

**The Impact of African Traditional Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values on  
Christian-  
Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 through the Present:  
A Case Study of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area of the Central Region.**

Submitted by Francis Acquah to the University of Exeter  
as a thesis for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology  
in December 2011

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My first and foremost gratitude goes to my academic advisors Prof. Emeritus Mahmoud Ayoub (Hartford Seminary, US) and Prof. Robert Gleave (IAIS, University of Exeter) for their untiring efforts and patience that guided me through this study. In this respect I, also, wish to thank my brother and friend, Prof. John D. K. Ekem, who as a Ghanaian and someone familiar with the background of this study, read through the work and offered helpful suggestions.

Studying as a foreign student in the US and the UK could not have been possible without the generous financial support from the Scholarship Office of the Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, USA and some churches in the US, notably, the First Presbyterian Church, Geneseo, NY and the First Presbyterian Church, Fairfield, CT. In this regard, Lisa Katzenstein, the administrator of the Scholarship Office of the Global Ministries (UMC) and Prof. Kelton Kobb, my friend and former Professor, Hartford Seminary, need to be singled out in appreciation for their personal efforts in securing these sources of funding for the study.

I cannot forget the president of Hartford Seminary, Heidi Hadsell, who had faith in me and offered me the opportunity to study at the Seminary. Heidi, I am very grateful to you.

Last and not the least, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my wife Phyllis, who, single-handedly, had to be there for the children while I was away, for most of the time and, to you my dear children – Ruth, Grace, Joseph and Aba, I offer my profound gratitude for your understanding and enduring the pain of my absence during those years of studies. Without your sacrifice and support, this dream could not have become a reality.

**Topic: The Impact of African Traditional Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values on Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 through the Present:**

**A Case Study of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area of the Central Region.**

**Abstract:**

The inception, evangelization and missionary activities of Christianity and Islam in Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area in the Central Region of Ghana resulted in the conversions of the indigenous people, mainly, from African Traditional Religion (ATR) to the two mission religions. The religious beliefs, practices and the provision of social services of these immigrant religions have impacted on the religious and cultural life of the traditional communities. Yet, the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural values have served not only as the mediation of expressions for both indigenous Christians and Muslims in this area; they have, also, shaped, to a great extent, the forms of Christianity and Islam that developed as well as the relationships between members of the diverse religious groups.

This thesis is an attempt to examine the impact of the traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices (with their underlying values) on the religious pluralistic context of this Mfantse traditional area in Ghana, particularly, on Christian-Muslim relations. Besides this quest, which has not received a sufficient scholarly attention, the need for this work also became evident in view of the emergence of religious extremism and intolerance by some Christian and Islamic groups in the country, which, at times, has undermined some of the traditional religious and cultural values, which have fostered peaceful co-existence over the years. Through this process, the extent of that changes that have resulted from the

interaction of the two main mission religions (Christianity and Islam) with the indigenous context, are, also, assessed.

The research tools used, namely interview and observation (of transitional rites and festivals), made it possible to explore both the religious and socio-cultural history of the people, which existed, mostly in oral tradition. In this sense, one of the contributions of this research lies in its role of “rescuing the memory” of the indigenous people.<sup>1</sup> This effort becomes more relevant as the potential for losing this important aspect of the people’s narrative history increases, with the older generation passing on from this life and the reality of the main stream of the historical account coming from European sources. This study contributes to the scanty local scholarly material in this field of study, which, for some time now, has relied on non-indigenous sources, often, with their underlying assumptions and biases.

The central argument of this thesis is that although a larger percentage of the indigenous population are converts to Christianity and Islam, it is the indigenous beliefs and values which, mainly, serve as the mediation for their religious and cultural expressions. This indigenous influence has enhanced harmonious relationships among members of Christianity and Islam in the area.

The thesis is in two main sections, namely sections A and B. Section A comprises chapter one, which focuses on the introductory and methodological approach of the research and chapters two, three and four, which constitute the historical background of the people and, Christianity and Islam in the area. The chapters five, six and seven, which deal with the data analysis of the research and the conclusion (chapter eight) form the section B.

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<sup>1</sup> “Memory and Mission” in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*(DACB), New Haven: OMSC, 2006, p. 1

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## **Section A**

### **Chapter One - Introductory Chapter**

## Background to the study

### 1.1. Introduction

Religious and cultural pluralism has been a prominent feature in human societies and this became intensified with the impact of modernity. The phenomenon of such pluralistic experience presents opportunities as well as challenges, particularly, for religious traditions and cultures today. H. Byron Earhart states in his foreword to E. Thomas Lawson's book *Religions of Africa* (1985) that one of the most fascinating aspects of our history is the richness and varieties of its religious traditions. This has tremendous impact on human relations in view of the resurgence of religion and its growing role in both public and private life. The social and political processes of secularization, which were thought to supplant religion and its influence, have, in fact, served to strengthen it.<sup>2</sup> In the age of globalization, religious traditions and pre-modern cultural forms, which used to be localized, have now become global phenomena.

One may argue that in certain instances religion plays a major role in instigating violence, social unrest and cultural tension. Some scholars have gone so far to assert an essential connection between religion and violence<sup>3</sup>. Rene Girard's "mimetic desire" theory in *Violence and the Sacred* (1977) posits that religion is intrinsically related to violence. Furthermore, Appleby affirms that religion invariably plays a role or roles in violent situations<sup>4</sup>. These assertions indeed hold to some extent in view of the tremendous influence of religion in the lives of many people. It has been observed that in Africa, the sources of social conflicts, and even wars, cannot be restricted to (among other things)

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<sup>2</sup> Louis Brenner (ed.), *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, London: Hurst & Company, 1993, p. 2

<sup>3</sup> Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 230

<sup>4</sup> R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, p. 60

ethnocentrism or dictatorship<sup>5</sup>. Inter-religious relations, especially, among African Traditional Religion (ATR) worshippers, Muslims and Christians are becoming sources of social tension and violence.

For many Africans and Ghanaians, in particular, it is religion more than anything else that shapes their worldview and participation in social life<sup>6</sup>. The African traditional religious belief is that human beings do not live in this world alone; there is a sense of human beings' close relationship with nature. Humanity, animals and plants have "their own existence and place in the universe as independent parts of a whole."<sup>7</sup> There are also spiritual beings that are more powerful than humankind and this opens up the African to the divine and to seeking affinity with these spiritual powers. Religious belief is thus diffused in all spheres of life filling them with meaning and significance.<sup>8</sup> In almost every form of activity such as family gathering, child-naming, funeral, fishing and trading, there is a religious observance. Gyekye captures religion's deep presence in African life in these words: "To be born into African society is to be born into a culture that is intensely and pervasively religious and that means, and requires, participating in the religious beliefs and rituals of the community."<sup>9</sup> This understanding of the pervasive influence of religion on humanity from cradle to the grave, and the African consciousness of the divine is captured in a Ghanaian Akan proverb: *Obi nnkyerε abofra nyame*, meaning "no one teaches the child to know God"; the consciousness of God is considered inherent in the child from birth.

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<sup>5</sup> Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha, "Interreligious Dialogue in Black Africa Among Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion," <http://11011.temple.edu/il/1H51/religious/dialogue.htm>, p. 2 of 17

<sup>6</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Oxford: Heineman Educational Publishers, 1969, P. 256

<sup>7</sup> Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity and African gods : A Method in Theology*, Nairobi: IBS-Nig. Press, 1999, p. 95

<sup>8</sup> Christopher I. Ejizu, "Emergent Key Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion," <http://www.africaworld.net/afrel/ejizu.htm> , p. 7 of 12

<sup>9</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996, p.

The quest for relevant patterns and forms of inter-religious relations rooted in the Ghanaian religious and cultural experience for fostering peaceful co-existence becomes, therefore, an imperative. I believe that such a paradigm could be explored with regard to the engagement of African Traditional Religions with other religions, especially, Christianity and Islam in the area chosen for this research.

## 1.2. The Problem

Ghana, a West African sub-Saharan country, is religiously diverse, with a population of about 22 million. In terms of religious composition, figures have been debated by the followers of various religious traditions in the country for political reasons. The official census however puts them at 65% Christian, 16% Muslim and 13% African Traditional Religion worshippers, with the remainder belonging to other religions<sup>10</sup>.

F. L. Bartels states in *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (and other scholars affirm this, especially, Ghanaian historians) that the earliest contacts of Christianity with the then Gold Coast (present day Ghana) was through the Portuguese merchants led by Don Diego D'Azambuja at Elmina in 1482.<sup>11</sup> There is, however, a suggested earlier date than that; the first batch of European merchants that introduced Christianity to the land of modern Ghana, being the Portuguese, who landed at Shama, along the Western coast of the country in 1471.<sup>12</sup> They were followed by another batch of Catholic missionaries from France in 1572. Though these attempts at planting the Christian faith in the country did not take firm roots, it did, however, provide the necessary foundation for sustained evangelization by later

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<sup>10</sup> John A. Azumah, *The legacy of Arab Islam in Africa: Quest for Inter-religious Dialogue*, Oxford: Oneworld

Publications, 2001 p. 5

<sup>11</sup> F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, Cambridge: University Press, 1965, p. 1

<sup>12</sup> David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism 1850-1928*, London: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 151. See also Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983, p. 21 and David Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, Accra: SonLife Press, 2008, p. 62

missionaries: the Basel missionaries sent by the Missionary Society of the Basel Mission Church in Germany in 1828;<sup>13</sup> the Wesleyan Methodists from Britain in 1835, and another attempt by the Catholics from France in 1881, benefited from that initial work.<sup>14</sup> These Christian denominations, initially, evangelized along ethnic lines; the Wesleyan Methodists for example, worked among the coastal Mfantse people, while the missionaries of the Reformed Tradition were among the Akwapim and the Ewe of Ghana. One could, therefore, say to some extent that the missionary enterprise in Africa, particularly, in Ghana, did play a role in the creation of spheres of influence that contributed to the segmentation of people along linguistic, cultural and ethnic lines.<sup>15</sup>

Other Christian denominations, including the Pentecostals, African Independent Churches, and lately the Charismatic Churches made their presence felt in the country in the 1950s and 1970s respectively. Some of the reasons for this development will be elaborated upon later.

There is no certainty as regards the exact time when Islam made its entry into modern Ghana. There is a general agreement among scholars that Islam was introduced into the Tropical Africa through the efforts of Muslim traders and religious experts from the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> These were Berbers, who after the Arab Muslim conquest of North Africa, had converted to Islam. They took advantage of the trans-Saharan trade route which ran through Africa, Arabia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean into Europe to plant the Islamic faith

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<sup>13</sup> *An Outline of Historical Events in Ghana*, Accra: Paramount Printing Works, 1996, p. 56; see also Peter Sschweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast: The Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana*, Accra: Sonartline Ltd, 2000, pp. 12-13, 18-24

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63

<sup>15</sup> Otieno M. Munala, "Unity of the Church and Unity of Human Kind," in *African Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges and Promises*, Nairobi: AACC Publication, 1993, cited in Francis Acquah, *Ecumenical and inter-religious Dialogue in Ghana: Prospects and Challenges for Promoting Peace and Reconciliation*, unpublished M.A. thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of Geneva, 2002 p. 74

<sup>16</sup> Azumah, p. 26

among the Sohinke of the ancient Ghana;<sup>17</sup> it was through the commercial activities of the North African Muslims that the religion spread to West Africa in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Its introduction in the northern sector of modern Ghana took place around the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it is claimed that the Mande or Wangara traders and clerics introduced it there.<sup>18</sup>

Most Ghanaian Muslims are Sunnis, who subscribe to the Maliki legal tradition and it was Maulim Abubakr Siddique, a religious teacher from Nigeria, who made a real missionary attempt for the establishment of Islam in the country in 1895.<sup>19</sup> The Sunnis include the Sufi Orders, comprising *Qadariyya* and *Tijaniyya*. The other Islamic groups are the Ahmadiyya Movement, from the Qadian Muslim sect in Pakistan and the Shi'a, which has also been growing in Ghana since businesses were set up there by Lebanese traders in the 1980s. In the Central region of the country, especially, among the *Mfantse*, the Ahmadis constitute the Muslim majority. The history, spread and activities of Islam in the area selected for this study will be discussed in detail later.

While there is presence of Shi'ite Muslims in Ghana, the focus, however, will be on the *Ahmadiyya* Muslims and the *Sunnis* due to their dominant presence in the area selected for this research work.

Though the Ghanaian traditional communities before then had diverse ethnic, cultural and indigenous religious forms, they did not experience the present situation of rapid and intense religious and cultural encounters, which have, sometimes, brought in their wake tensions and violence.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 26

<sup>18</sup> "Ghana: Christianity and Islam in Ghana," [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+gh0060\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+gh0060)), cited May, 2009, P. 2

<sup>19</sup> Isaac Boye, *Religious and Moral Education for Schools Vol 2*, Accra: I. K. Boye Ltd, 1999, p. 14

Culturally, Ghana is made up of hundreds of linguistic and cultural groups, with five major ethnic groups. Although this pluralistic environment has not witnessed frequent inter-religious and social upheavals, it has, nevertheless, experienced some instances of inter/intra- religious conflicts and violence. Some of the more recent ones relevant to this study are worthy of mention here: in November 1999, it was reported that violent clashes occurred between Christians and Muslims, which led to the destruction of mosques, houses and property in Agona Nyakrom, in the Central Region of Ghana <sup>20</sup>. Another violent incident, this time between two Muslim factions, took place on January 16<sup>th</sup> 1998, at Wenchi in the Brong Ahafo region, engaged in a violent conflict over the burial rites of their dead members.<sup>21</sup> Four persons were killed and twenty-six injured in this incident. Then in August the same year, another clash between the same groups took place, this time in Kumasi, over similar burial rituals. While the remote causes of the intra-religious clashes (between al-Sunnah and Tijaniyya Muslim factions) had to do with the doctrinal differences between them, that between Muslims and Christians was the result of offensive evangelization by some Christian and Muslim sects based on exclusivist interpretations of certain portions of their respective scriptures.

Islamic resurgence leading to the establishment of missionary organizations such as the Islamic Reformation and Research Center (also known as the Wahhabi Missionary Order), with emphasis on missionary work and preaching, has, also, intensified these developments, which I have referred to as the emergence of religious “extremism.” This will, also, be addressed in detail later.

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<sup>20</sup> 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana (U.S. Department of State Washington D.C: Sept 5, 2000)

[http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/irf/irf\\_rpt/irf\\_ghana.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/irf_ghana.html) , October 21, 2011, p. 4 of 5

<sup>21</sup> 1999 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana (U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. Sept. 1999)

[http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/irf/irf\\_rpt/1999/irf\\_ghana.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_ghana.html), p. 4 of 7

The early indications of an exclusive stance and the marginalization of traditional religious and cultural values that set the confrontational tone, rather than mutual dialogue (between Christianity and the indigenous religion and its culture), manifested itself in Basel Missionary (Reformed Tradition) work in Ghana. The Mission decided to establish a segregation between its converts and the rest of the indigenous community by building separate quarters for the converted indigenes. Such ‘communities within a community,’ known as *salem* were created and christened *oburoni-krom*, ‘the white man’s town.’<sup>22</sup> Among some of the adverse effects of these developments in the society were the disunity and tensions that built up between the citizens of *oburoni-krom* and their perceived pagan brothers and sisters from whom they had to distance themselves. The new converts were, also, made to believe that their Christian salvation could only be complete if they did away with their old superstitious religious and cultural life. While the missionaries might not have intended these negative results, their actions, nevertheless, led to social disruption as tensions, sometimes, resulted in violence within the community. Not surprisingly, J. B. Danquah protested against this and blamed the missionaries for the rift between the Christians and non-Christians at Kibi. The traditional elders in Eastern Akim, later, wrote to the then Governor to remove from the community, the Rev. Mohr and the Christians, who were perceived as the cause of the troubles.<sup>23</sup> Debrunner on the other hand, is of the view that the Christians were persecuted, especially, under Amoako Atta and in the aftermath of his sudden death.<sup>24</sup> While some of the extremist attitudes of Amoako Atta

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<sup>22</sup> Kimbele, p. 155. For full discussions on the various views regarding missionary activities that led to tensions between Christianity and the indigenous religion and its culture in Ghana, see also John D. K. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, Accra: SonLife Press, 2008, pp. 73-100; Bartels, p. 26; Samuel Adu-Andoh, *The sacred in Ghana’s Struggle for Justice and Communal Identity: The Legacy of Nkrumah*, an unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary, 1986.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 156

<sup>24</sup> Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967, pp. 196, 197

towards some of the Christians were unjustifiable, the tension and community disruption mentioned, earlier, resulted from the anti-indigenous religious and cultural stance by the missionaries, which culminated in the creation of separate Christian quarters. As Williamson, rightly observed, the end result of this “was to bring under suspicion every aspect of traditional life and, worse, to develop in the convert an attitude of shame and condemnation towards his traditional past and those who continued to share it.”<sup>25</sup> The situation is reminiscent of what Chinua Achebe describes in his novel, *Things Fall Apart*. In the aftermath of the encounter of a pre-modern Ibo society, Umoufia with Europe through Christianity and colonial rule, Achebe sums up the change he observed in a poetical language as follows:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre;  
The falcon cannot bear the  
falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed  
upon the world.<sup>26</sup>

Achebe felt that, there were some indications of religious and social disintegration as a result of the impact of European Christianity and culture on the indigenous context; those traditional religious and cultural threads that bound the people together were severed. Yet, he recognized some of the positive transformations that European colonial rule and Christianity brought to the community. Indeed the influence of the Christian church and European culture came with its own appeal, especially, through the provision of education and prospects of material progress; its appeal was too compelling to the extent that some of the elders and chiefs, who, initially, resisted the intrusion, supported the missionaries and gave lands for churches and schools. Today, the appeal of Western culture and its material promise is, still, very strong, if not stronger than before, especially, to some members of the

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<sup>25</sup>S. G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith*, Accra: Ghana University Press, 1974 , p. 56

<sup>26</sup> Francis Abiola Irele, “The Text of Things Fall Apart,” in Francis Abiola Irele (ed.), Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009, p. 2

younger generation of Africans, who, unfortunately, embrace everything Western to the neglect of their own culture.

Another dimension of religious developments resulting from Christian and Islamic evangelization in the country, which is of relevance to this research was the introduction of certain activities of some extremist and intolerant Christian and Muslim groups, whose determination was to compete in evangelizing Ghanaians in the 1970s and 1980s. These groups were, respectively, informed by the religious ideologies of American Evangelical Christianity and Saudi Arabia Wahabbi Islam. Their polemical missionary approaches, which ignored some of the indigenous religious beliefs and values, accounted for some of the inter- and intra-religious tensions and violence in the country mentioned earlier.

These and other factors, for instance, accounted, for the clashes that occurred between some Christian charismatic churches and ATR worshippers in Ghana on 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999.<sup>27</sup>

It must be said, however, that, the intention here is not to give a simplistic account of the causes of religious conflicts and violence in the Ghanaian context, nor, to claim that the traditional religious and cultural values have, all along, fostered peace and stable conditions; in every religion and culture, there are some inherent weaknesses as well as strengths. The traditional religious and cultural beliefs and expressions had some of its negative elements that dehumanized societies, especially, before the advent of Christianity and European colonization, sometimes, through fear and coercion. These negative acts have been part of human existence in time and space. However, what this research is trying to address is the situation whereby a particular culture with its religious heritage could be, totally, dismissed and disregarded as having no relevance for life.

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<sup>27</sup> 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana (U.S. Department of State WashingtonD.C: Sept 5, 2000), p. 4 of 5

### **1.3. The Relevance of the Research**

I propose in this regard, to study the history of ATR-Christian-Muslim relations in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area of the Central Region of Ghana from the 1920 through to the present. This study has become important in light of the following developments:

1.3.1. Inter-religious tensions and the consequent community divisions are, gradually, creeping into the Ghanaian society. Though the country has been witnessing peaceful co-existence in the midst of religious plurality, this harmonious relationship is now being threatened due to the emergence of religious extremism and fundamentalism. Both the Christian legacies of European cultural forms and American evangelical Christianity as well as the Arab cultural package of Islam seem to have marginalized and undermined, to a significant extent, some of the African religious and cultural values of Ghanaians, which emphasize family unity, community participation, love and sense of family belonging. This puritanical attitude that frowns upon and condemns incorporation of any indigenous religious and cultural expression into Ghanaian Muslim or Christian life tends to undermine those positive values which have fostered social cohesion and understanding over the years. The present situation does not only marginalize local cultures, but, also, create fertile grounds for religious intolerance, conflicts and violence in society. The researcher, in particular, grew up in a household (a typical African extended family system), where his grandfather, aunt and cousins were Muslims; grandmother, mother and other family members were Christians, while some of the uncles, aunts and cousins were ATR worshippers. Yet, the Ghanaian, and for that matter African religious and cultural values rooted in the extended family system

and the sense of community belonging, love and unity held members together. They participated together in events such as child naming, baptism, marriage/weddings of family members, funerals as well as festivals, irrespective of their religious differences. The African religious experience of Ghanaians does not define religion in terms of doctrinal formulations, which tend to draw lines of distinctions among religions<sup>28</sup>. It is in observing this life-affirming traditional heritage and the above-mentioned disruptive changes in the Ghanaian society that this research work has been undertaken.

1.3.2. Some of the indigenous beliefs and values which helped hold communities together as one people were looked down upon and even branded as paganism by some Arab Muslims and European Christian missionaries who came to evangelize the people of the then Gold Coast. F. L. Bartels gives an account of this negative attitude towards the local cultures, at this time, by the early Methodist missionaries among the coastal Mfantse people: “It seemed as if they could not accept the Christian faith and remain “good” citizens. The church’s rule on marriage was already causing much pain and creating dissension of a new kind. There were age-long customs and practices which they could no longer follow...”<sup>29</sup> Such was the tension between Christianity and African religious beliefs and cultural values at that time. At one point when members of the Methodist church in Cape Coast wanted to know if they could carry out their obligation of contributing to the funeral expenses of a deceased member in the family, who was not a Christian, Rev’d Wrigley, the missionary, replied in the negative. Among the Ashanti people, similar rifts between Christianity and ATR and its cultural values were reported. Chiefs in the Ashanti

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<sup>28</sup> Douglas E. Thomas, *African Traditional Religion in the Modern World*, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2005, p. 131

<sup>29</sup> Bartels, p. 26

soon realized that spiritual and traditional laws that bound the people together were being broken and disregarded by some community members who claimed to belong to the church.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, that legacy still persists, to some extent, in the Ghanaian society, sometimes, posing a threat to the peace and harmony of Ghanaian society. This situation calls for an in-depth study into the relationship among the three major religions in the country, with the intention of exploring those relevant religious and cultural systems which are crucial for fostering peaceful co-existence in a pluralistic setting.

1.3.3. The devastating effects of poverty, HIV/AIDS, other diseases, and the generally deplorable socio-economic conditions of the people call for all agents, including religious groups, to relate and cooperate in tackling some of the forces which impact negatively on the life of the community. Indeed, religion has a duty to make the world a worthy place for humanity and all forms of life to live in.<sup>31</sup> This study intends to rediscover and reinforce some of the African religious, cultural and community values, which foster pluralism as a means of addressing these problems, which confront common humanity.

1.3.4. Again, there have been some misconceptions that inter-religious dialogue has to do, primarily, with intellectual and theological discussions of the faith of various religious traditions or their interactions at an institutional level. These miss the important and dynamic dimensions of inter-religious dialogue, which touch on the day-to-day human relationships of members of diverse faith traditions living in a community. In most practical situations, the official religious teachings based on the

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<sup>30</sup> K.A. Busia, "Christianity and Ashanti," in Ram Desai (ed.), *Christianity in Africa*, South Dakota: Spearfish, 1962, p. 94

<sup>31</sup> Method Kilaini "Ecumenism in a Multi-Religious Context," in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol.53, No. 3 Geneva: WCC Publication, July 2001, p. 357

sacred text or the tenets of beliefs of a religious tradition differ in some respects from the religious practices expressed in daily lives by the members of that religious community. In other words, official religion and popular religion are not, exactly, the same. In most African communities, a majority of Christians/Muslims, for example, apply the official teachings of their respective faith traditions through the mediation of the indigenous religious and cultural symbols.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, religious scholars, sometimes focus too much on institutional aspects of religion to the neglect of its popular dimensions. Yet, a lot of issues relating to conflict and peace bear on the daily responses of members of religious communities to real life situations and relationships. This dialogue of life which serves as the very foundation of African traditional community relationships and, which plays a vital role in the Ghanaian society has not received the academic discussions it deserves. The study intends to draw attention to this important dimension of inter-religious relations – dialogue of life – which sustains community relationships, but, unfortunately, overlooked in scholarly discourse.

1.3.5. Finally, the Enyan-Ekumfi-Mfantsiman area in Ghana has been chosen for this study due to its unique religious and cultural composition and the researcher's background as one who comes from this area. Muslims, Christians and indigenous religious worshippers have stayed together for quite a long time, yet no official report of inter or intra-religious violence has been made. In addition to that, this is an area where the Ahmadis, a Muslim sect constitute the majority of the Muslim community. The Ahmadiyya brand of Islam, with its missionary emphasis, especially, on evangelism, education and health services, as well as concept of

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<sup>32</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Nairobi: Kenya, 1997, pp. 20, 21

community life for members, adds other dimensions to the inter-religious engagements in the area. This, together, with the Ahmadiyya missionary success story in this area and Ghana, as a whole, also, serve as part of the motivation for this study.

The purpose of this research is, therefore, to examine the inter-religious relations among Christianity, Islam and ATR in order to explore how African religious and cultural values have impacted on Christian-Muslim relations in the area, and how the latter has, also, been affected by the former.

#### **1.4. Time Frame**

The year 1920 up to the present has been chosen as the period constituting the focus of this study for the following reasons:

- i. On the Ghanaian religious scene, the impact of certain developments which contributed to the evolving changes that are relevant to this study began to take place. The emergence of African Independent Churches in response to European Missionary Christianity, which failed to address the indigenous needs of the people, began to manifest in the 1920s. The Musama Disco Christo Church, for instance, which broke away from the then Gold Coast Methodist Church, was established by Joseph W. Egyanka Appiah, a former Methodist catechist in 1922.<sup>33</sup> In addition to this, in the early 1930s, there were European and American Pentecostal missions in Ghana, whose spiritual emphasis in worship appealed to the indigenous people.<sup>34</sup> Among them was the Church of Pentecost which started as the Faith Tabernacle Church in Asamankese, with Peter N.

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<sup>33</sup> C. G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of some 'Spiritual' Churches in Ghana* London: SCM Press, 1962, p. 29

<sup>34</sup> Richard Foli, *The Ghanaian Church in Retrospect*, Accra: Methodist Book Depot, 2001, p. 36

Anim as the leader.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the coming into existence of the two Muslim communities – the Mfantse Sunnis and the Ahmadis in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area and, later, in Ghana as a whole, took place in 1921.

- ii. Politically, the beginning of agitations for independence from colonial rule by the indigenous people preceded this period. However, in the 1920s a significant political event took place in Ghana, which underscored the indigenous determination to have a role in matters that concern their very existence. Under the initiative of Joseph E. Casely Hayford, the leaders of the four British West African colonies – the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria – were brought together, out of which was formed the National Congress of British West Africa. It held its first meeting in Accra in 1920. Among the points set down for the consideration of the British government was that the colonial administration should desist from interfering in the selection and removal from office of the traditional chiefs. Rather, this should be left entirely in the hands of the indigenous people themselves.<sup>36</sup> The above-mentioned events, among others, underline some of the indigenous responses to the changes that were going on during this period.

## **1.5. Literature Review**

This study is undertaken in recognition of some work that has already been done in the area of inter-religious relations among ATR, Christianity and Islam in Africa, and, specifically, in Ghana.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 42

<sup>36</sup> F.K. Buah, *A History of Ghana*, Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1980, p. 145

John A. Azumah, in his book *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa*, calls for a reconsideration of the historical role of Islam in Africa as against the general notion that Christianity and its beliefs were imposed on African people, while Islam entered the continent in respectful recognition of its religious and cultural resources. He argues that both Christianity and Islam marginalized ATRs and their cultural values, and yet, ATRs engaged in dialogical mutual exchange with these two mission religions; "...there can be no disputing the fact that African Muslim practices are replete with indigenous African elements."<sup>37</sup> Azumah is of the view that any constructive inter-religious engagement has to recognize and acknowledge the resilience nature of the African religious beliefs and its cultural expressions as well as some of its values.

This same debate is also taken up by Elizabeth Amoah in her paper "African Indigenous Religions and Inter-Religious Relations". In line with Azumah, Amoah contends that contrary to the general conception that African Traditional Religions were passive recipients of the religious beliefs of Christianity and Islam, differing religions in Africa do encounter each other, leading to an inevitable exchange.<sup>38</sup> She argues that despite the outward conversions of members of the indigenous religions to Islam and Christianity, the traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices still persist in these converts and continue to inform and shape their religious experience. In this sense, she thinks that African Traditional Religions have played a major role in transforming the two mission religions- Christianity and Islam - by confronting both with the decisive issue of indigenization.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Azumah, p. 7

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Amoah, "African Indigenous Religions and Interreligious Relationship," paper presented at Westminster College, Oxford, autumnal IIC2 lecture, held on October 22, 1998, p.4

<sup>39</sup> Sanneh, p. 211

Amoah's position seems, however, to be challenged by Jacob K. Olupona's view on the influence of both Christianity and Islam on ATR; "...the advent of Christianity and Islam has swept away evidences of its vitality, nature and scope."<sup>40</sup> One is not very sure as to what Olupona is implying here; however, in the same paper he makes reference to, and seems to agree with Robin Horton's argument that, "African Traditional Religion was not just a house of cards that collapsed at the instance of change, but that it has the potential to adapt on its own, in response to changes that take place around it."<sup>41</sup> In this sense, I think Olupona is, rather, affirming Elizabeth Amoah's position on the resilient nature of ATR and its cultural values and the ability to influence and be influenced in encountering other religions and cultures.

There are of course various forms of ATR belief systems among the different groups of people on the vast continent of Africa. In Ghana, diverse religious beliefs and expressions are portrayed in the celebration of religious festivals, rites of passage, funerals, etc, among various, ethnic groups, clans and families. This does not dismiss the fact that while various expressions of ATR are found among different ethnic communities in Africa, the essence, that is, the core beliefs in African Traditional Religion, namely the belief in a Supreme Being, lesser deities or spirits and ancestors, as practised in West Africa and, particularly, by the Akan in Ghana are virtually the same. "The varieties are more of those of expressions than basic belief."<sup>42</sup> In terms of expression, therefore, religious diversity has been with traditional African societies before the advent of other foreign religions such as Islam and Christianity. However, the differences found within ATRs do not result in religious conflicts and divisions due to what Kofi Asare Opoku refers to as "common

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<sup>40</sup> Jacob K. Olupona, "Major Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion" in Jacob K. Olupona (ed.), *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, New York: Paragon House, 1991, p. 26

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32

<sup>42</sup> Magesa, p. 26

thread in indigenous values.”<sup>43</sup> As mentioned earlier, African Traditional Religions place emphasis on practical living instead of doctrines that reinforce exclusive claims to truth and beliefs. The differing traditional religious systems open up, in mutual exchange, to diverse religious elements, which equip them to respond to such practical challenges of life as diseases, poverty and death. ATRs are not in competition and conflict, but, rather, in complimentary roles in meeting the social, psychological and spiritual needs of the people.

It must be stated, at this point, that while it may be true, to some extent, that the presence of Christianity and Islam has had the effect of reducing the dominant sway of ATR on African people, I do not think that these two mission religions have, actually, swept away either any evidence or any vitality of ATR in African societies. ATR and its cultural values have been the major factors that have formed and shaped African thoughts and expressions, irrespective of religious persuasions. They are rooted in the very being of Africans, and are expressed in various types of behaviour and conduct.

I concur, in this sense with Elizabeth Amoah that ATRs’ encounter with Islam and Christianity has resulted in mutual exchange. Indeed, both of them (Amoah and Azumah) provide a relevant context in relation to this proposed area of study as their work reflect on ATR-Christian-Muslim relations in Africa. While, Azumah’s work explores, in general, the situation on the African continent, Amoah situates hers in the Ghanaian context, but does not delve into the historical developments of the inter-religious relations among ATR, Christianity and Islam. In addition, Amoah’s work does not address inter-religious relations in the area chosen for this study.

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<sup>43</sup> Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*. Accra: FEP International Private , 1978, P. 8

Another related work of interest in the area of Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana is by Nathan Samwini. In his book *The Resurgence of Islam in Ghana since 1950*, he provides a well documented development of Islamic resurgence, which reflected more on increased activities of various Islamic groups and the implications for Christian-Muslim relations in the Ghanaian society. He traces the historical developments of Islam and analyzes its socio-economic and religious impact in Ghana. Useful as his work is for the discourse of the inter-religious relations, the focus of the study is not on inter-religious engagements among ATR, Christianity and Islam. It addresses, specifically, the Muslim resurgence and its impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana.

Eboussi F. Boulanga, in his book *Christianity without Fetishes*, also, critiques the European religious and cultural forms in which Christianity was encapsulated and presented to Africa through evangelization and the establishment of the Christian church. He calls for the removal of this façade, (which he terms ‘western fetishes’) so that Christianity could be expressed in authentic African religious experience and cultural forms by Africans.

*The Africans: A Reader*, edited by Ali A. Mazrui, is another literature source, which deals with some of the vital issues related to the current study. The thesis of the book is that contemporary Africa is the result of the encounter of three cultures – the indigenous Africa culture, Western culture and Islamic culture; what Mazrui refers to as Africa’s ‘triple legacies or heritage’.<sup>44</sup> The encounter of the three cultures has set into motion an unavoidable influence of change that has presented Africa with glimpses of hope and at the same time conflict. The people of Africa struggle to come to terms with the reality of this

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<sup>44</sup> Ali A Mazrui, “Africa’s Triple heritage ,” in Mazrui, Ali, A & Levine, Toby Kleban (eds), *The Africans: A New Reader*, , New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986, p. xviii

encounter and its on-going impact and what that means not only for their religious and cultural life, but for their socio-economic and political life as well. Various articles in the book examine this central theme, from various interdisciplinary perspectives, which enrich the discussion. The article “A Conflict of Cultures” by Elliot P. Skinner and Gwendolyn Mikell, especially, raises some of the issues of concern relating to this study and tries to examine the dynamics involved in the African’s triple heritage as people try to make meaning of it, religiously and socially.<sup>45</sup> Any talk about inter-religious relations in the African context has to come to terms with this reality.

This source material is useful in examining Islamic, Christian and ATR encounter within the context of the experience of the triple heritage, but the content of the discussion is general, pertaining to the whole Africa, while this work focuses in detail on the Christian-Muslim-ATR relation within this selected area in Ghana. In addition, this study focuses on investigating the indigenous impact, in particular, on Christianity and Islam and vice versa.

Another relevant source for this study is the book *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith*, by Sydney George Williamson, a British Methodist Missionary, who worked in Ghana from 1933 to 1959. The book is primarily a comparative study on the mutual impact of the religious and cultural life of the Akan Ethnic group of Ghana, with a particular reference to the Ashanti and the Christian faith that was introduced by the various European Christian denominations in the country.

While observing some of the failures of the church, Williamson brings into focus, at the same time, some of its positive achievements in terms of being an agent of change in

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<sup>45</sup> For Full discussions on “Conflict of Cultures,” see Ali A. Mazrui (ed), *The Africans: A Reader*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986, pp. 212-230

the provision of schools through which some of the early nationalists who championed the independence struggle of the nation were raised. He highlights in his work the positive impact of the church's teachings as well as European governance that helped to transform some of the negative religious and cultural practices of the Ghanaians.

Of particular interest, as far as this study is concerned, are the observations Williamson made, on some of the European Missionary attitudes towards the indigenous religion of the Akan and the description made of it at that time. The religious system of the people was not considered worthy of any religious sort; a pagan system that did not have value for human consideration, a perception, which Williamson felt was wrong: "The people to whom Europe offered its faith were themselves possessed of religious practices and rites which came to bear a variety of descriptive names. As for the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, so in the eyes of nineteenth-century administrators and missionaries, indigenous religious practice was *idolatry* or *superstition*, or came to be known, inaccurately, as *fetishism*."<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, Williamson himself could not escape the trap of misrepresenting the African religion by describing it as 'animistic.'<sup>47</sup> The person who first used that description for African religion was E. B. Tylor in an article published in 1866.<sup>48</sup> He claimed, among other things, that in African Traditional Religion, there was the belief that every object had its own soul. This view, of course is not right; this is not what Africans who practise their religion believe. They, rather, believe that some physical objects could serve as the habitation of some spirits and be used as media to operate. It was, therefore, equally, wrong for Williamson to have used that term for African Traditional Religion.

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<sup>46</sup> S. G. Williamson, p. ix; see, also, pp.44-58 for his detailed discussions on the missionary impact on the Akan Religious and cultural life.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. ix

<sup>48</sup> Asare Opoku, p. 3

However, he raises the important issue of the churches failure to naturalize within the Akan and the Ghanaian environment in general, and thereby seeing the church planted in Ghana as the carbon copy of those in Europe. This failure, he thinks was one of the factors which made it difficult for the Akan people to understand the thrust of the Christian message and faith, and for them to have come to terms with the relevance of the new faith for their lives.<sup>49</sup> He thus touched on the vital issue of indigenization, which the church in Africa still struggles with.

S.G. Williamson's work provides insightful information as regards the mutual impact of the Akan faith and Christianity. It does touch on some of the core issues relating to this study, namely, the Christian encounter with the Ghanaian indigenous religion and culture and its socio-cultural implications for the people. This notwithstanding, Williamson examines this relationship with particular reference to the Ashanti among the Akan, who inhabit the middle belt of Ghana, while mine is a case study focusing on the Mfantse people along the central coast of the country. In addition to that, his work looks at the relationship between the Akan religion and the Christian faith, but this research takes on the inter-religious relations among Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion.

With the exception of the *The Africans: A Reader*, which takes a look at the dynamics of the encounter of the three cultures and its implications for Africa, the rest of the studies mentioned above submit that in one way or the other, African religious and cultural values have been marginalized by both Christianity and Islam. However, these efforts have their limitations, in the sense that they do not, specifically examine in detail, the historical developments of inter-religious relations among these three major religions in Ghana and, specifically, in the selected area. This study is, therefore, intended to address this need and

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<sup>49</sup> Williamson, p. xiii

to explore how ATR has engaged and impacted Christian-Muslim relations in the Ghanaian context.

## **1.6. Methodology**

Peter Cannolly makes the assertion that all accounts of religion are made by people from a particular position and that accurate, objective accounts of religious phenomena do not exist in their own rights.<sup>50</sup> The point here is that there cannot be anything like a neutral, objective position once the study of religion or any other worldview is taken up. All approaches come with certain assumptions and biases about the subject matter of enquiry. This work, also, cannot escape this inevitable dilemma. In recognition of this challenging reality, Ninian Smart has called for an open-mind approach, what he refers to as ‘methodological agnosticism’, to the study of religious traditions; unfortunately, this sound academic caution is, hardly, attainable in practice.

It is appropriate, therefore, for the researcher to acknowledge this challenge and state where he is coming from. One of the positions taken by this study is the notion of belief in the sacred or transcendent. The religious worldview of the three religious traditions and the people in the area chosen for this study has the concept of belief in the transcendent or the creator as one of its core religious elements. For them, the creator is supreme above all created order and is, indeed, the starting point in all things relating to life.<sup>51</sup> Any study and investigation into the inter-religious relations of the people has to take the notion of the sacred, seriously, if that work is to reflect the authentic religious and cultural expressions of the people. The researcher’s background as one from the same ethnic community, and

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<sup>50</sup>Peter Cannolly, “Introduction,” in Peter Cannolly (ed.), *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London: Cassell, 1999, p. 1

<sup>51</sup> Magesa, p. 45

having been formed and shaped, to a large extent, by the religious and cultural environment of the place, makes it somehow possible for him to undertake this study as an “insider”. Yet he recognizes that this same familiarity could possibly make him take things for granted in his investigation. To overcome or minimize the tendency towards such an inclination, he has adopted a defamiliarization approach, by making the familiar seem strange;<sup>52</sup> the purpose here is to better enhance the researcher’s perception of what he observes and his understanding of what he hears through appropriate questioning. He, also, acknowledged his limitations, with his strong Christian background in terms of understanding the religious beliefs and concepts of Islam and ATR and the challenge and need to make every possible effort to step outside of his religious and cultural perspectives and assumptions in order to have an objective look into the subject of enquiry as others would have perceived it.

This study will use mainly historical and phenomenological methods in the research work. However, other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and psychology will be drawn upon in gathering, analyzing and interpreting the needed information.

The study conceives these faith communities – ATR worshippers, Muslims and Christians - as recognized religious and social groups that exist together and in relationship with other groups and institutions in their environment<sup>53</sup>. Before the advent of Christianity and Islam in the area, a majority of the indigenous people shared the same African religious worldview and cultural values as well as economic and social influences. Even today, conversion to Islam or Christianity does not imply that the individual African is, completely, emptied of these core beliefs and values. In affirmation of this point Mulago

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<sup>52</sup> Bradley L. Herling, *Beginner’s Guide to the Study of Religion*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007, p. 10

<sup>53</sup> “Introduction.” in Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley & William Mackinney (eds.), *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998, p. 14

argues that ATR “always persists as base and foundation of any subsequent conversion.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed if Islam and Christianity as well as other foreign religions were able to take root in the indigenous soil and grow, it was largely due to this persisting traditional base and foundation. This is not to play down in any way how theologies of the various religious groups have shaped and formed the belief systems and practices of these people, and resulted in the growth, especially, of the Christian and Muslim communities.

For most black Africans, and for this ethnic group in particular, the life of the individual is understood as the participation in the sacred life; that is, the individual taking part in all aspects of life in the community. It is that *vital union* or bond of life with its interconnectedness that ensures solidarity among members of the same family or clan and, influencing how one conducts himself/herself in that community.<sup>55</sup> The point being made here is that the communal nature of most African societies with their strong network of relationships plays an influential role in the individual’s life; she/he is very much shaped and formed by the religious and socio-cultural context of that community. Yet, that individual identity is not lost; the individual is real and his/her identity cannot be set aside by being a member of a community.<sup>56</sup>

In this study, the influence of theologies and doctrines of religious traditions in shaping behaviour is well recognized. However, it is also, equally, true that the theologies of both Christianity and Islam have been shaped and formed by the historical contexts in which they found themselves. Jackson for instance argues that as Islam moved out of its Arabian environment to settle among the inhabitants of the world of Late Antiquity, it came

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<sup>54</sup> Vincent Mulago, “African Traditional Religion and Christianity,” in Jacob K. Olupona (ed.), *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, New York: Paragon House, 1991, p. 128

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 121

<sup>56</sup> Gyekye, p. 47

into contact with others, whose unique geographical, historical and traditional settings endowed different communities and individuals with different ways and approaches to thinking. These different endowments led to different attitudes and approaches towards beliefs and practices<sup>57</sup>. Islam's beliefs and practices, for example, still have traces of some of the indigenous Arabian religious and cultural elements. This same argument could be made for Christianity, which, was equally affected by the Jewish and Greco-Roman environments in which it grew and expanded.

Indeed one of the major factors that militated against the accurate presentation of African religious life was the failure of both European colonizers and the Christian missionaries to seriously take into account the historical context of the African people. As Fynn rightly observed, some of them even did not think that Africans had any important history or religion before the European colonization and Christian evangelization.<sup>58</sup> In their mind, the history of the people only began when they made contact with them to “civilize” them. If it had not been for this superior European attitude, both the colonizers and the Christian missionaries would have found within the historical narrative of the people these resources - the oral traditions, their language (in particular, in the abundance of African proverbs), and, especially, artefacts such as talking drums, sacred stools, household items, tools and other objects that were used for both religious and socio-economic purposes. When these objects are placed in their specific historical context, they become windows onto a particular religious world.<sup>59</sup> Sadly, these were not counted as important and sometimes even condemned as pagan objects.

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<sup>57</sup> Sherman A. Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's Faysal al-Tafriqa*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 14

<sup>58</sup> J. K. Fynn, *A Junior History of Ghana*, Accra: Sedco Publishing, 1975, p. 1

<sup>59</sup> Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 3

For most Africans, there is no dualistic conception of religion; no dividing line between the sacred and the profane, the spirit and matter. The African religious beliefs and practices are infused into all aspects of life and African artefacts and oral history have much to communicate about the historical journey and experience of its people. The intention in adopting an historical approach as one of the methods in this study is to explore some of these traditional sources of the people's historical narrative in order to gain a better insight into their religious and socio-cultural life.

The researcher, on the other hand, recognizes the mutual exchange in all inter-religious engagements. In this sense, the objective of this study is not, only, to explore the influence of the African religious and cultural context and its impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana, but, to some extent, assess the influence in the opposite direction as well. It is hoped that this will lead to the creation of a conscious awareness for Ghanaians and Africans in their search for inter-religious patterns that are relevant to their contextual realities.

In brief, the following points sum up the rationale for the choice of the historical and phenomenological methods:

1.6.1. The phenomenological method creates space for an objective investigation into the religious, cultural and social life of people in a given area. The researcher, who happens to be a member of this ethnic community, could view this familiar situation with new lenses through this method.<sup>60</sup> This method aims to create an opening for observing and listening to their stories and studying their traditions, beliefs and

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<sup>60</sup> Scott L. Thuma, "Methods for Congregational Study" in Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney (eds.) *Studying Congregations: A New handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998, p. 198

practices, rather than just reading and talking about them.<sup>61</sup> Myths and rituals together with their symbols constitute the vehicle that conveys the religious and cultural traditions of people in time and space.<sup>62</sup> The choice of observation and interview are to permit to conduct investigations into the religious and cultural universe of the area as the researcher listens to mythical narratives and observes symbols and rituals, which are embedded within religious and cultural expressions of the people. Of course the meaning of symbols and rituals, actually, lie, more, with the one or those who use them.<sup>63</sup> In this sense, the researcher, irrespective of his/her connection with the context of the selected area, cannot take the symbols within any particular culture or religious tradition for granted; their meanings have to be decoded. The choice for these means of gathering data –interview and observation - were to enable the researcher to ask relevant questions for explanations and clarity so that as much as possible, understanding and meaning can be obtained with regard to the religious beliefs and cultural expressions of the people.

1.6.2. Description, analysis and interpretation of information would be based more on what has been observed and heard from the people than one's biases and imputed meanings.

1.6.3. The historical approach provides the tools for exploring the historical developments which have given rise to the growth of the three faith communities, and how they have responded to their mutual interactions as well as their historical situations. The study intends to examine, analyze and interpret through this approach, the religious life of the people, namely Christians, Muslims and ATR worshippers, who live in

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<sup>61</sup> Herling, p. 6

<sup>62</sup> Magesa, pp. 42, 43

<sup>63</sup> Eller, pp. 62, 63

this socio-cultural context. It provides a means of exploring not only how religion and culture have evolved to shape the worldviews of these people over the years, but also to take into account how the interaction of sociological, psychological and economic factors has contributed to this historical process. This method, therefore, allows for an interdisciplinary approach in analysis and interpretation. As Cantwell Smith succinctly put it, “Human history, including its religious history, is an intricate web of human relationships.”<sup>64</sup> This is an attempt to make use of an approach that could construct how human life in faith is expressed in the world in which that faith is lived.

Observation and interviews were the two sources of data collection employed in the field study to access the required information. The three faith communities that constitute the population of the selected area were the focus of this means of information gathering. The national Christian and Muslim leadership and some of the local leaders in the traditional area of this study were approached to be, officially, informed of the relevance of this work and in order to get their cooperation.

In addition, random selection of some members of the various religious groups was done to get their views through interviews. In the case of ATR, the leaders were the local chiefs and some of the elders, who were contacted in order to explain the essence and relevance of the study and, thereby, solicit their cooperation and involvement. To this effect, consent forms were given to everyone who, willingly, opted to participate for him or her to sign. In cases where the participants could not read or write, the content of the form was read to him/her in the local language for an understanding of the issues involved, after which the participant was asked to thumbprint.

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<sup>64</sup> Cantwell W. Smith, *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981, p. 42

In this process, the sex and age of the participants were taken into account in order to get fairly representative views of the elderly men, women and the young people. In a patriarchal and traditional set-up, as found in this area, leadership in both traditional and religious institutions was mostly held by the elderly men who, also, considered themselves as the spokespersons of the group. In view of this, the researcher reasoned with the leadership of both religious and traditional institutions on the need to be allowed to, randomly, speak to the young people (men and women) and elderly women, whose views are, equally, important for the research. Moreover, in view of the evolving developments, the future of the religious communities depended on the young men and women. Although majority of the interviewees were elderly men, this approach made it possible for the researcher to speak to quite a number of young men and women as well as elderly women. The gender and ages of the interviewees were stated against their names.

Interview appointments were scheduled with some of the participants on one-to-one basis. Semi-structured questionnaires were used for the interviews. This was to allow for flexibility, while at the same time, focusing on the goal of the interview and the research work.

Discussions with the leadership and the local people of the selected area dealt with the ethical issues involved and it was made clear that the outcome of this work would be published and its information used for educational purposes.

Observation covered events such as marriages, child-naming ceremonies and funerals as well as the cultural and religious festivals of the people. These were events that made it possible to observe how the people, comprising all adherents of the faith traditions in the area gave expression to their beliefs and religious practices in concrete situations.

The justification for using these means of information gathering on the field was due to the following:

- i. ATR does not have its theology and doctrines documented or written out in books.

Its emphasis is on practical living of its beliefs; that is, it manifests practical theology in pragmatic existential context. This dimension of religious life of Africans, generally, and Ghanaians, specifically, is very much inherent in both Ghanaian Christians and Muslims. This methodological approach provided some kind of uniform standard for data collecting and analysis with regard to these three religious traditions. The conviction was that observation and interviews constituted a system of data collection that was more effective in capturing the religious and cultural life of the people in the area chosen. It allowed for participation in the life of the community and listening as well to their stories.

- ii. This area is not an urban community, but a mixture of town and rural setting. It has an illiteracy rate of about 26.2% in males and 43.4% in females, with just over half (52.8%) of the population in the area who have attained primary or junior secondary school education<sup>65</sup>. Most of the people cannot, therefore communicate, effectively, in the official language, which is English. The researcher, however, speaks the local language of the people. The use of observation and interview, therefore, helped to resolve, to a great extent, the problem of language barrier. The use of these methods, also, fitted in well with the people's tradition of oral transmission of information.

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<sup>65</sup>K.A. Twum-Baah, T. K. B. Kumekpor & I. Addae-Mensah (eds.) *Ghana 2000 Population and Housing Census: Central Region – Analysis and District Data and Implications for Planning*, Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, p. 42

- iii. Using the two methods (interview and observation) served to make up for the weakness of each individual method.

This study was not based on the study of sacred texts of faith traditions, neither was it focused on theological and doctrinal traditions of the religious groups, especially, Christianity and Islam. However, official documents of faith traditions that contained relevant information on their historical development in the area, and related to the objective of the research were studied to explore how doctrines and beliefs upheld by religious institutions were, actually, expressed in relationships in a local setting.

In addition to observation and interviews, secondary source literature, which examines the history of the socio-economic and religious life of the people in the area as well as the historical developments of ATR-Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana and Africa were explored and, critically, analyzed, in the light of the objective of this study.

## **1.7. Work Outline**

The outline of the work is as follows:

### **1.7.1. Chapter outline**

Chapter one is the introductory chapter and it outlines the following: statement of the research problem, literature review, research methodology, chapter break down and the general structure of the work, including the hypothesis.

Chapter two of this work explores the historical background by, specifically, examining the African religious experience and the socio-cultural context of the selected area before and after the 1950's, and how these are reflected in the people's beliefs and practices. The intention here is to examine the nature of the indigenous religious and socio-cultural environment in which Christianity and Islam grew with a view to relating the

before and after of the introduction of the two mission religions in the area. This is to allow for the required analysis and interpretation of any changes that might have taken place. An example of the relevance of this approach is the present emerging situation of religious extremism already mentioned.

The beginning and growth of Christianity will be the focus of chapter three. For the purpose of this work, the historical developments and growth of four Christian denominations – the Church of Pentecost, the Roman Catholic, the Methodist and Musama Disco Christo (an Independent African Christian Church) Churches, which give a fair representation of Christian groups in the area, will be explored. Emphasis will be on evangelization, conversions and their socio-economic engagements in the area.

Chapter four will examine the beginning and growth of Islam by focusing on the Sunni and Ahmadiyya groups due to their relative dominance in the area. A closer look will be taken at their emergence, evangelistic activities, conversions and their involvement in the provision of social services. The organization, activities, beliefs and practices of Muslims in this traditional area will be discussed.

The researcher is conscious of the prevailing debate within the Islamic community as to whether the Ahmadiyya Movement is acknowledged as an Islamic sect or not. This chapter does not intend to take a stand on this issue, but will define and perceive any religious group as it defines itself and as Ghanaians perceive it.

Chapter five will examine and analyze the impact of Christian beliefs, practices and the provision of socio-economic services on the life of the people in this area. The focus will be on festivals, child birth and naming, marriage and funerals, which are observed by Christian members in these communities.

Chapter six will follow the same procedure by analyzing the impact of the Islamic beliefs, practices and the provision of social services on the communities that are found in the Enyan-Ekumfi-Nkusukum traditional area.

The impact of ATR and its cultural values on Christianity and Islam will be examined in chapter seven. The researcher is of the conviction that there is no religious tradition that is immune to the influence of its historical context. The indigenous context of this place – the African religious worldviews and their cultural values - as found in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area, has engaged both Christianity and Islam in a mutual exchange. The extent to which ATR and its cultural values have impacted on Christian-Muslim expressions of beliefs and practices as well as relationships will be the focus of examination and analysis of this chapter.

Chapter eight will constitute the summary and conclusion of the thesis. It will focus on the synthesis of the data analysis and suggestions for a way forward.

### **1.7.2. Hypothesis**

- 1.7.2.1. That there has been cordial and peaceful co-existence between Christians Muslims in the area chosen as a result of the impact of the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural values that are rooted in the traditional family structures and communal relationships.
- 1.7.2.2. The strong presence of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement (AMM) in the area adds other dynamics to the inter-religious relations there.
- 1.7.2.3. That there are potential factors, which could threaten this peaceful co-existence and these need to be identified and responded to.

### **1.6.3. Objective.**

The objective of this work is to research into the following:

- 1.6.3.1. The nature of relationship that has existed among Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) in the area chosen.
- 1.6.3.2. To explore and reclaim the dialogue of life which constitutes the very foundation of African religious experience and pluralism, but which has been down played till now.
- 1.6.3.3. To explore and highlight African religious belief and cultural values of community belonging and unity in fostering inter-religious relations, especially, Christian-Muslim relations.
- 1.6.3.4. To delineate the possible setbacks of inter-religious relations among ATR, Christianity and Islam in the area.

### **1.6.4. Scope / Delimitation of the Study**

The research work will cover Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area of the Central Region of Ghana. This area has been chosen for the following reasons:

- i) African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam have co-existed in this area for quite a long time. Yet, incidence of violent clashes among them has not been, officially, been reported.
- ii) The area is very accessible and can, therefore, be covered without much problem by the researcher.
- iii) The dominant presence of a different brand of Islam - the Ahmadiyya Movement in the area.

### **1.6.5. Methodology**

A. This work will adopt a multi-faceted approach, which will draw such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc. This will however be done using these two main approaches:

i. Historical method

ii. Phenomenological method

B. Information will be gathered from the following sources:

- i Literature written on the subject under study as well as any work done on ATR, Christianity and Islam in Ghana will be read to gather information.
- ii The researcher has contacted leaders as well as members of these three religions both at the institutional and the local / grassroots levels for relevant information through interviews.
- iii The chiefs and some leaders in the communities of the area have been interviewed by the same means.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Background of the People of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan Traditional Area: The Historical and Socio-Cultural Context before 1920**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter examines the historical and socio-cultural background of the Bɔ̀ɔ̀bɔ̀ and Enyan Mfantse (anglicised as “Fantis”) commune-cultural groups of the Central Region of Ghana, who occupy the area stretching from the south-central coastal portion of the country to about 25 kilometres inland. These communities, located in the Enyan-Ekumfi-Nkusukum traditional area, constitute the focus of the investigation of this work. They fall within three political administrative districts, namely Mfantseman (East & West) and Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam Districts. The Enyan group is located in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam and that of Ekumfi is found in the Mfantseman East, while Nkusukum is in the Mfantseman West.

The discussions in this chapter will cover the migration of the Mfantse ancestors from Takyiman in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana to the coastal south and the ensuing period

of their settlement and life before encountering the European colonizers, Christianity and Islam in the country. Attention will be paid to the African religious worldviews and culture of the people and how these have given expression to their beliefs and practices. The objective is to bring to the fore those historical and formative factors, the impact of which are reflected in the present realities.

## 2.2. The Migration of the Akan

Ghanaian oral tradition and other historical accounts claim that the ancestors of some modern Ghanaians migrated from a region in the Western Sudan (the region north of Ghana drained by the river Niger)<sup>66</sup>. However, there are variations in some of these accounts as regards the origin of the migration of the Akan, including the Mfantse people. Kuada and Chachah claim that the Akan moved, first, from the Chad-Benue regions (that is, the Western Sudan) and settled in the forest regions of Ghana, at the confluence of the Prah and Offin rivers in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>67</sup> Fynn, on the other hand, states that the ancestors of the Akan were, originally, living in the grassland areas of north-western Ghana and the north-eastern Cote d'Ivoire. Their population grew, resulting in the formation of the powerful kingdoms of Bono-Manso-Banda.<sup>68</sup> They settled, later, at Akan-man-mu, but due to rapid population growth, some of them migrated to the forest regions of the country (Ghana), including Takyiman, while others continued southwards to the coastal region. J. B. Crayner, also, records that the Akan migrated from Western Sudan due to frequent wars and the pressure of conversion to Islam;<sup>69</sup> they then settled at Takyiman before moving to their various settlements. Although it is difficult to reach a consensus on the various

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<sup>66</sup> "Ghana: The Precolonial Period," <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-5197.html>, cited 2/16/2009, p. 1

<sup>67</sup> Chachah, Yao & Kuada, John, *Ghana: Understanding the People and Their Culture*, Accra: Woeli Publishing, 1999, p. 12

<sup>68</sup> Fynn, p. 27

<sup>69</sup> J. B. Crayner, *Borbor Kunkumfi*, Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1989, p. 12

accounts, it could be said that Crayner's position is affirmed by Mfantse oral traditions according to which the Mfantse people are said to have migrated from a region in Western Sudan with some Akan groups to Takyiman before moving to their various settlements in the south coastal Ghana.

### **2.3. Mfantse Migration and Settlement**

Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse was the first among the Mfantse groups to have migrated to the south-central coastal portion of Ghana from Takyiman.<sup>70</sup> The people were led by three strong and brave warrior leaders in the persons of Oburmankoma, Ɔdapagyan and Ɔson.<sup>71</sup> They were assisted by the *akɔ̀mfo* (traditional priests) Amena, Eku, Kurentsir and Eduonu. The Enyan, later, followed suit, led by the warlords Asankoma, Amoako-Bɔ̀ndam, Edumadze, Asan and Andam and the Ɔkɔ̀mfo Saa, assisted by his son Nkodwe Ata. They found their kinsmen, the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r, already settled at Mankessim. Realizing that the land area was too small to accommodate both of them, they moved on inland about 10 kilometres north-east of Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse and settled at Enyan-Maim, comprising four suburbs, namely Bankyir, Asan, Andam and Edumadze in 1505 AD.<sup>72</sup> The discovery of the river Emisa flowing through the seemingly fertile land seems to have been the decisive factor for their settlement here. Even then, they sought confirmation and blessings from the gods by consulting their traditional priest Saa. Both the physical and spiritual dimensions of existence, which reflect the traditional African attitude to life, were, duly, taken into consideration.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 68

<sup>71</sup> W. Walton Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti*, Vol. 1, London: John Murray, 1915, p. 6

<sup>72</sup> Crayner, *Borbor Kunkumfi*, p. 105

Some members of the Enyan community, later, broke away from the others at their present township, Enyan-Maim. Two major factors accounted for this: in a culture where the motivation for having more children was high due to its prestige and economic reasons, their population began to grow, rapidly, bringing serious constraints on the limited land and its resources for sustenance. Consequently, some members of the Andam group moved and relocated at Enyan-Abasa. The other was the result of a misunderstanding between the Edumadze and the Asan people, which irrupted into war and bloodshed. The majority of the Asan community, therefore, left and founded Enyan-Denkyira. For quite some time, the remnants of Asan at Enyanmaim kept allegiance to and paid homage to the Chief of Enyan-Denkyira till 1950 when reconciliation was, finally, made between the two groups.

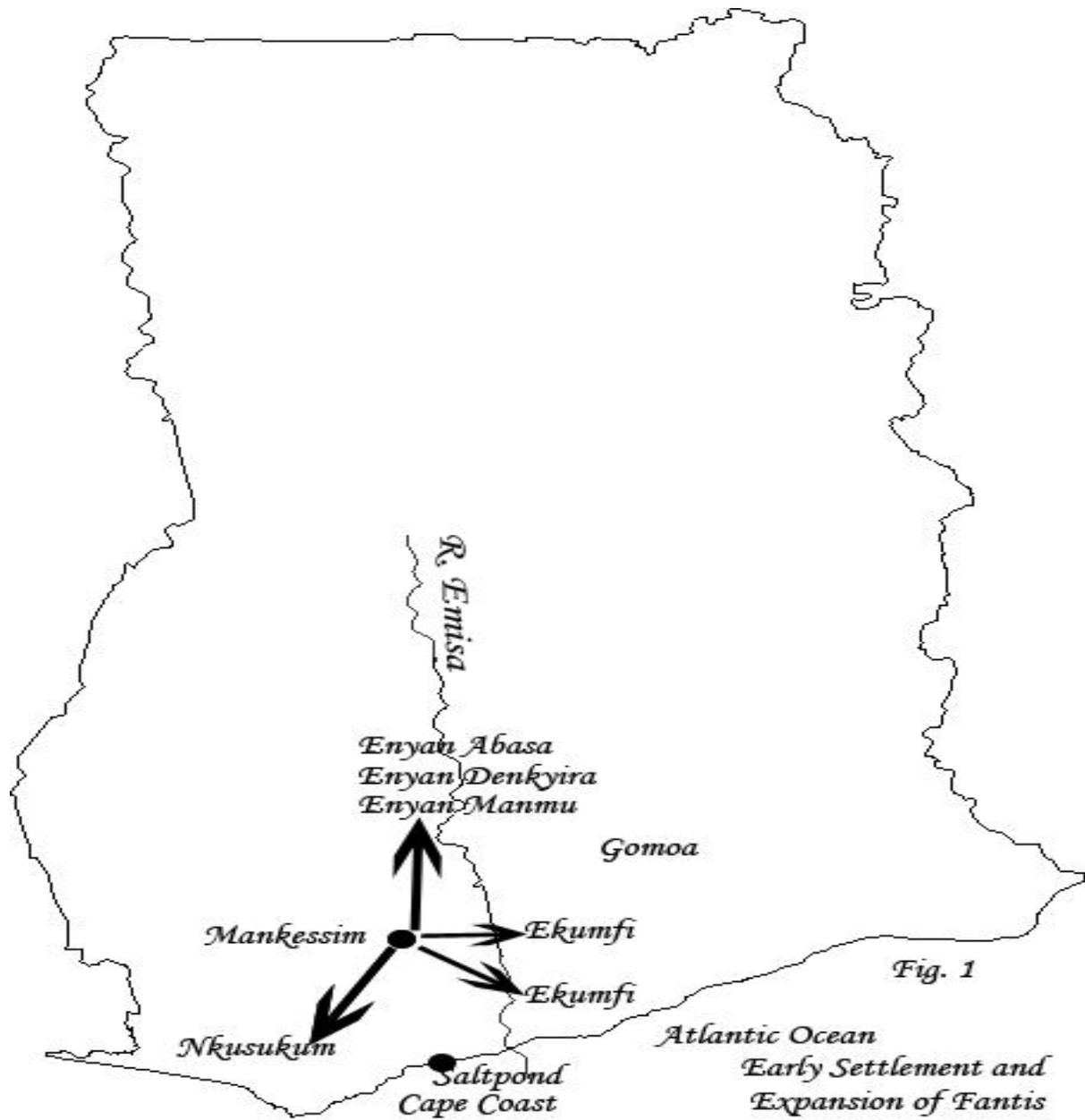
The exact date of arrival of Bɔrbɔr Mfantse in the south is not certain. However, the historical account of J. B. Crayner suggests it may have taken place in the 1480s. Not long after their arrival at their current location, two of their skilful hunters, Kweesiar and Ansafor went on exploration in the surrounding virgin forest in 1489 and discovered farms that were already established.<sup>73</sup> Similar such ventures led to an encounter with the original occupants of the land (the Etsii people), which, eventually, turned out to be violent and bloody, with Bɔrbɔr Mfantse suffering the worse casualties. Besides the Etsii, Claridge reports that Bɔrbɔr Mfantse met similar hostility from the Asabu on the coast; “They found the sea-board inhabited by two tribes, the Asabu and the Etsii, who united to oppose the new-comers.”<sup>74</sup> The encounter of Bɔrbɔr Mfantse with these two ethnic groups on the coast

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 19

<sup>74</sup> Claridge, p. 6

is, also, affirmed by Balmer in his historical account of the Akan people.<sup>75</sup> The Asabu were defeated when their king Amanfi was eventually killed by Bɔ̀rɔ̀r Mfantse.<sup>76</sup>



<sup>75</sup> W.T. Balmer, *A History of the Akan Peoples of the Gold Coast*, London: The Atlantis Press, 1925

<sup>76</sup> Claridge, p. 6; see also Eva L.R. Meyerowitz, *The Early History of Akan States of Ghana*, London: Red Candle Press, 1974, p. 86

Fig.2.3. is a sketch map of Ghana, showing (by arrows) how the ethnic communities of the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse migrated from Takyiman to the South-Central coastal regions of Ghana and spread, later, to their current settlements.

An unexpected marriage contracted, later, by *Ɔkɔ̀mfo* Eku (a traditional priestess of Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r) between her beautiful daughter Amba Otaapuwa and Afor (the warlord of the Etsii) proved to be the life saver for the Mfantse people, who later found a way to overcome the Etsii threat as well.

The marriage and its impact on the fortunes of Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse as well as its cultural significance shall be returned to later.

#### **2.4. The Socio-cultural Background**

This section discusses the socio-cultural environment of the Mfantse communal-cultural groups.

Before proceeding further, two clarifications need to be made: The first is the use of the concept ‘traditional society.’ The concept is employed here to mean a society where there is belief in the legitimacy of an authority that has always been in place due to inherited status and to which members in that society submit as prescribed by custom.<sup>77</sup> In such a pre-modern society, the possibilities for social changes are minimal and their occurrence, usually, serves to reinforce the existing social order.<sup>78</sup> Though the same term would be used elsewhere to depict the experience of these communities, even after the impact of modernity, it does not imply that they are still pre-modern, but, rather, that their

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<sup>77</sup> G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2003, p. 6

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7

universe of meaning is still underpinned, to a large extent, by the characteristics mentioned above.

The second point of clarification is that the African concept of existence is not categorized into separate compartments of life, but rather holistic, diffused and integrated. This is rooted in the African understanding of life as participatory; human beings, spirits and nature are interconnected. There is no strict separation as to what is social, cultural, religious, etc, but that they are blended into a unified system. However, for the purpose of clarity in description and coherence of analysis, this section will examine, as a point of departure, the following socio-cultural constituents of the communities: their social, cultural and religious life. The objective is to lay the foundation and context for investigation into the traditional African religious and cultural universe of the Bɔ̀rɔ̀r Mfantse and the Enyan into which both Islam and Christianity penetrated and to show how these engagements have evolved, especially, during the period under discussion.

#### **2.4.1. Social Structures and Relations**

In most African traditional, and to some extent modern societies, the basic social structures which give grounding to social relationships and cohesion among people are the family and the clan systems. Among the Mfantse people and the Akan in general, communal sustenance and cohesion were fostered by these social structures mentioned above. It was in this arena of relations that the people's religious and cultural values were expressed in living situations. In discussing this, the focus will be on marriage, the family and clan/lineage systems within the Nkusukum, Ekumfi and Enyan traditional communities.

##### **2.4.1.1. Marriage**

The traditional marriage institution was a vital link and bond that sustained and strengthened kinship ties within African communities. It served as the building block or cement that connected and united the members of the extended family as well as the larger community. Indeed, through intermarriages, members in an Mfantse traditional family could even trace their link with members of the larger society or other ethnic groups.

One of the important social functions of marriage is raised by Kwame Gyekye: “Without the institution of marriage there would be no family, nuclear or extended, and therefore no kinship ties.”<sup>79</sup> In African traditional settings, marriage unites not only the woman and the man; it connects and links families and clans, creating what I refer to as a “community of family relations” as well as kinship ties.

Its sacred function as transmission of life was so strong among the Mfantse people that a man who attained marriage status in terms of age and material assets and, yet, refused to marry was considered irresponsible and a social misfit. This African concept of marriage as a means of procreation among the people is succinctly expressed by Kofi Asare Opoku: “It is indeed a religious duty for a man to produce offspring, so that the existence of humanity can be prolonged.”<sup>80</sup> It, also, served as a link for fostering reconciliation and peace.

Herein lies the importance of the marriage contract between Amba Otaapuwa and Afor of the Bɔ̀rɔ̀r Mfantse and Etsii people respectively. *Ɖkɔ̀mfo* Eku might have had her spiritual reasons, as Mfantse oral tradition claims, for advising and initiating the marriage. However, its social significance mentioned above, equally, played a role in Eku’s decision and this needs to be given its due attention and interpretation. The marriage contract

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<sup>79</sup> Gyekye, p. 76

<sup>80</sup> Asare Opoku, p. 124

between Amba Otaapuwa and Afor was an inter-ethnic marriage that had the potential for fostering reconciliation and unity. Indeed, it might not have been the first time that such a cross-ethnic marriage took place between the Mfantse and another ethnocultural group; the long period of sojourning in Takyiman did create the conditions for such possible occurrences. The evidence to this is the existing names among the Bono in Takyiman and the Mfantse people in the south that are traced to such inter-marriages. *ƆKɔmfo* Eku's experience of marriage as a social institution for building bridges across cultures was thus brought to bear on this marriage arrangement. It was not surprising, therefore, that this arrangement resulted in a temporary truce between the two warring communities - the Mfantse and Etsii - for some time. The former, however, exploited, later, the situation to their advantage by using Otaapuwa to undermine the war strategy and the security system of Afor and the Etsii people. This notwithstanding, one should not underestimate the possible effects of its reconciliatory role, later, in the society. The Etsii people were defeated, but they were not, completely, driven away; they were allowed to settle in the Mfantse communities and the two have co-existed, peacefully, as one ethnocultural group. The following communities within the current Mfantse settlements trace their descent to the Etsii people: Endo, Etsii Sonkwaa, Opepeadze, Ekumfi Abor, Ekumfi Abeka, Abɔwenmu, Ekumfi Adansi-Adowegyir, Bosomadwe and Akranpa.<sup>81</sup> The language spoken by the Bɔrbɔr Mfantse when they first came to the south was *twi*, (the language spoken by most Akan ethnic groups). The current Mfantse language, which is spoken by the indigenous people of this area, is said to be a mixture of the original *Mfantse* language of the Etsii, the *Guan* of the Efutu and the original *Twi* language of the Bɔrbɔr Mfantse. This is an evidence

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<sup>81</sup> Crayner, *Borbor Kunkumfi*, p. 30

of the mutual exchange and blending of certain cultural practices and values which took place in the encounter between the various communities.

#### **2.4.1.2. Family**

The African concept of the family is broader than the general Western notion of family – the *nuclear* system; it is broader and includes the nuclear family as well. The African *extended* family comprises a large number of relatives, who are connected by blood bond and trace their descent to a common ancestry.<sup>82</sup> The concept and expression of the Mfantse communal values were derived from this understanding.

One major characteristic of the family type of these Mfantse groups was the household system which reinforced the family ties and oneness. Most of the family members lived in one household, usually, within a big enclosed compound. The relationship between members was guided by the sense of sharing and caring for one another. This was reflected in the collective ownership of property such as family lands and houses, although one person might have worked to acquire it, with or without the support of other members. It was, thus, inconceivable for people to be homeless or without land to work or to fend for themselves in those communities. It was a common practice for family members to, usually, share meals from one bowl, irrespective of one's religious and social background; each one was welcome to the family meal. The traditional family bond brought members together in the observance of initiation rites, funeral and religious events of family members as well as celebration of cultural festivals by the community as a whole. In that family set-up, one's progress in life was the product of the collective care and nurturing of nuclear and extended family members as well as of the entire community; it was a kind of

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<sup>82</sup> Gyekye, p. 75

social relationship and support that provided the needed social environment for proper personal development.

However, this traditional value of collective possession and sharing did not discount individual enterprise and ownership. Of course, the danger in that strong sense of family belonging and obligation to one another was the likelihood for some individuals to exploit it by living lazy and reckless lives and turning, always, to family members for support. However, there was (and there is still) an Akan maxim that addressed such an inclination; *enyinguase mmfata Akanyi ba*, meaning, “it is unworthy for an Akan person to live in disgrace.” This implies that any lifestyle that brought failure and disgrace was to be eschewed by every Akan.

#### **2.4.1.3. Clan/lineage**

Among most of the Akan ethnic groups including Mfantse people, one’s descent and inheritance were traced through the mother’s lineage. The descent system was, therefore, *matrilineal*; one traced his or her ancestry and inherited from the mother’s side. Mintah articulated the reason and traditional wisdom behind this by explaining the African concept of personality among the Mfantse: the *bogya*, blood within a person was believed to have been given by the mother, but the *ntorɔ/nton*, soul was received from the father.<sup>83</sup> On the basis of this understanding of the special blood bond between the mother and the child, the Mfantse and other Akan ethnic groups had a *matrilineal* system of descent or lineage. Seven major clans were identified among the Mfantse people, with their respective totems (in brackets), which identified them: *Nsona* (crow or fox), *Anɔna* (parrot), *Twidan* (leopard), *Aboradze* (plantain), *Ntwa/ntwea* (dog), *Kwona* (buffalo), *Adwenadze* (mud

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<sup>83</sup> Mintah, p. 2

fish).<sup>84</sup> Among the Twi speaking Akan, the number of clans were eight or more depending on the particular ethnic group.

G. K. Nukunya delves into the lineage and clan systems by stating the distinctions between the two, the discussion of which will engage our attention at this point.

He defines a clan as a group whose members are *believed* to have descended from one common *putative* ancestor/ancestress.<sup>85</sup> This group is so large and inclusive that there is the difficulty of, correctly, knowing and tracing the genealogical ties to the common ancestor/ancestry, hence the use of the terms ‘believed’ and ‘putative.’ Besides this definition, Nukunya goes on to identify other distinguishing features, one of them being the location of members in one settlement.

He states in comparison that, the lineage is part of the clan found in one locality, consisting of members, whose descent is traced through one line only from common ancestor/ancestry.<sup>86</sup> Nukunya argues that the main distinguishing feature between the two lies in the fact that while the clan is very big, with membership dispersed in different locations, the lineage on the other hand forms part of the former, with members located in the same settlement; the reason for which ties to the common ancestry could easily be traced. He states that his analysis is applicable to the Akan and the Anlo in Ghana.

While I do not dispute most of the thoughts expressed, I find it difficult to agree with Nukunya’s claim that in traditional societies, membership of the lineage is localized, while that of the clan is not. In most Akan communities and, specifically, among the Mfantse, it was not the case that lineage members were always found in the same settlement. The

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<sup>84</sup> J. K. Mintah, *Akan Amanmbra Mu Bi*, Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1996, pp. 4, 5

<sup>85</sup>Nukunya, p. 19

<sup>86</sup>Ibid, p. 21

phenomenon of movement of family members who belong to the same lineage has been there and on-going. One of the factors, among others, accounting for this, as mentioned earlier, has been rapid population growth, with its attendant challenges. Today such movements have, even, been intensified owing to the impact of modernity on traditional societies. Those who moved out from the family or lineage group in a particular location got themselves established elsewhere and yet, their lineage links were still maintained. The group grew, with time even to become another lineage, but its members still traced their descent to the older lineage, and visited there from time to time to take part in family events. It is, therefore, overstated on the part of Nukunya to say that the members of the lineage are settled in one location while those of the clan are dispersed. Both, sometimes, have members in different locations; what enabled lineage members to visit family homes and take part in celebration of certain events was the strong family bond that united them and not because of the proximity of their location. When the Mfantse, initially, came to settle along the coast for instance, their first point of call was Mankessim, which was, previously, called *Kurentsir Amamfo*. Later, they dispersed to various locations, but the lineage and family ties made them recognize and hold Mankessim as their ancestral home where they visited from time to time and even left their respective representatives there to take care of affairs on their behalf. However, Nukunya's view that the clan is bigger than the lineage and embraces the latter is a credible and worthy observation.

#### **2.4.2. The Cultural Heritage**

This section explores certain specific cultural practices and expressions of the early settlers, which have been passed on from one generation to the other. The discussions focus on some of the traditional cultural institutions and practices: charismatic leadership, the political institution, cultural festivals and some rites of passage, namely child birth and

naming, marriage and death/funerals. The rationale for the choice of these is to examine some of those traditional institutions and cultural practices where both the religious and cultural beliefs of the people are actualized through rituals and celebrations. It has been, rightly, observed by Pobe that “African cultures are through and through religious”.<sup>87</sup> The cultural life of Africans and, for that matter, the Mfantse people is the window through which one could catch a glimpse of their religious universe.

#### **2.4.2.1. Charismatic leadership**

The Mfantse ethnocultural groups recognized and commemorated the charismatic leadership roles and lives of their first three warlords, namely Oburmankoma, Ɔdapagyan and Ɔson as well as their akɔmfo Eku, Kurensir, Amena and Ahor who came with them from Takyiman in the 1480s. The commemoration was actualized during the celebration of their cultural festivals. Remembrance during such periods was not only in honour of those mentioned above; various Mfantse families, lineage/clan groups and traditional villages and towns held religious and cultural festivals in memory of exemplary elders (ancestors/ancestresses) who had passed on to the ‘other world.’ For instance, some of the cultural festivals of the Enyan people were, also, celebrated in commemoration of their migration and in remembrance of their charismatic leader Asankoma and his assistants Amoako Bondam, Asan, Andam and Edumadze, who led them to their present abode. This practice had a bearing on the place and importance of ancestors/ancestresses in the traditional life of the people, a subject that will engage our attention later.

In his analysis of the emergence of charismatic authority in society, Max Weber discusses charismatic leaders as natural leaders who were, uniquely, endowed with special

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<sup>87</sup> John Pobe, *West Africa: Christ Would Be an African Too*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998, p. 5

and specific gifts believed to be supernatural.<sup>88</sup> They emerged in traditional societies, usually, at a time of distress, especially, during time of wars, famine, outbreak of a disease, etc. in order to carry out deeds of deliverance for the people. It is on this basis that their leadership office is legitimized. In comparison with bureaucratic organization, Weber conceives the charismatic procedure as a system without rationale arrangement and regulation. Crayner's accounts of the migration of the Mfantse people from Takyiman to the south and the notable role played by the leaders mentioned earlier, resonates to some extent with Weber's theory on the emergence of such leaders in traditional societies. Although the society recognized one central leader at a time, there was the indication in both their oral tradition and Crayner's historical narration that, the people had representatives of the various clans/lineage and families.<sup>89</sup> These were summoned from time to time for discussions with the charismatic leader on matters relating to governance and social order. For instance, when transition was being made from charismatic leadership to chieftaincy system, it is recorded that the representative leaders of Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse were summoned to a meeting.<sup>90</sup> It could thus be observed that the organization of the society to ensure security and order had a kind of arrangement structured on a rational basis. In view of this social arrangement of governance, one wonders if Weber's general assertion that charismatic leadership is not based on rational and regulated arrangement could hold sway in all cases. Of course, a charismatic leadership system may not have had comprehensive structures of governance as it pertains in modern society, but that does not mean that the organization of society under such leadership did not have any rational procedure as Weber is implying.

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<sup>88</sup> Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 247

<sup>89</sup> Crayner, *Borbor Kunkumfi*, p. 47

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 47

It is interesting to note at this point the, equally, important role women played in Mfantse migration and settlement along the coast. Though the society was a patriarchal one, their historical narrative reveals the heroic deeds of the priestesses Eku and Amena, which enabled them to survive in their various wars. As we shall soon observe, the first Chief of the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse, Nana Eduonu Egyin, was able to offer himself for the service of the people due to the wise counsel and encouragement of the mother. In traditional societies, women were in the forefront in religious roles and certain community responsibilities. They were not treated as insignificant as we are, generally, made to think, in terms of their status in African traditional societies.

#### **2.4.2.2. The traditional political institution: Chieftaincy**

As the Mfantse people got established in their new home and the population grew with its related problems, the need for a political structure that could meet such emerging social challenges became a major concern for Ɔson, the last of the three Mfantse warlords. It was out of this pressing reality that he led Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse to make a transition into Chieftaincy as a traditional political institution. This political system was first instituted and inaugurated by the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse at the beginning of the fourteenth century at Mankessim.<sup>91</sup> It was a move intended to forestall developments that might possibly lead to the disintegration of the native Mfantse states.

Available records in terms of oral tradition or written documents do not tell whether the people had such a chieftaincy institution in place or not before migrating to the south. However, the institution might not have been unknown to them, taking into account the traditional political system that prevailed in the region (western Sudan), where all the Akan

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 61

were purported to have originated from. In trying to establish the evidence for the common origin of the Akan, especially, the Ashanti and Mfantse, Claridge points to the clan system, a social and political feature found among all the Akan ethnocultural groups.<sup>92</sup> The old Ghana Empire had a political system that was well structured and established. Historical accounts indicate that the name Ghana was the title of the king, but the Arabs, who were there, applied it to the kingdom as well.<sup>93</sup> This process of election and installation of chiefs is practised among all the Akan and other ethnic groups in Ghana. It became a necessity for the Mfantse people, it seems, after finding a permanent settlement at their new home. This development, also, shows how, socio-culturally, the search by such traditional communities for establishing structures for stable societies was evolving over the years.

Having said this, it is relevant at this point to comment on the nature of traditional political systems and the customary laws that were in place among the Mfantse before the arrival of the European colonizers.

Nukunya describes the Akan political system as having a series of structural hierarchies, operating from the family units through the lineage to the final authority, the chief or the king.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, the Mfantse political organization was grounded in kinship, with each lineage being represented through its head on higher councils.<sup>95</sup> Though the ascension to the throne was hereditary, the appointment was elective. The chief or king was always picked from the royal family, but it was never automatic which male figure was going to be selected. In the Akan traditional political system, the Queen Mother of the royal family had the sole responsibility to nominate the would-be chief/king; yet, her nomination

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<sup>92</sup> Claridge, p. 8

<sup>93</sup> "Ghana: The Precolonial Period," <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-5197.html>, cited, 2/16009

<sup>94</sup> Nukunya, p. 68

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 68

was in consultation with the members of the royal council of king makers. In this political system, although women could not be elected as chiefs, their role (the Queen Mother in this case) in upholding the traditional political institution was very paramount; the election of the chief was traced through the mother's lineage. The choice of the council was, further, subject to the approval of council of elders or council of chiefs in the case of an election of an *omanhene*, a paramount chief (sometimes also referred to as king). These council members were the representatives of the people, whose will and interest constituted their sole objective at such meetings.

In view of what has been discussed above, it is, rather, unfortunate and borne out of either ignorance or prejudice that misconceptions and misrepresentations of both the cultural and religious life of Africans are made by some Western scholars as well as by European Christian missionaries. I wish to cite just one example here to clarify the point: Leo Frobenius makes these observations against the background of European scepticism and negative attitudes to African culture: "Any conversational mention at that time of the great cities of the Sudan with their thousands of well-dressed and well-trained artisans would have been greeted with a shrug: The Arabs passed that down to these fellows."<sup>96</sup> Such misguided and erroneous perceptions that the African did not have a religion and culture before contact with other cultures legitimized, to a large extent, the projects of slavery and colonization.

It was against this backdrop that one of the pioneers of the Nationalist Movement in the then Gold Coast, John Mensah Sarbah, sought for a kind of imperial rule in the land that could take the cultural and religious life of the people into account so as to yield the desired

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<sup>96</sup> Eike Haberland (edit), *Leo Frobenius on African History, Art, and Culture: An Anthology*, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007, pp. 57, 58

benefits for the native people. He stated thus: “One fact, however, is clear from doubt, that is, from time immemorial the ancestors of the inhabitants lived in this country, dwelling in several communities, under their own rulers of various kinds and degrees, with customary laws and national constitution of their own.”<sup>97</sup> He gave further evidence of a well structured political system under the Mfantse Chieftainship, which ensured democratic governance and administration of justice: “The Council of the people is the only effective instrument or body which tempers the will or power of the ruler. For no discreet or wise ruler would undertake any matter of importance affecting his people, until it has been discussed at length in council...”<sup>98</sup> J. E. Casely Hayford, another prominent member of the movement, picked up the same theme when he made reference to the then prevailing political system of the union of Mfantse provinces, referred to as ‘the Fanti Confederation’: “...in fact, several distinct native states federated together under the same laws, the same customs, the same faith and worship, the people speaking the same language, and all owing the same allegiance to a paramount king or president, who represented the sovereignty of the entire union.”<sup>99</sup>

The objective here is not to idealize the traditional institutions and customs of the Mfantse and Africans in general, but to argue the point that in spite of some inherent weaknesses, the Mfantse traditional political system had some built-in mechanism for ensuring some amount of democratic governance and that this deserves recognition. Even some African scholars do not agree with the view that some African traditional political institutions ensured, to some extent, social order and justice.

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<sup>97</sup> John Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution*, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968, p. 2

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11

<sup>99</sup> J. E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, London: Frank Cass & CO. Ltd, 1970, p. 19. The coming together of the various Mfantse states, referred to as the ‘Fanti Confederation’ in response to British imperial rule came into effect at Mankessim in 1868 with the promulgation of the Mankessim Constitution in October 1871. For details on the reasons leading to the arrests of its leaders and subsequent collapse, see also Casely Hayford, pp. 184-189 and John Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti national Constitution*, p. x

S.G. Simiyu, a Kenyan historian, for instance denounces the undemocratic nature of the institution on grounds that it is built on hierarchical and stratified society as well as the hereditary nature of election. “The societies and therefore political organizations were conceived in a hierarchical structure with little or no horizontal checks and balances. The second was the insular type of structures...without upward mobility or open recruitment outside the laid down rigid rules of procedure.”<sup>100</sup> It seems his conclusion derives from the perception of and concern about the hierarchical and stratified nature of African societies, as opposed to societies that are not hierarchical, open and with democratic structures. If my assumption is correct, then I think Simiyu fails to take into consideration the checks and balances built into the African traditional political system such as the representative nature of the council system and the use of consensus building to arrive at decisions. In addition to these, the hereditary nature of ascension to the throne does not imply that the choice of a chief or king is an imposition. In the same royal family there are almost always competing possible heirs, but it is by virtue of character that the one elected is accepted by the people. Unfortunately, Simiyu overlooks these in his assessment of the African traditional institution. He, also, forgets that there is no society where one can boast of impeccable democratic governance. Even in the US, for instance, women’s right to vote was not attained till August 18, 1920 when an amendment to the US constitution was, finally, rectified.<sup>101</sup>

What is unacceptable and against which some Ghanaian and African nationalists kicked was the conception that the African did not have the capacity to reason for himself,

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<sup>100</sup> S. G. Simiyu, “The Democratic Myth in the African Traditional Societies,” in Walter O. Oyugi, E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, Michael Chege & Afrifa K. Gitonga (edit), *Democratic Theory and Practice in Africa*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1988, p. 55

<sup>101</sup> “19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women’s Right to Vote, <http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/document.html?doc=13&title.raw=19%20Amend...>, cited 7/7/2009, p. 1

did not have a culture or religion and, therefore, must be ‘civilized’ through the imposition of foreign cultural, religious and political ideas. In failing to recognize the traditional institutions of the natives in the attempt to rule them, the British imperial system of governance became, but a disruption in the people’s political, cultural and religious life as Frobenius rightly remarked: “A “flower” which the European conquistadors destroyed wherever they were able to penetrate.”<sup>102</sup>

The very approach adopted by Ɔson in the process of selection of the first Mfantse chief underlines the traditional thought and values that govern the chieftaincy institution and is worthy of brief examination at this point. A detailed description of the procedure has been made by Cryaner.<sup>103</sup> Ɔson assembled the people and demanded someone, who would, voluntarily, offer himself from the community for this high office, but on condition that the same would permit his arms and feet to be amputated for ritual sacrifice for the security of the state. It appeared the would-be chief, even if he survived the ordeal, would be without arms and feet. After three consecutive gatherings, none was willing, except Eduonu Egyin, who offered himself (as ‘sacrificial lamb’), through the encouragement of the mother for that purpose. It turned out, to the dismay of all, that the feet and arms of Eduonu Egyin were not amputated after all; rather, small sharp cutlass marks were made on those parts of his body just enough to draw some blood for the ritual purpose. Herein lies the philosophical thought of Ɔson and that of Africans in general as regards this political office: the would-be chief had to be ready to serve the people even at the expense of his life. He sat on the stool in order to serve the will of the people and not his own and could be deposed if he misconducted himself. This understanding of the political contract was given

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<sup>102</sup> Haberland (edit), p. 58

<sup>103</sup> Crayner *Borbor Kunkumfi*, pp. 47-56

clear expression in the oath taken by Eduonu Egyin during his investiture: *Mara Eduonu Egyin, migyina ha ndε musua mema Nana Ɔson dε mobɔwhε Bɔrbɔr do ekodu mu wu da, sε Bɔrbɔr frε me ewia o, anafua o, na manngye do a meka, meka, meka,*<sup>104</sup> which means ‘I, Eduonu Egyin, stand before you today and swear in the presence of Nana Ɔson that I will serve Bɔrbɔr till I die, and whenever I am called upon by Bɔrbɔr, whether in the afternoon or at night and I do not respond, I will have violated this oath.’ Nana Egyin understood his role not as an autocratic ruler but, as a leader, who was to serve the will and welfare of his people.

The installed chief was presented with the royal stool and staff. The Akan belief was that the royal stool embodied the spirits of the departed chiefs or kings as well as the symbol of the unity of the people. It was the focal point of cultural, religious rites and kinship ties. The cultural and religious identity of the Mfantse people were held together, preserved and sustained by the institution. The royal staff embodied the soul of the state and the people. It was, also, the symbol of authority of those who had preceded him and those who would come after him. In this sense he took his place in the line of duty bridging the past and the future.

By virtue of offering himself, in spite of the possible danger of losing his life and, consequently, becoming the first chief, Eduonu Egyin’s maternal family became the royal family line for the Bɔrbɔr Mfantse. This maiden election and installation of the chief laid down the core cultural values and principles that guided the practice of the traditional institution over the years among some of the Mfantse people on the coast, particularly, the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional communities.

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid, p. 58

### 2.4.2.3. Festival

The historical narrative of any race or culture is replete with certain important landmarks reminding them of the past events that have given rise to the present as well as guiding the future direction. Among the Mfantse people, such important landmarks were actualized through the celebration of cultural festivals so as to preserve and pass on some of these important aspects of their heritage from one generation to the other.

The cultural festivals celebrated by the people were quite numerous, but three of them, namely *Akwambɔ*, *Ahobaa*, and *Okyir* will be the focus of discussion in this section. These festivals were celebrated in commemoration of the migration and in remembrance of the leaders who led them to their present site. During *Akwambɔ* and *Okyir*, footpaths were cleared and general cleaning to get rid of dirt and filth were, respectively, undertaken by the whole community. *Ahobaa* was, specifically, observed in memory and honour of one of their dedicated religious leaders, *Ahor*, who served as chief priest of the *Gomoa* and the Mfantse in general. It entailed celebration of *Ahobaa kɛse*, which involved “stool celebration” during yam festival and the *Ahobaa kakraba*, dedicated to remembering the dead in every family.<sup>105</sup> The Mfantse Oral tradition and historical account of J.B. Crayner narrates how the entire Mfantse ethnic group was almost wiped out by a deadly plague.<sup>106</sup> Consultation with the gods revealed that human sacrifice was needed in order to stop it. *Ahor* offered himself to be sacrificed so that the rest could be saved from the deadly plague; hence the celebration of *Ahobaa* to commemorate and honour him.

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<sup>105</sup> Hayford, p. 86. See also pp 85-90 for details on how the *Ahobaa* festival and its celebration was connected to the Mfantse farming seasons and harvests.

<sup>106</sup> See Crayner, *BorborKunkumfi*, pp. 85, 86 for details of this account

The cultural festivals had both religious and social underpinnings for the people. Socially, it was an occasion that fostered and reinforced community bond and social cohesion through communal celebrations, narrative story of ancestors, family gathering and sharing of meals, joint communal work, etc. Religiously, festivals were filled with religious rituals that entailed purification rites, libation pouring at family gatherings, remembrance of ancestors and other departed members of the community, etc. They were occasions for re-enacting the people's mythical narrative through religious symbols and rituals, which made it possible for the cultural heritage to be passed on from one generation to the other.

#### **2.4.2.4. Child Naming**

The birth of a child was an event that brought a special joy to the community and the family due to a high premium placed on children within the family and community. Certain rituals were performed, symbolically, to welcome the new-born into the family. The naming rite was observed to give the child an identity as a member of the family. A name was, usually, given to the child by the father; normally, the child was named after any of the father's biological parents or important family members who had led an exemplary life. The moral life of the person to be named after was very important because the Mfantse and most ethnic groups in Ghana and Africa believed that names given to children had tremendous influence on the child's future life. Usually, the head of the family of the father was the one who performed the ritual; water and alcohol were presented and the head of the family would touch the tongue of the baby (who was, usually, about a week old) with drops of each liquid three times while mentioning the child's name saying 'if you say it is water/alcoholic drink, it should be nothing else but water/alcoholic drink.' The first moral lesson to the child as a moral person was imparted during this time; the child should be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood. The ritual was concluded with traditional

prayers followed by celebrations, involving both families of the husband and wife as well as some members of the community.

Socially, the ritual fostered that sense of family belonging and its religious significance was rooted in the belief of providing spiritual protection and grounding for the child in the religious universe of the people.

#### **2.4.2.5. Funeral Rites**

Mfantse funeral rites, like all Akan, derived from African philosophical thought on life and death. Funeral constituted one of the important rites of passage in life. The African thought regarding death is that it marks a transition from this earthly life to the world of the spirits or ancestors.<sup>107</sup> In that understanding, the Mfantse people believed that death did not put an end to life; it was only perceived as a transition from one existence to the other.<sup>108</sup> Although the dead were in the unseen world, they still continued to be part of the living community. This belief and understanding explains some of the funeral rites performed for the dead. Among the Mfantse and many Akan people in Ghana, objects such as a piece of cloth, money, rings, etc were placed in the coffin so that the dead could make use of these in the other world.

It was this belief that guided the funeral rites and burial of the three charismatic leaders of Bɔ̀rbɔ̀ Mfantse: they sought for a place where they thought these ancestors could have a peaceful rest, hence the choice of *Nanom pɔ̀w*, near Mankessim. It was a thick forest with mighty trees, a lot of fruits, water and big rocks and serene environs to serve the needs of the ancestors. It became a sacred ground where people were forbidden entry to hunt or to

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<sup>107</sup> John Kuada & Yao Chachah, *Ghana: Understanding the People and Their Culture*, Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1999, p. 66

<sup>108</sup> Peter K. Sarpong, *Dear Nana: Letters to My Ancestor*, Takoradi: Franciscan Publications, 1998, p. 13

cut trees. The creation of such sacred burial grounds in other communities served, besides its religious rationale, as traditional method of forest conservation.

Generally, among the Mfantse as well as other Akan ethnocultural groups in Ghana, funeral rites and celebrations differ depending on one's age, social accomplishments or status. The social achievements were not understood as the selfish individualistic quest for wealth and power; rather, one's moral integrity and relationship with other members in the community were important considerations in funeral celebrations. Traditionally, education and academic achievements were perceived as means of serving the community to the benefit of all individual members and upon this basis, one's life in society was assessed. In contrast, the modern understanding of education and academic laurels in most African societies is that of individual accomplishment, intended for one's exclusive social enhancement. Such a lifestyle in traditional Mfantse societies was frowned upon and the funeral of such person would fail to attract the involvement of the entire community.

Socially, traditional funeral celebrations and rituals engendered social and community solidarity. In the wake of funerals, the entire Mfantse community members provided material and moral support for the bereaved family. It was in the course of such traditional funerals that family disputes were settled, thereby fostering reconciliation and unity among family as well as community members.

### **2.4.3. The Religious Universe**

This section examines some of the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Mfantse and how these have provided grounding for conceptualizing and interpreting their historical realities. It has been stated in the introductory chapter that any academic attempt to explore the religious experience and life of Africans has to be rooted in the African

notion of the sacred, in contrast to some of the Western approaches which present it as a relative notion. For instance, Emile Durkheim conceptualizes the sacred as the clan transfigured and imagined in the form of plant or animal that serves as totem;<sup>109</sup> the sacred is perceived as society divinized. Freud, also, conceptualizes religion or the gods as human creations due to the yearning for a father-figure as a result of one's helplessness so as to render one's condition tolerable.<sup>110</sup> Africans, and Mfantse people, in particular, conceived the sacred as a reality that gave meaning to their lives; any academic religious inquiry that fails to recognize and come to terms with this worldview of the people is incapable of capturing the real essence of the people's cultural and religious life. This is succinctly expressed by Asare Opoku: "Religion gives meaning and significance to their lives, both in this world and the next. It is hence not an abstraction, but a part of reality and everyday life."<sup>111</sup>

The core of the religious thought of the Mfantse, as Africans, was the belief in the Supreme Being, minor divinities/spirits (also referred to as intermediary spirits) and ancestors. Some Western scholars have attempted to dismiss the possibility of Africans knowing God before contact with other religious traditions. Bolaji Idowu cites A.C. Bouquet, for example, as arguing in favour of this viewpoint by claiming that African conceptions of God, the Supreme Being, were later acquisitions resulting from encounter with groups of monotheists.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religion* (trans. Carol Cosman), Oxford: University Press, 2001, p. 154

<sup>110</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, James Strachey (trans. & edit.), New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961, pp. 22, 23

<sup>111</sup> Asare Opoku, 1

<sup>112</sup> Bolaji Idowu "God," in Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (edit), *Biblical Revelations and African Beliefs*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1969, p. 18

The concept and belief in the Supreme Being has been an intrinsic religious experience of Africans from birth. There is an Akan maxim that states; *obi nnkyerε abofra Nyame*, meaning, ‘no one teaches the child about God.’ J.B. Crayner, a prominent writer on Mfantse history and customs, has argued strongly that Mfantse and other Africans had their own ideas and beliefs about God before the arrival of the Europeans. He expressed this coherently in an Mfantse maxim about the plurality of the God-head: “*Ber a Ɔdomakoma ɔrobɔ adze no nna Ananse kokroko tse n’egua mu dada,*”<sup>113</sup> which is translated to mean that “while the Creator God was bringing creation into being, the Supreme Being was in his seat. The use of the names *Ɔdomkoma* and *Ananse Kokroko* in the maxim needs some clarifications: *Ɔdomakoma* refers to the creator God who effects the process of creation. The name *Ananse* is the Akan name for spider. In Akan fairy tales, the spider (*Ananse*) is depicted as such a clever creature that he always overcomes and manages to come out of every trouble. In this sense *Ananse*’s nature and life is surrounded with mystery; in the thoughts of Akan and Mfantse, *Ananse* is a mysterious creature. Applying the name, symbolically, to God depicts the Supreme Being as the mysterious and eternal One who was in his seat and issuing instructions to *Ɔdomankoma*, the creator *God* to create the universe. The idea of the Supreme Being had been with the Mfantse since the distant past and was expressed in various symbolisms, among which are; *Nana Nyame*, the one who satisfies, *Nyankopɔn Twerammpɔn*, the awesome one on whom we lean without falling.

Mfantse people, as Africans, conceived of him as one distinct from his creation; his transcendence and uniqueness is such that humanity cannot approach him directly. The

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<sup>113</sup> This maxim was expressed by J.B. Crayner in an interview held on Nov. 12, 2010 at Mankessim as a follow-up to the reading of his book, *Borbor Kunkumfi*. It was intended for him to clarify some aspects of the book.

absence of particular spots or shrines for sacrifices designated to the Supreme Being in African religious experience has often been interpreted by some to indicate that the idea of him is only theoretical and that in practice he is neither acknowledged nor worshipped. However, this assertion derives from a false understanding; unlike the other spirits, the Supreme Being is not localized and cannot, therefore, be confined in a specific territory. Some of the religious rites and rituals of the Mfantse indicated that he held prominence in their religious beliefs and practices. When sacrifices, offerings or libation prayers were made, the Supreme Being was, usually, mentioned first. The following portion of a libation prayer of the Mfantse during their *Okvir* festival recorded by Crayner illustrates this point:

*...Dza ɔbɛyɛ mbusu wɔ hɛn akwan mu biara,*

*Twɛrammpɔn mpa ngu*

*Ma yɛntsena asomdwee mu daa;*

*Afe nkɔ mbɔto hen bio,<sup>114</sup>*

meaning;

‘May the Supreme One

Prevent any misfortune

May he enable us to live in peace;

May we live to see another year!’

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<sup>114</sup> Crayner, p. 46

Magesa sums up the African understanding of the place of the Supreme Being in life as follows: “God holds the first of all existence, as Ancestor *par excellence*.”<sup>115</sup> In the religious life of the Mfantse, all forms of life and existence took their source from the Supreme Being.

As mentioned earlier, the Mfantse, also, believed in other divinities or spirits, who were so pervasive that they shared the physical world with humankind and their activities impacted tremendously on the living. They migrated to the southern Ghana from Takyiman with some of these deities and their respective *akomfo* and *asɔfo*, (priests). Prominent among the priests were Amena, Eku (the female priestesses) and Kurensir, who served among Bɔɔbɔɔ Mfantse, while Saa and his assistant Kojo Atta (Saa’s son), also, exercised their calling among the Enyan people.<sup>116</sup> These traditional priests operated through the calling and unction of a specific deity. In one community therefore, there could be many shrines, each with a respective priest and each shrine or cult was dedicated to the service of a particular deity; hence the proliferation of various shrines and cults.

Some of the deities the Mfantse brought with them were *Befi-dua*, *Bendereku*, *Bɔngaa* and *ɔmano*. These were symbolic objects, in which spirits of the deities were believed to dwell: Befi-dua had as its symbol a wooden staff; Bendereku was symbolized by a drum with a lamp hanging by its side, Bɔngaa was represented with beads on a thread that was hung on a wooden staff and ɔmanano by a bottle filled with concoction.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Magesa, p. 51

<sup>116</sup> Crayner, p.101

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, pp. 36-43

In addition, the use of material symbols and other objects in religious experience helped to address the emotional and spiritual needs in worship. In ATR, the drum is conceived as a sacred text through which the spirits communicate with the human. The *Bendereku* (symbolized by a drum) of the Mfantse, for example, was believed to have the power to drive away both evil spirits and physical enemies (during times of war). There was also the land deity *Asaase Efuwa* and the sea god *Nana Bosompo* as well as water spirits, to whom offerings were made to seek their blessings during either farming or fishing respectively.

The place of sacred objects in African traditional religious thought has to be understood in its context. ATR has often been misrepresented as the worship of spirits and objects; hence the use of, as Asare Opoku puts it, certain “inadequate and prejudicial” terms to describe it.<sup>118</sup> E. B. Tylor, the British anthropologist, for example is cited for using *animism* for ATR on grounds that it espouses the belief that the soul of a human being could leave his/her body after death and inhabit that of an animal or any object for its continuing existence.<sup>119</sup> This conception does not depict the true essence of ATR. What ATR beliefs, rather, stipulate is that material objects could be inhabited by spirits, thereby rendering such mediums as sacred. The physical object per se does not present itself as sacred and elicit worship; it is, rather, its being a hierophant.

There was, also, the belief in other lower spirits that inhabited the religious universe of the Akan, which could *be manipulated to meet various needs*.<sup>120</sup> Among the Mfantse, some of these spirit beings were known as *mbotsia* (dwarfs), *abayifo* (witches) and *sasabɔnsam* (forest monster). While *mbotsia* and *abayifo*, were believed to have the dual nature of

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<sup>118</sup> Asare Opoku, p. 3

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>120</sup> John D.K. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, Accra: SonLife Press, 2008, p. 38

serving as either good or evil spirits, depending on the prevailing circumstances and conditions, the *sasabɔnsam* was, exclusively, associated with evil.<sup>121</sup>

Discussions on the religious experience of the Mfantse would not be complete without mentioning the concept of ancestral worship, an essential dimension of ATR. The belief of the people was that their family and community elders who had died were, actually, not dead as such, but still lived on in another world from where they still related with the living. Though the living did not see them, they believed the ancestors were still with them in the family and the community. This accounted for the practice whereby individual family members and the community acknowledge their presence by offering them some of the drinks in libation prayer and food sacrifices at certain vantage points in the house or community. Mention has been made earlier of the celebration of the *Ahobaa* festival among the Mfantse. The core of the ancestral rites was given full expression, especially, during *Ahobaa kakraba*. During that period the entire community mourned their dead as women wailed and libation and food sacrifices were offered to the ancestors. It was an expression of a solemn act of faith in the unseen world around them, which was repeated every year and handed from one generation to another.<sup>122</sup>

The institutional form of these religious beliefs and practices took the form of an ethnic cult at the *Nananom pɔw*, the sacred grove, where Oburmankoma, Ɔdapagyan and Ɔson were laid to rest. It is recorded that the paramount chief of the Mfantse states (he resided at Mankessim) used to summon the divisional chiefs from Ekumfi, Nkusukum, Abora, Enyan, Edwumako and Gomoa for meetings at *Nananom pɔw* to seek help from the spirits and ancestors whenever they were confronted with crises such as drought, famine, diseases,

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<sup>121</sup> For details read Ekem, p. 38-39

<sup>122</sup> Hayford, p. 86

etc.<sup>123</sup> The people's religious beliefs and cultural practices were, largely, informed by this traditional religious heritage that has been mentioned.

## 2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the historical background of the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse ethnic group by, specifically, discussing the indigenous religious life and the socio-cultural context before the advent of Christianity and Islam in Ghana.

We examined the historical migration of the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse and the Enan people, comprising the Nkusukum, Ekumfi and Enyan ethnic groups from Takyiman in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana to their present settlements of the south-central coastal area of the country. We noted that they encountered other ethnic groups, namely the Etsii and Asabu people, whom they, eventually, overpowered, but were not able to eliminate from the land. They had, since then, co-existed with them, resulting in a cultural assimilation.

We, also, discussed the socio-cultural life of the people and took note of Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse's transition from charismatic leadership to the institution of chieftaincy. We found how their first chief was installed at Mankessim, as a measure of putting in place a system of governance that could ensure a sustainable societal law and order. Further, the traditional family structures, its bond of relationships and communal values and, how these fostered social cohesion and sense of belonging were examined.

We explored, as well, the indigenous worldviews, with some of its underlying religious beliefs, cultural practices and traditional values, which existed before the introduction of European colonization, Christianity and Islam. While most of the religious

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<sup>123</sup> J. B. Crayner, *Akwesi Egu Nananom Pow*, Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1967, p. 28

beliefs and cultural practices discussed above continue to form the core cultural heritage and religious worldview of the Mfantse people, some of them have undergone tremendous transformations and modifications as a result of encounter with immigrant cultures and religious traditions, particularly, Christianity and Islam.

The next chapter will examine the history of Christianity, by focusing on the introduction and growth of selected Christian denominations in this area.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Beginning and Growth of Christianity in the Enyan-Ekumfi-Nkusukum**

#### **Traditional Area**

##### **3.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to explore the socio-cultural background of the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀r Mfantse people in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area, with emphasis on their religious and cultural experience. This indigenous religious and cultural context never remained intact; it encountered Christianity with its European culture as well as Arab Islam. This chapter takes the discussion to another level by exploring the inception and growth of Christianity in the area. The focus here is to trace and examine the history, evangelization, conversions and socio-economic activities of selected Christian denominations – the Roman Catholic, the Methodist, the Church of Pentecost and the Musama Disco Christo Churches; the reasons being that there is a fair representation of the presence and activities of these groups in the area. The researcher is, also, of the opinion that the inclusion of the Musama Disco Christo Church as an African Independent Church will enrich in, a significant way, the discussions on the Christian engagement with African Traditional Religion and cultural values. The sources for this discussion are primary materials from oral history (through interview with indigenous Christian converts), church documents and secondary sources consisting of both published and unpublished materials. Specific mention has been made of the churches in the following towns: Saltpond, Mankessim, Enyanmaim, Essakyir and Enyan-Abasa due to their traditional importance, the growth and historical impact of some of the churches as well as their easy accessibility to the researcher. This does not mean that the others have been, incidentally, cut off; this was to save time in the data collection (in an area where there are quite a number of towns and

villages), where the information concerned was applicable to the rest. When the need arose for additional information from a town or a village that were outside the ones mentioned above, effort was made to reach out to that community.

In order to set the relevant context for this discussion, it will be instructive to have a brief survey on the pioneering pre-European Christian missionary period (Mercantile era) when the then Gold Coast came into contact with the Christian faith. This particular enterprise for sending the Christian gospel to Africa was undertaken by European merchants who had the mandate from their various countries, first, to establish trading posts in the African continent and, secondly, to evangelize the indigenous people. These early efforts and of course, some of the later ones, carried with them a “European civilizing mission” thrust,<sup>124</sup> its objective was to “give light to those who were in darkness.”<sup>125</sup> Though the evangelistic efforts of the merchants were not sustained, they provided the required preparatory work that explains the later success of the European Christian Missionary societies in the West African sub-region in general and, specifically, in the area chosen for this study. As Odamtten noted, the early attempts laid those structures on which depended the success of missionary work in the country.<sup>126</sup>

### **3.2. Introduction of Christianity by European Traders**

The year 1482 has been claimed by some religious scholars and historians as the time when the people of Ghana (then Gold Coast) first had contact with Christianity through Catholic Portuguese merchants led by Don Diego D’Azambuja. However, there is an evidence of an earlier date than this. In fact, Sanneh makes reference to, even, an earlier period before the fifteenth century, but dismisses its probability due to lack of historical

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<sup>124</sup> Ekem, p. 63

<sup>125</sup> Sanneh, p. 21

<sup>126</sup> S.K. Odamtten, *The Missionary Factor in Ghana’s Development (1820-1880)*, Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1978, p.11

evidence. Debrunner on the other hand, thinks that the earlier date cannot be brushed aside.<sup>127</sup> There is no intention here to delve into that debate. However, 1471 is affirmed by most scholars and historians on Christian mission in Ghana as the date when the people of modern Ghana first came into contact with the Christian faith through European merchants/missionaries; two Portuguese captains Joao de Santarem and Pedro de Escobar and their merchants, first, landed on the coast of Gold Coast at Shama, where they erected a wooden cross on the land.<sup>128</sup> However, the impact of conversion of the local inhabitants was negligible since these merchants kept to themselves within their fort and, rather, focused more on trade than the spread of the Christian faith. The initiator and promoter of this adventure was king Henry of Portugal, whose commitment to the Christian cause had been, highly, commended by the Pope in a Papal Bull, giving authority to reach other lands with the Christian gospel and to exploit the wealth of such lands. Besides the economic reasons cited above, the West African venture was, particularly, initiated as a counter measure to the advance of Islam in the region. Henry had before then, defeated the Saracens in a fierce battle at Ceuta, “turning the mosque of that city into a Catholic Church in 1415.”<sup>129</sup> This adventure to the Gold Coast, however, took place at a time when Henry had died.

A second batch of Portuguese merchants comprising 100 artisans and 500 soldiers led by Don Diego de Azambuja followed and made their berth at Elmina, a coastal fishing town lying 15 kilometres west of Cape Coast, in January, 1482, this time, under the initiative of king John II of Portugal.<sup>130</sup> Like all other ventures by the European merchants in the Gold Coast, the reasons for their coming were both religious and economic. Upon

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<sup>127</sup> See Debrunner, pp. 13, 14

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 21

<sup>129</sup> Ralph M. Wiltgen, *Gold Coast Mission History, 1471-1880*, Techny: Divine World Publications, 1956, p. 1

<sup>130</sup> Ekem, p. 63

landing on the coast, they erected an altar under a tree with the royal flag of Portugal hoisted over it and celebrated their first mass.<sup>131</sup> Thereafter, they sought audience with the chief of the town Caremansa, (also referred to as Nana Kwamena Ansah) and his elders, whom they entreated for a place to build a fort. The request was granted with some initial misgivings, which was later justified to some extent, as the building project, nearly, resulted in violence between the Portuguese merchants and the local people of Elmina, but for the timely intervention of some of the merchants. Some of the violent situations that occurred in the relationships between the European merchants/missionaries and the indigenous people shall be returned to shortly.

European merchants' rivalries and power struggle resulted in the Dutch dislodging the Portuguese from the Elmina castle on August 29, 1637.<sup>132</sup> The Roman Catholic religious instruction in the castle was replaced with one based on Reformed Tradition. This was just the tip of the iceberg as regards the scramble for African Lands and resources by the European merchants and colonial powers. In the first confrontation between the Dutch and the Portuguese in 1625, for instance, (in which the former were defeated) the local people of Elmina fought alongside the Portuguese against the Dutch.<sup>133</sup> African people in that process became the tools that were manipulated to achieve their desired goals. In trying to gain control of the then Gold Coast, various European merchants entered into alliances with some local towns and villages, which sometimes pitted one community against the other. The British for example, created an alliance with the local Mfantse people, while the Dutch wooed the support of the Ashanti. Even among some of the coastal Mfantse towns, they were divided along such alliances. For instance, two close coastal towns with the same name 'Komenda,' had to be distinguished from each other by being referred to as 'British

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<sup>131</sup> Bartels, P. 2

<sup>132</sup> Debrunner, p. 33

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 33

Komenda' and 'Dutch Komenda,' respectively, on grounds of such alliances. These early attempts to control and dominate the trading opportunities that existed in Africa, eventually, led not only to the exploitation of African people and their resources, but also to the colonization and division of Africans, the disastrous consequences of which still linger on.

Other European merchant ventures led to the building of the Christiansborg Castle in Accra by the Danes and the Cape Coast castle by the English. As it has been already observed, these early missionary ventures by the European merchants were confined, mainly, within the four walls of the castles and forts.

Deliberate attempts to reach out and evangelize the local people were, later, made with the arrival of a team of Catholic missionaries of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, led by Father Gasper dos Anjos at Elmina in 1572.<sup>134</sup> Their number was boosted by the arrival of two more missionaries in 1576, thereby, enabling the group to extend its work to Komenda, Efutu (eight miles north of Cape Coast),<sup>135</sup> and further to Abakrampa, thirteen miles to the north-east.<sup>136</sup> This thriving missionary activity, however, came to an abrupt end, when five of the missionaries lost their lives in an attack by the local people of Komenda and Efutu.

This particular attack on the early missionaries is mentioned by Sanneh and Kimbele, respectively, among other sources.<sup>137</sup> With the exception of Sanneh, who states; "Faced with the increasing presence of the Europeans, also, with an increasing number of African religious and commercial clients, the local populations in Efutu and Komenda reacted with

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<sup>134</sup> Sanneh, p. 27; see also Odamtten, p. 12

<sup>135</sup> I Tufuoh, "Relationships between Christian Missions, European Administrators, and Traders in the Gold Coast, 1828-74," in C.G.Baeta (ed.), *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 34

<sup>136</sup> Bartels, p. 2

<sup>137</sup> See Sanneh, pp. 23, 27 and Kimbele, p. 52

Violence,”<sup>138</sup> the rest of the other accounts are silent as to the causes of these attacks. Even Sanneh’s attempted explanation is partial and fails to provide depth as to the rationale behind this, rather, unfortunate incident. Besides this, there were other instances of conflict situations between the merchants/missionaries and the indigenous people. One even becomes more puzzled when Bartels goes on to indicate that a similar reaction occurred at Assini from the indigenous people who had been, initially, friendly and with whom Fathers Colombin and Cyrille had, previously, worked.<sup>139</sup> But, one may ask, “why would these initial ‘friendly’ people turn against the missionaries?” What has snapped in this, hitherto, cordial relationship? To these questions we turn our attention for plausible answers.

A continent that was then described as ‘dark’ and its people regarded to be without any meaningful culture and religion could easily be taken for granted in these unfortunate developments. Those violent encounters could be taken as a reflection of their natural inclinations. In view of this, it will be instructive for one to attempt to glean from the sources available, some of the possible reasons that might have given cause to this. This is not meant in any way to justify the attacks, nor to force evidence in support of them, but to analyze from the historical accounts available, some of the possible contributory factors to the violence. Sanneh’s accounts regarding the effort of the Portuguese merchants led by Don Diego de Azambuja to build St George Castle (Sao Jorge) at Elmina throws light on one of the possible factors leading to the hostile confrontation. In their attempts to exploit the local resources for the construction of the castle, the merchants converted the coastal rocky grounds which served as the sacred space of the local people into a quarry site.<sup>140</sup> This action was, evidently, seen and interpreted by the local people as a violation of their

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<sup>138</sup> Sanneh, p. 27

<sup>139</sup> See Bartels, p. 2

<sup>140</sup> Sanneh, p. 23

sacred space and a disruption of the traditional religious life, hence the move to attack, had it not been a timely intervention.

While the merchants might have acted in ignorance, Ekem's observation of the initial European Christian attitude of 'civilizing mission' in Africa is worthy of attention here.<sup>141</sup> Such an attitude took the religious and cultural universe of Africans for granted; that lack of sensibility played a major role in the European Christian encounter with Africans. In this particular situation, a little inquiring mind and sensibility to the indigenous religious life could have raised some awareness; for African worship grounds or shrines are replete with religious symbols and other sacrificial objects that are, likely, to strike the attention of an outsider. The merchants' action might have created initial mistrust and suspicion on the part of the indigenous folk towards the Europeans and this was to affect subsequent future relationships.

Most European missionaries, initially, regarded African traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices as fetish and superstitions that had no place in the type of Christianity they brought to the Africans. The comments made by the then Vicar of the Elmina castle in 1632 throws more light on this point:

As for paganism, the village was rife with superstitious and magical rites of which the people were so fond that they allowed only every other child to be baptized and those baptized were quickly corrupted by their pagan brothers and sisters...<sup>142</sup>

It was not surprising, therefore, that conscious attempts were made by some of the missionaries of the European Christian denominations to create a distinct separation between the indigenous converts and their African religio-cultural contexts. F. L. Bartels gives an account of the early tension that existed between Christianity and African

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<sup>141</sup> See Ekem, p. 58-60

<sup>142</sup> Wiltgen (1956) cited in Ekem, p.65

Traditional Religion and cultural values in Cape Coast; “It seemed as if they could not accept the Christian faith and remain “good” citizens. The church rule on marriage was already causing much pain and creating dissension of a new kind. There were age-long customs and practices which they could no longer follow...”<sup>143</sup> Similar developments in Kumasi, in the Asante kingdom were captured in Busia’s observation: “native converts cut themselves so completely adrift from the rest of the community that the chiefs are afraid to encourage a movement that experience tells them will, in course of time, undermine their power.”<sup>144</sup> In order to prevent the indigenous converts to the Christian faith from being contaminated by the pagan ways of their family members and relatives, the Presbyterian Church, initially, created separate communities referred to as ‘Salem’ within various towns and villages in Ghana. This negative attitude and confrontational stance of the European Christian missionaries towards African religious and cultural values was one of the factors that created the tensions in some of the traditional societies.

In the case of the attack by the people of Efutu and Komenda on the Roman Catholic Augustinian missionaries, one needs to explore certain developments that preceded this, rather, sad event. It is claimed that both kings of Efutu and Komenda, with some of their family members and elders converted to Christianity.<sup>145</sup> Various views have been expressed on the nature of this conversion experience, but what is essential in this discussion and which has not been given the due attention in scholarly discussions is relating the two incidents – the conversion of the chiefs and the attack. In African traditional life, the chief has a sacral role that forges the cultural and political cohesion of society. As Trimmingham, rightly, observed, “The African’s religious and social life cannot

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<sup>143</sup> Bartels, p. 26

<sup>144</sup> K.A. Busia, “Christianity and Ashanti,” in *Christianity in Africa*, cited in Acquah, p. 40

<sup>145</sup> Sanneh, p. 24, 25. Refer also to Debrunner, p. 18, 19.

be considered apart, for they are one.”<sup>146</sup> At a time when the indigenous converts were being made to distance themselves from their traditional religious and cultural contexts, the purported conversion of the chiefs of Efutu and Komenda with some family members and elders might have resulted in tensions and divisions; the compulsion to discard the very traditional religious and cultural systems, which legitimized their right to rule became a source of social upheaval. Evidently, the activities of the Christian missionaries might have been viewed as the cause of the disruption of these traditional societies. While Sanneh’s assertion of the increasing presence of African religious and commercial clients as one of the causal factors of the attack cannot be dismissed, I believe that the reasons discussed above were major contributory factors to these violent situations.

Sixty years later, in August 1638, two Catholic Fathers – Colombin and Cyrille – of the Orders of Capuchins in France came to Axim, 83 miles west of Elmina.<sup>147</sup> They seemed to have chalked up initial success among the people as the school they opened was, willingly, patronized by the local people, who brought their children to the school to be instructed in the Catholic faith.

These pioneering missionary efforts were however, not sustained and among the reasons are the following: first, greater emphasis was placed on trading than on evangelization. Secondly, some of the missionary attempts among the local people encountered stiff oppositions, with some resulting in violence. Most of the missionaries died of the malaria disease before they could get settled to do any serious work.

These notwithstanding, the early efforts did lay the foundation upon which subsequent Christian missionary endeavours were to build upon. For instance, Bartels records that out of the religious education provided by the Dutch in the St. George Castle at Elmina, a nine-

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<sup>146</sup> John S. Trimingham, *The Christian Church and Islam in West Africa*, London: SCM Press, 1955, p. 12

<sup>147</sup> Bartels, p. 2

year African slave boy by name Elisa Johannes Capitein from Cote D'Ivoire (then Ivory Coast) was taken to Holland for training. After graduating, Capitein returned to become the first African chaplain-schoolmaster at the castle to instruct both the Europeans and Africans in the Christian faith. His greatest contribution to missionary work was that he was the first to have put the local language into writing and to have the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and parts of the catechism translated into it.<sup>148</sup>

At Cape Coast, among the Mfantse people, the inception of Christian evangelization by the Methodist Missionary Society from England was, partly, the result of the religious education that was provided by the European merchants at the castle.<sup>149</sup> Potter, a sea captain of a vessel which plied between Bristol, U.K. and West Africa, came into contact with a group of young African Christians at Cape Coast, known as "Bible band", "The Meeting" or "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge." It was upon the plea for help to deepen their religious experience that Potter sent an appeal to the Methodist Missionary Society in Bristol for a missionary to the Gold Coast.

In addition, the missionaries of the various Christian denominations that came to Ghana were given support and assistance by the merchants in the forts and castles. The Basel Evangelical Missionary, for instance, sent two batches of missionaries to Ghana in 1828 and 1832. The church they planted in Ghana, later, became the Presbyterian church during the World War I. The first batch of these missionaries were invited and received by the Danish Governor at the Christiansborg Castle in Osu.<sup>150</sup> Indeed some of these efforts of cooperation with the European merchants by the missionaries were necessary if the missionary enterprise in the West African sub-region was to succeed; the earlier

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 3; for other details on Capitein's training and Christian mission work in the Gold Coast, refer to J. Kofi Agbeti, *West African Church History*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986, pp. 6, 7.

<sup>149</sup> Williamson, p. 4

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, p. 44

acquaintance of the merchants with the local people for instance, provided very useful information for the preparation of the missionaries who came later into the country in terms of knowledge and insights into some of the indigenous religious and cultural life.

Yet, the cooperation, also, brought in its wake mixed blessings for later missionary work and the Christian churches' life in Ghana. The missionary churches have often been praised in promoting socio-economic developments through the provision of schools, hospitals and social services; some of the products from the missionary schools, especially, the Methodist, being the early nationalists who championed the cause of political struggle for the independence of Ghana. When some of these churches set the pace by allowing some of the indigenes to assume leadership positions, a strong and clear message was sent out to colonial governors in Africa that the black man/woman was, also, endowed with that intellectual capability for handling his/her own affairs.

Some of the churches, however, failed, in some instances, to address and, even, turned a blind eye to some of the acts of injustice and exploitation inflicted upon the indigenous people by the European trading merchants and colonizers due to their close links with the latter; sometimes, the former even affirmed those actions. Christian missionary churches have often been accused of common interests and collaboration with European merchants and colonizers in slavery, colonization and exploitation of Africans and Ghanaians in particular. For these reasons, the Christian church and colonialism were, sometimes, seen as the two faces of the same coin. Indeed, it has often been expressed by the African nationalists that, the presence of some of the European missionaries facilitated the exploitation of Africans by the colonialists.<sup>151</sup> Certain events during the mercantile period seemed to confirm this perception. The Rev. Thomas Thompson, the first Anglican

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<sup>151</sup> John S. Pobee, *AD 2000 and After : The future of God's Mission in Africa*, cited in Acquah, p. 14

missionary to Ghana, made these comments on his return to England in 1772: “The African trade for Negroes and slaves shown to be consistent with the principles of humanity and the laws of revealed religion.”<sup>152</sup> The honourable clergy was in effect saying that slavery in Africa was, morally and biblically, acceptable!

One, also, recalls the active involvement of the Dutch Reformed Church in the racist and oppressive rule of the apartheid regime in South Africa; three Dutch Reformed churches that belonged to the World Council of Churches (WCC) withdrew from the Council when its consultative report (held at Cottesloe College in the University of Witwatersrand), involving black and white church leaders in South Africa, took a stand against Christians being “excluded from any church on grounds of race or colour.”<sup>153</sup> Some of these historical legacies of the church have made some Africans and Ghanaians view the church as an alien and unsympathetic to the African cause.

Now to the Wesleyan Methodist mission work in Ghana and, specifically, in the area under this study, we shall turn our attention.

### **3.3. The Methodist Church**

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) from England started its missionary work in the Gold Coast among the Mfantse people on the coast, in Cape Coast. The first missionary, Joseph Rhodes Dunwell arrived in Cape Coast on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1835<sup>154</sup>. A combination of factors led to his coming: the first among these was the Christian seed that had already been sowed in the soil of Ghana at Cape Coast through the Castle religious education programme. The second was the wind of change blowing at this period,

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<sup>152</sup> John S. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana: 1949-1966*  
Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1988, 55

<sup>153</sup> Marlin VanElderen & Martin Conway (eds.), *Introducing the World Council of Churches*, Geneva : WCC Publications, 2001, p. 31

<sup>154</sup> Brent Sundler & Christopher Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge: University Press, 2000 cited in Acquah, p. 25

especially, in Britain; there was earnest campaign against slavery by some prominent English men such as William Wilberforce and others, some of whom were of the church. The Missionary Society in England at this time felt the sense and obligation to repair the damage already done to Africa through slavery by sending out missionaries to the African continent to share the gospel of the Christian faith and European ‘civilization.’ At the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, which was addressed by Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton in May 1834, Rev. Joseph Rhodes Dunwell was sent as a missionary to the Gold Coast in October, the same year.<sup>155</sup> In addition to the above mentioned factors, some of the merchants who were instrumental in the slavery project began to feel the weight of criticisms against them and therefore made possible attempts to salvage their image and reputation; one of them being captain Potter, who brought the Appeal of the group of young African Christians in Cape Coast to the British Missionary Society in Bristol.

As it has been said, Dunwell, eventually, arrived in the then Gold Coast and settled at Cape Coast to begin his work among the Mfantse people on the coast. He preached his first sermon on Sunday, January 4, and established the first Methodist class among them on January 8, 1835.<sup>156</sup> Two more fellowships were inaugurated, one at Anomabo and the other at Winneba, the latter having been established through deGraft. The enthusiasm of Dunwell to work and the great expectation of the indigenous members of the young church were, rather, cut short, when the group, sadly, lost the missionary within six months of his arrival. Though Dunwell’s life was short, he succeeded in healing the division within the Bible Band fellowship. The group had split into two on grounds of whether the content of the bible should be explained or not, with one group under the leadership of Joseph Smith,

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<sup>155</sup> Sanneh, p. 119

<sup>156</sup> Bartels, pp. 13, 14

while the other was led by William deGraft.<sup>157</sup> By the time of his death, a strong foundation had been laid, not only for the church at Cape Coast, but, also, for later missionaries who came after him to build upon his work.

Rapid succession of deaths took a heavy toll on the missionaries that came. This, nearly, put a halt to the Wesleyan missionary enterprise in the country and succeeded, to some extent, in stagnating the growth and spread of Methodism from the Cape Coast area to other parts of the country. However, the determination and zeal of some of the early indigenous leaders of the nascent Methodist Church such as deGraft, Joseph Smith, and John Sam, stabilized the church and ensured its survival and growth. This indigenous role draws attention to that inner religiosity of the local people, which facilitated some of the conversions to Christianity<sup>158</sup>

### **3.3.1. The Growth of the Methodist Church in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area**

The evangelization and planting of Methodism in this area by the missionaries of the British Wesleyan Missionary Society can be described as a pioneering work, as they happened to be the first among the European Christian denominations to have preached the Christian message here.

Although mention is made of Methodist fellowships being in place at Anomabo and Winneba, it was during Rev. Wriggley's period that Methodism, actually, spread outside the Cape Coast environs;<sup>159</sup> the Methodist Missionary strive, at this time, was beginning to hold and show signs of growth. The decision by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to send in Rev'd and Mrs. George Wriggley and Rev'd and Mrs. Peter Harrops to fill the vacuum created by the death of Dunwell brought a new energy and hope to the few

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<sup>157</sup> For full discussions of Dunwell's missionary achievements see Agbeti, pp. 54, 55

<sup>158</sup> "Introductory Review: The Engagement of Christianity with African concepts and Way of Life," in C.G.Baeta, *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, p. 126

<sup>159</sup> See Bartels, p. 24-27

members of the emerging Methodist church in Ghana, especially, those in the Cape Coast society. However, that hope was temporary; as it was the case for most of the European missionaries that came to the tropical environment in Africa, these missionaries with their spouses fell as victims to the dreadful malaria disease within one year of their arrival. By the time Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman arrived in Cape Coast, to assist with the work, Rev. Wriggley, the last of the two couples that came before him, had died about two months earlier; the mantle of missionary leadership and responsibility fell on him. The missionary enterprise in the then Gold Coast was proving too costly to human lives, raising a major challenge to the missionary societies regarding the sustainability of the work in West Africa and beyond.

Thomas Birch Freeman however, lived longer after surviving the scare of the deadly tropical disease to ensure that Methodism took firm roots and expanded in the Nkusukum, Ekumfi and Enyan Mfantse areas and beyond. The reason for his survival has been speculated on two grounds: his habit of sleeping under mosquito net proved, consciously or unconsciously, to be a very effective safety measure; secondly, being by birth the son of European mother and African father, he seemed to have an immune system against the killer disease. However, his survival was at the expense of his wife's life, who, rather, became a casualty while seeing to his recovery from the disease.

As mentioned before, the seed of Methodism had been planted in a few other places in the Mfantse land before gaining access to the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area. Among some of the early communities in this area that came into contact with the Methodist teachings were Mankessim, Dominase, Saltpond, Enyan Abasa, Enyan-Maim and Ekumfi Gyinakomah before spreading to other places.

The exact date when Methodism came to Mankessim, the heartland of the Mfantse people is not certain. Arkaifie states, for instance, that the Methodist Church in Mankessim was established in 1838. This is countered by the church's souvenir programme, which indicates that it was founded in 1836, immediately, after that of the Enyan Abassa society in the same year.<sup>160</sup> In a traditional society where oral history was the main channel of passing on information rather than written documents, such discrepancies concerning date for certain historical event could easily arise. The way to ascertain the fact is to do cross-checking of information. According to Neylor Kweku Appiah, a past Circuit Steward of Abasa, the Church there was founded in 1838.<sup>161</sup> The Methodist Missionary at that time in the person of Freeman, visited the Enyan Abasa congregation on November 26, 1838.<sup>162</sup> According to the 1843 missionary report to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), the church had twenty-one adult members as in December, 1843.<sup>163</sup>

Further, in listing the existing Methodist fellowships/nursery societies during the time of Wrigley 1836-1837, Bartels does not mention the Mankessim and Abasa churches.<sup>164</sup> It is, therefore, likely that the Mankessim church was founded in 1838 according to these records. It was from Mankessim that the Enyan-Maim branch was started by a group of traders, who were dealing in palm kernel trade.

It has been recorded, however, that, before the Methodist evangelization of Mankessim and Enyan Abasa, Christian gospel had already been proclaimed to the people of Saltpond. A member of the Cape Coast "Bible Band," in the person of John Sam had started preaching before 1830 to the people of Lower Saltpond (also referred to as

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<sup>160</sup> Souvenir Programme, Mankessim Methodist Circuit Document, 1996, p. 11

<sup>161</sup> Interview conducted with Neylor Kweku Ampiah, Methodist class leader, Enyan Abasa on August 9, 2009

<sup>162</sup> Bartels, P. 36

<sup>163</sup> Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (London, SOAS) Archive: Synod Reports from the Gold Coast on Cape Coast Circuit for the year 1843, recorded on December 31, 1843.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p. 36

Nankesedo), calling upon them to repent.<sup>165</sup> Out of this effort, a fellowship started, which was, officially, inaugurated as a nursery church by Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman in 1838. However, due to early misunderstanding between the missionary and the early converts to Christianity, as regards traditional festival and customs, this fellowship was not sustained. A second one was, later, started in the home of Opanyin Kwame Annan by Freeman;<sup>166</sup> out of this grew most of the Methodist churches in the Nkusukum area. Adult members in the Saltpond church stood at twenty-six in May 1842.<sup>167</sup> The church's written record of both Mankessim and Saltpond Circuits indicate that it was out of the latter that the former circuit was created.

Though it is not certain which of the Ekumfi communities was the first to have been reached by the Methodists; available records however, indicate that the person who was instrumental in the Methodist evangelization in this area was Ben Sam, a Methodist teacher-catechist from Ekumfi Ekrawfo, who later converted to Islam in 1885.<sup>168</sup> Gorman indicates that a Methodist Church was constructed at Gyinakomah by Ben Sam in the Ekumfi area before his conversion to Islam;<sup>169</sup> consequently, Methodism reached Gyinakomah and Ekumfi area before 1885.

In terms of administrative structure, Methodism in this area has grown into four big circuits, namely Saltpond, Mankessim, Otuum and Enyan Abasa, each headed by a Superintendent Minister, with a pastoral oversight over a number of societies.

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<sup>165</sup> Samuel E. Arkaijie, *Methodism in Saltpond Circuit: 1844-2004*, unpublished long essay submitted in partial fulfillment of probation studies to the Methodist Church Ghana, 2007, p. 1

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>167</sup> Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (London, SOAS) Archive: Synod Reports from the Gold Coast on Cape Coast Circuit for the year 1842, recorded on May 23, 1842.

<sup>168</sup> See Humphrey J. Fisher, "Early Muslim-Western Education in West Africa" in *Muslim World*, vol. 51, 1961, pp. 288-98 for further details on the history of Islam in the area.

<sup>169</sup> Rasheed Abu B. K. Guar-Gorman, *Islam in Fanti Land*, unpublished M. A. Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, Univeristy of Ghana, Legon, 1978, p. 62

The history of Methodism in this area will not be complete without mention of the clash between Christianity and the Mfantse indigenous religious shrine, which was centralized at the *Nananom pow* sacred grove, near Mankessim. References have been made regarding the conflicts that ensued from time to time between the European Christian evangelization and the Ghanaian indigenous religious and cultural context. It will thus be superfluous to revisit these, but it suffices to say that while this particular decisive confrontation turned round the fortunes of the Methodist missionary drive among the Mfantse people for good, the fate of the indigenous sacred shrine at Mankessim was one of disintegration, from which that institution never recovered.

The alluded confrontation is, particularly, intriguing in view of the circumstances that led to it and its aftermath. The centre of this drama was Akweesi, who was living at that time in a coastal village, Asafa, about ten miles east of *Nananom pow*. Akweesi was accused of witchcraft out of sheer jealousy for his hard work. This was, strangely, confirmed by the officials at the shrine. All his belongings were taken away and he was, nearly, killed by the community, but for the timely intervention of his friend, Esias Kofi.<sup>170</sup> He could no longer live among his own people, but had to go into exile with his wives and children. He created his settlement on the only available plain between Asafa and *Nananom pow*, which was impossible for people to stay because of the presence of wild animals at that time. Indeed no land would be given to him, except that one, since he was considered as a witch. Akweesi and his family survived the danger and it was not long when a hunter and a Christian by name Kwaasiar Atta from Obokor came to befriend him;<sup>171</sup> Kwaasiar came often to hunt on the land and, eventually, came to live with him and the family in the small village. Due to Akweesi's hard work, his farm work prospered, thereby, attracting

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<sup>170</sup> Crayner, *Akweesi Egu Nananom Pow*, pp. 63, 64

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, p. 68

others, including even those who accused him of witchcraft. Crayner in fact explains that it was this twist of events that made Akweesi to name his village ‘Obi dan obi,’ rendered in short as ‘Obidan.’ meaning, ‘even my accusers are now coming to depend on me’.

Meanwhile, Kwaasiar Atta had shared the Christian faith with Akweesi and his family members and the inhabitants of the village offered Christian prayers every evening and studied the bible. On Sundays they did not work, but devoted the day to worship service and rest. However, this community and its farming activities were, rather, too close to the *Nananom pow* grove and the priests and priestesses who officiated at the shrine began to have some apprehensions. This feeling of discomfort was due more to the fear of discovering the trickery that had been invented to exploit the people than the belief that the proximity of the inhabitants constituted a disturbance to the *nananom*, the ancestors who were buried there. Bartels inferred that Akweesi and his fellow Christians at Obidan treated the shrine and its worship with contempt.<sup>172</sup> That allusion needs some clarifications; else it would appear that the Christians did not have respect for the ancestors and their own culture. It happened that one day Kwaasiar, on his hunting round within the precincts of the grove, saw people who were entering the forest and climbing into the branches of the tree. Not very convinced of what he saw, he went for one of Akweesi’s nephews in the village, Kofi Kuma to come and observe what was going on. They then realized that those strange sounds that came from the branches of the tree, sometimes with sands falling from above were, actually, orchestrated by human beings and not the ancestors as people were made to believe. It was this discovery that made the Christians treat the shrine with contempt;<sup>173</sup> an

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<sup>172</sup> Bartels, p. 56

<sup>173</sup> There are some differences regarding the narratives by Bartels and Crayner, but these do not alter the substance of what transpired regarding the confrontation. For the details of the two narratives on the shrine and the subsequent clash of its officials and the Christians, see Bartels, p. 55-60; Crayner, *Akweesi Egu Nananon Pow*, p. 60-84

attitude that, finally, led to the clash between the Mfantse chiefs and the officials of the shrine on one side and Akweesi and the Christians in his village on the other.

One day, Kwaasiar shot a deer quite close to the grove and the animal rushed into the sacred grove that was, traditionally, declared as forbidden ground to anyone. He, consequently, solicited the assistance of his friend, Akweesi to accompany him to the grove to retrieve the animal. While coming out of the grove with the animal and two tree sticks that Akweesi had cut, they were met by someone from Mankessim, who went to inform the chief, Nana Edu that Akweesi and his village members were farming and hunting in the ancestral grove. A strong contingent of the palace guards, including Nana Edu himself invaded the Obidan village, took most of the members captive and destroyed their huts and belongings. One of the Christians, together with Akweesi's wife who escaped, managed to reach the British District Administrator and some of the Methodist members at Anomabo, who, in turn, sent an urgent message to Cruickshank, the Judicial Assessor of the British Administrator at Cape Coast for help.<sup>174</sup> Military personnel were despatched to Mankessim, who saw to the immediate release of the detained Christians. All those who were involved in the case – the Christians, the priests and the priestesses of the shrine and the chief of Mankessim, Nana Edu and his elders - were all summoned to a court trial at Cape Coast after an initial attempt to settle it at Anomabo failed. At this trial, the burden was on the Christians to prove that the activities at the *Nananom* shrine were, actually, shrouded in deception and exploitation. The deep belief and trust of Mfantse people in the shrine was such that the testimonies of the Christians from Obidan alone would have been treated as fabrication. Under rather strange circumstances at this time, certain developments among the high functionaries of the shrine had created discrimination and hurt among some

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<sup>174</sup> Bartels, p. 57

of them, and one of them, *Ɔkɔmfo* (priest) Kum had, around this time, decided to renounce his faith in *Nananom*;<sup>175</sup> it was a crucial moment that unfolded an incredible turn of events. At the Cape Coast trial, Akweesi testified to the drama of deceit practised at the shrine as he and some of his colleague Christians at the village had seen. This was confirmed by *Ɔkɔmfo* Kum, who narrated in detail the various acts of trickery performed by the functionaries of the group as well as the plot by the priests/priestesses to poison three prominent Anomabo Methodist church elders – George Blankson, John Hayfron and Andrew William Parker – for their active involvement in ensuring the trial of the case<sup>176</sup> Apart from the punishment meted out to the functionaries of the shrine as required by law, the outcome of the trial was one of shock and extreme disappointment for the chiefs and the entire Mfantse people who, over the years, had exercised deep faith in *Nananom* and the rituals at the shrine. They found themselves to have been deceived and exploited by the priests/priestesses of the shrine and their informants. It was an episode that brought, shamefully, to an end the religious hold of *Nananom pow* on the lives of the people and, rather, served as the pulling force for the rapid growth of Methodism in the Mfantse land and in the whole of Ghana. Many Mfantse Chiefs opened their doors for the establishment of Methodist churches and schools in their communities afterward. For instance, Nana Edu, the chief of Mankessim sponsored the building of Methodist church in the town.<sup>177</sup>

The degeneration of *Nananom* shrine into deception and exploitation demonstrate how institutionalized religions have, sometimes, been exploited by its functionaries to entrench their power in society and to serve the interest of the powerful. This illusory nature of

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<sup>175</sup> Crayner, *Akweesi Egu Nananom Pow*, p. 79

<sup>176</sup> Bartels, p. 57

<sup>177</sup> Interview with J. B. Crayner at Mankessim on Nov. 12, 2010

religion and its use in exploiting people gave grounds to Karl Marx's critique of religion as "the opium of the people."<sup>178</sup>

The Methodist evangelization and spread in the area and beyond were carried through dawn home/chapel devotional meetings (with the singing of hymns and local Christian songs, *lyrics*), dawn preaching in suburbs, class meetings (where studying of the bible or discussion of any relevant topic for Christian living took place), Sunday morning and evening services, annual camp meetings (involving teaching and intense prayer activities), among others. An outstanding dimension of Methodist missionary work is the provision of schools, hospitals/clinics and other social services based on community need. The above-mentioned activities of the church were some of the reasons that accounted for the church's spread and growth in this area and in Ghana as a whole.

#### **3. 4. The Roman Catholic Missionary Societies**

In spite of the general claim that the Roman Catholic missionaries were late in coming to the Gold Coast (Ghana), Catholicism was introduced on the land, as mentioned earlier, by the Portuguese as far back as 1471 at Shama. They built a fort, from where they engaged in trading with the local people, but just like the rest of the other European merchants that came later, not much was heard of their evangelization among the indigenous people. They were followed by another arrival of Portuguese merchants, this time, at Elmina in 1482. They organized regular mass in the castle for the European occupants and set up a religious school, purposely, to instruct the children of the Portuguese as well as the children some of them had with the local people.

Intentional efforts to take the Christian message outside the castle to the local community did not receive serious attention till 1572 when Catholic missionaries of the

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<sup>178</sup> Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," cited in Bradley L. Herling, p. 77

Order of Hermits of St Augustine, led by Fr. Gasper dos Anjos settled at Elmina.<sup>179</sup> Though these and other early efforts to plant the Christian faith were unsuccessful, some traces of Catholic beliefs and practices were found within the local community by the Roman Catholic missionaries who came afterwards. Wiltgen commented on certain activities and rituals that reflected the Catholic influence among some of the local people after 250 years of encounter with the Portuguese Catholics: “For about 250 years, 1637-1880, the people had passed down from generation to generation as much as they can remember of the ceremonial and doctrine taught them by their Portuguese priests.”<sup>180</sup> However, these beliefs and practices seem to be a mixture of indigenous and Christian religious expressions. Sanneh makes reference to this phenomenon: “...the traces of Catholic Christianity he found intermingled with African religious elements...”<sup>181</sup> It was alleged that some of the indigenous people who converted to Catholicism, used to meet at the shrine of one of the local gods, *Nana Ntona* (the name for the local deity) to observe religious rites reminiscent of those practised by the Catholics. These people who called themselves *Santonafo*, set aside in every year, a week to the Good Friday in which no work was done. “Like their forefathers, the *Santonafo* knelt down to pray not only for themselves but also for their brethren in the town.”<sup>182</sup>

Series of Catholic missionaries poured in, later, after the missionary venture in 1572 failed to yield the expected results, and they came, with Elmina as their focus of evangelization. Among these missionaries were Frs. Colombin and Cyrille, French Capuchins, who came in 1638 and Dr. Barrow with his team of twelve, who arrived in

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<sup>179</sup> Bartels, p. 2

<sup>180</sup> Wiltgen, cited in Kofi Agbeti, pp. 103, 104

<sup>181</sup> Sanneh, p. 29

<sup>182</sup> Agbeti, p. 104

Cape Coast in 1844.<sup>183</sup> All these efforts however, did not alter the pattern of failures and disappointments. One may wonder at this point the rationale behind the relative greater attention that was given to the mission work at Elmina by the Catholics; probably, it was to build upon the earlier efforts by the merchants and also, they might have been motivated by the hope of easy success due to the traces of Catholic rituals and expressions found among the local people there.

One of the factors that hindered the early resumption of Roman Catholic missionary work at Elmina was the Dutch takeover of the Portuguese castle at Elmina on August 29, 1637.<sup>184</sup> Debrunner offers some insights into the prevailing situation at that time: “In the eyes of the Portuguese and the Spaniards, the Dutch were wicked rebels and their Reformed or Presbyterian faith was called “Calvin’s poison”.”<sup>185</sup> It seemed the Christian denominational rivalry and enmity went beyond religious boundaries to affect respective nations.

In 1880, the Society of African Missions at Lyons in France sent in another batch of Catholic priests led by Frs. Auguste Moreau and Murat, who came to revive the Catholic Christian activities at Elmina.<sup>186</sup> This time around, the missionary work became stabilized and expanded with the establishment of the branches of the church and schools in other towns in Ghana.

It was from Elmina that the Catholic Christian faith was, first, taken to Saltpond, an administrative and commercial centre of the Nkusukum traditional area.

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<sup>183</sup> For various accounts of Catholic missionary activities in Ghana, refer to Sanneh, p. 26-30, Bartels, pp. 2, 63, 118 and Agbeti, p. 102-110

<sup>184</sup> Ekem, p. 66

<sup>185</sup> Debrunner, p. 31

<sup>186</sup> Agbeti, p. 103

### 3. 4. 1. The Growth of Roman Catholic Church in Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area

The exact year when Catholic missionaries introduced the Christian faith in Saltpond is quite uncertain. Arkaifie makes reference to a chapel building that was taken away from a nursery Methodist Church at Saltpond and given to the Catholics by the then Chief of the town in 1844.<sup>187</sup> The cause of this action was alleged to have risen from a misunderstanding between the traditional authorities and the Methodist missionary, Thomas Birch Freeman as regards the celebration of the traditional festival *Ɔdambea*. However, other accounts indicate that upon the request made by *Nana* (chief) Graham to Fr. Pellat (he resided at Elmina), who was in charge of the missionary work, a Catholic station was opened at Saltpond in 1890 by Frs. Ulrich and Groebli.<sup>188</sup> Historical account by Mr. Graham, one of the elders of the church confirmed that Nana Graham received Catholic Frs. in the persons of Pellat and Groebli in 1889 for the opening of a Catholic mission station in the town.<sup>189</sup> In view of other accounts which reveal that the Roman Catholic mission expansion outside Elmina did not take place till 1881, when Frs. Moreau and Murat arrived in the country, Arkaifie's allusion to Roman Catholic Church's (RCC) presence in Saltpond in 1844 seems far-fetched. Nana Graham might have, probably, met the Catholic Fathers for discussions on opening a station at Saltpond in 1889; however, the creation of the station was, likely, to have taken place in 1890.

Besides the request by the chief of Saltpond for the Catholic missionaries to begin mission work in the town, a similar call came from the Chief of Denkyira for the establishment of Catholic station at Jukwa, the traditional seat of the Denkyiras. It is intriguing to observe the openness and invitation by traditional authorities, who had earlier

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<sup>187</sup> Arkaifie, p. 1

<sup>188</sup> Agbeti, p. 107

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Mr. Graham, leader, Roman Catholic Church, Saltpond on September 2, 2009

on resisted Christian evangelization efforts. One of the major reasons for this change was the gradual growing appeal of Christianity to the indigenous communities, especially, with the establishment of schools that offered prospects for both social and economic progress. Detailed discussions on the impact of the social services offered by the mission religions on the life of the indigenous people shall be returned to later. One further reason for the openness to Christianity was that the indigenous religious hold on the people was somehow losing its power due to the *Nananom pɔw* episode mentioned earlier.

Agbeti mentions that the Catholic missionary work that was opened in Saltpond had to be closed down only after one and half years of its establishment for lack of missionaries. However, it appears it was, rather, suspended since its care was, in the interim, entrusted to Mr. R. B. Quaison, one of the church pioneers till the missionaries returned in 1894.<sup>190</sup> The return of the missionaries resulted in the consolidation of the work and expansion of Catholic missionary activities to other towns in the area, some of which will engage our attention briefly.

At Mankessim, the Catholic Christian faith was sown by Rev. Fr. Ignatius Hummel in 1914 and the early converts who started as the founding members were Opanyin Paul Anderson, Opanyin Adoko, Opanyin Kwame Sam, Opanyin Kobina Odoom and Opanyin Woode.<sup>191</sup> The Mankessim church has grown to become a parish with stations in the following towns/villages: Baafikrom, Enyanmaim, Nkwanta, Efutukwaa, Opim, Duadze, Mpeseduadze and Kwaman. These are towns and villages located in the area where Bɔɔbɔɔ and Enyan Mfantse groups, initially, settled on their migration from Takyiman to the south-coastal area.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Agbeti, p. 107

<sup>191</sup> July 8-9<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Mankessim Roman Catholic Church Anniversary and Dedication Brochure, p. 11

<sup>192</sup> Refer to fig. 2.3 for those areas where these Mfantse groups settled.

In the Ekumfi area, Mr. Michael Coleman, the current Catechist of the church, narrates that the Essakyir Roman Catholic Church was established in 1988 through his efforts and that of Mr. Hammond, who is the current school master.<sup>193</sup> They were, initially, attending Catholic mass celebrations at Essuehyia, but decided to establish a station in the town where they resided. The catechist in charge of the Roman Catholic Church at Enyan-Abasa, Mr. Kobina Acheampong, also, claims that the church was introduced in the town from Breman Asikuma through the efforts of catechist J. K. Arthur.<sup>194</sup> Accounting for the church's growth, he intimated that the then Catechist was well grounded in the knowledge of traditional medicine and he combined that with the Catholic worship, which proved very helpful to many church members and outsiders. This comes to underscore the fact that reasons for conversions to other faiths are not, purely, religious as it is, sometimes, assumed, but material needs also play a role, especially, in the African context. The following were named by Acheampong as some of the pioneer members of the church: Opanyin Bamful, Okota and Egya Acquah.

One major factor accounting for the growth and expansion of the Catholic Church's missions work in Ghana and, specifically, in this area was the church's sensitivity and response to the dire socio-economic needs of the local people. I mentioned earlier that this was a major reason for the breaking down of the wall of local resistance to the Christian message. Though the church has, sometimes, been accused by other groups of using social services to proselytize, I am of the opinion that the message of love which constitutes the core of the Christian gospel cannot look on while people dwell in ignorance, poverty and die of hunger and diseases that could be prevented. To such needs, the Roman

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with Michael Coleman, Caretaker, Roman Catholic Church, Essakyir on August 30, 2009

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Samuel K. Akyeampong, Catechist, Roman Catholic Church, Enyan Abasa on September 8, 2009

Catholic Church and the Methodists responded as a prominent feature of their missionary work in the area.

The RCC was a late starter as far as missionary work in Ghana was concerned, yet in the area of social services in the country and, specifically, in this area, they are one of the major government partners, if not the first in providing these services. The church, therefore, grew and spread faster to various communities in the country, due, mainly, to this aspect of its missionary work. Some of the mystic aspects of Catholicism such as the use of physical objects as symbolic and ritual elements, also, found affinity with certain indigenous religious expressions. In most of the towns and some of the major villages in this area, the church has congregations, schools and sometimes hospitals/clinics.

The church's worship life and means of evangelization are centred on mass celebrations in the weekdays and Sunday worship services, the special religious instructions on basic Catholic beliefs and the celebration of certain Christian festivals. These among other factors have accounted for the growth and expansion of the Catholic Church in this area. Detailed discussions on the impact of the social services provided by some of the mission religious groups on the lives of the people in the area will be addressed later.

The discussion of the missionary activities of both the Roman Catholic and the Methodist Churches underscores two major common elements, among others, which have accounted for the growth and spread of the missionary churches in Ghana and in Africa as a whole. The first one is the churches' social services agenda, which have been mentioned already. The second is the indigenous factor, which in most cases was omitted in missionary reports. Within the RCC, mentioned has already been made of how through the initiative of the local people, the church was planted in places such as Essakyir and Enyan

Abasa, besides local chiefs who invited the missionaries and gave lands for the establishment of the churches and schools at Jukwa and Saltpond respectively.

Among the Methodists, it has been observed that Methodism was sustained and spread, after the initial motivation and guidance of the missionary leadership, by the indigenous Mfantse converts. Besides the initial appeal made by the indigenous products of the Cape Coast castle school to Captain (resulting in the coming of the first Wesleyan Methodist missionary to the Gold Coast), there are other records that delineate the role played by some indigenous people for the spread of the Christian faith. Bartels for instance, records the determination of the members of the young Church in Cape Coast at the unexpected death of the first missionary: "...I met the class on purpose to know whether they would continue in the profession they had recently entered into, or desire to return to their former ways, in consequence of the death of the missionary. They said they would remain in the profession; for though the missionary was dead, God lives."<sup>195</sup> In fact Mbiti has argued for the crucial role of the indigenous factor, including the indigenous religious environment in the spread and growth of Christianity in Africa: "The rapid spreading of the Christian faith where people have been predominantly followers of African religion provokes interesting questions. That which had been seen as the enemy of the gospel turns out (to me) to be indeed a very welcoming friend. African religion has equipped people to listen to the gospel, to discover meaningful passages in the bible, and to avoid unhealthy religious conflict."<sup>196</sup> The Christian missionary work in Ghana was indeed initiated by European missionaries who believed, strongly, that the Christian message was, absolutely, worthy for both the spiritual and material progress of humanity, including Africans. They risked their lives in the face of, sometimes, indigenous opposition leading to loss of lives as

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<sup>195</sup> Joseph Smith's journal, cited in Bartels, p. 19

<sup>196</sup> John Mbiti, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion," <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1746>, cited 01/03/2010, p. 4

well as the heavy death toll caused by malaria. They provided the initial financial and human resources in terms of leadership. However, these noble sacrifices would have been futile without the indigenous involvement and the story of Christianity in Africa and, specifically, in Ghana will not be complete without the due acknowledgement of this contribution.

### **3.5. The Church of Pentecost**

The church of Pentecost (CP) is one of the Pentecostal churches in Ghana that is claimed to have come into existence on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1962 with the official declaration of the name “The Church of Pentecost”.<sup>197</sup> It originated in the Pentecostal Movement that began in the Gold Coast during the intervening period of the two world wars.<sup>198</sup> Peter N. Anim, who was, initially, a member of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, established his own prayer group known as African Faith Tabernacle at Asamankese. The group became affiliated, as a church with the Apostolic Church, Bradford, UK and an Irish missionary, Pastor James Mckeown was, consequently, sent to assist the church.<sup>199</sup> This group of Christian believers was referred to as *Kyirbentaa*, that is, Christians who were against the use of any form of medication for healing purposes (they believed in divine healing). This stance of the church might have been, partly, influenced by Anim’s divine healing experience of a guinea worm and a chronic stomach ailment as well as other doctrines of the Holy Spirit’s manifestation as espoused by some Pentecostal groups from both the US and UK. Barely after six months of his arrival, McKeown was, seriously, taken ill by malaria fever. The news reached the then English District Commissioner, who rushed him

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<sup>197</sup> Foli, p. 48

<sup>198</sup> Yaw Bredwa-Mensah, “The Church of Pentecost in Retrospect 1937-1960” in Opoku Nyinah (ed.), *James Mckeown Memorial Lectures: 50 Years of the Church of Pentecost*, Accra: Pentecost Press Ltd, 2004, p. 3

<sup>199</sup> The Church of Pentecost, <http://thecophq.org/history.html>, p. 1, cited 6/3/2010

to the Ridge Hospital in Accra.<sup>200</sup> After his recovery, he was questioned by a group of church members, including Apostle Anim on his faith regarding divine healing. The misunderstanding that ensued led to the creation of two separate headquarters of the church, with one based at Asamankese, led by Apostle Anim and the other under the leadership of Pastor James Mckeown at Winneba.<sup>201</sup> An eventual split of the church took place in June 1939 when Peter Anim called a meeting of his group at Pepeadze and adopted the name Christ Apostolic Church (CAC).<sup>202</sup>

### **3. 5. 1. The Church of Pentecost in Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area**

It was the branch of the Apostolic Church, with Pastor James Mckeown as the leader that reached out and opened the major assemblies of the church in the area that constitutes the focus of this study. According to Pastor Wayo, the District Pastor of Saltpond, the inception of the Church of Pentecost in the area took place when Mckeown, in the company of S.R. Asomaning and J. Cofie Quaye came from Winneba to Saltpond in 1941 and organized an evangelistic rally at Millers' Square.<sup>203</sup> The aforementioned rally seems, however, to have taken place earlier than the date intimated above; official records of the church place this event in early 1939.<sup>204</sup>

James Mckeown was a real evangelical preacher and could not stay at one place He moved from here, leaving the nursery church in the care of one of the pioneer members, Mrs. Obo. In a society that was, highly, patriarchal, one would wonder what prompted Mckeown to have entrusted the leadership responsibility to a woman. Pastor Wayo

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<sup>200</sup> "Brief Church History," [http://theapostolicchurchuk.org/files/Brief\\_Church\\_history.pdf](http://theapostolicchurchuk.org/files/Brief_Church_history.pdf), cited 6/3/2010, p. 2

<sup>201</sup> Foli, p. 40

<sup>202</sup> Christine Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana*, West Sussex: New Wine Press, 1989, p. 9

<sup>203</sup> Interview with the Rev. W. Tetteh Wayo, District Pastor, The Church of Pentecost, Saltpond on September 2, 2009

<sup>204</sup> See Bredwa-Mensah, "The Church of Pentecost in Retrospect: 1937-1960," in Opku Nyinah, *James Mckeown Memorial Lectures: 50 years of the church of The Church of Pentecost*, p. 12. This view was, also, confirmed in an interview with the General Secretary of the Church of Pentecost, Apostle Alfred Kodua at the headquarters of the Church in Accra on September 23, 2010.

explained the choice of Mrs. Obo as due to her invaluable contribution to the sustenance and growth of the nursery church in contrast to the initial lack of commitment of the men to the Christian message at that time.

The Mankessim branch of the church was opened through the instrumentality of local people who were, initially, coming to Saltpond to worship. In the early part of the 1940s, the few members of the church at Mankessim, led by Mr. Warden decided to establish an assembly there.<sup>205</sup> The church in Mankessim grew quite fast to become a District with J. S. Manu as its first Pastor. Among the reasons for this were first, the town as a market centre boosted religious activities, as most indigenous traders felt the need for divine intervention for the success of their commercial activities. Secondly, the effective evangelistic strategies and ministry adopted by the church made deep impression on the people. Detailed discussions on this will be addressed later. The Mankessim District used to cover part of Enyan and Ekumfi areas. The latter has now become an autonomous District, with Essakyir as its head, while the Enyan area, including Enyan-Maim still remains under Mankessim.

The congregation at Enyan Abasa is claimed to have been established about 50 years ago at the residence of a traditional chief, Nana Kojo Kakraba.<sup>206</sup> Some of the founding members were elder Achamfo, Maame Daadze Asa, Taylor and Maame Rose Bafoe. The church, which has two assemblies within the town, is under the Enyan Denkira District.

Further squabbles rocked the Apostolic Church in 1953; a rift between the Ghana branch and the church's Headquarters at Bradford in the UK, resulted in the creation of two separate churches, the Apostolic Church of the Gold Coast, which remained affiliated to the

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<sup>205</sup> Interview with Edward Acquah, District Elder, Church of Pentecost, Mankessim on September 5, 2009

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Samuel Baidoo, Assistant Presiding Elder Church of Pentecost, Enyan Abasa on September 8, 2009.

parent church in the UK and Gold Coast Apostolic Church, which broke away with James Mckeown as the General Superintendent.

Due to the effect of this split on the indigenous involvement and the consequent fortunes of the church, it will be instructive to examine the factors that led to the split. The church's account indicate that the aforementioned break resulted from the disagreements that arose over the visit of a revival movement, the Latter Rain from the USA, led by Dr Wyatt to the Gold Coast Church in 1953.<sup>207</sup> The visit which was upon the invitation of the Gold Coast branch of the Apostolic Church was made known to the members as early as April 1952.<sup>208</sup> However, it could not come on that year as planned due to the opposition of the church's Headquarters in the UK. Among some of the reasons for the objection were the following: firstly, the lifting up of hands that was characteristic of the Latter Rain's prayer life was frowned upon as unorthodox. Secondly, the revolutionary manner of the group's ministry was observed to have created confusions in most of the established institutions where they visited. Thirdly, Dr. Wyatt himself was not in the good books of the Apostolic Group for divorcing his wife and re-marrying.<sup>209</sup>

In spite of the opposing stance of the church's headquarters in the UK, the Latter Rain, finally, visited the Gold Cost church in February 1953 as a result of the decision of the African Ministers at the Council meeting of the Church at Dunkwa-on-Offin in October 1952; for, they felt that they needed the kind of revival associated with the group.<sup>210</sup> The decision received a strong backing from the missionaries Adam Mckeown and Stanley Hammond, who had had personal contacts and experiences with the Dr. Wyatt's group. The

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<sup>207</sup> Refer to Bredwa-Mensah, pp. 19-26 and Kafui E. Asem, (ed.), *A History of the Church of Pentecost* vol. I, Accra: Pentecost Press Ltd, 2000, pp.

93- 104 for detailed discussions on the nature of the split.

<sup>208</sup> Bredwa-Mensah, p. 19

<sup>209</sup> Asem, p. 95

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, p. 95

conviction of the indigenous church was validated as the said visit witnessed spiritual awakening through, miraculous healings, winning more converts and transformed lives.

These benefits notwithstanding, the Bradford Headquarters of the church did not take the visit kindly and proceeded to institute some disciplinary measures. The church held its Quadrennial Council Meeting (final authority of the international network) in 1953. Mckeown had left the Gold Coast after the Latter Rain revival on Furlough to the UK and he attended the Quadrennial meeting, which required all the Apostles and missionaries to be present.<sup>211</sup> The meeting sought to restrain the Latter Rain from ministering in Apostolic Churches without prior approval from the Headquarters. Furthermore, the constitution of the Apostolic of the UK was amended by creating separate apostleship for blacks and whites; a black Apostle could exercise authority only over fellow blacks, while his white counterpart could have oversight over both blacks and whites. In addition, a white non-Apostle missionary could not work under a black Apostle.<sup>212</sup> The 54 members present were required to affirm this revised constitution; all gave their affirmation to it, except James Mckeown and Cecil Cousen, a missionary to the USA, who refused due to the racial provisions. The two were, subsequently, dismissed from the church.

The incident occurred at a time when the agitation for self-governance in the Gold Coast had reached its climax. Kwame Nkrumah had won elections to become the leader of government business and the idea of African inferiority, which, to some extent, justified colonization, was an issue of both political and religious concern. The church in the Gold Coast heard James' dismissal for standing against what they perceived as a racial discrimination and unscriptural practice. An emergency Council meeting, which was convened by Pastor J. A. C. Anaman, the then acting Field Superintendent on 21<sup>st</sup> May,

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<sup>211</sup> Bredwa-Mensah, p. 22

<sup>212</sup> Asem, p. 98

1953 unanimously supported James Mckeown and Cecil Cousen. The Gold Coast church declared its independence from the UK Headquarters. A cablegram was, subsequently, sent to James to return to the indigenous church he helped established as its leader.<sup>213</sup>

Not willing to give up its mission work in the Gold Coast, the Bradford Apostolic church sent a delegation in the persons of Vivian Wellings and G. Rosser to the Gold Coast in September 1953.<sup>214</sup> After trying in vain to meet with the local Church Council, the delegation managed to convince a handful of some indigenous Pastors and elders to declare their allegiance for the UK branch, an action which led to a split in the Gold Cost Apostolic church into two distinct Apostolic churches, with their respective names as mentioned earlier. After independence, the two groups changed their names to reflect the newly adopted name for the country – the Apostolic Church of Ghana and the Ghana Apostolic Church, respectively.

One would have thought that the split mentioned above was going to be the last, but later events proved otherwise. Within the Ghana Apostolic church, there were moves to remove Pastor Mckeown from office as chairman, but others stood against this, petitioning the President of the nation, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to intervene for settlement. He did step in and a procedure for sharing the assets of the church were laid out and the two parties agreed to go their separate ways. Mckeown and his group adopted the name “The Church of Pentecost” in August 1962. As said earlier, most of the churches that were established in the Mfantse area by Mckeown became members of the Church of Pentecost.

In Ghana, the church of Pentecost is claimed to be the fastest growing Christian denomination; among the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, it is the one church that has effective evangelistic strategy that reaches out to people in rural areas and as a result,

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p. 99

<sup>214</sup> Bredwa-Mensah, p. 24

has assemblies in most of the villages in Ghana. Pastor Tetteh Wayo shares some of the reasons for this as follows:

- i. The church places emphasis on evangelism through open air evangelistic programmes, annual Easter Conventions and frequent revival services.<sup>215</sup>
- ii. There is intentional effort to indigenize church worship by using the local language (for better understanding) and cultural symbols by employing local Christian songs (easier for everyone to sing than hymns) and drums in their services.
- iii. The church also tries to respond to the indigenous religious aspirations and needs by organizing teachings, prayers and counseling that are intended to meet such needs.
- iv. Efforts are made to plant churches (local assemblies) within the reach of various communities so that people do not have to walk long distances in order to attend church services.
- v. Individual members are taught to understand their responsibility and role in ensuring that the Christian message gets to everyone. Members in the church are, therefore, trained and motivated to go out and share their faith with others and to bring them to church.<sup>216</sup>

In addition to what has been mentioned, there were other factors that facilitated the growth and spread of the church in Ghana and, particularly, in the area under discussion. Mckeown himself was, to a large extent, respectful of the indigenous culture and the local customs as observed by Christine Leonard: "...Both James and Sophia often wore the local dress and, really, came to be regarded as Africans who happened to have white skins."<sup>217</sup> As a European, James sometimes had his biases and struggles as regards certain indigenous

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<sup>215</sup> See appendix iv, page for the special emphasis the CP places on evangelism

<sup>216</sup> These views were affirmed in separate interviews with Pastor Tetteh Wayo and Apostle Alfred Koduah, the General Secretary of the Church of Pentecost.

<sup>217</sup> Leonard, p. 63

cultural practices; "...Festivals, weddings, funerals, or just something to do in the evening – there were so many occasions for drumming and dancing. James frowned. He knew this was not always good – it could lead to immorality."<sup>218</sup> Yet, he made effort to indigenize the church he came to plant in the Gold Coast by involving the local people, from the onset, in the church's leadership. In addition, he took into account both the indigenous religious and cultural worldviews in his presentation of the Christian message; a factor which accounted for the special appeal of the church's preaching to the Gold Coast people.

Furthermore, the inception and evangelization of the Church of Pentecost in the Gold Coast coincided with the development of socio-economic infrastructure, particularly, road networks under the administration of governor Guggisberg.<sup>219</sup> This made it possible for faster human movements across the country and aided, in the process, the evangelism drive of the Church of Pentecost in the country.

Besides these, in the 1970s and 1980s, there were teachings and stresses within the Pentecostal Churches on the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit for every Christian. In certain instances, some of these Churches, including the Church of Pentecost taught that the evidence for the Holy Spirit's baptism in the life of the believer was the speaking in tongues.<sup>220</sup> This, rather, controversial teaching, somehow, served as an attraction for the younger generation who were seeking for a new religious experience other than what the mainline missionary churches represented. It could thus be observed from the discussion above that the church of Pentecost did not, initially, have within its missionary programme that urgent concern for the provision of social services as the Methodists and the Catholics. It, nevertheless, addressed the indigenous religious yearnings in its worship and proclaimed a strong salvation message that were, to some extent, partially, present, if not lacking in the

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, p. 65

<sup>219</sup> Asem, pp. 5, 6

<sup>220</sup> See appendix iv, p.336 on the church's official position on speaking in tongues.

mainline churches. In this sense, the Church of Pentecost came with its own appeal, which accounted for its spread and growth in this area and in the country.

### **3.6. The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC)**

The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) is one of the well established African Independent Churches (AICs) in Ghana and with a strong presence in the area chosen for this study. Before examining its history in the area, one or two clarifications need to be made. The historical presentation of this church will not follow the same pattern used in the discussion of the others; that is, as a point of departure from the others, focus will, rather, be on the call experience of the founder of the church, and how that and other related incidents led to the establishment of this church. In addition to that, the main features of the church's evangelization and conversions as well as its growth will be examined.

There are two main reasons for this approach: in the first place, the religious experience of the founder has been one of the dominant factors that has shaped and directed the life and ministry of this church. Secondly, the church has not as yet compiled the history of the local branches and in order to discourage individual accounts which might be conflicting and yet, taken by researchers as the church's official information for outsiders, some sort of restraint is placed on such individual historical narratives. For instance, the researcher was in Enyan Abasa in August, 2008 and made contact with the minister in charge of the church there, but could not obtain any information to that effect. This reality has compelled the researcher to rely, mostly, on primary sources from the church's leadership at Muzano (the church's township and headquarters) and secondary sources for this part of the historical narrative of the church.

However, it is hoped that data collection on the church's beliefs, practices and socio-economic activities in some of the communities within the selected area will account for the

relevant contributions, which the choice of this Christian denomination will make to the discussions.

### **3. 6. 1. Religious Experience and Calling of the Founder**

The founder of the Musama Disco Christo Church, Joseph William Egyanka Appiah, began his ministry as a teacher-catechist in the Methodist Church at Abakrampa-Dunkwa.<sup>221</sup> He was, later, transferred to Gomoa Dunkwa, where it was alleged he had series of religious experiences that had deep impressions upon him, which led to a change in his religious life. He understood and interpreted one of such religious experiences that took place at Gomoa Dunkwa, not only as being called to do God's work, but, also, chosen to be a great King (Akaboha).<sup>222</sup> It was that which led to the creation of his prayer group called 'Faith Society' at Gomoa Ogowan in 1919, while still functioning as the catechist of the Methodist Church.<sup>223</sup> Later events, eventually, led to a complete break from the Methodist church. It seems others in the church became uncomfortable with the style of his prayer activities and might have suspected certain occult practices. His Circuit Superintendent Minister, the Rev. Gaddiel Acquah called him and asked him to put an end to those activities. Since the catechist disobeyed that order, he was expelled from the church. Various Accounts on the history of the church are in agreement that the Musama Disco Christo Church was formed in 1922.<sup>224</sup>

There seem to be two principal concepts that have influenced and shaped some of the church's practices and organizational structures: first, the founder's perception and understanding of divine revelation (manifesting, especially, in visions and prophecies) and

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<sup>221</sup> Baeta, p. 29

<sup>222</sup> Clark, Peter B. *West Africa and Christianity*, London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1986, P. 188

<sup>223</sup> Kofi Asare Opoku, "Changes within Christianity: the Case of the Musama Disco Christo Church in O. U. Kalu (ed.), *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1980, p. 310

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, p. 310

secondly, his desire and attempt to blend the Akan culture and the Christian heritage.<sup>225</sup> While not questioning in any way the authenticity of the founder's spiritual calling to exercise these aspects of his ministry, one also needs to consider the socio-cultural environment at that time which might have, equally, served as an influential factor. It was the period of the nationalist movement when indigenous culture was being affirmed in the face of negative attitude by some Christian missionaries and European colonial administrators towards indigenous cultural expressions. Indeed, he himself was a champion of the nationalist cause and an ardent member of the Gold Coast Aborigine's Right Protection Society<sup>226</sup>. In addition to that, the mainline churches that were planted failed to take into account the African religious and cultural universe. In this sense it could be said that the founding of the Musama Disco Christo Church and the kind of ministry it offered were a response to the conditions of the time.

The Musama Disco Christo Church as an institution has a dual identity – a church and *Oman*, a state. The head of the church, therefore, exercises the functions of both a spiritual and a traditional political leader.

### **3. 6. 2. The MDCC as a State**

As a state, the founder of MDCC did establish a dynasty with the title *Akaboha I* (King) or paramount chief, with his wife given the title *Akatitibi* (Queenmother) and his son referred to as *Akasibeena* (prince).<sup>227</sup> The son had the divine right, according to the church's constitution, to succeed the father.

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<sup>225</sup> Ekem, p. 122

<sup>226</sup> Baeta, p. 62

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, 310

The headquarters of the church called Mozano is a complete township, which constitutes *the ahenkro*, the traditional seat of the Musama state. Sometimes, *Akaboha*, sits in state as an Akan chief with his sub-divisional chiefs and elders in deliberations not only to take decisions that affect the life of all the local branches considered as towns and communities under the state, but, also, to settle disputes that affect the harmony of the state. The annual festival, the ‘Peace Festival’ is held in Mozano.<sup>228</sup> During this period, which is, also a spiritual revival and a retreat for the church members, the entire church as a state, headed by *Akaboha* as the paramount chief, with his sub-divisional chiefs and elders hold durbar referred to as ‘Piodedema’.<sup>229</sup> The festival culminates in the slaughter of a sheep, the blood of which is used to mark doors of members’ household and foreheads of participants by *Akaboha* himself;<sup>230</sup> a reflection of the sacral role of an Akan traditional chief.

The organizational structure of the ‘state of Musama’ follows that of the Akan military organization. The *Omanhen* (paramount chief) *Akaboha* has divisional and sub-chiefs under him who are responsible for the various wings within the state. The divisional and sub-chiefs, who, for instance, are responsible for Breman, Ekumfi, Enyan and Saltpond communities (the last three constitute a large portion within the area selected for this study) are referred to as *Twafohen*, scouts.<sup>231</sup> In the event of the death of an *Akaboha*, traditional funeral rituals are performed just as it is observed for an Akan paramount chief and likewise the installation of the successor.<sup>232</sup> *Akaboha* as an Akan paramount chief has

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<sup>228</sup> See appendix iii, 332 for further information on the celebration of the Annual Peace Festival.

<sup>229</sup> Asare Opoku, “Changes within Christianity: the Case Study of Musama Disco Christo Church,” p. 316

<sup>230</sup> Ekem, p. 126

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, 314

<sup>232</sup> For detailed discussions on the functions of *Akaboha* as an Akan paramount chief and MDCC as a state, refer to Ekem, *Piethood in Context*, p. 122, Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, pp. 61, 62 and Asare Opoku, “Changes within Christianity: the case Study of Musama Disco Christo Church in O. U. Kalu (ed.), *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, pp 315-319

all the royal vestments and apparatus which befits that traditional status and is, highly, revered by church members, who constitute citizens within the state.

### 3. 6. 3. The MDCC as a Church

As a church, the founder's understanding of revelation is reflected on how the church relies heavily on manifestations such as prophecies and visions in its worship events. Within MDCC, every church member including the founder has a given heavenly name and some heavenly language expressions that only members of the church understand and use in greetings and casual conversations; these are believed to come from God and received through prophecies and visions.<sup>233</sup> The heavenly name given to the founder was Prophet Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah and his wife, Hannah Barnes was also referred to as Prophetess Natholoma Jehu-Appiah.<sup>234</sup> The above-mentioned practices, also, throw light on the church's self-understanding of having been called into being as a distinct community. In addition to these, members use *inaabi* (bead rosary for prayers) and wear small wooden crucifix around the neck. Apart from official occasions, all members in the church, including the pastors and the prophets, wear white clerical gown.<sup>235</sup> This kind of an egalitarian practice makes it difficult for an outsider to notice any distinction among them, thereby, serving to instil the sense and feeling of sisterhood and brotherhood among members, while at the same time setting them apart from others as a distinct group.

The church's distinctiveness is, further, reinforced by its practice of helping members in times of need, especially, bearing the funeral cost of their members instead of leaving the burden on their families. The headquarters of the town as mentioned earlier, is a complete township, with a given heavenly name *Mozano*, meaning my town. The inhabitants are all

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<sup>233</sup> Refer to appendix iii, page 331.

<sup>234</sup> Asare Opoku, "Changes within Christianity..." p. 310

<sup>235</sup> Ekem, p. 130

members of the church. It could thus be observed that as a church, MDCC presents its own uniqueness as a community of believers with a special bond that unites its members.

In its worship practices, evangelization and organization, the church retains some of the elements of the Methodist tradition, the parent church, while introducing some innovations that it deems fit and relevant to its vision and calling. Its use of camp meetings, the *Christian Asor Ndwom*, Methodist Mfantse Hymnal, as well as *Ebibidwom*, Mfantse Lyrics in worship services as well as the Circuit and Society structures of administration, among others, are akin to its historical link with the Methodist Church. On the other hand, there are certain aspects of the church's practice and rituals, which constitute a point of departure from the parent church. For instance, the church incorporates and endorses the use of the Ark, with the 'Book of the Holy Covenants, the Holy of Holies (entered once a year by *Akaboha*) and some levitical rules of purification, which reflects the Old Testament rituals and practices of Judaism.<sup>236</sup> Its uses of rosary in prayer, the candle-lighting ceremony and 'high mass,' are rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition.

The Akan cultural expressions and religious universe, also, inform the church in its spiritual emphasis. As an African church, it practises polygamy under the assumption that God wills that form of marriage. The church's rule states: "We believe that (as an African church) polygamy is not a moral sin."<sup>237</sup> However, the church does not intend members to marry anyhow. There is an attempt to control and ensure that marriage is contracted and celebrated in accordance with the churches laid down principles. In this sense, any church

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<sup>236</sup> Baeta, pp. 48, 49

<sup>237</sup> MDCC church constitution cited in Baeta, p. 58

member who intends to marry has to seek permission from the *Jehunano* (the companions or followers of Jehu), who constitute the Supreme Council and ruling body of the church.<sup>238</sup>

Besides, the endorsement of polygamy, which is a prominent feature of most African traditional communities, the church's incorporation of traditional Akan military structure and animal sacrifice, among others, into its practices, has been hailed by most African scholars, who have followed the church's ministry as an indigenous Christian paradigm that has given a voice to African indigenous religion and cultural values. Asare Opoku, for instance, states: "Membership is tied up with the understanding of the role and the practice of religion in African society...Religion in the 'Oman' of Musama fits the description given by Bishop Sarpong and, like traditional religion, the Christianity practised in the 'Oman' of Musama is a religion of being and doing..."<sup>239</sup> While I do understand Asare Opoku's emphasis here on the pragmatic nature of African religion which is reflected by MDCC, the, rather, strong rejection of the founder of the church to some of the life-affirming traditional religious beliefs and practices could, easily, be overlooked in one's analysis. For example, the church preaches, vehemently, against Akan ancestral beliefs and practices as expressed, especially, in *Ahobaa*, among the Mfantse people.<sup>240</sup> One indeed wonders the basis of such rejection when the essence, for example, of *Ahobaa* among the Mfantse is to remember the departed members of the family and community, some of whom are considered as ancestors; a practice that is parallel to the Christian understanding of communion of saints and all saints day observance. It becomes even more worrying when the MDCC, rather, embraces and practises most of the rituals identifiable with African Traditional Religion and its culture as regards the institution of Akan chieftaincy such as

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<sup>238</sup> Baeta, p. 44

<sup>239</sup> Asare Opoku, "Changes within Christianity..." p. 318, 319

<sup>240</sup> Baeta, pp. 43, 44

the installation and burial for an Akan paramount chief. In consideration of this, one needs to bear in mind the characteristic inclination of emerging religious sects to pick and choose religious elements and symbols that enable them to legitimize their place within a community as an authentic religious group among others, while introducing innovations that enable them to critique the existing ones. Moomen's observation on how a prophet-founder constructs his message is quite instructive in this respect:

He had to make his message familiar enough to be understandable; therefore, he used the same cosmology and basic vocabulary as the established religion. But at the same time, he brought a teaching that was sufficiently radical and innovatory to cause the springing up of a new religion.<sup>241</sup>

Herein lies, to some extent, MDCC's special appeal to the members of the community, with its emergence on the religious scene, the attention and conversion of whom are being sought by the other religious groups as well.

The church devotes much time for prayer activities and fasting as means of responding to the spiritual needs of members. In this sense, frequent healing services are held with the use of special holy water that has been blessed by the head of the church for the healing of those who come with all sorts of sicknesses. The church, indeed, believes in absolute divine healing. In such services, prophecies and visions that help, especially, in identifying evil spirits and warding them off feature prominently. This overemphasis on visions, prophecies and the use of special holy water in healing constitute the point of departure from the parent church, the Methodist, for which reason misunderstanding

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<sup>241</sup> Moomen Momen, *The Phenomenon of Religion: A Thematic Approach*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999, p. 308

leading to the separation occurred.<sup>242</sup> However, it is this very special dimension of the MDCC's ministry that presents its attraction to many of the indigenous people, especially, those with various physical and spiritual challenges that seek answers and solutions; an urgent religious need and aspirations that seem to be met by this religious paradigm. One could thus say that MDCC may not have the strength and resources for the social service agenda that are possessed by the mission established churches, but it has emerged with its own spiritual emphasis as well as the indigenous cultural touch that constitute a strong element in its evangelization drive.

In view of what has been discussed concerning MDCC's evangelization efforts, two factors, among others, could be stated as accounting for its spread and growth in the area: the first is the socio-economic challenges which confront most communities in Ghana. In this Mfantse area, socio-economic conditions are deplorable and good medical services are lacking, hence the reliance of ordinary people on spiritual means to meet such needs is prevalent. The second is that, as Africans, most of the Mfantse people have a religious worldview that reflects a strong belief in spiritual causes of diseases and other problems in life. For people who seek for answers and solutions to these life challenges, the kind of religious service offered by the Musama Disco Christo Church is, obviously, attractive.

### **3.7. Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the introduction and spread of Christianity in the area. The discussions focussed on the history, evangelization, conversions and socio-economic activities of the selected Christian denominations – the RCC, the MCG, the CP and the

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<sup>242</sup> See appendix iii, page 330 for details of MDCC spiritual practice on healing and titles for its leaders.

MDCC. We observed how their differential approaches accounted for their respective growth.

We discovered how the indigenous religious institution, the *Nananom pɔw* shrine at Mankessim, which had strong hold on the people's religious life collapsed as a result of the Methodist missionary encounter with the traditional cult through its convert, Akweesi. This event gave the Methodist Church the initial missionary advantage as some of the indigenous people, including chiefs converted to the faith.

In our discussions, we paid attention to the provision of socio-economic services, especially, by the RCC and the MCG and observed these became strong points of attraction for conversions, as they responded to some of the urgent socio-economic needs of the people. On the other, the worship activities and spiritual emphasis of the MDCC and CP, which met the indigenous religious aspirations and needs, were very appealing to some of the people in the area.

We, also, found from our discussions that the European established churches (in this case represented by the RCC and MCG) were, however, considered assets and liabilities at the same time: their social services were received as necessary socio-economic interventions by the people. The provision of education, particularly, prepared some of the indigenous people for their participation in the independence struggles and future leadership roles in the country. However, their initial objections to most of the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural practices, as well as being perceived as allies of the colonial powers, projected European missionary Christianity as a foreign religious system on an African soil.

Christianity as an immigrant religious tradition was not the only missionary religion that entered Ghana, the impact of which was felt on the traditional communities in this area. In some sense, it has been in competition with Islam. In fact, Islam's presence in the sub-Saharan African region predates that of Christianity, although the latter was introduced in this area before it.

Our attention and discussions in the next chapter will turn on the history of Islam among the Mfantse people in this area.

## **Chapter Four**

### **History of Islam in Nkusukum-Ekumfi- Enyan Area**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter will examine the beginning and growth of Islam by focusing on the Sunni and Ahmaddiyya groups; the choice of these is due to their relative dominance and socio-cultural impact in the area. A closer look will be taken at their emergence, evangelistic activities, conversions and their involvement in the provision of social services. The beliefs and practices of Muslims and how these have impacted the indigenous worldview of the people will be examined as well.

The history of Islam in Ghana and for that matter the area selected for this study originates in the processes by which Islam was introduced in the sub-Saharan Africa by the Arabs and Berbers from the North Africa. The historical narrative of Islam in this traditional area cannot be, adequately, addressed without taking a look at the background mentioned above. This chapter will, therefore, commence with a brief historical overview of how Islam began and spread to West Africa and Ghana and, then, to this selected area.

#### **4.2. Islam in West Africa**

Islam made its entry from North Africa through the Sahara and, gradually, spread to the West Africa sub-region. A large proportion of this region was once occupied by the ancient empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhay. What is of relevance to the purpose of this study is the Islamic history in the Central and Western Sudan, what today constitutes the West Africa sub-region. The discussions that follow will examine, briefly, this account.

The spread of Islam in West Africa took place in stages and through various means: Among these were the military expeditions and slave raids in the 8th century, the Almoravid movements, the activities of Muslim clerics, scholars and merchants, and the Jihadist reforms. These will be discussed in turn.

#### **4.2.1. The Military expeditions and slave raids**

In the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Umayyad rulers of North Africa embarked upon military incursions and slave raids southwards, as far as the boundaries of Ancient Ghana in the Sudan. Such raids led to the opening up of the Sudan regions as sources of supply for slaves and gold. The North African raiders and traders, the majority of whom were Berbers, took advantage to develop the existing trans-Saharan routes as very important commercial links from the North to West Africa. In 745 A. D, Abd al-Rahaman, governor of Ifriqiyya, for instance, ordered wells to be dug along these routes from southern Morocco across Western Sahara to West Africa.<sup>243</sup> “The Moslem Berber merchants, not merely organized the trans-Saharan caravans for trade with Negro states in the Sudan , but, also, established permanent residence in their towns...”<sup>244</sup> The Berber population, the majority of whom had adopted Kharijite Islam, rather than Sunni Islam, due to what has been described as Arab oppression of the local people, introduced the religion in the Sudan region; Kharijism which taught equality of Muslims appeared to make sense to them in addressing their aspirations.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Joseph O. P. Kenny, *West Africa and Islam*, London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1982, p. 10

<sup>244</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, “The Expansion of Islam” in James Kritzeck & William H. Lewis (eds.), *Islam in Africa*, Toronto: Van Nostrand – Reinhold Company, 1969, p. 16

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, p. 88

#### 4.2.2. The Almoravid Movement

In certain parts of the Sudan region, various forms of Islam such as the Khajirite, Ibadite and Sufrite, which were perceived as mixed Islamic practices prevailed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. These had, earlier, sought refuge in North Africa from a form of persecution by the Abbasid caliphs in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>246</sup> The perceived adulterated forms of Islam in the area and other factors, which will be discussed, later, motivated the founder of the Almoravid movement, ‘Abd Allah B. Yasin (d. 1059) to launch the jihad of the sword among the Sanhajas in the early part of that century.<sup>247</sup> It was Yahya b. Ibrahim, chief of the Judala branch of Sanhaja, who invited him into that region of what is today known as the Islamic Republic of Mauretania. The chief had met Abu al-Fassi, a leading exponent of the Maliki School of Law on his way home from pilgrimage; in their conversations, the latter brought to his notice the superficial nature of Islam among his people and he, subsequently, returned home to effect reforms.<sup>248</sup>

Before this time, a similar process of reform and restoration of unity among the Sanhajas had been initiated by Abdullah Muhammad b. Tifat, also, known as Tareshna al-Lamtuna (chief of Lamtuna branch of Sanhaja) during the early part of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>249</sup> The Arabic scholar, al-Bakri described him as “a man of faith, who performed the pilgrimage (hajj) and waged a holy war (jihad).”<sup>250</sup>

There has been a scholarly debate as regards the conquest of ancient Ghana by the Almoravids: while some, such as Fisher and Trimingham are of the opinion that the

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<sup>246</sup> John Hunwick, *West Africa, Islam, and the Arab World*, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006, p. 15

<sup>247</sup> Azumah, p. 25

<sup>248</sup> Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*, New York: Africana Pub. Co., 1980, p. 33

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13

<sup>250</sup> Al-Bakri, *Book of Journeys*, trans. V. Monteil, cited in Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1982, p. 59

Almoravids did conquer Ghana and converted the people into Islam, Clarke and Conrad, among others, think otherwise.<sup>251</sup> Though there is archaeological evidence of tombstones of kings and queens who were buried there during the period 1088-1120, when Almeria was under the control of the Almoravids, the identity of these royals cannot be ascertained.<sup>252</sup> While scholarly debate on this is not conclusive, there is consensus, however, that some territories in the region such as Gao and Kanem were conquered and brought under Islamic rule by the movements. This does not imply, as Clarke, rightly, pointed out, that the relationship between the Almoravids and the Sudan was characterized, solely, by hostility; the booming trade activities in the region required peaceful co-existence and cordial relationships towards that goal. Alliances, in this regard, were made from time to time between the Almoravid war lords and some of the chiefs in the region, including ancient Ghana.

One may wonder, at this point, as to the causes that gave rise to the Almoravid movements. Various reasons –economic, political and religious - have been assigned, all of which cannot be examined here. Friedrich Engels, for instance, thinks it was economic reasons that motivated the reforms and that the jihads were a “clash between the impoverished, morally, upright nomadic Berbers of the Sahara, and the wealthy, morally, lax Muslim merchants of the towns;”<sup>253</sup> that is, the reforms were, mainly, rooted in socio-economic causes, but clothed with religious outlook. His position seems to be strengthened by the Arabic sources that emphasize the nomadic and anti-urban nature of the Sanhaja.<sup>254</sup> Joseph Kenny, on his part, attributes political factors as the major reasons, but admits that

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<sup>251</sup> Refer to Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, pp. 17-22 for detailed discussions on this.

<sup>252</sup> Hunwick, p. 18

<sup>253</sup> Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, p. 22

<sup>254</sup> R. Lhote, *Route antique du Sahara Central, Encyclopedie Mensuelle d’Outre-Mer*, cited in Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*, p. 30

both economic and religious motives formed the background. He argues that ancient Ghana conquered Awdaghost in 990 A.D and in the process subjected the Sanhajas to all sorts of hardships. For this reason, Abdullah Muhammad B. Tifat, a Sanhaja Muslim, sought for means to liberate his people and to unite them; he discovered in Orthodox Islam an ideology that could rally the people for the realization of that political end.<sup>255</sup>

Engel's reductionist approach tends to narrow the scope of analysis and I am of the conviction that economic, political and religious conditions were the major interacting factors that informed some of the religious revolutions, including the Almoravid reforms.

One of the effects of the movements on Islam in West Africa was that it established Sunnite Maliki law as opposed to unorthodox Muslim beliefs and practices espoused by the Kharijite, Ibadite and Sufrite traders and missionaries in the region.<sup>256</sup> Sound foundation for Islamic education and worship is said to have been laid by these movements. However, this attempt did not succeed in getting rid of all forms of what were seen as "mixed" Islam.

The movements, also, contributed to the acceptance of Islam by the major kings of the Savannah, including, as mentioned above, Kanem and Gao or Kawkaw (as called by the Arabs).

Finally, it also introduced militarism into West Africa Islam,<sup>257</sup> the Almoravid became "the prototype of militant Islamic practice for succeeding generations of Saharans and West Africans."<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Kenny, p. 96

<sup>256</sup> Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, p. 24

<sup>257</sup> Kenny, p. 97

<sup>258</sup> David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*, Cambridge: University Press, 2004, p. 39

#### 4.2.3. The activities of Muslim traders, clerics and scholars

Islam's penetration into the Sudan regions, also, came about by peaceful means. The Bambuk gold production in the ancient Ghana, controlled by the indigenous Dyula or Wangara Malinke, attracted Muslims traders to settle in that part of the Sudan region. Indeed, it was difficult, at some points, to differentiate the Muslim trader from the cleric or the scholar; the same person, sometimes, happened to play the three roles. As a result of this immigration, some Dyula and Malinke became Muslims and, together, with some Muslims from the North Africa, began to play a more active role in the trans-Saharan trade from the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century until the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The upshot of this was the creation of Sijilmasa and Awdaghost as commercial centres. Al-Bakri described in 1067 AD the extent of Muslim presence and influence in ancient Ghana: "The capital of Ghana is made up of two towns one of which is inhabited by the Muslims. This Muslim town is a big town with twelve mosques, one of which is for public prayers on Fridays..."<sup>259</sup>

The reaction of the local people to Islam at this time varied. Very few, of the ruling elite in the Volta basin, became Muslims during the period 1000-1600. Some of the rulers of the Mossi kingdoms in the Upper Volta, for example, (now Bourkina Fasso) developed a hostile attitude to Islam; a situation that gave cause for Askiya Muhammad Ture I to launch his jihad against them for failure to comply with the request to convert to Islam in 1498. Elsewhere in the region, while some rulers, simply, tolerated Muslims, others were sympathetic to Islam and opened up to its worshippers. In the east of the Black Volta River, chiefs used Muslims as advisors and administrators in their courts due to their literacy, and

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<sup>259</sup> A. D. H. Bivar & M. Hiskett, "The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804: A provisional account", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies XXV* (1962) cited in Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* p. 37

some, eventually, became an integral part of the political and social systems as was the case in ancient Ghana. Few chiefs, however, converted to the Islamic faith.

Though some Muslim chiefs employed the services of Muslims in their courts as judges and scholars, they did not, in anyway, sideline the philosophers and priests of the traditional religion. Ibn Battuta observed that the poets of the traditional culture stood before the rulers on a festival day and recited their poetry, which he referred to as “a kind of preaching.”<sup>260</sup> Under some Muslim rulers in certain parts of the kingdom, traditional religious and cultural practices persisted and featured in national life and Islam adapted to these traditional religious systems and cultural life.

On the part of Muslims, Clark has observed that up to the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Muslims constituted a minority within the various communities in West Africa and they adopted different approaches in their relationship with their surrounding societies: some did not see anything wrong, in terms of faith, by co-existing peacefully with the different beliefs and cultural systems. Others felt that as a minority, they had to participate in the socio-political life of the societies (an accommodation approach, as he terms it). The dominant approach to the spread of Islam during this period in the sub-region was, by peaceful means – preaching and living relationships – and it was through these means that most of the local people were converted to the faith; but there were those, who, also, felt the need for a change through religious and political authority and they employed militant means to achieve that goal.<sup>261</sup> To these militant approaches, we now turn our attention.

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<sup>260</sup> S. Hamdun & N. King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (1975), cited in Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* p. 45

<sup>261</sup> Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, p. 77

#### 4.2.4. Jihadist Reforms

The occupation by some European countries, particularly, in the eighteenth century of certain of lands in the Middle East, India, Ottoman Turkey and North Africa, which were once under the rule of Muslim dynasties, posed a serious dilemma to the Muslim world. In a state of shock and disbelief, various responses were given by Muslims to this development: some accepted the situation and, even, took it as punishment from Allah for the failure of the *umma*, the community to live according to his precepts; yet, others felt that ways had to be sought to deal with the perceived misfortune. One outcome of this was the emergence of a Muslim puritanical group referred to as Wahhabis, which originated in Arabia through the instrumentality of Shaykh Abd al-Wahhab (hence its name).<sup>262</sup> The group refers to itself as Sunni Muslim, *Ahl al-sunna wa'l-jama'a* 'People of the Sunna and the community'. They sought the return to the simple Islam of the Prophet and his Companions.<sup>263</sup> A lot of Muslims understood the European occupation of such lands as Christian conquests (still having in mind the memories of the crusades), which to them, pinpointed to 'Signs of the Hour,' the end of time, with the coming of the Day of Judgment.<sup>264</sup> Linked to this idea was the Islamic belief that Allah would send his deliverer, the *Mahdi* and, in the process, establish justice and restore true Islam. In addition to this teaching, it was, also, believed that once in a century, someone with the role of a renewer, *mujaddid* would come as a forerunner to the *Mahdi* to prepare the way.<sup>265</sup> The Wahhabi quest, together with the *Mahdi* doctrine, to some extent, served as the background that informed some of the jihadist reforms that were initiated, especially, the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1984, pp. 156, 289-290

<sup>263</sup> For detailed discussions on Wahhabism, refer to Hiskett, pp. 156-7, Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* pp. 216-7  
Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1994, pp. 312, 324-7.

<sup>264</sup> Hiskett, p. 157

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*, p. 157

century jihads in the central and western Sudan regions. However, the above elements were not the only factors; some of the existing religious and socio-political conditions in those societies, also, played a role as mentioned earlier. For illustration and clarification as regards the causes and impacts of these jihads, two examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> century will be examined here.

One of the pre-colonial Muslims reformers was Shaykh Uthman b. Muhammad b. Uthman b. Salih (known among Hausas as Shehu Usumanu dan Fodio), a strong member of the Qadiriyya *tariqa*. The driving force behind his jihads was the Islamic ideology of the expected Mahdi and the *mujaddid*. His position as a reformer and a leader was legitimized on the grounds that he had encounters with the founder of the Qadirriya, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani in visions and that the latter appointed him as his representative in the Sudan.<sup>266</sup>

After embarking upon *jihad al-qawl*, preaching jihad without the expected change, the Shehu, eventually, launched his jihad in 1804.<sup>267</sup> The primary objective was to address the problem of mixed Islam and to create an Islamic society nearer in all its aspects to the Wahhabi Islamic ideal. As it was, devout Muslims in Hausa land became, increasingly, dissatisfied with the seemingly discrepancy between the “daily Hausa life and the Islamic ideal,” thereby preparing the grounds for the Fulani reforms.<sup>268</sup> The first of the wars was fought against the state of Gobir and Altalawa. The capital of Gobir was captured by the Shehu and his forces, with its ripple effects felt through other Fulani areas such as Kano, Zaria and Bauchi in forms of revolt.<sup>269</sup> The caliphate had gained firm control by 1812 over

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<sup>266</sup> Azumah, p. 75

<sup>267</sup> Hiskett, p. 163

<sup>268</sup> Barbara Callaway & Lucy Creevy, *Islam: Women, Religion, and Politics in West Africa*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994, p. 13

<sup>269</sup> Hiskett, pp. 163, 165

most of the Hausa lands, south of Birni Konni. It survived till the British colonial rule began in the Southern Nigeria and, eventually, conquered it.

Another Muslim reform which impacted on the Volta basin of West Africa was by al-Hajj Mahmud (c. 1266/1850) in the upper bend of the Black Volta.<sup>270</sup> Mahmud, a sufi (Qadiri) was Dyula from Dourala, who went on Pilgrimage and met Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahim (Qadiri) in Syria on his way home. It appears he was, greatly, influenced by Al-Rahim’s radical Islamic ideologies; these and other experiences of the pilgrimage were the major reasons informing his jihad in the 1860’s.<sup>271</sup> With the support of the Kantosi and Dyula Muslims, he attacked and succeeded in conquering the non-Muslim people of Boromo. In the process, he set up a small Islamic state with its seat at Wahabu.<sup>272</sup> Some Dyula Muslims, however, opposed the jihad as it was claimed to have disrupted their relationship with the local polytheists and affected their trade business.

Upon closer examination of these militant Islamic reforms, there seems to be a common trend that runs through them, which needs mention here, since its bearing is not limited to the past only, but, also, on the present West African context. The, first, is the Wahhabi concept of ideal or simple Islam, such as it prevailed in the time of the Prophet and his Companions and the second, is the Islamic ideology of the expected Mahdi, who was to be heralded by the *mujaddid*.

Other forms of militant Islamic reforms preceded the two examples mentioned above and one wonders what influential role the early ones might have played on the latter events. Though Hiskett tends to play down this possibility, it appears to me that the effects of the earlier jihads cannot be trivialized. Muslims, especially, the reformers perceived the

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid, p. 168

<sup>271</sup> Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, p. 153

<sup>272</sup> Hiskett, p. 170

Muslim world as one universal community and contacts between West African Muslims with others through Pilgrimage and Islamic literature has been an on-going phenomenon. This reality on the ground renders it difficult, if not impossible for Islamic ideologies that shaped the convictions and actions of the reformers to be confined within a particular locality or time. Hiskett himself traces the background of some of the militant Islamic reforms to influences from other Muslim lands outside West Africa due to the contacts mentioned. It is not convincing, therefore, for Hiskett to dismiss such possible influences of the Almoravids and other Islamic movements in the Senegambia (the Wars of Shurbubba and the jihads of Alfa Ba and ‘Abd al-Qadir) on later jihads on grounds of distance in space and time.<sup>273</sup> I think that the ideas of the earlier jihads in the Sudan region did inform some of the later ones in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the early period of the colonial occupation.

Two comments need to be made in addition to what has been said on the history of the jihad movements and their impact in West Africa.

Firstly, the point has been made and emphasized by some scholars that in Africa, Islam was more tolerant towards African religious and cultural values than Christianity. I do not intend to debate this position, but to question the underlying assumptions of such an assertion. When an outside religious or cultural system makes its way into a host environment, it is the host that is said to be receiving and, for that matter, tolerating the guest and not the other way round. In the encounter between ATR and its culture on the one hand, and Christianity and Islam on the other, the emphasis is often laid by some western scholars and some African Christian and Muslim scholars on the extent to which the two mission religions responded to and tolerated the indigenous religious and cultural life. This approach derives from the assumption that, in that encounter, the African religious and

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<sup>273</sup> Refer to Hiskett, p. 157, 158 for details of his argument and position on this issue.

cultural system is the weaker partner in comparison with both Christianity and Islam, which were introduced into Africa from Europe and Arabia respectively; the stronger and dominant partner, out of magnanimity tolerated the weaker and vulnerable one! The African environment, which to a large extent, received and accepted the different religious traditions with tolerance, is, then, relegated to the background of the discourse. This attitude and mindset dismisses objectivity and fails to create an equal platform for a, mutually, healthy inter-religious and cultural exchange, which is crucial for relationships in our pluralistic global world. We shall come back to this point for further discussions.

Secondly, it could be said that Islam's relationship with certain aspects of African cultural values, notably, the African marriage and family systems has been affirming, to some extent. This, in some respect, is understandable; Islam's acquaintance with ATRs and its culture predates that of Christianity due to its longer period of contacts with North African and the Sudan regions. However, this needs to be qualified as one takes a closer look at the incidence of jihads in the West African sub-region. One of the factors that informed the reformers' intolerance towards what they perceived as 'mixed' Islamic and polytheistic practices is the doctrinal position and incessant quest of the Islamic puritanical group Wahhabis, to restore Islam to that which was practised during the time of the Prophet and his Companions. That is what they believe to be pure Islam and has to be upheld by all Muslims. This, coupled with the Islamic ideology of Mahdism, was the fire that ignited some of these jihads. It becomes evident then, from the discussions above that, what Wahhabi Islam affirms in other cultures are those religious and cultural values that were found to have been practised by the Prophet and his Companions in that Arabian setting. African cultural values such as marriage and extended family are affirmed by Islam, not because of their intrinsic value and relevance in the African context, but, because they were

the values by which the Prophet and his Companions lived. These two points, which are crucial for this thesis, will be revisited for detailed discussions.

### **4.3. Beginning and Growth of Islam in Modern Ghana**

#### **4.3.1. Islam in the Northern Ghana**

From the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslim traders from the Upper Niger region, known in various ways such as Wangara, Dyula and Yarse, became increasingly involved in the gold and cola nut trade which was centred in the forest region to the south of West Africa. It was the quest for this trade that led some of these Muslim traders to settle in Northern Ghana.

The communities in Northern Ghana that came under the early influence of Islam were the Gonjas, Mamprussi and the Dagombas as well as the kingdom of Wa. The exact date of Islamic penetration in the modern Ghana is not certain. Gorman states that Portuguese trading at the coastal regions of the Gold Coast reported of Mande-speaking and Hausa Muslim traders engaged in buying slaves brought there from Benin in the 1480s.<sup>274</sup> Samwini, on the other hand, claims that Dyula or Yarse Muslim settlers, who were Mande-speaking, introduced the religion among the Gonjas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and to the Dagomba and the Wala people by the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>275</sup> By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims lived in almost every village with a prominent chief.<sup>276</sup> In affirmation of the latter position, Mallam Abubakar, the daily Imam of the Accra Central Mosque, Ghana, also, thinks Islam was introduced in the North of Ghana between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Guar-Gorman, p. 34

<sup>275</sup> Nathan Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006, p. 22. See also Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* p. 95

<sup>276</sup> "Three 'Gates' to the Paramountcy, cited in Nehemia Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-colonial Period*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 114

<sup>277</sup> Interview conducted with Mallam Adam Musa Abubakar, the Chief Director at the office of the National

#### 4.3.2. Islam in the Forest and Coastal Regions of Ghana

The influx of Muslims from northern Ghana towards the south, comprising the forest and coastal areas of the country continued with the collapse of the Salaga market. Islam's contacts with the Ashanti kingdom in the forest zone of Ghana seem to have started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, visible presence of Muslim settlements, especially in Kumasi, the capital of the kingdom, seems to have occurred by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>278</sup> These settlements were driven more by ethnic identities rather than one's religious affiliation. It was observed that Muslims served as representatives of those in Gonja, Dagomba and Mamprusi, in the Northern Region of Ghana. The first two states were tributaries of the Asante kingdom during this period.<sup>279</sup> Their presence in the royal court in Kumasi, in effect, served not only the economic and political interests of the Asante king,<sup>280</sup> but religious as well, as later developments proved to be the case.

The rulers in the Asante are said to have been, particularly, interested in the gifts and talents of the sharifs and the Muslim holy men, who were believed to be endowed with *baraka* (spiritual powers) to ensure success. This was of prime importance to the Kings of Asante as they were engaged in various wars, at this time, with neighbouring ethnic groups in order to ensure dominance and territorial expansion. Ashanti kings made use of Muslim diviners in their courts and "thought it possible to win the intercession of the Prophet in the

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Chief Imam on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec., 2010

<sup>278</sup> Samwini, p. 32

<sup>279</sup> Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: University Press, 1975, p. 67

<sup>280</sup> Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-colonial Period*, pp. 181, 182

interests of Ashanti.”<sup>281</sup> Muslim religious leaders, in this sense, became very important in the royal court by offering prayers, talisman and amulets to Asante kings for success in wars. Letters received by Muslim *ulamas* in Kumasi from their chiefs in the north testified to this.<sup>282</sup> Muslim, scholars, also, served as advisers and secretaries to the Ashanti chiefs due to their literacy. Yet, the traditional religious and cultural practices were adhered to and it is claimed that none of the chiefs converted to the faith.

Further south, in the coastal regions of the country, Islam’s penetration and spread were said to have been aided by other factors, among which were the collapse of the Salaga market in the north and the establishment of the Gold Coast Hausa Constabulary by the then Colonial government. Some of the members in the regiment were Muslims, for which reason, Muslim chaplains were appointed by the colonial government to take care of their needs. In addition to these, a community of liberated African slaves from Brazil were brought to settle at various points on the West African coast in 1836 and some of these were received in Accra.<sup>283</sup> Coupled with this was the return of Ghanaian veterans, in the same year, who had fought alongside the Dutch in Indonesia 1831. A place for settlement, referred to as, ‘Java Hill,’ was created for them in Elmina (a coastal Mfantse town).<sup>284</sup> These settlements led to an increase in the Muslim population in the coastal areas, including the Mfantse land.

While intentional Islamic missionary activities were not carried out in Ghana up to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has been noted, however, that in 1806 Usumanu dan Fodio, the

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<sup>281</sup> Ivor Wilks, “The position of Muslims in Metropolitan Ashanti in the Early Nineteenth Century” in I. M. Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa*, Essex: Ancor Press Ltd, 1980, p. 158

<sup>282</sup> Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: a study in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-colonial period*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. 182, 183

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, p. 35

<sup>284</sup> Mumuni Sulemana, *Islamic Organizations in Accra: Their Structure, Role and Impact in the Proselytization of Islam*, an unpublished MA thesis submitted to the Department of Religion, University of Legon, 1995, p. 6

Fulani *jihadist*, visited Ghana and made comments on “Muslims living in pagan territories.”<sup>285</sup> Though the utterances stirred up emotions among the non-Muslims and, even, some of the Ghanaian Muslims, they failed to foster Islamic militant ambitions in the country. The absence of jihadist campaigns in Ghana does not, in this regard, imply that inclinations towards such radical Islamic ideals have not emerged on the Ghanaian religious scene nor affected it; there have been indications of that. Mention has been made, earlier, of the emerging religious extremism in the country. What is lacking is the soil for this to foster and grow in Ghana. Sanneh’s remarks sums up this observation: “the legacy of tolerance and flexibility bequeathed by the host African environment has largely survived.”<sup>286</sup>

A deliberate missionary attempt for the establishment of Islam in the country was, eventually, made by Mallam Abubakr Siddique, a religious teacher from Nigeria, in 1895;<sup>287</sup> this gave a boost to the growth of the faith in the country.

The major Muslim groups in Ghana are Sunnis, who subscribe to the Maliki legal tradition and the Ahmadis. The Sunnis include the Sufi Orders, comprising *Qadariyya* and *Tijaniyya*. There are, also, the Shi’ites, who have been growing in the country since businesses were set up there by the Lebanese traders in the 1980s. In addition to these is the Wahhabiyya branch of the Islamic group known in Ghana as the Ahlus Sunna wal-Jama’a (ASWAJ). It has developed in the country as a result of the exposure of young Ghanaian Muslim scholars who were sponsored for further studies in Arab/Muslim world, particularly Saudi Arabia.<sup>288</sup> The Islamic ideology of wahhabism is the driving force that

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid, p. 22

<sup>286</sup> Sanneh, p. 213

<sup>287</sup> Boye, p. 14

<sup>288</sup> Samwini, p. 173

informs the thoughts and actions of the members of this group; their objective is to resist any cultural or religious innovation in Islam in Ghana.<sup>289</sup>

It must be noted here that Muslims were not organized into recognizable groups or communities in the coastal areas till the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pockets of small groups were, mostly, found among places where Muslim foreigners from the Northern Ghana have settled, known as the *zongos*. Though it is claimed that Muslim Dyulas were engaged in trade with Portuguese merchants in Elmina in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim settlements on the coast are said to have taken place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>290</sup>

This last point leads us to our discussions on how Islam became established and spread among the Mfantse people, resulting in what has been referred to as *Mfantse Kramo*, ‘Mfantse Muslims’. This section will examine how Islam settled in this indigenous environment to become an essential part of the people’s religious and cultural experience.

#### **4.4. Islam in Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area**

The discussions in this section will draw, mostly, on primary sources – oral tradition (gathered through interviews and observation), documented accounts of the Muslim communities in the area – as well as secondary materials.

A point to be noted is that, the Mfantse Muslim community, initially, began as one group until the invitation of the first Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary, Al-Hajj Maulna ‘Abdul Rahim Nayyar from India in 1921.<sup>291</sup> The developments that followed, later, led to a schism and the creation of the two separate communities - the Mfantse Sunni Islam and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission - in Ghana. In this section the following will be discussed:

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid, p. 173

<sup>290</sup> Hiskett, Cited in Mumuni, p. 5.

<sup>291</sup> Samwini, p. 87

the conversion of Benjamin Sam, the beginning of the Mfantse Muslim community, the arrival of the first Ahmadiyya Missionary from India, the split and finally, the missionary activities of the Sunni (comprising Mfantse Sunnis and the Sunni Settlers) and the Ahmadiyya Muslims in the area.

It was observed, earlier, that Islam made its presence felt in the Mfantse coastal regions in the early part of the 19th century, mostly, through Muslim traders from northern Ghana, the returnee slaves and war veterans from Brazil and Indonesia, respectively. Later, this Muslim population was boosted by the presence of the Hausa Muslims in the colonial Gold Coast Hausa regiment. During this period, the religion was, mainly, confined to the communities where the foreigners had settled. There was no intentional effort to evangelize the indigenous people. Some of the Christian churches had, however, made inroads in terms of conversion of the local people; emerging from these developments were the following identifiable ethno-religious groupings in the area: the indigenous ATR adherents, Mfantse Christians and the Muslim settlers. An identifiable Mfantse Muslim community had not yet come into being. This, however, does not discount the possibility of individual conversions that might have taken place due to contacts between the local people and the foreign Muslim settlers.

These boundaries were to be altered in 1885, when an Mfantse Methodist Catechist in the person of Benjamin Sam got converted to Islam.<sup>292</sup>

#### **4.4.1. The Conversion of Benjamin Sam**

Various accounts have been given as to the circumstances surrounding Sam's conversion. It has been alleged, in the first place, that the attraction of the Muslim dress

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid, p. 37

was the cause of his conversion to Islam.<sup>293</sup> This reason, however, seems unlikely, as other documented local narratives and oral traditions of the people in the area do not mention this.

Two of the documented sources will be, briefly, examined here; one will be taken from the orthodox Muslim group and the other from the AMM. The first one is Al- Hajj Hamied's, which serves as the official point of reference for the Mfantse Sunni Muslims. According to this account, a Muslim mystic, referred to as 'Kramo Sheibu' came to settle in Egyaa No. 2, the home town of Sam. Sheibu was, highly, revered by the community because he was perceived as a religious person who had deep knowledge in herbs and possessed *baraka* to cure and help people with various problems. It was even claimed that he, spiritually, helped the people of Elmina in their war against the Mfantse people;<sup>294</sup> for this reason, many people went to him with their problems. Sam had two friends Egya Aduogyir Appah and Yedu at Ekumfi Ekrawfo, where as a Catechist, he has been serving the Methodist Churches in that area. Appah's problem with his wife was that he could not get closer to her in bed at night and Yedu's wife could not conceive.<sup>295</sup> Sam, who knew the spiritual prowess of Kramo Sheibu, advised and went together with them to see him. Yedu and Appah had their problems resolved, but together with Sam, they wanted to secure the medicine or the medium for that healing. Sheibu's pre-condition was that he would give it to them if they, including Benjamin Sam, would convert to Islam. In his desire to acquire,

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<sup>293</sup> Samwini, p. 37 and refer, also, to Humphrey Fisher, "Early Christian-Muslim Education in West Africa," in *Muslim World*, vol. 51, 1966, pp. 288-298

<sup>294</sup> Imam Hamied, *Islam ne Farba*, a documented indigenous account of the history of Mfantse Sunni Islam (unpublished), p..32

<sup>295</sup> Refer to appendix vii, for further details of the account of the Mfantse Sunni Muslims on how Sam got converted.

what he believed to be a spiritual resource, Sam and his friends converted to the Islamic faith.<sup>296</sup>

The other official account of the Mfantse Ahmadiyya Muslims was narrated by Ahmad Afful and put together by Hakeem Kofi Yamoah. This version attributes Sam's conversion to a dramatic encounter with one Muslim mystic, Mallam Abubekr Bin Siddique, who was referred to as Sadick Bukar in the local Mfantee language;<sup>297</sup> he came from Nigeria with the Hausa soldiers.<sup>298</sup>

Sam was going to Anomabo by the beach road (as was his custom as a Methodist catechist) to preach, when he had an apparition of a mysterious being from the sea. The shocking experience rendered him unconscious and when he, finally, recovered from it, he heeded his uncle's advice to put an end to the catechistic work in order to join his second uncle at Ekumfi Otuum in trading.<sup>299</sup> His commercial activities took him to places such as Gyinakoma and Attakwaa, where he met Chief Kobena Aduogyir Appah, who, later, became his close friend. While Sam was away from his home town, Egyaa No.2, it was alleged that Mallam Sadick Bukar, an unknown person to him and his family, according to this account, went to Sam's uncle at Cape Coast and requested to see him. The urgency of the quest was such that the uncle brought the stranger to Egyaa No. 2, while a messenger was sent after Sam at Attakwaa. The journey took one week by foot and Mallam Sadick

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<sup>296</sup> This account is central to the oral history of the Fante Sunni Muslims; the core events, namely Kramo Sheibu's spiritual powers, the healing of Appah and Yedu's wives and the conversion of Sam and his two friends, were confirmed in an interview with the leadership of the Sunni Community at Obontser on 12 Nov. 2010

<sup>297</sup> Hakeem K. Yamoah, *The Advent of Amadiyyat in Ekumfi Ekrawfo*, p. 2 Accra: Lordstat, 2008. With the permission of the Ahmadiyya community at Ekrawfo, the booklet was narrated by Ahmed Afful, a great grandson of Mahdi Appah and recorded and printed by H. K. Yamoah. This documented account was at the instance of John H. Hanson, a PhD, Director of African Studies Program at the Indiana University, who came to Ghana to research on the history of Islam among the Fantes. The researcher on this work also met Yamoah personally on Nov. 22, 2010 for discussions and clarifications on this narrative. Refer also to Haneef Keelson, *Early History of Ahmadiyyat in Ghana*, Accra: Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, 2002, pp.1-19

<sup>298</sup> *Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana*, Saltpond: Ahmadiyya Movement Ghana, 1961, p. 1

<sup>299</sup> Keelson, p. 4. See also Yamoah, p. 2

Bukar stayed all this while in the family house of Sam. While waiting for Sam, Sheibu resorted to some mystical practices, to the extent of narrating to the family members every progress of Sam's journey. He then washed an Arabic inscription with water in a calabash and had this soaked with some local leaves known as 'odwon'. As soon as Benjamin Sam appeared in the house, Sadick Bukar poured the content on him with the declaration;

“‘Mumin’ Sam, Allah says I should bring you to his religion, Islam. Methodist is not your religion. This religion, Islam will not survive here but where you came from. When you go back, write the name of your friend as ‘MAHDI’...”<sup>300</sup>

On the strength of this encounter, Sam, who was given a new Muslim name ‘Mumin,’ even before his conversion, accepted Islam. He returned to his friend Aduogyir, who was a traditional chief and converted him, with the new name, ‘Chief Mahdi Appah,’ as instructed.<sup>301</sup>

We shall at this point, discuss the two accounts and try to examine the factors which might have induced Sam's conversion, since before this time, he had been occupying a prominent position in the missionary work of the Methodist church as a Catechist. This will be preceded with one or two comments on the two accounts.

The first observation has to do with the two different names in the two accounts regarding the man who got Sam converted. Further investigations carried out revealed that it was the same person, a Fulani, Muslim mystic who came to stay for some time at Sam's home town Egyaa no. 2. Fisher makes reference to him as Abu Bakr and projects him as an important precursor to Ahmadiyyah in the Mfantse area.<sup>302</sup> The different names resulted

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<sup>300</sup>Yamoah, p. 3

<sup>301</sup>Ibid, p. 4

<sup>302</sup>Humphrey J. Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah: A Study in Contemporary Islam on the West African Coast*, London:

from changes in narrative as the story was passed on from one person to the other over the years. Whether this Fulani Muslim mystic came to stay there after converting Sam to Islam or before, it was not made clear.

The second is the absence of the mysterious apparition event in the Mfantse Sunni Muslim version; this is where one finds the major difference between the two accounts. Most of the Mfantse Sunni Muslims interviewed do not seem to remember this event, except their Imam at Essakyir, who made reference to that.<sup>303</sup> However, the Ahmadis who were interviewed confirm this incidence. Besides that, Haneef Keelson, the son of the first General Secretary of the Ahmadiyya Jaamat, also documented the Mfantse Muslim history;<sup>304</sup> his account corroborates with that of Yamoah, with slight variations in terms of names and places. Most Ahmadis interviewed about this dramatic event, also, confirmed it. Its veracity, however, cannot be denied nor affirmed as there seems to be no consensus between the two Mfantse Muslim communities who share this common heritage. The motive behind its inclusion or exclusion is difficult to tell, but the two accounts give us an idea of some of the factors that informed Sam's conversion.

In spite of the differences in narration, there is a core event in Sam's conversion that both narratives bring out – the mystical aspect of the conversion – which is relevant not only for examining Sam's conversion, but other conversions among the indigenous people. Here, we are dealing with the experiential dimension of religion in the African context. The point was made earlier that any examination of religion from an African perspective has to take into account the notion of the sacred as a reality in the African religious experience. In

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Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 117

<sup>303</sup> Interview with the Mohammed Ocran, the Imam of Essakyir Fante Sunni community on 29 August, 2009.

<sup>304</sup> Keelson, p. i

this worldview, supernatural explanations to problems play a major role in people's interpretation of life issues.

According to the Sunni Muslim account, Sheibu was revered as Muslim Mallam with *baraka*. By the people's perception, 'Kramo' (Mfantse name for Muslim) Sheibu's mystical powers and knowledge became a channel of divine intervention in resolving people's problems, as it happened to the wives of Yedu and Appah; this appeared compelling enough to have resulted in the conversion of Sam and his friends, who wanted to possess and share in that divine gift.

Dwelling on Yamoah's account, it seemed that Sam's conversion came about in a process, which began with that beach experience. The incident appeared to have troubled him to the extent of putting a stop to his catechist work for some time. If the story and those details were correct, then, spiritually and psychologically, there seemed to have been an inner struggle within Sam, what William James referred to as "divided- self," which needed to be unified.<sup>305</sup> This possibility could then mean that, till he met Mallam Sadick Bukar, he was trying to process the beach episode and its implication for his religious vocation. The climax, then, came in his dramatic encounter with Bukar, resulting in the pouring of the contents of the calabash on him; a kind of religious initiation, that might have connected with Sam's inner struggles. In this context, these related events were, pointers of an encounter with the divine and a calling for a special purpose, which resulted in his conversion to Islam. These are possibilities, but other unknown factors might have played a role.

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<sup>305</sup> William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, London: Longmans, 1913, p. 171-175

Sam brought his experience and zeal as Methodist Catechist and local preacher to bear on his new calling and mission. The special appeal of Sam's message derived from his use of the local language, *Mfantse*, instead of Arabic, with symbolic expressions in his preaching which the indigenous people could easily relate to. The handicap of the local people in Arabic no longer stood as a barrier between them and the Islamic faith. It was one of the major reasons accounting for the fast growth of Islam in the Mfantse areas under Sam and Mahdi Appah.

In addition to the above, Mumin Sam, also, used the strategies and experience gained from the Methodist missionaries to advance the cause of Islam. This is evidenced in the architectural design that was used in constructing their first mosque as well as the founding of the first Muslim school on the same standard as the mission and government schools at Ekrawfo.<sup>306</sup> It is claimed that the school which was opened in July 1896, was the first Muslim school in the Gold Coast to have received government assistance.<sup>307</sup>



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<sup>306</sup> *Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana*, Saltpond: Ahmadiyya Movement Ghana, 1961, p. 1

<sup>307</sup> Fisher, p. 117

#### **Fig. 4.4.1. The first Mfantse Muslim Community Mosque at Ekrawfo<sup>308</sup>**

As a former Methodist Catechist, he might have been questioned about his reasons for leaving the Methodist faith. This required him, at some points in his preaching, to make references to those mystical religious experiences that led to his conversion to Islam. Taking into account the religious universe of the people, these narratives of his religious experience connected with the people's religious perceptions and, therefore, attracted some of them to the Islamic faith. If there were some feelings of resentment and betrayal on the part of the Methodists, these did not show in any open antagonism;<sup>309</sup> rather, quite a number of them and adherents of ATR converted to Islam through Sam's preaching.

#### **4.4.2. The Mfantse Muslim Community at Ekrawfo**

A community of Mfantse Muslims began to grow in the following areas: Ekumfi, Abura, Enyan, Nkusukum, Mankessim and Assin, where Mumin Sam evangelized.<sup>310</sup> At this time, Sam had relocated from Egyaa No. 2 and Otuum to settle at Gynakoma. The growing Mfantse Muslim converts used to congregate at Gynakoma every week for Sam to lead them in *salat* and basic Islamic teachings. They soon realized that these frequent treks were becoming a burden for the people, especially, the elderly among them. They resolved, therefore, to find a common settlement for those who wished to meet together often, but could not cope with the fatigue of frequent walking. This led to the creation of an Mfantse

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<sup>308</sup> This mosque now belongs to the Ahmadis. The original mosque underwent renovation and expansion and was completed in 1952, but its architectural design was maintained as much as possible, according some leaders of the Ahmadi community interviewed. Directly behind it is the Muslim cemetery, where some of the pioneers of the group were laid to rest, including Benjamin Sam and Mahdi Appah.

<sup>309</sup> Interview with the Ahmadiyya Circuit Missionary at Essakyir, Mustapha Bin Dankwa (a convert from Methodism) on Aug. 29, 2009; see also Fisher, p. 117 for the nature of religious tolerance which prevailed between Christian and Muslim converts in the area during this period.

<sup>310</sup> Keelson, p. vi

Muslim community at Ekrawfo (derived from the Mfantse word ‘krowforfor’ meaning, new town). The community helped to foster members’ religious identity and sense of belonging.

Some of the Ahmadi sources seem to suggest that the town was founded by the Muslims.<sup>311</sup> However, the version of the traditional leaders of the town speaks to the contrary; they admit that the Muslims from some of the surrounding towns and villages moved to the present location, where there was an existing village known as Nyamekwaa. They stressed that this village, together with Amanykrom, Otwabedziben, Odumabena, Kwansakrom, Gyinakoma, Ekuamoakwaa, and Ansakwaa constituted one of the Ekumfi traditional communities and they held their annual traditional festivals together.<sup>312</sup> This position is, also, affirmed by the historical document of the Sunni Mfantse Muslims, which makes reference to ‘Nkurofor’ village (that is Ekrawfo), where Sam used to visit as Catechist before his conversion.<sup>313</sup> From these various accounts, it is, highly, probable that Nyamekwaa was already in existence, when the Muslim group moved in before adopting the new name ‘Ekrawfo,’ with its current predominant Muslim population.

In this town, the first Mfantse Islamic mosque, as mentioned earlier, and a cemetery were built under the leadership of Ben Sam.<sup>314</sup> The cemetery served as the burial grounds for the members of the early Mfantse Muslims, including Benjamin Sam and it, still, serves same for members of the Ahmadiyya group. Some members of the Ahmadiyya community who do not even come from Ekrawfo are buried there upon their request. The cemetery, together with the Ahmadis’ other institutions of learning, has rendered Ekrawfo as a mini-

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<sup>311</sup> See Yamoah, p. 5 and Keelson, p. 9

<sup>312</sup> This assertion was made in an interview with eight traditional elders of Ekrawfo on Dec. 10, 2010. Most of them belonged to the various Christian groups and the Ahmadiyya community in Ekrawfo

<sup>313</sup> Hamied, p. 32

<sup>314</sup> After the split between the Ahmadis and Sunnis, the former claimed the mosque and the cemetery as their own and the first to have been built by them in Ghana; both, nevertheless, trace their origin to some of the early pioneers of the Fante Muslim group, whose mortal remains still rest in that cemetery.

Pilgrimage centre, not only for Ahmadis in Ghana, but in the whole of the West African sub-region.

In spite of the language barrier and some cultural differences, the nascent indigenous group had initial spiritual guidance from the settlers. The accounts of the Mfantse Sunni Muslims indicate that Sam and other leaders in the faith were nurtured for some time by Mallam Saddique Abubekar before leaving the Mfantse area; even then, he entrusted them into the care of Mallam Yakubu, one of the Imams of the settler community.<sup>315</sup> Though there were two different Muslim communities in this area, in terms of ethnic composition, the Muslim sense of the one universal *umma* guided their relationships with each other.

At Benjamin Sam's death in 1915, the leadership responsibility fell on Mahdi Appah according to the Ahmadis.<sup>316</sup> Other sources, on the other hand, suggest that the group was led and supervised by others from the Muslim settlers in the area. Samwini, for instance, states that itinerant preachers provided supervision for the new group, a claim confirmed by the Mfantse Sunni Muslims.<sup>317</sup>

However, Mahdi Appah being an Mfantse and the eldest among the believers, who, also, converted and worked closely with Mumin Sam, was, naturally, looked upon to step in the shoes of the latter. This, he did and his initiative and sense of responsibility became more evident when the need arose for the group to look for someone from outside Africa to come and assist them. This takes us to the next subject of our discussion, the arrival of the first Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary and the subsequent split in the group.

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<sup>315</sup> Hamied, p. 35

<sup>316</sup> See Yamoah, p. 6 and Keelson, p. 10

<sup>317</sup> Refer to Samwini, p. 37 and Hamied, *Islam ne Farba*, p. 34. Hamied states for instance that one Mallam Yakubu served the community at Ekrawfo as their Imam before the arrival of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary from India. These views were confirmed in an interview with the Imam Ibrahim Adam and some leaders of the Fante Sunni group in Obontser on November 12, 2010.

#### 4.4.3. The Arrival of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary and the Split

If Benjamin Sam is credited with evangelizing the Mfantse people in this area and bringing into being an Mfantse Muslim community, Mahdi Appah could be given the honour as the chief architect in bringing the first Ahmadiyya Missionary from India. It is claimed that one Yusuf Nyarko, a member of the Mfantse Muslims, had a dream that they (Mfantse Muslims) were praying with white Muslim people. The group became convinced that Allah was directing them to get in touch with such people. With the consent of the group, Mahdi Appah took upon himself to contact a Nigerian Muslim friend, who was then working at the Saltpond seaport to inquire about this group. Two different names have been suggested for this man: Keelson refers to him as Abudu Pedro, while Yamoah mentions the name as Nabugri. It appears the different names mentioned refer to the one person, as both Yamoah and Keelson state that he was a Nigerian Muslim friend of Mahdi Appah.<sup>318</sup> Al-Hajj Anderson, a leading member of the Mankessim AMM, confirmed the name as Abudu and, not Nabugri. Changes in narratives might have resulted in this discrepancy.<sup>319</sup>

In the written records and narratives of the Sunni Muslims, this account is conspicuously missing and I guess that one could understand why, when one considers the division that resulted from this development. It appears, in this sense, that the two groups, over the years, have developed distinctive versions of their narrative history which validated their claim and gave credence to their historical religious experience. It is this reality that makes the cross-checking of information necessary without putting personal interpretations and judgments on particular claims.

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<sup>318</sup> See Yamoah, p. 8 and Keelson, p. 11

<sup>319</sup> Interview with Al-Hajj Anderson on October 30, 2010

The necessary documents making the request for a missionary, together with money for travelling expenses was sent by Chief Mahdi Appah and his elders to the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in India, Hazrat Amirul Momineen, Khalifatul Masih II. This incident bears semblance to a similar indigenous Christian initiative made at Cape Coast, which brought Joseph Rhodes Dunwell, the first Methodist Missionary from England to the Gold Coast. While not trying to take anything away from Yusuf Nyarko's dream, Gorman conjectures that the Christian initiative, which was quite a familiar story, might have had a psychological influence on the Mfantse Muslims, in their request for a Muslim Missionary.<sup>320</sup>

The first Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary, Maulvi A. Rahim Nayyar, arrived in the then Gold Coast in 1921.<sup>321</sup> He was welcomed at the Saltpond seaport and brought to Ekrawfo, the religious seat of the group, where he delivered his maiden address. His teachings began to create a kind of dissent in the group. It was claimed by both Mfantse Ahmadi and Sunni Muslims that he, for instance, taught the correct posture in prayer; that is, in Muslim prayers, the arms were not to be folded on the chest, but by the sides of the body. In addition, he gave an interpretation on jihad to mean the inner struggle against evil in order to do the will of Allah, and not by the sword. These were teachings that made distinctions between some of the Islamic practices of the Sunnis and the Ahmadis. The Sunni Muslims, also, claimed that he prevented one Mallam Yakubu who used to visit the community at Ekrawfo from leading prayers.<sup>322</sup> These and later events, made explicit the

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<sup>320</sup> In an interview with Al-Hajj Anderson on October 30, 2010 and the Circuit Missionary of Ahmadiyya, Bin Dankwa at Essakyir on Aug 29, 2009; both were of the opinion that the community probably knew of the initiative of the Fante Christians at Cape Coast, but dismissed its influence on the group's invitation for a missionary from India. They perceived Yusuf Nyarko's dream as a revelation from Allah.

<sup>321</sup> Fisher, p. 118

<sup>322</sup> Refer to Hamied, pp. 35, 36 for the documented version of the Sunni group on the reasons for the split. Interview held with some leaders of the Sunni community at Obontser and those of the Ahmadiyya group at Ekrawfo on Nov. 12 and 22 respectively, agreed, with some variations that the split occurred as a result of

differences between the Sunni Muslims and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement. Some, even, alleged that the Missionary, officially, introduced the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement by initiating some of the members present into the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Mahdi Appah being the first.<sup>323</sup> Consequently, Appah has sometimes been referred to as the first Ahmadi in Ghana.<sup>324</sup> Without studying the prevailing situation, Nayyar's utterances appeared to have imported to the local scene the rivalry and hostility that existed between the Ahmadiyya Movement and the Sunni Muslims. Members at this point had to decide whether to be Ahmadis and accept the leadership of Nayyar or to leave and form a separate Muslim group.

On a positive note, however, his presence inspired devotion among the indigenous people, since they felt a sense of pride that their religion was, also, practised by other white people elsewhere just like the Christian religion that was brought to the land. His interpretation of jihad to emphasize its peaceful dimension was well received among the people, who for their strong sense of family and community belonging tended to avoid issues that fostered division and violence.

These notwithstanding, the community broke apart in 1921, with one faction under Nayyar and Mahdi Appah as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement, and the other led by Mallam Yakubu as the Mfantse Sunni Muslims. However, the two Mfantse Muslim communities in the area (Sunni Muslims and the Ahmadis), all trace their common roots to

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some actions taken by Nayyar. The documented accounts of the Ahmadis, however do not mention any of the developments that led to the split.

<sup>323</sup> Refer to Yamoah, p. 12 And Keelson, p.13

<sup>324</sup> See Yamoah, p. 12 and *The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana*, Accra: Raqem Press, 2009, p. 10. On this page the document states the Ahmadiyya Missionary Training College, which was initially established at Saltpond in 1966 was relocated at Ekrawfo to serve as a monument in memory of Chief Mahdi Appah, the first Ahmadi Muslim in Ghana.

Benjamin Sam, according to their respective historical accounts;<sup>325</sup> that was confirmed in various interviews with the leaders of the two groups.

It could be noted at this point that, there is some consensus between the two Mfantse Muslim groups - the Sunnis and Ahmadis – that the split in the early group occurred due to misunderstandings resulting from Nanyar’s teachings, though with some variant views.

#### **4.4.4. The Sunni Muslims**

##### **4.4.4.1. Mfantse Sunni Muslims**

In the aftermath of the split, members of the Ahmadiyya Movement remained in Ekrawfo, where today, the population is predominantly Ahmadis.<sup>326</sup> The Mfantse Sunni Muslims, on the other hand, relocated to Obontser as their religious seat, with Mallam Yakubu as their Imam. The following were some of the pioneers of the group that migrated from Ekrawfo to Enyan Obonster: Opanyin Odum, Akodaa Saa, Opanyin Nyarko (from Onyadze), Nana Kwesi Andam (from Kokodo), Kwaa Esuon (from Kokodo), and Nana Kwaa Egyir. These were received by Nana Kwaamosa, chief of Obontser, (a member of the group) who gave them a place in which to settle.<sup>327</sup> The Sunni group even claim that Benjamin Sam came with them to Obontser.<sup>328</sup> This is, however, far-fetched, as Sam had passed away (in 1915) by the time the split occurred in the group.

Samwini has argued that one of the reasons for the invitation of the Ahmadi Missionary was the unwillingness of the Mfantse Muslims to continue under the spiritual

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<sup>325</sup> See Imam Hamied, *Islam ne Farbaa*, p. 37 and Keelson, *Early History of Ahmadiyyat in Ghana*, p. 1

<sup>326</sup> Interview conducted with some leaders of the Ahmadiyya group at Ekrawfo on Nov. 22, 2010.

<sup>327</sup> Interview with leaders of the Obontser Muslim community on Nov. 12, 2010

<sup>328</sup> Ibid, Nov. 12, 2010

leadership of the other Muslim settlers in the area.<sup>329</sup> This does not seem convincing, as those who broke away continued to be led by a member of Hausa/Fulani Muslims in the area in the person of Mallam Yakubu as mentioned above.

Mallam Yakubu had eye problems and was compelled, under the circumstances, to move to Akyem Oda, where he was alleged to have passed away.<sup>330</sup> The group met and appointed Hamidu as Imam, the son of chief Kwamosa.<sup>331</sup>

Under Hamidu's leadership the group was said to have grown and spread to other Mfantse towns and areas such as Enyan, Ekumfi, Nkusukum, Abora and Gomoa. In the Enyan and Ekumfi areas, the following towns became strong Sunni Muslim centres: Essakyir, Eyisam, Abor, Kokodo, Otabanadze, Enyan-Maim, Nkodwo and Nsawodze.<sup>332</sup>

It has been suggested that Imam Hamidu devised a missionary approach that took into cognisance the cultural context of the people; that is, he, practically, taught the people to express their Islamic beliefs as *Mfantsefo* (Fantis), and not to be completely cut off from their indigenous religious and cultural roots. He, personally, identified and encouraged Muslims to be involved with the indigenous religious and cultural events such as the traditional military groups, the traditional festivals and other rites of passage that were observed by the people, and which were not against basic Islamic beliefs and practices.<sup>333</sup> He, also, tried to make the beliefs and practices easily accessible to the ordinary people by translating the prayers for ritual cleansing, the *shahada*, and some of the hadiths of the Prophet Mohammed from Arabic into the local Mfantse language.

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<sup>329</sup> Samwini, p. 87

<sup>330</sup> Interview with Opanyin Selkyi, the eldest (aged) among the leaders of the Obontser Muslim community on Nov. 12, 2010; see also Hamied, p. 37

<sup>331</sup> Second interview session with leaders of the Obontser Muslim community on 19 Nov. 2010

<sup>332</sup> Interview with the Imam of the Enyan Abasa Sunni Muslim Community, Kwesi Osman on Sept. 8, 2009

<sup>333</sup> Interview with Paul Vital Abekah, a leading member of the Obontser Muslim community and a graduate from the University of Ghana, on Dec. 17, 2010

To ensure that the future growth of the group was sustained, he created an informal education system. He brought the children and youth together in order to teach them the Qur'an and basic Islamic beliefs wherever he evangelized. It has been observed that most of the Imams of the present Mfantse Sunni communities are products of his informal religious education.<sup>334</sup>

Hamidu's contextualization approach did not set the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad aside, but, rather, taught and practised them through the African religious and cultural mediation. Islam, in this respect, was indigenized and appropriated to the needs of the people. That was, perhaps, not surprising, as most of the early leading members of the group were traditional leaders, who did not abandon their traditional religious and cultural heritage in the face of Islam, but sought to hold the two in tension. Most of the members of the traditional leadership that the researcher spoke to in the following places: Saltpond, Enyan-Maim, Obontser and Ekrawfo were, also, members of other religious groups, including Islam.<sup>335</sup> One, also, discovers a similar pattern in Islam's engagement with ATR in West Africa since its inception in the sub-region.<sup>336</sup> The implications of this for our discussions will be examined in detail later.

When Hamidu passed away, his son Hamied succeeded him as Imam.<sup>337</sup> He received his religious training in Cairo; a background and exposure, which became assets to him and the community. He intensified teachings on the Qur'an, the hadith of the Prophets and the Arabic language, especially, among the children and the youth in order to enhance the people's understanding about Islam. Despite these efforts, most Mfantse Muslims still

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid, Dec. 17, 2010

<sup>335</sup> Interview with traditional leaders of Obontser, most of whom belong to the Muslim community on Nov. 12, 2010

<sup>336</sup> See Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, pp. 71-72, 77 and Hiskett, pp. 31-32, 121, 135

<sup>337</sup> Hamied is the current Imam of the Mfantse Sunni Muslims, but could not speak with the researcher due to his old age and illness.

remain illiterate in terms of the Arabic language and, therefore, handicapped in reading the Qur'an. The efforts of Hamidu and Hamied to ensure the indigenous understanding of Islam and to preserve the history of the group, resulted, respectively, in the compilation of a teaching document on prayer, *Muslimfo Mpaabɔ* ("Muslim Prayer") and a documented narrative (an unpublished Mfantse Sunni document), *Islam ne Farba*, "The History of Islam in the Mfantse Land".<sup>338</sup>

At this point we shall discuss briefly the religious life of the Sunni Muslim settlers since their beliefs and practices have, equally, impacted on relationships in this area.

#### **4.4.4.2. Sunni Muslim Settlers**

The role of this community in the spread and growth of Islam in this area has, already, been mentioned. Particularly, after the split in the Muslim group at Ekrawfo, some Mfantse Sunni Muslims found it expedient to worship together with the settlers and even settled among them in the Zongos. That was the situation, especially, in Saltpond and its surrounding towns and villages.<sup>339</sup> This kind of mixture of different ethnic Sunnis was, also, found in Mankessim. These are towns with cosmopolitan outlook due, particularly, to their respective administrative and commercial functions. In the 2000 A.D. district population census, the population estimates for Saltpond and Mankessim were 16,212 and 25,481 respectively.<sup>340</sup> In these communities, one does not find a distinctly Mfantse Sunni Muslim community as it prevails in Obontser, Enyan-Maim, Enyan Apaa, Enyan Abasa, Nkodwo, among others. Some of the reasons accounting are as follows: firstly, by virtue of their long stay in the area, children born to the first generation of these settlers now speak

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<sup>338</sup> Refer to appendix vii for other details of the history of Mfantse Sunni Muslims

<sup>339</sup> Interview with Alhaji Idris Ibrahim, the Imam of the Sunni settlers at Saltpond, Sept. 2, 2009

<sup>340</sup> 2000 Mfantseman District Population and Housing Census, Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, p. 10

the local language as their own and now consider themselves as indigenous people. Secondly, through inter-marriages, most of the settlers now identify themselves as Mfantse. Due to this cultural assimilation, the indigenous Mfantse Muslims, now, find it convenient to live together with settlers. The zongos in these areas are no longer settlements only for Muslim foreigners. Moreover, in Mankessim and Saltpond as, already, mentioned, the demographic structure differs from the rest of the communities where there are, strictly, Mfantse Muslim communities. According to Al-Hajj Idris Ibrahim, the current Imam of the Sunni Muslims in Saltpond, the zongo settlement there comprises the following ethnic Muslims: Wangara, Hausa, Gurshi, Zamrama and Mfantse, with their respective chiefs. The Imam was of the opinion that most of them have become part of the indigenous population and that distinctions are, hardly, made between who is indigenous and who is not.<sup>341</sup> While the growth and commercial importance of Saltpond has gone down due to the removal of the seaport and the collapse of certain economic and commercial establishments, Mankessim is, rather, one of the fastest growing market centres in Ghana, with the influx of people with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Muslims. The isolated settlements that were, initially, created by foreign Muslim traders and clerics are, now, a mixture of the settlers and the indigenous Muslims, a development, which has, also, occasioned the different shades in the expression of some Islamic beliefs and practices.

Among the contributions of the Sunni Muslim settlers to the spread and growth of Islam in the area, are some of the religious practices of the *ulama*, who are Sufis. Alhaji Idris Ibrahim indicated that among the Sunni Muslim community in Saltpond, a sizeable number of them belong to the al-Tijaniyya order. They act as spiritual consultants, not only for the Muslim community, but for the non-Muslims as well, who go to them with

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<sup>341</sup> Interview with Alhaji Idris Ibrahim, Sept. 2, 2009

problems of sickness, infertility and other socio-economic challenges that are believed to have spiritual causes. They provide their clients with amulets and charms as spiritual protection. Some of them who are non-Muslims sometimes do convert to Islam, especially, when they get their problems resolved.

Other religious practices, which have contributed to the growth of the Muslim groups (comprising both the Sunnis and Ahmadis) in the area, are child birth and naming, funeral rites, observance of the Ramadan and the celebration of Muslim religious festivals. The extent of the impact of these rituals on the members of the community shall be examined in detail later.

In the area of social services, the impact of Sunni Muslims on their respective communities in this area has been very minimal in comparison with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement. It is not that these people did not know the benefits of these services to the society and their implications for the growth of Islam in the area; as indigenous settlers along the coast, they were among the first people to have had contacts with the European colonizers and Christian missionaries. They have, therefore, had the taste of Western culture, some of its benefits, especially, in the area of education and medicine. After the break, however, the close association of the Mfantse Sunni Muslims with the Fulani and Hausa settlers, blunted the yearning and efforts of the former for such facilities. Most of the Muslim settlers saw Western social services (of both government and Christian Missions) as a means of corrupting their children and converting them to Christianity. Nevertheless, their interests in these areas were not killed completely. The Mfantse Sunni Muslims at Obontser, for instance, wanted, initially, to set up a school in the town, but realized that there was one already in place by the Methodists. In order to avoid unhealthy competition among the members of the two religious communities and their children, they relocated

theirs to Enyan-Maim.<sup>342</sup> The school is still flourishing as a very important basic school in the community. The other set-back in the provision of these facilities was the fact that most projects of both the Christian churches and the Ahmadis were sponsored with funds from outside. As a religious group that lacked such a global connection at that time, the Sunnis could not do much on their own.

The lack of well defined leadership and organizational structures, needed to facilitate the groups' programmes and activities have, also, been some of their handicaps. Documentation and historical records on the group's activities are difficult to come by and these have, sometimes, rendered them dysfunctional over the years, as they have, virtually, had nothing to fall on for direction and inspiration.

These notwithstanding, the ability of the group, especially, among the Mfantse converts, to evolve a religious life and practice that takes into account the indigenous religious and cultural contexts, has enabled the religion to settle well within the community and adapted as an intrinsic part of the people's religious heritage.

Our attention now turns to AMM - its history and activities - after the split.

#### **4.4.5. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement**

After the break, the Ahamadis came under the leadership of Nayyar, with the active support of Chief Mahdi Appah and other elders of the Ekrawfo community. The Ekrawfo town, however, was lacking in social amenities such as potable water, electricity and medical facilities. For this reason, Nayyar was given a residence at Saltpond, which was a

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<sup>342</sup> Though the researcher knew this school at Enyan-Maim, the history of its establishment by the Orthodox Mfantse Muslims was, however, made known in an interview with the leadership of Fante Sunni Muslim community at Obontser on 12 Nov. 2010.

seaport and a district capital with modern facilities.<sup>343</sup> Saltpond, thus, became the national Headquarters of the Jaamat in the Gold Coast from 1921 till the early 1970's when it was moved to Accra, the capital of Ghana.

This arrangement did not, however, diminish the religious importance of Ekrawfo, which Ahmadiyya Muslims have referred to as “The Gold Coast Mecca” in the history of AMM in the country.<sup>344</sup> The strength and growth of the group were said to have emanated from this place and spread to other areas in the Mfantse land as well as Ghana and beyond. It was in recognition of this and others, that the AMM training college for Missionaries, established in 1966 at Saltpond was relocated to Ekrawfo in 2002.<sup>345</sup> This school has now been given accreditation by the Ghana Council for Higher Education to run Bachelor of Theology programme for the Missionaries of the Movement.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Interview with Yamoah on November 22, 2010. See also Yamoah, *The Advent of the Ahmadiyyat in Ekumfi Ekrawfo*, p. 12 and Keelson, *Early History of Ahmadiyyat in Ghana*, p. 15

<sup>344</sup> Yamoah, p. 12

<sup>345</sup> *Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana*, p. 10 and interview with Mustapha bin Dankwa

<sup>346</sup> Interview with Mohammed Yusuf Yawson, the Deputy Ameer /Missionary and Alhassan Bashir Annan, Missionary in the office of the Ameer and Missionary in charge of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana on Dec. 14, 2010



**Fig. 4.4.5. The front view of the Administration block, Ahmadiyya Missionary training college at Ekrawfo**

The success story of the group in Ghana has been phenomenal and the community in Ghana is claimed as the largest in Africa.<sup>347</sup> It will be instructive, therefore, to examine the factors accounting for this.

It has been observed that the initial missionary approach adopted by AMM at its inception was polemical and exclusive, as exhibited by Nayyar on his arrival. This pattern continued for some time and such exclusive utterances of the early Indian and Pakistani missionaries in preaching could have stirred up rifts and conflicts in the local communities, thereby, stifling any progress. Samwini draws attention to some of the early attacks by the

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<sup>347</sup> *Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana*, p. ii; see also appendix iv, for further details on the history of the Ahmadiyya Movement in the area and Ghana, in general.

AMM on both the Sunni Muslims and Christians on aspects of their doctrines and religious practices respectively.<sup>348</sup>

Besides the rift that occurred in the Ekrawfo Muslim community, another one took place between the Sunnis and the Ahmadi in Wa.<sup>349</sup> Within the Sunnis, those who received the brunt of Ahmadi condemnations were the al-Tijaniyya Sufi religious leaders who used divinations, charms and amulets to administer to the religious needs of the people. Ahmadi, believed themselves to be the authentic Islam: a letter from Bashir-Ud Din Mahmud Ahmad II, (the then Head of the Movement), to a Pakistani missionary in Ghana states; “and we do not regard other people to be true and good Muslims as we regard ourselves”.<sup>350</sup>

In their engagement with Christians, the AMM resorted to the use of the Bible and the Qur’an, purposely, to refute certain Christian claims such as Jesus’ death and resurrection. This confrontational stance, sometimes, took place right in a predominant Christian community and premises. These initial polemics to proselytize did not sit well with the various religious adherents of the affected groups and I concur with Samwini on his conclusion that the AMM could, equally, be blamed for some of the intra-religious conflicts that occurred within Muslim groups in Ghana during that period.<sup>351</sup>

This initial polemical stance of the Ahmadiyya Movement in the Mfantse area and in Ghana should not come as a surprise, after all, when one examines the Indian context, where the religion emerged. It started, among others, as a protest against Christian ‘proselytism’, vis-à-vis the prevailing decadence of Islam and Hinduism; “Hinduism and

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<sup>348</sup> Refer to Samwini, p. 91-96 for some of the polemical stances of the AMM

<sup>349</sup> See Samwini, p. 91-96 for full discussions on this conflict.

<sup>350</sup> “Are non- Ahmadi Kafirs?” in *Review of Religions*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 7, July 1935, cited in Nathan Samwini, p. 94

<sup>351</sup> Refer to Samwini, p. 191-198

Islam were in varying states of disarray and impotence, occasioned externally by British imperial dominance as well as the threat of Christian missionaries, who claimed superiority and exclusivity.<sup>352</sup> On the one hand, the validity of Christianity was, utterly, denied by the Ahmadis, while on the other, it was appropriated; for instance, while Jesus' divinity, sonship, death and resurrection were denied by the founder of AMM, Ghulam Ahmad, he, at the same time, claimed, "Jesus is in me and I am from God."<sup>353</sup> AMM, also, studied and adopted some of the Christian missionary principles and strategies applied in India and these, were put into useful implementation in Ghana.

The relationship between the Ahmadis and the Sunnis became worsened when the latter declared the former as apostates on grounds that their founder, Ghulam Ahmad claimed prophethood and the Mahdi for himself. The Sunni religious scholars went further to call for official exclusion of the Ahmadis from the Islamic fold and this was, constitutionally, effected in Pakistan in 1947. One could thus say that this background informed, to a large extent, the initial polemics and exclusive attitudes of the AMM, especially, towards the Sunni Muslims and Christians in Ghana. These were, however, historical disputes, which were of little relevance to the various indigenous religious adherents, including the Ghanaian Ahmadis and when they took over leadership, the situation was bound to change. On the Ghanaian religious scene on the other hand, the AMM, with its Mahdi concept, initially presented itself as a revivalist, puritanical Muslim group.

In view of the above discussions, one might ask, what were the overriding factors that made it possible for the group to succeed in Ghana? One of the major reasons has to do

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<sup>352</sup> Antonio Gualtieri, *The Ahmadis: Community, Gender, and Politics in Muslim Society*, Montreal, McGill-Queens University Press, 2004, Appendix 1, p. 1

<sup>353</sup> Ibid, p. 62

with the indigenous environment. The group's success, partly, has to do with tolerating of the indigenous environment. The religious and cultural values of these local people, like many Akan in Ghana and some Africans, are informed and shaped by their cohesive family and community structures, with that strong sense of belonging. The tolerance of the Mfantse, in particular, which is sometimes overstretched in an attempt to avoid conflict situations, is given the local expression as “ɔnnyɛ hwee, gya mu ma ɔnka,” meaning “that is alright, let it go.” To them everyone in the community is a relation and religion is conceived as that which enhances their life together, but not to divide them. While sometimes this has been interpreted as acts of cowardice, its role in fostering peace in the face of religious and cultural differences has proved crucial over the years. This and other affirming indigenous values, which serve as important religious mediation for Ghanaians of diverse religious backgrounds, helped to accommodate the initial extremist approaches of the AMM. We shall take up this matter up again for detailed discussions later.

With time, the AMM grew out of this initial extremist activism, especially, when their missionary work, gradually, shifted into the hands of local leadership. This change became more visible in 1974, with the appointment of Maulvi Wahab Adam, a Ghanaian as the Amir/Missionary of the AMM in Ghana;<sup>354</sup> his knowledge of the religious and cultural context and its dynamics, together, with that of his other indigenous colleagues, proved very beneficial to the community.

In addition to the above reason, the new missionary paradigm injected by the AMM into the Islamic activities in the area, in terms of its aggressive evangelization, effective implementation of missionary agenda and provision of social services proved effective. These were innovations introduced by the Indian and Pakistani missionaries, which

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<sup>354</sup>*The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana*, Accra: Raqem Press, 2009, p. 9

contributed to the spread and growth of the Movement in Ghana. These aspects of missionary work began to neutralize that field of monopoly which the established missionary churches had been enjoying in the Gold Coast.

Nayyar stayed for a less than a year in Ghana and was replaced upon his own request by Alha Maulvi F. R. Hakeem.<sup>355</sup> He and successive missionaries who came, later, helped to lay the necessary foundation in terms of evangelism programmes, missionary strategies, administrative structures and planning that were similar to the Christian churches that were before it. The structures and nomenclature adopted by AMM such as ‘circuit,’ ‘mission houses,’ and ‘missionaries,’ among others, were being used in Ghana by the Christian churches, especially, the Methodist Mission, before the arrival of AMM. These administrative and organizational structures enhanced effective implementation of activities and programmes.

By the end of 1961, the number of Pakistani Missionaries in Ghana, besides those that were first sent from India, stood at eighteen. They saw the need to involve the indigenous people in leadership and, therefore, trained a sizeable number of them in training institutions in Rabwah, Pakistan. In that same year, the Movement had thirty-five trained African missionaries and thirty indigenous elders, manning their various mission stations in the country.<sup>356</sup>

The Ahmadiyya showed concern for the ‘this worldly’ by emphasizing the need to provide social services education, medical facilities, potable water and agricultural extension services; their motivation for this being the understanding that the provision of these constitute practical ways of serving Allah and the needy as “demanded by the

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<sup>355</sup> *Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana*, p. 3

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid*, p 22-23

revelation made to the Promised Messiah”.<sup>357</sup> AMM hospitals and clinics served as important social interventions, at a time when most communities lacked medical facilities and its people could not afford the financial resource to obtain basic medical services in the cities.

In the Ekrawfo area where the Movement started, the group has a basic school, Senior High School and a missionary training college. The Movement has an Education Unit, purposely, to liaise with the Ghana Education Service as well as the Christian Education Units in order to ensure high standards in their schools. The Indian missionary, during whose tenure, AMM was claimed to have made strides, especially, in education and other social services was Alhaj Mobashir, who worked in Ghana from 1936 to 1961.<sup>358</sup>

In order to ensure effective publicity of its programmes, a printing press was set up in Accra for the publication of its literature as well as the construction of the offices of the *Tabligh*, and *Tarbiyyat*, preaching and moral training secretariat in Kumasi, to disseminate its doctrines.<sup>359</sup> In this sense, The AMM demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing times by making use of the required modern technology and knowledge to advance its missionary work, while holding to the core beliefs of the Islamic faith.

As regards AMM religious beliefs and practices, the group shares a lot of things in common with the Sunni Muslims, which have, already, been discussed. While it could be said that the AMM, to a large extent, respected the indigenous religious practices, its tendency to revive the Islamic faith and create an exclusive community, sometimes, created tension between the group and the traditional authorities and other religious groups as

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<sup>357</sup> Gualtieri, p. 58

<sup>358</sup> Ibid, pp. 5, 19

<sup>359</sup> *The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana*, pp. 12, 13

mentioned. For instance, the group, sometimes, refused to submit itself under the jurisdiction and leadership of the traditional authorities as observed by Samwini.<sup>360</sup>

One major effort, however, made by the Ahmadis to contextualize Islam in this area and in Ghana was the translation of Qur'an into English and some of the local languages such as the Asante, Mfantse, Ga Twi, Wale and others. For the Mfantse people in this area, they could read the Qur'an in their own language and understand. This initiative, to a large extent, removed the obstacle of access to the teachings of the Qur'an posed by the lack of an Arabic education.<sup>361</sup> This became an influential factor in attracting the indigenous people who were illiterates in Arabic to the Islamic faith.

Other prevailing factors in Ghana at the inception of the AMM, also, contributed to the success of its missionary cause in the country. The indigenous dissatisfaction against colonial rule in Africa and the agitations for independence became heightened, especially, in Ghana in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Besides the negative indigenous attitudes towards European domination was the African critique against various forms of European culture, including Christianity, which was, sometimes, regarded as an ally of the colonizers. Many Ghanaians, including some Mfantse people were affected by this current of ideas; as a new religious entrant, with more dynamism than the orthodox Muslims in mission work, the AMM became an alternative religious source of attraction for the local people.

Moreover, unlike the early Christian missionaries, the Ahmadiyya missionaries were not affected by heavy death toll caused by the malaria parasite; a cure for that dreadful disease had been sought by the time they arrived in the Gold Coast. The efforts of their successive Missionaries were, therefore, sustained.

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<sup>360</sup> Samwini, p. 90

<sup>361</sup> Hiskett, p. 292

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

The discussions above have attempted to outline the history of Islam and some of the major factors that accounted for the spread and growth of the religion in this area.

Effort was made to examine the emergence of the Mfantse Muslim community through the conversion of Ben Sam and his friend Mahdi Appah. The circumstances surrounding Sam's conversion as a former Catechist of the Methodist Church and the special features of his preaching, which attracted the indigenous folk to the Islamic faith, were discussed. Sam's work as an Mfantse Muslim Imam, supported by Mahdi Appah, resulted in a growing Mfantse Muslim community, which culminated in the formation of an Islamic township at Ekrawfo. We have seen how the invitation by the group for a missionary from India, after Sam's death, eventually, led to the split of the group into the Mfantse Sunni Muslims and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement in the area.

We, also, tried to explore the missionary activities and religious lives of the various Muslim groups in this place, namely the Mfantse Sunni Muslims, the Sunni Muslim settlers, and the Mfantse Ahmadis. Our attention was drawn to the different shades of beliefs and practices and how these were reflected in various ways in their respective growth in the area.

A closer look was taken at AMM's evangelization, organization, planning, the provision of social services and religious practices. It was observed that the groups revivalist and puritanical approach in evangelism as well as the tendency to import its Indian and Pakistani background into the Ghanaian religious scene, created initial conflicts, especially, with the Sunni Muslims.

That notwithstanding, the discussions pointed out that AMM's missionary zeal, especially, with the provision of social services, effective planning and strategy, aided by the indigenous context, were the major contributory factors to its missionary achievements in Ghana and, particularly, in this area.

Religious beliefs and practices transform and are transformed by their respective contexts. Having discussed, respectively, the penetration and growth of both Christianity and Islam in this area, we now turn to the impact of beliefs and practices of the two religious traditions on the traditional life in the area. We shall, first, begin with Christianity in the next chapter.

## **Section B**

### **Chapter Five**

#### **The Impact of Christianity on the Indigenous Life**

##### **5.1. Introductory methodology**

This thesis attempts to investigate the extent to which the indigenous context has served as a factor for religious and cultural mediation, thereby impacting on the inter-religious relationships for both Christians and Muslims in this traditional area. However, these inter-religious and cultural engagements are mutually transforming; that is, the, equally, important influence of these immigrant religions - Christianity and Islam – on the indigenous environment has, also, become an integral part of the people’s socio-cultural experience, a phenomenon, which cannot be overlooked in this discourse. This chapter, therefore, examines and analyzes the impact of the Christian beliefs, practices and missionary activities (such as provision of social services) on the indigenous communities in the area.

The indigenous environment into which Christianity and Islam penetrated was (and still is), intensely religious; there was that strong awareness of and belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, conceived as the creator and sustainer of the universe and with whom humans tried to establish constant ties.<sup>362</sup> Besides that, the people, also, believed that ancestors and other spirits acted as intermediaries between humans and God. The nature of this traditional religion, as expressed in many areas in Africa, is very communal and utilitarian or pragmatic. That is, people born into that traditional community were, also, born into the religion, in which they, naturally, participated as they grew up through the

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<sup>362</sup> Gyekye, p. 3

traditional socialization processes. The universe was perceived as a wider community, consisting of a composite of divine spirit, human, animate and inanimate elements in a hierarchical order, but directly related, and always interacting with each other.<sup>363</sup> In other words, the unseen forms an integral part of the reality as the visible; the spiritual and the material are both aspects of the reality.<sup>364</sup> Within the African religious life, persons, also, constitute a hierarchy among themselves according to their age or function in society; as a rule, the older the person, the more powerful his vital force; the greater the responsibility he/she holds, the more intense their mystical powers.<sup>365</sup> This explains the high value placed on respect for the elderly and leaders in African traditional life. This community web of relationships constitutes what Magesa refers to as the vital force.<sup>366</sup>

The main focus of the traditional religion was on this-worldly life and its sole purpose was the enhancement of the community life, which, of course, included that of the individual. Most of the traditional ritual practices and values, which will be discussed, later, derived from this understanding.

The tradition of the people, out of which the moral code is derived, is actualized in the rites that were observed. The communal nature of the indigenous religion engendered, to a great extent, communal traditional values, which informed most of the ritual practices that were observed in the communities. Among these values were social solidarity, harmony, cooperation, sharing, love, generosity, hospitality, respect and the value for life as well as obedience to and respect for elders.

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<sup>363</sup> Magesa, p. 44

<sup>364</sup> Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, p. 8

<sup>365</sup> Magesa, p. 54

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*, p. 44

The indigenous religio-cultural background that has been outlined above offers a snapshot into the traditional environment where Christianity and Islam entered. This is to enable us to know what was in place before and to assess some of the changes that have, possibly, occurred after the encounter of the two immigrant religions – Christianity and Islam – with the indigenous religious and cultural universe.

The methodological approach for the discussions in this chapter will be as follows: First, the discussions will focus on the Christian beliefs and practices as observed in the rituals of naming, marriage, funeral as well as the celebration of traditional and religious festivals. Some of the values, which inform some of these transitional rites, will be examined and analysed. Secondly, attention will be paid to the differences in the beliefs, practices and religious values of the various Christian denominations and the extent of their varying impacts on the indigenous life. Besides these, the impact of the provision of social services by the Christian churches on the traditional communities and other influences, resulting from these missionary activities will be addressed. Finally, the extent of changes that have occurred in some of the ritual practices and their underlying values will be assessed. The intention here is to attempt to examine the measure of change that has taken place within the indigenous context as a result of the impact of the imported Christian norms and practices.

## **5.2. The presence of Christian denominations in the Mfantse area**

In chapter three, attempt was made to trace the history and growth of the following Christian denominations: the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG), the Church of Pentecost (CP) and the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area in the Central Region of Ghana. In this chapter, we shall

continue to explore and analyze the religious, cultural and the socio-economic impact of their beliefs, practices and provision of social services in the area. We shall begin the discussion with the religious and cultural impact of Christianity in the area.

### **5.2.1. The Christian evangelization and its impact**

Even though the Roman Catholic and the Basel Missionaries preceded the Methodists in the Gold Coast in their respective evangelization attempts, it was the Wesleyan Methodists from the United Kingdom, who were the first to make inroads into the indigenous community of this area. Their enduring missionary efforts in the face of various obstacles, especially, the heavy death toll among their missionaries, and, sometimes, the indigenous opposition, finally, had a breakthrough, when the Mfantse religious cult at Mankessim (referred to in chapter three), which had a strong hold on the indigenous communities was brought to a decisive halt through Akwesi's episode in 1851.<sup>367</sup> This encounter between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, as practised by the people of this area, resulted in the shaking up of the ATR's foundations. From that time onwards, the rate of conversion among the indigenous people to Christianity, particularly, Methodism began to rise. Crayner is of the view that many Mfantse people who became disappointed with the deceptions of the traditional priests/priestesses of the *Nananom pow* turned to the Christian faith<sup>368</sup>. One could state, in view of this change, that the subsequent success of the missionary work of the Methodist, the Roman Catholic Churches and other religious groups, including Islam in the area during and after that time, was facilitated, partly, by this incident. The reason for this religious change is not far-fetched. The Mfantse religious shrine, located at the *Nananom pow* in Mankessim became an institutionalized

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<sup>367</sup> Crayners, *Akweesi Egu Nananom Pow*, p. 80-84. Refer, also, to Bartels, p. 55-59 and Buah, pp 15, 16.

<sup>368</sup> Second interview with Crayner on Nov. 12, 2010

form of ATR on the land.<sup>369</sup> The rituals and practices performed there, fostered and deepened the people's belief in the Supreme Being as well as the local deities and the ancestors, who acted as intermediaries. In fact, the activities at the shrine centred more on the ancestors than any other deity, especially, their three Charismatic leaders – Oburmankoma, *Ɔson* and *Ɔdapagyan*, who were buried at a sacred grove in this area. The people and their leaders trooped to this sacred ground to consult *Nananom* (the ancestors) on matters relating to their well-being. This dependence on the ancestors persisted till the corruption of the priests and priestesses at the shrine were exposed by Akweesi and some of his Methodist members at Obidan.<sup>370</sup>

In this sense, the Methodist challenge resulted in a substantial number of people turning to Jesus, who was perceived as the much more powerful and authentic deity. This was the major factor that changed the religious landscape in the area as well as some of its cultural practices. Having said that, it must be stated that, the incident did not put an end to the indigenous religious beliefs in ancestors and other deities; it was a major set-back to ATR, as the institution of *Nananom pɔw* sacred cult collapsed, but it did not end the traditional religious beliefs and practices among the people as we shall find out, later, in chapter seven.

As mentioned earlier, these developments resulted in a paradigm shift as far as the people's religious alliances were concerned. Quite a sizeable number of the indigenous people converted to Methodism and Roman Catholicism. These conversions received an impetus, as some of the elders and chiefs in the communities who, initially, opposed the Christian Missionaries became converted or sympathetic towards the Christian cause and

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<sup>369</sup> Buah, pp. 15, 16

<sup>370</sup> See chapter three, section 2 for a detailed account on this.

offered land and financial assistance for the erection of chapels. Nana Kwesi Edu, the chief of Mankessim traditional area, for instance, was alleged to have, personally, invited the Methodist Missionary, Rev. T. Birch Freeman to Mankessim and offered land and money for the construction of a Methodist chapel.<sup>371</sup> The Queen mother of the Mankessim Traditional Council, Nana Araba Otuwa IV, also, observed that some of the traditional leaders at that time helped the Christian cause. She claimed that as a Methodist and a traditional leader, some of the Christian values had been helpful in giving guidance to her leadership.<sup>372</sup> This meant that some of the traditional leaders, who at that time exercised indigenous religious and cultural authority on the family, clan and the community members, now led the way to the new religious experience, although community or family members did not follow them en masse. The on-going developments impacted, in general terms, on the indigenous context and affected some of the indigenous practices and values.

### **5.2.2 The religious conversions and the change**

In the traditional societies, the chief was a political and religious leader; as the final ethnic authority figure, he was the chief priest of his people.<sup>373</sup> Among the Mfantse people, in particular, he entered the ancestral stool room during festive occasions as *Eguadoto* and *Ahobaa* to make petitions to the ancestors on behalf of his people.<sup>374</sup> In view of some of the induced changes in the traditional political and religious systems, engendered by the conversions of some of the traditional leaders, the indigenous value of the chief as an exemplary traditional religious and political leader was, severely, compromised; their sacral

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<sup>371</sup> Crayner, *Akweesi Egu Nananom Pow*, p. 84; see also to Bartels, p. 58

<sup>372</sup> Interview with the queen mother of Mankessim on November 17, 2010; in talking about the traditional help to the Christian cause, the queen mother was referring to the assistance offered by Nana Edu, the Chief of Mankessim to the Methodist Missionary work in the area just after he got to know the deceptions of the traditional priests/priestesses at the *nananom pow cult*.

<sup>373</sup> Nukunya, p. 77

<sup>374</sup> Ekem, p. 41

role, especially, came into contention as Christian teachings demanded that they break away with some of their traditional religious and cultural practices.<sup>375</sup> Even when they took part and performed some of these traditional religious rites, the commitment was half-hearted. A manifestation of this crisis was witnessed during the reign of Rev. S. Q. Ghartey, an ordained Methodist Minister, who succeeded his father to the traditional seat of Winneba as Nana Ghartey V in 1946.<sup>376</sup>

The provision of schools by the missionaries and the introduction of Christian morning worship at schools, together with bible knowledge lessons, became formal process of education and evangelization for the younger generation. As Casely Asamoah, rightly, observed, the Mission schools, besides its 'other-worldly' benefits, provided the right environment for the people to come under the influence of the Christian gospel.<sup>377</sup> The Methodist and Roman Catholic churches appeared in the eyes of the local people to offer almost the same content of teachings through their various bible and catechumen classes, the exception being the RCC's emphasis on Mary, saints and the use of the rosary. Both denominations taught on the salvific work of Christ and the need for the sinner to repent and believe in Jesus to be saved from eternal condemnation. Converts who went through confirmation classes were baptized and confirmed as full members of the church. These religious rituals were intended to equip them to remain in the Christian faith and live a morally good life as Christians.<sup>378</sup> Though these formal Christian teachings and education were intended to induce Christian moral change, the emphasis was on individual salvation. In this sense, this new process of education and learning stood at variance with the old

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<sup>375</sup> Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, p. 97

<sup>376</sup> Bartels, p. 86

<sup>377</sup> Casely B. Essamoah, *Genuinely Ghanaian: A History of the Methodist Church Ghana, 1961-2000*, Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 2010, p. 56

<sup>378</sup> Interview with Eric Odoom a Catholic Catechist at Mankessim on Dec. 21, 2010

traditional system of informal education and socialization. In the traditional system, religion, with its moral values was not taught; the younger ones learnt by observation and participation. Its purpose was to effect a communal, rather than individual salvation, rooted in harmonious community relationships for the enhancement of the vital force.

Although some of the early missionary teachings made the people frown upon their indigenous religious and cultural elements, most of the Christian converts could not just break away from them. Their Christian convictions and expressions were still underpinned by those indigenous values and religious thoughts that have been the basis of their nurturing and socialization right from birth. The African religious worldview which attributed sufferings and other strange happenings in life to spiritual causes, still, prevailed in spite of the teachings of the mainline Christian denominations, which, often, denied them. The lack of credible Christian spiritual response to some of these life challenges compelled some of them, out of frustration and fear, to resort to other traditional priests or priestesses for answers. There were, therefore, some Christians who professed the Christian faith, alright, but were still tied to those aspects of the African traditional religious life, which dwelt on the fear of evil forces.

The emergence of the MDCC and the CP in Ghana and, particularly, in this area did not just introduce diversity in the Christian missionary work, but, also, sought to fill this indigenous spiritual vacuum. The Pentecostal churches, which placed emphasis on the power of Jesus, as demonstrated in the New Testament stories, provided answers and hope for the indigenous Christian converts and, even, some of the non-Christians, who, also, sought for religious help. The intense prayers sessions, fasting and teachings offered by

these churches became concrete spiritual channels for addressing those challenges.<sup>379</sup> The president of Ghana, Prof. Evans Atta Mills made reference to this aspect of the Pentecostal ministry during his visit to the church on the occasion of the 39<sup>th</sup> General Annual Council Meeting, by commending the CP for promoting “both spiritual and physical well-being of Ghanaians.”<sup>380</sup> The Church of Pentecost’s particular emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, gave these new converts the needed self-confidence in the face of challenges.<sup>381</sup> It was not surprising that these churches gained converts from some of the established mainline churches as well as from the ATR adherents.

Another serious challenge to the indigenous religious system was the questioning of certain beliefs and practices, especially, by the younger generation as a result of the new religious consciousness introduced by the Christian missionaries. Explanations were sought for the rationale behind the various traditional religious taboos and sanctions as Christian converts claimed that they were no longer obliged to submit to the religious injunctions of the ancestors and other deities. This boldness to question elders by the younger people on matters of traditional beliefs and practices was, really, new and revolutionary in a culture where children and young people were taught to obey elders, but, not to question. The traditional authority structure for ensuring conformity to social norms came under serious

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<sup>379</sup> Respective interviews held with Mary Provencal, a Minister/Prophetess in the MDCC on Nov. 4, 2010 and Esther Smile Melah, a youth leader of the Mankessim Church of Pentecost on Nov. 21, 2010, underscored how the intense prayer activities of some of the Pentecostal Churches serve as points of attraction, especially, to the women. Mary, who was a Presbyterian, came to the MDCC in 1967 because she could not conceive. Through fasting and prayer sessions, with the help of Rev. Adu, she got pregnant in 1968 and delivered her baby in Jan., 1969. Since then she became a full member and, later, was accepted into the ministry upon the recognition of her gifts and calling. Esther also leads in worship and singing at the Church of Pentecost during church service. She is of the opinion that the Church’s teachings, fasting and prayer activities have served as means of protection and meaningful Christian experience for her.

<sup>380</sup> “Christ is President – President Mills,”

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=208162>, cited 07/05/2011, p. 1

<sup>381</sup> *The Church of Pentecost Ministers’ Handbook*, Accra: Advocate Publishing Ltd, 2008, p. 9

pressure. This was further intensified by the western system of education and culture which became some of the important factors of social change in traditional communities at that time. These and many other religious and cultural changes began to impact the indigenous context as Christianity grew and established itself, firmly, in this area and in Ghana. This social impact shall be returned to soon.

Some of these changes were reflected in the religious festivals and transitional rites that were observed in the communities and our discussions will now turn to these aspects of the people's life.

### **5.3. Religious festivals**

The discussion in this session will cover celebrations of both the traditional and Christian religious festivals.

As mentioned earlier, the confrontational attitudes of some of the Christian Missionaries to the African traditional religious experience pitted, initially, European Missionary Christianity against ATR and its cultural expressions, including the observance of traditional festivals. Busia records that some of the early Christian converts refused to be part of the community celebration of the traditional festivals and observance of some of the rites as a result of their new religious faith.<sup>382</sup> Yet, the African finds his or her being within a community and its participation. Most of the Christian converts were, in any case, involved in the observance of their traditional festivals and rites of passage at the various levels within the society.

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<sup>382</sup> K.A. Busia, "Christianity and Ashanti," cited in Acquah, p. 41

The mainline churches came, with time, to accept in principle that, the celebrations of the traditional festivals were community events, of which they themselves formed part.<sup>383</sup> In addition, they, also, perceived these traditional observances as important occasions for collective engagement in undertaking developments projects. For these reasons, they have become participants in the celebration of the *Akwanbo* festival, a major traditional remembrance event, observed by almost all the communities of this ethnic group in commemoration of their migration from Takyiman to this present location.

Details of its observance and relevance will be discussed later, but it suffices to note, at this point that, most members of the Christian churches took part in almost all the activities, except the religious rituals, which involved sacrifices to the ancestors and other spirits. In this regard, there was a dynamic process on the part of Christians in this area, in trying to make a distinction between what they considered as religious (some aspects of which were considered as “fetish”) and what was cultural. On the basis of this, some indigenous elements were embraced and others were rejected. The festival activities ended with thanksgiving service by the various religious groups in the community. A point to be noted here, with regard to change, is the absence of libation offering during the Sunday gathering. Nana Kwansah III explained that the absence of the libation was an effort at finding a common ground to involve the diverse religious communities, most of whom do not subscribe to that practice. Moreover, the Sunday was a Christian worship day, hence the Christian service adopted by the community for that event.<sup>384</sup> During the researcher’s interviews and personal observations of some of the traditional festival events, it was revealed that the celebrations had undergone some changes due to the recognition by the

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<sup>383</sup> Interview with Bishop Asane at Cape Coast on Nov. 2, 2010. The Rt Rev. Asanse is a Methodist a Bishop of the Cape Coast Diocese, who hails from this area. He came from a Muslim (Ahmadi) family and was raised a Muslim until he converted to the Christian faith in the Methodist Church.

<sup>384</sup> Interview with Nana Kwansah III, the Amankorahen of Enyan-Maim and his elders on Nov. 26, 2010.

traditional leaders of the diverse religious composition of their communities and the desire to involve all of them. In view of the objection, especially, on the part of Muslims and Christians to some aspects of the religious rituals such as the sacrifices to the ancestors and other deities, some adjustments had been made in the observance of the event. Most of the traditional religious sacrifices have now been confined to the palaces and certain sacred grounds, where the rest of the community members are not involved. The gesture is intended to foster the community identity and unity that cut across religious divides and to reinforce the communal values of the people. As mentioned earlier, the monotheistic religious groups in the area (Christians and Muslims) have evolved their own dynamic process of selecting which indigenous ritual practices to embrace and which to reject (considered as “fetish”).

The Christian involvement has served to give a Christian touch to these traditional festival celebrations, as it was revealed, for instance that, at Mankessim, one of the nights during the festive period, was used for a candle procession, in which the Christian community turned out in large numbers to participate.<sup>385</sup> It is on this ground that some Ghanaian theologians are advocating for Christian adaptation of some of these indigenous religious elements instead of dismissing them as fetish. Ernestina Afriyie, for instance, makes a strong argument for this position and cites the Christian Christmas celebration as one example of such Christian adaptations of indigenous religious and cultural practices.<sup>386</sup> In addition, the participation of Christians in the traditional religious festival reinforces the communal values of solidarity, identity and unity of the people

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<sup>385</sup> Interview with Matilda Mbeah (the Methodist Guild Youth leader) on Nov. 26, 2010 at Mankessim

<sup>386</sup> Interview with Rev. Dr. Ernestina Afriyie on Jan. 5, 2011. Rev. Afriyie is a Presbyterian Minister, who did research on Christian adaptation of Akan Traditional Festivals for her PhD.

On the other hand, it could be noted from the discussions that, the Christian involvement in the celebration of the traditional festival has occasioned certain modifications in the practices of the traditional religious rituals. The exclusion of some of the traditional religious rituals and symbols, for example, from public participation due to the indirect influence of immigrant religions (including Christianity), had stripped, to some extent, the event of its mystical character and symbolic meanings. Those elements had served, over the years as important point of attraction.

Besides that, as membership of the Christian community grew due to conversions of members from ATR, the community interest and involvement in other festivals such as *Eguadoto*, *Ahobaa* and *Okvir* waned; an estimated number of 80% of the people in this area are Christians.<sup>387</sup> Unlike the *Akwanbo*, the celebrations of the other traditional festivals mentioned above have, mostly, been confined to family and clan groups as well as the traditional palaces. The effect of Western civilization and the drift of people from the village communities to the urban areas for employment are other, equally, influential factors in these changes that have to be reckoned with.

Another major religious and cultural impact of Christianity on the indigenous communities could be observed in the celebrations of Christian festivals – mainly Christmas, Good Friday and Easter. These are festive occasions celebrated by all members of different religious backgrounds in the communities, with fanfare, games and special food. A typical observation of Christmas celebration at Mankessim reflected evidence of inclusive involvement of people of diverse religious persuasions. Below is a picture of a masquerade, captured during the 2010 Christmas festive event at Mankessim.

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<sup>387</sup> 2000 Population and Housing Census: Central Region, Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, p. 39



Fig. 5.3

A lot of people travel during these periods from their places of work, to visit members of the extended family in their home towns and villages. Due to these heavy human movements, it is not unusual to see long queues of people at transport terminals, waiting to board buses to their respective destinations.

The usual Christian messages preached in the Churches on these occasions have tended to stress the need for humanity to respond to God's love and forgiveness for salvation, as conveyed in the Christmas, Good Friday and Easter stories, respectively. In addition to these, the Christian teachings have, also, focused on inculcating the values of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. These have had some effects on the life of some Christians and, even, the rest of the community. The occasions have been used by people in

some communities to settle family disputes and promote reconciliation, as well as to organize community meetings towards the execution of development projects. The community nature of Christmas celebration, for instance, is expressed in the exchange of gifts and sharing of food and meals with family members and neighbours as means of expressing God's love in Christ.<sup>388</sup> While Christian teachings have, most of the time, deepened the values of individual salvation and righteous living, the celebration of the Christian festivals have, on the other hand, served to reinforce some of the African communal values.

Sunday as a Christian day of worship is another visible evidence of the Christian religious and cultural influence on the people in this traditional community. It has become a community observance as a day of rest, not only in this area but in Ghana as a whole. Formerly, the traditional days of rest were linked to the various gods/goddesses of the lands or the seas. Among the Akan, people are named after the day on which they were born, in addition to the given family names. This principle was applied to the gods as well; the day after which a particular land god/goddess is believed to have been named became a day of rest for the people living in that particular area. On that day of rest, members of the community were forbidden to go to farm or sea to work; an action considered as taboo, which could incur punishments from the gods concerned. Religious superstition notwithstanding, this belief and its practices, involving period of rest from work had the value of preserving both human life and nature. Some Christian members, however, violated these traditional injunctions, regarding them as prohibitions that were rooted in "fetish" beliefs and practices.

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<sup>388</sup> Interview with traditional leaders at Ekrawfo on Dec. 10, 2010

Besides the various religious worship services for the celebration of these festivals, there are diverse Christian activities and practices that take place during these occasions. These different religious programmes are informed by the particularities of the Christian denominations - their different emphasis and values. For instance, the CP's emphasis on evangelism is reflected in the series of Christmas and Easter conventions organized, purposely, to win souls for Christ. In these conventions, intense teachings, prayers and fasting have become spiritual channels for addressing the needs of people who come with both physical and spiritual problems. The Methodists are, also, noted for the camp meetings which are, usually, organized before the Easter and, sometimes, after, to promote spiritual renewal among its members. The RCC organize special religious ritual, *Corpus Christi* on Good Friday. The RCC as a church, with deeper affinity towards the use of religious rituals and symbols in worship, re-enacted the various stages of Jesus suffering (with pictures), which culminated in his crucifixion on the cross. It has served as a very important means of arousing the religious sensibilities of the community members, resulting, sometimes, in repentance and conversions.

The MDCC observes these Christian festivals in addition to its own religious festival, the Peace Festival. The church has evolved a community understanding of itself, which is borne out of its historical experience as well as its self-perception as an African Christian institution. The Church celebrates, for example, the "Annual Peace Festival" to commemorate God's faithfulness to the church and in fulfilment of the birth of a son to the Akaboha I and his wife as prophesied. Its annual celebration by members at Mozano has been one of the means by which the church's self-perception is actualized.<sup>389</sup> When members of the church troop down to Mozano from different points of the country every

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<sup>389</sup> *The Musama Disco Christo Church Constitution*, Mozano: General Head office, MDCC, 1959, p. 50-55

year to celebrate the Festival, they gather with this sense of coming to their one spiritual root as members of one community, irrespective of their diverse ethnic and social backgrounds.<sup>390</sup> In this sense, the MDCC stands distinct from the other churches, in using this event to inculcate in its members the sense of having been set apart as an African Christian community with a global mission.

In view of these aspects of Christian influence, The Rt. Rev. Yedu Bannerman remarked that the observance of Christian religious festivals is one major area where Christianity has stamped its influence on many communities in Ghana.<sup>391</sup>

#### **5.4. Transitional rites**

Within both the Christian and the indigenous traditions, the rites of passage were presided over by religious functionaries, who constituted the authority structure in the religious communities. Among the Mfantse and the Akan, in general, the religious functionary who officiated in the naming ceremony was the *ebusuapanyin*, the head of the clan or the family. He played the important religious role of communicating with the ancestors on behalf of the family/clan.<sup>392</sup> In religious terms, he had no official or special religious training like the Christian priests or Muslim clerics, except the experience he had acquired over the years through participation and observation. His religious role here became very pertinent in view of the strong African belief in reincarnation of ancestors through children born to the family or the clan. An important point to be noted here is that there were indeed other traditional religious functionaries such as the *akomfo*, who were, specifically, called by various deities, with special training for their religious office and the

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<sup>390</sup> This point was made during an interview with the Akabohah III at Mozano on Dec. 7, 2010.

<sup>391</sup> Interview with The Rt. Rev. Yedu Bannerman at his residence in Tema on October 28, 2010

<sup>392</sup> Ekem, pp. 41, 42

*asɔfo*, servants, who officiate in religious rites at a shrine of a particular deity.<sup>393</sup> Yet, they did not preside over traditional child naming ceremonies in the family. The reason for this is that the naming rituals for the birth of a child into a family and its underlying values revolve around the ancestors. The ancestors are rooted within a particular family or clan of the people and not the entire ethnic group or nation. The *akɔmfo* or *asɔfo* were not identified with a specific family or clan group on the basis of lineage; rather, by virtue of their calling, they are representatives of a wider ethnic group or people. Hence, the religious functionary qualified to preside over family religious and cultural events as child naming, marriage and funeral was the *ebusuapanyin*, who was the representative between the living family and the ‘living dead’ (ancestors). During these events, he offered prayer through libation to the Supreme Being, other deities and the ancestors, who indeed were the focus of such celebrations.

Among the Methodists and the Roman Catholics, for instance, it was baptism and christening of children which, initially, constituted the main Christian rites of naming in the church. The Church of Pentecost does not baptize infants, but observes the rites of dedication with naming, while the MDCC practises baptism of children, in addition to its own rituals of giving special heavenly names to its members.

The religious practices of these churches as regards the incorporation of certain elements of the traditional rites into the Christian observances have evolved, in varying ways and degrees, perhaps, the exception being the CP, which has been less open to absorption than the others.

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<sup>393</sup> Refer to the detailed discussions of Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, pp. 43-57

The RCC christened or named children through water baptism in the sanctuary of the church and the MCG and MDCC performed the same either in the church sanctuary or family home. The name of the child was mentioned three times, respectively, with the pronouncements of these words: “in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. Water was then sprinkled on the forehead of the child, with the sign of the cross. The RCC considers baptism as one of the Christian sacraments and therefore applied oil to the forehead of the child and a lighted candle placed in the hands of the child, supported by god-parents. The significance of these rituals is that the child is anointed to walk as king and to be a light, respectively, in the world.<sup>394</sup> In the naming rites, the RCC, MCG and MDCC have incorporated aspects of the indigenous ritual by using water and alcoholic/soft drink.<sup>395</sup> Drops of each drink are placed, consecutively, on the tongue of the child three times, with the words, “if you say it is water, it is water;” “if you say it is wine, it is wine.” The child is being called to be truthful throughout his/ her life. It is the traditional way of, symbolically, imparting the first moral lesson to the child, which these churches have incorporated into their rites.

The Church of Pentecost has a very simple ceremony for naming and dedication rituals. The rituals are performed either at church or home, but, mostly, held in church, especially, in towns and cities. Commenting on this minimum attention to ritual practice, Apostle Koduah stated that the Church of Pentecost as a Christian denomination that belongs to the family of Classical Pentecostals, has, always, tried to dwell on simple forms of church rituals.<sup>396</sup> For this reason, traditional symbolic elements do not feature,

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<sup>394</sup> Interview with Eric Odoom on Dec. 21, 2010 at Mankessim

<sup>395</sup> See appendix v, page 343 for further information on how the Methodist church blends traditional elements with those of Christianity in child naming

<sup>396</sup> Interview with Apostle Alfred Koduah at the Head Office of the Church of Pentecost on September 23, 2010.

prominently, in the rituals and the only Christian rites and elements used in the naming and are scripture reading, the giving of the name (by the parents) and prayers of thanksgiving and protection for the child and the family. In fact, the CP, like most Pentecostal churches, tends to adhere to simple literal interpretation of biblical references to transitional rites. They have, therefore, been less inclined than the European mission churches in incorporating indigenous elements that are considered as having “fetish” influences on the child.

The MDCC uses water in baptism by sprinkling just like the RCC and the Methodist Church. This is not surprising; as a church that broke away from the latter, it shares a lot in common with the mother church. For this same reason, most of the the Methodist ritual practices described are applicable to the MDCC. In a MDCC birth thanksgiving service observed by the researcher, the mother and child were brought in front of the altar where the officiating Minister and the prayer group members (prophets and prophetess) surrounded them. Water was sprinkled on the baby and prayers of thanksgiving and protection were offered. The sprinkled water was referred to as *nkwa nsu* a kind of special “holy water,” which was expected to protect the child.<sup>397</sup>

The major difference between MDCC and Methodist Church was that, apart from the baptism as a means of naming children, the MDCC had a separate ritual by which specific heavenly names revealed to the *Akabohah*, the Head of the church, were given to the children born into that Christian community.<sup>398</sup> The ritual of conferring these names to the

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<sup>397</sup> Interview with Rev. Kaye of the MDCC after church service at Mankessim on Sunday December 27, 2010.

<sup>398</sup> MDCC constitution, p. 52

children in church service was performed, only, by him.<sup>399</sup> However, the researcher learnt that this practice has been suspended for some time now.<sup>400</sup>

In all the four Christian traditions, the common Christian rites observed were scripture readings, prayers and a short exhortation offered on parental responsibility to the child, with the biological parents as the focus. This focus on biological parents, however, overlooked and failed to address the extended family and community responsibility in raising children, which is very central to the indigenous process of socialization and moral upbringing.

Whether at church or home, the family and community members are, always, present to offer support and celebrate the arrival of a new member in all observances, irrespective of the religious group involved.

These Christian rites have effected some changes in the traditional observance of these practices, but have not, completely, replaced them. There is the virtual absence of libation and the role of the family elder, which has now, in most cases, been taken over by Christian Priests/Ministers in christening or child baptism.

Moreover, Mfantse traditional religious beliefs and practices had rituals for the birth and naming of certain children that were considered unique: children born as *twins* and those given birth to in the following order: seventh, *Esuon*, ninth, *Nkromah/Akron*, and tenth, *Badu/Baduwa*. These children were believed to have been given by deities and certain ritual sacrifices were performed in order to ensure their wellbeing and that of the family. The religious ritual known as *abam* was performed for such children, with objects

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<sup>399</sup> Interviews with Rev Amankwa at Mozano during the celebration of the Peace Festival on August 26, 2010.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid, August 26, 2010

of charm put around the wrist or the waist of the child<sup>401</sup> These were practices that reflected the indigenous belief in the close link and bond between the spiritual and physical realms of life and the desire to maintain that bond for the enhancement of values that pertain to the vital force. All these are missing in the Christian naming rituals.<sup>402</sup> Yet, some Christian parents, out of fear for the repercussions on failure to perform these traditional rituals, secretly, sought, on their own, alternative spiritual protection.

The community observance of these traditional rituals and its public participation has, however, been, gradually, disappearing, partly due to the Christian influence.

The Christian rituals were, initially, confined to the church, which, sometimes, restricted the participation of most members of the family and community in the event. In the early Christian missionary era, the family was, usually, advised to pick a Christian name, since that had no ‘fetish connotation’;<sup>403</sup> usually, the name of one of a Christian saint, as it was in the case of RCC, while the MCG and CPP would pick a biblical name, most often, one of Jesus’ disciples or an European name. In this process, the indigenous belief in the influential role of naming on the individual and family and its value for the community life was not taken into serious account by the church.

The naming rituals in the Christian and the traditional religious setting had both convergent and divergent points, in terms of symbolic meanings. In both traditions, the celebrants expressed their recognition and gratitude to God, the creator and giver of life, from whom they have received the child. The rituals, also, served as means of receiving and welcoming the child as a living member into the community, with the given name intended

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<sup>401</sup> Mintah, p. 52-61

<sup>402</sup> Interview with traditional leaders at Saltpond, on Nov. 18, 2010

<sup>403</sup> Interview with Rev. Fr. Robert Sniper, a liturgist and lecturer in systematic theology at the St. Peter’s Seminary, Pedu on Dec. 23, 2010.

to foster in the child the good virtues of the person named after or the event associated with it.

On the other hand, there were some differences between the two systems. While the Christian practice of giving biblical names or names of early Christian fathers or mothers were meant to honour and perpetuate memories of the good deeds of such personalities in the Christian family, the traditional naming of the child intended to honour the ancestors and to maintain the traditional family name. Formerly, one's lineage could, easily, be traced on the basis of his/her family name. The Churches' baptism and naming practices, especially, among the Mfantse people, has, rather, resulted in the adoption of many Christian or European names by the local people. This is, also, partly rooted in the impact of Western culture, which was projected as superior to everything African, including naming. A majority of the children who entered the Western schools were advised to adopt Christian or European names, which were perceived at that time as an honourable fashion. Even the indigenous names were anglicized. In view of the symbolic importance attached to names by Africans, this practice, psychologically, affected the people's indigenous identity and dignity; a paralysis that Africa is yet to recover fully from.

In the indigenous system, people participated in the religion and community from birth, but the Christian ritual of dedication or baptism, symbolically, meant the removal of the baptized from his or her traditional religious community to a different religious setting. The Christian exclusive claims on salvation, particularly, reinforced the notion of leaving the old, considered as "evil" behind in order to enter into the new. In this sense, the Christian baptismal and dedication rituals alienated the indigenous converts from their traditional religious and cultural roots.

Another religious and cultural event that manifests the Christian influence on the traditional communities is marriage celebration. In this particular rite, the Christian churches, especially, the RCC and the MCG insisted on members' marriage being solemnized in the church before it could be recognized as acceptable before God. Appointments of church officers were, most of the time, made on the basis of their marriage status, besides their Christian commitment and spiritual gifts. This stance of missionary Christianity towards the existing indigenous marriage arrangements, initially, ignored the valid traditional customary rites that governed people's marriages.

There has been a shift on the part of the churches in partial recognition of traditional marriage rites. Most of the Christian churches recognize, at present, three types of marriages - the customary, ordinance and church marriages - which prevail in this area and in Ghana as a whole. All the three can be combined, with the church celebration as the seal. The churches ensure that the customary rites have been, duly, performed as concrete demonstration of the consent of the two families involved before the marriage could be blessed in church. For instance, the question asked in the course of the Churches' liturgical service, "Who gave this woman to be married to this man," is intended to ascertain the performance of the customary rites and the families' consent in the presence of the Christian witnesses.<sup>404</sup>

The churches have their different arrangements as regards counselling sessions and preparations for the couple to be married. The various denominations devote some time to counselling and spiritual preparation for entry into this union. Sometimes, emphasis is

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<sup>404</sup> *Methodist Liturgy and Book of Worship*, Accra: Commercial Associates Ltd, 2000, p. 119. The Methodist Church's decision to incorporate some relevant indigenous religious and cultural elements resulted from the realization to be more relevant in the African context where she has been called upon to serve. Hence, some of the revisions that were introduced in the new liturgical book.

placed either on counselling or the spiritual preparation, which involves fasting and intensive prayers for divine guidance. Commenting on this experience within the Church of Pentecost, Mrs. Grace Nyame-Tsease intimated that the counselling and spiritual preparation, as practised by the church, has helped to nurture good wives within both the church and the community; for this reason, the incidence of divorce has been minimal.<sup>405</sup>

Within the MDCC, when a church member found someone that he wanted to marry, he was expected to inform *Jehunano*, currently, the main prayer group at Mozano, who would put the matter before God to seek his will before the man made his intentions known to the woman and her family. This particular spiritual exercise was open to even those who were non-members, but it has been discontinued due to abuse, especially, by some church members, with its attendant problems.<sup>406</sup>

The Christian rites, usually, take place in the sanctuary of the church amidst large turnout of friends, family and community members; an element of fanfare that underlines the importance the community attaches to the institution as well as the nature of close interconnectedness of the community members. The rituals are pretty uniform in almost all the Christian churches, with slight variations. The major symbols and rituals which feature in the celebration are hymns/songs, prayers for the couple and family members, the taking of vows, exchange of rings, scripture readings, exhortation and, finally, the administration of Eucharist or communion. The vows and the exchange of rings lay stress on the unbroken covenant and symbolize the love that binds the couple in Christ respectively.<sup>407</sup> The administering of the Eucharist underscores the Christian understanding of the sacredness of

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<sup>405</sup> Interview with sister Grace Nyame Tsease at the manse of the Church Pentecost, Essakyir on September 2, 2009.

<sup>406</sup> Interview with Akaboha III at Mozano on December 7, 2010.

<sup>407</sup> *Methodist liturgy and Book of Worship*, pp. 119, 122

the marriage institution, which symbolizes the mystical union that exists between Christ and his Church. It is these meanings and values that the hymns/songs, prayers and the reading of scriptures, with exhortation tend to reinforce in the married couple and the participants. While these Christian rituals focus on the relevance of the marriage institution for the couple, the traditional rituals draw attention to its relevance for the wider community, revolving around the family lineage and the ancestors.<sup>408</sup>

The fanfare and social prestige attached to the Christian marriage rites have served to popularize the church's celebration, but the traditional one has not been replaced; the two have existed side by side. Some of the Christian churches have, even incorporated some aspects of the traditional rites in their liturgy. This shall be discussed in detail later.

The churches' rule on marriage, on the other hand, with the exception of MDCC, did not create any room for polygamous marriage, which was very pronounced in African cultural set-up. The Christian rule was stretched to inflict punishment upon even those who were already in polygamous marriage before conversion to Christianity; they were not permitted to receive the Holy Communion and, in certain situations, they could not hold office.<sup>409</sup> If the issue is not as contentious in the church now as it used to, it is not because the church has, officially, changed its position, but it is because times and circumstances have changed, making polygamous marriage no more an attractive option. The nature of traditional economies, especially, the need for more hands on the farm, which gave grounds for the system, is no longer tenable under the impact of modernity and the reality of rapid population growth. In addition, the impact of education and urbanization has, radically, altered the original views that supported polygamy.

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<sup>408</sup> Interview with some leaders of the Mankessim Methodist church on Nov. 21, 2010

<sup>409</sup> *The Church of Pentecost Ministers' Handbook*, Accra, Advocate Publishing Ltd, 2008, p. 121

Even the MDCC, which, strongly, affirms certain indigenous cultural elements, including polygamy, has introduced a clause that seeks to regulate the polygamous practice. The church, still, accepts those who are already in polygamous marriage as full members, but prohibits members who are in monogamous marriage from taking additional wives or becoming second or third wives. This is in recognition of the changing times, which have impinged on the church to adapt in order to be relevant to the present context.<sup>410</sup> There is, also, the possibility of the MDCC trying to conform, to some extent, to the general norms and regulations regarding marriage, as existing in other Christian churches in view of the controversies that surround this type of marriage.

Although some of the Christian churches recognize polygamy as, customarily, acceptable form of marriage in traditional communities, most of them have, still, not been able to accept polygamists as full members.

Both the customary rites and church blessing always end with celebrations, which as usual, involve family and community members of diverse backgrounds.

The observance of funeral rites has been an aspect of transitional rites where Christian impact has, also, been felt in various ways in the communities, depending, on the rituals of a particular Christian denomination.

In this discussion, we shall limit ourselves to the burial rituals of the funeral celebration, since Akan funeral observances are elaborate and could, sometimes, span over a long period of time. This limitation enables us to focus on some of the practices of both Christian Churches and the traditionalists and the values that inform them as well as examining some of the evolving trends over the years. Observations of the funeral services

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<sup>410</sup> Interview with Akaboha III on December 7, 2010

of the Christian denominations and examination of their books of liturgy revealed the basic underlying beliefs of Christians in the life after death. On the basis of the Christian's faith in Christ, death is not the end of life; those who die in Christ shall be raised in Christ and ushered into an eternal existence with God. These are the core values that Christian funeral rituals tend to emphasize. The traditional beliefs concerning this will be addressed, at length, in the next chapter, but it suffices to state here that, the two systems share some common grounds; that is, death is not the end of life, though there are differences as regards the life hereafter. It is the Christian belief in the eternal existence of the soul in paradise that informs most of its rituals concerning funerals.

Quite an appreciable level of understanding has been reached between family members and the immigrant religious groups concerning burial arrangements when a member passes away. The traditional families have come to understand the need to respect the will of a deceased member, who made a choice for a particular religious community while alive. The need to respect the will of a dead family member is very strong among Akan and the Mfantse people, in particular. When a family member is called home, the family elders inform the leaders of his/her religious community as soon as possible, and together, a decision is taken on the date for the burial service. This traditional initiative derives, also, from the fact that Christian funeral celebrations have become prestigious ways of honouring the dead in society.<sup>411</sup> Though the church sees itself as a family and a community for its members, it also, recognizes that its members belong to ethnic families and the wider community, perhaps, with stronger bonds. For this reason, burial rituals associated with

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<sup>411</sup> Interview with Saltpond traditional leaders on Nov. 18, 2011

bathing the dead and laying in state for public viewing are left as much as possible in the hands of family members.<sup>412</sup>

In recognition of the importance the community attaches to funeral celebrations, some of the churches have instituted public viewing in the early morning of the day of burial before the coffin is closed for the funeral service to commence. In the RCC, MCG and the MDCC, the mortal remains could be brought into the Chapel for the burial service. In some places the viewing is done early in the morning in the family house before the coffin is brought to the chapel. In the Christian service, the choice of songs, scripture reading and the preaching are all geared towards reinforcing Christian beliefs concerning the life after death and the hope of resurrection that is found in Christ Jesus. It is a moment that prompts all present, for once, at least, to reflect upon the transient nature of this life.

Some of the Christian traditions do not open the coffin for viewing in the church, especially, the RCC and, for this reason, the viewing takes place either in a spacious family house or a public meeting place on the eve of the burial day. Some families, communities and church members keep wake. However, there has, also, been an observation by some of the Christian churches that wake-keeping add to the high cost of funeral and, also, saps the energy and health of members who have to come back early the following morning for the burial ceremony. The Methodist and some Christian churches have taken a decision to put an end to the wake-keeping. However, it must be admitted that the implementation of ending the practice has not been met with the cooperation it deserves, especially, on the part of family and community members; wake-keeping persists in several communities

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<sup>412</sup> Interview held with the Rt. Rev. Yedu Bannerman, October 28, 2010

The CP, in particular, intentionally, uses funeral celebrations to evangelize due to its strong values for soul-winning. The church has figured out that death impresses upon people to reflect upon the brevity of human existence and the prospects of destiny. On this note, the CP has, effectively, used such occasions to draw attention to the hope in Christ in the face of death, sometimes, resulting in conversions.<sup>413</sup> This explains why the church, usually, holds its funeral services in the open space so that as much as possible, the wider community members can be reached with the Christian message.

There is the recognition of the relevance of the public viewing of the mortal remains as a means by which family and community members come to terms with the reality of the departure of a loved one. The observance is used to bid a befitting farewell to their loved ones through symbolic gestures. Family members at this solemn moment place objects such as pieces of cloth, rings, handkerchiefs, money, among others, in the coffin of a departed Christian family member; a practice that is informed by the traditional belief that the dead, who is making a transition into existence in the “other world” will need these items. It is believed that this community participation contributes to the psychological and emotional healing process, especially, for the bereaved family.

From the church, the mortal remains are taken to the cemetery to be laid to rest. Here, one of the committal rituals that bring the reality of the human mortality and the acceptance of the departure of the dead from the living into focus, are the following words which are uttered at the grave yard: “dust to dust and ashes to ashes;”<sup>414</sup> but, the end of that sentence also evokes the hope that is rooted in the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

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<sup>413</sup> Interview with Apostle Afred Koduah on September 23, 2010

<sup>414</sup> *The Methodist Liturgy and Book of Worship*, p. 148

In the area of burial rites, sometimes the church and the family have had some misunderstandings and serious confrontations, especially, during burial rites of church members, who are chiefs or from royal families. While the church wants to insist on its right to offer its deceased member the required Christian burial, the family would claim that the dead member is a royal and cannot just be buried like any ordinary member in the community. Some of these traditional burial rituals cannot be performed till late in the night at the royal cemetery. The church's experiences with some of these incidents over the years have, most often, informed them on how to respond to such situations; it, often, gives in to the family demands by offering the cemetery committal prayer during the funeral service in the church.

There is always the family gathering after the burial for the final funeral rites, which embraces all the sections of the wider community, comprising, the church, the family and the local community. Here the cultural dimension of the people as reflected in their participation in such events to show solidarity, support and love as one people becomes more observable. Individuals and groups within the community make financial donations to help the family members deal with the cost incurred. Unfortunately, this community support to deal with the financial burdens resulting from funerals is often offset by the heavy expenditure that goes into the funeral celebrations. The heavy expenditure has to do with the cost of expensive coffins, exotic food and drinks, advertisements, brochures, posters, mortuary cost, among others.

The churches, on their part, have their different regulations on the kind and amount of financial support they give to the bereaved family. Some of them such as the Methodists and the Roman Catholics take up collections during the funeral service, purposely, for the family to help pay the cost of the Coffin. However, since the church has not been able to

legislate on the minimum amount to be spent on the coffin, the cost of these coffins, sometimes, exceed the amount realized through the church collection. Some of the churches also have welfare system, which helps to pay for a substantial cost of the funeral expenses. The Church of Pentecost operates with this option. The MDCC, as a church that has a strong community identity takes up every aspect of the funeral cost when a member passes away and this has served as one of its strong points of attraction for new members.

Some of the visible Christian influence on funeral rites is the virtual absence of libation, where the church is involved in the performance of the rituals; something that has been a strong component of the traditional rituals for funerals. In some instances, serving strong alcoholic beverages are, completely, discouraged as the funeral of the member is supposed to give public witness to the Christian faith.

Perhaps, one observable area of the churches' failure to impact positively upon the religious and cultural life of the people is found in the funeral observance. Though attempt has been made by some to regulate the rising cost in funeral expenses, this has not been, entirely, successful. In the midst of poverty, expensive funerals in Ghana and in this area, for that matter, have become uncontrollable. Almost in every funeral in the family, it has become customary for a new uniform clothe to be acquired by every family member and some members in the community. It has, also, become a fashion now to use big bill boards on road sides to advertise the funeral of departed ones, not counting the cost for very expensive coffins, which has, now, become a matter of competition. The Christian churches have failed to inject moderation into these funeral practices, which are tearing families apart with heavy debts. The Christian values of otherworldly, which discourages over-emphasis on material existence of life is yet to be felt in funeral observances of the people.

We shall now turn to the socio-economic impact of the activities of the Christian churches on the people in the area, with emphasis on the provision of social services.

### **5.5. The socio-economic impact of Christianity**

The Christian understanding of Jesus' holistic ministry, as expressed in addressing both the spiritual and material needs of humanity, has guided most Christian churches in their mission in various cultures. Ghana has not been an exception in this process. The early Christian missionaries - the Roman Catholics, the Anglican Church of England, the Presbyterians and the Methodists, among others – demonstrated their compassion and concern for the spiritual as well as the material needs of the people of the Gold Coast.

The introduction of the Christian gospel, together with the provision of formal education and other social services in the country, was initiated by the early European Christian traders and missionaries. It is in these social programmes that one could observe the greatest impact of Christianity on the life of the people. Various references to these efforts were made in chapter three. We shall remind ourselves of few of them in order to contextualize the discussions.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Portuguese Catholic merchants, who built St. George Castle at Elmina for trading, tried to introduce the Christian faith as well as Western education by setting up a religious school there. When they were overthrown by the Dutch in 1637, the tradition continued, this time, through the Reformed Christian instructions. In the process, an African, in the person of Elisa Johannes Capitein, was sent to Holland and trained as the Chaplain-school master for the Elmina castle school. His outstanding work in putting the

local language into writing resulted in the translation of the Lord's Prayer book, the Ten Commandments and parts of the catechumen into the Mfantse language.<sup>415</sup>

These initial efforts were consolidated by the various Christian missionary groups in their mission activities in the country. Their educational enterprise, particularly, made it possible for those who were willing to acquire literacy.<sup>416</sup> The RCC and the MCG have basic schools in the major towns and villages in this traditional area. The CP and the MDCC falls behind in these endeavours for some obvious reasons: in the first place, there was initial over-emphasis on the spiritual concerns of the people as against the socio-economic on the part of the CP and MDCC; this is well reflected, for example, in the views of Mckeown, the founder of the Ghana CP, when he argued that the real need of the African was not education, but the fullness of the Holy Spirit in his life and then, everything else would follow.<sup>417</sup> In addition, some of the AICs, including the MDCC, did not have that financial resource and support to engage, in a substantial way, in providing these services. Finally, the early Christian Mission Churches took the lead and monopolized this field to the extent that, some of the emerging churches felt no need to duplicate those efforts that had already resulted in the establishment of schools with sound academic foundation. Though in this particular area, the RCC and MCG have the comparative advantage, it could be said that all these four churches are now paying due attention to the churches' social agenda, without sacrificing the spiritual vision. The Church of Pentecost, for instance, is involved in the provision of basic public schools and private schools referred to as (preparatory school) in Mankessim and Saltpond, while MDCC has established a basic as well as the sole Junior Secondary School (JSS) at Mozano. In fact,

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<sup>415</sup> Debrunner, p. 33

<sup>416</sup> Odamtten, p. 135

<sup>417</sup> Alfred Koduah, *Christianity in Ghana Today*, Accra: Advocate Publication Ltd, 2004, p. 56

the provision of water, electricity, good access road and other amenities in Mozano and its neighbouring towns was through the instrumentality of the church.

The social agenda of these Christian Churches have gone a step further; the MCG, RCC and the CP have all established tertiary institutions (university colleges) in the country, though outside this traditional area.

It is not only in the area of education that the impact of the churches' social service has been observed and felt. From the very beginning, the Christian missionaries demonstrated their commitment to help build the country's economy, beside education. In the fields of agricultural, medical and other social services, the Christian churches have, equally, responded to the plight of various communities where they have evangelized. The RCC, for instance, runs a clinic at Mankessim and a hospital at Breman Esikuma, few miles away from this area. This serves, especially, the inhabitants of this traditional area and others in the Central Region of Ghana. The MCG and the CP, also, have few hospitals and clinics outside this area, while the MDCC has, recently, established a clinic at Mozano. The Methodists have agricultural stations, one in the northern Ghana and two in the Central region (one of which is located at Ajumako in this area), which provide basic farming services as well as limited employment opportunities for the community. The churches in their various ways, initiate intervention programmes to respond to certain challenges such as lack of potable water, outbreak of diseases, storms and floods, among others in the communities. This important partnership between the church and the state in meeting the socio-economic needs of the Ghanaian citizenry, over the years, has been a landmark achievement of the Christian missionary work, not only in this area, but Ghana as a whole. It was in recognition of this that the President, John Evans Atta Mills congratulated the Methodist Church Ghana for her contributions to the development of the nation at a church

service to commemorate the Methodist Church of Ghana's 50 years autonomy from Britain on Sunday July 31, 2011.<sup>418</sup>

Admittedly, all the Churches' activities and influence on the Ghanaian society cannot be perceived and described as positive. Mention has already been made of certain set-backs as regards the attitude, particularly, of the Christian Mission Churches towards some indigenous practices and values: the intolerance towards indigenous religious and cultural expressions, the undermining of traditional authority by some Christian converts, owing to some of the churches' teachings, the European civilizing attitudes, which characterized the missionary activities of the European established churches, among others, are but some of them. Besides these, a Christian impact that needs to be noted here is what seems to be the disintegrating effect of the Churches' activities on traditional family structure and values. People have argued that some of the churches' teachings and emphasis on personal and individual salvation, as against the traditional value of family and community belonging, is responsible for the current lack of family and community control on individual moral life, resulting in individualism, selfishness, greed and corruption. One evidence of this disintegrative effect in this traditional area is individualism, which has led to some family houses being left in ruins in preference for the construction of individual housing units; a phenomenon that did not exist in the past.<sup>419</sup> Of course while the blame for these happenings cannot be put, squarely, at the doorstep of the Christian churches, European Missionary Christianity cannot, also, be exonerated, completely, for its failure to take into account the African concept of communal salvation and well-being which were cherished values in this traditional area and Ghana as a whole. The, rather, over-emphasis on

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<sup>418</sup> "State and Church must forge closer ties – Mills," Accra: Joy Online News, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel....>, cited 01/08/2011, p. 1

<sup>419</sup> Interview with some traditional leaders of Ekrawfo on Dec. 10, 2010

individual prosperity and acquisition of wealth by some of the Charismatic Churches has intensified this already worsening situation.<sup>420</sup> It must, also, be reckoned, however, that, the forces of modernity through Western culture, which are impacting on various societies, have been strong elements in this process and it demands that one adopts a holistic approach in examining and addressing the problem.

In addition, the churches' education system, together with Western culture equipped people with knowledge and skills which enhanced their upward social mobility. The beneficiaries had to move away from the traditional set-up, where they had been, hitherto, under the traditional tutelage of family and community elders, to seek employment in towns and cities. The upshot of this has been the breakdown of the hold of some of the traditional values on their lives. In their place, Western cultural life-styles began to take the central place in the lives of the people. Some of the emerging educated Africans began to turn their back on their own cultural values as they imbibed, almost, everything Western without the required evaluation.

In spite of the above observations, the impact of Christian churches' activities on the Ghanaian community life, particularly, in this area has been laudable. When it was doubtful in the minds of the European colonialists, as to whether the African was capable of taking part in the affairs of governing themselves, the churches showed the way. Among the Mission established churches, steps were taken to train indigenous members who worked hand in hand with the missionaries. They were given leadership responsibilities at the local, regional and national levels. Though there were still attitudinal elements of superiority on the part of the European missionaries over their indigenous counterparts, the concrete example of entrusting leadership positions to the indigenous people was set by the church.

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<sup>420</sup> Interview with Rev. Fr. Francis Mbroh, Mankessim Parish, Catholic Church on Aug. 29, 2009

The CP, for example, started with the active involvement and leadership of the indigenous people, while the MDCC and many AIC churches were established by Africans. The success stories of all these Christian institutions in Ghana sent a strong signal to the European colonizers that the Africans were determined to take their destiny in their own hands. This initiative on the part of the churches became a catalyst in the processes that set the Gold Coast on the road towards independence.

Added to the above is the important role played by some of the educated church members in raising political consciousness during the early period of the agitation for the independence of the country. Most of them were products from the church mission schools. Mention can be made of Joseph Smith, Henry Barnes, Thomas Hughes, J. deGraft Hayford, James F. Amissah, James Hutton Brew, Andrew William Parker, F. C. Grant, R. J. Ghartey, John Mensah Sarbah, among others. Reporting on the death of one of these - Andrew William Parker – the newspaper, *Gold Coast Nation* expressed the following words, “... There could be no two opinions that the veteran soldier of the cross was a scholar of no small repute, fearless where wrong was to be righted, modest, unassuming and unpretentious; he was ambitious for church and state.”<sup>421</sup> In this regard the mission schools did play a role in laying the foundation for the country’s selfdom.

Contrary to the popular perception of the church as bedfellows of the colonial powers at that time, the Methodist Church, for example, became involved in the socio-political life of the country in advocating for justice. This was reflected in the publications of its newspaper *The Gold Coast Methodist Times*. The paper served to address the political and economic concerns of the country and, in this process, held the colonial powers to accountable governance.

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<sup>421</sup> Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, p. 84, cited in Acquah, pp. 7, 8.

The provision of schools, medical and other social facilities by the churches could not have come at a better time; access to medical facilities and education during that period was very limited. The social intervention of the Churches' missionary activities became, for the people, a great relief from some of the problems relating to high illiteracy, diseases and heavy death tolls that were, easily, preventable and treatable. The Christian schools admitted children irrespective of ethnicity and religious affiliation. These efforts contributed, tremendously, towards fostering unity and understanding among people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in Ghana. These and other socio-economic programmes of the churches, all of which cannot be enumerated in this work, have served to place them as institutions that are in partnership with the civil authorities to ensure national development.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

We have explored in this chapter the impact of the beliefs, practices and Christian missionary activities on the indigenous context. It was noted from the discussions that the growth and influence of Christianity, which was introduced in this area by European Christian missionaries, was facilitated by the events that led to the collapse of the *nananom pɔw* shrine at Mankessim. This religio-cultural change became more pronounced, especially, as some of the traditional chiefs converted to Christianity and some Christian converts began to question certain indigenous beliefs, practices and values as well as the indigenous authority structure. Furthermore, imported Christian beliefs and values, aided by the Western cultural influence at that time, alienated some of the indigenous people from the traditional way of life, as evidenced in the Christian and European names that were given to Christian converts and other indigenous people at church and school,

respectively. In spite of these influences, the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural practices were not, completely, abandoned.

We, also, observed that the variations in the doctrines, practices and values in the different Christian denominations in this area, namely the RCC, MCG, MDCC and the CP were reflected in the celebration of the transitional rites and festivals: while the RCC, MCG and MDCC practised infant baptism, the CP, on the other hand, observed christening and dedication. In addition, the RCC, MCG and MDCC have incorporated the use of symbolic elements of water and alcohol/soft drink as found in the traditional ritual, while the CP has not absorbed those indigenous elements in traditional naming. In marriage, the MDCC, with its self-understanding as African Christian Church, welcomes polygamists at the Lord's Supper and practises a controlled form of polygamy while the other Christian churches do not endorse polygamous system of marriage.

We noted that, apart from the funeral liturgical and committal services held for the departed Christian at the church and the graveyard, respectively, the Christian funeral observance is, largely, informed by the indigenous beliefs of the people. The elaborate funeral preparations in terms of high expenses and the practice of placing objects in the coffin of the deceased as items that will be needed in the world beyond, still, persist in most funeral celebrations.

Generally, libation prayers in transitional rites that involve Christian converts have been, mostly, discontinued. Christians have objected to these rituals, which invoke the presence of lesser divinities, as they perceived them as “fetish” practices.

The Christian involvement in the celebration of the traditional festivals has resulted in some modifications in the observance. Certain religious rituals such as animal sacrifices have been removed from public spaces to certain excluded traditional sacred grounds.

The discussions have established that Christianity as a monotheistic religion, tried to distinguish between the indigenous religious elements and the cultural components; a criterion which was based on an unclear line of distinction between what was religious and what was cultural.

Again, other activities of these various Christian groups and their relevance to the indigenous context were differently felt by the people; while the provision of social services of the RCC and the MCG served the urgent social needs of the communities, the incorporation of the indigenous elements in the worship life of the MDCC and CP and their emphasis on intensive prayers, fasting and healing services connected with the people's religious aspirations and needs. These became major points of attraction to converts.

Our discussions, also, revealed that one of the areas where Christian cultural influence has been very visible in this traditional society and Ghana as whole is in the observance of Christian religious festivals and Sunday as the Christian day of worship. Both Christmas and Easter are festive events, which have involved the participation of almost all community members, irrespective of religious affiliation.

The celebration of the Christian festivals as well as the Christian participation in the traditional festivals has, however, helped to reinforce the traditional communal values of ethnic identity, unity and sense of belonging.

The above discussions delineate some of the major areas of the indigenous religious and cultural life in which Christian beliefs and practices, with their underlying values have impacted the traditional communities in this area.

Our second task in the next chapter is the examination of the Islamic impact on the indigenous context, aspects of which will be compared with that of Christianity.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Impact of Islam on the indigenous life**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

In chapter five, we examined and analyzed the impact of the Christian beliefs, practices and missionary activities (provision of social services) on the indigenous communities in the area. This chapter will continue with that line of discussions by taking a look at the impact of the Islamic beliefs, practices, values and provisions of social services on the indigenous environment.

The methodological approach adopted in chapter five for discussing the Christian impact on the traditional life of the people in this area will be applicable in this chapter as well: that is, the indigenous religious and cultural environment into which Islam penetrated as mentioned earlier in reference to Christianity must be kept in focus in order to assess any change that has occurred due to the entry and activities of Islam in the area.

We shall, then, examine and analyze the Islamic beliefs and practices as observed in the rituals of naming, marriage, funeral, the celebration of religious festivals (both Islamic and traditional festivals) and the provision social services in this area, with their underlying values. An attempt will be made, in this process, to examine the measure of the Islamic impact on the indigenous context and the change that has taken place as a result of its imported norms, practices and values.

In addition, the discussions will, also, make a comparative analysis of the respective relationships of Christianity and Islam with the ATR and its cultural elements as well as

their impacts on the latter. In view of our methodological approach, chapter five will serve as the major point of reference in our discussions for this chapter

## **6.2. Islamic penetration and influence in the Mfantse area.**

As mentioned in chapter four, foreign African Muslims, mostly, the Dyula traders from the upper Niger regions of West Africa came to settle in certain places in this traditional area and created their distinct communities in the early part of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was reinforced by the Muslims in the Gold Coast Constabulary established by the colonial government, freed slaves from Brazil and the return of war veterans from Indonesia, some of whom, later, settled along the coast of Ghana in the Mfantse area.

One visible impact of this development on the indigenous community was that the demographic structure of the place became altered, religiously and socio-culturally. Owing, primarily, to language and other cultural barriers between the early Muslim settlers and the local people as well as much focus on trading by the former (most of them were traders), Islam was, to a large extent, confined to the foreign Muslim settlements (the zongos), as found, especially, in Mankessim and Saltpond. This, notwithstanding, mutual religious and cultural impact on the various ethnic groups was completely blocked. One of the religious influences of Islam in the area at this time was the mystic practices of some of the Muslim religious leaders (locally referred to as mallams), who were of Sufi religious Orders. Their practices of divination, use of amulets, charms, washing of Qur'anic verses with water for people with spiritual needs, among others, projected them in the eyes of the indigenous people as religious leaders, with magical powers, *baraka*. These aspects of Islamic religious practices became entrenched in the communities because they connected well with the indigenous beliefs and practices. These were embraced, not only by Muslims, but by non-

Muslims, some of whom were traditional elders and chiefs. The amulets and charms were sometimes sown on traditional war uniforms or hanged on the body as means of protection.

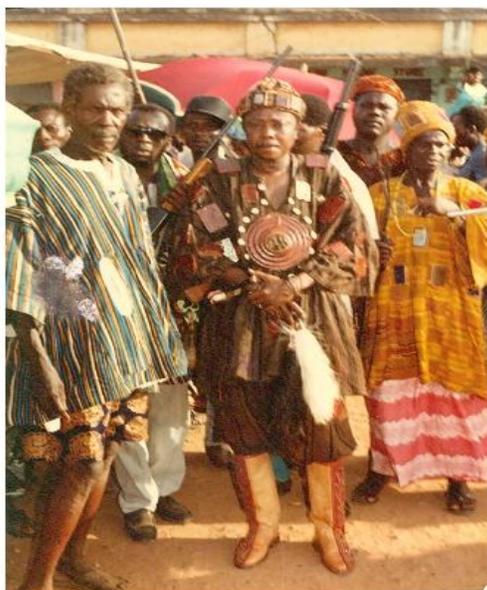


Fig. 6.2

The picture above (Fig. 6.1), depicts an Mfantse divisional chief wearing a war regalia and gear on which are sown amulets and talismans made by mallams.<sup>422</sup> Such objects were coveted by most chiefs in West Africa who believed that these mediums offered them protection and victory, especially, during war times. It was, partly, due to this that Muslim sufi clerics and leaders gained easy access to the royal courts of some of the West African kingdoms.

At the time of the inception of Islam in this area, some of the towns and, especially, the villages were without modern medical facilities, in spite of the efforts of the Christian missionaries in this direction. The people experienced high infant mortality rate and fatalities in pregnancy and delivery. The traditional beliefs in spiritual causes of diseases and other life challenges became the driving force behind the indigenous inclinations towards these Islamic mystic practices as sources of help and this popularized the religion

<sup>422</sup> The picture was captured during an Akwanbo festival of the people of Mankessim on Sept. 4, 2010.

and served to open the possibilities of conversions. For instance, the charms and amulets were craved for by mothers as means of protection for their children. In addition to the mystic Islamic practices, some of the Sufi Muslim clerics, also, gained recognition among the indigenous people as experts in the circumcision of the male (including both children and grown-ups). These were, locally, referred to as *wanzams*.

This nature of Islam's relationship with the indigenous religious beliefs and values of the Akan, and the Mfantse people, in particular, has been affirmed as well by Omenyo: "One major thing that attracts Akan to Islam in Ghana is amulets that are produced by Muslim spiritualists (mallams)."<sup>423</sup> It was in this context, perhaps, that the role of the Muslim mystic Sadick Bukar through whom Sam was converted, takes on a significant importance, not only in Benjamin Sam's conversion, but also in the history of Islam among the Mfantse people in this traditional area.

Like the African Independent Churches, the Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian groups, the al-Tijaniyya sufi orders provided religious services that connected with the African indigenous religious aspirations and met both the people's spiritual and material needs.

On the other hand, Islam's attitude towards the indigenous religious and cultural elements of the people could be likened to that of Christianity; a complicated one, which depended on the type of Islam one found in the local context. The researcher observed this reality on the ground in the course of his field work in this area. At Mankessim, for instance, where the composition of one of the Muslim communities was mixed – comprising Muslim settlers and the indigenous converts – it was observed in the course of

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<sup>423</sup> Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: History of Christianity in Ghana*, Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2002, p. 32

conversations that, the leadership have inclinations towards some of the legalistic and radical Wahabbi form of Islam. The same can be said of the community at Essakyir that is led by the cleric Alhaj Mohammed Ocran, who shared with the researcher of having pursued further Qur'anic studies in Saudi Arabia. Al-Haj Ocran was of the view that traditional beliefs and practices that were not in consonance with the Traditions and Sunna of the Prophet were not Islamic and should not be practised by Mfantse Muslim converts. Besides these, Samwini, also, makes allusion to the possibility of similar Islamic influences on the indigenous context. He reveals in his study, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana Since 1950* that a Muslim sect, *Ahlus Sunna wa-Jama'a* (ASWAJ), which was established in Ghana on the religious ideology and principles of Wahabbism has a branch at Agona Nyakrom, in the Central Region of Ghana.<sup>424</sup>

It must be noted, at this point that Islam made its entry in the country and in this area, mainly, through the efforts of African Muslims and the indigenous converts, without the support of outside missionary agencies. It became easier, therefore, for it to be identified as an African religion. Christianity, on the other hand, was introduced in the then Gold Coast by the European Christian missionaries during the period of European colonization of West Africa. There were, also, times when the missionaries enjoyed supports from the European colonial administration. This relationship between the European Christian Missionaries and the colonial powers projected Christianity as a bed-fellow of colonization in the eyes of most indigenous people.

Moreover, Islam was introduced in this area with much more united front and uniform religious doctrines than Christianity. Islam's uniform beliefs and practices, especially, as found in *shahada* and the five pillars of Islam, made it easier for its converts to understand

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<sup>424</sup> Samwini, p. 177

and embrace the faith. Although the emergence of the Ahmadis, ASWAJ and al-Tijaniyya sufi order in Ghana have, also, given rise to different doctrinal emphasis and practices, resulting, sometimes, in violence and deaths, it could, still, be said that there is much more uniformity and unity found in Islamic beliefs and practices in comparison with Christianity. The various doctrinal emphasis and practices of the Christian churches, sometimes, confused their converts, rather than convinced them about the one faith in God through Christ Jesus. In Ghana the two Islamic groups whose presence and activities are more pronounced, as observed earlier, and, therefore, recognized are the Sunnis and the Ahmadis. Even then, the Ahmadis are perceived by some Ghanaian Muslims, including Rabiatu Ammah as belonging to the Sunni Tradition.<sup>425</sup>

In view of these factors, among others, the attitude of most indigenous people towards Islam was, therefore, much more favourable than Christianity and this, to some extent, affected how the two immigrant religions were accepted by the local people. Islam's advantage in this indigenous context was boosted when Benjamin Sam converted to the Islamic faith from Methodism.

### **6.2.1 Benjamin Sam's Conversion and emergence of Mfantse Muslim communities**

Other aspects of religious and cultural impacts of Islam began to be observed and felt, particularly, with Sam's conversion and his active missionary work. The first of these was the religious composition, which became much more diverse with the emergence of Mfantse Muslims within some of the traditional communities. This saw conversions from one religious tradition to the other, especially from the established ones - both ATR and Christianity – to Islam, which according to some of the local narratives, were devoid of

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<sup>425</sup> Interview with Dr. Rabiatu Ammah, senior lecturer of the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon on Sept 3, 2009.

major tensions and conflicts.<sup>426</sup> Perhaps, of greater religious and cultural significance in the process of change was the creation of a distinct Mfantse Muslim community at Ekrawfo, which set some of the members separate and away from their traditional family setting. As noted earlier, the intention was to make it possible for members to be together and participate in *salat* and Islamic teachings as a religious community. These practices and their religious expressions, further, reinforced the aspiration of unity and the Islamic sense of universal community which characterize Islam and the faithful.<sup>427</sup>

The emergence of that indigenous Islamic community came along with certain practices and expressions, which served, further, to deepen the change that was taking place in the traditional environment. Islam as a monotheistic religion with a strong emphasis on *tawhid*, the unity of God, considered belief in any deity other than Allah as *shirk*. Islam's rejection of certain ATR elements was grounded in this understanding of the unity of God, though its application was not clearly defined.

Assessing the Islamic growth and expansion at this time, it could be said that the indigenous factor was much influential in accounting for the conversions that occurred than the appealing effect that the Islamic message might have had on the people. Sam's background as an Mfantse indigene, who, effectively, used the indigenous language and its symbols to express the message of Allah made it easier for the people to understand what was being conveyed to them. In addition, as an indigenous missionary agent, who once served as Methodist catechist, the people could identify much more with this messenger and, then, accept his message than anyone who came in as an "outsider".

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<sup>426</sup> Interview with al-Hajj Isaka, Imam and founder of the Fante Sunni Community at Mankessim on August 22, 2009; Mustapha Bin Dankwa, Ahmadiyya Circuit missionary at Essakyir on August 29, 2009; Nana Mbrahen a founding member of the Methodist Church at Essakyir on August 30, 2009; Essah-Donkoh a leader of the Mankessim Methodist Church on Sept. 4, 2009; Ekuwa Aisha, a Fante Sunni Muslim woman at Essakyir on Nov. 27, 2010.

<sup>427</sup> Robinson, p. xviii

Like Christianity, some of its converts were alienated from the ATR and its cultural practices;<sup>428</sup> beliefs in lesser deities, ancestors and other spirits as well as other indigenous rituals were considered “fetish”. This alienation was strengthened through the exclusive religious claims and practices of some of the Islamic communities. Some of the Fulani and Hausa Muslim settlers were, quite, influential in this dynamic process as they saw the above-mentioned aspects of ATR as being at variance with the tenets of Islam. Glimpses of this position are reflected in some of the Islamic transitional rites in the area and this shall be examined in detail soon. Yet, this alienation, as noted earlier, was not a complete break with the indigenous worldviews and expressions. This reality of the traditional religious and cultural mediation for most of the converts to the immigrant religions, namely Christianity and Islam, has been succinctly expressed by Gyekye: “The utilitarian perception of the place of religion in human life has reverberations even in the attitudes and conduct of African converts to Christianity and Islam...For them, religion must have immediate relevance in coping with the various problems of life on earth.”<sup>429</sup> This religious and cultural mediation has persisted among most of the Muslim converts as well as Christians in this area.

As people belonging to universal Muslim community, certain Islamic religious rituals began to mark and set the Mfantse Muslims converts apart as a distinct group among their people. Some of them were devoted to the practices of the pillars of Islam- the testimony to the faith (*shahada*), the ritual prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage as the ideal goal as well as the adoption of lunar rites and festivals.<sup>430</sup> These became visible evidence of the Islamic presence and influence on the people. In addition, there were, also, Islamic

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<sup>428</sup> Nukunya, p. 130

<sup>429</sup> Gyekye, p. 16

<sup>430</sup> J. S. Trimingham, *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1979, p. 57

categories of the *haram* (tabooed) such as eating pigs and contact with dogs, among others and *halal* (permitted), which practically dealt with the method of killing animals.<sup>431</sup> At the Ekrawfo community, in particular, and other areas in the Mfantse land, where Islam was, gradually, establishing its presence besides ATR and Christianity, the impact of Islam was felt. Islamic religious and cultural life began to take its own place in shaping the life of the converts and, consequently, the indigenous environment.

However, as Ghanaians, who lived in large family compounds with members, most of whom were non-Muslims, quite a number of these indigenous Muslims did not adhere strictly to some of the Islamic restrictions, owing to the strong influences of family ties and relationships.

The discussions so far have been on the general religious and cultural impact of Islam in the area, without dealing with the specifics such as the religious festivals and transitional rites. We shall now try to examine these, bearing in mind that in spite of the ideological differences between the Sunni and Ahmadi Muslims, there has been, to a greater extent, no major distinctions between the two in terms of the observance of these rituals.<sup>432</sup> This is because the basic tenets of the Islamic faith as enshrined in the Tradition of the religion, to which both of them subscribe, is unitary both in form and content. For this reason, in some of the communities, the two Muslim groups, sometimes, join together in the celebration of

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid, p. 57. Some members of the Muslim communities interviewed indicated they practised those Islamic teachings within their family settings, but sometimes it was not easy to determine between the *halal* and the *haram* as they partook family meals together. The following were some of the members who expressed these views: Francis Aidoo, a Sunni leader and a woman, Aisha Seguwa, all members of the Attakwa Fante Sunni community on Nov. 21, 2010; Abdul Hakim, Ahmadiyya local Imam at Mankessim on August 22, 2009 and Hussein Acquah, an Ahmadiyya youth and Circuit youth organizer at Essakyir on August 29, 2009. Some of them eat together with family members without questioning the source of the animal used in preparing the food.

<sup>432</sup> Interviews with the local leaders of the two groups indicated that their differences in terms of practices had to do with prayer posture – whether one has to fold arms in prayers or not: Mustapha Bin Dankwa on August 29, 2009; Mohammed Ocran at Essakyir on August 29, 2009; S. K. Yamoah at Ekrawfo on Nov. 22, 2010; al-Hajj Idris Ibrahim on Sept. 2, 2009

some of these rites, with the exception of celebration of *id al fitr* and *id al adha*, which will be discussed later. We shall begin the next session with our discussions on the celebration of religious festivals.

### **6. 3. Religious festivals**

The indigenous emphasis on community participation in events and ritual, which serves as important means of sharing with one's fellow as well as integrating the individual into the community, has served not only a religious purpose in this area, but social as well; its significance lies in bringing the community together for regular customary and seasonal observances.<sup>433</sup>

The *akwanbo* festival of the people in this traditional area, as mentioned earlier, has served this same purpose over the years. Most Muslims and Christians in this area have been active participants in the observances of this traditional festival. In their involvement, Muslims, like Christians, have approached it as a community cultural and social event, which promotes community belonging and development. In this sense they, have tried to make distinction between the religious and cultural or social aspects of the celebration. Islam does not, normally, draw a distinction between what is sacred and what is secular since everything is considered as under the domain and rule of God. However, in Islam's dynamic relationship with ATR and its cultural values in this area, there is a conscious effort on the part of Muslims to distinguish between the religious and the cultural components of the traditional beliefs and practices of the indigenous life. Islam appears to have, practically, followed the example of Christianity as a religion that preceded it in this area and, which used the same criteria as we observed earlier, in selecting what to accept

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<sup>433</sup> Trimingham, *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*, p. 57

and what to reject from the indigenous context. Moreover, as a monotheistic religion, Islam considers sacrifices to other deities as *shirk*. Notwithstanding their withdrawal from what were perceived as “fetish” aspects of the festival, Muslims in this area play active role in the observance of the traditional festival. Even though Friday is considered as the main worship day in the week, they, fully, participate in the Sunday thanksgiving to climax the traditional festival; a practical demonstration of that sense of community belonging which all members in the community share, irrespective of religious divides, and towards which, such participations foster.

The celebration of Islamic religious festivals, namely *Ramadan*, *id al-fitr* and *id al-adha* has had observable religious and social influence on the life of the people just like the Christian festivals discussed earlier. Ramadan occurs at the beginning of the Muslim ninth lunar month during which every able Muslim is expected to fast from before dawn till sunset.<sup>434</sup> The month is regarded by Muslims as most holy; it is believed that in this month, the Qur’an was first revealed.<sup>435</sup> In this regard Ghanaian Muslims and, in particular, Muslims in this area reflect the sacredness of this month in their unreserved commitment to fasting, prayers and to abstinence from any acts considered as, spiritually and morally, unclean. Non-Muslim extended family members and friends join their Muslim brothers and sisters, sometimes, at the dawn meals before the fast or in the fast itself. Besides these, some of the non-Muslims, including Christians, present food items in order to help their Muslim relatives in breaking the fast in the evenings.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Frederick Mathewson Denny, *Islam: An Introduction*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994, p. 126

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127

<sup>436</sup> Interview with Francis Aidoo, a Sunni Muslim at Attakwa on August 22, 2010.

Although the Sunnis and Ahmadi Muslims do not pray together, there are various forms of cooperation that exist between the two groups, especially, in the observance of the *Ramadan* and *id*, which serve to strengthen their relationships at the local, regional and national levels. The two collaborate in sighting the crescent (the appearance of the moon) and the commencement of the *Ramadan* comes into effect upon a joint declaration by the National Chief Imam of the Sunnis and the Amir and Missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Ghana.<sup>437</sup> To facilitate such joint efforts, the two groups have put in place the Hilal Committee, comprising members from the office of the National Chief Imam of the Sunnis and those from the outfit of the Ahmadi Amir respectively. The Committee members deliberate on other issues of common interest to Muslims in Ghana as well as those that pertain to national progress.<sup>438</sup> This cordial relationship and cooperation between the Ahmadis and Muslims in Ghana transcends the wall of enmity that still prevails between the two in most Muslim countries, especially, in Pakistan. During the following conversation with Alhasan Bashir Annan and Mohammed Yusuf Yawson, the latter expressed his views on how the indigenous factor has played an influential role in fostering harmonious relationships between Ahmadis and Sunnis in the Mfantse area and Ghana, in general:

*Q: Owura Mohammed Yusuf Yawson, eβen ber na mpapamu baa Mfantse nkramo mu ma dem ntsi wobonya Ahamadiafo na ɔtɔdɔɔfo wɔ Ghana ha, na eβenadze na ɔdze nkyεkyεmu no baa?*

Mr. Mohammed Yusuf Yawson, when did the Mfantse Muslim community split into Mfantse Sunni and Ahmadiyya Muslim groups and what brought about this?

*Ans: Mpapamu sii kuw no mu ber a kuw no too nsa de wɔmfɔ kramonyi sɔfo mfi India*

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<sup>437</sup> Interview with the first Deputy Amir and Missionary, Mohammed Yusuf Yawson and Alhasan Bashir Annan, the Administrator and Missionary at the office of the Amir on Dec. 14, 2010 at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Head Office, Accra.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid, Dec. 14, 2010

*mbrɛ hɔn ma dɛm ntsi Owura Nayyar bodur Ghana wɔ afe 1921 mu. Dza ɔdze nkyɛkyɛmu baa no, tsitsir, gyina ne nkyɛkyɛrɛ a ɔdaa Ahamadiafo hɔn ntsease bi edzi wɔ nkramosom ho a kuw mba no bi hun dɛ nsosoe wɔ Ahamadia na ɔtɔɔx som ntamu:*  
The split occurred after the invitation by the group for a Muslim missionary from India, with the subsequent arrival of Nayyar in Ghana in 1921. Among the factors that led to the split were some of the teachings of the Missionary that delineated some of the basic Ahmadi teachings, which were perceived by some members in the group as different from those of the Sunnis.

*Q: Wo kasa mu no, eka dɛ Ahamadiafo and ɔtɔɔxfo dzi dwuma bɔ mu wɔ kwan bi do, na nkabɔmu na koryɛ da hom ntamu. Metsee w'ase yie anaa?*

You have already said that Ahmadi and Sunni Muslims in Ghana co-operate in a number of things through joint committees as means of fostering cordial relationships. Did I understand you correctly?

*Ans: Ampa; n'ara nye no:*

Yes, that is correct

*Q: Minyim dɛ wontwiwonwi kakra da Ahamadiafo na ɔtɔɔxfo ntamu, tsirtsir wɔ Pakistan na Arab amanaman pii mu. ɔyɛ dɛn yɛ na Ghana ha dze hom ebien no tum tsena ase wɔ koryɛ mu yi? Eɛn adze n'aboa ma iyi etum akɔ do?*

I know that in Pakistan, especially, and in many Arab countries, the relationship between the main Sunni Islamic group and Ahmadis has not been cordial. How come that in Ghana you have been able to foster a peaceful relationship? What factors have accounted for this in Ghana?

*Ans: Wɔ Ghana ha na tsirtsir na hɛn Mfantse mbew do ha, hɛn ebuasua no mu koryɛ na no mu ntsetsee ma yehu hɛn ho dɛ enuanom, sɛ nsosoe wɔ som ahorow a yɛwɔ mu no mu mpo a. Dwumadzi ahorow wɔ hɔ a mber pii yedzi bɔ mu wɔ ebusua na ɔman no mu. Ne dɛm no ntsi ɔyɛ dzen dɛ ɔtɔɔxfo and Ahamadiafo bɛtsena dɛ atamfo wɔ Ghana ha. Dɛm ebusua yi na no mu amambra a wɔwoo hɛn nyinara to mu na wɔdze tsetsee hɛn no, nye nkramo asomdwee ho nkyɛkyɛrɛ no, n'aboa ma dɛm koryɛ nkitahodzi akɔ do wɔ hɛn ntamu:*

In Ghana, and, particularly, in our Mfantse area, our indigenous family ties and values, with which we were, all, nurtured, make us see ourselves as brothers and sisters, in spite of some differences in our religious practices. Our family and community events bring us together most of the time. It is, therefore, difficult for the two of us to live as enemies. This shared indigenous background, coupled with the Islamic message of peace, has helped us to have a cordial relationship between us.

The indigenous family bonds and relationship, together with the Islamic message of peace, according to the first Deputy Amir and Missionary of the Ghana Ahmadiyya Muslims

Mission, have fostered community oneness among the people, including Sunnis and Ahmadis.<sup>439</sup> We shall at this point turn our attention to Islamic transitional rites.

#### 6. 4. Transitional rites

Birth and naming as Islamic religious and cultural rites express the following distinct practices, as observed in this traditional area: call to prayer (*adhan*) is made by a cleric in the right ear of the child and another one to perform prayer (*iqama*) is made in the left ear.<sup>440</sup> This is the first call upon the child to submit to Allah, which is done in imitation of the Prophet Muhammed's example.<sup>441</sup> On the seventh day, the child is named; he/she could be named after a Muslim saint, a family member or an event connected with the child. The name is given by the parents to the officiating cleric to announce. Usually, a Muslim name, especially, from the family of the prophet is encouraged. Then, the *aqiqa* sacrifice follows, where the hair of the child is shaved, with the sacrifice of two male sheep or goats, depending on if it is a boy or a girl respectively. A concrete explanation on this particular ritual could not be offered when the researcher interviewed some of the local Muslim converts. Denny, explains, however, that *aqiqa* refers to the hair of the child and that the ritual originates from pre-Islamic Arabian times when the hair of the child was weighed and its equivalent in alms was given as a sacrifice.<sup>442</sup> In this local context, the meat of the sacrificed animals and the meals prepared with it are shared with neighbours and the needy

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<sup>439</sup> Interviews with the national leadership (Sunnis on Dec. 2, 2010; Ahmadis on Dec. 14, 2010) and local leadership of the two groups at Obonster (Sunnis on Nov. 12, 2010) and at Essakyir (Aug. 29, 2009) confirmed the cordial relationship that exists between the two groups, especially in this area.

<sup>440</sup> Interview with al-Hajj Abubaker Anderson, a leading member of the Mankessim Ahmadi community and the Imam of the Fante Sunni Muslims, Imam Ibrahim Adam at Obonster on October 30 and Nov. 12, 2010 respectively. Both of them explained the ritual as the first religious calling for the child to worship Allah.

<sup>441</sup> Denny, *Islam: An Introduction to Islam*, pp. 269, 270

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid*, p. 270

community members as almsgiving<sup>443</sup>. The indigenous belief that names given to children have influence on them ties in with that of Islam; the child's name is, therefore, believed to become closely connected to him/her once it is pronounced in this ritual; that is, it partakes in some sense of his spirit.<sup>444</sup>

Through the rites of naming, most family names of Mfantse Muslims, as observed in the case of the Christian rite, are overshadowed by the use of Islamic names. Although Mfantse Muslims are still given family names at birth through a separate indigenous rite, these are, hardly, used, especially by orthodox Muslims. The Islamic names adopted by the indigenous Muslims transcend race and ethnicity and helps to link the Mfantse Muslims with the rest of the world Muslim community, the *umma*.<sup>445</sup> One can, hardly, distinguish between, on the basis of one's Islamic name, an Mfantse Muslim and a settler Muslim from this area, in recent years. In this regard, like christening, the Muslim naming ritual has had its unfortunate negative impact on the indigenous practice through which family lineage is maintained. The change has the potential in weakening the traditional family and community links as well as the possibility of loss of one's identity and loyalty.

One can, however, observe here some differences between the Sunnis and Ahmadis as regards the adoption and use of Muslim names and the indigenous ones. While most Sunni Muslims adopt Muslim names for their first and last names, Ahmadis adopt Islamic names for the first and indigenous family names for the last. This was explained, on the part of the

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<sup>443</sup> Interview with Al-Hajj Ibrahim Iddris, Sunni imam, Saltpond on Sept. 8, 2009

<sup>444</sup> Timingham, *The Influence of Islam on Africa*, p. 71; Timingham's views were affirmed in separate interviews with Mustapha Bin Dankwa and Imam Ibrahim Adam on Aug. 29, 2009 and Nov. 12, 2010 respectively.

<sup>445</sup> Some of the Muslims interviewed such as Mohammed Awal (Kofi Abekah), Adam Dawuda (kofi Ndur), Fatimah Abubaker (Efua Kwansema), Asana Efua Atta admitted that their Muslim names are used more often than the family names and they think that gives them the sense of belonging to the religious community.

Ahmadis, as a practical means of maintaining both the indigenous and the Islamic identity.<sup>446</sup>

The end of the religious ritual of naming marks the beginning of community celebration, where family members and neighbours of various religious persuasions participate in the celebration of the event amidst music, dancing and sharing of meals. The festivities involved depend on the economic and social status of the couple and family concerned.

The Islamic religious and cultural influences are, also, strong in the ritual celebration of marriage as prescribed by the Islamic law. Yet, some of indigenous elements are practised side by side with the Islamic rituals. There are three stages in the Islamic ceremony, namely, the proposal and engagement, *khitab*, the contract marriage, *katb al-kitab* and the moving of the bride into the husband's home.<sup>447</sup> Before the various stages mentioned above, the man is obligated to perform the required traditional customary marriage rites as demanded by the family of the woman. One of such lists of customary rites for Ahmadis and non-Ahmadi Muslim marriage in the Mfantse area is as follows: *ebisa nsa* (drinks requesting marriage); *nyew nsa* (drinks offered for the positive response); *ntsi nsa*; *ho adzeye* (bride money, which also the Islamic legal fee, *mahr*, supposed to be paid to the bride.<sup>448</sup> The officiating Muslim cleric in the Muslim marriage rites inquires and makes sure that the traditional customary rites have been fulfilled, especially, the payment of the *mahr* to the woman before going ahead with the Islamic

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<sup>446</sup>Interview with Hussein Acquah, Ahmadi Circuit Youth Secretary, Essakyir on Aug. 29, 2009

<sup>447</sup>Trimingham, *The Influence of Islam on Africa*, p. 71

<sup>448</sup>These items constituted the core of the traditional customary rites which were observed within the Muslim marriage rites in the area. Though the customary rites used to be fixed among the Akans, this has changed and the amount to be paid by a man for each of the listed items, depends on the family of the woman.

ritual. This is derived from the recognition, on the part of Muslims, of the important role of the African indigenous values in the marriage relationship. The Islamic ritual, on the other hand, laid much more emphasis on the legal dimension of the marriage as a contract, than the traditional, which conceived marriage as a relationship not only between two partners, but, also, between the two families from which the couple are marrying.

The Islamic marriage institution and rites share some common grounds with the indigenous marriage system: the first one is that polygamy is accepted in both and, secondly, divorce is permitted under certain circumstances. Thirdly, emphasis is laid by both on procreation as one of the major goals of marriage.

However, the Islamic emphasis on the legal dimensions of marriage, binding the couple is at variance with the indigenous understanding and significance of marriage; indigenous rituals underscore the family and community bond which is rooted in the marriage institution as well as its relevance for maintaining the family and clan lineage through children. In addition, Islam, stresses on patrilineal system of inheritance, but, maintains some flexibility when it comes to male or female inheritance of parents and near relations property, as indicated in the Qur'an 4: 8. The Mfantse people, like most of the Akan groups, practise, on the other hand, a strict matrilineal system of inheritance. In this respect, the full implementation of Islamic legal marriage has not been, practically, possible, as most Muslim converts in this area still inherit from their mothers' lineage.<sup>449</sup> In an interview with Alhassan Bashir Annan, he explained that the Ahmadiyya group, for instance, has found accommodation with the Mfantse and Akan practice by interpreting and

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<sup>449</sup> Muslims interviewed in this research (some of whom are Kweku Isaka, al-Hajj Idris Ibrahim, Aisha Seguwa, Aisha Badu on Nov. 12, 2010, Hussein Acquah, al-Hajj Abubaker Anderson) all responded that they inherit matrilineally. Mfantse Muslim leaders have not been able to implement Islamic legislation on inheritance in this area. However, there is civil interstate law which applies where one of the couple's dies without leaving a written Will.

practising the Qur'anic provision mentioned above in consonance with the traditional system.<sup>450</sup>

Though Islamic polygamous marriage finds connection with that of the traditional system, Islam has been more resistant than Christianity to the absorption of indigenous elements in the practice of the marriage institution in this area, as we noted earlier in the observance of other transitional rites. The Muslim adherence to the Islamic legal tradition has, mainly, accounted for this.

In polygamous marriage, however, the Islamic practice, to some extent ties in with that of some AICs, such as MDCC.

In the latter part of the 19th and that of the early 20th centuries, when both Christianity and Islam were, actively, engaged in evangelization in this area, the issue of polygamy was one of the decisive factors that influenced conversions, mostly, from either ATR or Christianity to Islam. Polygamy as an indigenous marriage practice, which served as a means of having more children, was for economic and other cultural reasons desirable at that time; sacrificing it on the altar of religious demands was not, easily, achievable. For this reason, Islam was found to be at home with the indigenous cultural environment. "Islamic conception of family system and regulations for example is not unlike the African ideas of family responsibilities."<sup>451</sup> This has led others to generalize that Islam was much more sensitive to African indigenous religious beliefs and cultural values than Christianity without paying attention, sometimes, to the context in discussion.

However, the socio-economic realities of modern society are, gradually, rendering polygamy as an obsolete marriage practice, even, among Muslims who dwell in urban

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<sup>450</sup> Interview with Alhassan Bashir Annan on Dec. 14, 2010, at the Headquarters of the AMM, Accra.

<sup>451</sup> Desai, Ram (ed.), *Christianity in Africa*, South Dakota: Spearfish, 1962, p. 34

areas, thereby, rendering it as non-influential factor in religious conversions anymore, among the indigenous people.

The climax of the Islamic celebration, which brings the community and family members into full participation, occurs after the contract ceremony is over. The feasting in the sharing of food with music and dancing goes on late into the day till the bride is, eventually, escorted to her husband's house amidst drumming and dancing.

The Islamic funeral observance has, also, been one of the religious and cultural practices by which the impact of Islam has been felt in the life of the people. The uniform and simple pattern of funeral observance as defined in the tradition of the religion has won the admiration of even non-Muslims, who decry the heavy expenses for elaborate funerals. The Islamic funeral rituals are simple and religiously intense. The extra-mural practices such as the use of expensive coffin, buying of new family cloths, giving of parting gifts to the dead, among others, have been taken out of Islamic funeral observances, thereby helping to bring down cost

Unlike Christian funerals described in chapter five, when a Muslim passes away, every aspect of the funeral arrangements is handled by the local Islamic *umma*, and not by the family. In this sense Islam has been much more successful in ensuring a uniform and simple funeral observance in the traditional communities than Christianity. If death occurs among Muslims early in the day, the burial is scheduled to take place that very day, else it is pushed to the next day. The burial rites begin with the final ritual bath of the body with prayer, which is performed by Muslim family members, and in the absence of any family Muslim relative, some trusted and mature members from the group are selected to perform this solemn duty. It is the final ablution, which is performed in accordance with the specific



Islamic rules.<sup>452</sup> The body is then dressed with white funeral clothes and either laid in state for viewing or taken to the cemetery for burial, depending on its state. At the graveside, the burial rituals are performed. At a burial ceremony observed at Ekrawfo by the researcher, the following rituals were performed: The final prayer, *salat*, consisting of four parts, each with the mentioning of “God is most great” was said and the first sura of the Qur’an was recited.

Then, the presiding cleric whispered *shahada* into the ear of the deceased, before removing the mortal remains from the coffin and laying it in the grave, with the head pointing towards Mecca. The *shahada* was intended to remind the dead of the true religion and, also, to equip the departed on how to answer the angel, who was going to receive his soul.<sup>453</sup> These religious rituals and symbols underline Islam’s strong belief in the life after death and the judgement that awaits the soul.

Figure 6.4. left, shows the mortal remains of a Muslim member being laid to rest.<sup>454</sup>

In the burial rite, one finds a mixture of the intense religious rituals of Islam, which invoke

<sup>452</sup> Frederick M. Denny, *Islam*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1987, p. 103

<sup>453</sup> Ibid, p. 104

<sup>454</sup> The picture was captured during an Ahmadi burial ceremony for a deceased member at the Ekrawfo Muslim cemetery on Nov. 22, 2010. The burial rites described above were observed at this event.

the African religious sensibilities and its simple Bedouin life, which resonates with the rural setting of the people, finding a connecting meeting point; one of the major factors accounting for Islam's attraction for the indigenous people in this area. It could be said, then, that Islam's affinity to some of the indigenous religious and cultural elements was one of the factors that facilitated conversions from ATR, and, sometimes, from Christianity in this area.<sup>455</sup> It is in funeral rites, especially, that one observes the evidence of islamization of the people in this area, whether in Sunni or Ahmadi rites; general uniformity is observed in ritual pattern.<sup>456</sup>

From the cemetery, the family and community gather for the final funeral rites, where donations are given to support the bereaved family.

#### **6.5. The socio-economic impact of Islam**

Socio-culturally, Muslim style of dressing, introduced in Ghana by Muslims settlers such as the Fulanis and the Hausas, has been adopted by most Ghanaians, irrespective of ethnic or religious backgrounds. It has become a fashion, for example, for people to put on "agbaja," with its cap, (a typical Muslim dressing) for very important functions. Indeed, the style has been incorporated into the local Ghanaian dressing designs. In the Ghanaian context and for that matter in this area, Western culture has reinforced Christian influence and made its impact much more visible and felt than Islam.

Up to this point in our discussion, the analysis of the religious and cultural impact of the Muslim missionary activities in the area has taken together the Sunnis and the Ahmadis. This segment of section 6.5 will now examine the two groups separately in exploring their socio-economic contribution to the life in these traditional communities. This approach

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<sup>455</sup> Benjamin C. Ray, *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 2000, p. 144

<sup>456</sup> Trimingham, *The Influence of Islam on Africa*, P. 73

becomes necessary in view of the different attitudes and levels of involvement of the two religious communities in responding to the social context of the place.

### **6. 5.1. The Socio-economic impact of the Sunni Muslims**

As early as 1896, before the split within the Islamic community at Ekrawfo took place, the Mfantse Muslims demonstrated their determination for social concerns by establishing their first school to provide Western form of education at Ekrawfo in 1896.<sup>457</sup> This school, which gained government assistance in 1902, was, eventually, closed down in 1908 due to Guinea worm contamination of the school wells.<sup>458</sup> Following the split and the relocation of the Mfantse Sunni Muslims to Obonster, these indigenous efforts to provide social services as demonstrated by the Christian Mission churches came to a virtual standstill. The only further successful attempt in this field resulted in the establishment of a Sunni Muslim primary school at Enyan-Miam that offered a Western model of education in the early part of the 1950s.<sup>459</sup> The school, now, provides basic level of education in the community. The best efforts by the Sunni Muslims, including both the Mfantse groups and settlers, after this, have resulted, largely, in the establishment of Qur'anic schools, which offers, mainly, rote learning of the Qur'an, basic teachings on the Islamic faith and, sometimes lessons in English. These schools are restricted to Muslim children and, even if it were open to the children of non-Muslims, one wondered if it would have been patronized as the other established schools that offered lessons in a wider range of subjects. In an interview with the chief administrator at the office of the National Chief Imam of the Sunnis, he lamented that their school in the mosque, which were open to both Muslims and non-Muslims in the community were not being patronized by the non-Muslims; even

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<sup>457</sup> Guar-Gorman, p. 62

<sup>458</sup> Ibid, p. 62

<sup>459</sup> Interview with Obontser Sunni Muslim leaders on Nov. 12, 2010

Christian children who were, initially, enrolled there were being taken elsewhere.<sup>460</sup> It appears that this negative response towards Sunni Muslim schools derived from the general perception of the narrow nature of the schools' curriculum, which, were considered as inadequate to prepare pupils to compete in a post-modern society. This is evidenced by the different attitude of the general public towards, Ahmadiyya Muslim schools, a subject that we shall address soon.

The reasons for the low key regarding Sunni Muslim involvement in the provision of social services are quite varied. In the first place, as mentioned before, Mfantse Sunni Muslims showed initial signs of a missionary approach that was both “other-worldly” and “this worldly”. As an ethnic group in West Africa that were among the first to encounter Europeans, the benefits of Western education and other socio-economic services became attractive to Mfantse Sunni Muslims as important social needs. However, one of the reasons for their abysmal efforts in this area was the lack of the needed resources and funds to embark upon such a venture; as an indigenous group that did not have any external help as the Christian Mission churches and the Ahmadis, they were limited in offering any kind of social service that was capital intensive. Secondly, most of their leaders lacked that level of education which could have equipped them with the requisite knowledge for effective planning and organization of the group. In fact, this was worsened by the initial anti-Sunni attitude to Western education and social services, which were considered as emphasis on material concerns of life that lured people away from their submission and duty to Allah. In addition, there was Sunni suspicion of Christian and Western public school systems, as means of converting and corrupting their children respectively. Indeed, this suspicion became more influential in the Mfantse Sunni Muslims' social agenda, especially, when the

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<sup>460</sup> Interview with Adam Musa Abubaker, the National Administrator, office of the Sunni National Chief Imam on Dec. 2, 2010

group became more attached to the Fulani and Hausa Muslim settlers in the area after their break from the Ekrawfo community. For these reasons, apart from Mankessim, Saltpond and Enyan-Maim, the Sunni Muslims do not have basic schools and, neither do they have in place medical or other social facilities that serve the people in this area.

The above observations, notwithstanding, it must be noted, however, that there was an influx of, particularly, Fulani and Hausa Sunni Muslims from Northern Ghana and other neighbouring West African states, most of whom were traders and workers on cocoa farms in Ghana, between the 1950s and early 1970s. Their presence and economic activities contributed, significantly, to the economic growth of the country at that time.

Our attention shall now turn to missionary activities of the Ahmadis in terms of provision of social services in the area.

#### **6.5.2. The Socio-economic impact of the Ahmadi Muslims**

In Ghana and, particularly, within this traditional area, Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Ghana could compete on equal footing, if not better with the Christian churches in the provision of social services. Unlike the Sunnis that resented secular education and other benefits of Western science and technology, the Ahmadiyya Movement embraced these as necessary dimensions of human life that ought to be pursued without forgetting one's relationship with Allah. Indeed, the Movement believes that its service to Allah is incomplete without the corresponding concern that responds to the living situations of the people among whom the Jama'at finds itself. Hence, their missionary activities have always involved both the spiritual and material ministry to the needs of humanity. The Ahmadi missionary approach, commitment and execution could be likened to the Christian

churches; the spiritual and material concerns were perceived as, equally, important demands of their religious mission.

One area where the impact of Ahmadis' activities has been, greatly, felt is in the provision of secular education. The analysis of AMM's contribution as well as that of European Mission Churches to the social progress of this area will be much more appreciated against the backdrop that this administrative district has an average estimated illiteracy rate of 43.4% female and 26.2% male (those who have never been to school).<sup>461</sup> The traditional area has an average of 1% out of the estimated average population of 1444, 820 that have access to hospital medical care, with 8.6% getting access to clinics. As much as about 84.2% of that population resort to traditional healers for treatment.<sup>462</sup> The only hospital in this traditional area is located at Saltpond. As at 2000, the Mission had 102 pre-schools; 323 basic schools; 6 Senior High Schools; 1 teachers' Training College, 1 Women's Vocational Institute and 1 Missionary Training College in the country.<sup>463</sup> Out of these educational institutions, 2 of the Senior Secondary schools are located in this Mfanste area, namely, Essakyir and Potsin. According to the Central Regional Ahmadiyya Education unit, the mission has six basic schools in this traditional area. These are institutions that are funded in partnership with government and they are open to the admission of both Muslims and non-Muslims, with teachers whose background cuts across religious affiliations. These efforts in the education sector by the AMM, have served to train many youth of various religious persuasions in the area, who otherwise, would have been drop-outs in society, thereby becoming a social burden for families and the nation as a

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<sup>461</sup> *2000 Population Housing Census: Central Region*, Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, pp. 41, 42

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94

<sup>463</sup> Samwini, p. 169

whole. The Movement has helped in equipping people with knowledge and skills to find their place in today's' competitive world as well as reducing illiteracy rate in the area.

In addition to these efforts, on the visit of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III, the third Head and leader of the Movement, four scholarships, Nusrat Jahan Open Merit Scholarships were offered to deserving Ghanaians of any religious or ideological background.<sup>464</sup> One of the motivating factors behind this drive is the aim to help train people who are “intellectually, socially, morally, and, spiritually, worthy citizens and dispel the common misconception that Islam is opposed to secular education...”<sup>465</sup>

Besides education, AMM has invested in its missionary programmes to respond to the inadequate health care in the country and, especially, in this area as indicated above. The mission has one homoeopathic clinic at Mankessim that serves both the whole administrative district and the traditional area.<sup>466</sup> One of its major hospitals in Ghana, with modern equipments for undertaking surgeries, is located at Agona Swedru, about 20 miles away from this area. Its location has made it easier for people in this area to receive prompt medical attention whenever the need arises. This has reduced the incidence of infant mortality as well as complications in pregnancies and deliveries. Sometimes, it becomes very difficult for people with complicated medical conditions to get the required medical treatment and this is worsened by lack of resources of those affected. In compassionate response to this, the AMM organize a free Medical Camp in Ghana from time to time. The AMM community invited to Ghana Dr. Agha Khan, an accomplished Ahmadi Neurosurgeon of Baltimore, in the US and his team to work, in collaboration with Ghana's

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<sup>464</sup> *The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana*, p. 7. The book contains a documented account of AMM's social programmes and achievements in Ghana.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6

Ministry of Health and the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in treating cases of brain tumour free of charge.<sup>467</sup> These medical interventions and services of the AMM have helped in saving lives of others in Ghana and this area, whose situations would have been hopeless.

The socio-economic missionary activities of the Ahmadis do not stop here; the group is involved in the provision of borehole water for certain needy communities and, also, supports other humanitarian institutions as the Ghana National Trust Fund and Help Age, among others. What has been commendable in these efforts is that the provision of such services in this area and in Ghana have been made without religious or ethnic considerations. Many are non-Ahmadis, who have benefitted from their socio-economic activities and though the group originated from this area in Ghana, most of its social institutions are located outside the area.

It is tempting for one to make a comparison between the Ahmadis and the Sunnis as far as their socio-economic activities are concerned, but such an attempt will be misplaced in the Ghanaian context, as leaders of both communities see these achievements in the name of Islam and, not Ahmadis alone.<sup>468</sup> Moreover, such a comparison will amount to an attempt to entrench the historical differences and hatred that existed (and exist in other parts of the Muslim world) between the two groups, which most of the leaders and members of the two groups interviewed resent, since they are determined to work and live together amicably.<sup>469</sup>

Culturally, the impact of AMM has, also, been felt in certain areas of Ghanaian life. Some aspects of the Pakistani background of the Ahmadiyya Movement have evolved to

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid, p. 11

<sup>468</sup> Interview with the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Amir and Missionary, Yusuf Yawson and Alhassan Bashir Annan at the National Office of the AMM on Dec. 14, 2010.

<sup>469</sup> Interview with the leadership of both the Sunnis and Ahmadis at their National Headquarters on Dec. 2 and Dec. 14, 2010 respectively.

become an intrinsic religious and cultural identity of Ghanaian Ahmdis. For instance, the Urdu language is spoken, fluently, by most Ghanaian Ahmadi leaders who were trained in the Movement's headquarters in Rabwa, Pakistan as if it were their indigenous language.<sup>470</sup>

The AMM's religious ethos, vision and social concerns, coupled with the accommodating Ghanaian indigenous context have been important factors, among others, accounting for its success in this traditional area. In spite of its initial polemical stances, the group, decisively, made use of the indigenous language in its missionary drive and this will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

## **6.6. Conclusion**

The discussions in this chapter have attempted to explore and analyze the impact of beliefs and practices of Islam on the indigenous context and a comparative analysis was made with that of Christianity.

We noted that while Islam entered this area through the agents of foreign African Muslims, especially, by the Dyula Muslim traders, Christianity was introduced there by the European Christian missionaries. We observed that unlike Christianity that came in through various Christian denominations (with different doctrines), Islam came as one religious tradition before the arrival of the first Pakistani missionary that resulted in the break within the Mfantse Muslim community.

We found that there was an indigenous African initiative in the inception of Islam in the area and that the religion had affinity with some aspect of the indigenous family and marriage institution. These, coupled with its uniform teachings and form, as compared to

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<sup>470</sup> Interview with Missionary Alhassan Bashir Annan on Dec. 14, 2010, Accra. He explained that the need to learn and master the Urdu language has been an integral programme for the training of Ahmadi religious leaders in the Qadian, Pakistan

Christianity, among others, accounted for how the two mission religions were accepted in this area.

It was, also, established that although there were two separate Muslim communities in the area – the Sunnis and the Ahmadis - not much difference between them was observed, in terms of their beliefs, practices in the celebration of transitional rites and festivals. This was, mainly, because both groups adhere, basically, to the same legal tradition of the Islamic religion.

In spite of their experience of separation, Sunnis and Ahmadis in this area and the entire country, cooperate and join each other in the celebration of festivals and transitional rites. We noted that the shared traditional family and community bonds, with their communal values have been very strong factors in promoting this cordial relationship, besides Islam's teachings on peace.

It became evident from our discussions that the mystic religious practices of the al-Tijaniyya Sufi religious order within the early foreign settlers, connected with the indigenous beliefs and these were strongly patronized by the people. Charms and amulets for instance, manufactured by the sufi religious leaders of the Tijaniyya tariqa, were used by the local people as means of protection. Parallels of these religious practices were, also found in some Christian denominations (African Independent Churches, Pentecostals and the Charismatic churches), which offered religious experiences such as fasting and healing prayers as well as other mystic practices in responding to the spiritual and material needs of the people.

In the celebration of the transitional rites, including marriage, we, also, found that Islam had held on to a uniform ritual practice rooted in its non-negotiable legal tradition. In

this regard, Christianity had been much more open in incorporating some of the indigenous elements in its ritual practices than Islam in this traditional area. However, in the area of marriage, Islam, unlike most of the Christian churches (exception being MDCC), shared common grounds with the indigenous institution of polygamous marriage; a factor that, initially, facilitated much more acceptance of Islam than Christianity in the area.

As monotheistic religions, both Christianity and Islam's relationship with ATR was based on a kind of an unclear distinction between the indigenous religious elements and the cultural components. The relationship has been shifting due to the lack of clarity of this criterion, depending on the type of Christianity or Islam found in a place. Some of their exclusive religious claims and practices alienated their converts from their traditional roots.

The discussions, also, revealed that Islamic social services in the provision of schools, hospitals, among others, especially, by the AMM brought great social relief to the people in this area and to Ghanaians as a whole. This missionary agenda of the AMM accounts for its huge success among the people in this community and in Ghana. In this regard, both Christianity and Islam shared the common social concerns of their religious calling and responsibility to the people among whom they worked.

We observed, further, that although Islam and Christianity made conversions of a sizeable number of indigenous people from ATR, most of the religious convictions and expressions of the indigenous converts were still underpinned by their traditional religious beliefs and values.

In the next chapter, detailed analysis of this indigenous influence on Christianity and Islam will be the focus of our discussions.

## **Chapter seven**

### **The Indigenous Impact on Christian-Muslim Relations**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

In chapters five and six, we examined the missionary activities of both Christianity and Islam, respectively, and how their various beliefs and practices have shaped some aspects of the indigenous religious and cultural life.

This chapter examines and analyzes the extent of this indigenous mediation for both Christians and Muslims in this area and Ghana, in general. In these discussions we shall first, look at the impact of ATR and its cultural values on both Christian and Islamic beliefs and practices as reflected, especially in the observances of festivals and transitional rites. Secondly, we shall examine the extent to which the impact has influenced the inter-religious relationships of the converts to these immigrant religions in the area. In pursuing this objective, the focus of our discussions and analysis will, mainly, be on the indigenous religious universe, the traditional festival and the transitional rites. However, some of the general influences of the indigenous elements on the imported norms of the immigrant religions will be examined as well.

#### **7. 2. The Indigenous Religious Universe**

As mentioned earlier, the indigenous environment into which Christianity and Islam entered was very religious. A lot has already been said about this indigenous religious universe in chapters two and five. Mention, therefore, will be made only of those aspects that will be relevant for our discussions in this chapter.

Constituting the core of ATR is the belief in the Supreme Being, the lesser deities, ancestors and other spirits. Though the people of this area believed in lesser divinities,

ancestors and spirits, besides, *Nyame*, the Supreme Being, they were quite clear on the relationship between the creator and the other divinities (creatures) as well as their respective roles in the universe. The world was conceived as a sacred abode of the life forces of God, the ancestors, the diverse spirits and the rest of creation in a hierarchical order, but directly related, and always interacting with each other, a web of relationships referred to as the vital force.<sup>471</sup> Creatures in the universe, including the spirit beings were not considered, by any means, as God or equal to him, but creatures that were indwelt by the divine presence and they derived their existence and power from *Nyame*; they were intermediaries between the Supreme Being and humanity. Ekem sums up this Akan (including the Mfantse people) conception and understanding of the composition of this invisible realm of forces as follows: “In the Akan spiritual universe, which, hardly, lends itself to watertight compartmentalization, *Nyame* is, generally, acknowledged as the creator under whom created entities carry out their functions in human societies.”<sup>472</sup> Within this African traditional religious universe of the Mfantse people were certain religious categories and conceptions, which found similarities and parallels in Christianity and Islam that connected with their religious understanding and experience.

Mbiti has, specifically, stated that the African concepts about God provide one convincing ground of commonality between Christianity and ATR. “The God described in the Bible is none other than the God who was already known in the framework of our traditional African religiosity.”<sup>473</sup> He concludes that the rationale behind the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa is due to the belief in the one creator, as found in the ATR, which

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<sup>471</sup>Magesa, p. 44

<sup>472</sup> John Ekem, p. 35

<sup>473</sup> John Mbiti, “The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion,  
<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1746>, cited 01/03/2010, p. 2

connected with the idea of God that the Christian missionaries presented to Africans.<sup>474</sup> Mbiti has elaborated, extensively, on this idea in his book, *Concepts of God in Africa*, where he gives examples of African names and attributes of God, which reflect the African understanding of his work in creation as well as his dealings with humanity. Among the Akan of Ghana, for example, including the Mfantse people, God's comfort "is felt in distress, sorrow, affliction, trouble, or other forms of discomfort,"<sup>475</sup> the Mfantse, therefore refer to God as *Ɔwerεkyekyefo Nyankopon*, "God, the comforter". This is not a borrowed idea or concept from the so-called superior cultures or religions as some have claimed, but, rather, originates in ATR. This line of thought is echoed by Archbishop Akwasi Sarpong, who said; "The African is not interested in the nature of God; he describes him in terms of what he does for him (He gives him air, life, etc) rather than what he is in himself, which no other mind can know for certain anyway."<sup>476</sup> This truth is found in some of the names certain Ghanaian ethnic groups and, particularly, the Mfantse people give to their children: *Nyame atse*, "God has heard", *Nyame nndaa*, "God is not asleep", *Nyame tsease*, "God is alive", among others. This common ground was found, not only in ATR's relationship with Christianity, but also, with Islam which was planted among the Mfantse people, mainly, through the efforts of the indigenous people. It was this common conception of God within ATR and the immigrant monotheistic religions, aided by certain local events, which facilitated some of the conversions from the indigenous religion.

Among the Mfantse people, the self-offer of Ahor for sacrifice, for instance, mentioned in chapter two, to avert an epidemic, which threatened to wipe out the entire Mfantse ethnic group, connected with the Christian conception of Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice for

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid, pp. 3, 4

<sup>475</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, London: S. P. C. K., 1970, p. 33

<sup>476</sup> Akwasi Sarpong, *African Theology*, Accra: Cabo Publications, 1988, p. 10

humanity; this Christian notion of sacrifice, therefore, did not come to the people as a strange teaching. Traditional sacrifices as means of obtaining communal salvation or restoring the vital forces of life were very important aspects of the traditional religious life. “In the indigenous thought, nothing happens by chance and community or individual disasters were attributed to either the displeasure of the benevolent deities for an offence committed or to the evil intentions of *abayifo*, witches.”<sup>477</sup> It was in this context and, upon a directive from an oracle for human sacrifice as a solution to that epidemic, that Ahor offered himself to be sacrificed to save his people.<sup>478</sup> In honour and memory of Ahor the Mfantse people celebrate the *Ahobaa Kakraba* and *Ahobaa Kεse* festivals every year. *Ahobaa Kakraba* is celebrated in late May or early June in remembrance of the dead (ancestors), while that of *Ahobaa Kεse* takes place three weeks after, to mark the end of the harvest period.<sup>479</sup> This indigenous salvific event and the practices of communal sacrifices offered to local deities to restore community harmony for offences committed, fostered an understanding of the Christian message of Jesus’ sacrifice for the forgiveness of the sins of the world. What engendered some of the conversions of the indigenous people to the Christian faith was the Christian proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection after death; an aspect that projects Jesus on a higher plane of spiritual power in comparison with Ahor, other ancestors and deities. This aspect of the Christian message has been emphasized, especially, by the Independent African Churches, the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches

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<sup>477</sup> Ekem, p. 39

<sup>478</sup> Refer to J. B. Crayner, *Borbor Kunkumfi*, Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1989, pp. 80-93 for detailed accounts of Ahor’s life, sacrifice and institution of the Ahobaa festival by the Mfantse people.

<sup>479</sup> Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional religion*, p. 43; see Also Hayford, p. 85-90

and, even, some charismatic groups within the orthodox Christian Churches in addressing the spiritual needs of members.<sup>480</sup>

Furthermore, the indigenous concept of ancestors in the life of the members of the living family and the clan found its parallel in the Christian understanding of saints. The Christian celebration of memorial rite for the saints and the Mfantse traditional rite of memory for the dead, share striking similarities. In recognition of the shared communal values for the remembrance of Christian saints and that of the traditional ancestors, observed during All Saints Day and *Ahobaa Kakraba*, respectively, some Christian churches have encouraged prayers of thanksgiving to be offered not only in memory of Christians who have passed away, but also, for non-Christian family members and loved ones.<sup>481</sup> In the same vein, some Christians and Muslims join their family members in the celebration of *Ahobaa Kakraba* to remember their family ancestors and other members who have departed from this world.<sup>482</sup> This indigenous role in fostering cordial relationship, especially, between Christians and Muslims in this area through the traditional family links and ritual events was expressed, emphatically, by Nana Kwansah III in the following interview conversation with him and some of his elders:

Q: *Nana Kwansah, ɔwo na wo mpanyimfo a hom ehyia mu wɔ ha yi, eɛn som ahorow na hom wɔ mu?*

Chief Kwansah, what is the religious composition of your elders, who have gathered here?

Ans: *Binom yɛ ekristiamfo, binom so yɛ nkramofo na binom wɔ som a hɛn Nananom dze gyaa hɛn no mu. Nnyɛ hɛn nkotsee; efiefie beberee so wɔ hɔ a no mu nyimpa wowɔ som ahorow a m'abobɔ edzin no mu:*

Some are Christians; others are Muslims, while others still hold on to the traditional religion bequeathed us by our ancestors. This religious plurality is not applicable only to us; there are many homes, with members who belong to the different religious denominations

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<sup>480</sup> Interview with Samuel Aidoo (Elder, CP, Enyan Abasa) and the Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Arkoh-Otoo (Minister, MDCC, Mozano) on Sept 8, 2009 and Nov. 4, 2010 respectively.

<sup>481</sup> Interview with Rev. Fr. Francis Mbroh (RCC, Mankessim) on August 29, 2009

<sup>482</sup> Interview with traditional leaders of Saltpond on Nov. 18, 2010

mentioned.

Q: *Ebɛn Mfantse afahyɛ ɛtsirtsir na hom dzi no wɔ ha; Ekristiamfo na Nkramofo ka ho ma wodzi ana?:*

What are main traditional festivals celebrated in this area and are Christians and Muslims involved in the celebrations?

Ans: *Afahyɛ ɛtsirtsir a yedzi ndɛ ber yi nye Ahoba Kakraba, Ahoba Kɛsɛ, okyir na Akwanbɔ; Ekristiamfo na Nkramofo ka ho ma yedzi:*

The major traditional festivals celebrated by the Mfantse people of the Enyan traditional area are *Ahoba Kakraba, Ahoba Kɛsɛ, Okyir* and *Akwanbɔ*. Christians and Muslims are involved in the celebrations.

Q: *Ebɛn asɛm na ibotum aka afa Ekristiamfo and Nkramofo hɔn nkitahodzi ho wɔ Mfantse ha?*

What can you say about Christian-Muslim relations in this Mfantse traditional area?

Ans: *Esom ahorow ebien yi nkitahodzi wo ha yɛ koryɛ n'asomdwee:*

The relationship between the two religious groups has been cordial and peaceful in this traditional area.

Q: *Ebɛn ndzɛmba dɛm na egyedzi dɛ aboa kɛsɛ ma dɛm koryɛ na nkabomu no akɔ do?*  
What factors, do you think, have, mainly, accounted for this peaceful relationship?

Ans: *Megyedzi dɛ hɛn ebusua no su na hɛn kusum ndzɛmba tse dɛ afahyɛ tsirtsir, na ɔdze koryɛ na asomdwee abɔto som ebien no ntamu:*

I think the nature of our traditional family structures and the observance of some of the traditional ritual events such as festivals have, mainly, contributed to this unity and peace.

Nana Kwansa III, therefore, believes that the indigenous family links and traditional rites have served in building bridges across diverse faith traditions, including Christianity and Islam.<sup>483</sup>

There were, however, points of divergences, in terms of the indigenous perception of the ancestors as intermediaries to whom libation prayers and sacrifices were offered, among others.

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<sup>483</sup> Interview with Nana Kwansah III, a divisional chief of Enyan-Maim and his elders at Enyan-Maim on Dec. 7, 2010.

Although Islam as a monotheistic religion like Christianity affirms, strongly, the concept of *tawhid*, the unity of God, the message of Allah, as preached among the Mfantse people of this area was not, entirely, objectionable to the indigenous conception and understanding of the Supreme Being, other deities, ancestors and spirits. Islam opposes associating lesser divinities with Allah to the point of impairing his sovereignty. Unlike European Christian missionaries in Africa, who, initially, denied the existence of these deities, Muslims recognized their existence and influence on human life.<sup>484</sup> In this regard, ATR concepts of the Supreme Being, ancestors, deities and other spirits find similarities and parallels in the Islamic notions of Allah, holy men, jinn and angels. The above-mentioned religious elements find expressions, especially, in the ritual practices of Sufi Muslim clerics, who employ the religious resources of divination, sorcery, amulets, charms and prayers through the baraka of Muslim saints, jinns and angels to seek spiritual help for those with problems.<sup>485</sup> Among the Mfantse Muslims, the indigenous concepts of the lesser divinities have not been replaced by Muslim saints, jinns or angels; they have, rather, been retained within a broader Islamic religious vision.”<sup>486</sup>

It must, however, be stated that these features of Islam described above does not pertain in practice everywhere among the Mfantse Muslims. There are some Muslims, as we observed in chapter five, who insist on Islamic orthodoxy and, therefore, do not subscribe to these mystic dimensions of Islamic religious life. The Ahmadis and some orthodox Muslims do not accept these practices as Islamic. Moreover, ASWAJ, the Wahabbi Islamic ideological proponent group in Ghana, has, constantly, criticized the al-Tijaniyya Sufi Order for their mystic practices which they perceive as mixture of Islam

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<sup>484</sup> I. M. Lewis, “Introduction: Islam and Traditional Belief and Ritual” in I. M. Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa*, Essex: Anchor Press Ltd, 1980, p. 60

<sup>485</sup> Interview with Al-Hajj Idris Ibrahim, Imam of the Saltpond Sunni Muslim community on Sept. 2, 2009

<sup>486</sup> Ray, p. 166

with certain aspects of African traditional religious beliefs and practices. Yet, these different shades of religious expressions are the realities which characterize Islam among the Mfantse people of this area.

It has been mentioned earlier that indigenous Mfantse people celebrate, yearly, the Ahobaa festivals in commemoration of Ahor, who offered himself for sacrifice to save the lives of his people. This provided a strong religious connection for the indigenous converts to Islam in this area; that is, it provided the key for understanding the Islamic ritual of sacrifice when pilgrims at the hajj as well as the rest of the Muslim world, sacrificed animals on the tenth day of the month of Dhul al-Hijja in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice of the ram in place of Ishmael.<sup>487</sup> Although most Mfantse Muslims, both Ahmadis and Sunnis, are not able to go the hajj due to financial and other social constraints, they are very involved in this Islamic ritual of animal sacrifice during *Id al Adha* and sharing the meat with needy neighbours.<sup>488</sup>

In chapter four, mention was made of certain local events that facilitated the growth of both Christianity and Islam among the Mfantse people of this area. We shall, briefly, revisit those accounts in order to access those traditional religious elements, which were found to have provided the preparatory grounds for the understanding and acceptance of the messages of both Christianity and Islam by the indigenous people.

Before the entry of Christianity into this traditional area, ATR as the indigenous religion, was institutionalized at the *nananom pɔw* shrine at Mankessim, where the three charismatic leaders of the people were buried. The focus of the cult activities was on the ancestors as intermediaries, though the Supreme Being was considered as the ultimate

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<sup>487</sup> Denny, *Islam: An Introduction*, p. 134

<sup>488</sup> Interview with al-Hajj Bubaker Anderson on October 30, 2010

source of all power. The unravelling of the deception and the exploitation of the cult functionaries during the trial of Akweesi, a Methodist convert at Cape Coast, and the subsequent triumph of the latter, resulted in the collapse of the activities at the shrine. This development raised some doubts in the mind of most of the indigenous people and some of their traditional chiefs as to the ancestral powers, as projected by the religious functionaries. The apparent victory of Christianity over *nananom*, symbolized by the shrine, coupled with the Christian message of God's incarnation in Christ Jesus, fostered a better understanding of Jesus' divinity to the indigenous people. What reinforced this understanding and the consequent acceptance of the Christian faith was the Christian proclamation of Jesus as the mediator between God and man. This had a parallel in the indigenous religious conception and understanding of the role of the lesser deities and the ancestors as intermediaries. The perceived triumph over the *Nananom* ancestral cult by Christianity projected Jesus as the much more powerful and dependable intermediary in whom they could believe in order to establish contacts with the Supreme Being.

A point worthy to be noted here is that, although quite a number of the indigenous people embraced Christianity under the circumstances, they did not denounce completely those indigenous elements that served as "bridges" for their conversions to Christianity; their religious lives were still informed by some of those beliefs. It was the activities of the cult functionaries at the *Nananom pow* shrine that came into doubt. An evidence of this is the site of the *Nananom* shrine at Mankessim which has been preserved and where some Christians and non-Christians visit to offer libation prayers to the ancestors with the hope of having their needs met.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Interview with Kobina Amo, Head of Akweesi's family at Obidan on Dec. 28, 2010

Fig. 7.2



Fig. 7.2 is a picture of the remnant site of the *Nananom pɔw*, near Obidan, Akweesi's village. Here, people of diverse backgrounds, still, come from far and near with drinks to offer libation prayers to the spirits of the ancestors for assistance.

It has been mentioned earlier that Islam's inception and growth among the Mfantse people originated in the events which occasioned the conversion of Benjamin Sam to Islam through Sadick Bukar. However, a critical evaluation of the local religious history, will lead us to an earlier event which might have, also, served as a preparatory factor for Islam's acceptance among the Mfantse people and that is the Akweesi and the *Nananom pɔw* episode. It could be said that Islam's entry among the indigenous people, also, profited from this event; that is, the weakening of the hold of the *Nananom pɔw* cult on the people in the area introduced a religious change that made it possible for other religious traditions, including Islam, to enter the indigenous religious and cultural life with less resistance.

Benjamin Sam's (a former Methodist Catechist) conversion experience, which was narrated with different colouring by both the Mfantse Sunnis and Ahmadis, became the climax and the decisive point which opened doors for the growth and spread of Islam among the Mfantse people. The mystical aspects of Sam's conversion experience as discussed in chapter four were some of the points of connections with the indigenous religious beliefs which played, partially, a role in the reception of Sam's message of Allah by some of the people in this area.

### **7. 3. Indigenous language and its symbolic expressions**

The indigenous language with its symbolic expressions served as very important medium for the Mfantse people's expressions of the religious categories and symbols in Christianity and Islam. In various cultures, language as a vehicle of conceptions and symbolic expressions has been instrumental in translation and understanding of immigrant religious beliefs and ideas. This dimension of language and culture as essential media in transmitting, for instance, the Christian gospel in other cultures has been observed and

argued for by Sanneh. Referring to the apostles' efforts in transmitting the Christian message with understanding and meaning to the Greek-speaking Christians, he states: "The preponderance of Greek-speaking Christians in the primitive church forced the apostle to embark on translation, interpretation, and exegesis. No tongue was taboo or exclusive, and no one was irredeemable."<sup>490</sup>

Similarly, the cultural medium of the Mfantse language, with its indigenous symbols and myths, were employed by the early indigenous converts to Christianity and Islam in the evangelization and spread of the two religions among the Mfantse people. However, there are disparities, in terms of how the two immigrant religions responded to this indigenous medium as expression of their respective beliefs and practices and this will be addressed soon.

The indigenous religious categories and conceptions in which the ideas and beliefs of the immigrant religions were expressed did not only provide access to a better understanding of the new faith traditions, but also made it possible for the converts to express the same in indigenous terms, which gave them a better meaning. For example, the use of such indigenous categories as *ɔsɔfo*, "a cleric" (including priest/imam); *asɔrdan*, "a meeting place for worshippers of God" (chapel/mosque and others); *nyamesom*, "the worship of God"; *akɔm*, "ministering under the possession, power and inspiration of the spirit", among others, were applied to the symbolic elements and categories of the immigrant religions, including Christianity and Islam. The understanding of most of the traditional leaders interviewed was that the objective of the various religious groups in the area was the worship of the one Supreme Being; the diverse religious composition of

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<sup>490</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009, p.36

members of their traditional councils, according to them, gave evidence to that reality.<sup>491</sup> The translation of the myths and symbols of the immigrant religions into some of the indigenous categories resulted in a meaningful and better understanding of the beliefs, practices and values of the immigrant religions. The activities of Christianity and Islam in the area were, partly, sustained through this process.

The importance of the translation of such religious conceptions and symbols through the medium of the indigenous language was that, the indigenous perception, understanding and reverence for the sacred were transferred upon Islamic and Christian categories. Pastor Nyame Tsease was of the conviction that this accounted, largely, for the acceptance, recognition and respect given to the Christian church and its Ministers within the traditional communities by some of the traditional leaders and non-Christians.<sup>492</sup> This respect and reverence was not limited to the Christian clergy, but, also, to Muslim clerics and religious functionaries of other immigrant religions. While on the surface, the Muslim Imam, for instance, was perceived as a leader of the *salat*, who represented a new religion, he was, also, seen as a religious functionary, whose role evoked the old traditional diviner, interceding with the spirits and souls of the departed ones.<sup>493</sup> In this process, the indigenous language helped to play down the undue focus on religious differences that had the potential of fostering religious exclusivism, with its intolerance for the other. The various

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<sup>491</sup> Interviews with the traditional leaders of Saltpond (Nov 18, 2010), Enyan-Maim (Dec., 7, 2010) and Ekrawfo (Dec., 10, 2010) respectively. The following was the religious composition of the three traditional council members mentioned above to whom the researcher spoke: Saltpond – four of the members were present (all belonged to Christian Churches; one was an Anglican, two were Catholics and the other was a Methodist); Enyan-Maim – seven members were present; five were members of the Christian Churches (two attended Methodist, one was member of MDCC, another belonged to Church of Christ and the other was a member of the New Apostolic Church) and the two were Muslims; Ekrawfo – thirteen members were present; eight of them belonged to Christian Churches (five Methodists and three were members of Church of Pentecost), four were Ahmadi Muslims and the other was, solely, an ATR adherent.

<sup>492</sup> Interview with Pastor Nyame Tsease, CP District Pastor, Essakyir, on Sept. 2, 2009

<sup>493</sup> Lamin O. Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism*, Oxford: Westview Press, 1997, p. 15

religious traditions within this traditional area have been helped, in this sense, to make use of common religious symbols, ideas and expressions through the indigenous mediation (the indigenous religious terms such as *ɔsɔfo*, *ɔsom*, *nyame* are but few of the common Akan religious expressions for God, worship and a religious cleric, used, respectively, for those religious categories in the immigrant religions). This indigenous mediation has, also, helped in dismantling barriers created by doctrinal and historical differences inherited from western Christianity and Arab Islam; differences and disputes, which are, of virtually no relevance to the African context. This indigenous factor has been instrumental in the promotion of dialogue of life among the members of the different faith traditions in the area.

In view of the above discussions, it could be said that the indigenous language, symbols and rituals were key elements in indigenizing Christianity and Islam, thereby fostering the traditional value of community and family belonging in the midst of religious and cultural plurality.

In this sense, recognition and credit ought to be accorded some of the early Christian missionaries, who did not dismiss the importance of the indigenous language in the dissemination of the gospel. Some of them worked hard to develop the indigenous language in its written form. These efforts resulted in the translation of the Christian Bible into many indigenous languages, with the Mfantse language being among the first in Ghana. In this respect, Sanneh, rightly, critiques the position of modern historiography that perceives Western colonialism and Christian Missions as forces, which combined to destroy indigenous cultures.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 4

In addition to these, the written liturgies of the European established churches, including the RCC and the MCG, have been translated not only into the indigenous language of this people, but, also, the indigenous languages of most ethnic groups in Ghana. The CP and the MDCC have, since their inception, held their worship services in the indigenous languages, except in urban areas where there are mixed ethnic groups, that English is used, sometimes, with translations into the local languages.

The response of orthodox Islam to the role of the indigenous language as medium for the expression of religious beliefs and categories has been, rather, restrictive; the reason being the “insistence on Arabic as the exclusive vehicle of revelations.”<sup>495</sup> The upshot of this stance has been the denial of access to the reading of the Qur’an and listening to the sacred scriptures in the local language, particularly, by most Mfantse Muslims in this area, who are illiterate in Arabic. Yet, the religion could not have grown and been sustained among the Mfantse people without the local language as the vehicle of expression for Islamic religious thoughts and beliefs; it was the channel that provided the understanding for the Islamic message and connected with the indigenous religious experience of the people. It has been mentioned earlier that though Islam had been introduced in the Mfantse area before Sam’s conversion by the foreign Muslim settlers, its power of appeal to the indigenous Mfantse people for conversions was weakened by the language barrier.<sup>496</sup> This explains why al-Hajj Isaka, the Imam for the Mfantse Sunni group at Mankessim, had to establish another community, even though there was one, comprising the foreign settlers, already in place in the town.<sup>497</sup> Yet, orthodox Islam could not, completely, bypass the use of the indigenous language in spreading the Islamic faith. Most of the early indigenous

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<sup>495</sup> Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The religious Impact*, p. 221

<sup>496</sup> Interviews with al-Hajj Abubaker Anderson (Mfantse Ahmadi) at Mankessim and al-Hajj Idris Ibrahim (Sunni Imam) at Saltpond on Sept. 2, 2009 and on October 30, 2010 respectively.

<sup>497</sup> Interview with al-Hajj Isaka (Imam, Mfantse Sunni community, Mankessim on August 22, 2009

converts to the religion, especially, Ben Sam and Mahdi Appah, who did not know Arabic themselves, used the Mfantse language, indigenous symbols and rituals in preaching and worship events. Sam and the early pioneers of the Mfantse Islam, for instance, resorted to the use of the Mfantse translation of the Bible in order to communicate aspects of the Islamic message to ensure a better understanding.<sup>498</sup>

In comparison with the Ahmadis, one observes a different attitude towards the use of the indigenous language; the flexibility and encouragement for the translation of the Qur'an into the local languages, including Mfantse, accounted, in a large measure, for its special appeal to the indigenous people and the success of their missionary work in this area. The vernacularization policy of the Ahmadis derived from the understanding that the message of Allah could be better understood by non-Arabic speaking people in their own local language, a position that stands in contrast to Orthodox Muslims, who hold that Arabic is the language of revelation, and for that reason, cannot be translated. In accordance with their policy of the translatability of the Qur'an, Alhaji Maulvi Nazir Ahmad Mobashir, the then Amir and Missionary-in-Charge of the Movement, initiated the translation work from the original Arabic into the local Mfantse language in August 1960.<sup>499</sup> This recognition of the essential role of the indigenous language in the missionary work of the AMM and its practical application in religious functions attracted most indigenous Mfantse converts, who could hear, read and interpret the essence of the Islamic faith through their indigenous symbols.

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<sup>498</sup> Samwini, p.38; interview with the Essakyir Ahmadi Circuit Missionary, Mustapha Bin Dankwa (Aug. 29, 2009). He clarified that the Mfantse Muslim pioneers, later, used the Mfantse translation of the Bible to ensure better understanding of some of the Biblical stories about Isa (Jesus) and other Prophets, also found in the Qur'an.

<sup>499</sup> *Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana*, pp. 13, 14

#### 7. 4. The traditional festivals

It has been observed in our earlier discussions that the celebration of the *Akwanbo* festival of the people of this area has served, yearly, in bringing together the various religious groups in this area in a community festive participation.

The verb *akwanbo* means clearing of footpaths. It re-enacts the migration event of the forebears of this indigenous people and the footpaths that were used to arrive at their present location. Accordingly, bushy footpaths in the villages and towns were cleared and all surroundings cleaned.

Besides its social value and hygienic benefits, the festival, also, draws on the power of memory of those already gone from this life. This is actualized through symbolic rituals and narrative of the history and myths of the ethnic group by the elders to the younger generation as the latter observe and participate in the event.<sup>500</sup> The celebration reinforces the values of identity and unity of the celebrants, involving both Christian and Muslim members of the community. In this context, traditional religious festivals, which bring the converts to immigrant religions and ATR adherents together in annual celebrations, have become strong sources of fostering family and community identity and oneness that transcends religious divides. This has served, in particularly fostering cordial Christian-Muslim relations. Officially, the approach of the Christian and Muslim communities towards the celebration of the traditional festival has been one of selective participation as already indicated; sacrifices to other divinities and ancestors in the traditional festivals were perceived as “idol worship” by these two monotheistic religious traditions. Even though African traditionalists think that idols are not worshipped since they are mere symbols, this

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<sup>500</sup> These explanations were given by Nana Kwansah III, the Amankorahen in an interview with some Traditional leaders of Enyan-Maim on Dec. 7, 2010, aftermath of the researcher’s observation of the Enyan-Maim annual *Akwanbo* from Thursday Sept. 3 to Saturday Sept. 5, 2010

perception still persists.<sup>501</sup> Some of the members of the Christian and Islamic communities have, in principle, tended to withdraw from such perceived “fetish” practices in the celebration. Yet, the communal nature of the indigenous life, with its strong family ties makes it difficult for the members of these monotheistic religions to, completely, stay away from those religious rituals of the festivals.<sup>502</sup> Although the youths, including, those in the immigrant religious traditions, take part in the various aspects of the festivals, most of them do not seem to understand its significance, apart from its social and communal functions.<sup>503</sup> In conversation with some of them, they seemed not to be, particularly, interested in the event. It appeared the traditional socialization process of passing on some aspects of the traditional heritage to the younger generation is losing some grounds in view of the changing religious backgrounds of the parents. Most of the youths revealed that their Christian or Muslim parents have not shared with them the rationale behind the traditional festivals and some of the other indigenous beliefs and practices.

The people’s participation in the festival event, nevertheless, linked them with the past, the present and the future generations of the traditional communities as one people, which cut across religious divides and went beyond time and space.<sup>504</sup> In this process, the

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<sup>501</sup> Interview with Osofo Okomfo Atsu Kove, the Head Priest of Africana religion in Ghana at Accra on Dec. 22, 2010

<sup>502</sup> Interviews with Rev. William Tetteh Wayo, Saltpond CP District Pastor on Nov. 2, 2009; Rt. Rev. Yedu Bannerman, past Diocesan Bishop, MCG on October 28, 2010; H. K. Yamoah, an Ahmadi leader, Ekrawfo community on Nov. 22, 2010 and Francis Aidoo, Mfantse Sunni Muslim leader, Attakwa community on Nov. 22, 2010 respectively. These interviewees affirmed that though the immigrant religions frowned upon these aspects of the festival, some of their individual members participate in them.

<sup>503</sup> Interview with some of the Christian and Muslim youths: respective interview sessions with Abdul Hakim (an Ahmad young adult and local missionary, Mankessim community) on Aug. 22, 2009; Hussein Acquah (Essakyir Ahmadi Circuit Youth Secretary) on Aug. 29, 2009; Esther Smile Melah and Arnold K. S. Ocran (CP. Youth members, Mankessim Assembly) on Nov. 21, 2010; Richard Essuman (Methodist leader and Youth Executive members, Mankessim) on Nov. 21, 2010; Kadija Eshun (a young Orthodox Muslim woman, Attakwa) on Nov. 22, 2010; Isa Baiden (an Ahmadi young adult and Traditional Committee Secretary, Ekrawfo) on Nov. 27, 2010; Stephen Afful (RCC youth seminarian) on Dec. 21, 2010 and Sarah Quabo (MDCC young woman youth member, Mankessim Church) on Dec. 27, 2010.

<sup>504</sup> Interview with Kojo Amokwandoh, the flag bearer of the Asan military group of the Enyan-Maim traditional community on Dec. 7, 2010

communal values of their identity and unity were reinforced.<sup>505</sup> The occasion, which, also, coincided with the harvest time, was used to give thanks to the Supreme Being for his protection and provisions. Sacrifices of food and animals were offered to the ancestors and other deities for ensuring their well-being. The inseparable union between the religious and the material dimensions of the African life as well as the utilitarian understanding of religion were given full expressions during the celebration; an African religious heritage that has informed some of the religious practices (with their underlying values) of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and African Independent Churches (AICs). We revisit this subject below.

Another area of the impact of the observance of the traditional festivals on the life of Christians and Muslims in this area could be found in the celebration of the *Ahobaa* festivals, which was mentioned, briefly, earlier. It appears the celebration of these festivals has lost some of its earlier community patronage; it is restricted, mostly, to the clans and families, although it involves the entire community. Moreover, due to the Christian and Islamic influence, active participation in these festivals by community members had declined. These festivals – *Ahobaa Kakraba* (the minor) and *Ahobaa Kεse* (the major) – are focused on the ancestors, to which, as mentioned above, official Christianity and Islam have strong objections. In addition, the effects of money economy have compelled, especially, the young adults who used to be its active participants in the traditional set-up to relocate to the urban centres in search of employment opportunities. These notwithstanding, the active involvement of Muslim and Christian members in the ritual observance of these festivals in respective families and households cannot be overlooked. In various families, family elders lead their members, some of whom belong to other religious communities, in

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<sup>505</sup> Interviews with Crayner (Nov. 12, 2010), Enyan-Maim (Dec. 7, 2010) and Saltpond traditional leaders (Nov. 18, 2010) respectively.

libation prayers and other rituals of sacrifice. This communal function and value found in the celebration of these traditional festivals by the Mfantse people, including, Christians and Muslims of this area, stands in contrast with J. Spencer Trimingham's assertion in his book *The Christian Church and Islam in West Africa* that one of the factors that accounted for Islam gaining more adherents than Christianity in certain regions in West Africa was the breakdown of the old religious authority.<sup>506</sup> While his claim might be right in some respects, this generalization, like that of most European missionaries and some scholars, fails to appreciate the resilient nature and enduring character of some of the traditional religious beliefs and practices for contemporary Africans. It, also, demonstrates the lack of understanding regarding the utilitarian and pragmatic approach to religion by most Africans, including these Mfantse people. First, I have argued in this thesis that though conversions from the traditional religion to the immigrant religions may appear overwhelming in terms of numbers, it does not mean in any way that those indigenous converts have abandoned their traditional religious beliefs and practices; they still serve as important religious mediation for expressing their new faith. Secondly, for most Africans, conversions to other religions amount to adding onto the old layer, the relevant religious elements found in the new religious systems so as to serve their present need in life. In view of these dimensions of the indigenous religious life, it will be wrong for any easy conclusion that conversions from the traditional religion to Christianity or Islam serve as an indicator of the breakdown or decay of the old religious order.

### **7. 5. Transitional rites**

The communal nature of the indigenous celebration of the transitional rites as well as their religious and cultural meaning for the people in this area had impacted, particularly,

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<sup>506</sup> Trimingham, *The Christian Church and Islam in West Africa*, p. 14

on some of the ritual practices of Muslim communities and the Christian Churches. In view of the varying degree of impact on Christian and Islamic beliefs and practices, respectively, we shall, first, begin the discussion with the impact on Christianity, followed by that on Islam.

### **7. 5. 1. Traditional naming**

Among the Akan of Ghana and, in particular, the Mfantse people, traditional naming rituals convey the indigenous thought and understanding of the personality. An individual is, first, conceived as belonging to a particular family.<sup>507</sup> This is held in tension with the uniqueness of the individual, in terms of his or her particular needs, ambitions, destiny, among others. The indigenous conception has, always, related one's individuality to his/her identity as one belonging to an extended family and the total social and historical context of the community.<sup>508</sup> Furthermore, the indigenous belief was that the naming ritual involved the actualization of a person (an ancestor) and a certain desired moral value in the child. The given name, in this sense, conferred a personality, status, destiny as well as a wish of the good circumstances in which the bearer of the name was born.<sup>509</sup> This understanding became the guiding principle for the socialization of the child by parents, family and the community members. Through the naming ritual, the child was, effectively, incorporated into the clan and the family;<sup>510</sup> that is, the traditional institutions where he/she would be guided, shaped and informed by the indigenous norms and values, alongside those of the religious tradition of the parents.

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<sup>507</sup> Ray, p. 92

<sup>508</sup> Ibid, p.92

<sup>509</sup> Magesa, p.87

<sup>510</sup> Ibid, p.90

In view of the indigenous moral value underlying the rite as well as the strong community and family involvement in the birth and naming ritual of a new child, some of the Christian Churches have tried to incorporate aspects of the traditional practices and their underlying values into their respective rites. The RCC, MCG and the MDCC, for instance, have moved in this direction. At a gathering in a family house, comprising family, community and church members, a family elder and a Priest/Minister or an appointed church leader, co-officiate in the naming ceremony. The Minister, normally, takes responsibility for the prayers, while the family elder performs the naming ritual. Most of the time the, family will even request the Minister to do both due to the reverence accorded the latter as God's chosen servant. As we mentioned and explained in chapter two, it was the father of the child who gave the name and, a family name as such, from one of his elders.<sup>511</sup> The ritual of naming the child is as follows: two cups are placed on a table, one filled with water and the other, with an alcoholic drink or any soft drink. The name for the child is given by the parents (particularly by the father) through the family elder and the rationale behind it is explained. Then the officiating person dips a finger in the water first, mentions the name of the child and declares: *ese nsu a nna nsu a*, meaning, "if you say it is water, then it is water". It is repeated three times. The same is done with the alcoholic or soft drink. The first moral lesson to distinguish between truth and falsehood is taught to the child by the members of the community, comprising different religious affiliations. With the exception of the CP, the same rituals are performed, even when it takes place in the

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<sup>511</sup> Interviews with the following Christian youth on family naming and its significance revealed that though most Christian youth or young adults bore Christian names as their first names, all of them were given family names: Matilda Mbeah (a young Methodist youth woman, Mankessim) on Nov. 26, 2010. Her given family name is Nana Adwoa Nyarkowa (named after her grandfather); Evelyn Ansah (RCC youth student, Ekrawfo) on Nov. 27, 2010. She was given the family name Adwoa Ahemah (named after her grandmother – father's mother); Arnold K. S. Ocran (CP. youth, Mankessim) on Nov. 21, 2010. His family name is Paa Koomson (named after his grandfather – father's father); Sarah Quabo (young MDCC woman and youth executive member) on Dec. 27, 2010. Her family name is Ataguaa – named after her grandmother). These youths expressed that family names gave them their family identity and enabled them to trace the family lineage.

sanctuary of a church, except that the Priest/Minister is the main celebrant. It must be noted at this point that the indigenous elements, which have been, prominently, incorporated are the elements of water, drink and the words that are pronounced as drops of these elements touch the tongue of the child; an indigenous means of imparting the first moral lessons to the child. In view of their powerful symbolic meanings and moral value, some of the churches saw the need to incorporate them in their liturgical rituals.

Conspicuously missing, however, in the rite, is the libation prayer; a traditional ritual that symbolizes the welcoming of the new member into a wider community, encompassing the living and the dead (ancestors) as well as the other invisible beings of that religious and cultural universe.<sup>512</sup> The reason for this, as mentioned before, derived from the Christian churches objection to rituals which give allusions to the worship of other divinities and ancestors. In this regard, one observes that it is not every aspect of the indigenous rite that is absorbed by these Christian churches.

In the case of the CP, which belongs to the Classical Pentecostal Tradition, most of the indigenous elements have not been incorporated, especially, the use of water and alcohol in naming.<sup>513</sup> The impact of the indigenous naming practice has, therefore, not been the same on all the Christian churches in the area.

As regards Islamic response to the traditional naming observance, one could say that there has been very minimal absorption in comparison with Christianity due to the universal Islamic legal tradition that governs transitional rites; a legal tradition, which according to Muslims, are, hardly, altered in any different religious and cultural context.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> Interview with J. B. Crayner (Nov. 12, 2010). He pointed out some of changes that had taken place as a result of the Christian incorporation of some of the indigenous rituals.

<sup>513</sup> Interview with Apostle Koduah, General Secretary, Church of Pentecost in Accra on Sept. 23, 2010

<sup>514</sup> Interview with Essakyir Ahmadiyya Circuit Missionary, Mustapa Bin Dankwa (on Aug. 22, 2009) and

However, the traditional naming in the family has been practised, side by side, with the Islamic rite. Mfantse Muslim children are given family names as members who belong to the indigenous family and the traditional community, although their Muslim names are used more often.<sup>515</sup>

### **7. 5. 2. Traditional marriage**

Traditional marriage has a very important place and function within the African community and family structures. A couple's declaration to get married means not only the desire to be instruments in bringing other lives into the world, but also, the acceptance of their religious and societal role to maintain the family and ancestral lineage. The African religious and cultural value, which focuses on enhancing the vital life force, is seen by the family and community as being fulfilled in this respect; hence, the decision is received with joy and expectation. It is a sentiment that underscores the central place of marriage and procreation in the moral thought of Africans and, for that matter, this ethnic community.<sup>516</sup> The importance of the marriage institution in the traditional life of the people accounted for the thorough background check that is done before the marriage customary rite is performed.

Most Akan families, including Mfantse people, had some major concerns in mind, which had to be addressed before the marriage of their young ones could be allowed to take place: first, the would-be couple should not be related, matrilineally, by blood or belong to

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Imam of the Obontser Sunni Muslims, malam Ibrahim Adam (on Nov. 12, 2010) at Obontser respectively.  
<sup>515</sup> Interview with some Muslim youths Hussein Acquah (an Ahmadi Circuit Youth Sec., Essakyir) on Aug. 29, 2009. His family name is Odoom (named after grandmother – father's mother; Dawuda Adam (a Sunni Muslim youth, Enyan-Maim) on Dec. 10, 2010. His family name is Kwame Nkum; Fatima Abubekar (a young Sunni Muslim, Enyan-Maim and women's secretary) on Dec. 10, 2010. Her family name is Efua Kwansa. These Muslim youth thought that their Muslim names made them feel part of the universal Islamic community and their family names identified them with their Mfantse family lineages.

<sup>516</sup>Magesa, pp. 100, 101

the same clan. Secondly, the partner should come from a good home or family; by this, it is meant that members of the two respective families are not litigants. They do not have a record of criminal conviction, no serious disease is associated with their members, and that they are not notorious for greed, stealing and other social vices. They, also, try to verify, especially, on the woman's side whether there is barrenness in the family; for one of the main purposes of marriage in the African traditional setting is for procreation and continuity of the family lineage as noted earlier. Unfortunately, in African traditional marriage system, the cause of barrenness has, most often, been put at the doorstep of the woman, when medical science has proven that men have been, equally, if not the major source of this problem. Partly, it is in trying to deal with childlessness within the traditional society that polygamous marriage has been thriving, especially, in traditional societies.

The consent and final decision on the marriage rested with the family (mostly, with the fathers directing the decision making process), though, not without consulting the couple involved. However, much of this family control in the traditional choice of a marriage partner has undergone a lot of changes for some reasons: first, most young people who desire to get married no longer live under the tutelage of their parents and family elders; they are, sometimes, living far away from home and they take the initiative in finding their would-be partners. Financially, they do not depend on their parents; consequently, parents cannot be too rigid on such matters. Moreover, parents have, also, come to the realization that though the marriage of their children unites the two families, it is the couple who are, eventually, going to live together. They need, therefore, to be given the opportunity to make the major decisions on important issues of their lives such as marriage. Yet, parents and family do not surrender, totally, that role described above. The young man and woman who are planning to marry know very well how important it is for them to secure the respective

consents of their parents and the family acceptance of each other. It is, strongly, believed that getting the consent of the parents ensures blessings for the marriage and subsequent prosperity for the family of the young couple.<sup>517</sup> For these reasons, if the couple do not come from the same community and ethnic group, it is their duty to provide their parents and family with all the necessary information concerning the background check mentioned earlier to seek the approval of the latter. This traditional family and parental role in the choice of a marriage partner is, still, respected, to some extent, by both Christian and Muslim couples to be married.

For this indigenous people as well as for most traditional Africans, marriage is not a legal contract between only the man and the woman, but a joining of the two families of the couple concerned, thereby extending the community link of relationships, further, through the family structures. This communal value and relevance of marriage for most African societies, has been kept in focus by the various members of the religious groups in the area. In view of this enduring essence, one might perceive the external trappings of the indigenous African rituals to be outmoded, yet, its value still lasts on.<sup>518</sup>

The inherent importance and value of the ritual practices of the traditional marriage have been, duly, appreciated by the Christian churches; hence the various efforts at absorbing, to a large extent, some of the indigenous elements in their ritual practices. For instance, the question, “Who gives this woman to be married to this man?” posed to the person who is giving the woman away in marriage is intended to verify whether the required customary rites have been met and that the family consent has been obtained.<sup>519</sup> Moreover, the calling upon the families of the man and woman, asking for their support for the couple is a

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<sup>517</sup> Interview with the Rt. Rev. Yedu Bannerman on October 28, 2010 at Tema

<sup>518</sup> Sarpong, p. 27

<sup>519</sup> *Methodist liturgy and Book of Worship*, p. 119

significant revision, on the part of the churches, in recognition of the communal value of the traditional marriage.<sup>520</sup> In this respect, the churches, represented by the leaders and some members (sometimes, including the Priest/Minister), participate in the customary rites, where the bridal price for the woman and all the other financial obligations of the man are fulfilled, on his behalf by his family members. The head of the woman's family, in religious terms, presides over the functions of this ceremony as the representative of the Supreme Being and the ancestors.<sup>521</sup> In the presence of church leaders and members, libation prayers are usually omitted.

On the issue of polygamy as found within the indigenous marriage system, the Christian Churches have still not opened their doors of acceptance to it, neither have they given recognition to members who are polygamists, except the MDCC. As mentioned before, the MDCC gives full recognition to polygamous members, just like anyone in the church and invite them to the Lord's Communion.

Just like the other transitional rites, marriage rites for Islamic members are, strictly, observed according to the Islamic legal tradition. However, Muslims in this area also see to it that the bridal price or gift and all other obligations are fulfilled according to the customary rites by the man and his family before the Muslim legal marriage *mahar* could take place.<sup>522</sup> In this regard, the Islamic ritual has been an addition to the traditional practice, though its observance constitutes both the focus and climax of the celebration for the Muslim couple and the Islamic community.

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<sup>520</sup> Ibid, p. 123. The need for the revision of the old Methodist Book of Offices, containing some of the transitional rites, to make it more relevant to the local context was felt by the Ghana Conference of the church in the 1980s. The old liturgical book was inherited from the British Methodist and the new one was completed in 2000.

<sup>521</sup> Magesa, p. 116

<sup>522</sup> Interviews with Hakim Kofi Yamoah, a leading member, Ekrawfo Ahmadi community on Nov. 22 at Ekrawfo and Malam Adam Musa Abubaker, Chief Director of the office of the national Sunni chief Imam and Imam in-charge of the Sunni Central Mosque in Accra on Dec. 2, 2010 respectively.

Besides that, Islamic marriage shares a common ground with the indigenous system in polygamous marriage. This, partly, accounted for the ease with which some of the indigenous converts embraced Islam, especially, as the Christian churches, with the exception of some African Independent Churches, closed their doors to the indigenous system. However, this cannot be taken as incorporation of an indigenous element, since Islam, within its legal marriage, allows a man to marry up to four wives. It could, rather, be seen as an affinity that Islam had with some of the indigenous cultural elements and, not an adjustment on the part of Islam, in its relationship with the indigenous context.

### **7. 5. 3. Death and burial**

In chapter two, we discussed the indigenous beliefs and thoughts of the Mfantse people concerning death, which marked a transition from the world of the living to that of the spirit and ancestors. Like Christianity and Islam, there is the belief that death is not the end of life, though in the traditional thoughts, the idea of judgment after death, as espoused by the immigrant religions, is, completely, absent. In ATR, there is this strong belief and understanding that the dead continue with their lives in the spiritual realm, virtually, maintaining the status they had among the living. This understanding informs the various funeral rituals and practices among the people of this area, namely, placing objects in the coffin of the dead, elaborate organization, the nature and size of community participation and the heavy expenditure that goes into funerals. Formerly, when a chief died, people were, ritually, killed as a means of ensuring that he had servants to accompany him into the other world to serve him. Although this practice has ceased, there are, still, different ritual celebrations for the deceased depending on his/her status in the community.

The indigenous funeral practices have extensively influenced Christian funeral ceremonies in this area. The Christian churches' recognition of their members as having a dual identity – belonging to the traditional family and the community, on the one hand as well as to the church, on the other – has resulted in some unofficial burial arrangements between the church and families of the deceased. The church leaves all aspects of burial rituals in the hands of the family, while it handles the burial services and rites at the graveyard, which are considered not only as the Church's sacred responsibility, but also, a religious duty towards the departed member. Though the Christian churches do not, officially, subscribe to the underlying indigenous beliefs, the practice of placing objects in the coffin are observed by most Christians before covering the mortal remains for the final Christian liturgical funeral service.

It is only in Muslim funerals that the official insistence on simple and uniform rites has been able to hold sway among the people. Even then, the family and community members of the deceased Muslim continue with other traditional funeral rituals, which are not, officially, sanctioned, but patronized by the family and community, including some Muslim members; the most determining factors being the family and community links and some of their inherent indigenous beliefs, which enjoin them to be involved.

What has accounted for the much more effective Muslim control over the funeral rituals in this area is that every bit of the burial arrangement is handled by the Muslim community, whilst Christians leave everything in the hands of the family, except the burial service and the interment ritual at the cemetery. Muslims have a fixed period within which to bury the dead, not giving room for elaborate preparations as found in the indigenous practices. Due the above-mentioned factors, among others, the impact of the indigenous practice on Islam has, therefore, been very minimal.

However, there are other aspects of community participation, such as the digging of the grave, drumming to summon people, preparing the funeral grounds, and the gathering of the community, chiefs and elders and others that express the oneness and solidarity of the community members. These activities defy religious boundaries and are informed by the dynamics of the family and community relationships and the indigenous values.<sup>523</sup>

## **7. 6. The influence of other indigenous elements**

Among the other important indigenous elements that impacted on the growth and spread of both Christianity and Islam in the area was the initiative and active involvement of the indigenous people in the spread of the two religious traditions in the area; a factor that is taken for granted, especially, by most missionary narratives on African Christianity and, sometimes, by some Muslim scholars.

Mention was made in chapter three of the survival of Mfantse group of Christians from the Anglican Cape Coast castle school, “the Mfantse Bible Band”. It was the group’s aspirations and determination to continue in the Christian faith, which resulted in the sending of Joseph Rhodes Dunwell, the first Methodist missionary, to the Gold Coast by the British Methodist Missionary Society in 1835. Now, this indigenous religious determination, which, eventually, led to the birth of Methodism on the Mfantse land, deserves some attention at this point.

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<sup>523</sup> Interviews with some youth members of the following religious communities: the Methodist Church Mankesim (Richard Essuman and Matilda Mbeah on Nov. 21 and 26, 2010 respectively); MDCC, Mankessim (Sarah Quabo and Martey on Dec. 27, 2010); Sunni Muslims Enyan-Maim (Adam Dawud and Hdjiatu Safiw on Dec. 10, 2010) and Ahmadi Muslims, Essakyir (Hussein Acquah on Aug. 29, 2009) These Muslim youths were unanimous in saying that they participated in various activities of family and community funerals in solidarity as people whose family links and community values bound them together as one people.

This religious thirst on the part of the members of “the bible band” is an element that is very much akin to the enduring influence of primal religions, as was identified by Mircea Eliade among Australian aboriginals. “The need the aboriginals felt to preserve their contact with those scenes of hierophany was essentially a religious one; it was nothing more than the need to remain in direct communion with a “centre” producing the sacred.”<sup>524</sup> Without discounting the influential role of the Christian seed that was sown in this group of indigenous Christians, I am of the opinion that the embedded indigenous religious heritage that resided in the inner recesses of the indigenous Christian converts, equally, facilitated this longing to deepen their Christian religious experience. This inner urge to establish communion with the sacred is very characteristic of primal religious life, including that of ATRs; religion pervades every dimension of the indigenous life among most Africans. Accordingly, I have argued that the important mediation role of the indigenous religious elements in the religious and cultural expressions of both African Christians and Muslims and, for that matter, those in this area, needs to be given its due recognition, hence this study.

Though, Joseph Rhodes Dunwell and subsequent missionaries that came after him could not survive in the tropical conditions, the missionary work was sustained during those trying periods, mostly, by the indigenous converts. Most of these were members of “the Mfantse Bible Band,” namely Joseph Smith, William de Graft (leaders of the group), George Blankson, John Sam, Henry Brew, John Smith, William Brown, John Niezer, John Aggrey, Kobina Mensah Sackey and Kwabena Mensah.<sup>525</sup> The spread of the Christian faith in this area was, often, carried out by the indigenous converts, who through migration,

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<sup>524</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, translation by Rosemary Sheed, New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1958, p. 369.

<sup>525</sup> Essamuah, p. 8

established fellowships that, later, became congregations of respective Christian denominations. In chapter three, we noted that most of the leaders of the CP who worked with Mckeown, the founder of the church in the Gold Coast, were the indigenous Christians. Furthermore, the MDCC came into being as a result of an indigenous initiative to provide a Christian worship that resonates with the African religious experience. Even with the mainline churches such as the RCC and the MCG, the problem of comprehension of the Christian message due to language barrier, brought the indigenous converts into the forefront in the missionary activities of the church. “Just as urgent was the need for a deeper understanding of the gospel message. Obviously this need could not be satisfied as adequately through the English as it could be in the Fante, the local language.”<sup>526</sup> The indigenous involvement and the use of the local language in spreading the faith of the missionary religions were very crucial factors in the success stories of the Christian groups in this area and in the entire country.

Today an observation of the worship service of these Christian churches reveals the incorporation of the indigenous cultural elements such as the use of locally composed songs and indigenous instruments in the mainline churches (including RCC and MCG), the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and the African Independent Churches. Most of these indigenous expressions were, initially, considered as “pagan” expressions, especially, by the established mission churches. The absorption of these worship expressions helped most African Christians to connect, meaningfully, with the Christian experience. It is in affirmation of this urgent need and reality that E. W. Fashole-Luke stated: “Furthermore, if Christianity is to change its status from that of resident alien to that of citizen, then it must become incarnate in the life and thought of Africa, and its theologies must bear the

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<sup>526</sup> Bartels, p. 22

distinctive stamp of mature African thinking and reflection.”<sup>527</sup> This call for change of Christian status on African soil, especially, in the area of worship expressions, has taken place and it is on-going. The African religious experience involves both the intellectual and emotional expression of the worshipper. The spontaneous singing, drumming and dancing of the indigenous people as means of expressing their praise and gratitude to the Creator and Sustainer of life was very much restricted by the form of worship life that used to prevail in the established European Missionary churches. The emergence of the AICs and Pentecostal churches provided the vital spiritual missing links, which, sometimes, resulted in conversions from the mainline churches to the new ones. This loss of membership, coupled with the realization of the need for the European mission churches to be African as well as the universal church, resulted in the reforms mentioned above within these churches. This need for mission religions on the African soil, particularly, Christianity to, seriously, engage ATRs in order to help provide meaningful religious experience for African converts is echoed by Bediako: “No self-respecting theological institution in Africa can avoid the study of African Traditional Religions.”<sup>528</sup>

One of the distinctive Mfantse indigenous impact on the worship life of the Methodists and the MDCC, is the translation of some of the English hymns into Mfantse, “Christian Asor Ndwom” and “Mfantse lyrics,” “Ebibidwom” which feature, prominently, in their worship service. These are unique features that characterize the worship life of the Methodist and MDCC churches. This particular indigenous expression is rooted in the traditional war songs that were composed and sung by the people as they fought battles in

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<sup>527</sup> E. W. Fashole-Luke, “The Quest for an African Christian Theology”, in *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1975, pp. 267, 268

<sup>528</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Cumbria: Paternoster Publishing, 2000, p. 69

their historical journey of coming to settle in their present communities. Though some of these traditional songs were sung to serve as motivation to forge ahead in their battles and other struggles, others were also composed in recognition of the divine interventions of the Supreme Being through the mediation of the lesser gods and ancestors. These traditional songs have been adapted by the indigenous Christians, using the background of the biblical struggles and wars of the Israelites. The Church, the new Israel, to which these indigenous converts belong, is, also, perceived as engaged in the struggle of life. The indigenous ideas and experience of the gods and ancestors as protectors, who, also, led them to triumph in wars, enabled these indigenous Christians to translate in the lyrics their understanding of God's providence and sustenance through Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

An evaluation of mode and spread of Islam among the Mfantse people brings attention to the central role of the indigenous people in the establishment of the religion in the area. The indigenous people of this area came into contact with Islam in the 1836, as mentioned in chapter four. However, it was not until the conversion of Benjamin Sam and his friend Mahdi Appah, both, indigenous Mfantse people, that Muslim communities began to be established among the indigenous people through the missionary efforts of these pioneers.<sup>529</sup> Some of the reasons accounting for this were the following: first, the initial problem of language barrier, in particular, between the foreign Muslim settlers and the indigenous inhabitants was resolved as indigenous Mfantse converts proclaimed the Islamic message to their own people in a language they could understand. The use of indigenous religious expressions and symbols by the early Mfantse Muslim leaders facilitated easier understanding and connections with the Islamic religious categories.

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<sup>529</sup> Interviews with some Ahmadi Muslim leaders (Mustapha Bin Danquah Hussein Acquah) on Aug. 29, 2009 at Essakyir and some Sunni Muslim Leaders (Kweku Isaka and Ibrahim Adam) on Nov. 12, 2010 at Obontser.

These early Mfantse Muslim leaders, were not experts in Islamic legal tradition, neither were they oriented towards reformist traditions. They were typical Africans who sought and aspired for religious practices and expressions in Islam, which connected with their indigenous experiences and made meaning for daily living. With the exception of Islamic religious rituals for the transitional rites, which were rooted in the Islamic legal tradition, most of the cultural expressions and some of the religious practices of Muslims in this area were informed by the traditional religious and cultural values. Muslim women in this area, mostly, dress in the traditional way (occasionally wearing the Muslim veil), shake hands with men in greetings as the indigenous custom demands, and mix up with the opposite sex, freely, in cars and public places, among others.<sup>530</sup> These traditional influences on Islam have, also, been facilitated, among others, by the predominant rural setting of this area: with the exception of Saltpond and Makessim areas, which are considered as urban (the estimated population of which were given in chapter four), the rest are small towns or villages. In this rural environment, traditional religious and cultural norms are strong influential factors in group and individual conducts; the traditional life of community members, including, Christians and Muslims is, mostly, grounded in the indigenous belief systems and customs.<sup>531</sup>

The indigenous utilitarian view of religion has had tremendous impact on the religious beliefs and practices of the indigenous converts to both Christianity and Islam. In Christianity this could be observed in the intensive fasting and healing prayers which

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<sup>530</sup> Interviews with the following Muslim women: Ekrawfo Ahmadi Muslim (Aisha Badu on Nov. 12, 2010); Enyan- Maim Sunni Muslim (Fatima Abubaker and Hadjiatu Safiw on Dec. 10, 2010) and Essakyir Sunni Muslim (Ekuwa Aisha on Nov. 26, 2010) . These women explained that their conduct in terms of dressing and relating with the opposite sex, among others are informed by the traditional norms of the family and the community.

<sup>531</sup> Nehemia Levtzion, "Rural and Urban Islam in West Africa: An Introductory Essay" in Nehemia Letzion & Humphrey J. Fisher (eds.), *Rural and Urban Islam in West Africa*, Colorado: Lynn Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1987, p. 19

feature, prominently, in the ministries of MDCC and the CP and, has, eventually, influenced the mainline churches to move in the same direction in order to retain their membership. “As in the New Testament, indigenous African Christianity believes in an intentional world of invisible spiritual agents and in the power of prayer and ritual symbols to cope with life’s problems. These are the principles that unite the indigenous churches and that make indigenous Christianity and African religion.”<sup>532</sup> The indigenous religious universe and its elements have been influential factors in shaping the various Christian expressions in this area.

In Islam, it is the Sufi Muslim mallams, who, mostly, offer the aspects of religious services, which tend to address the material and spiritual needs of the people. Orthodox Muslims and Ahmadis tend to frown upon some of these mystic practices, but on the basis of their common indigenous worldview, some Sunni and Ahmadi Mfantse Muslims as well as Christians patronize these spiritual services, not only from Muslim clerics, but from a Christian or a traditional religious functionary in times of need. The practice by which Muslim clerics are believed to make use of mystical powers and sorcery to cause rain and to trap evil doers, respectively, are quite common in this area and are seen by the indigenous people as very necessary life interventions.

The indigenous mediation for both Christianity and Islam in this area could also be observed in the celebration of the religious festivals of the two immigrant religions. We observed earlier that the celebration of the Christian festivals, especially, Christmas and Easter and those of Islam - *Rahamadan* and *Id al Fitr* - have involved non-Christians and non-Muslims in the community. Sometimes, non-Muslim family members eat together with Muslim members at dawn for the commencement of the fast and, also, join them in the

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<sup>532</sup> Ray, p. 195

evening meal to break the fast.<sup>533</sup> Culturally, the indigenous custom of family members sharing meals together from one bowl has been an influential factor in this practice.<sup>534</sup> The active participation by the rest of the indigenous community members in the celebration of these religious events and their ritual observances reflects the indigenous value and emphasis on community participation, engendered by strong family and community ties.

The impact of the indigenous religious and cultural elements on Christianity and Islam could, also, be observed in the nature of inter-religious relations that characterize the relationships of the members of the various religious groups in the area, especially Christians and Muslims. We observed how the celebration of the traditional festivals brings the various religious groups together. More pronounced in the indigenous contribution for peaceful co-existence among the members of the different faith traditions, is the traditional family links which bind members of the diverse religious groups together as one people.<sup>535</sup> Most Christians and Muslims in this area have been socialized through the traditional family and community norms and values, besides those of their respective religious traditions and they see themselves more as one community and family members.<sup>536</sup> This indigenous impact on cordial inter-religious relations is found, not only in Christian-Muslim relations, but, also, in intra-religious relations of various religious denominations or sects of the two immigrant religions in the area. Among the Christian denominations joint religious programmes are held together from time to time, besides, coming together for other community events. The Mfantse Sunnis and Ahmadis who separated, rather, with

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<sup>533</sup> Interview Francis Aidoo, Sunni Muslim leader, Attakwa on Nov. 22, 2010

<sup>534</sup> Interview with Ahmadi Circuit Missionary and Imam, Adam ABdullah at Mankessim on Aug. 22, 2009. He explained that the reason for non-Muslims family members' participation in meals with fasting Muslims was rooted in the indigenous practice of sharing family meals together.

<sup>535</sup> Interview with Mustapha Bin Danquah on Aug. 29, and al-Hajj Idris Ibrahim on Sept. 2, 2009 respectively.

<sup>536</sup> In an Interview with Mustapha Bin Danquah he explained that the conversion from one religious tradition to another as well as their various activities in the Mfantse area did not result in conflicts because the people, irrespective, of their religious persuasions saw themselves, first, as belonging to one family and a community.

bitter sentiments, now come together, especially, during funerals to support each other and cooperate in other religious functions, as we mentioned in chapter four. The bitter differences between the orthodox Muslim group and Ahmadis, which still prevail in other predominantly Muslim countries does not characterize the relationship of the two groups in this area and in Ghana as a whole. Nevertheless, there have been times when certain polemical utterances, especially, by some Muslims sects have created religious tensions within the Islamic community, but necessary steps are taken to resolve them when they happen;<sup>537</sup> the shared indigenous background, among others, providing the necessary resources for such conflict resolutions.<sup>538</sup>

This common traditional heritage serves as important mediation for the religious beliefs and expressions of both Christians and Muslims. During the field research, the researcher observed a joint funeral service for five deceased members of the Ekrawfo community, who were members of two different Christian denominations –the Methodist Church and the Apostolic Church Ghana.<sup>539</sup> To save time and cost as well as make it possible for most of the citizens of Ekrawfo, especially, those who resided outside the town to participate in the event, the families concerned and the community elders took the decision to hold the joint funeral celebration, in consultation with the Christian churches.<sup>540</sup> The large household systems, which accommodate extended family members of different religious affiliations, have, further, served to strengthen these intimate family and communal relationships which cut across religious boundaries.

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<sup>537</sup> This was affirmed in respective interviews with both of the office of the Ahmadi Amir and the National Chief Imam of the Sunnis on Dec. 2 and Dec. 14, 2010 respectively

<sup>538</sup> Interviews with the first Deputy Amir, AMM, Yusuf Yawson at Accra on Dec. 14, 2010.

<sup>539</sup> The names of the deceased members were as follows: Comfort Nkrumah, Sarah Korako and Kobina Esuon were members of the Methodist Church, while Mary Eshun was a member of the Apostolic Church Ghana. This funeral took place on Nov. 24, 2010 at Ekrawfo.

<sup>540</sup> Interview with Isa Baiden, an Ahmadi member and the traditional Unit Committee Secretary at Ekrawfo on Nov. 27, 2010

The indigenous influences on relationships and participation in ritual observances have, also, contributed in breaking down some of the religious barriers that came with the immigrant religions. This common indigenous background has served as important mediation for Christian and Muslim expressions and relationships. This is against the backdrop that the estimated figures of Christians and Muslims in this area are 80% and 9.2% respectively.<sup>541</sup> These figures might be misleading, in terms of real religious commitment of the indigenous converts. They, nevertheless, indicate the extent to which the Mfantse people of this traditional area have affiliated with these immigrant religions (Christianity and Islam) as part of their reality. This situation on the ground, also, affirms the thesis of this research, that in spite of the high numbers of indigenous conversion to Christianity and Islam from ATR, the beliefs and practices of the latter, still, serve as the mediation for the expressions of the former.

The indigenous impact on Christianity and Islam in the area has, sometimes, manifested in either rejecting or modifying elements introduced by immigrant religions, which were considered alien to the traditional environment. The worship style of European Christianity, which centred, mostly, on the leader of the liturgy, to the detriment of lively congregation participation, did not connect well with the indigenous religious experience of the people. In addition, the introduction of European instruments of music and hymns in worship failed to appeal to the spontaneous emotional and participatory worship experience of the indigenous people. It was the resistance to these worship forms, considered as alien by the African Christian converts that, partly, resulted in the emergence of the African Independent Churches, the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches as a response to the

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<sup>541</sup> 2000 Population Housing Census: Central Region, Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, p. 39

indigenous need. It has, also, resulted in the modification of the legacy of the old worship forms that were received from the European Christianity.

In Islam, the indigenous resistance to alien religious practices has been felt in the area of saints' veneration and visit to the tombs of departed Muslim spiritual leaders, believed to be imbued with *baraka*. Though the practice has been popular among Muslims in North Africa, Asia and even some parts of West Africa, it has not flourished among the Mfantse people. The main reason for this is grounded in the Akan belief regarding the death and burial of their ancestors and elders. The Akan belief is that their dead ancestors or elders are not dead as such, but are in the other world from where they communicate with the living. However, in reverence, the ancestors are not to be disturbed, hence they are, normally, buried in places regarded as sacred ground, where it is forbidden for ordinary members of the community to enter. This traditional belief has discouraged saint veneration in the form of pilgrimage or visitation to cemeteries and tombs in most Ghanaian and Akan communities, including those of the Mfantse people.

The above-mentioned indigenous elements, among others, have been strong factors in forming the type of Christianity and Islam that are found in this area and in most parts of Ghana.

The above discussions do not mean that in terms of comparative influence of religious beliefs on the people's life, ATR has an absolute dominance in their mode of behaviour. The various religious beliefs and regulations of the immigrant religions have been transforming some aspects of the behaviour of their converts as noted earlier. However, the teachings of Islam and Christianity and their application by indigenous worshippers, especially, those in a traditional setting have been, quite, challenging. Comparatively, there

has been a greater internalization of ATR beliefs, on the one hand, by the indigenous Christian and Muslim converts than the beliefs of the two immigrant religions, on the other; the reason being as follows: first, ATR beliefs and values were imparted through the traditional socialization process of participation and observation in the family and community, right from the infancy. Christian and Islamic beliefs and values were, on the other hand, taught the converts at a time when most of them were grown-ups and illiterate. Most of them, therefore, found it difficult to recall the teachings of their new religion. In addition, ATR beliefs have been internalized by the indigenous converts over a longer period as compared to those of Christianity and Islam.

Moreover, in African traditional society the agents of moral conduct for the younger generation are the elderly people in society. For these reasons, though the teachings of Christianity and Islam provide guidance for the conduct of their members, their influence on the life of the indigenous converts is, considerably, limited without official reminders. The indigenous beliefs and practices have become an inherent identity of the people and are, unconsciously, given religious and cultural expression, irrespective of one's religious background. It is these reasons, which, to some extent, account for the dominant sway ATR beliefs and values hold in the life of indigenous Christian and Muslim converts.

## **7. 7. Conclusion**

We have discussed, at this point, the indigenous environment into which Christianity and Islam entered in this area. It was found to be very religious, characterized by the belief in the Supreme Being, lesser deities, ancestors and other spirits.

It has been established that some of these indigenous belief systems, with their practices, found some parallels and similarities within those of the two immigrant religions

– Christianity and Islam – which provided understanding for some of the religious thoughts of the latter. This, among others, accounted for some of the conversions from the ATR to both Christianity and Islam. These common indigenous beliefs and practices have served as important mediation for Christian and Muslim religious expressions. This indigenous context has, also, shaped and formed, to a large extent, the nature of Christianity and Islam that were planted in this area, which have been very tolerant of each other.

In general, the traditional family structures and values, with their strong family and community links, have provided the foundation for facilitating participation in the indigenous transitional rites, which bring members of diverse religious traditions together.

Besides, we discovered that the African utilitarian view of religion has been an influential factor in the religious beliefs and practices of most Christians and Muslims in this area. The inclination towards spiritual explanations to problems of life and the consequent fasting and healing prayers, characteristic of the MDCC and the CP as well as the mystic practices of Sufi Muslim clerics, are informed and fostered by this indigenous worldview.

The analyses have, also, shown that the indigenous cultural medium of the Mfantse language, with its symbols and myths, facilitated the translation of religious categories of both Christianity and Islam into the indigenous religious thoughts and understanding. The early indigenous converts to the two immigrant religions employed, effectively, this indigenous medium to evangelize and spread the Christian and Islamic faiths among the Mfantse people. The indigenous language, its symbols and rituals were key elements in this process of indigenizing Christianity and Islam, thereby fostering the traditional value of community and family belonging in the midst of religious and cultural plurality.

It was noted, however, that there were disparities, in terms of how the two immigrant religions responded to this indigenous medium. While orthodox Islam stuck to the untranslatability of the Arabic language of the Qur'an, the Ahmadis and the Christian churches translated the Qur'an and the Bible, respectively, into the local language, Mfantse, and made effective use of it in spreading the faith.

We, further, examined the impact of the traditional transitional rites on those of Christian and Islamic practices and observed that there were disparities as regards the indigenous influence on Christianity and Islam in this area.

All the four Christian churches – the RCC, MCG, MDCC and CP – have recognized and adopted, to a large extent, the indigenous rituals and their underlying values, especially, in marriage and funeral celebrations into their own practices. In birth and naming rituals, we found, on the other hand, that the RCC, MCG and MDCC have absorbed quite a lot of the indigenous practices, while the CP has been, relatively, resistant to the absorption of most of the traditional elements; the reason being that as a church that belongs to the Classical Pentecostal tradition, the CP places less emphasis on the use of religious symbols. In incorporating the elements of the indigenous transitional rites, the churches have been selective in what to adopt, based on what is perceived as “fetish” ritual and what is not.

On marriage, all the Christian churches object to the traditional polygamous system, except the MDCC (which perceives itself as an African Christian church), which practises a controlled polygamous marriage.

The discussions have, also, established that the impact of the indigenous transitional rites on those of Islam has been minimal in comparison to the Christian rites. The reason is that the transitional rites of Islam are rooted in the legal tradition of the religion, which,

according Muslims, are, hardly, altered in any religious and cultural context. The Islamic community in this area has been able to maintain uniform Islamic transitional rites, especially, in funeral celebration in accordance with the Islamic legal tradition.

We, discovered, however, that the traditional polygamous marriage system and family structures found affinity with those of Islam. In addition, most of the traditional observance of the rites of passage has been practised alongside the Islamic rites in for Muslims in the traditional family set-up.

It has been noted that the observance of the traditional festival in this area brings together community members of different religious backgrounds. This has helped to foster the values of family and community identity and oneness that transcend religious divides, in spite of objections to some aspects of its religious rituals by the immigrant religious groups. Consequently, the celebration of the festivals has been an important factor in the promotion of dialogue of life and peaceful co-existence among members of diverse religious communities.

The analysis of this chapter has affirmed the central argument of the thesis; that is, in spite of some of the Christian and Islamic influences on the indigenous life, the indigenous beliefs continue, to a greater extent, to exert influence on the life of indigenous converts to Christianity and Islam. Despite the changes that have taken place in the traditional communities, resulting from the Christian and Islamic conversions of the indigenous people, the indigenous beliefs and values continue to underpin most of the beliefs and practices of Ghanaian Christians and Muslims, particularly, those in this area.

Discussions and analysis in this chapter and the two previous ones have brought into focus some of the changes and the existing dynamics that characterize, especially, the

relationships among the indigenous Christians, Muslims and ATR adherents in this area. The next chapter, which concludes this work, will sum up these discussions and attempt to offer concluding remarks on the observations that have emerged from the analysis of this research.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion**

#### **8.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, we shall conclude our discussions by summarizing the major issues raised in the previous chapters and draw conclusions from the analysis of the various data. We shall point out the core issues that relate to the past and present living experiences as well as relationships among the different religious groups in the area as evidenced in our discussions and analysis. Finally, we shall offer our concluding comments, in terms of challenges and suggestions and establish the relevance of this study within the Ghanaian and African context as well as the global Christian-Muslim engagements.

#### **8.2. Summary of chapters**

In chapter one, we stated the problem of the thesis and discussed the methodology for the study, namely historical and phenomenological approaches, with the application of observation and interview methods as the field research tools. In addition to these, a literature review of previous works by other scholars was also presented and the researcher drew upon their insights, filled some of the gaps related to this study and built upon the efforts of these scholars. Finally, the chapter, also, stated the core argument of this thesis: in spite of the conversions of most of the indigenous people in this area to Christianity and Islam, the traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices still serve as important mediation for the religious and cultural expressions of the indigenous converts. This indigenous factor has contributed, to a large extent, in fostering cordial relationships among members of the diverse religious groups in the area.

Chapter two examined the historical and socio-cultural background of the Bɔ̀rbɔ̀ Mfantse people, comprising, Kurensir Amamfo, Enyan, Ekumfi and Nkusukum ethnic groups. The discussions established that the ancestors of Bɔ̀rbɔ̀ Mfantse migrated from Takyiman in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana to their present settlements of the south-central coastal area of the country, where they met some of other ethnic groups such as the Etsii and Asebu already settled. The ensuing wars and eventual co-existence with the former resulted in a mutual cultural exchange, which has shaped the ethnic identity, especially, the indigenous language of the people who now constitute the inhabitants of this traditional area.

The discussions, also, established that the people's sense of family and community belonging were derived from their traditional family structures and relationships, with their accompanying communal values.

In chapter three, we discussed the inception and growth of Christianity in the area – the RCC, the MCG, the CP and the MDCC, which represented, fairly, the Christian churches in the communities.

It was found that the early Christian growth and influence, led by the Methodists among the Mfantse people, were facilitated by the events both before and aftermath of the collapse of the *nananom pɔ̀w* shrine at Mankessim.

The different and similar beliefs, practices and missionary activities, accounting for the varying strengths and weaknesses of the Christian groups in the area were analyzed. We observed that the provision of socio-economic services, especially by the RCC and the MCG catered for some of the vital social and economic needs of the people and served as the initial influential factor for the conversion of the indigenous people to those

denominations. On the other hand, the worship activities and spiritual emphasis of the MDCC and CP which, met the people's indigenous religious aspirations and needs accounted for most of the conversions, not only from ATR(s), but, also, from the European established Christian Churches.

Chapter four explored the history of Islam in this Mfantse traditional area, by examining its inception as well as the growth and activities of the three main Muslim groups – the foreign Sunni Muslim settlers, the Mfantse Sunni Muslims and the Mfantse Ahmadis.

We noted in the discussions that the conversion of Ben Sam and his friend Mahdi Appah and their consequent pioneering missionary activities resulted in a growing Mfantse Muslim community, which culminated in the formation of an Islamic township at Ekrawfo. We, also, found that the invitation by the group for a Muslim missionary from India, who happened to be an Ahmadi, eventually, led to the split of the group due to some misunderstandings that ensued. The Mfantse Sunni Muslims and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement, consequently, came into being in the area as two different Muslim entities.

In comparison with the other Islamic groups in the area, we found that the following factors among others were influential in the success of AMM in the area and in Ghana as a whole: first, the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic to the local language enabled the indigenous people, most of whom were illiterate in Arabic, to read the Qur'an in the mother tongue and to spread its message among their people. Secondly, the effective planning and organization of their missionary activities, with emphasis on the provision of social services, resulted in quite a number of the indigenous people converting to the AMM from the ATR, as well as from some Christian and the Sunni groups.

The data analysis of Chapter five focused on the impact of Christian beliefs and practices in this area, as reflected on selected Christian rites (naming and baptism, marriage, funerals and festivals). Observations and interviews conducted among the different Christian denominations in this area, namely the RCC, MCG, MDCC and the CP revealed that the impact of the various Christian groups in these traditional communities was differently felt by the people.

Their different doctrines, practices and religious values were instrumental in shaping the celebration of their respective transitional rites and religious festivals. These accounted for the varying degree of adoption of the indigenous elements in these rituals.

Our analysis, also, established that the RCC and the MCG, especially, thrived in this area on the strength of the provision of social services, the pursuit of which has been one of the major contributions to nation-building by the mainline churches in Ghana.<sup>542</sup> On the other hand, the worship life of the MDCC and CP, with emphasis on intensive prayers, fasting and healing connected with the indigenous religious experience, which the European mission churches failed to provide.

In addition, the study established that the Christian involvement in the celebration of the traditional festivals and transitional rites has resulted in modifying some aspects of the traditional rites. For example, animal sacrifices during traditional festivals were, mostly, confined to certain excluded traditional sacred grounds, while libation prayers in transitional rites that involved most indigenous Christian converts were discontinued, often, on grounds of being “fetish” practices.

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<sup>542</sup> Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004, p. 20

Furthermore, the Christian cultural influence in the observance of festivals and Sunday as the Christian day of worship was very visible in this traditional society and Ghana as whole.

Observation of funeral celebrations, however, revealed that the Christian impact on the indigenous observance of funerals has been very minimal. The traditional belief in the need to honour the dead, who are believed to continue living on in the “other world” still informed most of the practices.

Chapter six analyzed the impact of beliefs and practices of Islam on the indigenous context and made a comparative analysis with some aspects of the Christian influence on the indigenous context.

Most Mfantse Sunnis and Ahmadis, who were interviewed, did not see much difference between their respective Islamic groups in terms of doctrines and practices. They attributed this to the common legal tradition which they shared. The major exception was found to be in the mystic practices of the mallams of the al-Tijaniyya Sufi Orders, to which some of the Orthodox Muslims and Ahmadis objected.

It was, also, revealed that in spite of their bitter historical experience of separation, the Sunnis and Ahmadis in this area and the entire country enjoyed cordial relationship and cooperation, which was, mainly, informed by their shared family and community bonds.

We, also, established that the mystic religious practices of the al-Tijaniyya Sufi religious order and the healing/deliverance prayers of certain Christian denominations, especially, the AICs and the Pentecostals, found a convergence in connecting with the indigenous beliefs and practices.

In the celebration of the transitional rites, we discovered that Islam was much more rigid than Christianity in imposing uniform ritual practices on the indigenous context. The group was more resistant to absorbing some of the indigenous rituals and practices as well as their underlying values than Christianity. However, in polygamous marriage and traditional family structure, we found that Islam had much in common with the traditional system than Christianity, with the exception of MDCC.

Our discussions, also, revealed that like Christianity, Islam's relationship with ATR was based on an unclear criterion that tried to distinguish between the indigenous religious elements and its cultural components. However, most Muslims, just like Christians, participated in the observance of traditional festivals.

Finally, it was discovered that although Islam and Christianity had made sizeable conversions of the indigenous people from the ATR, most of the religious convictions and expressions of the indigenous converts were, still, underpinned by their traditional religious beliefs and values.

Chapter seven examined the impact of the indigenous environment on Christianity and Islam. The indigenous context was found to be very religious, characterized by the belief in the Supreme Being, lesser deities, ancestors and other spirits.

The study revealed that the Mfantse language, with its symbols and myths facilitated the translation of religious categories of both Christianity and Islam into the indigenous religious thoughts and understanding. This served as an influential factor, among others, for the conversions from ATRs to Christianity and Islam as well as common grounds for the indigenization of the two mission religions. An allusion to this important indigenous role in shaping Christian-Muslim relations in most communities in black Africa was made by

Sanneh: "...that African religions played an important role in moulding the two missionary religions."<sup>543</sup>

In the celebration of transitional rites and other practices, the indigenous impact on the Christian denominations – RCC, MCG, MDCC and CP – was observed in the varying adoption within the liturgical practices, worship styles, prayers and healing activities of the churches.

We discovered that most Christians and Muslims in this area lived together in households and communities as family members and participated together in community celebration of transitional rites and festivals in spite of their different religious beliefs and practices; a dialogue of life, which was rooted in the family and community structures and relationships.

Finally, it was found that the indigenous religious beliefs, with their cultural values continued to underpin, to a large extent, the religious and cultural expressions of the people and fostered cordial inter-religious relations among Christian and Muslim members in the area.

From the analysis and discussions of this work, certain major observations, which have been recurring through the chapters, present some challenges as well as prospects for both the present and future relationships of Christians and Muslims in this area and Ghana as a whole. To these issues, we now turn our attention.

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<sup>543</sup> Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, p. 211

### 8.3. Christianity and Islam's relationship with ATR

#### 8.3.1. ATR as 'Polytheistic' Religion

Both Christianity and Islam understand themselves as monotheistic religions and perceive ATR, on the other hand, as “polytheistic”. From this perception flowed the general attitude of trying to draw a line of distinction by the former in their relationship with the latter, as regards what constitutes ‘the religious’ and ‘the cultural’. It must, however, be stated that this observation is, rather, the result of the institutional responses of the two mission religions than the attitudes of their respective members in grassroots relationships. Most of the beliefs and practices of the traditional religion in which recognition was given to other deities and spirits, were considered as ‘fetish’ by some functionaries and members of the immigrant religions. Earlier on, however, we pointed out the unclear and complicated nature of this criterion, especially, when it comes to African worldviews, where the dichotomy between the religious and the cultural, hardly, exists. In addition, the concept of ATRs as “polytheistic” is highly debatable. For example, Kofi Asare Opoku objects, strongly, to this description since in ATR the Supreme Being is considered unique and creator of all other gods, who depend on him and act as intermediaries between him and humans. “But ‘polytheism’ is grossly inadequate as a description of African traditional religion, for a religion cannot be said to be polytheistic merely because there exist many divinities in that religion... In African traditional religion, however, the picture is quite different. God, or the Supreme Being, is outside the pantheon of gods. He is the eternal Creator of all other gods, and of men and the universe.”<sup>544</sup> We do not intend to get entangled in this debate, but to point out that the polytheistic notions of ATR derive from Christian and Islamic understanding and not from the traditionalists themselves. This raises,

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<sup>544</sup> Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, p. 5

rather, a serious challenge to the dialogue of life that the sub-Saharan African context fosters, as admitted by Parrinder: “A curious feature of West Africa is the religious tolerance, especially in the coastal area, where members of different religions live together in such harmony that they may join in one another’s festivals.”<sup>545</sup>

### **8.3.2. Christian Attitudes to ATR**

We noted, earlier, that, the initial attitude of the European missionary Christianity towards African religious beliefs and cultural practices were confrontational as well as rejection. However, we found that some changes have taken place in the course of time.

Among some of the reasons for the Christian attitudinal change towards the ATR were the following: First, there was the emergence of other AICs and Pentecostal groups in reaction, mostly, to the inability of European missionary Christianity to take into account the indigenous religious context and needs. The above-mentioned incidence and other global developments within Christianity such as the Ecumenical Movements and Vatican II, helped raise certain concerns among some African Christian scholars and religious leaders in respect of Christianity’s relationship with other non-Christian religions. In the *Nostra Aetate*, for instance, the RCC, in view of some inherent virtues found in non-Christian religions, stated the need for Christianity to relate with the former as follows: “Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unresolved riddles of human existence...The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussions and collaboration with members of other religions.”<sup>546</sup> In the same spirit, some among the Protestant Tradition came to terms with some essential values in people of other faiths, by which the Christian church could be enriched in entering into dialogue with them. “When we seek to understand the adherent of another religion, we should not be concerned

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<sup>545</sup> Edward Geoffrey Parrinder, “Islam and West African Indigenous Religion,” in *Numen* 6, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959, p. 134

<sup>546</sup> *Vatican Council II* Vol. I, Rome: The Liturgical Press, 1992, pp. 738, 739

to arrive at a descriptive account of him as an example of his particular faith, but we must rather treat him as someone who has something to teach us and something to manifest to us of God.”<sup>547</sup> In response to these events, some of the mainline Christian Churches in Africa began to re-examine the Christian message and its relation to the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural expressions. The change in attitudes towards the indigenous elements was, also, influenced by the impact of European enlightenment and rationalization on the Christian Church. Historical criticism, which became one of the approaches to understanding the biblical text, paved the way for liberal interpretation of certain biblical references to subjects such as idol worship and Christian exclusive claims. Thirdly, some of the Churches, also, came to the understanding of some of the inherent values of certain traditional beliefs and practices for religious expressions and living. Finally, there was the realization by the European established churches of losing members to the emerging new churches that offered worship experiences and programmes, which connected with the indigenous religious aspirations and spiritual needs.

### **8.3.3. Muslim Attitudes to ATR**

Although Islam has been perceived as more affirming of the African traditional indigenous life than Christianity, we can, rather, speak, on the basis of the findings of this research, of affinity instead of affirmation. That is, most of the common elements between the two are found to be rites and practices inherent in official Islam, rather than what has resulted from its incorporation of the indigenous elements. Islam was much more resistant than Christianity in the absorption of traditional elements. Unlike the European established mission churches, Islamic interpretation of Qur’anic references, especially, *tawhid* and linked beliefs and practices, has tended to be, strictly, subservient to the Shari’a. There is,

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<sup>547</sup> Georges Khodr, “Christianity in Pluralistic World – the Economy of the Holy Spirit,” in Michael Kinnamon & Brian E. Cope (eds.), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key texts and Voices*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997, p. 405

supposedly, no room for liberal interpretation as the Qur'an is believed to be a direct revelation from Allah. Islamic tradition claims that, "...when Muhammad heard this word, it sounded as a reverberating bell."<sup>548</sup>The universal nature of the legal tradition and practice has accounted for the major differences between Christianity and Islam as regards the absorption of indigenous elements in this area. The primacy of Islamic Scripture, law and practice has been much more asserting in this area in the observance of transitional rites.<sup>549</sup>

We, further, found that this Islamic resistance, also, derived from the resolve of some of its members, particularly, those of the settler communities and some radical groups to practise Islam according to the Sunna of the Prophet.

This official Islamic response to the indigenous life notwithstanding, we found that certain indigenous cultural and religious elements have continued to shape some Muslim beliefs and practices in this area: The indigenous family structures and values inform the cordial relationship between Muslims and other non-Muslims. Furthermore, most of the indigenous Muslim religious experiences were derived from the traditional religious beliefs and practices.

On the use of indigenous elements to advance the cause of Islam, we discovered how the AMM found and developed the vernacular as an essential tool for ensuring better understanding of the Islamic message. In this effort, the Qur'an was translated into some of the Ghanaian local languages, among which was the Mfantse,<sup>550</sup> thereby, facilitating the spread of the faith among the Mfantse people, who were handicapped in the Arabic<sup>551</sup>. This was in contrast with the Orthodox Muslim position on the non-translatibility of the Qur'an as practised by the Sunnis in the Mfantse traditional area.

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<sup>548</sup> Ovey N. Mohammed, S. J. *Muslim-Christian Relations*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999, p. 56

<sup>549</sup> Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban*, p.12

<sup>550</sup> *The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission*, pp. 7, 8

<sup>551</sup> Interview with Mohammed Yusuf Yawson, the Deputy Amir I/Missionary at the AMM Head office on Dec. 14, 2010

#### 8.4. The indigenous response to Christianity and Islam and its impact

We found in our analysis that while the spread of Islam in this traditional area and in the sub-Saharan Africa was, mostly, the result of indigenous initiatives, that of Christianity was began by European Christian Missionaries. This, together with, especially, the similar marriage and family institutions Islam shared with the African traditional life, has resulted in the perception of the religion by some as “African,” in comparison with Christianity. However, it must be noted, on the basis of our analysis that, this view derived, rather, from the identity of the agents of Islamic evangelization and aspects of its cultural practice than its theological content.

Nevertheless, these differential perceptions and attitudes by the indigenous people towards Christianity and Islam have undergone some changes, which, at the moment, give neither of the two immigrant religions any advantage over the other. Today, both Islam and Christianity are perceived as an integral religious heritage of the people. Sanneh makes reference to this reality in relation to Christianity when he spoke about Christianity as a “religion transcending ethnic, national and cultural barriers.”<sup>552</sup> This is, equally, true of Islam and this reality is reflected in the local cultural and religious forms of the two religions in sub-Saharan Africa;<sup>553</sup> the shared indigenous religious context being an influential factor in this dynamic process.<sup>554</sup> One could thus, speak of “indigenization” or “domestication” of both Christianity and Islam.

In recognition of these shared traditional beliefs, practices and values, among others, a pastoral letter issued by the African and Madagascar Catholic Secretariat stressed the need

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<sup>552</sup> Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose religion is Christianity?* Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, p. 7

<sup>553</sup> Ray, p. 165

<sup>554</sup> Mutombo Nkulu-N'senga, “Interriligious Dialogue in Black Africa among Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion,” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 33 no 4, Philadelphia: TempleUniversity, 1966, p. 533

for dialogue rather than confrontation in respect of the church's relationship with non-Christian Religions. It stated: "ATR is the religious and cultural context from which most Christians in Africa come, and in which many of them still live to a great extent."<sup>555</sup>

Running through our analysis is the mutual impact of Christianity and Islam on the indigenous life, on the one hand, and the ATR and its culture on the mission religions on the other. The historical Christian and Muslim polemics and tensions, which were imported into the sub-Saharan African, sometimes, with their associated violence, have been contained and, mostly, diffused by the indigenous impact.

Mention was made, earlier, of the legacies of European mission Christianity and Arab Islam (1.1; 4.1.4; 4.3.3) as well as emerging radical Christian and Muslims groups that are influenced, respectively, by Wahhabi Islamic and American evangelical religious ideologies (1.1). Besides their earnest desire to carry their respective faiths to other lands, both European Christianity and Arab Islam entered Africa in a competitive spirit and played down the relevance of the indigenous context for their mutual encounters.<sup>556</sup> This scramble for the "redemption" of African souls and its associated polemics was reinforced, with the later arrivals of some of the exclusive and radical missionary religious groups, including the Pakistani Ahmadi missionaries whose missionary approach resulted in the break-up of the first Mfantse Muslim group that was found at Ekrawfo (4.3.3).

In fact, the Ahmadis were, initially, noted for their preaching attacks on some Christian doctrines. Samwini commented on one of the reports that the Ahmadiyya Pakistani Missionary Maulvi Hakeem wrote on the Movement's missionary activity in Ghana to the headquarters in Rabwa: "What is clear from this report is Hakeem's satisfaction and pride in ridiculing the church and Christian doctrines, without asking himself why his Christian

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<sup>555</sup> Francis Arinze & Michael L. Fitzgerald, "Pastoral Attention to African Traditional Religion (ATR)" in *AFER* 30 no 3, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1988, p. 132

<sup>556</sup> Sanneh, *West African Christianity: the Religious Impact*, p. 210-213

audience never reacted violently to his speeches, even at the entrance to the central church of the town.”<sup>557</sup> The answer to the “why” in Samwini’s question, which was not answered by him, could be found in the understanding of that indigenous Christian audience; their communal oneness, which embraces religious diversity as a necessary living experience, with its tolerance, as has been established by the analysis of this research. For most Africans and, for that matter, this Ghanaian ethnic group, religious diversity is a fact of life, helping worshippers to attain their varied spiritual and material needs.

It is in this context that one can say that the indigenous mediation has, to an appreciable extent, indigenized the two immigrant religions and fostered religious tolerance and harmony between them. Long before the Ecumenical Movement, for instance, started to explore ways of healing the wounds of division among the Christian denominations, the spirit of ecumenism had manifested in communal living among most African communities and for that matter Ghanaians, serving as the foundation of societal relationships, which defied religious boundaries. While the historical and doctrinal divisions of the Christian churches prevented them from receiving each other at the Lord’s table, among most Ghanaians and Africans, however, everyone, including visitors were always invited and made to participate in family meals, sometimes, eating from the same bowl. Yet, most of these participants were of diverse religious traditions as evidenced in our discussions. It is in recognition of the unifying role of some of the indigenous practices and values in the midst of diversity within a community that the Most Rev Francis Lodonu, Bishop of Ho Diocese of the RCC called for efforts to sustain the extended family system through the promotion of “family feast” and family re-unions. He described the extended family system “as a very important aspect of the Ghanaian culture which should not be left to whittle.”<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Samwini, p. 90

<sup>558</sup> “Bishop Lodonu calls for celebration of “family

Through this process, the intra- and inter-religious harmonious relationships between Christian and Muslim groups in this area has been fostered through the bonds of traditional family relations and communal values. This indigenous role in fostering harmonious relations among the members of the various religious groups in the area was succinctly expressed by the people, as captured, for instance, in the words of Hussein Acquah: “*Dem wiadzenyi no, Christianyi ana de kramo nyi no, yeba fie a nyɛ monua. Yɛkyɛ kaw bo mu na yeto nsa dzidzi*;<sup>559</sup>” meaning, ‘that traditional religious worshipper, the Christian or Orthodox Muslim is a brother, with whom I share family financial commitment and eat together’.

Unfortunately, the polytheistic perception of ATR by both Christianity and Islam, coupled with the incidence of religious extremism pose a serious Challenge to this accommodating indigenous environment.

### **8.5. The Challenges**

We mentioned above that one of the challenges to religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence among members of the diverse religious faith in the area relates to the perception of ATR as a “polytheistic” religion, with “fetish” beliefs and practices by both Christianity and Islam. This perceived ‘fetish’ influences of the indigenous religious and cultural environment was, strongly, expressed not only in the early European Christian missionaries’ attitudes (1.2; 3.1) towards ATR, but, also, by some puritanical Muslim groups in the sub-Saharan African region (4.1.2; 4.1.4). This pejorative view of the indigenous religion and its cultural expressions, still, persists among some radical Christian and Muslim members. This poses problems, in terms of a healthy dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding which is necessary for harmonious relations. This definition of

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feast”,” <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/religion/artikel.php?I...>cited 29/7/11, p. 1

<sup>559</sup> Interview with Hussein Acquah, the Circuit Youth Organizer of AMM, at Essakyir on August 29, 2009

ATR by others fails to take into account some of those relevant belief systems and values that are central to people's understanding of life realities and, which enabled some of the indigenous converts to connect with certain aspects of the Christian and Islamic teachings. In affirmation with our analysis, it has been observed that Africans responded, for instance, much more positively to Christianity in places where ATRs were strongly practised, thereby, pointing to a degree of indigenous compatibility with the gospel.<sup>560</sup> There is no doubt, as we noted earlier that, the expansion of Islam in this area and that of sub-Saharan Africa, also, benefitted from this continuity with the indigenous religious tradition.

In addition, such an attitude tends not only to marginalize some of the wisdom and inherent values embedded in certain indigenous practices, but, also, to look down upon the adherents of the indigenous religion and the traditional institutions which, still, form the very foundation of these societies. Such attitudes, when exploited by radical religious groups in offensive preaching, has the potential to disrupt communities by undermining the authority of traditional chiefs, community leaders and family elders, who ensure the observance of those norms that are necessary for the maintenance of law and order. Within the constitution of the land, which provides the necessary legal frame for the maintenance of law and order in Ghanaian societies, traditional customary laws have their place and are, duly, recognized as such.<sup>561</sup> One could, therefore, imagine the kind of social disruptions that could occur, if the authority of traditional leaders are disregarded and treated with contempt for certain religious reasons. It was this tendency to disregard the authority of the traditional institutions on the part of certain religious groups that led to the violent clashes between some charismatic Christian churches and traditional worshippers, which was referred to earlier (1.1). Those churches took the traditional injunction of banning

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<sup>560</sup> Sanneh, *Whose religion is Christianity?* p. 18

<sup>561</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992*, Accra: NCCE, 1993, p. 6

drumming in Accra (a means of observing community silence just before the celebration of the traditional “homowo festival”) as a “fetish taboo” that had no binding on them as Christians.

Some of these polemical attitudes, first, fail to appreciate the dialogue of life which is already in place and fosters the peaceful co-existence of members of diverse faith in most Ghanaian communities, including this area, which is rooted in the family relations and communal values of the people.

Secondly, the perceived evil religious influences of ATR seem to ignore the various historical contexts which gave shape and form to some of the religious beliefs and practices of various religious traditions, including Islam and Christianity. Nana Addo Dankwa III, for instance, argues that polytheism has, in the past, been held in most of the European Christian countries. Christianity came to terms with some of the pagan customs in Europe and absorbed them. He cites, for instance the Christian celebration of Easter, originally known as Eoster, which marked “the idea of the new birth symbolized in nature’s renewal of itself out of the death of winter and the return of the sun spring.”<sup>562</sup> He, therefore, laments the lack of openness, on the part of Christianity, to the incorporation of certain essential elements of the indigenous religious and cultural beliefs in Africa. “The paradox of the situation is that whereas Christianity is about the most adaptable of all religions and has been able to adapt itself to suit the conditions in which it finds itself, this situation has not been quite evident in Africa.”<sup>563</sup> In a similar manner, the Graeco-Roman world had its huge impacts on Christianity in terms of some aspects of religious conceptions and beliefs, which informed some of the Christian doctrinal formulations. Though there has been quite a considerable shift by Christianity in positive affirmation of some the African indigenous

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<sup>562</sup> Nana Oseadeeyo Addo Dankwa III, *Christianity and African Traditional Beliefs*, New York: Power of the Word Press, 1990, p. 19

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17

religious practices and values since Nana Addo Dankwa made those observations, there is, still, more room for improvement. This becomes much more relevant in view of the active presence of some Charismatic churches on the Ghanaian religious scene who, still, denigrate most of the indigenous beliefs and practices as “fetish” and irrelevant for the life of the indigenous converts.

One can, also, take examples from Islamic history and identify similar contextual influences in some of its beliefs and practices. For example, one of the major ceremonies observed during the Hajj, the circumambulation of the Ka’ba, is considered to be a pre-Islamic religious practice of going round sacred stones, which was observed in certain parts of Arabia.<sup>564</sup> The Ka’ba, which was, originally, built by Abraham and Ishmael for the worship of the one true God, according Islamic tradition, had degenerated to become a shrine for polytheistic religious observances.<sup>565</sup> The prophet of Islam reclaimed and rededicated the place for the worship of Allah, but due to the religious significance of the rite of circumambulation, its ritual practice was believed to have been adopted by Islam. Besides that, other indigenous religious and cultural contexts have, to some extent, shaped certain Islamic religious practices in some Islamic communities. Though most Muslims in Turkey, for instance, are Sunnis, their pre-Islamic shamanic beliefs and practices still find their expressions in certain mystic and ecstatic religious observances.<sup>566</sup> In the same vein we can speak of the Islamic practices of the veneration of tombs of holy men, in places such as Indonesia and Morocco, among others, which are believed to have originated from aspects of the indigenous cultural practices of the people. Although the Wahhabis and other Orthodox Muslims object to some of these rituals as un-Islamic, they still constitute such important dimensions of Muslim religious expressions in those communities that one

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<sup>564</sup> Denny, *Islam: An Introduction to Islam*, p. 133

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100

cannot divorce those rituals from the Islamic faith of the people. The point here is that religious faith, with its beliefs, practices and values cannot be received and expressed without mediation. The context in which it takes its roots will impact it, giving rise to its form and shape.

Closely related to the polytheistic perception of ATR is the notion of syncretism, a term which is most often applied to the indigenous religious and cultural mediation of African Christianity and Islam by some scholars. Very often, it is used, pejoratively, to denote a form of religion that is not in its pure form due to its mixture with other elements that are considered to be objectionable to the tenets of that religion. In the African context, it is usually used to refer to ATR's relationship with either Christianity or Islam. Where elements of the traditional religion and culture are found in Christian and Islamic practices, those Christian and Islamic forms are described as syncretic; that is, they have been adulterated and polluted by the traditional system. Hardly is the same said, when on the other hand, certain Christian and Islamic elements find their way into the African traditional religious and cultural life. This perception underscores the inferior status that is accorded the African traditional religious and cultural system in most academic discourse. This has provided impetus, especially, for some radical Christian and Muslim groups to exert energy in purging their various religious traditions of the so called "pagan" influences by launching incessant preaching attacks, which, sometimes, result in violence. These attitudes are in fact not expressed towards ATR and its culture only. Some members of the radical and extremist Christian and Islamic groups become intolerant towards each others' religious tradition as well as towards other sects within their own traditions which they consider to be different and syncretic.

This aversion for differences contrasts the usual indigenous tolerance for diversity and harmonious relations which have been the main features of the Ghanaian religious life as the study shows and this has to be addressed through concerted efforts.

## **8.6. Suggestions for a contextual dialogue paradigm**

Religious traditions have been instrumental, historically, in formulating worldviews that helped instil moral values that have laid foundations for mutual existence and sustenance of societies. Besides, their relevance in providing emotional and psychological support for individual lives, their role in fostering social cohesion and solidarity cannot be underestimated.

However, their power to cause social disruptions, especially, when adherents become intolerable of others due to differences or when they are exploited by others for political and economic ends could be quite devastating. In the following concluding remarks, we shall suggest approaches that could help foster mutual inter- and intra- dialogue that could lead to harmonious relations among the members of the diverse religious groups. In doing so, we, first, take into account the findings that have emerged from our discussions and analyses, bearing in mind the dialogue of life paradigm, which characterizes the people's daily relationships. Secondly, the respective historical backgrounds of both Christianity and Islam mentioned, earlier, furnish us with some insights which could inform the responses necessary for the on-going challenges that have been identified with the engagements of the religious groups in the area.

### **8.6.1. Dialogue of life as the essential paradigm.**

At the core of these suggestions is the essential principle of contextualization for dialogue. Quite often, approaches have been applied from other settings without the due analysis and consideration of the local situation. We observed from the analysis that

dialogue of life, which is rooted in the family and community relations of members of the diverse faith communities, constitutes the main feature of the people's daily encounters. In this regard, it is time for African and Ghanaian religious scholars and leaders to contextualize their insights gained from global perspectives and international academic discourse on inter- and intra-religious relations for the benefit of their people. For far too long, issues of inter-religious dialogue have been restricted to academic engagements at the institutional level and its impact is yet to trickle down to the grass roots where religious encounters has more to do with people of diverse faiths sharing their lives together in a compound household setting and a community with strong family bonds. The dialogue of life, which is the main feature of inter-religious engagements in the Mfantse area as well as other societies in Africa, has to serve as the guiding principle for dialogue efforts in sub-Saharan Africa. For most Africans, religion is a way of life, the influence of which is experienced in daily interactions. Unfortunately, these ordinary religious followers come under the influence of exclusive and radical religious ideas, sometimes with their political and economic motives. These have, often created confusions that have the potential to disrupt their relationship with their own family and community members who belong to other religious traditions.

However, religious traditions are enjoined with the divine mandate to foster reconciliation and peace, which constitute the core of beliefs and teachings, especially, of Christianity and Islam as well as ATR. The practical dimension of this mission should be the major concern of the immigrant religions. For without the attainment of these objectives within the community in which they are located, their own existence will be meaningless.

This study, therefore, proposes that that inter-and intra-religious dialogue resources and knowledge that have been acquired by religious scholars and leaders of Ghanaian

religious institutions be put not only in context, but, also, made available at the grass root levels through pragmatic community programmes. Religious leaders and academic religious scholars are urged to take the initiative in this process and, possibly, work through the Ghana National Catholic Secretariat, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Muslim Coalition Council. They have to provide the organizational framework, the content of the programmes, which should relate to the people's living experiences and to serve as facilitators for the discussions of such meetings. Here, it is recommended that the traditional institutions and community structures should be utilized to ensure its successful implementation. The traditional chiefs, community and family elders are better placed due to their status and role as traditional authority figures to organize their people and convene such meetings.

This approach is expected to provide space for community participation of members of various religious groups in activities that could help create the necessary awareness and responses to some of the on-going religious challenges that affect their very existence.

#### **8.6.2. The role of African Christians and Muslims**

If Christianity and Islam, the two major immigrant religious traditions on the African continent today, can take their place as integral religious and cultural systems of the sub-Saharan African societies, then, African Christians and Muslims have a role to make this happen. We have mentioned earlier on, the role of the indigenous converts in the spread of the two mission religions in the Mfantse communities. This indigenous involvement has to be dynamic, providing required responses to the prevailing challenges within their various religious traditions so as to render them more relevant to both the religious and social aspirations of the people. Some of the religious attitudes of certain Christian and Islamic groups we referred to earlier, hardly, take into consideration the central issues of the

African context and, for that matter, have lost their relevance to the African religious life. This has been intensified by the growing presence of some Charismatic-Pentecostal churches that have come under the influence of Western Pentecostal preachers.<sup>567</sup> They have been growing since the 1980s in the urban centres, where there is a sense of insecurity for those, particularly, coming to settle there from the rural communities. Their growing influence has been facilitated by their messages, which tend to address issues such as prosperity, healing, witchcraft, curses, among others that are appealing to people seeking success in life.<sup>568</sup> There are, also, some young Ghanaian Muslims, who are, sometimes, offered scholarship for further, studies in Saudi Arabia and Iran, respectively, who return with radical Islamic ideas. Some of these (both Christians and Muslims) are so aggressive in evangelism to convert others that they are intolerant of other religious expressions and views, especially those of ATR.

However, some of the Christians and Muslims interviewed in this research narrated how some of the indigenous religious and cultural elements established certain connections with the Christian and Islamic messages and made it possible for some of the indigenous people to accept and convert to these traditions, respectively. This indigenous factor and its impact on the inception and growth of these mission religions has to be preserved and told as the African and, for that matter, Ghanaian Christians and Muslims' story of the history of their respective religious traditions on the African soil. This could serve as a practical way of responding to some of the radical and intolerant views of the religious extremists, who advocate for a radical discontinuation of African Christians and Muslims with their

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<sup>567</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, cited in Rijk van Dijk, "Pentecostalism and politics of Prophetic Power: Religious Modernity in Ghana," in Niels Kastfelt (ed.), *Scriptural Politics: The Bible and the Qur'an as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa*, London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, p. 170

<sup>568</sup> Rijk van Dijk, "Pentecostalism and politics of Prophetic Power: Religious Modernity in Ghana," in Niels Kastfelt (ed.), *Scriptural Politics: The Bible and the Qur'an as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa*, London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, pp. 163, 164

indigenous past as well as the intolerance for religious differences. As this thesis has established, this role of Ghanaian Christians and Muslims will underscore the fact that Ghanaian Christianity and Islam have their respective Western Christian and Arab Islamic roots as well as their indigenous origins.

In his book, *Jesus in Africa*, Kwame Bediako raises the relevance of the responses of some of the Christian Fathers to the issue of Christian identity in relation to Graeco-Roman culture. Bediako rightly identifies the struggle, on the part of the Christians in that religio-cultural context in synthesizing the ‘old’ and ‘new’ in view of their mutual impacts and concludes that it was a dynamic process of adjusting, adapting and rejecting, through which Christian theological tradition was formed and passed on to later generations.<sup>569</sup> We have, also, made reference to similar experience that has shaped and formed the various Islamic expressions in time and space. I believe that African Christians and Muslims face the same challenges and those references demonstrate the ability of both Christianity and Islam to adapt to their respective historical and cultural contexts. The above-mentioned historical religious experiences affirm, in religious terms that, religious encounters, experiences and relationships have, to a great extent, been conditioned by their context. This study draws on the insights of these historical experiences and calls upon African converts to the two mission religions to be guided by them in putting into perspective their respective engagements with the sub-Saharan African religious and cultural context as well. Applying the mutual exchange that resulted from Christian engagement with the Graeco-Roman tradition, Bediako was of the conviction that “African Christianity is no longer an import, but has been thoroughly internalised.”<sup>570</sup> This position is, equally, affirmed by some findings

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<sup>569</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Cumbria: Paternoster Publishing, 2000, pp. 63,64

<sup>570</sup> Paul Gifford, (ed.), *The Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995

in this study. For example, the celebration of the Christian festivals as well as the Christian participation in the traditional festivals, have helped to reinforce the traditional communal values of ethnic identity, unity and sense of belonging.<sup>571</sup>

The implication for the African and the Ghanaian situations is that Africa's heritage of pluralistic religious and cultural scene has been an evolving one that has been witnessing attitudes of accommodation, incorporation and, of course rejection as well. Through this dynamic process ATR, Christianity and Islam, as asserted earlier, have become integral parts of the religious and cultural heritage of the people of that Mfantse traditional area and Ghana, as a whole.

African Christians and Muslims cannot be excused for failure to explore their own given indigenous traditions, which constitute their inherent identity and mediate in their religious understanding and expressions. Unfortunately, most stories about Africa within the global community focus on the disruptive aspects of life as if Africa has nothing good to offer. Certainly, it is not every aspect of the indigenous religious beliefs, practices and values that is life-affirming. This study has, however, highlighted some of those positive elements, which foster the sustenance of community living in the midst of religious and cultural diversity. This unique indigenous contribution to a harmonious inter-religious relation, particularly, Christian-Muslim relations, must be upheld by African Christians and Muslims through dialogue of mutual respect and understanding. This will not be, only, beneficial to African societies, but, also, serve as a contribution to the global inter-religious and cultural encounters.

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p. 22

<sup>571</sup> Interviews with traditional leaders of Saltpond and Ekrawfo on Nov. 18 and Dec. 10, 2010, respectively.

### 8.6.3. Promoting a broader vision of dialogue

Christian initiative in dialogue with people of other faiths derived from the understanding that it was an essential dimension of God's reconciling mission in the world through the church.<sup>572</sup> In Ghana, both the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the National Catholic Secretariat (NCS) began an intentional effort to relate with other religious traditions, with the establishment of departments of Inter-religious Dialogue and Christian-Muslim Relations respectively. These developments were the results of the outcomes of the Second Vatican Council and a WCC inter-religious consultation involving Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, which took place at Ajaltoun, Lebanon in 1970.<sup>573</sup> The Presbyterian Church of Ghana has, also, added her efforts to these Christian initiatives by establishing an inter-religious department under the Ecumenical and Social Relations Committee of the church, primarily, to provide a research and resource for members to engage in a meaningful relationship and outreach to non-Christians, especially, Muslims.<sup>574</sup> Even though the church in Ghana have these institutional structures in place, very little has been done in terms of their felt impact in society and among the reasons for this are as follows: first, both the Catholic and Protestant Bodies have Muslims as their focus, without engaging ATRs and other faith communities in the country. Secondly, their inter-religious activities have been restricted to the institutional levels instead of the local communities where, the daily interactions of people of diverse faith backgrounds, really, take place.

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<sup>572</sup> Michael Kinnamon & Brian E. Cope (eds.), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key texts and Voices*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997, p. 1

<sup>573</sup> Acquah, p.65

<sup>574</sup> This information was made known in an interview with the Rev. Dr. Solomon Sumani Sule-Saa, Director of Ecumenical and Social Relations, Presbyterian Church of Ghana on October 10, 2011 in his office, Accra

It is in view of these shortcomings that this study is calling for a broader vision and inclusive inter-religious programmes that take on board ATRs and other religious traditions in the country.

In addition to that, dialogue activities of intellectual and theological discourses should not be an end in themselves. They have to serve in providing theoretical framework and understanding for religious beliefs and ritual practices, informing the practical relationships of diverse religious groups in the various communities. As of today, this important application of the outcomes of institutional inter-religious dialogue efforts to the African context of dialogue of life as found in this study has been lacking. On the basis of the findings of this research, we call upon, especially, Christian groups that have been in the forefront of these dialogue initiatives as well as Muslims to explore ways of addressing this need.

We have discovered in our discussions that the Ghanaian Christian churches place premium on their relationship with Muslims, thereby, relegating to the background the, equally, important place of ATR(s). This is not surprising in view of the competitive spirit that characterizes the activities of the two mission religions in sub-Saharan Africa and the passive role accorded the indigenous religions. This institutional attitude of Christianity towards ATR was confirmed in a conversation with the Rev. Dr. Sumani Sule-Saa, the current director for the department of the Ecumenical and Social Relations (ESR) of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Though the ESR has an Inter-religious unit, it is Islam that constitutes the focus of its activities.<sup>575</sup> However, this study has demonstrated that this is an erroneous perception and attitude that has been bequeathed to the African church by some of the European Christian missionaries that implanted the Christian faith in Africa.

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<sup>575</sup> Interview with the Rev. Dr. Solomon Sumani Sule-Saa, in his office in Accra on October 10, 2011

We have found in this study that the beliefs and practices of ATRs were very instrumental to the inception and growth of both Christianity and Islam in Africa and, still, inform the beliefs and practices of African Christians and Muslims. For this reason, ATRs must be engaged as equal partners in meaningful dialogue activities that reflect the realities of the sub-Saharan African context and, not to be dismissed as inconsequential.

In order to render the inter-religious programmes of the churches, contextually, relevant in Ghana and, for that matter in this Mfantse area, we suggest the following:

- i. Both the CCG and the NCS should enter into dialogue with ATRs and other religious groups in the country. Although ATRs does not have institutional structures, there are scholars of African Traditional Religion and other faiths in the religious departments of most of the country's universities. The Churches can hold discussions with them and traditional leaders in the communities from time to time with the intention of exploring into each other's beliefs, practices and values for better understanding, even where there are disagreements. In addition, the Africana Religion that was founded by Osofo Komfo Damua tries to provide a theological basis for ATRs and according to the current Head Priest, Osofo Komfo Atsu Kove, a sacred text for the traditional religion will soon be compiled.<sup>576</sup> The RCC and the CCG need to consider having similar conversations with this traditional religious institution.
- ii. In order to render dialogue with ATRs relevant to the living realities of the people in the various communities, the outcomes of the institutional level of dialogue engagements mentioned above have to be taken to the community level through consultation with traditional chiefs, community and family elders who

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<sup>576</sup> Interview with Osofo Komfo Atsu Kove on Dec 22, 2010 in Accra

are custodians of indigenous religious ritual observances, norms and values. The object of the consultations is to plan with the traditional leaders on how meetings could be held involving members of the various religious groups in the community for discussions and deliberations on sustaining harmonious community relations in the midst of pluralistic religious and cultural heritage. The traditional leaders are better placed to convene such community meetings, which has to be facilitated by the resource persons mentioned earlier. The essence of this is to foster better understanding of one's neighbour, especially, as some of them come under intense pressure of some radical religious ideas. In this way, the cordial religious relationship among the people can be built upon.

- iii. This research work is, also, calling for practical steps to be taken by the Christian Churches and the Muslims groups to set up academic programmes in their theological or high institutions that offer courses in ATRs, purposely, to explore its beliefs, practices and values, which constitute the base of their shared religious experiences and understanding. Such courses will equip the Christian clergy and Muslim religious leaders to better understand and serve the various communities where they are placed to work. Sometimes, it appears Ghanaian religious leaders, like the European Christian missionaries take the indigenous religious worldviews and belief systems for granted, hence this suggestion. It is hoped that the accreditation being received by AMM from the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education for the opening of its first theological school at Ekrawfo will enhance efforts towards such a goal.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Interview with Yusuf Yawson at the Head Office of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Accra on Dec. 14, 2010

iv. Due to its self-understanding as a messianic and a universal religious community, among others, Muslims in their local communities are cautious about dialogue initiatives and engagements with other faith traditions. For this reason, they have not been in the forefront in institutional dialogue engagements. Yet, in various communities they are consciously or unconsciously involved in a dialogue of life. In Ghana they form part of the FORBG to promote harmonious relationships between Islam and other religious groups as well as to join hands with other religious groups in working for the peace and welfare of the nation. It is on the strength of this that I suggest that they join hands with the Christian institutions in proactive programmes, by creating similar inter-religious institutional structures. The purpose of this is to help translate the benefits of intellectual engagements to the grassroots levels within community and family settings, especially, at a time when the traditional process of socialization is fast breaking down due to the impact of modernity.

#### **8.6.4. Exploring for resources within the different religious traditions**

This study has highlighted some of the indigenous African religious elements that made connections with those of Christianity and Islam, acting as catalysts for some of the conversions. Furthermore, it has become obvious to the two religious institutions – Christianity and Islam - that in spite of their differences, most of their members share the common indigenous background as well as its religious and cultural expressions. This means that although there are differences in beliefs, practices and values among the diverse religious traditions in the communities, their respective presence and activities enrich, strengthen and complement each other's ministry to the people. Most Africans, irrespective

of their particular religious affiliation, are very much at home with religious diversity as they live with it in their respective families and communities.

In view of the above observations, this study recommends collective efforts in exploring for those resources within the different religious traditions, which are necessary for responding to life challenges, instead of indiscriminate objections to their respective differences.

In this context, it can be said that, "...dialogue widens the horizons, exposes both partners more to the Reality, makes them perhaps more humble. And that again is part of coming nearer to Truth."<sup>578</sup> In the traditional African thought, religious differences are not objectionable, but rather complementary to each other. The different beliefs and practices enable them to choose as many rituals as possible for their needs in moments of crisis.

Such differences can, also, challenge our stereotypes and superstitions, leading to a positive transformation in society. Some of the teachings of both Islam and Christianity have, over the years, helped to transform some of the traditional practices that were rooted in superstitions, which, sometimes, violated the sacredness of life and human dignity. People were, sometimes, falsely, accused as witches or wizards and, consequently, banished from society or even killed. Mention could, also, be made of human sacrifices that used to be made on the death of a chief or royal, or the killing of children believed to be bad omen to families or a community because they were born under "unusual" circumstances or with deformities. Even now, the interactions of certain aspects of Christian and Islamic beliefs with those of the indigenous traditions challenge certain obnoxious practices of ATR, which violate human rights and dignity. In Ghana, for example, the International Needs Ghana, a Christian NGO, has been a leading social voice,

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<sup>578</sup> Klaus Klostermaier, "Hindu-Christian Dialogue," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 12 no 2, 1975, p. 170  
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among others, advocating for the abrogation of the practice of Trokosi system by which young girls are held as slaves of the shrine because of the supposed sins of their parents.<sup>579</sup> It is, equally, in view of some of these inherent weaknesses in the traditional institutional structures and practices that the nation's constitution enjoins traditional leaders to re-examine some of the customary laws and practices in order to bring them in line with trends that affirm life.<sup>580</sup>

Furthermore, the centrality of peace and love in both Christian and Islamic teachings as values demanded by God in human relationships, which transcend ethnicity are very relevant for responding to the tendency of exclusion of others, which sometimes, flows from indigenous people's undue attachment to ethnic groups and families. This becomes much more relevant as African governments still struggle to build cohesive modern nation states, which are, sometimes, plagued with nepotism and ethnic political alliances, with its associated civil wars. In view of the strong place of religion in African socio-cultural life, joint religious efforts at exploring for life-affirming practices and values in other religious traditions can be enriching to societies.

Similarly, both Christianity and Islam can explore for insights from certain ATR beliefs and their underlying values. For instance, the indigenous concept of community can provide an enriching insight for Christianity and Islam through a dialogue of mutual respect and understanding. We have already discussed ATR's strong understanding of community that embraces humans, the spiritual universe and the rest of creation, which required a responsibility on the part of human beings to engage in acts that ensured harmonious relationship with all elements of creation for the realization and sustenance of the vital force. The centrality of this belief in ATR required rituals of redress to be performed in

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<sup>579</sup> "Trokosi practice still popular in Ghana – Research" Ghana Homepage, General News, June, 2008

<sup>580</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992*, p. 49

times of need within communities in order to maintain the bonds of communion between the living and their ancestors and the balance of the universe.<sup>581</sup> In addition, the observance of burial grounds for the ancestors as sacred places, the totemic belief, as well as certain rest days for farming and fishing communities have contributed to environmental preservation measures that cannot be overlooked. These can provide examples and resources required for joint religious and social actions in responding to the environmental crisis, which threaten all life forms. These are not just to be dismissed due to certain allusions to other spirits.

While the Christian notion of individual salvation, for instance, stresses the need for a personal relationship with God, who has entered human history, its teachings have, also, engendered individualism, with its associated greed and power. In these challenging times of greed, with its penchant for unrestrained individual wealth creation, which threatens our collective existence, a genuine dialogue by the mission religions with the indigenous tradition, intended to explore, further, these aspects of ATR's beliefs and practices will be necessary and timely interventions in religious relationships.

The important place of religion in African life demands relevant African responses to the phenomenon of religious plurality in African societies. Life and its preservation occupies the centrality of African thought and Stinton has made an observation of this emphasis: "Life is, of course, that to which all humanity aspires, but the way in which the African systematically centres community and ethos around life deserves particular attention."<sup>582</sup> The African understanding of religion as that which enhances life informs the attitudes and responses to various religious traditions that are found on the continent. Taking into account the indigenous perception of religious diversity, this study calls for a

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<sup>581</sup> Magesa, p. 79

<sup>582</sup> Diane B. Stinton, *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004, p. 54

community participatory dialogue approach that explores and draws upon some aspects of different religious beliefs, practices and values of ATR, Christianity and Islam, which are, sometimes, viewed with suspicions, but resorted to by ordinary community members in times of need.

The institution of FORBG can offer assistance in facilitating these dialogue initiatives and to ensure the practical implementation of its outcomes, together with governing authorities, traditional rulers and community elders.

#### **8.6.5. Dialogue of co-operation and collaboration**

Both Christianity and Islam, especially, the Ahmadis have, over the years given concrete witness to their concern for the socio-economic needs of the Ghanaian community as important aspect of their missionary work. In this regard, the respective missionaries of the two immigrant religions helped in laying a strong foundation for the provision of social services in certain places of the country, including this Mfantse traditional area, as this study has shown. These commendable efforts were, however, carried out by the singular efforts of the various religious traditions. In a world that is becoming more and more divided, broken and distorted, with communities facing abject poverty, diseases, natural disasters and other forms of suffering due to human greed, exploitation and injustice, concerted religious efforts are needed to address these challenges which threaten our common humanity. In fact, suffering and disasters do not recognize religious boundaries. The deplorable socio- economic realities of the majority of the population in the world and, especially, in Ghana demand that various religious groups join hands in addressing these societal needs. While theological differences among religions, sometimes, engender polemics, religious cooperation in responding to life problems tend to foster understanding and harmony among them.

In the area of education, there has been some collaboration among the religious education units and the traditional festival occasions have, also, often brought different religious groups together to help raise funds for certain community projects.

In continuation with these traditions and taking into account the enormity of the social challenges, it is recommended that collective efforts of cooperation and collaboration be made by the religious traditions in offering relief services as well as playing advocacy role for social justice. Dr. Ishmael Noko, the representative of the Lutheran World Federation to the Assisi Day of Prayer for Peace in the world, on 24th January 2002, stressed this need when he hinted that interfaith relationships couldn't be isolated from their social and political implications. He thus prayed: "...I pray that through these means we may find the right ways to alleviate poverty, economic disparities, human injustices that deepen that desperation."<sup>583</sup>

Interreligious dialogue has become an urgent issue in our era, where all humanity from religious, racial and cultural divides search in desperation for justice, peace and hopeful future. Despite their differences, they share common aspirations of survival as one community and as one family. Constructive interreligious dialogue among the faith communities through cooperation is a required option in the Ghanaian context, as the traditional family structures and communal bonds provide grounds and connections for such efforts. In addition, inter-religious co-operation, especially, in Ghanaian traditional communities, reinforces the communal value of solidarity, which provides collective support in times of crisis.

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57 Dr. Ishmael Noko, Address: Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, [http://www.vatican.va/special/assisi-testimonianz\\_20020124\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/special/assisi-testimonianz_20020124_en.html), cited 2 March 2002, p. 5 of 28.

## 8.7. Concluding remarks

In our concluding remarks, we shall first, explore, in brief, few examples of Christian-Muslim relations, taking into account its immense implications for the rest of humanity. Christianity and Islam constitute about half the population of the world.<sup>584</sup> There is no doubt; both religious traditions “have become truly universal.”<sup>585</sup> In view of this reality, their responses to each other take a central stage, with regard to the subject of human encounters in our pluralistic world and the pursuit of peaceful co-existence. Secondly, we shall, then, point out the relevant contribution this study makes to the above-mentioned discourse; that is, the influential role of the African indigenous religious and cultural context on Christian-Muslim relations for peaceful co-existence, a contribution which has not been given the desired recognition in academic discourse. We shall, now, take a look at the nature of Christian-Muslim relations in some selected areas in the world.

In Palestine, for instance, what fosters Christian-Muslim relationship, according to Silvia Nicolaou-Garcia is that shared experience of history of dispossession by both Palestinian Christians and Muslims as a result of Israeli policies of occupation and discrimination.<sup>586</sup> It is this context which informs their solidarity, joint resistant efforts and other areas of relationship. The context here is quite different from that of the area of this study, where the relationship between Christians and Muslims are shaped by the common indigenous religious beliefs and cultural values which are rooted in the family and community structures. It is true that the Arab Christians and Muslims in Palestine share the common Arab ethnic identity, but they do not have same family structures and relations,

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<sup>584</sup> “Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations,” <http://www.oikumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dial...>, cited, 01/11/2011, p. 9 of 10

<sup>585</sup> Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2000, p. 2

<sup>586</sup> Silvia Nicolaou-Garcia, “Christian-Muslim Relations in Palestine,” <http://www.middleeastmonitor.org.uk/resources/briefing-papers/1208-christian-musli...>, cited 01/11/2011, p. 1 of 5

with household systems that are bonded by intermarriages. It is more of their common suffering as Arabs, occasioned by the Israeli occupation that shapes their relationship

Similarly, in most western countries, where of late, there is a recognizable Muslim presence, most Christians relate with Muslims, not through family and community links, but through institutional and academic programmes such as seminars, conferences and at work places. Some, also, try to know about Islam, its beliefs and, therefore, Muslims through reading. This was heightened, especially after the September 11, 2001 attack on the US by the al-Qaeda. These aspects of relationships are quite different from the sub-Saharan context as depicted by this study, where within the indigenous system, some Christians and Muslims live in the same household and share their life together as one people. For instance, Ekuwa Aisha is a Sunni Muslim woman, her husband Kobina Kyereboah, is a Christian, a member of the MDCC. In spite of the religious divide, the couple respect each other's faith to extent that the husband is the one who wakes her up to go and pray at dawn when the Muslim prayer call is made.<sup>587</sup> Rev. Dr. Sule-Saa, who is of the Mamprusi ethnic group in the Northern Ghana, converted from a Muslim family background. Yet, as a Christian Minister, he enjoys the respect and support of his Muslim family members as well as good relationship with them.<sup>588</sup>

In the Arab countries, where majority of the people are Muslims, the relationship between Muslims and Christians are, also different. Although, the Qur'an recognizes the people of the book (Christians) and the expression of various religions as the will of Allah, in practical terms, this is not reflected in Christian Muslim relations in most of those countries. The Muslim understanding of Islam as both a state and a messianic religion as

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<sup>587</sup> Interview with Ekuwa Aisha on November 26, 2010, at Essakyir.

<sup>588</sup> Interview with the Rev. Dr. Sule-Saa on October 10, 2011.

well as the intolerant views of certain radical Muslim groups towards minority Christians, restrict the public witness of the latter's faith and renders any efforts towards Christian-Muslim relations as superficial. Here, intermarriages between members of the two religious groups and the indigenous pragmatic view of religion, which embraces religious diversity as complimentary, as pointed out in our analysis, are very minimal, if not, virtually, absent.

At this point one may demand an explanation for the violent confrontations that has often erupted between Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria. It will, of course, amount to over-simplification of issues if one claims to have answers for all the causes of violent occurrences between Christians and Muslims there. However, we pointed out in chapter four that the jihadist movements of Usumanu dan Fodio, which established the Islamic caliphates in the Hausaland, embarked upon a process of purifying the Islamic faith by attempting to get rid of the indigenous elements in Islam that were considered as "shirk". It meant that the intolerant attitude of the Islamic rule, especially, towards ATRs, hampered the role of the indigenous context in shaping the Christian-Muslim relations and laying the foundation for harmonious relationship there. In addition, the introduction of the militant Islam in the Hausaland, which was, still, influenced by Wahhabism as well as the British colonization, radicalized the rivalry between Christians and Muslims there and, thereby, set the stage for the violent confrontations between the two mission religions. The above-mentioned background has been a major influential factor in informing the nature of responses that characterize Christian-Muslim relations in Northern Nigeria. However, religion has, sometimes, been used in legitimizing other people's economic or the political interests and Northern Nigeria has not been an exception.

Another factor that has to be borne in mind in trying to account for the different situation in Northern Nigeria was the political climate during the period of the Islamic

caliphates in the Hausaland, which suppressed ATR beliefs and expressions. The legacy of that still persists and influences Christian-Muslim relations in that context. In Ghana, where a political climate that gives equal and due recognition to all religious groups has been in place for most of the time, ATRs have been able to mediate in the expressions of Christian and Muslim beliefs and inter-relationships. In this regard, it can be said that a secular pluralistic state, which gives all religious traditions the opportunity to function and flourish can, as well, provide the potential climate for religious pluralism and, for that matter, a harmonious Christian-Muslim relations. This is what appears to be missing, for instance, in the Sudan, where successive regimes, led by the Sudanese Arab Islamic leaders tried to legitimize their rights to govern the people on the basis of the Qur'an and the Shari'a. This, eventually, culminated in the introduction of the Islamic Shari'a law in 1983 by the Numeiri regime.<sup>589</sup> A situation, which radicalized the relationship between the dominant Arab Muslims in the North and the black Africans and Christians in the South and, with time, served as one of the major influential factors in the creation of the two separate Sudanese states – the North and South.

In the Ghanaian situation, that secular political climate, which has been in place over the years, has facilitated ATR's role in shaping expressions of religious pluralism, especially, Christian-Muslim relationships.

One can realize from the above analysis that the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the Northern Nigeria gives a different background from that which is, generally, found in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa. In the latter, Christian-Muslim

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<sup>589</sup> M. A. Mohamed salih, "The Bible, the Qur'an and the conflict in South Sudan," in Niels Kastfelt (ed.), *Scriptural Politics: The Bible and the Qur'an as political Models in the Middle East Africa*, London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2003, p. 104

relations are, to a large extent, mediated by the indigenous beliefs and cultural values as exemplified by this study in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area of Ghana.

Having taken a brief overview of those few examples of Christian-Muslim relations and the relevance of this study to that discourse, it is necessary at this point to emphasize an important aspect of the thesis, which this research is drawing attention to. That is, various religious beliefs, expressions and the dynamics of their interactions cannot be, meaningfully, understood and appreciated without the context. The context transforms and is, in turn, transformed. I am of the opinion that the relevance of this for a universal application cannot be doubted.

The findings of this research has, in this sense, proven the hypothesis of the thesis: that is, the indigenous African religious beliefs and cultural values have, positively, impacted on Christian-Muslim relations in fostering harmonious relationships among its members in the Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan traditional area of Ghana.

This does not mean that the Christian-Muslim engagements and that of other religious groups in Ghana and, for that matter, in this area are without their challenges of potential rifts. The attitudes of certain radical Christian and Muslim groups that are intolerant of religious differences have been identified. The continuous impact of the indigenous context on Christian-Muslim relations will depend much on the extent to which members of the diverse faith groups work together in the implementation of some of the suggested approaches to dialogue of life in this thesis. In this sense, it will require, in the near future, another research effort to investigate how the indigenous influence on the Christian-Muslim relations in the area has evolved.

## Appendix i

### Interview

Date	Interviewee	rank/denomination/town/sex/age
29/08/09	Rev. Fr. Francis Mbroh:	Parish father, Catholic Church, Mankessim (36 yrs)
29/08/09	Mustapha B Dankwa:	Ahmadiyya Circuit Missionary, Essakyir (convert from Methodism, male, 32 yrs)
29/08/09	Al-Hajj Mohammed Ocran:	Sunni Imam, Essakyir (male, 51 yrs).
29/08/09	Abiba;	an Ahmadi women's president, Essakyir (female, 57 yrs)
30/08/09	Michael Coleman:	Caretaker, Catholic Church, Essakyir (male, 59 yrs)
30/08/09	Nana Mbrahen:	a founding member, Methodist Church, Essakyir (male, 81 yrs)
2/09/09	William Tetteh Wayo:	District Pastor, Church of Pentecost, Saltpond (male, 55 yrs)
2/09/09	Mr. Graham:	Leader, Saltpond Roman Catholic Church (63 yrs)
2/09/09	Mrs. Grace Nyame-Tsease:	wife of Pastor Nyame-Tsease, District Pastor of Church of Pentecost, Essakyir (female, 35 yrs)
2/09/09	Al-Hajj Idris Ibrahim:	Imam, Sunni settler community, Saltpond (male, 67 yrs)
5/09/09	Edward Acquah:	District Elder, Church of Pentecost, Mankessim (male, 45 yrs)
8/09/09	Neylor Kweku Ampiah:	a class leader, Methodist Church, Enyan Abasa (male, 52 yrs)
8/09/09	Samuel K. Akyampong:	Catechist, Catholic Church, Enyan Abasa (male, 27 yrs)
8/09/09	Samuel Baidoo:	Asst. Presiding Elder, Church of Pentecost, Enyan Abas (male, 34 yrs)

8/09/09	Kwesi Osman:	Imam of the Sunni Muslim Community, Enyan Abasa (male, 53 yrs)
8/09/09	Kobina Akyeampong:	Catechist, Roman Catholic Church, Enyan Abasa (male, 46 yrs)
14/09/09	V. Rev Obo-Williams:	Methodist Minister, Mankessim Methodist Circuit (male, 48 yrs)
14/09/09	Essa-Donkoh:	Leader, Mankessim Methodist Church (male, 65 yrs)
30/11/09	Juliana Coleman:	President of women's fellowship, RCC, Essakyir (female, 41 yrs)
26/08/10	Rev. N. K. Amankwa:	Senior Minister, MDCC, Mozano (male, 71 yrs)
23/09/10	Apostle Afred Koduah:	General Sec. Church of Pentecost, Accra (male, 62 yrs)
28/10/10	Rt. Rev. Yedu Bannerman:	a retired Methodist Bishop, Tema (male, 84 yrs)
30/10/10	Al-Hajj Abubekr Anderson:	leader, Mankessim Ahmadiyya group (male, 64 yrs)
2/11/10	Rt. Rev. Nicholas Asane:	Bishop of the Cape Coast Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana (male, 63 yrs)
12/11/10	J. B. Crayner:	a Methodist Catechist and Mfantse historian (male, 73 yrs)
12/11/10	Ibrahim Adam:	Imam of the Obonster Sunni group (male, 54 yrs)
12/11/10	Kweku Isaka (alias, Selkyi):	leader (eldest), Obontser Sunni group (male, 78 yrs)
12/11/10 19/11/10	Some Muslim leaders:	Sunni Community, Obonster (all male)
18/11/10	Some traditional Leaders:	Saltpond Nkusukum Traditional Council (4 male and 1 female)
21/11/10	Esther Smile Melah:	a youth leader Church of Pentecost,

		Mankessim (female, 33 yrs)
21/11/10	Arnold K.S. Ocran:	youth leader, Church of Pentecost, Mankessim Male, 26 yrs)
21/11/10	Some Leaders:	Methodist Church, Mankessim (4 Male and 3 female)
22/11/10	Hakeem K. Yamoah:	a retired educationist and a leader, Ekrawfo Ahmadiyya Group (male, 79 yrs)
26/11/10	Matilda Mbeah-Mensah:	a youth member of Methodist Church, Mankessim (female, 25 yrs)
26/11/10	Some traditional leaders:	Essakyir (all male)
26/11/10	Ekuwa Aisha:	a Sunni Muslim woman and wife of Kobina Kyereboah, Essakyir (female, 42 yrs)
26/11/10	Kobina Kyereboah:	a Christian (MDCC) and husband of Ekuwa Aisha, Essakyir (male, 51 yrs)
29/11/10	Isa Baden:	an Ahmadi youth leader and member of the traditional council, Ekrawfo (male, 44 yrs)
2/12/10	Mallam Adam Musa Abubakar:	Chief Director at the office of the National, Daily Imam, Sunni Central, Accra (male, yrs)
7/12/10	Nana Kwansah III:	Traditional chief, Enyan-Maim Traditional Council (male, 71 yrs)
7/12/10	Nana Akabohah III:	the Head and General Overseer, MDCC, Mozano (male, 62 yrs)
9/12/10	Most Rev. Prof. Emmanuel K. Asante:	Presiding Bishop, Methodist Church Ghana (male, 61 years)
10/12/10	Thirteen traditional leaders:	Ekrawfo community (all male)
10/12/10	Fatima Abubekr:	a Sunni woman leader, Enyan-Maim Community (female, 47 yrs)
10/12/10	Hadjiatu Safiw:	a Sunni Muslim youth, Enyan-Maim community (female, 34 yrs)

- 10/12/10 Some Muslim members and leaders: Sunni Community, Enyan-Maim  
(6 Male and 4 female)
- 14/12/10 Mohammed Yusuf Yawson: the Deputy Amir I/Missionary of the  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana, Accra  
(male, 69 yrs)
- 14/12/10 Alhassan Bashir Annan: Missionary in the office of the Amir and  
Missionary in charge of the Ahmadiyya  
Muslim Mission Ghana (male, 65 yrs)
- 17/12/10 Paul Vital Abekah: a leader of Obontser Sunni Community, Tema  
(male, 66 yrs)
- 21/12/10 Eric Odoom: a Roman Catholic Catechist, Mankessim parish  
(male, 68 yrs)
- 23/12/10 Rev. Fr. Robert Sniper: a Roman Catholic priest, a liturgist and lecturer  
in systematic theology at the St. Peter's  
Seminary, Pedu (46 yrs)
- 27/12/10 Sarah Quabo: youth and national executive member, MDCC,  
Mankessim (female, 33 yrs)
- 27/12/10 Rev. Kaye: District pastor, MDCC, Mankessim  
(male, 54 yrs)
- 5/01/11 Rev. Dr. Ernestina Afriyie: A Presbyterian female Minister, Accra  
(female, 52 yrs)
- 10/10/11 Rev. Dr. Solomon Sumani Sule-Saa: director, ESR, Presbyterian Church of  
Ghana, Accra (male, 53 yrs)

## **Appendix ii**

### Samples of Questionnaire

#### **Questionnaire for the traditional leaders**

1. Can you narrate, briefly the history of the people in this area and how they came to settle here?
2. How has the traditional leadership helped in promoting harmonious relationship among the people in this traditional area?
3. What are some of the effects of the activities Christianity and Islam on the traditional religious beliefs and cultural life in your area? Have they been helpful or harmful? (explain)
4. What is the relevance of the following rituals for Mfantse communities?  
Child naming  
Marriage  
Funeral  
Festival
5. What are some of the moral lessons in these rites?
6. Are any among you who belong to Christianity/Islam or other religious groups and how do you manage the beliefs and practices of the religion with your traditional religious functions?
7. In your individual families and households do you have members who belong to different religious traditions?
8. How will you describe the relationship among the various religious groups in your area?
9. What role do you think the traditional family system, with its religious and cultural practices have played in this?
10. What will you recommend for sustaining peaceful co-existence among the people in your area, taking into account their different religious backgrounds?

#### **Questionnaire for the national leaders of the religious groups (Christianity and Islam)**

1. When and how did your religious group begin in Ghana?
2. What are some of the socio-economic activities of your religious denomination in Ghana and what has been the impact on the life of the people?

3. To what extent have the beliefs and practices of your religious group impacted on indigenous religious and cultural values and vice versa? How has the impact been reflected in the following rites of passage?

Child naming

Marriage ceremony

Funeral (laying-in-state and burial rites)

Festivals

4. To what extent does Christian/Islam in Ghana incorporate or take into cognizance the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural values in the observance of these transitional rites?
5. How do Muslims/Christians view the celebration of traditional festivals?
6. To what extent are your members involved in their observance?
7. Are there some indigenous religious and cultural elements which Christians/Muslim consider as objectionable to the tenets of the Christian/Islamic faith? What are they, if any?
8. What has been the relationship between your denomination and other religious groups, including ATR?
9. What role do you think have the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural values played in this inter-religious relationship?
10. What do you recommend for sustaining peaceful co-existence among the various members of the religious communities in this area?

### **Questionnaire for the leaders of the religious groups in the Mfantse communities**

When did your Christian/Islamic group start in this area and who were the founding members?

#### **Child Naming:**

- i. What are the main Islamic/Christian rituals performed after child-bearing and during child-naming ceremonies for your members?
- ii. What are some of the rites and symbols employed (e.g. use of sacred text, water, alcohol, names, etc) and what meanings do they convey to the participants?
- iii. What names are given? Who chooses them and for what reasons?
- iv. To what extent do these rituals differ from or incorporate the indigenous ones?

**Marriage:**

- i. In marriage ceremonies, what are the major Christian/Islamic rituals observed? What symbols are used and in what ways do they convey the desired religious beliefs and values to the participants of these events?
- ii. How does the Christian/Islamic marriage celebration differ from or incorporate the elements and practices of the traditional one?

**Funeral:**

- i. What are the Christian/Islamic beliefs regarding death and after life and how do these influence its funeral celebration?
- ii. What rituals and symbols are used in the funeral rites? (e.g. use of scriptures, prayers, committal rituals at the graveside - “earth to earth, ashes to ashes,” positioning of the mortal remains in the grave, etc).
- iii. How do participants understand these and appropriate them in their beliefs and practices?
- iv. In what ways do these religious funeral practices differ from or incorporate the indigenous elements (for example, the placing of objects in the coffin)?

**Festivals:**

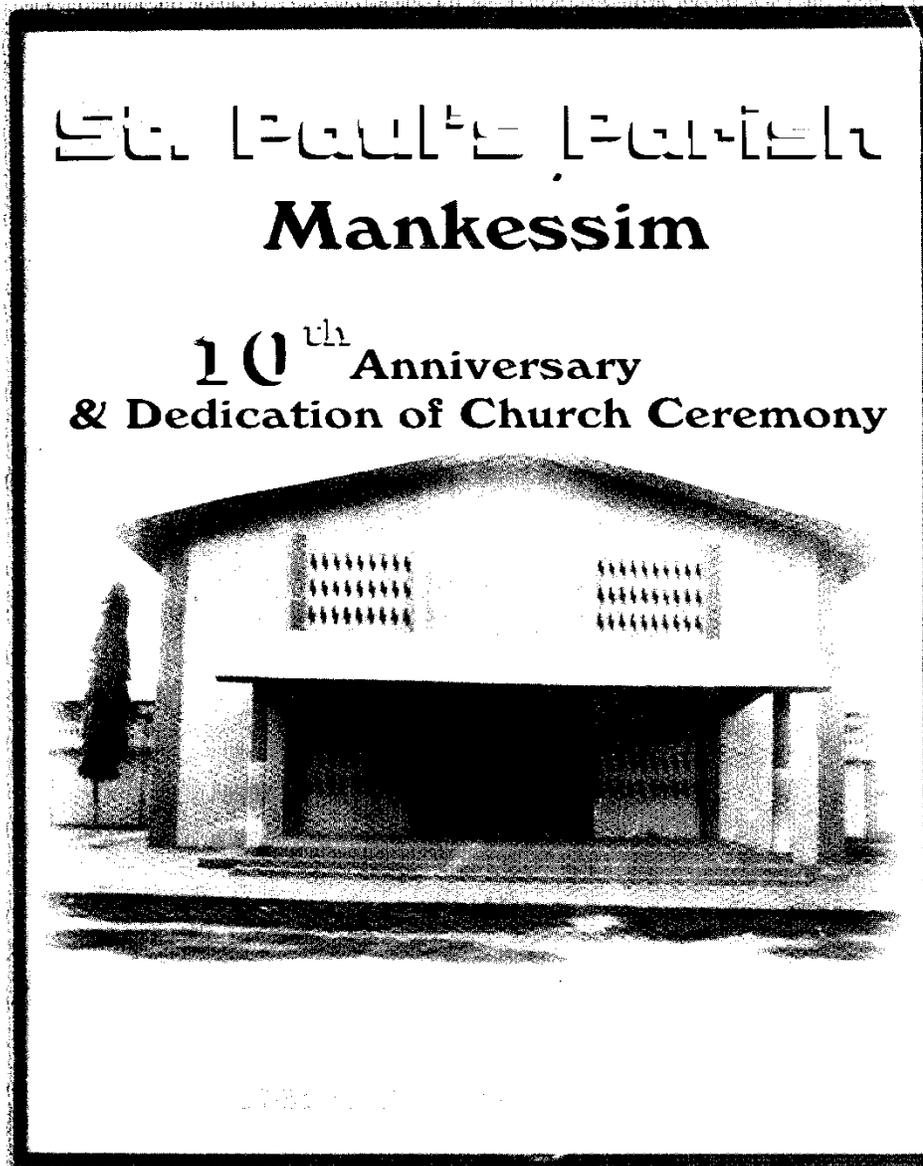
- i. What Christian/Islamic festivals are normally celebrated by your religious group?
- ii. What impact have these had on both the religious and social life of Ghanaians?
- iii. How do Christians/Muslims view traditional festivals? What are some of the positive/negative aspects of the traditional festivals?
- iv. How relevant are these traditional festivals to the respective communities and Ghanaians?
- v. To what extent do Christians/ Muslim participate in them and why?
- vi. What socio-economic activities has your religious group undertaken in this area since its inception? What has been their impact on the communities in this area?
- vii. What has been the relationship between Christians/Muslims and non-Christians/Muslims in this area? What has accounted for this relationship?
- viii. What do you suggest for the fostering of cordial relationships among the members of different religious groups in this area?

### **Questionnaire for the members of the religious groups in the Mfantse communities**

1. What is your religious denomination and how did you become a member? Why did you join this particular group?
2. What are the major religious programmes and activities which respond meaningfully to your spiritual and socio-economic needs?
3. What role do you play in your group?
4. As an adult/ youth member/male/female, what are some of the teachings of your group which help in your daily living, especially, with family and community members who do not belong to your group?
5. Do you take part in traditional festivals and transitional rites, which are observed in your family and the community?
6. How relevant are some of these to you and the community?
7. What are some of the socio-economic activities of your religious group in this area and what effects have these had on the life of the people?
8. Can you share your views on the relevance of family names to you, personally, and your entire family and the ethnic group?
9. What religious denomination(s) do members of your/household belong to?
10. What is the relationship between Christians/Muslims and non-Christians and Muslims in this area? What do you think has accounted for this relationship?
11. What will you recommend for promoting peaceful co-existence among the various religious groups in this area?

**Appendix iii**

St. Paul Roman Catholic Church, Mankessim: Extract of Church History



## HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S PARISH, MANKESSIM

### **BACKGROUND**

The Seed of the Catholic Faith was sown in Mankessim by Rev. Fr. Ignatius Hummel in 1914. Father's early converts were five in number. They were Opanyin Paul Anderson, Opanyin Adoko, Opanyin Kwame Sam, Opanyin Kobina Odoom and Opanyin Woode (all of blessed memory).

By 1916 the nucleus Church of five had grown in number to about 20 members. This growth challenged the infant church to get a bigger place of worship. Therefore Opanyin Adoko offered his room to serve as their chapel. The infant church chose Opanyin Anderson as her first church president in the later part of the same year. In 1925 it became imperative for the young church to acquire a plot to put up a church building. Opanyin Kobina Coleman generously transferred ownership of his personal plot to the church for free.

The church thought it wise in 1943 to build a school as a means of evangelization to boost membership drive. It was for this reason that a school was started. The school did not stand the test of time so the corrugated iron sheets intended for the school building's roofing were used to erect a chapel that was popularly referred to as "kyense Dan" in 1964. The faithful worshipped in the "Kyense Dan" for about 20 years. It was around this time that the church enjoyed a steady growth in numbers and church structures. This period witnessed the springing up of the following societies:

- \* Singing Band
- \* St. Anthony's Guild
- \* Sacred Heart Confraternity
- \* Catholic Women Association
- \* C. Y. O
- \* Choir

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The church attracted special attention from her then Mother Parish St. John the Baptist, Saltpond. The church enjoyed constant pastoral care from the Parish Priest and his assistants for quite a long time. It became expedient in 1977 for the church to acquire a new site for a mission house and a Church Building. On 27th March, 1977 the church purchased the new site at Estate from Nana Kwaan VII at the advice of his elders.

In 1984 the new Church Building was vigorously started at Estate. On 5th February 1989, the foundation stone of the church was laid. The Ceremony was presided over by the then Archbishop of Cape Coast, Most Rev. John Kojo Amissah.

**PARISH STATUS:**

On 19th March 1995, the Archdiocese of Cape Coast raised the church, St. Paul's, Mankessim to a parish status with the following Stations under her jurisdiction:

- \* Baifikrom
- \* Enyanmaim
- \* Nkwanta
- \* Efutukwaa
- \* Opim
- \* Duadze
- \* Mpeseduadze
- \* Kwaman

### **PRIEST FROM THE PARISH**

Very Rev. Fr. James Myres	(Ag. Vicar General)
Rev. Fr. Edwin Hagan	(U. S. A)
Rev. Fr. Adoko Enchil	(Parish Priest, Elmina)
Rev. Fr. Richmond Dzekoe	(Chaplain and Tutor OLA Training College, Ag. Deputy Manager and Editor of C. M. P )
Rev. Fr. Valentine Odoom	(Communications Officer; Chaplain of Cape Coast Polytechnic and Cape Tech)

### **MAJOR SEMINARIANS FROM THE PARISH**

Emmanuel Adjine	(Theology 4 – Pedu Seminary)
Theophilus Hagan	(Theology 2 – Pedu Seminary)

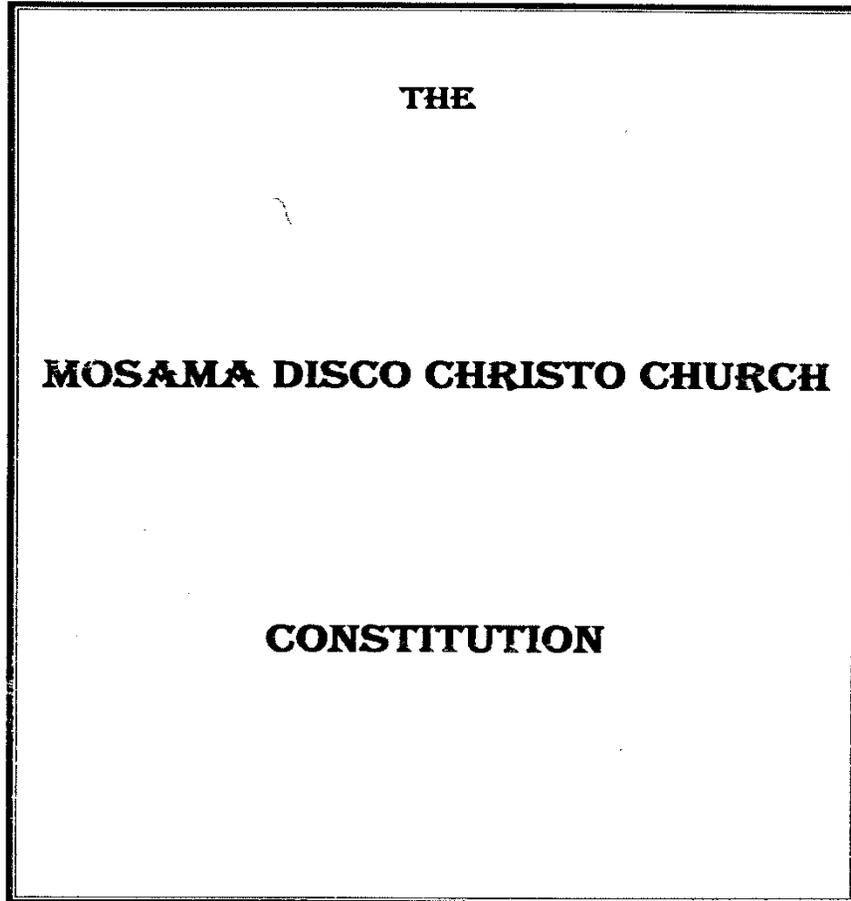
### **MINOR SEMINARIANS FROM THE PARISH**

Stephen Afful	(Mankessim)
Enoch Asmah	(Mankessim)
Isaac Danquah	(Mankessim)
Thomas Acquah	(Baifikrom)
Johnson Alabi	(Mankessim)
Francis Nyarko	(Mankessim)

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**Appendix iv**

Extracts from MDCC constitution:



## Appendix III

**Ayemidi-Kusidi:** (Double-Pointed Sword) A title given to the Akaboha and the Akatitibi through prophecy.

**Ayompo:** 1. A pedestary for fixed crosses, usually of 3 or 7 steps. also 2. A concrete raised platform in Mozano where the Akaboha sits in state during official functions.

**Bewdney Lodge:** It is the name of a Spiritual Society usually for the educated members of the Church.

**Bonasaidom:** (Dwelling Place) Official Residence of the Akaboha.

**Camp:** 1. A temporary place usually a Shed or cleared bush for worship. 2. It also means a place for healing.

**Camp Meeting:** A public Group Meeting for Revivals and Evangelisation. It usually lasts for three days.

**Consecrated Worker:** A term applied to any member of the Pastoral Staff.

**Cosa:** (Cross) A wooden Cross fixed usually in the Chapels and Camps.

**Copper Ring:** It is an identification ring worn by members.

**Discosa Sett:** (Meditation under the Cross) It is a quarterly Spiritual Revival Meeting of the Musama Church.

**Divine Healing:** A restoration to health through prayers, lay on of hands and/or rubbing of oil (Olive oil).

**Fasting:** 1. **Ordinary Fasting:** Abstinence from food for divine purposes. The period of normal fasting for the Church starts from 6.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. *i.e.* 24 hours; or more strictly from last supper (or dinner) to the supper of the next day.

2. **Dry Fasting:** Complete abstinence from food 6.30 p.m. to 6.30 a.m. of the third day *i.e.* 36 hours.

## Appendix III

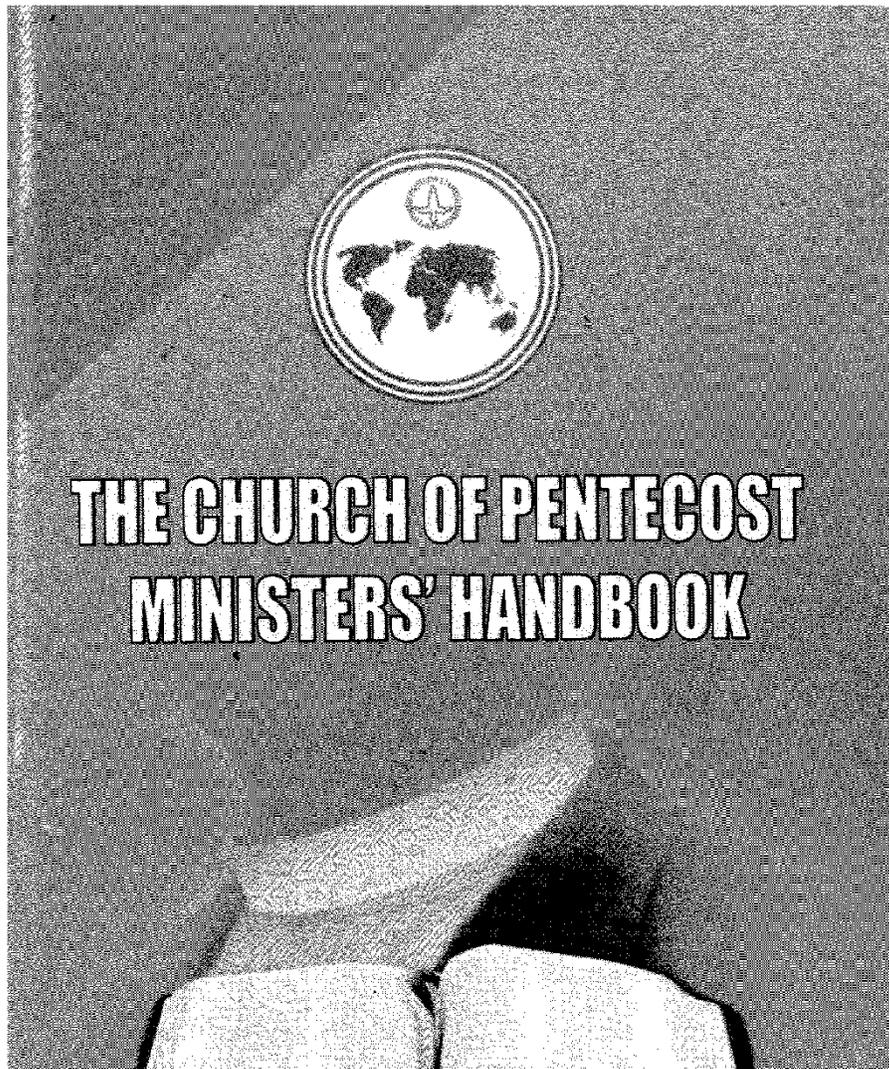
3. **White Fasting:** Abstinence from food for complete 36 hours broken on the 24th hour with food not containing meat, salt and pepper.
4. **Fasting for Invalid:** From 7 p.m. to 7 p.m. broken with food not containing meat, salt and pepper on the 18th hour.
5. **Normal period of fasting for members:** 1 day, or 3 days or 7 days.
23. **Finusifim:** (College) Refresher Course for the Pastoral Officers of the Musama Church. (See Section V page 13).
24. **Healing Well:** A well in which water is stored and sanctified for healing.
25. **Heavenly Name:** Name given through Prophecies to a member during Spiritual Enquiries by the Head Prophet.
26. **Holy Place:** The Sanctum of the Church where the ARK and the MERCY SEAT are housed for annual Dedication.
27. **Holy Water:** Consecrated water used for healing purposes.
28. **I'Odomey Conference:** (Synod.) An Annual Conference of the Church.
29. **I'TODI (Redemption):** A name given to all rituals on Fridays and especially Good Friday (See the Musama Book of Rituals).
30. **Jehunano:** (Followers of Jehu) The name given to foundation members of the Musama Church. Now a name given to the main Prayer Group at Mozano.
31. **Kale Kansa:** (Monthly Meeting) It is a monthly Conference of the Jehunano.
32. **Kaleta:** (Month) A Monthly meeting by the Jehunano Members to enquire spiritually the events of the Month.

## Appendix III

47. **Offering:** Money collected at or after a religious Service of the Church.
48. **Omisharong:** (Strength) It is a Spiritual Retreat of the Lay Elders of the Musama Church.
49. **Peaceful Year:** The highest Annual Festival of the Musama Church. It falls on 24th August each year at Mozano and lasts for ten days or more. It also marks the birth day of the Founder's Elder son, the Akasibeena I.
50. **Petition:** A written request to the Lord (usually through a Pastor).
51. **Piodama:** (Gathering) A General Meeting for the members of the Musama Church for exchange of greetings. It forms a part of the Peaceful Year Anniversary.
52. **Prophecies:** Revelation of Spiritual Plans and Divine Teachings.
53. **Revival Meeting:** It is a one-day meeting for Open-Air Preaching and Healing.
54. **Sacrifice:** A burnt offering usually connected with public system of the Church.
55. **Seenim:** (Selected) A Circuits' Quarterly Spiritual Revival Meeting for the Workers and the Auxilliary Workers of the Church.
- ✓ 56. **Shidmok:** (Cottage) The private Residence of the Akaboha.
57. **Spiritual Invocation:** A Meeting calling on God with singing, prayers and drumming for pentecostal blessings of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ 58. **Stone of Courtesy:** A memorial tablet raised at Mozano in honour for God's praises for fulfilling HIS PROMISES, to the Church as given through Prophecies.
59. **Supervising Officer:** An ordained Pastor.

**Appendix v**

Extracts the Church of Pentecost Ministers' Handbook



## Appendix IV

vicarious death of Jesus Christ before they can be justified before God (**Rom. 4:24; 5:1**). We believe in the working of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11**) and God's gift of eternal life to the believer (**Rom. 6:23b; Jn. 17:2, 3; 10:27, 28; 1 Jn. 5:11-13**).

- **THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER OR COMMUNION:** We believe in the sacrament of baptism by immersion as a testimony of a convert who has attained a responsible age of 13 years (**Matt. 3:16, 28:19; Mk. 1:9, 10: 16:16; Ac. 2:38**). Infants and children are not baptised, but are dedicated to the Lord (**Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 2:22-24, 34**). We believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion which should be partaken of by all members who are in full fellowship (**Lk. 22:19, 20; Ac. 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-33**).

- **BAPTISM, GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:** We believe in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit for all believers with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues (**Joel 2:28, 29; Ac. 2:3, 4, 38, 39; 10:44-46: 19:1-6**); and in the operation of the gifts

and fruit of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 12:18-11; 28:30; Rom. 12:6-8; Gal. 5:22, 23**).

- h. NEXT LIFE:** We believe in the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, both the saved and the unsaved; they that are saved to the resurrection of life and the unsaved to the resurrection of damnation (**Dan. 12:2; Mark 13:26; Jn. 5:28, 29; Ac. 1:11; 10:4; Rom. 2:7-11; 6:23**).
- i. TITHES AND OFFERINGS:** We believe in tithing and in the giving of free-will offerings towards the cause of carrying forward the kingdom of God. We believe that God blesses a cheerful giver (**Gen. 14:18-20; Mal. 3:6-10; Heb. 7:1-4; Matt. 23:23; Ac. 20:35; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 9:1-9**).
- j. DIVINE HEALING:** We believe that the healing of sicknesses and diseases is provided for God's people in the atonement (**Is. 53:4, 5; Matt. 8:7-13; 16, 17; Mk. 16:17, 18; Lk. 13:10-16; Ac. 10:38; Jas. 5:14-16**;). However, the Church is not opposed to medication by qualified medical practitioners.

#### 4. CORE PRACTICES

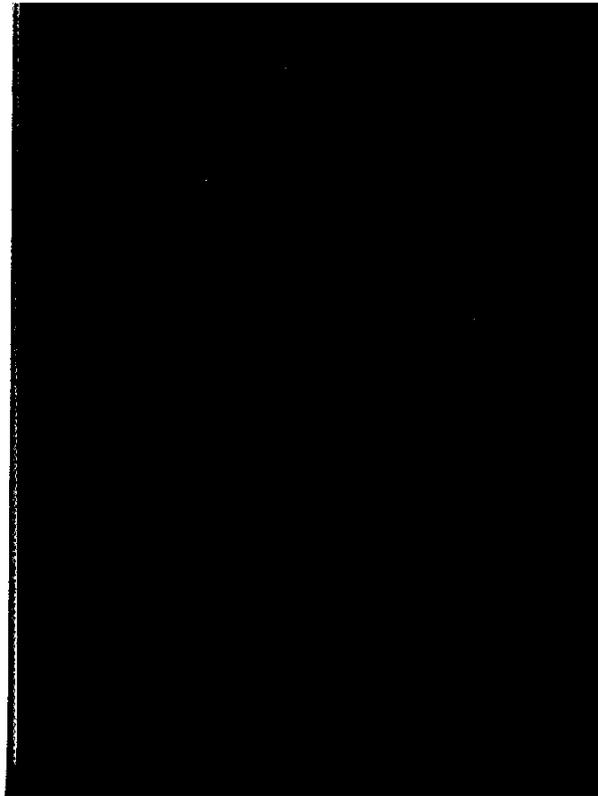
##### a. **Evangelism**

It is the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit with the view that people will trust Jesus as Saviour and Lord and serve him in the fellowship of the Church. Evangelism is the responsibility of every Church member and Minister. It is the prime duty of every believer to share his/her faith after conversion.

Through cross-cultural, mission-oriented evangelism, church members who travel to other countries preach Christ, begin churches and call for ministers to pastor same. Besides, as was the practice of the founder, Pastor James McKeown, we respond to calls to missions as led by the Holy Spirit.

##### b. **Discipleship**

Discipleship is teaching and training believers to be like Christ in character so as to make responsible choices. The



**Appendix vi**

Extracts from Methodist Liturgy book



## Appendix V

### The Vows

The Minister shall cause the congregation to stand while he says the following prayer.

Almighty God, as you have brought A.B. and C.D. together in love and grace, mercifully enable them through the power of the Holy Spirit to keep and keep the vows they are about to make through Jesus Christ.

The Minister shall say to the man:

Will you live together with this woman as your wedded wife according to the law of God in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, and forsaking all others keep faithfully only to her so long as you both shall live?

The man shall answer: I will.

The Minister shall say to the woman:

Will you live together with this man as your wedded husband according to the law of God in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honour and keep him, and forsaking all others keep faithfully only to him so long as you both shall live?

The woman shall answer: I will.

The Minister

Will you give this woman to be married to this man?

The father of the woman or his representative shall answer:

I do on behalf of the families.

## Naming

*The mother gives the baby to the father who hands him/her over to the Minister.*

*(The Minister holding the child speaks)*

What name do you give this child?

"This child shall be named ... (the head of the family explaining any particular reasons for the choice of the name, or virtues of the one (if any) after whom the child is named)."

The Minister then calls the child by its name three times, each time dipping his/her finger or using spoon to drop on the child's tongue, alternatively water and soft drink or water and corn wine, or water and roasted corn flour soaked in water and salt, or water and honey, as is the custom of the area.

The Minister says the following words to accompany the dropping of water or soft drink (as the case may be) on the child's tongue.

(Name of child), you have been brought by God into this world as a moral being with the responsibility to distinguish between **truth** and **falsehood**, **right** and **wrong**.

This is water, therefore if you say water, it must be water; and this is soft drink/corn wine/honey, therefore if you say soft drink/corn wine/honey, it must be so.

*(This symbolic act is meant to impress upon the spirit of the child God's providence, the importance of human industry, and moral values).*

The baby should be handed over to its parents.

*(If parents desire that the child should be baptized, the following abridged order of baptism may follow at this point. If not, the ceremony must continue at \*Exhortation).*

## Appendix X

*(One or all of the following Bible lessons may be read)*

What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and what is mortal cannot possess immortality. Listen, and I will tell you a secret. We shall not all die, but in an instant in the twinkling of an eye, we shall all be changed as the last trumpet sounds! For the trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised immortal beings, and we shall all be changed. For this perishable nature of ours must clothe itself with the imperishable, these bodies which are mortal must be wrapped in immortality.

So when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal has been clothed with the immortal, then this scripture will come true:

Death has been swallowed up in victory!  
O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your stinging power?  
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.  
But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through  
our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body. (Phil. 3:20-21).

### **The Committal**

#### ***Minister:***

Since the Almighty God has called our brother/sister (name) from this life to himself, we commit his/her body to the earth from which it was made: dust to dust, ashes to ashes, earth to earth. Christ was the first to rise from the dead, and we know that he will raise up our mortal bodies to be like his own glorious body.

In your hands, O merciful Saviour, we commend your servant, (name). Acknowledge him/her a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him/her into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints above. Amen.

**Appendix vii**

Extracts from the history of AMM

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**AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN GHANA**

*(Headquarters — Saltpond)*

**WEST AFRICA**

1921—1961

Published by  
Ahmadiyya Movement Ghana,  
P. O. Box 39,  
SALTPOND.

## THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN GHANA

Islam was introduced into Faute Land in 1885 by Muallim Abubekr Bin Siddique. He came to Ghana with Hausa soldiers from Nigeria, as a religious teacher. He came into contact with one Benjamin Sam of Egya, a Methodist Priest, and converted him to Islam. Benjamin Sam was a friend of Chief Mahdi Appah (of Ekumfi Ekrawfo) of blessed memory. Under the influence of Benjamin Sam Chief Mahdi Appah became a Muslim. The two men began preaching the religion of Islam and succeeded in converting many Fantes.

### PRIMARY EDUCATION

In July 1896 a school was opened at Ekrawfo in the Ekumfi district for the Muslims. For the period 1896 to 1899, the school received scanty grants from the then Gold Coast Government. Chief Mahdi Appah was the Manager of the school. It was from 1902 when the Gold Coast Government began to give regular and sufficient grants for the maintenance of the school. The school continued functioning until June 1908 when it was closed down for the following reasons.

First, most of the boys in the school had been attacked by guinea-worms as a result of drinking impure water-the only water available in the village. Secondly, the Muslims were afraid that if their children continued to read and write English they would eventually be converted into Christianity.

## Appendix VI

2

### THE ADVENT OF THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN GHANA

✓ In 1920 Mr. Yusuf Nyarku of Ekrawfo, then residing at Mankessim, dreamt that he was praying with white men. He informed one Mr. Abdul Rahman Pedro a Nigerian Muslim who was residing at Saltpond, six miles from Mankessim. On hearing this he told Mr. Yusuf Nyarku that he had read about a Muslim Mission in India with a branch in London. The members follow and practise the religion of Islam. Yusuf Nyarku informed also Chief Mahdi Appah who was then at Badum about his dream. On hearing this he sent some people to the towns and villages in the neighbourhood of Ekrawfo, where there were Muslims to announce that a general meeting of all Fante Muslims would be convened at Mankessim for considering the important dream. They all assembled at Mankessim and decided that a letter should be written to Qadian, (The Headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Movement) India, asking for an Indian Muslim missionary to be sent to Ghana.

Comma  
Complying with this decision, a letter was sent to Hazrat Amirul Momineen, Khalifatul Masih II asking him to send a missionary and to establish a branch of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana.

#### MISSIONARIES

Alhaj Maulana Abdul Rahim Nayyar was instructed to go to Ghana. He sailed from London on February 9, 1921 in a cargo boat and reached Saltpond, Ghana on March 1, 1921. He visited many

# Appendix VI

places including Accra and Kumasi and on one occasion visited Nigeria. He stayed for less than a year in Ghana. His tour though short was successful. Indeed Maulvi Nanyar was a born missionary. His speeches were very convincing. While he was working in Ghana, he considered the appointment of another missionary whose sole aim would be to teach, organise and elevate the group of Fantes who then formed the nucleus of the new Jamaat.

Nanyar  
only  
one  
year

On recommendation of Maulvi Nanyar, Alha Maulvi F. R. Hakeem was sent to Ghana in 1922 by the Headquarters, Qadian, to succeed him. To Maulvi Hakeem must be given the credit of reinforcing the Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana which was begun by the pioneer missionary. Maulvi Hakeem opened up many stations in many regions, prominent among them were Ashanti, Gomoa, Assin and Agona. He founded a Primary School at Saltpond in 1923 and through his strenuous efforts he succeeded in having it placed on the List of Government Assisted Schools in 1926. He put up a block building for the school. (Later the Saltpond School was extended to Standard VII (Form IV). In November 1929 Alhaj Maulvi Hakeem left Ghana for Qadian, India. For eight good years Maulvi Hakeem helped the spread of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana. He was assisted in the great task by his secretary and interpreter the late B. E. Keelson and A. A. Adam. Alhaj M. A. Ishaque, and other sincere African Missionaries.

Alhaj Maulvi Ali came to Ghana in 1929 and worked under Maulvi Hakeem for some months. He

## Appendix viii

Extracts from the history of the Mfantse Sunni Muslims (written in local language)

Below is the picture of their first Imam after the split from AMM. He compiled the Islamic prayers for the indigenous members in the local language.

Appendix 1



OSOFU HAMIEDU (OBONTSER)  
Ono na ohye Osofo Sam ananmu. Obshyee n'ananmu  
oonya mfe Eduanan Enum (45 years).

MUSI

WJ ARAI

Ma

MUS  
P.O. BO



# Appendix I

na yer Anwa na nkyan e onnye yie. Owura Yihu  
so na na yer na y dur die ekvle na onnwow. Da  
anyankofe beenu yi dzia non yernon yi ho nkando  
kyeras osofo Sam. Osofo Sam ka kaa kyeras non  
da, "Kramo Sheihu bi aba Egya, na so woko ho e  
ebetun eye non yernon no edur ama non, na dze  
chaw non no eefi non do. Anyankofe beenu ya,  
Egya Apah na Owura Kedu sia na kor Egya Kramo  
Sheihu ho. Ber e wokeres na, Kramo Sheihu ka  
kyeras Egya Apah na yer na, abetsia na wokeres  
no. na okas kyeras hoo na da yerba na chaw na  
yer na. Ntsi Kramo Sheihu yee den abasiifo beenu  
yi edur na dze chaw non na fii non do.

Abetsia na fii Egya Apah na yer na e na  
se oko na nkyan e erel eye yie. Yefu so na yer  
no wowe. Ntsi Egya Apah na Kedu yee Kramo  
Sheihu dzii.

Aber e Sheihu yee den abasiifo beenu no edur  
no, Egya Apah na osofo Sam ka kyeras Sheihu da,  
"omfo den edur no e odze yee abasiifo no edur na  
mma non na wonto. Na Sheihu buas non da, "kyera

## Appendix 1

wogyɛ tonɔ de wobeyɛ Islam asorube anɛwɛne adze  
den adur ne ene hon. Ne noara Baye Ipaɛ na osofo  
Sam peɛn de ntsi Sheihu too hon Islam adzin.  
Baye Ipaɛ wotoɔ ne dzin Mehdi. Ne osofo Sam so  
wafraɛ ne Abudu Mamina. Na Sheihu hyee ase de  
onye hon roye Islam asor na orɛkyɛrɛkyɛre hon  
mbre wosi na woye asor. Iber a wohun Islam asor  
ye no, wodze Baye Ipaɛ yee asorpanyin. Na osofo  
Sam Abudu Mamina so wodze ne yee "Iman." Kreɛnɔ  
Sheihu nye hon yee asor ara Baye abesom esia, ne  
okɛ kyɛrɛɛ nɔa de, oboko kumasi na oboko beɛbi a  
a ofi baɛ, ntsi adzi ha hyee kreɛnɔ bi so a wofra  
ne Malam Tibu ne nsa wo Ankɛsɛin de onwa hon do.  
Osofo Sam Abudu Mamina ne ne den no kyinkyinii  
kɛɛ hyɛwɛsɛn wo Abora, Bayan, Ekumfi, Bremen na  
Gomɛ. Iber a Malam Tibu kɛrɛɛ nɛ, adze hon hyee  
Malam Abubakar de nsa. Iber a Malam Abubakar bo-  
hweɛ don no de ne nna osofo Sam ewu.

Den Malam Abubakar no ne ohyee ase de orɛkyɛ-  
rɛkyɛre don no hon mbofrabe Koran ne nkaneɛ. Malam  
Abubakar so kyɛrɛɛ mbofrabe no adze wo Ekumfi

# Appendix 1

Ekurofor kakra no, no so fii Ekumfi Ekurofor  
katsensa Idwanako Mando. Ekyir no ofii mando  
katsensa Nsewa.

Aber a Malam Abubakar fii mando kor Nsewa  
no don no kefaa Malam bi e wofra no Yakubu na  
obohwa don no do. Malam Yakubu so hwea don no  
da mber kakra. Ifei no don no eye kase ara yie.  
Ntsi Eyya Apah Mahadi kaa kyere don no da owo da  
wonye Arabanyi na aba bohwe hon Islamsa no do.

Den mber no na Eyya apah Mahadi wo Alatanyi  
nyenke bi wo Akymfo e wofra no Abudu Fentree,  
na oko efiadze. Apah Mahadi kor Abudu Fentree no  
da owo no Arabiifo hon "address" na okyeraw hon  
na wofra obi abra onen yi na na bohwe Islamsa  
no do. Na Abudu Fentree a na na Indio Abanfi-  
yafa hon "address" na okyeraw hon. Oenkyer  
biara na Indiyani bi e wofra no Naysal baa onen  
yi nu. Aber a Naysal baa no don no nye no yaa  
esor mber kakra, na Naysal kaa kyere asomba no  
da sa woreye asor a, obiaro mfo ne nsa ngu no ho.  
So obi so wu a ma wonndzi ndawotwe salika. Bio.

yi ase. Fi biara a əwə me ho biara pa gu ma  
me ma mo ho ntsew, ma me mfa nsom wo.

*Fida biara əwə de eguar ansaana akə asər.*

#### ARABIC

ALAAHUMA, INEE, NAWAITU, GAS-  
LA, WULDUI, RAF'U, MAA KAA NA,  
HADASU, MAA NIA, MINEE, MIN ADAI,  
FARLDI.

#### MFANTSE

**Nsu kita ho mpaabə:**

Medze me Nyankopən ne dzin hye me  
nsukita yi ase. Fi biara a əwə mo ho no pa  
gu ma me ma moho ntsew ma me mfa nsom  
wo.

#### ARABIC

ALAAHUMA, INEE, NAWAITU, TA-  
YAMAMU RAF'U, MAA KAA NA, HA SU  
MAA NIA MINEE MIN ADAI-FARLDI.

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