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KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-KUMASI  
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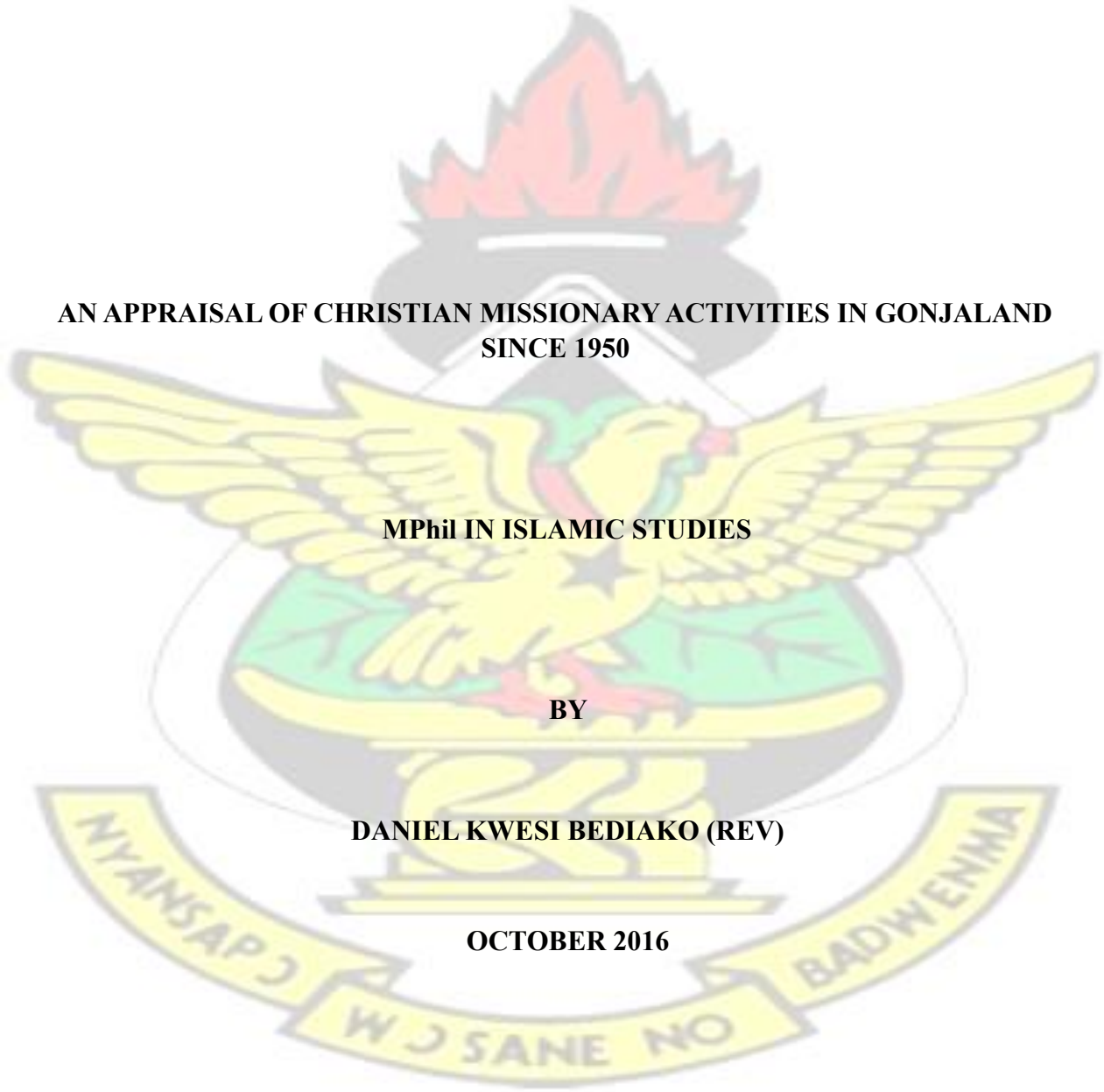
**AN APPRAISAL OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN GONJALAND  
SINCE 1950**

**MPhil IN ISLAMIC STUDIES**

**BY**

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**OCTOBER 2016**



# KNUST



## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is in submission to the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award Master of Philosophy degree. To my best of knowledge it contains no material previously published by another person for an award of a similar or other degree of any University.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Mrs Georgina Akua Bediako and our daughter Nhyira Abena Bediako, who made a lot of sacrifices to help me complete this work.





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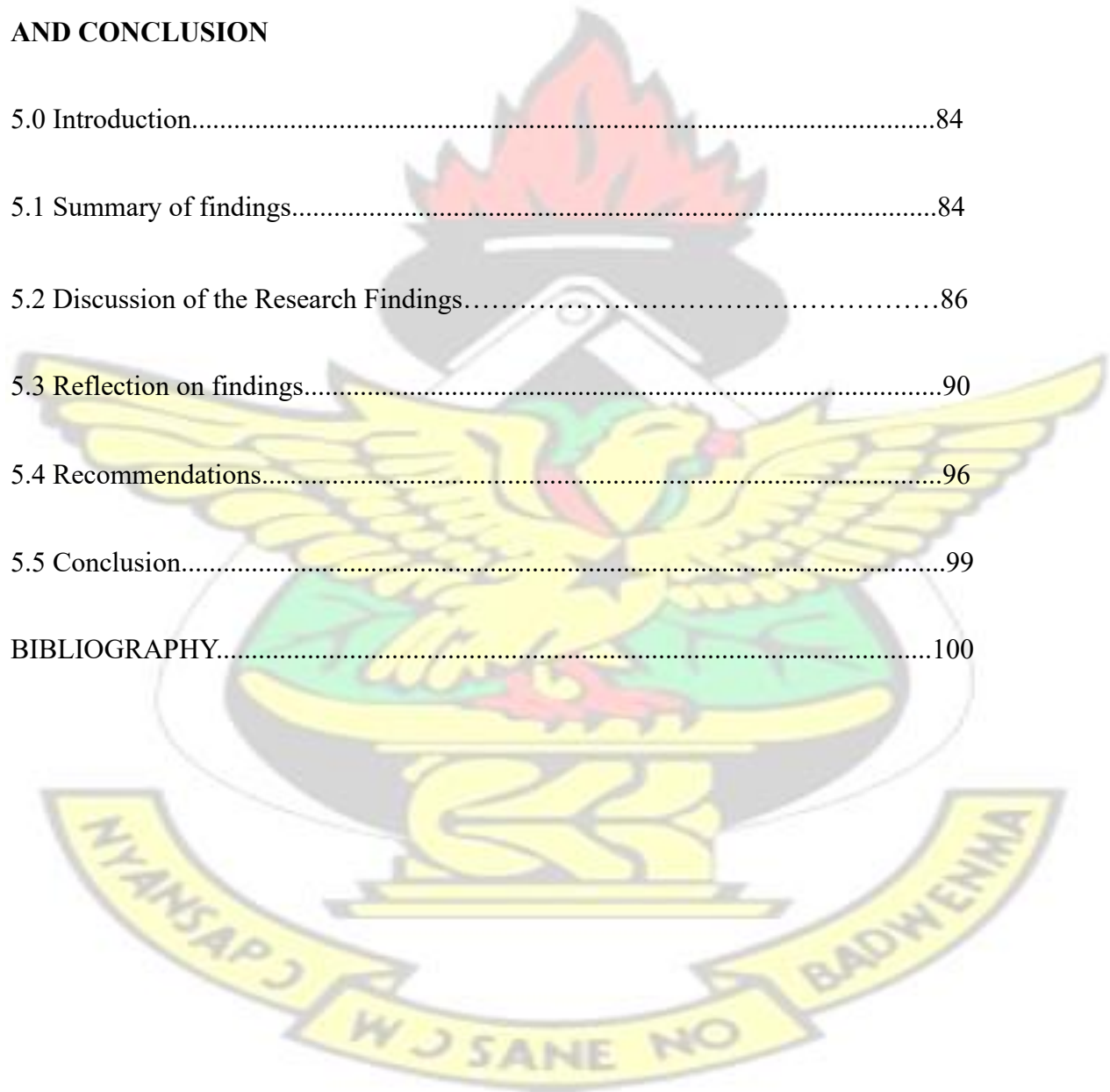
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	African Independent Churches
ASV	American Standard Version
BGL	Bureau of Ghanaian languages
ECG	Evangelical Church of Ghana
GEC	Ghana Evangelism Committee
GILBT	Ghana Institute of Linguistic and Bible Translation
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UCC	University of Cape Coast
WEC	Worldwide Evangelism Crusade

## GONJA WORDS

<i>Ngbanye</i>	Gonjas
<i>Kagbanye</i>	Gonja
<i>Ngbanyato</i>	Gonja language
<i>Agbri</i>	Shrines
<i>Kigbri</i>	Shrine
<i>Bewura</i>	Chiefs
<i>Bewurbi</i>	Sub-chiefs
<i>Ewura</i>	A Chief
<i>Gbipe</i>	Gonja pronunciation of Buipe
<i>Yagbon</i>	Seat of the Overlord of Gonja state
<i>Belejipo</i>	Soothsayers (Plural)
<i>Lejipo</i>	Soothsayer (singular)
<i>Bekpalpo</i>	Synonym of Belejipo
<i>Ekpalpo</i>	Synonym of Lejipo
<i>Echensa</i>	Third day funeral celebration
<i>Echenshunu</i>	Seventh day funeral celebration
<i>Enhenkuduanyon</i>	Twelfth day funeral celebration
<i>Enchendena</i>	Fortieth day funeral celebration
<i>Akalibi</i>	Personal Shrines
<i>Awuba</i>	Gonja funeral dirges
<i>Jabuni</i>	Concoction prepared to drive out Ghosts
<i>Kuntunkurebi</i>	Gonja drums made out of calabash

## ABSTRACT

Religion is a phenomenon or concept that is associated with humanity. Ghanaians were highly religious, even before the arrival of Islam and Christianity. To explore a religion of a tribe or people, there is the need to understand what makes such tribe or people, what informed their present religious state before you plan a strategy to evangelise them. This then necessitates the appraisal of Christian Missionary activities among Gonjas from 1950 to date.

This study seeks to examine who the Gonja people are, and assess whether Christianity has made a significant impact on the Gonja over sixty years of Christian Missionary activities in the area.

The study also evaluates some missionary challenges that might have affected the spread of Christianity among the Gonja. The study also tried to do a comparative study of the impact of the three major religions in the area (Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions). It explored some possible reasons why the Islamic religion has been integrated into the Gonja culture. What was the effect of the colonial directive, which declared the North an Islamic territory on evangelisation of the Gonja tribe? The researcher sought information from across religious boundaries for an objective analysis, of the future of the three main religions in the area.

The researcher found that there is need to adopt strategies adopt for evangelical breakthrough in the Gonja area. This is because the Gonja area is a virgin area for evangelization, to which the church should turn her attention in fulfilment of the Great Commission which is the church's mandate. The researcher recommended some positive steps which should be taken to address the issues raised in this work.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The chapter is the general introduction of the study. It discusses the Aims and Objectives of the study, the relevance of the study, methodology for gathering data, scope of study, envisaged limitation of the study, literature review and organisation of the work.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

This work seeks to examine the impact of Christianity on Gonjaland since 1950 and to appraise it by revising pertinent questions such as: When did Christianity enter Gonjaland, how did Christianity gain access into the study area, what activity of Christianity is being assessed, who; the Gonja or the Missionary? Which aspect of Christian activity? Why the need for Christianity to be assessed in the area of interest.

The study was approached in two ways, Christian Religion in Gonja before 1950, and Christian Religion in Gonja from 1950 to date. An overview of the historical root of Christian religion was explored, especially how Christianity gained roots in the area under study. A brief history of Gonja people was discussed showing some available resources and tourist attractions that abound in the area. A comparative study of Christianity and other faiths would be of importance to this study, to set as a prelude of the assessment of Christianity in the area. The appraisal evaluates the strengths of the Missionaries, what constituted their weaknesses, some limitations that could possibly impede their progress and contribution of the people that created an enabling environment for



effective evangelisation. Questions were asked on how Christianity cooperated with people of other faiths in the area before and from 1950 to date. Because the work is aimed to appraise, the assessment seeks to answer whether the Gonja see Christianity as a religion for all. Secondly, whether Christianity carried out any interventions in the area, what was the motive for starting these interventions, if any, whether these interventions helped the expansion of the Christian faith in the area. And how have these interventions improved the dignity of the people of Gonjaland? What was the encouragement of the early missionaries, especially with the challenge that “before their arrival the people had a popular belief and worship they adhered to, which was popularly known as African Traditional Religion. These, the people in the area still trust, cherish and practice even today, because of its relation with ancestors. To the African, the ancestor is the immediate intermediary to the supreme deity and who they have lived with over the years. Christianity and Islam appear somehow “foreign” to the African and for that matter the Gonja. Because of the slave trade in Salaga, the people had a certain perception of missionaries and received them with some scepticism. So the question in the mind of the people was how is this different between the colonialists and the carriers of the Gospel? The colonialists came with the pretence of loving or caring, and ended up capturing the strong men of our people into slavery”<sup>1</sup>.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

A study of the factors that hinder the effective propagation of the Gospel in the East Gonja District (Salaga), revealed that the Gonja people perceived the Christian religion to be for the elite class

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Kwesi Bediako, *Long Essay topic, May 2011. P.1*



and not Gonja commoners, according to the Damongowura<sup>2</sup>. Besides, some of the churches were started by workers who were church members from the Southern parts of Ghana and were posted to Gonjaland to work. They had no time for the mission work. The character of such people did not also paint a good picture of the Christian faith. Even though the use of the Southerners did have its strengths, the picture the early characters painted was that Christian faith was for southerners. Besides, a Gonja is born first as a Muslim and could join any religion of their choice in their lifetime, but after the death he or she is a Muslim. Again, Christianity in Gonja area was not contextualised as a religion of the people and this has been so till date, because there are many typical Gonja congregants who will only read the scriptures in English and Twi and also sing in Twi without interpretation in the native language, Gonja. Preaching Christ to them is quite strange and perceived in the abstract. Hence, the absences of Gonja in leadership as ministers/pastors are few especially in the mainline Churches.

In an appraisal of Christianity in the area, the question was asked, has Christianity reached out to the minds of the Gonja? Apart from focusing on the salvation of the soul of the person, how much has the Christian faith helped the society in terms of holistic ministry (Social Services)? The study has examined whether Christianity has promoted an environment that laid a foundation for the social and economic well being of the people. The study area has a large number of influx of our Northern brothers and sisters to the south in search of all types of menial jobs including scrap

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Kwesi Bediako, *Long Essay topic, May 2011. P.50-54* when he has this to say “in my encounter outside the region over the past thirty years as Educationist, I hardly met a Gonja in most conferences I attended.” Furthermore, he alluded that the Islamic religion had made them conservatives and many who practiced it are difficult to witness to. They are not in communities that they can be identified in any of the nine regions with exception of three namely. Northern, Upper West and Brong Ahafo.

collection and head porters (Kayaye), which in itself might have affected the spread of the faith. They are not staying in the area to be reached. Furthermore, when they move to the south, they are not well integrated into Christian community in the south as a result; they renounce their new found faith, since they are not well grounded. About a half or more of these youth involved in these menial jobs hail from the Gonja land. After more than 60years the issue or question is whether Christian mission in Gonjaland has appealed to the heart of the Gonja as a religion of God? Another question is whether proper feasibility study was done before the Missionaries were deplored to Gonjaland. The extent of Christian integration into Gonja culture will also be investigated.

### **1.3 Research Question**

The main question for this study is: to what extent has Christianity influenced the culture and life of Gonjas after 60 years of its presence in the area. Under this big question, the following minor questions will probe the issue in further detail.

- How has the Gonja embraced Christianity as a religion of salvation for all humankind?
- To what extent have Gonjas been able to incorporate Christianity into their way of life?
- What are the critical concerns for new missionaries to the area need to consider for effective mission?

### **1.4 Objective of Study**

The aim of the study is to evaluate Christian Missionary activity in Gonjaland after 60years, of Christian presence. This is intended to give opportunity to Christians to assess their performance in the area over the years, and re-strategise their operations.

- To address the issue of complacency that may engulf Christianity on their activities in the area.
- To credit or challenge Christian activities that might be overlooked over the years.
- More importantly, to give a new sense of direction for Christian missionary activity as far as Gonjaland is concerned.
- Investigate the perception that the Gonja cannot be a Christian; and if he/she becomes a Christian till death he or she is not treated as such.

### **1.5 Relevance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to sensitize and educate people on the realities existing among Gonjaland and their perception about Christianity and to identify and point out critical issues that are worthy of note for the Christian community. Thus, in the wake of packaging their message for evangelism they would be able to address the fear which is growing into an established perception that “a Gonja who becomes a Christian does not die well”. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will help the church to be consciously aware of the realities of the Gonja perception about Christianity. The Gonjaland is a vast mission field that has been unexploited and this work will provide useful information to guide the Church in missions. Scholars of comparative Religion will find this thesis helpful. Last but not least is the wealth of information this work offers on strategies for evangelism.

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

This study centered on Gonjaland, an area with a vast land coverage and cosmopolitan in nature, covering about a tenth of the total landmass of Ghana but very less Christianity especially the indigenes of the land. The thesis will investigate the Gonja belief system and why Christianity has not made much impact on the Gonja after all these attempts by the Christian missionaries to win them into the faith. It will compare the practice of Christian beliefs and Muslims beliefs among the people. The researcher hopes to provide suggestions which explain why the Gonjas would choose a particular religion. The study will make recommendations for the way forward.

## 1.7 Motivation for the study

The motivation of this study is that, the researcher was born and bred at Salaga in the Northern region, and has lived and worked among the Gonjas most of his life, before becoming a reverend minister. A study of some Presbyterian missionaries like Rytz, Peyer, and David Asante, with their stories of how they tried making inroads into the Gonjaland<sup>3</sup> shows that, Christianity had not made a significant impact in Gonjaland without being faulted. This is because, the 2010 Housing and population census shows that Christians in Ghana are around 72 percent and Muslims 17 percent, the Gonja area might be the opposite or “elusive” for an age old perception. That Gonjas who accepted the Christian faith and die, in some cases their funeral is taken over and handed to Muslim Iman to bury and perform the final funeral rite. Examples of such cases are John

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<sup>3</sup> H. J., Keteku *Pioneers Series; The Reverends Theophilus Opoku and David Asante*, Waterville Publishing House, Accra, p8.



Bawa one time ambassador to Russia, Michael Mbema Mahama a senior Presbyter of Ridge congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, David Dare a Ministerial student of

Trinity College who died with his lecturer Natomah in 1984 in an accident on their way to the North for Easter break. Even though the church did the burial and Thanksgiving service, later the family performed another funeral rite the Islamic way. Many other Gonja Christians funerals were treated similarly but their congregations or churches could not do anything because they wanted peace to prevail.

The Gonjaland even though might be less populated, has the largest land area with accommodation for many tribes, with many towns and villages which are unreached with either Christianity or Islam. They mainly adhere to Traditional Religion and sorcery. Nevertheless, because of the agreement the people had with the founder (Sumalia Ndewura Jakpa). The Gonja would prefer associating themselves with Islam, not as worshippers but for the historical attachment to Ndewura Jakpa. The 1986 Church Survey of the Ghana Evangelism Committee recorded fourteen thousand towns and villages or three million unreached Northern and alien people in Northern Ghana, which neither have churches nor even heard of Christ Jesus' name<sup>4</sup>. The survey revealed that Gonja areas were the less evangelised communities. The assessment seeks to evaluate thirty years of the case with the Christian faith in the area. The question to assess is, has Christianity reached the Gonja after three or more decades of intensive Christian evangelisation? Has Christianity reached every community in the Gonjaland? This study seeks answers to this question and other related questions.

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<sup>4</sup> National Church Survey, *facing the unfinished task of the church in Ghana* update 1993 Towards 2000 by Ghana Evangelism Committee



### **1.8 Delimitations of the study**

The delimitation of this study is the fact that the Gonja land is a widely spread area with poor road network, hence movement from one community to another is a great challenge. Reaching out to some of the areas where the core information could be retrieved was not easy. Besides, the low literacy level of the majority of people impeded the flow of information, and the elite who could volunteer information are sometimes were not up to task of the realities of their heritage because they have often distanced themselves from home. Additionally, even though Gonja is one tribe, the segmentation of the people created the problem of coherence of ideas, especially when it comes to the history of origin. Again, among the Gonja are segments of dialects which would not easily be understood even though the researcher can speak the language.

### **1.9 Methodology**

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

The study was approached in a way that gave a fair knowledge of the reality of what happens on the ground. To achieve this, the following methodology was followed for effective access to information.

1. Interview with persons who have knowledge of the Gonja and their religious life. In this regard, five Gonja chiefs and twenty elders including Gonja Christians were interviewed.
2. Two surviving people who worked among Gonja as Missionaries were interviewed.
3. Related literatures were consulted

4. A questionnaire was used to gather the views of ordinary Gonjas and non-Gonjas staying within the study area.
5. The researcher adopted the participant observation approach.

The method of interviews stated above were in three forms: the first was to look out for academicians who were Gonja and who volunteered information to aid this study without considering religion. Gonja chiefs, like their counterparts in the other parts of the country, whether Christians or not, have played major roles in the spread of Christianity in this country directly or indirectly and hold Christianity in high esteem. For a study of this magnitude views of the chiefs cannot be left out, especially at this time that many chiefs are educated. Putting together their academic and royal views contributed immensely to enrich the study. Above all, judging that they are the custodians of the land and controllers of the people made it imperative that they included for the study.

The researcher contacted missionaries who who work in the area. to find out how they went about the mission in their attempt to reach the area and what were some of their possible challenges or strengths that reflected in the current trend of Christianity in the area.

Gonja Christians who still practice the religion were interviewed to share their experiences especially, judging from the fact that as at now many Gonja Christians seem to practice the religion in the urban centres. When they go back to their various villages and towns they appear unable to practice their religion as in the urban centres, because there are no churches for them.

Questionnaires were given out at random to people within the area of the study, to seek the ordinary person's view on the subject matter. Questionnaires however, were limited to literates who can read and write. This gave a fair assessment of the situation across board, that is, from the academia through to the middle class of Gonja and non-Gonja in the area. This method provided a clear focus for the academia or the church in attempting to reach the area.

Participant observation and experience took an important stage of the study. The researcher was among the people, observing and participating in the daily lives for the purpose of this study, in addition to having lived with the people for forty years of his life. Yet more observation and participation was required for new understanding because the dynamics have changed.

### **1.10 Literature Review**

Accounts of the area states that, mission work in the Northern Ghana started as far back as 1906 by the Catholic Missionaries which was in the Western corridor of the Upper North of the region, without any activity in the North south belt of the North Region. Notwithstanding this, around 1913 an attempt was made around Yendi by the Basel and Methodist Missionaries but did not succeed for various reasons. Among them was the directive of the colonial masters to prevent Protestant Christianity in the area. By 1931 Assemblies of God arrived around Bawku and later the Baptist church at Gambaga after attempted work in Yendi failed<sup>5</sup>. It is instructive to state that all this while the Gonjaland was not touched.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Baker, *Peoples, Languages and Religion in Northern Ghana*. GEC/Asempa, Accra 1986, pp 35

On his part Nehemiah Letvion in his work covers the geographical setting on the trade route of Muslims with historical overview of certain groups the Muslims had an encounter with. The interesting part of this work is that even though it is titled Muslims and chiefs, the selected tribe included the Gonja and their trade in Salaga. Levztion acknowledge that as far as 1877 two members of the Basel missionaries, David Asante in 1877 and M. Buss in 1878 passed through Krachi on their way to Salaga<sup>6</sup>. The above statement makes his work more interesting to this study in two ways. Firstly, most historical account read has it that work in the area was started in 1948, and not as early as 1877. Secondly, the work of David Asante and M. Buss seem not to be highlighted by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, who are on record to have accepted the challenge to go to Salaga.

Following the above work of Levztion is also a historical collection of the missionary activities of Basel Missions by Michael Albert Kwamena Poh<sup>7</sup> this work is a retrospective reflection of the church's activities from 1828 – 1978. A reflection that takes into accounts the Portuguese rule through to independence, the work of the Europeans that prepared the grounds for the take off of Christian activities in the Gold Coast. The highlighted some difficulties and the uncertainties the early missionaries went through from 1828 - 1850. Break through and progress of the missionaries, how the church attained self – governess from 1850 – 1918 and the church in the independent Ghana. The work concluded by assessing the Presbyterian Church and African culture. In

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<sup>6</sup> N. Levztion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in pre-colonial Period*, Oxford: ClarendonPress, 1968, p. 38

<sup>7</sup> Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement, A Hundred and Fifty years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)* David Kpobi, Cephas Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo.ed. Waterville Publishing, Accra. 2011, p 167.



appraising Christian Missionary activities in the Gonja land, this work would be cited to make a case for this study.

Kwame Bediako focuses on modern African Christianity by relating it to Christian tradition as a whole<sup>8</sup>. In his book which is in two part, Bediako examines question of Christian Identity in the context of the Greco-Roman culture of the early Roman Empire. His work tries to contrast the Gospel as against Barbarism, from the stand point of the theologians, from different cultural lenses. These are Tatian against Greek culture, Tertullian within Greco-Roman Culture, Justin and the Hellenistic and Clement of Alexandria who sees Christ as a unifying principle of all knowledge. The second part however, addresses the modern African predicament of quests for identity and integration. This of course should pose a big challenge, because of the diversities of cultures in Africa. This is why his work would be used to juxtapose what cultural orientation is in Gonja. How has Christianity as civilisation according to Bediako's, impacted on the Gonja people and their culture?

In his book Anthony Beekoa former Moderator of Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, did a collection of his speeches and sermons during his term in office. He concluded the book with a brief history of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. In the history he added his voice to the start of work in Northern Ghana around Yendi and was categorical that it was "in December, 1917, the noble army of Basel Missionaries were deported because of the 1<sup>st</sup> World war. The Gold Coast was then a British Colony. Britain was at war with Germany and it was felt unwise to

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<sup>8</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity, The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the second century and in Modern Africa*, Paternoster Publishing, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 0QS, U.K. 1999



have citizens of an enemy country in her territory”. This was a big blow to the spread of Christian faith especially in the Northern Ghana<sup>9</sup>. This part of history is important to this study as it shows that as at the time of that directive of the colonial Masters Gonja area was not evangelised by any Christian Missionary.

When the British and the Germans arrived in the Northern part of the Gold Coast, the Dagomba, Gonja and Mamprussi were already in contact with Islam. These Kingdoms were under Muslim rule, and they became strong political structures. To maintain order and peace in the Northern Territory, the colonial powers worked hand in hand with Dagomba and Gonja chiefs. The Gonjas executed the orders received from the colonizers over other ethnic groups, a classic example of the famous colonial "praxis", known as "indirect rule" Thus, the Dagomba and the Gonja chiefs, in order to serve the colonial interests and their own, made various attempts to subordinate the stateless Konkomba and the related tribes (Krachis and Gurma) under their political and religious control<sup>10</sup>.

Samwini in his work assess the Muslims and the groups in Islam, the activities of Islam in Ghana and among certain selected tribes in Northern Ghana. He did not leave out the Muslims’ relation with the wider world. He also looked at missionary activities in Ghana with Protestants missions in the Northern Territories from 1910-1950 which is important to this study. Even though he did not mention Christianity among Gonjas, he touched on the fact that “The British colonial

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<sup>9</sup> A. B. Anthony, *Something to live on*, Smartline Accra, 2000, p279.

<sup>10</sup> Website of mkopGogefroid Manunga-Lukokisa, Muslim and Christian Relations Series  
The Conflict of 1994 in Northern Ghana from a Missiological Perspective

government encouraged Islam in the north with the view that it suited the natives; which was helping to spread civilization and a decent life and giving impetus to trade.....a few towns like Salaga, Gambaga and Wa”, the rest of the north was almost completely pagan<sup>11</sup>” will be important in the next chapter.

Peter Bakar in his book chronicles the composition of almost every tribe in Northern Ghana. What the people constitute, their origin, belief, language and dialect and some possible shrines in each language group. The statistics of each group tribe and their religious affiliation based on the 2000 Housing and Population census. Apart from all what makes his work important to this study is the addition of dates on the work of some denominations in the study area. “The first missionary was sent by the Basel Mission (Presbyterian) to start work at Salaga in 1950, and laid a foundation of evangelistic and literature work. The Worldwide Evangelical Crusade Mission (WEC) and Evangelical church of Ghana (ECG) began work at Damongo in 1953 and at Buiepe in 1971; the Catholics founded the parishes of Damongo in 1955, Salaga in 1961, Bole in 1965, and Tuna in 1979”<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile it is important to state that the Salaga work actually started in 1948, except that the Basel Missionaries did not start literature work in Salaga, this will be shown out in the next chapter in the history of the church in the area. Rather to say that, it was the WEC mission and Evangelical Church of Ghana that did literature work by translating the New Testament and some Bible tracks at Buiepe and Tuna respectively. Protestant missionaries excelled in the work of

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<sup>11</sup> N. I. Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950; Its effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations*, Berlin, Lit Verlag, 2006, p52

<sup>12</sup> Peter Baker, *Peoples, Languages and Religion in Northern Ghana*. GEC/Asempa, Accra 1986, pp 36

literacy classes around Salaga, even though that cannot be compared to the Catholic mission in Narvango, Nandom, Jirapa (among the Kasinas and Dagabaa).

After the World War II, in 1948, the realisation of the need to do something about the North dawned on the minds of the Synod Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. So during the Synod held at Akropong Akuapem, the Synod launched an appeal for a volunteer to begin the pioneering work in the North. After the appeal, there was a long deep silence. Emmanuel Asante asked for a piece of paper. He wrote down his name on the paper and presented it quickly to the Synod Clerk, C.H. Clerk, who in turn passed it on to the Moderator, S. S. Odorkor. He rang a bell on his table and announced Emmanuel Asante's name to the big gathering. (Ref Minutes of Synod held at Akropong-Akuapem 10-23 April 1948. Business arising from minutes—a page report on the work in the Northern Territory)<sup>13</sup>. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Abraham Berinyuu in his work discussed at length the general missionary activities in the Northern Ghana, stated that “After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (1939-1945) all the German Missionaries working in Northern Ghana were deported leaving those from Switzerland, who were mostly medical officers, and those from Scotland who were in charge of our Educational Unit, with their Ghanaian counterparts. The Church was therefore left almost in the hands of the Ghanaian leaders. The future of the Church was uncertain. The missionary work was virtually suspended, while the Northern Region was completely left out. Hence, mission work in the Northern Ghana came to a stand still due to the above directive by the colonial masters, but there was some kind of desire to start

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<sup>13</sup> Minutes of Synod held at Akropong-Akuapem 10-23 April 1948. Business arising from minutes—a page report on the work in the Northern Territory,



something by the few southerners and other government officials who were church goers before they were posted to Northern Ghana to manage government departments<sup>14</sup>. This was followed by Theophilus Opoku and David Asante all of the Presbyterian church of Ghana then Gold Coast<sup>15</sup>. This according to Berinyuu did not have any direct impact on the Gonja as they only managed to win migrants who went and settled there to make ends meet. Many Gonja consider it as the "religion of the rich with an ideal of brotherhood". Christianity is regarded as the "religion of the Whiteman", thus, foreign to the chiefly ethnic groups, in contact with Islam for centuries. By the late 1950s when Otto Rytz took over the missionary work, with the help of a few Brongs in Kalande who also understood the Gonja language, they started to make some inroads to villages around Salaga like Lonto, Jembui (Sabonjida), Abromase, Yeji, Kajaji and other communities which were then all under Salaga politically. So per Berinyuu's account the work actually started in Salaga which makes it interesting for this study because Salaga is Gonja.

It is worth noting that the Missionary activity numerated by Berinyuu was approached from a Presbyterian lens, may be because he is a Presbyterian Minister himself. The only contradiction of his account was the route of arrival of the first missionaries to Salaga that will be discussed in chapter three of this study.

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<sup>14</sup> A. Berinyuu, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ghana*, Asempa Publishers, Accra, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Keteku, *Pioneers Series The Reverends Theophilus Opoku and David Asante*, Waterville Publishing House, Accra. The researchers' experience of the area. Apart from the fact that the researcher lived in the area for forty years, the father of the researcher happens to be among the first seven converts of the Missionaries to Salaga and acted as interpreter and a houseboy to the Rev Otto Rytz until he was asked to go home and marry by O. Rytz.

Bartels also approached the Northern accounts from a Methodist lens “the mission work by the Methodist Church Ghana began again in 1952 when the church set up the Evangelism Campaign Committee, with Rev. A.W. Banks as a member. They surveyed the work in the north and visited the Gonja Development Corporation in Damongo. They also had talks with the Baptists and Roman Catholics in that area”.<sup>16</sup> Given the cooperation shown in his accounts in Gonja area it will be interested to this study.

According to Braimah the Islamic faith had its encounter with the Gonja chiefs back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. “Ndewura Jakpa is considered as the conquering founder of the Gonja state, sometime in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and is part of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo language family one of Potou-Tano languages. In the reconstruction of history where written records are absent, legend and folk tradition can be pieced together to form something of a historical picture of recent events. The trouble with these oral traditions is that it lacks chronology. Gonja is one of the tribes which have its history recorded by Muslims who accompanied them to Gonjaland. According to Arabic manuscript and oral tradition, the Gonja, who were originally Mandingo, or Mandinka, migrated from Mande, that is, from the Mali Empire, many years before the Year 1000”<sup>17</sup>.

Also in his book “*Salaga the struggle for power*” in this work Braimah discussed the political system of Gonja people<sup>18</sup>. This will be important for this study, because of his role in the Gonja history. This is a history which will be looked at when the study looks at the Gonja before

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<sup>16</sup> F. L. Bartels, *The Root of Ghana Methodism*. Cambridge, London, pp 262

<sup>17</sup> J.A. Braimah, *The founding of the Gonja Empire*, MA thesis University of Ghana, Legon. <sup>18</sup> J. A. Braimah, *Salaga: the struggle for power* Longmans, 1967



1950. In his article “*The Ethnographic Context*” Kirby, assessed the Gonja tribe of Ghana, covering a huge area situated south and north of the Black Volta River and the Volta Lake. There are about thirty ethnic groups in this area, each with their own distinctive languages yet all pay homage to the Gonja and all are classified as Gonja<sup>18</sup>. The study of their respective histories is a great help to understand the real factors that lead to the Gonjas Religious beliefs.

### **1.11 Organisation of the work**

This study would be divided into five chapters; with the second chapter of the study discussing brief history of the Gonja before 1950 and Gonja after 1950 with assessment of Christian activity in the area, with emphasis on their strength, weaknesses, limitation and the people’s contribution to mission activity in the area. The chapter will also assess the impact of other religions on the people in the area before Christianity.

Therefore, in chapter, “A Religio-Historical overview of the Gonja State” the following structure would be adopted;

- Profile of the Study Area
- Brief History of the Gonjas before 1950 and Gonja today
- Gonja Political Systems
- Gonja Traditional Religious Belief Systems
- Gonja Cultural

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<sup>18</sup> J. Kirby, (Article) “*An Historical and Ethnographic Commentary on the Northern Conflict*”.

The third chapter evaluates “Comparative Study of Christian and Islamic Activities in the Gonja Area” data collection and collation of information from the field, through primary, secondary and other means scientific. While the fourth chapter “Identifies the true state of Christianity in the Gonjaland” will be analysis of data that is collected from the field. The fifth chapter “Recommendations and Conclusion” will be the researcher’s contribution and recommendations after gathering the facts which will include the conclusion of the work.

### **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to highlight the areas of concern that this study seeks to research into. The procedure the researcher intends to use in the study was outlined, with the issues this study seeks to appraise. The significance of this study was highlighted in this chapter. The chapter also seeks arecast of some related literatures which supports the cause of the study. The chapter ended with a forecast of the whole study, with the outline on how each chapter will be approached. Even though there is a researcher’s experience of the area, the study will do well to eschew prejudices of the issues because the dynamics of the area might change in course of time because of modernisation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A RELIGIO-HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE GONJA STATE

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the study concentrated on the brief history of the Gonja before 1950 and Gonja today. We attempted to critically highlight some cultural beliefs of the Gonja people. Considering the demographic dynamics, that might be a plausible neglect by missionaries and their effect on the propagation of the Christian faith. Africans have a rich cultural heritage with a historical past that informs their choice of religiosity today. This is because; a study of pre-Christian and pre-Islam period that seeks to deal with any culturally-rooted questions in Gonja needs to be studied in context. A primary source that is capable of handling the religious past, present and the future of the Gonjaland.

#### 2.2 Profile of the Study Area

Gonjaland is found in the present day Northern Region of Ghana. The Gonja people are known as Ngbanye (singular. Kagbanye), and speak Ngbanyato as their language. Their land area is about 9,700 sq km. In Gonja the name of God is *Ebore* and traditional gods (shrines) are called *agbri* (singular kigbri), with farming as their main occupation. Yagbonwura is the title of the overlord in Gonja; He heads five sub-chiefs called *Bewura* who are eligible to the paramountcy.

Selection of chiefs is based on the principle of rotation. At the local level the clans take it in turns to provide village chiefs; the oldest person in the clan takes the chieftaincy for life. At the state level, the paramount chieftaincy rotates among five "gates" -- Daboya, Kpembe, Bole, Tuluwe,

and Kusawgu. Those eligible for selection as paramount chief are sub-chief (*Bewura*); but the paramount is selected by seven chiefs who are sub-chiefs (*Bewurbi*) -- eligible only for village chieftaincies. The final decision is taken by two chiefs based in Buipe, the Buipe-wura and Kagbapewura<sup>19</sup>.

The area have many tribes in the area which includes the Gonja, Nchumuru, Nawuri, Ntrapo and Kpariba around the eastern and central Gonja districts whose primary occupation is farming, hunting and fishing. Apart from these ethnic groupings, who are all within the Guan tribe, are four different groupings such as the Kalande people who are Brongs from Brong Ahafo, Chokoshies', Konkombas and the Bartors who come from Volta Region and Togo, and are found in the area because of the two rivers (Black and White Volta) and the fertile nature of their land. The western, Bole/Bamboi, and Sawla/Tuna Districts have tribes like Vagla, Moo, Dagaba/Wala, Nafana, Ndempu. The main product of commercial value in Gonjaland is shea-butter which is transported to the Coast and can be found in every market of this country. The Gonjaland is made up of seven political Districts namely: Kpandai, East Gonja, Central Gonja, West Gonja, North Gonja, Sawla/Klaba and Bole/Bamboi Districts. These Gonja Districts share borders with the following Districts, Nanumba North and South, Yendi to the East of the country. West Mamprussi, Tamale Municipal, Tolon/Kumbungu, Wa Municipal, Wa East and West Districts. Whiles Gonjaland shares borders with Pru, Kintampo, Wenchi and Krachi North Districts to the South. And Bole/Bamboi District shares border with Cote D'ivoire to the west of the country.

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<sup>19</sup> P. Bakar, *Peoples, Languages and Religion in Northern Ghana*. Accra GEC/Asempa, 1986. A revised version of this book is however cited in this page because the researcher had the privilege of the writer to use the unfinished revision and credit.



Much could not be said of their occupation apart from the fact that they cultivate some fields with various kinds of yams, millet, corn, groundnuts and some maize even though there used to be hunters, that aspect is almost a dream in the area because of the way they have depleted the forest or ecology.

### 2.3 Brief History of Gonja Before 1950

Records assessed, show that the history of the Gonja had been by the authority of the following personalities; Goody Jack, H.H. Tomlinson and J.A. Braimah. Besides these persons, the Gonjas themselves had depended largely on folklore and drumming to narrate their history. Meanwhile, “several accounts of Gonja history have been published, all of them based very largely on the corpus of oral tradition called the 'Jakpa epic' <sup>20</sup>. The collection of eighteenth- and nineteenthcentury Arabic texts with their translations into English by Levtzion includes five historical documents of local authorship<sup>22</sup>. This work has been known for some time in an English translation made and published later by Goody (1954). A warrior 'from Mande', who fought his way across Gonja from west to east, Jakpa was killed in battle. Before his death he had shared out the lands which were his by right of conquest among his sons”. Before he died the present Gonja Traditional Area was established fully as a centralized state under his sole leadership in 1675<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> D. H. Jones, *Jakpa the Foundation of Gonja*, Legon: Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 1963 <sup>22</sup>. I. Wilks, N. Levtzion, and B. M. Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

“Fragments of Gonja history have been written by European writers and translations of Arabic manuscripts have been made”<sup>22</sup>. The researches made into the history of the Gonja people by J.

A. Braimah and the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana have been of considerable help<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.4 Gonja Political Systems

According to Braimah, the Gonjas social and political organization is attributed to King Lata who divided the state into eight village chieftaincies: Buipe, Kpembe, Bole, Tuluwe, Kusawugu, Wasipe (or Daboya), Kun (or Kong) and Kandia which is today grouped into five paramountcies namely, Kpembe, Bole, Tuluwe, Kusawugu and Wasipe. An Imam was attached only to big villages entrusted to elderly persons. Gonja traditional society was divided into three categories of citizens:

The chiefly (Royal) group "Gbanya",

The commoners or the "Nyamase" and

The Muslim clerics, called the "Kramo".

At the very beginning, the "Nyamase" who are the Ntrapo (Warriors), were regarded as the first inhabitants of the ancestral land, but the "Kramo", is associated with the Muslims, who came in

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<sup>22</sup> J. A. Braimah, *The founding of the Gonja Empire*, MA thesis University of Ghana, Legon.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. This is of course one of the work on Gonja history that has been undertaken by a Gonja with verses of the traditional drums have been quoted to support some of the facts given by oral traditions. A work that is available at University of Ghana, Legon , Department of African studies.

earlier and conquered the land. This gave the Kramo the right to rule over the traditional Gonja Commoners<sup>24</sup>.

The Muslim Community has since then occupied a distinctive and privileged position within the Gonja society because of their powerful influence over the chiefs' political system. Currently, the Muslim Imams are mainly attached to the traditional and paramount centres: Kpembe (or Salaga), Bole, Tuluwe, Kusawugu and Wasipe (or Daboya): They are entrusted with the task of naming ceremonies and praying for the Chiefs' victory during wars of conquest and at various occasions, such as the funeral rites after a chief's death. They (Gonja) had to feed the Imams for their service and defend their rights. The Muslim Imams who also lived in the urban centres had no contacts with the Gonja commoners, who remained attached to their traditional religious beliefs; and lived far from the city centres<sup>25</sup>.

Historians on Gonja, claim that their royal residence in Mande is Kaaba (Kangaba). "Kangaba has always been the ritual centre of state and people, where sanctuaries for septennial cult ceremonies, which draw together representatives of the various Mande people, are still held." The Gonja war song is called "*Sin bo aya*"; meaning "The Sin migrates." From the expression of Gonja war songs, one would assume that the original home of the Gonjas is Sin, one of the Mande states situated in Senegal"<sup>28</sup>. In Kpembe today Singban is a clan or section of Gonja who ascend to the throne of the Gonja paramountcy and become the overlord of the Gonja Kingdom.

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<sup>24</sup> N. Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. A study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial period*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968

<sup>25</sup> H.H. Tomlinson, *The customs, constitution, and history of the Gonja people* Legon: IAS 1954

<sup>28</sup>J.A. Braimah, *The founding of the Gonja Empire*, MA thesis University of Ghana, Legon. <sup>29</sup>Ibid



This may suggest that the group actually came from Mande<sup>29</sup>

In a historical narration by Braimah and Tomlinson, Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa the founder of the Gonja Kingdom was himself initially a trader from Malle or Mande according to the source. At a point in time he became bankrupt and consulted a certain Mallam about his fortunes in life. The Mallam bluntly told Jakpa that even though he came from the royal family he would never ascend the throne. Instead, his fortune was in foreign lands, and would establish a kingdom for himself, his children and followers<sup>26</sup>. Jakpa was so convinced of the Mallam's prophecy that he mobilized tens of thousands of fighting contingent and other followers and set out around the sixteenth century. From Mandi or Gizi, both sources affirm that Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa and his army on reaching Jah, the first town of call, Jakpa came into contact with Fati Morukpe, a very powerful Mallam and made friends with him<sup>27</sup>. Jakpa solicited his company for his impending adventures so that he would be an intermediary to offer prayers unto God so as to divert mishaps and evil in his exploits. If the offer was accepted, Jakpa promised to pay a tribute of a hundred pairs of every domestic animal including one hundred slaves, cattle, horses, and gowns<sup>28</sup>.

According to the historical accounts above, Ndewura Jakpa began his conquests by first moving west from the Dibir country where his father founded his state. On reaching Bole he was told of a certain powerful Fetish or Shrine Priest who must be overpowered at Mankuma, the capital of

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<sup>26</sup> Emmanuel Forster Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba people*, Government printing office, Accra, 1931, p 21.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p 21 see also Nehemia Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs*, p 52-54

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p 22 see also *the Ta'rikh Ghunja: Chronicles from Gonja; A tradition of West Africa Muslim historiography*, by Ivor Wilks, Nehemia Levtzion and Bruce M. Haight, Cambridge, Cambridge University press, London, 1986, p 158-159.



Gbipe (Buipe) before he could settle down. Consequently he marched on Mankuma, and after a great display of black power and show of strength on both sides, he defeated the Fetish Priest and planted his sister and nephew there. The sister was subsequently given the title Mankuma *wuriche* (Mankuma Queen) and nephew Kakulasewura (meaning an eavesdropper to tap information from the Fetish Priest for Jakpa). Jakpa then over ran the Vagalla people who largely occupied the place. He marched through Sakpa into Ntereso-Gbanfu, western Gonja (the Bole Division). At Sakpa the elders of Bel (Bole), Mandari and Gbenfu met Ndewura Jakpa and surrendered to him. The town of Bel was renamed Bole meaning "Submission" in Gonja<sup>29</sup>. "After he had settled affairs in Bole and appointed a chief (the Bolewura) for the area Jakpa marched northward into the Wala territory defeated them and chose Nyanga as the capital of the conquered lands and named it Gbinipowura-pe"<sup>30</sup>. He then partitioned the land among his sons as chiefs to administer these areas. This Wala territory included Kong and Kandia areas.

Jakpa now turned his attention to the "Tampruma people on the Western banks of the White Volta River. These Tamprumas were subjects of the Dagomba Kings who appointed their representatives to administer the area and also control the salt-making by the natives in Burugu (later to be known as Daboya by the Ngbanye). Jakpa went into combat with the Dagombas dislodging them on the western side and followed them up to the Eastern side where there ensued a fierce battle and very heavy casualties were suffered on both sides. In the end the Dagombas were defeated and their

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<sup>29</sup> This account was put together in pieces by the Gonja Youth Association on the net [bykwekudeetripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/03/Gonja](http://bykwekudeetripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/03/Gonja).

<sup>30</sup> Tamakloe, p 23

King Na Dariziogo slain”<sup>31</sup>. Many Dagomba towns made up of the Kparibas were captured, and came under the jurisdiction of Kpembu and Kasulyili under the Wasipewura.

The narration continued that, “Jakpa and his men now pushed eastward between the White and Black Volta river routing Kahu (Laribanga) and the big town of Kurase, South-West of Damongo mostly occupied by a section of the Dagomba. From there Jakpa traversed to Kaniamase the capital of the then Kania people and captured the town and in the process killed their king at the palace and renamed Kaniamase (Gbipe or Buipe). When they reached Gbipe now spelt Buipe (Gbi meaning heavy or weight load) the corpse of the King was getting bad so he was interred there (Gbipe). When they reached Aburumase (meaning I am now weak and dying) he became very sick. When they got to Trekpa (I have now reached my end) he died”<sup>32</sup>.

Since it was Jakpa’s expressed wish to take his final rest at the sister’s place of abode at Mankuma, it has become customary since then for all Yagbonwuras to be entombed at Mankuma, a village on the main Sawla-Bole road. The successor, it was decided, should be a prince or chief with large house-hold and plenty followers. The Chief of Kong was selected.

Hence the town Nyanga is called “Yagbon” i.e. “big household” and thus became the name of the skin and title “Yagbonwura”. It was not until 1944 that the capital of the Ngbanye was moved from Nyanga to Damongo<sup>33</sup>, a new seat of the head of the Gonja kingdom.

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Staniland, *The lions of Dagbon: Political change in Northern Ghana*, Cambridge University press, Cambridge, London, 1975, p 5.

<sup>32</sup> Kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Also the compilation of the history was take from one of the oldest surviving documents written in an African language by Isnad of Al-Haji Muhamed from about A.D. 1736, a Gonja. In addition to these documents is other

## 2.5 Traditional, Cultural and Belief Systems

Muslims claim that the Gonja were originally Muslims and had no other gods; however the 1960 census figures show that a significant percentage of Gonja considered themselves as followers of Traditional Religion.

Ebore is the supreme God, but one cannot talk to him directly -- one must pass through ancestors, gods, and fetishes.

Towns have their own gods or fetishes, for instance:

Sonyo        has     *Kipo*

Busunu and Mankuma have *Gbulo*

Tuluwe       has     *Yala*

Chama        has     *Lansa*

Kpambu       has     *Lereku*

Salaga        has     *Kito*

Bute           has     *Borowase Lempo*

There is a week each year, when people go to Sonyo to worship *Kipo*.

Sacrifices are made to the ancestors, and food is put out for them, especially at feasts.

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source for the Gonja history. Which are the ntunpana (talking drums) the Kuntunkure and Mbontokurbi (made with calabashes) drums, which recites the history and give appellation of all Chiefs of Gonja.

*Belejipo* or soothsayers (sing.) are members of a particular clan who have been properly initiated into the society at a special *lejipo* ceremony. However, there are other soothsayers, known as *bekpalpo* who have not been initiated in the normal way but have come to office by the call of a spirit<sup>34</sup>.

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**Festivals** among the Gonja are feasts of the Islamic Calendar, but, in the words of Levtzion, "transformed to the extent that the original Islamic features can hardly be recognised"<sup>35</sup>. The greatest festival *Damba* ("rejoicing") is in origin a celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, but in practice it has become a state festival. *Dugni* and *Achan* (the sacrificing of Abraham's Son and Guinea Fowl festival) are other festivals of Muslim origin. All these festivals, link to the Muslim calendar, which in lunar are not celebrated on permanent days but based on the lunar shift.

*Jintigo*, on the other hand, is a non-Islamic festival -- the fire festival -- held annually at the beginning of the yam season<sup>36</sup>. This view was espoused by Peter Bakar which is debatable, because like the other lunar festivals it is also based on the lunar calculations and so not permanent and could have Islamic root.

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Bakar, *Peoples, Languages and Religion in Northern Ghana*. Accra GEC/Asempa, 1986 Revised 2011 pp

<sup>35</sup> Ibid p 35

<sup>36</sup> Ibid pp 35



## 2.6 GONJA CULTURE

### 2.6.1 Definition of Culture?

According to Baker “the word “culture” originally referred to cultivating the ground and it has never completely lost this rapport with natural productivity. While the word is often used more narrowly for fine arts, culture is better understood as the total pattern of a people’s behavior, and it is in this latter sense that the word will be used in this article or work. Culture includes all behavior that is learned and transmitted by the symbols (rites, artifacts, language, etc.) of a particular group and that grows out of a certain idea or assumption that we call a worldview”<sup>37</sup>.

The English Advance Dictionary also defines the word culture(s) with several meanings which includes “The arts, customs and habits that characterize a particular society or nation” “The beliefs, values, behavior and material objects that constitute a people’s way of life”<sup>38</sup>

Baker’s work continued to highlight that “the relations between Christianity and culture are varied according to circumstances and particular perceptions of culture. Although modern social science has given us a more detailed understanding of culture, we are basically concerned with the way God’s work of redemption both in scripture and in history has confronted and changed the social order in its created context, and also with the ways believing communities have viewed and

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<sup>37</sup> Baker, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second edition, Walter A. Elwell, editor, Baker Publishing, Grand Rapids, USA, 2001, p 227

<sup>38</sup> The Advance English Dictionary

responded to their environment. The church confronts these issues whenever it seeks to live its faith and give a credible witness in the place to which God has called it”<sup>39</sup>.

On his part Kwame Bediako thinks the teaching of God by African Theologians should not depart from what is obscuring the contribution of Africans towards the interpretation of what is, in fact, their own religious heritage. He agreed with Harold W. Turner that the study of African primal religions forms part of the common spiritual heritage of mankind<sup>40</sup>.

From the definitions and perceptions above, it is obviously clear that religion had never been departed from culture. It was even the best tool used in explaining the existence of God, Bediako thinks. Similarly, tribes and groups knew God, and had worshipped God through various mediums, a situation which is not different in Gonja, as mentioned in section 2.2 of this study. The belief system of Gonjas might have been for their demographic formation. A design which conforms to Turner’s view as outlined by Bediako in the study of African primal religion and run across all facets of the Gonja people’s lives. It is visible during marriage and naming, death and funeral, chieftaincy and royalty, drumming and dancing and ancestor venerations. The environmental artifact designs of the Gonja people, the language and all other unique rites that identify the people should not be compromised.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid p227

<sup>40</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity, The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the second century and in Modern Africa*, Paternoster Publishing, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 0QS, U.K. 1999, p4-6

### ***2.6.2 Marriage and naming ceremonies***

Ceremonies are one occasion that show cases the African's culture, and this is well portrayed in Ghana among many tribes without religious attachment. Gonja is no exception, but when it comes to marriage rites you cannot separate it from religion. Marriage dowry in Gonja culture before recently was more religious; hence the Groom was required to pay hundred pieces (100) of kola-nut to the bride's family with a token of money not less than two hundred Ghana cedis or its equivalent today. The significance of the cola-nut was the spiritual attachment to the distribution of the kola. The belief in the area was that any head of family that received the kolanut and chewed it had vowed spiritually to support the marriage<sup>41</sup>.

Likewise with the naming ceremony, any Gonja child born, no matter the religion of the parents the Kramo (the Palace Muslim cleric) has the sole right of naming that child. The Muslim Cleric is one of the three spiritual figures of the Gonja Political system. The importance of Muslim Cleric role in this naming ceremony cannot be over emphasized, as he is seen as the spiritual head of the community who communicates directly to God on behalf of the people.

### ***2.6.3 Death and funeral***

Rites of passage are observed across the African continent. In Ghana some tribes might have relaxed the intensity because of modernization and religious beliefs. In Northern Ghana the story might not change so much among all the ethnic. However, the ceremony may differ from one ethnic to the other because of cultural orientation. On the surface, there may be a lot of similarities

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<sup>41</sup> Kola nuts are symbol of friendship and are frequently broken and share at most social occasions such as child naming ceremonies, funeral rites or when important visitor arrives in a home. In Gonja, the marriage contract is sealed with 12 pieces of cola nuts.



because of religious affiliation without tribal considerations. On the quiet, things are still done behind the scenes because of cultural beliefs that are passed on from generation to generation. These things are adored, venerated, and worshipped as cultural heritage despite the religious affiliations of the deceased. The failure to appreciate the reasons behind such practices creates barriers for sharing the new faith. In Gonja preparing the dying, the dead, digging of grave, bathing of the corpse, announcing of the death, burial and the third (*Echensa*), seventh (*Echenshunu*), twelfth (*Enhenkuduanyon*) and fortieth (*Enchendena*) days funeral rites are sacred rituals that are cultural in nature than religious. The significance of the reconciliation of persons with the dying person is reality of conflicts and tensions. The ceremony essentially consists of a brief discourse which acknowledges the guilt of the wrongdoer and concludes with the plea of forgiveness thus: “*Ebore wushi kagbeni, jande tapan mo*” (May God calm down your heart, please forgive him). Some kolanuts and drinks are then presented to the offended person. The kola nuts are received, broken and eaten by those present. The third day’s funeral rite of opening the pot (*Kapulya* or *Kapuli be Kebugi*) cannot be replaced by any ceremony as it marks one of the first rituals after death<sup>42</sup>. It would be recalled that on the day of death the attire that covered the waist and the private parts of the dead person. During the bathing of the corpse, the attire is put in a pot and the pot turned upside down. This is opened on the third day and the attire is given to the one who bathed the dead person. This ritual is very brief, no words accompany it, and no one tries to explain it. Yet, it seems to be the most important activity of the day. Such a symbolic ritual merits critical attention. The interpretation is that the entire ritual is a symbolic re-enactment of the dead person

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<sup>42</sup> Esther Goody, *Context of Kinship in Gonja: An essay in the Family Sociology of the Gonja of Northern Ghana*, Cambridge University Press, 1973. Pp 144-145



and reincorporating him/her with the ancestors and the living, since this attire would be used by the person who bathed the corpse. The seventh and the twelfth days' funerals are not many activities different from the third day. Even for the twelfth days' celebration it is not observed by all Gonjas today, as it is only practiced in the Bole area.

The summary of activities that could be carried out on the seventh day funeral include; visiting the 'farm', this rite consists of a procession to the outskirts of the village. A mock farm is quickly made and the widow is asked to sit on a mound in which a yam tuber of her husband has been inserted. This rite is meant to establish once and for all the paternity of her children for it is held that a woman who was not faithful risks bringing on herself some disaster such as bareness, sickness or even death. Times have changed and this rite is almost a forgotten one, largely because society has become diversified and not all Gonja men today have a farm. They have taken to different occupations;

Reckoning of debts- in this case, a dead man's possessions are placed on mats outside his room and kin and friends are asked to claim what belongs to them. At the same time they are also asked to return anything they may have borrowed. The dead man's debts are settled immediately by the person in charge of the funeral. He also receives debts owed the dead man. My own observation is that this activity is not peculiar to the seventh day funeral as it is done elsewhere on the day of burial or some other later convenient time;

Sweeping the room /throwing away of the *akalibi* shrine; the room of the deceased is thoroughly swept. All the dirt is carefully collected and put on top of the personal shrine (*akalibi*), so that when the shrine is thrown away at across road outside the village, the dirt is also disposed of.

The dead man's room is now considered to be cleansed of his spirit. It can now be used again without any danger<sup>43</sup>.

On the celebration of the fortieth day funeral, it is performed publicly only for very senior men and women. Prefaced by *awuba* dirges, it consists mainly of the killing of a cow, distribution of the meat, and the preparation and distribution of a funeral *kude* (Tuozafe popularly called T.Z). During the sacrifice and preparation of the food, praises are sung, and certain dances may be performed. Prayers are said in the evening. On the night before the fortieth day, a widow is given her final purification bath and given a special medicine to take if she intends to marry again. This medicine is known as "*Jabuni*" (literally meaning "drive away ghost"). It serves to protect the widow by driving away her husband's spirit so that she can be free to accept a love proposal of a prospective suitor.

*Tomb as Womb:* The intelligent narration of the digging of the grave is worth mentioning. The grave is rectangular in shape dug to about five to six feet deep. At the bottom a recess is created at one side of the grave and this is further developed in the interior into a spacious chamber. This chamber is dark inside and clearly resembles a dark cave in shape. It is said that just as a baby is hidden in the dark womb of the mother waiting to see the light at birth so is a person hidden in the "womb of the earth" waiting to be born into a new life. Far from being permanent places, both the womb and the tomb are places of transition. Both point to life beyond their immediate dark

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<sup>43</sup> E. Goody, pp148-149.

confines. A perfect description of that is in consonant to the descriptions the sons of Korah gave to the grave in the Psalms<sup>44</sup>.

#### ***2.6.4 Chieftaincy and Royalty***

The most cherished institution in Africa is the chieftaincy institution. In Ghana there might be few cases where communities are antagonistic with their land owners. This would be in the minority as far as the chieftaincy institution is concerned. The role of the chiefs in most instances is almost like deities for their tribes, especially when succession of the area is not abused. With the Gonja tribe the laid down order had always been followed, hence the Gonja royals are often reminded of the impending responsibility to serve as culture demands. A situation many think it is at variance with the Christian faith. This has led some Gonja Christians, for respect of culture to abandon their faith as Christians in support of the chieftaincy institution. Thank God for the lives of Chief Adams a church elder with Evangelical Church of Ghana and a volunteer worker with Ghana Institued of Linguistic and Bible Translation (GILBT). He helped in translating the Bible to Gonja language. And the late J.J. Bakari these two royals stood on their grounds to defy their cultural perception that a Christian cannot be a chief without converting to Islam.

Speaking to this study chief Adams<sup>45</sup> insisted that the perception that if you are a royal and a Christian “you would not die well” is a fallacy and those that they point to as “having died a shameful death” is just a mere coincidence, and only a tool used to put fear in the people. He admonished Christians to do more to change this perception.

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<sup>44</sup> Psalm 88

<sup>45</sup> Chief Adams is a sub chief in Buipe, a church elder with the Evangelical Church of Ghana.



### 2.6.5 Gonja drumming

Drums may be least worshipped artifacts across the continent of Africa. However in Ghana many ethnic groups worship their drums for various reasons. These drums to some extent have sacrifices to purify them. Mostly among the Akan people of Ghana their drums received human blood as a sign of purification. The Gonja tribe would not worship their drums that way, but would pay the drummer for certain appellations. In his work, “The founding of Gonja Empire”

Braimah outlined how drumming has helped to narrate the story of Gonja history”<sup>46</sup>. To quote Askia Dawud accordingly, “dispatched a force of Mandinka armed cavalry to see what could be done. Dawud's armoured horsemen, the bulldozing tanks of these times, rode south from the neighbourhood of Jenne until they reached the Black Volta bend of modern Ghana. These horsemen were the ancestors of the present day Gonjas. The horse riders were armed with swords and iron spears. In war, the horsemen acted as cavalry. The Gonjas discovered that cavalry could not operate in the dense forest where the Akan lived and smelted gold. The Kuntunkure traditional drummer in some of the verses he recites gives us some information about the battles fought including those fought with the Akan”<sup>47</sup>. Currently, some communities in the Gonja areas, the Christian leaders are battling with some of the congregants as to whether talking drums can be beaten as culture demands when a Gonja Christian dies. This is happening because most of the leaders are from other parts of the country with certain tribal lenses. Where should they cooperate?

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<sup>46</sup> J. A. Braimah, *The founding of the Gonja Empire*, Unpublished document

<sup>47</sup> Gonja Youth Association on the net by kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/03/**Gonja**.



### 2.6.6 Ancestor Veneration

Talking about veneration, some sections of the Christian community want a distinction between act of worshipping and that of veneration. In Christian circles the word veneration is a celebration of the virtuous life or heroic death of persons whose souls reside in heaven with Christ. Such honour includes the respectful memory and imitation of the virtues of departed believers as well as verbal communion with them. It includes both private and public devotion<sup>48</sup>. If this was the Christian interpretation of veneration, where would the Africans err when they venerate their own heroes that died for their various people? The Gonja tribe as mentioned above used their drums to narrate their historical past. Part of the narration is the veneration of their fallen heroes. During this narration all past chiefs of the tribe and their deeds are recited for upcoming generations. This is done to keep the people informed. The drums sound every Monday and Friday at the chief's palace across the Gonjaland and occasions such as deaths. It is used to alert or announce the funerals to relations in and outside jurisdictions. The Gonjas and other neighbouring ethnic groups like the Dagomba, Mamprussi and Nanumba have a common month and a day they celebrate their ancestors as mentioned above under traditional beliefs. It is called *Jintige* literally means "eat to satisfaction". On the day of the festival, animals are sacrificed to the ancestors and their protection and blessing are sought for the entire family. At the evening meal, every household reserves some food in calabashes for the ancestors who will arrive to eat at night. The ancestors must eat to satisfaction so that they can bestow their blessing on the living. Children must also eat to satisfaction, if not the ancestors might get sad for kids being starved and

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<sup>48</sup> Baker, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second edition, Walter A. Elwell, editor, Baker Publishing, Grand Rapids, USA, 2001, p1240

take them along to the land of the dead. To facilitate their easy return, torches of grass are set on fire to enable the ancestors see their way back to their home.

Our view on these cultural beliefs stems from the fact that Christianity is not absolute. Historical antecedence shows that culture cannot be separated from religion. Besides, the import of the directive of the colonial masters that the north was Islam needs verification to unravel any foul play or mischief at the time. From the information it was conclusive that after all these cultural practices are not Islamic as the perception seem to portray. Rather Islam was able to contextualize or acculturation the religion to marry with the culture of the people. This approach is worth emulation by Christians for mission.

## **2.7 Gonja after 1950**

Meanwhile, the Gonja today is made up of seven political Districts namely: Kpandai, East Gonja, Central Gonja, West Gonja, North Gonja, Sawla-Tuna-Kalba and Bole/Bamboi Districts. They are also fairly present in five districts in the Brong Ahafo; Ejura/Sekyeredumase District in the Ashanti Region and Wa in the Upper West Region. Before independence, their land mass bordered Ashanti Mampong which means Atebubu (meaning Atta's house in Gonja), Kwame Danso and their surroundings were once classified as Gonja. There is a heavy presence of Gonja in these Districts, including Pru (Yeji) District, which once upon a time was under Salaga. It became part of Brong Ahafo region in 1959 when the area was carved out of the Northern region by President Kwame Nkrumah.

Today Gonjaland extends from Chindri which border the Eastern to Northern Volta and to Nyoli which border the Western to Upper West region and covers a tenth of the total landmass of Ghana. Added to the vastness of the area, is the multiple abundance of tourist attractions like the Salaga slave market, the popular Mole Park, the Laribanga Mosque and the mystic stone. Apart from these tourist attractions, the people talk of abundant natural resources like diamond in Damango, alluvial salt in the vicinity of Daboya, Gold deposit around Bole-Bamboi, lime stone for cement, the black and white Volta Rivers, which have produced the only manmade lake in Africa at Mankango and the well known smock industry at Daboya. The area is the largest cultivator of yam and above all the largest area cover of the Shea nut trees. In spite of all the available opportunities, the youth still migrate to the South in search of none existing, but menial jobs. The people are very accommodating so the area can be noted for different ethnic groupings in Ghana.

The worrying situation of the natural deposit in the area is the abounding or underutilization of these natural mineral deposits. The vastness of the area and the cover of the Shea nut trees are being eroded with political propaganda, as today most of these economic trees are being felled and replaced with *akasia* and *teak* trees in the name of creating jobs for the people. The tourist attraction which is the national heritage is also under developed. With the exception of the Mole Game reserve where there is a structured operation of mobilizing fund for national development, the rest are abandoned for no reason. The worst of the area is the neglect of the area for social amenities by successive governments.

## 2.8 Conclusion

The history and culture of the Gonja as narrated above, shows their orientation and their allegiance to Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa, the founder of the Gonja state and forms the base of the religion of the Gonja. A narration of the history, cultural and the demographic influence of the Gonja religiosity in appraising Christian Missionary activities has proven valid from the interaction of the information gathered as a necessity to this study and could not be in any variance to the interest of a study of this nature. The study of the culture helps us to do away with some prejudices. It also helped to shape the direction of questionnaire that should be distributed and the category of people we should interview.





## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE GONJA AREA**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter does a comparative assessment of two Missionary faiths in the Gonja area, Islam and Christianity. With the view to understanding the perspective from which each of the faiths operated in the past, the chapter explores the lacuna (long silence of Christian activities) of about sixty years (1884-1943) of no Christian activities in the Gonjaland. It would also inform the direction of interview questions and observation of this study, to ascertain the current state of Christian mission and why a Gonja will opt for Islam instead of Christianity. The chapter also spells out the method for data collection, study design, target Population, sampling size and procedures. It would also unravel the Gonja's view of Christianity and how this view has had an impact on Christianity today in the area.

#### **3.1 Islam's Encounter with Gonja before 1950**

This section of the study evaluates Gonjas encounter with Islam, before the introduction of Christianity in the area. From the brief Gonja history narrated in section 2.2, the fact that Gonjas had a belief system before Jakpa's invasion to Islamise the Gonjaland is not questionable. Islam and Gonja from then could not be separated because as mentioned earlier in this study (1.2) "that a Gonja is born first as a Muslim but could join any religion of their choice later in their lifetime". Geoffrey Parrinder, in his work seems to accept the assertion of Edward Blyden, who

“rejects the notion favoured by some anthropologists of the time that Negroes were inferior, but Blyden thought it would be more African to pass through Islam before rising to Christianity”<sup>49</sup>.

This is because he thinks evangelisation in Africa should not be in the hands of foreigners (foreigners here were referred to non-Africans), but the Africans. A statement that we support, because this would help minimise the adulteration of the African’s good cultural heritage.

According to the historical accounts of Gonja, by the end of nineteenth century (19<sup>th</sup>) section 2.2 of this work, Islam was the religion of the Gonja. And all five paramount seats of Gonja traditional area had Imams as spiritual heads attached to the chiefs. With the role of spiritual oversight, this came with the founding of the Gonja Empire so the Gonja practices Islam as a way of life because that is how Gonja today originated from. Again, the security orientation that places the Imams high on the political system of the Gonja setup is responsible for all spiritual matters, and this explains their attachment. Their role is more visible today, during funerals, naming ceremonies and other festive occasions, Unfortunately, in the cause of performing their duties things that used to be for children, such as *masa*, bread and monies given as offering or adowa, as time went on was taken over from the children and eventually today all those things have been given to the Mallams. During the interaction on the field we interviewed

Salagawura<sup>50</sup>, when did the Gonja people convert to Islam? In answering the question, his Muslim cleric Baba Ibrahim who sometimes acts as spokes person said “Nkramo Nsowa brought Islam to the whole of the Gonja area. They have a section in Kpembe; they are referred to as Sakpare. When the warlords came there, their headquarters was at Buipe. As far as Gonjaland is

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<sup>49</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *Africa’s Three Religions*, London, Sheldon Press,

<sup>50</sup> Interviewed with Alhaji Kanyiti Osman Fusheini, chief of Salaga in the East Gonja District 18/01/2016

concerned the Islamic headquarters and the chief for Muslims was at Buipe. The chief who first settled at Buipe, that is the first chief or leader of Islam came from Damongo and settled at Buipe. He was called "Napo" in the colonial records or in books. White people wrote "Naba," but it is "Napo". Even though the Muslims were Wangaras they met the land owners called the Ntrapo. The early Muslims who settled in the area actually intermarried with the Gonja and got children. It was those children of Gonja blood that converted to Islam. One of these children was selected to be the Muslim leader at Buipe and he was Napo. The cleric, Baba Ibrahim also said there was a different account that there was an Arab called Ayyub Ansar who settled at Larabanga, contributed to the spread of Islam in Gonja. According to Baba Ibrahim, Ayyub Ansar had a son called Yidan Braimah who succeeded his father and helped to spread Islam in Gonja<sup>51</sup>. It was during this time that war broke out in an area around Buipe. In fact we cannot tell whether the name is Kule or Kulor. We are saying this from Islamic records but it was a war between the Yagbonwura called Ndewura Monwura and his enemies. The war was fought for years without stopping and one chief brought a Muslim from an area called Begho, it is in Nsowa language. The people of Buipe brought a Muslim from Begho around Mali. When he came he was sent to the battle ground. At that time the Buipe people were losing but he offered prayers and they won. He then asked them whether they were not praying or had become unbelievers. They could not answer him so he decided to convert them into Islam.

However, there is a record on Larabanga people tracing their origin to an Arab called Abu Ayub

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<sup>51</sup> The chief's account also confirms Levzion's accounts in *Muslims and chiefs* p 72-76



Ansari<sup>52</sup>, It is curious to note that Levztzion accounts for names like “Yidana Bureima and the brother Dokurgu (‘the old man’). Yidana Bureima prayed for Jakpa and helped him to attain victory in his wars until they conquered Gonja, and Yidana settled at Larabanga. Yidana brought with him an old Qur’an from Madinh, which is still kept at Larabanga, and is venerated by the Gonja”<sup>53</sup>. The researcher is of the view that Yidana (meaning house owner in Dagomba and Manprussi) and Dokurgu (old man) could not be Arab names, but rather Dagomba. Are the two brothers (Yidana and Dokurgu) migrants who settled in Madinah and had a fore knowledge of the area, or they were natives of the area and had contact with Jakpa at Madinah and submitted because they wanted to return to their land? This may help in their contribution to the propagation of the Islamic faith among Gonja and Dagombas for years.

As far as the Gonja is concerned instead of conflict between Islam and traditional leadership the two rather went hand in hand. This means that Gonja and Islam are inseparable. A Gonja does nothing without attaching Islam to it. It could be marriage, naming ceremony or even death. Eventually it is a Muslim who will pray for him or her<sup>54</sup>.

This statement of the chief seems to be the position of the Gonja when it comes to their relationship with Islam. Unlike most of the West African countries whose encounter with Islam was basically as a result of some superiors who visited Makkah and came back with the religion to the people, Parrinder on his part says “The diffusion of Arab traders coming over the Red Sea, intermarrying

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<sup>52</sup> N. Levztzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. A study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial period*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968 p 72

<sup>53</sup> Ibid p.72

<sup>54</sup> An interview with Salagawura Kanyiti Fusheini



with coastal peoples, and even adopting their language instead of Arabic”<sup>55</sup> paved way for the religion. Gonja was not different. We need to state here clearly that, in appraising Christianity in an area with Islamic influence there will be such an entrenched position.

Besides this was another account which stated that “the Gonjas were partially converted to Islam because they were impressed by the miraculous routing of the enemy at Kawlaw (Kolo) and wanted to keep the Muslims for continuous prayers for them so that they could continue to win in all their wars<sup>56</sup>. This would enable them to establish their own Kingdom and thereby increase their fortunes by accumulating more wealth. “After their conversion Chari Manwura asked Mallam Mohammed Labayiru (Fati Morukpe) to come with him and offer prayers for him unto Allah so as to divert mishaps and evils which might tend to bar his advance and promised to reward him if he was successful in his adventure. An agreement was made at the camp, which was sealed by an oath taken on the Qur’an, binding both parties to keep the agreement. The agreement was: (i) That Fati Morukpe should go with the Ngbanya (Gonja) army and implore God for his success; (ii) That the articles reward comprising; One hundred slaves (men and women) One hundred cattle, One hundred horses, One hundred donkeys, One hundred sheep, One hundred goats and One hundred gowns. From the time of the taking of the oath on the Qur'an open hostilities between Chari Manwura and Lata Dii Ngoro Jakpa ceased”<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *Africa's Three Religions*, London, Sheldon Press, p 193

<sup>56</sup> Levtzion, "Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. A study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial period", Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, p 72

<sup>57</sup> kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/03/**Gonja**. Levtzion quoted this in his work *Muslims and chiefs* p. 52.

There may be many other versions of Gonjas encounter with Islam and their religious conversion to the religion that we have not mentioned in this study. A visit to any Gonja community today would question why their choice of Islam than any other faith. When it comes to social infrastructure that addresses their holistic needs Islam has virtually nothing in the area to show. With the exception of Mosques built in some of the communities, English and Arabic Schools are numbered in some of the District capitals. Most of the basic schools in the area are Christian mission assisted, and in addition to this are some health centres to cater for their immediate health needs. This is why in appraising Christian Missionary activities, Islam which has a mission style like that of Christianity needs to be reviewed so as to juxtapose that of the Christian mission's approach.

### **3.2 Christian Encounter with Gonja before 1950**

In the background to this study under literature review, reference to some work David Asante, M. Buss and Theophilus Opoku in the Gonja area was made dating back to 1877, who are on record as pioneers in the area<sup>58</sup>. According to Basel Mission's record put together by Albert Otoo, Theophilus Opoku and Philip Kwabi conducted a missionary tour to Salaga which lasted from January 23, to April 25, 1878<sup>59</sup>. The same was in his (Theophilus Opoku) report to the church. "This included reports on the various populations along the valley of the Volta as far as Salaga, the

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<sup>58</sup> N. Levtzion, "Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. A study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial period", Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968 A reading of the pioneers of the faith of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (ed.) Martin Knispel and Nana Opere Kwakye.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement, A Hundred and Fifty years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)* David Kpobi, Cephas Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo.ed. Waterville Publishing, Accra. 2011, p 167.

extent of slavery and the slave trade and the strength of both indigenous religions and of Islam. But he had some good things to say about the people. He saw them to be 'free' independent, industrious and intelligent people; It was only the blessing of Christianity they lacked, so as to become an excellent and rich nation."<sup>60</sup><sup>61</sup>

All these people spent some time in the Gonjaland especially in Salaga in the latter part of the nineteenth century (C19th) but could not make the needed impact as enough records are not there to show that there was any planted seed at the time<sup>62</sup>. In order to explore why Christianity did not seem to make an impact on Gonja "It was during this journey that Theophilus Opoku composed the famous Presbyterian funeral Hymn in Twi 791 '*Dhoho ne mamfrani na meye wo fam ha....*' (I am a stranger and sojourner on this earth), during his isolation at Salaga when he had smallpox"<sup>63</sup>. According to the accounts, "in 1879 there was another visit by the missionary architect, Philip Buss. He was accompanied by fifteen carriers each carrying pieces of cloth which Buss sold at Salaga market in order to purchase horses, dairy cows and sheep for the mission station at Begoro. A third visit to Salaga was organised in 1883-1884 by Muller, David Asante and Dr. Mahly, the mission medical doctor and the trader Gottfried Zimmerman"<sup>64</sup>. Even though in his work *Pioneer Series, Owura Nico, Pioneer and Church Leader 1965*, Debrunner

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<sup>60</sup> Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement, A Hundred and Fifty years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)* David Kpobi, Cephas Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo.ed. Waterville Publishing, Accra. 2011, p. 61

<sup>62</sup> Martin Knispel and Nana Opare Kwakye, *Pioneers of the Faith, Biographical Studies from Ghanaian Church History*,ed,Akwapem Presbytery Press, 2006, p 67

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p 54

<sup>64</sup> Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement, A Hundred and Fifty years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)*, David Kpobi, Cephas Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo, ed., Waterville Publishing, Accra. 2011, p. 230



acknowledged that, some attempts were later made to the area around 1889-1890 by Nicholas Timothy Clerk which did not also make any impact<sup>65</sup>, records still show that there was no church planted during the period.

The concentration or bias on the Basel Mission here is simple because, all this while no activity was going on in any of the Paramountcies. Apart from the Basel Missionaries' work in Salaga, available records show that the earliest the other paramountcies had a church planted was as follows; the Worldwide Evangelical Crusade Mission (WEC) and Evangelical church of Ghana (ECG) began work at Damongo in 1953 and at Buipe in 1971; the Catholics founded the parishes of Damongo in 1955, Salaga in 1961, Bole in 1965, and Tuna in 1979<sup>66</sup>; the Methodist began work in Damongo in 1954, Bole in 1961 and Salaga in 2015, as stated under literature review section (1.10) after "the mission work by the Methodist Church Ghana began again in 1952 when the church set up the Evangelism Campaign Committee, with A.W. Banks as a member. The team surveyed the work in the north and visited the Gonja Development Corporation in Damongo"<sup>70</sup>. In all this Tuluwe, Kusawugu and part of Wasipe that constitute the Daboya and its environs was without any work. This means that before 1950 with the exception of Salaga, the whole Gonja was without a church.

The lacuna between the 1885 and 1950 of Christian missionary activities in the Gonjaland might have raised a lot of concern within the Christian fraternity. The question worth asking is what happened in the area in the long sixty years of no Christian activity? Why did activities in Salaga

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<sup>65</sup> Debrunner, H. W., *Pioneer Series OWURA NICO*, Waterville Publishing House, Accra 1965, p16

<sup>66</sup> Peter Baker, *Peoples, Languages and Religion in Northern Ghana*. GEC/Asempa, Accra 1986, pp 36 <sup>70</sup>Bartels, F. L. *The Root of Ghana Methodism*. Cambridge, London, pp 262



(Kpembe traditional area) that were started by the missionaries stop, especially, with reference to a report of Theophilus Opoku, which seeks to portray the area as fertile, ready and conducive for mission work stop? Again, after his report, there were two other visits mentioned above which never showed any resistance of the people in the area. The report from the visits of David Asante and team concludes the people's preparedness for Christianity. Why then did the work not continue? Or was it that the subsequent visits came out with an adverse report of the area after the Theophilus report, which was not acknowledged? After the work had finally taken off in the area how much impact has Christianity had on the Gonja? These and many questions inform the decision to carry out this study so as to assess work in the area after over fifty (50) years of intensive Christian activities, so that all this could be answered at the end.

Besides this visit by the Basel missionaries to Salaga, the rest of the paramount area appears not to have any mention of any attempt of Christian missionary activity until 1950. This if is true should be a cause of worry for a Christian to evaluate. Especially, when at this same time southern Ghana was wide spread with the faith, and the upper region and part of Northern region especially among the Mamprussi some work was going on. But what was the actual cause of the area not being reached at the time was readily not clear. "Even though some study revealed that the main difficulties revolved around three different conditions prevailing in the North, namely environmental, that is geographical and cultural differences between the North and the South; the

attitude of the colonial administrators in the north during the period; and the prevailing influence and strength of Islam”<sup>67</sup>.

For the actual start of work in the area, the Presbyterian accounts revealed that it was in 1948. Even though the Evangelical Church of Ghana (ECG) and Worldwide Evangelistic Crusade (WEC) Mission had visited Damongo, there was no planting of seed. Meanwhile, oral story by a Muslim Imam in Salaga says in 1947 a white missionary on a horse visited Salaga and was received by him a Muslim cleric by name Mallam Baba (a picture of the Whiteman and himself was shown by the Mallam). There is a story of the Missionary visiting Kalande, an Akan community five miles from Salaga off Salaga Bimbilla road. At a meeting with the then chief of the community, Nana Akwasi Agyapong, asked why he should believe in his God and throw away the stool which the whole village adored? The missionary prophesied his death with the statement “I am going and if I don’t meet you on my return, greet your fathers for me”. This statement came to pass in less than six months. The interaction of the missionary and the Mallam, and that of the chief of Kalande might have buttressed the Basel Mission’s attempt at the Salaga work<sup>68</sup>. Under the literature review (1:10) that “in 1948, during the Presbyterian church’s Synod held at Akropong Akuapem, the Synod re-launched an appeal for a volunteer to begin the pioneering work in the North. When after the appeal, Emmanuel Asante asked for a piece of paper. He wrote down his name on the paper

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<sup>67</sup> Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement, A Hundred and Fifty years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)*, David Kpobi, Cephas Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo, ed., Waterville Publishing, Accra. 2011, p. 207

<sup>68</sup> Oral narration of the history of the Presbyterian church in the area by researchers’ father who was among the first seven convert of the Basel Missionaries in 1948, when Rev Emmanuel Asante and his team arrived in Salaga.

and presented it quickly to the Synod Clerk, C.H. Clerk, who in turn passed it on to the Moderator, S. S. Odorkor. He announced

Emmanuel Asante's name to the big gathering. The delegates stood up and sang Twi Hymn 152

Verse 1: Now PHB 276

After the singing, the Moderator offered a short prayer asking God's blessing on God's work. "That was the proudest moment in my life" Asante exclaimed. "An amount of twenty-five pounds (£25) was collected from some enthusiastic members to help God's work". A subcommittee was appointed to plan the modalities and report to the Synod Committee for approval before the end of the year. The members were: Rev Otto Rytz, leader, E.K.O. Asante, J.N. Smith, and Mr Abraham Anane, visiting teacher from Asante Mampong.<sup>69</sup>

A narrative of the journey to Salaga which finally had a seed planted according to Berinyuu has it that "The team met in October 1948 in Kumasi after the Synod. The following Monday we left Kumasi in a truck driven by Rytz and came to Yeji on the Southern bank of the river Volta. We went and reported to the chief and his people and to inform them about the purpose of our journey. They received us warmly and promised to give us all the necessary help. They selected four young men as our guides and to help to carry our luggage to the next resting place. We woke up early next morning and after prayer we started our journey. After a couple of miles away, certain speculations rose in our minds. The carriers were speaking in their own language, which we did not understand. We thought that the carriers would take us on a wrong path and escape with our

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<sup>69</sup> Minutes of Synod held at Akropong-Akuapem 10-23 April 1948. Business arising from minutes—a page report on the work in the Northern Territory,



luggage, or attack us and even kill us in the bush. We therefore took our map to check our path. Then we offered prayer and mustered up all the courage, trusting in God; we continued the journey without any fear. We went westward from Buma and Telkpa until we reached Abrumase, a village where we stopped and spent the night. The chief and his people received us gladly. After an evening service, they asked us to appoint a teacher for them to open a School and a Church. We promised to give their request serious consideration as soon as possible when we got back to our station. This request also encouraged us to continue our journey with hope”<sup>70</sup>.

This account of Berinyuu could not be the true picture of the journey, especially for people going to a place for the first time. The team’s destination was Salaga, a popular market centre judging from the route described by Berinyuu. From Yeji the team moved back south through a route that would take days before they could get to Salaga. Whereas going through Mankango towards the North is only half day’s journey even on foot. It must be mentioned that, at the time of this visit, the only route to the North was Atebubu, Yeji through Mankango, as this Volta Lake was then a stream which was easily crossed by commuters, until 1965 when Kwame Nkrumah created the dam. There was no road through from Kintampo to Tamale until the late 70s. Secondly, the vehicle with which they were going could not have gone through the said route mentioned by Berinyuu in his work, since there were no motorable roads to Salaga even today. Hence they chose some people to carry their load, which could be risky for the team who already had a negative perception of Northerners.

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<sup>70</sup> B. Abraham, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ghana*, Asempa Publishers, Accra, 1997. P 43



### 3.3 Islam and Christianity as Missionary Religions in Gonja

From the historical narration on the Gonja people above, there was a clear line of belief system and orientation the Gonja may have had before the arrival of Islam and Christianity. Hence to assess an inception of Christianity that has not proved a worth of protection for a people whose belief was idol worshipping and Islam orientation, it is important to first understand whether the people still believe in African Traditional Religions and if not; what has Islam done for the area to guarantee total acceptance even though the tribe was not wholly Islam. What was the mode of operation of the Muslim clerics or traders who introduced the Gonja area into Islam? And what lessons are there for any religion apart from Islam to learn.

Even though records have it that Islam is professed throughout Gonjaland, practising of the religion is synonymous to the practice of African Traditional Religions. This in effect means Islam as a religion, is only a way of life when it comes to Gonja. This means the majority of Gonja bear Muslim or Islamic names but practise less, especially in the countryside. The allegiance of the people to Islam is not news, as discussed above; they may not have any option today because their forefathers pledged to pay an allegiance with Ndewura Jakpa after the conquest. Again, the Gonja are psyched to see Islam as the security for their lives. Furthermore, the missionary activities of Islam accommodated the Gonja with what they believed before the arrival of the founder and the religion of Islam. Integration of the Muslim traders and clerics within the communities was an influential factor of Islams propagation, because upon their arrival they intermarried with the people which eventually became the starting point of influence.

On the other hand the Christian missionary activity approached the area from a foreign point of view or western type of religion. Islam had been part of the Gonja people for over four hundred (400) years before the arrival of Christianity and as such they see the Islamic faith and the Gonja tribe as inseparable. It has been their source of security, during wars and famine or any natural catastrophe. The chief's palaces have the Gbanya traditionalist and the Kramo (Imams) as mandatory for all Gonja paramount and sub-chiefs.

When the Christian missionaries arrived to seek the blessing from these royals to start Christian religion which indirectly will oppose the beliefs and source of livelihood of the Gbanya and Kramo, common sense may have suggested that they may not fully support the coming in of any such religion. Christian missionaries may have arrived in the Gonjaland with very good motives. Hence, the widespread of Basic mission schools, Health care centres and Hospitals to help in the holistic development of the people. The team of Theophilus Opoku, Buss and David Asante may have arrived there like the Islamic missionaries with modest integration, lived with them in their homes and ate their food but not without some caution. This is because though Ghanaians, they came from the southern part of the country and had reservation about some types of food in the area. Whiles on the other hand the Muslim missionaries (traders and clerics) had no problem eating despite their foreign background. But for Christians, the most challenged areas that may characterise their work among the Gonjas, includes their position against polygny which was widespread in the area. The demonization of some of the cultural practices in the area mentioned in section 2.3 of this study, by Christianity has full endorsement by other religions that preceded Christianity among the

people. Christianity could not however, convince or assure the people the full protection of the Gospel, as is the case of Islam in times of social calamities like war, famine, etc.

### **3.4 Christians responses to these Cultural Beliefs of the Gonja**

“Christianity had not made much conscious efforts to engage the traditional culture in dialogue with the Gospel. Consequently, aspects of traditional culture such as drumming and dancing, oath, pouring of libation, festivals, puberty rites, polygyny and functions connected with the Stools/Skins remained points of contest between the church and the traditional setup. Even though some missionaries had sympathetic attitude towards some aspects of the Ghanaian culture, the general attitude might not have helped matters. The main reason was their failure to divorce the non-Christian aspect from these customs some of which they could have used as they did with the Ghanaian language and the African herbalists”<sup>71</sup>.

Missionary activities in the study area had a mix reaction to the above cultural beliefs of the Gonjas. This variance came in different forms, with doctrine interpretation to these cultural beliefs of the people. Even though the Christians came with the Bible, their worldview was clouded with denominational interest rather than looking for corporation. The Catholics response to these cultural practices was that of indifference, with the attitude of, “it is God we are all worshipping”. The Protestant took a passive position, very conscious on selected cultures, pronounced or approached each case on its merit. The Pentecostal/charismatic and the African Independent Church (AIC), popularly called “*Oneman Churches*” on the other hand attacked and demonized

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<sup>71</sup> Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement, A Hundred and Fifty years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)*. David Kpobi, Cephass Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo, ed., Waterville Publishing, Accra. 2011, p. 367



the cultures as fetish. The stands of various denominations painted a certain picture to the people, because the African primal religions and Islam had seen nothing wrong with the culture of the people. The fanatic's *shrines lords* as mentioned in section 2.5 trumpet the issues that these "strangers" are trampling upon the cultural values of the Gonja tribe.

### **3.5 An examination of the effects of these responses to Christianity today**

Christian Mission has never degraded the culture of the people. What seems to be the practice had been to study those cultural practices and modify it. A reading of Paul's work very carefully one thing Paul does is to identify himself with the people in order to win their hearts. For example, the Bible says in Acts "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the Gentile worshippers and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there...."<sup>72</sup> Currently among the Gonjas the response to the Christian faith does not seem to be very impressive. The sad story of Christianity in the area is the closing down of some early stations like Abramase, Telkpa, Buma and many other communities that were started by the Missionaries as mentioned above. These places are without any Christian activities today. The state of Christianity is visible in the area, as less than a tenth of the total Gonja communities have churches. And even the communities with churches are missions established or related churches and few of the Pentecostal Council churches, but with the charismatic and the African Independence Churches, they are less visible in the Gonja area<sup>73</sup>. Most of the active churches are made up of settler members and sister

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<sup>72</sup> Acts 17:16-34, New King James Version

<sup>73</sup> Ghana Evangelism Committee, Third Northern Ghana Church Survey, Facing the Unfinished Task of the church in Northern Ghana, Provisional Report March 2014, pp 15-21



ethnic groups like Nawuri, Nchumuru and other non-Gonja living in the area. The Gonja are virtually not reached to, because of the mode of operation, by refusing to identify with the people.

### **3.6 Mechanism to Evaluate Christian impact on Gonja**

This study is a qualitative research, employing descriptive case study design, which describes characteristics associated with the subject population, and in particular factors that make them behave the way they do. The study used a descriptive design because it enables the researcher to collect large quantity information about the population being studied. The objective of this study was to assess the impact of Christianity on Gonja. Data was collected from individuals within the target area between September 2015 and January, 2016. No introduction letter was issued for consent to collect data from the respondents; this was possible because of the openness and readiness of the people to share at all times. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents directly by the researcher. For those respondents who were not available the researcher visited the second time before getting the entire targeted respondents. Aside the questionnaires administered to respondents, direct interviews were also conducted with some personalities in and outside the research area who could volunteer vital information.

The field work seeks in-depth evaluation of the impact of the Christian faith on the Gonja; hence it would not be conclusive if the custodians of the land are not spoken to. The researcher booked appointments and visited all five Paramountcies; Kpembe, Bole, Tuluwe, Kusawugu and Wasipe (Daboya) to speak to all the lords (chiefs) of the Paramount areas who narrated their views as handed over to them. This also gave the researcher the opportunity to interview some Muslim clerics attached to the palaces.

### 3.7 Some Contributors to Christian Mission in the Area

David Mensah, a Moo philanthropist working in the Bole/Bamboi and West Gonja Districts in the last decade as missionary without an affiliated denomination, yet opening churches through his philanthropist work was interviewed to solicit his view on the study<sup>74</sup>. Besides him the researcher interviewed a couple Mr and Mrs Terry Ruff who have sole interest of planting Gonja speaking congregation's churches in the central Gonja and Kintampo North Districts<sup>75</sup>. Since the interest of this study was for the Christian faith, most Pastors and church leaders in the communities visited were interviewed to have the real picture of how many Gonjas are in their respective churches. Though not all denominations were contacted, data gathered gives enough ground to draw conclusion of the study of the area.

Another group of personalities whose side of Christian activity had been sort was I. A. Sowah and Isaac Fokuo respectively. Sowah first worked in Salaga and Damango as Evangelist in 1954 before he was commissioned and worked in the same area as Pastor in the late 60s for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. On the part of Isaac Fokuo who is half a Gonja and half an Asante, and a church historian and a Minister of Presbyterian Church of Ghana who served as a

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<sup>74</sup> David Mensah is a PHD holded in Theology from a Canadian seminary, and because of his Scripture Union background had an Agricultural station in Janga in East Mumpurisi District in addition to what his doing in West Gonja and Bole Bomboi Districts. He had contributed a lot in women empowerment through micro finance in the area today.

<sup>75</sup> This interview seeks to assess how far these couple had contributed in the Christian activities in the Gonjaland.

<sup>80</sup> Sowah and Fokuo are both ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Their respective knowledge from two tribal background of the study area sought to enhance a fair conclusion.

Chairperson of the Northern Mission Field<sup>80</sup>. Daniel Gbande, General overseer of ECG, P.M. John a first WEC missionary to Mpaha area in the 1980s, and Madam Jeanette Zwart WEC missionary who helped in the translation of the New Testament into Gonja language<sup>76</sup>.

### **3.8 Exploring Colonial Directive and its impact on Gonja Christianity**

“In 1884 Germany had occupied a part of the coast and called it Togoland. In about 1890 they extended their influence to the interior beyond Buem as far as to Salaga. The British on the Gold Coast also had their eye on the same area”<sup>77</sup>. It was this colonial political struggle for the North that led the colonialists to declare the North an Islamic territory. Some prominent Gonja personalities such as Alhaji Nuru Jawula (Lepowura Kpembe) and Ahmed Jinapor, Lecturer of Cape Coast University were interviewed to share their thoughts on how this struggle had delayed Christian activities in the Gonja area and by extension the Gonjas’ acceptance of the Christian faith<sup>78</sup>. The division of the area put the Southern territory which is Gonja under one commissioner who did not enforce the above directives, but this did not have any bearing on the late arrival of Christianity in the area. Meanwhile because of the perception that the whole of the Northern Ghana was the same and one people the area was not reached by Christians because of the political atmosphere.

In addition to the above, we participated and observed all cultural activities of the communities.

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<sup>76</sup> The Evangelical Church of Ghana (ECG) and Worldwide Evangelism Crusade (WEC) was the second Missionary church in the Gonjaland, some leadership of this church home and abroad was contacted.

<sup>77</sup> Debrunner, H. W., *Pioneer Series OWURA NICO*, Waterville Publishing House, Accra 1965, p28

<sup>78</sup> Nuru Jawula (Alhaji) and Ahmed Jinapor are both royals of Gonja, and each of them could have his strength as far as the history is concern. Especially, it is from their religious orientation.

This was to avoid prejudices of new developments of Christian impacts among the Gonja people.

### **3.9 Demography of Respondents**

The research targeted population is One hundred and Fifty (150) within Gonja area. The unit of analysis for the study is any individual who is currently residing in Gonjaland, and those who are Gonjas with information and living outside the area. Organizations like; Bureau of Ghanaian Languages (BGL), Ghana Institute of Linguistics and Bible Translations (GILBT), Ghana Statistical Services and Ghana Evangelism Committee, who carry out annual surveys, were all contacted for their views of the area.

Since it was impossible to interview everybody to solicit their views, the following groups were considered.

- i. Individuals living in the area: 50
- ii. Non- Gonjas who have worked in the area as missionaries: 10
- iii. Gonjas who are living in the area and not Christians: 50
- iv. Christians living in the area: 30

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

This research endeavoured to obtain an informed consent from the respondents before undertaking to collect data from the field. Objectives of the research were explained and made known to the respondents no matter their literacy level, so as to solicit their informed consent. High level



confidentiality on the information provided by respondents through interview or questionnaires was assured and maintained.

### 3.11 Conclusion

The approach in this chapter depended largely on modern technological approach of gathering information; these are phone calls, google form chats, electronic mails, voice recording and in addition direct contacts made by the researcher in the various communities of the target area. The field work was not sacrosanct and the results were gathered from the respondents. Even though the interviews and questionnaires targeted the middle class, more attention was given to the low class Gonja who might not have good education; but their grip on oral tradition contributed a lot to this study. This would be evident in the next chapter during the discussion of the field work. Christian missionary activities might not have reached all communities in the five paramountcies of Gonjaland today; the reality might be that it is not as a result that the Gospel was not preached. Furthermore, the strategy of the Muslim traders and clerics played out well for the acceptance of Islam by the Gonja, especially the security or protection of the Gonja was assured with Islam as a religion in times of natural calamity. Meanwhile, on the part of the Christianity, the faith was introduced with foreign culture, demonizing certain practices of the people, without recourse to cultural orientation and beliefs of the Gonja. Some interaction on the field suggested a perception that the Christian has still not made a conscious effort of their activities to appeal to the minds of Gonja.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the data collated from the field to authenticate the real state of Christian missionary activities in the Gonjaland from 1950 to date. The data analysis and discussion sought to discover whether there were any challenges a Christian missionary needed to surmount in reaching out to the Gonja. The purpose of the field work was to ascertain the Gonja people's acceptance of Christianity. The analysis thus answers the following questions; how has the early missionaries' work promoted Christianity among Gonjas? Are there any negatives on the part of Christian activities that have had impact on Christianisation of the Gonja people? What new direction is needed for Christian missionaries' activities in the area?

#### **4.1 General information of Respondents**

The respondents for this study were drawn from various categories of the people as mentioned in section 3.9. The purpose of the varied target group and individuals was to obtain divergent views on the state of Christianity in the area. In all 150 respondents were targeted within and outside the five Gonja paramountcies. A total of 115 respondents were reached out to 87 individuals were issued with questionnaires, while 28 individuals were interviewed within and outside the target area. These include 93 males and 22 females. Three out of the five paramount chiefs were interviewed and the Yagbonwura the overlord of the land was also contacted.

Apart from these personalities, organisations like Ghana Evangelism Committee, Bureau of Ghanaian Languages (BGL) and Ghana Institute of Linguistics and Bible Translations (GILBT) were also contacted to verify information in relation to churches in the area. This was also to ascertain the availability of language materials for evangelisation of the area.

#### **4.2 Non- Gonjas who have worked in the area as missionaries**

Four Non- Gonjas who have worked in the area as missionaries were interviewed for their experience in the area, and what in their view has contributed to the state of Gonja Christianity today. These include; Ishmael A. Sowah a Ga, Jeanette Zwart a Dutch National, Plavila Mathew John a British of Indian origin and Isaac K. Fokuo an Asante and half Gonja.

Sowah was one of the pioneer missionaries to the Salaga and Damango Districts. He succeeded Rytz and the wife, after they ended their service in Ghana in July, 1965. Sowah, who had already served in Salaga as an evangelist, was with Rytz at Damongo together with C. J. Natomah to translate the Acts of the Apostles and some Bible parables into the Gonja language. As an evangelist and minister who worked among Gonja, Sowah in recounting his story responded that the Gonja are not resistant to the Christian faith because anytime they visited any Gonja community, it did not matter how many times and wanted to share the message with them, the chief and all his people would give all the necessary cooperation and support needed without any problem. Some of the factors he saw as a hindrance were; firstly, it was a problem of communication. Secondly, is the Christian's failure to understand Gonja and the cultural orientation and thirdly, the strategy seemed always of imposition rather than a choice for the people.



Furthermore, in explaining the communication problem, revisiting or evaluating the past and the approach used in propagating the message, he likened it to sending a child to execute an action of greater importance above his or her class. So was the cost of the gospel through interpreters to the communities. But as to whether the people really received the message was another thing. According to Sowah the first point of call which was Salaga, received the message as far back as 1948. But it was the people of Kalande who were themselves not Gonjas, who were used in reaching out to the Gonjas. Yet the danger of using these first converts was that they were not educated people, so there was difficulty understanding what the missionaries were trying to communicate and what they were communicating to the people. According to Sowah they used sign language in communicating to these interpreters, with the assumption that, when they went out to the communities, they could communicate the right message to the Gonja. As to whether the exact question the people asked at the time, received the exact answers that could enable them make an informed decision was a different thing all together. He held to this view because, Abramase, Lamsa, Bunjai, all communities he visited at the time could not hold on to the faith because they could neither read or interact direct to ask proper questions about the Christian faith. The peer influence for Sowah was a major setback, because of the pressure of the already existing faith. Even though the people came out to meet the Missionaries any time they were visited, they never met as a church during the absence of the visiting Missionaries. This might have contributed to the close down of those stations shortly after the missionaries had left.

Secondly, the expectation of the people was not understood because many of the Gonja, who came forward to accept Christ as their saviour during the propagation of the message, had shortly gone



back to their roots. He was quick to imagine the religion before Christianity Islam, what language or approach did the Muslims use when they were reaching out to the people. The Gonjas had always been in a fix when their expectations are not met, whether to accept the faith or retain their belief as traditionalist or to embrace the Islamic faith.

Sowah added that, the strategy was more of imposition because all these years the church did not find it necessary to learn the language of the people and to preach in their mother tongue.

Equally, with the exception of the Lord's Prayer and Apostles Creed neither the service books nor the hymn books were translated into Gonja for the use of the people to give them a sense of belonging<sup>79</sup>.

Jeanette Zwart was contacted as a Missionary to the area, whether she had knowledge of history as recorded by Nehemiah Levtzion and others. What could account for the delayed takeoff of Christianity in Gonja area, after first six years attempt between 1877 and 1884? She had no idea since she was not around at that time and had not read anything about it. But she felt it could be that those bringing the Gospel were not aware or took into consideration the tremendous spiritual warfare surrounding the Gonja tribe".

Being a teacher, Zwart was asked whether Christian missionary activity lived up to expectation as far as Gonja area was concerned? Responding she asked "Whose expectation? God's or men's? I can only speak for myself. I learned and analyzed the language in order to give the word of God to the people. You will have to ask the Gonja's in the first place I have seen that even though the

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<sup>79</sup> Interview Ishmael Ayi Sowah on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

language proved to be a barrier for some missionaries, they have faithfully witnessed through a trade language and brought people to a living faith in Jesus Christ. They carried a good testimony among the people. God has blessed the work of dedicated servants who lived close to the Lord and worked prayerfully and sacrificially. If there was failure, it might have been through lack of language skills. On the other hand I have seen Gonja's counting the cost and not willing to pay the price of following the Lord. I don't know whether you would call this failure<sup>80</sup>.

On the reason why Gonja communities choose Islam rather than Christianity, She said, communities easily choose Islam. It is the road of least cost or resistance. I have not seen communities choosing "Christianity" as you call it. But if there are such communities, each person would still have to make a personal decision and will have to count the cost. Jeanette further pointed out that Christianity is not a "religion". It is a PERSON! Jesus Christ. Choosing to become a Christian is a personal and life-changing decision and an act of obedience. There is no force and no acting to please others.

For Jeanette, Christian Missionaries working in the area if they are not Gonjas by birth, should learn to speak the language and live with the people, show interest in them personally and as a community. Show Gonjas the Love of Christ; teach them to read the Bible which is available in Gonja as from February, 2016. Above all Christian Missionaries should live a life that is honoring God and a testimony to the people. Do what Jesus taught us to do. Make people hungry for the life you are living<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Jeanette Zwart on 11/12/15 Jeanette Zwart a Dutch National was a Teacher, Missionary and Bible Translator and now a Retired WEC Missionary to Buipe and Tuna. She lived in the Gonja land for 25 years, and another 5 years in Tamale <sup>86</sup>Ibid on 11/12/15

Plavila Mathew John<sup>81</sup>.

was contacted on his knowledge of what happened between 1878 and 1884 as mentioned under the literature review 1.10 by Nehemiah and Kwabena Poh of some work being attempted earlier. Where was the attempt made; who (church/mission) made the attempt and what the result was. In my opinion, Christianity has never really taken off as yet among the Gonja. There may be many reasons why Christianity did not spread as widely as in the southern parts. For instance

- a) There were no missionaries residing among the Gonjas in those early years. There may have been sporadic attempts to preach the gospel to the Gonja but no missionaries or church workers lived among them. This I find important in the Gonja context. When I lived in the Gonja village of Mpaha, we often would go to a nearby village every now and then to preach the gospel. We did this for a couple of years. But no church was planted until we moved to live in that village.
- b) I think Gonjas have the largest land area than any Ghanaian tribe. In the 1800s and early the 1900s, most Gonjas lived in villages which were not easily accessible. There were hardly any roads in those days. This coupled with the fact that there were so few foreign missionaries in those early years in the north, was a major limiting factor in the spread of the gospel among the Gonjas. I remember the story of two WEC missionaries in the 1940s, who cycled all the way from Tuna to Kpandai preaching in the Gonja villages along the route, yet they could not plant any church because they did not make time to live with the people.

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with Plavila Mathew John on 17/12/15 P. M. John as he is affectionately called a British of Indian origin. Is a retired missionary of WEC Mission who lived in or been acquainted with the Gonja area for 15 years



- c) Another factor may be that there were no Bibles or Christian literature in Gonja language.

Even if they were available, the people could not read them as most of the Gonja at that time were illiterate. There were no literacy programmes during that period to teach them to read and write.

- d) Another reason could have been that the missionaries who worked in those early times were resident in the Gonja area, but were not able to speak the Gonja language which limited their ability to communicate the gospel well.

In responding to whether Christian missionary activities lived up to expectation, Plavila Mathew John said, “when my wife and I lived in the Gonja area in the 1980s, there were very few missionaries living and working among the Gonja. In fact, other than a few Roman Catholic missionaries in Damongo, I cannot count more than five foreign protestant missionaries working among the Gonja – Jeanette Zwart in Buipe, the Knols in Damongo and my wife and I in Debre area. The number of Gonja pastors were also few. So, obviously mission activity was limited”<sup>82</sup>. This has always been the case among the Gonja; the lack of mission personnel was a real problem in the spread of the gospel. But those who were there, I believe, did a great work. Jeanette Zwart, for example worked hard to translate the New Testament into Gonja. Later, Janet Clarke who moved from WEC Kpandai Health Centre to Buipe to start the Gonja Literacy Programme did a good job promoting literacy programmes all over Gonja land. And the few Gonja pastors who worked with the missionaries were also true ambassadors of the gospel.

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<sup>82</sup> Interviewed with Plavila 17/12/15



In trying to probe further, we asked Plavila, have the missionaries' lives attested to the spread of Christian activities in the area? He said, I can speak only of the missionaries during my time. I believe they tried to live godly lives and helped the people they lived among in every way they could, practically and spiritually. Of course, missionaries are human beings and they had their failures and shortcomings. However, I do not think the shortcomings of the missionaries can be attributed to the lack of success in the spread of the gospel among the Gonja.

Assess what could have attributed to their success or failure in the area? In a sense, it is hard to measure success. If you measure success in Christian work in terms of thousands of church members, then the missionaries among Gonja were not successful. On the same token, our Lord was not successful either. What the missionaries were successful at was to lay a foundation for a Gonja church. They have lit a torch that the Gonja believers could and should carry forward.

The Gonja as a tribe has not been receptive to the gospel for a while. Maybe there was a time before Islam became strong among them, they were more receptive. I mentioned above the story of the two WEC missionaries going from Tuna to Kpandai on their bicycles sometime in the 1940s. On the way they visited Gushiegu where they preached the gospel to the people of the village. The Gushiegu people were interested in the gospel and wanted to learn more. They urged the missionaries to stay on and tell them more about Jesus. The missionaries replied that they were on their way to Kpandai but will return to them soon. But they were unable to keep their promise to return soon. Two years later when they returned to Gushiegu, they found the people had become Muslims. Apparently, months after the missionaries' visit, Muslim teachers came and converted the

village to Islam. The Christian missionaries lost their opportunity; they should have struck when the iron was hot.

Colonial influence as narrated under literature review 1.10 and 3.6 of this study mentioned the famous colonial "praxis", known as "indirect rule" and "In 1884 Germany takeover part of the coast and called it Togoland was explored, to ascertain the respondent view. In about 1890 they extended their influence to the interior beyond Buem as far as to Salaga. The British on the Gold Coast also had their eye on the same area"<sup>83</sup>. For this reason a question was asked, How in your view has the rift or struggle between Germans and British for northern Ghana in 1890 contributed to the late Christianisation of Gonjas? I do not think it has affected the attitude of the Gonjas towards the gospel in any significant way. I have never heard any Gonja speak about it in relation to their acceptance or rejection of the Christian message.

Plavila further mentioned that, there was a time when Islam was not strong among the Gonja people. At that time, Christian missions were not active among the Gonja. So, Christianity lost the initiative. Since then, Islam has become much more influential among the Gonjas and hence, they have become more resistant towards the gospel. So, now it is not a question of which of the two religions they will choose. They have already chosen Islam. It is now a question of whether the Christians, especially Gonja Christians, can present Christianity as a better way than Islam. The Bible makes it clear that Christ is the only way to God. If that is so, Islam is false. Gonja have chosen what is false. They must choose Christ or perish. So, it is the responsibility of the followers of Christ to continue to lovingly preach the gospel to the Gonja.

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<sup>83</sup> Debrunner, H. W., *Pioneer Series OWURA NICO*, Waterville Publishing House, Accra 1965, p28

Zwart had this to say, “With the growth of radical and violent Islam globally, some Muslims are becoming disillusioned with Islam. They are seeking truth and many are finding it in Christ, the only true way to God and salvation. Many missions report amazing number of conversions from Islam to Christianity all over the Muslim world”<sup>84</sup>.

Hence Plavila thinks, there are hundreds of Gonja villages without a Christian witness. Churches in Ghana need to take the challenge of evangelising these villages seriously, and plan to plant a church in each of these villages, and take concrete steps to see this happen<sup>85</sup>. On the part of Isaac Kwaku Fokuo an Asante and a Gonja Minister of Religion and a church historian who lived and got acquainted with the Gonja for about 20 years. Christian missionary activity lived up to expectation is a Yes and No. In the early days of Christian Missionary activity many indigenous Gonja were evangelized and baptized. The tragedy is that many could not continue in the faith due to threats from Islam. The other negative issue is that some of the indigenes who were Christian leaders were a bad example for the younger generation. With the European Missionaries Fokuo thinks they did a good job. For example, many of the places Rytz visited and evangelized are now without congregations. He thinks the African Missionaries could not faithfully continue with the work. Perhaps they did not have the needed resources. Their success however, can be attributed to their commitment and the power of the Holy Spirit. The challenge the Church faced was first and foremost Islam. Gonjas believe they are born Muslims. The conquest of Gonja land by Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa contributed greatly to this mindset. Jakpa planted a Muslim leader in every town or village that he conquered. Islam was then made the official religion of his kingdom just as

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid Zwart 11/12/15

<sup>85</sup> Ibid Plavila 17/12/15



Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire during his reign. The other challenge was the poor witness of the Gonja Christians. There was no clear break in their lifestyle. The light in them did not shine brightly enough. The third challenge is the persecution Gonja Christians had to undergo because of their faith. Fokuo believes Gonja would choose Islam for reasons stated above, and have this advice to new Missionaries who will go to Gonja area; Just be what Christ calls us to be. Be Christians in the true sense of the word. In the Lord our labour will not be in vain. Let me add that I have in my answers thought about the indigenous. Missionary work amongst the other non Gonja tribes seems to have had a better response. All said and done we must not lose sight of the fact that God is the Lord of the harvest. There is surely a bright light at the end of the dark tunnel<sup>86</sup>.

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#### **4.3 Some Christian leaders in the area**

Time with some Pastors who are currently working in the area reveal that Christianity has a long rope to pull. Statistics given by all church leaders interviewed show that Christianity is not getting any better as far as the Gonja is concerned. No denomination in the Gonja land today can pride herself with five percent of her total membership being Gonja. With exception of the new denominations that are springing up, denominations like Presbyterian, Catholic, ECG, etc. mention of a number of their Gonja stations that have closed down. These stations were not only closed down but the leaders who were Gonja have left the Christian faith and have now become Muslims. There was an admission of the fact that mission in Gonja area is like that of a Diaspora minister sent

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with Isaac Kwaku Fokuo 6/01/16



to maintain their own that have relocated to make ends meet. Most of these ministers are of the view that learning the language is of less importance as the few members they have, could understand either Twi or English hence the language or medium of communication during worship and for the Catholic church it had mostly been Dagaare and English, with exception of ECG even though it is a Gonja community.

This of course would give worry to a Parish chaplain who is a Gonja by tribe with about a total number of over six thousand parishioners and less than hundred are Gonjas and had just celebrated her 50 years of existence in Bole. For him, he cannot help but to conclude that Christians had not yet made that conscious effort to reach out to Gonja. For example, he mentions a priest who was posted to Damango as a missionary and on his arrival was rather sent to Damafia in the Upper West region to come and head Damango parish in a Gonja community. A story which is not peculiar to the Catholic church but to all denominations. For example, in the Presbyterian church, Damango, Salaga and Bole congregations were reserved for Akan speaking ministers and when recently missionaries were sent to Salaga and Damango from Germany, these missionaries were asked to go to Abetifi to study some Twi before going to these stations. This situation may not be different from the Methodist church which has been in Bole and Damango for more than five decades.

Meanwhile on the part of Terry Ruff a couple from United States of America evangelising among Gonjas gives me the following result of his work in the study area: for 2015 Baptism Breakdown by Tribe; Mamprusi 50 Bimoba 3 Chokossi 9 Gonja 84 Konkomba 5 Dagomba 35 Dagaare 31 Ewe 4 Bono 19 Sisala 2 Fulani 23 Mossi 1 Julia 12 Deg 3 Total 2015 baptisms 282. Attached are appendix two and three of communities he is currently working in, the names of contact persons

and number in each church. A work some Christians in the area fear its survival because of past experience.

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#### **4.4 Views of some Chiefs (Bewura) in some traditional areas**

We interviewed the Bolewura, Damangowura, Kpembewura (*Bewura*) three of the five paramount chiefs and Yagbonwura who is the overlord of the Gonjaland and other sub chiefs (*Bewurbi*) of the area. This was to explore whether oral informaton was pass on to these cheif's that informed some bases of the current state of christian faith.

Bolewura Mahama Abudu Pontonporon is a retired magistrate, "I have moved a lot in the cause of duty. This enabled me to interact with people of all sphere of life. I cannot say I don't know of Christianity. Christianity in Gonja should not be an exception. The Gonjas in my view have embraced Christianity. That is why the length and breadth of the land have churches. Besides, the choice of religion is personal; chiefs have a limited role to play when it comes to their subjects' choice of religion. Only to say that we as chiefs because of our founder Ndewura, have accepted to become Muslims<sup>87</sup>. In my family I know some who are Christians. We meet and deal with family matters without any hitches. What I am not able to say is their affiliations. So I cannot also remember the first time Christianity came to Bole, but as at 1940 when I was leaving here for Kpembe to start schooling there was no church and school in the whole area except Kpembe so all Gonja who wanted education, did so by attending Kpembe Primary. It was when we were in Salaga

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with Bolewura Mahama Abudu Pontonporon on the 12/01/16

that a church first came to Salaga and Gonja land. And the church from then started coming to talk about Jesus in our school. Some Gonjas like the late E. A. Mahama, late J.J. Bakari (Sankpanwura). accepted the faith and attended church but I did not because my family insisted that Christianity was not for Gonja, because it was a foreign way of life. Today, because of modernity young ones could make their choices without recourse to traditions and they are allowed.

The next chief we interviewed was the Damangowura, paramount chief of the Damongo traditional area. Known in private life as Mr James Lawu a retired Educationist who was a Christian and a Presbyterian and a Presbyterian. He was asked: “Sir, you were one of those who encouraged me at my tender age to accept the Christian faith, today what has changed so suddenly to make you a Muslim?” “I am a Muslim today because; immediately I was enskinned my people came and said, ha! Now the progress of this town depends on you and so you need to co-operate with us so that we can build this Kingdom for our people. They continued to remind me that, any time the need arises for performing any ritual I am supposed to provide the animal for the purpose.” “Why did you a strong Presbyterian and one time Presbyterian renounce your faith for the Muslim faith? Could not this have been the opportunity for you to tell them about Christ and the power of his blood?” He alluded to pressure from his people and explained that he could not provide an animal for sacrifice to other gods and then come and sit in the church, even though the Gonja chief is not supposed to go to the idols, sacrifices are done by the elders on his behalf.

As to whether he cannot be a Christian model chief of his time, this is what the chief had to say: “The Gonja is not like the Akan, because for most of the Akan chiefs they were born Christians before their new position and their subjects are also mostly Christians and believe in that as well.



But the Gonja whose ideology was founded on Islamic and African Traditional Religion will not understand. Besides this, you will not even be a good example to the up and coming Christians of your time.”

“Could you not have used your Christian brethren to pray to God in this direction?” “Even though I could,” said the chief, “it would not be easy as the Mallams would always be around you to make their prayers which the people had accepted over the years.”

What could contribute in the low spread of Christianity among the Gonja people? He said, Islam came with the founding of the Gonja Empire so the Gonja practices Islam as a way of life because that is how or where most of them earn their living. During funerals, naming ceremonies and other festive seasons, things that used to be for children, as time went on they took over those things from the children and eventually today all those things have been taken over by the Mallams.

Besides, the Islamic faith is so much impressive hence making it difficult to tolerate especially Christianity.”

Additionally, he said “the *ngebanyas* and the *nyamases* of the Gonja tribe are purely traditionalist and custodians of the Gonja land and are very difficult to reach.” To explain this further, he recounted that there is a brother who is a traditionalist who will never take advice or change a stand unless a circumstance beyond his control pushed him to soften that position, like an adage in Akan “*afotuonsakra nipa gyesâ nsôhwâ*” literally “advice does not change a person except temptation”.

Furthermore, he alluded that the Islamic religion had made them conservatives and many who practised it are difficult to witness to. In addition, it is liberal to the African Traditional Religions



and practices. And those who became Christians could not stand the test of time because they are most often despised or rejected by their relations or families.

Another factor has to do with the Gonjas not willing to travel and stay outside the Gonja land.

According to him, “In my encounter outside the region over the past thirty years as an educationist, I hardly met a Gonja in most conferences I attended. They are not in communities that they can be identified in any of the nine regions with exception of three namely: Brong Ahafo, Ashanti and Upper West regions. In the rest of the six, they are virtually absent. Besides, in their home region, they are not in the urban centres but in the predominantly farming areas. Yet most of them who attempted Christianity rather came back eventually without anything or without better lifestyle which in most cases will not encourage others”.

Damongowura wondered whether the early missionaries did help during their first encounter. The answer was in the affirmative, because they created job opportunities for the early converts and education to their children. They were employed as cooks and interpreters and they were paid for their services and the missionaries sponsored their children’s education to some enviable levels.

Why then didn’t they continue in the faith? “Yes they could not because most of them were not the appropriate materials they picked. Besides, most of the early converts could not use their new found faith to influence their immediate families, and their lifestyle was nothing to write home about. Most of them took to drunkenness and other reckless lifestyle which did not encourage the others to join them”.

The other factor for him is that, unlike the Upper Regions and the Dagomba areas where education was used as a tool for evangelism, Gonja land was the opposite. The Presbyterian Church has a lot of basic Schools in the length and breadth of Gonja land, however, no single second cycle institution

by any of the missions (except the Methodists' at Buipe). For the tertiary level, the least said about it the better. With the Basic Schools too, it is common head knowledge that they were not being managed by the Church, so its intended purpose for its establishment could not see the light of day. In most of them, there was no single Christian teacher in such schools let alone to impact Christian virtues in the children and religious instruction was handled by non Christians. Again, after their basic education they end up in public schools where a care free life is allowed and so they go through the mill without being grounded.

We further sought to find out whether Christianity has a future in the Gonja land. "Yes, he answered. When the secret of Islamic faith comes to light among the Gonja (by this he means it not being the only religion that can save) the people will follow the truth. Secondly when the primitive Gonja start travelling out of the land they would be exposed to some realities and would not allow themselves to be 'deceived'. Additionally, when settlers on the land embrace Christianity it would have a replica effect on some of the Gonja children and some adults. When the Gonja themselves start the crusade of evangelising the Gonja, the Gonja will appreciate that Christianity is the way for salvation.

At this point we tried going back to his personal life which he evasively declined. For instance, a question like "how will you encourage your own children and relations to become Christians" was asked three times but no answer was given. As to whether he would put all his thoughts and feelings on paper, the answer was no. He said the interactions are too much (meaning very busy); he has limited time for himself<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with Damangowura on 13/01/16, known in private life as James Lawu

The most important person to interview was the Yagbonwura the overlord of the Gonja land, Yagbonwura *Tuntunba Boresa I* ( meaning “it has jumped to meet, it is God who gives”). Moved from Kusuwuguwura one of the sub paramountcies to be the overlord when it was the time for Tuluwe, but because of ill health of Tuluwewura, he had the jump to become the Yagbonwura, hence his skin name. On his part though not educated, lauded Christianity for giving the first school of Kusawugu his home town. And it is not just Kusawugu but in terms of basic education the land had a fair share. According to the Yagbonwura, this contributed to the current number of elite Gonjas in the country. But for the religion you know that Gonjas are *nyamases* and cannot stop *nkpanyishin* (tradition of Gonjas, venerating their forefathers) but you Christians say its idol worshipping so a true Gonja cannot follow your religion. Our fathers are peace loving people and accept any group of people who would want to live peacefully with them. We give our land out for anything the church wants to do just that we have our religion already. But if you will allow us to keep our culture (*a dankari shin*) the Gonja (*kagbanyi*) can be a Christian<sup>89</sup>.

The Kpembewura Nyen Choru Ebore II (gets and gives thanks to God) was the last paramount chief to be interviewed. Because of his pre- knowledge of the interview he asked a question, “can three chiefs think the same way”? And ‘no’ was my answer. That is what you are forcing us to discuss this morning. Christianity (*Asorebi*), Islam (*Nkramo*) and Traditions (*Nyamase*) are three kings that rule the area with different spectacles. He thinks Gonja have embraced Christianity than any tribe, but it’s their own who have not encouraged the up and coming ones to join Christianity. When they come home they do not want to be part of the larger family, hence the religion was seen as one that

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with Yagbonwura Tuntunba Boresa I on 13/01/16



divides families. There are chiefs in this palace who were Christians but have to abandon their faith for the skins because Christianity will not accept them as chiefs but the Muslims will. As you know these skins are family properties that were handed over to us by our forefathers. The Gonja and Christianity are inseparable, as far as the ministers who have come to this area that I know, had respected our culture and continued to do so. The pastors in this area even mobilised from time to time to this palace to pray for me and my kingdom which I cherish even though am a Muslim and an Alhaji. Their schools are what help the rural Gonja to have education<sup>90</sup>.

But a sub chief in the palace whose direct sister is a Christian asked what the role of Christians is at funerals because he thinks it is what determines the future of the Christian faith in the land. Citing a funeral of a Christian he witnessed, the late Michael Mbema, no young person would like to be a Christian. According to the chief,, when the corpse was brought from Tamale, it was left in the room with Muslims praying, while the Christians were outside preaching and singing.

#### **4.5 Some Muslim Leaders in the area**

Two Imams were interviewed; one Dagomba and the other a Wangara who have been living in the Gonjaland the whole of their lives to share their views on the topic. For the Imams, Christianity is a foreign way of life and a religion of the past. That is the reason why Gonja are not Christians. Besides, those who are Christians know that Gonja who join that faith cannot succeed, because they know how Islamic faith relates to the tribe. Again, they know that Islam is a true religion but most of them join the Christian faith because the missionaries brought old clothing and other worldly things. On the issue why Muslims takeover funerals of Gonja Christians, they are of

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<sup>90</sup> Interview Kpembewura Nyen Choru Ebore II 18/01/16



the view that, we do not take over the funerals but their family heads invite us to pray for their relations. The researcher asked the Muslim cleric, do you not think if Muslims accept such invitation it is an indictment on the Islamic faith? Because when a non Muslim dies Muslims do not seem to look or go near the corpses but why would Muslims do this when Gonja Christians die? His response was because it is their family heads that requested, we pray for God to forgive their sins and pardon them. Even after they are dead? Yes we believe God is merciful and can grant him or her passage into eternity.

#### **4.6 Individuals who are not Gonja and living in the area.**

This study not only found it necessary to interview Gonja but appreciated the cosmopolitan nature of the Gonja area. Today Gonja also has some tribes who would comfortably call the area their home. Because their ancestors have lived with Gonja for over a century now. These are the Tamplumas, Nchumurus, Vaglas and Kperiba. These interviews were spontaneous without any consideration of religious backgrounds; hence the interest was limited to their knowledge of Christianity in the area and their view of the future of Christianity in the area. Views gathered across from respondents were that Gonjas are not against Christianity as a religion of salvation but they have the fear of being ostracised by their families. But evangelisation of the area had done little to give enough security and assurance for the few Gonja Christians.

#### **4.7 Gonja who are living in the area and not Christians**

The study further sought to enquire from none Christians who are Gonjas, what their views about the future of Christianity would be in the area. The summary of the respondents is, for the Gonja who is born and bred in an area where all he or she hears is the history of Gonja conquering the

other tribes, our interest is to seek how we can have our continuously dominant these tribes for our future. Christianity condemns *talisman and amulets* which Ndewura brought to us. What securities (kukunn) will Christianity bring to us in times of a calamity? This is why Christianity cannot gain grounds in the Gonjaland today and tomorrow. Even though there are Gonja who are Christians today and are giving birth, yet cannot change the situation in terms of numbers. He asked the researcher how many of their children are Christians, it is only for those in the cities but not in these our rural setting. That is why communities like Sisipe, Masaka and the rest churches cannot be reached with the Gospel. Besides, the Gonja have respect for their elders and ancestors when it comes to decision taking. Any Gonja who is a royal will be forced to abandon Christianity when it is his turn to take over the family skin for the fear that if he refuses, the grandfathers will make life difficult for him. And if that happens, the wife and children automatically will follow him as the head of family. Much as this is difficult for Christianity, technology and modernisation can change all things. Hence it is possible for Christianity to change some perceptions of the Gonja towards Christianity.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

From the interactions the researcher conducted and answers received from respondents the following are some of the highlights of the field work. It was established that Christianity in Gonjaland actually started around 1948 in Salaga, 1950 in Damango and 1961 in Bole among non-Gonjas, with settlers who had relocated there to make ends meet. This means the first missionaries got to the area to maintain or take care of Christians who have relocated to area. The true picture or

impression from the field is that Christian missionary activities seem not to be doing well, because many stations started by missionaries had since been closed down. The Gonja were the target but the Christians had not made conscious effort to reach out to them. And on the other hand, the first Gonja converts did not give a good testimony of the Christian religion hence the lukewarm attitude of the Gonjas to Christianity.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, REFLECTION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

After various interactions with primary and secondary sources of information, there were plausible cultural and traditional beliefs and perceptions that might have been glossed over in the time past. Some of these cultural and traditional perceptions were not in the fore knowledge of the Missionaries. Others like, death and funeral, drumming and ancestor veneration, the Missionaries might have a foreknowledge of these cultural beliefs and yet glossed over it, because it was misrepresented to the Missionaries as Islamic, hence they failed to appreciate the importance they are to a Gonja. This chapter seeks to highlight some issues raised on the field. And the reasons why Christianity has made least impact on the Gonja tribe. The findings would be summarized for easy understanding of the situation on the ground. Our opinion as gathered from the records and our observations from the field would form part of this chapter. Putting together records and our field finding, the study makes some recommendations for academic and social considerations. The chapter then ends with a general conclusion of the study.

#### 5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the second chapter of this study section 2.7, we pointed to the fact that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1878 – 1884) there was an attempt by the Basel Missionaries to start some work in the Gonja area. A work which did not make the desired impact, even though according to their report the ground was positive for a smooth take off. This event or period was not remembered or mentioned by the people during the field work of this study. Interesting to this study, the



question that comes to mind, was the issue that accounted for the discontinuity of a work that was very promising.

Again, the most revealing concern raised on the field was Christianity and Gonja Culture. This has had a serious setback for Christian missionary activities in the area. This was expressed very loud and clear in the chief's response to this study that the tag of Gonja culture as animist was the cause of the least Gonjas in the Christian faith. This was also identified by Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh in his review of the work, *Vision and Achievement*, which was quoted in section 2.8 of this study, where culture and idolatry were not differentiated by the Missionaries in the Gonjaland.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the missionary approach used in the Gonja area had been that of a Diaspora approach, that means there has not been a conscious effort to witness to the Gonja as a tribe. And rather, it was a missionary activity that seeks to maintain their own that have relocated to the area by all denominations. Hence, the least evangelization of the Gonja tribe according to the Ghana Evangelism Committee's survey results of 2014 as stated in this study above.

Another observation made from the field was the issue of expatriates or Western nationals in the area. Even though there were no genuine reasons given for their not living in the area, instances have shown that there are limited expatriate Missionaries who were successful in the Gonjaland, a situation which is not just in the past, but present also. With the exception of Buipe it is hard to see an expatriate stationed or living in any of the Gonja towns. This needs much to be desired, because if the perception that whites or Westerner were cursed, not live and prosper on the Gonjaland is true, then the culture and the spirituality of the Gonja people needs further interrogation. Additionally, in relation to the low Christianization of the area and the general

conception of the people that Christianity is foreign or Western type of life is something that needs further research.

It was surprising to hear from the GILBT literacy committee mention their concern of Gonja not having any valued document today. This could explain why the autography and phonology were written the way they are written today. Despite the many graduates who have completed Ajumako in Gonja language. Gonja are left behind in all facets of life. This also may answer why after sixty years of ministry worship books and hymn books are not available in Gonja language.

There was an issue which seems too remote to consider, yet was revealed to be an unpediment to the Christian faith in the Gonja area. This has to do with some tribes in Ghana that Gonja used to regard as inferior. When members of any of these tribes were posted to the Gonja area submitting to that authority was quite difficult for the people. The attitude of the missionaries and ministers not willing to learn the Gonja language as the medium of communication during worship discouraged the people and added to the perception that Christianity was a foreign religion.

## **5.2 Discussion of findings**

From the interviews, questionnaires and interactions, the following observations were made. Firstly, it seems Christianity in the Gonjaland has not received the needed attention from the Christian missionaries. This is because, out of the five Gonja paramountcies only three, namely; Kpembe, Bole and Wasipe have Christian presence. Kusawugu and Tuluwe are virtually left fallow without any church, and where there are members at all, they are few migrant settlers who were Christians that organised themselves along the river banks. Even where the church is wide spread among the three paramountcies the figures of Gonja in the churches look very gloomy. For example, in

the Bole District there are fifteen (15) different denominations with a Christian population of over thirty thousand members of the “District population of sixty one thousand, five hundred and ninety three (61,593)”<sup>97</sup>. Out of this number less than four hundred (400) are Gonjas (e.g. Catholic 83, Methodist 8, Presbyterian 8, Lighthouse 4, C.A.C. 5). A story which almost runs across the Gonjaland and even worse when one visits the Tuluwe and Kusawugu traditional areas. Churches in the area are not doing well, and in addition to the poor performance of the churches, those that were started by the Missionaries have been closed down and members have now become Muslims. The irony of the story of converts becoming Muslims is very interesting, because in most cases if he or she had been a free mind and not a Christian, the conversion to Islam would not have been the concern of the Islamic faith. A contact with the Ghana Evangelism Committee for their Survey results for the area has the figures of Gonja Christians from the three Northern regions. Northern region 2409, Upper West 30 and Upper East 19. Total Gonja Christians 2458<sup>98</sup>. Gonjas are fairly present in Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions hence the statistics of Gonja Christians was also taken and the figures are as follows; 1119 and 547 for Brong and Ashanti respectively. Total Gonja Christians for five regions of Ghana where Gonjas can be found more as mentioned above is Four thousand, one hundred and twenty four (4,124), a figure that is far below two percent (2%) of the total Gonja population in Ghana.

Another revealing challenge that is affecting Christianity in the area is lack of appreciation of the Gonja culture. The early missionaries’ attack of all Gonja traditions as atheism poses a challenge to all royals to accept the Christian faith and those who

<sup>97</sup>2010 Population & Housing Census, Summary Report of final results, Ghana Statistical Service May, 2012, p 103

<sup>98</sup>Ghana Evangelism Committee, Third Northern Ghana Church Survey, Facing the Unfinished Task of the church in Northern Ghana, Provisional Report, March 2014, Pp 35-38



accepted it reversed to Islam because of the position of Christianity, that if one is a chief he or she cannot be a Christian. This position of attack by Christians on some cultural practices, resulted in two of the five paramount chiefs; Damango and Tuluwe who were once Christians (former Catechist and Presbyterian respectively in the Presbyterian Church) in the Christian fraternity going back to the Muslim faith. This in itself has had a negative effect on the future of Christianity in the area. Today the Gonja whose palaces were *Gbanya and Nyamase* traditionally, now have Mosques. Gonja chiefs who are supposed to be traditionalists and not to pray in the Mosque, now go to Makkah and come back as Alhaji (e.g. Alhaji Jikumu the current Kpembewura Nyen Choru Ebore II)<sup>91</sup>.

Furthermore, the non-preparedness of missionaries to learn and use the Gonja language is one of the causes of the low spread of the Christian faith in the Gonjaland. During the interaction in the area, a prominent Gonja expressed or registered his reason for not accepting the faith. In 1956 when the Catholic Church opened the Damango Parish, a missionary, C.J. Vout was first posted there, instead of him coming to learn Gonja, he was rather sent to Dafiana in the Upper West to learn Dagaati to come and preach Dagara in Damango. A story which is not peculiar to the Catholic Church, but among all denominations across the land. Presbyterian church sent Peter Fleskenstein and Godline Bigalke to Abetifi to learn Twi when these two were going to Salaga and Damango respectively. Admittedly, all churches are using “foreign” language in Gonjaland during church services. When this concern was raised, the best the Catholic Church in Damango could do was to start Tuesday Evening service for Gonjas which is carried out through interpreters with low patronage. One thing the church does not know

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with V.I. Bukari on 18/01/16



is the Gonja has some ethnic pride which makes them have very little respect for other tribes, so if the medium of communication used is from tribe they look down upon, then it gives a negative signal, consequently creating feet dragging. Again, today if you go to the Dagomba areas, the missionaries who learnt the language are speaking it, whereas in the case of the Gonja the medium of communication is either English or Twi, and none is making the effort to reach them in their mother tongue. Evidence of this is in all churches in Gonja land where everything is in English and others in Twi or any other language of majority in the church other than Gonja.

Literature was also another factor. Throughout history where Christianity has excelled much depended on basic literature that simplify the salvation message for new converts to build up their new found faith. Work on the Old Testament translation into Gonja has just completed. "As we speak, the whole Bible has been translated into Gonja and has just been inaugurated. On in adequacy of literature in Gonja, we contacted some institutions like Bureau of Ghanaian Languages (BGL) and Ghana Institute of Linguistics and Bible Translations (GILBT). With the BGL they could not give a paper on Gonja because according to them they cannot have any Gonja to come and work there. But for the Ghana Institute of Linguistics and Bible Translations (GILBT), they have partnered with one chief Adams an Elder of Evangelical Church of Ghana at Buipe who is a Gonja and helped in the translation with some difficulty. We also had a chat with Chief Adams for more insight on his translation work and its effect on Christendom.

Education was the issue raised by one of the chiefs, because he felt that the church did well in basic education, yet there is no tertiary education either by the Church or the government. It was revealed that in 1961 Evangelical Presbyterian church, Ghana, entered the land through Katiejile and proposed to build a Training College at

Kpandai. The then Kanakulewura Jawula who was a candidate to the Kpembe skin rejected the offer with the reason that their children would be indoctrinated. The Bimbilla Naa on the other hand extended hand of friendship and offered land for the said facility, hence the E.P. Training College in Bimbilla today. A position, that gate in Kpembe has held on to till date. For example, during the interaction on the field a statement was alluded to the current Lapuwura Nuru Jawula, that “a Gonja cannot be a Christian, but if a Gonja chooses to be a Christian and died he would be treated as such” to buttress the perception that Gonjas are born Muslims as mentioned in chapter two of this study. A statement many Gonjas think if it is true is unfortunate, especially coming from an influential and educated person of his type whose wife and some of his children are Christians.

On the issue of language and interpretation, the people they used as their interpreters were handicapped; they either did not understand the missionaries or they wrongly explained the message resulting in various kinds of distortions in the interpretation of the message.

### **5.3 REFLECTIONS**

To “Appraise the work of Christian missionary activity in the Gonjaland since 1950” there were possible indicators the study evaluated. This includes; strengths, weaknesses, limitation and the people’s contribution to activities in the area were considered to ascertain whether the success or the failure of the work could easily be identified.

Despite some constrains the Missionaries might have encountered in the initial attempts; they were still some positive initiatives that were put in place for a smooth take off of the faith. The study observed that these initiatives by Christian missionaries could have aided their activities across the land.

### ***Strengths***

The Missionaries are on record to have established most of the basic schools in the area. These schools in most cases serve as the facility for many communities in the area. This shows that once upon a time there was an attempt of church activities in these communities. Today there are no traces of Christian activities except the name of the school. Even though the missionaries may not have churches in these communities, the schools established were not a misplaced priority, as today government still depends on these mission schools in the area to educate the people.

Apart from the schools that the missionaries established, they also have three health facilities situated in the area. These are located at Kpandai, Salaga and Damongo which have complimented those of the government in serving the people. Aside the three facilities mentioned, there was another attempt by the Catholic mission to start some health centre in the Tuluwe area. This is currently not functioning, because of the neglect of the area by successive governments in terms of social infrastructure like roads, electricity etc. it makes it very difficult to get personnel to station and work in these areas.

Even though giving of items by Missionaries could be viewed in the negative in Mission exploration, in the case of the Missionaries, the situation of Gonja area and the North in general the Missionaries had no option because of the condition of the people they were witnessing to. This then pushed the Missionaries to take up the responsibility to keep most of the children of the new converts in school. This was the best or wise decision to take at the time judging from the circumstances they were confronted with.

Apart from the schools, health and personal support to the people's social needs, the early teachers and Christian workers who were sent to the area, served as counsellors or models to the communities they were posted to. There may be some negative results of the teachers and



other Christian workers then, but by and large the situation will not down play their impact in shaping the likes of J.A Braimah, E. A. Mahama, John Bawa, J. J. Bakari and the list goes on.

### ***Weakness***

Despite the above ground breaking by the Missionaries in the area, there are certain issues that played out against the smooth impact on the Gonja to accept Christianity as a faith for all humanity. These issues might not be a deliberate neglect by the Missionaries, yet it has had a far reaching effect on the current Christian situation in the Gonjaland.

Education of the area has been limited to only basic level with exception of the Buipe Senior High School and the recently opened minor seminary by the Catholic Church at Sawla. In most cases these schools were just opened because either the communities request or the Missionaries saw the need for it without a single Christian teacher, who could teach Christian principles in these schools. This did not help much in the evangelistic drive of Christian Missionary activities, as today the facilities are still there without the churches in those communities.

The effect of the above was distance of the Missionaries and the community. Thus, they did not bother or find the need to learn and use the Gonja language for their mission work. Rather they depended much on interpreters who understand Twi and English, because majority of the membership were Twi and English speakers. No effort was made to produce an essay or any readable gospel material for the Gonja converts, even though today there is a Gonja Bible that has just been published and inaugurated.

The fall out indication of their inability to learn and speak Gonja on the ground shows that, the Missionaries could not prepare the early indigenous converts adequately to do effective follow-up. The result of this weakness could be attributed to the low Gonja in leadership positions in



the various churches. They also failed to present Christianity as a worthy substitute to the already existing faiths which the people had held on to for their security. Hence many are the Gonja who accepted Christianity but could not stand the pressure of the times, so they have abandoned the faith. (For example, Gilbert Iddi, Salas Natomah, and James Lawu, just to mention a few). Meanwhile, because of the hospitality of the people, the mind of the early Missionaries may have been clouded, hence their misunderstanding of some of the cultural perceptions that have been a barrier to the faith. Besides, they failed to identify and use the right personnel from the area to expand the mission work.

Furthermore, the chaplaincy approach adopted by churches in the past is being replicated today. This is the attitude of being content with the Southerners and relocated migrants who were there as church members and who continued to brand Christianity as a foreign faith. Unfortunately, this issue or obstacle has not yet been rectified by any of the churches. They also failed to replicate or start the Salem system that could take the new converts who were ostracized by their families like it happened in the South. Africa communal life system is highly respected in Ghana, and in the North external family life has effect on any religious choice. Hence the failure of not isolating new converts was a panacea of them being ostracized, because they lived in an environment that is at variance to their new faith. Again their inability to introduce a trade system like was done by the Basel Mission that built factories to give job opportunities to the new converts to consolidate their new found faith, did not give much confidence to new converts to guarantee their security.

### ***Limitation***

The study also revealed that the Missionaries were constrained logistically. A constraint which was beyond their means, even though it was a necessity that would enable the Missionaries

achieve their mission of reaching out to the people. The area is so vast with less population, making the government show less interest in providing certain basic social amenities. Most of these problems were not within the means of the missionaries. One of such problems is the road network which is in a very deplorable state across the area, lack of hospitals, water and many others, which have not changed even till this day, a reality we were confronted with in our attempt to reach out to some of the target communities. Movement from one community to another is a great challenge a situation the people and workers posted there, including Missionaries had to grappled with for sometime because of the demography, despite the fast globalization of today's world.

There are also some silent perceptions that are not documented but for the long association of the researcher and the tribe, it was one of the discussions that have had plausible consequences on the spread of Christianity in the area. One of such was an old age traditional perception that no whiteman can stay on the land and work, either as a missionary or a volunteer. This perception has no scientific proof but with the exception of the Game Reserve that attracts tourist who are Foreign nationals, it is difficult to see any European in any of the Gonja Districts working today. (Example of this was previewed to the researcher when a whiteman came to Salaga to start a School. He befriended a lady and wanted to marry her. The families of this girl discouraged her that it was not going work because of the perception mentioned that Gonja have nothing to do with whites. The marriage did not come on and the school the man started was abandoned since 1980s.)

In all this, the entrenched position of the Gonja that was difficult to uproot is the perception that they are born first as Muslims, as alluded in section 2.6.2, every child is named as a Muslim. This was as a result of the founder of the state, Ndewura Jakpa a Muslim, Islamic influence has had a far reaching effect, especially; it is a saying in the area that Gonja

Christians do not die well, even though this was disbanded by some few Christians, as stated in section 2.6.4 of this work. The Gonja today finds it difficult to break out of this shell, because there are countless examples of Gonja converts who have reversed to Islam. This has put fear in potential converts and this has become a big challenge and limitation for the missionaries.

### ***The people's contribution***

The researcher is of the view that despite the low figures of Gonja Christians in the area, the Gonjas would give all the needed assistance any missionary needs to propagate the gospel. Below is an outline of some areas the Gonjas would offer their assistance.

One fact of the Gonja people is their accommodating nature. This came to play when the missionaries visited the area; the chiefs might have given out their palaces for the introduction of the Christian faith despite their allegiance to Islam and Indigenous Religions.

As mentioned in section 2.4 of this study the Gonja political system is Islam and Tradition Religions orientation. However, the palaces were the first point of call for the Missionaries, where the people are congregated to listen to the Missionaries and their message.

In addition to their palaces, they gave out lands for establishment of schools and chapels free of charge. The visibility of mission infrastructures, (like schools, health posts etc) across the length and breadth of the Gonja area, attest to the fact that the chiefs actually offered their lands even though there are no churches in those communities.

Another way the people contributed to the missionaries' work was there creating of enabling environment anytime the Christian faith wanted to propagate the gospel. As mentioned above in section 2.4, the palaces were manned by the Royal group "Gbanya", the commoners or the "Nyamase" and the Muslim clerics, called the "Kramo. Yet there was never a time that the



missionaries visited, and they were resisted by any group because of their faith, despite their beliefs that was at variance to the faith being propagated by the Christian Missionaries.

Apart from the contributions mentioned, the people freely offered their time, in the form of labour support to the Missionaries whenever necessary even though they did not accept the faith. A good practice that is widespread among all the Northern tribes, a rapport that had always created confidence for the Missionaries and other visitors who experience this hospitality by the people feel accepted.

Except the isolation case in Kpandai sections 4.9, when Kanakulewura Jawula who was a candidate to the Kpembe skin rejected an offer of a school with the reason that his children would be indoctrinated, the Gonja gave up their children for the start of the mission schools without the fear that they were going to be indoctrinated; a situation that has the likes of E.A. Mahama, Mbema Mahama, J.J. Bakari, Col Iddisah, John Bawa, etc. becoming Christians before their death.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having enumerated issues and concerns raised by the various quarters, we would want to recommend the following for consideration by stakeholders with interest in Gonja Christianity and the Gonja Christians. There is a need to identify and catalogue the issues, and dialogue with those who have the capacity of contributing to alleviate the deplorable state of the Gonja community and the Gonjas themselves. That is as social advocates, play our advocacy roles.

History should be revisited by all stakeholders including the government, the Christian community and the Gonjas, to assess what is feasible in terms of the way people decide in their religious affiliation and do away with prejudices. This will give opportunity to all sides to re-strategize for the future of the Gonja.



Gonjas on their part should stop living in delusion by continuously depending on their past glory. This becomes necessary in the wake that, times have changed from the days of Jakpa and today. Even though it is true that Jakpa once captured some tribes in the past, the continuous trumpeting of this heroic past could be a potential danger that could break the current social cohesion that exists with Gonjas and the affected tribes. Besides, physical wars are no longer fought today, but rather, the war of the brain and Technology that bring economic leverage and empowerment to our people and communities.

Furthermore, because of the little Evangelisation of the area, Christians should declare the Gonjaland a mission field that all denominations will target. In this age of technological advancement and competitive life, few or average persons would find it difficult to gamble with their lives and that of their families in an insecure area, when the obvious challenge of the scarcity of basic amenities like; Schools, Health, Transport etc. for themselves and their families would be forfeited. On the other hand, when a person is sure of the security of the immediate family he or she would give out the best for the advancement of work without thinking of anything. This also means that, where possible, the Christians should collaborate with the Government in trying to help address these perennial social challenges which have existed with the people for a long period of time.

The culture of clothing Christianity before sending the religion to a group without recourse to culture dynamics should be reconsidered. Like Paul, each community should be approached in its uniqueness. When Paul visited each community he always presented the message as the custom of the area required. It could be recalled that Paul will say I would like to be anything at any place. So when ministering to the Jews he behaved like one of them, likewise to the Gentles. “But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the Council; Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and

resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” (Acts 23:6, ASV). But in the case of the Gonja it seems that this was not applied by the missionaries. They had “failed” to identify with the tribe; hence Christianity was viewed as a foreign way of life and not to be integrated into Gonja culture.

Strategically, the church needs to adopt a different approach in order to win the Gonja. This was the call by K.A. Busia in 1955 that “we should not try to Christianise Africa, but rather Africanise Christianity”. Islam used that and it worked perfectly for them, such as chaplaincy at the palaces. In chapter two sections 2.3 of this paper the literature revealed that when the Gonja Kingdom was founded, any town or village Ndewura Jakpa captured, there were two things that He did. That was to enskin a chief and a Muslim cleric called Mallam to oversee the spiritual welfare of the Kingdom. Churches also need chaplains attached to these palaces to assure the chiefs of security in times of social calamities. These chaplains act as seers like Gad to David “And the Lord spoke to Gad, David’s Seer saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you; choose one of them, that I may do it to you.’ .....either three years of famine, or three months of devastation by your foes while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three of the sword of the Lord, pestilence on the land, with the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all territory of Israel.’ Now decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me.” (1 Chronicle 21:9-12).

Education has in the time past been used in other parts of Ghana for successful witnessing; there has been the need for the Church to take keen interest in the existing mission schools in the area. Churches with these facilities should collaborate with Ghana Education Service to send their own teachers to head the schools as was the case in the early days they established the schools. They should also identify indigenous young ones to be trained so they could be ambassadors to their own people. Churches should think of citing more of their Second cycle

and Tertiary institutions in the area where Christian virtues could be taught and nurtured. Missionaries posted there by the church should be prepared to learn Gonja language as they would, when they were posted to Akan and other areas of the country. Besides, Gonja who are Christians should lead the crusade by going back to stay among their people. This means that they should not allow themselves to be infected but rather go and affect their own with the gospel they have come to believe.

In terms of literacy programmes, Churches should collectively help the Gonja to improve or produce basic Christian primary materials that could enable effective witnessing. For example, materials such as the ones that “Sowers Ghana” produced should be translated into Gonja for easy use in witnessing. Now that the Old Testament work has been completed and inaugurated, it should be possible for Christian NGOs to help subsidize the cost for new converts to buy.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

After over sixty years (60yrs) of Christian Missionary activities in the Gonja area, it is evident that mission activities have done little to reach out to the Gonja as at now. Per the figures of the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 census and the Ghana Evangelism Committee 2014 survey, it is clear that there is a lot of work to be done on the ground. On the surface it appears promising, but it appears deceptive in reality because of the Gonjas accommodating nature. All denominations working in the area need to go back to assess their performance on the ground, and take the concerns raised by the chiefs and other people mentioned in this work seriously. The church should take the above recommendations seriously and rebrand and package the Christian faith with the cultural beliefs of the Gonja in mind, in order to be effective in soul winning and lasting discipleship.



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Daniel Gbande	General Overseer Evangelical Church of Ghana	07/12/15
Damangowura	Paramount chief Damango Traditional area	13/01/16
Father Remigios	Bishops' Secretary Damango Catholic Dioceses	13/01/16
Ibrahim Alabira	Chief Imam Salaga	15/01/16
Isaac Kwaku Fokuo	Minister Presbyterian Church	06/01/16
Jeanette Zwart	Retired Missionary Worldwide Evangelism Crusade	11/12/15
Kanyiti Osman Fusheini (Alhaji)	chief of Salaga, East Gonja District	14/01/16
Nyen Choru Ebore II	Kpembewura	18/01/16
Nana David Mensah (PHD)	Philanthropic in West Gonja and Bole Districts	10/01/16
Nuru Jawula (Alhaji)	Lapowura and former chairman Ghana Football Association	07/12/15
Plavila Mathew John	Retired Missionary Worldwide Evangelism Crusade	17/12/15
Ralph Koomson	Minister Christ Apostolic Church	12/01/16
Sowah Ishmael Ayi	Retired Evangelist/Minister Presbyterian Church	29/10/15
Tuntunba Boresa I	Yagbonwura overlord of Gonjaland	13/01/16
Father David Jimah Bakeri	Catholic Church Bole	12/01/16
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