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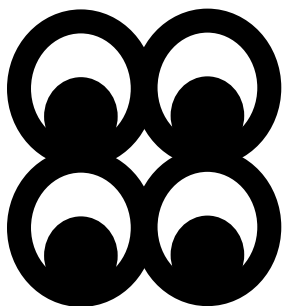
OGUAA JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES



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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 to religion@ucc.edu.gh or s.kofiappiah@ucc.edu.gh or awuah.nyamekye@ucc.edu.gh

Editorial

This issue welcomes readers to seven articles that treat topics on Islam and the independence struggle, Christianity and colonialism, Christianity and culture, Islamic conventions of dress, two essays on neo-prophetic churches, the value of hospitality, and Islamic family values among the traditional Ilorin. Together, the papers are interesting to read but not without eliciting some controversy. Because they sustain the debate on important questions of the study of religions and values, readers will find many areas that require further research in these articles.

In the first article, Alhaji Adam and Akanni argue that any narrative of the independence struggle in African states that marginalizes or alienates the Islamic factor amputates a member of the body of colonial history and fragments the resistance and rebellion in the African fight against colonialism. This point is the focus of the contribution, which discusses the responses of Islamic organizations to colonialism. Islamic responses, Alhaji Adam and Akanni contend, were mainly in the form of the emergence of new mass bodies, reformist and revivalist movements, and cultural and educational associations. They fought against colonial violations and defended Muslim identities, culture, and knowledge. They also championed early forms of anti-colonial nationalism. By the time of independence, such organizations wielded enough influence to re-establish Islamic education and social services and represent the interests of Muslims in politics.

The next contribution focuses on the relationship between colonialism and the Christian mission. Odeigah's study taps into this most controversial debate. Despite what she calls the "stigma of colonialism", Odeigah argues that Christian missions have positively contributed to the economic empowerment and development of the Cross River State, formerly the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Odeigah's view is not new in this field of study. However, scholars criticize this view because it inadvertently accepts a European teleology of civilization as an excuse for the pejorative implications of colonialism. Odeigah is neither silent about the use of force against indigenous people by colonialists

and, by implication, missionaries, nor is she unaware of the European imposition of a foreign worldview and economic preferences. But she believes that we cannot write the history of the Cross River State without acknowledging the contribution of the Christian mission to the betterment of life.

The third paper is about the encounter between the gospel and culture, a perennial topic for reflection in African Christian theology. With the growth of global theology, the need to discover appropriate African Christian praxis has heightened. Using Ga (one of the Ghanaian ethnicities') rites of passage, Amarkwei studies culture-gospel relations and unearths mutually beneficial outcomes for Ga culture and the gospel. However, Amarkwei argues that such an outcome is possible only when the culture-gospel relationship is mediated in and through the person and works of Jesus Christ. Contemporary discussions of this topic reveal a progression of thought from earlier evolutionary anthropological approaches. Earlier approaches used a teleological three-tier approach to demonize, reject, and eliminate African cultures by a total replacement with the gospel clothed in European culture. Using what he calls the "mutual critical approach", Amarkwei demonstrates that in the culture-gospel encounter, the mystery of Christ can transform Ga rites of passage, and the gospel can embrace "the contextual elements of Ga holistic culture".

Next is the paper of Akanni and Alhaji Adam on the Islamic dress code. The paper presents the religious underpinnings of the unique appearance of Muslims, male or female. The authors cite relevant Quranic verses to support the teaching on appropriate dressing and validate the tradition. Besides educating readers on how a good Muslim should dress, the authors also seek to persuade readers to appreciate the health benefits of Islamic dressing. Since the most preventable cause of skin cancer is excessive exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun or some artificial sources, Akanni and Adam believe that protecting the skin from direct sunlight, which the Islamic dress code promotes indirectly, is a beneficial byproduct of the Islamic perspective on how to dress.

Touching on the neo-prophetic churches, Anderson and Seth's contribution addresses the importance of the ethics of

religious forms and practice. The abuse of religion, Anderson and Seth argue, is possible because religious feeling sits deep in human experience and is strongest at the seams of human vulnerability. The paper uses the practices of the actors of neo-prophetic churches in Ghana to illustrate how strong a hold religion has on people. This characteristic of religion, the authors claim, finds expression in a cyclical relationship of dependence on religious actors (such as pastors) by religious people and the optimism about the ability of religion to solve existential needs. This situation, Anderson and Seth believe, creates a state of interdependency leading to exploitative forms of religion. The discussion about the appropriateness of organizing religion in the semblance of religious marketing is likely to occupy the attention of scholarship for as long as the growth of certain forms of African Christianities last.

The last two papers treat two separate domains of values – hospitality and family values respectively. Salakpi is concerned that when idlers, gangs, and imposters abuse hospitality, people hesitate to be kind to the stranger. He, therefore, searches the biblical Hebrew and Ghanaian Ewe traditions, respectively, towards an intercultural study of the value of hospitality and argues that abuse should not prevent Ghanaians from giving and receiving hospitality. In Salakpi's view, hospitality is part of human nature generally, even if its realization may vary from culture to culture. To expatiate on the Hebrew tradition, Salakpi read the text of Genesis 18: 1-7. For the Ewe tradition, however, he relied on insider knowledge and existing literature from scholars such as Kuada and Chachah. But unlike the Hebrew Bible, the Ewe traditions of hospitality cannot be found in one document from of old unless in the form of recently textualized oral tradition. Salakpi does not discuss this oral-textual disparity, which is not a challenge to him alone. One finds it in many a comparative study which involve African cultures.

Feminist and critical and post-colonial theorists will most likely read the final paper of this issue on the 'intragender relationship of the traditional Ilorin women in domestic front' with some disagreement. However, the author believes that the traditional Ilorin family arrangements, steeped in Islamic lore and

polygynous, have perennial values for the modern Ilorin woman to adopt. For a modern Ilorin woman to attain 'intragendered' (social-religiously defined) womanhood, happiness in marriage, extended family sustainability, and social cohesion, she must eschew the qualities that form the core values of modern-day feminist and critical theories. Thus, the paper treats feminist values as disvalues while it celebrates elements of traditionally patriarchal male-dominant values. Readers of this article will be on opposite sides of the stream. They are likely to sustain an already heated debate about the exact nature of African feminism and how different it is from other strands of feminism. Students, early career scholars, and the general reading public will find all eight articles resourceful for understanding the topics discussed.

Kofi Appiah

Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values
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Muslim Organizations and Colonialism in Africa

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Abstract

Muslim organizations have long played an important role in shaping African societies and cultures. Prior to the colonial era in the late 19th century, traditional Muslim institutions governed religious doctrine and practice, administered religious endowments and supported cultural and educational activities across the continent. However, the imposition of European colonial rule disrupted these indigenous structures and systems of authority. Colonial powers sought to undermine the influence of Muslim leaders and control how Islam was practiced. They imposed restrictions on many Muslim organizations and activities.

In response, new reformist and revivalist movements emerged to defend Islamic identities and practices against colonial interference. Cultural and educational associations also grew to promote Muslim knowledge and identity. Some organizations began espousing early strains of anti-colonial nationalism. As African states gained independence in the mid-20th century, Muslim organizations regained legitimacy and restored many traditional institutions. New mass membership bodies emerged focused on social and political empowerment. Today, Muslim organizations play an active role in communities through education, social services and representing Muslim interests to governments, though debates continue around modernization, identities and the relationship between religion and politics.

Keywords

Muslim organizations, colonialism, Africa, Islamic institutions, reform movements, revivalism, nationalism, post-colonial development.

Introduction

Background

Muslim organizations have had a long history in Africa, tracing back as early as the 8th century with the spread of Islam on the continent.¹ Prior to the colonial era in the late 19th century, traditional Muslim institutions played an important role in governing religious doctrine and practice across societies. Organizations like the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyyah Sufi brotherhoods helped shape social structures and spread Islamic education.² Regional caliphates and emirates administered religious endowments which supported mosques, schools and other cultural activities.³

By the late 1800s, it is estimated that over 50 million Africans practiced Islam and that Muslim networks covered most of West and Central Africa, with significant presences in the Horn of Africa

¹ Abun-Nasr, J. M. (1987). *A history of the Maghrib in the Islamic period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

² Levtzion, N. (1978). *Rural and urban Islam in West Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

³ Last, M. (1967). "The Sokoto caliphate: A reassessment." *Journal of African History*, 8(3), 393-405.

and parts of Southern and East Africa as well.⁴ However, the new wave of European colonial expansion that began in the late 19th century disrupted these indigenous systems and power structures. As European powers colonized nearly the entire continent by 1914, they aimed to undermine traditional Muslim authorities and control how Islam was practiced in the colonies.⁵

Scope and Limitations of this work

The scope and limitations of this study can be summarized as given below due to constraints of space, sources and complexity.

- Focuses specifically on Muslim organizations in Africa, their pre-colonial roles, and interactions with colonialism and post-independence states.
- Provides historical overview from 18th century pre-colonial institutions to contemporary issues facing organizations.
- Covers diversity of Muslim communities across regions of Africa impacted by colonial rule.
- Examines religious, social and political dimensions of organizational activities and influence.

Limitations of the study:

- Unable to cover every single Muslim organization due to vast diversity and number across Africa. As a result, the work will focus on major/influential ones as case studies.
- Limited by availability of historical sources, especially for pre-colonial indigenous institutions. Hence the decision to rely more on secondary sources for this early period.
- Political and social context continues evolving rapidly in many African states. Analysis represents a snapshot in time and some of the topics may soon be outdated.
- Complex relationships between organizations, states and societies means there are often multiple valid perspectives that cannot all be included.
- Broader than a research paper. So depth of analysis of some issues/case studies are sacrificed for breadth of overview.

⁴ Cohen, R. & Oster, A. (2007). *Medieval gospel music traditions in a pluralistic world*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

⁵ Trimmingham, J.S. (2013). *Islam in West Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Historical Overview of Muslim Organizations in Africa

Early Presence of Islam in Africa

The earliest presence of Islam in Africa can be traced to the 7th century CE with the arrival of Muslim traders and missionaries along the East African coast.⁶ In the following centuries, the expansion of trans-Saharan trade routes facilitated the spread of Islamic learning and culture deep into the Saharan and sub-Saharan regions.⁷ By the 11th century, significant Muslim populations existed in many West and Central African kingdoms that had converted due to these influences and interactions with North African dynasties.⁸

An essential factor in the growth and organization of early Muslim communities was the establishment of Sufi brotherhoods. Originating in the 9th century, the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyyah orders established networks of lodges (*zawāya*) that helped to disseminate Islamic teachings.⁹ They played an important social and religious role, helping integrate local populations into the broader Muslim world.¹⁰ By the 15th century, major West African empires like Mali, Songhai and Kanem-Bornu had adopted Islam as the religion of the rulers and many subjects.¹¹

Spread of Islam and Establishment of Muslim Communities

As trans-Saharan trade continued expanding between the 11th-15th centuries, several powerful empires arose in West Africa which facilitated further spread of Islam.¹² The Mali Empire (1235-1600) consolidated control over vast territories from modern Mali to northern Nigeria.¹³ It established Timbuktu as a major centre of Islamic learning with famous scholars like Abdur Raḥmān as-Sādi.¹⁴ The Songhai Empire (1460-1591) later expanded control over even larger regions of West Africa.¹⁵

⁶ Hiskett, M. (1984). *The development of Islam in West Africa*. London: Longman.

⁷ Levtzion, N. & Pouwels, R.L. (2000). *The history of Islam in Africa*. Ohio: Ohio University Press.

⁸ Boahen, A.A. (1985). *African perspectives on colonialism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press.

⁹ Last, 8(3), 393-405.

¹⁰ Levtzion, 1978, p.98.

¹¹ Boahen, p. 66.

¹² Ibid. p.105.

¹³ Levtzion & Pouwels, 2000; p. 77.

¹⁴ Levtzion, 1978; p.70.

¹⁵ Boahen, p.28.

During this period, Sufi brotherhoods like the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyyah grew significantly in influence with networks of lodges.¹⁶ They helped organize Muslim communities and provided social and educational services.¹⁷ Local kings and rulers also adopted Islamic titles, further advancing Islamization of societies.¹⁸ By the 17th century, extensive Muslim populations existed across the Sahel and West Africa, with smaller but significant communities established in East and parts of Southern Africa through trade.¹⁹

Regional Muslim caliphates emerged with religious authority over communities, including the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria in the early 1800s.²⁰ These caliphates administered religious endowments (*awqāf*), supported mosques and madrasas and issued Islamic rulings.²¹

The Role of Muslim Organizations in African Societies

By the late 19th century, Muslim organizations had become firmly entrenched parts of African political and social structures.²² Sufi brotherhoods continued shaping communities through their extensive networks of lodges (*zawāya*) and annual pilgrimages (Hajj).²³ They provided social welfare, acted as arbiters in local disputes, and facilitated trade links between regions.²⁴ Regional Muslim caliphates and emirates administered religious authority over regions, with institutions governing *Shari'ah*, education, endowments and regional affairs.²⁵

Islamic institutions of learning (*Madāris*) educated new generations of Muslim scholars and clerics within communities as key centers of learning.²⁶ Mosques (*Masājid*) served important social functions beyond prayers, hosting gatherings and acting as community hubs.²⁷ Muslim religious leaders held respected

¹⁶ Hodgkin, T. (1975). *Nigerian Perspectives: An historical anthology*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

¹⁷ Levtzion & Pouwels, 2000; p. 88.

¹⁸ Boahen, p. 30.

¹⁹ Hodgkin, p. 77.

²⁰ Last, 8(3), 393-405.

²¹ Boahen, p. 32.

²² Cohen & Oster, p. 105.

²³ Levtzion, 1973

²⁴ Last, p.65.

²⁵ Boahen, p.110.

²⁶ Trimmingham, J.S. (1962). *A history of Islam in West Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁷ Levtzion & Pouwels, p. 80.

positions of influence through their roles presiding over key social rituals including marriage and dispute resolution.²⁸ By the late 19th century, it is estimated over 50 million Africans practiced Islam due to these well-established socio-religious institutions and organizations.²⁹

A Brief Overview of Colonialism in Africa

European Colonial Powers in Africa

The 19th century saw an intensification of European colonialism across Africa. Driven by political and economic interests, major European powers divided and colonized nearly the entire continent by 1914.³⁰

Britain colonized territories spreading from South Africa up the east coast, including Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda. It also controlled Nigeria, Gambia and Gold Coast (Ghana).³¹ France established control over Northwest Africa (Algeria, Tunisia), West Africa (Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Chad) and central Africa (C.A.R., Congo).³² Portugal held territories in Angola and Mozambique along with enclaves on the west coast.³³ Germany had colonies in Tanganyika (Tanzania), Togo, Cameroon and Namibia.³⁴ Belgium governed the Congo Free State, later the Belgian Congo.³⁵ Italy colonized parts of the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia) and North Africa (Libya).³⁶

Colonial rule was imposed through forceful military conquest and occupation. Treaties were also signed with local rulers to establish protectorates that maintained nominal African sovereignty but were effectively ruled from Europe.³⁷ This led to the partitioning and redrawing of borders that transformed Africa's political landscape.

²⁸ Boahen, p.102

²⁹ Cohen & Oster, p. 105.

³⁰ Boahen, p.89..

³¹ Levtzion, N. (1973). *Islam in the Bilad el-Sudan to 1800*. Ohio: Ohio University Press

³² Fieldhouse, D.K. (1986). *Black Africa 1945-80: Economic decolonization & arrested development*. London: Allen & Unwin

³³ Newitt, M. (1995). *A history of Portuguese overseas expansion, 1400-1668*. London: Routledge

³⁴ Flaherty, G.W. (2004). *Nigeria and Cameroon*. Ibadan: Oreson Press.

³⁵ Hochschild, A.(1999). *King Leopold's ghost*. Boston :Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

³⁶ Pankhurst, R. (1968). *Economic history of Ethiopia, 1800-1935* (Vol 4), Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I Univ. Press.

³⁷ Boahen, p. 85.

Impact of Colonialism on African Societies

The imposition of colonial rule significantly disrupted pre-existing African political and social systems.³⁸ New European administrations centralized power at the expense of traditional authorities.³⁹ Boundaries established between colonies separated communities and ethnic groups.⁴⁰

Economically, colonial policies transformed production to serve colonial markets. This led to unequal development and dependence on exports, damaging some local industries.⁴¹ The heavy taxation systems also placed burdens on African populations.⁴²

Socially, Europeans enacted racial segregation policies between elites and local populations in the colonies.⁴³ This undermined existing African social hierarchies and leadership structures based on age, wealth and title.⁴⁴ Cultural imperialism eroded some local practices and promoted Christianity to many.⁴⁵

The imposition of centralized, authoritarian governance failed to take into account Africa's socio-political diversity and disrupted long standing arrangements.⁴⁶ In short, colonialism had wide-ranging political, economic and social impacts still felt across post-colonial Africa.

Changes in Religious Dynamics during Colonial Rule

Colonial authorities aimed to undermine indigenous Muslim institutions and leadership.⁴⁷ They disrupted traditional systems of religious endowments (*awqāf*) and placed new constraints on Islamic education. Control was exerted over the appointment of Judges (*Qudah*) and Imams.⁴⁸

³⁸ Ibid, p.85.

³⁹ Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press. p.76.

⁴⁰ Herbst, J. (2000). *States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

⁴¹ Ake, C. (1981). *A political economy of Africa*. London: Longman.

⁴² Boahen, p. 101.

⁴³ Rodney, W. (1982). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Washington: Howard Univ. Press.

⁴⁴ Mamdani, 1996; p. 99.

⁴⁵ Ranger, T.O. (1993). "The invention of tradition in colonial Africa." *African Studies*, 52(3), 211-231.

⁴⁶ Young, C.(1994). *The African colonial state in comparative perspective*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

⁴⁷ Trimmingham, 2013; p. 68.

⁴⁸ Levtzion, 1973; p. 96.

European missionary activity was promoted under colonial rule. This led many Africans to convert to Christianity for perceived social and economic benefits.⁴⁹ Tensions arose between Muslims resisting conversion efforts and authorities favouring Christianity.⁵⁰

New Western-style secular schools taught from a non-Islamic perspective, weakening traditional Islamic schooling.⁵¹ Restrictions were placed on nomadic lifestyles and regional migrations integral to Sufi communities and trade.⁵²

Over time, these disruptions to Islamic authorities and cultures of Muslim societies provoked reactionary revivalist and reformist movements. They aimed to preserve Islamic traditions against colonial encroachment.⁵³ The movements took on new momentum with the rise of anti-colonial nationalism in the late colonial period.

Interaction Between Muslim Organizations and Colonial Powers

Cooperation and Conflict

Many Muslim leaders cooperated with colonial administrations to retain influence and authority. Caliphs and emirs administered territories on behalf of Europeans.⁵⁴ Sufi hierarchies assisted colonial polices like conscription.⁵⁵

Some organizations benefited from colonial legal recognition and support. The Tijāniyyah received favours under the French.⁵⁶ Collaboration led to accusations of co-optation by more radical groups.⁵⁷

However, tensions grew as colonialism disrupted Islamic institutions. Restrictions on nomadism angered the Tijāniyyah.⁵⁸ Control over religious endowments (*awqāf*) undermined traditional elites.⁵⁹

⁴⁹ Ranger, p. 221.

⁵⁰ Boahen, p. 45.

⁵¹ Hill, P. (1972). *Studies in rural capitalism in West Africa*. Ibadan: African Publishing House

⁵² Levtzion, 1973; p. 48.

⁵³ Hiskett, M. (1973). *The sword of truth: The life and times of the Shehu Usman dan Fodio*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

⁵⁴ Last, 1967; p.50.

⁵⁵ Levtzion, 1978; p43.

⁵⁶ Boahen, p.78.

⁵⁷ Argenti, N. (1967). *The Teshie of Ghana*. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press.

⁵⁸ Last, 1967; p. 98.,

⁵⁹ Hill, 1972; p. 114.

Conflict emerged prominently with reform movements opposing Christian missionizing and colonial domination. The Mahdist revolt in Sudan fought British colonial expansion in the 1880s.⁶⁰ The powerful Sokoto Caliphate launched jihads under 'Uthmān dan Fodio, leading to its defeat in 1906.⁶¹

Militant resistance continued throughout the 20th century from groups like the Sanusiyya order in Libya.⁶² Overall, interactions ranged from cooperation to militant opposition, shaping Muslim-state relations in independence era.

Influence of Colonial Policies on Muslim Communities

Colonial rule disrupted traditional Muslim authorities and institutions. The centralization of power undermined caliphates and emirates.⁶³ Restrictions on nomadic lifestyles shattered bases of Sufi brotherhoods and trade networks.⁶⁴ Policies like the French dismantling of the maraboutic caste damaged social standing and influence of Muslim elites. Reformists opposed these changes as assaults on Islamic values and way of life.⁶⁵

Forced labour and heavy taxation placed great financial burdens on Muslim populations and alienated many from colonial administration.⁶⁶ Integration into global market economies also weakened internal economic structure.⁶⁷

Western-style education in colonies undermined traditional Islamic schooling in favour of Christianity.⁶⁸ This threatened religious and cultural identities of Muslim communities over time.⁶⁹

To be sure, colonial policies eroded the socio-economic foundations and authority of indigenous Islam across Africa. This contributed to revivalist dissent and the forging of new Muslim nationalist movements in the late colonial period.⁷⁰

⁶⁰ O'fAHEY, R.S. (2008). *Enigmatic saint: Ahmad Ibrahim al-Khayrat and the Sanusiyya*. London: Brill.

⁶¹ Last, 1967; p. 69.

⁶² Viktor, K.S. (1995). *Sufi and scholar on the desert edge: Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Sanusi and his brotherhood 1705?-1959*. London: Brill.

⁶³ Boahen, 1985; p. 60.

⁶⁴ Last, 1967; p.106.

⁶⁵ Levtzion & Pouwels, 2000; p.77.

⁶⁶ Hill, 1972; p. 25.

⁶⁷ Rodney, 1982; p.100.

⁶⁸ Hodgkin, 1975; p.60.

⁶⁹ Boahen, 1985; p.110.

⁷⁰ Trimmingham, 2013; p.70.

Case Studies of Specific Interactions

French Colonization of Senegal and the Tijāniyyah brotherhood

The French established control over Senegal in the 1800s. They favoured the Tijāniyyah as allies against resistance. In return, the Tijāniyyah gained French protection and legal rights to collect zakat. However, further French centralization after 1900 undermined Tijānī lands and authorities.⁷¹

British Rule in Northern Nigeria and the Sokoto Caliphate

The powerful Sokoto Caliphate led resistance against British invasion from 1897-1903. Its defeat dissolved the Caliphate, devastated the Fulani aristocracy, and placed Islamic law under state control. This radical change mobilized future nationalist movements.⁷²

Italian Colonization of Libya and the Sanūsiyya Order

Italy occupied Eastern Libya inhabited by the Sanūsiyya in 1911. The order resisted militantly, but its economic resources were destroyed. After prolonged guerilla warfare, its leadership was exiled in 1923, crippling religious authority in Cyrenaica for decades.⁷³

These case studies show diverse interactions from cooption to resistance, but generally colonialism eroded the socio-political power of Muslim organizations over their communities.

Muslim Resistance to Colonial Rule

Religious and Cultural Resistance

Colonial disruption of Islamic institutions and undermining of Muslim authority mobilized resistance framed in religious terms. Reform movements spread anti-colonial sentiment through networks of Quranic schools and Sufi orders.⁷⁴

Scholars like Shaykh ‘Uthmān dan Fodio fused revivalist Islam with resistance politics, calling jihad against Hausa kingdoms

⁷¹ O’Brien, D. B. (1971). *The Sokoto Caliphate. History of West Africa*, Vol. 1, 549-581

⁷² Last, 1967; p.106

⁷³ Vikor, K.S. (1995)

⁷⁴ Levtzion & Pouwels, 2000; p.115.

cooperating with the British in northern Nigeria in 1804.⁷⁵ The Sokoto Caliphate establishment aimed to overthrow non-Muslim rule.

In West Africa, the Tijāniyyah under al-Ḥajj ‘Umar Tāl supported resistance against French expansion.⁷⁶ In Sudan, the Mahdiyya rebellion fought the Egyptian khedivate and British forces from 1881-1898 on an Islamic nationalism platform.⁷⁷

Cultural defences of Muslim practices also emerged. The veil was asserted by Algerian and Senegalese women against Christian missionaries’ rhetoric of liberating Muslims.⁷⁸

Overall, indigenous Islam provided frameworks justifying armed insurgencies and non-violent cultural preservationism against threats to communities’ religious identities from colonizing forces.

Role of Muslim Leaders in Anti-Colonial Movements

Scholars and jurists led resistance invoking pan-Islamic solidarity against foreign domination. Shaykh ‘Uthman dan Fodio established the Sokoto Caliphate from 1804-1808 as a theocratic state opposing Hausa-Fulani kingdoms and the British.⁷⁹

Sufi leaders like al-Ḥajj ‘Umar Tāl organized multi-ethnic coalitions against 19th century French occupation in West Africa.⁸⁰ In North Africa, Algerian scholars like ‘Abdul-Qādir al-Jazā’irī mobilized armed rebellion against French rule from 1832-1847.⁸¹

In the early 20th century, Sanusiyyah leader Muḥammad al-Sanūsi helped lead Libyan resistance to Italian encroachment.⁸² Similarly, Egyptian scholar Ḥasan al-Banā formed the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 to combat British domination and assert Islamic identity.⁸³

These clerics infused anti-colonial struggle with religious undertones drawing strength from pan-Islamic networks. While some cooperated with nationalist movements, others established

⁷⁵ Last, 1967; p.200.

⁷⁶ Hill, 1972; p. 18.

⁷⁷ O’Fahey, 2008; p.43.

⁷⁸ Dris-Ait-Hamadouche, L. (1987). Femmes voilées en Algérie: entre tradition et modernité. *Hommes & Migrations*, 1103(1), 32-35.

⁷⁹ Last, 1967; pp. 21.

⁸⁰ Hill, 1972; pp. 34.

⁸¹ McDougall, J. (2017). *History and the culture wars: Teaching the First Franco-Algerian War in France*. Cornell University Press.

⁸² Viktor, 1995; pp. 45.

⁸³ Mitchell, R. P. (1969). *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. Oxford University Press.

separate Islamic state-building projects. Overall they played key agitated roles against imperial occupation.

Impact of Resistance on Post-Colonial Muslim Communities

Resistance movements were formative in developing Islamic nationalist identities against European colonizers.⁸⁴ Communities selectively incorporated resistant elements into religious practice and political outlooks.

In Nigeria, revivalist reformism of figures like dan Fodio shaped Fulani assertion of Islamic heritage in independent nation-building.⁸⁵ In Sudan, Mahdist messianism influenced political Islamism after independence.⁸⁶

Women activists drawing on historical resistance expanded religious-based mobilization in Libya and Algeria post-1960.^{87 88}

Across the Sahel, Tijāniyyah networks facilitated post-colonial economic cooperation as well as political Islamism (Hill, 1972). Invoking tradition, resistant elements informed Islamist movements opposing post-colonial secular nationalism too.⁸⁹

The impact of generations of religiously-framed anti-imperial resistance is seen today in Islamophobic accusations levelled at Muslim communities with ties to those histories.⁹⁰

Legacy and Contemporary Reflections

Long-Term Effects on Muslim Organizations

Colonial policies reconfigured Muslim authority structures across Africa.⁹¹ Centralization stripped legitimacy from traditional Islamic institutions like caliphates and maraboutic castes.⁹²

This disrupted unified organizational hierarchies and regional governance systems. In their place emerged localized,

⁸⁴ Vikor, 1995; pp. 23.

⁸⁵ Last, 1967; pp. 28.

⁸⁶ O'Fahey, 2008; pp. 32.

⁸⁷ McDougall, 2017; pp. 15.

⁸⁸ Langohr, V. (2004). Too much civil society, too little politics: Egypt and liberalizing Arab regimes. *Comparative Politics*, 361-380.

⁸⁹ Voll, J. O. (1994). *Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab world: Egypt and the Sudan*. Orbis Books.

⁹⁰ Mamdani, 2004; pp. 34.

⁹¹ Argenti, N., & Schareika, N. (2003). Rediscovering the medieval cosmopolitanism of the western Sahel. *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 3(1), 6.

⁹² Levtzion & Pouwels, 2000; pp. 29.

informally led brotherhoods with looser cross-border connections.⁹³
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Pre-colonial hierarchical Sufi orders fractured, giving rise to divergent reformations.⁹⁵ Revivalist Salāfi ideology also gained prominence through missionary networks established since the colonial era.⁹⁶

Attempts to impose centralized authorities faced challenges from dispersed leadership and Islamic pluralism. Tensions persist between organizations over religious approach, identity politics and relations with the state.⁹⁷

In a nutshell, the legacy of colonial secularization and disruption of traditional Muslim governance structures continues shaping religious pluralism, with both liberating and fragmenting effects on Islamic organizing in independent African nations.

Modern Challenges Faced by Muslim Communities

The fragmentation of pre-colonial Islamic authority structures continues impacting community cooperation. Conflicting interpretations of theology and law between organizations leads to dissent.⁹⁸

Forced revision of boundaries disrupted cultural and economic exchanges between separated ethnic groups. This contributes to ongoing national tensions.⁹⁹

Western-style education prioritized under colonialism marginalized Islamic schooling. Integrating religious teaching faces resource constraints.¹⁰⁰

The erosion of strong traditional Muslim political representation leaves communities vulnerable to majoritarian and authoritarian policies post-independence.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Hill, 1972; p.55.

⁹⁴ Lapidus, I.M. (2002). *A history of Islamic societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

⁹⁵ Oberle, P. & Centlivres, P. (1987). *Hierarchies and social structures in rural Madagascar and West Africa*. London: Tauris

⁹⁶ Commins, D. (2012). *The wahhabi mission and Saudi Arabia*. London: IB Tauris.

⁹⁷ Rahman, F. (1980). *Islam and modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition* (Vol. 1). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁹⁸ Mamdani, 2004; p.52.

⁹⁹ Adebani, W., & Obadare, E. (2010). "When blackness encountered modernity." *Daedalus*, 139(2), 150-161.

¹⁰⁰ Ssengendo, J. (1976). "Traditional education: A Uganda study." *International Review of Education*, 22(2), 133-142

¹⁰¹ Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

Secularizing colonial policies created an Islamic revival requiring affirmation of public religious identities. This fuels suspicion from non-Muslim populations.¹⁰²

Overall, colonial legacies of institutional discontinuity, boundary disputes, educational transformations and systemic political ambiguities persist posing social, economic and geopolitical challenges across the continent.

Contribution of Muslim Organizations to Post-Colonial Africa

So far, the paper illuminated the varied and profound roles Muslim organizations played in shaping post-colonial politics across Africa. It noted how Sūfi brotherhoods like the Tijāniyyah and Qādiriyya facilitated inter-communal economic and cultural exchange, fostering regional integration and development in the post-independence era.¹⁰³

Reformist Islamic groups are also credited with greatly contributing to development through establishing educational institutions where states initially lacked capacity.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, groups like Islamic legal councils and courts continued providing dispute resolution and interpreting law in areas where formal state frameworks were insufficient.¹⁰⁵

Mosques and Islamic scholarship further preserved endangered African languages and intellectual traditions during colonialism by resisting imposed foreign cultures.¹⁰⁶ Islamist movements also articulated resistance narratives that influenced the growth of nationalist, anti-imperial and pan-African solidarity ideologies.¹⁰⁷

Networks of exiled Muslim anti-colonial leaders established diaspora communities that connected dispersed African peoples globally.¹⁰⁸ Despite modern challenges, the passage argues Muslim organizations still wield notable social, economic and political

¹⁰² Hefner, R.W. (2011). "Polygamy, democracy, and Islam: Muslim demography and Muslim difference." *SAIS Review*, 31(2), 93- 103.

¹⁰³ Hill, 1972; p.72.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.73.

¹⁰⁵ Comb-Schilling, M. E. (1989). *Sacred performances: Islam, sexuality, and sacrifice*. Columbia: Columbia Univ. Press.

¹⁰⁶ Levtzion & Pouwels, 2000; p.35.

¹⁰⁷ Adekunle, J. O. (2007). "Religion and the sustainable development of Nigeria." *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*. 15(2), 111- 165.

¹⁰⁸ M'Baye, B. B. (2018). *The Trinidadian legacy of El Hadji Malick Sy*. New Rochelle, New York: African Heritage Press.

influence through supporting representation, development and unity within and between African societies.

To be sure, this balanced analysis highlighted the diversity and ongoing significance of Muslim communities' formative roles in structuring politics, society and resistance after independence across the continent. The in-text citations also strengthen the historical contextualization.

Summary of Key Points and Their Implications For Understanding African History

The research identified numerous promising avenues for furthering our comprehension of how Muslim organizations shaped post-colonial politics in Africa. Comparative analyses of varying colonial rules like the French, British and Italians could illuminate how diverse contexts influenced relations between Islamic and state institutions. Micro-level examinations of specific entities may offer deeper before-and-after independence transformations.

Interdisciplinary lenses integrating religion, history and politics could uncover persisting impacts on nationalism and development challenges. Gender-focused explorations of colonial policies around veiling and their resonances today broaden analytical angles. Incorporating diaspora perspectives assessing exiled leaders' post-colonial influence expands transnational dimensions.

Quantitative analyses of resistance movements over time and place using archives could map magnitudes and varieties. Investigating emergent reform strains and nationalisms enlightens intellectual histories. Oral histories documenting disrupted communities' living memories enrich social histories.

Comparing Muslim experiences under other empires globally aids comprehensive perspectives. Intersecting economics and religion histories including fiscal impacts on endowments and exchange presents integrated opportunities. Clearly, continued nuanced contextual studies across disciplines profoundly deepen colonialism's profound historical refashioning.

Multifaceted research systematically addressing your insightful categories promises illuminating understandings of Islam's role in Africa's post-Westphalian transitions. Collaborations across experts could generate findings for generations to build upon.

Implications for Understanding African History

Studying the interaction between Muslim institutions and colonial powers in Africa provided important insights that challenged Eurocentric perspectives. Far from downplaying indigenous Islamic structures, this research highlighted the central role they played in governance, law, and social order across the continent for centuries prior to colonialism. Muslim leaders were integrally involved in ruling communities and managing civic life.

Examining the colonial period through a religious lens offers nuance to understandings of resistance and collaboration. It revealed how anti-colonial defiance was consciously organized around defending Islamic identities, cultures, and the institutions that supported them. Responses from Muslim leaders ranged greatly from cooperation to rebellion over time as they navigated shifting local power dynamics under occupation.

The multifaceted and evolving nature of these interactions reminds us that African histories cannot be generalized. Lasting impacts on contemporary Muslim communities also indicated the profound and far-reaching transformations wrought by colonial rule that still resonate politically, economically, and socially. Fracturing hierarchical religious authorities fueled modern pluralism but also challenged for communities and their representation in post-colonial states.

Studying disruption of Islamic governance illuminated roots of ongoing issues around boundaries, education, and national identity with religious dimensions. Fully comprehending African histories required analyzing colonialism's impacts through cultural and religious lenses beyond just political economies or nationalist paradigms. Only then can we avoid notions that Islam spread through recent forces alone, instead appreciating its centuries-old social presence.

Areas for Further Research

There are many promising avenues for deepening our understanding of how Muslim organizations shaped politics in post-colonial Africa. Comparative analyses of different colonial occupiers like the French, British and Italians could offer insights into how their rule variably influenced relations between Islamic and state institutions. Micro-level case studies of specific religious organizations and communities may provide deeper examinations

of social, political and economic transformations before and after independence.

Interdisciplinary research combining fields such as religious studies, history and political science could help uncover the ongoing legacies of colonial policies on contemporary issues around nationalism, ethnic tensions and development challenges across Africa. Gender-focused work exploring colonial attitudes towards practices such as veiling and their resonance today would broaden perspectives. Incorporating oral histories and diaspora viewpoints could illuminate the endurance of exiled leaders' influence on post-colonial societies.

Quantitative analyses mapping religious resistance over space and time using archival sources would elucidate the scale and variability of response. Examining revivalist and reformist Islamic movements emerging in this period and their roles in nationalist politics sheds light on evolving intellectual currents. Comparisons with Muslim experiences under other empires globally, such as in South and Southeast Asia, provide useful parallels.

Investigating intersections between fiscal policies, labour systems and religious economies offers integrated insights. Ultimately, sustained case study research across multiple fields and colonial contexts continues to be imperative for enhancing comprehension of this transformative historical process with ongoing reverberations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, colonial rule had profound and long-lasting impacts on Muslim communities and organizations across Africa, though religious networks also resisted and facilitated post-independence socio-political contributions addressing colonial legacies. A complex relationship of cooperation, conflict and ongoing influence resulted.

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**Christian Missions and Economic Empowerment of
the People of Cross River State, Nigeria, 1885-1960**

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Abstract

The nineteenth century Christian missionary activities in Cross River State as in other parts of Nigeria were mainly targeted at evangelisation of the people. Christianity has become the dominant religion in Cross River State and the people believe that it is a religion of civilisation and development. The resultant effect of different positions of some scholars is that colonialism has become a stigma for Christianity in contemporary times. To this extent, missionary work in Africa will continue to attract stringent and critical historical examination. It will however be intellectual dishonesty to write off the positive results of missionary work in Cross River State. This paper therefore, examines the contributions of missionary work in empowering the people of Cross River State from 1885 to 1960. The research adopted historic-structural approaches using primary and secondary sources. This includes qualitative interviews and books and journals. The findings of this research show that modern medical practise, theological education as well as education generally, skills acquisition, poverty alleviation and attention to the vulnerable such as children, orphans, widows, the sick and the elderly, through appropriate

influence on negative traditions are some of the areas where missionary work has impacted positively on the people. It concludes that the Christian Missions contributed tremendously to the economic empowerment and enlightenment of the people of Cross River State of Nigeria.

Keywords

Christian Missions, Economic Empowerment, Cross River State.

Introduction

The Cross River state of Nigeria was created in May 1967 from the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria with its capital in Calabar, a well-known city even during the colonial period. Some of the major towns in Cross River state include; Ikom, Calabar, Odukpani, Ogoja, Boki, Ugep, Obudu, Obubra, and Obanliku among others. The state is composed of many ethnic groups such as the Efik, Ejagham, Boki, Yakirr and Bekwarra. Cross River state epitomises the nation's linguistic and cultural plurality. In spite of the numerous dialects, the missionaries were able to pass across their message of evangelism and learnt how to speak some of these local dialects. This was because they also knew that for their evangelism to be effective, they needed to integrate properly especially in terms of language and the culture of the people.¹

In Cross River state, the missionary work began after the coming of the Portuguese, who were then in search of slaves and raw materials for their plantations, factories and industries back home. The familiarity with the indigenous people began when exchange of products such as textiles, metals and agricultural produce attracted the Europeans to the people.² Some of these foreign explorers were also interested in the culture and language of the local people as well as missionary work. The missionaries became interested in exposing the ills and the vices of the evil trafficking of able-bodied women and men that were eventually taken away to Europe. This challenge of the trafficking in able-bodied men and women paved the way for active missionary work. The Christian missionaries were into the establishment of churches,

¹ E.J. Alagoa, "People of the Cross Rive Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta", in Obaro Ikime (ed). *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, (Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria, 1980, 56-57

² James Buchan, *The Expendable Mary Slessor*, New York: Seabury Press, 1981, 25

schools, dispensaries, setting up humanitarian work and the training of people in different skills. This helped in endearing the indigenous people to the foreign Christian missionaries and in their embracing Christianity. The arrival of very notable missionaries like Mary Slessor who stopped the killing of twins in the area and others who established schools and other training institutions brought significant development in the area.³ Roman Catholic missionaries were well rooted in Cross River State. Bishop Joseph Shanahan who became the first Catholic Bishop of the then Eastern Nigeria had his Christian missionary work covering Ibo land, Tiv land and Calabar among others. This Bishop was very zealous with his evangelical work and his work has remained significant in the history of the Christian missions in Cross River State.⁴

The Coming of the Christian Missionaries to Cross River State

The Calabar area and its environs were generally known for the production of palm produce and oil, since the missionaries were to a large extent primarily pursuing their commercial and economic motives, business in this product was very lucrative. This was because these products were needed in their countries as raw materials and it thus further encouraged the Europeans to penetrate into the area.⁵ The Christian missionaries in Cross River State and its environs made efforts to introduce various changes in every sphere of life of the society. The Europeans were particularly fascinated with the various agricultural produce they saw and the economic potentials of the area as well as the remarkable hospitality of the people.⁶

In all these, the people did not initially know that the Europeans apart from their economic motive could also improve their other aspects of life by the establishment of churches and schools. After the assumption of legitimate trade, the negligible interaction and impact made on the social, economic and political institutions of the indigenous people gave room for the easy establishment of schools and designating Sunday a day of worship separate from the social life of the people.⁷ Because of the

³ Mary Slessor, *Letter to Partridge*, October 3, Dundee Central Library

⁴ <https://spiritanroma.org.shanahan>. Accessed 2nd August, 2017

⁵ W.P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916, 55-56

⁶ F. O. 2, 1891-1900, Oil River and Niger Coast Protectorate series

⁷ C. O.520 1907-1912 Southern Nigeria series

luxurious articles given as gifts to the indigenous people and the attitude of the Europeans, many people such as notable Chief Eyamba V of Duke town became close to the Europeans to an extent that he had a journal published in English chronicling the events in Calabar at that time. The missionary work in Cross River State brought Reverend Hope Waddell who arrived in Calabar with a group of Christian Jamaican ex-slaves in 1846 through the Presbyterian church of Scotland.⁸

The hospitality of King Eyamba of Duke town and King Eyo Honesty of Creek town assisted Hope Waddell to acquire land, and this gave him the opportunity to establish mission houses and schools. The reception given to the missionaries by the chiefs was as a result of the flattering of the chiefs with regular visits and patronage of luxurious gifts by the missionaries. Other notable missionaries include Mary Slessor who was a Scottish missionary that came to Calabar and her enthusiasm and dedication endeared her especially to the Calabar Chiefs and the people of the area.⁹ It is pertinent to note that it was the coming of the missionaries that gave room for the abolition of certain barbaric practices such as human sacrifice and also the development of literacy among the people of Cross River State. During this period a missionary by the name Thomas Magttrick who became the catholic Bishop of Ogoja in the then Eastern Nigeria, established a medical mission hospital for those with leprosy which was then not even to talk of now a very highly stigmatized disease.¹⁰

The Impact of Christian Missions in Cross River State

The missionaries in Cross River State made a lot of attempts to bring changes in every sphere of the life of the society. The missionaries began their work by establishing Christian centres which were called stations. They used these centres as places of worship. Later on, their focus was in establishing medical centres to take care of those who were sick. It was generally believed that the Christian centres and their teaching and doctrines were superior to the traditions and culture of the people. It was a major transformation for the indigenous people of Cross River State.¹¹

⁸ E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914, A political and Social Analysis*, 1966, 337-338

⁹ Hardage Jeanette, *The Legacy of Mary Slessor*, pp 178-179

¹⁰ F. O. 2, 1891-1900 (Oil River and Niger Coast Protectorate series)

¹¹ Interview with Eno Paul, aged 62+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Boki, date of interview 28th December, 2022

The establishment of the churches in the area contributed to the abolishment of some very undesirable culture and traditions giving way to their economic and social emancipation. The churches and worship centres preached about good moral standing and treating neighbours and others as they would like to be treated and this led to reduction in crime, criminality and some anti-social practices such as rituals. The missionaries primarily confined themselves to the building of churches, preaching the gospel and converting the indigenous people into Christianity and establishing schools such as Annunciation School in Ogoja, Holy Child College in Ogoja and St. Patrick's Technical School Ugep.¹²

One of the most remarkable of the Christian missionary's achievements in the area was in the field of education. This was the greatest legacy that Christian missionary work left in Cross River State. Education was seen by the Christian missionaries as an indispensable handmaid of evangelism.¹³ The establishment of western educational institutions in Calabar by Revd Hope Wadell such as the Hope Wadell Institute Calabar which was established in 1895 from where many very notable politicians, academics and professionals from far and near were educated remains an important legacy of Christian missionary work in Cross River State. With fluency in English language also being a requirement for employment, the indigenous people seized this advantage and were employed as typists, messengers, interpreters, clerks and teachers. During the colonial period, those who spoke English were paid salaries and allowances according to the salary structure of the colonial administration in Nigeria then which laid a lot of emphasis on being fluent in English language.¹⁴ In 1846 two missionaries Hope Waddel and Samuel Edgerly established printing press in Calabar and this printing outfit was used to publish several documents that still exist till date. Rev. Henry Townsend also was one of the first persons to establish a printing press in Nigeria in 1882. This encouraged the Europeans to document their activities in Nigeria.¹⁵

¹² K. B.C. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa, 1800- Present day. Nigeria*: African Educational Publishers Nig Ltd, 211

¹³ Andrew .F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Maryknoll, NV, Orbis Books, 1996, 172

¹⁴ Abdul-Rasheed Afolabi, *A Brief History of Printing in Nigeria*, 2015, <https://m.thenigerianvoice.com>. Accessed 2nd August, 2017

¹⁵ Interview with Ejim Basil, aged 40+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ikom, date of interview 28th December, 2022

The crop of Nigerians who learnt to speak the English language constituted the bulk of those in the nationalist movement in Nigeria and this was the group of people that eventually fought for Nigeria's independence. Other places such as Ogoja had the Mount Carmel College, Mary Noll College and Holy Child Ikom, St. Patrick's Technical College Ugep, all of which were established by the Catholic Missions. Another missionary who contributed immensely to the development of education in Cross River State was the Scottish missionary Mary Slessor.¹⁶

Mary Slessor was deeply involved in education and gospel preaching as her primary occupation. Ogbu Kalu, a historian and scholar in church history and a Professor of World Christianity and Missions at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago referred to her as having "a broader view of the style and the vision of the missionary enterprise".¹⁷ He stated that Mary Slessor's vision and aim was much broader than that of an activist. Mary Slessor was a great missionary in Calabar who was not only into education, but also contributed in the area of saving lives and changing harmful local traditions, practices and culture. She was the one who stopped the killing of twins in the area.¹⁸

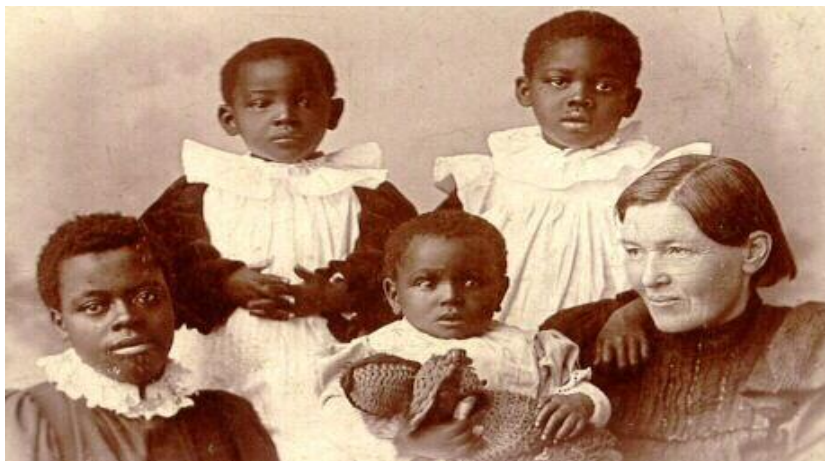


Fig 1: Mary Slessor and adopted children,
<http://en.wikipedia> Accessed August 2nd 2017

Mary Slessor ensured a better livelihood for the orphans and also made sure that women were free from harmful rituals after the death of their husbands. The birth of twins then was in particular

¹⁶ W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, London: Holder and Stoughton, 1916, 55-56

¹⁷ W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, London: Holder and Stoughton, 1916, 55-56

¹⁸ <https://eruditesunny.wordpress.com/.../ho>. *How Mary Slessor Stopped the Killing of the Twins in Calabar, Nigeria*. Accessed 7th September, 2017

considered an evil omen. Natives then feared and believed that the father of one of the infants was an evil spirit, and that the mother had been guilty of a great sin. Unable to determine which twin was fathered by the evil spirit, the natives often abandoned both babies in the bush. Mary Slessor adopted every child she found abandoned.¹⁹

She also established vocational training schools for the women. Mary Slessor worked hard to an extent that in 1913, she was given an award from the British Government and was also selected as an Honorary Associate of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.²⁰ Mary Slessor and other missionaries in conjunction with the female slaves went on a protest that defied the authority of the colonial masters in Calabar over the wearing of slave gowns and the success of that action eventually paved the way for their freedom.²¹

Another very vital achievement in the coming of the missionaries to the area was in the health sector. The missionaries introduced medical missionary work by treating those who were sick and had serious medical conditions. As a result, dispensaries hospitals and medical centres were established. The hospitals were built by the missionaries and were equipped by them. People who became sick and needed medical care were treated by the doctors and drugs were properly administered to them. Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Pharmacy Technicians, Laboratory Technologists, Laboratory Assistants and other health workers were employed and paid by these missionaries. Some of these hospitals were the Roman Catholic Missions (RCM) Hospital Moniaya Ogoja, Sacred Heart Hospital Ogoja, and Holy Family Hospital Ikom. These formed the foundation for the establishment of several other tertiary hospitals by various other governments in Cross River State.²²

Another great and spectacular achievement in the area was the study of linguistics and the introduction of writing. It was the missionaries that introduced the translation of the Bible into many other Nigerian languages. In connection with this, the missionaries were able to teach and develop converts who could interpret from

¹⁹ Hardage Jeanette, *The Legacy of Mary Slessor*, 179

²⁰ Weddle Hope, Journal Entries for 16-17 April and May, in the national library Edinburgh, 1846, 67-68

²¹ Interview with Cyril Bayim, aged 65+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ogoja, date of interview 12th December, 2022

²² Interview with Obi Mike, aged 48+, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ugep Osokom, date of interview 29th December, 2022

the indigenous languages to English and vice versa and this led to wide-spread literacy in the area. The coming of the missionaries in a way brought modern civilisation. In Cross River state the first person to translate the Boki language into English was a white missionary who lived in Boki for several years.²³

Another major contribution of the missionaries was on the economy of the area. The missionary work was not limited to religious activities alone, but encompassed other areas such as agriculture and trade. Some of the missionaries paid some attention to the development of agriculture and legitimate trade. It was also through the activities of the missionaries that domestic slavery and the Trans- Atlantic slave trade were stopped. Their interest in trade then translated from slave trade to legitimate trade and also the transformation of agricultural produce from indigenous produce such as plantain, yams and coco-yam to produce such as cocoa and timber. The emphasis on these new products was for their own selfish interest and for the development of their industries and factories back home in Europe.²⁴

The missionaries especially because of their hospitality towards the people, the indigenous people therefore became encouraged to go into plantation farming and agriculture in preparation for export products which were then taken to the European countries. Some of the missionary bodies had trading companies to supply imported goods at cheap prices to the people.²⁵ It was the missionaries that formed the trading company called United Trading Company (UTC) in 1889.²⁶

The issue of economic development has been of national concern in Cross River State. The missionaries contributed in the economic growth and development of the area in spite of their initial motives. Historically, since the inception of the Christian missions the people of Cross River State had benefited in the various economic activities enunciated by the missionaries. It is pertinent to note that some scholars have seen economic development as a process in which there is a long period of sustained growth in per capital real income of a nation and there are always fundamental changes in the setup of the economy and

²³ Interview with Obi Mike, aged 48+, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ugep Osokom, date of interview 29th December, 2022

²⁴ M. J. Walsh, *The Catholic Contribution to Education in Western Nigeria*, London: 1962

²⁵ Buchan James, *The Expendable Mary Slessor*, New York: Seabury Press, 1981, 25-26

²⁶ Talodun and Nnadi, 2007, 32

also in improvement the lives of the people.²⁷ This shows that economic development occurs, if the rate of growth of per capital income in a nation is higher than the rate of the population growth. This means that economic development has to be measured by the standard of living of the people. Oguji and Kene also saw economic development as a process of growth and a foundational change in the economy.²⁸

The impact of the work of the missionaries in the economic sphere also helped the society as adjudged by the increase in the quality of life of the people. The missionaries were able to teach the people various crafts and skills such as weaving, woodcraft and tailoring among others and these therefore economically empowered the people. The missionaries also transformed the old values of the indigenous people such as the killing of twins and worship of idols to the worship of God, as well as created adjustments in their social and economic circumstances and values. The introduction of new crops also encouraged the cultivation of these export crops mainly for export trade by the indigenous people of Cross River State. Opportunity was also given for employment especially among those who spoke English, as evangelists, catechists, school teachers and interpreters among others. This improved their productivity and relevance to the area as well as improving their quality of life.²⁹

On the role of economic advancement of the area, virtually all the churches had hospitals and schools built along them. All these went a long way in improving the economic status and quality of life of the people. Indigenous people were employed to work in these facilities and salaries were paid to them. Rehabilitation centres such as Catholic Maternity hospital and Saint Benedict's Tuberculosis and Leprosy rehabilitation hospitals among others were built to help those with disability and medical challenges. Some of the mission schools such as Hope Waddell Training Institution Calabar and Boki Boys Secondary School had practical training for boys in blacksmithing, carpentry work and brick making among others. The girls also were into tailoring and other vocational training. All these vocational skills contributed to the growth and development of the economy of the area.

²⁷ C. O. Oguji, and G. I. Kene, *Foundation of Development Studies*, Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishes, 2009

²⁸ H. Goldie, *Calabar and its Mission*, London and Edinburgh, 1901

²⁹ P.E.M, Inyang, *The Provision of Education in Nigeria with reference to the work of the Church Missionary Society, Catholic Mission and the Methodist Missionary Society*, London, 1958, 90

In Africa and Nigeria, polygamy was a product of political, economic and social circumstances of the society, because there was a lot of land to farm, most people used it to improve their lives by marrying many wives and therefore having more people to work on the farms.³⁰ Since there was no birth control and infant mortality was high, people saw the need to marry many wives and have many children.³¹ During this period, monogamy was encouraged and enforced by the church and that was why the divorce law was introduced by the administrators in the Native Courts established all over southern Nigeria to settle cases and to grant divorce on the basis enunciated by the British colonial government.³²

The missionaries also abolished human sacrifice and seclusion of widows for many years after the death of their husbands.³³ The abolition of human sacrifice involved a combination of missionary efforts, cultural exchange and colonial intervention. Missionaries engaged the local communities promoting Christian values and emphasizing the sanctity of human life. The process was complex and it involved religious, cultural and legal interventions. The abolition of human sacrifice and the stoppage of widows' seclusion had social and humanitarian impacts. It reduced violence, improved human rights and promoted more inclusive and compassionate practices. It also played a vital role in enhancing cultural norms in the society.

Challenges Faced by the Missionaries

It is important to note that the Christian missionaries achieved a lot of successes in their missionary work even though they experienced many difficulties and hardship in the course of their work. The impact of the Christian missionary work in Cross River State, to a large extent, - had an everlasting impression on the people, but this does not mean that there were no challenges. There were also a lot of shortcomings and limitations suffered by the missionaries. In spite of the establishment of schools in the different communities in Cross River State, education was a secondary consideration to evangelisation, which was why their curriculum was not appropriate.³⁴ For example, Nigerian history was not

³⁰ Leith-Ross Sylvia, *African Women-A Study of Ibo of Nigeria*, London: 1938, 23-34

³¹ Leith-Ross Sylvia *African Women-A Study of Ibo of Nigeria*, 23

³² E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*, A political and Social Analysis, 1966, 337

³³ Agnes Waddel, *Memorials of Mrs Sutherland of Old Calabar*, Paisley 1883.

³⁴ Leith-Ross Sylvia, *African Women-A Study of Ibo of Nigeria*, 1938, 24

considered or taught in the schools, because of some Eurocentric views such as that of Hugh Trevor Roper a professor of European history at Oxford University who asserted "Africa has no history and history took to its heels when the Europeans discovered Africa".³⁵ That was why Europeans teaching were based on the proper documentation of European activities in Nigeria.³⁶ Another challenge faced by the Christian missionaries was the language barrier. This was a very difficult problem, the Christian missionaries found it difficult to contend with. This problem made the Christian missionaries to train some indigenous people to become interpreters. These interpreters were involved to interpret the gospel to the people.³⁷

One other challenge of the Christian missionaries was in the area of their health. Most of them suffered from sicknesses arising from harsh climate and because of the unfavourable weather, some suffered from Yellow Fever, Malaria and Pneumonia among other infectious diseases. The use of Quinine for treating Malaria from 1954 could not really help the situation and antibiotics for treating Pneumonia and other infections were just coming on the scene then.³⁸

There were other herbs and orthodox preparations administered to people who were suffering from Malaria which helped to combat the Malaria parasite. Some of the missionaries died due to some of these illnesses and were eventually buried in those communities. An example was Thomas Peter who suffered from Malaria in 1942 and eventually died. Some of the missionaries paid the supreme price by dying of infectious diseases such as Malaria and Pneumonia because of the risks they were exposed to in Cross River State.³⁹ Another obvious challenge that the Christian missionaries faced was in the area of finance. Financial resources were limited and that constraint led some of the Christian missionaries into trading activities.⁴⁰

Communication and transportation were another limitation faced by the missionaries. Some places such as Ikom, Boki, Ogoja, Obudu and Ugep among others, lacked communication facilities.

³⁵ T. A. Kwame, *Africa: the Hidden History*, 1998, <https://www.nybook.com>.

³⁶ J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missionary in Nigeria, 1841-1891*, London: 1965, 56

³⁷ J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missionary in Nigeria, 1841-1891*, 52-53

³⁸ Interview with peter Orom, 2017, aged 81+, occupation trader, place of interview Ogoja, date of interview 29th July, 2022

³⁹ Anozie Eric Emeka, *Christian Church: A Catalyst for Economic Development in Nigeria*, *An International Multi-disciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia, Vol. 7. (4), serial No. 31, 2013, 275-286

⁴⁰ Slessor Mary, (1884), *Notebook*, Dundee Museum, 258-259

Communication between the Christian missionaries with their home countries was difficult and some of them sent messages through vessels travelling to their home countries that took months to arrive. Modern communication system was introduced in Calabar in the later part of the 19th century.⁴¹ Transportation was also a big challenge that confronted the missionaries. Most of them travelled along bush paths on foot from Ogoja to Ugep and other places. Few of the missionaries had motor bikes or bicycles, Rev Father John Long rode on bicycle to Boki, Ikom and to other communities for evangelism.⁴²

The coming of the missionaries created some conflicts and also an impression that the tradition and culture of the people was inferior. Some of the indigenous traditions and practices were seen as evil and diabolical and the people were discouraged from worshipping their indigenous gods/deities. The missionaries also faced hostility from the people especially in the aspect of their culture. Most of the traditional Chiefs and the people were not happy that their traditions were being eroded and degraded.⁴³

Lastly, the missionaries also faced opposition from both the indigenous and the colonial masters, among the indigenous people, the white men were seen as slave dealers, this brought negative attitude towards the early missionaries. In the 19th century, when it became real that the Europeans were opting for legitimate trade, the chiefs refused to give land to the Christian missionaries to build stations, because the benefits associated with slave trade were no longer given to some of the chiefs.⁴⁴

This resulted to the Christian missionaries building their churches or stations in burial grounds or in areas that were known as the evil forests. The indigenous people suffered discrimination from missionaries, because during Christian baptism, the indigenous people were not allowed to give their children native names, because baptismal names were restricted to only English names.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Onah Augustine Odey, *Mitchell Slessor (1848-1915) and her Impact on the Missionary Enterprise in Cross River Region, Nigeria*, Journal Home, Vol.7, No1, 2016, <https://www.ajol.info/article/view>. Accessed 17th June, 2017

⁴² Interview with Peter Offong, aged 65+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Calabar, date of interview 5th October, 2022

⁴³ Andrew F Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 1996, 172-173

⁴⁴ Waddell Hope, *Journal, Hope Waddell and others*, Hutchinson, 16h. 1856, 8-9

⁴⁵ Interview with Peter Offong, aged 65+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Calabar, date of interview 5th December, 2022

Conclusion

Despite the stigma of colonialism associated with early missionary work in Africa, it is pertinent to note that missionary work in Cross River State of Nigeria brought about an improvement in the economy, livelihood and in the quality of life of the indigenous people of the area. Apart from the economic development and empowerment of the indigenous people of the area, the coming of the missionaries also gave room for the abolition of unacceptable cultural practices and traditions. However, the zeal of the Christian missionaries to convert the indigenous people made them undermine the rules and regulations of the indigenous people because of the protection they got from their home government.

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**A Christian Engagement and Interpretation of Ga
Rites of Passage and the *Kpelelogical* Theological
Method**

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Abstract

The paper studies the dialogical relationship between the gospel and Ga rites of passage. There is a paradox in this relationship which only becomes meaningful only by considering its mediation through the person and works of Jesus Christ. This view allows a mutual critical approach which resolves the paradox of the initial rejection of Ga rites of passage by the gospel and their later acceptance after they have been transformed and preserved by the mystery of Christ. In this way, Ga rites of passage become useful in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, while the gospel adds on to itself the contextual elements of Ga holistic existence. The paper looks at how this paradoxical relationship between Ga rites and the Christian gospel underlies the processes transforming the liturgy of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and helping to preserve important Ga traditions and culture in Christianity for of church and of society.

Keywords

Rites of passage, Ga, paradox, theology, religion, *Kpele* and *Kpelelogical*.

Introduction

The study of world Christianity has heightened the theological principle that Christianity manifests its essence in consonance with the context in which it resides. Hence, insofar as the essence or the form of Christianity remains one, it has diverse expressions. For example, although the message of Jesus Christ carries the same meaning all over the world, it is transmitted through many different cultures and languages. So, it is often said that Christianity is universal while at the same time, it is particular.¹

In this paper, the *Kpelelogical* method is used to analyze how Christianity has engaged the traditional Ga rites of passage. Ga people are indigenes of the Greater Accra region and of the capital city of Ghana. The church has been engaging the Ga language and its culture since the arrival of the missionaries. The results of the engagements have transformed the liturgies of some of the churches. For example, those which have brought transformation into the church include *kpojiemɔ* (outdooing/child naming), and *okulafeemɔ* (widowhood rites).² The work presents the theological paradox approach known as the *Kpelelogical* method.³ The *Kpelelogical* method stands as an improvement of other contextual theological approaches such as translation⁴ which does not guarantee mutual critical engagement between culture and the gospel. The *Kpelelogical* method is the paradoxical rejection and acceptance of the Ga rites of passage in Jesus Christ the Redeemer. It is an inherently trinitarian theology revealed in the soteriology of Jesus Christ and human culture as conversion. As there is a

¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1. 3vols. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), 16-17; Robert J. Schrieter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, foreword by Edward Schillebeeckx (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 37-38.

² Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Ghana Presbyterian Asafo Jamɔ Wolo: Klenkley Mlijaa* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1987), 100-109.

³ Charles Amarkwei, *An Introduction to Theology in Africa and the Kpelelogical Foundations of Christian Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2021).

⁴ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 27-28; Lamin, Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989).

conversion of the Ga cultural rites on one hand, there is the renewal and expansion of the church on the other hand.⁵

The results show that it is a win-win situation for the Ga culture as well as the Ga Christian community in favour of the survival and growth of the future of both the Ga local church and the Ga indigenous culture. The theological word conversion is used instead of translation or any of the inculturation approaches that include, incarnation, indigenization, acculturation, and accommodation because of they do not represent the holistic African worldview among other critiques.⁶ Moreover, the *Kpelelogical* method which is seen as a theological conversion is used to show that it is not only human beings as Africans who convert to Christianity because of the new life in God, but also, they and their cultures and languages are received by God but transformed with a new sense of usage which is according to the tenets of Christianity while maintaining their original essences.

Nature of Ga Rites of Passage: Marriage and Procreation

The beginning of life, growth, and maturity leading to death for the Ga society involves passages. In other words, there are passages through which every Ga person becomes a human being, a 'canal' for birth and living with other human beings, a 'canal' of growth and maturity, a 'canal' for reproduction, and a 'canal' for life after death.⁷ Thus, life is actually in stages. At every stage of transition, there is a rite of passage that ushers the individual Ga of a community into another stage. The rites of passage include rites of puberty, marriage, and childbirth; it also has the outdoorings and naming of the children, training of developing children in vocations and professions, puberty rites, as well as funeral rites and widowhood rites.

The rites of passage may begin with the marriage ceremonies which prepare the ground for procreation and proper socialization of children. Generally, it is held that rites of passage begin from birth to death. However, in her ethnographical studies of the Ga people, Margaret Field presented her work starting with

⁵ Amarkwei, *An Introduction to Theology in Africa*, 108-110.

⁶ Amarkwei, *An Introduction to Theology in Africa*; 108-110; Emmanuel Martey, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 74; Volker Küster, *The Many Faces of Jesus in Africa: Intercultural Theology*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2001), 15-36.

⁷ Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 161-206.

the marriage rites. It cannot be farfetched that procreation or birth is central and since it is central the act of procreation is given all the needed attention. This study is peculiar to the Ga people and cannot be done on generalizations. In all the Ga communities there are customary marriage rites involving both the man and woman with emphasis on the woman. However, the Tema customary rite that involves the preparation of the man where he undergoes rituals of purification and fortification among others underscores the procreation intention in the rite.⁸ Moreover, after the purification, fortification, grooming, and adornment of the male he is required to stay in the room with the pregnant wife for about three days. After the three days, some rituals may be performed for her too.⁹ In the La community there are houses where traditionally, pregnant women need to be presented to the deities for blessing at night among other things. These rites mentioned above are all performed by a *Wulɔmɔ*. Now, for a rite to be performed by the *Wulɔmɔ* in the Ga traditional community shows the level of commitment and priority given to customary marriage and procreation.

Again, for a place like Osu where a woman is getting married to a *dipo* family, a *dipo* puberty rite has to be performed before she delivers a child. So, in many ways, for ladies in the *dipo* culture, *dipo* is a rite of passage for marriage and procreation.¹⁰ *Dipo* prepares the woman in question to be a good companion and help to her husband. It shows the lady how to groom herself, take care of the house, and provide all the needs of her husband including food. The fact that it has to be done for a woman before the delivery of a child may imply that the *dipo* rite of passage prepares her for the period of pregnancy and the successful delivery of children.

Women who are in dire need of children also visit the priests and priestesses and other rites of passage for childbearing are done.¹¹ These include the preparation of special herbs in a basin and soaking them in water from the lagoon, river, or sea ascribed to a deity. These women or girls are bathed with it after prayers are said in the form of libation. In the prayer God and the primary deities of the Ga, communities are invoked for the gift of children for the women. Miniature symbols of babies such as dolls are presented to the deities for the prayers of the barren women to give

⁸ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 162.

⁹ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 162-64.

¹⁰ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 161-70.

¹¹ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 162.

birth. When the women are done with the rites of purification and prayers, they all hope to conceive and bear a child in a year. After all the rituals the dolls and the herbs in the basin are deposited at the dumpsite.¹² Surely, bathing at the dumpsite means cleansing and removing all dirt and refuse symbolically and dumping them outside the place of human abode. All the woman's burdens are no longer with her but dumped on the refuse heap.¹³

A Religious, Anthropological, and Psychosocial Analysis of Ga Rites of Passage

According to Marion Kilson, the Ga Kpele religion is holistic. Therefore, the rites of passage also aim at addressing the holistic needs of the persons undergoing the rite so passage. The focus includes the focus on spiritual well-being, psychological well-being, and physiological well-being among others.¹⁴ These different realities as different as they are, are held meaningfully together. Spiritual well-being is fundamental to the Ga person. If God is not brought into any situation, there is a fear of failure or fear of trouble or challenges in life. The whole idea of God is found in the *Kpele* religion.¹⁵ It is a belief in God who the Creator of all things is and the greatest and mightiest of all who is good. *Ataa Naa Nyɔŋmɔ* (God) is masculine and feminine symbolically because of providence. The providential God is the one who has made the whole universe and oversees its upkeep including the upkeep of all human beings and leads them to goals and missions of self-realization and fulfilment. God is *Okpelejen*.¹⁶ It is keeping the harmony of the world and promoting the blessedness of being. It promotes human flourishing.

Some of the other spiritual rites are associated with the deities of the land.¹⁷ In addition, other spiritual needs are met through prayers in the form of libation to the ancestors. Today, the Ga prayers are said to the constellation of the deities and spirits known to them. Therefore, they could mention God as their Creator

¹² Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 161-62.

¹³ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 161.

¹⁴ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 92-99.

¹⁵ Marion Kilson, *Kpele Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbolism* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 7-8; 58-61.

¹⁶ Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 115-27, 135-37; Charles Amarkwei, *An Introduction to Theology in Africa and the Kpelelogical Foundations of Christian Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2021).

¹⁷ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 4-6, 29-30; Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 69.

and all the deities as well as their ancestors.¹⁸ They call upon all of them for help and for things to be harmoniously and successfully done. The ancestors conform to the hierarchy of being created in the Ga community since they were brought on board as aids for guaranteed success and protection. The deities are known to the ancestors and the ancestors have also known them.¹⁹ The next is harmony with all the spiritual entities with the whole of the physical world through nature.²⁰ Since all these spiritual realities are in harmony with nature given the holistic nature of the rites, the righteousness and success of the initiate is dependent on the right spiritual connection.

Therefore, spiritual aid has a direct impact on the psychological well-being of the person.²¹ The Ga psychological wholeness is of utmost importance. This is based upon the anthropological terminologies for the composition of the human being such as *susuma*, *kla*, and *gbɔmɔtso*, and how each could be affected.²² For example, the driving out of bad *gbeshi* associated with an individual is a spiritual activity yet it achieves a psychosocial healing for the person in question. *Gbeshi* is a type of influential reality or power behind an individual for fortunes or misfortunes. *Gbeshi* for good fortunes is called good *gbeshi*. And *gbeshi* for misfortunes is bad *gbeshi*. A bad *gbeshi* could be driven out through a ritual by a priest. An awareness of a bad *gbeshi* itself may cause psychosocial problems such as self-isolation, stigmatization, and ostracisation. Thus, all the processes involved in the healing process of a human being is not taken only as physical, but in addition, it is taken as psychosocial and spiritual.²³ This is the basis of the holistic worldview of the Ga people. However, having been aware of contemporary science and psychological analysis, it has become very clear and more meaningful to note that rites of passage could be described as *kairos* moments.²⁴ As a

¹⁸ Philip Laryea, *Yesu Hɔmɔwɔ Nuŋtsɔ: Nikasemɔ Ni Kɔɔ Bɔ Ni Kristofoi Naa Yesu ye Gamei Akusumfeemɔ ke Blema Saji Amlɔ*. Foreword by Kwame Bediako (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2004), 60-62.

¹⁹ Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 64.

²⁰ Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 58-78.

²¹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1969), 2, 15-16.

²² Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 92-9; Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 62.

²³ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 96-7; See how the word “*gbeshi*” became legally meaningful in Ghana’s Supreme Court. See Mabel Aku Banaseh, “Ayikoi’s Humor, Maturity Saved Sir John” *Daily Graphic* (August 16, 2013) accessed September 20, 2022. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/482543/1/ayikoi-otoos-humour-maturity-saved-sir-john.html>.

²⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* III: 369-72; Charles Amarkwei, “The Kairos of COVID-19 Pandemic and the Quest for a New Life: A Paul Tillich Interpretation of History” *E-Journal*

Christian interpreting the reality of the rites of passage, *kairos* is key because *kairos* is a moment in which the spiritual meets the temporal and there is a revolutionary impact that could shift the negative into a positive and the positive into the negative depending on the situation. Such a situation could shift the barrenness of a woman caused by a bad *gbeshi* and healing could be obtained through the process.

This healing is intended to bring fruitfulness and purpose to those who suffer all manner of challenges. This is why for the pregnant mother who carries a child, there is a need to engage these rites of passage. In the end, the rite of passage has an impact on not only the spiritual and psychological well-being of the Ga people, but also impact on the socioeconomic, cultural, and political well-being of the community.

Theological Paradox in Jesus Christ: The *Kpelelogical* Method of Engaging the Ga Rites of Passage

The Christian theological approach to Ga rites of passage in this paper looks at it as a paradox. There is an initial 'no' or rejection of the rites and yet there is a 'yes' or acceptance in such a seeming ambiguous state.²⁵ The unambiguous meaning is derived only from the mediation of Jesus Christ as fully human and fully divine in the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁶

The Christian Theological Rejection of the Whole Creation of God and all Cultures

The revelation of God as presented to the world in the person and works of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is a direct position that points to the response of God to his rejection and condemnation of the world and the whole of the created order. The rejection is very logical insofar as Christ appeared on the scene to salvage the situation. It points to the reality that no human civilization or culture can save itself. If the culture of the world has any capacity

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<https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2022851>.

²⁵ Paul Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections," 5; Horton, "Tillich's Role in Contemporary Theology," 29-31; See how Tillich says yes to German national socialism as a cultural creation on one hand, and on the other hand, he says no to it.

²⁶ He employs the knowledge of the Chalcedonian creed regarding the unity without confusion and without separation in the person of Jesus Christ as a guide to engaging his context. See Horton, "Tillich's Role in Contemporary Theology," 32-33.

to redeem itself of its predicament of “*ana ημε anaaa τε; ana τε anaaa ημε*”²⁷ (ambiguity of fortunes and misfortunes), the Christian gospel and the agenda of God for redemption would have been needless. Therefore, the Christian claims that:

1. Symbolized as the fall in Genesis 3, the world’s effort aimed at self-redemption through cultural creativity without God and or without the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is in vain. Throughout human history, the strive for meaning has been exhibited in morality and religion. Yet, meaning has been drawn from cultural creations such as language, cognitive abilities, aesthetics, and science and technology. In today’s world, however, it is plain that all human cultural creations including science and technology, and its gadgets remain both a positive and a negative force and not redemptive at all. The goal and purpose of culture therefore cannot be said to lie in the culture itself no matter how good and fascinating it is. This position is grounded among others in the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).²⁸ Therefore, the meaning of the world’s existence truly lies outside all cultural creations including the Ga rites of passage for fulfilling life and progressive life.
2. The effort of the world to bring meaning by providing a solution to the human predicament is an effort in futility without the God it has rejected through pride and falsehood (Genesis 3). In the attempt to provide solutions to the human predicament over the ages, it is plain that no human civilization including that of the Ga has ended the challenges completely. The ideas and rites, though good and quite relevant to the needs of the people, never go away. This is what is known as the utopian cultural creations, they are repeated endlessly because the problem they seek to address persists in history and never goes away.²⁹ And so is the Ga cultural rite of passage.
3. The act of culture is directly opposed to God the Creator of all things. The very element of sinfulness associated with creation through the elements of self-pride to the disobedience of God and rebellion has never left any culture. The sheer boldness in

²⁷ A common appellation of Ga people. It however reveals the critical and realistic position that Ga people possess regarding the futility of all human efforts no matter how progressive it is.

²⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 73, 151.

²⁹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 345-46.

declaring that other spirits and deities have to be involved amounts to a contemptuous boldness against the justice, righteousness, and holiness of God. It is a reasonable thought and action when it cannot be taken in that God alone is enough and it is wrong for us to determine our helpers of deities whom he has not assigned to us. It is a total rejection of God when the deities worshipped become the center of the religion of Ga culture. And this is what the gospel stands up against and says a big “No” to.³⁰

Moreover, the church will reject human culture insofar as it expresses itself in ungratefulness because it fails to recognize what the Lord has done in providing its being for existence. It fails to acknowledge that its being in existence for the opportunity to experience life in all its joyous and sad moments through cultural creations is based upon how it has come into being. This ungrateful spirit inherent in human culture makes human culture a culture of deception. It presents itself in a manner that it exists on its own and it is independent. Thus, it causes the ethnic communities and the nations to assume absolute power as if they were God. This deception and falsehood lead many people away from God. Leading people away from God also means leading away from order to chaos and further into destruction and non-existence.

Taking the place of God and deceiving people is complete evil. It is this evil, which has been described effectively by Paul Tillich as the demonic. The demonic arrogate all power to itself and thus negates itself and the sustaining power of being which is beyond all creation. It is failing to notice that culture no matter how good, is having inherent ambiguities that could be creative and destructive.³¹ It is distorting the essence of God’s agenda for the new earth and the new heavens. The demonic negates the power that sustains culture and the created order. It means a spiral out of control leading to the deprivation of other creatures of their being through oppression, suppression, and dehumanization. Other elements of the demonic include actions of death and destruction of life and creation. Culture in its demonic mode could manifest in racism, colonization, imperialism, oppression of women, gerontocratic oppression, classism, and environmental destruction.

³⁰ Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising “Nature and Grace” by Professor Dr Emil Brunner and the Reply “No!” by Dr Karl Barth*. Translated from the German by Peter Fraenkel (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

³¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* I:222-7; III:102-6, 375-8.

In the case of the Ga traditional rites of passage, there exists an example of the oppression and dehumanization of widows. Some of the rituals involve the use of stones as pillows, starvation, and other physical abuses. Others include socioeconomic as well as religious and cultural exploitation.³² For many of these women, they have to suffer a lot from fear and anxiety until the end of the process.

The Christian Theological Acceptance of the Whole Creation of God and the Ga Cultural Rites of Passage

Going through a major stage in life has been considered by Western psychologists as a developmental stage.³³ No matter how Western psychological issues have been presented they aim at addressing issues surrounding these major stages so that an individual can pass through the stage successfully. Psychologists such as Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, James W. Fowler, and Jean Piaget among others affirm this position poignantly.³⁴ On that score, it is plausible to accept that the Ga people like other Africans have such stages of development in the rites of passage. Moreover, the Ga have these ideas conceptualized in holistic and spiritual terms. Therefore, the spiritual has a direct impact on the biological or physiological to the psychological through the social realm and then to the creative realm of human life where culture resides.³⁵ So cultural rites of passage for the Ga people have physical foundations that are intricately linked to spirituality and religion.

And just as Jesus Christ would not conceive of a physical ailment as compartmentalized as physiological only but instead with a spiritual connection by bringing about physical healing through forgiveness of sins, (Luke 7:48; Matthew 9:5), so is the Ga

³² Michael Martey Tei-Ahontu, "Widowhood Rites in the Ga Traditional Area of Accra, A Review of Traditional Practices Against Human Rights," (Masters Thesis: Norwegian University of Life Sciences, 2008): 1-2.

³³ Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (Scotts Valley, California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016); Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994); Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 2019); James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995).

³⁴ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 92-9; Cf. Paul Tillich, *The System of the Sciences According Objects and Methods* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1981).

³⁵ Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*; Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*; Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child*; Fowler, *Stages of Faith*.

³⁶ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 92-9; Cf. Tillich, *The System of the Sciences*; James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Science, Culture and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

traditional rites of passage³⁶. Furthermore, the making of Jesus Christ as the anointed one who would perform signs and wonders, do good works, die, and rise from the dead also started with a spiritual conception when angel Gabriel spoke to Mary (Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18). This was followed up by the rite of circumcision and naming in the temple on the eighth day (Luke 2:21). After that, Jesus was baptized to fulfil all righteousness as he went through that rite of passage into the Kingdom of God (Mathew 3:13). The anointing of his body for his death and resurrection is a crucial rite of passage (Mathew 26: 6-13; Mark 14: 3-9; Luke 7: 36-50; John 12: 1-8). The ascension (Luke 24:50), and Pentecost day outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all disciples (Acts 2) are all rites of passage in him. These are spiritual dimensions of life that made a revolutionary impact on Jesus and the church holistically. Therefore, the Christ event as Jesus' rite of passage is the basis of Christian suffering, death, and the hope of the resurrection as well as eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Salvation is in Jesus Christ alone and once and for all in his death and resurrection and there is no salvation without Jesus Christ. Therefore, from the Christian theological perspective which is different from the philosophy of religion, Jesus has obviated all the evil and suffering associated with the traditional rites of passage. Moreover, Christian suffering is not an endorsement for oppression, rather it is a voluntary self-sacrificing love that aims at promoting the common good. It provides liberation from taboos and norms that are inimical to the members of society while retaining the essential purpose of the rites of passage.

Nonetheless, the Christian rites of passage when understood should expand the scope and understanding of the Ga rites of passage. The reason is that the eschatological transition from the old to the new cosmos at the end of history is the ultimate rite of passage for all creation. Moreover, it has implications on not only the physical existence but also for the spiritual existence which expands the scope of the Ga rites of passage.³⁷ The Ga rite is physical as well as spiritual, yet it terminates in a spiritual realm mostly but partly with the potentiality of reincarnation.³⁸ The Ga final rites of passage terminate in the burial and funeral rites in the physical world. However, it is believed that the dead journey by

³⁶ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 92-9.

³⁷ Carl E. Braaten, "The Kingdom of God and Everlasting Life" *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, edited by Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1982), 274-98.

³⁸ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 197-98.

crossing a river to their destination known as the land of the dead³⁹ yet it does not deal with the future of this world and its form as the resurrection of Jesus Christ has demonstrated. The Ga rites of passage do not give hope that the dead shall rise from their graves and inhabit a new earth and a new heaven.⁴⁰

The Ga rites of passage are a wealth of information that shows that the rites as performed are efficacious in terms of the spiritual and physical benefits. The Ga with the background above is bound to interpret their Christian rites of passage similarly. Therefore, the Christian rites of passage that include baptism and Christian confirmation cannot be taken casually from the Ga Christian perspective. It reminds them that the sacraments are indeed holy and efficacious and that participating in that Christian rite of communion and baptism could generate a *kairos*⁴¹ that could be a blessing or a curse depending on the situation (1 Corinthians 11:27-31).⁴² The Ga spirituality of the rites of passage could also inform the over-spiritualization of Christianity and Docetism as it has a direct impact on the physiological, psychosocial as well as socioeconomic well-being of the people. The knowledge of eternal life and the Kingdom of God should never deter Christians from connecting to responsible life on earth. There ought to be a tension between the life of eternity and the life of the present world. Knowledge of Christ's coming in the future should remind Christians to plan well for the final rites of passage into his Kingdom through righteous and holy living on this earth.

Certainly, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ regarding the ultimate rite of passage manifested concretely in history in him may be identical to the rites of passage in the particular context of the Ga people in Ghana. This is true because God cannot deny himself as the Creator of the Ga people. Yes, and acceptance of the identical elements in the rites of passage of the Ga people because the Logos that created all things including the rites of passage for the Ga people for their healing is the same Logos that has been revealed to the world in history as Jesus Christ (Acts 14:16-17, Romans 1:18-32., Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3).⁴³ The connection is

³⁹ Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 196-205.

⁴⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 412-14.

⁴¹ *Kairos* is seen as God's timing in his providential activity in history with the shaking of its foundations. See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 369-72; See also Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Dread* translated with introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, translated by Margaret Kohl (St Albans Place, London: SCM Press, 1996), 292-95.

⁴² Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 111-13.

⁴³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I: 16-17.

only natural because the Word which holds the whole creation in place in the power of the Spirit of God is the wisdom of God in Jesus Christ. But how could God in the Holy Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ truly reconcile or accept his creation which has rejected him and which he has also rejected? The answer to the question is Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.⁴⁴

The understanding that Jesus Christ is the epitome of the Ga rites of passage means that the Ga rites share identity with the rites of passage accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, the rites of the Ga people are embraced through the Christian understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Kpelelogy: The Paradoxical Rejection and Acceptance of Ga Rites of Passage in Jesus Christ

The paradox of the question of how God rejects and accepts the Ga rites of passage could be found in Jesus' act of redemption.⁴⁵ In the Christian proclamation, the cardinal element of the redemptive act of God in Jesus Christ is his death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). It must be stated that in the Christian understanding of God's relationship with the world, the role of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit is *sine qua non*.

The revelation is that in Jesus Christ as the fully human and fully God without separation and confusion, the retributive justice for the death of all creatures is manifested in his death on the Cross. That very violent death of Jesus which he willingly subjected himself to represents the No and rejection by God of all creation, on one hand. And on the other hand, it represents Jesus's Yes and acceptance of God on behalf of all creation.⁴⁶ By the acceptance of God's offer in his only Begotten Son's death, the retribution and eternal rejection (No) for all the worldly things are atoned for.⁴⁷ The atonement for the rites of passage is on the basis that there is an admission of sin and incapacity and the demonic inherent in

⁴⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The Library of Christian Classics, Volume 2: 3.20 – 4.20. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.24. 1-17; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* translated by Geoffrey William Bromiley and edited by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance. Vol. 1. 4 vols. (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1956), IV/I, 122-154.

⁴⁵ Walter M. Horton, "Tillich's Rôle in Contemporary Theology," *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, The Library of Living Theology. Volume 1. 4 vols (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 29-33.

⁴⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, §13.58.4.

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.6.

corrupted human culture. It also implies a change from the rebellious nature of the Ga rites of passage, particularly of the worship of deities and the ancestors in contempt of the worship of God. It is a complete denunciation of the deities, ancestors, and demonic powers and all the works of dehumanization, death, and destruction the cultural rites bring to the world.⁴⁸ There has to be repentance from being a channel of deception and falsehood.⁴⁹ Together with God in the knowledge of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, there is a big No to all these elements of cultural rites for their rejection of God. This is what is described by Paul as dying with Jesus Christ in the Spirit as the fulfillment of the will of the Father (Romans 6: 2-19, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 19, 21). Also, it portrays how God's rejection of the rites of passage is mediated in the death of Jesus Christ.

Such an acceptance of what Jesus Christ has done in history for the redemption of the world connects the Yes of God in Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God, the ground and mediator of humanity to the cultures. The Yes of God must also be an affirmation of Jesus Christ as Creator and Sustainer of the universe as well as the power behind all meaningful creations, cultures, and beauty. It is a Yes insofar as the Ga rites of passage can be unambiguously founded on *Ataa Naa Nyɔɔmɔ* (Father, Queen Mother God), the *Wɔ Bɔlɔ Mawu* (God our Creator) who is *Okpelejen* (The All-encompassing One).⁵⁰ Again, it is a Yes insofar as the redemptive act of God though distorted through the human element in the culture shines through and gives hope to the Ga people. Furthermore, it is a pointer to the everlasting salvation of God in whom the ultimate rite of passage resides by grace through faith in his Son Jesus Christ. In addition, the rites of passage of the Ga people in Ghana do not only point to Jesus Christ but through the light of Jesus Christ in the Ga rite, the light of the ultimate rite of passage is amplified. This engenders vibrant faith expression in the Ga people. It is a Yes also because it accords the opportunity for the Ga Christians to let those aspects of the rites in the culture rejected by God die in Christ. And by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the new life that is akin to the past is rebirthed just as Christ

⁴⁸ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, §13.58.4.

⁴⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, §13.58.4.

⁵⁰ Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 7, 18 & 114; Solomon Nii Mensah Adjei, "Nyɔɔmɔ (God) In Ga Tradition And Christian Mission: An Exploration of the Historical Relationship Between the Religious Tradition of the Ga of Southeastern Ghana and Bible Translation and Its Implications for Ga Christian Theology" (Master of Theology Dissertation, University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, 2006); Amarkwei, *An Introduction to Theology in Africa*, 205.

died and rose in newness of life. Here, there is a Yes because there is a mutual expansion of the Christian horizons of its faith expression through the Ga rites of passage on one hand. On the other hand, there is an expansion of the cultural and faith horizons of the Ga people through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Hence the contradiction between the No and Yes of both the full humanity and the full divinity in the one person of Jesus Christ leading to hostility has been overcome without the diminishing of the No and Yes. The contradiction of No and Yes under normal reason is an absurdity. Yet since the contradiction is occasioned and mediated in the triune God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, there is a lot of meaning in the seeming contradiction. It is what Paul the apostle terms as “the knowledge of God” which transcends all understanding. And it is what Paul Tillich describes as thought transcending thought, and reason beyond reason.⁵¹ In the Christian experience, there is a lot of sense made because the rejection and acceptance are transformed into a powerful, meaningful, and ethically sound reality of being in existence (I Corinthians 1:18-31). Furthermore, the transformation which is known as conversion is an ontological transformation because it affects the whole being of the Christian. Thus, the creative aspects of life that include the cultural realm are converted to the service of God. It is the grand plan of God to convert creation and all cultures to serve the purpose of his eternal mission⁵².

This means that aspects of culture such as the Ga rites of passage would be converted by the Christian community which is the bearer of the concept of the New Life and the New Creation in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵³ The Christian approach to the rites of passage is that the power of Jesus Christ that has possessed the Church has converted and is converting and shall convert the rites of passage to his glorious service. This means that what did not pertain in the Church of Christ in the past in terms of the cultural mode of presenting the gospel is constantly enlarging and must be expected to be enlarged in perpetuity. The church must take on board new cultural forms in fulfilling its mission and that also means the church itself is being transformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ. The church then must not resist the conversion of the rites of passage of the Ga

⁵¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I: 56-57.

⁵² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 298-99.

⁵³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 376-77.

people but accept that it must embrace the transformed cultural forms.

All Ga Christians must also understand that just as Christ changed them into new people in him, so will he continue to bring good transformation to the culture of the Ga people. Those aspects of culture that distort the truth must surely be rooted out to pave the way for the new Ga rites of passage in Jesus Christ. The Ga cultural rites of passage then are enlarged and given prominence in another light. It will rather improve the number of people allowing themselves to go through the Ga rites of passage. To ensure the continual celebration of these rites of passage and prevent the diminishing of it, they must be modified neither arbitrarily nor whimsically and capriciously but based on the truth of God in Jesus Christ.

A Kpelelogical Interpretation of the Christian Engagement with the Ga Rites of Passage

This system of conversion is not akin to Ga Christian communities alone. Throughout the history of the church, such modification has taken place and enlarged the liturgy of the church in the celebrations on the Christian calendar. Examples of such traditional and liturgical incorporation through modifications include the celebration of Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas. Likewise, in the growth of the church, several aspects of the Ga culture have been transformed already to bring a glorified transformation of the church. Some of these include the use of the Ga religious language to understand God and Jesus Christ in the Ga terms. Professor Laryea has done some work on these already and examples include the use of the *Nyɔɔmɔ*, *Yesu Hɔmɔwɔ Nuɔtsɔ*, *Yesu Wala Amralo*, *Yesu Nyɔɔmɔ Bi*, and others.⁵⁴ Another important contribution includes knowing the cosmic Jesus Christ as *Okpelejeɲ Wulɔmɔ*.⁵⁵

Now in analyzing the Ga Christian engagement with their rites of passage, there is the need to acknowledge some of the results of the engagements. It must be noted that regarding the rites of passage in the Ga, the Ga Christian community has engaged with the rites for outdoorings and naming ceremonies. The rites of marriage have also seen a lot of changes in the Ga customary and traditional marriages. Also, the church has brought transformation in the area of funeral and burial services. In addition to these, the

⁵⁴ Laryea, *Yesu Hɔmɔwɔ Nuɔtsɔ*.

⁵⁵ Amarkwei, *Introducing African Theology*.

rites of widowhood have also seen significant changes. The changes are not only in the Ga traditional rites but also in the liturgy of the Church. In the whole of the Christian traditional liturgy handed down and developed since the missionary years, there was not a liturgy for outdooring and naming ceremonies. There was no liturgy for widowhood rites but today the church has been converted partly by the Ga traditional widowhood rites though the traditional rites have also been converted by the church in Christ.

It has to be observed that the liturgical conversions of the Ga rites of passage in the church have taken out the prayers and rituals that involved the deities and ancestors and replaced them with God in Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The traditional functionaries have also been replaced with the Presbyters, Catechists, and Ministers of the church. The venue is situational and has not been made rigid although it has to represent the Christian position. There has been some situational creativity regarding the items used as well as the rituals performed. It is expected that however contextually the rite is performed, it does not lose the essence of the rite in the Ga tradition while maintaining the Christian essence. Therefore, there must not be a contradiction in the relationship between the essential and existential aspects of the rites of passage. The essential remains constant while the existential may take on a different substance and style⁵⁶ so long as it conforms to the essence of the rite.

Today, I think there are other aspects of Ga culture that the Ga Christian community must embrace. These include *dipo* and other puberty rites. *Dipo* is mentioned because of its importance in the character formation of girls in the Ga and Adangme community at large. What can the church in the Ga community do to ensure that proper formation into womanhood is achieved using the Ga traditional system? How does the church convert the education of girls and transition them through a converted system of *dipo*? With this, it must be realized that the church must go back to the missionary era and learn how in my opinion they converted the *dipo* into the mission girls' school system. In learning, it must be noted that the Ga church must also correct the wrongs of the missionary era whereby the culture and people of Africa were denigrated and improve the system for the future. Those cultural rites such as the outdooring and naming, funerals and burials, widowhood, and marriage which have seen changes and have

⁵⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 60-61.

brought changes into the Ga church must be worked on continuously.

Conclusion

In this paper, it is quite clear that Ga rites of passage stand to gain by making inroads into the Ga Christian community through its transformation and the glorification of Jesus Christ in it. It is making the point that the Ga culture has something worthy to be included in the expression of Christianity among the Ga people. Again, the Ga traditional rite of passage mentioned above is also transforming the church more and more into the image of Christ and enlarging the church. This is a win for the Ga cultural rite of passage and a win also for the tradition of Ga rites of passage. It is a win for the Ga cultural rite insofar as its guiding principles and essence are preserved in the Ga Christian expression of it. It means there is mutual respect as well as a mutual critical approach of Christianity to Ga culture and religion.

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Muslim Dress Code and Its Health Benefits

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Abstract

This article provided an overview of the history and benefits of Muslim dress code. It traced the origins and evolution of modest clothing styles prescribed in Islam and explored regional variations across Muslim majority cultures. Key benefits of adhering to Islamic dress standards around modesty are examined, including spiritual discipline, health aspects of loose fitting garments, and cultural identity affirmation. Common types of traditional Muslim attire such as *hijāb*, *jalbāb* and *abāya* are defined. The paper also looked at modern trends integrating Islamic dress principles with contemporary fashion design. Issues pertaining to social discussions on Muslim dress code in the context of religious

freedom, cultural integration and stereotyping are critically analyzed.

Keywords

Muslim fashion, *hijāb*, modest clothing, Islamic dress code, Muslim attire.

Introduction

Origins of Muslim clothing

The origins of Muslim dress can be traced back to the advent of Islam in the 7th century CE. The earliest prescribed standards of modest Islamic attire stem from the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth literature which provides guidance from the Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.). When scrutinizing the core scriptural sources, key principles emerge around dress serving the dual purpose of bodily humility and spirituality.¹

The Qur'ān encourages both men and women to “lower their gaze and guard their modesty” (Q. 24:30-31). Women are further advised to draw their head coverings over their bosoms (Q.24:31). These initial guidelines laid the foundation for modest Islamic standards of dress that progressively took shape over the centuries.² Ḥadīth narrations from Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.), offer valuable context into early Muslim female dress norms.³

During the prophet's lifetime in the 7th century CE, women in Arabia typically wore a simple garment called the ihram which was a long piece of fabric draped around the body with the head covered.⁴ This basic cloth covering sufficed the criterion for *hijāb* or modest dress at the inception of Islam in the Arabian context. In the following Umayyad era from 661 to 750 CE, Muslim rule had expanded into the cosmopolitan cities of Damascus and Baghdad with diversity in cultural influences on attire as well as wealth available for fine fabrics and clothing.

¹ Ahmed, S.M (2000). Women and Gender in Islam. *The Afhad Journal*, 17(2), 61.

² Arjomand, S.A. (ed.) (1988). *Authority and political culture in Shi'ism*. London: SUNY Press.

³ Haykal, M.H. (1976). *The life of Muhammad*. New York: American Trust Publications.

⁴ Afsaruddin, A. (2008). *The first Muslims: History and memory*. New Delhi: One World Publications.

Evolution of Muslim fashion through history

As Islamic rule expanded into new regions, Muslim fashion evolved incorporating local styles but maintaining modesty principles. In the Abbasid era from 750 to 1258 CE, the court dress reflected Persian influences with tunics and trousers worn by men. Women's fashion adopted the Persian chador, a full-length semicircle cloth draped over the body and head.

The spread of Islam into South and Southeast Asia incorporated elements of Mughal and Indian attire from the 12th century onwards. The *shalwar kameez* and *kurta pajama* sets for men and long flowing *ghagras* and *kurtas* or *salwar kameez* for women became dominant. In the Ottoman period from 1299 to 1924 CE, Turkish influences came to define Islamic fashion with caftans and turbans for men, and belly-dancing costumes giving rise to the harem pant style for women.

Colonialism impacted Muslim fashion from the 15th century as Western styles infiltrated courts. However, modest interpretations prevailed such as the *jilbāb* replacing the European skirt and jacket.⁵ Postcolonial Muslim-majority states saw a revival of traditional garments like the *thawb* in Arabia and *abāya* and *hijāb* globally with renewed emphasis on Islamic modesty.⁶ Contemporary Muslim fashion now integrates modest tailoring with cosmopolitan silhouettes.

Regional variations in Muslim attire

Muslim dress has taken diverse forms across different regions while upholding modesty. In the Middle East, the *thawb* is prevalent for men comprising an ankle-length garment with hood. Women wear the *abāya*, a loose over-garment and *shayla* headscarf.

In South and Southeast Asia, the popular *shalwar kameez* for women and *kurta pajama* for men are worn. In Indonesia, the *baju kurung* and *kebaya* blouse with sarong signify local Muslim attire.

In North and West Africa, flowing gown-like *fustanellas* are worn by women along with colourful headwraps. For men, *boubous* and grand *boubous* resemble caftans with embroidery.

The *chador* and *rousari* headscarf are characteristic of Iranian Muslim women's clothing. Turkish Muslim clothing comprises the *entari* dress and *tcharchaf* veil. Bosnian Muslim femmes wear the modest *goja* which is an ankle-length skirt and blouse.

⁵ Tarlo, E. (2010). *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, politics, faith*. Berlin: Berg.

⁶ Ibid, p.15.

Regional Muslim clothing helps to assert cultural identity while conforming to faith-based modesty. Globalization and interpreting dress through local sensibilities have kept traditions alive.

Benefits of Muslim Dress Code

Modesty and dignity

One of the primary benefits of adhering to the Islamic dress code is that it fosters qualities of modesty and dignity. The Qur'ān emphasizes protecting one's chastity as a virtuous act that pleases God (Q.24:30-31). Dressing modestly reduces temptation and objectification while promoting respect between genders.⁷

Loose, non-revealing clothing that covers the body is prescribed with exceptions made for medical concerns or very young children. This allows Muslims to immerse themselves in worship and community without distraction. Veiling for women is similarly viewed as a means to dignify femininity beyond physical attributes alone.⁸

Muslim scholars argue modest dress elevates one spiritually by shifting the focus from outward looks to inner character and intellect.⁹ Social psychologists have found it boosts self-esteem and confidence in those who choose it voluntarily versus being compelled.¹⁰ Anthropologists note it reinforces women's agency to determine appropriate behavior in public.¹¹ Overall, the concept of hijāb in Islam symbolizes decency, humility and protection of privacy.¹²

Spiritual discipline

Observing the standards of modest dress in Islam promotes spiritual discipline and mindfulness of God. Dressing modestly is

⁷ Arjomand, p.60.

⁸ Read, J.G. & Bartkowsky, J.P. (2000). "To Veil Or Not To Veil? : A Case Study of Identity Negotiation Among Muslim Women in Austin, Texas." *Gender & Society*, 14(3), 395-417.

⁹ Esposito, J.L. (2003). *Unholy war: Terror in the name of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

¹⁰ Ali, S.R., Mahmood, A., Moel, J., Hudson, C. & Leathers, L. (2008). "A qualitative investigation of Muslim and Christian women's views of religion and feminism in their lives." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 14(1), 38.

¹¹ Abu-Lughod, L. (2015). "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?" (Vol. 15, No. 5, pp.759-777). London: Sage Publications.

¹² Engineer, A. (2008). *The rights of women in Islam*. London: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

seen as an “outward expression of inner faith” that strengthens one’s connection to Allah.¹³

The physical act of covering oneself according to Islamic guidelines is considered an embodiment of God-consciousness (*taqwa*). It helps cultivate humility, avoid committing sins with one’s body parts, and purifies intentions.¹⁴ By restraining visual stimuli, Muslim attire facilitates concentration during acts of worship like prayer and recitation of the Qur’ān.¹⁵

Some scholarly interpretations even suggest compliance with the concept of *hijāb* carries spiritual rewards. For instance, it is mentioned as an act that may erase past sins and elevate one’s status in paradise according to certain ḥadīth narrations.¹⁶

Overall, adhering to dress standards functions as a daily remembrance of submitting to Allah alone as the Supreme Being worthy of veneration.¹⁷

Muslim dress is thus characterized as a form of worship that enhances devotion and fear of God through tangible discipline of the physical self.¹⁸ This spiritual component is central to comprehending its role and merits in Islamic practice.

Health benefits of loose fitting clothing

The concept of *hijāb* promotes covering the entire body except for hands and face with loose, modest layers of clothing. Medical research has highlighted health advantages associated with this style of dressing in Islam.

Loose fabrics allow the body to breathe naturally without restraint. This ventilation decreases chances of heat-related illnesses in warmer climates and is recommended by dermatologists. Air circulation also helps control body odour better than tight-fitting synthetic clothes.

Multiple layers provide UV protection to sensitive body parts and reduce risks of sunburn and skin cancers compared to beachwear. Researchers further link the modest outfit to lower stress levels due to reduced social physique anxiety.

¹³ Esposito, p.64.

¹⁴ Engineer, p.25.

¹⁵ Naşr, H. (2002). *The heart of Islam: Enduring values for humanity*. San Francisco: Harper.

¹⁶ Ramadan, T. (2003). *Western Muslims and the future of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁷ Webb, G. (1993). *Islam: The straight path*. London: Longman.

¹⁸ Esposito, p. 33.

The spacious designs are comfortable for pregnant and breastfeeding women by avoiding constriction. They pose no impediment during exercises and daily chores either. To be sure, this attire style endorsed in Islamic teachings offers tangible physical and mental wellness advantages according to health experts.

Cultural identity

Following Islamic dress traditions helps affirm a Muslim's cultural identity and sense of belonging to a spiritual community. Scholars argue attire promoting modesty distinctly portrays adherence to religious values.¹⁹

For many Muslims, clothing like the *hijāb*, *thawb* or *jilbāb* possesses symbolic importance as a badge reflecting their heritage and faith.²⁰ Qualitative studies find donning such attire allows assertion of multiple identities - be it ethnic, national or sectarian.²¹

Psychological research also links modest dress to greater well-being due to strengthened religious identity.²² This aids positive self-image development among Muslim youth navigating diverse societies.

Some Muslim populations choose distinctive emblems to reinforce their cultural identity, such as the Moroccan fouta or Algerian haïk mantle. Overall, traditional Islamic clothing reinforces a sense of belonging through outward presentation of inner beliefs. This promotes healthy social ties within Muslim communities worldwide.

Common Types of Muslim Clothing

Hijāb

The *hijāb* or headscarf is perhaps the most well-known aspect of Muslim dress for women. It refers to modest head coverings that cover the hair, forehead and neck while leaving the face visible.²³

The practice of *hijāb* finds support in Qur'ānic guidance to draw *khimar* over the bosom (Q.24:31). Ḥadīth literature provides context that early Muslim women wore a shawl or head-covering

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 35.

²⁰ Read & Bartkowski, p. 395- 417.

²¹ Tarlo, p.55.

²² Ali et al., 14(1), 38.

²³ Webb, p.103.

called the *khimar* in public spaces.²⁴ While not obligatory, the act of veiling hair holds significance as a symbol of faith and piety for many.²⁵

Hijāb styles vary between cultures and personal style. Popular designs include the Arabic *shayla* which is a long rectangular scarf, the Turkish *türban* which is wrapped around the face tightly, or the Indonesian *sida* which loosely covers hair. Contemporary *hijābs* have evolved into fashionable patterns, colors and materials like georgette and chiffon.

Medical professionals also point to health perks as some studies link veiling to less scalp infections. Overall, wearing the *hijāb* allows Muslim women to balance religious principles with individual expression.²⁶

Jilbāb

The *jilbāb* is a loose fitting coat or cloak worn over other garments. It is particularly common among Muslim women in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and other regions. Historical records indicate the *jilbāb* emerged as an evolution of the traditional *ihram* garment donned in pre-Islamic Arabia. With Islamic teachings emphasizing modesty, the *jilbā* became a recommended overt garment to shield women's silhouette.²⁷

Scholars deduce the Qur'ānic command of *khimar* in Qur'ān 24:31 may refer to a *jilbāb*-like robe. Hadīth offer context that 'Āisha, wife of the Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.), described the most virtuous act of piety (*taqwa*) being walking with a *jilbāb*.²⁸ Thus, the *jilbāb* is seen as upholding morality. Today it comes in various cuts, often featuring slits at the sides, three-quarter or full-length sleeves and loose drapes. Popular fabrics incorporate thick materials like denim and canvas for conservative modesty. The *jilbāb* allows ease of movement while covering the entire body modestly according to Islamic principles. In more strict interpretations, it may be worn over even loose-fitting long sleeves and pants outdoors.

²⁴ Haykal, p. 75.

²⁵ Read & Bartkowski, p. 395- 417.

²⁶Read & Bartkowski, p. 395- 417.

²⁷ Afsaruddin, p. 104.

²⁸ Haykal, p. 86.

Abāya

The *abāya* is a loose, full-length outer garment common in the Gulf states of the Middle East. Its name derives from the Arabic word meaning “cloak.”

As mentioned in ḥadīth literature, early Muslim women covered their entire bodies except for hands and face in mixed company.²⁹ The *abāya* emerged as a convenient solution fulfilling this requirement of modesty. It features a hood or loose scarf and may be worn with *niqāb* and *hijāb* for maximum coverage. Various materials are used from lightweight cotton to opulent brocades. Sleeves range from short to full-length and slits are cut on each side for ease of movement.

Contemporary *abāyas* reflect each woman’s personal style through intricate stitching, printed designs and vibrant hues. Popular retailers allow customization of fabrics, cuts and accessories like scarves or handbags. Medical experts note health advantages too, from shielding the skin to preventing musculoskeletal issues in older age. In short, the versatile *abāya* empowers women to adhere to modest requirements comfortably.

Khimār

Mentioned in the Qur’ān 24:31, the *khimār* refers to a head covering worn by early Muslim women. It is sometimes used interchangeably with other terms like *hijāb*. Etymologically, the Arabic word *khimār* means a piece of fabric drawn over the head or a veil.³⁰ When analyzing the social context of the verse, scholars concur it recommends modest draping of a shawl or scarf over the bosom area.³¹

Ḥadīth literature provides valuable context, describing the *khimār* as a yemeni-style head shawl that could be pulled forward to cover the face as well.³² This suggests it granted flexibility in veil-wearing rather than being a set garment.

While interpretations vary, most scholars agree the *khimār* was not a mandatory item of clothing but encouraged believers to draw their outer garments over their bodies with dignity.³³ Its meaning of a semi-transparent head-covering has influenced

²⁹ Ibid, p. 85.

³⁰ Wehr, H. (1979). *A dictionary of modern written Arabic*. Berlin: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.

³¹ Arberry, A.J. (1996). *The Koran interpreted: A translation*. London: Simon and Schuster

³² Haykal, p. 92.

³³ Webb, p. 73.

modern *hijāb* styles as well. In sum, examining references to the *khimār* in early Islamic sources deepens understanding of recommended standards for women's dress alongside the principle of righteousness (*taqwa*).

Thawb

The *thawb* is a classic garment commonly worn by Muslim men. It originated in the Arabian Peninsula and remains a staple of modest dress for religious and cultural occasions.

Etymologically derived from an Arabic root meaning "cover", the *thawb* references a loose-fitting ankle-length garment with full sleeves. Historical records indicate Prophet Muhammad and early Muslims wore the *thawb* as daily clothing.³⁴ While simple in cut, *thawbs* were often carefully tailored from fine fabrics like linen or silk according to social rank. Elaborate styles featured intricate embroidery along cuffs and hems.

Traditionally white in color to symbolize purity, contemporary *thawbs* now come in various hues and may coordinate with a *kufi* skullcap or *ghutra* headdress.³⁵ Strict interpretations only permit the *thawb* and pants underneath for adult men.

By virtue of its loose draping, medical professionals note *thawbs* as breathable attire aiding circulation especially in hot climates. Thus the *thawb* remains the quintessential manifestation of modest elegance for Muslim men across regions.

Modern Trends in Muslim Fashion

Integration of style and modesty

A significant trend in contemporary Muslim fashion is the artful integration of religious modesty requirements with aesthetic style. Designers and brands are pioneering versatile, on-trend clothing that adheres to *hijāb* and loose-fitting guidelines.

Secular high-street stores now feature modest style collections recognizing this growing market. Popular modest clothing blogs provide looks featuring *abāyas*, *hijābs* and *jilbābs* as standout accessories to complement any outfit.

³⁴ Haykal, p. 94.

³⁵ Nasr, p.35

Runway shows by major designers debuted modest versions of red carpet gowns with long sleeves and high necklines. Modest fashion weeks in Muslim cities like Istanbul and Kuala Lumpur have encouraged this fusion.³⁶ Innovative fabrics play a role - breathable jersey cuts are popular for *hijābs*, while pants come in lightweight chiffon. Young Muslim consumers drive demand for modest statement pieces like printed *hijāb* wraps.³⁷ This has empowered many to actualize both religious and modern identities seamlessly. Access to modest yet stylish options allows reclaiming faith traditions on one's terms. The trend suggests an organic synthesis between religious guidelines and sartorial self-expression.

Emergence of Muslim fashion designers

An important development in the Muslim fashion industry has been the rise of dedicated modest fashion designers. Creatives from Muslim communities worldwide are producing stylish, tailored lines upholding *hijāb* and loose fit principles. Pioneers include Malaysian Kenneth Cole and Indonesian Annie Selly who launched modest style collections in the 1990s.³⁸ Brands like New York-based Modanisa offer chic *abāyas* and modest work-wear gaining mainstream recognition.

Leading global designers include American Mariah Idrissi of Modestly and London-based Hana Tajima promoting modest cuts in high fashion shows. Emerging labels fuse cultural heritage with contemporary silhouettes - Pakistan's Erum Khan uses intricate embroidery.

National fashion weeks now platform modest talent such as Turkey's Dice Kayek featuring modest formalwear.³⁹ Designers creatively use draping, embellishments and modest tailoring techniques.

This allows reclamation of faith-based aesthetics, and addresses the need for clothing adapted to each community. Their success signals rising economic power and visibility of the modest fashion consumer base on a global scale.

³⁶ Tarlo, p. 68.

³⁷ Mir, S. (2014). *Muslim American women on campus: Undergraduate social life and identity*. New York: NUC Press Books.

³⁸ Ibid, p30.

³⁹ Tarlo, p.68.

Adaptations for different climates

A key modern trend is tailoring modest clothing to suit varied climatic conditions. Designers must balance principles of covering with practical considerations like temperature, terrain and activity levels.

For warmer tropical locales, lightweight fabrics like linen, cotton and tulle are utilized. Creators experiment with layered skirt-pant combinations, cropped *hijābs* and breathable fabrics.

Brands catering to the Gulf develop *abāyas* featuring stretch jersey and perforated panels. Outfits incorporate ventilation slits, ponchos and accessories like portable fans.

Cooler mountainous areas see innovations in quilted, insulated *jilbābs* and coats. Designers release versatile separates embracing layering, like tunics over leggings.

Outdoor ranges function utility and modesty with UPF protection. Trending items include cargo pants, trail *hijābs* and cardigans.

As modest fashion becomes tailored to athletes, yoga practitioners and travelers, brands ensure religious guidelines do not hinder mobility or safety. Climate-conscious modest wear empowers active lifestyles globally.

Social Impact and Debates Around Muslim Dress Code

Freedom of religious expression

The right to freely practice one's faith through dress and appearance is a key debate around Muslim attire globally. Proponents argue restrictive laws undermine this fundamental freedom.⁴⁰

The UN Human Rights Committee maintains prohibiting the *hijāb* severely limits religious expression, especially for those who see it as a religious command.⁴¹ Landmark rulings like in France deemed bans a violation of human rights.⁴²

Studies find veiled Muslim women internalize stigma due to prevailing stereotypes in Western societies.⁴³ This marginalization

⁴⁰ Webb. P.55.

⁴¹ UNHRC. (Oct, 2019). Committee Issues Views Concerning Communications by the Victim of a School Hijab Ban in France. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

⁴² BBC (2014, July 1). French veil bans violate human rights - UN. BBC News.

⁴³ Tarlo, p. 19.

strengthens their religious identity tied to attire. At the same time, some states impose *hijāb* compulsions violating personal choice through patriarchal interpretations of sharia. A balanced approach respects an individual's agency over their clothing according to conscience.

As societies diversify, policymakers debate reasonable limits to secularism versus respecting religious pluralism. Thus, judicial consensus tilts towards individuals' freedom of dressing according to their beliefs.

Cultural assimilation

The degree to which Muslim immigrants and minorities should adapt culturally by modifying traditional clothing remains contentious. Proponents of assimilation argue certain attire presents obstacles in secular societies.⁴⁴

Critics countermand this promotes pressuring Muslims to discard intrinsic parts of their identity.⁴⁵ Qualitative research finds veiling can aid inclusion into public life through instilling leadership abilities and confidence among Muslim youth.

Some scholars propose a multidimensional concept of integration allowing parallel citizenship while sustaining community ties.⁴⁶ Forcing abandonment of modest codes may breed resentment and hinder belonging.⁴⁷

A balanced perspective considers individual priorities - some femmes choose situational unveiling in professional contexts while retaining *hijāb* spiritually.⁴⁸ Successful integration models tolerance for private religious observance. To state it forcefully, this debate underscores larger themes of negotiating distinction versus commonality in multicultural democracies. Respecting diversity may strengthen social cohesion more organically.

Stereotyping and discrimination

The visible nature of Muslim attire makes it a lightning rod for prejudices that lead to disproportionate monitoring and

⁴⁴ Roy, O. (2004). *Globalized Islam: The search for a new Ummah*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

⁴⁵ Tarlo, p.28.

⁴⁶ Mir, p. 35.

⁴⁷ Webb, p. 69.

⁴⁸ Read & Bartkowski, p. 417.

xenophobic acts. Qualitative research links conservative dress to profiling experiences among Muslim women.⁴⁹

Post-9/11, veiling has become a racially marked signifier attracting hostility in public spaces (Peek, 2005). Studies show *hijābis* face workplace discrimination, social marginalization and physical threats due to the “threat narrative”.⁵⁰ Even in predominantly Muslim nations, some attires become targets for harassment depending on sociopolitical currents.⁵¹ Internalization of “othering” adversely impacts confidence and sense of belonging.⁵² Promoting Muslim fashion visibility in positive media helps altering stereotypical perceptions. Multicultural values of inclusion and respect for diversity can counter stigma.

Overall, discriminating based on dress infringes basic human rights while diversity enriches societies.⁵³ Tackling stereotypes involves addressing their socio-historical roots through open and informed public discourse.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Muslim dress reflects both religious obligations of modesty and cultural traditions that have evolved over time. While certain attires like the *hijāb* and *jilbāb* aim to fulfill Qur’ānic principles, their precise meanings have been interpreted diversely. Modern Muslim fashion integrates religious guidelines within contemporary silhouettes, materials and styles. Globally, designers are adapting attire for different geographies and activities. At the same time, visible Muslim clothing remains a topic of complex debate around issues like cultural integration, freedom of expression and discrimination. To be sure, appreciating the multifaceted role of dress in faith and identity is important for fostering more inclusive societies respecting religious diversity. Further open-minded discussion can help addressing misunderstandings and reducing prejudices related to this significant aspect of Islamic tradition.

⁴⁹ Afshar, H. (2008). “Can I see your hair? Choice, agency and attitudes: The dilemma of faith and feminism for Muslim women who cover.” *Ethnic and racial studies*, 31(2), 411-427.

⁵⁰ Tarlo, p. 44.

⁵¹ Read & Bartkowski, p. 417

⁵² Mir, p.70.

⁵³ Ramadan, p.39.

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**Neo-Prophetism and the Commercialisation of
Religion in Ghana**

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Abstract

Drawing on the commercialisation of religious items and services by Ghana's neo-prophetic actors, this paper seeks to draw a relationship between existential insecurity, reliance on religion and associated abuses. The paper brings to the fore the factors that push religious followers to patronise the services of prophetic actors. It contends that a symbiotic dependence between prophetic actors

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and their followers in terms of what the paper identifies as *religious dependence, opportunism and interdependency* fuels and fans the commercialization of religion in the Ghanaian neo-prophetic Christianity. The paper also interrogates the ways in which the attempt to meet the demands of religious consumers yields itself to certain forms of violations and abuses. The paper does this via the qualitative approach to research with interviews and participant observation.

Keywords

Abuses, commercialisation of religion, interdependency, Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal Christianity, opportunism, religious dependence.

Introduction

On January 3, 2017 the Ghanaian media reported that Rev. Stephen Odamy Asare, a pastor of the Genesis International Church had lamented about the increasing manner in which the Ghanaian religious field has been turned into a business arena. According to the report, the cleric, complained that 90% of churches in Ghana were operating as business entities by hiding behind the name “churches” as a convenient tool to siphon monies of members instead of adhering to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. While his claim can be easily dismissed as lacking empirical supporting evidence, in a large measure, it reflected a popular concern regarding the activities and operations of some churchly leaders.³

Drawing on the commercialisation of religious items and services by Ghana’s neo-prophetic actors, this paper seeks to draw a relationship between existential insecurity, reliance on religion and the associated abuses. The paper assesses the factors that occasion consumers’ behaviour in patronising the services of these prophetic actors. We interrogate the ways in which the attempt to

³ Ultimatefmonline, 90% of Ghanaian churches now business entities - Pastor, Ghanaweb.com, 3 January 2017. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/90-of-Ghanaian-churches-now-business-entities-Pastor-498375>. See also Kwame Asare Boadu, “Tax churches on businesses they do,” *Daily Graphic*, September 2 2019. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/tax-churches-on-businesses-they-do.html>; Kojo Emmanuel, “The church is not a business enterprise - Man of God,” May 11, 2020. <https://www.pulse.com.gh/news/local/the-church-is-not-a-business-enterprise-man-of-god/r9lrkz2>.

meet the demands of religious consumers yields itself to certain forms of violations and abuses.

In most of Africa, religion is debatably identified as pervading in almost every facet of human life. According to the Kenyan theologian, John S. Mbiti, Africans are notoriously religious.⁴ This view is reinforced by the Ghanaian scholar, Kofi Asare Opoku, who has observed that religion is so pervasive among Ghanaians that it is difficult to delineate the religious and non-religious aspects of Ghanaian lives.⁵ The pervasiveness of religion in Ghana's religious landscape, coupled with the many existential insecurities, has occasioned reliance on religious resources. This is closely evident in the upsurge in the number of churches, religious traditions, shrines, and mosques scattered across the country.⁶ Pentecostal Christianity, the fastest growing Christian denomination in African and beyond, has risen to respond to the many challenges confronting majority of the population. To be sure, many of the churches identified as Pentecostal fall under what is quite offensively labelled as 'one-man churches' categorised under the Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal strand of Christianity whose founders popularly refer to themselves as 'Prophets', 'Bishops', 'Rev. Drs' and 'Angels/ Archangels' among others.⁷

One of the religious practices that has begun to gain academic interest in this Pentecostal strand of Christianity is the commercialisation of religious paraphernalia and services to interested section of the Ghanaian populace who are known to express exponential demand for them. Owing to the incessant commercialization of spiritual gifts, some studies have described Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana as a business enterprise.⁸ Evidence of this is found in studies that show

⁴ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Second Revised and Enlarged Edition (Gaborone: Heinemann Education Botswana (Publishers) (Pty) Ltd, 1989), 1.

⁵ Kofi Asare Opoku, "Aspects of Akan Worship", in *The Black Experience in Religion*, ed. Eric C. Lincoln, (New York: Doubleday, (1974): 286.

⁶ Karen Lauterbach, *Christianity, Wealth, and Spiritual Power in Ghana* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 91-92.

⁷ Seth Tweneboah, "Religion, Human Rights, and the Parliamentary Regulation of "One-Man Churches" in Ghana," *Journal of Church and State*, (2022):1-21.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csac074>

⁸ George Anderson Jnr, "Commercialisation of Religion in Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches in Ghana: Christian Ethical Analysis of their Strategies," *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 42, (2019): 1-8;
David K. Okai, Evaluating the Effects of Merchandizing Ministry on Some Television Stations in 21st Century: A Study of Prophetic Ministry in Ghana, *The American Journal of Biblical Theology*, 18, 20, (2017): 1-15; Francis Benyah, "Commodification of the Gospel and

that in some Neo-Prophetic Churches in Ghana, items such as anointing oils, eggs, soaps and bottle water are sold as high as GH¢ 2000 (US\$ 400), GH¢ 1000 (US\$ 200) and GH¢ 500 (US\$ 100).⁹

Over the years, this situation has raised significant concerns in the Ghanaian religious field. Some studies posit that neo-prophetic Christianity is characterised by financial extortions, abuses and the sale and purchase of assorted sanctified items and services between pastors or prophets and consumers of religion. These vulnerable clientele have been reported to have gone through some sort of financial extortions, and sexual, emotion, and physical abuses in their quest to find supernatural solutions to their daily predicaments.¹⁰ In spite of the unsurmountable evidence regarding the phenomenon of the commercialisation of religion among Ghanaian neo-prophetic actors, there is a worrying gap when it comes to what might be termed as the producer-consumer behaviour especially the factors that give rise to the phenomenon of commercialisation of religion.

This paper seeks to provide an understanding of the reasons that occasion the commercialization of religious services and items: religious dependence, opportunism and interdependency and the praxis of commercialisation. The paper aims to contribute to the academic map of knowledge creation by investigating the foundations of the phenomenon of commercialisation of religion and the abuses religious consumers are reported go through in their bid to find supernatural solutions to their plights. We begin our discussion with a brief overview and understanding of the concept of commercialization and then pay attention to the ways in which neo-prophetic actors have capitalized on the vulnerability of their clients. We pay particular attention to the implications of this situation, focusing on the abuses that occur.

Theoretical Framework and Relevant Literature

This paper hinges on the Religious Market Theory (RMT) which is based on the application of general market principles on activities

the Socio-Economics of Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana. *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, 29, 2, (2018): 116-145.

⁹ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Jonathan E. T. *Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi*, 64; Anderson Jnr, *Commercialisation of Religion in Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches in Ghana*, 5.

¹⁰ George Anderson Jnr, "Ghana's Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity: Future Prospects," *ERATS*, 1,1, (2019): 16-27.

of religious organizations.¹¹ RMT can be conceived as a set of interrelated marketing concepts and propositions that could be used to explain and predict events or situations in religious organizations by specifying and interpreting market variables in relation to those of religion.¹²

RMT is said to be an outgrowth of Religious Economy Theory, which posits that in a religiously pluralistic society, the population, which is religious consumers, is presented with a wide range of religious or spiritual options to choose from. This situation yields to a competitive religious economy in which differing religious organisations compete for followers just as businesses compete for consumers in a market economy. Originally developed by Peter L. Berger in the 1960s, the theory has received wider application particularly in the 1980s when critics like Roger Finke, Laurence Iannaccone, William S. Bainbridge and Rodney Stark, developed Berger's inchoate theory into a comprehensive one. With the influence of these intellectual associates, Stark developed a more economic "supply-side" theory of religious behaviour. In elaborating this, Stark predicated his paradigm on the supposed virtues of the free market economy rather than those of the regulated economy, in meeting and stimulating needs for such consumer goods.

Matthias Opfinger has noted that the Religious Market Theory dwells on three pillars, namely 1) a monopolistic church is less motivated to exert effort to produce high quality religious goods than churches in a fully competitive market; 2) a monopolistic church can meet the needs of only a smaller portion of beliefs than many churches in competition, which implies that higher religious diversity should lead to higher levels of religiosity; and 3) market forces have crowded out religion.¹³ Opfinger explains that the rise of welfare states has invariably reduced the performative role of churches. As he notes, "many competing churches can supply better social services which attracts more people to each religion."¹⁴ A religious market entails religious activities, in a specific society. It is a spiritual market place of

¹¹ Bruno Tunderman, *Between Cliffs of the Religious Market Theory: An Exploration of the Religious Market Theory within a Secular Context*. Master Thesis Practical Theology, VU Amsterdam, (2013): 18.

¹² See Karen Glanz, The Role of Behavioral Science Theory in Development and Implementation of Public Health Interventions. *Annu Rev Public Health*, 31, (2010): 399-418.

¹³ Matthias Opfinger, "Religious Market Theory vs. Secularization: The Role of Religious Diversity Revisited," Leibniz Universität Hannover - Wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Fakultät - Diskussionspapiere Discussion Paper; No. 475 (2011): 1-32.

¹⁴ Opfinger, "Religious Market Theory vs. Secularization," 3.

existing and potential worshippers; and religious cultures offered by religious organisations. Here religion is seen as a “commodity” and worshippers as “consumers” who shop for the religious goods and services on a market (religious organization).¹⁵ In other words, religious organizations are likened to firms or markets that produce and supply consumable religious goods and services. As Eric Sengers says, the religious market is not confined only to the vicinity of religious organisations. Instead, it extends to other places where transactions or exchange process takes place between ‘customers’ (rational actors) and religious organizations. Just as market economies thrive on competition, so too in the religious market, there is a competition to attract, win and maintain existing and new members, who are religious consumers.¹⁶

In spite of the diverse scholarly criticisms levelled against the Religious Market Theory, it still remains germane for an insightful appreciation of the discussion in this paper. For one thing, the theory is useful in providing critical explications of the market dynamics most religious organisations are involved in to carve a niche, achieve visibility, access potential followers, supply religious commodities, and understand the nature of, and the dynamic interactions that go on between religious consumers and religious organisations in an ever-flourishing religious field of Ghana.

Commercialisation of Religion

While religion is largely associated with things related to the ultimate reality, there are several ways in which religion can be and is actually commodified. Indeed, power and wealth acquisition are imperative in Pentecostalism. Amos Yong for instance, notes that prosperity Pentecostalism has introduced a “sanctified consumerism” or a “holy materialism.”¹⁷

‘Commercialisation’ has several meanings. The term can mean introducing or launching a commodity, selling and buying a product/commodity and service in a market environment to

¹⁵ Albert K. Wuaku, Selling Krishna in Ghana’s Religious Market: Proselytizing Strategies of the Sri Radha Govinda Temple Community of Ghana. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 30, 2, (2012): 337.

¹⁶ Roger Finke, & Rodney Stark, Religious Economies and Sacred Canopies: Religious Mobilization in American Cities. *American Sociological Review*, 53, 1, (February 1988): 42.

¹⁷ Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 19.

consumers.¹⁸ Commercialisation of religion in this paper means the sale and purchase of religious products (sanctified items) and services between consumers of religion and a church. It is important to realise that in neo-prophetic circles, the sale of religious items and services are not held as commercialisation; that is, commercialisation of religion does not mean selling and buying of religious items and services. Rather, in the activities of neo-prophetic actors such transactions are referred to as “offertory”; *afɔrebɔ* or *afɔdeɛ* – an act of giving out one’s financial resources in support of God’s work and in receipt for religious products that are believed to provide blessings and healing or solutions to the believer’s glitches.¹⁹ Commercialisation of religion, in this sense, is a situation whereby religious adherents are expected to pay for certain religious goods and services, including blessings and healing. In this sense, religion in this paper is largely referred to as religious products (sanctified items) and services. This meaning is consistent with Rodney Stark’s and Roger Finke’s²⁰ depiction of ‘religion’ as a commodity, or items/products on a religious market where pastors or prophets present them to religious consumers as an antidote to the consumers’ existential needs.

Scholarship on Pentecostalism has shown that “Pentecostal churches show a wide variety of forms, from back-room churches with a dozen members directed by one pastor, to mega-churches with millions of members, run as a religious enterprise by CEO-style leaders. This organizational diversity is part of Pentecostals’ capacity to adapt to local demands. It also reflects their able use of market strategies and entrepreneurial tools.”²¹ Emerging out of a humble beginning, a good portion of Ghanaian pastors and prophets have risen to become prominent big men of society. Yet as their churches grow, the affluent lifestyle of the leaders put significant burden on membership who have to contribute more to sustain the lavish lifestyle of these prophetic actors. Thus, tithing and monetary sowing of faith are presented as a surest way of obtaining divine blessings and success. Clients are promised divine blessing on the amount of money they contribute. Crucially, certain

¹⁸ Rana Eijaz Ahmad & Abida Eijaz, “Commercialisation of Religion in Pakistan”, *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, vol. 1, no. 2, (2011): 186.

¹⁹ George Anderson Jnr, “God has Instructed me to Sell Questioning the Practice of Commercialisation of Religion in Neo-Prophetic and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches in Ghana”. *All Nations University Journal of Applied Thought*, 6, 2:178.

²⁰ For further reading, see Wuaku, *Selling Krishna in Ghana’s Religious Market*, 337.

²¹ Alan Anderson, Michale Bergunder, Andre Droogers, Cornelis van der Laan, *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 3.

sanctified items are presented to their religious consumers as the surest channel of accessing divine blessings, wealth and health. It is within this context that the sale of religious items has received prominence in Ghanaian neo-prophetic scholarship.

The religious products and services sold to religious consumers vary from church to church. David Okai for instance, has identified soap (black, rose, rope, healing, sulphur, pacholi scented, rue cyclarine, sandara, money (jackpot), and Jabon), Florida water, money perfume and Kananja water, myrrh breakthrough water and myrrh spiritual healing blood as the religious items commercialised to religious consumers by some churches.²² These items are believed to be potent enough to remedy the problem of religious consumers. Francis Benyah has identified books, stickers, wristbands, church paraphernalia/religious objects as tangible religious items, and healing and deliverance, or others related to the promise of a reward for a better future as intangible items often interpreted as “salvation goods” or “goods of pure belief” and guidance and counselling, *akwankyerε*.²³ George Anderson Jnr. has shown a special type of anointing oil known to believers as “the collector of fight and separator of fights” (*ɔpata ko agye ko abɔwobo*) and “iron cuts iron” (*dadie bi twa dadie*) with eggs as religious items sold by prophetic actors like Prophet Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom popularly known as Opambour to religious consumers in Ghana.²⁴

A key tenet of capitalism is that the success of a business owner is uniquely measured in terms of how much profit he or she earns. Market competition, we have said, is an essential component of capitalist economy. Thus, the ability of individuals to control the tools or means of production are crucial. This also leads to some form of rivalry. Put it another way, rivalry among sellers is an infrequent marker in the market competition. In neo-prophetic Christianity, too, power struggle among prophetic actors is a common occurrence. The success, power and wealth of a leader is determined by how much patronage they control. In fact, some prophetic actors have used the beauty and shape of their wives not only as their status symbol but also to insult their spiritual rivals.²⁵

²² Okai, *Evaluating the Effects of Merchandizing Ministry*, 10-12.

²³ Benyah, *Commodification of the Gospel*, 126-7.

²⁴ Anderson Jnr, *God Has Instructed me to Sell*, 178-9.

²⁵ Edwin Lamptey, “Rev. Obofour flaunts his wife's 'assets' in front of his congregation.” October 18, 2018 Read more: <https://yen.com.gh/117454-rev-obofour-flaunts-wifes-assets-front-congregation.html>

Religious Consumer

In the market economy, consumers are held as playing a major role for the smooth running of the system. In the religious economic system, too, a religious consumer is a person who has preference and need for 'religion', religious meaning, or spirituality and consumes products and services of religion.²⁶ Such a person holds the staunch belief that religion possesses the revealed truth and efficacious solution to his/her lingering plights. Usually, he/she interacts with providers of religion that exhibit high-level religious satisfaction to religious consumers. At the research units, barren and pregnant women, impotent men, the sick, cripple, nurses, politicians, teachers/lecturers, students, pastors, accursed, police officers/soldiers, aged, visually impaired and the unemployed were identified as religious consumers. These were people, who at the same time, expressed political, social, psychological, religious, emotional, educational (promotion and successes in exams), economic and health needs.²⁷ Thus, they buy and patronise the religious products and services offered to them by religious specialists without necessarily registering any reservations about the latter.

Methodology

The research design for this study is exploratory, and it used the experiential survey method. This method helped the present study to obtain insight into the relationships between variables and new ideas relating to this research's problem.²⁸ The study was conducted in five Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, namely Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre (Kumasi), International God's Way Church (Tema, Accra), Anointed Palace Chapel (Kumasi), House of Power Ministry (Kumasi) and Church of Bethesda (Accra). These churches were purposefully chosen because they are well known to be engaged briskly in the sale of religious goods, including services to their clientele. The two cities, Kumasi and Accra, are densely populated in Ghana. Moreover, the cities are characterised by a proliferation of Pentecostal,

²⁶ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 57-79, 195. Eric Sengers, *Do You Want to Receive a Missionary at Home?*, 6; Rodney Stark & William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press (1996): 27-28, 32, 113.

²⁷ Anderson Jnr, "Commercialisation of Religion", 3.

²⁸ Cartik R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, (2nd rev. ed.). New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited, Publishers, (2004): 35-36.

Charismatic, and Orthodox churches, making it an ideal field for pastors or prophets who are producers of religious goods to compete for church membership and maintaining existing ones. Besides, the two cities are well noted for brisk real-world commercial activities.²⁹ Thus, there is the likelihood that such commercial environment may influence the activities of church leaders.

Data were collected from September, 2018 to May, 2020 via interviews and focus group discussions on the phenomenon of commercialisation of religion and its ensuing abuses. The research techniques above were used to gather information on the study's objective. The principles of *epoché* and *eidetic intuition* in phenomenological studies were strictly adhered to. Adhering to the two principles helped to avoid biases and passing pointless judgments.

The study involved 40 (25 women, 15 men) participants as its sample size. The study involved 8 focus group discussants involving 5 women and 3 men in each church; and 8 members (5 men and 3 women) from each church were also interviewed. The participants' age ranged from 28-50 years. Eleven (10) of the participants were Ga speaking people and 30 were Asante. All the participants had had secondary education background. The participants comprised 20 traders, 8 teachers and 12 non-workers. The rationale was to find out what went on in relation to securing religious items and services from the churches for solution of their problems; and their experiences during the exchange processes. The study also sought to find out what influenced their decision to go for the religious items and services.

The participants were accessed via purposive sampling procedure. The purposive sampling procedure was used to select participants who had key information, involved in commercialisation of religion in the church, and were willing to share to achieve the study's set objectives³⁰. For the analysis of data, the study drew connections between the field data, literature and the Religious Market Theory (RMT).

²⁹ Ghana Statistical Service, *2010 Population and Housing Census: District Analytical Report, Kumasi Metropolitan*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, (2014): 18, 38.41.

³⁰ Ranjit Kumar, *Research Methodology: A Step-By-Step Guide for Beginners*, (2nd ed.), (Australia: Pearson Education, 2005):189.

Causes of Commercialisation of Religion in African Pentecostal Christianity

It is important to acknowledge that the commercialisation of religious products and services occur due to a number of factors. In a rather apologetic, emotional and somewhat contemptuous manner, David Okai, for example, has identified cultural markers of African spirituality which appears to find continuity in present-day Neo-Prophetic Christianity as one of the causes of commercialisation of religion.³¹ Cephas Narh Omenyo and Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, among other scholars have explained that the religio-cultural worldview of Ghanaians is an important reason that supports the perpetration of the practice.³² There is the general belief among Africans including Ghanaians that the forces of evil are in constant scuffle with the successes of humankind; and that every mishap has a spiritual dimension. In that regard, in order for one to earn protection from malevolent forces and to be successful in life; one needs to use the religious resources offered by “powerful” religious functionaries. This belief influences religious consumers to patronise religious functionaries at all cost in order to assuage and secure their protection.

In Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity, the fear of malevolent spirits and religious consumers’ quest to be delivered from the enemy – *atamfo*, the desire to become wealthy and healthy in life, and the hermeneutics on the prosperity gospel allows for more liberal interpretations that become a vanguard for commercialisation of religion.³³ The quest for wealth creation and the lucrative nature of commercialisation of religious products and services thereby account for the cause and perpetuation of the practice.³⁴ There is little point overemphasising that the desperation of religious consumers in their bid to get their existential needs quickly met is another cause of the commercialisation of religion. As Amos Yong has noted, “Pentecostalism has become religion of

³¹ Okai, *Evaluating the Effects of Merchandizing Ministry*, 10-12.

³² Cephas Narh Omenyo & Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, “Claiming Religious Space, The Case of Neo-Propheticism in Ghana”. *Ghana Bulletin of Theology, New Series*, 1, 1, (July 2006): 62; Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye, Magic: Its Nature and Meaning in Traditional Akan Society in Ghana. *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, 40, 1, (2008): 25-46. See also: Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, (1995): 77; Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*. Singapore: FEP International Private Ltd., (1978): 55-58.

³³ Benyah, *Commodification of the Gospel*, 119-124.

³⁴ Anderson Jnr, “*God Has Instructed me to Sell*”, 183.

choice in part because it promotes values that enable transition into and survival within the market economy.”³⁵

There have been accusations that illiteracy and ignorance serve as a reason why some religious followers are duped by their leaders. According to David Okai, for example, “there are a lot of literate Christians who do not study the Bible for themselves and for this reason are ignorant of the scriptures and the wicked schemes of their slave masters.”³⁶ This assertion implies that religious consumers who are involved in the commercialisation process lack understanding of their engagements. This, as a matter of fact, obscures the reality of the religious followers’ attraction to their leaders. As David C. Rose has noted, the challenge associated with high transaction costs in impoverished societies is not rooted in the fact that people in such societies lack intelligence, education, sophistication, or lawyers.³⁷ Personal interviews and observations revealed that consumption of religious goods leading to commercialisation is not limited to the so-called economically untutored. Indeed, patronisers of spiritual gifts cuts across all manner of professional backgrounds. According to Rita (a nurse), a key participant, her husband could not have had his promotion if not because she took a bold decision to present her husband’s academic papers to the prophet for spiritual guidance.³⁸ Moreover, as already indicated, there were some clergymen who had come to seek spiritual assistance from the prophet to surmount the challenges they faced in their church and marital homes.

Using Nigeria’s religious landscape as a typical example, Princewell A. Nwanganga has identified poverty and unemployment as the two major causes of commercialisation of religion. Nwanganga argues that the protracted search for gainful employment has caused many young people to be frustrated. This situation has compelled them to resort to pastoral work without genuinely called by God. This pastoral enterprise serves as means of livelihood option to them. Nwanganga indicates that in most cases those who are very good orators and are endowed with effective and rhetorical communication skills set up ministries which later metamorphose into full-fledged churches. This

³⁵ Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 21.

³⁶ Okai, *Evaluating the Effects of Merchandizing Ministry*, 7.

³⁷ David C Rose, *The Moral Foundation of Economic Behaviour*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20.

³⁸ In fact, Rita showed the research team the documents. Three weeks later, she was in the church to testify with her husband about his promotion.

situation has led to church proliferation hence, fanning the embers of commercialization of religion in Nigeria.³⁹

Religious Dependence, Opportunism and Interdependency

As identified above, many causes of commercialisation of religion and its associated religious consumer abuses exist. We now turn our attention to three key interrelated causes of commercialization, largely ignored in the literature: *religious dependence, opportunism and interdependency*. Below we detail these in turns.

Religious dependence: Religious dependence refers to the situation whereby religious consumers rely solely on a pastor or prophet for all of their needs (spiritual, emotional, psychological) premised on the fact that the former is incapable of tapping into the supernatural realm unlike the latter who has the power to offer such a need. The absence of *religious dependence*, which initiates the entire phenomenon of commercialization of religion, renders the other two null and void. In other words, religious dependence gives rise to opportunism and interdependency in the commercialisation and abuse processes in the churches. It follows that anytime religious consumers depend on their religious leaders (prophets, pastors, priests/priestesses) for solutions to their needs, there is the high tendency of the rise of opportunism on the part of the prophets or pastors, which then leads to interdependency between religious consumers and religious leaders (prophets, pastors and priests).

In the commercialisation chain, religious dependence, as already indicated above is the starting point. It usually starts with the religious consumer. The dependence is usually motivated by the religious consumer's quest, and inability to personally and naturally address his/her personal existential needs; be it social, psychological, educational, emotional and more importantly religious. The dependence is usually the fruit of the religious worldview of the religious consumer. As already indicated elsewhere in this paper, Africans including Ghanaians' religious orientation is that nothing happens in a vacuum. In this regard, the

³⁹ Princewell A. Nwanganga, "Church Commercialisation in Nigeria: Implications for Public Relations Practice," *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 28, (2017): 1-11.

religious consumer attributes all mishaps and good fortunes to the activities of malevolent and benevolent spirits. In that sense, since the believer has preference and need for religion (i.e., religious meaning, or spirituality) religion would be seen as the only remedy to his/her existential needs.

At the research units, we gathered that congregants expressed so much confidence in, and over reliance on their prophets or pastors. They usually disclosed to their prophets their secrets and every happening in their life. Majority of the participants including Mary, Akosua and Fremaa, for instance, revealed that they could not trust any of their family relatives with their existential problems; thus, they trust and solely depend on their prophets and the spiritual direction (*akwankyerɛ*) they give to them.⁴⁰ Interviewing our participants, we gathered that they relied on the directives of their prophets or pastors in every decision they took. In other words, they could not have taken any personal decision (be it marriage, business, education, health or distress) without relying on the counsel of their prophets or pastors. Moreover, they expressed so much satisfaction and confidence in their prophets and the religious paraphernalia they received from them. This finding describes the phenomenon of dependence of religious consumers on their prophets or pastors.

Opportunism: In a market economy, opportunism simply refers to “a condition of self-interest seeking with guile” involving but not limited to more blatant forms, such as lying, stealing, and cheating.⁴¹ Opportunism is said to, more often, involve subtle forms of deceit.” It is simply a condition of taking advantage of circumstances - with little regard for principles or with what the consequences are for others. In the religious market system, opportunism flows out of religious dependence. It is occasioned by the religious leaders, in our context, prophets. It becomes actualized when religious leaders come to terms with the fact that religious consumers revere them as ‘superhuman figures’ who are the only persons capable of addressing their predicaments. In that regard, religious leaders/prophets display supremacy, dwell on the religious artlessness and gullibility of religious consumers, invoke fear, display their spiritual capabilities and thus take advantage of

⁴⁰ Interview with Mary, Akosua and Fremaa, October 24, 2018.

⁴¹ Oliver E. Williamson, *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism*, (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 3; see also Rose, *The Moral Foundation of Economic Behaviour*.

them. This helps the prophets or pastors to regulate and dictate the religious and human behaviours of his followers in order to have access to and control over their resources.

At the research units, we gathered that congregants were unable to question the authority of their prophets or pastors. Congregants act in accordance with the demands and prescriptions of their prophets. They exhibit this attitude by buying or patronising every sanctified item or service offered to them on sale without any reproach. In Ghana and elsewhere, media reports abound on prophets and pastors who have and continue to dupe their congregants by taking possession of their cars, houses, gold bars, money, and have engaged their associate pastors' wives and some desperate congregants in sexual fantasies. As will be detailed later, there are reports of prophets and pastors who blatantly insult, fondle the breasts, and sell fake religious or sanctified items to their congregants which never worked out their purpose. This phenomenon is what we have termed as opportunism.

Interdependency: This is largely a product of *religious dependence* and *opportunism*. Interdependency depicts a kind of demand and supply chain of interaction between the religious consumers and their prophets or pastors. Usually, the interdependency interaction is championed and dictated by the prophets or pastors. Here, religious leaders or prophets on the one hand depend on religious consumers for their material and financial resources and satisfaction to enrich themselves, while on the other hand, religious consumers also derive their religious/spiritual, emotional, social, psychological satisfaction from the former.

At the research units, it was observed that some sanctified items such as two, four and eight bottles of anointing oil respectively are sold for GH¢ 500 ((US\$ 100), GH¢ 1000 (US\$ 200) and GH¢ 2000 (US\$ 400).⁴² One would want to find out why the price of the religious products would be sold at a very high price. It was revealed that the congregants solely depended on the items, and they have been conditioned to believe that God has endorsed its use. Moreover, they have been taught by their prophets that all other religious items procured by different prophets or pastors are not genuine, and have the potential of escalating their conditions. This kind of belief compels religious consumers to continuously

⁴² Presently, the exchange rate at the bank in Ghana is around GH ¢14.41 to 1 US dollar. The exchange rate at the time this study was conducted was GH ¢ 5.00 to 1 US dollar. The Ghana currency always devalues and scarcely appreciates.

patronise the prophets. It is important to underscore that the interdependency bond is very difficult to break. This is because the prophets or pastors frighten their congregants with curses, death and madness in the event that they seek to withdraw their allegiance and patronage of their services and sanctified items.

Religious Consumer Abuses

In a free-market economy business owner make decisions about their products and properties with no interference from the government. In other words, free market economies are based on voluntary exchange. At the same time, however, the government plays certain key traditional roles to ensure that consumers of goods and services, and indeed the public, are protected from any form of unfair practices in the marketplace. This traditional role includes enacting and enforcing laws that seek to safeguard consumers. Thus, state legislative regimes regarding the welfare of consumers aims to prevent business owners from engaging in fraudulent or certain unjust practices that inure only to the advantage of business owners. In the religious field too, similar situation can be observed. In Ghana, for example, as a constitutionally secular state, while the state does not interfere with the activities and operations of the religious groups, there are certain situation in which the state can step in to offer protection for its citizenry who may be impacted by the activities and operations of religious actors. Given that majority of the population live in place with no or limited state reach, a lot of religious abuses have been committed by religious actors. In this section, therefore, we want to call attention to the various abuses consumers suffer. We present the different levels of violations that religious consumers suffer from the hands of their leaders.

Indeed, Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in and outside Ghana, have provided us with marked instances whereby religious consumers go through different forms of abuses.⁴³ The abuses are mostly physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual in nature, details of which we provide in the ensuing discussion. In terms of physical abuses, some important studies have shown that given its relatively recent start, there is an impressive spread of the number of the Pentecostal faithful worldwide. Today, the movement is seen as the most rapidly

⁴³ Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches that Abuse*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992): 53-54; Okai, *Evaluating the Effects of Merchandizing*, 6; Anderson Jnr, *God Has Instructed me to Sell*, 174.

expanding religious movement in the world. According to some studies,

Within the last past thirty years there has been an estimated 700 percent increase in the number of Pentecostal believers, who represent about a quarter of the world's Christian population and two-thirds of all Protestants. The rapid expansion of Pentecostalism has pushed so-called mainstream Protestantism into a minority position. It is not uncommon to see Pentecostalism presented as a modality on its own, at the same level as Catholicism and Protestantism. The growth of Pentecostalism has raised a challenge to ecumenism cooperation.⁴⁴

Like many firms that once had monopoly-like power which have now seen their market position diminished over time, historic churches have seen a diminution of their hitherto power, numerical strength and social respectability. Evidence of this is seen in the increasing growth of Pentecostalism in Ghana over the last two decades at the time the historic churches have witnessed a gradual decline in their numbers. Pentecostalism's ability to offer solution to the existential needs of its adherents has become a major capital for it to take over the hitherto monopoly that the historic churches had over members of society, making Pentecostalism to flourish to become a global movement with wider appeal. Their ability to offer spiritual solution to the mundane happenings of their members has become a moving motivation for its wider appeal. Yet, in their attempts to help adherents overcome their daily struggles, certain forms of abuses and violations have been reported. Typical examples of this situation include instances whereby pastors or prophets subject their members to physical abuses for the members' failure to adhere to their leaders' spiritual prognosis. There have been situations whereby worshippers are compelled to carry a 50 kilogram of cement bag(s) for hours through a long distance for their failure to stake a lottery number the leader reportedly gave them either in physical or spiritual realm.⁴⁵ There

⁴⁴ Alan Anderson, Michale Bergunder, Andre Droogers, Cornelis van der Laan, *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 3.

⁴⁵ George Anderson Jr, *Ghana's Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity*, 24; Ghabase, "Obinim punishes woman to carry a bag of cement around for lotto number," *Ghanaweb.com* 4 May 2018.

are those who received multiple head knocks, hit with plastic chairs, spanked, walked and sat on.

In fact, there have been reported cases of some followers having their private parts hardly and harshly stepped on. Over the years, there have been reported cases of women who have undergone various forms of sexual violations as part of their search for spiritual security. Some of them have been reportedly had their private parts shaved and bathed by male pastors while others have had their breasts fondled, kissed, buttocks caressed and are also involved in sexual intimacy. In reported cases, these religious consumers are women who out of desperation for the fruit of the womb go to the extent of forfeiting their sacred marital vows to engage in surreptitious sexual intimacy with prophets or pastors under duress.⁴⁶

Religious consumers are also verbally and emotionally abused with insults by prophets. The experience of one of the authors of this paper and his team is telling here. As participant observers, one of the team members was insulted by a prophet during the fieldwork. The member was abused for refusing to believe in certain prophetic utterances of the prophet. In the midst of the entire congregation, the prophet referred to a member of the research team as “an ugly fool.” Unsurprisingly, to avert further insults from the prophet, the researcher in question conceded to the prophet’s ‘fake’ prophecy. According to some of our participants, there have been occasions whereby associate pastors of the church involved yelled at them, mislabeling them as insensible because they refused to sit at a place where they were instructed to sit.⁴⁷

Rev Adjei, a pastor and key participant narrated how he felt emotionally abused and embarrassed by a prophet after informing the prophet of his desire to get spiritual assistance to enable him address the challenges bedeviling his church. According to Rev Adjei, the prophet asked him why he couldn’t pray to God for help, but rather came to seek for him assistance. Rev Adjei revealed that the prophet’s comment embarrassed him and rendered him spiritually useless in the midst of the entire congregation.⁴⁸ There were other religious consumers who we observed were emotionally and verbally abused by prophets and their assistants at the research units after their private issues were disclosed openly to the rest of

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/Obinim-punishes-woman-to-carry-a-bag-of-cement-around-for-lotto-number-648925>

⁴⁶ Okai, *Evaluating the Effects of Merchandizing Ministry*, 6.

⁴⁷ Interview with Ama, Yaa, Sammy, Esi and Adjoa on February 6, 16, 26, 2019.

⁴⁸ Interview with Rev. Adjei on March 20, 2018.

the congregation which incited several unpleasant comments and laughter.

Religious consumers are also yelled at and embarrassed for late response to the prophet's call. Felicity, a key participant, indicated that a prophet referred to her as stupid, uncivilised and unserious in the midst of the rest of the entire congregation. According to her, sitting far behind the large congregation, she couldn't audibly hear the prophet calling out people associated with the problem she finds herself in. It was her sister who prompted her to attend to the prophet's call. When she rushed to see the prophet, she said, she was insulted and embarrassed. According to Felicia, this scene made her so ashamed that she could not pay attention to the spiritual direction the prophet eventually gave her to pursue to get her plights resolved.⁴⁹

Importantly, in the attempt to commercialise their spiritual gifts, some prophets have abused religious consumers financially by selling to them religious products and services at exorbitant rates. It has been revealed by some studies that, in the sacred spaces of religious market, some prophets sell anointing oils with eggs, perfumes, bottle water, soaps, witches' pomade, and miracle bangles as high as GH¢ 2000 (US\$ 400), GH¢ 1000 (US\$ 200) and GH¢ 500 (US\$ 100), which in actual sense would have cost lesser in the everyday commercial market. In some instances, prophets extort money from religious consumers by asking them to pay GH¢ 200 before they could prophesy or reveal secrets concerning their lives, and the reasons for their misfortunes. Religious consumers are also made to buy varieties of religious products at different costs to be used as mediums to surmount their problems, which product in some cases have been found to be incapable of surmounting their problems.⁵⁰

Essentially, there is also the use of fear to regulate the religious behaviour of religious consumers.⁵¹ It has been shown that in the religious field, the existential problems of religious consumers, and the knowledge religious organisations have about religious consumers' problems influence how the latter treat the

⁴⁹ Interview with Felicity October 24, 2018.

⁵⁰ Anderson Jnr, *Commercialisation of Religion*, 5.

⁵¹ See Steve Mochechane, *Dealing with Fear and Anxiety in Pentecostalism: The Bushiri-Phenomenon in Pretoria*. A CHSSA paper presented at the Third Conference of Academic Societies in the Fields of Religion and Theology. University of Pretoria, (11-15 July, 2016).

former.⁵² Pastor or prophets, thus, employ fear or superstition to control religious consumers. Deploying the notions of demonic and satanic influences, they compel religious consumers into buying and using religious products and services for the purpose of protection against their enemies. As Lucius M. Plutarch tells us, fear and superstition clouds most of the religious consumer's rationality, and thereby condition his/her decision and choice-making processes in the religious market.⁵³

In all the study units, we gathered that prophets and their associates maneuver their way by invoking fear to regulate the religious behaviour of their congregants to influence them to patronise their services and products. Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic pastors and prophets in Ghana use fear as a strategy to regulate the religious behaviour of religious consumers in order to buy their religious products and services.⁵⁴ They do this by accusing some close relations of their followers as witches, thus attributing every failure or mishap experienced by their followers to the so-called witches in their circle.⁵⁵ Paul Gifford, for example, has narrated how the renowned prophet, Owusu Bempah, founder of End Time Power Ministry International instilled fear in the followers of Prophet Salifu Amoako's convention on 31st January, 2001 in order to regulate their religious behaviour and to adhere to his biddings.⁵⁶ According to Gifford, Prophet Owusu Bempah told a woman that she was going to die of stroke if she failed to pay the sum of money he had invited the congregants to pay. This threat of fear consequently induced the woman to pay the money.

⁵² Frank Cole Babbit, (Ed. and Trans. in English). *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. VI, London: Cambridge Mass, (1938), 2; Enroth, *Churches that Abuse*, 53-54. See also Mochechane, *Dealing with Fear and Anxiety in Pentecostalism*, 2.

⁵³ Babbit, *Plutarch's Moralia*, 2.

⁵⁴ Omenyo and Atiemo, *Claiming Religious Space*, 62; See also Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Signs, Wonders, and Ministry: The Gospel in the Power of the Spirit". *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 33, 1, (2009):36; Frimpong Wiafe, & Harriet Clotney, "Ghanaian Christian Understanding of the Concept of Enemy with Reference to Psalm 35: 1 - 10: A Case Study of Some Selected Churches under the Neo-Prophetic Strand of Ghanaian Christianity". *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 2, 11, (2015): 1709.

⁵⁵ George Anderson Jnr, *Commercialisation of Religion*, 6.

⁵⁶ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 101.

Conclusion

Focusing on the commercialization of religious items and services by Ghana's neo-prophetic actors, this paper has brought to light the foundations of the phenomenon of commercialisation of religion and its related religious consumer abuses in today's African Pentecostal Christianity. The paper was driven by the observation that Sub-Saharan African Pentecostal Christianity is akin to a business enterprise. This is because it is characterised by the sale and purchase of assorted 'sanctified items' and the provision of religious services by pastors or prophets to consumers of religion; it also involves financial and material extortions and the abuses these consumers of religion suffer. This phenomenon raised the question; what could be the foundations of this practice and its ensuing abuses?

The paper has revealed a chain of interconnected relations in terms of *religious dependence*, *opportunism* and *interdependency* as the basis of commercialization of religion and its ensuing abuses in neo-prophetic churches particularly in Ghana. This means, the total dependence of religious followers on their leaders influences the latter to take advantage of the former to exploit, and in most cases abuse them and thus depend on each other for their survival. The paper suggests a state regulation of the activities of religious organisations. This will bring sanity on the religious landscape.

The findings of this paper allow a recommendation that consumers of religion should rather express much belief, reliance and confidence in Jesus Christ who is the way to the Christian God than their prophets or pastors. Prophets or pastors should treat their congregants as an end in themselves; but not as a means to an end, and they should accord them with worth and dignity instead of putting fear in them and abusing them. Furthermore, prophets or pastors should not use their congregants to enrich themselves under the guise of helping them to address their existential needs.

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**The Rewards of Hospitality:
A Case Study of Gen 18:1-16a**

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Abstract

Hospitality is a value ingrained in all human beings. Ghanaians love to practice hospitality and it is common to hear foreigners mention "Ghanaian Hospitality." Unfortunately, this valuable gift seems to elude contemporary Ghanaians. The practice of hospitality has been taken advantage of by armed robbery, pretenders, and lazy people, so that a hospitable person becomes a victim of their attack. Instead of the rewards of hospitality, cheerful heart, smiles, joy, that perpetuates healthy life, sadness, grief, sorrow, sickness and sometimes death have become the result. Consequently, Ghanaians have become afraid and reluctant to practice this virtue. Engaging traditional Ewe wisdom with Gen 18:1-16a, the paper seeks to explore through exegetical and intercultural study the value of hospitality within the Ewe and the Hebrew cultures to propose a re-conversion towards 'hospitality' for contemporary Ghanaian Christians.

Key Words

Hospitality, The Ewe, Trust, Responsibility, Ghanaian Hospitality,
Gen 18:1-16a.

Introduction

Hospitality is the receptive quality, the act, and the openness to a guest.¹ In this understanding of Webster, hospitality is the act of friendly reception of a guest, showing kindness, giving comfort in entertainment, to enhance health, growth, and to ensure security of the guest (Gen 19:6-11). Acceptance of hospitality means accepting the person who offered hospitality and rejection of hospitality means rejecting the person who offered hospitality. The rejection of hospitality cast a slur on the person who rejected it and may have consequences on relationships because rejection will mean the supposed recipient has a mixed feeling about the offer.² But giving and accepting hospitality yield more benefit to the giver and the receiver because at the end, both the one who gives and the one who receives enhance their own health and life. Therefore, hospitality has mutual benefits and is demonstrated vividly in the story of Gen 18:1-16a: the guests, on one hand, had a fill of their stomach, relief from the scorching sun, and the energy to reach their destination; and Abraham and Sarah, on the other hand, had the benefit of deliverance from the distress of not having a child.³

There are diverse ways that hospitality is expressed, but more essentially in the following three areas: to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to shelter the homeless. Israel is always reminded of its former status as a stranger who was in need of hospitality (Lev 19:33-34; Acts 7:6).⁴ In the ancient Near East (ANE), hospitality is a necessity for survival and so demands that enemies reconcile in order to offer and to accept hospitality.⁵ Once a guest is accepted by a host, he or she becomes sacred and must be protected and shown love.⁶ No charge is made and no gift is accepted in return. The guest in return is supposed to live a worthy life not to mar the name of the host.⁷

¹ *Webster's New World Dictionary* (ed. in ch. David B. Guralnik, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1988), 653.

² John Kuada and Yao Chachah, *Ghana. Understanding the People and their Culture* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Service, 1999), 76.

³ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36. A Continental Commentary* (transl. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 275.

⁴ Xavier Léon-Dufour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (updated 2nd ed. transl. E. M. Stewart, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 243.

⁵ L. T. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publication, 1995), 374.

⁶ Léon-Dufour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 243.

⁷ McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 374.

Hospitality, as the essence of humanness, becomes complete in good relationship in which other human beings also enjoy some comfort of life. The implication is sacrifice, to the point of an inconvenience of oneself or of friends (Luke 11:5-8), just to make the guest happy and to feel at home. Abraham demonstrated this, Job prided over it (Job 31:31-32), and was approved by Jesus Christ (Luke 7:44-47); it is a fraternal charity that makes the Christian very much aware of his or her responsibility to others as humans (Rev 12:13; 13:8).⁸ In that regard, Slavcheva notes human personality is possible only when others also exist and partake in the fruits of the earth.⁹

Hospitality is a value ingrained in all human beings. Ghanaians love to practice hospitality and it is common to hear foreigners mention “Ghanaian Hospitality.” A guest is always a king, or a queen and he or she is given the best of everything. Abraham did just that by giving the best to his guest, which is noted of Ghanaians. Unfortunately, this valuable gift seems to elude contemporary Ghanaians. The practice of hospitality has been taken advantage of by armed robbery, pretenders, and lazy people, so that a hospitable person becomes a victim of their attack. Instead of the rewards of hospitality, cheerful heart, smiles, joy, that perpetuates healthy life, sadness, grief, sorrow, sickness and sometimes death have become the result. Consequently, Ghanaians have become afraid and reluctant to practice this virtue with a conscious disappearing of love of neighbour.¹⁰ Engaging traditional Ewe wisdom with exegetical analysis of Gen 18:1-16a in the intercultural perspective, the paper seeks to explore the value of hospitality in the Ewe and Biblical cultures to propose a re-conversion towards ‘hospitality’ for contemporary Ghanaian Christians.

This paper engages in exegetical and theological analysis of the text, the Ghanaian hospitality of a guest, the reasons why a contemporary Ghanaian will not want to offer hospitality, and finally the need to offer hospitality despite the abuses of hospitality today.

⁸ Léon-Dufour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 243,

⁹ Kameliya Slavcheva, “Human Rights, Dignity and Freedom: An Orthodox Perspective,” *Baptistic Theologies* 3.2 (2011), 120.

¹⁰ Augustine Mensah, “The ‘Neighbour’ in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37)” *GJRT* 9.2 (2019).

The Analysis of Text

Background to the Text

In the ANE, hospitality is mostly seen in having a grand dinner or giving a bed to a friend for the night.¹¹ It means literally taking a stranger into one's home; and is a highly esteemed virtue, particularly in a nomadic society like that to which Abraham belonged. In the eyes of such a society, the guest is almost sacred, and any passing traveller, even a member of a hostile tribe, is entitled to become one.¹² The necessity of hospitality to a stranger is an essential part of the culture that there are motifs of common ancient literature that motivates and encourages the entertainment of strangers. Such stories exist to instill the spirit of hospitality among the people; but most especially, the idea of entertaining a divine guest, obliges them to offer hospitality.¹³ Such was the case in the life of Abraham.

A critical study of the text from vv. 1-8 gave the impression, as if, the son was a reward for having fulfilled the piety of hospitality demanded by custom (vv. 9-16a).¹⁴ In that sense, Abraham has passed the test of hospitality, but chaps. 15 and 17 made that assumption impossible because Abraham was already promised a child and the seemingly reward for hospitality was just to give the definite time of the long awaited child.¹⁵ Abraham later got to know that the visitors were divine, in conformity to the ancient stories.¹⁶ To buttress the fact that hospitality was an essential customary rite in the ANE; Lot, the nephew of Abraham (Gen 19:1-11) and the man of Gibeah (Judg 19:16-24) did likewise.

Vv. 1-2 The Encounter

The narrator made us aware that Yhwh appeared to Abraham at his home (v.1). But for Abraham, three men appeared to him, and it

¹¹ John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis. The Daily Study Bible Series*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 75.

¹² Gibson, *Genesis*, 76.

¹³ Cuthbert A. Simpson, "The Book of Genesis" in *The Interpreter's Bible vol. I* (ed. Nolan Harmon, New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), 616.

¹⁴ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 274.

¹⁵ Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis" in *NIB. Vol. I* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 462.

¹⁶ Similar divine visitations also occurred in the life of the following persons: Jacob (28:18); Gideon (Judg 6:22); Manoah and his wife (Judg 13:20-21).

was unexpected (v. 2).¹⁷ According to Westermann, the presence of the three men in front of Abraham is the oriental equivalent of knocking (see also Judg 19:15), which is done in the Ewe culture.¹⁸ The syntagm “entrance to his tent” in v. 2, is repeated in v. 10 to describe Sarah’s sitting position. The terebinth of Mamre reminds us of Gen 13:18.¹⁹ Fox linked the “three men” to the anthropomorphic character of Genesis; God’s messengers, he said have human appearance and are sometimes taken for God himself.²⁰ According to the Midrash, an angel performs only one role at a time; so, the reason for the three angels was for three specific roles.²¹ The first angel was to announce the birth of Isaac, the second to destroy Sodom, and the third to save Lot and family.²²

No name has been mentioned except “three men;” however, one of them became Yhwh in vv. 10 and 13.²³ Even, the name of Abraham was mentioned only in v. 6.²⁴ The narrator suggests a divine character to the three men, “and the Lord appeared,” but this knowledge is only to the reader, which still leaves Abraham in the dark about their divinity. In that sense, Abraham’s gesture of prostration, “bowed himself to the earth” was an oriental expression of self-deprecating courtesy and not as a homage to the

¹⁷ Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis,” 462-463; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 277.

¹⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 277.

¹⁹ Once again, it echoed Abraham, the sojourner and tent dweller, the man who is childless and who inhabits a homely house opened to the hospitality of the Bedawin. See Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday company, 1977), 226; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 277.

²⁰ Everett Fox, *Genesis and Exodus: A New English Rendition with Commentary and Notes* (NY: Abingdon Press, 1990), 67. Read also the tale told by Ovid and Hyginus, of how Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury (i.e., three visitors, as in Genesis), while travelling through Boeotia, came in disguise to Hyrieus, a childless peasant (or a prince) of Tanagra, and, in return for his hospitality, granted him the boon of a son, who became Orion. See Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading*, 227; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 275-276; Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis,” 462. Linking Abraham’s story to the Greek story of manifestation of the gods, Westermann recounts “narratives of visits by gods to men are so widespread throughout the world that we must assume a long period of development and an abundance of variants. The motif as it appears in Gen 18:1-16a, therefore, cannot be explained directly as a parallel to the Greek narrative; it is to be traced back through its Near Eastern prehistory; no direct parallel to it has been found so far, though there are traces in Sumerian myths.” See Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 276.

²¹ J. H. Hertz (ed), *Pentateuch & Haftorahs. Hebrew Text English Translation & Commentary* (London: Soncino Press, 1967), 63; Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis,” 63.

²² Hertz (ed), *Pentateuch & Haftorahs*, 63.

²³ Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, *Commentary on the Holy Bible - Genesis to Esther* (Nashville, Tennessee: Royal Publishers, Inc, 1979), 52.

²⁴ Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis,” 462.

divine beings. Lot and others did likewise (Gen 19:1; see also Gen 23:7; 1 Sam 24:8; 2 Sam 14:4, 22; 1 Kgs 1:31).²⁵

The Abraham scenario seemed like an adaptation to the seminomadic episode of the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat (tablet V: 6-7) in which the childless Dan'el is visited by the god, Kothar.²⁶ These are the verbal links between the two stories: Dan'el was sitting at the entrance, overshadowed by a tree; he lifts up his eyes to see a divine visitor; he asked his wife to prepare a meal from the choice of the flock for the visitor; and a son was promised.²⁷

Vv. 3-4 Receptive Attitude

Abraham demonstrated an excellent attitude of hospitality in his reception by giving them a rest from the scorching sun.²⁸ The phrase "my Lord", yn"©doa] a vocative singular is misleading because the visitors were three. A shift occurred into the plural in v. 4 with the use of ~k,yleg>r:, "your feet" with second person masculine plural suffix.²⁹ Later in v. 10 and vv. 13-15, Abraham used yn"©doa in addressing the one who remained with him, while the other two head on to Sodom and Gomorrah.³⁰ It is inappropriate to read meaning into the story as if Abraham knew they were divine beings.

The statement "Let a little water be fetched" is in accord with the Jewish tradition. The first hospitality to a guest is to fetch water and wash the guest's feet³¹ and to "take a rest under the tree" is to pave way for the entertainment of food and drinks, which are essential requirements of hospitality for a guest. Here, Abraham is

²⁵ Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," 463.

²⁶ Robert Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1997), 77; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 274.

²⁷ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels. Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1997), 67-68; Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 77.

²⁸ They needed comfort from the scorching Sun and Abraham saw through that. See also Josh 5:13; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 277.

²⁹ Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading*, 226-227. There are two possibilities here: the first is that someone read meaning into the story since Abraham addressed one of the three as God in vv. 10, 13-15; and the one he addressed as God remained with him after the two angels left to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18). The second possibility is that the text could be a fusion of two traditions, in which in one tradition, it is only one visitor to correspond with the story of Aqhat of Dan'el and the other tradition with a version that has three visitors, which will then explain the switch from singular to plural and unfortunately, it was not well taken care of by the editor.

³⁰ Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 77; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 278.

³¹ See Gen 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 278.

figured as the exemplary dispenser of hospitality.³² Remember, the Hebrew culture revolves around Abraham and no doubt he is made to demonstrate it.

V. 5 The Acts of Hospitality

The mode of Abraham's invitation, his anxiety, and the haste are symbolisms of service to others.³³ There was no indication that they knew one another and in fact, there is no need for people to know one another before rendering or accepting services of hospitality.³⁴ The response "do as you have said" is an acceptance and a welcome of hospitality. In ancient tales, the greater person is succinct in utterance and the lesser person garrulous, which is evidenced in Abraham's plenty talk. Another good example, in the Bible is the case of Obadiah and Elijah (1Kgs 18:7-15).³⁵ A good host will always esteem his or her guests above himself or herself because he or she must be at their beck and call; Abraham has become their servant (v. 3). Hospitality is service, and rendering that service always placed the giver of hospitality lower in dignity than the recipient of hospitality. Abraham has become their servant, and his words and actions depicted a welcome attitude that enabled his guest felt at home and relaxed. They enjoyed some peace and rest before battling the blazing sun again to their destination.³⁶

Abraham's diplomacy is seen in his modest promises: "a little water" (v. 4) and "a morsel of bread," while he hastened to prepare a sumptuous feast, a big feast, the hall mark of a good hospitable person.

Vv. 6-8 Generosity, Key to Hospitality

Hospitality goes with generosity and service. Abraham's generosity is embedded in his hospitality, and this is expressed in the quantity of food that he prepared namely, "three measures of fine meal."³⁷ His act of service is seen in the following gestures: "please" three times; "runs" two times, "hurry" three times, and "fetch" four

³² Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 78; Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading*, 226.

³³ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 277.

³⁴ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 277-278.

³⁵ Simpson, "The Book of Genesis," 618.

³⁶ Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," 463.

³⁷ Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading*, 226; This is not because of their number, 'three' but a generosity from the heart. The quantity of food was way too much to imagine. See also Simpson, "The Book of Genesis," 618.

times. Alter notes that “fetch” appears four times in rapid succession, “hurry” three times as indications of the flurry of hospitable activity.³⁸ Abraham stood by them because in the oriental custom, the host stood by to attend to the need of the guest.³⁹ This is the only place in the Bible that divine beings were mentioned to have eaten or appeared to do so (Tobit 12:19). It is always good to conform to the social habits of the people and the angels demonstrated it.⁴⁰

Vv. 9 - 10 The Benefits of Hospitality

Until now, there has not been any formal introduction. Surprisingly, in v. 9, one of the guests strangely mentioned the name of Sarah. Abraham, their host, should be startled at this revelation and this should have set the stage to inquire into their personality. Again, in v. 10, a child is promised. These are indicators that the three men were not ordinary human beings; an ordinary human being cannot promise a child. Eye brow is always raised at certain comments and to promise a child means there is a supernatural power at stake.⁴¹ In the case of Dan’el, El was the one who proposed a child after Dan’el had fed them.⁴² In case of Abraham, the fulfillment of Yhwh’s promise of a child (Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-27) was made definite to them after their acts of hospitality. A time frame has been given for the birth of the child and the child will be a son from a mother who is postmenopausal. Alter associates “at this very season” with the annunciation type-scene, which always involves barrenness, the promise of a son by God, angel or holy man, and fulfilment of the promise in conception and birth. This text is the first of its kind in the Bible.⁴³ A similar example is in 2 Kgs 4:8-11, 14-16, Elisha received hospitality as a holy man.⁴⁴ The narrator identifies the speaker to us as Yhwh (v. 10).

³⁸ Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 78.

³⁹ Hertz (ed), *Pentateuch & Haftorahs*, 63.

⁴⁰ Hertz (ed), *Pentateuch & Haftorahs*, 64.

⁴¹ Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading*, 227.

⁴² Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 67-68.

⁴³ Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 78.

⁴⁴ First, it was only food but later, they furnished a little room for him. In response, Elisha asked if something could be done for her as a reward for her good deeds. Gehazi answered, she has no son, and the husband is getting on in years. Call her said Elisha and when she came he made a promise to her “this time next year you will be fondling a baby son.”

Vv. 11 – 15 The Irresistible and the Limitless Power of Yhwh

These verses brought to fore human limitedness and God's limitless power over his creatures. The narrator identifies the speaker again as Yhwh (v.13), as he inquires about Sarah's laughter. Sarah should have known better. Here, it is Sarah's reaction that is important and not Abraham.⁴⁵ Sarah laughed, just as Abraham did in Gen 17:17, when God made the same promise of a son.⁴⁶ Sarah was in a tent far away, but the guest knew that she laughed; even though, the laughter was silent and was to herself.⁴⁷ Without prejudice, it could be possible that Sarah laughed because Abraham did not communicate the encounter of chaps. 15 and 17 to her.⁴⁸ If that is the case, it is possible she laughed because the promise is coming from "cheap men" who had eaten free food and drank free drinks and wanted to please their host with such a promise. In that sense, Sarah did not conceive the hand of Yhwh in this promise of the guest.

However, accepting that they were aware of the earlier promise, then the conception of the child could be describe in these words of Westermann "encounters not gratitude and joy, but skepticism and doubt."⁴⁹ This is because some considerable time had elapsed since the promise of a child was made known to Abraham; and now that human limitedness for all females had set in on Sarah, the fulfilment of the promise is announced. Here is a barren woman who has become postmenopausal.⁵⁰ Considering her age, her condition is stated clearly to show that conception is biologically impossible. Apart from that her husband is also old and frail, and sexual pleasure could be for Sarah and her husband a distant memory. These factors indeed usher in God's power that overcomes human weakness in the words of the guest.

The guest speaker quizzed "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (v. 14); a recall of God's attributes "the omniscient" and "the omnipotent." There is nothing the creator cannot do. This heightened the limited view of Sarah and Abraham and persuaded them to believe and cooperate to bring God's promise to a fulfilment.⁵¹ An indication that God needs human cooperation on

⁴⁵ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 281.

⁴⁶ Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," 463.

⁴⁷ Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading*, 227.

⁴⁸ Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," 463.

⁴⁹ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 274.

⁵⁰ Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 78.

⁵¹ Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," 463.

earth to fulfil His will. God is not within time, He has His own time, but human beings are within time. "At the same time next year" (v. 14), the guest speaker promised "I shall return, and you shall have a son" (v.14). With that Sarah's period of "barrenness," "unproductivity," and "death" is over. Sarah's new life of "fruitfulness," "productivity," and "life" has begun with the gift of a son. The statement "shall have a son" stressed the authority of Yhwh. The promise was fulfilled with the gift of the son, Isaac in Gen 21:6-7.

Unbelief led Sarah to lie (v. 15). She became afraid when her laughter was made known to her and she lied, but God rejected her denial. The word "laughter" from the root qxc occurred in Gen 17:17 with Abraham and now with Sarah paving the way for the name of their son.⁵² After the child was born, Sarah was overjoyed that she cried out in great laughter that "God has made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" (Gen 21:6), Yhwh has removed her reproach. But this stage of life is not always easy to reach, it demands perseverance in the face of God. Sometimes, those who would like to trust in God may be overawed by those who sit in the seat of the scornful and hence become disillusioned and lose their self-confidence and so meet their fresh opportunity with an embarrassed smirk instead of courage, hope, and fulfillment.⁵³ Or sometimes, they become scrupulous and surrender to the thought that the great opportunity is too good to be true. In that way, they become frustrated in their excitement and give in to disbelief that at the end they achieve nothing. However, in Sarah's case, God's promise was fulfilled despite Sarah's derisive skepticism.⁵⁴ God's promise will never fail.⁵⁵

Laughter, in Response to Hospitality

There are categories of laughter. There is a laughter that is kind and soothing for the one who laugh and to those who listen; and there is a laughter that is careless, carefree, loud, and coarse, that will amuse the one who laugh and to those who listen, but to those the laughter is intended, they will feel miserable within although, they might be smiling.⁵⁶ In the first case, it generates and enhances life. In the second case, it is a way of escape from themselves,

⁵² Vawter, *On Genesis. A New Reading*, 227; Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 79.

⁵³ Walter Russell Bowie, "The Book of Genesis" in *The Interpreter's Bible vol. I* (ed. Nolan Harmon, New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), 620.

⁵⁴ Bowie, "The Book of Genesis," 620.

⁵⁵ Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," 464.

⁵⁶ Bowie, "The Book of Genesis," 618.

knowing that the laughter is embedded with evil.⁵⁷ To laugh loud enough draws one's inner self out and gives a satisfying purpose. Now, if the purpose is positive, it enhances the inner self, but when the purpose is negative, it destroys the inner self.

In this regard, laughter can be termed as virtuous or vicious. The virtuous laughter is sincere and truthful. It is a laughter of blessedness, in which one rejoices in the goodness of God's creation, in a spirit of generosity and humility. It is within a heart sensitive to what are lovely, true, and of good repute. It is about something worth talking about and to extol in glorification and in gratification to God who created all human beings. The vicious laughter is consciously acted to be devoid of pain. Such a laughter is deliberate, evil, and result in sin and disaster. It is deliberate evil because it has won malignant victory over what is better than itself. The perpetrator has succeeded in evil and when people are suffering then he or she turns out to laugh at them. Evil laughter is common and does not have to be dramatic because it is something that is exhibited, either in a cruelled triumphant satisfaction of a rival's failure or in the discrediting of someone we do not like.⁵⁸

The laughter of Sarah and Abraham was that of disbelief.⁵⁹ One can be nominal in God's circle and not trust his power and grace, but another could believe and receive wonderful blessings. Our world does not help us to believe due to our own human frailty, untruthfulness, insincerity, insecurity, and insatiability. An earlier promise of a child has not been fulfilled, and how can this one be trusted to be true? The earlier promise did not come with a definite time, which they have forgotten; but their action is understood because human beings, sometimes promise without fulfilling their promises. The world has become unrealistic, faithless, deceptive, selfish, pretentious, which is deathly and so, human beings should not be afraid of being laughed at. So like Sarah, human beings may try to hide their most eager longings behind a laugh that tries to say, "Don't fool me."⁶⁰

The Price of Impatience Due to Faithlessness

Faithlessness did not allow Abraham and Sarah to be patient; instead, impatience and disobedience led them to recruit Hagar as a

⁵⁷ Bowie, "The Book of Genesis," 618-619.

⁵⁸ Bowie, "The Book of Genesis," 620.

⁵⁹ See more on disbelief in Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 281; Bowie, "The Book of Genesis," 619.

⁶⁰ Bowie, "The Book of Genesis," 620.

surrogate mother who gave birth to Ishmael as a son. Disobedience to God's Word comes with consequences and may end up in evil. The rivalry that ensued, the expulsion of Hagar and the son, God's intervention, and the rescue of an innocent child are lessons for humans to have trust in God. It was not the fault of the child, but the parents'.

V. 16a The Departure

A guest when received and taken care of must live; if not, he or she will no longer be considered a guest. Abraham's astute hospitality is seen in him accompanying them to see them off. A sign that a good friendly relationship has been established through hospitality.

Summary

Abraham welcomed the three men with seats, drinks, and food. Friendship was established. Abraham and Sarah were happy and satisfied that the guests accepted them, and the guests were also satisfied that they had a homely welcome. The guests, out of what could be a sign of gratitude for excellent hospitality revealed the fulfilment of God's age-old promise to their host.

The Ewe Hospitality

Cultures have norms and values that define the behaviour and history of their members.⁶¹ The Ewe entertains strangers. To receive a guest is one of the values and it goes with its norm. The various ethnic groups in Ghana have similar basic form of entertainment of a guest: seat, water, food, drink, and a place to sleep. To receive a guest is of prime importance because such a visit could be vital and of a decisive importance for the one who is visited or one who is visiting. So, each culture makes it a point to receive guests.⁶² It is a moral responsibility for a society to develop social responsibility, commitment, and a concern in the preservation of the welfare of the society and to maintain a standard that affords all human beings a right to life and happiness.⁶³ Within the sub-region of West Africa, the hospitality of the Igbo people of Nigeria differ considerably;

⁶¹ Kuada and Chachah, *Ghana. Understanding the People and their Culture*, 71.

⁶² Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 276-277.

⁶³ Rabiata Ammah, "Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies Attempts at Dealing with Poverty in the Ghanaian Muslim Community," *GJRT vol. 2* (2007), 7 - 8.

they welcome their guests with kola nut and a mark of chalk as an identification on the guest.⁶⁴

Signs for A welcomed Guest

A guest who entered a house of an Ewe says “*agoo*” (knocking) and those in the house will respond “*ame* or *agoo ne na ma nu ame ne ge de eme*” (yes or agoo should remain at the entrance and let human being enter).⁶⁵ The person in the house will come out to meet the guest. If the guest is welcomed then the host will say “*woe zo*” (welcome), or on a happier note it is “*woe zo loo!*”⁶⁶ But, if the guest is not welcomed, then the host will not say *woe zo*. It means the guest must leave. A guest who is welcomed is offered a seat and water to drink.⁶⁷ While the guest is drinking the water, the host will call few people around to receive the guest. When all the people have gathered and seated, then the process to receive the guest begins. One person is chosen as the linguist and the linguist is told to ask the guest if he or she is ready to greet them. If he or she is ready then he or she greets the people.⁶⁸ At any gathering, there

⁶⁴ Among the Igbos of Nigeria, Kola nut (*oji*) and white chalk (*nzu*) are two most prominent and frequently used substance in hospitality ceremonies. The two are regarded as having ritual power and facilitates communication between human beings and their gods. Kola hospitality is an offering, sharing, and eating, which blesses any proceedings and its participants before the event. The common maxim, ‘He who brings kola brings life’ gives the idea that without kola, life would not exist. This reinforces its countless use most especially, in ritual situations. In many social rites, it may include the use of chalk to mark certain parts of the body as a means of indicating one’s serious participation in a ceremony. The use or configurations of both kola and chalk address central ideas in aesthetics, numerology, and spiritual thought and even more than kola, chalk has mythical and medicinal properties, which make it an almost constant ingredient in healing and life-affirming medications. Chalk is, above all, whiteness, purity, beauty, and sanctity. Things are painted with white chalk to make them shine and glow, important aspects of aesthetic valuation that are tantamount to spiritual and moral purity. Chalk is rubbed on a pregnant woman’s abdomen and later on, on the newly born child to celebrate its arrival, a welcome hospitality. When a guest comes to a house he or she is given kola and he or she is smeared with chalk, so that all who see such a person will recognize the host of the guest.

⁶⁵ It is believed that a spirit will never say “*ago*,” but if it does, since it is not a human being it has no right to enter.

⁶⁶ This greeting from the host is to welcome the guest.

⁶⁷ Kuada and Chachah, *Ghana. Understanding the People and their Culture*, 75.

⁶⁸ The initial greeting from the host is just to usher in the guest. The guest is supposed to greet those who are in the house. The greeting among the Anlo of the Ewe is so long that it takes some time. The greeting demands you inquire about the wellbeing of spouse, children, family, kindred, friends, and people in the society. It can be overwhelming when one is pressed with time. The first person who says the first sentence becomes respondent to the one who answers that sentence. The respondent answers the questions in the greetings and when the questioner exhausted his or her questions then the respondent, who was the first person to start becomes the questioner and he or she will ask the same very questions as had asked him or her. Sometimes, it is done standing by the roadside

should be a greeting.⁶⁹ In the case of Abraham, Westermann noted that Abraham's invitation and acceptance of his visitors takes the place of his greetings.⁷⁰

Signs for Unwanted Guest

A person who is not welcomed will not be accorded the welcome reception that means the guest is unwanted. If there is no response to his or her greetings, or what follows is a retorted question like: *nuka dim nele?* (What do you want?), *nukae?* (What is it?) And if, no seat is offered, and no water is given then the guest must be on the run because these are clear indications that the guest is not welcomed and is unwanted. In case of Abraham, he spoke to them, bow to them and pleaded that they sit under a tree, and with his statements "a little water" and "little bread;" these are but polite languages to ease the tension of a larger feast.⁷¹ Such languages are uncommon these days.

Entertainment Constitutes Hospitality

After the ceremonial greetings and the hearing of the reason for the visit, if the guest is accepted, then food and drinks are offered to the guest apart from the initial water to cool his or her tongue. Food and drink are the entertainment for the guest, just as Abraham did. Now, if the guest is staying overnight a place of sleep is prepared. If the guest is coming to stay for period of days, then the host will visit the home of each neighbour within the locality with his or her guest introducing the guest to the neighbours in the community.

Other Hospitable Acts within the Ewe Community

Apart from entertaining visitors, neighbours take care of each other's children. Sometimes, they feed them while they await their parents to return from farm, market or any other place of work.

and can be a good sight. To just say Good Morning is not enough and not to greet is morally unaccepted. The greeting itself is therapeutic because it relieves oneself of stress and undue worries because the greeting addresses them. It promotes friendliness, and shows some care for one another. Those who do not know how to greet will say, "let us go by the short one" and that is "Good Morning" that means the person does not know the long greetings. Those who are pressed with time will sometimes go by the short one.

⁶⁹ Kuada and Chachah, *Ghana. Understanding the People and their Culture*, 75 - 76.

⁷⁰ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 275.

⁷¹ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 278.

This is because human beings have moral responsibilities and should act as one another's keeper, and this does not infringe on anybody's personal rights or freedom because humanity is inextricably bound up with obligations to be responsible.⁷²

With the notion of cultural hospitality, it is no shame to borrow personal belongings of others like handbags, shoes, clothes for church, parties, weddings, funerals, etc. The one who borrows is in need, but must appear elegant at a particular occasion, hence the borrowing. Some celebrants even borrow chairs, tables, cooking utensils, plates, silver wares to use for occasions. In the spirit of hospitality, community members, especially during weddings, birthdays and funerals, come together to help the celebrant. Neighbours, generously, erect canopies, carry and arrange seats for guests; they sweep and clean the ground of the celebration. They help in cooking to feed the guests. Apart from that, they donate food and drinks, in kind and cash towards the ceremony. Some donate chairs, tables, canopies, mattresses, plates, cups, silver wares, vehicles; those with empty rooms in their homes make them available for visitors; those with open space makes them available for the celebrants to use for the celebration.

The community is always aware of the needy within the society and they reach out to them. For instance: widows, orphans, and in some cases, it is a whole family that is poor and needy; and people within the community extend their help to them.⁷³ Sometimes, family members like uncles, aunties, nephews or nieces adopt some of the children and raised them up. Even in some cases neighbours do that. In some situations, people give them jobs to do to earn a living. During festive celebrations, it is not strange to see neighbours giving clothes, shoes, food, and drinks to these needy ones to be part of the festive celebration.

It is very common to see people give in to charity to beggars like the cripple, the blind, and the homeless on our streets. Many people attend to them and give them something, but mostly what is given to them suffice for a day and so, every day they are out on the street begging for help.

⁷² Kameliya Slavcheva, "Human Rights, Dignity and Freedom: An Orthodox Perspective," *Baptistic Theologies* 3.2 (2011), 122.

⁷³ Ammah, "Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies," 10-11.

Repercussions of Inhospitable Behaviour

It is believed that wickedness to animals and plants can bring misfortune to people.⁷⁴ A woman who was alleged to have hit a goat in a gestation period, maiming the hind legs gave birth to three daughters crippled. An oracle is said to have attested to the act.⁷⁵ In another example, a woman experiences mental illness during full moon. It is said that the grandfather slashed a madman to death with a cutlass at night when it was full moon, because the madman used to make noise at night disturbing the community. After the death of the grandfather the son became mad, followed by his grandchild and now, this woman. The illness is being passed on due to their grandfather's ruthless and cruel action.⁷⁶

The Consequence of Hospitality Today

The blissful consequences of hospitality of health, smiles, joy, happiness, and peace have resulted in pain, sorrow, regret, and death for some who give to hospitality. The haste in trying to attend to visitors as seen in Abraham's story and as described among the Ewe has disappeared due to ungrateful human attitude. Westermann enlightens on Abraham:

... the invitation, the acceptance, the entertainment is an element of early civilization whose proper meaning is for the most part misunderstood. We understand civilization primarily in relation to objects (products of civilization); early civilization looks to people; civilization unfolds itself in human relationship. Secondly, hospitality in modern culture is practiced by and large within a chosen circle, whereas it is available in Gen. 18 to whomever needs it. The strangers are invited (see also Lk. 24:29) because they are weary from their journey, hungry and thirsty, and need Abraham's hospitality. So Abraham is completely at their service; hence his availability, haste, and concern.

⁷⁴ It is believed that wickedness to animals, plants and the vulnerable in society rewards the perpetrator with a similar effect. See Godson Ahorator, "Exploring the Intersection of Religion, Health and Disability in the Ghanaian Experience," *GJRT vol. 6*, (2016), 110-111.

⁷⁵ Ahorator, "Exploring the Intersection of Religion," 110.

⁷⁶ Ahorator, "Exploring the Intersection of Religion," 110.

This too is the context in which one is to understand Abraham's bowing down before the three men. Such a mark of honour is something quite outside our understanding of the situation. Abraham does not know who the strangers are, but he cannot and will not exclude the possibility that they are worthy of honour. One who comes as a stranger is honoured because a dignity may be his without there being need of any external sign thereof.⁷⁷

Today, it is pride, insensitivity, greed, selfishness, and 'who you know' that characterize human life and contribute to inhospitality. Without fear, in the spirit of hospitality, Abraham received three strong men, who were passing through in the heat of the sun; people, he did not know into his house.⁷⁸ He took them as ordinary men who happened to come by his way and he offered them his best hospitality.⁷⁹ The goodwill of Abraham led to a turnaround in his life and he gained happiness, joy, peace that contributed to his health and consequent long life. Such similar hospitality was heavily rewarded. First, for the widow of Zarephath, who at the command of Yhwh, Elijah became her guest and because she consented to Yhwh's command, the jar of oil never dried out of oil and the kerg of flour never run empty and above all, life was restored to her dead son (1 Kgs 17:7-24). Secondly, Elisha was accepted as a man of God and was shown hospitality by the couple; and because of their hospitality, they gave birth to a son and received him back to life after he died (2 Kgs 4:8-37).

It is unfortunate that the spirit that was in Abraham, the widow of Zarephath and the couple in Elisha's story no longer exist; and the generosity that came out of the hospitality to the angels, Elijah and Elisha are non-existent because human beings today do not allow themselves to be transformed by God as those holy men and women.⁸⁰ Today, both the giver and the receiver are corrupt and depraved. The examples given below are the outcome of conducted research, which involves interviews, observations,

⁷⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 277-278.

⁷⁸ Alter, *Genesis. Translation and Commentary*, 77.

⁷⁹ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 276.

⁸⁰ See Slavcheva's exposition on how human beings must understand and transform themselves in the image and likeness of God. Slavcheva, "Human Rights, Dignity and Freedom," 118.

investigations and interactions within the community on why “Ghanaian hospitality” is eluding Ghanaians.

Borrowers have become irresponsible and show signs of ingratitude. This is evident in the care they give to the borrowed items: they are either not returned, confiscated, or if damaged, they are returned without repairs. Sometimes, the borrowers ask the owners to come for their items themselves. When the owners questioned these attitudes, then tempers flare up. These borrowers lack deliberate conscience. Today, many people decide to rent chairs, tables, mattresses, and canopies for money; so that they can be replaced if they get spoilt. Some people even attached conditions that are binding on borrowers, just to make them responsible.

The love of money has made community members not to be generous to give the usual help that they used to offer to a neighbour in terms of donating canopy, chairs, mattresses, plates, cups and tables. Everything must be paid for today, only few people will give for free.

There is lack of trust in the community. There is fear in giving food to a neighbour’s child because one may be accused of poisoning the child. Yes, the fact cannot be denied because it is possible. Formerly, it is normal for parents to keep their child or children with their neighbours until they returned, but it is not easily done today.

Begging on the street has become an easy way of making money:⁸¹

- a. Some people faked to be crippled and sit on the ground asking for money.
- b. People without disability shelter the blind and the crippled in their homes and make money out of them. They bring them early in the morning unto the street and come for them in the evening. They give them room for the night, feed them and cloth them. They take any money they make during the day from them.
- c. It is interesting to see a fully grown man or woman leading or wheeling a blind or a cripple around begging for money. Such a person can work and look after the blind or the cripple but prefers to lead the blind or the cripple to beg.

⁸¹ Ammah, “Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies,” 9, 11; See Begging as Work: a study of people with mobility difficulties, Kassah, 2005 at www.tandfonline.com accessed 1st July 2020; see also www.emerald.com accessed 1st July 2020.

Now, such wheelers do not go to school or learnt any trade and may become liability for the society in the future.

- d. Some “sound” human beings just decided to beg out of laziness because it is the easiest way to make money. They can work but they just decided to go begging.

The sudden surge of armed robbery in our society has limited how far one can be of help in public. Abraham will think twice today before inviting three strong unknown men into his house. There is fear to open one’s door for a guest to sleep overnight.

Some people who benefited from hospitality, return evil for good. The item of generosity from hospitality is used by the recipient to acquire the fortune of the giver. A mother has a daughter who is a teacher. She asked her for ₵5.00, which the daughter readily gave, and the mother took it to the fetish priest to perform ritual so that she will become the beneficiary of the daughter’s fortune.⁸² She succeeded in her evil deeds for so many months. Whenever the daughter received her salary at the end of the month, she did not know what she used the money for, until she shared her unfortunate plight with her friend who with other friends later put it into prayers. They prayed and fasted with her for some months. One day, at their prayer meeting the mother came in running and screaming into the church where they were praying, like someone being beaten all over, only to confess that she was responsible for her daughter’s plight.

There are generous people who are labelled as those who have and people flock to them for help, which at times become embarrassing especially, when they truly do not have to give to them. They are termed wicked, if they are unable to offer. Some took those titles during a generous contribution made in church or within the community. Hospitality has created enemies as people become jealous of those who give and make them their targets.

Some people are just mean and stingy and use today’s evil outcome of hospitality as cover up not to be hospitable. This is bad and these people need a change of heart. There are also others who think one must be rich to give; forgetting that the poor, out of his or her valuable, gives as a sign of goodwill.⁸³

⁸² This does not refer to the African Traditional Priests. The fetish priests are the bad ones who indulge in evil deeds and are demonic.

⁸³ Kuada and Chachah, *Ghana. Understanding the People and their Culture*, 76.

Conclusion

Every human being has elements of the divine. To entertain a fellow human being is to entertain God, the source of abundant life.⁸⁴ Good friendship, good cheers and smiles, feeling secure to welcome others, and to render service to others are factors that enhance health and guarantee life. Abraham entertained his guest unconditionally; it was wholeheartedly done, in what can be described as a ready liberality within an obliging manner of kindness. Abraham expressed his piety in hospitality and entertained divine beings (Heb 13:2). The effect was that he received a gift which was a fulfilment of a promise made long ago.⁸⁵ Through acts of hospitality, Paul and Barnabas were taken as gods (Acts 14:11; 28:1-6).

Today, people dread to help others for fear of being targeted by evil people. Some will not aid persons with disability, thinking they were cursed.⁸⁶ Others just abhor them because of their physical or mental conditions.⁸⁷ One who receives another human being with a warm heart and shows that person kindness is nearer to the divine (Matt 25:40).⁸⁸ A good use of wealth is a blessing to the benefactor and to the beneficiaries. The smiles, the cheers, the self-fulfilment that results from a hospitable act is the beauty of friendship that is established through generosity.⁸⁹ Friendship builds trust, dependability, and security among community members.

It is sad to see children loitering around and people looking on unconcerned. It was the case in Anlo-Ewe traditional communities that a child found loitering around was taken into custody and the custodian will look for the parents. If the parents cannot be found, then the child will be sent to the chief, who will authorize the *Gong Gong Beater* to publicly announce for the parents to come for their child.⁹⁰ There are poor and needy people among us and people are not touched. Some people seem to blame the inability to be hospitable on how people react evilly to hospitality,

⁸⁴ Human beings are godly people. Whatever is done, it is done in the name of God and for a godly person; and that is the desire of God and He rewards every good deed accordingly. Ammah, "Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies," 6.

⁸⁵ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 275.

⁸⁶ Ahorator, "Exploring the Intersection of Religion," 112.

⁸⁷ Ahorator, "Exploring the Intersection of Religion," 113.

⁸⁸ Bowie, "The Book of Genesis," 616- 617.

⁸⁹ Kuada and Chachah, *Ghana. Understanding the People and their Culture*, 76.

⁹⁰ The *Gong Gong Beater* is the person who announces any event in the village. The sound "gong," "gong" comes from the hitting of the metallic instrument with the rod.

it is a lean way for some to be stingy. Others blame their inability to be hospitable on urbanization and development, but urbanization has its own form of hospitality. There are no obstacles to prevent anyone anywhere from practicing hospitality. The following are some recommendations:

1. The hospitality of giving a seat, water, food, a place to rest, and even the culture of greetings must be encouraged by parents to our contemporary Ghanaians. People pass by without greeting or if someone greets them, they do not respond. It is the self-centeredness that has taken hold of us that we lost consciousness of the presence of a neighbour. We need to go back and take our abandoned and forgotten value.
2. Greed and jealousy that make people to cheat, steal, and arrogantly incite evil against hospitable people should be stopped. Integrity must be key in relating with others. We must develop trust and present ourselves to be trusted, to be one another's keeper. The lazy ones who pretend to be handicapped and dupe people are indeed to desist from that so that the genuine people are attended to and not neglected.
3. People should not be hospitable with the view of receiving rewards. Abraham did what he has to do without expecting reward. Jesus said, when you have done everything just say, we have just done what we were supposed to do (Luke 17:10). Hospitality must be genuine. The seven-corporal works of mercy are the Christian obligation of charity (Matt 25:31-46). In the Bible, the Israelites were obliged to be hospitable and so also, Muslims are obliged to give alms to the needy.

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**Intragender Relationship of the Traditional Ilorin
Women in Domestic Front: Lessons for Modern
Muslim Women**

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Abstract

The traditional Ilorin society was renowned for peaceful coexistence among its people and decorum in the family domain. Families made Islamic principles their watchwords and the genders collaborated to ensure that marital obligations were efficiently performed. This paper focuses on the pattern of family management displayed by traditional Ilorin women to facilitate peaceful cohabitation and efficient performance, as wives and mothers. The study is historical and ethnographic, dwelling on the system's pattern of orientation and integration of new wives, division of domestic chores, collaborative nurturing of children, fraternity system and disciplinary measures. The major instruments for data collection are interview, observation, documented studies and Islamic texts. The study revealed religious faithfulness as their inspiration and Islamic ethics of gentility, mutual support, collaboration among women cohered to channel the family course. These were borne out of sincere love and unity which translated into peace and harmony in the home and the society. The paper

submits that if modern women can embrace this Islamic interactive etiquette and hold the marital duties in high esteem, as done by the traditional Ilorin women, there will be family cohesion, meaningful progress in the society.

Keywords

Traditional Women, Home Management, Fraternity, Islamic Ethics, Ilorin.

Introduction

Islamic scholarship among the traditional Ilorin dated back to 1830 when the town became an Emirate under the Sokoto Caliphate.¹ This was brought about by an itinerant Islamic scholar, Shaykh Salih Ibn Ahmad Junta (popularly called Alimi), and his *Jamā'a* along with other Muslim settlers he met on his arrival in 1816.² Shaykh Alimi's vast knowledge of Islamic sciences and his missionary ingenuity drew more scholars of Islam and other people from different heterogeneous backgrounds to the town, either to teach, learn, seek spiritual assistance or guidance. Within a very short time, the Muslim (*jamā'a*) became populous, with Islam becoming the only unifying factor which facilitated socialization and integration among the people. Accordingly, Islamic principles submerged the diverse ethno-cultural practices of the heterogeneous groups. Since then, Islamic law governed every aspect of the Ilorin emirate life.³

The traditional Ilorin society was acclaimed to be pure and simple with no accessories.⁴ The people, regardless of their gender, were enthusiastic to live in accordance with the principles of Islam. Virtues like piety, simplicity, kindness, love, co-operation, patience, endurance, devotion and commitment, among others, permeated the communal life. These dispositions created healthy social interactions and orderliness in the home and the larger society. Each gender worked separately to complement one another in making a whole. The male gender (grandfather, father, uncle, son,

¹ S. J. Hogben, *An Introduction to the History of Islamic States of Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1967), 154-155.

² L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin: The Journey So Far* (Ilorin: Atoto Press, 1994), 50-52.

³ L. A. K. Jimoh, 9.

⁴ L. A. K. Jimoh, 9; T. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba 1841-1908* (London: Longman, 1978), 10. The interviewees equally confirmed this religious disposition.

and grandson) usually worked jointly for the maintenance of the family. They engaged in occupations such as, farming, hunting, blacksmithing, weaving of cloth, Arabic and Islamic scholarship.⁵ In line with the Islamic marital law, which obligated the husband to maintain his family,⁶ this maintenance duty was discharged by the eldest male member in the family who controlled the joint family enterprise.⁷ As the family head, he also provided guidance and mentorship with the support of other elderly people in the family. On the other hand, the family female members consisting of grandmothers, mothers, wives, daughters and other female relations jointly oversaw the home front, in adherence to Islamic duties of wifehood and motherhood.⁸ Though, some of them engaged in occupations like dyeing, pottery, petty trading among others,⁹ these did not in any way hinder their domestic duties.

According to Hermon- Hodge,¹⁰ marriage was usually a family affair in its preparation, execution, and sustenance. Most times, marriage partners were within the extended family or friends, purposely to solidify kinship or friendship as the case might be. Hence, each of the in-laws committed much to sustain the union.¹¹ Though, husband and wife interaction was minimal, it was very cordial and peaceful. The husband wielded so much power on his wife and she dared not contest anything, in a bid to comply with the Islamic rulings on total submissiveness to the husband. Hence, a wife always accorded her husband high honour and in all circumstances, even at the expense of her own comfort. Polygyny was the norm in family formation, while people lived in the extended family compound of several husbands and wives of multiple generations (parents, grandparents and great

⁵ H. B. Hermon-Hodgem, *-Gazetteer of Ilorin Province* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1921), 232.

⁶ A. Al-Jaziriy, *Kitābul-Fiqh 'alā Madhāhibil Arba'ah Vol.4* (Dārul Irshād Liltibā'ah wan-Nashr), 148, 223-224, 489-503.

⁷ The information was given by Justice Salihu Olohuntoyin Muhammed (Retired Grand Kadi, Kwara State Shariah Court of Appeal, Ilorin); Yinusa Abdulkareem (Magaji, Ile Mejidadi, Okeagbede, Ilorin); Abdullahi Babatunde (Retired administrator, Adabata, Ilorin), and Abubakar Ishola (Businessman, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin), interview by author December 06, 2019, among others.

⁸ M. A. Al-Hashimi, *The Ideal Muslimah: The True Islamic Personality of the Muslim Woman as defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab (Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, 1998), 215-230.

⁹ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, 276-278, 280-282.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 279-280.

¹¹ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin), Salamatu Amosa (Aged woman, Oke-kere, Ilorin); Fatmoh Abdullahi (Aged woman, Isale Maliki, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, June 10, 2019.

grandparents). Women were housed at the rear of the house while the male folk occupied the front for protection.

The pattern of family management displayed by women in this period was fascinating. There was a perfect hierarchy which facilitated women's interaction and coordination of the family. The wives in the family were headed by the most senior wife (*Iyalé Agba*) who wielded so much power as to control and scold erring or stubborn wives, along with the other senior wives in the extended family compound. In this system, there was adequate respect for seniority and consideration for the junior ones, these enhanced confidence and followership. Their supportive system of felicitating together and sharing burdens on the one hand and their collaborative nurturing of children on the other hand created, in no small measure, family oneness and orderliness. It is this ingenuity of the traditional Ilorin women that this paper hopes to explore for modern women to emulate for peace of the homes and cohesion in the extended family. The paper dwells on the pattern of orientation and integration of a new wife, division of domestic chores, collaborative nurturing of children, supportive system, and disciplinary measures. Lessons drawn from this traditional system are set as model to ameliorate the challenges faced by modern women at home. The study is historical and ethnographic with interview and observation as the major instruments used to source for data. 50 aged respondents consisting of 40 women and 10 men, were interviewed together with 50 middle-age and young women and men among the indigenes. Due to space constraint, few people are referenced to represent the interviewees, who were selected from different quarters of the town.

Orientation and Integration of a New Wife

In the traditional Ilorin tradition, after the marriage ceremony, the new bride would be taken to her husband's family, and she would be handed over to the *Magaji* (head of the family). The *Magaji* would in turn hand her over to the most senior wife (*Iyalé*). Other wives of family would welcome her with songs, prayers, and felicitations. The senior (*Iyalé*) would hand her over to her immediate co-wife (if her husband had another wife) or a designate wife (*Iyalé iyawo*) in the family for hosting (*Gbigba iyawo*).¹² For two weeks, the (*Iyalé*) would give the new bride some

¹² The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Ummulkhair Atanda (Aged

of her wears to dress with, attending to her needs such as feeding, bathing, *etc.* as well as keeping her company. Thereafter, the new bride and her host *Iyalé* would together engage in communal service of sweeping the family compound and fetching water for all the wives in the compound. This service ushered her into the family. A critical look at this aspect of the orientation of the new wife shows that the said communal service was tedious and laborious for the new bride.

As part of the orientation and integration of the new bride, some of the senior (*Iyalé*) would preside over a meeting among the wives in the compound, where the new bride would be guided and instructed on names to call her seniors and the children in the compound, e.g., *Iyami* (My Mother) or *Iyami Kaa* (My Mother in the interior), *Iyami Elepo* (My Mother that sells palm oil) as the case may be, for elderly wives. She was equally not expected to call all the children by name, even if the child is few months old when she joined the family. So, nicknames like, (*Ibadiaran*) 'One with buttocks suit for velvet clothing', (*Opelenge*) 'The Slim Lady', (*Ayiluko*) Fat Lady, (*Iyako*) 'My Mother-in-law', *etc.* are the female children, and (*Omokewu*) Qur'an Student, (*Okomi*) My Husband, (*Ajiwokewu*) One who wakes up to recites the Qur'an, (*Alfa*) The Cleric, (*Babaokomi*). My Father-in-Law, are used for the male children.¹³ However, she was either addressed as (*Iyawo*) wife or by her real name. She is expected to honour and serve every member of the family including the extended ones. Even, when the female children got married, she was still expected to serve them, particularly during ceremonies.¹⁴ Interestingly, her humility and diligence attracted respect and honour from all and sundry. Both the old and the young would surround her with love and care.

Division of Domestic Chores

The domestic activities were evenly shared among every family female member. In this respect, the women partake in domestic chores as stakeholders in the overall well-being of the family. In the

woman, Gaa Saka, Ilorin); Abebi Amosa (Aged woman, Kuntu, Ilorin); Ummulkhair Abdullahi (Aged woman, Isale Maliki, Ilorin) interview by author, February 10, 2020.

¹³ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin).

¹⁴ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Joko Obalowu (Aged woman, Karuma, Ilorin); Habiba Kadiri (Aged woman, Adifa, Ilorin); Fatimoh Amuda (Aged woman, Oja-Gboro, Ilorin); *etc.* interview by author, June 16, 2019.

cooking for instance, most families shared the task in the following: the youngest wife or wives fetched firewood and set fire for cooking. They were equally responsible for the grinding of pepper, grains, or cassava/yam flour (*elubo*) as the case might be. The next senior wives were saddled with the preparation of dishes such as yam flour meal (*amala*), maize flour meal (*tuwo*), pounded yam (*iyam*), etc. Due to the intricacies of this chores, some wives were saddled with the direct preparation, while others monitored the processes to ensure best output. The most senior wife sorted out vegetables like (*eku, efo*, etc.), cooked them along with stew and dishes them out. The distribution of chores was not only intended for grooming of the junior wives, but to ensure that the food was properly prepared, more importantly in a bid to please their husband. Based on the respect commanded by the most senior wife (through her fairness) she was in charge of the distribution of food, meat or fish that without any objection from other wives.

In honour of the husbands as the heads, their shares were usually the first to be dished and the youngest served them. The children were then called upon to pick theirs. The co-wives ate together in the same plate, but the most senior wife (*Iyalé*) set the pace, while others followed. At times, the senior wife shared the meat/fish or edible animal skin or hide (*panmo*) (if available) or picked her own and others followed suit according to seniority. The female children ate together as the male also did. The used plates were washed by the youngest wives along with the elderly female children as a way of grooming them as well.¹⁵ In other instances, as the younger wives were busy with house chores, the seniors looked after their toddlers as a duty. Other domestic chores of cleaning the compounds and washing of the dresses were also done by the younger wives and the girls.

Collaborative Nurturing of Children

As expounded in both the Qur'an and the Hadith that the woman has the primary obligation of conceiving, nurturing and serving as model for the younger ones;¹⁶ the activities of women of this period captured these duties efficiently. As was their tradition, they collaborated in ensuring that both the baby and mother received

¹⁵ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin)

¹⁶ Hinna Mirza Upal, "A Celebration of Mothering in the Qur'an," *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, vol. 7, no. 1, 87-96.

care. The experienced women offered useful hints and herbs to overcome pregnancy inconveniences. Upon delivery, these women would also bath the new mother and her baby in a special way to quicken her recovery and for the baby to have a healthy growth.¹⁷ Her (*Iyalé*) or designate senior would be sleeping with her in order to give needful attention to the baby and guide the mother on the childcare procedures. This she would do for a week, while the mother eventually continued with the baby care.

Thereafter, senior women monitored the child healthy development. They ensured that the child was well breastfed with words of encouragement to the mother. Every male child was breastfed for four years and the female three years. More time was allotted for the male child to make him intuitively kind when he came of age. Little time was given the female child who was generally considered to be naturally merciful. In addition, the child would be associated with a stepmother who will be responsible for him or her, and not the direct mother. This system made every woman a stakeholder in children nurturing and they did it volitionally such that hardly would a child grow up to identify his/her biological mother.¹⁸

Character building, as ordained in Islam,¹⁹ was top-most in the mind of every Ilorin adult, regardless of gender in the traditional period. The whole society conscientiously partook in ensuring that young children were well groomed to develop balanced personality and act wisely and judiciously anytime, everywhere and with anybody. The elderly women had the obligation of inculcating the culture of civility and respect in all and sundry. This, they did with passion by dedicating their time to provide counselling as they mentored their wards. More attention was given to female children as a way of equipping them for future engagements. More so, a daughter was seen as an ambassador of her family, hence, her behaviour was considered to be a reflection of her family's. Her blameworthy traits were constantly condemned, while the praiseworthy ones were extolled. She was

¹⁷ A. I. Jawondo, "Traditional Education in Ilorin Emirate," in *Ilorin Centre of Learning*, ed. S. A. Jimoh (Ilorin: JIMSON Publishers, N.D.), 22.

¹⁸ Halimat Yusuf (Retired administrator and former commissioner, Kwara State, Ile Magaji, Oke Suna, Ilorin); Ayinke Saka (former commissioner, Kwara State, Okeagbede, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, June 12, 2019

¹⁹ Aisha Utz, *Psychology from the Islamic Perspective* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2011), 99-114.

mentored on that which would make her a good wife and a caring mother, including peaceful coexistence in the society.²⁰

Inculcation of Islamic education was handled with all seriousness by traditional Ilorin women. They complemented the efforts of their male folk by encouraging or reporting erring children for discipline. Their religious adherence made the children to naturally embrace the Islamic way as a norm. They taught the fear of God and the need to always act righteous in all circumstances and.²¹

Fraternity System

The fraternity system practiced by the traditional Ilorin women incorporates friendship and mutual support to each other. This was evident in their manner of welcoming a new wife into the family (*Iyawo gbigba*). Subsequently, the senior wives willingly guided the junior wives on the basic ethics of family socialization. Similar gesture was also extended to a new wife when she gave birth and her gentle integration into motherhood. For days after birth, for instance, the new mother enjoyed communal assistance in her cooking, fetching of water, washing and other house-keeping activities. The sharing of domestic chores among all categories of women in the family and collaborative nurturing of children were a demonstration of sisterhood. They exhorted one another on religious adherence and discouraged what was evil as commanded in Qur'an 3:110, "Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah..." Also, they acted in accordance with Qur'an 4:34 and the following Prophetic submissions,

When God's Messenger was asked which woman was best. He replied, "The one who pleases (her husband) when he looks at her, obeys him when he gives a command, and does not go against his wishes regarding her person or property by doing anything of which he disapproves."²²

²⁰ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Ilorin Women and Family Life in Retrospect: Implications for the Modern Women," in *Ilorin Emirate in Periscope (A Compendium of Articles)* vol. 1. ed. Abdulaheem H.I. et al. (Ilorin: Ilorin Descendant Progressive Union, 2015), 52-54.

²¹ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Ilorin Women and Family Life..."

²² Mishkat al-Masabih 3272, SUNNAH.COM, accessed, June 22, 2022, <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:3272>.

When a woman observes the five times daily prayers (Ṣalawāt), fasts during Ramaḍān, preserves her chastity and obeys her husband, she may enter by any of the gates of paradise she wishes.²³

Traditional Ilorin women exhibited submissiveness and faithfulness as expected of every Muslim wife to her husband. They even attributed these as determinant factors for Allah's blessing on the children. They constantly admonished one another on the need to overlook the inadequacies of their husbands. In the case of dispute with husband, other women, particularly the senior ones, would persuade the aggrieved wife to exercise patience and endure for peace to reign and for her children to be upright.²⁴ They used the following aphorism to underpin this positive behaviour, 'a wife who endures her husband would have blessed children' ("*Obirin toba gba ifa fun oko re ni omọ re ma ni alubarika*"). In the extreme cases of marital discord, the mother-in-law intervened and called her son to order or reported him to the *Magaji* for rebuke. In another instance, the senior women would intercede by pleading with the husband to exhibit positive change, even when they knew he was at fault.²⁵

The traditional Ilorin women were noted for their high level of sharing-spirit among themselves. They rallied round each other during ceremonies by active participation and exchange of gifts to ameliorate financial burden.²⁶ At the challenging times, they were readily available to commiserate. They kept each other company with positive expressions, prayers, cash, provisions, etc. to alleviate the grief. A problem of one of them was considered problem of all; they were always on their toes to find solution to it. Sometimes, if a fellow woman detected a problem threatening her colleague, she would not only call attention to it, but join hands in finding solution to it and the victim would accept the gesture with utmost gratitude. This friendly habit changed negative tendencies such as,

²³ Mishkat al-Masabih 3254, SUNNAH.COM, accessed, June 22, 2022, <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:3254>.

²⁴ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Joko Obalowu (Aged woman, Karuma, Ilorin); Habiba Kadiri (Aged woman, Adifa, Ilorin); Fatimoh Amuda (Aged woman, Oja-Gboro, Ilorin), etc., interview by author, June 16, 2019.

²⁵ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Joko Obalowu (Aged woman, Karuma, Ilorin); Habiba Kadiri (Aged woman, Adifa, Ilorin) ...

²⁶ The information was unanimously given by the interviewees.

envy, gossiping, and rivalry. This culminated into exhibition of sincere love, concerns, and unity in the home and the larger society.

Disciplinary Measures

During this period, disputes were settled by womenfolk among themselves without recourse to the male members of the family. The respect for seniority and the sincerity of the senior wives accounted for peaceful settlement. The (*Iyalé*) would preside over the arbitration panel while other senior wives in the family compound were in attendance. The erring or stubborn wife would be reprimanded based on the gravity of the offence. The uncouth woman-, would learn her lesson in a very hard way, particularly when withdrawal of assistance or her isolation were employed as punishment. The instant effect of these steps helped to nip stubbornness in the bud. Also, no matter the intensity of the disagreement between co-wives, it was forbidden for them to engage in physical combat. When it happened, the erring co-wives would be punished publicly. The punishment was usually so humiliating that, it served as deterrent to stubborn women. Example of this was bathing with ashes (*eru kunkun*) for the culprits. Both women would be bathed with wet ashes. They would be made to pound (*yangi*) pieces of rock or water inside mortal (*odo*). As both pounded together, they spat on each other continuously without allowing them to clean the saliva. People would watch them and sing reprimanding songs like: ‘jealous wives fought and fell into the well, shame on them (“*ojowu ja, oko kanga, alaode*”).²⁷ This type of disciplinary measure is not only demeaning to womanhood, but also anti-Islam, no matter its good intent. According to Shobalaje and Rukayatu, this punishment is seldomly used and meant to scare co-wives from unhealthy rivalry and violence which destroy family harmony.²⁸ The public disgrace and

Generally, children in the family regardless of their mothers enjoyed a good relationship. They were socialized to respect themselves; the junior ones addressed their senior ones with respect, while the latter were gentle on their junior ones. Disagreements between the junior children were settled by the

²⁷ Belawu Olomoda (Aged woman, Omoda, Ilorin); Sifau Kadiri (Aged woman, Okelele, Ilorin); Fatmoh Kuranga (Aged woman, Adabata, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, June 16, 2019.

²⁸ Shobalaje Olohunlalaro ((Aged woman, Alore, Ilorin); Rukayatu Jimoh (Aged woman, Okelele, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, March 06, 2024.

senior ones or any woman present. However, if the quarrel became serious, or it was between the grown-up children, the mediation was the duty of the elderly women. Children were taught to relate with respect. As the junior ones honoured the senior ones, so also were the seniors expected to treat juniors with kindness. In cases of disagreements, children were expected to report rather than seek vengeance.²⁹ This social pattern led to orderliness and peaceful cohabitation in the home.

Men's Roles in Family Maintenance and Childcare

In this period, the male gender laid a solid foundation for family welfare, which the female folks complement as described in the earlier sub-sections. The male family members of all categories (grandfather, father, uncle, cousin, brother, son, etc.) of the households in a compound were headed by the (*Magāji*) who was followed, in rank, by the heads of households that constituted (*Awon Bale*). The (*Magāji*) has the final say on any matter concerning the entire family and he or the next most senior male could discipline any erring member of the family regardless of the gender.³⁰ As earlier mentioned, the eldest woman in the family (*Iyalé Agba*) mediates between the females but there used to be referral of nutty cases, particularly among young couples, to the overall head of the family. Thus, men respect women's space and did not usually interfere except on rare cases of dispute.

The individual heads of households (*Awon Bale*) hold forth for the (*Magāji*) in supervising the affairs of the womenfolk and the children. In line with Islamic prescription, which obligates husbands to maintain their families, as heads and maintainer of the family, primordial Ilorin men displayed meticulousness in managing their women and children. They provided physical, psychological, financial, and social supports, which fostered peace, love, and togetherness in family life as well as men's control of the familial. The male gender, like their female counterparts, worked together in this endeavor and in hierarchical order. They did not willfully

²⁹ Belawu Olomoda (Aged woman, Omoda, Ilorin); Sifau Kadiri (Aged woman, Okelele, Ilorin),

³⁰ Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); Khalid Bello Ishola (Islamic scholar and Imam, Kwara State University Teaching Hospital, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, March 10, 2024.

oppress their women. Hence, it is a popular adage among the Ilorin people that 'Ilorin men don't divorce their wives.'³¹

The extended family head (*Magāji*), followed by other in order of seniority, oversaw the welfare of the members. It was when a young man got married that he had a room of his own and his wife was housed in the women's section along with other women. The women's apartment was usually at the back of the house. This was to protect them against any intruder. Primordial Ilorin men's concern for the welfare and safety of women and children was marvelous. They were very attentive, particularly in the night, to ensure that women and children sleep calmly and comfortably; they inspected the doors to ensure that they were properly closed. Indeed, in most cases, they were the last to sleep at night and the first to wake up in the morning. Their attitude to the safety of their family members was such that they were very swift to react to any happening and promptly address various situations, including the cries of babies or unusual movements at night. For different health issues, they had various home remedies or antidotes such as locally made balm (*erọ*) and herbal drinks (i.e. *agbo tutu*, *ap'oro* and *ap'arun*), which were used to treat or suppress the discomforts in women and their children. When occasion demanded, they recited relevant portions of the Qur'an to suppress any frightful happenings.³²

Furthermore, the family head or his designate made provision for the material needs of the family, including food items and other condiments that the womenfolk prepared for its members. Of course, women used to give necessary support, but this was not by compulsion. Thus, the men were caretakers of their wives and, in appreciation of women's strenuous domestic works, especially during the Ramaḍān, they presented new clothes or other gifts items particularly during the (*idul fītr*) festival to mark the end of Ramaḍān fast. They equally rendered both financial and moral supports during other ceremonial events in the wives' families. This was to relieve their wives of the financial burdens usually associated with such ceremonies. It was in view of that, the (*Magāji*)

³¹ Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); ...

³² Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); ³² Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired Principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); Fadhilat Ibrahim (Teacher, Government Girls Day Secondary School, Pakata, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

and other senior men commanded high respect from all and sundry in the family.³³

Intragender Relationships in Modern Ilorin Family Life

The narrative of family life in modern Ilorin has drastically taken a different dimension from the traditional system owing to globalization. This has affected many spheres of the family units, thereby creating new challenges in maintaining cordial intra-gender relationship among the females in the running of affairs in the family. The development is consequent upon a new lifestyle characterized by individualism, self-aggrandizement and parental negligence which have replaced the traditional ethos of collectivism, sacrifice, and care, qualities responsible for family stability during the traditional period. These modern trends are discussed below.

Individualism

Individualism is the tendency to act without recourse to the feelings and needs of others in a relationship. This trait is characteristics of modernist approach to family life, whereby people promote self-goals and desires as a way of attaining self-fulfillment. This is contrary to the traditional concept of collectivism. Modern Ilorin women, as a product of modernism, embraced individualism as a way of life as against collectivism which is countered as outdated and repressive.³⁴ They, due to their social status and the wave of the time, see themselves as better off than other family female members who are not educated. In their bids for independence and non-interference, they minimize their interactions with the extended family relations and hate polygyny with passion. Other family female members, especially mother in-laws and co-wives, are viewed with suspicion and considered usurpers and threats to their desires. They often act discourteously to scare family relations, including co-wives, from their husbands. They are indifferent to relations' feelings and challenges; they live

³³ Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); ...

³⁴ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired School Principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); Fadhilat Ibrahim (Teacher, Government Girls Day Secondary School, Pakata, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

in luxury and abundance, for instance, while their mother in-laws and husbands' siblings are in misery.³⁵

The collaborative support system of the traditional Ilorin women is perceived by some modern women as dubious and with intent of infiltration. Some of these women conceive the 'offering aspects' of the group-collectivism (domestic participation, selflessness, and control system) as intrusive and oppressive; and the 'receiving aspects' (mentoring, admonitions, and assistance) as subjugation and barbaric. Hence, they employ service providers for their domestic needs to nullify the collaborative family supports.³⁶ This development has widened the gap between the family female relationships, since actions beget reactions. The intra-gender rapport among modern Ilorin women, and their counterparts in the country, is characterized by suspicion, hatred, envy, gossips as well as unending bickering and tussles between wives, mother-laws and co-wives among others.³⁷ These happenings hindered their solidarity effort in combating challenges like sickness, barrenness, male abuse, etc.; and in their bid for solutions from outsiders, they become prey to evil-minded men in particular.³⁸

Self-aggrandizement

This is a deliberate behaviour to draw attention to self-importance without recourse to humility and affability preached by religions. More Ilorin women in modern time prosper in their chosen endeavours like their counterparts in other parts of the country. This development is asserted to be responsible for their inadvertent self-aggrandizement. Some of these women forcefully resist any pressure or authority that constitutes obstacles to their

³⁵ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired Principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); Fadhilat Ibrahim (Teacher, Government Girls Day Secondary School, Pakata, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020; Falilat Obalowu (Retired principal and woman leader, Karuma, Ilorin); Ummulkhayr Jimoh (Retired administrator, Alagbado, Sobi, Ilorin); Alhaja Hawwau Ayinke Obalowu (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

³⁶ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...

³⁷ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...; Falore Omiyinka Olutola, "Wife-Mother-in-Law Relationship and Violence among Yoruba Women of Southwestern Nigeria" *American Journal of Sociological Research* 2, no. 2 (2012): 14-16.

³⁸ Respondents unanimously supplied this information and gave instances of how spiritual Alfas or/and herbalists extort modern women or even impregnate them in the name of solving their problems of barrenness and husband's oppression among others.

independence and comfort, even if it is enjoined by Allah. They emphasize their rights rather than their duties and display pride, disrespect, and intolerance to near and far relations.³⁹ This disposition is averred to be one of the major factors responsible for incessant divorce cases and single motherhood syndrome in Ilorin.⁴⁰ Similarly, the development has opened modern women to more temptation and molestation with no genuine sympathisers.⁴¹

Parental Negligence

The quest for socio-economic upliftment has formed a major trend in the globalized world of today, thereby resulting in misplacement of priority. This has greatly affected the womenfolk in Ilorin as it affects their counterpart worldwide. In the attempt to combine domestic and professional duties on the one hand and due to the exigencies of the latter on the other hand, they have inadvertently jettisoned their primary duty of child nurturing. They have resorted to daycare, nanny, or housemaid services to replace their mothering obligations.⁴² Consequentially, the children imbibe the culture of their custodians (who are mostly non-Islamic). Besides, the excessive freedom enjoyed by the children due to their mothers' inactiveness, the unguarded use of ICT gadgets, and none availability of elderly family members to guide them, have contributed immensely to the modern children's lackadaisical attitude towards life and religion, and have made them suck into crimes.⁴³ To correct these anomalies, the old adage of 'only a woman bears the burden of pregnancy, but all numerous people carry the burden of nurturing' should be made functional.

Lessons from Traditional System to Right the Wrongs

The traditional Ilorin women brought into perspective the centrality of women in home making as engendered by Islam. Their

³⁹ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin) ...

⁴⁰ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...

⁴¹ Same as reference no. 29.

⁴² Falilat Obalowu (Retired principal and woman leader, Karuma, Ilorin); Bolajoko Ismail (Retired medical officer, Sobi Specialist Hospital Sobi, Ilorin); Aminat Ayinke Hussain (Islamic Scholar, Agbaji, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

⁴³ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Islamic Mothering: A Prophylaxis for Social Vices in Nigeria," *Kwasu Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 3 no.1, (2019): 42-44.

attitudes and manners were influenced by their high sense of moral cum religious qualities of conscientiousness and God consciousness as mandated by Islam. The lessons that can be drawn from the traditional Ilorin women, particularly for modern females regardless of their backgrounds are:

Solidarity

Modern Ilorin women and other societies alike are characterized by segmentally owing to disaffection created by unfounded hostility among them. Rather than join hands to face the challenges destroying their constituency, they fuel domestic crises through isolation, effrontery, and pettiness. To ameliorate these challenges, solidarity which in the traditional setting, was the bedrock of the women's ability to take control of the home in the traditional Ilorin community should be adopted. All forms of discrimination were non-existent as vividly shown in the warm relationship enjoyed by all. This formed the bedrock of confidence, respect, and followership. The domineering status of contemporary women is another major bane of family and societal integration.⁴⁴ Modern women display individualistic tendencies that disintegrate the home through unnecessary and baseless intra-gender discord occasioned by selfish dispositions and materialistic tendencies. To overcome the disintegration bedeviling the society via family discordance, taking a cue from the Ilorin traditional spirit of unity can form the bedrock of peaceful coexistence among mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and co-wives, etc.

The modern women's individualist and monopolist lifestyle predisposes them to stress and frustration, emanating from overworking and misconduct from those working for them. The traditional Ilorin women's collaborative and support system was imperative for modern women to achieve progress in their endeavor. Their collaboration in the domestic chores did not only lessen their burdens but also strengthened their togetherness. The pretentious disposition of modern women's 'lonely peaceful living,' has destructive effects on the society. Therefore, to avert such, the genuine collaboration of sharing happy and sad moments as practiced in the traditional system of family life, will help reduce the harrowing incidents of loneliness, stress, depression, and overreaction, as it was the case with the traditional Ilorin women.

⁴⁴ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...

The afore-mentioned practice if adopted shall usher in prompt interventions to mitigate physical and emotional pains rampant among modern women.

Healthy Relationship

The healthy intra-gender relationship created by Ilorin traditional women through fraternity is exemplary for women of different holds to emulate. Adapting the team spirit exhibited in the collaborative approach to domestic burden by these traditional women will serve as succour to modern women who are mostly public servants, professionals, and business tycoons. The modern women at times find it difficult to combine domestic and occupational demands.⁴⁵ Similarly, a collective disposition to domestic demands as practiced in the past will obviously lighten the worry over modern women's inability to respond to emergency domestic issues owing to occupational exigencies, because some people are always on a standby to intervene. This truism also displays some of the hidden benefits of Islamic polygyny where co-wives can constitute a supportive strength to each other as was the case with traditional Ilorin women.

There is no doubt that continuous increase in the population of unmarried females (because of males' death owing to uprisings and disasters or increase in female/male birth ratio) constitutes a serious social threat. Yet, the unhealthy interaction between co-wives and unjust treatment from husbands cannot be denied in the modern time.⁴⁶ But polygyny becomes the realistic option to get many of the unmarried women married as asserted in the Islamic scholars' discourse on numerous gains embedded in Islamic polygyny.⁴⁷ To actualize these benefits and surmount unjust treatment by husbands, the fraternity relationship of the traditional Ilorin women can be embraced. This will not only foster intra-gender love but will make it impossible for a husband to use the divide and rule method to exploit them; each of the wives will

⁴⁵ Hadi Muhammad Musa, "Women, Work and Home Management: The Dilemma of a Muslim Working Class Woman," *The Journal of the Islamization of Knowledge and Contemporary Issues*, issue vol. 1, no. 1, January (2010/Safar 1431AH): 106-127.

⁴⁶ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Islamic Worldview of Justice and Its Reality among Contemporary Muslim Polygyneous Families in Nigeria," in *Contemporary Muslim Women Issues, Challenges and Best Practices*, ed. Nasir, B. M. et al. (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Persatuan Ulama' Malaysia, 2016), 33-36.

⁴⁷ U. A. Hirschfelder and U. Y. Rahman, *From Monogamy to Polygyny: A Way Through* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2003); A. A. B. Philips, *Polygamy in Islam* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 1998).

stand to defend the other, rather than being used against one another. Each will perceive the other's pains as hers and thus collaborate to fight any form of abuse. Such cooperation will also enable a smooth interaction with in-laws and ameliorate the tension that usually mar modern homes and families.

3. Proper Child Nurturing

It is sacrosanct that the achievement recorded by traditional women in child upbringing and development is a model for modern women. It was founded on the collaborative approach to nurturing, where all categories of women partook and did not discriminate among the children. Their humbleness towards their spouses is equally an attribute to note because children are easily influenced by happenings around them. All these sacrifices, apart from yielding the desired results, earned them rewards from Allah. However, a modern trend where women violently engaged their husbands (in the name of fighting for their rights) in the presence of their children end in awful failure in child rearing. The tension in the home together with the materialistic lifestyle and with no monitoring forces, makes some of these children prey to peer group influences and vices.⁴⁸ The traditional women saw their rights as secondary to their responsibilities, hence their tolerance of the short comings from the husbands all in the bid to bequeath righteousness to the children. This step is necessary for modern women to achieve similar success and avoid turning out children that earn their curses and become the wretched beings in the sight of Allah.

The concerted efforts of the traditional Ilorin women in child nurturing constitute a viable template for modern women in addressing child deviant behaviours and recklessness that characterize youth behaviours in recent time.⁴⁹ Modern women should lead by example through faithfulness to their spouses and inculcating obedience in their children, instead of leaving their affairs in the hands of paid caregivers, who have no stake in the life of the children, so as to save the children from the attributive problems.

⁴⁸ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Girl-Child Upbringing in Islam: Where Contemporary Ilorin Women are Getting it Wrong," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 11, no.2, (2021): 36-39.

⁴⁹ Musa Halima, "Nigeria: Parents and Rising Cases of Social Vices among Youth" 22/4/2016 accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/parents-and-rising-cases-of-social-vices-among-youths.html>.

Conclusion

The foregoing has presented the ways the traditional Ilorin women skilfully maintained peace and order in the home. This fact showed the incontestable centrality of women in the stability of the family and the upright development of progeny. The traditional Ilorin women discharged their marital and motherhood duties with zeal based on piety, patience, endurance, cooperation, generosity, perseverance, and strong family support. This positive attitude culminated into a peaceful and healthy society. Thus, modern women are urged to embrace the practicality of the Islamic etiquettes, as exhibited by the traditional women, in their interactions with other women and in discharging their duties as wives and mothers. This study opines that this template, as old as it may seem, will assist modern women to overcome fears, frustration, and risks that characterize modern style and enhance a better relationship with other women, relations, and colleagues alike, to facilitate cooperation that will make the home a haven for all.