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Statement of Purpose

The aim of the Department of Religion and Human Values at the University of Cape Coast is to make the study of religion relevant to the social, economic, and political needs of society. One of the ways of doing this is through its Departmental journal, the *Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values.* The journal is for promoting research on issues concerning Religion and Society in areas such as Ethics and Philosophy, African Tradition Religion, Islam, and Christianity and the Bible. The journal gives an equal opportunity and space to scholars to present scholarly and insightful research in these areas of study. Every effort shall be made to have in every edition of the journal at least one article from each of these areas. The journal is published twice in a year—June and December. It is our aim that the journal will become one of the journals of reference in Africa. Thus, we hope that articles sent to us would be marked by a high standard and originality. *Oguaa*, the name of our journal, is in recognition of the journal's setting, that it is published within the *Oguaa* Traditional Area. *Oguaa* is the traditional name for Cape Coast. *Oguaa* is also known in Ghana as the citadel of learning and academic excellence. The journal is, thus, positioned to reflect this reality.

Author Guidelines

This journal adopts the footnoting style of citation, following the Kate Turabian style or Chicago Manual style (15th Edition). The full bibliographical detail of the book or journal is cited in the first instance and subsequently, only the last name of the author and the first two or three words of the title and page number are provided. If more than one book by the same author is used, they should be differentiated by their titles. For example, if one used Amina Wadude, Qur'an & Woman: Re-reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Amina Wadud, Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam (Oxford: One world Publications, 2006),the first time any of these books is cited, the full bibliographical detail should be given. Thereafter, they should be distinguished in the following manner: Wadud, *Qur'an & Woman*, p.7 and Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad,* p.45. We accept both American and British spelling on condition that the author is consistent with one.

An electronic copy of the article should be sent toreligion@ucc.edu.gh or awuah.nyamekye@ucc.edu.gh or kwasi.nyamekye@yahoo.com

Editorial

This issue of the journal presents six contributions. Two of the six contributions concern themselves with issues relating to biblical interpretation, another two treat the theme of religion and conflict/peace, one deals with religion and cultural identity while the final contribution treats the practice of tithing and its relation to poverty alleviation.

The potential of Muslim-Christian relations for conflict is real in the relationship between the two faith traditions. Whenever one of the two religions has tried to position itself as superior to the other or to exact conversion or capitulation from the other, the relationship between the two religions has often turned soar and resulted in bitter and violent conflicts. In Ghana, Christianity and Islam seem to enjoy some quiet, but how far this tranquillity defines a peaceful co-existence is tested from time to time by sporadic conflicts between the two religions. Vincent Asanful's article discusses how such an incident occurred when a Muslim student at a senior high school founded by a Christian church was prevented from participating in the Ramadan fast. The author does not dwell on the concepts of superiority, conversion, and capitulation, but one cannot miss how these concepts are linked to the reported reactions to the incident from Muslim and Christian voices alike. African countries, because they are sites of religious plurality, can be sources of valuable data for studying the texture of inter- and intra-religious dialogue and/or conflict. Assanful's contribution calls attention to this area of research.

It is, sometimes, said that religion is a double-edged sword.[1]This statement means many things, but in this case, it is a way of saying that religion is not only potentially conflictual; it can also promote peace. This other side of religion is a concern addressed in the contribution from Samuwilu Alade Owoyemi and Dauda Ashir Ebgeolowo. They discuss the potential of Islam for the prevention and resolution of the recurrent farmer-herder clashes, some of them ending in the loss of lives and property in some parts of Nigeria. Since government interventions have not achieved the desired results, the authors assert that Islamic laws relating to cattle rearing can complement existing governmental and non-governmental interventions for resolving the problem. The enforcement of religious laws has merits, but there is an important

[1]F. L. Adamu, A double-edged sword: Challenging women's oppression with Muslim society in Northern Nigeria, *Gender & Development* 7/1 (1999), 56-61,

and closely-related element (not discussed in the paper). This element concerns an explanation of how Islamic religious laws on cattle rearing can contribute to overcoming the simplistic binary of 'we' and 'them'. The authors show in the paper that the conflict thrives on such relational binaries. By pointing to the potential of Islam to mediate the peaceful co-existence between the two groups, the authors question the uncritical thinking that leads some people to associate Islam with troublemaking or violence. Scholars of Islam are concerned today with questions about how to reconcile the Islamic faith and practice with indigenous traditions and cultures in the face of globalisation, social change, and technological advancement. What is even more important here is the desire to understand how "Islamic moderatism [works] in the inculturation of local [cultures]."[2] In some countries such as Indonesia and Thailand, the issue of Islamic inculturation into local cultures has sometimes led to dividing communities into purists and liberals, inducing social and religious tensions.[3] What is the situation in Ghana? In exploring this situation, it is important to identify mediators between the local culture and the different faith orientations of Islam in context. It is also necessary to understand the consequences of accepting or rejecting Islamic inculturation as it occurs in different places. The paper of Bin Yusuf and Dumbe explore similar issues, emphasising the complex relations among cultural continuity, Islamic purity, and personal identity. Yusuf and Dumbe explore these ideas by focusing on contemporary trends of Islamic naming practices in Ghana and their effects on cultural identity from a multicultural perspective consequences of accepting or rejecting Islamic inculturation as it occurs in different places. The paper of Bin Yusuf and Dumbe explore similar issues, emphasising the complex relations among cultural continuity, Islamic purity, and personal identity. Yusuf and Dumbe explore these ideas by focusing on contemporary trends of Islamic naming practices in Ghana and their effects on cultural identity from a multicultural perspective.

Tithing is widespread in African Christianity. However, discussions of the practice tend to emphasise its theological and economic aspects. But other areas need thorough investigation

[2] Mukri, M., Kamarn, and Hemanto, A. "Actualization of Islamic moderatism in local culture inculturation in Indonesia", Baltic Journal of Law & Politics 15:3 (2022): 1732-1748 DOI: 10.2478/bjlp-2022-002121

[3] Horstmann, A. "The inculturation of a transnational Islamic missionary movement: Tablighi Hamaat al-Dawa and Muslim society in Southeast Asia", SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia, 21:1 (2007), 107-130.

through further research. Because of contemporary interests in decolonising religious epistemologies, some questions have assumed renewed interest and call for attention. Who pays tithes and who receives them? What is the relation between pre-biblical, biblical, and contemporary tithing practices?[4] Are tithes today not anachronisms of middle-age ecclesiastical and/or feudal taxation systems that made and sustained the economies of emerging European societies?[5] In which ways do tithes participate in some form of Indigenous religious practice and why do they enjoy acceptance among African Christians? Does tithing, based on the enthusiasm it enjoys, subtly simulate structures of power negotiation between classes of society in African Christianity? The contribution of Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu explores the practice of tithing in relation to poverty alleviation from the perspective of theological anthropology. Fawenu reads some texts on tithing from Deuteronomy in the Hebrew Bible and concludes that behind the book's the ocentricity, it is possible to find a narrative that is thoroughly concerned with human liberation. Based on what the author sees as a philanthropic emphasis of the Deuteronomic texts that endorse tithing, he evaluates how the United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA) in Ilorin, Nigeria, practises tithing. Caritative tithing, the author believes, serves liberative purposes and is particularly for the benefit of the weak and the poor of society. Based on this assertion, the paper recommends that caritative tithing be adopted and used for poverty alleviation in UMCA.

Africa is one of the important centres of contemporary Christianities. This moving frontier of Christianity is not only in terms of demographic shifts, but also how the faith is lived and practised. Liturgical patterns, doctrinal nuances, and especially readings of biblical texts are receiving non-Western transformations that contribute to making contemporary Christianity a non-Western religion.[6]The last two contributions in this issue deal with biblical interpretations focusing on Ghana. Kofi Appiah discusses the role of Ghanaian exegetes in promoting ways of reading the Bible to emphasise social and individual ethics. The idea that the Bible can be read in ways that promote morality presupposes some

[4]P. A. Walkington. *Tithing*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library (CCEL, 2011).

[5]G. Constable, Monastic tithes: From their origins to the twelfth century. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

[6]Kwame Bediako, Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005); Lamin Sanneh, Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West (Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003).

relation between religion and morality, which some scholars consider to be problematic. But beyond such a presupposition, narrative ethicists have asserted the importance of narration, stories, and interpretation as more valuable genres of daily moral experience than the abstractions of meta- and normative ethics. Thus, Appiah argues that even if the religion-morality connection is ignored, the narrative relevance of the Bible is enough to motivate the Ghanaian exegete to engage in biblical exegesis for the promotion of ethics in Ghana. Kojo Okyere's contribution comes up as a coincidental response to Appiah's plea that Ghanaian exegetes promote a moral reading of the Bible. Okyere suggests there is a way to read the narrative about Esau's marriage that suppresses the ethnocentric overtones of the narrative. Part of the motivation for such reading of the texts, according to Okyere, is the ethnic plurality of the Ghanaian context in which the popular reading of the narrative as a condemnation of cross-cultural marriages can be filled with social volatility. He is convinced that by reading the narrative of Esau's marriage with Hittite women as a violation of his family tradition of not marrying outside of his kin group, scholars have inadvertently endorsed ethnocentrism. According to Okyere, the gaps within the narratives and other textual clues show that the problem with Esau's marriage was not the Hittite background of the women, but their behaviour.

The first pair of articles on religion and peace/violence and the last pair on how the Bible can be read in an African setting, interspersed as they are by the article on tithing, give this issue of the journal a kind of thematic symmetry. The themes have been treated in ways that can offer students, scholars, and the public a critical review of issues that have become commonplace and fallen into peripheral academic circles in the study of religion(s) in African contexts.

Kofi Appiah

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"To Fast or not to Fast": Religious Diversity and Peaceful Coexistence in Ghana

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Abstract

During the 2021 Ramadan fasting, a controversy arose in the Wesley Girls' High School, Cape Coast that brought to the fore the need to deepen the discussions on religious diversity and accommodation of different faiths in Ghanaian public schools. The disagreement stemmed from the fact that the school prevented a Muslim girl from engaging in the annual Muslim Ramadan fasting, with the excuse that it would affect the health of the child. The school, which was built by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries, had the support of the Methodist Church. The Muslim groupings in Ghana felt that the attempt to stop the Muslim girl from fasting was an infringement on her religious right to practise her religion. This paper discusses this dispute in the light of the religious pluralistic society of Ghana. The paper argues that the schools which were founded by the Christian Mission and are now fully run by the state should not be used as a proselytising tool to prevent children of other faiths from practising their faiths. The paper concludes that if this action of the school is allowed to fester, it could lead to disturbances that may threaten the religious diversity and peaceful co-existence that Ghana currently enjoys.

Keywords

Diversity, Ghana, mission, Ramadan-fasting, schools

Introduction

Ghana is a religiously pluralistic society with much cultural diversity. The constitution of Ghana in Article 21 (1c) guarantees all Ghanaians the freedom to practise any religion and to manifest such practice.[7] The 2021Population and Housing Census puts the religious population of Ghana as follows:

i. Christianity 71.3 %
ii. Islam 20%
iii. African Traditional Religion 3.2%
iv. Others 4.5%
v. None 1.1%[8]

The religious demography shows that Ghana is a highly religious country. With the inception of Christianity in the fifteenth century in the then Gold Coast came the establishment of formal schools. The history of education in Ghana can be traced to the castle schools set up by the European merchants to train their mulatto children for employment as administrative assistants and soldiers.[9] The involvement of the Christian missionaries in education changed the face of education in Ghana. Education became one of the means of proselytising. The European Christian Missionaries such as the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and the Basel Missionaries established schools in Cape Coast, Accra, Anomabo, Akropong, and some other places along the coast of Ghana. Among the mission schools established are Mfantsipim School and Wesley Girls' High School by the Methodist Church, Adisadel College by the Anglican Church, St Augustine College and St Peters by the Catholic Church, and Presbyterian Boys Secondary School by the Presbyterian Church. Islamic missions also joined in setting up schools to help train Muslim children. Among such missions are the Ghana Muslim Mission and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission.

[7]1992 constitution of Ghana

[8] Ghana Statistical Service, "Population and Housing Census (Accra: GSS, 2022)

[9]C. K. Graham, History of education in Ghana: From the earliest times to the declaration of independence (London: Routledge, 1971).

The Ghana Muslim Mission has established basic and secondary schools across the country. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission also has several schools across the country providing formal education to many Muslim and non-Muslim students.

The main purpose of the mission schools was to serve as vehicles to attract and convert the indigenous people.[10] The mission schools have become an avenue for many children from diverse backgrounds to access education in Ghana. Both Christian and Muslim children have gained admissions into these mission schools, as they have proven to be excellent educational institutions. These mission schools, though have been taken over by the state, still have their founding churches wielding a lot of influence on their administration. These schools are still run on the teachings and beliefs of the founding churches. It is the understanding of these schools that all students who are admitted are to abide by the code of religious ethics of the founding churches. Recently, there was some misunderstanding between administrators of these mission schools and some parents who felt that their children were being denied the right to practise their religions. This article discusses the recent incident of the decision by the Headmistress of Wesley Girls' High (WGHS) to prevent a Muslim girl from taking part in the 2021 Ramadan fast.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The article is mainly exploratory in nature. Exploratory research deals with research problems that are not clearly defined or understood. This type of research is conducted to have a better understanding of an existing problem but does not provide conclusive results. The main theory underpinning this paper is the theory of the 'dialogue of life'. The 'dialogue of life', according to Samwini[11],:

> entails coexisting peacefully with "the other" in spite of obvious religious differences. It also means being patient. In dialogue of life, people from different religious traditions live and interact

[10]Denis Cogneau and Alexander Moradi, "Borders that divide: Education and religion in Ghana and Togo since colonial times." *The Journal of Economic History*, 74 no. 3 (2014): 694-729.

[11]Nathan A. Samwini, "Dialogue of life" approach to interfaith peace in West Africa." The Interfaith Observer (2011)

> in their everyday lives. Dialogue of life is a direct challenge to religious people, non-religious individuals, towns, and communities to accept one another no matter their differences in beliefs or practices.

Sintang, Baharuddin, and Khambali also argue that the dialogue of life is significant, as it helps to enhance mutual understanding and encourage people to be more graceful in the relationship with others.[12]The dialogue of life will be an important tool to deal with the threat of the seemingly religious intolerance that has been identified in the case under study.

Ramadan Fast

Fasting is an age-long practice that is found in all religions of the world. In Islam, fasting is observed during the holy month of Ramadan. It is a period Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, and having sexual intercourse from sunrise to sunset. The Ramadan fast lasts between 28 to 30 days.[13] Ramadan, according to Awad,[14]

> is the month of goodness and blessing during which Muslims become more inclined towards the worship of Allah. They pay greater attention to the recitation of the Qur'an, remembrance of Allah and seeking pardon for sins. Ramadan is distinguished from other months due to its many virtues.

The Ramadan fast is important to Muslims since it is one of the five pillars of Islam. Being a pillar means that the fasting is compulsory for every Muslim who has reached the age of puberty and is fit and well. Hossain[15] has identified some benefits associated with the Ramadan fasting. These are:

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[12] Suraya Sintang, Azizan Baharuddin and Khadijah Mohd Khambali, "Dialogue of life and its significance in inter-religious relation in Malaysia" 2 (December, 2012): 69-79

[13]John. F. Trepanowski, and Richard. J. Bloomer, "The impact of religious fasting on human health" *Nutrition Journal* 9 no. 57 (November 2010): 1-9.

[14]Abdul Karim Awad," Fasting in Ramadan according to the Quran and the authentic Sunnah" (n.d).

[15]Mohammed Zakir Hossain, "Fasting in Islam: Its excellence, benefits and use for sustainable development of the society." *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences*, 3no. 3 (January 2012): 184-190.

(i) helps in drawing one closer to Allah
(ii) helps in acquiring strong will and patience
(iii) helps in striving for righteousness and sincerity
(iv) helps in refinement of manners, especially those related to truthfulness and discharging trust.

One may argue that it is these perceived benefits of the Ramadan fasting that may have prompted the aggrieved parent to confront the authorities of the WGHS who had prevented his daughter from taking part in the 2021 Ramadan fasting.

Ramadan fasting and the response of WGHS

Muslims in Ghana joined their counterparts worldwide to observe the 2021 Ramadan fasting. The fasting started on Tuesday April 13, 2021 and ended on Wednesday May 12, 2021. As stated earlier, the Ramadan fasting is compulsory for all Muslims who have reached their puberty and are fit and healthy. What this means is that students in the Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana are legible to take part since most of them have reached the age of puberty. However, a case was reported that teenage girls at the Wesley Girls' High School (WGHS) were prevented by the school authorities from taking part in the fasting during the Ramadan.

On Monday April 26, 2021, an angry father of one of the girls stormed the school with the intention to withdraw his daughter from the school because the school authorities had prevented her from taking part in the Ramadan fasting. In a myjoyonline story by Richard Kojo Nyarko, the aggrieved parent is quoted to have said:

> My daughter had admission to this school this year. In fact, for over a month, we had not heard from her. We became a bit apprehensive when some news portals reported that Muslims at Wesley Girls were not allowed to pray. I had a friend who teaches in the school and he debunked the story. Two days ago, I had a call from my daughter and she complained that they were not allowing her to fast. I know my daughter; she's been fasting right from the primary

> school through to the Junior High School and so I became worried.[16]

The news of the action of the parent attempting to withdraw his daughter from WGHS sparked a lot of responses from interested stakeholders.

Responses of Stakeholders

Many stakeholders raised various issues with the action of the WGHS on their 'no fasting' policy. While some were in favour, others condemned the action as discriminatory and a sign of religious intolerance. The following sections present some of the various conflicting views on the impasse.

Response of Wesley Girls' High School Old Girls' Association

The school's decision to prevent their students from engaging in any form of fasting, according to the Wesley Girls' High School Old Girls' Association (WGHS OGA), was not to discriminate against any religion but was purely on health grounds. The Association said that the policy was put in place as a result of past experiences where some of the Muslim girls who took part in the fasting faced health challenges. The Association reiterated its unflinching support for the school:

> OGA will continue to support the Headmistress, the Board and all authorities of the School to enforce rules and regulations that seek to serve the purpose of instilling discipline and supporting the holistic upbringing of students.[17]

Response of the Islamic Medical Association of Ghana

The position espoused by the Old Girls' Association that the policy of 'no fasting' was based on health grounds but not religion was challenged by the Islamic Medical Association of Ghana (IMAGH). The group in a statement said:

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[16]Richard Kojo Nyarko, "Ramadan: Angry parent storms Wesley Girls' High School to withdraw daughter over fasting." Accessed January 9, 2023*https://www.myjoyonline.com/ramadan-angry-parent-storms-wesley-girls-high-school-to-withdraw-daughter-over-fasting/.*

[17]WGHS OGA, "Press release by OGA on fasting in WGHS", accessed January 9, 2023, www.wghsoga.com/news/from-the-executive-desk/

> This inaccurate assertion was made by these bodies in an attempt to justify the clear violations of the religious rights of Muslim students in Wesley Girls' High school. As far as IMAGH is concerned, those claims are unfounded and lack any firm bases in science and medicine. It is important to state that Islamic fasting is comparatively moderate and cannot be considered as starvation. There is a clear scientific distinction between fasting and starvation. At no point within the 12-16-hour period of fasting is the person deprived of any essential nutrient.[18]

The Association concluded that

> Ghana is a secular state which must promote inclusiveness. Public or government-assisted schools which seek to promote one religion over the other pose a risk to all of us and our future. We need to be careful in taunting Muslims to build their own schools. This has the potential of deepening religious segregation and divisiveness.[19]

Response of the Ghana Education Service (GES)

The GES was among the first to comment on the impasse in the school. The GES, in a statement released to the press, instructed the WGHS to allow all Muslim students who are desirous of taking part in the Ramadan fasting to do so. The GES added that

> The parents or any such student are also directed to write to the school indicating that the school is not to be held liable for any health condition of the student as a result of the fast. Staff, students and the general public are to take note.[20]

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[18] IMAGH, "Re: Wesley Girls High School preventsa student from fasting", accessed January 9, 2023, www. Imagh.com/re-wesley-girls-high-school-prevents-student-from-fasting

[19]IMAGH, "Re: Wesley Girls' High School", para. 6

[20]Ghana Education Service, "Re: Wesley Girl's High School prevents a student from fasting" (May 1, 2021).

Response of the Methodist Church Ghana

The Methodist Church Ghana is the founding church of WGHS. Though the church no longer manages the school since the state took over the running of the school, it still has a controlling influence over the school. The Church has a strong say in who should become the Headmistress of the school. The school follows the Methodist Church's liturgy in its religious activities. The decision by the GES in directing the school to allow Muslim students to observe the Ramadan fasting did not go unnoticed by the Methodist Church Ghana. The Church, in a press release on May 4, 2021, vehemently disagreed with the directives given by the GES to the authorities of WGHS to allow Muslim students to observe the Ramadan fasting. The Church stated in the press release that:

> The school rule in question is a long-standing one which is also non-religious and various renowned Muslim ladies in Ghana have passed through the school adhering to such a rule. The policies of the school over the 186 years of its existence have resulted in Wesley Girls High School being the school of Choice, Excellence and Achievements and the Church remains in **full support**(emphasis theirs) of these policies. The Methodist Church Ghana cannot accede to the unilateral directive issued by the Ghana Education Service and insists that the Ghana Education Service respects the long-standing partnership between the Government and Mission Schools.[21]

Response of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference and Christian Council of Ghana

In a joint communiqué, the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference (GCBC) and the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) agreed with the position taken by the Methodist Church Ghana on the fasting impasse at WGHS. The two Christian bodies in their joint communique signed by

[21]Methodist Church Ghana, "The Methodist Church Ghana responds to Ghana Education Service. RE: Wesley Girls' High School prevent a student from fasting" (May 4, 2021).

Rev. Fr. Lazarus Anondee and Rev. Dr. Cyril Fayosey after their annual meeting on Wednesday May 5, 2021 stated:

> We, leadership of the CCG and GCBC, have followed with keen interest the discussion about the authorities of Wesley Girls' High School, who allegedly prevented a student from fasting in the on-going Ramadan. We have discussed the issue prayerfully and have studied the various press statement that some stakeholders have released on the matter. We wish to endorse the position of the Methodist Church Ghana, which they succinctly outlined in their May 4, 2021 Press release, and reiterate that the decision of the Wesley Girls' High School authorities on fasting is purely in the interest of the students. The leadership of CCG and GCBC, therefore, wish to state that we take strong exception to the directives the Ghana Education Service issued in their press release on May 1, 2021 (CCG and GCBC, 2021).[22]

Responses of Muslim Groupings in Ghana

The positions of the WGHS, WGHA OGA, Methodist Church Ghana, GCBC, CCG, and the GES on the impasse were roundly condemned by Muslim groupings in Ghana. The Islamic Learning Centre described the action of the school in preventing Muslim girls from taking part in the fasting as 'unenlightening'. The founder of the Centre, Sheikh Muhammad Mustapha, in a post on Ghanaweb, described the directive for parents to write to the school absolving the school of any blame if the child suffered any harm in the course of fasting as tantamount to asking Muslim students to apply for permission to practise their religion.[23] Another Muslim cleric, Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu, also commenting on the impasse accused the big churches of ganging up against Muslims in Ghana. He said:

> In Presbyterian Boys' Secondary School (PRESEC) which is one of the best schools in this country, we

[22]GCBC & CCG, "Communique issued by the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the Ghana Catholic Bishop's Conference (GCBC) on Wednesday May 5, 2021."

[23]Ghanaweb, "Wesley Girls no fasting policy is 'unenlightening-Islamic Learning Centre', accessed January 9, 2023. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Wesley-Girls-no-fasting-policy-is-unenlightening-Islamic-Learning-Center-1253386

> have Muslim students there. They have a patron in the school who caters for their needs in matters of discipline. They pray in the school, they fast and do everything. These practices have never reduced the academic ranking of PRESEC. My worry is the ganging up by these big Christian organisations, the Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference and the Christian Council not taking a step back to look at this dispassionately but rather endorsing this.[24]

The National Chief Imam, Sheikh Nuhu Sharabutu, is quoted by his spokesperson, Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu, as being unhappy with the brouhaha at WGHS over the fasting. Sheikh Aremeyaw said in an interview with Joynews:

> Anytime Chief Imam hears this he feels disappointed, he feels worried, and when he calls and talks to me, he's like 'these are the people that hail praises on me, they show me great respect anytime, but my grandchildren are in their schools, and my grandchildren are not treated well'.[25]

The Ghana National Association of Muslim Teachers (GNAMT) added their voice to the impasse. The group stated in a press release:

> Ghana National Association of Muslim Teachers has observed with keen interest this phenomenon of consistent abuse of Muslim students in the various Christian Mission Schools, and it is instructive to submit that the discrimination is chiefly about the coercion of Muslims into church services while proscribing them from offering Salaat on campus. The refusal of the management of Wesley Girls' SHS to allow Muslims to fast during Ramadan is only the newest twist to the

[24]Modern Ghana, Wesley Girls' brouhaha: Sheikh Aremeyaw accuses big churches of ganging up against Muslims in Ghana accessed January 9, 2023, *https://www.modernghana.com//news/ 1080004/wesley-girls-brouhaha-sheikh-aremeyaw-accuses.html*

[25]Myjoyonline, "Chief Imam disappointed with Wesley Girls' refusal to let students fast – Sheikh Aremeyaw" Accessed January 10, 2023, *https://www.myjoyonline.com/chief-imam-disappointed-with-wesley-girls-refusal-to-let-students-fast-sheikh-aremeyaw/*

> myriad of the discriminatory acts against Muslims on Senior High School campuses.[26]

The Muslim caucus in the Ghana's Parliament also issued a statement describing the communique issued by the CCG and GCBC as disappointing. The statement stated, in part:

> The Muslim Caucus in Parliament of Ghana … have received with extreme disappointment the Communiqué issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Christian Council of Ghana dated 5th May 2021. The Communiqué endorsed the stand of the Methodist Church Ghana to prevent Muslim students at WESLEY GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL from fasting in the holy month of Ramadan … We state that if fasting, one of the key pillars of Islam, could be treated by the Methodist Church Ghana, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference in such a cavalier and flippant manner on the basis of unscientific, spurious and trumped-up reasons then our constitutional values of freedom of religion, religious diversity and tolerance are at stake and in great peril … Moreover, we find it unacceptable for any religious group to hide behind the veil of majority or religious traditions to unleash tyranny and intolerance on the faith and cardinal doctrine of other faiths. If the disingenuous and dangerous argument of majority and religious tradition is allowed to hold sway, our country will be riven apart in our regions, districts, schools, neighbourhoods, markets, businesses, state institutions, among others. It must be stated that such dangerous arguments belong to a bygone era and have no place in a modern democracy like ours.[27]

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[26]GNAMT, "Discrimination against Muslim students in Christian mission schools in Ghana" (May 8, 2021)

[27]3news.com, "Communique by Catholic Bishops, Christian Council disappointing-Muslim caucus. "Accessed May 11, 2021*https://3news.com/communique-by-catholic-bishops-christian-council-disappointing-muslim-caucus/*..

A group of Muslim professionals also waded into the controversy. The group observed in a press statement that the issue at Wesley Girls' High School goes beyond the ban on fasting and goes to the heart of a policy of Islamophobia and intolerance in Christian mission schools which needs to be addressed to preserve religious harmony in Ghana. They described the health reasons given by the school to ban fasting by the students as untenable. They argued that if health risk was a major concern, it would have been reported in all other schools where Muslim students were allowed to take part in the Ramadan fast. They backed their position by saying that "majority of practising Muslims encourage their children to begin half-day fasts around age nine and most Muslims are fully fasting by the time they enter Junior High School." The group alleged that the real motive behind the directive was not health but bigotry and unwillingness to accommodate any other religion. They argued further:

> For the avoidance of doubt, these policies include compulsory Christian worship by all students and denying Muslim students the right to fast and pray - never mind the disingenuous denial that the policy is targeted at Muslims. It is intriguing that a Church could be boasting that its school's tradition of excellence is built on a rigid regime of oppression, discrimination and spiritual asphyxiation of its students of minority faiths based on bigotry.[28]

Muntaka Mubarak, a member of the Muslim caucus in Ghana's Parliament, in a news item reported by Ghanaweb, also called on the GES to enforce its rules to ensure that students in Senior High Schools suffer no discrimination due to their religion. He stated further:

> We are worried about the sheer disregard to the concerns of others. The statement they have issued has really sent a shock to us, and we believe that GES has to enforce the rules because failure to enforce the rules mean everybody will have to do

[28]**Ghana Guardian, "Choose between togetherness or bigotry and apartheid- Muslim Professionals warns" accessed January 10, 2023 https://ghanaguardian.com/choose-between-togetherness-or-bigotry-and-apartheid-muslim-professionals-warns**

> his own thing and I do not think that will auger well for the co-existence and unity of us as a country. If GES fails, they will be setting a bad precedent. I can bet you most of the Islamic schools will join to have sharia as their rules. I think that GES must stand its grounds and enforce its rules.[29]

Another Muslim group, the Coalition of Muslim Organisations, called for the dismissal of the Headmistress of WGHS over her decision to disallow Muslim students from fasting. The group said the action of the school shows:

> sheer hatred, ignorance, prejudice and intolerance on the part of the Headmistress of Wesley SHS, Kay Oppong Ankomah and her administration where they barred Muslim students from prayers, meetings and even the on-going Ramadan Fasting. Wesley Girls has ignored the 1992 Constitution Article 21(c) which states that 'All persons shall have freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice'.[30]

Discussion

The Christian-Muslim dialogue has been an important topic for discussion in Ghana. Because Christianity and Islam are the two largest religions in Ghana, any seemly conflict or potential conflict between the adherents of these two religions raises concerns for national security and cohesion. The constitution of Ghana guarantees the freedom of each Ghanaian to belong and manifest any religion of their choice. The Ghanaian being very religious has taken his or her religion wherever he or she goes. In Ghanaian public and private schools, religion has become one main tool of socialising the students into the society. However, like in some other societies in the world, the 'misuse' and 'misunderstanding' of

[29]Ghanaweb. (May 6, 2021). "Wesley Girls, Muslim students' impasse: Enforce your rules – Muntaka to GES." Accessed January 10, 2023*https://www.ghanaweb.com /GhanaHomePage/ NewsArchive/Wesley-Girls-Muslim-students-impasse-Enforce-your-rules-Muntaka-to-GES-1252777.*

[30]Myjoyonline.com. "Sanction Wesley Girls Headmistress for not allowing Muslim students to fast." Accessed January 10, 2023*https://www.myjoyonline.com/ sanction-wesley-girls headmistress-for-not-allowing-muslim-students-to-fast-group-to-education-minister/*.

religion has been a source of conflict in Ghana.[31]The missionaries used education as a proselytising tool and established a lot of schools in their operational areas. Though these schools have been taken over by the state, the establishing churches still have some controlling influence on them. It is this controlling influence that has come under scrutiny with the fasting controversy at WGHS. The President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo, in his 2021 Eid-ul-Fitr message, called on Ghanaians not to reduce the secondary schools to ideological and religious fighting grounds. He rather tasked all stakeholders to work hard to preserve the enviable inter-religious coexistence to sustain the peace and social cohesion of the nation.[32]

The controversy at WGHS has the potential to lead to inter-religious conflicts if not well managed. It is the reason why the statement from the office of the National Chief Imam is seen as more conciliatory and worth noting. The Chief Imam cautioned the Muslim community to be careful and not generalise the issue as it could lead to religious divisions. The Chief Imam, through his spokes person, Sheikh Aremeyaw, told Citi News that:

> The Chief Imam has called for immediate consultations between the Christian and Muslim leaders. And we are hopeful that we will settle the issue amicably. We are employing the empathetic engagement to resolve this issue.[33]

The comments of the Chief Imam seem to have doused the flame of passion that greeted the action of the school and the reaction of both Christian and Muslim leaders. The statement of the Chief sits well with the 'dialogue of life' theory which enjoins people of different religious persuasions to co-exist with each other in spite of the obvious religious differences.

The tone of press releases by the Methodist Church Ghana, corroborated by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Catholic Bishop's Conference in their joint press release, was not

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[31]Nora Kofognotera Nonteria, "The Challenges of Interfaith Relations in Ghana." In: *Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century. Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue*, eds V. Latinovic, G. Mannion, P.C. Phan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 197-211.

[32]Ghana News Agency. (May 13, 2021). "Let's sustain the religious tolerance that has served us well." *https://www.gna.org.gh/1.20741257*. Accessed 13/05/2021.

[33]Citinewsroom.com, "Stay calm as we resolve Wesley Girls' fasting impasse." Accessed January 10, 2023 *https://citinewsroom.com/2021/05/be-calm-as-we-resolve-wesley-girls-fasting-impasse-chief-imam-to-muslims/*.

conciliatory. Commenting on a similar incident involving Christians and Muslims in secondary schools, Azumah stated:

> We have to be careful not to sleep-walk down the path of the West. In most Western countries, there is an obsession with individual rights which makes perfect sense in individualistic and increasingly hedonistic societies. In Africa we need to be just as concerned about community or corporate rights as we are about individual rights. Do Muslims and Christians as communities have rights, and if they do, how does the Ghanaian constitution guarantee these? Individual students may well be within their constitutional rights to insist on not being compelled to participate in a worship service of another religion.[34]

The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition, a civil society group championing the right to quality basic education for all children in Ghana, added its voice to the call for a peaceful resolution to the impasse. The group said in a statement:

> We believe that each party in their respective viewpoints do wish the best for the child concerned. But this can only be done in the midst of calm. History has shown that, whenever decisions were made out of turbulence, other problems were given birth. There is the need for all stakeholders to seek guiding interpretations to the provisions in the 1992 Constitution.[35]

The Coalition further expressed a concern that the Wesley Girls' High School did not heed to the directive of the GES to allow the girl continue with the fasting. This, they believe, will set a bad precedence for other schools to disregard similar directives from the supervisory body. This call is important as it helped to cool

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[34] John Azumah, "A case for inter-religious schooling in Ghana." *Graphic online*, January 10, 2023 *https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/opinion/a-case-for-inter-religious-schooling-in-ghana-john-azumah-phd.html*

[35]Ghana News Agency, "Wesley Girls Muslim student's fasting impasse: GNECC urges calm." January 10, 2023*https://www.gna.org.gh/1.20693296*.

down the tension that was building as a result of comments of the various religious groupings.

The National Peace Council of Ghana was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 818, 2011. The Council was established to promote peace. Article 2 of the Act gives the object of the Council "to facilitate and develop mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and to build sustainable peace in the country".[36] Going by the mandate of the Council, it was appropriate that they waded into the WGHS fasting brouhaha. In a press statement, the Council called 'on all Ghanaians, particularly, those who have been affected in any way by the events at the Wesley Girls' High School, to exercise the greatest restraint and circumspection in their comments and pronouncements on the matter'.[37] The Council went on to appeal to the leadership of the Christian and Muslim communities to urge their followers to remain calm as efforts to build on the time-tested peaceful co-existence among Christians and Muslims are made by the relevant authorities and organisations. This call by the Council was important to help ease the tension that the action of the school authorities backed by the Christian groupings caused.

In the heat of the impasse, some people suggested that if the Muslims would not bow to the dictates of the Christian mission schools, they should build their own schools since Muslim children have been attending Christian schools and following all their practices without any challenge. Azumah, responding to the same claim in the previous conflict, admonished:

> It is simplistic to argue in favour of the status quo on the basis that Muslim students have in the past decades attended Christian schools and participated in worship services without any complaints. Similarly, the argument that if Muslims don't want to participate in Christian worship, they shouldn't enroll in Christian schools is also unrealistic. For instance, in some places a Christian school may be the only school in the area or within walking distance. But more

[36]National Peace Council Act, Act 818, Article 2 (2011)

[37]National Peace Council, "Statement of the National Peace Council Regarding Wesley Girls' Senior High School and a Student Prevented from Fasting." Accessed January 10, 2023, https://www.peacecouncil.gov.gh2021/05/05/press-release-statement-of-the-national-peace-council-regarding-wesley-girls-senior-high-school-and-a-student-prevented-from-fasting

> importantly, with the computerized system of placements into SSS, the choices wards and parents have, are limited.[38]

This position of Azumah is important if the controversy generated by the action of the Headmistress of WGHS is to be resolved. Since WGHS cannot close its doors to Muslim girls from applying to the school, it will be important if examples from other schools are looked at and seen whether they can be replicated there. A story posted on Graphic Online could be seen as a testament of inter-religious schooling in Ghana. The writer, Enoch Darfar Frimpong, shared his experience as a Christian student in an Islamic school, TI Ahmadiyya School in Kumasi. The school, founded by the Ahmadiyya Mission Ghana, in 1950, has a liberal arrangement for all students to practise their various religious beliefs on campus, without infringing on anyone's beliefs. Frimpong stated his experience as a Christian student in an Islamic school:

> Unlike in Christian mission schools, where it is compulsory for all students to be present at all school gatherings, including Sunday church services, where non-Christians are obliged to attend, the situation is different in AMASS. It is not compulsory for non-Muslims to attend Friday Islamic prayers or fast during the month of Ramadan. What actually happened during our time was that, there was an arrangement for classes to close early on Friday's at 10:40 a.m. to enable Muslim students to prepare to either go to pray at the Mosque on the school's premises or go to town to any other Mosque of their choice to pray. The four periods of 40 minutes each, which was missed on Fridays because of the early 10:40 a.m. closure time, was incorporated into the periods of Monday to Thursday. Thus, instead of closing at 1:30 p.m., which was the norm in many secondary schools, we rather closed at 2:10 p.m., because of the additional 40 minutes that needed to be covered.[39]

[38]Azumah, "A case for inter-religious" para 3

[39] Enoch Darfor Frimpong, ."Christian in Islamic school versus Muslim in mission school." Accessed January 10, 2023

According to Frimpong, the morning assembly at TI Ahmadiyya reflected religious tolerance as the school rotated the reading of the Quran and Bible during the morning assemblies. He said further:

> We recited the Al Fatiha (Islamic prayer) and the Lord's Prayer (Christian) in turns either before the messages and announcements at the assembly or immediately before we depart for our various classrooms. When a Muslim preached on Monday, quoting from the Quran, a Christian preached on Tuesday, quoting from the Bible.[40]

The example from TI Ahmadiyya in Kumasi could be adopted by the GES as a policy to guide the religious lives of the public Senior High Schools in Ghana. The model of TI Ahmadiyya Senior High School in Kumasi can also help in appreciating the religious diversity of Ghana and help in promoting peaceful co-existence among all religions in the country. This practice of alternating the reading of the Quran and Bible at the morning assemblies finds space in the 'dialogue of life' which, as a Samwini puts it, "generates peaceful co-existence and enables people to promote spiritual and cultural values, which are found in the distinct outlook of followers of the other religions."[41]

Conclusion

Ghana, as earlier articulated, is a religiously diverse society. The religious diversity is seen in all aspects of the Ghanaian society. The article has argued that in formulating policies for the various secondary schools, this diversity should be taken into consideration. As the President of Ghana admonished, secondary schools should not be used as religious and ideological battle grounds.

The call for peace fits well in the theory of 'dialogue of life' which enjoins all persons of various religious faiths to see each other as friends and agree to sit round the table to dialogue. This approach to solving the current impasse will ensure the peaceful coexistence and respect for one another. The article concludes that

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https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/opinion/christian-in-islamic-school-vs-muslim-in-mission-school.html.

[40] Frimpong, "Christian in Islamic school" para 24

[41] Samwini, 'Dialogue of life', para 8.

the issue must be handled with care so as not to disturb and threaten the religious diversity and peaceful co-existence that Ghana currently enjoys.

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Islamic Prescriptions for Cattle Rearing: A Complementary Approach towards Curbing Farmer-Herder Clashes in Nigeria

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Abstract

The recurrence of violence across Nigeria is worrisome. Among the incidents are the clashes between Fulani Muslim herders and Christian farmers, especially in the middle belt and parts of southern Nigeria. Efforts of the government at curbing these clashes have not yielded desired results. Can religion (Islam) complement governmental interventions in the resolution of the problem? This paper focused on a historical and analytic exploration of this question. It was found that clashes were caused by the open grazing system of cattle rearing adopted by Fulani

herdsmen. This system exposes cattle to dangers, destroys crops on farmlands, and causes collisions on roads/highways. It was also revealed that the non-adherence to Islamic prescriptions on animal welfare was an important additional factor. The paper posits that criminal activities such as rape, killing, and destruction of property alleged to have been committed by Fulani Muslim herders are condemnable and punishable by Islamic law. To achieve better results in the search for peaceful co-existence, it is recommended that the federal government and state administrations establish ranches and grazing reserves, implement the National Livestock Transformation Plan, and collaborate with religious leaders to motivate herders to keep Islamic laws of cattle rearing.

Keywords

Cattle rearing, herder-farmer clashes, Islam, Nigeria, open grazing

Introduction

Nigeria, a plurality country with a diverse cultural background, has continued to witness insecurity since the return of democracy in 1992. Unfortunately, the insecurity challenges have become pronounced in the insurgency of *Boko Haram*, banditry, and kidnapping in northern Nigeria. In the Southeast, the struggle for secession by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has continued to reverberate, while the Southwest has been witnessing cases of kidnapping and separatist activities for the establishment of a Yoruba nation. The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has been accused of tribalism under the aegis of Fulanisation due to alleged criminal acts being perpetrated by Fulani herders in the country. The Fulanisation agenda is hinged on the premise that President Buhari, a Fulani man, supports herders from his ethnic group when they are alleged to have caused conflicts through open grazing of cattle.

The movement of Fulani herders from the North to the South in search of pastures for their cattle has caused a series of conflicts with the farmers who claim that cattle destroy their crops. It seems that all six geo-political zones have witnessed herder-farmer clashes. The conflict has assumed an ethno-religious dimension, as evident in recent conflicts over land resources between the Fulani Muslim herders and Christian farmers across the country. The conflicts are more pronounced in the Middle Belt

in the North Central. Since 1999, it has been reported that herder-farmer violence has claimed several thousands of lives and rendered many people homeless[1].

Scholars of various disciplines including history, sociology, political science, and religion have addressed the menace of conflicts among the herdsmen and farmers in the Northern and Southern geo-political zones. Mortiz sees the herder-farmer conflict as a local struggle over resource use within the context of the larger political economy. It is a conflict in which a limited number of local people are involved in skirmishes over crops, animals, water, and land. A herder is defined as a pastoralist who keeps herd animals. In other words, a herder is a person in charge of the activity of herding the animals to pasture[2]. A farmer is also defined as an agriculturalist that lives primarily off farming or a person cultivating a particular plot of land. It is often observed that the majority of the farmer-herder clashes have occurred between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers, resulting in ethno-religious hostilities[3].

The Nigerian government has made attempts to curb the herder-farmer clashes through some projects but the efforts have not yielded desired results. Since 2000, urban conflicts, particularly in Jos and Kaduna, have been violent, claimed several lives, and destroyed valuable properties. The fact that the clashes have been linked to ethnicity and religion calls one's attention to address the herder-farmer conflict from a religious perspective. What provisions does religion, especially Islam, make for Muslims who rear animals? How should animals be catered for according to Islam? These are the issues this paper intends to address with a view to proffering solutions to the lingering problems of herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria. Before delving into the main thrust of this paper, let us briefly examine cattle rearing as a profession in Nigeria.

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[1]A. A. Jeremiah, "Herders against Farmers: Nigeria Expanding Deadly Conflict" retrieved from https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/252-herders-against-farmers-nigerias-expanding-deadly-conflict downloaded 28/8/2021).

[2]M. Mortiz, "Changing Contexts and Dynamics of Farmer-Herder Conflict Across West Africa" Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable*Canadian Journal of African Studies/Review Cannadiann das Etudies* vol.40 (1) (2006) pp.1-40, Taylor and Francis Ltd, downloaded 12 April 2018).

[3]Ibid, pp.22-23

Cattle Rearing As a Profession in Nigeria

Cattle rearing is an aspect of animal husbandry. It is a lucrative livestock-rearing business in the world today. The cattle production system can be extensive and intensive which largely depends on local conditions, climate, available feeding components, herd size, etc[4]. Cattle rearing is said to be a lucrative and thriving business due to the milk and other products gotten from cows. There are a lot of benefits derivable from cattle rearing. These include milk, beef, cheese, skin, fur, dairy products, etc. Statistics show that there are about 38,200 licensed and registered livestock farming businesses in the USA alone, which is said to have provided job opportunities for about 62,500 people. Besides the USA, beef cattle farming is very large and active in other countries like Germany, Egypt, Argentina, Israel, China, Turkey, and Nigeria. Cattle rearing deals with the mass breeding of cattle (calves, steers, bulls, cows, heifers, bullocks, and oxen) to make a profit[5].

In Nigeria, cattle are mostly reared by Fulani people. They are said to have been the largest semi-nomadic group in the world and are found in West and Central Africa, especially from Senegal to the Central African Republic. In Nigeria, some Fulanis live as semi-nomadic herders. They herd animals across vast areas. They are often linked with the Hausa people, having lived together for a very long time[6].

Different breeds of cattle are reared by Fulani. These include Azawat, Sokoto Gudali, Wadara, White Fulani, Ndama, Kekeku, Kuri, Brown Swiss, Holstein, Jersey, etc. Cattle breeds can be categorised into three major groups, namely beef cattle, dairy cattle, and dual purpose. For clarity purposes, beef cattle are reared to produce meat; dairy cattle are reared to produce milk while dual-purpose cattle are capable to produce meat and milk. Dairy cows are extensively grazed, which is said to be the traditional way of cattle farming. Cattle rearing is good in arid regions and that is why Northerners have the highest number of cattle farmers[7].

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[4]P.P. Rajkumar, "Cattle Farming" retrieved fromhttps://agribiz.info/agriwiki/article/cattle-farming/downloaded 5/9/2021.

[5]Ibid

[6]N. Mukaila "Making Sense of Nigeria's Fulani-Farmer Conflict" retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36139388downloaded 28/8/2021

[7]E. Johnson "Cattle Rearing Business Plan in Nigeria" Retrieved from https://www.liveandwingit.com/download-cattle-rearing-business-plan-in-nigeria-pdf/downloaded 3/8/2021).

It is important to note that there are traditional and modern cattle farming systems. In traditional cattle farming, the cows are a local breed and they are small in size. The traditional method is an open graze system whereby cattle move from one place to another while in zero grazing, they are pure-bred modern cows, which are larger and more productive than the traditional ones. In the traditional method, cattle move about the land, sometimes destroying the fields, leading to clashes between the crop planters and cattle farmers as is being experienced in the Middle Belt and Southern part of Nigeria. As a reactionary measure, farmers too sometimes poison the water sources and farmlands, thereby, killing innocent animals. The herders of the traditional method spend much of their time with the herd, whereas modern cattle farmers can diversify their role by investing in other forms of agriculture[8]. It is observed that Fulani herders often carry sticks, cutlasses, and knives to meet their daily needs while grazing their cattle but later had to resort to carrying AK 47 rifles to defend themselves against cattle rustlers.

On cattle rearing in Nigeria, Johnson writes:

> Cattle rearing in Nigeria is for hides/skin, meat, and dairy products but meat production is the highest in the chart followed by dairy. Nigeria's dairy industries comprise milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, butter, and infant formula[9].

The economic importance of cattle rearing in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. It provides meat and milk for human consumption. It is also suitable to pull plows on farms by using cattle for plowing land. Cattle rearing provides hide and skin, blood meat and bone meal for feeds for farm animals, and a source of employment and income for people. It is also a source of fertilizers, as the dung of cattle serves as a good manure for plant growth[10].

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[8]A. Christou "Comparison between traditional and modern cattle farming" https://www.comundos.org/en/content/comparison-between-traditional-and-modern-cattle-farming, downloaded5/9/2021

[9]E. Johnson Cattle Rearing in Nigeria" Retrieved from https://www.liveandwingit.com/download-cattle-rearing-business-plan-in-nigeria-pdf/ 3/8/2021).

[10]"Livestock farming in Nigeria" Retrieved from www.nigerianfinder.com/livestock-farming-in-nigeria 10/8/2021.

A Historical Overview of Farmer-Herder Clashes in Nigeria

Historically, in the early 20th century, pastoralists had been driving their cattle east and west across the Sahel, south of the Sahara desert, including Northern Nigeria. Since the 20th century, some herders started moving further South due to drought experienced in the far North and relative peace in central and southern Nigeria. As the herders moved southward looking for pastures for their cattle, so they had clashes with farmers. Since 1999, a lot of media and academic literature have been documenting violent and persistent fatal clashes between herders and farmers across Nigeria. In 1999, it was reported that more than 19,000 people were killed. Since 2000, farmer-herder conflicts have been taking place in Jos and Kaduna. According to Global Terrorism Index, 800 lives were lost in 2015 in the clashes between farmers and herders[11].

Between 2016 and 2019, an unaccounted number of people had been gruesomely killed in the clashes between farmers and herders that were recorded in Adamawa, Agatu, Benue, Nimbo, Enugu State, Plateau, Taraba, and Kajuru Local Government areas of Kaduna State. The killings involved children, women, farmers, and Fulanis as well as the destruction of worship centres and residential buildings[12]. Oluremi and Olusegun, while enumerating frequent clashes between herders and farmers, explain the clashes:

> A gruesome attack on Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State was reported in February 2016 in which about 7000 people were driven from six villages by Fulani herdsmen….Fulani herdsmen in Enugu State in April 2016 also attacked Ukpabi Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area on 25 April 2016, killing over 40 people. Two days after, the Ukpabi Nimbo attack, there was another attack by the Fulani herdsmen in the Umuchigbo Community in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State and over 200 people were

[11]Retrieved from "herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria" Retrieved from *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia,* 12/8/2021

[12]Ibid

> killed and houses were razed. They have left their footprints in virtually every part of the country.[13]

Scholars of diverse disciplines including history, sociology, and political science have identified various factors responsible for the frequent clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria. Jeremiah states that among the principal factors or drivers of the clashes are climatic changes, population growth, loss of grazing reserves, technological and economic changes(new livestock and farming practice), crime (rural banditry and cattle rustling), political and ethnic strife, and cultural changes[14].

In their study, Gabriel and Joseph attribute traditional institutional factors, land acquisition by capitalist farmers, contamination of streams, rape, destruction of crops, indigenisation, the porosity of Nigerian borders, impunity, and nepotism as the main causes of herdsmen and farmers crises in Nigeria[15]. Okonoye and fawenu state that the factors responsible for conflicts between the herdsmen and crop farmers in Nigeria include unauthorised encroachment into farmers' farmlands by the Fulani herdsmen, lack of political will by the government to arrest and punish the offenders, and the inability of the government to respond quickly to distress calls and early warning signs[16].

Government's Efforts towards Curbing Farmer-Herder Clashes in Nigeria

Of recent, some states have started legislating against the open graze system, a move which did not go down well with the Fulani herdsmen and their associations. It was reported that the anti-open grazing law was made by Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Zamfara, Enugu, Ekiti, and Ondo states. The law was criticised by the zonal leader of the Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore (a

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[13]O.J. Okonoye and B.O. Fawenu "The Concept of Restitution in Exodus 22:5-6 as a panacea to Conflict between Fulani and Crop farmers in Nigeria, *LASU Journal of Humanities*, Ojo, Lagos, Faculty of Arts, 13 (1&2), pp. 63-64.

[14]A. A. Jeremiah, "Herders against Farmers: Nigeria Expanding Deadly Conflict" retrieved from https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/252-herders-against-farmers-nigerias-expanding-deadly-conflict downloaded 28/8/2021).

[15]N.T. Gabriel and N.T. Joseph "Political and Religious Implications of Herdsmen and Farmers Crises in Nigeria" *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies* 2019, 6 (2), 1-12 Sryahwa Publications.

[16]O.J. Okonoye and B.O. Fawenu "The Concept of Restitution in Exodus 22:5-6 as a panacea to Conflict between Fulani and Crop farmers in Nigeria" *LASU Journal of Humanities* 2019, Ojo, Faculty of Arts 13(1&2) 60-77)

Fulani socio-cultural group in charge of the north-central states), Gidado Bebeji, saying that the herders would leave Benue State because they did not understand the content of the law. Since 2018, several attacks and clashes have been happening between herdsmen and farmers. Though Miyyeti Allah absolved itself from the attacks, another body, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), was said to have claimed responsibility for the attacks, which were said to be in response to anti-grazing laws made by some states in Nigeria[17].

Federal Government had also attempted to curb the frequent clashes between the herders and farmers in the country. It is on record that in April 2014, President Goodluck Jonathan's government inaugurated an inter-ministerial committee on grazing reserves to end the crisis between the herders and farmers in the country. In the same year, the government set up a Political Committee on Grazing Reserves chaired by the then Benue State Governor, Gabriel Suswam. The Governor's Committee called for the recovery of all grazing routes encroached upon by farmers. The Committee also recommended that the Central Bank of Nigeria should release a total sum of N100 billion to the 36 state governments in the country for the creation of ranches in their respective states.

It was reported that the money which was released for the creation of ranches by the Central Bank was looted by the state government and since the defeat of President Jonathan in 2015, no report has been heard about the money released for the creation of ranches[18].

Since 2016, the administration of Muhammadu Buhariwas said to have embarked on some projects to create transhumance corridors through the Middle Belt in a bid to curb the conflicts between the herders and farmers. The project, which was mostly supported by the Northern governors, was vehemently opposed by their southern counterparts. In 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari tried again to create Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements[19]. His proposal was met with opposition from Nigerians, especially in the southern parts of the country. President

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[17]O.J. Okonoye and B..O. Fawenu "The Concept of Restitution in Exodus 22:5-6 as a panacea to Conflict between Fulani and Crop farmers in Nigeria" *LASU Journal of Humanities* 2019, Ojo, Faculty of Arts 13(1&2) 63-64.

[18]A. A. Jeremiah "Herders against farmers: Nigeria's expanding deadly conflict" https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/252-herders-against-farmers-nigerias-expanding-deadly-conflict downloaded 28/8/2021.

[19]Ruga Settlement "*Sahara Reporters*," 28th June 2019

Buhari was accused of having a Fulanisation/Islamisation agenda by promoting his Fulani tribesmen at the expense of other tribes in the country.

In an attempt to curb farmer-herder violent clashes in Nigeria, Federal Government initiated a plan in 2019 known as The National Livestock Transformation Plan purposely to restrict the movement of cattle by encouraging nomadic herders to switch to sedentary, more mechanised livestock production as it is obtainable in the developed countries. The plan was aimed at establishing ranches in public grazing reserves and improving services around them, including securing water to irrigate pastures and grow fodder.

To implement the plan, seven pilot states of the federation were identified: Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, and Zamfara. Going by the plan, it was hoped that by 2028, the seven states would have built a total of at least 119 ranches, creating over 2 million new jobs for Nigerians[20]. On March 15, 2021, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development launched the National Livestock Breed Improvement Programme to improve the genetic makeup of dairy cattle to achieve milk and meat yields from the nation's herds[21]. On May 17, 2021, it was widely reported that the 17 Southern governors in Nigeria met in Asaba, Delta State, where it was declared that there would be an anti-grazing law, come September 1,2021 by all the southern governors to solve the clashes between the herders and farmers in the region[22].

What should be the lasting solution to these incessant clashes and violent attacks among the Fulani herders and farmers in Nigeria? The rest of this paper shall examine the Islamic prescriptions for cattle rearing. The study shall also proffer some pragmatic solutions to the lingering problem of the crisis between the Fulani herders and farmers across the country.

Islamic Prescriptions for Cattle Rearing

Generally, cattle are cows and bulls that are kept on a farm purposely for the production of milk and consumption of meat

[20]A. A. Jeremiah "Herders against farmers: Nigeria's expanding deadly conflict" https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/252-herders-against-farmers-nigerias-expanding-deadly-conflict downloaded 28/8/2021.

[21]Ibid

[22]Full Communiqué: Southern Governors Call for National Dialogue, Ban Open Grazing,12thMay, 2021 retrieved from www.thisdaylive.com6th July 2021

gotten from them. In the last few decades, animal rearing, including cattle rearing and production, has become commercialised and industrialised in Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt. Belonging to the animal world, cattle's benefits are mentioned in the Islamic texts, the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith. It is said that there are over 200 verses of the Qur'an and some Quranic chapters that are named after animals. Among them are *Suratul-Baqarah* (Chapter on the Cow/Heifer), *Suratul-Ani'ām* (Chapter on the Cattle), and *Suratul-Fīl* (Chapter on the Elephant). This is to show that as human communities are relevant, animals' kingdom is also useful and relevant to the human world. While referring to the numerous benefits derivable from cattle rearing, Allah says:

> And in cattle (too) you have an instructive example. From within their bodies, We produce (milk) for you to drink; there are, in them, (besides) numerous (other) benefits for you; and of their (meat) you eat. And them, as well as ships, you ride[23].

In another place in the Qur'an, Allah further mentions the purpose of creating cattle when He declares:

> And Cattle He has created for you (men): from them, you derive warmth and numerous benefits and of their (meat) you eat. And you have a sense of pride and beauty in them as you drive them home in the evening and as you lead them forth to pasture in the morning[24].

From the above Qur'an verses, it is clearly understood that cattle rearing, either for commercial or personal purposes, is beneficial and useful for human beings.

Cattle rearing from the Islamic perspective is a permissible and lucrative occupation due to its numerous benefits mentioned in the Qur'an. Today, cattle provide human beings with food through milk, butter, cheese, yogurt, and meat which are gotten from cattle

[23]Q23:21-22

[24]Q16:5-6

on a daily basis. They also provide human beings with clothing and furnishings[25].

Considering the numerous benefits derivable from cattle rearing, herders or cattle owners are enjoined by Prophet Muhammad to treat their animals (cattle/cows) kindly. While discussing the kind treatment towards animals, the Prophet is quoted in one of his traditions, reported by Abu Hurairah, as saying:

> While a man was walking, he felt thirsty and went down a well and drank water from it. On coming out of it, he saw a dog panting and eating mud because of excessive thirst. The man said "This (dog) is suffering from the same problem as that of mine. So he (went down the well), filled his shoe with water, caught hold of it with his teeth and climbed up and watered the dog. Allah thanked him for his (good) deed and forgave him. The people asked: O Allah's Messenger! Is there a reward for us in serving (the) animals? He replied: Yes, there is a reward for serving any animate (living being)[26].

From the above tradition, it can be deduced that cattle rearing is a good deed if properly done by providing what to eat and what to drink for the cattle. The kind treatment given to the thirsty dog in the above-quoted hadith can be likened to taking proper care of cattle by protecting animals' lives from danger, cruelty, and other forms of maltreatment.

Beating cattle with sticks in a circus show and forcing them to run from a long distance to another, especially under harsh weather conditions, are considered cruelty from the Islamic perspective. Islam prescribes good shelter, food, and water for cattle being reared either for commercial or personal purposes. It is also important for herders and cow owners to provide good sanitation, medication, and shelter. From the Islamic view, the appropriate shelter for cattle should fit the physical and medical needs of the cattle. The dwelling places of the cattle being reared

[25]S. Faruqui "Animal Welfare in Islam: All your Questions answered" retrieved from www.https://muslimhands.org.uk downloaded 26/9/2021).

[26]M. M. Khan (Trans) "*The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari Arabic-English, vol. 3*, Riyadh- Saudi Arabia, Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, 1997, p.317

should not pollute the environment or spread diseases to other organisms[27].Cattle and other animals must not be maltreated while they are alive. Exposing animals to danger and other forms of cruelty may lead to Hellfire. Prophet Muhammad is reported by Abdullah to have said:

> A woman was punished because of a cat. She imprisoned it until it died and she entered Hell because of that. She did not feed it or give it water when she imprisoned it and she did not let it eat from the vermin of the earth[28].

Prophet Muhammad, in other traditions, condemned the beating of animals and forbade striking, branding, or marking them on the face. He was reported to have cursed and chastised those who maltreated animals and commended those who showed kindness towards them. He also instituted radical changes against the practices of cutting off the tails and humps of living animals for food. Prophet Muhammad, while admonishing the herders, said:

> The worst of shepherds is ungentle, who causes the beast to crush or bruise one another[29].

While explaining the traditions of Prophet Muhammad on kindness towards animals, especially cattle, Faruqui writes:

> …Allah appreciates us giving water to animals, having considering for their suffering, especially during the heat... Show the softness of your heart and it can extinguish your sins; just like charity to people. It can even be *sadaqahjariya* for you[30].

In the Muslim world today, cattle rearing has taken a technological and scientific dimension, with many companies springing up as animal farms for the production of dairies and meats for human

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[27]T. S. Nazari "Animal Welfare and Utilization limits in Islam" retrieved from Animals in Islam from *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia* downloaded 23/9/2021

[28]N. al-Khattab (Trans) *English Translation of Sahih Muslim vol. 6* Riyadh Darussalam Global Leader in Islamic books, 2007, p.101

[29]Hadith Muslim retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih/700/pmc/articles/pmc5332932 20/9/2021

[30]S. Faruqui "Animal Welfare in Islam: All your Questions answered" retrieved from www.https://muslimhands.org.uk 26/9/2021

consumption. For instance, Almarai is one of the largest dairy farms in the world, milking over 93,000 dairy cows in the Arabian Desert in Saudi Arabia. The farm has provided a lot of job opportunities for over 2,750 people. Since, 2000, Almarai has been running five farms with a little of 25,000 dairy cows and 14,000-15,000 replacement heifers[31]. Open grazing of cattle has become an archaic or old traditional system in some countries. It has even been outlawed in other countries.

Nomadism, herding cattle from one place to another, was eliminated in Singapore by Lee Kuan Yew while the late Libyan President, Muammar Gadhafi, banned nomadism in Libya[32]. How we can adopt Islamic prescriptions for cattle rearing as a veritable solution to curbing farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria is the next issue this paper will address.

Proffering Islamic Solution to Curbing Farmers-Herders' Clashes in Nigeria

The insecurity arising from rearing cattle through open grazing in modern Nigeria requires urgent and proactive action from the stakeholders in the indivisibility of the corporate existence of the country. Considering the Islamic prescriptions for cattle rearing earlier discussed, it will be a worthwhile academic exercise to proffer solutions to the farmer-herder conflicts from the perspective of Islam. Islam is described as a religion of peace and allows peaceful co-existence to reign supreme in a multi-religious society.

Cattle rearing is a recognised and permissible profession in Islam and its practice is expected to be in tandem with the modern system approved by Islam. An open grazing system that exposes cattle and their herders to danger and criminal activities is condemnable in Islam. It is observed in the Southern part of the country, especially in Yorubaland, that some under-aged children are being used as herders of cattle among the Fulani Muslims. Such children are deprived of quality education which Islam enjoins every Muslim child from age six to acquire.

Besides, herders' encroachment and intrusion into the farmlands where crops are planted is against the Islamic ethical teaching on respect to privacy and ownership of landed or residential property. This injunction which enjoins every Muslim to

[31]Almarai Dairy Farm retrieved from www.agriland.ie September 26, 2021
[32]Yemi Adebowale "Extolling Open Grazing in 21st Century retrieved from www.thisdaylives.com June 19, 2021

respect people's privacy and their residential property can be found in the Glorious Qur'an where Allah commands that:

> O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own until you have asked permission and saluted those in Islam. That is best for you so that you may heed. If you find no one in the house, enter not until permission is given to you. If you are asked to go back, go back that marks for greater purity for yourselves and God knows well all that you do[33].

The above Quran verse refers to the refined, decent, and well-ordered private life of Muslims. It is an injunction for the privacy of people. It implies that a Muslim cannot enter another person's place or land, or have access to another person's property without permission from the landlord or the owner of the property. By extension, this Qur'an injunction can be applied to the farmer-herder relationship in Nigeria. In a situation where a farmer plants crops for consumption and commercial purposes and does not give access to herders to herd their cattle on his farmland, entering into such farmlands is not only condemnable but it is also against the Islamic ethical teaching on respect for privacy and ownership of landed property.

Rearing or grazing cattle in an unapproved place or farmland will be considered, according to a hadith, as a forbidden act by a shepherd who grazes his cattle in a forbidden area. This is contained in the hadith where Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "…he who falls in the ambiguous things falls into the unlawful, just like a shepherd who pastures (his cattle) round about the forbidden area is on the way to pasturing them in it…"[34]. The true interpretation of this hadith is that grazing cattle on a forbidden farmland is not proper for a shepherd because such a place (farmland) does not belong to him.

Cattle rearing, from the Islamic perspective, ought not to have caused an ethnic or religious problem in Nigeria. The fact is that Islam condemns and preaches against tribalism, ethnicity, racism, and religious intolerance in a plural society like Nigeria. The Islamic scripture(the Glorious Qur'an and authentic Hadith)

[33]Q24:27-28

[34]Hadith 6 of al-Nawawi Collection culled from M.O.A Abdul (1981) The Sayings, Acts and Deeds of Prophet Muhammad, Lagos, Islamic Publication Bureau…..pp 76-77

strongly condemns whoever proclaims or encourages racism or ethnicity. In the Qur'an, Allah stresses the importance of the unity of mankind and recognises the equality of races and tribes in the world (Q49:13). Islam also allows freedom of religion and plurality of religion in a multi-religious society (Q2:256; Q10:99-100; Q109:1-6). While condemning promoters of tribalism, Prophet Muhammad is quoted to have said:

> He is not of us who proclaims the cause of tribal partisanship; and he is not of us who fights in the cause of tribal partisanship; and he is not of us who dies in the cause of tribal partisanship[35].

From the above quoted Qur'an verses and hadith, it is clear that the alleged *Fulanisation or Islamisation agenda* of President Muhammadu Buhari or of any other group of people in Nigeria is against the Islamic teachings on tribalism, ethnicity, and religious tolerance.

In the course of rearing or grazing cattle in the Middle Belt and other southern parts of Nigeria, some Fulani Muslim herders have been alleged to have been involved in armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, destruction of crops, and killing. Herders are also accused of carrying AK-47 assault rifles while grazing cattle openly. This has caused a proliferation of small and large arms into Nigeria and consequently threatens the security of the nation, whose borders are porous and uncontrollable[36].

It is important to state that Islam is against the open grazing of cattle or any occupation/profession that will cause or lead to the loss of lives and properties, or other criminal acts such as rape, kidnapping, and armed robbery. This is because all these criminal acts are condemnable and punishable by Islamic law. To maintain peace and security in a Muslim community, Islamic law prescribes punishments for some criminal acts. These include *Zina* (fornication, adultery, and rape), *Qatl* (killing/homicide), *Hirabah* (highway/armed robbery), *Sariqa* (stealing/theft), and *khamr* (drinking intoxicants/hard drugs)[37].

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[35]Hadith from Tirmidhi and Abu Daud on the authority of Abu Hurairah culled from B. Aisha Lemu *Islamic Studies for Senior Secondary School Book 1*, Minna, Islamic Education Trust, 1992 pp.62-63)

[36]N. Mukaila "Making Sense of Nigeria's Fulani-farmer conflict" retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36139388 28/8/21, Y. Adebowale "Extolling Open Grazing in 21st Century retrieved from www.thisdaylives.com June 19,2021.

[37]Doi. A.R.I *Shariah: The Islamic Law*, London: Taha Publishers, 1984, pp. 229-268. Intentional killing (*Qatl*) attracts the death penalty, rape/fornication/adultery (*Zina*) is

From the foregoing discussion, the position of this paper concerning the criminal acts alleged to have been committed by Fulani Muslim herders is that any person herding cattle or farming land is found guilty of any of the criminal acts (rape, stealing, armed robbery, kidnapping, and killing punishable by Islamic legal system) should be prosecuted in the Nigerian courts. Allowing offenders to go unpunished will not curb farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria and this is against the spirit of *Maqasid Shari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) which include security of life and property, protection of human dignity, family lineage, and religion of every creature on earth[38].

Islam, through its scripture, also offers a conflict resolution mechanism whereby conflicts/clashes or disputes among warring parties could be amicably resolved (Q49:9). This is known as *sulhu* (peaceful dialogue/reconciliation) which was employed by Prophet Muhammad and his companions to maintain peace by resolving the conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims during the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah in 628 CE. One of the terms of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah was that the warring parties would refrain from hostilities and violent clashes against each other and their friendly tribes[39].

This historical event is aptly captured when Rahim explains some terms of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah:

> The Treaty of Hudaybiah provided that the Muslims and the Quraysh (non-Muslims) were to observe a truce for ten years and were not to engage in any act of hostility. If anybody wished to join the Prophet or enter into a treaty with him, he should have the full liberty to do so. Similarly, if a Muslim desired to go back to the Quraysh or to maintain relations with them, the Prophet would not interfere in his affairs[40].

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punishable by 100 lashes if it is fornication, rape attracts the death penalty. Highway/armed robbery (*Hirabah*) is punishable by death if it involves killing and imprisonment if it does not involve killing) Stealing is punishable by cutting of hand or fine or imprisonment depending on what is stolen while drinking intoxicant/hard drugs or dealing in the sale of hard drugs is punishable by flogging with 80 lashes, imprisonment, or death penalty if it is drug pushing

[38]Islamic Education Trust *Shari'ah Intelligence: The Basic Principles and Objectives of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, 2015, pp 161-212.

[39]A. Rahim *Islamic History*, Lagos, Islamic Publication Bureau, 1987, pp37-42

[40]A. Rahim *Islamic History,* Lagos, Islamic Publication Bureau, 1987, p. 35

The above historical record shows that Christian farmers and Fulani Muslim herders in Nigeria can resolve their conflicts through peaceful dialogue which can be initiated by traditional rulers or the government. The fact is that some cow owners in the southern part of the country are neither Muslims nor Fulani, and some farmers may be Muslims or Fulani. Not all Fulani are Muslims. There are Fulani Christians in Nigeria. In other words, the Fulani herder may not be the owner of the cattle he rears; the cows may belong to influential people(Muslims and non-Muslims). What is important is that for a peaceful co-existence to reign among different tribes and religions in Nigeria, particularly among the farmers and herders, peaceful dialogue should be one of the mechanisms to resolve the conflict amicably as prescribed by Islam.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has been able to establish the fact that cattle rearing, through the open grazing system, has been causing a lot of clashes between farmers and herders in Nigeria. Efforts of the Nigerian government at finding lasting solutions to the crisis have not been fruitful. The Islamic prescriptions for cattle rearing are hinged on the kind treatment of animals, which encourages proper feeding, good shelter, and provision of health facilities for cattle. The numerous benefits derivable from cattle rearing, which are acknowledged in the Islamic scripture, should draw the attention of Fulani herders, cow owners, and the Nigerian government to modernise the cattle-rearing profession. This can be done through the provision of grazing reserve areas, ranches, and other modern methods of cattle rearing to maximise the socio-economic benefits of cattle rearing, which will provide, among others, food security and employment opportunities for the Nigerian populace. From the Islamic perspective, cattle rearing should not have caused an ethno-religious crisis in a multi-religious society like Nigeria, because Islam strongly condemns tribal partisanship, religious intolerance, bigotry, and prejudice. All criminal acts alleged to have been committed by Fulani Muslim herders are not only forbidden but also punishable in Islamic law. Adopting the Islamic approach to curb farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria, as discussed in this paper, will complement the government's efforts towards resolving the clashes.

The paper offers the following recommendations to curb farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria. The government at all levels

should legislate against the open grazing of cows across the country. The Nigerian government should also see cattle rearing as a profession or business enterprise that can generate employment opportunities for the citizenry and income for the government. Hence, the establishment of grazing reserve areas and ranches for cattle rearing should be urgently embarked upon. The Federal Government of Nigeria should ensure the implementation of the National Livestock Transformation Plan to modernise cattle rearing and production. Part of the plan is the establishment of cattle farming companies/industries for the production of dairies and meat in large quantities. This can be achieved by creating an enabling environment for foreign investors and other stakeholders to establish cattle farming industries across Nigeria, thereby, providing job opportunities for the unemployed. The southern state governments should be cautioned against thwarting the Federal Government's effort to curb farmer-herder clashes by not making lands available for the creation of Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) in their respective states. The Nigerian government should also create agencies for animal welfare that will be in charge of curbing all forms of cruelty and maltreatment towards cattle in Nigeria. Hence, allowing cows to roam about the Nigerian streets and highway roads, exposing cows to eat poisonous grasses/food on farmlands and other untold hardships towards cows should be stopped. Promoters and perpetrators of conflicts, violent clashes, and criminal acts among the farmers and herders should be prosecuted without delay. The Nigerian judiciary system should handle cases involving farmer-herder clashes with fairness, justice, and equity. Nigerian religious leaders and preachers, including missionaries, pastors, and imams, across the country should use their pulpits to preach peace, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence among the Christian farmers and Fulani Muslim herders, in particular, and among the adherents of different faiths, in general. The Nigerian government should compensate herders for cattle rustling and farmers for the destruction of crops/farmlands and provide adequate security for both groups. Adhering to Islamic prescriptions for cattle rearing and refraining from criminal acts by Fulani Muslim herders would go a long way in restoring peaceful co-existence among farmers and herders across the country.

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Islamic/Arabic Names and their Implications for Cultural Identity in Ghana

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Abstract

This paper examines the implications of Islamic-naming and cultural identity from a multi-cultural perspective, using some Ghanaian experiences. This exploration is rooted in the contemporary social and religious transformation in the Ghanaian, particularly, Muslim societies. The activities of Muslim revivalists, who have sought to Islamise African societies at the expense of the indigenous culture and heritage, question the future of the African traditional worldview and heritage. More so, the rapid spread of Western education is accelerating the pace of globalisation, leading to further Westernisation of Muslim societies. Undoubtedly, the youth of today see themselves, more than ever before, as part of a new world order that is at variance with their indigenous traditions and values. This study explores how a Muslim could maintain an

Islamic identity without an Arabic name, the cultural value of a name, and the role of cultural diversity with respect to names in Islam. Analysis of scriptural texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, historical sources, and oral interviews revealed that the philosophy and process of naming new-born children in Ghanaian, particularly, Akan settings are not different from Islamic processes and motives of naming. The study also argues that the supposed "Islamic" names are more of Arabised racial identities which pre-date the advent of Islam. Thus, we conclude that, technically, "Islamic" names do not necessarily need to be in Arabic, but even when they do, they may still portray deep indigenous philosophical and religious beliefs.

Keywords

Arab/Islamic names, Christianity, culture, Ghana, identity, Islam values

Introduction

Until recently, scholars were not much interested in the study of names least to talk about their implications on African cultural identities. Many social scientists, for example, have, sometimes, even overlooked the implication of the names of people whose lives and heroic activities they studied.[1]

Interestingly, recent scholarship has shed new light on the fact that human beings are more than just 'names'[2]. The African continent offers a fascinating background that helps to understand that names carry more philosophical meaning apart from the fact that they evaluate nature and essence, and provide a string of relationship between the living and the dead.[3]

This study analyses Islamic/Arabic names and their implications for Ghanaian cultural identity. The focus on Islamic or

[1] S. Wilson, *The Means of Naming: A Social and Cultural History of Personal Naming in Western Europe* (London: Tylor & Francis, 1998), x.

[2] J.K. Hyde, *Literacy and its Uses: Studies on Late Medieval Italy* (Manchester: Manch. Univ. Press, 1993), 120; S. Mutunda, "Personal names in Lunda Cultural Milieu", *International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research*, 1/1 (2011), 14; T.J. Markey, "Crisis and Cognition in Onomastics", *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*30/3 (1982), 138; L. Adamic, *What's your Name?* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 72.

[3] B.O. Igboin,"An African Religious Discourse on Names and Identity", *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions*, 3/1 (2014), 26-40.

Arabic names has become necessary partly because of the wave of contemporary transformations that Ghanaian societies and, more particularly, Muslim societies are undergoing. The activities of Muslim revivalists who have sought to Islamise African societies at the expense of indigenous culture and heritage have put to question the future of the African traditional worldview and heritage. Moreso, the rapid spread of Western education is accelerating the pace of globalisation, leading to more Westernisation of Muslim societies. Undoubtedly, the contemporary youth, who see themselves as part of the external world, are losing allegiance for their indigenous traditions and values.

The study employs the decolonial theory with specific focus on religion and the identity politics. More importantly, Samuel Huntington's seminal work, wherein he demonstrated the resilience of religion in the identity politics, offers a useful basis for analysis. He argues that future wars will not only be fought on political grounds but on cultures, since religious identities will be the primary source of power contestations.[4]By exploring Arabic/Islamic encounters with African societies, it is possible to demonstrate how enduring African values and heritage are, and how Africans have succeeded in preserving their naming practices. This paper argues that while Western (Christian)and Islamic values have competed with African traditional values, their philosophical underpinnings in naming are not different from naming traditions in Africa.

The study is structured into five parts. The first part analyses the relevant literature in the discipline. This is followed by a section which analyses the Arabic and Islamic origin of the name, Ghana. Importantly, the study further delves into the philosophy of naming in Ghanaian societies and ends with the conclusion.

Literature Review

Contemporary scholarly works have been examining the place of African identity in public life. This question has become relevant because the African identity has become a subject of manipulation by external forces. For centuries, the African continent had

[4]Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 183;J.B. Yusuf & H.A. Abdulsalam,"Time, Knowledge, and the Clash of Civilisations: An Islamic Approach", *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 1/1 (2011),51-53.

experienced activities of Arab invaders with their push for Islamic conversion or *da'wah* and its implications on the African heritage. This was followed by European imperialism in the 19th century, which also came with its cultural baggage of Christianity. These developments have had an impact on African identities and cultures in diverse ways. While the implications of the activities of external forces on African politics and cultural heritage have received considerable attention,[5] there has been marginal interest in the practice of naming, especially the use of Arab/Islamic names and their implications for the African cultural heritage.

This study focuses on Ghana, which offers the prospect for revealing the impact of Arabic or Islamic names on African identities. The point is that Africans have been subjugated by foreign empires. This experience of imperialism began with the Arab conquest of parts of Africa and the associated extensive trading activities. This was followed by the partitioning and colonisation of Africa by Europe in the 19th century. As an outcome of these forms of imperialism, it has been frequently argued that Africans have come under cultural onslaught.

The cultural implications of imperialism in Africa have been repeatedly amplified by scholars who use the decolonial theory. The same theory is used in this study with a focus on religion and identity politics. It analyses the structures of the age-old Eurocentric epistemological tradition, its supposed universality, and the superiority of Western culture. This brings to focus the perspective introduced by Samuel Huntington in his seminal work on the resilience of religion in the identity politics of the post-coldwar period[6] and argues that future wars will not only be fought on political grounds but on the grounds of cultural and religious identities, which will be the primary source of power contestation.

For its operational definition of identity, this study borrows from Mary Bernstein, who argues that the term, "identity", describes diverse phenomena as in multi-culturalism, ethnicity, and race.[7] The focus of analysis on identity politics is limited to African languages, ethnicity, and indigenous names. It demonstrates that while external forces have undermined African cultures in diverse

[5]G.N. Uzoikwe, 'European Partition of Africa. An Overview'. In A. Adu Boahen (ed.), *UNESCO General History of Africa*, vol 8(1985). Abriged edition.

[6]S. P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations", Foreign Affairs, 72/5 (1993), 22-49; S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of the World Order* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 180-183.

[7]Mary Bernstein, "Identity Politics", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31 (2005), 47-74.

ways, it is becoming clear that there has been an increasing cultural re-awakening among Africans in recent times. Identity politics has been ongoing in Africa and the continent has been in cultural conflict with external forces over centuries prior to the decolonial and Huntington prognoses. The Arab conquest of Africa and the extensive trade networks they created, coupled with the European partitioning and subsequent colonisation of the same continent, have been enduring in reshaping the African political institutions and cultural values.

The foregoing analyses by previous scholars demonstrate that Africa is not only undergoing identity crises but is also experiencing a decline of its heritage in world politics on account of several factors. From the perspective of WaThiong'o, the African identity crisis cannot be understood in isolation without analysing the social and political forces which have and are deconstructing the uniqueness of the continent's heritage.[8] Central to his argument is the point that imperialism and neo-colonialism are reconfiguring the African continent with external cultural values which stand in contrast with the African reality.[9]The Berlin Conference of 1884 not only partitioned Africa among specific European countries but also resulted in the exportation of different European languages such as English, French, and Portuguese into Africa. The implication is that the imperial languages became the national languages in Africa and would, subsequently, reconfigure African identities in diverse ways.[10] Beside the dominance of European languages collectively serving in many cases as *lingua franca* in Africa, imperialism has equally introduced foreign religions which have virtually undermined the traditional African cosmic view.

Naude argues that the Western tradition of thought is hegemonic within the world system which not only defines concepts (thoughts) for the rest of the world but forcefully imposes its values.[11] Terms such as religion, democracy, human rights, and feminism were conceptualised in the Western context and imposed on the world as the ultimate truth without regard to the cultural

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[8]WaThiong'o, *De-colonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981); L. G. Kuusisto, et-al., "De-colonising Religious Education Curriculum", *Journal of Religious Education,* 43/1 (2021); Naude Piet, Decolonising Knowledge: Can Ubuntu Ethics Save Us from Coloniality? *Journal of Business Ethics,* 159/1 (Sept. 2019), 23-37

[9]WaThiong'o, ibid.

[10] V.Y. Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

[11]Piet, ibid, 23-37.

diversity of African communities. Western coloniality introduced what is termed as modernity in which the non-Western thought has been inferiorise and subalternised. Uzoikwe argues that Western colonialism was perpetrated in Africa, and among other arguments, it was affirmed that the black race needs to be civilised along Euro-Christian religious values.[12]

While Western imperialism was the mainstay of its might, European civilisation and ideas were boosted by the instrumentalisation of Christianity.[13] WaThiong'o likens the metaphor of the impact of the European-backed religion on the African identity with a 'master armed with the bible and sword.' By this, he meant that imperialism controls the African economy, politics, and cultures. There was no distinction between the roles of colonial administrators and traders, on the one hand, and Christian missionaries in the propagation of European political and cultural hegemony in Africa, on the other. Beyond the fact that these diverse groups share a common agenda to dominate the continent, they also aim to impose their culture and cosmic view on the African continent. From the perspective of Mbiti, the rationale behind Western imperialism in Africa cannot largely be divorced from the Christian missionaries' agenda.[14] However, while many scholars have analysed the Western imperialism in Africa, the Arab factor in the African identity crisis is yet to be heard. Quite revealing, most of the analyses tend to overlook the Arab/Islamic factor in the challenge equation of the African identity crisis.

There has been a raging debate about whether Arabic can be classified among indigenous African languages. This view has attracted mixed reactions partly because the influence of the Arabic language is ubiquitous in Africa. Hunwick refers to Arabic as the Latin of Africa because of its ubiquity in Africa as Latin was in Europe in the medieval era.[15] On the other hand, Stewart[16] and Robinson[17] argue that the Arabic language has been Africanised

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[12]Uzoikwe, ibid; see also: J. B. Yusuf, Dupuis' discourse on Asante in the 19th Century: An evaluation of the Islamic themes in the *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (1824). In E. Abakah & S. Osei-Kwarteng, eds. *The Asante World* (pp.129-150). (London: Routledge, 2021), 133;

[13]Mudimbe,ibid.

[14]John Mbiti, *African Philosophy and Religion*(Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1969).

[15]John O. Hunwick,"West Africa and the Arabic Language", *Sudanic Africa*, 15 (2004), 133-144; David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*(New York. CUP, 2004).

[16]Frances Stewart, ed., *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

[17]M.D. Robinson, Personality as Performance: Categorization Tendencies and their Correlates, Current Directions in Psychological Science, *13*/3. (2004), 127-129.

and given strong roots in the continent. Consequently, Arabic provided Africa with the literacy and the first documented history. They made reference to Muslim historians documenting the historical records of ancient Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, among others. Thus, without Arabic, Africa would have been referred to as a dark continent.

The argument further becomes complex as Arabic is classified as part of the Afro-Asian languages since it is a widely spoken language after indigenous African languages. Despite its origin in the Middle East, Arabic is the official language of North Africa and although it is unofficial in Africa south of the Sahara, it is spoken by many people in this sub-region. The significance of Arabic in Africa cannot be discussed without analysing its religious relevance in Muslim life.

Islam attaches considerable religious significance to the use of the Arabic language in diverse ways. A new convert is expected to pronounce his/her testimony of faith in Arabic. One is equally expected to learn the rudiment of the Qur'an in Arabic when undertaking daily prayers.[18]Even more, the Qur'an, which is the sacred text of Muslims, is written in Arabic and the adherents of the religion are encouraged to recite it not only for spiritual guidance but to gain salvation in the hereafter. Apparently, in a tradition attributed to Prophet Muhammad, he is quoted to have implored Muslims to "love the Arabs for three reasons: because I [the Prophet] am Arab; the Qur'an is Arabic; and the tongue of the people of paradise is Arabic."[19]These diverse claims come with consequence as the followers of Islam are motivated to learn, read, and understand the holy book in Arabic. The Arabic language, thus, becomes a central and integral part of the Muslim's quest for religious identity.

Arabic, partially, became a dominant language in Africa as an outcome of the impact of Islamisation of some groups. The Islamisation of Africa was the result mainly of trade and the Arab/Muslim political interests which culminated in military conquests.[20]While Islamisation resulted in the Arabisation of North Africa, Africans south of the Sahara, largely, embraced the wave of Islam but retained their indigenous languages. In terms of numbers, North Africa has become an overwhelmingly Muslim

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[18] David Waines, *Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

[19]M.M. Ibn Manzŭr, *Lisān al-Arab,* vol.1. (Beirŭt, DārLisān al-Arab, 1994), 7

[20]Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development from 8th to the 20thCentury* (London: Edward Arnold,1982).

majority region with 85% of the population being Arabic-speaking natives.[21] On the contrary, as at 2010, the population of Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa was 29.6%.[22] Therefore, West Africa provides an interesting basis for analysis. Per the Pew result of 2010, the Muslim population in West Africa is 55.6%.[23] This has implications for the Arabic language in terms of religious life. The resilience of Islam manifests in the impact of Arab culture on the adherents of the religion. Thus, Africans not only embraced Islam but the Arab culture. One of the aspects in which Islamic culture is deeply rooted in Africa is Arabic names. The extent to which Arabic names are Islamic has been a matter of controversy. Many conservative Muslims may view Arabic names as Islamic while liberal Muslims may think otherwise.

Africa represents a unique continent in which names not only convey deep religious meanings but portray political events or the life people encounter. Unsurprisingly, scholarly works have argued that Africans are incurably and notoriously religious.[24] The extent to which these statements find favour in African life can partly be seen in the manner in which children are named. According to Igboin, African names evaluate nature and essence as well as provide a string of relationship between the living and the dead.[25] It is now becoming clear that African names are more than a mere designation of individuals but have spiritual, psychological, and physical significance. For Mbiti, African names are tied with circumstances of childbirth, including political and social issues which may have a bearing on the personality of the parents.[26]

Notwithstanding the fact that African names have received a marginal interest in recent scholarships, the traditional names of the Akan people have attracted some attention in sociolinguistic and anthropological perspectives. Agyekum examines Akan personal names from linguistic and anthropological perspectives and upholds that naming is an essential aspect of the Akan society

[21]https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-sub-saharan-africa/, 22/10/2022

[22]https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-sub-saharan-africa/,22/10/2022

[23]https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-sub-saharan-africa/, 22/10/2022

[24]J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989), 1; E.G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Clowes & Sons, 1962), 9.

[25]Igboin, ibid, 26-44.

[26]Mbiti, ibid.

of Ghana[27] and that names are not "arbitrary labels but socio-cultural tags that have socio-cultural functions and meanings." He surveyed different categories of personal names, including names based on day of birth, names based on family belonging, and names based on circumstances of birth.

Also, Beidelman[28] found in his study of the Kaguru of Tanzania that the Bono subset of the Akan of Ghana assigns similar importance to personal names. On the other hand, Dakubu[29] looks at the personal names and naming practices of the Dagomba ethnic group of northern Ghana. She indicates that the Dagomba are among the ethnic groups in the popularly Muslim north where personal names are mainly derived from Arabic. Among the Dagomba people, the religious circumstance of naming is either indigenous (i.e. traditional) or Arabic (i.e. Muslim), with the latter often superseding the former. On Dagomba names, Abdulai Asuro's[30] PhD thesis is very instructive. However, he looks at the Dagomba names in the context of the Dagbani tradition. The indigenous categorisation of names reflects socio-linguistic and historical uniqueness.[31]

Like Agyekum, Dakubu also considers the origin of Dagomba names from a linguistic perspective. Among the Gur-speaking people of northern Ghana, written resources on names are rarely available.[32] For the Tallensi, Meyer Fortes[33] has done a detailed study but focused mainly on the traditional names of the Tallensi. Ansu-Kyeremeh[34] also gives descriptive accounts of many interactive or communication functions of the personal names of the Bono. Undoubtedly, from a non-Western perspective, personal names are often connected with social status or may have cosmic

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[27] K. Agyekum, "Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names", *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 15/2 (2006), 206

[28] T.O. Beidelman, "Kaguru Names and Naming", *Journal of Anthropological Research*,30/4 (1974), 281-293.

[29]M.E.K. Dakubu, "Personal Names of the Dagomba", *Research Review (New Series)*, 16/2 (2000),

[30]Abdulai S. Asuro, "Names That Prick: Royal Praise Names in Dagbon, Northern Ghana", UMI Dissertation, 2008

[31]Dakubu, ibid, 53

[32]Dakubu, ibid, 53

[33] M. Fortes, "Names Among the Tallensi of the Gold Coast". In J. Lukas, ed. *Afrikanistische Studien, Diedrich Westermann Zum 80: Geburtstag Gewidment*(Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955), 337-49

[34]K. Ansu-kyeremeh, "Communicating *Nominatim*: Some Social Aspects of Bono Personal Names", *Research Review* [New Series], 16/2 (2000).

significance and religious implications, or, sometimes, take on gender dimensions.[35]

Ansu-Kyeremeh, however, sets the stage by questioning the view that 'there is nothing in a name' and contends that personal names buttress human interactions with the world and their environment as a means for fostering human communication.[36] Awedoba[37] reviews how Kasem personal names communicate within the linguistic nomenclature of the Kasena people. He studied the "collocational patterns" of Kasem names and their relevance as "gender determiners."[38] Yet, he also focused on the linguistic aspects alone. Kruger[39] also reflects on some personal names of the Bulsa; yet, apart from the fact that he dwelt principally on traditional names, he also treated these names in a limited space.[40]Other limited studies have been conducted on the personal names used by some other ethnic groups in Ghana including the Builsa,[41] the Mossi,[42] the Talni,[43] the Bimoba,[44] and other Ghanaian linguistic groups whose settlements overlap into neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso[45] and Togo.[46] However, aside from the possible concentration of the latter category of research on the traditional or linguistic components alone, the findings are not presented in a language that is accessible to English readers.

This study revisits the debate on Islamic/Arabic names by offering analyses on the Ghanaian context. Much attention has been paid to various aspects of Islam in many parts of Ghana over the

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[35]Ansu-Kyeremeh, ibid,19

[36]Ansu-Kyeremeh, ibid,19

[37] A.K. Awedoba, "Kasem Norminal Genders and Names", *Research Review [New Series]*, 12/1&2 (1996).

[38]Awedoba,ibid, 8

[39]F. Kruger, *Ubergangsriten in Wandel* (Hobenschaftlam: Kommissionsverlag Klaus Renner, 1978). Citedby: Dakubu, ibid,53

[40]Dakubu, ibid,53

[41]S. Dinslage & S. Steinbrich, 'Ethnologische Symbolanalyse am Biespiel der Namengebung in Westafrika". In W. Krawiets, et-al. eds, *Sprache, Symbote und Symbolverwendung in Ethnologie, Kulturanthropologie, Religion und Recht.* Festschrift fur Rudiger Schott zum 65.Geburtstag (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1993), 3-50. Cited by: Dakubu, 53

[42]M. Houis, *Les NomsIndividuels chez les Mossi [Initiations et etudes africaines 17]* (Dakar: IFAN, 1963), See: Dakubu, ibid,53

[43]Dinslage & Steinbrich, ibid, cited by: Dakubu, ibid,53

[44]J. Zwernemann, "Personennamen der Moba", *Afrika und* Ubersee, 55 (1971/72). Cited by: Dakubu, ibid,53

[45]Dinslage & Steinbrich, ibid, Cited by: Dakubu, ibid,53

[46]R. Cornevm, *Les Bassari du Nord Togo* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levraul, 1962), 128-133. Cited by: Dakubu,ibid,53

years where considerable scholarship has been expended in various capacities by prominent scholars like Trimingham,[47]Clarke,[48] Hiskett,[49] Wilks,[50] Levtzion,[51] Adu Boahen,[52] Dumbe,[53] and Sey.[54] Yet, surprisingly, Islamic names, which are an aspect of the religious life of Muslims, have escaped attention. Moreso, the rapport between Islamic and indigenous names in Ghana has been overlooked in cultural, historical, or religious studies. Nonetheless, a study of the relationship between Islamic or Arabic names and the indigenous names shows visible interactions between the two, which this study elaborates.

Arabic and Islamic Origin of the Name Ghana

The name, "Ghana," cannot escape attention in a discussion on Arabic names.[55] While the successive colonial governments referred to what is now called Ghana as "Gold Coast Colony and Protectorate", the forefathers changed the name to "Ghana" prior to independence in 1957.[56] The question arising is what does the word, "Ghana," mean? The reason why the country was named "Ghana" is not clearly known. While its Arabic origin cannot be contested, it is contended that the country was named "Ghana" as a reflection of the then defunct empire of ancient Ghana, which was also very rich in Gold. Another narrative argues that since the word "Ghana" is derived from the Arabic word *Ghina* (wealth),[57]the country was named Ghana because of the abundant natural

[47]J.S. Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa* (Oxford, O.U.P., 1959)

[48]P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* (London, Edward Arnold, 1982).

[49]M. Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London, Longman, 1984)

[50]I. Wilks, *Islam in Ghana History: An Outline* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 1962); I. Wilks, "A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in Dagomba"', *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8 (1965); I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1975); and: I. Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana* (Cambridge: *C.U.P.*, 1989).

[51]N. 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).

[52]A. Adu Boahen., et-al., *Topic in West African History, 2nded* (London: Longman, 1986).

[53]Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*(Sweden: Södertörn University Press, 2013)

[54]M. Sey, 'Muslim Community in Ghana: The Contemporary Scene', *Jurnal Syariah*,5/2 (1997). J.B. Yusuf, "Muslim Leadership in Ghana: A Critical Study" (PhD thesis, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei, 2018).

[55]L.H. Ofosu-Appiah, "Ghana-An Historical Introduction". In *The Encyclopaedia Africana: Dictionary of African Biography,* 1 (New York: Reference Publications Inc., 1977), 167

[56]James K. Brukum, "The northern territories of the gold coast under British colonial rule, 1897-1956: A study in political change." PhD thesis, University of Toronto, Canada, 1997

[57] See: Imam Rashid, *An African Identity* (Accra: Media Graphics & Press, 2005)

resources it is endowed with.[58] Similarly, it has also been argued that some of the ethnic groups in Ghana migrated from ancient Ghana to their present-day locations.[59] Thus, the significance of naming is underscored here since it highlights the vision of the founding fathers of this country.

Briefly, Ghana is a small, virtually rectangular, country located in the south-western part of what the Arabs called *bilad-us-sudan* (land of the blacks). It is bordered by Ivory Coast in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east, and the Gulf of Guinea in the south. These were borders demarcated by the British during the partitioning of Africa which sometimes resulted in deadly encounters between the 'monarchs' and the Germans, settled intermittently with armed confrontations.[60] Consequently, the settlements of many ethnic groups living in Ghana overlap into neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Togo, and as far as the French Republic of Benin and Nigeria in the farther east.[61] Ghana is traditionally said to be inhabited by between forty-six[62] and fifty[63] linguistic groups. Official estimates quote more than fifty ethnic groups[64] and, by implication, a corresponding number of languages. Each of these groups has unique cultural elements that preserve its ethnic identity.

Ghana is a religiously pluralistic country. While Christianity commands the majority with 70%, Muslims represent 20%, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census. There are other minority religious groups too.

Islam is said to have been introduced to Ghana between the 14th and the 16th centuries when a handful of Muslim traders of Mande origin entered Begho in what is Bono Region today to

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[58] Abdul R. Hussain, *Our African Identity*. Graphic Communications Groups, Accra, 2005

[59]Yunus Dumbe,"Transnational Contact and Muslim Orientation in Ghana" (PhD dissertation submitted to the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, 2009)

[60]K. Adu-Boahen, "Pawns of Contesting Imperialists: Nkuransa in the Anglo-Asante Rivalry in Northwestern Ghana, 1874-1900", *Journal of Philosophy and Culture* 3/2 (2006), 59; T. Mustapha, 'A Historiographical Study of Four Works of al-Hajj 'Umar ibn Abi Bakr of Kete-Krachi (Ca 1850-1934)" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1970), 44&46

[61]N. Gbegble, "Spectrographic Analysis of Ewe Vowels", *Papers in Applied Linguistics* (University of Winneba) 1 (2006),94-5;

[62]Appiah, ibid, 15

[63] R.A. Akpanglo-Nartey, "Gender Effect on Vowel Quality: A Case Study of Ghanaian English", *Canadian Journal on Scientific and Industrial Research*, 3/3 (2011), 142

[64]National Commission on Culture, "The Cultural Policy of Ghana" (2004), 7.retrieved from: http://www.artsinafrica.com/uploads/2011/04/ghana.pdf, 29/06/2014.

transact trade in Kola and gold.[65] There followed later a wave of migrations also seemingly underpinned by trade, but this time, backed by armed altercations which led to the creation of cultural groups like Gonja and their neighbours.[66] By the close of the 19th century, Islam was present in all the regions of today's Ghana.

Conceptual Limitations

1. Culture

Before explaining the term, "identity", we must first understand the amorphous term, "culture". However, as Levi Strauss observes, scientific explanations do not always reduce the complex to simple. Indeed, sometimes, it rather substitutes intelligible processes with less intelligible ones.[67] This implies that in defining a term, it is possible to create more complexities than what already exists. Thus, we will give modest explanations of the term "culture" to avoid further complication. Matthew Arnold defines culture as "the best that has been known and said in the world" and "the history of the human spirit."[68] However, our "culture" is the "integrated pattern of human behaviour" often encapsulated as "a way of life of man."[69] This indicates that man is at the centre of culture. This then justifies another definition of culture as "the man-made part of the human environment."[70] Thus, Saville-Troike's definition of man as "a cultural animal" is noteworthy.[71]This is because every human being is a product of his own culture in some way. This is because individual behaviours and values, among others, are defined along

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[65] Clarke, ibid, 105; Levtzion, ibid, 51 ff; R.A. Silverman & D. Owusu-Ansah, "The Presence of Islam Among the Akan of Ghana: A Bibliographical Essay", *History in Africa*,16 (1989), 332

[66]Hiskett, 120&122; N. J. K. Brukum, "Traditional Constitutions and Succession Disputes in the Northern Region, Ghana", *WOPAG: Working Papers on Ghana: Historical and Contemporary Studies* 4 (2004), 2; E.F. Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba People* (Accra: Government Printing Office, 1931); J.A. Braimah and J. Goody, *Salaga: The Struggle for Power* (London: Longmans, 1967); J.A. Braimah, *The Founding of the Gonja Empire* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 1972); J.A. Braimah, H.H. Tomlinson, and O. Amankwatia, "History and Traditions of the Gonja", *African Occasional Paper* 6 (1997); D.H. Jones, "Jakpa and the Foundation of Gonja", *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 11 (1962), 1-28; K.B. Dickson, *A Historical Geography of Ghana* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1969), 31

[67] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 1

[68]U.F. Abd-Allah, *Islam and the Cultural Imperative* (Chicago: Nawawi Foundation, 2004), 3

[69]*Colliers Encyclopedia,* 7 (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 560. Cited by: A.A.B. Philips, *The Clash of Civilizations: An Islam View* (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah, 2007), 9

[70]Philips, ibid, 10

[71] M. Saville-Troike, *A Guide to Culture in the Classroom* (Rosslyn, Virginia: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1978), 3

cultural orientations.[72] Culture is an amalgam of human values, i.e., beliefs, morality, expectations, skills, and knowledge integrated into blueprint customs.[73] For Abd-Allah, culture could be deemed to be "'successful' when it influences an operative identity."[74] What then is 'identity'?

2. *Cultural identity*

After explaining "culture" as a human mechanism for self-identity, it appears that "cultural identity" is already carved out as a process of expressing one's personality through a variety of key determinants including race, nationality, ethnicity or tribal affiliation, social class, etc. However, the term, "identity," itself is problematic. According to Hall, "identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think."[75] Hall observes that "identity" should be conceived as a continuous process of "production" which never ends and occurs from within not from without, instead of being considered as a completed process.[76] Cultural identity could, therefore, be conceived in two ways.[77] One, it could be considered as single mutually shared values defining "'one's true self' hiding inside the many other'" synthetically imposed "selves" which a group with common history and ancestry associates itself with.[78] As an elastic term, cultural identity manifests the shared past experiences and values which provide a stable and continuous framework for understanding others' values underneath changing cultural history.[79] On the other hand, cultural identity could also be conceived of in terms of what enables people to establish what they really are or have become.[80] Conceptualising "cultural identity" is, therefore, to define the shared uniqueness of "being" and "becoming" which are *sine qua non* to understanding the past, present, and future realities of culture. This dimension of identity jostles for space for self-actualisation independent of any well-defined external cultural yardstick although, as Stuart rightly argues, this identity process is also "… subject to the continuous

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[72] Saville-Troike, ibid, 3

[73] Abd-Allah, ibid, 3

[74] Abd-Allah, ibid.

[75] S. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In J. Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222.

[76] Hall, ibid, 222

[77] Hall, ibid, 223

[78] Hall, ibid, 223

[79] Hall, ibid, 223

[80] Hall, ibid, 225

'play' of history, culture and power" and is "transformational" rather than fixed and eternal.[81] Aside from Arab or Islamic values, the Ghanaian Muslim cultural worldview, as a people operating in a multi-cultural space, is shaped by two forces, Western culture and traditional values. The former affects mostly the educated and/or urbanised minorities while the latter, sometimes impacting on both, affects mostly the uneducated and mainly rural folks.

3. Name

A name is an important means of identification. However, it is more than mere identification. Writing about names among the Tallensi of northern Ghana, Meyer Fortes defined a name as "… a document epitomsing personal experiences, historical happenings, attitudes to life, and cultural ideas and values."[82] This implies that names speak volumes about peoples' personalities and cultural associations. This is why the Akan people have a proverb that *Bo wo dzin na mekyere wo bea a ifir!* Literally, "tell me your name and I will show you where you come from." They are a means of cultural belonging and communal experience. The meaning of the name a person bears has many implications. From the above proverb, a name enables people to identify others' cultural belonging. In some cultures, names, especially, surnames, establish a bond of solidarity between bearers of the same name. Others regard bearers of the same family names as descendants of the same ancestor and, hence, entertain certain sympathy for them.[83] The implication of this bond or affinity is that a person could gain favours from influential tribesmen or name-sakes. It could also enable one to find a dwelling place in a locality.[84] Thus, a name is an essential tool not only for cultural identity but the essence of life, happiness. Sociologically, one's name could affect one's behaviour or determine one's success. For example, Figlio intimates that boys given female names are 8% more likely to be low-income earners than those with masculine names.[85]

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[81] Hall, ibid, 225

[82] Fortes, ibid, 349

[83] R. Jones, *Chinese names: The use and meanings of Chinese surnames and personal names in Singapore and Malaysia* (Malaysia: Pelanduk Pub., 1989), 9

[84] Jones, ibid, 9

[85] D.N. Figlio, "Boys Named Sue: Disruptive Children and their Peers", *Education, Finance and Policy*,2/4 (2007), 384

Arabic Names as Islamic Cultural Identity and Cultural Diversity

In this section, we depend on textual resources of both the Qur'an and Hadith to make our analysis on what constitute Muslim names in Islam. Our initial analyses of scriptural texts demonstrate that it is difficult to say that there is something called Islamic names. This is because most of the names associated with Muslims pre-date the advent of Islam. Muhammad, the originator of Islam, had his name as such before he started the propagation of Islam. Similarly, his father's name is Abdullah (meaning, the Servant of Allah), and he was also born and bred in pre-lslamic Arabia. While there were no unique names associated with the people prior to the advent of Islam, certain names associated with wicked people in that period and the Qur'an were not adopted by the subsequent generations of Muslims to their children's identity. This, thus, underscores the fact that good names have become synonymous with positive character.

This notwithstanding, Muslims globally have adopted Arabic names as effective tools to preserving their religious identity. Most Muslims are often identified through Arabic names although there are some non-Muslims who bear some of these Arabic names. Our analyses do not show much difference between the names of Arab Christians and those of their Muslim counterparts. Thus, what we may call Islamic names are more of racial Arab identity. As illustrated, Muslim names are synonymous with Arabic names and Muslims are known worldwide for their use of Arabic names. This is akin to African Christians adoption of Euro-Greco names as Christian identity.

Therefore, names like Yahya (John), Ibrahim (Abraham), Maryam (Mary), and Sulayman (Solomon) could be identified easily even though, etymologically, they are the same names called differently by virtue of language and religion with deep roots in either Arabic (Qur'an) or English (Bible), respectively. This means that naming does more than labelling and concerns a group sharing common features, in this case, cultural or religious identities.

At the heart of all names lies the issue of identity and this is the point that Muslims hold on strongly to promote their religious identity, i.e., labelling their personhood in tune with their conscious religious belonging. Muslims are cautioned about what names to

give to their children in order to enhance their identity.[86] Thus, in Islam, a name (*al-Ism*) is supposed to connote the bearer's personality and is expected to have a positive impact on the individual. Consequently, the Prophet recommended names like Abdullah (Servant of Allah), Abdu-r-Rahman[87](Servant of the Compassionate), and Ibrahim (Abraham-regarded in the Muslim traditions as "the Father of the Prophets"). Such names are intended to make children morally responsible. In one hadith, the Prophet is quoted as saying: "On the *Day* of *Resurrection, you will* be *called* by *your names* and by *your father's names*, *so* give yourselves *good names*."[88] In another hadith, he said: "give names with good meanings."[89] Despite this antecedent, the early Muslim converts continued bearing their "traditional" names, whether Arab or non-Arab after conversion. The examples are replete among the first generation of the companions of Prophet Muhammad.

Apparently, there were companions who possessed Arabic names before conversion. Therefore, names like Abu Hurayrah ('father of a Kitten') which was once shortened as Abu Hirr by the Prophet[90] and Abu Bakr ('Father of young camel')[91]were all pre-Islamic names he never attempted to change or downgrade although, ethically, they did not promulgate any unique value. He, however, changed names with meanings that depicted bad qualities. For example, the name of Umar's daughter Asiyah('ill-mannered' or 'disobedient') was changed to Jamilah ('beautiful').[92] In a similar vein, the name of Zaynab was changed from Barrah ('righteous'), which the Prophet interpreted to imply having arrogated to herself the cachet of righteousness.[93]

Nonetheless, he never changed a name out of compulsion. For example, he asked a young man to change his name from *Hazn* ('trial' or 'hardship') to *Sah l*('ease of life') but the young-man refused saying that was the name his father gave him (*māanā bi-mughayyirin isman sammānīhi abī*: literally: "I will not change the name my father gave me")[94] and the Prophet did not insist. From

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[86] M.A. Qazi, *What's in a Muslim Name* (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1982), ii

[87]**Abu Dawŭd, *Sunnan*, 5, hadith 4949; Al-Tirmidhi, *Jami'*, 5, hadith 2833; & Ibn Majah, *Sunnan*, 5, hadith 3728; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih-al-Bukhari*, 8, hadith 6189.**

[88]*Abu DawudJami'*, h*adith* 4930.

[89]Imam Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*.

[90]**Al-Bukhari, *Sahih-al-Bukhari*, 8, chapter 111**

[91]These names are reminiscent of their individual tenderness towards those animals.

[92] Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, hadith 4301

[93]**Al-Bukhari, *Sahih-al-Bukhari*, 8, hadith 6192**

[94]**Al-Bukhari, *Sahih-al-Bukhari*, 8, hadith 6190**

the above, the bottom line is that a child should be given a name with a meaning that conveys either a blessing or pious quality. Thus, essentially, a name does not have to be in Arabic to fulfil this condition and people like Maria al-Qibtiyyah, the Egyptian slave who later got married to Prophet Muhammad, and Salman, the Persian architect of 'the Trench,' never changed their names during conversion.[95]

The Arabic name system consists of five parts: *kunya, ism, nasab, laqab,* and *nisba*.[96] *Kunya* is a honorific title name rarely used formally in addressing a person but often used in much the same sense as educated Ghanaians would use "Aunt" or "Uncle". Usually associated with one's first born, *Kunya* is used to indicate that a man or woman is the father (*Abu*) or mother (*Umm*) of a particular child.[97] Thus, "*Abu* Yusuf" has a first born called "Yusuf"; what the Akan will call "Ntsifu Papa" (Yusuf's father). Women prefix it with *Umm* (mother, e.g., Umm Yusuf). *Ism* is the personal name sometimes extended with a *laqab* (religious or descriptive suffix), *al-Din, al-Rahman*and*al-Rashid* (e.g., Muhi-d-Din and Abd-ur-Rahman or Harun-al-Rashid, among others). *Nasab* is the patronymic, in which case one's name could depict a detailed list of ancestors connected by *ibn, bin,* or*bint*. *Nisba* indicates a tribal, ethnic, or national belonging.[98] Hence, a person called "Abu"Abd-Allah Muḥammad ibn Isma'il ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mughirah ibn Bardizbah al-Ju'fi al-Bukhari"[99] has a detailed genealogy in his name. This was important in the tribal society of the ancient Arab for the purpose of identification and socio-political interaction.

From the multi-cultural perspective, however, the above person loses his indigenous cultural identity because "personal names are cultural constants."[100] In African indigenous societies of which Ghana is no exception, personal names serve as an important component of cultural identity[101] and portray a person's cultural belonging more than any other aspect of his personhood. Names

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[95]Of course, due to the influence of foreign languages (*lughaat al-ajnabiyyah*) on the Arabic language, some of these names are understood today from the cultural context of the Arabic language.

[96]B. Notzon & G. Nesom, "The Arabic Naming System", *ScienceEditor*28/1 (2005), 20

[97]Notzon & Nesom,ibid

[98]Notzon & Nesom,ibid

[99]The meaning of the above name could be rendered as follows: "Father of 'Abd-Allah who was Muḥammad, the son of Isma'il who was the son of Ibrahim, the son of al-Mughirah, the son of Bardizbah from the Ju'fa clan of the city of Bukhara."

[100] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 155

[101]S.M. Zawawi, *African Muslim Names: Images and Identities* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), xii

are connected not only to social identity and self-identity but may underlie the political background of a family.[102] People's names are not just the people themselves[103] but they depict the "linguistic, ethnic, social and cultural group affiliations of their bearers."[104] Furthermore, names show how members of particular cultural groups regard themselves[105] because people expose their cultural values, traditions, and important cultural events through names.[106] Thus, to change one's name is to change one's personal identity.

Islam perceives identity as a permanent feature of one's personhood granted by Allah and could be ethnicity, as in being a member of a particular tribe; nationality, as in being a citizen of a country; or race, as in originating from a particular continent. In Qur'an 49:13, Allah says:

> Oh mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) most righteous of you….

While the above verse largely demonstrates the significance of cultural diversity and identity in Islam, it is interesting to observe how Arab racial identity has rather defined Muslim names. The Qur'an largely underscores the relevance of cultural diversity, which is for people to acknowledge one another's cultural uniqueness. This makes the Islamic concept of culture a matter of inclusion rather than exclusion. This is because the cultural experience and world-view of a Muslim cannot be divorced from the background in which he or she lives.[107] This fundamental logic applies to naming, which is a defining characteristic of a person's cultural identity. However, the Islamic perspective of cultural diversity with regard to naming is difficult to understand. Indeed, from the beginning, Islam allowed indigenous expressions of cultural identity with its comprehensive corpus of law.

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[102] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 158; Alford, ibid, 29; P.M. Mohome, "Naming in Sesotho: Its Sociocultural and Linguistic Basis", *Names:* **A Journal of Onomastics,** 20/3 (1972), 171

[103] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 154-5; Mutunda, ibid, 12-22; Alford, ibid, 29; Mohome, ibid, 171

[104] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 159

[105] Zawawi, ibid, 1.

[106] Mutunda, ibid, 14-15

[107] S. Yasmeen, *Understanding Muslim Identities: From Perceived Relative Exclusion to Inclusion* (Australia: University of Western Australia, 2008), 21

Consequently, it showed itself to be friendly to indigenous cultures. Faruq Abd-Allah expressed this in the following:

> In China, Islam looked Chinese; in Mali, it looked African. Sustained cultural relevance to distinct peoples, diverse places, and different times underlay Islam's long success as a global civilization.[108]

Islam accustomed itself to indigenous life while vigorously and dynamically engaging and nurturing stable Muslim identities. This has enabled Muslims to fuse deeply into indigenous cultures as well as identify with and make groundbreaking contributions to Islam. This made the assimilation of Islamic culture easier. Nonetheless, some Muslims have also emphasised Arabic names as a requirement for religious identity in Islam.[109] Thus, Arabic names, also known as Islamic names, have been a catalyst for promoting Islamic identity. The Qur'anic understanding, however, seems to differ, considering the fact that the message of Islam was in Arabic as its recipient was an Arab. It says:

> Had We sent this as a Qur'an (in a language) other than Arabic, they would have said: Why are its verses not explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger) an Arab?'… (Qur'an 41:44).

The above verse makes it clear that the Arabic language was the backbone of the message of Islam because it was first received by Arabs whose culture and language were Arabic. It also emphasises that:

> And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an [oh Muhammad!], that you may warn the mother city [Makkah] and those around it, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt; …(Qur'an 42:7). Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand (43:3, 12:2). And We make (this

[108] Abd-Allah, ibid, 1

[109]Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *What is "Islamic" culture? An Introduction to the Relationship between Islam and Cultural Diversity* (Minna, Niger State, Nigeria: Islamic Education Trust, 2009), See part II

> Scripture) easy in your tongue (O Muhammad) only so that you may bear good tidings with it to the righteous and warn (with it a) people most hostile (Qur'an 19:97).

The first verse (42:7) implies that the message was not meant for only Arabs but, as well, the surrounding nations. It is, thus, clear that Islam actually began life in its Arabic embryo in unity predisposed naturally to diversity. Yet, epistemologically, naming and cultural diversity in Islam are 'a theoretical and practical dilemma'[110] because it leads Muslims to a situation with difficult choices. Muslims worldwide are considered as a single community of faithful servants of God (*ummatanwahidah*). Despite this onehood, the *ummah* is also conceived of as one of the most diverse entities known to humanity in terms of its approach to culture and civilisation.[111] For Hossein Nasr, 'Islam's refusal to reduce this unity-in-diversity to mere uniformity, far from weakening the faith, has been a major cause of its strength through the ages.'[112] The motivation to understand people's cultures in order to set a platform for operationalising the Islamic worldview of cultural diversity is evident in the prophetic *sunnah* that instils respect for other people's cultures.[113]

Islam's tolerance of and respect for indigenous cultures is reflected in many of the prophetic customs (*sunan*), which borrowed from some "acceptable pre-Islamic Arab cultural norms."[114] For example, although Hajj was instituted by Prophet Ibrahim, its relics were preserved for Muslims by the pre-Islamic Arabs, while practices like developing beard, wearing *jalabiya* and turban, among many others, were retained from the pre-Islamic Arab culture. In many of the lands Muslims occupied, no cultural artefact was destroyed and the ancient cultural monuments of today's Islamic Republic of Egypt, including the pyramids and the Great Sphinx (*Abu-l-Haul*), are classic examples. Indeed, the Islamic law encourages Muslims to obey sound cultural norms. These acceptable indigenous cultural norms are known as *urf* (whether verbal [*urfqawlī*] or behavioural [*urffi'lī*]). *Urf* is a cultural norm (custom) which does not contradict a sound Islamic principle. The

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[110]A.A. Said & M. Sharify-Funk, eds.,*Cultural Diversity and Islam*(Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2003), 33

[111]Yusuf & Abdulsalam, ibid, 52

[112]Said & Sharify-Funk, ibid, 33

[113] Abd-Allah, ibid, 4

[114]Abd-Allah, ibid, 4.

importance of customs for Muslims is evident in the *shari'ah*maxim that "Custom is the basis of judgement" (*Al-'ādahmuḥakkamah*)[115] based on Abdullah ibn Mas'ud's view that "what the Muslims deem to be good is good in the eyes of God."[116]Explaining this metaphor, Hashim Kamali indicates that, when a matter is not regulated by a contract, its customary rule applies.[117] Islam's attitude towards indigenous cultural identity was so robust that the Madinan legal luminary, Imam Malik, specialised in the indigenous practices of Madinah conventionally known as *amal* which constituted much of the first known corpus of Islamic law, *al-Muwatta'*.[118]*Amal* refers to a:

> … 'Well-established precedent' (*sunnamadiya*) [i.e. confirmed custom] or 'ancient practice' *(amrkaddim)* … [which] partly reflects the actual custom of the local community, but it also contains a theoretical or ideal element so that it comes to mean normative *sunna,* the usage as it ought to be.[119]

Imam Malik assumed that since the Prophet developed Islam into a full-fledged cultural society in Madinah and the fact that all "un-Islamic" practices in Madinah were abolished by the time of his death, any cultural norm which remained necessarily acquired a prophetic sanction.[120]However, *amal* expresses a cultural value which never really entailed the presence of a definite report to the effect that the prophet, in his own words (*qaul*), action (*fi'l*), or tacit approval (*taqrīr*) confirmed such practices.[121] The approval of *amal* by the *fuqahā'*(Muslim jurists)and its continued survival and promotion in Islamic lore attest to the fact that Islam traditionally acknowledges indigenous culture, diversity, and identity in all their ramifications.

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[115]Mustafa, D.A., et-al., Islamic Economics and the Relevance of *al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah*. *SAGE Open*, 6/3 (2016), 4

[116]M.H. Kamali, *Qawa'id al-fiqh: The Legal Maxims of Islamic law* (United Kingdom: Association of Muslim Lawyers, 2007), 3.

[117]Kamali, ibid, 3

[118]Y. Dutton, *The Origins of Islamic La w: The Qur 'an, the Muwatta' and Madinan 'Amal* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999).

[119] J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (New York: O.U.P., 1982), 30

[120]Dutton, ibid, 180

[121]Schacht, ibid, 33

In spite of the above, once again, there is a dilemma in non-Arab Muslims attempting to maintain an indigenous cultural identity through names. Generally, the issue of non-Arab Muslims attempting to maintain non-Arabic names raises problems. This hinges on the issues of whether to maintain an Arabic name or accept a traditional name in tune with their indigenous cultural identity. Essentially, a non-Arab could ordinarily express an identity through an indigenous name but with an Arabic component to make it "Islamic." This phenomenon, sometimes, has implications for *da'wah* because loss of indigenous identity could lead to "alienation and the loss of important da'wah opportunities between new Muslims and the community they no longer identify with."[122] Many Ghanaian foreigner Muslims usually lived in isolated suburbs called *Zongos*,[123] which, of late, have been heavily stigmatised due to concerns about "Islamic names in crimes."[124] Apparently, Arabic is ranked superior to all languages. Referring to a tradition, Ibn Manzūr, the author of perhaps the most popular dictionary of the Arabic language, makes the Arabic linguistic culture *primus inter pares*: "love the Arabs for three reasons: because I [the Prophet] am Arab; the Qur'an is Arabic; and the tongue of the people of paradise is Arabic."[125] Yet, the Qur'an says:

> And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues [languages] and colours. Verily, in that are indeed signs for those who possess knowledge (Qur'an 30:22).

For Ibn Manzūr, however, the revelation of the Qur'an in Arabic and Allah making it a language of paradise makes the Arabic language superior to all languages,[126] a general view of all Muslims.[127] Research indicates that, in Iran, "most Arab Muslims,

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[122] Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, ibid, see part II.

[123] E. Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo: The Transformation of Ethnic Identities in Ghana* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1978), 67; J. Middleton, '"[Review of the book *People of the Zongo: The transformation of ethnic identities in Ghana*, by E. Schildkrout]", *African Affairs,* 79 (1980), 131

[124] J.B. Yusuf, "Contraception and Sexual and Reproductive Awareness among Ghanaian Muslim Youth: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects for Positive Development", *SAGE Open*, 4/3 (2014), 6

[125]M.M. Ibn Manz**ŭ**r, *Lis**ā**n al-Arab,* vol.1. (Beir**ŭ**t, D**ā**rLis**ā**n al-Arab, 1994), 7

[126] Ibn Manz**ŭ**r, 7; F. Esack, *The Qur'an: A User's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 16

[127] A. Farghaly, "The Arabic Language, Arabic Linguistics and Arabic Computational Linguistics". In A. Farghaly (ed.). *Arabic Computational Linguistics* (Stanford, California: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 2010), 46

of all sects, see their Arab culture as superior to the culture of Iran."[128] The feeling of cultural superiority by Arabs over other cultures is summarised in the following extract:

> The Arab Empire lasted more than 750 years and covered an area from the Atlantic coast to India. The attitudes developed in the wake of such a cultural dominance are mirrored in what Western managers may experience as a sentiment of cultural superiority by the Arabs: they define themselves at the top of the cultural hierarchy and regard other cultures with lenience and suspicion, depending of [**sic**] the culture in focus,…. The Arabs' perception of cultural superiority contrasts strongly with the westerner's technological superiority on which they depend for their economic and political development.[129]

Nonetheless, existing research indicates that the feeling of cultural superiority is a major internal problem facing Muslims of all cultural divides and not Arabs alone. In Africa, Candice Goucher *etal.* intimate that the Mali empire from the time of Sunjata 'was cemented by the idea of Mande cultural superiority' and praise singers and oral historians helped to propagate this ideology.[130]Others indicate how the Hausa pilgrim-makers in the Chad expounded a legacy of cultural superiority over their less orthodox Muslim Chadian neighbours[131] and classified themselves as practitioners of a purer Islam.[132] Furthermore, St Croix reports that the Fulbe, who once ruled the Hausa states in the Sokoto Caliphate, had such a sense of supremacy that some of them would virtually die from it.[133] They believed that they alone "have the necessary ingredient in the blood which enables them to be

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[128] J. Zogby, E. Zogby, S.H. Zogby, J. Zogby, C. Bohnert, M. Calogero, J. Mazloom, & K. Scott, *Looking at Iran: How 20 Arab and Muslim Nations view Iran and its Politics* (Washington, DC: Zogby Research Services,2012),vi

[129] C.A. Solberg, "Culture and Industrial Buyer Behavior: The Arab Experience" (A Paper Presented at the 18th IMP Conference, Dijon, France, 2002), 7-8.

[130] C.L. Goucher, C.A. LeGuin, & L.A. Walton, *In the Balance: Themes in Global History*, vol. 1(Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 233

[131] J.A. Works, *Pilgrims in a Strange Land: Hausa Communities in Chad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); S. O'Brien, "Pilgrimage, Power, and Identity: The Role of the *Hajj* in the Lives of Nigerian Hausa *Bori* Adepts", *Africa Today*,46/3&4 (1999), 17

[132] Works, ibid, 136

[133] F.W. De St Croix, *The Fulani of northern Nigeria* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1945)

culturally and morally superior."[134] The inclination towards cultural superiority is so strong among Fulbe Muslims that, in spite of their deprived wealth statuses today,[135] their women have persisted in rejecting trading "in order to maintain and enhance the *daraja* (prestige, honour) of their people as a whole."[136]Thus, most of them rather rely on support from their husbands or the latter's families for their own upkeep and their matrimonial homes.[137] In southern Ghana, Islam is mostly, but erroneously, associated with the Hausa to the extent that one is able is identify oneself as a Muslim in the "true sense" if one is able to speak the Hausa language. Nonetheless, one's inability to speak Hausa is expressed by the clause: *karamu nnte Hausa* (literally, "a Muslim who does not speak the Hausa language"). This mentality has sustained the historical categorisation of the Muslims into Asante *Nkramo*, Fanti *Nkramo*, and Hausa *Nkramo* to distinguish those Muslims who are ethnically non-Hausa but are Asante and Fanti, respectively. As a matter of fact, non-northerner or non-Hausa Muslims are often tagged by the Hausa as *tubah* (converts), irrespective of whether one was born a Muslim or converted.

The above trend of cultural differentiations slams the door to cultural diversity, creates an impasse in the attempt to understand the Islamic perspective of cultural diversity, and leads a Muslim to a crossroad in attempting to express a sense of indigenous cultural belonging. In African societies, the perception of Arab cultural superiority led to a hybrid culture in which, while trying to maintain an Arabic identity, Muslims have sought an indigenous definition in a brilliant African perspective. This makes many wonder whether Arabic or "Islamic names" or even "Islamic dress" are not culturally biased and exclusive, and therefore ethnocentric, or even racist, as non-Arab converts to Islam are virtually made to adopt Arabic names and dress.[138]Thus, clearly, cultural diversity is a dilemma not in Islam itself but in the Muslim approach to Arabic and its culture. Today, diverse cultural groups exist in the *Ummah*, yet, there is no trust between them and this creates the problem of mutual acceptance of each other even though active effort to understand and tolerate each other occurs every day which,

[134]C. VerEeecke, "Muslim Women Traders of Northern Nigeria: Perspectives from the City of Yola", *Ethnology*, 32/3 (1993), 230

[135]Ver Eeecke, ibid

[136]Ver Eeecke, ibid

[137]Ver Eeecke, ibid

[138] Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, ibid, see part II

temporarily, prevents cultural conflicts but often comes with it an attempt to hold sway.[139]

Philosophy of Naming in Ghanaian Societies: An Islamic View

Naming is a cultural practice that is universal.[140] The rituals performed during naming ceremonies tend to vary from one ethnic group to another. In many ethnic groups, the child is not brought to the public view for up to eight days. This traditional ritual can actually be described as a scientific or medicinal way of ensuring that the baby adjusts to the temperature outside the mother's womb. To make sure the baby survives this, the mother has to be with it and she is discouraged from public exposure. Hence, on the day of naming (called different names by different linguistic groups, e.g., *D[z]into*: Akan, *Vihehedego*: Ewes, *Kpodziemo*: Gas, *Suuna* among mostly people who established contact with the Hausa) when the baby literally sees the sun for the first time, the baby's exit from its confined premise is known as "out-dooring." He or she is now regarded as *ɔhɔho* (visitor) who has to be welcomed either formally (through a flamboyant feasting ceremony of well-meaning dignitaries) or, among the lower-class, informally (through a simple ceremony involving few respected members of the extended family setup). The right over what name to give to a child is the couple's, particularly, the father, unless they are too young to make a sound judgment in selecting "a good name." Among the Akan, a baby is first given a basic name known as *Kra-D[z]in* (soul name), which derives from the day of birth.

Table 1: 'Soul names' of the Akan

Day in English/Akan	Corresponding name for boys	Corresponding name for girls
Sunday/*Kwasida*	*Kwesi/Akwasi*	*Esi*
Monday/*Dwowda*	*Kodwo/Kwadwo*	*Adwoa/Adwowa*
Tuesday/*Benada*	*Kobina/Kwabena/Akwabena*	*Abenaa/Aba*

[139]D. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country has now become the World's most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 70.
[140]Matunda, ibid, 16

Wednesday/*Wukuda/Wukwada*	*Kweku/Kwaku*	Ekua
Thursday/*Yawda/Yawada*	*Yaw*	*Yaa/Yaayaa*
Friday/*Fida*	*Kofi /Afi*	*Efua/Afia*
Saturday/*Memenda*	*Kwame/Kwamina*	*Ama*

Source: Authors' Construct

With the above, an Akan child automatically knows the day of his or her birth. Apart from the above, the sequence of birth or consecutive birth of a particular gender of baby could also be used to name a child. For example, an Akan woman who gives birth to three consecutive boys or girls will name the third as *Mensa* or *Mansa*, respectively. A fourth and fifth consecutive birth of the same gender of babies will be *Anan* and *Maanan* and *Anum*, respectively. Other Akan names like *Nsia* (sixth-born), *Esuon* (seventh-born), *Awɔtwe* (eighth-born), *Nkruma* (ninth-born), and *Badu/Baadu/Baduwa/Baaduwa* (tenth-born) are all based on the sequence of birth. Arabic names like *Awwal*, *Thāni*, *Thālith* (*Salisu*), *Rābi'u/Rābi'ah* (i.e., first, second, third, and fourth born, respectively), which become alternatives, also derive mainly from the sequence of birth although, sometimes, some of them are named after elders and not necessarily due to the sequence of birth. Thus, the cultural identity of great people like Kofi Anan and Kwame Nkrumah[141] are clear. While some of these names could be given to both boys and girls, others have gender differentials. Therefore, just like Islamic names, African baby names are not chosen anyhow but with much consideration.[142]

Curiously, the intensity of the Islamic revival in Ghana has largely contributed to the Muslims' adoption of Arabic names and identity than before. The revival heightens the significance of religion in Muslim life at the expense of the primordial ethnic identity emanating from indigenous names. Deriving its impetus from the transnational contact with the Arab or Muslim world, the revival has been boosted by mass education and modern technologies, which made religious resources accessible and, thus, transformed identities. Commenting on the transformation of Muslim identities in recent times, Eickelman[143] argues that mass education and mass communication are transforming Muslim

[141]A reliable history has it that the name of Ghana's first president is corrupted from *Ngɔruma* of the Nzima language.

[142]Mutunda, ibid, 15

[143] Dale F. Eickelman, "Inside the Islamic Reformation", *Wilson Quarterly*,22/1 (1998)

identities akin to the Protestant Christian Reformation fuelled by the printing revolution in Europe.[144] He illustrated how the demography of the Omani society was changing from few literate people to unprecedented educated elites. Revivalist movements have succeeded, through propagation and education, to homogenise Muslim identities devoid of any socio-ethnic influence. Both the Tijaniyya and Salafi revivalists from the West African sub-region and the Middle East have propagated or facilitated the adoption of Arabic names in Ghana than indigenous ones by Muslims.

The later move has succeeded primarily because indigenous names are often labelled as polytheistic (*shirk*) and consequently considered as "un-Islamic" to justify the adoption of Arabic names.[145] Sheikh Muhammed Mahey has attributed this to ignorance on the part of some '*Ulama* about aspects of our indigenous practices and names which conform to Islamic values. In his view, the dimension of ignorance is further reflected as some '*Ulama*give Arabic words to new-born babies.[146] Otherwise, sentences like *Naṣru-n-min-al-Lāh* ('Help from Allah' [Qur'an 61:13]), *Ba'du bi-l-Dīn* (part of 'Then what sways you [unbelievers] to deny the judgement' [Qur'an 95:7]), and *Alamnashrah* ('Did We not open…' [part of Qur'an 94:1]), and women's names like *Asra* (part of Qur'an 17:1 which means 'He took' [reminiscent of the prophet's journey to the heavens {*Al-Isra*) would not have been taken as names.[147]

In the past, many non-Arab Muslims have encountered a clash of cultural identity with Arabic names. In Ghana, this occurred in the wake of Christian missionary education. Ibrahim Mustapha illustrated that the colonial policy on education created more challenges for Muslim children who pursued Western formal education at the time. For instance, school pupils were forced to adopt Christian names which, just like Arabic names, were basically either Euro-Christian or English (Interview: Ibrahim Mustapha, 2019, Accra). This view was corroborated by a renowned Muslim scholar at the University of Cape Coast, Sheikh Dr. Mark Sey, arguing that he was coerced by his school master to either change his name from *Muhammad Sey* to *Mark Sey* to reflect

[144]See also: J.B. Yusuf & A. Boletbekova, "Mass Media and Islamic Religious Propagation (Da'wah) in Kyrgyzstan", *Research Journal of Islamic Studies Abḥāth, 7/28*(2022). 1-22

[145]Interview: Mallam Musa, Cape Coast, 11/08/2018

[146]Interview: Muhammad Mahey, Kumasi, 12/03/2019

[147]Schmmel, ibid, 25

the Christian principles of the school or risk giving up his education at the school.[148] Thereafter, to avoid the frustration of a name change, Mark Sey had to bear the supposed 'European' identity as a Muslim scholar. This, on its own, should not have been a problem; after all, it is a circumstance borne out of sheer inevitability (*Darurah*). However, the issue is him having to live the rest of his life with a name that was imposed on him. Even more, his fellow traditional Muslims might doubt his commitment to Islam based on his name or wonder about the kind of Muslim he was.

Among the Akan groups in Ghana, the philosophy of naming is not opposed totally to the Islamic philosophy of naming because both aim at giving to children names that depict virtuous qualities. However, indigenously, names depict ethnic identity and an Akan may not give a Ga name to his children unless there is a fair justification for this. Personal names are social labels which bestow on children an identity into the ethnic or social group they belong to. Hence, generally, a child with a name is a social entity with an identifiable cultural background[149] and grows knowing who he or she is culturally.[150] Those who know such a name immediately realise the child's ethnic belonging. Sometimes, names play a role in accommodating strangers. For example, an Ewe tribesman may be more disposed to accommodating a man called, *Setsoafia*, than an Akan due to the tribal affinity. This is clarified by the Fanti adage: *Se Fantsenyekɔ Kumasi kɔto Kwaw Afona a naɔakɔtononua* ('when a Fanti goes to Kumase and meets a man with a name, *Kwaw Afona*, he has met his brother'). *Kwaw Afona*(also known as *Yaw Dadze,* symbolic of "brave warrior")is a name used by the Fanti group of the Akan. *Kwaw*is an appellation for a Thursday-born Fanti man called *Yaw*. Hence, on hearing the name, the Fanti stranger in Kumai realises he has met his tribesman (brother) with whom he could temporarily perch.

Thus, indigenous baby names are projected to carry a particular message to the society regarding not just who the child is but, more importantly, the kind of personage he is supposed to

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[148] Sheikh Dr. Mark Sey, Retired Senior Lecturer and Muslim Scholar, Department of Religion and Human Values, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Personally revealed to one of the authors at his office when he was in active Service, 2004.

[149] I. Shagrir, *Naming Patterns in the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2003), 1; Alford, ibid, 29

[150] R.D. Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven, CT: HRAF Press, 1988),29

depict.[151] Indigenous names establish family identity, manifest a family's social class and offer important clues to the legitimacy of a child's parentage. This is expressed by the *hadith* that "a child born to a house belongs to the owner of the house." Therefore, indigenous baby names given by legitimate individuals prevent the wrong attribution of children's parentage, which is in conformity with the Qur'anic verse:

> Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is more just in the sight of Allah. But if you do not know their fathers' (name, call them) your brothers in faith, or your *mawlas*. But there is no blame on you if you make a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (Qur'an 33:5).

The verse underpins the prohibition of giving one's name to an adopted son. A Muslim child retains the inalienable right to his biological father's name as a surname, irrespective of whether the said father is or is not responsible.

In African societies, non-Arabic or indigenous names are not always just to label children but are also underpinned by the consideration of good character emulation and building which, for all intents and purposes, are the main raison d'être for Arabic names in the "Islamic" context. In line with this cultural philosophy, some Ghanaian parents name their babies after their parents, grand-parents, or remote ancestors. Thus, African indigenous naming patterns have significant sociological functions:

- They establish links between two distinct alternating generations: those gone or about to go and those who just came.
- They perpetuate the names of the exemplary members of the older generation while using their good deeds as a yardstick to build perhaps a more ethical one. This makes the older generation feel valued.
- They also forge closer ties between the respectable elders of society and the new-born. This is because as Mohome notes,

[151] P.R.C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972); P. Franklin, "Normans, Saints and Politics: Forename Choice Among Fourteenth-Century Gloucestershire Peasants", *Local Population Studies*, 36 (1986), 18-24; C.A. Cody, "Naming, Kinship and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation", *William and Mary Quarterly,* 39 (1982), 193-209; Mutunda, ibid, 14; Alford, ibid, 51; Guma, ibid, 267

"when a grandparent shares the name with a grandchild, the relationship between them becomes even closer."[152]

- On the other hand, according to Guma and Moning, naming a child after elders also serves a religious purpose[153] as well as political and social functions.[154] Religiously, having children named after exemplary elders and departed heroes reminds the living of their duty to pray for the dead and sound health for the elderly members of society.

It must be noted that in indigenous Ghanaian societies, not all ancestors or elders receive the honour of being named after. Elders that are named after often lead virtuous lives. These are presumed not to have taken others' wives, never found to be thieves, drunk or, for that matter, never engaged in any disliked behaviour unworthy of emulation by new generations. In the past, bravery in war and commitment to people's welfare through virtuous sacrifice, humility, and hard work were admirable qualities. Some of these qualities should be borne in mind in appreciating why the Prophet named his sons, Abdullah (after his father) and Ibrahim (after his great-great-grandfather, Prophet Ibrahim). The same should be borne in mind in appreciating why the Fanti are proud of their ancestors, Obun-mankoma, Odapagyan and Oson; as Asantes do to Obiri Yeboah, Osei Tutu I and Opoku Ware I, the Gonja to Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa and Naba' and the Dagomba to *YaNa* Wumbei (Muhammad Zangina), among others. They might not presently give these names to their children per se but they still place value on them morally. This is because these men not only displayed acts of valour but demonstrated virtuous character which their offspring wish to maintain in their respective families and so feel privileged to be associated with them. Similar to the Islamic philosophy of naming, indigenous names are given to preserve the legacy of the founding fathers of Islam (*Salaf al-Salih* or ancestors) and exemplary leaders. Like Arabic names, indigenous names might not escape distortion by outsiders due to wrong intonation and lack of proper knowledge of the local language.

Our analysis demonstrates that the modification of Arabic names among Ghanaian Muslims is underpinned by two

[152]Mohome, ibid, 171-185

[153] H.D. Monnig, *The Pedi* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1967), 338.

[154] M. Guma, "The Cultural Meaning of Names among Basotho of Southern Africa: A Historical and Linguistic Analysis", *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 10/3 (2001), 267

significant experiences (factors): intonation orientation and Western education.

1. Intonation Problems

The distortion of Arabic names due to intonation applies to all ethnic groups that came into contact with Islam since its introduction to Ghana. The dominant tribes include the Akan (southerners), the Gonja, the Wala, the Dagomba, and their neighbours (northern territories). These ethnic groups have corrupted many Arabic names.

Table 2: Some Arabic names and their intonation among various ethnic groups in Ghana

Name (Arabic)	Intonation/distortion	Name (Arabic)	Intonation/distortion
Halimah	Alima	ʻA'ishah	Ashatu/Shatu
Ishaq	Isaka/Isaku	Habibah	Abiba
ʻUmar	Moro/Imoro	Khadijah	Hadis[z]a/Adiza/Alinsa
Salih	Salifu	Bilqis	Barkisu/Balkisu
ʻUthman	Asuman/Asman/Asma/Esuman/Sumana	Mika'il	Munkaila/Minkaila
Ahmad	Amadu	Hamid	Amidu/Hamidu
Ruqayyah	Rakia/Likia	Isma'il	Sumaila
Zaynab	Jenabu/Zenabu	Husaynah	Fuseina
Abu Bakr	Buker/Abukari/Bukari	Hasan	Alaasan
Hafsah	Awusatu/Afishetu	Husayn	Fuse[i]ni
Armiya'	Ameyaw	Ya'qub	Dakubu
Yusuf	Ntsifu/Ntifu/Esilfi/Ntseful	Mu'min	Mumuni
Jibril	Ziblim	Muhammad	Maman

Source: Authors' construct. **NB**: Some of these names have been so deeply corrupted that they have lost their original Arabic connotations and are now treated as indigenous names: e.g. Asma, Esuman, Ntseful, Esilfi and Ameyaw.[155]

[155] It is noteworthy that these names are used among the Akans in general or Fantis in particular. How the transformation came about may require another article.

Some parents fondly corrupt the names of their children which become so familiar that, at times, reversal becomes impossible. For instance, among the Nigerian community in Ghana, Muhammad is sometimes corrupted to *Mamad*, Ahmed to *Amad*, Ibrahim to *Ibu*, while other foreign nationals possibly of Asian origin call "Yusuf" as *Isop*. Other names are sometimes fondly shortened by parents or friends alike, e.g., *Fatimah* as *Fati*. Sometimes, shortening compromises meanings if any was intended at all. For example, when *Fatimah* (meaning 'baby nurse'/'weaner') is shortened as *Fāti* (intoned as *Faati*), it sounds like *Fātih* (which means 'the conqueror'). Such mutilations could be grievous because, like all languages, the Arabic language is dynamic, and many might end up reigning curses on their own children instead of perceivably intending blessings with particular names. Thus, one might possibly be served better if one considered indigenous names with a philosophy one understands.

2. *Westernisation and Education*

This category is "adaptation" usually carried out by educated young Muslims who hope to avoid discrimination by the wider society. These young Muslims try to hide their Arabic names, which portray their religious identity, by modifying them for fear of stigmatisation in public spaces.[156] These Muslims, who are mainly students, take European-sounding versions of their names to enable them assimilate with their colleagues of the other divides. Names like Maryam is corrupted to *Miriam* or *Mary*, Ya'qub to *Jacob*, Musa to *Moses*, Rahman (prefixed with *Abdul*) to *Raymond*, Salāma[tu] to *Sarah* or *Sallie*,[157]Ismā'il to *Ishmael*,[158]among others. They suppose that replacing their perceived Muslim identity with European-sounding versions would facilitate their integration into a society that is perceived as less conducive to their religious orientation. Many scholars refer to similar processes of Europeanisation[159] or 'Americanisation' in various capacities in which even Arab Muslims have anglicised their names and

[156]Interview: Miriam Anonymous, former student of the University of Ghana, 11/12/2019, 14/12/2019.

[157]Interview: Salah Anonymous, Student of the University of Cape Coast, 10/01/2020.

[158]Interview: Muhammad Latif, Student Activist, Ghana Institute of Journalism, 10/01/2020.

[159]Khosravi, ibid, 65&78

avoided the Arabic language.[160] Obviously, when they speak Arabic, they could be identified rather easily.

Conclusion

This article discusses the significance of Arabic and Islamic names and their implications for the Ghanaian indigenous Muslim cultural identity. We tried to find out whether a Muslim could maintain an Islamic identity without an Arabic name. Equally, we tried to understand whether names have a cultural value in Islam, or, in point of fact, Islam acknowledges cultural diversity. From the findings despite the fact that Islam attaches importance to names (particularly, good names), it also regards all races, tribes, and cultures as unique in their own settings and does not prefer one culture over others. Therefore, a Muslim could maintain an indigenous name and identity and still identify himself as Muslim, provided that one's behaviour is consistent with the accepted rules of Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

The study further demonstrates that what is referred to as Islamic names are basically pre-Islamic names of Arabs who became associated with Islam. The unique roles played by these Arabs in the propagation of Islam transformed their names into exemplary models for the subsequent generation of Muslims to use them as names for their children. The study also establishes that Prophet Muhammad admonished Muslims to name their children to reflect positive values to enable them imbibe such values. Ironically, some of the ethnic groups that embraced Islam in Ghana corrupted the Arabic names with wrong intonations. This underscores how the Arabic/Islamic identity reflects inan indigenous cultural background.

Through a comparative analysis of the philosophy of naming in Arabic or Islam and the Ghanaian indigenous society, using the Akan people as a special example, we found that the Akan philosophy of naming is not entirely different from that of Islam. This is because, just like Arabic or "Islamic" names, Akan names are

[160] E. Goldwasser, "Economic Security and Muslim Identity: A Study of the Immigrant Community in Durham, North Carolina". In Y. Y. Haddad &J.L. Esposito, eds., *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*(New York: O.U.P., 2000); A. Kulczycki & A.P. Lobo, "Patterns, Determinants, and Implications of Intermarriage among Arabs", *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 64/1 (2002), 202-210; E.D. Gould & E.F. Klor, "The Long-Run Effect of 9/11: Terrorism, Backlash, and the Assimilation of Muslim Immigrants in the West", CEPR Discussion Paper 8797 (2012), 6; A. Schimmel, *Islamic Names* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 73

given in reference to those ancestors who have lived exemplary lives in order to promote good moral values or ethical standards among the young. There are also political and religious underpinnings in which children are named after some elites as a way of showing gratitude to them. For all these reasons, it is incumbent on, especially Muslim scholars, to dig deep into the sources with prospects to clarify whether a Muslim is obliged to identify with Arabic ("Islamic") names or not, and to dress in the manner of certain cultures rather than others.

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Deuteronomy's Philanthropic Stance Against Poverty: An Advocacy for Charity Tithe in United Missionary Church of Africa, Ilorin[1]

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Abstract

Poverty alleviation has been discussed extensively in economics and other disciplines. While theology has not been left out of the discourse, there has been little emphasis on the perspective of theological anthropology concerning poverty alleviation. This paper explores Deuteronomy's philanthropic posture towards the poor from the perspective of theological anthropology and how such an anthropology is applied through the practice of tithing in the United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA) in Nigeria. The paper adopts the Kantian understanding of poverty and uses contextual analysis to interpret relevant biblical texts. Data from focused group discussions conducted in selected churches of UMCA, Ilorin, were also analysed. It was found that though the book of Deuteronomy is theocentric, its narrative is intensely concerned with the liberation of humans, especially the weak in

[1]This is an extensively revised and updated version of the paper I presented at the4th International Conference of the U6 Initiative for Development held at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, September 11th -16th, 2016.

society. It was also established that UMCA models its practice of care for the poor on the tenets of the book of Deuteronomy; however, the church must also motivate its poor to aspire towards self-reliance. The paper concludes that tithing is a caritative measure that could be adopted towards effective poverty alleviation in UMCA.

Keywords

Deuteronomy, poverty eradication, social inequality, tithe, UMCA

Introduction

Poverty is a universal phenomenon that is manifested in diverse strands of social inequality. Social inequality manifests in the form of status, power, wealth, and gender differences. Because poverty is widely spread, there is a global concern to end it. Therefore, it is understandable that the first of the 17 goals on the list of the United Nations' projection of what should bring sustainable development to the world in the next 15 years (chronicled from September 25, 2015), is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.[2]Attempts at alleviating the pains of the poor are as ancient as the time of biblical events in ancient Israel. Broadly, Yahweh is portrayed in the Bible as one who responds to the cry of the poor, especially the cry of the needy among his people.[3] Specifically, the book of Deuteronomy contains stipulations that address social inequality of which poverty is one. The laws of debt cancellation (Deut. 15:1-11), gleaning (Deut. 24:19-21), scrumping (Deut. 23:24-25),and charity tithe (Deut. 26:12-15) were given to cater for the welfare of the poor in ancient Israel. Deuteronomy can be described as a book with a philanthropic stance and solicitous of the marginal group of society.[4] This outlook is vivid in such texts as Deut. 10:18; 16:11-14; 24:17-21; and 26:12-13. The relevance of the contents of Deuteronomy to the present discourse is aptly captured in the words of Jenny Corcoran as follows: "Deuteronomy is an obvious text to explore in terms of understanding the social and ethical constructs of the people of God, and of exploring how these themes

[2]United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals" https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/accessed June 15, 2016.

[3]L. Ryken, et al. (eds.), "Poverty" in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998), 658.

[4]H. F. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research,* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 166.

relate to Christianity."[5] It is in the light of this that Olubitan, while positing about the church generally on the issue of poverty, articulated the "unique position of the church in taking poverty alleviation as part of her core obligations to the poor."[6]He opines that the church should provide a lasting solution to the menace of poverty.[7]

The place and contribution of contemporary religious institutions (particularly the Christian faith)to the quest of the United Nations about ending poverty cannot be underrated. Consequently, the question is: to what extent has the Christian faith appropriated the biblical injunction in Deuteronomy about the plight of the poor? This paper explores one of the Deuteronomic responses to poverty, which is charity tithe as found in Deuteronomy 26:12-15, vis-a-vis the approach of the United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA) in Ilorin to alleviate the burden of the poor. This paper aims to establish that UMCA as a microcosm of the church in Nigeria can revamp its approach to poverty alleviation using a more effective biblical pattern. The paper adopts the Kantian theory of poverty, which posits that under the duty of beneficence, the wealthy in society must make the poor happy by alleviating the toll of poverty on them, irrespective of the kind of relationship they share. This thinking is inseparable from the right of the government of any organised society or institution (including the Church)to impose taxes on the affluent for the benefit of the needy.[8]

The current discourse is relevant because while the Deuteronomist is theocentric in his work, intense concern for the emancipation of humans, especially the socially weak in the society (the poor, orphan, widow, and alien), remains obvious in the book of Deuteronomy. Equally, the fact that successive governments have not disregarded the reality of poverty and the current leadership of Muhammadu Buhari in domesticating the SDGs about poverty has projected to lift 100 million Nigerians illustrates why a study on poverty alleviation from the Christian perspective

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[5] J. Corcoran, "The Alien in Deuteronomy 29 and Today" in *Interpreting Deuteronomy: Issues and Approaches,* eds. 229-239, David G. Firth and Philip S. Johnston, (Nottingham: Apollos, 2012), 229.

[6]A. A. Olubitan, "The Christian Theological Basis for Poverty Alleviation," in *Religion and Human Capital Development: Essays in honour of Prof. Yasir Anjola Quadri*, 142-154, eds., Y. O. Imam et al., (Ilorin: Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2017), 150.

[7]A. A. Olubitan, "Trends in Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria: The Functional Role of the Church," *KWASU Journal of Humanities* 2, no.3 (2021):56.

[8]I. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 468.

is important.[9]The historical-grammatical method is complemented with contextual analysis for the interpretation of the Biblical text in this paper. Also, a focused group discussion was done to elicit data from selected Assemblies of UMCA in Ilorin. The local churches sampled were UMCA Theological College Chapel, UMCA Pake, and UMCA Rehoboth. These churches were purposely selected; the first is the central church of UMCA because it serves as the church's main Theological College and attracts elite members. The second is the Oldest Yoruba congregation of UMCA in Ilorin while the third is a recently established branch of the church; it has a concentration of young adult and middle-aged members. It should be underscored that UMCA is a Christian denomination that has existed in Nigeria since 1905 and it is a pro-tithing church.[10]

What is Poverty?

Poverty is construed as a condition that describes the polarity in the socio-economic status of people in any given society. It distinguishes between the poor and the rich, "those that have" and "those that do not have." This suggests that poverty is used to describe members of society who suffer deprivation. But thinking theologically, every human is subject to one form of deprivation or the other. So, one can establish that the term poverty is broad in connotation and relative in usage. Nancy Dziedzic affirms the fluidity and relativity of the term when she says, "because being poor differs dramatically across countries, experts have had a difficult time establishing concrete terms to discuss it."[11]

The United Nations offers a definition that can be described as reasonably comprehensive because it considers nearly all aspects of human experience—personal, political, social, and financial. It defines poverty as a "denial of choices and opportunities most basic to human development—to lead a long, healthy, creative life and enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, self-esteem, and the respect of others."[12]According to Louis-Marie Asselin, "Poverty

[9]"Buhari outlines plans to lift 100m Nigerians out of poverty," Buhari outlines plans to lift 100m Nigerians out of poverty - Vanguard News (vanguardngr.com) accessed 28 June 2022.

[10] B. O. Fawenu, "Tithing in African Christianity: An Inquiry into its Origin in United Missionary Church of Africa, Nigeria," in *African Christianity in Local and Global Contexts*: *A Festschrift in honour of Rev. Prof. Isaac Deji Ayegboyin*, 212-223, eds., Samson A. Fatokun et al, (Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, 2019), 213-215.

[11]N. Dziedzic, *World Poverty,* (New York: Thomson Gale, 2007), 1.

[12]N. Dziedzic, *World Poverty*

consists in any form of inequity, source of social exclusion, in living conditions essential to human dignity. These living conditions correspond to the capabilities of individuals, households, and communities to meet their basic needs in the following dimensions: nutrition, primary education, primary health care, sanitation, safe water, housing, income, and community participation."[13] Consequently, poverty is a condition of deprivation of essential items, virtues, or resources that are necessary for good living.

Often, perspectives on the description of poverty are determined by the field of study from which the discourse is done. For instance, the definitions given above are inclined toward social, economic, and political deprivation of an individual or a group of people. Therefore, emphasis is given to the depth of poverty, which is then classified into absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty involves a condition where a person's subsistence needs such as food, clothing, and shelter are not being met at all. Poverty is considered relative where a person's needs are not being met in comparison to the rest of his or her society.[14]

Theologically examined, in addition to the social, economic, and political dimensions, there is a spiritual dimension to poverty. Gideon Yohanna Tambiyi describes the biblical concept of poverty to include material and spiritual dimensions. While material poverty implies economic deprivation which results in the loss of human dignity and self-expression in society, spiritual poverty points to human's continuous dependability on God for spiritual sustainability.[15]

Malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy are indicators of absolute poverty.[16]Therefore, to live in poverty is to experience a condition of life characterised by the aforementioned indicators in a manner that is beneath any reasonable human decency. The efforts of the United Nation under Sustainable Development Goals can be interpreted as a strategy put in place to end what Wolterstorff describes as a "scandal." He views the continuous penury of a class of people in society in contrast to the increasing affluence of the other as a serious scandal. In his own words, "it is not sheer fact of massive world poverty that is a scandal to the Church and all

[13] L. Asselin, *Composite Indicator of Multidimensional Poverty,* 2002. 2

[14]N. Dziedzic, *World Poverty,* 1.

[15]G. Y. Tambiyi, *The African Church Under Fire: Problems and Prospects,* (Kaduna: Tubase, 2014), 286.

[16]N. Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 74.

humanity; the scandal lies in the fact that this abject poverty is today not an unavoidable feature of our human situation, and even more so is the fact that the impoverished co-exists in our world-system with an equal number who live in unprecedented affluence. Poverty amidst plenty with the gap becoming greater: this is the scandal".[17]

What is Sustainable Development?

Since the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, it has kept its central mission of maintaining international peace and security by working to prevent conflicts, helping parties in conflict make peace, and creating the conditions to allow peace to hold and flourish. The UN has launched several programmes targeted at making life comfortable for humanity. Right from start, the UN has given priority to sustainable development by harnessing the cooperation of countries across the world to solve the problems faced by humans. This is best captured by the organisation's statement on sustainable development:

> One of the main priorities of the United Nations was to "achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion." Improving people's well-being continues to be one of the main focuses of the UN. The global understanding of development has changed over the years, and countries now have agreed that sustainable development – a development that promotes prosperity and economic opportunity, greater social well-being, and protection of the environment – offers the best path forward for improving the lives of people everywhere.[18]

[17] N. Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*.

[18]"What we do" *United Nations*, accessed June 15, 2016,http://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/index.html

From the above, sustainable development guarantees the improvement in people's lives which is manifested in prosperity for all, provision of economic opportunities, greater social well-being, and protection of the environment. It is in line with this that the latest agenda of the organisation tagged Sustainable Development Goals evolved. The agenda which follows on the heels of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)has seventeen goals covering three dimensions of sustainable development. The three dimensions are economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. The agenda was described as a plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity. In other words, the set of goals was meant to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. The 17 goals have 169 associated targets which seek to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. In sum, the agenda is designed to improve the lives of people everywhere—to build a better world that is all-inclusive. The first goal is focused on the global eradication of poverty in all its forms by the year 2030.According to the UN, "eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development."[19]

The Poor and Poverty in the Bible

The Bible is not silent on poverty. A vivid picture of the predicament and affliction of the poor is presented in the Bible. The groups that suffer pains of want and injustice in the Bible are peasant farmers, wage labourers, widows, orphans, and foreigners (Ezek. 22:1-7; Jer. 7:1-8). The poor in the Bible were usually victims of greed, lust for power, and manipulation within the legal system (1 Kings 21; 2 Sam 11). The beneficiaries of divine justice in the Bible(the Old Testament, in particular) are the defenceless in society. The defenceless are described by the Hebrew terms *ʿaniy* (poor), *'ebyon* (needy), and *dal* (weak). These various terms describe conditions of economic deprivation as well as political and legal injustices. According to R. E. Nixon, such economic deprivation could be traced to several factors in the Old Testament. The factors include, but are not limited to, natural disasters, vicissitude of life

[19]"Sustainable Development Goals," *United Nations*, accessed June 15, 2016. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/

(as in the case of orphans and widows), and oppression by powerful neighbours.[20] Therefore, God expresses enthusiastic disleasure against the oppression of the defenceless. Wick Broomall's outline of the many provisions made for the poor in the OT states:

> The poor are strongly safeguarded in the Mosaic legislations: A slave must be released in the seventh year (Ex 21:2ff); a garment taken in pledge must be returned at sunset (Ex. 22:26ff); wages must be paid daily (Lev. 19:13); Essential implements must not be impounded (Deut. 24:6; 12ff, 17); Debts must be released every seven years (Deut. 15:1). Provision was made for the food of the poor (Deut. 24:19-22).[21]

The way the Old Testament Prophets stood as the representatives of God and spoke sternly against the ill-treatment of the defenceless is inestimably instructive. They expressed God's displeasure and anger against those who perpetrated injustice on the poor, needy, and weak members of the society (Amos 4:1; 8:4-6; 5:11-12 and Micah 3:14-15). In sum, God defends and protects the poor and oppressed against their enemies (Psalm 4:5-6; 34:9, 15-22). Leland Ryken says, "Throughout the Bible, God is portrayed as one who responds to the cries of the poor, especially the needy among his people."[22]This position of the Old Testament Prophets was built on the instructions found in the legal codes of the Pentateuch, especially those in the holiness code of the Deuteronomist.

The Deuteronomic Concern for the Poor

Specifically, the Deuteronomist frowns on the incongruence in the economic status of the poor and the rich in society. Six texts in Deuteronomy particularly focus on the protected groups in Israel, namely the widows, orphans, Levites, and strangers. The texts are Deut. 14:22-29; 16:9-12; 16:13-15; 24:17-18; 24:19-22, and 26:12-15. These texts highlight the predicaments of the defenseless or

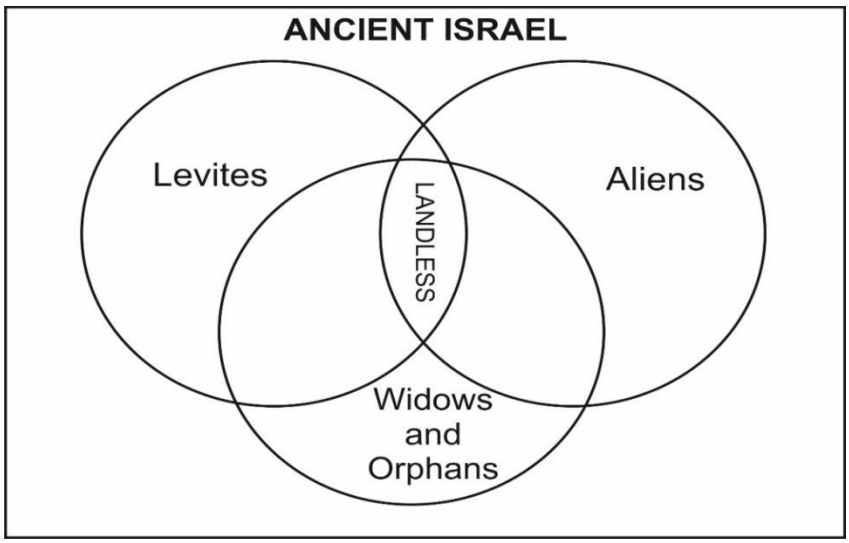
[20]R. E. Nixon, "Poverty," in *New Bible Dictionary,* 3rd ed., (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 945.

[21]W. Broomall, "Poor, Poverty" in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* ed. Everett F. Harrison et al. (London: Pickering & Inglis LTD, 1960), 409.

[22] Ryken, L, et al. eds., "Poverty" in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 658.

protected group in ancient Israel. While the texts are rich in the cultic interest of the ancient Israelite society, they have considerable sociological relevance today. They serve as a model text for an engaging discussion on the nexus of religion and the social well-being of people because the humanitarian thrust of the texts is intertwined with the cultic observances in a manner that suggests that true religion cares for the less privileged. While the inclusion of Levites among the less privileged of that society has been queried,[23]the humanitarian outlook of the book could be the reason for categorising them as such. After all, the Levites too were a landless group in the social structure of that society. Diagram 1 below indicates landlessness as a common point of intersection for less privileged groups.

Diagram 1: Common intersection among the poor in Deuteronomic perception



Source: Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu, 2018.

The triad of the orphan, the widow, and the alien describe the weak and helpless segment of society and, thus, the most vulnerable to injury and abuse.[24] The Deuteronomist's stance against social inequality, in general, and concern for the defenceless was essentially based on Israel's earlier slavery experience and deliverance from Egypt. The identity of Israel is inseparably

[23]J. G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, eds. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davis, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984),73-74.

[24]W. A. Van Gemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), 570.

bonded to that experience, and this is amply emphasised in Deuteronomy. There are forty-nine references to it in Deuteronomy in a manner that shows its centrality to the theology of the book.[25]Although the stipulations in Deuteronomy appear to have been given in preparation for Israel's conquest and settlement in Canaan, liberal scholarship assigns the content to the monarchical period of the 7th Century B.C. This liberal view implies that those stipulations in defense of the weak members of the society came as a response to the social inequality experienced during the monarchy. The argument goes further that social class distinction of members of the society was not known in the Patriarchal era in ancient Israel; emphasis on the distinction between the rich and the poor became prominent in the monarchical era and the defenceless were always at the mercy of the rich and the powerful of the society.[26]Before the monarchical system, Israel had a tribal system and social structure in units that are related by blood from the same patriarchal ancestor. The monarchy appeared as an antithesis of that tribal system. Before the monarchy, Israel in the Patriarchal era had a nomadic and, at times, semi-nomadic lifestyle. The monarchy inevitably set forth shifts in class configuration due to changing economic, political, and ideological development.[27]The egalitarian community got transformed in its social and political structure into a classified society where the tribute-imposing elite took undue advantage of the tribute-paying class. The first class was made up of the political elite, military retainers, landholding merchants, and manufacturing elite, all of whom profited from the state power. The class at the receiving end was made up of peasants, pastoralists, artisans, slaves, and unskilled workers.[28]The Prophets in that era were very vocal against the social system that perpetuated discrimination, impoverishment, and oppression along with social bias.

In contrast to the perspective described above, I think the Deuteronomic stipulations did not emerge as a reaction to the social inequality of the monarchical era. Rather, they were

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[25]J. Corcoran, "The Alien in Deuteronomy 29 and Today" in *Interpreting Deuteronomy: Issues and Approaches,* eds. 229-239, David G. Firth and Philip S. Johnston, (Nottingham: Apollos, 2012), 236.

[26], J. O. Akao, "Biblical theology in Africa and the Issue of Poverty Alleviation," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 15, no. 2 (October 2000): 41-59).

[27]N. K. Gottwald, "Social Class as an Analytical and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112, no. 1(1993): 1-3.

[28]N. K. Gottwald, "Social Class as an Analytical and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies, 3.

prophetic prescriptions made in anticipation of the change in the social structure that lay in the future for Israel. The Prophetic tradition simply employed the Deuteronomic stipulations and applied them to the socio-economic as well as the political reality of their time. This view is accentuated by the fact that the pastoralists, artisans, and unskilled workers emphasised in the monarchical time could not have been captured or classified among the poor in Deuteronomy. Relative to the aristocrats, especially the royal class of the monarchy, it is understandable to have the pastoralists, artisans, and unskilled workers classified as helpless groups in that society.

By and large, whether before or at the monarchical time, Deuteronomy's concern was to impact on the social life of Israel by projecting beyond the narrower casuist and statutory law corpus found in other parts of the Pentateuch, to providing a code of laws for ensuring the protection of the individual and particularly persons who are vulnerable to social discrimination.[29]

Charity Tithe as Deuteronomic Prescription for Poverty

The term, tithe, appears to be very simple to define, given that the "percentage" presupposition derivable from the Hebrew word, *ma'aser,* and the Greek word, *dekate,* translated tithe, with both suggesting the tenth part of anything.[30]However, a critical examination of the issues involved in the practice from one historical milieu to another suggests otherwise.

In the larger context of the ancient Near East, tithe refers to a tenth of loots of war or taxation imposed on the vassal nation by a suzerain king.[31]In the biblical context, it refers to the divinely commanded tenth of agricultural products earned from the Promised Land to fend for the less privileged, the Levitical priesthood, and for festival meals. In contemporary tithe-practising churches, tithe refers to the tenth of one's income or profit on business obligatorily remitted to the church or clergy for ecclesiastical use without which divine blessing reflected in

[29]M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 488.

[30]A. Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities*, (C.E. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2003), 488.

[31] D. K. McKim, "Tithing," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book Academic, 2001), 1202.

material prosperity and protection of the Christian is not guaranteed.[32]

Deuteronomy contains instructions that prepared the Israelites for a settled life in Canaan. In preparation to confront a new set of challenges on arrival at Canaan, Moses articulated specific decrees and laws for the people. Tithe was one such law and it was meant to help them survive the new challenges they were bound to encounter.[33]The book's unique approach to tithe in terms of its beneficiaries is fascinating and different from what is found in Leviticus and Numbers. Deuteronomy Chapter 12 mentions tithe specifically in verses 6, 11, and 17 alongside other forms of offerings and vows as part of cultic observances, with emphasis on the location for the presentation of the items for offering, tithe, and vows. This discussion is set in the context of the clear instruction to the Israelites not to adopt the existing shrines and altars of the Canaanites for the worship of Yahweh; rather, they were told to sanitise the places by destroying the existing altars before commencing the worship of Yahweh. In a contrasting manner, the worship of Yahweh must not be done according to the pattern of Canaanite worship.[34]The Israelites were to worship in a place Yahweh himself will choose for them. It is at the designated place that the people should offer their tithe alongside other offerings and vows. Two principal issues about tithe stand out in this Bible text. Firstly, it is location-specific; secondly, it is festival or ceremonial in context. By implication, while tithes in Numbers and Leviticus emphasised the giving of a sacred portion of the produce from the land to God, Deuteronomy 12 allows the giver to eat the tithe as part of the festival meal with his family members and religious functionaries (the Levites) in a socio-religious context. Thus, additions and modifications in the use of tithe were introduced in Deuteronomy. In response to the question of what could have accounted for the change or difference in the tithing prescription found in Deuteronomy, M. E. Tate[35]and R. D.

[32]B. O. Fawenu, "The Practice of Tithing in Malachi 3:6-12 and the Lived Experience of Tithers in United Missionary Church of Africa, North-central Nigeria," *PhD. Thesis*, (Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2017), 51.

[33]H. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 173.

[34] V. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), 420.

[35]M. E. Tate, "Tithing: Legalism or Benchmark?" *Review and Expositor* 70 (1973):155

Nelson[36]explained that the need for centralisation of the sanctuary for worship informed the change in instruction.

It should be noted that the modification in Deuteronomy 12about the frequency and use of tithe does not present many challenges as in Deuteronomy 14. It is from later verses of Deuteronomy 14 that several scholars have come up with the idea that three different tithes are required of Israel in a year, namely, the Levitical tithe (affirmed in Leviticus 27 and Numbers 18), the festival tithe (found in Deuteronomy 12 and 14:22-27), and the poor tithe (contained in Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and Deuteronomy 26: 12-13). In addition to the continuation of the theme of festival tithe found in Chapter 12, Chapter 14 gives further details about how tithes were to be transported to the designated place. Those Israelites who lived some distance from the designated place of worship were given the latitude of exchanging their tithed goods for money, in situations where the distance made transporting the goods difficult.[37]Therefore, verses 22-27 describe the tithe remitted yearly while verses 28-29 along with 26:12-15 deal with the triennial tithe. The triennial tithe, also known as poor tithe or charity tithe, is given at the end of every third year (Deut. 14:28), the year termed the year of the tithe (Deut. 26:12). Kelly says: "unlike the first tithe, the third-year tithe (in the year of tithing) was specifically for *all the needy—including the non-Israelite stranger!* The recipients of it included the Levites, widows, orphans, fatherless, and Gentile strangers."[38] Also, unlike the second tithe which went to Jerusalem, the third tithe was to stay in the towns, within the peoples' gates, at home. Therefore, Kelly contends that "this could not possibly be the same as the first, or second, tithe."[39] It is noteworthy that all the beneficiaries are people that do not possess landed property but whose economic needs must be met.[40]This kind gesture to the needy agrees perfectly with the wider ancient Near East context of care for the less privileged of society.[41]Nevertheless, the inclusion of the resident alien among the beneficiaries of the tithe is indicative of God's all-encompassing

[36]R. D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary. Old Testament Library,* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 146.

[37] Goldingay, J. *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Life*, Volume Three, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 147.

[38]R. E. Kelly, *Should the Church Teach Tithing?*(New York: Writers Club Press, 2007), 52.

[39] R. E. Kelly, *Should the Church Teach Tithing?*

[40] N. Lohfink, "Poverty in the Laws of the ancient Near East and of the Bible," *Theological Studies* 52, (1991): 44.

[41]R. D. Patterson, "The Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in the Old Testament and the Extra-Biblical Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July 1973): 223-228.

care for all humans; his chosen nation was mandated to undertake this duty on his behalf.[42]

Consensus has not been realised on whether the various texts (Leviticus 27:30-34; Numbers 18:21-32; Deuteronomy 12; 14:28-29, and 26:12-13) on tithe suggest multiple tithes or not. Kelly[43], Kostenberger and Croteau[44], Kaufmann[45], McIntosh,[46] etc. think Israel paid more than one tithe every year, culminating in more than a tenth of each worshipper's income. Most of these scholars refer to the tradition established in Tobit 1:6-8, a passage synchronised with Deuteronomy to advance the existence of an apparent discrepancy between the legislation in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. It is harmonised in the Jewish tradition, not only theoretically but in practice, by considering the tithes as three different tithes, which are named the first tithe, the second tithe, and the poor (charity) tithe, also called the third tithe.[47]On the other side of the divide are Wellhausen[48], Jagersma[49], Christensen[50], McConville[51], Driver,[52]etc. They posit that there is only one tithe in ancient Israel, but that it evolved developmentally as necessitated by changing historical circumstances.[53]By implication, the demand of the community at different historical times was the reason for differences in the various texts about tithe in the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, Ajah who also subscribes to one tithe position thinks despite the lack of consensus by scholars on the number of tithes, consistency in the theological significance of the institution at different times and places cannot be faulted.[54]

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[42]J. Corcoran, "The Alien in Deuteronomy 29 and Today", 231.

[43] R. E. Kelly, *Should the Church Teach Tithing?*50.

[44] A. J. Köstenberger, and D. A. Croteau. "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8): A Study of Tithing in the Old and New Testaments, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16, no.1 (2006): 61-64.

[45] Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginning to the Babylonian Exile,* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961), 188-193.

[46]D. McIntosh, "Deuteronomy," in *Holman Old Testament Commentary*, vol. 3, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2002), 185.

[47]D. L. Baker, *Tight Fist or Open Hands? Wealth and Poverty in Old Testament Law,* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 241-242.

[48]J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel,* (Edinburgh: Black, 1883),156-7.

[49] H. Jagersma, "The Tithes in the Old Testament," *OTS* 21 (1981): 116-119.

[50]D. L. Christensen, "Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9" in *Word Biblical Commentary* volume 6b, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001),302-305.

[51]J. G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 74.

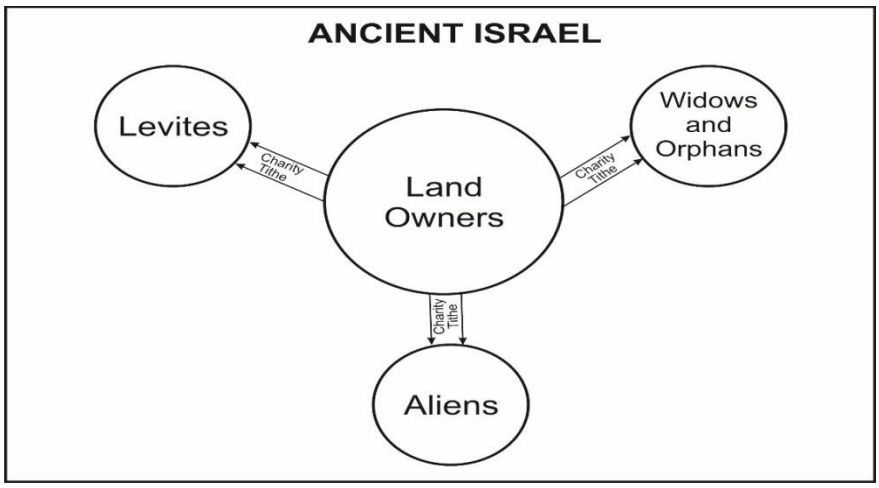
[52]S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy,* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2006), 170-173.

[53]D. L. Baker, *Tight Fist or Open Hands? Wealth and Poverty in Old Testament Law,*242.

[54]M. Ajah, "The Purpose for tithe in the Old Testament," *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition,* Vol. 4 (2012): 27.

However, the tithe in Deuteronomy reflects the humanitarian focus of the author, especially with an emphasis on the triennial tithe. Every third year, the tithe is submitted to the local storehouses for onward distribution to the poor and other marginalised people (widows and orphans). Once again, the beneficiaries of this stipulation are the landless members of the society. Since tithing was essentially based on the theology of the Promised Land indicated by the emphasis on agricultural produce from the land, then the landless category depended on the landowners for survival, as illustrated in Diagram 2 below:

Diagram 2: Benefactor and beneficiary of charity tithe in Deuteronomy



Source: Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu, 2018.

Baker opines that this law ensures that the poor had provisions during the three years until the next year of the tithe.[55]Therefore, the humanitarian dimension of the tithe established in Deuteronomy shows that one way of serving God is by serving the needy.

It is important to note that Deuteronomy 26: 12-15 added that the worshiper must take an affirmation oath that he has done everything on this tithe per the Lord's commandment.

> When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that

[55]D. L. Baker, *Tight Fist or Open Hands? Wealth and Poverty in Old Testament Law,* 246.

> they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them: I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey (KJV).

Additionally, it is thought-provoking to note that it is only concerning charity tithe that a petition for national (not personal) blessing comes up. The author of Malachi most probably leaned on this for the emphasis laid on the blessing that accrues to tithing in Malachi 3:10-12.

Concise History of UMCA

In 1905, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ (MBiC) Society, which was made up of four conferences of the Church from Canada, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, was responsible for sending Alexander Woods Banfield to Nigeria for mission work. His coming marked the beginning of what has metamorphosed into the UMCA of today after years of being recognised as the United Missionary Society UMS (1921-1955).[56]Banfield led other missionaries in the opening of many preaching stations; after that of Tsonga, he opened Jebba in 1910, Mokwa in 1911, Tsaragi in 1919, Igbeti in 1921, Zuru in 1925, and Share in 1927.[57] Using the

[56]Clare Fuller, "Banfield, Alexander Woods (1878-1949)." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. August 2015. Web. 4 Dec 2022. https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Banfield,_Alexander_Woods_(1878-1949) & oldid=132566.

[57]J. Y. Bello, *UMCA: The Journey so far 1905-2013*(Ilorin: OPW Ltd., 2014), 29-30.

tools of medical services, education, and training, the Gospel was preached by the missionaries,[58] as both spiritual and material emancipation of the people became evident with the turn of events that expectedly were preceded by a lot of difficulties, hardship, and life-threatening weather conditions. Theological training of pastors and missionaries across different denominations in Nigeria has been provided through UMCA Theological College, Ilorin.

Recent research by Ahuche indicates that today, UMCA has 812 pastors (excluding Church Planters all over the Denomination), 1,089 churches (excluding Preaching Stations), and over 122,931 members in 31 Districts and 2 Area Church Councils. These churches are spread across 14 States of the Federation and Abuja.[59]The Church has much spread across the South-West, North-Central, and North-East of Nigeria. Also, through collaboration with World Partners (the official mission agency of both the Canadian and American Missionary Churches formed in 1987 to assist the Nigerian Church, i.e., UMCA), the UMS Mission fields in Sierra Leone and Liberia are being revived.[60]

As an evangelical church, UMCA upholds the infallibility of the Bible, subscribes to its final authority in matters of faith and conduct, and believes it teaches: 1. The Divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. 2. The right and duty of personal judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. 3. The unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of persons therein. 4. The total depravity of human nature because of the fall and the need for regeneration. 5. The incarnation of the Son of God, His atoning death and resurrection for sins of mankind and his mediatorial intercession and reign. 6. The justification of the sinner by faith alone. 7. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the sinner, the purification, and infilling of the believer. 8. The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ. 9. The Divine institution of the Christian Ministry, the obligation and perpetuity of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.[61]

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[58] See the work of J. Y. Bello for the roll call of the expatriates that have come to Nigeria from 1905.

[59]Ahuche Peter Zaka, "The Impact of the United Missionary Church of Africa in Kebbi South Senatorial District, Kebbi State, Nigeria" *A PhD. Thesis* in the Department of Religions, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, 2018: 139.

[60]Ahuche Peter Zaka, "The Impact of the United Missionary Church of Africa in Kebbi South Senatorial District, Kebbi State, Nigeria", 154.

[61]*Constitution of United Missionary Church of Africa*, (UMCA Christian Education Department, 2006), 9-11.

Ministry of mercy through free-will offering to help the indigents within the denomination and prospective Christians in their missions' field/station is strongly encouraged and practised by UMCA. Also, tithing is largely practised by the church, with much emphasis on its Levitical strand. Therefore, it is the remittance of 10% of income to the church by members who have a legitimate source of income.[62]Through it, the Church raises funds for financing its activities.[63] UMCA does not practise charity tithe, hence, the advocacy for its introduction to help the poor make a better living.

Tithing and Care for the Poor in United Missionary Church of Africa: A Focused Group Discussion

Nine people, three each from the sampled churches, took part in the discussion. The pastors of the three churches and two other members from each of the churches formed the group. The two members from each church are all involved in one committee or the other that directs the welfare programmes of their respective churches. The questions posed to the discussants received similar answers in some cases and divergent responses in others.

Question 1: How does your church care for the poor? All but Respondent III from UMCATC agreed that there are poor people in their churches. According to Respondent III, the term, poor, cannot be used to describe any member of his church. He believed that while some of them may occasionally have one form of need, none of them falls in the category of the poor. Therefore, to meet such occasional needs, his church runs a programme called "Christian Faith in Action (CFIAT)." The programme has a separate purse with a committee that superintends it. Members of the church make donations into the purse of their own volition.

Probe question: Does it mean that there are no members of your church who cannot meet the basic needs of life with ease? His

[62] Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu "The Nexus Between Tithing and Prosperity in United Missionary Church of Africa, Nigeria" *Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values (OJORHV)* Vol. 6 Issue 2 (December 2021):71-73.

[63]Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu, "Tithing in African Christianity: An Enquiry into its Origin in United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Nigeria." In *African Christianity in Local and Global Contexts: A Festschrift in honour of Rev. Prof. Isaac Deji Ayegboyin.* Edited by Samson Adetunji Fatokun, Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo et al. (Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, 2019), 216.

response to the question suggests that such people are in the church but people in that category are few. Meanwhile, the response to the main question reveals that UMCA Pake raises funds to cater for the poor by collecting "welfare offering" every third Sunday of each month. In the case of UMCA Rehoboth, welfare for the needy is provided in the church's annual budget in addition to making calls for special contributions as the need to help members of the church comes up.

Question 2: Who are the beneficiaries of welfare programmes? All discussants mentioned the indigents as beneficiaries of their welfare programmes. These are people who cannot satisfactorily meet their own basic needs of life as it affects food, shelter, health, and clothing without reliance on aid from other people. Discussant IV stated that widows, orphans, and indigent students are recognised by Rehoboth as the poor who receive help from the church to make a good living. Discussant VIII added that several widows received such aid for feeding, payment of house rents, payment of their children's school fees, and some for boosting their petty trading. Again, Discussant III asserted that such widows are seldom found in his church. He described most widows in his church as self-reliant, who comfortably meet their personal needs and probably make provisions for indigents. However, Discussant I from the same church as Discussant III explained that the CFIAT aids are done in two categories:

1. Seasonal Attention: The offering of Christmas and Easter gifts to the needy and widows.
2. Periodic Attention: the provision of school fees, accommodation, feeding, and payment of health bills etc., for those who approach the CFIAT committee for such help.

Question 3: Does your church have a programme targeted at making the poor self-reliant? Discussant IX answered negatively regarding his church. In contrast, Discussant VI explained that his church, Rehoboth, had conceived to make the poor self-reliant but it has not been deliberately pursued. An attempt was made at a time but was not sustained because of a lack of adequate funds. The plan included helping church members to own land property. In a similar but more elaborate pattern, Discussant I explained that indigents are catered for during his church's outreach mission activities to named mission fields located outside the city of Ilorin. Monetary and material provisions were made available for the target audience. Skill acquisition training was occasionally done to

make them self-reliant. Adult literacy classes were also done to educate them. Such mission fields are Sabbo Gida, Oreke, Baruten, etc. Additionally, he explained that the church introduced Youth Empowerment recently. The intention is to help the unemployed youth population of the church to get established and become self-reliant. Orientation and training in such skills as farming, tailoring, catering services, etc. were done. Over thirty youths were trained. The next level is to make financial backing for the establishment of their businesses available as revolving loans. However, a momentary paucity of the fund has delayed the take-off of the loan.

Question 4: Would you consider your church's means of raising funds for welfare adequately sufficient? Discussant VII said the response to the monthly welfare offering by members of his church is extremely poor. Most times, the church does access its main account to source help to meet the requests of the indigents. Discussants from UMCATC and Rehoboth are of the view that there is always room for improvement.

Question 5: Will your church like to explore the use of charity tithe to help the indigents become self-reliant? The issue of charity tithe was strange to most of the discussants. Particularly, Discussant II felt the introduction of such could confuse the church. He felt it is not biblical, but he was educated that charity tithe is found in the Bible. Discussant III said that charity tithe is practised in his church, though un-structurally. Meanwhile, his explanation shows that he construed it as general personal charity given to needy individuals. However, Discussant I opined that charity tithes may be considered if the need for it arises, but the present structure for raising funds is sufficient and effective (workable) in his church. Discussant IV claims that his church recognises that charity tithe exists in the Bible but does not specifically practise it. Rather, conventional tithing is observed as one of the main sources of income of the church from where a percentage is dedicated to welfare in the church's annual budget.

Probe question: Don't you think the paucity of funds to help lift the poor out of penury will be easily realised through charity tithe? All discussants were sceptical about introducing more tithes to the most popular one currently practised. All of them agreed that no one should be exempted from paying the popularly known and practised tithe of ten percent.

Findings

i. UMCA does not have a uniform agenda and sustainable approach to alleviating poverty.
ii. The book of Deuteronomy made indigents within ancient Israel beneficiaries of the proceeds from tithe, but UMCA does not practise charity tithe; rather, even the poor are expected to pay tithe from whatever meagre resources they have.
iii. Although some of the churches have the intention of helping indigents attain economic self-reliance, the paucity of financial resources has made it impracticable because the approaches adopted have not been effective enough.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Christian community is an integral part of the global community. Therefore, it is important to access its sacred literature to see the faith's response to poverty and contextualise it for the contemporary situation. In this respect, I find respite in the book of Deuteronomy which makes the care of the poor a fundamental obligation of the affluent members of ancient Israel society. It is striking that Kantian theory of poverty is in congruence with the Deuteronomic prescription.

Therefore, UMCA needs to develop an agenda for poverty alleviation which should be vigorously pursued by each local assembly of the denomination because the current attitude to the plight of the poor is generally feeble. Care for the poor is a very cardinal teaching of the Bible that demands an intensity of purpose and passion. While the contemporary emphasis on tithing in UMCA does not exclude remittance from the poor members of the church, Deuteronomic prescription shows that the poor should be beneficiaries of proceeds of tithe, hence, the stipulations for charity tithe in addition to Levitical and festival tithes. At least, three different types of tithes are described in the Old Testament: a tithe to the Levites, who in turn tithed it to the priests (Num. 18:21-32); a tithe that was brought to the sanctuary and eaten "before the Lord" (Deut. 14:22-27); and a tithe every three years for the poor (Deut. 14: 28-29). This shows that a typical tithe-paying Israelite parted with at least 23% of his agricultural harvest as tithe per year. Comparatively, UMCA, like many other churches, has adopted a partial application of the Old Testament injunction on tithing, with emphasis on Levitical tithe based on Malachi's call against reneging in the observance of the tithing obligation (Malachi 3:6-12).

Charity tithe could be introduced by UMCA based on the principle inherent in the Deuteronomic prescription to supply palliatives for the poor as it was done in ancient Israel. The tithe will ensure a steady and consistent provision and sustenance for the poor members of the church and the society at large. The Deuteronomic prescription could be enhanced by directing the fund into sustainable empowerment in the form of setting up small-scale businesses for the beneficiaries of such tithes. This could be done in turn for the identified poor members of each church until each becomes financially independent and becomes a contributor to the central pool to help others in need of such funds. If charity tithing is adopted and adapted, the church will certainly contribute significantly to the realisation of the United Nation's agenda of poverty eradication in a very biblical way.

In summary, charity tithe is advocated as one of the sources through which UMCA and, by extension, the Church in Nigeria can mobilise significant resources, which fits into what the United Nations describes as "enhanced development cooperation." Also, the charity tithe aligns with the United Nation's yearning for sources that guarantee "adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions," as earlier cited.

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Biblical Interpretation and the Moral Function of Religion: Towards the Building of a Just and Equitable Society in Ghana

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Abstract

Christianity has become commonplace in Ghana today, but there is something unique about its realisation and expression. Among Ghanaian Christians, the Bible is applied as a document of faith and conduct in ways that pay minimal attention to the separation between religion and morality. This practice is like allegorical interpretation, which reads the Bible as a resource for learning about Christian religious values and how they influence what people do, how they live, and the effect of both on the development of an equal and just society. But naturally, allegory presupposes the age-old question about the moral function of religion generally, and, in this case, of the relationship between religion and morality in 'Ghanaian Christianities'. This paper argues that biblical exegetes in Ghana can lead the way toward a more systematic reading of the Bible from a moral perspective in the complex context of contemporary Ghana and the pluralism of faith it represents. It is suggested that a fruitful fulfilment of this difficult task can contribute significantly towards building a just and equitable Ghanaian society.

Keywords: Ghanaian exegetes; hermeneutics; Bible; morality; ethics

Introduction

Ghanaians profess the Christian faith with significant enthusiasm today, but like the early Christian community of Jerusalem, ordinary Ghanaian Christians worry less about critical questions about the Bible or its historicity. They live and believe with little attention to the historical materiality of Christianity. Ghanaian Christians transform and contextualise biblical faith beyond the cultural and historical(time-based) differences that separate biblical texts from contemporary life and culture. By applying texts of the Bible as spiritually authoritative and long-lasting documents, Ghanaian Christians find meaning and purpose in their day-to-day experiences. Theirs is a way of relating with the Bible that presumes unmediated similarities between biblical and Ghanaian cultures.[1]

However, understanding this unique way of relating to the Bible requires an examination of how Ghanaian Christians read and apply the Bible as a document of faith and conduct. On this premise, it is possible to understand popular approaches to biblical interpretation in Ghana as allegories[2] for a Christian perspectival value-praxis. This approach mimics the tradition of the Alexandrian school traced to Origen (ca 185 – 253CE)and promoted by the Church Fathers in early Christianity. Today, scholars believe that the meanings deduced from biblical literature using the allegorical method rarely convey the meanings intended by the text. However, for the early church, allegory served as a platform for understanding the Bible as both a standard of faith and conduct. Allegory allowed patristic exegetes to deduce moral lessons from the Bible.

Contemporary exegetes generally admit that the New Testament has elements of allegorical deduction of Old Testament ethics, such as Matthew's use of the golden rule in Mat 7:12 (see

[1]J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Beyond Text and Interpretation: The Bible as a Book of Sacred Power in African Christianity, "*Journal of African Christian Thought*, *10*(2) (2007), 18-23; J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu, "Growth and Trends in African Christianity in the 21st Century", in *Anthology of African Christianity*, eds. Isabel A. Phiri & Dietrich Werner, Chammah K. & Kennedy Owino, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2016), 65-75.

[2] Allegory is a technique by which concrete details in a text – people, events, places in which things occur – are explained as representing abstract ideas, entities, virtues or vices, or philosophical doctrines.

Tobit 4:15a) or the law of love of God and neighbour in Deut 6:5 and how Mark's use of it in as the interpretive parameter for the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue (see Mk 12:29-31). Thus, though exegetes point to the difficulties and misappropriation of the allegorical approach given contemporary critical methods, it does not mean that biblical interpretation for morality purposes should be abandoned. While patristic allegorical methods may not be the best fit for the modern Ghanaian context, there are historical and contemporary reasons why Ghanaian exegetes may want to advance context-relevant and scholarly-tested approaches to biblical interpretation that have space for morals.

Biblical interpretation in Africa dates to the beginnings of Christianity in places like Alexandria and Hippo[3]. From these North African beginnings, the allegorical interpretation of the Bible spread to the West and continued until the period of the Enlightenment. Historical critical methods developed in the 18th century and by the 20th century, other related critical approaches to biblical interpretation had developed. By this time, however, there is a reversal of the flow of biblical scholarship. Critical methods for biblical interpretation develop in the West and spread to Africa and other places until recently. Today, biblical scholars in Africa have come up with their own context-specific methods.[4] Unlike Western methods which concentrate on authorship and text, contemporary African scholarly methods are identifiable through their emphasis on "the communities that receive the text".[5]

Justin Ukpong identifies three phases of African methods of biblical interpretation: a) reactive-apologetic using comparative approach (Joseph John Williams approach, 1930s – 70s); b) reactive-proactive, using the African context as an interpretive resource with inculturation method and liberation readings (black theology, 1970s – 90s); and c) proactive exegesis with emphasis on the ordinary reader and context as subjects of interpretation (1990s – present times).[6]All three approaches relate in one way or another to the close connection between African Christianity and African

[3]Justin S. Ukpong, *The Bible in Afric: Transactions, trajectories and trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 11-28.

[4]Nlenanya Onwu, "The Current State of Biblical Studies in Africa," *Journal of Religious Thought, 41*(2) (Washington: Howard University Press, 1984), 35-46; Jurie Hendrik Le Roux, *A story of two ways: Thirty years of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa*(Pretoria: Verba Vitae, 1993).

[5] Ukpong, *The Bible in Africa*, 11.

[6] Ukpong, *The Bible in Africa*.

indigenous religious cosmologies and beliefs,[7] and especially the cultural, economic, social, and political contexts of Christian communities. The full implications of the development of scholarly biblical exegesis for the intuitive/allegorical common practice of the buzzing African churches under trees, tents, and temples cannot be fixed too quickly. But it remains a necessity to propel the process of synchronising the narrative of both traditions of biblical exegesis towards a deliberate and functional morality-oriented reading of biblical literature in Africa.

The Bible and Values

Despite the backdrop of increased Christian fervour, the media, civil society organisations, religious groups, and political parties in Ghana show tremendous concern that something is profoundly negative about the value motivations underlying the social, political, economic, and religious behaviour of people in Ghana. As observed by Kudaji, a Ghanaian ethicist, "there is irresponsibility, dishonesty, corruption, subterfuge; people of all walks of life … engage in … cheating, fraud, misappropriation, embezzlement, [and] nepotism".[8] A cursory look at social, political, and religious literature today will reveal that Kudajie's concerns are as current now as they were twenty years ago. Concerns about value orientations and motivations suggest that people in Ghana are failing in how they deal with ethical challenges in private and public life.

Beyond the specific context of Ghana, there are other reasons why critical discussions about the place of values in development are receiving renewed attention. For example, the current global agenda is to achieve sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, national and international peace, and global citizenship. Therefore, even amid contemporary Western liberalisation of values, the United Nations (UN) proposed the incorporation of values education as a core component of sustainable development education. This suggests the need for some generalisable instance of moral motivation and orientation for global sustainability.[9]

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[7] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

[8]Joshua N. Kudajie, *Moral renewal in Ghana: Ideals, realities, and possibilities* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, Christian Council of Ghana,1995), 48.

[9]UNESCO, "Education for Sustainable Development: Sourcebook," *Learning & Training Tools No.4* (Paris: UNESCO, 2012), 13. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/926unesco9.pdf

The term '(human) values', invariably means many things, but by it, we mostly imagine those desires and goals, which we have internalised as socially accepted standards, and which motivate our actions and judgment. This means there is something "communal" about values. Through upbringing in the family, church, school, and other socialising environments, we develop beliefs about what is desirable or undesirable and identify for ourselves judgments and skills of morality. Once formed, values govern our ways of behaving, communicating, and relating. Mostly, we have a value system rather than individual and unconnected values.

Our values are different from our attitudes to the extent that the latter consist of many beliefs coming together to form a disposition about one situation, object, or person. Values, on the other hand, are usually based on one's belief that enjoys relative stability, but which transcends specific situations, objects, or persons. Schwartz defines values "as desirable transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serves as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity."[10] This definition is, for our purposes here, rather broad, and more inclined towards social scientific or, specifically, social psychological perspectives of values.

In Christian ethics, scholars are more concerned with the extent to which values serve as motivations for virtue; they are interested in discussing what social scientists might single out as moral values, which are at the heart of any discussion about the Bible and values. It is here that the Bible emerges as an important resource for critical discussions on values and their relevance for the attainment of individual and national goals such as self-preservation and transformation, respect for human dignity, systematic development of a fair and just society, and the promotion of life beyond material development to the realisation of personal and communal spiritualities (ways of life) of magnanimity and peaceful co-existence. The cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, shared by classical philosophy and Christian theology, form the basis of the virtue theory in ethics. However, these virtues are not necessarily a monopoly of Western thought even if they have received much more systematic elaboration there. African communities hold similar virtues. They are taught at home to children in stories, daily instructions of good

[10]Shalom H. Schwartz, "An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values," *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2*(1) (2012). http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116

upbringing, and especially at liminal phases of developmental transitions such as naming, puberty, and marriage ceremonies. Other ceremonial realisations of these virtues are revealed at the making of chiefs and other traditional office holders and other such occasions. There are suggestions in the study of African religions that some of the factors for the attainment of ancestorhood are calculated against the extent to which a person realised these virtues.

The perspective of biblical interpretation as a resource for learning about values and how they influence what people do, how they live, and the effect of both on the development of an equal and just society naturally presupposes the age-old question about the moral function of religion. Different societies and times have had to answer the question about the role of religion in social integration. Do we need a shared morality? And if we do, to what extent can religion be the source of that morality? Does Christianity provide a source for values, and can it act as a resource for their realisation in the pursuit of a just and equitable society in Ghana? These questions are not new, but they recur differently in each age and time because of varying needs and contexts. In the paragraphs that follow, I seek to discuss the question of the Bible and values from the perspective of the moral function of religion in social contexts and briefly consider related issues that should be of interest to the exegete and Christian ethicist.

African Christianities and Challenges of Biblical Interpretation for Morals

As a site for Western scholarship on values and ethics, secularism provides the opportunity to raise the question about the importance of religion to social integration. Among other things, secularism was experienced as a democratisation of values, a heightened sense of individual moral agency, self-determination, rejection of (institutional) religion or belief, and/or the reorienting of Christian ethics to suit the utilitarian ethics and egoistic psychology of society. Today, the literature[11] describes a new situation that is plural and post-secular. An elementary way of understanding secularism is to think of it as a philosophy in which the question about the validity of Christianity or religion generally is considered to have been successfully taken out of the social

[11] Jürgen Habermas et al., *An Awareness of what is missing: Faith and reason in a post-secular age*, trans. Ciaran Crown (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

domain and restricted to the individual and private sphere.[12] There is a higher concern for humanistic values and the need to make room for as many, and as varied, different realsations of values in a shared global space. This means that in the West, emphasis on pluralism is challenging previous paradigms of universality and objectivity.[13] This historical note on the context of the West is important because of the tendency to quickly extend the secular/post-secular perspective to societies in Africa in unqualified ways.

However, one wonders whether the experience of modernism in the West and the characteristics that qualify the experience fully explain the contemporary experiences of communities in Africa. The critical interrogation of the globalising influence of dominant Western social theories and philosophies and their effect on social processes in the Ghanaian context may, therefore, be one of the major challenges facing exegetes who seek to engage in a systematic and scholarly reading of the Bible from a moral point of view. They will have to navigate the intricate environment of Western domination of Africa and the domestication of the West in African religiosity.

There is a flourishing of what is now referred to as 'African Christianity'; or to specify its varieties, the term 'Christianities' is used,[14] usually, to refer to the mission churches, Africa Initiated Churches (AICs), and the Charismatic and Pentecostal Christian traditions that are growing quickly across the continent. Mission churches such as mainline Protestant and Catholic churches in Africa may complain about losing members, but this loss, unlike in Europe and America, does not spell the slackening or rejection of Christianity generally. It is richly compensated for by the impressive numeric growth of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Independent churches. At churches on Sundays and other specified days, but also, nearly all days of the week, at markets, bus terminals, and places set aside for faith healing, one cannot miss the pulsating religious fervour of the average Ghanaian. Scholars

[12]Charles Taylor, *A secularage* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Bryan Wilson, "The Secularization Thesis: Criticisms and Rebuttals," in R. Laermans, B. Wilson and J. Billiet, eds. *Secularization and social integration* (Leuven: Leuven University Press).

[13]Simon K. Appiah, "Thinking Africa in Postmission Theology: Implications for Global Theological Discourse," *Exchange*, *51*(4), (Brill: Leiden, 2022), 343-360.

[14]Paul Kollman, "Classifying African Christianities: Past, Present, and Future: Part One," *Journal of Religion in Africa, 40*(1), (Brill: Leiden, 2010), 3-32; Asenzo Ukah, "African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems," in *Arbeitspapiere/Working Papers Nr.* 79, (University of Mainz: Mainz, 2007).

believe that these expressions of Christianity thrive and thrive so well because they base fundamentally on Ghanaian indigenous religious worldviews that mission churches previously dismissed or gave little attention to.

In indigenous African worldviews, there is a union of the spiritual and material, and the expectations of the benefits of religion are equally envisaged to be both material and spiritual. Material wellbeing, freedom from the harm of physical and spiritual evil, success in business and life generally, the absence of calamity and tragedy, and harmony between the living, the ancestors, and the yet-unborn in a balanced relationship with the gods and other spiritual beings are among the important characteristics of the indigenous religious cosmology.[15] The spiritual is not the binary of the material, but the vital force permeating life, making all reality and the experience of it more than the ordinary, so that results of religious practice are expected to be active, visible, and, as much as possible, immediate.

This way of understating Ghanaian Christian religiosity paints a rather harmonious picture of things, but it also throws a formidable challenge to the exegete who seeks to read the Bible from a moral perspective, because the religious landscape of Ghana is more complex than it is impressive. The complexity is apparent in the fact that while building strongly on indigenous worldviews, Ghanaian Christianity insists it is not "Traditional Religion." Ghanaian Christianity poses as the liberator of people from the evils and satanic elements of Traditional Religion. Indeed, the ascendancy of African Christianity frequently finds expression through the demonisation of Traditional Religion and, to some extent, by subverting key traditional values that secured social integration in pre-Christian Ghana. For example, scholars who studied Ghanaian values from about 1950 into the mid-1970s found that common cross-ethnic (shared) basic values in Ghana were 'communitarianism', respect for life, and humanism, around which other values revolved.[16]

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[15]J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African charismatics: Current developments within independent indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*. (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Kingsley Larbi, "African Pentecostalism in the Context of Global Pentecostal Ecumenical Fraternity: Challenges and Opportunities." *Pneuma, 24*(2) (Brill: Leiden, 2002), 138-166; Laurenti Magesa, *African religion: The moral traditions of abundant life*. (Orbis Books, 2014), 27; Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "The Problematic of Exorcism and Spiritual Warfare: A Dialogue with Apostle Dr Opoku Onyinah," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association,* 37(1), (Brill: Leiden, 2017), 68-79.

[16]Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Values in African Tribal Life," in *Modern Africa,* Peter J. M. McEwan, and Robert B. Sutcliffe, eds, (Ohio: Crowell, 1965), 55-57;

Contemporary research, however, suggests that Pentecostal Christianity in Africa may be transforming the value of communalism into non-communalistic spiritualities fit for today's neo-liberal economies (Freeman, 2012; van Dike, 2012; Piot, 2012).[17]Freeman, for example, clearly paints a picture of the revolution in the transformation of values engendered by Pentecostal Christianity:

> [F]or many Africans one of the main barriers to accumulating wealth is the pressure to participate in traditional practices, such as rites of passage or rituals of commensality, and the constant demands for financial support from poorer kin. Redistribution, in one form or another, is inherent in most traditional African religions and moral systems, and it makes personal accumulation virtually impossible. By linking these traditional practices with the devil, … Pentecostalism makes avoidance of them, and separation from more distant kin, intensely and aggressively moral, and thus enables the emergence of previously impossible behaviours.[18]

Thus, Ghanaian Christianity can be experienced both as a blessing and a challenge in the values landscape. Christianity may be alive and active, but at the same time, it embodies tremendous energies of social change and values transformation in ways unique to our times and context. Since the Pentecostal wave is to be found even in the mission or mainline churches, biblical exegetes in Ghana who seek to explore the Bible as a resource for discussing the role of values in national development must also seek to understand the contours of Ghanaian Christianities and the place of the Bible in each of them. Exegetes must position themselves to respond beyond the euphoria of Ghanaian Christian fervour and reach into

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Patrick Akoi, *Religion in Africansocial heritage* (Rome: Pontifical Urban University, 1970); Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in retrospect: Some aspects of Ghanaian culture*. (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974).

[17]Dena Freeman, ed, *Pentecostalism and development: Churches, NGOs and social change in Africa* (New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan, 2012);Charles Piot, "Pentecostal and Development Imaginaries in West Africa," in *Pentecostalism and development* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 111-133.

[18]Freeman, *Pentecostalism and development*, p. 21.

the conflict of values that naturally attends the transition from African traditional religious culture to African Christian culture.

It cannot be overemphasised that by discussing the Bible as a resource for values, the Ghanaian exegete is faced with answering questions about the moral function of religion because of the complexities of Ghanaian Christianities and their place in an environment of tenacious traditional religious worldviews. In this way, the Ghanaian exegete can promote biblical perspectives on Christian values needed to build a just and equitable society. But the challenge may be how to achieve this goal in a situation where Ghanaian Christianities fully endorse traditional worldviews of blessing, which, according to Freeman, is "generally understood as health, wealth and fecundity – and [minimizing] misfortune."[19] The challenge is even greater when, in addition to the promotion of this immanence and materiality of religious blessing, individualism is emphasised as a legitimate religious value, contrary to the expectations of the indigenous ethos of communitarianism.

In addition to these complexities of Ghanaian Christianity, other contextually contending issues attract the attention of the Ghanaian exegete in studying the Bible as a resource for the promotion of values in society. Consider, for example, the religion-politics nexus and its ramifications in the pragmatics of the motivations underlying pro- and contra-social behaviour. There are multiple levels of contact between religion and politics in Ghana through the provision of social services such as education, health, welfare, and other areas of life. The conduct of citizens is informed by religion and politics together, though anecdotal sources are concerned about the politicisation of religion in Ghana. Social media, especially in the wake of President Akufo-Addo's ambition for the construction of a national cathedral, have been participating in this debate in recent times. But what emerges as a more logical cause for worry and which must be of interest to biblical interpretation for good conduct is the risk of the reversal of roles between religion and politics in the Ghanaian polity. For, it might be possible to consider political values without recourse to religion, but it is a contradiction to envisage a religion built on political rather than moral values.

The social crisis experienced because of a similar subversion of roles, that is, basing religion on political rather than moral values, in the history of the people of Israel, occupies attention in the narratives of the Hebrew Bible. What is intended by this

[19] Ibid.

statement is that portions of the Hebrew Bible criticise its audience for rejecting the rule of Yahweh, their God, and desiring to be like other nations that have kings. In this way, they were destabilising the religious principle by which they were constituted into a people; they were choosing a political organisation over a religious organisation. This move is condemned because it invariably ended in practical acts against their social and individual ethics of fairness, equity, and justice (see, for example, sections of prophetic literature).[20]On this point, the exegetes of Ghana, like those of biblical times, have a difficult task to fulfil. Theirs is the responsibility of reading the Bible as a resource for promoting Christian values that are required for building a just society in Ghana because of the conflation of religion and politics. In addition to this is the attendant craving for prosperity, a natural human desire that has found fertile ground in new interpretations of the Gospel.[21] Put together, this situation makes it even more urgent for exegetes to take up the task of proposing the Bible as a resource for discovering important national values.

The Moral Function of Religion

Whether morality requires religion or not is a question that is as old as it is topical. We can, for example, recall the famous question of Socrates recorded in the *Euthyphro* as to whether the gods command something because it is good, or whether something is good because it is commanded by the gods,[22]himself opting for the former view.

However, for most of the time in the history of Christian ethics, it is assumed that there is a direct link between religion and morality.[23]Thus, Dostoevsky, for example, tersely says, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted."[24]Whereas Dostoevsky was concerned with moral psychology (how morality can be enforced without God),for Socrates, it was a question about logic (how

[20]Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, ed, *Priests and cults in the book of the twelve* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).

[21]Paul Gifford, *Ghana's new Christianity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[22]Plato. *Five dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*(2nd ed). G. M. A. Grube, trans. Revised by J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).

[23]Howard O. Mounce, "Morality and Religion," in *Philosophy of religion: A guide to the subject*, ed, Brian Davies (London: Cassell, 1998), 253-285.

[24]Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The brothers Karamazov.* R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, trans. (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990, Original work published 1880).

morality could be coherent without the existence of God). Ordinarily, people are not always conscious of these two sides of the dilemma when they raise the question about the connection between morality and religion. One wonders if one would find any direct answer to this question from the Bible without a theological or faith perspective. But the question is not limited to Western Christianity and its Greek philosophical foundations. The question has been considered in different ways across history and has usually been much debated with one faction arguing there is a positive connection between religion and morality and the other that there isn't. A brief discussion of both sides of the debate can improve our understanding of the matter.

Disconnecting Religion and Morality

Today, scholars of the psychology of religion, cognitive science, and the study of religions contest the view that there is a positive connection between religion and morality for lack of evidence to support it. For instance, Richard Dawkins believes that "faith can be very very[sic] dangerous, and deliberately to implant it into the vulnerable mind of an innocent child is a grievous wrong."[25] Like Dawkins, atheists generally are quick to reject any connection between religion and morality. Daniel Dennett, for example, argues that the moral stance of society is sustained by those who do not wait for God to clean up the folly of humans.[26]Others who oppose the argument of a positive connection between religion and morality simply point to the fact that moral inclinations in humans are but a part of their evolution, which develop quite naturally without religious socialisation.[27] For most of the time, however, opponents of the connection between morality and religion invariably point to the paradox of moral and natural evil.[28]For instance, John Mackie argues that if God is absolutely good and the source of all goodness, then, there should be no evil in the world. Since there is evil in the world, we must conclude that there is no God, or if there is, then he is not all good. For Mackie, neither the

[25]Richard Dawkins, *The God delusion*. (London, UK: Transworld, 2006), 348.

[26]Daniel C. Dennett, "The Bright Stuff," *New York Times,* (2003, July 12), 11. Retrieved from http://www.the-brights.net/vision/essays/dennett_nyt_article.html

[27]Ilkka Pyysiaïnen, & Marc Hauser, "The Origins of Religion: Evolved Adaptation or By-product?," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 14* (London: Elsevier, 2010), 104–109. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2009.12.007

[28]John L. Mackie, *The Miracle of theism. Arguments for and against the existence of God* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1982).

logical nor psychological reasons for the connection between religion and morality should apply in the face of natural catastrophes and human wickedness.[29]

Away from the philosophy of religion, empirical research also opposes any positive connection between religion and morality. For example, in the 1ate 1960s, Hirschi and Stark, in their influential study among young people in California, failed to find the alleged relationship between lack of religion and delinquency.[30] According to them, church attendance did not influence how young people thought about delinquency or whether they engaged in delinquent acts. These studies and even those of more moderate inclinations point to the fact that there is no clear-cut indication about the moral function of religion.

However, notwithstanding this strong opposition to any attempt to relate morality with religion, Marquette makes an important point to which we should return when we try to understand empirical studies that disclaim any connection between religion and morality. Based on her review of many empirical studies regarding the moral function of religion, Marquette arrives at the following conclusion:

> attitudes towards deviant behaviour show that individuals' interpretation of messages on moral behaviour is significant in terms of determining their acceptance or rejection of deviancy, but there is little evidence to suggest that the religious will reject behaviour that is 'anti-social' any more than the non-religious.[31]

Marquette's conclusion indicates that the findings of empirical studies explain the relationship between a person's religiosity and their readiness to engage in anti-social behaviour more than they explain the connection between religion and morality as such. This means that the findings of empirical studies cannot be used to deny the application of the Bible as a resource for critical debate on values for nation building. This view finds even stronger support

[29]Mackie, *The miracle of theism*

[30]Travis Hirsch &Rodney Stark, "Hellfire and Delinquency," *Social Problems,* 17(2), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 202-213

[31]Heather Marquette, "Corruption, Religion and Moral Development," in *Handbook of research on development and religion,* ed, Matthew Clark (Cheltenham, UK**:** Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), 25.

among scholars who argue that literature, sacred or secular, plays a central role in narrative ethics.[32]

Connecting Morality to Religion

Proponents of a positive moral function of religion view the matter differently from those who reject any relationship between religion and morality. That religion has a positive connection with morality, as earlier noted, has been part of the intuition of many cultures. However, the problem is to determine just how this connection works. Proponents of the moral function of religion believe that religious people will craft their moral system from their religion and that non-religious people also have their morality influenced by religion if they share a cultural heritage. Though non-religious people may deny any such influence, they are not for that matter left out, since religion provides the source for morality in society. This means that "the primary social function of religion lies in the area of corporate morality", a thought that Robin Gill holds to be deep seated in the West.[33]

Gill refers to Comte, who thought that since religion is so important for morality in society, it was important to find equally effective alternatives to take the place of religion if there was to be any success in reducing the role of religion in society. For some time, this idea that other social systems could take the place of religion as a key factor in the integration of traditional societies represented the French intellectual tradition. This tradition believed that such substitutes would serve as a vehicle for the masses to internalise social values. But it is not so with Durkheim, who thought that religion has lost social credibility and societies would have to continue without it, proposing reason as the best option out of the situation.

According to Gill, the same debate raged on the topic among theologians in the 1960s. For example, H. L. A. Hart and Patrick Devlin argued against each other as did Don Cupitt and John Habgood.[34] In the case of the last two, that is, Habgood and Cupitt, Habgood disavowed Cupitt's tendency to purge Christianity of its

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[32]Athena E. Gorospe, *Narrative and identity: An ethical reading of Exodus 4* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Richard C. Allen, "When narrative fails," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 21(1), (Toronto: Willey & Sons, 1991), 27-67; Adam Z. Newton, *Narrative ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Dan P. McAdams, *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of self* (New York and London: Guilford, 1993).

[33]Robin Gill, *Christian ethics in secular worlds* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 97.

[34]Gill, *Christian Ethics*, 98-100.

transcendental content and reduce it to no more than a moral code or a guide to living. Habgood insisted that Christianity has a specific and crucial social function, believing that when a pluralistic state comes under threat of disintegration, it is religious values that can protect it more adequately than any other alternative.[35]Similarly, one finds support in more recent literature[36]for the positive connection between religion and morality. Though she contests a simplistic understanding of the connection between religion and morality in her wide-ranging review of literature on the topic, Marquette discusses works that illustrate how what is considered to be a decline in morals can be attributed to "increased secularisation".[37]She refers, for example, to Marijke ter Voert et al., who explain from multi-dimensional perspectives how religion positively influences pro-social behaviour such as disapproval of tax cheating and other financial offences.[38] Some of the reasons proffered for this religion-morality connection include the fact that by locating moral systems in sacred and supernatural realities, religion tends to bolster the authority of moral standards. By so doing, religious people find a reliable and non-arbitrary moral orientation to live by.[39]There is not much room in this paper for comparing this religious imagination of moral psychology with its well-known Enlightenment alternative of the autonomous moral psychology theory of Kant and its development in Kholberg's experimental research.[40] For Kant, the autonomy of

[35]Gill, *Christian Ethics*.

[36]Azim Shariff, "Does Religion Increase Moral Behavior?"*Current Opinion in Psychology* 6 (London: Elsevier, 2015), 108-113; Ali M. Ahmed, "Are Religious People More Prosocial? A Quasi-experimental Study with Madrasah Pupils in a Rural Community in India," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48(2) (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 368-374.

[37]Marquette, *Corruption, religion and moral development*, 8; Will M. Gervais, Azim F. Shariff, and Ara Norenzayan. "Do You Believe in Atheists? Distrust is Central to Anti-atheist Prejudice," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*(6) (New York: American Psychological Association, 2011),11-89; Will M. Gervais, "In Godlessness We Distrust: Using Social Psychology to Solve the Puzzle of Anti-atheist Prejudice," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass 7*(6) (Toronto: John Willey & Sons, 2013), 366-377; Rodney Stark, "Religion as Context: Hellfire and Delinquency One More Time," *Sociology of Religion*, 57(2), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163-73.

[38]Marquette, *Corruption, Religion and Moral Development,* citing Marijke ter Voert, Albert Felling, and Jan Peters, "The Effect of Religion on Self-Interest morality," *Review of Religious Research, 35*(4) (June 1994), 302-323.

[39]Frederick B. Bird, "How Do Religions Affect Moralities? A Comparative Analysis," *SocialCompass, 37* (California: Sage, 1990), 291-314.

[40]Immanuel Kant, *Grounding of the metaphysics of morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Lawrence Kohlberg, "From is to Ought: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away with it in The Study of Moral Development," in *Cognitive development and epistemology,* ed, T. Mischel (New York: Academic Press, 1971),

the will defines the capacity of an individual for authoring the moral rules he or she lives by. On such a premise, Kohlberg argues that moral autonomy is the highest level of moral development.

But while research is not conclusive on the matter of moral motivation, it can be assumed that good conduct will be shaped in some way by the quality of the relationship that people of a moral system have with their source of moral authority. Ethical principles cannot be based on mere inclination or needs and emotions. Morality needs criteria that ground the moral *ought* on some consistent and clear foundation. In the absence of such moral clarity, people must rely on "prevailing circumstances" where morality tends to be relative.[41]

Ter Voert et al. argue that this need for clearly identifiable foundations of morality must be part of the reasons accounting for the assumption that strong Christian believers are more likely to disapprove anti-social behaviour than those who are low on Christian belief. This means religion provides moral spaces within which the moral code can be reaffirmed. People who actively participate in these moral spaces "will adopt more strict moral values."[42]

It is to be expected that some Christian denominations may be more outright in strengthening and enforcing a moral code than others, and Ter Voert et al., citing Bird, locate this interdenominational variation in "the ways and degrees to which they directly foster personal feelings of moral acceptability and moral excellence."[43]In this regard, Marx Weber held that Calvinist Christians were more motivated to adhere to a strict moral code than Catholics.[44]Be that as it may, the proposal is that religion has a role to play in motivating religious people to engage in good conduct. In the case of Christianity in Ghana, exegetes have a contribution to make through the way they promote a moral reading of the Bible.

151-235; Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Claim to Moral Adequacy of a Highest Stage of Moral Judgment," *The Journal of Philosophy*, *70* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1973), 630-646.

[41]Ter Voert et al., *Effect of religion on self-interest morality*, 305

[42] Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Max Weber, *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 27-277.

Conclusion

The debate about the moral function of religion, as presented above, takes its structure from the history of Western philosophy and Christian scholarship. Its relevance to values development and transformation in the Ghanaian/African context must, however, be measured with caution; care must be taken to not superimpose the experience of the West on African communities. But the attempt to comprehend Western thought about how religion and morality relate and to cautiously apply such an understanding for solving a similar dilemma in a Ghanaian indigenous setting can show how the Western approach overlooks the extent to which the culture of a people enables them to live morally. "This is because the religious self-interpretation of a people usually follows as a second step to their cultural and historical experiences. The attribution of elements of their life to some supreme or divine power is more a matter of theological innovation which then sets the tone for their self-interpretation and identity. Therefore culture, religion, and philosophy of life usually converge in a people's ethos. At this level, morality is more relational than rational."[45]

This way of understanding culture and religion is key to biblical interpretation and to other narratives that constitute the communal memory of a people. From the perspective of narrative ethics, there is a sense in which values can be viewed as composites of identity and morality, which are expressed and realised through the stories we tell about ourselves and those others tell about us.[46]

There is certainly a need for a critical discussion about values in Ghana today and biblical exegetes need to contribute to the debate by promoting the Bible as a resource, given the palpable signs of the importance of Christianity in Ghana today. Based on the presumed significance of Christianity for most Ghanaians, it can also be presumed that they see a positive connection between the Christian religion and values. For Christian ethicists, values specifically concern motivations of virtue. Whether the moral function of religion is disputed or not, there is enough evidence from different cultures and religions that people associate religion with morality; it is, at least, taken for granted that religion will promote morality.

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[45] Simon K. Appiah, *Africanness-inculturation-ethics: in search of the subject of an inculturated Christian ethic* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 59-60.

[46]Dan P. McAdams, *The stories we live by.*

Part of the many challenges that may confront the Ghanaian exegete who seeks to engage in biblical interpretation to promote moral lessons will be the inadvertent transfer of Western constructs to the Ghanaian context. But this may not achieve the desired results because of obvious differences in the cultural and religious histories of different peoples. For instance, the processes of secularisation in Europe and America have led to the conceptualisation of morality and religion as binary operations. But this experience of Europe and America does not necessarily represent the Ghanaian experience in which the connection between religion and morality is part of how the average person appropriates the Bible for daily life. Thus, Christians in Ghana would seem to answer the question about the moral function of religion by adducing evidence of the ability of their Christianity to make them morally capable in line with their indigenous religio-moral cosmology.

Ghanaian exegetes can make significant contributions to the moral transformation of society and to balancing the prosperity narrative with that of moral responsibility. From the perspective of narrative ethics, values can be said to be bundles of ideal stories, and a crisis of values in a society may well be a crisis of interpretation of individual and group narratives. In the field of interpretation, none is more capable than the exegete. Biblical exegetes of Ghana, therefore, have a tremendous role to play in the reinterpretation of values for building a true, just, and equitable society.

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Esau's Wives and the Question of Cross-Ethnic Marriage in Genesis

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Abstract

Esau's marriage to Hittite women has been explained by many as a wrongful act that placed him outside the chosen family. By this interpretation, commentators over the years have overtly and covertly endorsed ethnocentrism. As African readers, what are we to make of such interpretations, in the complex context of multiple ethnicities in Africa? In this paper, I interrogated the issue of cross-ethnic marriages in the Old Testament, using the case of Esau and his wives. Isolating three texts that focus on Esau's marriage (Gen 26:45, 27:46, and 28: 1-9), and using literary analysis, I read the texts in a way that suppresses the ethnocentric overtones of the narrative. This was achieved mainly through exploring the gaps within the narratives. My reading revealed that there was no explicit condemnation by the narrator of Esau's marriage to Hittite women. It was also revealed that the behaviour of Esau's wives towards their in-laws, not their ethnic background, was the source of strife. Since a poor management of the high ethnic and cultural diversities in African countries can lead to conflicts, African biblical scholars need to interrogate ethnocentric narratives through a constructive engagement with the Bible.

Keywords

Esau, ethnic, ethnocentrism, Hittite, Isaac, marriage, Rebecca, wives

Introduction

Genesis 27:46 reports Rebecca's request to Isaac concerning Hittite women. She expresses her discontent for these women and seeks to prevent her son, Jacob, from taking a wife of such background. However, her other son, Esau, has two wives of Hittite background, with whom Rebecca, for some reason, is displeased (cf. Gen 26:35). She points to the ethnic background of her daughters-in-law and insists that her son, Jacob, desist from getting a wife from the same ethnic background. In this, Rebecca appears to be ethnocentric in her reasoning.[1] As African readers, what are we to make of Rebecca's comment? Writing on the topic "Addressing Ethnicity via Biblical Studies: A Task for African Biblical Scholars", Peter Nyende, a Bible scholar from Kenya, strongly argues for African biblical scholars to pay more attention to how the Bible can address problems of ethnicity on the continent.[2]Nyende is very much aware of the scars ethnic clashes have left on the African continent, including his home country.[3] However, discourses on ethnocentrism in Africa mostly dwell on ethnic clashes between groups and ethnic politics. For instance, in buttressing his point on ethnic crises on the African continent, Nyende gives the example of the Rwanda genocide which involved clashes between the *Abatutsi* and the *Abahutu*.[4] Ethnic problems on the African continent, however, manifest in other subtle ways apart from the dominant and overt clashes between different ethnic

[1]In this paper, ethnicity "refers to the social ideology of human division sorted according to common culture." See J. A. Manickam, "Race, Racism and Ethnicity," in William Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, eds. *Global Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove (Illinois): InterVarsity Press, 2008), 718. Ethnocentrism, on the other hand, is "The sentiment of cohesion, internal comradeship, and devotion to the in-group, which carries with it a sense of superiority to any out-group and readiness to defend the interests of the in-group against the out-group …", W. G. Summer, *War and Other Essays* (Freeport: Yale University Press, 1911), p. 11.

[2]Peter Nyende, "Addressing Ethnicity via Biblical Studies: A Task of African Biblical Scholarship," *Neotestamentica*, 44, no. 1 (2010): 122.

[3]Adam Ashforth, "Democracy in the Aftermath of the 2007 Kenyan Elections," *Public Culture* 2, no. 1 (2009): 9-19; Brigitte Rohwerder, *Conflict Analysis of Kenya* (University of Birmingham, Birmingham: GSDRC, 2015).

[4]Nyende, "Addressing Ethnicity via Biblical Studies," 129.

groups. Boris Bizumić, for instance, explains that ethnocentrism "could contribute to direct (i.e., overt, brief, episodic, sporadic) kinds of violence among ethnic groups, such as ethnic wars …" and "to structural (i.e., slow, covert, societally arranged) kinds of violence …".[5]Indeed, ideas of ethnic superiority may first be displayed in the everyday traditions of a people, such as marriage and friendship. These perceptions of ethnic differences, when ignored, cement concrete ideas of ethnic uniqueness and progress into myths of ethnic superiority. In addressing ethnic problems, therefore, there is the need to pay attention to the covert and latent ethnocentric traditions to openly confront them and prevent the possibility of these traditions simmering. One such tradition is the aversion some people have toward cross-ethnic marriages.

In this study, I seek to interrogate the issue of cross-ethnic marriages in the Old Testament, using the case of Esau and his wives. I place the texts that dwell on this subject (Gen. 26:45; Gen 27:46, and Gen 28:86-8) under what Nyende calls "problem texts". By "problem texts", Nyende refers to portions of the Bible "which can be seen to teach ethnocentrism directly, and whose teaching then, rather than addressing corrosive ethnic issues actually appears to foster them."[6] I see the chosen texts as having this potential, thus, necessitating an interpretation that takes their meaning away from ethnocentric sentiments. I focus on the texts by exploring through literary analyses how ethnocentric sentiments can be relegated. Because I intend to read the texts purposefully to suppress ethnocentric ideas, I pay close attention to the gaps in the texts, which I see as opportunities that the texts give readers to shape their construction of meaning.[7] I argue that the resentment Isaac and Rebecca had for Esau's wives has little to do with their ethnic background as Hittite women. Rather, it is the lived experiences between the in-laws which is the source of the tension and resentment. Also, Jacob's marriage into the household of Laban, his uncle, is a consequential fallout of Rebecca's attempt to

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[5]Boris Bizumić, "Theories of Ethnocentrism and their Implications for Peace building," *Peace Psychology in the Balkans: Dealing with a Violent Past while Building Peace*ed. Olivera Simić, Zala Volčič, and Catherine R. Philpot (New York: Springer, 2012), 36.

[6]Nyende, "Addressing Ethnicity via Bible Studies," 129.

[7]Gaps are important features of biblical narratives. According to Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Literary Biblical Series; Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 235, a gap is a "lack of information about the world—an event, motive, causal link, character trait, plot structure, law of probability." Gaps allow readers to use their imagination to enter the story world and participate in the creation of meaning.

prevent bloodshed between brothers. My reading pays less attention to the history behind the texts.

Esau and His Wives

Esau is the elder son of Isaac and Rebecca. He is the twin of Jacob and the grandson of Abraham. The first time we learn of Esau's marriage is in Gen 26:34, where we are told that he married Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath, daughter of Elon the Hittite. Upon learning of Isaac's requesting of Jacob to go to their kinsmen for a wife in Paddan Aram, Esau also took to himself as a wife Mahalath, daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth (Gen 28:9). Esau, thus, ends up with three wives: Judith, Basemath, and Mahalath. However, in Gen 36:2-3, we find a different list of names for Esau's wives. Here, we read Adah, daughter of Elon the Hittite; Oholibamah, daughter of Anah, daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; and Basemath, daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nebaioth. Not only do we have different names, but also an overlap of the names concerning their origins. Thus, Basemath in Gen 26:34 is said to be a Hittite, while in 36:3, she is the daughter of Ishmael.

Scholars have tried to explain the inconsistencies in the accounts.[8] Several proposals have been put forward, including the approach which explains that the differences imply that Esau may have had five or six wives. This means that the lists are reporting all the women that Esau married. Others explain by proposing two ways of name variation—first, that each wife had two names and, second, that each wife was renamed.[9] A more popular explanation is that the different names result from different lists and traditions and that the wives were only three.[10]

Moving away from the difficulty of the names and number of Esau's wives, what is of major concern here is the nature of the marriage between Esau and the women and how the marriage was perceived by Esau's family. Traditional readings tend to point out that Esau broke the family tradition of how marriage was

[8] Jed H. Abraham, "A Literary Solution to the Name Variations of Esau's Wives," *Torah U-Madda Journal* 7 (1997):1-14; Abraham, "Esau's Wives," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 25:4 (1997):251-259. See Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 174-181, where Gen 36 is specifically shown to be an example of genealogical fluidity, including Esau's wives.

[9] For more details see Reuven Chaim Klein, "The Wives of Esau" *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 42, 4 (2014): 211-220.

[10] R. J. D. Knauth, "Esau, Edomites," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 223.

contracted and, as a result, ostracised himself from the family.[11]Abraham, Esau's grandfather, played a central role in contracting a wife for his son, Isaac. Abraham was insistent on finding a wife from his family in Mesopotamia (Gen 24). Two things are essential here: the first is that Abraham as a father played a role in getting a wife for his son. This may be construed as a parentally-arranged marriage. Interestingly, Hagar appears to be the first to have carried out this parentally-arranged marriage when she sought a wife for Ishmael in Egypt (Gen 21:21). We later see Isaac also playing a role in helping Jacob get a wife (Gen 28:1-5). Second, all wives in these parentally-arranged marriages have a common background with their in-laws. So, in the case of Ishmael, the wife was from Egypt, Hagar's hometown. Rebecca is Abraham's "grand-daughter"[12] (daughter of Bethuel who is Abraham's nephew). Thus, Jacob was directed to go to his uncle who was to help him get a wife. So far, in Esau's marriage, we see what appears to be a deviation from the two principles: he marries women of different ethnic descent and contracts the marriages himself. Nahum M. Sarna argues that Esau "commits a threefold offense: breaking with social convention by contracting the marriage himself rather than leaving the initiative to his parents; abandoning the established practice of endogamy by marrying outside the kinship group; and violating the honour of his clan by intermarrying with the native women."[13] How true are these assertions by Sarna? Below, I interrogate three texts that talk about Esau and his wives.

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[11] Among the early modern scholars to express negativity about Esau's marriage is John Skinner. He writes, "But the unedifying stories of Jacob's treachery, which were the essential link of connexion between them, are here omitted; and a new motive is introduced, viz., the inadmissibility of intermarriage with the inhabitants of Canaan. By transgressing this unwritten law, Esau forfeits his title to the 'blessing of Abraham,' which is thus transferred to Jacob"; *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Scribner, 1910): 374. John Calvin earlier had this to say of Esau's marriage, "Inasmuch as he mingled himself with the inhabitants of the land, from whom the holy race of Abraham was separated, and contracted affinities by which he became entangled; this was a kind of prelude of his rejection," *Calvin's Commentaries: Genesis*. electronic ed. (Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries), S. Ge 26:34.

[12] Among most Akan ethnic groups, of which I am part, one's nephew's daughter is one's granddaughter.

[13]Nahum M Sarna, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 189.

a. Gen 26: 34-35

Sarna's evaluative conclusion on Esau's marriage is highly contestable when we pay close attention to the three texts that relate to Esau and his wives. The first is Gen 26:34-35, which reads:

wayhî ʻēśāw ben-ʼarbāʻîm śānāh wayyiqaḥ ʼiššāh
ʼet-yəhûdît bat-bəʼrî haḥitî wəʼet-bāśmat bat-ʼêlon
haḥitî

When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite[14]

Esau emerges here as the main protagonist of his marriage. It is he who takes for himself wives, and like his father, he marries at the age of forty. In his father's case, however, he was passive in the entire arrangement, as it was Abraham's servant who facilitated the marriage arrangements upon the behest of his master (Gen 24). Father and son are similar in terms of the age at which they marry, but both assume different roles in their marriage arrangements. Esau's sole initiative in his marriage becomes difficult to comprehend when compared, for example, to the marriages of Isaac and Jacob, respectively. So why did Esau decide to initiate marriage on his own? Could this be one of the reasons why the marriage was displeasing to his parents (Gen 26:35)? Scholars such as Sarna who see Esau as making a mistake in arranging marriage on his own need also to answer the question: where were the parents? After all, marriage customs are scarcely an individual affair. Rebecca's indifference can be excused on the basis that she was less attached to Esau (see Gen 25:28) and so might have been less concerned with what her son does. On the contrary, there seems to be no excuse for Isaac and it is an indictment on his role as a father not to have been involved in his son's marriage. As a father, he has a greater responsibility in directing his household to follow family traditions. Can the failure on his part be construed as the absence of any such tradition?

Indeed, R. C. Heard takes the position of the absence of tradition when he argues that some scholars err in making the

[14] All translations are from *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, except otherwise stated.

hasty conclusion that Abraham's instructions to his servant to take a wife for Isaac constitute a tradition of parental marriage arrangements.[15] If tradition is understood here as a long-established pattern of behaviour in a group that is passed down from generation to generation, then, Heard has a good point in questioning the line of argument that sees Esau as breaking tradition in initiating his marriage. In the first place, we do not know whether Terah arranged Abraham's marriage for him. Again, if the so-called tradition began with Abraham, then, the pattern put forth is that a servant goes to the kindred family and contracts a wife for the master's son (the case of the background of the wife will be considered later). We do not see this pattern play out in Jacob's case. Jacob himself goes to Laban's house upon his father's instruction (Gen 28:1-3). Although the father plays the role of directing him where to go, it is also evident that this process deviates from what Abraham did in Isaac's case. What is important to note is that there is no direct selection of wives by fathers/parents in both Isaac's and Jacob's marriages.

What about the background of the women Esau chooses? The text is clear about the fact that the women are Hittite. Should this information affect our understanding of v. 35? The background of the women has been seen as the greatest mistake of Esau.[16] In other words, the problem with Esau's marriage is not so much his initiation, but the kinds of women he chooses. Sarna indicates that the phrase "Canaanite women"[17] is derogatory; therefore, it is unworthy for Esau, Abraham's grandson, to have a conjugal association with these women. Robert L. Cohn further explains that Esau's marriage to the Canaanites is significant in his role as the unchosen descendant of Abraham.[18] On the premise of tradition, scholars of this persuasion point to the firm instructions Abraham gives to his servant to ensure that the wife taken for his son, Isaac,

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[15]R. Christopher Heard, *Dynamics of Diselection: Ambiguity in Genesis 12-36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah* (SBLDS 39; Atlanta: SBL, 2001).

[16] Gordon J Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 205, argues that Esau's indifference to his grandfather's law merits his denial of the inheritance. See also Victor P Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 210 who sides with Sarna in his evaluation of Esau's marriage.

[17] The terms "Hittite women" and "Canaanite women" are used in this paper synonymously. Old Testament references to Hittite give us two groups. First is a group located in Palestine near Hebron (Gen 15:20,23); second is a group located in the North Syrian (Josh 1:4, Judg 1:26, 2Kgs 7:6). It is the former that the narrative world of our selected texts operates with.

[18]Robert L. Cohn, "Negotiating (with) the Natives: Ancestors and Identity in Genesis," HTR 96:2 (2003):153.

is not a Canaanite. Abraham instructed his servant on his deathbed, and not only that, but he also made the servant swear.[19] These signs point to the patriarch's strong position against taking wives among the indigenes. So Sarna writes, "Esau's marriages violated the conventions of his family and flouted their values …".[20]

However, just as the issue of Esau's initiative to marry appears not to breach any tradition, here also, it is difficult to determine how Esau's Canaanite wives are a breach of tradition or convention. And what are the family values that Sarna alludes to? Sarna does not make clear what he means by "values". He seems to be using values synonymously with the term "conventions". In that case, Abraham's instructions to his servant on how to contract a wife for Isaac become the reference point. The earlier criticism of the supposed tradition of parental arrangements applies here also. However, some issues deserve expatiation. First, did Isaac know of the convention that wives in the family are sought within the kinship group and that Canaanite women are to be avoided? Abraham, Isaac's father, had several wives and concubines (Gen. 25:6). Apart from Sarah, Isaac's mother, whom Abraham married in his homeland in Mesopotamia, the rest may have been taken in Canaan. Hagar, a servant, is from Egypt, and for Keturah, we are not told of her origins. The concubines may have come from the East (see Gen. 25:6). As part of Abraham's household, Isaac would be knowledgeable of these different women - who did not share the same ethnic background as his mother - but with whom his father had conjugal relationships. Isaac's lived experiences within the household of Abraham, therefore, included interacting with 'stepmothers' who were likely to be from the land of Canaan and beyond.

Equally important to ask is whether Isaac was at any point in time informed of this supposed tradition or convention of not marrying Canaanite women. The text does not suggest any such instruction. Rather, what comes close to such an idea is the portion of the narrative about the servant reporting to Isaac how he contracted Rebecca for him as a wife. Gen 24: 66 reads:

> wayəsapēr hā'eber ləyiṣḥāq 'ēt kol-hadəbārîm 'ăšer 'āśāh
> *And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done*.

[19] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 183.

[20] Sarna, *Genesis*, 247.

There could be the possibility that the servant might have narrated the whole incident of Abraham's instruction to him and how he went about securing Rebecca. In this case, Isaac will get to know of Abraham's aversion towards Canaanite women. However, is it not also plausible to read the same text as pointing to the servant's exploits in securing Rebecca's hand than to narrate to Isaac the instructions of Abraham? If the latter is true, then, Isaac did not know of the family tradition of not marrying Canaanite women. Also, his experience with his father's wives and concubines does not support any such tradition ever existing.

The concluding clause of Gen 26:35 has been used as evidence of the unworthiness of the Canaanite wives Esau took. It reads,

Watihyênā morat rûaḥ ləyiṣḥāq ûləribəqāh

And they were a provocation for Isaac and Rebekah[21]

Opening the verse is the phrase watihyênā which identifies the subjects. The third person feminine plural form of the verb, hāyāh, points to Esau's wives. The phrase, morat rûah (literally *bitterness of spirit*), is an hapax (only found here in the Hebrew Bible). Many commentators presume the word morat comes from the adjective, mār, which is commonly translated *as bitter*. Robert Alter, however, comes with an alternative meaning, suggesting that the root of the verb, morat, is morah, meaning to *rebel* or *defy*. Alter, then, goes on to translate morat as *provocation*.[22] He writes,

> Some commentators construe the first component of the compound noun *morat-ruah* as a derivative of the root *m-r-r,* "bitter"—hence the term "bitterness" favoured by many translations. But the morphology of the word points to a more likely derivation from *m-r-h,* "to rebel" or "to defy," and thus an equivalent such as "provocation" is more precise.[23]

Significantly, Alter's proposal shifts the attention of readers away from who the in-laws are (i.e., their background) to what they did. Nonetheless, the verse is clear on the fact that Isaac and Rebecca

[21] This translation is taken from Alter, *Genesis*, 136.

[22] Alter, *Genesis*, 136.

[23] Alter, *Genesis*, 136

are not pleased. What exactly are they not pleased with? One possibility is Esau's sole initiative to marry. However, this seems unlikely since going by the syntax of v.35, the wives of Esau are the subjects of the verb hāyāh – they are provoking Isaac and Rebecca. However, we need to know why Isaac and Rebecca are displeased and what their displeasure meant.

There is no explicit reason given in the text to help the reader understand why Isaac and Rebecca are displeased. However, scholars, such as Mignon R. Jacobs, are quick to cite the background of Esau's wives as the reason.[24] Though Jacobs's reading is a possibility[25], it does not alone suffice. In a persuasive analysis, Il-Seung Chung argues that the displeasure felt by Isaac and Rebecca towards Esau's wives was personal. He explains that Rebecca's comment in Gen 27:46 reveals the personal dislike she felt for her in-laws.[26] In addition to Chung's argument, I posit that the displeasure may have developed out of the provocative attitude of Esau's wives. This is why Alter's proposal is viable: Esau's wives behaved in a manner that infuriated Isaac and Rebecca. A careful consideration of v.35 shows that the displeasure felt by the in-laws is not instantaneous.[27] Rather, the displeasure seems to come out of their continuous encounter with the women. In this case, the discontent of the parents arises from their lived experiences with their in-laws. Wenham concurs with this reading when he writes, "What their Hittite daughters-in-law did to make life so miserable for Isaac and Rebekah is left unclarified, …".[28] It is important we separate displeasure based on what Esau's wives did from displeasure based on their ethnic background. If such a separation is done, the behaviour and not the ethnic background becomes the more likely explanation of the text.

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[24] For more details see Mignon R. Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 118-121.

[25] This may be a possibility because of the disagreement Isaac had with the Canaanites, which included the Hittites; cf. 26:12-22.

[26] For more details see Il-Seung Chung, "Liberating Esau: A Corrective Reading of the Esau-Jacob Narrative in Genesis 25-36," (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2008), 96-127.

[27] Even if the displeasure is instantaneous, it could be a reference to what Esau did – that is his sole initiative to marry - or when the in-laws realised the women were Hittites.

[28]Emphasis is from me; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 205.

b. Gen. 27:46

The next time we hear something of Esau's wives is from their mother-in-law, Rebecca. Already, we know of her dissatisfaction with them, although the exact reason is unclear. The verse reads:

> watoʾmerribqāh ʾelyiṣḥāq qaṣtî bəḥayyay mipnê
> bənôt ḥēt ʾim-loqēaḥ yaʿăqob ʾiššāh mibənôt-ḥēt
> kāʾēlleh mibənôt hāʾāreṣ lāmmāh lî ḥayyîm
>
> *Then Rebecca said to Isaac, "I am disgusted with my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob marries one of the daughters of Heth, like these, daughters of the land, why do I live?"*

In our first encounter with Esau's wives, we learn about them through a direct report from the narrator. This time, it is Rebecca who says something about them, though indirectly. What is important to note is the source of this information on Esau's wives. But first, what is the background to the comment Rebecca makes? Rebecca's comment should be understood within the context of a desperate mother trying to prevent her two sons from having a fatal encounter. As a schemer, Rebecca hears of the plot of her not-so-beloved son, Esau, planning to kill her beloved son, Jacob. She quickly puts into motion a plan to prevent such tragedy. The plan involves separating the two brothers to allow for time to, perhaps, soften hearts and allow for reconciliation. Since Esau is married and settled, Rebecca sees an opportunity to use marriage as a pretence to send Jacob away.

Rebecca, however, knows that Isaac is not pleased with Esau's wives because of their behaviour. She cleverly begins her manipulation of Isaac by picking on the Hittite women as they (Rebecca and Isaac) share some level of displeasure towards the women (cf. Gen 26:35). She then connects her will to live or die to the presence of the Hittite women. The phrase, ***qaṣtî*** (*I am disgusted*), is Rebecca's way of focusing on herself as the bargaining chip. Her entire speech to Isaac dwells on the value of her life. Constructions such as *bĕḥayyay* (*with my life*) and *lāmmāh lî ḥayyîm* (why do I live) heighten her perceived danger which she labours to direct Isaac's attention to. The source of Rebecca's perceived danger is ***bĕnôt ḥēt*** (*daughters of Heth*) and ***bĕnôt hāʾāreṣ*** (*daughters of the land*). No overt objective reason is given for her resentment of Hittite women, except what we already know in 26:35.

We also need to be mindful of the state of Isaac in the scheme of Rebecca's manipulation. Isaac is very old and has a low vision (Gen 27: 1-4). He even sees himself as close to death. Esau acknowledges his father's weakness and nearness to death when he postpones his plan to kill Jacob (Gen 27:41), since such an act will only make Isaac's condition worse. Isaac's old age and ill health place him in a state where he is likely to be susceptible to what his wife tells him. Thus, when Rebecca tells him of how her life is under threat because of the Canaanite women, and that she will die if Jacob should marry one of them, Isaac is not in a state where he can challenge or dispute his wife's claims.

Several commentators, including Walter Brueggemann, see Rebecca's comment as a clear indication that the narrator is teaching against the prospect of mixed marriages. Brueggemann writes, "In 27:46, the account begins in a complaint by Rebekah … But as an introduction to a teaching, it is clear enough. To a passionate, faithful member of the family, assimilation through mixed marriage is a horrendous prospect."[29]Such commentators take a cue from Gen 26:35, where Rebecca and Isaac are displeased with Esau's wives. But as indicated earlier, it is not the ethnic background of the women that brings the tension, but rather, the behaviour of the women. Rebecca's experience of Esau's wives seemed to have influenced the way she perceived Hittite women. If this is right, then Rebecca's hatred can be described as a stereotype.[30] The two women cannot be the basis for condemning an entire group of people.

On the other hand, even when we understand Rebecca's comment literally, the comment can be read as part of Rebecca's grand scheme, which in this case makes the perceived danger the Hittite women pose a hoax she uses to achieve her main goal, which is to send Jacob away from Esau. The point is that Rebecca's real interest in her encounter with Isaac should lead us to what her comments mean. And as indicated, her interest is to protect her sons, especially Jacob, by sending him away. Her interest is not in the disdain she has for the Hittite wives of Esau. On this basis, we can push further that Jacob's marriage to non-Canaanite women is more of a coincidence than a family tradition of marrying from

[29] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 237.

[30]This is a fallacy that assigns certain qualities to all group members based on some members of the group exhibiting such qualities – see Husein Inusah et al, *Understanding and Applying Critical Thinking* (Accra; Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2019), 231-232. And this may be the case here; Rebecca may be assigning the provocative tendencies of her Hittite in-laws to all Hittite women.

one's clan or kinship group.[31] Indeed, the narrative is filled with many gaps, which makes it difficult to take a definitive position as representative of the view of the narrator. The text, so far, in no way places any explicit ban on cross-ethnic marriages (the case of Gen 28:6 is explained below).

c. Gen 28:1-9

Of the three texts, this passage perhaps gives the most convincing arguments against cross-ethnic marriages. V. 8 reads:

wayyarə' 'ēśāw kî rā'ôt bənôt kənā'an bə'ênê
yiṣḥāq 'ābîw

So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please his father Isaac …

This is a telling passage that reveals that Esau seems oblivious to the disdain his parents had for his wives. But before we accept Esau's rationalisation of what he saw and heard from Isaac's instruction to Jacob, once again, we need to connect this incident to what had earlier transpired. We already know that there is some level of discomfort and uneasiness on the part of Isaac and Rebecca towards Esau's wives. We have also established that the displeasure is more a result of the behaviour of the women. We again know that Rebecca uses the estrangement between the in-laws as a strategy to get Isaac to accept the proposition to allow Jacob to go to Paddan-Aram for a wife. The main reason for Jacob's departure, therefore, is to flee the wrath of his brother (cf. Gen 27: 42-25). I have, thus, postulated that Jacob's marriage to the kinsmen of Rebecca is a fallout from Rebecca's scheme to save her children.

With this background information, I posit further that Isaac's instruction to Jacob cannot be taken as strong evidence against cross-ethnic marriage in the text. The question we need to pose is: why did Isaac instruct Jacob not to marry the Canaanite women? Two reasons come up. First, Isaac has not been pleased with the

[31]Jacob's descent into Paddam Aram to Laban to get married is a result of Esau's fury. Marriage in Jacob's life is a consequential fallout of the blessing incident. Even in the encounter between Rebecca and Jacob, after Rebecca heard of Esau's plot, she did not have marriage in mind for her son. Her main agenda was to send Jacob away from the household to a safe place. It was in her attempt to convince Isaac to allow Jacob to leave, then she introduced the idea of marriage. I see this as smart spontaneous reasoning from Rebecca, which only goes to prove her as a good schemer.

Hittite wives of Esau.[32] More importantly, in Isaac's instruction to Jacob, he never uses Esau's marriage as the basis for sending Jacob away to his kinsmen to marry from there. If Isaac is not pleased with the background of Esau's wives, why did he fail to use that as the basis to prevent Jacob from marrying women of similar backgrounds?

Second, Isaac may have issued the instruction because of what Rebecca had told him earlier. This reason is more plausible. Isaac's instruction to Jacob follows immediately from Rebecca's manipulation. His response, therefore, appears to have been under duress than a self-reflection of the issues at stake. Therefore, Isaac's instructions to Jacob not to marry Canaanite women was not made out of prejudice, since he was only ensuring that his wife's life was safeguarded. After all, Rebecca made her request revolve around her safety. Again, the fact that Isaac gives Jacob no reason for his preclusion of Canaanite women as suitable wives strengthens the proposition that Isaac may have nothing against the Canaanite women, except the two wives of Esau.

However, Esau's rationalisation of Isaac's instruction to Jacob may support the position that the text bars cross-ethnic marriages. The narrator tells us that Esau hears the instruction to Jacob not to marry Canaanite women. More importantly, Esau rationalises what he hears to mean Isaac hates Canaanite women and proceeds to marry Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael (Gen 28:9). But Esau's rationalisation and actions flow from how Isaac responded to Rebecca's scheme. Significantly, Esau knows nothing of Rebecca's encounter with Isaac. He does not know that Isaac's instruction to Jacob is based on Rebecca's supposed threat to her life due to the daughters of the land. He again does not know that his two Hittite wives are a source of displeasure to his parents. He only gets to know about it when he eavesdrops on Isaac and Jacob's conversation. In this vein, Heard writes, "Nothing in the text indicates that either of his parents ever told him (in forty years of life!) that they preferred he not marry local women."

Is this absence not an indication that no such convention existed within the family? If the family saga is extended to Jacob and his twelve sons, it will be difficult to see any consistent family tradition which barred taking Canaanite women as wives. Only Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob seemed to fit this tradition. Even this is

[32]But this reason is not a strong point. Yes, the two Hittite wives of Esau are a source of worry to Isaac and Rebecca, but the nature of the worry emanates from their behaviour and not their background (see the exposition on Gen. 27:46).

uncertain, since Abraham married before settling in Canaan, and we know that when he got to Canaan, he was involved with local women. Jacob's marriage is also more of a coincidence than a planned thing. Finally, Jacob's sons married women from their surroundings.[33]

Conclusion

Implications for Cross-Ethnic Marriages in Africa

Old Testament writers were particular about the distinctiveness of ancient Israel. As a result, they laboured to present her as a unique group in the land of Canaan. The Israelites, therefore, emerge as people who came from outside Palestine, with a faith and a land that was a divine gift. Readers of the Old Testament do not struggle much to see that Old Testament writers were, in many cases, not sympathetic to other groups; indeed, the ideologies of the writers unified in demonstrating Israel's unique status on earth due to her special relationship with God. This enthusiasm on the part of the writers in preserving Israelite identity, sometimes, strayed into the area of ethnic superiority, a perceived ideology that had to be safeguarded. Marriage was, therefore, one of the traditions that served as a means of preserving this perceived ideology of ethnic superiority, although ironically marriage was also one institution that contributed to the multi-ethnicity of the Israelite people. Scholarship over the years has rationalised Israelite perceived ethnic superiority as a necessary theological caveat needed to establish and maintain her special relationship with God. Sarna, for instance, is of the view that through his marriages, Esau, the eponymous ancestor of the Edomites, made himself the unchosen brother, while Jacob, the eponymous ancestor of the Israelites, walked on the chosen path. Although these identity preservation maneuverings on the part of the writers serve a theological purpose, they, at the same time, have the potency of promoting negative sentiments, especially among readers from nations with ethnic polarities. Intrinsic to ethnicity is the idea of uniqueness which sometimes spills into the idea of superiority, a tendency likely to develop among people from nations with multiple ethnic groups.

[33] Judah married the daughter of Shua, a Canaanite (Gen 38:2). His son Joseph married Asenath, an Egyptian (Gen 41:45).

Almost all sub-Saharan African nations have multiple ethnic groups, and Ghana is no exception. Some of the dominant groups are the Akan, the Ewe, the Ga-Dangme, the Mole-Dagbani, the Guan, etc. The Akan group can further be divided into the sub-groups of Fante, Asante, Akuapim, Kwahu, Bono, etc. Once independent states, these groups are part of the state of Ghana, where their identities are now subsumed under the single fate of Ghana as a unitary state. Despite the push for nationhood and its attendant national identity, ethnic identities continue to thrive alongside national identities in Africa. Arguably, unlike European nations that have been able to create nation-states, African countries have been accused of failing to replicate European types of nationality. Without venturing into the debate of African nationalism versus ethnic diversity, suffice it to note that ethnic diversity is not in itself inimical to nationalism. As argued by Amanda Lea Robinson, in Africa, the two are intricately linked and mutually supportive.[34]

As an important socio-cultural institution, marriage has the potential to foster cross-ethnic interactions. As observed by scholars, cross-ethnic marriages are on the increase in Africa.[35] Across 23 African countries (including Ghana) cross-ethnic marriages stand at over 20% and the number is increasing.[36] In Ghana, cross-cultural/ethnic marriages are common among the political elite. The first president, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, married an Egyptian, Fathia Nkrumah. In the fourth Republic, His Excellency John Jerry Rawlings, an Ewe, married Nana Konadu Agyemang, an Asante. Also, John Dramani Mahama, a Gonja, married Lordina Mahama, an Akan. Arguably, the presence of cross-ethnic marriages among the political elite is a testimony to the acceptance and tolerance of cross-ethnic marriages among the general populace. Increased urbanisation and other economic factors are changing the landscape of Ghana's ethnic demography, with many people from different ethnic backgrounds coming into frequent contact with each other. Meeting couples from different ethnic backgrounds is, therefore, a common occurrence in Ghana.

Despite the increase in cross-ethnic marriages in Ghana, a mixed feeling persists among some sections of Ghanaians, leading

[34] Amanda Lea Robinson, "National vs Ethnic Identity in Africa: State, Group, and Individual Correlates of National Identification," Afrobarometer (September 2009), 23-24.

[35]Boniface Dulani et al., "Intermarriage, Ethnic Mixing, and Ethnic Voting in Africa," *Midwestern Political Science Paper* (2018), 2.

[36]Dulani et al., "Intermarriage, Ethnic Mixing, and Ethnic Voting in Africa," 2.

to a reluctance and/or rejection of such marriage arrangements. Indeed, the ethnic factor in marriage is still one of the important considerations would-be-couples and their families reflect on. Predominant among people steeped in their traditions, ethnic considerations in marriage stem from fears of the loss of one's customs, on one hand, and loyalty and attachment to one's native town, on the other hand.[37] Many are of the view that marrying from the same ethnic group is easier because the couples are compatible to culture, language, and traditions. Also, differences in cultural traditions such as succession and inheritance customs are important factors. According to A. K. Awedoba, cultural differences among ethnic groups lead to stereotyping. And in a study by Victoria W. Lawson, Charity S. Akotia, and Maxwell Asumeng, they found that ethnic stereotyping is prevalent in Ghana.[38]

As an important social institution, marriage is promoted and encouraged within African communities. Among many cultures in Africa, marriage is a measure of one's maturity. Since urbanisation and other economic factors are constantly changing African societies and their demography, Africans need to accept that cross-ethnic marriages may now be the norm. Cross-ethnic marriage has the potential to unify African societies, blur the lines of ethnicity, and promote social stability. In promoting cross-ethnic marriages in Africa, therefore, the Bible has an important role to play. Although, as John Goldingay intimates, the Israelite faith as played out in the Old Testament is ethnic,[39] there are important incidents in the Old Testament that open up the identity of God's people to include people from different ethnic backgrounds. Cross-ethnic marriage, for instance, was a significant medium through which the people of God became multi-ethnic. Mention can be made of Judah who married Shu'a the Canaanite (Gen 38:2), Joseph who married Asenath, daughter of the Egyptian priest (Gen 41:45), Moses who married Zipporah, the Midianite (Ex 2:21), and Ruth, the Moabite, who married Boaz (Ruth 4:13). Africans need to understand that all people are from God and all are worthy to form relationships

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[37] A. L. Crane, "Race differences in inhibition: A psychological study of comparative characteristics of Negro and the White man as measured by certain tests, with special reference to the problem of violation," *Archives of Psychology* 63, (1923): 9-84.

[38] Victoria W. Lawson, Charity S. Akotia, and Maxwell Asumeng, "Exploring Ethnic Stereotypes and Prejudice among some Major Ethnic Groups in Ghana," *Journal of Social Science Studies* 2, (1) 2015: 17-35.

[39] John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith* (Downers Grove (IL): Inter Varsity Press, 2007).

across ethnic boundaries – boundaries which have been culturally created and enforced through social ideologies. The Bible can, therefore, be engaged in ways that promote our common humanity and emphasise our common faith in God. This applies especially to problem texts which upon first encounter may breed divisions and suspicions among the people of God, but upon a closer look, reveal a deeper truth about our common humanity and God's love for all humanity.