

**JESUS CHRIST OF FRAFRALAND: A STUDY OF THE INTERFACE OF THE
GOSPEL AND THE FRAFRA CULTURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
EVANGELISATION IN THE FRAFRA CONTEXT**

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By:

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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August 2011

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work towards the M.Phil in Religious Studies and that to the best of my knowledge; the content has not been previously published by another person or submitted for any degree in any University. Due acknowledgement has been made for all citations and references in the text.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear wife Asibi and the children Wunammi, Yinmanna, Yinsonnam and Yinmalya whose prayer and moral support contributed immensely to the success of this work, and who had to bear with my continuous absence from home during the field work of this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BONABOTO – Bolgatanga, Nangodi, Bongo, Tongo Students Association

PPHCP – Presbyterian Primary Health Care Programme

NIV- New International Version

GILLBT – Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation

KNUST - Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

AD – Anno Domini

C.Y.O - Catholic Youth Organisation

A.O.G – Assemblies of God

W.V – World Vision

FRALIDEP – Frafra Literacy and Development Project

WEC—World Evangelistic Crusade

FGM---Female Genital Mutilation

ABSTRACT

This thesis, *Jesus Christ of Frafraland: A study of the Interface of Gospel and Culture and Its Implications for Evangelisation in the Frafra Context*, is a study on the engagement of the Gospel with the Frafra of Northern Ghana. It examines the patterns of evangelisation among the Frafra with particular reference to the methods used in the proclamation of the Gospel. It also addresses the response of the Frafra to the proclamation of the Gospel as well as the impact of the Gospel in Frafraland. The researcher contends that despite the challenges, indigenous Frafra Christianity is possible through the recognition of traditional or cultural categories as significant preparation for the Gospel. In this way the Christian faith can be articulated in the Frafra cultural context with the use of its thought forms in a relevant worship of God. The major finding of the research is that the proclamation of the Gospel among the Frafra often produces different responses ranging from full embrace to partial embrace as well as conflictual or negative embrace depending on how the Gospel is proclaimed and how the people understand it. There is the need for the people to perceive and respond to the Gospel in way that are meaningful to their own understanding and experience. The significance of culture in the evangelistic task of the church is therefore very crucial.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Title page	i
Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
List of Abbreviations	v
Abstract	vi
Table of contents	vii

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information	1
1.2 Statement of Problem	2
1.3 Objectives of the Study	3
1.4 Scope of the Study	4
1.5 Study Approach and Methodology	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	5
1.7 Limitation of the Study	5
1.8 Challenges Envisaged	6
1.9 Review of Related Literature	6
1.10 Organisation of the study	13

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND TO THE FRAFRA LIFE AND THOUGHT

2.0 Introduction	15
2.1 The Frafra	15
2.2 Geographical Location and Economic Profile	17
2.3 Social Structure and Organization	18
2.3.1 Settlement and Clanship	18
2.3.2 The Family	19

2.3.3 Marriage	21
2.4 Political Organization	23
2.4.1 Chieftaincy	23
2.4.2 The Office of the Tendana	25
2.4.3 Religious Personalities	26
2.5 Religious Beliefs and Practices	26
2.5.1 The Supreme Being	27
2.5.2 Divinities	29
2.5.3 Ancestors	30
2.5.4 Other spirits	32
2.5.5 Divination	34
2.5.6 Sacrifice, Offerings and Prayer	35
2.5.7 Traditional Festivals	37
2.5.8 Child Naming and Initiation Rites	38
2.5.9 Death, Funeral and the Hereafter	39
2.5.11 Sickness and Healing	41
2.6 Conclusion	44
CHAPTER THREE: THE GOSPEL AND THE FRAFRA	
3.0. Introduction	45
3.1 Definition of Concepts	46
3.1.1 Gospel	46
3.1.2 Evangelization	47
3.1.3 Culture	48
3.1.4 Salvation	50
3.1.5 Sacrifice	52
3.1.6 Church	54
3.1.7 Inculturation	56
3.2 Gospel and Culture from Biblical Perspective	58

3.2.1 The Case of Early Israel	58
3.2.2 Gospel and Culture in the New Testament Period	63
3.2.3 Gospel and Culture in the Early Church Period	69
3.3 Gospel and Culture from African Christian History	76
3.4. The Gospel in the Frafra Context	83
3.4.1 Patterns of Evangelization of the Frafra	84
3.4.2 Mono Ethnic Churches Planting in Southern Ghana	
among Migrant Frafra (the case of the Kumasi Metropolis)	90
3.4.3 Responses of the Frafra to the Proclamation of the Gospel	94
3.4.3.1 Full Embrace	95
3.4.3.2 Syncretism (Partial Embrace)	98
3.4.3.3 Conflictual or Negative Embrace	99
3.4.4 Challenges	101
3.4.4.1 Personal Challenges	102
3.4.4.2 Societal Challenges	104
3.5 The Impact of the Gospel in Frafraland	105
3.5.1 Social Significance of the Church	105
3.5.2 Preservation of Frafra Culture	107
3.5.3 Transformation of Community Life	108
3.6 Conclusion	110

CHAPTER FOUR: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION FROM THE FRAFRA PERSPECTIVE

4.0 Introduction	112
4.1 The Gospel and the Frafra Culture	112
4.1.1 Spiritual Realities	113
4.1.2 Spiritual Relationship with Nature	116
4.1.3 Social Arrangements	119
4.1.4 Religious Systems	124

4.2 Towards an Authentic Frafra Christianity	128
4.2.1 Frafra Culture as <i>Preparatio Evangelica</i>	129
4.2.2 Language and it's Implication for Theology and Evangelisation	134
4.3 The Gospel as Fulfiller of the Frafra Culture	137
4.3.1 Christ as <i>Tendana</i> Par Excellence	138
4.3.2 Christ as <i>Bakologdana</i> (Diviner)	140
4.3.3. Christ as <i>Yidan</i> (Lineage Head)	141
4.3.4 Christ as <i>Nyadaan</i> (Healer)	142
4.4. Conclusion	143

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, ISSUES EMERGING OUT OF THE STUDY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction	145
5.1 Summary of Findings of the Study	145
5.2 Issues Emerging out of the Study	148
5.3 Recommendations	149
5.3.1 Training and Support of Indigenous Leaders	150
5.3.2 Pastoral Care and Counseling	151
5.3.3 Literacy Development	151
5.4 General Conclusion	152

Bibliography

Appendices

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

The Great Commission of Jesus Christ enjoins all Christian believers to go and make “disciples of all nations”. (Matthew 28:19). The term “nations” from the Greek word *ethnos* does not refer to present day geographical areas like Ghana, Togo, Benin and Brazil; rather it refers to groups of people with languages and cultural distinctives of their own and who share common ideologies and common ethnic identity. The Bible and God see the human race as divided along cultural lines. The Gospel was revealed to the world through culture, and therefore has to be proclaimed, propagated and accepted within the cultural contexts of the different peoples of the world. This explicit command of Jesus Christ demands that people of every race, ethnicity and language are reached with the good news of salvation.

Christians generally believe that Christ is God who took upon himself a human form and was born into an existing culture that is the Jewish culture. He did not bring his own culture from heaven into the world but rather accepted the one he was born into and influenced it for God. Emmanuel Asante (2007:49) says that “Jesus being a Jew made use of available cultural categories in his unfolding of the mystery of the kingdom of God”. He concludes that, “had Jesus been born into some other culture he would have made use of the available cultural categories in his proclamation of the kingdom”. In like manner when Christianity moved from Jerusalem to Rome it

encountered the Roman culture. This encounter made Christianity to adjust to suit its consciousness thereby making it comprehensible to the Romans.

The relationship between Gospel and culture has engaged the attention of many missiologists for some time now. For instance in 1974 the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization acknowledged the significance of culture as a factor in the effective communication of the Gospel. (Stott and Coote 1979: ix) This concern is underscored by Martey (2001:30) who says that the Gospel we preach does not come to people in a vacuum; it is revealed to us in the context of the language of culture. This means that the Gospel can make the needed impact and achieve the desired results, if the message is understood and accepted in the cultural context of the recipients. The content of the message can therefore be tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of the people within their cultures. An understanding of culture therefore will help us to shape the content of the Gospel we are to communicate.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Generally scholars especially those engaged in Gospel and culture are of the view that conflicts or tensions arise when the Gospel is communicated in cross-cultural settings. These conflicts result perhaps firstly, from a lack of understanding of the traditional customs and religious practices on the part of the missionary, and secondly, a lack of understanding of the tenets of the Christian faith by the indigenous people. Cephas Omenyo (2002:1) has noted that when Christianity was first introduced on the African soil, the missionaries failed to recognise the significant role of the indigenous cultures, and as a result the converts that they made were not able to match their new found faith with their traditional worldviews. Omenyo calls this a “theological deficit”

which needs to be reversed. Following from this Kwame Bediako (1992:251) has also argued that the cultural partiality which accompanied the Western Missionary transmission of Christianity indicates a theological *problematik* in missionary theology, which led to a failure to correctly apprehend the universality and the freedom inherent in the Gospel. Consequently this has led to a situation whereby Christianity is viewed as an alien religion and not suited for the indigenous African.

Against this background, the study would seek to find out how the church can make Jesus real to the indigenous Frafra. It will also find out how the Frafra can maintain his or her cultural identity and be a true disciple of Christ. In line with this, answers would be sought to the following questions. How has the Gospel been communicated to the Frafra? How do the Frafra respond to the Gospel? Has the proclamation of the Gospel impacted their lives? If yes, in what ways?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at addressing two critical issues. First, to find out how the Christian Gospel could be adapted or assimilated into the Frafra culture without losing its essential message. The task here is to translate and make relevant the Gospel in contemporary Frafra culture. Secondly, the study aimed at coming out with the means to assist Frafra Christians to appropriate the Christian faith within their culture without conflict or tension.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the Frafra homeland, but has also drawn specific cases and examples from other places such as Southern Ghana (Kumasi Metropolis) to establish a complete picture of the subject under study. However, due to the broad nature of the Frafra , and for want of appropriate vocabulary and equivalents, Frafra concepts derived from the Talene dialect are used to articulate issues that are crucial to the study.

1.5 Study Approach and Methodology

The study employed multiple methods involving the qualitative method. The researcher being a Frafra relied on primary sources such as interviews, and participant observation to obtain data. Some traditional and church leaders as well as other personalities who matter were the focus of most of the interviews. Also some Frafra Christians living both inside and outside their homeland were interviewed. Relevant information was also sought from documentary sources such as books, journals, magazines, articles and others that have a bearing on the study. All data thus gathered, was carefully examined and evaluated in the light of the study objectives.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Several Christian Scholars such as Kwame Bediako, Kofi Abrefa Busia, Cephas Omenyo, Kwesi Dickson, and others have made significant contributions to the discussion on the value of African traditional culture in Christian missions in Africa. These scholars have established the fact that Christianity and culture are not enemies

or antagonists, but rather bedfellows or soul mates. The researcher embarked on this study to find out how the Frafra culture can be a *preparatio evangelica* for Christian missions among the Frafra. The result of this research would provide a platform for dialogue between Christianity and the Frafra culture in particular with the aim of removing any tension, prejudice and antagonism.

The choice of the Frafra is justified by the fact that the Frafra culture seems similar to that of other African societies and will thus provide a means of responding to similar problems facing Christians within the continent. The research would add to existing pool of knowledge for indigenous missionaries, church planters and students pursuing church planting and church growth courses. It would also aid future researchers who will like to conduct research in particular areas in Northern Ghana. Church denominations wishing to carry out missions in northern Ghana can find this study useful.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The study does not capture everything about the Frafra culture useful for Christian missions. It covers only aspects of the Frafra culture, hence it is limited. Thus the study would provide opportunities for research in other areas. Due to the lack of appropriate or equivalent vocabulary, indigenous Frafra concepts derived mainly from the Talene dialect are used to articulate issues critical to the study.

1.8 Challenges Envisaged

The major challenge envisaged in the course of the study was finance. Since the Frafra homeland comprises a very wide area, much money was required to travel to small towns, villages, cottages and hamlets to obtain data. Again since the researcher relied on primary sources for information, it was difficult accessing all the data especially with respect to dates and figures because the Frafra are mainly oral people.

1. 9 Review of Related Literature

Seeking to make Jesus Christ known, loved, and served throughout the world has been God's purpose for the church. God's missionary agenda for the church has at its heart, the discipling of the people of the earth. The church therefore needs to be sensitive to what God is saying at a particular time and to communicate his purposes to all humankind. These and other themes such as the relationship between Christianity and African traditional culture, have engaged the attention of many scholars over the years. Below is a review of the works of some of these scholars.

According to John Stott (1975), the word "mission" concerns God's redeemed people and what he sends them into the world to do. He asserts that conversion must not take the convert out of the world but rather send him back into it; the same person in the world, and yet a new person with new convictions and new standards. Stott concludes that if Jesus' first command was "come", his second was "go" and that is, we are to go back into the world out of which we came and go back as Christ's ambassadors.

The views of Stott underscore the meaning and purpose of mission. But he does not disclose how the task of missions is to be carried out. Our task therefore as far as this study is concerned is to ascertain how the Gospel can be communicated to people in every culture using the Frafra as a cultural paradigm.

David Bosch (1980) says that mission has to do with the crossing of frontiers as the Church moves towards the world. These frontiers, he says, may be ethnic, cultural, geographical, religious, ideological or social. Mission describes the total task which God has set for the church for the salvation of the world. For Bosch the salvation of the world is the task of the church and this involves the communication of the Gospel to people of all cultural backgrounds. However, Bosch does not tell us how we are to carry out this task. The study therefore seeks to examine how cultural categories can be employed in missions.

Pierce-Beaver, (1973:93) maintains that “it is culture which accommodates the Gospel, and the Gospel accommodates or contains Christ. We need culture, therefore to be the interpretive medium for the Gospel to find its own place among our peoples”. Furthermore he notes that. “Evangelism brings into proximity the Gospel on the one hand, and culture on the other”. He concludes that “without evangelism the Gospel cannot encounter culture and without culture, the Gospel cannot make Christ known and accepted”. By stating that culture is significant in the communication of the Gospel, Pierce-Beaver may be right but he does not tell us how culture can be a tool for the proclamation of the Gospel. There is therefore the need to examine

African traditional cultures in all their forms and their relationship with Christianity, a task which we have set ourselves to do in this study

Others scholars have also addressed the significant role of culture in evangelisation. They are of the view that the mindset of all human beings have been formed by the culture in which they think and the degree of their receptivity or resistance to new ideas, are all largely determined by their worldview. It is against this background that Cephas Omenyo (2002) has addressed among other issues, the relationship between the Christian faith and culture. In his view, “the failure of historical Christianity to enter into a constructive dialogue with African traditional cultures and religions has long been recognised”. According to him, “the consequence of this theological deficit is the inability of most African Christians to reconcile their worldview with the type of Christianity professed by Western Christian missionaries in Africa.” If Omenyo is right in his assertion, then it implies that African Christians did not fully understand the Christian faith at that time because of the way it was presented. But his view falls short of recommending ways of addressing the problem and to improve the dialogue between the Christian faith and African traditional cultures, which this study is set to do.

Omenyo (2002:1) further says that “those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian Gospel in other lands and cultures, have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for an encounter between the Christian religion and the cosmology of the people outside European culture and traditions.” He concludes that “it is this which has made Christianity either alien or superficial or both.” This assertion might imply that the early Gospel preachers disregarded the local culture of the African people. But it might not be the case now to say that Christianity is an alien

religion to Africans. There is therefore the need to examine the methods that can be employed in communicating the Gospel in African cultural settings in order to make them relevant and appealing to the people. This study is set to do that.

Writing on the impact of Christian missionary activities on African cultures, Emmanuel Asante (2007:19) observes that “in their missionary activities they sought to promote their own native cultures. They advertently and inadvertently sought to separate the African Christian converts from their own community and culture.” Asante (2007:19) further notes that the early propagators of the Christian faith were seldom able to detach their cultural particularities from the Gospel.” As result of this “African converts to Christianity have been invited to separate themselves from their own communities by rejecting their traditional beliefs and practices (Asante 2007:19).” We agree with the assessment of the negative impact of the early Missionary enterprise in Africa. What we cannot understand is whether, the entire culture of the African people was to be rejected by Christian converts, or they were to make a distinction between those compatible with Christianity and those not compatible. The study would seek to examine cultural forms of the Frafra which can be valuable for the propagation of the Gospel.

Helleman (2005) also notes that African Christians came to the realisation that they had been cut off from their own past and denied their own history and a legitimate continuity with their respective African ethnic identities. What is implied here is that African culture and religion were considered as having no value for Christianity. The result was confusion in the life of African Christians. Following from this, this study

seeks to reverse the trend by examining the some cultural forms of the Frafra which can be vital for the communication of the Gospel. Kingsley Larbi (2001:29) has also observed that” the denial of the spirit-force (witches, sorcerers’ fetishes, magic, charms, and the local deities) in the early missionary enterprise radically undermined the work of missions. In the process they ended up producing ‘two-world’ Christians with double allegiance. This situation normally arises because Christian converts still possessed a fear of witches and ghosts and also believed in the spirit of the ancestors and the potency of the fetish in times of crisis. By the assertions of Larbi it seems that the Gospel can make the needed impact if bridges are made with African traditional cultures which would make Christianity culturally relevant.

Helleman (2005:5) again says that “few missionaries had attempted to look for cultural or religious precedents in African thought and religion, as a preparatory and transitional step toward conversion to Christianity, as points of contact between these ‘backward’ ways and the religion of Europe and the West. The result was a crisis of identity, accompanying a radical discontinuity in the cultural context of Christian converts’’. These assertions seem to imply that the Gospel cannot achieve the desired results if the traditional worldview of indigenous people is not addressed. Therefore, the Gospel can make great impact among the people if bridges are made with traditional cultures which can make Christianity relevant. This study is aimed at examining some cultural values of the Frafra that can help accelerate the propagation of the Gospel. The study would seek to ascertain how the Gospel has been communicated to the Frafra over the years. It would also seek to find out the peoples’ response to the Gospel message and how the Gospel has impacted their lives.

According to Bediako (1992) when the Gospel is preached, the resultant community does not dissociate itself from the old rather it becomes the fulfillment of the aspirations of the old. He concludes that ‘the Christian Gospel, is not being opposed to African religious ideas, but rather is the “crowning glory of African religiosity.” It is generally believed that Africans by their nature are religious. Therefore what seems to be implied here is that the Christian faith can find deep roots among Africans because of this religiosity. From this perspective the Christian faith could be a fulfillment of African religiosity. But by saying that the Christian Gospel is not opposed to African religious ideas is debatable. This issue would be carefully addressed in the study.

Andrew Walls (1996) is also of the view that conversion to Christ does not isolate the convert from his or her community; rather it begins the conversion of that community. For Walls the African Christian does not live his life in isolation. His life is to be lived in the context of the community. However Walls’ assertion falls short of showing how the conversion of communities can be carried out. This study would examine how Christianity and for that matter the Gospel can affect the values and norms of traditional societies. Bediako (1995:5) again writes that “if the Christian way is to stay in Africa then African Christianity should be brought to bear on the fundamental questions of African existence in such a way as to achieve a united worldview which finally resolves the dilemma of an African uncertain of his identity, torn between the impact of the West, and the pull of its indigenous tradition. Bediako’s call is in the right direction. Christianity as a universal religion has to be made relevant to the African setting and find deep roots in the African soil. This study would examine the use of religio – cultural categories in the Frafra context for evangelisation.

In line with this discussion, Kwesi Dickson (1984:144) poses the question “should not the church in Africa evolve ways of studying the Bible that would underscore its character as an expression through particular historical circumstance of God’s dealings with mankind?” Again he asks, “Are not the people of Africa to be reckoned among those whose fathers have been the avenue of God’s self disclosure?” He suggests that “what is needed now is for Africans to start afresh beginning with the direct interaction with the scriptures, rather than moving along at the tail end of the long history of western embroidery and so restate the Christian faith in answer to African questions with African methodologies and terminologies.” Dickson’s claim of the centrality of the scriptures in Christian mission is very significant but he does not however, tell us how precisely the scriptures can be made relevant to the African terrain. This study would examine the place of mother tongue scriptures in Christianity and other methods that can be employed to make Christianity relevant and appreciated in traditional cultural settings such as the Frafra.

With regard to the presence of Christianity in the Frafra area. Peter Barker (1986:103-104) writes that

Catholic Missionaries came over the border From French West Africa as long ago as 1906 but concentrated on the Navrongo area and the North West; and the Frafra area did not get a resident missionary till Bolgatanga became a parish in 1924. There are now Parishes at Bongo, Sirigu and Tongo, and communities of Sisters at Bolga and Sirigu. The Presbyterians have had a pastor in Bolga since 1955, first a missionary, now a Ghanaian, Missionary nurses run clinics. The Assemblies of God and Anglicans also have a number of churches in the Frafra area. As a regional capital Bolga has attracted civil servants and other workers from many parts of Ghana, and hence the Christian community in Bolga itself includes a variety of denominations. However many of the members are Southerners, and in most cases the language of worship is Twi.

Barker should be commended for giving us the history of some of the Christian churches in the Frafra area. However, what he is saying might not be the current situation. Bolgatanga became a mission station in 1925 and not 1924 as posits by Barker (Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Centenary Brochure (2006:12). There might be other denominations which have come to the area in recent times. Again the language of worship might have changed with time. What this work is seeking to examine is the contemporary situation as far as church planting and development are concerned.

The discussion has brought to the fore God's intension for mankind that is salvation in Jesus Christ, through the proclamation of the Gospel. The propagation of the Gospel has to be culture sensitive by taking cognisance of the life and thought of the recipients. The researcher is of the view that the cultural "clothing" of people, such as their beliefs and practices can be significant tools in the dissemination of the Christian message and seeks to ascertain how this can be made possible among the Frafra.

1.10 Organisation of the study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction. It spells out the background information, the statement of problem, objective and scope of the study, the study approach and methodology, significance of the study, limitation to the study, and the challenges envisaged. In addition, there is literature review which discusses opinions of some scholars who have carried out similar or related studies. The second chapter discusses the background to the Frafra. It addresses who they are, the situation profile, their social and political organisation as

well as their religious beliefs and practices. Chapter three of the study examines the Gospel and the Frafra culture. It addresses the issue of faith and culture from Biblical perspective, Gospel and culture from African Christian history and in the Frafra context. Chapter four is a theological reflection from the Frafra perspective. Chapter five concludes the study and entails the summary of findings of the study, as well as some issues arising out of the discussion. The study ends with some recommendations and a general conclusion.

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CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO FRAFRA LIFE AND THOUGHT

2.0 Introduction

In the introductory chapter, we set out to examine the significance of the relationship between the Gospel and culture. Jesus' mandate to the church explicitly demands that people of every race, ethnicity and language be reached with the Gospel. Since the Gospel was revealed to the world through culture and had to be proclaimed and accepted within the cultural context of the different peoples of the world, it presupposes that evangelisation does not take place in a vacuum but has to be done in a given context. On this basis therefore, this chapter examines the Frafra cultural context with respect to their traditional life and thought and how they offer meaning, security and significance to their identity and self-perception as a people.

Issues addressed include the constitution of the Frafra, the situational profile, social organisation, political organisation as well as aspects of their religious life. As noted in the introductory chapter, in order to avoid linguistic problems due to lack of equivalent vocabulary, indigenous Frafra concepts derived from the Talene dialect would be employed to articulate issues vital to the discussion.

Many African societies seem to be oral in nature and this makes it difficult to trace their origin. Because of lack of documentation, the information available usually

comes from oral sources such as stories, myths folklore and legends. Therefore any information regarding the origin of the Frafra is no exception and is not a systematic historical record of where they came from and how they came to settle at their present locations. What is set out in this discussion is obviously based on oral sources gathered from elderly people who have had that information handed down to them by way of oral tradition.

It is significant to recognise that the term Frafra (see Appendix c) does not connote one single tribal or people group, but is an umbrella term referring to four major ethnic groups namely the Gurune or Gurunse, the Talensi, the Boose and the Nabdam. These people share similar cultural heritage and yet have minor cultural differences by way of language, and probably do not originate from the same ancestral root. The Gurune, speak *Gudene*, while the Talensi speak *Talen* or *Talene* with the Nabdam speaking *Nabt*. The Boose people also speak *boone*.

There are different accounts regarding the root of the name Frafra. Meyer Fortes (1967) writes that since the coming of the whiteman they have been called the *fara fara* and they are beginning to accept this appellation which is said to be derived from one of their customary expressions of greetings *nii fara fara, fara* (congratulations). According to Berinyuu, (2006) it is generally believed that the name Frafra was coined by a foreigner from the common informal greetings or murmuring by way of thanks or petition “fara fara” or “fura fura.” Atinga (2006) shares the same view that the term Frafra is a name that the British colonial authorities coined to apply to the Gurune-speaking people. According to him, it appears that they found it easier to pronounce the word Frafra rather than the proper name Gurune. He adds that the term

Frafra is derived from a form of greeting in the Gurune language and it is not very clear how the term came to be associated with the other ethnic groups since it is more prominent in the Gurune dialect than in the others. He concludes that the reason might be “due to the closeness of language, cultural practices and above all ritual action.” (Atinga 2006:2). Barker (1986:99) regards “Nankase as the correct name for the Frafra people”. He explains that because the people were popularly known as “Frafra” among the Europeans, he saw little difference between the Frafra and the Nabdam and Talensi. It is significant to note that the name Frafra has become widely used and accepted especially in literature such that no one seeks to challenge it.

It can be noted that the term Nankanse as used by Rattrary, is used by the Kasena people group to refer to the Frafra in general but more specifically to some Frafra speaking groups who do not fall within the political sphere of the three Frafra districts namely the Bongo district, Talensi-Nabdam district and the Bolgatanga Municipality (see Appendix E, F). Politically, the Nankanse belong to the Kasena-Nankana District whose chief town is Navrongo, but are close to the Frafra in terms of language, culture and ritual observances. In the general sense they see themselves as Frafra. Their major settlements include Sirigu, Mirigu, Kandinga, Nabongo, Kulgo and Naaga.

2.2 Geographical location and Economic Profile

The Frafra are located in the central part of the Upper East Region. Their area is boarded to the north by Burkina Faso, the west by the Kasena Nankana District, to the east by the Bawku West District, and to the south by the West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region (sees Appendix D). The Frafra area is situated in the Guinea

Savanna vegetative zone of Ghana which has two distinct climatic seasons of wet season which runs from May to October and a long dry season stretching from October to April. The major economic activity of the people is farming which is usually on subsistence basis with little surplus to sell. Other economic activities include animal husbandry, metal works (production of hoes, spears, knives, bangles and others), weaving of baskets, hats and smocks as well as leather works, fishing and petty trading. The main market centre is the Bolgatanga market which runs every other third day and involves the sale of foodstuffs, livestock, farming implements, clothing and others. With regards to the population, the available information obtained from the Bolgatanga Municipal Assembly and the other two districts, indicates that the Frafra are made up of 122,646 for the Bolgatanga Municipality, 77,885 for the Bongo District and 100,879 in the Talensi-Nabdam District. These figures are based on the 2000 Population and Housing Census. (Bolgatanga Municipal Assembly 2010-2013 Medium Term Development Plan, District Profile Talensi-Nabdam District Assembly, District Profile Bongo District Assembly)

2.3 Social Structure and Organization.

2.3.1 Settlement and Clanship.

In terms of settlement, the Frafra have always settled in villages, cottages and hamlets. Their settlements are usually dispersed with wide stretches of land between dwellings for the purpose of farming and pasturing of livestock (see Appendix G). Each settlement is made up of houses and compounds in which families reside in accordance with their lineages. The compounds are usually circular with *nayang* (gate). All males of each house meet in front of the house in the evenings and early

mornings for discussions. Women and girls remain in the inner yard for domestic activities such as cooking and caring of babies. The settlements are named after their ancestors who first settled in the place and whose graves and shrines dedicated to them are usually located in front of the house of each settlement.

Socially, the Frafra society is organised according to clans referred to as *Yilzuk*, which literally means “house-head”. Each clan consists of lineages especially of the patrilineal who trace their descent to one common *yaab* (ancestor) and who see themselves as *Mabiih* (mother’s children). The binding force of each clan is their taboos and totems. Clan members who do not reside in the same settlement, but in so far as they have common taboos and totemic ties, they are of the same clan. For this reason marriage between persons of the same totemic ancestor is strictly forbidden in Frafra society. Each clan is headed by the oldest surviving male of the common ancestor who by tradition is to supervise marriages, funerals and sacrifices to the ancestors within the clan and also ensure the well being of all individual members of the clan (Atinga 2006:5). It is significant to note that the communal nature of the society ensures that property especially land, cattle and others are held in common by all clan members. Even though there is room for individual responsibility and actions, the common good of the clan supercedes individual preferences.

2.3.2 The Family

In traditional African life, and for every community, the smallest unit is the family and special emphasis is paid to it in order to ensure the survival of the community at large. The Frafra understanding of family goes beyond the nuclear family system of

contemporary times. The family in Frafra sense is a component of the clan. The *yil* (house) and *yildem* (house members) embody all persons residing in one particular house that see themselves as *penyenbiih* (coming from the same vulva).

Mbiti (1970:106) underscores this broader sense of family within African societies by saying that “the family has a wider circle than the word suggests in Europe and North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives.” Atinga (2006: 4) is of the view that, for the Frafra, the family is not limited to only the living. It also includes all the deceased members. The land of the “living dead” is merely an extension of the family on earth, and they are treated with great respect, as if they are still alive. He concludes that “every Frafra family, therefore, still has links with its dead, and for this reason it is difficult if not impossible, to statistically enumerate people because the family also includes the unborn.”

This assertion by Atinga confirms Mbiti (1970:107) when he says “the African concept of the family also includes the unborn who are still in the loins of the living. They are the buds of hope and expectation, and each family makes sure that its existence is not extinguished. The family provides for its continuation and prepares for the coming of those not yet born.” In the Frafra society the significance of the dead members cannot be over emphasised. They are mentioned by name at every ritual activity within each family, and newly born children are named after these ancestors as a perpetuation of the family cycle.

2.3.3 Marriage

The Frafra society puts much premium on the continuity of the clan or family, hence their respect for marriage. Being a patrilineal society which emphasises male authority, the males marry women from other clans and the female members marry outside the clan. Mbiti (1969:106) undercores the significance of marriage in African societies when he says that “through marriage and childbearing human life is preserved, propagated and perpetuated. Through them, life is also deepened vertically and spread out horizontally”. He concludes that “marriage and childbearing are the focus of life. They are at the very centre of human existence, just as man is at the very centre of the universe.” In the same sense Asare-Opoku (1978:124) has observed that the purpose of marriage in African societies is **procreation**, without which marriage is incomplete.

When a young man reaches marriageable age, custom demands that his father looks for a wife for him. On the other hand the young man can engage a lady and introduce her to his father for approval. It can be stressed here that the various processes leading to successful marriage rites are very much dependent on the families of both the young man and the lady. Therefore in Frafra land marriage does not only involve the marriage partners, that is, the husband and wife, but also the families from both sides. In the view of Mbiti (1969:108), the relatives of the husband and of the wife establish a close relationship through the exchange of visits and gifts.” According to him, “this is an important African view of marriage, that it is not an affair between two people only but between those two people together with their families and relatives.”

It is also significant to note that among the Frafra one can marry as many wives as one wish provided he has the resources to cater for them. The reason for this seems to be the need for comfort when one wife gives birth or the need for additional hands in farming operations. This practice referred to as polygamy has attracted variant views from scholars. Muthengi (1995:58) underscores the factors that motivate the practice of polygamy in Africa by saying that traditionally, polygamy was accepted all over Africa as the cultural norm. It was believed that the chief end of marriage was procreation. Accordingly this meant that the more wives a man had, the more would be his children, and which would also determine his being remembered long after his death.

Marriage rites among the Frafra include what is referred to as *Zoteba* or *Zoreb*. It involves the presentation of two live goats and a number of fowls with or without drink, to the brothers in law. This is equivalent to the “brother in -law’s matchet” among the Akan. Other rites include *tindanlur*, though varies from place to place which may involve the presentation of a cock, hoe, some tobacco and kola nuts with or without a sheep depending on the status of the lady to be taken in marriage. In some cases the family of a young man may be required to offer any animal usually a sheep or dog for a sacrifice to the patron deity of the lady.

Dowry in Frafraland varies from place to place. For instance whereas in some areas four cows, are demanded, three cows are required as dowry in other areas for daughters taken in marriage. In the view of Christine (2006:16-17) dowry as a term has been used inappropriately to mean the purchasing of a wife. The terms marriage payment or bride price are foreign to African culture. The more accurate terminology

for a dowry will be marriage gift. This is confirmed by Mbiti (1969:140) when he says that

Under no circumstance is this custom a form of payment as outsiders have so mistakenly said... this marriage gift is a token of gratitude on the part of the bridegroom's people to those of the bride for their care over her and for allowing her to become his wife. The gift elevates the value attached to her both as a person and as a wife.

This idea of dowry which has been inappropriately expressed as bride price or marriage payment seems to inform the attitude of most Frafra men in their dealings with their wives. It may be noted that in the Frafra society because of the bride worth paid by men, women have been relegated to the background, subjected to their husbands with no property rights. It is not surprising that in the event of the death of their husbands most widows are “inherited” (as part of family property) by the brothers of the deceased.

2.4 Political Organization

The Frafra like any other traditional people in Africa have some structures set up for monitoring and controlling the various activities and behaviour of the people as well as the environment. These traditional structures include *nam* (chieftaincy), *tendaana* (priest of the Earth Cult) as well as *yilzuk-kpeenam* (clan heads). Also there are lineage heads as well as family heads. But the two great institutions concerning this discussion are those of the chief and the *tendaana* (see Appendix H).

2.4.1 Chieftaincy

Chieftaincy among the Frafra can be grouped under the paramountcy, divisional, and the sub chief status. The paramount chief is the overlord of the entire traditional area and he enskins the divisional as well as the subchiefs. However, the enskinment of the

paramount chief of the Frafra lies within the powers of the paramount chief of the Mamprugu kingdom who by tradition exercises jurisdiction over the Frafra area. The paramount chiefs include those of Bongo, Nangodi, Tongo, Sakoti and Bolgatanga. However, the paramount chief of Bolgatanga was not enskined by Mamprugu.

The duties of the chiefs include maintaining traditional law and order within their domain. They are to enforce the norms and values of the society thereby ensuring the unity and cordial relationship among the people. The royal palaces receive and send out information that is of interest to the entire citizenry. Furthermore they are the traditional courts where people can sue and be sued, fined, as well as settle disputes. (Apalle 2009) Therefore, chiefs play the role of counsellors and magistrates in their given domain or chiefdoms. Asigre (1991) underscores this function by explaining that “the maintenance of the social order, whether family, clan, or village is the preserve of the chief and elders. They ensure peace, harmony and the general welfare of the people.” On his part, Atinga (2006) points out that as regards to the political administration, the Frafra administrative system is under the umbrella of the paramount chief and his administrative machinery of sub-chiefs and elders. He says further that among other things they settle disputes and conflicts among members of the village.

On the link of the Mamprusi with the political system of the Frafra, Atinga (2006:3) explains that

They were warriors and conquered many parts of the north of Ghana including the Frafra area. They subsequently set up chiefs in these areas to rule for them. The British used them for their policy of indirect rule which was introduced by Lord Lugard in northern Nigeria... even today some chiefs from the Frafra area have to go to Naneligu the paramountcy of the Mamprusi traditional area to be made chiefs otherwise they would not be recognised as chiefs.

But this Mamprugu factor in the Frafra political system raises some questions. Barker (1986:124) quotes J.A. Mbilla as calling it a “historical fraud” of putting power where power should not belong. It might be against this background that Naaba Abilba III of Bolgatanga refused to go to the *Nayeri* at Mamprugu for enskinment. Awedoba (2009) maintains that Abilba III had insisted on reverting to the pre-colonial tradition and had refused to go to Naneligu to be enskinned by the *Nayeri*. Instead, by popular acclamation among the kingmakers and some elders, Martin Abilba III was duly selected, elected and enskinned as Bolga Naba in 1970.

2.4.2 The Office of the Tendana

The next political figure in the Frafra society is the *Tendana*, (custodian of the land cult). *Tendana* is derived from two words *teng* and *daan* which means land and owner respectively. *Teng* in some context may be loosely translated as land. But it can also mean a town or country as certainly embracing more than just land. Rattray (1932:246) maintains that *teng* is “a settlement of widely dispersed compounds spreading over many square miles of country, which is regarded as the *teng* (land) of the clan. The second word *daan* means owner of, master of, or possessor of, in the sense of being responsible, or being a trustee for what one owns. Therefore *tendana* will mean the land owner or the one responsible for the land (see Appendix H).

The charge of or responsibility for the *teng* (land) goes beyond just the political understanding. Since in Frafra cosmology everything that happens in the physical has a spiritual connotation, it therefore implies that this responsibility for the land extends to the governing of the spiritual well being of the people of the clan. In the view of Fortes (1969:185), he is the “mediator between the earth and the people. He exercises

ritual jurisdiction over the Earth on behalf of the people.” The *tendana* therefore becomes the high-priest, or chief-priest of his people. It is he who offers sacrifices to the land shrines, and grants permission for burials, putting new land under cultivation and building new compounds and other related matters. It should be noted that the *tendandem* (plural for *tendana*) are selected from among the various lineage heads through divination.

2.4.3 Religious Personalities

Among the Frafra certain class of people play significant roles in their religious life. Among these are *bakologdem* (diviners) who reveal mysteries especially concerning the will of ancestors and the *divinities*. Others include *saadem* (rain makers), *Nyaadem* (Herbalist or medicine men including bone setters), as well as the various *tendandem* who act as mediators between the community and the *divinities*.

2.5 Religious Beliefs and Cultural Practices

The Frafra like all other traditional people in Africa are very religious. Atinga (2006:6) maintains that “the Frafra religion and religious practices fall within the general framework of traditional religious practices all over Africa”. In their belief system, all that is visible in the physical world has a corresponding religious dimension. In other words, the people believe that the spirit world is an ever present reality in their lives to the extent that much of what happens in the seen world is believed to originate from the unseen world. They therefore seek and give religious explanations to all events that take place.

Berinyuu (2006:5) is of the view that “the physical and spiritual worlds are active. In the Frafra mythic world, the physical world is coterminous with their spiritual world. These two worlds constantly interact with each other in ways that diminish as well as promote the quality of human life.” Berinyuu (2006) concludes that “humans are both objects and subjects of the consequences of the interactions between the physical and spiritual worlds and that the Frafra also share their physical or human world with invisible spiritual beings and or powers.”

In line with this, Mbiti (1969) explains that Africans are notoriously religious with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. On his part Asare Opoku (1978) claims that a close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African life. He notes further that “... Africans are engaged in religion in whatever they do.” The structure of the traditional religion as it pertains to the Frafra can be grouped into four features namely belief in the Supreme Being, divinities, ancestors and spirits. We shall proceed to examine these features including divination, sacrifices and other issues which are key components of the African traditional religion.

2.5.1 The Supreme Being

Like all Africans, the belief in the Supreme Being is a strong element of Frafra ontology. The Supreme Being is referred to as *Naawun*, which is derived from *naab* (chief), and *wun* or *yin* (god). *Naawun* according to Baker (1986:102) is believed to be “above all other gods; he knows all, sees all and is all-powerful.” This belief in the Supreme Being is evident in Frafra prayers of thanksgiving and petitions

expressed as *tete wun fara*, (we give God praise), *Yin a nab* (God is king) *Yin be*, (God is there) *Yin nan song* (God will help) and others.

The abode of the Supreme Being is often viewed to be in the skies or even beyond the skies. This gives the impression that God is transcendent and far removed from human existence. But this assertion can be misleading in that even though it may be true that the Frafra consider God to be transcendent, it might also be true that they also think of Him as immanent. This paradox is only resolved when one considers carefully the expressions demonstrated in the daily conversations and blessings and curses. According to Atinga (2006:7) it is common to hear the Frafra say *yine ka zae*, (God is not far) or *yine yeti*, (God sees). He says further that God's name can be used in cursing an enemy saying *yine wan soke ho*, (literally, God will ask you). In blessing somebody will say *yine wan sunge/maale ho*, (God will help you or bless you).

It is worth noting that among the Frafra, some attributes of God are enshrined in certain names that are given to people, such as *Yinbon*, (God's property), *Yingareya* (God is above all) as well as *Yinbora*, (God loves) and so on. These names are a demonstration of the Frafra's perspective of God who is above all and has no equal. Atinga (2006:7) points out the significance of such names, as expression of the African concept of God when he says "the theophorus proper names that people bear all over Africa are a further evidence of how real God is to the African."

Interestingly, it can be noted that despite this understanding of the Supreme Being, the Frafra like any other African people, do not offer sacrifices and offerings to the Supreme Being directly. This is proven by the fact that there is no shrine throughout

Frafraland dedicated to the direct worship of the Supreme Being. However, this fact does not negate the respect the Frafra have for God, the Supreme Being, which falls in line with their socio-religious life. It is significant to point out that chiefs, who play significant roles in the socio-political life of the Frafra, are not approached directly, but through the elders, a system that is evident in all other African societies. This same idea is reflected in the Frafra attitude towards God, the Supreme Being, whom they approach through the medium of the ancestors and other divinities.

2.5.2. Divinities

The belief in divinities is very much embedded in the Frafra tradition just like the belief in the Supreme Being. They believe that other divinities exist and have some divine power which can influence their lives. Unlike the ancestors these divinities are never in human form and their origin is unknown. However, in their mentality, they perhaps believe that everything including the divinities originated from the Supreme Being and have some divine power. Idowu (1983:173) believes that divinities and ancestors form separate homogeneous categories of their own. Divinities and ancestors could be described as domesticated spirits. The ancestors have always been a part of the human family, and the divinities are intimately a tutelary part of the personal or community establishments.

It can be inferred from Idowu's observation that, the divinities may have some link with the history of the village or community or clan or families. The divinities are often associated with the names of communities or clans because they are believed to be connected with their founding ancestors. There is also the belief that the locations of the shrines dedicated to these divinities are sacred sites and should not be trampled

upon with shoes. According to Job Tindanbil no light is permitted within the vicinity of the shrine, and no farming activity is allowed there. No tree is to be cut so as not to incur the anger of the divinities. Their abode is perceived to be in such places as big trees, groves, rocks, mountains and hills as well as rivers and streams. For instance it is believed that the Tongo Hills and groves such as *Baat Daa* at Baare, the *Duun Kpaleg* at Zubiung in Tongo as well as the *Zemre Kok* (mahogany tree) at Logre are considered sacred. Therefore activities involving these divinities continue to be shrouded in secrecy.

The divinities are perceived to be good spirits who seek the welfare of the various communities. They are very much honoured and offered with sacrifices periodically to enlist their benevolence and are perceived to be mediators between the communities they represent and the Supreme Being. For that reason they are consulted in times of disaster like famine, drought, epidemics as well as untimely deaths which are beyond human explanation. For instance in such difficult times or crisis moments, it is the *tendaan* assisted by the *yilzuk-Kpeenam* (clan heads) who offer the required sacrifices at the *tongban* (sacred groves) and other sacred sites to solicit the intervention of these divinities.

2.5.3 Ancestors

The belief in *yaabnam* (ancestors) is the cardinal point of the Frafra society just as it is the commonest feature of most traditional African societies. Therefore the veneration of the ancestors is believed to be the central element of their religion. These ancestors, unlike the divinities just discussed above, were once human beings who dwelt on earth, and have now moved into the spiritual world through death.

These are also very much respected and most Frafra prefer to associate with them than with the divinities. This may be due to the fact that because they were once human, they understand the human situation or circumstance better and also are capable of soliciting blessing from the Supreme Being. For the Frafra, there is a strong connection between the ancestors and their living descendants, and this explains why the shrines dedicated to these ancestors are often placed within the homesteads (see appendix G).

When a Frafra dies, it is often said that such a person is on a journey to the land of the *Yaabnam* (ancestors). In this sense it can be noted that death is not the end of one's life. Again it is also believed that the ancestors can be reborn into the living family, and this is reflected in the names that are often given to the babies. This idea shall be considered in detail when we consider the issue of child naming as a religious function. The ancestors are believed to dwell in the land of the death, which in Frafra perception is in the underworld from where they influence the daily activities of the living. Sacrifices are offered to them periodically especially during festivals to solicit their help.

Fortes (1987:195) maintains that the ancestors "though dead and gone from the physical world of the living, invisible but effective, and accessible through the special medium of religious rituals." Barker (1986:103) is also of the view that "the ancestors are invoked at many junctures, for instance before a journey, before sowing after the first rains, before harvesting, before eating any newly harvested crop, at birth, marriage and death, and before a man enters his lovers house." On such occasions *zomkom* (flour mixed with water) may be poured to the ancestors. In times of crises or

when the ancestors demand a particular sacrifice, people may offer fowls or guinea fowls, with or without *pito* (locally brewed beer). It is significant to know that the main idea behind traditional festivals is the homage paid to the ancestors. We shall consider this in detail later.

The qualification for ancestorhood among the Frafra is not different from what pertains to most other African societies. As Atinga (2006:9) has noted, to qualify as an ancestor, one must have raised a family, been responsible, grown old, and become an elder in the family, clan or village community, and of course would have died a natural death. Within the Frafra society, anyone who uses sorcery, witchcraft or any evil spirit to cause harm to people can never be considered as an ancestor upon his death. The reason behind this strict moral code attached to ancestorhood among the Frafra is the belief that the ancestor is the custodian of the people and therefore one who has the mandate and power to punish negative actions and bless good works. It therefore follows that if one is not morally upright while living he or she cannot punish or correct wrong acts in the family, clan or community in general. The understanding may be that if one is not upright while on earth, he or she cannot be qualified mediator between the living descendants, and the Supreme Being (Atinga 2006:9).

2.5.4 Other Spirits

In the ontology of African people, the belief in the existence of other spirits is also very pronounced just as the belief in the ancestors and divinities. However, there is a difference between these other spirits and the spirit of the ancestors and divinities. As explained earlier the ancestors are the spirits of people who ever lived on earth and

have died and translated into the spiritual world. The divinities are also spirits which are associated in some way with the clan, family or community as a whole. These other spirits being discussed in this section are different. These are perceived to be free moving spirits which are not confined to one particular place. They are fearful as they are believed to manifest themselves in many forms usually at night and can cause harm to human beings. (Atinga 2006)

Under this category of spirits are *soob* (witches) who are alleged to possess some evil powers with the capacity to kill and “eat” human beings spiritually. In the Frafra culture one is said to be a *soe* (singular) if he or she has the ability to ‘see’ supernaturally. It is believed that some of these spirits can enter the womb of women and be born into the world. Children born from such encounters are often suspected to be abnormal and are usually not accepted in the society. They are therefore killed and buried secretly in the wild forest where they are perceived to belong. (Atinga 2006:10)

Again, it is believed that those spirits have the power to cause accidents of any nature, be it on the road, in the river or in the forests. Since they are generally considered as evil and wicked, the Frafra do not offer sacrifices to them, and there exist no shrines for them. However, they also believe that there are some benevolent spirits which can possess an individual and so reveal some hidden issues to him or her for the benefit of the community, family or clan. Examples of such hidden issues could be the knowledge and ability to heal some kinds of diseases, as well as the power for divination and rainmaking. People who possess such good spiritual powers and

abilities are often consulted on regular basis and it is not uncommon to see the Frafra and other people travelling from different places to consult these people.

2.5.5 Divination

It is generally believed among Africans that human life entails mysteries. This is underscored by Mbiti (1969) that African life is a life of mysteries. To the African there is no difference between the physical and the spiritual, therefore every event calls for explanation. It is against this background that the Frafra, like all other African societies give much premium to the practice of divination. *Bakolog* (divination) is an act of unveiling mysteries and *bakolog-dem* (diviners) are the agents who carry out such functions on behalf of people. They are considered as the mediators between the two worlds (physical and spiritual).

In certain instances a lineage elder or family head would visit the diviner to find out from the ancestors and other divinities, the state of their people, and what ritual is to be performed. Again, in the event of crises such as drought, epidemic, or the appearance of a strange animal in the homesteads, diviners are often consulted. According to Atinga (2006) the Frafra hardly carries out any activity without consulting the diviner. Such undertakings might include marriage, child naming, building a new house, or embarking on a journey, among others. Since the ancestors are considered as the guardians of the living descendants, their permission would have to be sought at various instances before such undertakings.

Again, divination is carried out during the event of death. Its function is to find out the cause of the unfortunate event be it natural or unnatural. It is also intended to find

solutions to such situations through the prescribed sacrifices and offerings. This spiritual event according to Gung Nakoring, comes off at the *kuur-mahr* (fresh funeral) to find out the cause of death and again at the *kuur-mengr*, (final funeral rites), to find out the one to ascend to the *boagr* (inherit the clan or family shrines), if the deceased happened to be either a lineage head, a family head or a clan head.

2.5.6. Sacrifices, Offerings and Prayer

The Frafra are a traditional religious people who maintain very close ties with their ancestors as well as the various divinities. They venerate or honour these spiritual beings through rituals such as sacrifices and offerings. As the situation may demand, fowls and *Zomkuom* (millet flour mixed with water) may be offered to the ancestors by lineage or family heads. Certain situations may also require animal sacrifice such as sheep or goat or cattle. For instance, in some areas, a sheep and a dog may be required from a bridegroom as a sacrifice to the *Yin* (patron god) of his bride. Again, if a new grave is to be dug for a lineage head or clan head, a bull is often sacrificed to the Earth to obtain her permission. According to Atinga (2006:12) there is also a dry flour sacrifice which is done in extreme cases, especially in times of long drought. In this case dry flour would be poured on the shrine that is dedicated to the rain deity to indicate that due to the drought they have no water to mix the flour with. Therefore, this form of sacrifice is only a symbolic sacrifice to provoke the divinity to act in their favour by giving them rain.

According to Mbiti (1969:58-59) sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African people. In his view, “some ontological balance must be maintained between God and man, the spirits and man, the departed

and the living. When this balance is upset, people experience misfortunes and sufferings.” He concludes that the making of sacrifices and offerings “... is a psychological device to restore that ontological balance.” The Frafra would always desire to live in harmony with their ancestors and thus would consult the diviners to ascertain the required sacrifices and offerings that are to be performed. During times of festivals, some sacrifices and offerings are performed as thanksgiving to the ancestors for their blessings of good harvest and to solicit their blessings for the coming season.

Another form of sacrifice is that of pacification which is carried out as a result of wrong doing by an individual or some persons in the family, clan or community. According to Apalle (2009) when a person’s life is terminated through murder there is a ritual to pacify the angered soul of the deceased. This is done to prevent the murdered from avenging his or her death. Apalle continuous that this same ritual is carried out to cleanse the murderer from the curse associated with murder. It is believed that failure to offer such sacrifices would incur the anger of the ancestors who might visit misfortune on the land.

A most significant element in Frafra sacrifices and offerings is *kaaba* (prayer). It is an acknowledgement of ancestors and a call on them to be part of the living descendants and to bring prosperity. According to Benard Kusiboo (secretary to the paramount chief of Tongo and church leader) they would often say this libation text:

Mba on be teng, duog na ne edie kuom ne nuo,

kabah te sasong ni, ka gosom gwih.

Da bah ka te wom buo be kaheg ga.

This is translated as “my father (ancestor) who is in the earth, arise and receive water (libation) and chicken and cause good rains to fall and grant sound sleep for families. Do not let us hear of any disaster or wailing in the land or community”.

2.5.7. Traditional Festivals

The Frafra have evolved various rites for all the important events of life. These events mark them out as a people and are meant to showcase their identity, origins and histories. For instance the Talensi celebrate *Goleb*, *Daa*, and *Boaram*, the Grurune celebrate *Adakoya* and the Nabdam have the *Tenglebeg*. It is significant to note that the *Daa*, *Boaram* of the Talensis, as well as the *Adakoya* of the *Gunrune* are harvest festivals during which the first fruits of the late millet are sacrificed in offerings to the ancestors for their blessings of harvest. The Nabdam celebrate the *Tenglebeg* as a New Year festival to thank the ancestors for their guidance. On the other hand the Boose of Bongo celebrates the *Azambene* festival which is a fire festival which commemorates their history.

Apalle (2009:4) says that there are two other important seasonal feasts in the Gurune tradition. These are *kee-poska* and *kee-bia*. *Kee-poska* is the grain and animal offering in thanksgiving to the gods between mid October and the New Year. The *kee-bia* is within the period of April to May where pito is brewed once again to seek the assistance and protection of the gods during the next farming season.

The most significant aspect of all these festivals is the religious element. This is because it is during times of festivals that religious ties with the ancestors are renewed. It is interesting to see most Frafra who reside outside their traditional homeland, travel to their respective towns and villages in order to offer sacrifices and

offerings to their various *Yin* (personal gods) as their thanksgiving and also solicit their blessings for the coming year. In the view of Fortes (1987:51)

for the chief, the *tendaana*, and the elders, the significance of the festivals lies primarily in the ritual activities. They stress the obligatory co-operation necessary to ensure the well being of the land and its people. Most of all they stress the commemoration of the ancestors and the homage offered to them in prayers and in sacrifice in order to enlist their benevolence for the coming year

On his part Mbiti (1969:143) believes that “rituals and festivals are religious ways of implementing the values and beliefs of society.” He concludes that “without them African life would be dull.”

2.5.8 Child Naming and Initiation Rites

In Frafra communities, it is believed that the birth of a child marks the re-birth of an ancestor. Therefore through divination they would normally determine the particular ancestor who has been reborn, and this reflects in the name that is often given to that particular child. It is not uncommon to hear such names as Mbalebna, (my father has returned), or Mmalebna, (my mother has returned). In such cases personal shrines are raised for such children right from infancy and are believed to be their guardians. Therefore child naming does not only give the child a family identification, but also a religious bond is established with the ancestral world. This is because the soul of the child is dedicated to a patron god for its protection and guidance through life, and such a link is maintained through regular sacrifices. This is underscored by Mbiti (1969:115,117) when he says “nearly all African names have meanings. The naming of children is therefore an important occasion which is often marked by ceremonies in many societies.” He concludes that “the physical aspects of birth, and ceremonies

that might accompany pregnancy, birth and childhood, are regarded with religious feeling and experience that another religious being has been born into a profoundly religious community and religious world.”

One important issue worth noting is the place of the male child. He is often specially initiated into the ancestral cult to act as priest in his father’s stead. Male children especially the first born can also ascend to the position of lineage or clan heads, or eventually become *tendaan-nam* within their clans. Again male children are often initiated into the *bayaa* (sexton) cult to be responsible for the digging of graves and the handling of the dead for burial. It is important to note that these initiates are considered as special people and are not to divulge any ritual information to any non-initiate, hence the secret nature of the cults.

2.5.9 Death, Funeral and the Hereafter

Among the Frafra, *Kum*, (death) is believed to be an entity that has power to take anyone at will and at any time. Death is therefore considered as the enemy of people and the strongest force against human life. By the concept of death, we mean natural death, that is, death not caused by external aggression such as murder or suicide. In the view of Mbiti (1969:151) “man has since accepted death as part of the natural rhythm of life ... every human death is thought to have external causes making it natural and unnatural.” It is significant to note that the Frafra concept of death is similar to that of other African societies such as the Akan. In the view of Sarpong (1974:22) “death is regarded as the occasion when the deceased person sets out on a journey to the underworld or spirit world to which his ancestors have already gone.”

In the Frafra tradition, death is considered as the end of one's earthly life and a journey home, hence the various expressions that are used. It is often said of the dead person that *u kulme*, (he or she has gone home) *yaabnam n buo o*, (the ancestors have called him or her) *u bah te me* (he or she has left us). *Zaalo nkaa* (means this or that person is no more). However when a child dies, it is considered as *u laleg me*, (he or she is missing). The chief or *tendaan's* death is expressed as *u duo me*, (a mighty tree is uprooted). It can be noted that announcement of death is normally carried out at midnight after the evening's meals in order to avoid any shock on family members going to bed without eating. During the farming season, death is not announced and no wailing is to be heard in the community, hence the dead are hurriedly buried. This is done in order not to disrupt farming activities which are time bound. Burial is normally carried out by *bayaah*, (sextons), who are initiated to perform such functions.

There are two types of funeral rites among the Frafra. *Komahr*, "wet" or fresh funeral entails all activities connected with the preparation of the dead for burial, and include wake keeping, *die* (war dance), the funeral dirges, divination or the rite of interrogation as well as the burial and widowhood rites. The final funeral rites which normally take place in the dry season involve the gathering of food items such as cereals and legumes and sacrificing of animals. There is also a day of divination during which the will of the ancestors is ascertained concerning the one to inherit the deceased. Other activities include the rite of the orphans, which entails the shaving of their hair as well as grave digging for reburial, if the deceased is a lineage or clan head. One other important aspect of Frafra funeral rites is the ancestral meal. During the funeral celebration there are times that *saab* (millet food) is prepared and kept in

the yards or compounds for the ancestors to come and eat. Therefore all the religious rites connected with funerals are believed to usher the dead into the world of the ancestors.

One other activity is the *pakoor malema* (widowhood rites) in which the *pakoor* (widow) is taken through some rituals believed to protect her against evil spirits on account of the death of her husband. Zure (2010:10) maintains that based on the concept and perception about death widowhood rite is one of the necessary rituals in funerals to purify the widow and to prepare her for social life.

Since the Frafra believe that death is a journey, they also have the idea that there is another world some where. For most Frafra, the hope is that they would be given “fitting” burials and ancestral shrines raised for them. Ancestry is a crucial issue among the Frafra as they perceive the ancestral world as their future home. In line with this, Mbiti (1969:157) is of the view that for the majority of African peoples, the hereafter is only a continuation of life more or less as it is in its human form. He concludes that “the hereafter is a carbon copy of the present life.” The reason may be that although the soul is separated from the body it is believed to retain most if not all of the physical social characteristics of its human form. Therefore, the glory of joining the ancestors is a catalyst for virtuous living, as immoral life is believed to have no place in the ancestral world.

2.5.10 Sickness and Healing

Being an agrarian community, the Frafra expect all to be of good health so as to undertake their farming activities. Much as they believe that there can be moments of

physical breakdown, they also believe that there are means to rise up, hence the various traditional interventions developed to deal with various ailments and diseases. Berinyuu (2006:6) maintains that among the Frafra, there are many types of life-threatening situations. He says that the Frafra use sayings to group these situations and these include *boo n bo*, (some bad intended action has occurred). This may refer to a woman who has fallen down and fracturing a bone on her way to fetch water, or a man in the course of his farming activity, cuts his toes. Again, when the Frafra says *u nengbina n yalek*, literally meaning his or her body is diluted; it refers to a feeling of a rise in body temperature or a general weakness in the body. Also when one has stomach problems, they say *puo n dumet*.

Another dimension of sickness among the Frafra is believed to be of spiritual causes. When they say *u tuugu yaabnam*, (he or she has gone astray from the ways of the ancestors). This means the person has not behaved in accordance with the ethical codes of the ancestors. It is possible that the person might not have committed the offence personally, but is only a victim of circumstances. (may be the offence might have been caused by a member of the family or clan who is no more alive). In the same vein, it can be said that *u galeme kiiha*, (he or she has broken the taboos of the clan). Another spiritual dimension of sickness is *ba eng me*, meaning “they have caused it.” This is the perception that someone might have deliberately caused the sickness of another through evil means such as magic or witchcraft. It can also be said that *ba lobo me*, meaning, “they have thrown something at him or her”.

In the Frafra mythical world, according to Berinyuu (2006:8) “the experience of sickness includes the social, psychological, physical and the spiritual. To be healthy

means to enjoy the full protection of the spiritual powers and the ancestors because one is in the right relationship with social, psychological and cultural ties". The Frafra believe that healing is possible in the event of any ailment, hence their reliance on all types of rituals. For instance herbal preparations such as *nyaa, muuha, tetuom, tesableg* and others are used to enforce healing. But behind these herbal products is a strong belief that healing rests in the powers of the ancestors and the divinities. Therefore traditional herbal practitioners are also spiritual persons who are believed to have some spiritual powers to communicate in the spiritual realm to diagnose sickness, and also prescribe healing.

The Frafra also employ some spiritual methods in their attempt to induce healing in a sick person, and these include *Kaaba* and *tebeg*. In the first instance *Kaaba*, literally means treatment can be used both in a medical sense and in a religious sense. When someone is sick of a particular disease, it is often said, *kika ba kaab*, which means let them treat it. In this case, a specialist in that field is consulted to prescribe a cure. Another expression *Kika ba teb*, may also mean let them treat, but connotes the idea of kicking. The implication here is that both the healer and the sickness are engaged in a struggle (Berinyuu 2006:3). In this sense the healer attempts through all means to kick out the sickness from the victim. Therefore the spiritual dimension of disease might probably be the reason why some Frafra, when taken sick outside the traditional homeland is transported to the traditional home for healing. The interaction between the healer and the sick therefore involves an invocation of the mythical world which is said to control all events of human life. Healing may therefore occur as a result of a harmony with the mythical world.

2.6. Conclusion

The topics addressed in this chapter are an attempt to capture in a very succinct manner the Frafra culture and worldview. This is very significant for an overall understanding of the attitude of the Frafra towards life in general and how this should inform the missionary strategy to reach them. On this same premise we would get to understand their attitude towards the Gospel, as we turn to the next chapter.



CHAPTER THREE

THE GOSPEL AND THE FRAFRA

3.0. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we examined the Frafra and their culture with particular emphasis on their traditional life, their identity and self perception as a people. In this chapter we shall discuss the encounter between the Gospel and the Frafra. Thus, attempts will be made to examine the encounter between the faith and culture from biblical perspective. Furthermore this Gospel-culture encounter is being explored from African Christian history in the light of the Frafra context.

It is generally believed that the nature of the relationship of the Christian faith to culture often proves problematic for many missionaries. Some missionaries, in their concern to emphasise culture may appear to lose sight of their goal of proclaiming Jesus. Others may also proclaim a Christ who is very much alien to the people among whom they are ministering. Akrong (2000:56) has noted that the crucial issue facing both philosophy of religion and theology is whether there can be a point of contact between traditional religion and the Christian faith which can create a fertile ground for the Gospel to take roots. His concern is that “any Gospel message that does not make a cultural connection with its cultural context becomes a disincarnated or docetic message.”

The crucial questions that need to be addressed include: how can the church make Christ real to the indigenous Frafra? Can the Frafra remain true to his or her cultural

identity and be a true disciple of Christ? The study therefore seeks to find out how the Gospel has been communicated to the Frafra, the response of the people to the Gospel as well as the impact of the gospel in their lives, personally and as communities. At this juncture, it is necessary to unpack the meanings of certain terms that are used in this study in order to facilitate the understanding of the issues being discussed.

3.1 Definition of Concepts

3.1.1 Gospel

Richards (1985) observes that in most New Testament uses “the Gospel is the sum total of saving truth about Jesus as it is communicated to lost humanity. Rahner and Vorgrimler (1983) have also noted that the literal translation of Gospel is good news which expresses Jesus’ claim for his own message. On their part Ferguson and Wright (1988) note that the New Testament use of the word *evangelion* which is translated as joyful tidings, or good news, has an Old Testament background in Isaiah 40-66 which speaks of the declaration of Jerusalem’s deliverance from bondage and also of a wider announcement of liberation for the oppressed (Isaiah 61:1-2). This last passage in their view provided the text of Jesus’ inaugural preaching at Nazareth, which was otherwise described as the Gospel of the Kingdom of God or Jesus’ manifesto. They maintain that with Jesus’ death and resurrection, a new phase of the Gospel begun which made the preacher (Jesus) as the preached one. His followers whom he commissioned to preach the Gospel after his departure, proclaimed him as the one whom the Father’s pardoning grace is embodied. They conclude that, the “Gospel of God... concerning his Son tells how in the coming and redemptive work of Christ, God had fulfilled his ancient promise of blessing to all nations”.

Edwell, (1991:206) maintains that the term “Gospel” (Greek-*euangelion*) means the joyous proclamation of God’s redemptive activity in Christ on behalf of sinners. On his part Williams (1989:199) sees the Gospel as ‘Good News’ which in classical literature is the reward given for good tidings and also the message itself which originally meant the announcement of victory. Used over 75 times in the New Testament, it is the good news that God in Christ has fulfilled his promises to Israel and that a way of salvation has been opened up to all. The Gospel of the coming of Christ was anticipated in God’s blessing to Abraham (Galatians 3:8) and was promised by the Prophets (Romans 1:2). It is God’s power, revealing his righteousness and leading to salvation all who believe (Romans 1:16) Paul sees it as a sacred trust (1Timothy 1:11) which he must proclaim (1Corinthians 9:16). It is the word of truth (Ephesians 1:13) hidden to unbelievers (2Corinthians 4:3).

3.1.2 Evangelisation

Reisinger, (1982:1) says that to evangelise is “to present Jesus Christ to sinful men in other that they may come to put their trust in God, through Him to receive Him as their Saviour and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church.” For him, evangelism is not just about winning “souls” or saving people from hell, or saving them from their personal problems, it also includes serving Christ in His church. According to David Watson (1979:25) the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelisation in Lausanne, stated the meaning of evangelism thus:

to evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the spirit to all who repent and believe But evangelism itself is the proclamation of historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord with a view to persuading people to come to him personally, and so be reconciled to God.

It therefore presupposes that Jesus is the embodiment of the Gospel. Consequently the proclamation of the person and work of Jesus and thereby accepting him as Saviour and Lord would lead to the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Mbiti (1970:43) on his part views evangelisation primarily as an act of proclaiming Christianity's universality and cosmicity. What he means is that the gospel is universal and meant for everyone.

3.1.3 Culture

According to Ukpong (2003) culture refers to the way people in a particular community or society live, think and react to realities of life. It embraces the totality of their life situations both past and present as well as values and disvalues. Awedoba (2005:28) talks of culture as a way of thinking, feeling, believing, and observes that it is the main factor permitting people to live together as a society. He goes on to say that it consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. Culture then is the totality of a people's ways of living, working and thinking and the totality of what results from these activities as pertaining to a giving society. These would also include the people's language, food, ways of dressing, architecture and others.

Eboh (2003) says culture has both material and non material aspects and is acquired by every member of a society. While the material culture refers to objects or concrete aspects of culture, that is, every visible acquisition of man in society such as houses,

shirts, hoes, tables, knives and others, the non-material aspects of culture include language, morals, attitudes, knowledge, philosophy, arts, beliefs and values, shared and transmitted from one generation to another.

Emmanuel Asante (2007:2) has defined culture as “the sum of behaviour acquired from human’s dealings with their environment and transmitted to later generations through art and symbol, the aim of which is to define a group’s identity and aspirations, to serve as the basis of behaviour, and as a factor determining what is to be accepted or rejected in a given situation”. This definition according to Asante underscores culture as dealing with a specific way of life. This specific way of life includes a specific way of thinking, of living and of viewing the universe.

In summary culture is the forming, shaping, and refining activity that produces the ideas, customs, skills, artifacts and arts of a given people in a given period. It is a communal task and combines the works of past and present generations. It can also be viewed as integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behaviour and products shared by a group of people who organise their feelings, thinking and actions. It is a complex of system within which and through which generation of people have pursued goals and values. Therefore culture includes the society’s creative abilities, collective aspirations for progress and its practical methods for living with a common destiny. It is quiet evident that all persons participate in one culture or another. There is no individual who has no culture.

3.1.4 Salvation

According to McGrath (1997), the term salvation is a complex notion in that it does not necessarily have a specific Christian reference. In his view, the term can be employed in a thorough secular sense explaining that, it was common for Soviet writers, especially during the late 1920's to speak of Lenin as the "saviour" of the Soviet peoples. He claims that military coups in African states during the 1980's frequently resulted in the setting up of "Councils of salvation" to restore political and economic stability. In this sense, the term "salvation" can be a purely secular notion, concerned with political emancipation or the general human quest for liberation.

At the religious level, McGrath is again of the view that, salvation is not specifically a Christian idea. To him, many, if not all, of the world's religions have concepts of salvation. They differ enormously in relation to both their understanding of how that salvation is achieved, and the shape or form in which it is understood to take. He however, concludes that the distinctiveness of the Christian approach to salvation lies in two distinct areas: firstly salvation is understood to be grounded in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and secondly, the specific shape of salvation within the Christian tradition is itself formed by Christ. It can be deduced From McGrath's position that salvation in the Christian sense is embodied in Christ and his relation to humanity. Therefore human freedom and fulfillment is enshrined in Christ who calls all men to himself.

Vine (1966) says the Greek word *Soteria* denotes deliverance, preservation, and salvation. Salvation is used in the New Testament of material and temporal

deliverance from danger and apprehension at the national level (Luke 1:69-71, Acts 7:25) and also at the personal level to mean safety and health (Acts 27:34, Philippians 1:19, Hebrews 11:7). It is also used of the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted immediately by God to those who accept His conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, in whom alone it is to be obtained (Acts 4:12) and upon confession of him as Lord (Romans 10:10) and for which purpose the Gospel is the saving instrument (Romans 1:16, Ephesians 1:13). Again, salvation can be used of the present experience of God's power to deliver from bondage of sin (Philippians 2:12) where the special reference (not the entire) is to the maintenance of peace and harmony (1 Peter 1:9). Vine (1966) concludes that this present experience on the part of believers is virtually equivalent to sanctification.

Asamoah Gyadu (1992) writes that in the Old Testament, the supreme example of salvation is found in God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and their journeys through the wilderness to Canaan as recorded in Deuteronomy 6:21-23.

... We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the Lord sent miraculous signs and wonders great and terrible upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our fore fathers (NIV).

According to Asamoah Gyadu this major deliverance and others are specifically interpreted as being a definite part of God's unique and special involvement in human history. It involved deliverance from bondage, safe travel to the land of promise and settlement there as a new people in a new relationship with God. In the New Testament, Jesus is the Saviour or Deliverer from sin and its consequences as well as from Satan and his power. As he preached the arrival of the Kingdom of God, that is

the fatherly rule of God in human lives, those who repented and believed, received salvation.

Therefore, salvation in Jesus is redemption from sin and from the dominion of Satan; it is freedom to love and serve God. The emphasis is on a new life, the evidence of which is a new lifestyle leading to the Kingdom of God as noted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 when he uses the term “new creation,” “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (NIV) Larbi (2001: xii) also observes that salvation means, abundant life in the Christian understanding when translated into the vernacular. Salvation is a religious process in which health, prosperity, dignity, fertility, security, vitality and equilibrium within the cosmos are dominant.

3.1.5 Sacrifice

Vine (1966) uses the Greek word *thusia* to denote primarily the act of offering, and objectively, that which is offered. It is used to refer to idolatrous sacrifices (Acts 7:41), of animal or other sacrifices as offered under the law (Matthew 9:13, Mark 9:49, Hebrews 7:27). It is used in a greater sense of Christ, in his sacrifice on the cross (Ephesians 5:2, Hebrews 9:23) which is a type of the Levitical sacrifices (Hebrews 9:26, 10:12, 26).

It is significant to note here that the Levitical sacrifices which consisted of bulls and goats and were carried out annually were in respect of and in response to human sin (Leviticus 16). However, they were incapable of dealing with the problem of sin, hence the need for the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Hebrews 10:5-10).

According to McGrath (1997), the New Testament drawing on Old Testament imagery and expectations, presents Christ's death upon the cross as a sacrifice. This approach presents Christ's sacrificial offering as an effective and perfect sacrifice, which was able to accomplish that which the sacrifices of the Old Testament were only able to intimate, rather than achieve. In order for humanity to be restored to God, the mediator must sacrifice himself; without this sacrifice, such a restoration is impossible. McGrath (1997:391), citing Athanasius' Festal Letter VII says that

Athanasius' explored the idea of Christ's sacrifice in terms of the Passover sacrifice of the lamb: He became incarnate for our sakes so that he might offer himself to the Father in our place, and redeem us through his offering and sacrifice... This is he who, in former times, was sacrificed as a lamb, haven been foreshadowed in that lamb. But afterwards, he was slain for us. For Christ, our Passover is sacrificed.

As a symbol of the sin offering that was presented by the high Priest on the Day of Atonement, Paul describes the death of Christ as a "fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2 NIV).

According to Mbiti (1969) sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African peoples. To him, sacrifices refer to cases where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part, or in whole, to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the "living dead." On the purpose of sacrifices to the African, Mbiti adds that

"an ontological balance must be maintained between God and man, the spirits and man, the departed and the living. When this balance is upset, people experience misfortunes and sufferings. The making of sacrifices and offerings is a psychological device to restore this ontological balance. It is also an act and occasion of making and renewing contact between God and man, the spirits and man, in other words, the spiritual and the physical worlds.

To sum up, it is worthy to note that the term sacrifice is very significant in any worship experience and which is meant to bring about renewal of fellowship, harmony and reconciliation between deity and man. The sacrifice of animals in the Levitical order and also in African traditional background was only a shadow. The real and original means to renewal of fellowship and reconciliation with God, the Supreme Being is through Jesus Christ, who voluntarily offered himself on the cross to deal with the problem of sin once and for all, for all humanity.

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3.1.6 Church

According to Wiley and Culbertson (1946), the word “Church” as found in the New Testament is from the Greek word *ecclesia*, and its simplest connotation means an assembly or body of “called-out ones.” The Christian church is therefore the assembly of called out ones, made up of the divinely adopted sons of God, with Christ as glorious Head. From him it receives its life through the indwelling Spirit and as such, discharges a two-fold function as an institute of worship, and a depository of the faith. In the view of Wiley and Culbertson (1946) the church is also the body of Christ thus constituting a mystical extension of the nature of Christ. Consequently, it is composed only of those who have become partakers of that nature. The relation between Christ and the church is vital, living and organic. The church is not merely an organisation; it is a living organism.

Elwell (1996:95) also notes that the New Testament word for “church” is *ekklesia*, which means “the called out ones.” In classical Greek, the term was used almost exclusively for political gatherings. Particularly in Athens the word signified the

assembling of the citizens for the purpose of conducting the affairs of the *polis*. Moreover *ekklesia* referred only to the actual meeting not to the citizens themselves. When the people were not assembled, they were not considered to be the *ekklesia*. The New Testament records three instances of this secular usage of the term (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).

In the view of Ferguson and Wright (1988), the church is one of the most fundamental realities of the Christian faith. The doctrine of the church is often called ecclesiology. The writers continue that scripture presents the church as the people of God, the community and body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As the people of God, Peter applies to the New Testament church terms used in the Old Testament for the people of God (1 Peter 2:9).

Ferguson and Wright (1988) continues that the Biblical word “church” (Greek *ekklesia*, Hebrew *qahal*) means “assembly.” It describes the covenant making assembly at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 9:10, 10:4). Israel later assembled before God for covenant renewal (Deuteronomy 29:1, Joshua 8:35, Nehemiah 5:13) and at the feasts (Leviticus 23). The prophets promised an ingathering to the feast of the Lord in the latter days (Isaiah 2:2, Zechariah 14:16). Also Christ came to gather God’s assembly (Matthew 9:36, 12:30, and 16:18) announcing that the feast is prepared (Luke 14:17). Christ fulfilled the feast of the Passover by his death and resurrection, and sent the Holy Spirit to the assembled disciples on the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). As Christians assembled to worship, they gather not to Sinai, but to the heavenly

Zion, the assembly of Saints and angels, where Jesus is (Hebrews 12:18-29). This heavenly assembly defines the church.

The church is also the dwelling of God. The symbolism of God's dwelling among his people in his tabernacle is fulfilled by Jesus Christ, first in the tabernacle of his flesh (John 1:14, 2:19, 20), then in his spirit. The church like the Christian is a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16). Grudem (1994:53) views the church as "the community of all true believers for all time." This definition understands the church to be made of all those who are truly saved. Paul the Apostle says "... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25 NIV). Here the term "church" is used to apply to all those whom Christ died to redeem, all who are saved by the death of Christ. But that according to Grudem must include all true believers of all time, both believers in the New Testament age and believers in the Old Testament age as well. (Ferguson and Wright 1988),

In summary, it can be noted that the term church is a spiritual entity, with Christ as its head. It consists of all who partake of the nature of Christ by identifying with his death and resurrection and by the indwelling, Holy Spirit. The church may be viewed as an organism in which every member functions and associates with other members, and also as an organisation in which various gifts are exercised.

3.1.7 Inculturation

Gefere (1995:24) notes that the word "inculturation" is typical of the theological language of the end of the twentieth century. For Catholics, the word was first used at

the Catholic Bishops Synod of 1977. Since then, it had been used often by Pope John Paul II. The meaning of the word “inculturation” is to underline the need for the (Christian) faith to germinate, to be born in the midst of a culture. Gefere (1995) cites Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical epistle of June 1985 as defining inculturation as the incarnation of the Gospel in native cultures and also, the introduction of these cultures into the life of the church. There can be no evangelisation without the insertion of the message into a given culture, just as God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. He contends that just as the exclusive transcendence of God has not been compromised by the incarnation, so also the Gospel can remain true to itself while expousing the particularity of different cultures. But by virtue of its universal mission, the Gospel has to incarnate itself **even in the tissue** of every culture and give birth to new historical expressions of Christianity in terms of confession of faith and practice. According to the brochure of the First National Catholic Pastoral Congress (1997:47) inculturation can be defined as

the integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this **experience** not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to **create a new unity and communion**, not only within the culture in question, but also enrichment of the church universal.

From this definition, it is clear that the process of inculturation is a two-way process. The way in which the Christian life and message influence the cultural context of a particular church and the impact of a given culture on the way the Christian life and message are articulated and passed on.

Inculturation therefore seeks to utilise the rich cultural categories to promote the kingdom of Christ. Therefore, in inculturation the Gospel becomes inserted in a given

culture transforming it from within by challenging certain values and cultural expressions. The particular culture, on the other hand offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is proclaimed, understood and lived thus enriching Christianity and the church by interpreting and formulating the Christian message in a purely new way.

3.2 Gospel and Culture from Biblical Perspective

3.2.1 The Case of Early Israel

God's dealing with people is the primary theme of the Bible. In this sense how people develop this relationship in the sense of their ideological beliefs, depends to a large extent, upon how they encountered the divine. The Old Testament is an intensely personal story and an account of the encounter between a personal God who goes by the name Yahweh. This personal God calls on human beings to respond personally as individuals, and collectively as a community. The aim of this encounter was to bring about a transformation along the lines designed by this personal God, who desired to enter into a personal covenant with them Bright (2000).

The Old Testament cultures present a picture of the people of the period and how they lived their lives. The Genesis account portrays a people with a kinship attitude to life. It is significant to note here that the history of Israel focuses on Abraham who is credited with the raising of a nation. In the early days, Abraham together with his family and servants had a kinship system, and also maintained a good relationship with all the people around them. Therefore the social life of the period was based on

personal relationship and group interaction as seen in the twelve sons of Jacob who later became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Bright 2000)

As noted earlier, Israel's history begun with Abraham. The biblical record tells us that Abraham left Haran at the command of God who had appeared to him, promising him land and posterity, in a place that would later be shown to him (Genesis, 12:1-3). The promise which was repeatedly renewed and also sealed by covenant was also given to Isaac (Genesis. 26:2-4) and later to Jacob (Genesis. 28:13-15, 35:11). Abraham therefore stands as the ultimate ancestor of Israel's faith. (Bright 2000)

It is evident from the Genesis record that as each patriarch encountered God, he had the freedom and the personal choice to worship his God to whom he entrusted himself. Bright (2000) further observes that this feature is not out of place but is seen in certain appellations of the deity evident in the narratives which indicates a close personal relationship between the clan father and his God. These include the God of Abraham (Genesis. 28:13, 31:42, 53), the "Fear of Isaac" (Genesis. 49:24). The God was the patron deity of the clan as illustrated in Genesis 31:36-55 where Jacob swears by the "Fear of Isaac." Therefore each swears by the God of his father's clan.

According to Bright (2000) parallels drawn from the Aramean and Arab societies of the early Christian centuries, and also from the Cappadocian texts and other documents of the patriarchal age and later, make it almost certain that the establishment of a personal and contractual relationship between head of clan and clan deity represents a phenomenon widespread and ancient among Semitic nomads. Another illustration of the personal relationship between individuals and patron deity

is seen in certain names in early Israel and among her other Semitic neighbours. For instance Bright (2000:98, 99) maintains that classes of names compounded with *Ab* (father) and *amm* (family people) is a classical example. Names in this category include Abiezer, Abimelech, Abiram and others. He contends that since most Semitic names have theological significance, they therefore, demonstrate belief. Thus Abiram means “my (divine) father or brother is exalted”, Abiezer means, “my (divine) father or brother is a help (to me)”, and Abimelech means “my (divine) father or brother is (my) king”. Such names, according to Bright also demonstrate keen sense of kinship between clan and deity, as “the God was the unseen head of the house, its members, and the members of his family.” Therefore patriarchal religion was characterised by a strong clan or family solidarity.

Drane (1983:30-31) maintains that like other farmers, the people of ancient Israel celebrated the annual gathering of the harvest in a religious ceremony. But as they did so their thoughts centered not on ploughing, sowing and reaping, but on the history of their nation. When they presented a part of the harvest to God, they affirmed their deepest convictions about life in words that are still repeated daily by pious Jews in the 20th century. They would say,

My ancestor was a wandering Aramean... who took his family to Egypt to live. They were few in number when they went there, but they became a large and powerful nation. The Egyptians treated us harshly and forced us to work as slaves. Then we cried out for help to the Lord, the God of our ancestors. He heard us and saw our suffering, hardship and misery. By his great power and strength he rescued us from Egypt. He worked miracles and wonders and caused terrifying things to happen. He brought us here and gave us this rich and fertile land. So now I bring to the Lord the first part of the harvest that he has given me. (Drane 1983: 30-31)

Describing in detail the religion of the early patriarchs would seem impossible. However, the biblical record is clear on the fact that the ancestors of early Israel were once 'pagans, even though it would not be possible to ascertain the particular gods they served. In the view of Bright (2000) it can be guessed that Ur and Haran were centers for the worship of the moon cult in the Mesopotamia region, and it might seem that the family of Abraham was committed to that cult. Drane (1983:32) argues that there is certainly plenty of evidence to suggest that Abraham and his family were originally 'pagans'. Citing Joshua 24:2 he affirms, Israel's initial commitment to other gods. He mentions Ur and Haran as important cities of ancient Mesopotamia as centres which habited important shrines for the worship of the moon god, *sin*, which many Old Testament scholars suggest might be the reason for God calling Abraham.

Schultz (2000) maintains that Israel's encampment at Mount Sinai was purposeful. In less than a year God's covenant people became a nation. The covenant expanded in the Decalogue and laws for holy living, construction of the Tabernacle, organization of the priesthood, the institution of offerings and observances of feasts and seasons which enabled Israel to serve God better,

In describing the nature of the religion of early Israel, Drane (1983) notes that a personal experience of God was vital for the very survival of the whole nation of Israel. Therefore the Old Testament accounts demonstrate to us how the people encountered God in their every circumstance of life. The Israelites considered themselves as a wandering people, and were never tempted to consider their faith as something that was to be locked up in a temple or some other sacred place. It was

something that went with them and affected their everyday life wherever they happened to be.

Edersheim (1975) has also noted that “one characteristic trait of the patriarchal history was faith which lays hold on the word of promise and on the strength of this word gives up that which is seen and present for that which is unseen and future”. Abraham listened and obeyed the voice of God, even though he knew little or nothing about Him. Gradually people came to know God and related to Him in many ways. The question is that how can people believe in one they do not know and how can they know unless they receive the word in an understandable manner? It is significant to know that the use of terms for God understood by the people would be of great assistance to a local understanding.

According to Anderson (1975), Joshua 24 describes a great assembly at Schechem at which Joshua entreated the people to renew their loyalty to the God who had shown His power and purpose in the exodus and the guidance into the land of Canaan. Specifically the people were challenged to put away the gods which their fathers served beyond the river Euphrates and in Egypt. (Joshua 24:14)

The passage seems to indicate that Israel’s ancestors had been under the influence of religious views that prevailed in the region of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Anderson (1975) continues that the exodus was not just a flight from political bondage but also a departure from the religions of the ancient world. Joshua’s challenge to the people was not an issue about the service of other gods verses the service of the one God who

revealed Himself in the event of the exodus. Rather, it was a choice between two different views of reality, one expressed in the myths of Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt and the other in Israel's history. Also their life as a people was dependant on the God who had revealed Himself to them as the God of their fathers. This became a solid foundation for their faith and identity.

3.2.2 Gospel and Culture in the New Testament Period

The New Testament times depict a new phase in the life of Israel. God's relationship with the descendants of Abraham had taken a definite form. The Jews were now a race with a definite sense of history, identity, religious traditions and a culture. Bosch (1991) maintains that the Jewish faith had permeated the entire region. There was little evidence of any active going out to the Gentiles in order to win them over to the faith. However Gentiles were often attracted to the Jewish faith and were thus referred to as proselytes. In the New Testament Judaism had been institutionalised as the national religion of the Jewish people, and the Torah, which is the Jewish Law had gained prominence. Living by the dictates of the Law was an important requirement of Judaism, failure of which attracted some form of punishment.

The period was also characterized by religious sectarianism and fanaticism with the rise of the Pharisees, zealots and Sadducees who were very zealous for the Law and the religious traditions. There were also merchants and soldiers, who in the course of their work often carried along new ideas and also experimented with new faiths. Socio-politically, the period witnessed Palestine coming under Roman domination which also saw the rise of large estates. According to Bosch (1991) these already poor

peasants became the labour pool for the estate owners who exploited them often. The Roman authorities also demonstrated their power by organizing a census and imposing heavy taxes, on the Jews. These were difficult times for the Jews who desired a deliverer to come to their rescue. They desired the days of the Exodus when God delivered Israel out of Egypt and the days of David who won military battles for Israel. This explains why their messianic expectation did not coincide with Jesus' mission.

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The life and ministry of Jesus is significant in this historical record. To understand Jesus, is to position him in the entire historical record concerning the Jews. He reflects the prophets of old and John the Baptist, his forerunner, who were concerned with the repentance and salvation of Israel. Bediako (1999) maintains that the coming of Jesus raised some questions regarding his mission. Will the Jews, both as individuals and as a community respond positively to the divine initiative in Jesus who is God incarnate? Also will they respond in the same open and personal manner as did Abraham their great ancestor which had resulted in their history and identity as a people? These questions will engage our attention as we examine the nature of the relationship between faith and culture in the New Testament period.

In the study of the New Testament and its culture, it is significant to note the extent to which ideological considerations had affected the lives of the people. It is quite evident from the biblical account that there was a shift from the awareness of a supreme God to many lesser, local deities. Again, it is important to recognise how the various belief systems affected the way people understood God's truth and also how

Jesus understood and addressed the religious climate of his time. We also need to recognise the effect of spirit beings on human beings and how Christ constantly engaged demons and those who were demon-possessed.

The coming of Jesus raised some problems for the Jewish people, who had different expectations regarding the coming Messiah as prophesied by the prophets of old. In the first place, he did not conform to the patterns of Jewish lifestyle. Niebuhr (1951:3) says that Jesus came and thrust aside all the requirements of the national life. He ignored everything connected with material civilization, making him a stranger to the so-called civilization. Jesus' words and actions revealed him as one who did not conform to normal Jewish expectations and attitudes.

In his inaugural speech to the Jewish people according to Luke 4:18-19, Jesus announced the purpose of his mission which was more spiritual than physical, much to the disappointment of most Jews who hitherto had expected Jesus, who was widely regarded as the promised Messiah, to put forward his strategies or measures to deliver them from Roman domination. He redefined some aspects of Jewish traditional life. For instance John 7:14-52 revealed an encounter of Gospel and culture as the Sanhedrin (Jewish religious council) and the Pharisees in particular struggled to understand the person of Jesus. (Bediako 1999)

An evidence of that struggle was seen in Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus. Nicodemus a member of the Jewish council secretly had had an encounter with Jesus

and had made a personal response and commitment. Before the council, Nicodemus is questioned about his association with Jesus, and this gives us a picture not only of the collective and individual hatred for Jesus, but also how Jesus himself had become a threat to the Jewish society. The Jewish authorities regarded Jesus as a threat to their power base, as many people were turning to him, and this blinded these Jewish authorities from seeing the divine initiative in their midst. They failed to recognise that Jesus was God incarnate and who had come to rescue them. Nicodemus had challenged the Sanhedrim that according to the Law one could not be condemned unless he had made a submission and his crime sorted out. The council, in seeking to marginalise Nicodemus culturally and religiously asked “are you from Galilee too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee” (John 7:52 NIV). According to (Bediako 1999) the implication of their statement is that no prophet had ever come, nor will ever come from Galilee. In their understanding it was against their custom and tradition.

Jesus’ teaching also brought him into conflict with the Jewish authorities as he sought to challenge some of their religious and social ideas. For instance, his teaching concerning the institution of the Sabbath was met with sharp criticism (Mark 2:13-17, Mark 3:1-6; Matthew. 12:1-8). Again, his description of the Temple as his own body was misunderstood, especially as he taught that he would pull it down and rebuild it in three days. The Jewish person regarded the Temple as one of the pillars of the national religion and therefore guarded it more jealously. Therefore Jesus’ words were viewed as a threat and amounting to treason.

It is also evident from the New Testament record, especially in the synoptic Gospels, that Jesus denounced all that was oppressive to the poor and marginalised in the Jewish society. It was evident that his teachings were going to set him against the Jewish law and traditions. For instance in the New Testament times, women were constantly discriminated against in religion and in the society. White (2000) explains that, on the basis of the Eden story, women were blamed for all the evil in the world. In the Synagogue they were segregated and silenced, and not allowed to take part in discussion. Also in the Temple they were confined to the Women's Court. Speaking with women in public places was frowned upon; even strict Pharisees would not converse with their wives or daughters in public. White (2000) continues that women unlike men had no right of divorce and were ritually "unclean" at various times especially at childbirth and which was prolonged if the child is a girl. Also women's testimony was not valid in any court or business matters. Worse of all White maintains that the pious Jew included in his synagogue prayer, thanksgiving that God had not made him a woman.

It is significant to note how deliberately Jesus set himself to oppose such discrimination. Jesus' mission to liberate the oppressed as recorded in Luke 4:18 include women, and this comes into play as he challenges the Jewish culture. Jesus' teaching concerning family life and kinship, especially the place of women (Luke 8:19-21, Luke 7:36-50) enables us to understand that his attitude toward women differed from the other Rabbis. Jesus, considered as a Rabbi on the contrary made women feel comfortable and secure in his presence (John 4). His attitude demonstrates the equality of all persons before God irrespective of gender, and this was misunderstood by the Jewish authorities.

Also Jesus' association with gentiles, which was widely condemned by the Jews, was to demonstrate that his ministry was an inclusive one far opposed to the exclusive position of the Jews. (Luke 9:52, 10:33, John 4:9, 8:48)

One significant aspect of Jesus' ministry was his encounter with spirit beings or demons, as well as those who were possessed by them (Mark 5). His miraculous works manifested in healing and deliverance were to demonstrate his power over spiritual forces who were out to destroy God's creation. Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom of God, meant that he was out to build a spiritual kingdom, which would involve all persons who would commit themselves to him, irrespective of gender or status.

It is also worth noting that the Synoptic Gospels present how the various authors have framed the traditions associated with Jesus of Nazareth in ways that gave it a significance that spoke to their cultural realities. The story of Jesus is presented in a way that was appealing and understandable to the people. For example, Jesus had spoken of fields, vineyards, sowing, harvesting, mustard seed, fig tree, lilies and banquets to show how the kingdom of God which he proclaimed could be understood by the people of Palestine.

To sum up, it can be noted from the New Testament record that the life and ministry of Jesus posed a major challenge to dominant Jewish culture of the time. The challenge was not in any way a rejection of his Jewishness. It is significant to note that Jesus did not condemn the Jewish culture including the law and the Jewish

religion per se, but sought to evangelise them. Using elements of Jewish culture, he sought to instill into the law and the Jewish religion a new vision based on the good news that he preached. This involved a challenge to the Jewish culture and religion thus calling on his hearers to respond to the good news and a challenge to people to rethink their basic beliefs, hopes, and institutions. Jesus used this challenge from within the culture itself and not from outside it.

It is also significant to note that Jesus preached a universal kingdom which eventually inspired the disciples to undertake a universal mission to evangelise all peoples. They were to follow Jesus' example of evangelising the people from within and based on the perspectives of their culture. Therefore the New Testament authors drew from the Hebrew tradition to show how the significance of Jesus of Nazareth could be explained to their recipients in categories they understood. At the same time, they re-interpreted the traditions contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, regarding the person of Christ and this gave much credence to the truth that the Jesus of Nazareth, was truly the Son of God.

3.2.3 Gospel and Culture in the Early Church Period

In the preceeding section we found out that the coming of Jesus was significant to both Jews and Gentiles. He lived and ministered among both Jews and Gentiles. His charge to the disciples after his resurrection was for them to go into the world (all people outside the Jewish circle) and make them disciples for the kingdom of God. Jesus's words meant that a new era was about to dawn in which God was calling all people, Jews and gentiles alike to come to Him. God in His sovereign wisdom and

power opened the flood gates for the Gospel to spread. As the Gospel begun to spread from Palestine into Greek and Latin speaking territories of the Mediterranean world, it encountered many different cultures. Following from this we shall proceed to discuss the encounter of the Gospel and the cultures of the Early Church period namely the Jewish and the Graeco-Roman or Hellenistic cultures.

Writing on the political and social background of the early church period, Oshitelu (2003) notes that Christianity was born at a time remarkably favourable to its development and spread. He attributes this to many factors including the following. First, the peace of the Roman Empire. The victory of Emperor Octavian Caesar over Antonia in 31BC brought to an end the long civil war and ushered in a period of peace. For two centuries the much acclaimed Pax Romana (Roman Peace) helped to spread Christianity. Many Christian writers at that time recognised the great asset of the Pax Romana which was to spread the Christian faith. For instance Irenaeus in the second century spoke of the freedom of travel which was made possible. Later Origen declared that the Pax Romana was given in the providence of God to enable the church to pursue its missionary task. Oshitelu (2003)

The second factor for the spread of Christianity, according to Oshitelu (2003) was the development of communication. The Pax Romana also resulted in the growth of commerce and the development of communication. He refers to a network of highways (Apian Way) which provided the means of travel. The safety of the roads, made travel a frequent activity and the Christian faith was usually carried along the trade routes of the Empire. Thirdly, language played a significant role. With the

spread of Greek culture throughout the Mediterranean region, Greek language became commonly used, especially in the eastern parts. In the west of the empire, Latin began to spread. The ease of communication, as well as free trade with a common language, all aided the exchange and spread of ideas including Christianity in the first century of the Christian era (Oshitelu 2003).

The fourth factor which enabled Christianity to spread is the uniform system of justice. During the period under review, a legal framework based on justice and fairness was in place which recognised the laws of ethnic minorities such as the Jews. However, it is significant to note that this system brought problems to the early Christians who kept themselves outside the Jewish law and were thus considered as atheists resulting in their persecution (Oshitelu 2003).

In another development Oshitelu maintains that Christianity emerged within a period of varying sects and religious faiths. This means that Christianity was not the only faith at the time that needed to be propagated. The Roman Empire had its own religion which was divided into public and private aspects. The public religion comprised public acts of worship including the giving of sacrifices as a matter of duty; on the other hand, and the private was limited to what one did in acts of worship to one's personal deities. The symbol of the Empire was the worship of the state gods as well as the Emperor and which was instituted throughout the empire as a sign of unity. However, according to Oshitelu (2003) there was freedom of religion as the official state cult did not suppress other people from practicing their religion. The worship of the state gods, as noted earlier, was considered compulsory, and any

refusal to participate was considered a crime. According Cook (1976 Roman religion was, indeed closely connected with patriotism, and disloyalty to the imperial gods was regarded as disloyalty to the empire itself. Jews were however given exemption, with much consideration, for the reason that their religion (Judaism) was unique and considered incompatible with the state religion.

In the light of this development, the early Christians also desired to have the same license of exemption as the Jews, but this was not possible. The Christians were soon found out and were set on collision with the Roman authorities in respect of the worship of the state cult which they failed to participate in because of its threat to their Christian faith. According to Oshitelu (2003:32), from the days of Nero in 64AD to Constantine in 313AD, the profession of Christianity exposed its adherents to persecution resulting in much suffering. Condemnation could lead to death.

Because Christians did not have any legal backing of the state, they were severely persecuted. The basis of the persecution was the state's religious policy which prohibited the state from interfering with the religion of tribal groups. They only considered a practice a crime if it persuaded others to change their faith in order to take on another. This policy was instituted to ensure religious harmony in the empire and to forestall any disturbance of the public order and also curb any threat to state security. Again, Oshitelu (2003) maintains that when the believers chose to live outside the Jewish Laws, it betrayed them as a separate sect, and therefore were accused of being disloyal to the state, considered as illegal sect, and were therefore charged with treason. They were further accused of breaching the public order law,

through their public preaching, practising cannibalism because of their observance of the Lord's Supper, and which was considered as an indecent conduct and a threat to the state. It is against this background that the early believers suffered much persecution.

Bright (2000) also maintains that participation in the state cult demonstrated one's loyalty to the state. Again the Romans gave room for the worship of other deities. They were of the belief that the more gods a city worshipped, the better its chances of divine favour. Given this mindset, it was surprising to the Roman authorities to understand the Christians' position not to participate in the state cult. The Christians were making a religious profession by refusing to worship the state gods and the image of the emperor. The Romans perceived it as an unpatriotic withdrawal from a civic duty, and this brought much persecution to the Christians.

It is significant to note that it took a long time for Jewish Christians to come to the understanding that the Gospel was not for them only, but also for the Gentiles, and that the God of the Jews was also the God of the Gentiles. In some cases Jewish Christians demanded that the Gentile Christians first become 'Jews' before they could be accepted as Christians. This is against the background that Jews considered Gentiles as 'dogs' and unqualified to participate in the same faith as they. For the Gentiles to be accepted in the assembly of the Jews, they must first be circumcised in order to become "proselytes" to enjoy right standing in Jewish assembly.

Fisher (1974:67) maintains that, Peter's mission to the home of Cornelius was not an exception. Cornelius was regarded as a devout man, somehow an adherent of the Jewish faith. However, Fisher continues that the Jewish believers, at that time were not willing to accept Cornelius on equal terms with them. Peter was queried for not only preaching to him and his household but also eating with them (Acts 11:3). The Council of Jerusalem according to Acts 15 offers us with a classical example of how a problem of Gospel and culture was resolved. As noted earlier, the problem at stake was the demand of Jewish Christians on their Gentile counterparts to renounce their background and put on Jewish nature so as to be qualified to become Christians. This problem posed a major challenge to the church and to the advancement of the Gospel.

In the midst of the struggle between the Jewish Christians and their Gentile counterparts, was the question; what is meant by being a Christian? The Council of Jerusalem resolved that one could become a Christian by identifying with the salvific work of Christ and no other thing. They declared that, it was wrong to impose one's cultural ideology and practice on another. As a matter of urgency, the council issued a letter to the Church at Antioch expressing the judgment that circumcision was not necessary for the Gentiles, rather they should abstain from idolatry and immorality which was so commonly practised among the Gentiles. According to Halley (1965) abstention from blood is an age old injunction even before the time of Moses (Genesis. 9:4) and was for all races to obey. It is note worthy that it was when the Jewish problem was soundly resolved that the doors of evangelisation of the non-Jewish world began to open.

The encounter of the Christian faith and the Hellenistic culture also brought about interesting developments. The person at the centre of this encounter is the Apostle Paul who took the Gospel to the then Greek world. As noted earlier, different ideologies shaped the minds of the Greeks and Paul had to push through these ideologies in order to communicate the Gospel to them. Also, spiritual entities were upheld as sources of power and life within the Greek territories. According to Johnson (1997) In Greek cosmology, the world is such a complex entity that it cannot be explained by a single principle. To them reality could not have only one source, or one person explaining it (this seems to explain their reason for inviting Paul). Therefore they had for themselves many gods each with its function. Paul and Barnabas took advantage of these philosophical ideas of the Greeks to present the Gospel message. They taught that Jesus was the only Lord and Saviour of mankind, and not the many gods or lords that they were used to. In later time, Paul had to write to the churches to defend the supremacy and lordship of Christ over and above every philosophy or any other human tradition that was common among the Greeks. (Johnson 1997).

Halley (1965) maintains that Athens was the home base of Pericles, Socrates, Demosthenes and Plato, centre of philosophy, literature, science, and art, seat of the greatest university of the then world and the meeting place of the world's academia (the Areopagus) which was wholly given over to idolatry. In this region came Paul the Apostle and which revealed his deepest insight into Greek life and thought. He translated his message into Hellenistic thought and language. According to Horton (1981) Paul used an inscription on an altar to give him an opportunity to speak about the one true God in contrast to their many gods. He declared that the "unknown God"

of their altar whom they worshipped without knowing Him, is the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth.

According to Johnson (1997) Ephesus provided a suitable setting for the series of encounters between the apostle Paul and the proponents of other religions. Ephesus was not only the site of the famous temple of Artemis, but also a renowned centre for the magical and occult arts. The growing word of God thus confronted both the popular personal religious practices (magic) and the institutional religion (temple of Artemis) for which Ephesus was well known.

To sum up, it is worth noting that the early Church period portrayed how the Gospel encountered the various cultures of the time. With regards to the Roman culture, the challenge of the early Christians was how to cope with the imperial cult. In the Greek territories, the Gospel preachers (Paul and Barnabas) had to challenge the prevailing intellectual and spiritual powers. However, Paul had to provide his urban audience with a new symbolical system such as athletics in his unfolding of the Gospel.

3.3 Gospel and Culture in African Christian History

The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 was convened to deliberate on what was termed missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world. It was also to find ways in which the Gospel could make a greater and lasting impact upon the world's non-Christian religion. At the conference, according to Bediako (1995), it was the traditional religions of Africa wrongly referred to as "animism" which caused the most concern. It was generally felt that there was practically no religion in animism which meant that, it possessed no formulated religious

observances or doctrines, and therefore no preparation for Christianity. Bediako (1995) maintains further that, it was not surprising that at the beginning of the Western Missionary Movement in Africa, the question was asked, “can the animist be converted”? Therefore the Missionaries began their work with misjudgment and misrepresentation of Africa’s traditional background.

Dzobo (2004) has observed that “Africans were represented as a savage people, immersed with crippling superstitions and whose religion lacked any abiding values and therefore they became fitting objects of evangelization”. He maintains that the Christian missionary work in Africa was subsequently started on the wrong understanding of African religion and it has remained so till now. Terminologies such as animism, fetishism, paganism were used to describe African religion. Dzobo further reiterates that all the descriptions that were given to African religion were loaded with value-judgments intended to create the impression that Africans were worshipping wrong objects either from nature or human creation. In this sense African traditional religion was viewed as the worship of creatures and not the Creator.

Expatriating on the basis of this misrepresentation of Africa’s religious background, Bediako (1995:194-195) is of the view that the modern Missionary Movement was an inheritor of the notion of a territorial Christianity as being heir to the idea of a great chain of being which ranked ‘White’, ‘Red’, ‘Yellow’ and ‘Negro’ races in that descending order in a grand schema of humanity. Therefore at the onset of the Missionary Movement in the early nineteenth century, it was perceived that the Gospel itself was the great civilizer of barbarous men. Bediako (1995) further posits

that the missionary enterprise in Africa thus became part of a much wider benevolent movement to elevate the peoples of Africa, to assume their place among civilized and Christian nations. Bediako (1995) notes that, the element of the Christian religion was seen as the essential agent for the civilisation of Africa. According to him,

Whatever methods may be attempted for ameliorating the condition of untutored man, this alone can penetrate to the root of the evil, can teach him to love and be friend his neighbour and cause him to act as a candidate for a higher and holier state, of being... This mighty lever (that is Christianity) when properly applied, can alone overturn the iniquitous systems which prevail throughout the continent. Let missionaries and school masters, the plough and the spade, go together, and agriculture will flourish, the avenues of legitimate commerce will be opened, confidence between man and will advance as the natural effect, and Christianity will operate as the proximate cause of this happy change (Bediako 1992:228).

The import of this assertion was the development of a package intended to foster cultural change in Africa and which would cause the “dark continent” to rise to the state of prosperity and happiness as was enjoyed by Europe (perceived as being by divine providence). To the missionaries, God ordained this prosperity and happy state for only Europe; and for Africans to enjoy this they needed to be identified with Europe. The key to unlocking this happy state was perceived to be Christianity, therefore “Christianity and civilisation were seen as inseparable” (Bediako 1992:228).

Writing on the motive of the modern missionary movement to Africa, Akrong (2000:49) maintains that despite the obvious economic and political motives for colonialism, there was that theory that placed colonialism within a theology of divine providence in which Western Europe is presumed to have been given a divine mandate to civilise the world in anticipation of the fulfilment of a special divine vocation to civilise the rest of the world as a prelude to the realisation of the kingdom of God on earth. This notion has been underscored by Bosch when he said that the

modern missions originated in the context of modern European colonisation (Bosch 1991:303). In this sense, the task of modern missions were categorised into territories, in which it became imperative for British missionaries to serve in British colonies, the French in French colonies, and the Germans in German colonies. Therefore the missionaries, like the colonialists, shared the same ideology that saw mission and colonialism as the task of the white man to bring civilisation to the rest of the world.

Akrong (2000:49) cites Stephen Neil as saying that

Missionaries in the nineteenth century had to some extent yielded to the colonial complex . Only the white man in the sense of the word, he was wise, good and members of other races ,in so far as they become westernised might share in this wisdom and goodness. Western man was a leader, and would remain so for a long time to perhaps forever.

It is apparent from these assertions that colonialism placed the white man at the highest pedestal. It produced a sense of European cultural superiority that coloured all dealings between the Europeans and the Africans. Therefore as the missionaries accommodated colonialism with its negative attitude of exploitation, it produced a kind of superior-inferior, master-servant, civilised-uncivilised attitude. This created the impression that Christianity was the religion of the white man, and Africans needed to succumb to the white man in their quests to become Christians.

Asante (2007) is of the view that for most of the early missionaries, western culture and Christianity were coterminous, if not synonymous. Therefore in their missionary activities they sought to promote their own native cultures. He says further that the early propagators of the Christian faith were seldom able to detach their cultural particularities from the Gospel. Asante (2007) believes also that the missionaries

usually supported and collaborated with the colonial powers, which embarked on assimilative policies aimed at planting in Africa the cultures and civilisations of the home countries of the powers concerned. Asante (2007) continues that the early Christian missionary activities, which showed very little sympathy, if any, with the life realities of Africans, the result was a ‘clash of cultures’ for the African Christian. This clash of cultures put the Africans Christian in a dilemma as to which way to go. First the African Christian is torn apart internally because, he or she must decide whether to side with the traditional background or with the European culture. Secondly, the clash of cultures results in a cultural alienation in which the Christian embraces the new (European culture and Christianity) and renounces the native traditions. (Asante 2007).

The legacy of the early missionary movement in Africa is the perception that African religion and culture were systems of evil that must be uprooted before Christianity could be planted. In the minds of the missionaries, African traditional religion is paganism and the culture is contaminated with evil, making it incompatible with Christianity. Therefore Akrong (2000) concludes that the rigid cultural and religious wall of separation erected between traditional religion and Christianity and the negative evaluation of traditional religion continue to shape any discourse on the relationship between Christianity and traditional religion which must be carefully addressed.

Bediako (1992) believes that missionaries on the whole saw in Africa and the environment, what they expected to find. In other words what was observed in Africa

was understood and interpreted, not in the terms of Africa but in terms of Europe, that is the European value setting for the faith. Mugambi and Magesa (1998:6) is of the view that when the Gospel was brought to Africa, it came as a foreign religion. Historically, Africa was perceived as the 'Dark Continent', and the African lived in darkness, and needed light. As such Christianity came to bring that light. In this sense, "Christ was obstructed by European perception and culture. According to Mugambi and Magesa (1998:6) the presentation was faulty. Again citing Taylor Mugambi and Magesa (1998:6) observes that

Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solution to the needs a westerner would feel, the saviour of the world of the European worldview, the object of the adoration and prayer of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking what would he look like? If he came into the world of African cosmology, to redeem man as Africans understand him, would he be recognised to the rest of the church universal? And if Africa offered him praises and petitions of her total, inhibited humanity, would they be accepted?

It is significant to note that the missionaries failed to make significant and lasting impact on the religious level mainly because they did not address the traditional worldview of the African. Christianity as it was presented represented a discontinuity with the African past as converts represented a new type of Christianity with a new lifestyle, new dress code, new language and new values. There was therefore no room for exchange of ideas or any form of dialogue. The Christian communities that emerged in the areas of missionary activity lost touch with African traditional experience and therefore became artificial.

Omenyo (2000:1) maintains that "the failure of historical Christianity to enter into a constructive dialogue with African traditional cultures and religions has long been

recognised. The consequence of this theological deficit is the inability of most African Christians to reconcile their worldview with the type of Christianity professed by western Christian missionaries in Africa” Even though the missionaries made some gains in their missionary work, much especially at the social and economic levels, their impact at the religious or spiritual level were woefully inadequate. Omenyo(2000:) is of the view that “those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian Gospel in other lands and cultures have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for an encounter between the Christian religion and the cosmology of the peoples outside European culture and traditions”. He concludes that “it is this which has made Christianity either alien or superficial or both.” (Omenyo 2000:1)

It is evident from this assertion that many African Christian converts realised that they had been cut off from their own cultural roots and had lost touch with African reality and experience. As African Christian converts were drawn away from their cultural rooting, their conversion also took place outside their cultural context. This is the state of affairs which inevitably has led to cultural conflicts within the framework of the church in Africa. However, it is worthy to state that, African theologians should not concentrate their efforts at reacting to western misrepresentation of African culture and religions. What is needed now is a critical theological construction which relates more fully, African confidence in the Christian faith to the actual life experience of Africans. They should strive to come up with theologies that will attempt to answer the pressing questions of Africans.

3.4. The Gospel in the Frafra Context

The first Christian organization to enter the north of Ghana was the Catholic Church. The first missionaries arrived in Navrongo from Ouagadougou, the capital of the then Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), in 1906. According to the brochure of the National Catholic Pastoral Congress (1997:13) Catholic Christianity was introduced into northern Ghana by the Missionary Society of our Lady of Africa, then popularly known as the White Fathers. (See Appendix L). In later times other denominations such as the protestant, Pentecostal and charismatic also came to the Frafra area.

The establishment of the first mission station in 1907 at Navrongo seems to suggest that the White Fathers needed to find a place of refuge for their mission in Ouagadougou rather than a conscious plan to evangelise the Northern Territories. The work of these missionaries in Ouagadougou was being threatened by the anti-clerical attitude of the French government which was extended to its colonies including the then Upper Volta. Therefore the missionaries needed to find an alternative place so as to safeguard their work, hence their crossing over to the Northern Territories of Ghana. The White Fathers spent almost twenty years in Navrongo before founding other mission stations including Bolgatanga in 1925 (First National Catholic Pastoral Congress Brochure 1997). The question that requires answer is what were their strategies or methods of evangelisation? These are presented in three main points, namely adaptation to local circumstances, Catechumenate in stages, founding of local churches.

3.4.1 Patterns of Evangelisation of the Frafra

In the first place, the missionaries upon their arrival in a new place spend the first year to learn the language and customs of the local people. They needed to adjust to the life situation of their would-be converts, in matters of dress and food. Aboteyuure (retired Catholic priest, Bolgatanga) explains that this was to put the missionaries in a situation of identifying with the ruling of Vatican II which stipulates that, the church be opened to other faiths and cultures. He quotes Cardinal Lavigne as saying that learning a people's language is learning to belong to them. According to the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Centenary Brochure (2006:59), it is on record that the White Fathers were the first to commit the native languages to writing. For instance, Father Charles Gagnon had to learn six different languages, Kasem, Gurune, Yalne, Bure, Kusal and Mampruli. Again Father Lapointe "was a past master of the timely use of African proverbs, not to mention frequent allusions to local fables." Again Lapointe was able to master both languages in Navrongo and in addition to these he spoke Kusal, Talni, Mampruli and Buli. Father Ken Haskew also composed hymns, translated the Sunday readings and liturgical texts.

Aboteyuure maintains further that the White Fathers were able to establish good and cordial relations with the traditional authorities, with the motive that if the chiefs convert first, they would draw their people into Christianity. However, he argues that even though this was their rule, the prejudices held by many Europeans in general about the culture and religions of Africans, often hindered the missionaries from seeing the many positive elements of the local people and their culture. Explaining further, he said that the perception of the missionaries about polygamy as a sexual license and certain religious rites as being demonic work in Northern Ghana in

general are other factors which hindered their work in the early years. He concludes that this perception has conditioned even to date the response of the local people to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Secondly, the White Fathers were committed to a pre-baptismal catechumenate which lasted over a minimum period of four years. The purpose of this was not only to inculcate basic truths of Christianity into the converts, but also to allow them sufficient time to actually turn away from their native ancestral cult, before being offered baptism. The motive behind this method was to eliminate hurried baptisms without sufficient Christian conviction, which could easily dispose converts to falling back into old traditional religious practices (Brochure of First National Catholic Pastoral Congress 1997:17). This method could not pass without criticism, in that due to denominational rivalry which was prevalent from the 1960's onwards this method could discourage many people to turn to other Christian denominations for quick baptism.

The third strategy of the White Fathers is the need to establish indigenous local churches. These were centered on the family which was seen as a model of the church. The missionaries spent time visiting families with the aim of building strong Christian homes which would also bring about strong indigenous churches. Again steps were also taken to establish institutions for the training of indigenous leaders, as catechists and priests, to assist the missionaries in the teaching of the converts and the faithful. It is worth noting that catechists played an indispensable role in the spread and growth of the church. It is recorded that "they were the immediate collaborators

of the missionaries” (Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Centenary Brochure 2006:159). These people were stationed in the main Parish and in the villages. As part of their activities they were responsible for translating the Bible, Catechism, and other liturgical materials from the English language into the indigenous languages. In this way basic Christian truths became comprehensible to the local Christian communities which ensured their growth.

In order to ensure the growth and survival of indigenous churches, the churches were also committed to the provision of social services such as education, health care and food for the poor and vulnerable. According to Simon Azaa (Centre for Development of the Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese) the church’s contribution to formal education as well as service of development is very much recognised and commendable. The church continues to carry out evangelization through its organisations such as Christian Youth Organisation (C.Y.O). Christian Mothers, Legion of Mary and others. Through community prayers, and faith sharing, exemplary lifestyles, personal witnessing, teaching, charity, service to the needy, social interaction, counseling and celebrations, the Gospel is being proclaimed far and wide resulting in the establishing of many parishes and outstations across the Frafra land including Tongo, Bongo, Kongo, Winkogo, Sirigu, Zuarungu and other places.

It can be said in summary that the White Fathers stressed communal evangelisation and the wide use of catechists. Blackely (1994:60) has argued that as a whole the Catholics were particularly slow in training sufficient indigenous clergy and catechists, and missionaries too often saw themselves solely as leaders, believing that

there was little or nothing to be gained from an open, equal partnership with Africans. However this situation has changed as more and more Frafra priests are being trained and ordained. Notable among them are Anoa, Roger Aboteyuure, Samuel Atinga, and many others who are serving in various capacities and places.

The Protestant movement represented by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana established its presence in the Frafra area in 1955 through the efforts of Josef Eichholzer. He initially relied heavily on the services of staff of the colonial administration such as the police who were already stationed in the area. Some of these were members of the Presbyterian Church and so they became the nucleus of the mission work. Additionally, there were evangelists who were already working in Bawku, Gambaga and Navrongo. (Berinyuu 1997)

According to Berinyuu (1997) another factor that helped the pioneer missionary was first, the formal school system which targeted the children of the natives. As part of the curriculum for the education of the natives, there was religious instruction which was aimed at inculcating religion (Christianity) into the pupils. Secondly, the school system offered the missionary the opportunity to visit the homes of the pupils and to build relationships with their parents. Berinyuu (1997:78) quoting Eichholzer said, they visited the home of one Akumbilige and,

it was only much later that we got to know how important this visit to his house had been to him. That was on the day when he brought his ten year old son Abagana to us. Abagana was ready to enter primary one, but the school authorities had rejected him for being too old. Akumbilige asked us to train Abagana in education and in religion so that one day he might be able to serve his own people. My wife and I agreed to his request and the good result is that he became literate and now a pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

The third strategy in the evangelistic work of the pioneer missionaries was translation. This was carried out through the partnership of E.L Rapp of the University of Mainz in Germany and Victor Nicholas Aboya, a native of Winkogo. The initiative resulted in the translation from Twi into the Frafra or Gurenne language 20 Psalms, the Gospel of Mark, 30 stories of the Old and 34 stories of the New Testament as well as 34 hymns. Also 360 proverbs were gathered. (Berinyuu 1997: 80)

Fourthly, the missionaries and their team of workers adopted the night school system which aimed among other things to make the natives literate. It is significant to note that these night schools or literacy classes resulted in the creation of new hymns in Frafra out of Twi or English. According to Berinyuu “an inspiring new singing went along with it. Native tunes got new words with Christian contents.” (Bennyuu 1997:80) It also enabled the literates to read the Bible and to preach to their own people using their native language. Richard Kumah (Bolgatanga District Minister, Presbyterian Church of Ghana) reports that the number of Frafra members in the Presbyterian Church stands at 3010. Commenting on the slow rate of evangelization in the Presbyterian Church in the Frafra area, Barker (1986:37) seems to give the reason that

In the main towns the church owns its existence to the initiative of southern members posted to appointments there; unfortunately, many of these congregations have been dominated by southern languages and the needs of the local people have been neglected. In this way northerners have been unintentionally excluded from the church in their own urban centres.

Spontaneous evangelisation among the Frafra began to emerge with the arrival of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches such as the Assemblies of God and the

Fountain Gate Chapel (formally Broken Yoke Foundation). With respect to the Assemblies of God, Barker (1986:25) writes that every local assembly is made responsible to evangelise villages up to half way to the next station. Methods used include open air meetings including altar calls. Church planting in a new area or village often starts with meetings every day for a week. These meetings may be announced by a drummer sent round by the chief. New converts are formed into a class and taught of up to three (3) months before they could apply for membership and baptism.

On his part, Diseh Kwotua (pioneer pastor of Assemblies of God Church, Gorogo) said that the church places much premium on the role of traditional authorities in its evangelistic efforts and as such strives to maintain good relationship with them. He says further that much emphasis is also placed on the family so as to build strong and viable Christian families and communities. Therefore evangelisation focuses on the nuclear family, (husband, wife and children) and employs the strategy of house to house personal interactions.

In addition to the open air and house to house personal interactions, George Apasera (Pioneer Pastor, Assemblies of God, Church, Duusi) also maintains that market centres were not left out. The Gospel message was proclaimed at the market places using the local language and this ensured easy understanding and response. Again with the introduction of literacy classes by the Assemblies of God Church in partnership with the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) and the World Vision (WV), using primers produced in the Frafra

language, many people have come to believe in the Christian faith. Notable of such classes is the one at Duusi which is being facilitated by John Kambe(Literacy facilitator,Duusi). He reports that many people can now read the *Yine Gongo* (God's Word or the Bible) in Frafra and this has transformed their lives.

The Fountain Gate Chapel began in 1987 in Bolgatanga. According to Richard Adongo (Frafra Churches Coordinator), the church, has overcome several challenges and has made inroads into the Frafra Communities and beyond. He says that there are 20 branches and 34 pastors in the Frafra area. The central church in Bolgatanga has a separate service for the Frafra and the use of Frafra cultural forms such as indigenous music and instruments as well as the reading of the Bible in Frafra has helped to reach many Frafra with the Gospel.

It is worth noting that the evangelistic strategies of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches seem so radical that people are called upon to abandon their traditional ways and subject themselves to exorcism and deliverance in order to be saved. Such people include those bearing traditional names, and others are also asked to present their personal idols to be burnt. This does not go down well with many people and has created conflicts between Christians and adherents of traditional religion.

3.4.2 Mono Ethnic Church Planting in Southern Ghana among the Migrant Frafra (the case of Kumasi Metropolis)

The genesis of the Frafra community churches in Kumasi can be traced to 1981 through the initiative of Peter Awane (member of Frafra Bible Project, Zuarungu). In

an interview, he said that he had a burden to reach the Frafra who had migrated to Kumasi for jobs, with the Gospel. Beginning at the Ayigya Catholic Church, the work culminated in the formation of the Frafra Christian Fellowship whose pioneers include James Aluruba, Solomon Ayamga, Paul Adombire and Moses Apore. Later Charles Ayindenab and Mark Nsoyine joined the fellowship.

According to Mark Nsoyine (now Senior Pastor of the Frafra Community Baptist Church at Moshie Zongo) a group of Frafra people from different church denominations in Kumasi came together to consider how best to help themselves as Christians. This was against the background that the language used in their respective church denominations was not intelligible to most of them who could only understand the southern languages especially the Asante-Twi on the surface level. Therefore because of the language barrier, these people decided to come together to devise ways to study the Bible using the Frafra language for easy understanding. In the course of time it dawned on them to reach out to their brothers and sisters in the various localities. Consequently, the fellowship decided to commence the planting of churches solely for the Frafra people where preaching and teaching of the word of God as well as worship could be carried out in the Frafra language.

It can be noted that the planting of the Frafra community churches was not carried out in isolation, but rather with the established denominations. According to Nsoyine In 1989 a missionary by name Richard Lamb of the WEC Mission, came from Hong Kong to work with the Evangelical Church of Ghana to establish Frafra community churches in the southern parts of the country. They sought the assistance of the

Fellowship and the first Frafra congregation was planted at Ayigya in Kumasi. Later similar congregations of the same denomination (Evangelical Church of Ghana) were set up at Moshie Zongo, Ejisu, and Atonsu all in Kumasi. All these congregations were led by members of the Frafra Christian Fellowship, some of whom later left the Fellowship to become full time ministers of the congregations (notably James Aluruba). It is significant to note that the Frafra Christian Fellowship is no more and this seems to explain the difficulty which denominations in southern Ghana now face in their attempt to plant Frafra churches.

In 1991 the Bantama Presbyterian Church also sought the assistance of the fellowship to start a Frafra congregation at Bantama; this assistance was given. Later in 1992, a Frafra congregation was also established within the Methodist Church at Ash Town. The first Baptist Frafra community church was also set up in 1993 through the initiative of Mark Nsoyine, who was also a member of the Frafra Christian Fellowship. With time the Assemblies of God through the initiative of Joshua Aduku also began the Frafra community church in 1995.

The strategies or methods adopted in the establishment of the Frafra community churches are varied within each denomination. Most of the denominations adopted the open air approach popularly known as “crusade”. As part of the open air programmes, messages were sent round the areas where most Frafra people resided inviting them to the meetings. At certain times, special letters were sent to their various tribal group or family meetings. During these meetings, the word of God is proclaimed in the Frafra language and an invitation extended to converts to commit

their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. Joshua Aduku recounts that he had to visit the Bantama market regularly to meet with the Frafra (Pastor of Frafra Assemblies of God Kumasi) people who were mainly porters. Therefore, the one-to-one personal approach he adopted resulted in the “harvest” of the early converts which later culminated in the Frafra Assemblies of God Church.

Mark Nsoyine also maintains that literacy classes popularly known as “night school” was an important tool in their evangelistic efforts. Some of the people became literates and were able to read the Bible by themselves and for themselves resulting in the conversion of many. As the congregation grew in number, according to Nsoyine, local fellowships or branches were formed whereby members resident in a particular locality could meet and have fellowship each week. This together with house-to-house visitation resulted in a remarkable growth of the church over time. He concludes that the success of the Frafra community church project in southern Ghana cannot be told without the recognition of the contribution of local or indigenous leadership. As more people became converted, the enterprising ones among them were quickly recognised and trained to take up leadership roles and that has resulted in a remarkable growth of the community churches, especially in Kumasi.

Joshua Aduku is of the view that the success of the Frafra community church project in southern Ghana is a catalyst to the evangelisation of the Frafra homeland in terms of personnel, resources and theology. On the basis of this Nsoyine also argues that the Frafra community church project in southern Ghana is not a promotion of tribalism as perceived by some people especially the non-Frafra but a fulfillment of the biblical

mandate to preach the Good News of salvation to all people groups since to make disciples of the nations is to make disciples of all people groups of the world.

3.4.3 Responses of the Frafra to the Proclamation of the Gospel

The Gospel in the true meaning of the word, is who Christ is, and what he means in his person, his life, as well as his work on earth and afterwards, and how all these relate to all humans in their culture, histories and environment. Evangelisation seeks to make Christ part of the peoples culture by making him part of their worldview. The most crucial question confronting the Frafra people is, who is Jesus Christ and how can they identify with him? Therefore the proclamation of the Gospel and the responses envisaged are determined by the recipients' understanding and how they articulate the Gospel in their personal or community situations.

The proclamation of the Gospel among the Frafra focuses on Yezu (Jesus) who provides salvation, healing, security and prosperity for the total man. The Gospel preachers present Jesus as one who is sufficient to meet every human need in the now and in the future. The Gospel preachers stress the power of God inherent in Jesus Christ which is more than that of the shrines or divinities. As a result people are called upon to abandon their old traditional religious practices and embrace Jesus Christ. The peoples' view of salvation pertains, to freedom from fear and the assurance of security and hope after death. The Gospel therefore re-orientes the perception of the people to come to appreciate eternity as more significant than ancestorhood, which is so dear to the Frafra especially the adults. In line with this we shall proceed to examine the responses of the people to the proclamation of the Gospel.

3.4.3.1 Full Embrace

Many of the people interviewed gave different accounts of how they came to embrace the Christian faith. Some of these conversions came about through personal conviction after hearing the Gospel message being proclaimed, while for others, it was through divine intervention in times of crises such as disease, accidents, and others. They came to the realisation that Yezu (Jesus) is all powerful to meet their every need and give them freedom from fear and the security they so dearly strive for.

In an interview Anthony Sabil Dittoh (Deacon of Fountain Gate Chapel, Zanlerigu) reported that being the youngest son he used to accompany his father to divination shrines and so became very qualified to take over when his father died. According to him, after his father's funeral rites in 1994, he developed a strange disease in his body. All medical treatments could not provide him healing; neither did their visits to so-called powerful shrines provide a cure. Finally, he said, he had to travel to his elder brother by name Saah Dittoh in Nigeria who was himself a Christian. It provided the opportunity for him to hear the message of Jesus and what he could do for him. In his words "it just took the prayer of my brother and his wife one early morning, to facilitate my healing. It was dramatic, something I could not easily comprehend". He testified that his new found faith in Jesus had changed his condition, and all that he could not do previously due to the disease, he could now do, especially sleeping at night. According to him "the Christian God is more powerful than the shrines". Upon his return to Ghana and subsequently to Zanlerigu, Anthony Dittoh reported that his family as well as the entire community could not comprehend what had happened to him, but he testified that (God) through prayer has made him what he has become as a result of finding a new faith in Christ.

In another interview, Robert Dittoh (an elder brother of Anthony Dittoh) recounted that he got converted in 1997 due to what he had seen concerning his junior brother Anthony. According to him what had happened to his brother Anthony was a miracle that was beyond understanding and bore testimony to the power of God as being more than the family or community shrines which had been their backbone for decades. He became convinced that the Christian God alone can provide the needed freedom and security which is the quest of every Frafra. He said further that he had become convinced that the secret of reality resides in Christianity and that alone ensures total security and hope for the future.

Conversion to the Christian faith also comes about also through personal conviction. At Duusi, David Bavalomkat, (leader, Assemblies of God, Duusi) reported that his conversion took place in 1993. Before then he used to accompany his father for divination sessions. According to him, the turning point in his life came during one of the divination sessions when the diviner by name Kolog “prophesied” that a time was coming when everyone would follow the God of Naab Kambe (the Duusi chief who had become converted to the Christian faith). This diviner, according to him, died on the third day after giving that “prophecy”. He therefore decided to join the church because he had been convinced by what the diviner had said. He said that

Now I am a member of the Assemblies of God Church, and many of my household members are now Christians we can now experience real freedom and security and are no longer fearful of the activities of witchcraft or the divinities.

On the part of Naab Bayel Kambe (chief of Duusi), he got converted upon hearing the Gospel from George Apasera (then Pastor of the Assemblies of God Church at Pelungu) in 1983, and was baptized in 1984. According to him he became convinced

of the power of God through the Word of God that was being proclaimed and decided to become a Christian. Since then, he says,

I have not turned back, but continually attend the Assemblies of God Church with my wives. All my personal gods were burnt on the day of my baptism, which was a sign of my seriousness to follow Christ.

The burning of the gods and his baptism were a public testimony of his conversion. Asked about the reaction of his people, Naab Kambe said, many were they who thought he would not survive but incur the wrath of the divinities and the ancestors, but which did not happen. In an answer to how he is coping up with Christianity and his traditional role as a chief, he said he has no problems with that. According to him he took inspiration from the Tillinaa (Chief of Tilli in the Bawku West District) who is also a Christian. Concerning the traditional religious functions he said he is not involved and he had made it clear to his people which they have understood. It is significant to note that Naab Kambe, being the chief, gave land for the construction of a chapel and has also influenced the conversion of many people in the area and even the entire Frafra homeland. He has become a “sign post” of Christian conversion for many, a reference and inspiration for many Frafra Christians. It is therefore significant to state that the conversion of traditional leaders would, to a large extent ensure the sustainability of the Christian faith in traditional areas, particularly the Frafra.

Stephen Nyaba (leader, Assemblies of God, Duusi) also reported that he got converted in 1989 through the literacy classes or night school organized by John Kambe who was himself a Christian. As part of the night school curriculum Bible teachings concerning morality, forgiveness and love were presented to the learners. He said that one would not have expected him to become a Christian because he was a *tindanbii*

(traditional priest) who is expected to guard the values and customs of the community. Asked about what prompted him to leave his traditional ways to become a Christian he said, he had come to understand the Christian message of salvation which is in Jesus and which offered freedom from fear of evil. For him, that assurance of security and hope was the bedrock of his conversion and there was no turning back to that. On his part John Kambe (literacy facilitator at Duusi) said, the night school is a rallying point for people to learn how to read and write and this has given him the opportunity to teach them Christian truths. Through this some have become leaders in the church.

To sum up, it is expedient to state that Christian conversion can truly take place as people come to appreciate the person of Jesus Christ and what he offers. To the Frafra, the quest for freedom from fear, security against spiritual forces especially witchcraft, and the hope of eternity, greatly determine, their decision to “shift camps”.

3.4.3.2 Syncretism (Partial Embrace)

Syncretism in religious circles means, living with double ideas or adhering to different faiths without being loyal to any of them. For many people, Christianity was viewed as the means to getting the good things of the white man. In the early years of Christian presence in the Frafraland, the missionaries offered food and other items to the local people and set up schools and health facilities for the betterment of the people. Many people joined the church in those early years. They regarded church attendance as the means to receiving the blessings of *fadayil* (father's house). However, many still patronised traditional healing shrines as well as divination shrines to ascertain the cause of every misfortune that they encountered. Lazarus

Zaazor believes that in the event of sickness, the traditional shrines are very “fast” in providing healing and this explains why he had to travel home from Kumasi to seek traditional healing for his sickness even though he is a Christian.

It is worth noting that Christianity offered by the early missionaries bore little resemblance to the pragmatic brand of problem-solving mechanisms that the Frafra are used to. According to Dseh Kwotua, church structures and personnel did not address the kind of problems dealt with by the traditional shrines. In this sense, he mentioned that one could “convert” to Christianity without having to change anything about one’s traditional approach to problem solving. He concluded that giving a mental assent to the Gospel is not enough, because in the event of crises, people will go where they feel they are spiritually connected. In this sense, it is common to find many people who refer to themselves as Christians, contract plural marriages, make sacrifices, pour libation to their ancestors, participate in initiation rites, observe taboos and maintain shrines for their family gods; as well as observe funeral rites such as the rites of the orphan which involves head shaving or widowhood rite.

3.4.3.3 Conflictual or Negative Embrace

In Frafra understanding, conversion to Christianity is seen as indoctrination and a denial of one’s cultural identity. It means a denial of one’s ancestors, and Christian converts are regarded as useless people who have lost their identity. For the older people, Christian conversion is identified with alienation and is to be avoided. This is because the Christian faith demands a complete break with traditional religion, which they see as a risky adventure. The ancestral cult is the backbone of the Frafra society.

People are born and initiated into it, and as they grow it becomes part of their lives. Therefore, the introduction of a new religion offers a great challenge to them.

Gung Nakoring, maintains that the social and religious customs are valid and unchangeable not because they are made to achieve the desired results but also because *tibanam ni te yabnam ndaa piil na* (our fore fathers and our ancestors started and transmitted them). These notions are very perfectly explicit in the behaviour and thought of the people and carry a profound moral value. The Frafra always stress the importance of passing on to their descendants the way of life bequeathed to them by their forefathers. They place an extremely high premium on their social order, such that no one would dream of trying to overthrow the whole social order or agitate against the existing customs and values, hence their resistance to new ideas which call for change in their traditional patterns.

Baba Amankua (shrine attendant Zuarungu Katanga) is of the view that if one becomes a Christian he might be required to stop the regular sacrifices which he offered to the deities. In the case of the youth Samuel Awuni (student pastor Northern Bible College, (A. O. G) Tamale) believes that the fear that they would not enjoy the blessing of their fathers in the event of their marriage engagements is very strong. They also fear that they might be banished from their families and clans if they refused to participate in family sacrifices. Job Tindanbil reported that in 1989 during their missionary activities at Baare, many people patronised their evening meetings, but failed to commit themselves to the Christian faith because it posed many challenges to them. The reason for this state of affairs is based on the belief that the

traditional customs are very much binding on them. They have compelling power because they constitute a legacy of the ancestors.

3.4.4 Challenges

The proclamation of the Gospel demands a personal decision and response. People would have to accept the message and commit themselves to the Christian faith or reject the message. On what basis will the Gospel message be rejected? The ancestral cult as well as polygamy among the Frafra constitute the grounds of conflict between their traditional religion and the “new religion” (Christianity). When the proclamation of the Gospel calls for separation from one’s old ways consisting of the traditional religious customs which are incompatible with the Christian faith, then the people would have to make decisions as to where to go either the way of the Gospel or remain in the traditional religious institution. The reason for this state of affairs is perhaps a lack of understanding of the Gospel and its demands on the traditional culture and this has been so throughout the history of the people.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches called on people to separate themselves from their traditional backgrounds and subject themselves to ‘deliverance’ in order to become Christians. Men in polygamous marriages were asked to divorce all but the first wife and this did not go down well with many people. Again those bearing traditional names were asked to go through “deliverance” in order to free them from ancestral curses.

3.4.4.1 Personal Challenges

On the personal level those who got converted to the Christian faith faced diverse challenges. In an interview with Jacob Tobeg, an elder of the Apostolic Church in Tongo, he said that he got converted in 1985 through the efforts of one Boayereg who was a leader of the musical group of the church. His involvement in the musical group opened the door for his conversion. By this he was considered a *persona non grata* by his family. He recounted that at one time, his own father threw a cutlass at him for refusing to participate in family sacrifices and also refusing to eat the meat that had been offered to the gods. Again many parents warned their children not to associate with him, saying that he was “lost”. When asked of his Christian life now, he said “I am now stronger than ever. I have no fears for the gods or witch craft because Jesus who is in me is much stronger than them.”

On his part, John Awuni reported that his family did not participate in the burial and funeral of his child in 1990 because he had become a Christian, and the funeral was being conducted by a Christian minister. In another interview Timothy Liahme of the Baare Assemblies of God Church recounted how he became sick of *miiha* (skin disease) upon his conversion. According to him, there were several attempts to get him to undergo *Kaaba* (traditional rites of healing) which he refused. He said, he refused all black medicine, and rather told his family that he preferred to die in the Lord if that was God’s will for his life. It is evident that he had been convinced of the power of God inherent in the Word of God.

It is significant to note that there were conflicts when the first Christian group (the Catholics) came to Frafraland. Those who are identified with the Church were regarded as traitors and outcast by their families (Tamale Ecclesiastical Centenary Brochure 2006:42). Aboteyuure maintains that by identifying with the missionaries the new converts were banished from their families and had to seek refuge in the missions. Some of these later became Mass servers and helpers at the missions.

Paul Ayirengo considered as the church father and founder of the Assemblies of God Church at Zuarungu, in an interview also recounted the conflicts that came their way in the early days of the church. According to him, one man by name Atia came out with a bow and arrow to shoot at them for constructing the chapel close to his house and farmland. Little did he know that one day, his own son Peter Atia would become a minister of the Gospel. He said further that his son by name James died on the very day the foundation stone of the chapel was been laid and this he considered as a blessing rather than a curse. Even though he is an aged person his strength is renewed daily, because of the confidence he has in Jesus his Saviour and Lord. In his words, *Yezu nde man dana, Nkazote bem.* (Jesus is my Lord; I have no fear for any evil).

On the part of Naab Bayel Kambe, he said he received spiritual attacks due to his new found faith. He considered the legal battle with the people of Gbani in connection with communal clashes which resulted in the death of some people and by which he was condemned to death by the High Court in Bolgatanga but acquitted by an Appeals Court, as a case in point. He also testified that all the chiefs in the neighbouring towns of the Tallensi and Nabdam areas ganged up against him because of his Christian

faith, but God has strengthened his faith even to today. He feels confident in God knowing that he is never alone. According to him, his greatest joy is in seeing many people come to follow Jesus because of him who they see as their inspiration. He concluded that his greatest prayer is to see the entire Frafraland become Christian where Jesus, instead of the ancestors, will reign supreme.

3.4.4.2 Societal Challenges

In an interview George Apasera said fears and persecution came his way during his evangelistic work at Duusi in 1983. He recounted that with the conversion of Naab Bayel Kambe, and the subsequent burning of his personal idols, many were they who considered this as suicidal. To them he had deceived the chief to abandon his ancestors which had the potential to bring disaster to the land. He said further that the local people raised curses on him predicting his death which never happened. To sum up, it is significant to note that conflicts are bound to occur because the proclamation of the Gospel calls for separation. But the management of these conflicts is very vital to the growth and maturity of Christian converts as well as the survival of the church. Much tolerance and understanding is required in this respect.

Job Tindanbil, in an interview also recounted the conflicts that came their way in their attempt to bring the Gospel to Baare in 1989. According to him, they were resisted by one Kambonaab Moot, who was considered as the “strong man of the area”, who had mobilised the various *tendandem* (priests of the earth shrine) of Baare to curse them. The worse moments came when they were seeking for land to construct a chapel. He said further that one of the new believers offered part of their farmland for the

construction. That, according to him, was vehemently resisted by Kambonaab Moot with the reason that the said land was close to *Baat Daa*, (sacred grove and traditional stronghold of Baare). He concluded that despite threats of death, and the objections to public preaching and warnings initiated by Malbazaa (the tendana of Lower Baare) not to drum in the months of September and October, the Christians became resolute and resisted all physical and spiritual attacks and this had resulted in the growth of the church, over time. Perhaps a lack of understanding of the Gospel and its demands on the traditional culture and this has been so throughout the history of the people.

3.5.The Impact of the Gospel in Frafraland

3.5.1. Social Significance of the Church

In its mission among the Frafra, the church had sought to bring the gospel both in word and deed to the people. It has been the quest of many church organisations to proclaim the holistic gospel which addresses the material and spiritual needs of the people. In the view of Roger Aboteyuure, the church has played a major role in liberating the people from the fear of the unknown. It has also scored high marks in the provision of social services for the betterment of the local people. These include schools, clinics and water facilities including boreholes. He said further that the White Fathers taught the local people backyard gardening and involving the establishment of small gardens around the missions. Additionally the church also in a bid to ensure environmental conservation has planted trees around the missions especially at Kongo. Aboteyuure concluded that “evangelization must go hand in hand with human development”.

According to the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Centenary Brochure (2006:171). The founding Fathers of the Catholic Church were totally committed to evangelisation and human promotion right from the start of their missionary work. They preached the Gospel to all people without discrimination irrespective of tribe, language, sex, class or age. Their aim was to ensure unity and co-existence among the tribes and people. The Church's social philosophy was informed by the context in which they encountered the local people. They were poor, ignorant and vulnerable to disease, hence the need of the missionaries to build schools, vocational centers and clinics. It is significant to note that the missionaries were guided by the scriptures that "God intended the earth and all that it contains for the good of humans. He also endowed man with intelligence to enable him know how to subdue the earth for his purpose.

On his part Simon Azaa says "the church has become a rallying point for the people who hitherto did not know how to come together to discuss their welfare." It is for this reason that BONABOTO (an umbrella group of students from Bolgatanga, Nangodi, Bongo and Tongo) was born out of the Catholic Church through the initiative of Roger Aboteyuure who was then the Manager of Catholic Schools in the Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese. It is worth noting that through this group many Frafra students have climbed to the highest level of the academic ladder notably Ambrose Tee of the University for Development Studies in Tamale.

In the words of Samuel Lawaaba (Pastor of the Assemblies of God Church at Duusi) "the Christians now are the *nereba kiriki* (important people) within their families. Christianity has transformed such people and has given them dignity so that people

now hold them in high esteem. They are consulted in matters bordering on their families' welfare, and have a stake in decision making processes within their families.

Berinyuu (1997:81) maintains that “although it has been said that the provision of food and clothing may create some dependent Christians, the provision of these items did meet some genuine needs, perhaps even saved some lives.” Richard Kumah in an interview reported that the Presbyterian Primary Health Care (PPHC) Programme has helped to reduce maternal and child mortality in many localities. Again the literacy classes have opened the doors for many to enrol in the formal school system.

3.5.2. Preservation of Frafra Culture

With the introduction of *Yene Gong* (the Bible translated into Frafra), many have come to appreciate the value of God's Word in their mother tongue. The careful use of Frafra idioms and vocabulary has conveyed Christian truth to the people in a way that would otherwise be impossible. Many have also come to understand certain wise sayings and have become aware of aspects of Frafra wisdom which had been unknown to most of them. In this sense the Bible has boosted the Frafra self esteem. In the words of David Bavolomkat, “now I belong to the church, I now feel that God understands my language. I can hear God talking to me directly in Frafra. I am really grateful.”

Again it is possible to find Christian tunes in Frafra used in church worship accompanied by indigenous musical instruments such as the *yiih*, *gooji*, *longa* and *siyaa*. Diseh Kwotua (Pioneer Pastor of the Assemblies of God Church at Gorogo) maintains that, the Bible in the mother tongue, has enhanced the language, much

especially in the composition of scriptural songs which has the potential of reaching the masses of non-literates with truths they otherwise will not hear. According to him he composed a chorus for the church at Gorogo with the words *Ya baa kora la woo ya vaage baah ya zug nwana woo ya vaag baah, ge taa dol yisa* (discard your old gods and their attachments and come and follow Jesus). With the introduction of Christianity indigenous creativity is also being induced as people now use the words from Bible to compose songs for worship. He concluded that the scriptural songs in Frafra depicted the theological orientation of the pioneer missionaries to the work of the Gospel in order to enforce a solid foundation for the Church among the Talensi. This consisted of a total separation from religious practices.

3.5.3 Transformation of Community Life

The introduction of the Christian faith in the Frafra culture has helped to change many Frafra communities. On his part Job Tindanbil (now senior Pastor, Assemblies of God Church at Zuarungu) maintains that the church now enjoys good relationship with the traditional authorities. Settlements close to his church often come for chairs belonging to the church for their social engagements. According to him, recently, the chief of Zuarungu sent messengers to him to enquire if the chairs that had been reported stolen from a church were that of his church. The chief wanted to know so as to institute investigation on behalf of the church. This is an evidence of how the relationship between the church and traditional authorities has been enhanced. Robert Dittoh also maintained that the Christians now enjoy great respect from the communities and because of this, they have been given separated buried grounds, instead of being buried in their family graves upon their death. (See Appendix K).

In the early years of Christianity many parents who were adherents of traditional religion wanted to protect their religion and felt threatened with the introduction of Christianity. Some forbade their children from attending formal school so as to prevent them from indoctrination by the teachers. But the situation has changed as many children have enrolled in formal schools as well as literacy classes. According to Joseph Aboya (co-ordinator of Frafra Literacy and Development Project – FRALIDEP) literacy has been enhanced such that the people feel very much appreciative of the need to read and write especially in the mother tongue. They have also come to be enlightened on health issues as well as improved technologies in agriculture such as family planning, sanitation, water treatment, food handling, the application of manure to soils, agro-forestry, animal husbandry and others. Catholic Brothers and Sisters were very instrumental in this direction.

Social institutions have also seen some transformation. According to the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Centenary Brochure (2006) the status of women has been raised. The bonds of the traditional patriarchal culture which restricted women to the kitchen more or less and debarred them from the process of decision making have been loosened. Aboteyuure explains that the missionaries initiated female education and this has gone far in the emancipation of women. He concludes that many leading women in health and education today are products of this initiative. The men no more regard the bride worth they pay for their wives as a licence to lord it over them. Again women now feel safe in acquiring property, a situation that hitherto was non-existent. Frafra Christians have come to acknowledge the equality of all persons before God irrespective of sex and this has brought harmony in families and communities. On the part of Richard Kumah, Christian teaching on marriage, forgiveness and love has

helped to reduce quarrels, fighting and other destructive tendencies in families and communities.

In an interview, George Apasera said most communities in the Nabdam area have seen much transformation. This has been necessitated by the conversion of some notorious personalities who once made life unbearable for most people. Such people used to be alcoholic and drug addicts. He notes further that one other outstanding achievement of the Gospel is the deliverance of many people from fear. According to him the area had a major shrine which forbade the possession of any form of metal without first showing it to the *tindaana*. For example it was a taboo to own a bicycle or even roof one's building with aluminum sheets. However with the introduction of Christianity people now own bicycles and roof their buildings with aluminum sheets. They have been inspired by the fact that the Pastor's residence at Duusi had been roofed with aluminum sheets and a corn meal had been installed by a nephew of the chief who is himself a Christian. He concluded that people no longer live in fear but feel liberated. Again the discovery of gold in the area is an answer to prayer by the Christians which has empowered the people economically, he claimed.

3.6. Conclusion

The discussion has brought to the fore the fact that relationship between the Gospel and the Frafra culture has been a historical one which has produced conflicts, enhanced dialogue and transformation. Through the Gospel, Frafra culture is beginning to witness some significant changes. There is ample evidence that the church is spreading far and wide across Frafraland where previously there were no

churches. Many people are witnessing some transformation in their individual lives as well as in their communities and churches are been established.

The survival of the church in Frafraland however, depends to a large extent on its continuous engagement with the traditional culture. How that engagement would be fruitful for both the church and the traditional society depends on how the church carries out its evangelistic mandate. There is the need for a paradigm shift from the inherited attitude of *tabula rasa* to indigenisation of Christianity and this forms the focus of the next chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION FROM THE FRAFRA PERSPECTIVE

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed the Gospel and its engagement with the Frafra culture. Concepts relating to the discussion were discussed. Also addressed were Gospel and culture from biblical perspective, as well as from African Christian history. The Gospel in the Frafra context was also examined, with particular emphasis on the patterns of evangelisation among the Frafra, the responses of the Frafra to the proclamation of the Gospel as well as the impact of the Gospel in Frafraland.

In the next chapter we shall attempt to analyse the Christian faith in relation to the Frafra culture in particular. It focuses on the Gospel and the Frafra culture; including the quest for indigenous Frafra Christianity, as well as the Gospel as the fulfiller of the Frafra culture. The chapter seeks to establish the point that the Gospel is not alien to the Frafra culture and that all that the Frafra seek in their quest for religious meaning find fulfillment in Christ, who is the embodiment of the Gospel.

4.1 The Gospel and the Frafra Culture

It is generally believed by Christians that the Bible is the revelation of God for man and constitutes the blue print of His self disclosure and how he wants man to respond to Him. In line with this Edusa-Eyison (2007:11) has noted that the scriptures being a particular historical and cultural document of a people, were meaningful and relevant to other people when applied to their cultural settings. Against this background, we shall attempt to explore the relationship between the Bible and the Frafra culture. The

aim is to establish bridges or points of contact for the communication of the Gospel to the indigenous people.

4.2.1 Spiritual Entities

The spirit world is central to the traditional life of the Frafra and this forms their worldview. We also believed that the Bible is God's revelation to man which contains all the essentials of what we need to know with regards to God, his creation and our relationship to him and the world. Firstly, the Bible reveals clearly the existence of one God who is the Creator and Supreme Ruler of the universe. He is infinite in time and power as well as in holiness and goodness (Revelation.4:8-11). He is sovereign over all things and makes everything ultimately serve his good purposes (Psalm 2:4-6, Ephesians. 4:8-11). It is interesting to note that the Frafra also share these beliefs and give God the title *Naawun* or *Yinam* meaning Chief God, who is above all. This is symbolised by the theophoric names they often give to their children such as *Yinmanna* (God has given), *Wunammi* (God knows) and *Yinmalya* (God has made all things well).

The thought of the involvement of Yahweh in human affairs is also evident in both the Frafra culture and that of ancient Israel. According to Dickson (1984:157), when Israel defeated the Canaanites under their chieftain Sisera, the turning of the ground into a muddy trap following a torrential downpour was seen by the Israelite leaders as the work of Yahweh (Judges 5:4-5, 20). Again in Isaiah 28:24, the conviction being expressed by the prophet is that it is God whose wisdom makes the farmer adopt the procedures needed for the production of food. If the Frafra believes that God is

involved in all human affairs, how then can we reconcile this with the Frafra belief that all events take place by the will of the ancestors?

As we noted earlier, the Frafra also believe that God is transcendent that he cannot be approached directly, hence the need for intermediaries such as *Yabnam* (ancestors) and *baaga* and *Yin* (lesser gods or spirits). They accord these spiritual entities much reverence through regular sacrifices and offerings. As they do this they however are of the belief that God is the final destination of the ritual sacrifices offered at the shrines. Baba Adongo (2002:41) believes that these intermediaries bless family members who obey them and punish or curse those who disobey, or offend them. He adds that the ancestors can be reborn into the family if such persons were morally upright by traditional standards, and this would define the names that are given to such new born babies. Examples are Mbalebna (my father has returned) or Mmalebna (my mother has returned).

It is significant to note that morality among the Frafra is determined by the ancestors. They act as the “police” of the community. What they demand and enforce is in conformity with the basic moral rules, which fulfils the requirement of all social relationships. Therefore ethical conduct is determined by showing reverence to the ancestors. The Frafra believe that anyone who violates the rules is liable to the mystical penalty of death. For though every death has material causes the Frafra believe that no death can occur except by the will of the ancestors. How can we therefore reconcile this with the teachings of the Bible that life and death are in the

hands of God, and also Christ is the Lord of the dead and living (Matthew 28:18, Revelations.1:18).

It was discovered from 2.5.3 that the belief in the ancestors is a crucial issue among the Frafra. This is against the background of their belief in the continuation of life after death. Mbiti (1970: 264) affirms that “without exception, African peoples belief that death does not annihilate life and that the departed continue to exist in the hereafter”. Again as noted from 2.5.2 the African concept of the family goes beyond the nuclear system of husband, wife and children, and also the extended system that includes uncles, nephews, nieces and others. For the Frafra and like all other Africans, as rightly affirmed by Atinga (2006:4) the family also includes the dead relatives or ancestors whom they accord much reverence for their active participation in the affairs of their living descendants. The crucial questions then are: if the Frafra accord their elders much respect while they are alive, why should such elders be considered demons upon their death? How then should the Frafra Christian relate to his or her ancestors? Can family heads be authentic Christians? It is worthy to state that this question of the ancestors has put many Frafra Christians in a limbo and remains an unsolved issue for the church which requires pragmatic solution.

The fact is that most Frafra like the people of Jesus’ day still possess some fears of spiritual attacks. This fear of evil spirits is evident in the Bible. The Bible teaches the reality of spirits within the framework of the Sovereignty of God. Even though evil spirits exist and oppress humans there is no need to fear them since God is all-powerful (Ephesians 6:12, Matthew 8:16, Matthews 12:22, Luke 13:11-17). It is

significant to note from the biblical record how Jesus encountered evil spirits as well as those possessed by them (Mark5). However the Frafra also believes that there are benevolent spirits who bring prosperity and blessings to the land and its people.

4.2.2 Spiritual Relationship with Nature

According to Mbiti (1969:48) African people believe that man lives in a religious universe, so that the natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. They do not only originate from him but also bear witness to him. Man's understanding of God is strongly coloured by the universe of which man is himself a part. Man sees in the universe not only the imprint but the reflection of God. Generally the distributive characteristic of traditional religions is the fact that their theologies are expressed in a cultural language which comes from their interaction with the physical environment. Therefore it can be said that the world of nature is their "theological dictionary" from which they define all their experiences and beliefs.

There seems to be some similarities in the Bible and the Frafra culture in connection with people's relationship with some objects of nature. Firstly, the creation story of the Book of Genesis reveals that God's communication with humankind began in a garden, the Garden of Eden. This could be considered the first sacred grove as it was a place of trees (Genesis 2:9). It was also a place where God communed with man (Genesis 3:8) and was therefore a sacred place, a place without sin or evil. Job Tindanbil is of the view that the *tongbana* (sacred grove) of the Frafra can be linked to the Garden of Eden, in that it is believed to be a place where spirits commune with the various *tendandem* (earth priests) who go there for sacrifice. These sacred groves

are sites for sacrifices in respect of the land or community. Activities at such places are often carried out in secret only in the night and no trace of light is permitted there. Because of the secret nature of the activities in the *tongbana*, (plural for *tongban*) there should be no interference whatsoever and no circumcised person is allowed there. The reason for this seem to be that the circumcised represents an outsider, one not of the clan or even the tribe, and are not allowed in there so as to keep the secrecy of the activities of the place.

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Secondly, as noted above, trees formed part of the Garden of Eden, and trees also are important features for the Frafra. A tree may be sacred because it is associated with the spirits of the ancestors or because it is identified with the spirit of the land. It is sometimes believed that the spirits in-dwell the tree and need to be placated with sacrifices either that of an animal or libation, or both. Examples of such sacred trees in Frafraland include *Zemre Kok* at Loare, and *Musuol Too* at Tongo Nayir Puhuug.. Because it is believed that some spirits have their abode in some trees, in some cases herbal medicines are often extracted from them to treat some particular diseases.

The Bible also mentions special trees such as the Oaks of Mamre where Abraham settled. (Genesis 13:18), the seventy palm trees at Elim where the Israelites camped during the Exodus (Exodus 15:27) and the sycamore tree that Zacchaeus climbed up onto for better view of Jesus (Luke 19:4). There are several Old Testament allusions to what many believe to be sacred trees or special trees. In Judges 9:6 reference is made to the Oak of the Pillar at Schechem. The Good News Bible renders this as “the sacred Oak tree at Schechem.” In 1Samuel 10:3 the prophet commissions Saul as

King of Israel and gives him instructions that include arriving at the Oak of Tabor. The Good News Bible makes explicit that this is “the sacred tree at Tabor.” Although each of these references to trees has to do with location, the allusion in the context is a reference to the sacred. In Isaiah 1:29 the prophet makes it very clear that he is denouncing Israel’s sacred trees and sacred gardens when he says “you will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted, you will be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen.” (NIV) Where lies the fate of the Frafra who revere the sacred trees as the abodes of the divinities?

Thirdly, the wells at Beersheba were used as sacred waters. (Genesis 21:25) and the prophet Amos seems to be condemning such attitude towards these wells (Amos 5:5, 8:14). Similarly, the sacred ponds of *Kpara* and *Kolkpeng* at *Zubiung* in Tongo are believed to possess the power to induce rain such that special sacrifices are made to them by the *tendandem* in times of drought. Even though these ponds are still there, there was a long drought this year (2011) which delayed the cropping season. The situation is not only peculiar to this year alone; it has been so for the past five to ten years. Gung Nakoring is of the view that the *tendandem* who are responsible to offer special sacrifices to these ponds are not able to do so which raises some questions and suspicions regarding their responsibilities as mediators for the land.

Fourthly, it is also clear from the biblical record, particularly the Old Testament, that Yahweh himself has been perceived as a nature deity, who was closely related to mountains Sinai and Horeb (Exodus 19:12). Among the Frafra, certain mountains and rocky areas are considered as abodes of deities and are held as sacred sites. Examples

of such places include the *Pwalegu Tang* at Pwalegu, *Dabii Zuol*, located between Gbie and Kpale in the Nabdam area. Again the Tenzuk shrine which is a very popular shrine is located in the Tongo Hills, specifically at Tenzuk. (See Appendix J)

The belief in the spirit of nature among the Frafra seems to buttress the point that nature constitutes the background for religion to express itself, and through which deity is encountered. It is worth noting that these beliefs can constitute bridges for dialogue with the Gospel.

4.2.3 Social Arrangements

The concept of the solidarity of the group among the ancient Israelites played a significant role in their social organisation. For example when Achan sinned by breaking the law of the ban, he was destroyed with members of his household as well as his non-human property (Joshua 7:14, 24:25). This illustrates the basic group by which every Israelite belonged. Again there was the clan system which comprised several families. All these emphasised the sense of corporateness which was very much evident among the Israelites and is also part of the Frafra culture.

Mbiti (1969:) notes that for African peoples the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children, and other immediate relatives. In many areas there is also the extended family which means that two or more brothers or sisters

established families in one compound or close to one another. The joint households together are like one large family.

Mbiti (1969) again points out that the family also includes the departed who are often designated as the living dead, and who though dead, but are alive in the memories of their living relatives and believed to be involved in their day to day activities. An African family, according to Mbiti (1969) also includes the unborn members who are still in the loins of the living. This seems to be the philosophy behind all the ritual activities in connection with new born babies in the family circles which is widely held to be the arrival of particular ancestors from the spiritual world. Against this background, Bediako (1992) has argued that the Gospel of salvation has to be communicated in the context of African life. In that sense he maintains that “If we want him [the African] saved, and then he must be allowed to bring with him into the Body of Christ all his many relatives Bediako (1992:309 – 310) what impact will the Gospel make if it makes individual appeals to the Frafra considering what Bediako (1992) is articulating.

It is significant to note the divergence here as there seem to be no evidence in the biblical record where the family included dead relatives or the unborn; which are strongly held by the Frafra. It should be noted here that the ancestral cult of the Frafra is also based on this philosophy of the family system as posits by Mbiti (1969). Among a people who have traditionally maintained an intimate relationship with their departed relations, communicating with them, honouring them with offerings,

depending on them for guidance and reckoning on their presence, how will they cope with the teaching of the Christian Church concerning the ancestral spirits?

One other issue that is so crucial to the Frafra Christian is polygamy. As noted in 2.3.3 polygamy is a widespread practice among the Frafra. While scholars are not agreed on whether or not the Bible clearly condemns polygamy, one thing is clear that the Old Testament records instances of polygamous situations. Genesis 4:19 records the first known polygamous situation. A careful look at the rest of the Pentateuch reveals that other polygamous situations existed among the Israelites (Exodus 21:9-11, Deuteronomy 21; 15-17). Other cases of polygamy can also be found in 1 Samuel 1:1-2 where Elkanah, Samuel's father had two wives Hannah and Peninnah. Also King David married many wives (2 Samuel 5:13) and Solomon is recorded as having the largest number of wives and concubines. (1 Kings 11:1-3).

The Prophetic writings, however, emphasised monogamy (the practice of having one wife). They played down on polygamy and used the symbolism of monogamous marriage as the basic relationship between Yahweh and the nation of Israel. (Hosea 2:18, Isaiah 1:1, Jeremiah. 2:2, Ezekiel 15:8). By the New Testament times, monogamy was considered the ideal case particularly for any man to hold Church office. (1 Timothy 3:2, 12, Titus. 1:16). If polygamy was part of Israel's heritage, and also remains as a legal form of marriage among the Frafra, then why should some churches (especially the Mainline churches and the pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches) deny the Frafra Christian polygamist full membership status? What biblical basis do they have for "stubbornly" denying such polygamists

participation in the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper)? What should the Frafra Christian polygamist do with his many wives? What should the Christian widow do if asked to remarry the brother of her deceased husband? Is polygamy sin in the biblical sense? Since the church comprises every person who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, why should other people be excluded on the basis of marriage? These questions remain unresolved and seem to constitute a hindrance to the evangelisation of the Frafra.

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The patriarchal system is a common feature in both the Hebrew culture of early Israel and the Frafra. It stresses the superiority of the male over the female in the scheme of things. Like the Hebrew culture, the Frafra culture relegates the woman to the background. Simon Azaa maintains that due to the bride worth that the men often pay for their wives in marriage, the women have generally come to accept the inferior position to which they have been relegated-without property rights, or even taking personal decisions and are also subjected to divorce. The Bible clearly teaches the equality of all persons before God (Galatians 3:28). This means mutual respect and love should be accorded one another as destined by God. Again in the New Testament, it is evident that women felt very comfortable in the presence of Jesus. White (2000.68) rightly says that Christ's attitude to women has altered their position in the world. This statement can be very appreciated if we consider Jesus' attitude towards women as against the Jewish law which marginalised women. On the other hand, does Pauline teaching on women as captured by 1Timothy 2: 11- 15 put women in an inferior position? Is Paul advocating superiority- inferiority form of relationship between the man and the woman?

Again the evidence of Jesus' prohibition of divorce in defense of the permanence (indissolubility) of marriage is also taken up in the Synoptic Gospels. In Luke 16:18 we read "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery (NIV)." Jesus' teaching here was a reaction to what was prevailing at the time (Jewish culture or Judaism). In the time of Jesus, the School of Shammai allowed divorce only in the case of unchastity of the woman, but in the case of the School of Hillel, divorce was fully at the husband's discretion. (Keener 1993:96). For Jesus however, the man is bound by fidelity, and husband and wife are equal partners with equal rights. He opposes any kind of divorce, which is morally evil. Thus for Christians, the love between partners in marriage is informed by the sacrificial love of Christ for the church which gives no room for any dissolution.

The way forward for the emancipation of women is that, there is the need for a critical and comprehensive re-appraisal of the traditional marriage culture and family life in the light of biblical teaching. On the other hand there is the need to critically examine biblical teaching on marriage and its implication for traditional culture. The situation of the bride worth, which is being over-commercialized these days and the call for its modernization and standardization, should be accepted and championed by all. There is also the need to sensitize women to join the advocacy for gender balance. Female education should be promoted at all levels, and practices which lower the status of women should be abolished or eliminated through appropriate legislation, for example, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriages, early marriages or betrothals, inhuman widowhood rites and others. They should be awakened to their potentials in both secular and Christian circles.

It is significant to note that before God, there is no distinction either by sex or by race or colour that should warrant any form of discrimination. There is therefore, the need for a new understanding of the church as the extended family of God. The Apostle Paul writing on the oneness of all Christians in Christ says, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:26, 29) NIV.

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4.2.4 Religious Systems

The Old Testament offers us a description of the religious life of Israel. It points out that the sacrificial system was very central to the Jewish national life. It signified their worship which attested to their loyalty and commitment to Yahweh. It involved animals, drinks and some food items. Theologically these sacrifices seem to be an appeasement for their sinfulness. They also represented an age-long picture of the coming sacrifice of Christ to whom they pointed and in whom they fulfilled.

In comparing attitudes towards sacrifice evident in ancient Israel and the Frafra it is interesting to note that both the Israelites and the Frafra consider sacrifices as a means of obtaining favour. In an interview, Alanbange Asamalogu (Bekot *Tendana* of Zuarungu) said in engaging in any enterprise either going to war, farming, or hunting expedition among others it is prudent to offer sacrifice before the undertaking in order to secure assistance, and to do same after the undertaking as an expression of gratitude. He explained that the idea behind this is the hope that by giving gifts the deity could be induced to render in return more than they have given, and this also

puts one in the “good books” of the deities. Nevertheless, in spite of what the Israelites thought about sacrifice, the Old Testament consistently pointed out that Israel did not receive blessings because of their continuous sacrifices (Genesis 22: 35, Isaiah 30:23). The Old Testament teaches that those who substituted sacrifice for genuine obedience to God were condemned. It was only as the people obeyed the laws of God, so that their sacrifices became an outgrowth of their obedience, that God abundantly blessed (Malachai 3:10).

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Underlying the concept of sacrifice is the issue of blood. With reference to the Frafra, *Ziim* or blood sacrifice creates a new bond among those who participate in the rite, and it is believed that the blood revitalises the ones to whom the offering is made. However, there seem to be a divergence here with respect to the Old Testament teaching on sacrifices. Biblical sacrifices were never a means of revitalizing God or man. Yahweh forbade the Israelites to drink or eat blood (Leviticus 3:17) but it is common for the Frafra to eat blood specially prepared in soup form popularly called *sel* which is often eaten at a *baat* (sooth saying rites) as part of the final funeral rites of departed. Christians generally believe that the blood of Jesus which he shed on the cross was enough and able to secure their reconciliation with God. Paul writes “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13) NIV.

It is also worthy to note the one to whom sacrifices are directed. Whereas biblical sacrifices were directed at Yahweh in the case of the Israelites, the Frafra offer sacrifices to the deities such as the *yin* (family or personal shrines) or *yabnam*

(ancestors), or the *tongbana* (divinities of sacred groves). They do so in order to solicit their benevolence and also as an appeasement to avert evil or calamity which is often ascertained through divination.

A most important aspect of Frafra sacrifices is the prayer. Through *kaaba* (prayers), they express their anxieties and gratitude, fears and hopes, their confidence and assurance, their faith and intimacy. To them prayer is communion and communication, a link between them and their ancestors. Mbiti (1986:70) has observed that “prayer and praying are not foreign to African people. Prayer is a well established and deeply rooted tradition which has evolved over centuries and generations”. The Bible has examples of men and women who prayed. For instance in Genesis 18:22-23 we find Abraham interceding for Sodom. The question then is: to whom is prayer directed? God is recognised as a God who is approached through prayer. The idea of prayer manifests a dependence on a superior power to act on one’s behalf while recognising one’s limitations and insufficiency. However, for the Frafra, prayer is an invocation of the ancestors and the divinities. How will the Frafra Christian handle the issue of libation to the ancestors?

Another important feature of the religious life of Israel was the priesthood. The Levitical Priesthood or the Aaronic priesthood was divinely ordained to mediate between Yahweh and the Hebrew nation in the ministry of animal sacrifices. It was only the descendants of Levi and the sons of Aaron who had the religious mandate to perform such religious functions. Similarly, the Frafra have the various *tendandem* who have the traditional authority to enter the various *tongbana* (a type of tabernacle or temple of ancient Israel, Exodus 25, 1 Kings 6:14-22, 7:9-12) to offer sacrifices. However, among the Frafra, all male children are considered as priests within their

families, lineages and clans, making it a much wider circle than that of the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood. It is significant to note that just as the various sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ, Christ himself is the Great High-Priest for man, the only and perfect Mediator between God and man (Hebrews 8:6, 9:11-12, 10:10). Christ as a priest is in the order of Melchizedek. The Bible also teaches the priesthood of all believers (1Peter 2:5, Revelation 1:6)

Feasts and festivals were also important features in the religious system of ancient Israel. These were meant to showcase the rich experiences of their history as a covenant people and which was perpetuated through various rites and ceremonies. Prominent among these feasts was the Feast of Atonement. It was during this time that the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle to offer sacrifices or sin offering on behalf of the nation. It was a time of purification and renewal in ancient Israel. The Frafra also have festivals such as the *Golgo*, *Daa*, *Buaram*, *Tenglebeg*, *Tingbana* and *Adakoya* and others. It is significant to note that all these festivals except the *Golgo* and the *Buaram* are agricultural or harvest festivals and are considered as a commemoration of the ancestors and a demonstration of gratitude to them for good harvests. The *Golgo* festival (a type of the Jewish Passover festival) as well as the *Buaram* involve purification rites. It is significant to note that it is during these festivals that young men are initiated into the various cults and again when “debts” owed to ancestral shrines are redeemed.

It is significant to note in summary that the people of ancient Israel did not divorce religion from life. They carried their religion wherever they went which was

symbolised by the Ark of the Covenant and other features. Similarly, ritual observances and other regulations such as taboos which are meant to ensure morality in the land, occupy an important place in the Frafra traditional life and thought. Mbiti (1969:2) has noted that, chapters of African religions are written everywhere in the life of the community. Therefore in traditional society there are no irreligious people.

4.3 Towards an Authentic Frafra Christianity

It is true that some essential values of the Bible may not be found in the Frafra culture, and vice versa, that does not mean that they are incompatible. Some values of the Biblical tradition and those of the Frafra cultural tradition may appear to be contrary but that does not mean that they are contradictory. The conviction therefore is that it is possible for one to be fully Christian without compromising the essential values of the Frafra heritage, and also one can be a full blooded Frafra without compromising the essentials of the biblical message. It is possible to be authentically Christian and authentically Frafra at the same time. This is not only a possibility but also an imperative. It therefore calls for dialogue between the Gospel or Christianity and the Frafra culture in particular. But is the Frafra culture open to enter into a symbiotic relationship with the Gospel? On the other hand, how should the Gospel respond to the Frafra Culture?

Many theologians such as Kwesi Dickson (1984) have come to the conclusion that each culture needs to devise its own version of biblical forms to express its heart in adoration to God. In other words Christianity in a particular culture should as a matter

of expediency, make use of the cultural categories of that culture with the view of transforming it. Charles Kraft (1980:321) may be right when he says:

The church will need leadership, organization, education, worship, buildings, behavioural standards and means of expressing Christian love and concern to the people of its own culture who have not yet responded to Christ. But a dynamically equivalent church will employ culturally appropriate forms in meeting these needs familiar, meaningful forms that it will possess, adapt, and fill with Christian meanings... What is desired, then, is the kind of church that will take indigenous forms, possess them for Christ, adapt and employ them to serve Christian ends by fulfilling indigenous functions, and convey through them Christian meanings to the surrounding society.

In the light of this Shawyer (2002:329) writing about the Wolof of Senegal, points out that “the Wolof will not come to Christ in any numbers until they can see Christ in Wolof skin and a genuine Christian community that is in every sense Wolof, worshipping God in a Wolof way.” What Shawyer (2002) seems to imply is that the Wolof have to see Christ incarnate in their culture. It therefore presupposes that Christianity among the Wolof must bear the indigenous, cultural stamp of the Wolof to ensure its authenticity and sustainability. Citing Tippett, Kraft (1980) says that:

When however the indigenous people of a community think of the Lord as their own, not a foreign Christ when they do things as unto the Lord – meeting the cultural needs around them, worshipping in patterns they understand; when their congregation functions in participation in a body, which is structurally indigenous, then you have an indigenous church. (Kraft 1980:321)

In the following discussion, we shall examine how some cultural forms in the Frafra context can enhance the proclamation of the Gospel.

4.3.1 Frafra Culture as *Preparatio Evangelica*

Mbiti (1970:) has noted that African religious background is not a rotten heap of superstition, taboos and magic as has been the perception of the early Christian missionaries to Africa. Rather, it has a great deal of value in it, and that this rich and

valuable heritage, can enrich Christianity. As far as the Frafra are concerned, we need to identify what constitutes the valuable preparation for the Gospel and what is not. It is against this background that Bediako says that the “positive evaluation of the pre-Christian tradition, and an attempt to derive insights from it for the declaration of Christian convictions, need not imply a theological syncretism (Bediako 1992:431). In what way can the Frafra culture be useful for the proclamation of the Gospel?

First, is the social organisation of the people with particular reference to their life in community? Like all other African societies, the Frafra religion and social life lay much emphasis on communal welfare, values, concerns and kinship. Fortes (1987) in examining the festivals of the Talensi, is of the view that they serve to affirm the belonging together, the solidarity and unity of a community, making its members aware of their dependence on one another and the need for some basis of mutual trust in their pursuit of common ends and values. On the basis of this, evangelisation need not seek to present Christ on the individual level, by making individualistic appeals. Antwi (1996:6) maintains that one’s humanity is therefore defined by a sense of belonging because it is not enough to be a human being unless one demonstrates a real sense of, and participation in community. He continues that a careful study of the African worldview of community as *Koinonia* (fellowship) shows a remarkable model for an effective re-definition of the church. He concludes that the clan system within the community is an invaluable paradigm in so far as the identity of the church is that of community called into being by God for his own glory. In line with this, Bediako (1992:310) cites Mbiti as saying that

We must therefore seek to make the church the centre of existence from which African people's may derive the fulfillment of their life's aspiration whether in time of need or in time of feasting, and where they may experience a communal life which has a vaster scope and meaning than tribal life without Christ could ever provide. The church will become for them a community in which their corporate aspirations are not destroyed but fulfilled and intensified, in which tribal foundations are not simply shaken and replaced with a vacuum but are made more secure in Christ. The God who made man and provides him with children, life and rain will now become man's light, and man will have fellowship with his creator.

It then follows that Jesus will become for African people the access to God whom they already acknowledge in their traditional ideas as the Creator of all things, as the one who strengthens kinship between man and man and also establishes kinship between man and God. It is only in this sense that the Gospel of the incarnation can find a place in the African environment.

In the second place, oral traditions of the Frafra can be a great asset in Christian evangelisation. These include *magaha* (proverbs), *solemia* (stories), *wooma* (music) and many others which constitute an embodiment of traditional wisdom. Job Tindantil is of the view that Frafra proverbs can be employed to teach the meaning of the Christian faith and specific Christian truths, beliefs and values. He contends that proverbs contain seeds of God's word and can be used in their own right as means of God's revelation and which are intended to evaluate and affect human behaviour. Against this background Idowu (1983:85) has noted that African oral traditions "constitute the scriptures as well as breviaries of African Traditional Religion ... they are indeed living and active. Hence they are valued authentic media of religious truths.'

On his part Bernard Kusiboo points out that Frafra proverbs and sayings are a depository of divine wisdom that has been passed on from one generation to another. He maintains that, Frafra proverbs and sayings are useful tools to convey the intended truths of the scriptures to the audience. He gives examples of such proverbs as follows;

- *Dibir be Ka de gbar-agr zii n be*; which literally means, “A stick has a place to hold it.” (This is translated as, life has a beginning and each one must acknowledge that).
- *Baa pu doat ka boa lien-na*; “A goat does not litter for a dog to lick.” (translated as, you are who you are, you were created uniquely).
- *Too pudoat duoga*; “The baobab tree does not give birth to the dawadawa tree.” (Translated as, you reap what you sow and each one is responsible for his or her own actions).
- *Nye zina tam biog*; “Do not forget of the future.” (Translated as, life has an end to it).
- *Naakenpiel yelye wo ponnye woyildem ka dol ba tengdem*; “All birds move with their kind.” (Translated as the need to respect one’s identity in the crowd).
- *Kpemburung nuol diegit daal*; “The words of the elderly call for regret.” (Translated as, there is always the need to accept counseling).
- *Pua-nyang pen pu-zoot kodoaret-de*; “The vulva of the elderly woman does not ‘fear’ hot water.” (Translated as endurance brings experience and joy in the future).

Kusiboo is also noted for the composition of many indigenous songs and which are used in the church. A local chorus in *Talni* which says *Naawun nmal mam soma ka*

eng noba tem is translated as, “God has created me well and given me legs, hands, eyes, to use to serve him, I must use them for that purpose.” It is significant to note the introduction of the first Frafra Gospel music album and video, composed by Comfort Awane of Zuarungu. The title of the album is *mandana*, translated as “My Lord.” The album also has a track entitled *tehe bere yeli*, which means, “think about the future, for judgment is sure to come.”

The use of indigenous music in worship is a necessity because western or non-native music cannot fully satisfy native Christians. The non-native melodies are of a different genre, and of different cultures, so that in translating a text from one culture, the nuances of each culture are not fully expressed. The need for indigenous music accompanied by native instruments such as the *longa*, *yeeh*, *gooji*, *bema* and others, can be valuable for Frafra Christian worship. The scripture songs in the native language have the potential of reaching the large masses of people especially non-literates with truths they otherwise will not hear.

The Catholic Church in her attempt to inculturate the Gospel in the Frafra environment has made tremendous gains. According to Aboteyuure, priestly vestments are now being made from local smock material. Again, church members now sit down to hear the reading of the Gospel, just as the Frafra sit down to listen to the words of their elders. He continues that the current chapel of the Sacred Heart Parish which is under construction is designed after the manner of Frafra round huts as an indication of their identification with the people. The church has also come up

with a liturgy for Christian widowhood rites whereby widows are prayed for and holy water sprinkled over them, with the belief of protecting them from evil spirits.

4.3.2 Language and It's implications for Theology and Evangelisation

The mother tongue of a person is that person's native language, the language that one is born into, and grows up with. It is a person's first language compared to other languages one might learn later in life. Thus, the mother tongue is a person's own native or indigenous language which is very much intertwined with his or her identity. Therefore, it is the language that confirms and affirms who a person is, where he has come from, and his or her sense of self worth. It is significant to note that the translation of the scriptures into the mother tongue is a great theological imperative, since every language matters to God. This is because it constitutes the medium of his self disclosure in Christ. The Frafra must therefore, hear God speak to them in their own mother-tongue, and have their felt needs addressed. It is significant to state that the Frafra are very privileged to have the scriptures in their language. *Farefare* (Frafra New Testament) was published in 1987, and then followed by the *Yine Gongo* (the whole Bible) in 2008. They were published by the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) in collaboration with the Bible League.

The significance of mother tongue translations of the scriptures for evangelisation cannot be over emphasised. Sule-Saa (2008: 21) maintains that the mother tongue scriptures have been found to deepen the faith of its users and help them integrate their faith with their culture and daily life. The realisation that God speaks to them directly has been a catalyst for speedy evangelization with the planting of many

churches. He concludes that it is evident that the mother tongue scriptures have contributed in making the Gospel accessible to people as never before, and this has resulted in indigenous Christianity. On his part Peter Awane, (member of the Frafra Bible Project) has observed that the study of the mother tongue Bible is an undeniable factor in the success of Christian evangelisation. He believes that the best way of communicating the Gospel is in the language of the intended audience, which has the tendency to remove all prejudices and misunderstandings. This is the philosophy that has informed all Bible translation projects till today.

Seeking to discover and set forth the most effective and appropriate ways in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ may find deeper rootage in African religious and cultural consciousness has been the concern of many African theologians. Bediako (1992:308) cites Mbiti as suggesting that the Gospel which remains basically the same for all time had to be communicated in terms that were meaningful to African perception of African needs,

As on the Day of Pentecost, the Gospel should be presented in such a way that each person will hear it in his own language. We must now search for ways and means of communicating the Gospel to make it intelligible to its hearers and to bring out its true depth effectively.

Bediako (1995) further maintains that the ability to hear in one's own language and to express in one's own language one's response to the message which one receives must lie at the heart of all authentic religious engagement with the divine realm. It is through language especially the mother tongue that God speaks to disclose his purposes to the human community. From Acts 2, we read "... how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues (Acts 2:7, 11 NIV)." In view of this Sanneh (1989: 120) believes

that “the African Church movement of the nineteenth century was the result of vernacular forces mobilized by the juggernaut of translation.” What this means is that mother tongue translations aided the evangelisation of Africa to a much greater degree. People’s response to the Gospel was as a result of its vernacular transmission.

It is significant to stress that God has always spoken in the language of the people. There is no language like a sacred language. Christianity, unlike Islam, has no place for a special, sacred language for its scriptures. Therefore the Christian faith becomes an indigenous faith. The vernacular provides a channel or the means for a genuine and lasting theological dialogue with culture to take place. The church can live up to its pastoral function of nurturing and equipping a people of God who have heard God speaks directly to them in their native language or mother tongue.

It can be noted in summary that, through cultural forms such as the mother tongue scriptures, God is breaking through to link with the Frafra people showing them truly who they are, so that they hear what he has been saying all the time, that is, his purposes for man for all time. What he began to do with Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others of the biblical times, he now continues to do among the Frafra through the *Yine Gong* (the Bible). In this way the Christian faith is no longer alien to the Frafra culture but a part of it. In connection with this Sanneh 1983:166) believes that “God is not disdainful of Africans as to be incommunicable in their languages.” He says further that “this not only imbued African cultures with eternal significance and endowed African languages with a transcendent range,” it also “presumed that the

God of the Bible has preceded the missionary in the receptor culture.” (Sanneh 1983:166).

4.4 The Gospel as Fulfiller of the Frafra Culture

As noted in 3.1.2 evangelisation is ministry involving the proclamation (*Kerygma*) of the “good news” As ministry it assumes different forms in accordance with the circumstances of local situations. The proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of humankind has to be appropriated in different cultural contexts. Therefore evangelisation is rooted in the person of Jesus and his encounter with people culturally and collectively located.

Asante (2009: 209) has noted that a people’s encounter (experience) with the divine determines how they appropriate Jesus for themselves. In other words, one’s appropriation of Jesus is to a large extent informed by social, cultural, economic and religious circumstances at the heart of one’s experience. To call Jesus Saviour is to do so in the face of social reality that calls for salvation. He concludes that Christological reflections are born out of socio-cultural concerns. Therefore the value of any theological discourse must be measured against its relevance in addressing contemporary concerns and challenges. In the next section, we shall examine the place of Jesus in the Frafra culture and how they can identify with him.

4.4.1 Christ as *Tendana* Par Excellence

From 2.5.2 we discovered that the *tendana* is a political figure in Frafraland, administering the affairs of the clan of which he is the head. Most importantly is his role as the custodian and chief priest of the earth cult. It has also been discovered that, he is responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the land and its people. According to Fortes (1969:185) he is the mediator between the *teng* (earth cult) and the land or community. The *tendana* therefore is the high priest or chief priest of the land who performs sacrifices on behalf of the people. He also offers sacrifices to purify the land due to murder or suicide.

Ryrie (1959) contends that the doctrines of Christology and high Priesthood are vitally interrelated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He continues that, nowhere else in the New Testament is the title “Priest” or “High-Priest” applied to Christ. On the superficial level, there was no basis in Jewish tradition for claiming the title of High Priest for Christ. Therefore, the doctrine of the Priesthood of Christ is the outstanding doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was written to encourage a people coming from an Old Testament background and had been accustomed to issues of priesthood and priestly functions.

Hebrews 5:1-10 presents the qualifications for the office of High Priest. First, he had to be a man. Christ’s incarnation qualified him to serve, because through the incarnation he took upon himself human nature. In the same vein the *tendana* was chosen from among living lineage heads and therefore became the head of the clan. Secondly, he had to be compassionate. Although the Mosaic Law did not

categorically state this qualification, it is inherent in the priest's duty to judge the people in matters concerning sin. In this the priests needed to have gentle consideration because he was involved with weakness. The third qualification of the priestly office according to Ryrie was that one had to be chosen by God. The Aaronic Priests were chosen in line with God's direction, and Christ was divinely chosen to be a priest by the Father. Therefore the text in Psalm 2 attests to the authority and not to the time of the calling by God of Christ to be a priest. Similarly, the selection of a *tendana* is done through divination, to determine the will of the ancestors concerning who should ascend to that office.

The Epistle to the Hebrews leads us to recognise the fact that to speak of Christ as Priest requires that we think of him in an entirely different way from the priesthood of Aaron and the Levitical order in the Old Testament. Rather, we are to think of Christ as Priest after the order of Melchizedek making him a perfect priest. The Aaronic Priests performed their functions on earth, in the tabernacle but Christ priestly function involved his death, resurrection and ascension into the heavenly sanctuary from where he intercedes on our behalf.

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents the Aaronic Priest and the Levitical order as shadows of the original or reality which is Christ. For it is the priesthood of Christ alone that guarantees our salvation. As the Epistle points out, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away human sin. Just as the *tendana* enters the sacred grove or appears before the ancestors on behalf of the people, to offer sacrifices not on account of sin, but as means of fellowship, gratitude and an appeasement, Christ has become

our *tendana*, or Perfect Mediator bringing good things to us. Christ as our *tendana* is not only manifested in his finished work on the cross. His priestly mission is also demonstrated through prayer, which he offers for us (John 17:6-26).

4.4.2 Christ as *Bakologdana* (Diviner)

The *bakologdana* among the Frafra is one who is specially gifted by the deities to reveal mysteries and to determine the will of the deities concerning particular situations for the benefit of the community. Whereas the *tendana* is a popular figure, the *bakologdana* is an uncommon person, who only appears on the scene when the situation calls for his services. He is specially invited on occasions when decisions have to be made concerning the will of the deities such as the one to succeed to the *boagr* (to become the lineage head), or the selection of a *tendana*. He is an important religious official because it is he alone who is believed to have the power to reveal mysteries and is therefore regarded as the link between the community and the deities. He is the “eyes and ears” of the community just like the prophet in the biblical sense.

It is significant to note how Jesus carried out his prophetic ministry. He was in the centre of the common people, living with them, sharing in their joys and sorrows. He made himself accessible to everyone. He explained the mysteries of the kingdom. His parables were taken from the centre of rural agro-pastoral life (Matthew 13:1-13, Luke 15:1-32, John 15:1-17). Therefore the evangelistic message of Jesus did not fall from heaven as ready made. He brought it in his incarnation, in his native language, Aramaic, and in the Jewish culture of his time. Christ as the *Bakologdana* prophesied concerning his death (Mark 8:31). He also revealed the end of the world and the

coming age. Jesus also comforted the disciples by promising them the Holy Spirit who was to be their comforter. It is noteworthy that the Frafra can rightly relate to Christ as the one in whom all mysteries are embodied. Therefore the meaning of life can be ascertained through Christ who holds the keys of life and death (Revelation 1:18). The *bakologdaana* claims to diagnose the causes of misfortune but can not save the people. Jesus Christ alone can save people from all their fears.

4.4.3. Christ as *Yidan* (Lineage Head)

The *Yidan* of Frafraland is considered as the lineage head or elder who possesses great wisdom and maturity to provide guidance and counsel as he administers the affairs of the people within his domain. They are responsible for marriages, contracts, funerals, construction of buildings and other social activities. Succession to the position of *Yidan* is by age, and the most senior member of the lineage becomes its head. On the spiritual level it is the responsibility of the *Yidan* to ensure that the various shrines dedicated to the ancestors of the lineage do not “go dry” by ensuring that the ancestors are always given food by way of libation and sacrifices. It therefore presupposes that the task of governance requires maturity and wisdom. This quality of wisdom finds its fullness in Christ. For instance, the prophet Isaiah prophesied that the shoot of Jesse (Christ) will possess the spirit of wisdom and understanding as well as the spirit of counsel and power. The apostle Paul also described Christ as the embodiment of all wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30, Colossians 2:3)

In John 10:14 Jesus referred to himself as the good shepherd who knows his sheep. This is a demonstration of knowledge and care and presupposes that Christ knows his

people and their every circumstance. Christ demonstrates governance with an attitude full of compassion towards sinners such as the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) and the scorned tax collectors like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus' attitude differed from that of the Pharisees and the Scribes (Matthew 23-29) in that he touched very deeply the hearts of people and attracted the crowds that followed him, including children whom the disciples wanted to drive away from him (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus' Pastoral ministry was not carried out in a political or military manner; rather he demonstrated kindness, goodness and love towards people. As the *yidan* Christ provides direction and counsel to his people in their journey through life.

It is worth noting in summary that Jesus exercised his triple public ministries of the prophet (teaching), priest (sanctification) and of a shepherd (pastoral or governance) in a perfect way. This demonstrates to the Frafra that all that they seek to achieve through their religious officials find fulfillment in Christ. Christ is therefore sufficient to meet every need. He is available to comfort them who grieve and provide faith and confidence for the fearful and above all hope for the future.

4.4.4 Christ as *Nyadaan* (Healer)

In Frafra understanding, the healer is an embodiment of both the spiritual powers of his or her ancestors. Therefore the healer is capable of providing healing for some diseases, because the efficacy of whatever he does or says lies in the powers of the ancestors. Among the Frafra, we have the bonesetters, herbalists, diviners, sorcerers and magicians who perform some form of healing or another. Traditional healers are very much known among the people for their services are highly demanded.

It is interesting to note from the New Testament how Jesus healed people who were sick in one way or the other as a demonstration of his own manifesto in Luke 4:18. In John 5 we read of a paralyzed man who had been lying by the Pool of Bethesda for a long time without any healing. When he encountered Jesus, he became whole again.

In the early church, the apostles prayed for the sick calling on the Name of Jesus and they were supernaturally healed. Salvation in Jesus includes freedom from disease, curses and spiritual attacks. Since in the traditional African or Frafra understanding there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual realms, and that all occurrences in the physical have a corresponding spiritual explanation, sickness and healing are viewed in the same light. This is against the background of the Frafra belief that healing rests in the powers of the ancestors as observed in 2.5.11. The church is recognised as a community, and as extension of the ministry of Christ which cannot be separated from Christ. It therefore follows that the church's evangelistic mandate includes healing the sick (Mark 16:15-18). Therefore we should endeavour to make the church a healing community where the sick can find supernatural healing. Healing is possible because Christ as the healer is the Head of the church and works through the church to the whole world, and every people group including the Frafra.

4. 5. Conclusion

The Frafra culture has been all-sufficient and self-sufficient in the perception of the people. The life of the individual and the entire community in terms of values, beliefs, social and political structures and creative activities are in one way or another

influenced by the culture. The presence of the Gospel or the Christian faith must challenge that self-sufficiency to bring it under the Lordship of Christ. It has been recognised that the encounter between the Frafra culture and religion with the Gospel and for that matter Christianity is one of mutual engagement; it enriches Christianity and is also enriched by Christianity. Through their cultural forms the Frafra can make connections with the Christian faith, thus making it relevant to their context and which gives them a sense of identity and self expression.

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It has also been discovered that Frafra culture share some similarities with the Bible and this means that the Gospel can find a home in the culture. This presupposes that an authentic Frafra Christianity is possible if attempts are made to employ Frafra cultural forms such as language, proverbs, music and social life categories in evangelisation. Above all, Christ, who is the embodiment of the Gospel, has been presented as the redeemer of the Frafra culture in his roles as the *Tendana*, *Bakologdana*, the *Yidan* and the *Nyadaan*. These roles present the diverse ways in which the Frafra can relate to and articulate Christ in their cultural environment. Their individual and collective longings or quests find fulfillment in Christ who is all sufficient for all their aspirations. Christ should not be viewed as someone who is alien to the Frafra culture, but rather part of it, and fulfilling it, thereby bringing the people to the point of realisation that Christ as the universal Lord and savior is the answer to all questions of life.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, ISSUES EMERGING OUT OF THE STUDY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This chapter concludes the study. It deals with the summary of findings of the study, issues emerging out of the study and some recommendations.

5.1 Summary of Findings of the Study

The study commenced on the following hypothetical questions: How has the Gospel been communicated to the Frafra? How do the Frafra respond to the Gospel? Has the proclamation of the Gospel impacted the lives of the people? If yes, in what ways? On the basis of these research questions, the researcher planned to interview about 40 key personalities, but was only able to interview 33, due to time, financial and other constraints.

Based on these research questions, the researcher came out with the following findings. Evangelisation of the Frafra took different forms. The Catholics, who were the first Christian church to enter Northern Ghana identified with the culture of the people by learning their language and customs. It is on record that the Catholics were the first to commit the native languages into writing. The Catholics developed good relations with the traditional authorities which was an incentive to their missionary efforts. It is significant to note that they were committed to the establishment of indigenous churches based on the family concept. As part of their indigenous church

planting strategies, they also undertook the training of indigenous leaders such as catechists to assist in the teaching of the converts. It is on record that these catechists played an indispensable role in the spread and growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Ghana in general and the Frafraland in particular. The Catholics were also committed to the social transformation of the society which was demonstrated through the provision of health facilities, schools, good drinking water and other social amenities. There was a holistic ministry based on the philosophy that the Good News must touch the total man in all respects. The biblical mandate for man to subdue the earth by creating good conditions for the betterment of humans constitutes the social philosophy of the Catholic Church over the years.

The Protestant Movement, represented by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana was the next Christian church to work among the Frafra. The missionary strategies of the Church included the formal school system which targeted the children of the natives. The curriculum for the education of the natives involved religious instruction which was meant to inculcate Christian teachings to the pupils. The pioneer missionaries also adopted the night school or informal system in reaching the natives. This informal school system was effective in the creation of hymns in Frafra as well as the translation of portions of the Scriptures from Twi into Frafra. This enabled the literates to read the scriptures in their mother tongue and to preach to their own people.

It also came out of the study that spontaneous evangelisation among the Frafra resulted from the arrival of the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic

Movement, represented by the Assemblies of God Church and the Fountain Gate Chapel (formerly Broken Yoke Foundation). Their evangelistic strategies included open air meetings otherwise referred to as “crusades.” They also undertook house-to-house visitation to interact with families. Again, in collaboration with the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), the churches also introduced literacy classes or night schools which enabled many to become literate and also opened doors to the conversion of many to the Christian faith.

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The study brought out diverse responses of the Frafra to the proclamation of the Gospel. It is significant to note that the proclamation of the Gospel centred on *Yezu* (Jesus) who was presented as the embodiment of true freedom and salvation. In response to this proclamation, some responded positively to the Gospel message and became converted with the reason that they had become convicted of their sinful ways and desired freedom and right standing with God.

The proclamation of the Gospel also brought conflicts in the lives of people, who otherwise were called upon to abandon their traditional ways and to accept salvation in *Yezu* (Jesus). It is worthy to note that the people are used to worshipping many gods, and the proclamation of Jesus as the only Lord and Saviour was bound to bring conflicts. In this sense, those who identified with the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches were seen as useless people because of their denial of their traditional ways. Some were subjected to many problems including banishment from families and clans as well as physical assaults and insults.

Others considered conversion to the Christian faith as a risky adventure and therefore did not commit themselves. To them, they saw no reason to abandon their ancestral ties which had been their backbone from infancy. However, there were other people who committed themselves to the Christian faith but did not abandon their traditional religious beliefs and practices. They considered Christianity insufficient to meet all their needs and therefore needed more power in order to ward off spiritual attacks on their lives. It was realised that this situation had resulted probably from a lack of understanding of the tenets of the Christian faith by the converts. For them, to abandon the ancestral ties was a risky adventure.

The study also brought out the fact that the proclamation of the Gospel among the Frafra had resulted in some form of transformation in many ways. Individual lives as well as communities had been impacted positively resulting in social advancement in health, education and agriculture as well as the preservation of Frafra culture resulting from Bible translation and an improvement in marriage and family life.

5.2 Issues Emerging out of the Study

The study came up with some key issues which are worth noting. First, the reverence of the Frafra for the natural environment brought out the need to address the issue of religion and ecology from the Frafra perspective. Issues relating to the *tongbana* (sacred groves) as well as ritual prohibitions designed to protect nature constitute some form of environmental conservation and any violation calls for restitution.

Secondly, in relation to the social organisation of the Frafra, the concept of *Mabirit* (brotherhood) should be seen in the context of the church as the extended family of God. Issues such as the sense of belonging, existing in relation to others and positive involvement of each member of the community can be addressed in the light of the church's *koinonia*

Thirdly, patriarchy (male dominance) which is evident in the Frafra culture and among the ancient Israelites should be addressed in the context of women initiative and participation in Christian ministry and social or political affairs. Specific issues that need to be addressed include the issue of the bride worth, divorce and widowhood rite for women (why not men also), and the priesthood which is male dominated.

Fourthly, the *tongbana* (sacred groves) can be addressed in the context of the tabernacle of God as a place of communion and worship. Lastly, there is a need for a new understanding of Christ and his relationship with humans. Christ should be seen as a living person and not to be considered as our ancestor as being championed by scholars such as Bediako, Nyamiti and Mbiti. Christ as an ancestor can be true for the Akan (understood as *nana*) and not in the case of the Frafra. The truth of the resurrection of Christ is an incentive to his functions as the *Tendana* (chief priest), *Bakologdana* (diviner) and *Yidana* (lineage head), and *Nyadaan* (healer).

5.3 Recommendations

Two critical problems characterise the evangelisation of the Frafra, like all other traditional societies in Africa. There is the evidence of a theological crisis and also an

identity crisis. The crucial questions then are: how can the church make Christ real to the indigenous Frafra? Can the Frafra remain true to his cultural identity and be a true disciple of Christ? The following recommendations are made to meet these challenges.

5.3.1 Training and Support of Indigenous Leaders

It has been established that for the Christian faith to be rooted in the Frafra culture, it has to be made relevant to the indigenous beliefs and practices of the people. Training quality Christian leaders and in appropriate numbers who could interpret the Christian faith to their own people with a true spirit of belonging, is of prime importance. In connection with this, indigenous Christian converts who show signs of maturity should be encouraged to undergo theological education in recognised and accredited institutions. Scholarships should be provided for such people to undertake the training as they seem to come from poorly resourced backgrounds.

Pastors can also develop their own training programmes for their people. They should discard any spirit of competition and deploy their promising leaders in right areas in order to help them maximise their gifts and potentials. The curriculum of theological institutions should be made to include Gospel and culture courses so as to intensify the study of traditional religious thought forms which are necessary for the proclamation of the Gospel in cultural situations such as the Frafra. Also periodic workshops on Gospel and culture should be organised for church leaders working

among the Frafra so as to put them in a better situation to understand the Frafra context and how best to adapt to it.

5.3.2 Pastoral Care and Counseling

It has been discovered that people coming to the Christian faith from traditional backgrounds sometimes face conflicts. These conflicts relate to fears of the malevolent spirits visiting them with misfortune for abandoning their traditional ties. Others also face rejection and physical assaults from their families and clans. All these and others pertaining to Christian conversion in cultural contexts call for a pastoral approach which is very crucial for the sustainability of the faith of Christian converts.

Pastors need to teach their members how to live the Christian life in their cultural environments. They should be given the opportunity to evaluate their traditional values and customs to determine which ones are compatible with their faith and which ones are not. Pastoral Care and counselling among the Frafra should therefore involve a rigorous pursuit of systematic theology based on philosophical appraisal of the traditional thought forms. It should be a searching, or investigation into the content of the traditional religious thought-forms with a view to erecting bridges of dialogue by which the Christian Gospel could be effectively transmitted to the indigenous people.

5.3.3 Literacy Development

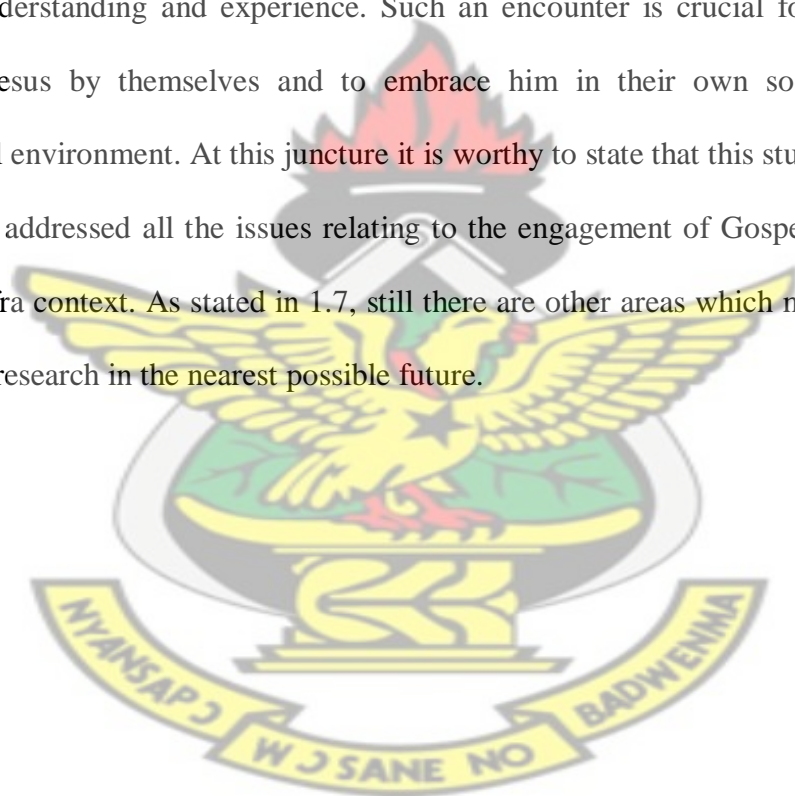
The significance of literacy in the understanding and appropriation of Christian truths cannot be over emphasized. Literacy is a tool that can facilitate the understanding of

the Scriptures and which will also influence the lives of people positively in such areas as health, sanitation and agriculture. Therefore the call for literacy development is of prime significance. Even though some literacy classes or night schools are organised in some areas, their number as well as their effectiveness is not good enough. This therefore calls for the training of more facilitators and the development of more primers to enhance the literacy work. Furthermore, the Ghana Education Service should as a matter of urgency sanction the teaching of the Frafra language and even make it examinable in schools. The churches should as a matter of priority encourage and support literacy classes for their members.

5.4 General Conclusion

There is little doubt that Christianity would never have moved beyond its Palestinian confines if the early church had not taken up the challenge of the relationship of culture to faith in a positive way. The story of the growth of the early Christian community is the story of communities responding positively to that challenge through creative adaptations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their various backgrounds. It has been recognised from the discussion that the encounter of Frafra culture with Christianity is one of mutual engagement; it enriches Christianity and is also enriched by Christianity. The question of the interface of the Christian faith and culture is very crucial to the success of Christian evangelisation. Therefore an awareness of the significance of culture in the expression of the Christian faith is of great necessity for the Christian community.

People do not need to stop being members of their tribes in order to be Christians. Rather they should establish a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and appropriate that relationship to all others within the human realm and the entire supernatural arena. As people become Christians they need to be encouraged to integrate their beliefs and practices into a relevant worship of God. It is evident that the engagement of Gospel and culture is a reality much as the significance of culture in the propagation of the Gospel cannot be compromised. There is therefore the need for the Frafra to perceive and respond to Jesus in ways that are meaningful to their own understanding and experience. Such an encounter is crucial for the people to name Jesus by themselves and to embrace him in their own socio-cultural and political environment. At this juncture it is worthy to state that this study cannot claim to have addressed all the issues relating to the engagement of Gospel and culture in the Frafra context. As stated in 1.7, still there are other areas which may come up for further research in the nearest possible future.



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Interviewee	Status and location	Interviewed on
Sule -Saa Solomon (Rev. Dr.)	Ecumenical and Social Relations Director of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Accra	14/7/2010
Yidana Yangariba	Catechist of St Theresa Parish Tongo	15/8/2010.
Asampana Isidore	Tutor, Bolgatanga Technical Institute	16/8/2010.
Aboteyuure, Roger (Rev. Mongseneor)	Retired Catholic Priest and Educationist	19/08/2010
Azaa, Simon	Center of Communication, Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese	19/08/2010
Salima, Lebyang,	Zubiung Tongo	19/8/ 2010.
Zure Samuel	Seminarian, St. Victor's Seminary, Tamale.	
Nakoring, Gung	Lineage Head, Zubiung, Tongo	20/8/2010
Agengre, Robert	Catechist of Kongo Catholic Church	21/8/2010.
Bavolomkat, David	Deacon, Assemblies of God Church-Duusi	20/2/2011
Dittoh Sabil, Anthony	Deacon, Fountain Gate Chapel Zanlerigu	20/2/2011
Dittoh, Robert	Head Deacon, Fountain Gate Chapel Zanlerigu	20/2/2011
Lawaaba Samuel	Senior Pastor, Assemblies of God Church-Duusi	20/2/2011
Naab Bayelem Kambe	Chief of Duusi	20/2/2011
John Kambe	Literacy facilitator, Duusi	20/2/2011
Richard Korah	Elder Apostolic church Tongo	20/2/2011
Liahme, Timothy	Founding Member, Assemblies of God Church, Baare	21/2/2011
Tobeg, Jacob	Founding Member and Elder, Apostolic Church of Ghana, Tongo	21/2/2011
Ayirengo, Paul	Founding Member, Church Father, Assemblies of God Church-Zuarungu	22/2/2011
Kumah Richard (Rev.)	District Minister Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Bolgatanga	22/2/2011
Kwotua, Disah (Rev.)	Pioneer Pastor of the Assemblies of God Church, Gorogo.	23/2/2011
Tindanbil Job, (Rev.)	Pioneer missionary, Baare/District Pastor, (Bolgatanga Bongo-Assemblies of God, now senior Pastor of Assemblies of God Church at Zuarungu.)	23/2/2011
Samuel Awuni	Student Pastor, Northern Ghana Bible College (Assemblies of God) Kumbungu – Tamale.	23/2/2011
Joseph Adongo (Rev.)	Coordinator, Frafra Churches, Fountain Gate Chapel Bolgatanga	23/2/2011
Apasera George (Rev.)	Pioneer Pastor Assemblies of God, Duusi	25/4/2011
Nso-yini Mark (Rev.)	Senior Pastor Frafra Baptist Church, Kumasi	14/5/2011
Zaazor Lazarus	Security Coordinator Ghana Post Company, Kumasi	20/5/2011
Aduku Joshua (Rev.)	Pastor Frafra Assemblies of God Church-Kumasi	20/5/2011
Aboya Joseph	Coordinator, Frafra Literacy and Development Project, Zuarungu.	23/6/2011
Awane Peter, (Rev.)	Member, Frafra Bible Project Zuarungu.	23/6/2011
Anambange	Bekot Tendana, Zuarungu	23/6/2011
Asamalogo		
Baba Awankua	Shrine attendant Zuarungu	23/6/2011

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Personal Information/Data

1. Name:
- Gender: Male [] Female []
2. Date :..... Time:.....
3. Church type:
4. Denomination and location:
5. Age
6. Educational level: Primary[] JHS [] SHS[] Tertiary []
7. Marital status: Single Married Widowed Divorced no. of wives
8. Ethnicity of spouse Same Other
9. Number of languages spoken Mother tongue Others
10. Leadership role in community
11. Profession/Occupation.....
12. Religion Traditional Religion Christian Islamic Others
13. Position in church. Pastor Elder/Deacon Others
14. Christian conversion experience. When? and How?

Church Background Information

- i) Can you tell me how Christianity came to your area?
- ii) How many churches are in your area?
- iii) Do you think there are some problems that preachers who come to your area face?
- iv) Do you think the churches in your area are making some impact on the people? Can you tell me some of them?
- v) What language is used in the church worship services?
- vi) Has the Bible been translated in your language? If so which one?
- vii) Do you have a copy of the Bible in your language?
- viii) How often do you read the Bible?
- ix) Do you read the Bible in any other language apart from yours?
If yes, in what other language?
- x) Do you think it is worth translating the Bible into your language?

About The Frafra People

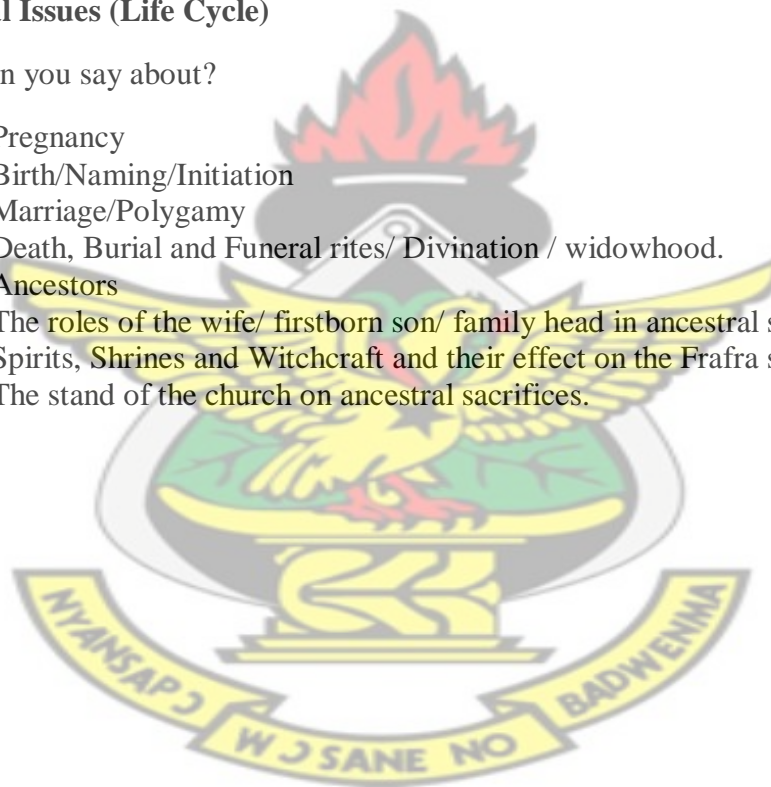
1. Can you tell me the meaning of “Frafra”?
2. Traditionally, how do the people call themselves?

3. Can you tell me the various dialects of the Frafra people and their capital towns?
4. Do you think there are some cultural differences among the dialects? If so, what are they?
5. Which religion do your people claim as theirs?
6. Which church in your area has most of your people as members?
7. Why do you think that this church has more members?
8. What are the main occupations of your people?
9. Can you tell me some customs and traditions of your people which make it difficult for people to become Christians?
10. Do you think some of your people who have become Christians face some problems?
11. Do you think there are some customs and practices of your people which are good for Christians? If yes, what are they?

Cultural Issues (Life Cycle)

What can you say about?

1. Pregnancy
2. Birth/Naming/Initiation
3. Marriage/Polygamy
4. Death, Burial and Funeral rites/ Divination / widowhood.
5. Ancestors
6. The roles of the wife/ firstborn son/ family head in ancestral sacrifices.
7. Spirits, Shrines and Witchcraft and their effect on the Frafra society.
8. The stand of the church on ancestral sacrifices.



APPENDIX B

List of Some Notable Frafra Pastors

1. Rev. Prof. Abraham Berinyuu Presbyterian Church of Ghana/UDS
Wa
2. Rev. Job Tindanbil Assemblies of God
Zuarungu
3. Rev. Lazarus Akabore Assemblies of God
Bolgatanga
4. Rev. Eastwood Anaba Fountain Gate Chapel
Bolgatanga
5. Rev. Joseph Adongo Fountain Gate Chapel
Bolgatanga
6. Rev. George Apasera Christ Frontiers Mission
Wa
7. Rev. Peter Awane Frafra Bible Project
Zuarungu
8. Rev. James Aluruba Evangelical Church of Ghana
Kumasi
9. Rev. Mark Nso-yine Ghana Baptist Convention
Kumasi

Assemblies of God

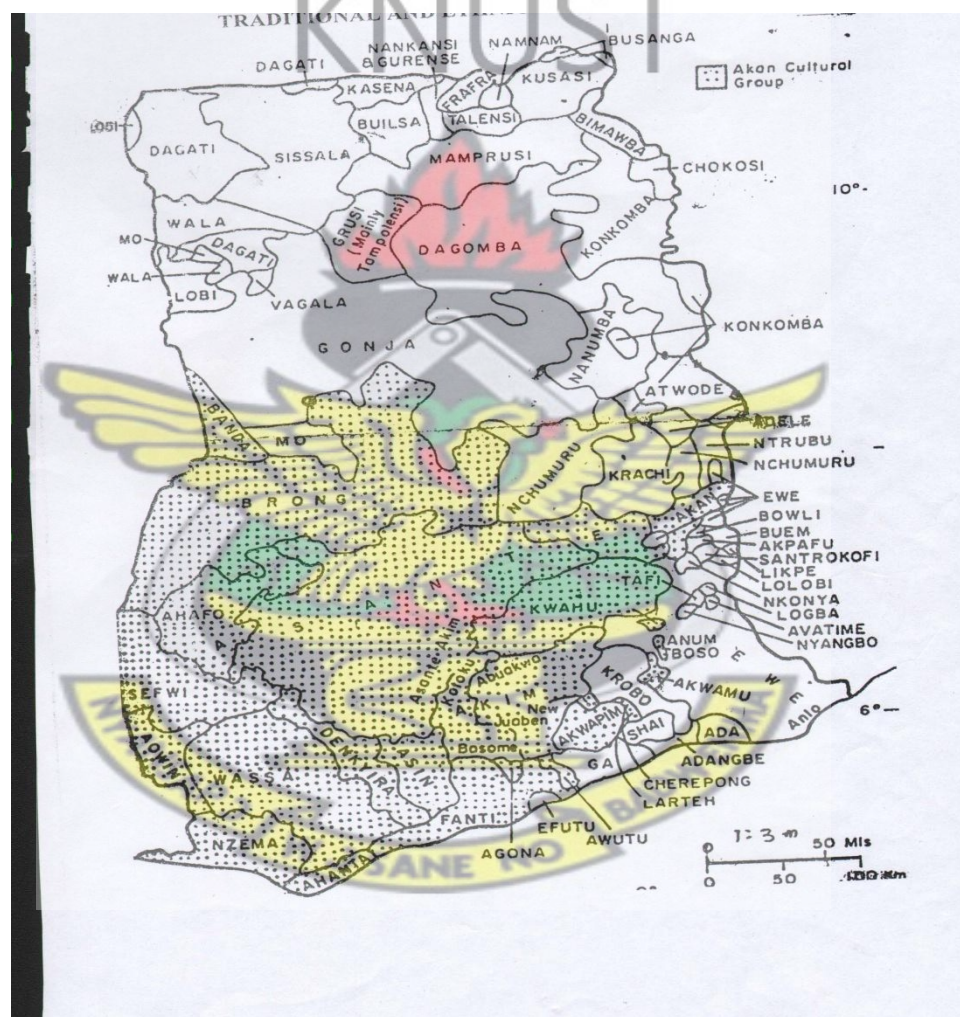
Kumasi

Assemblies of God

Duu

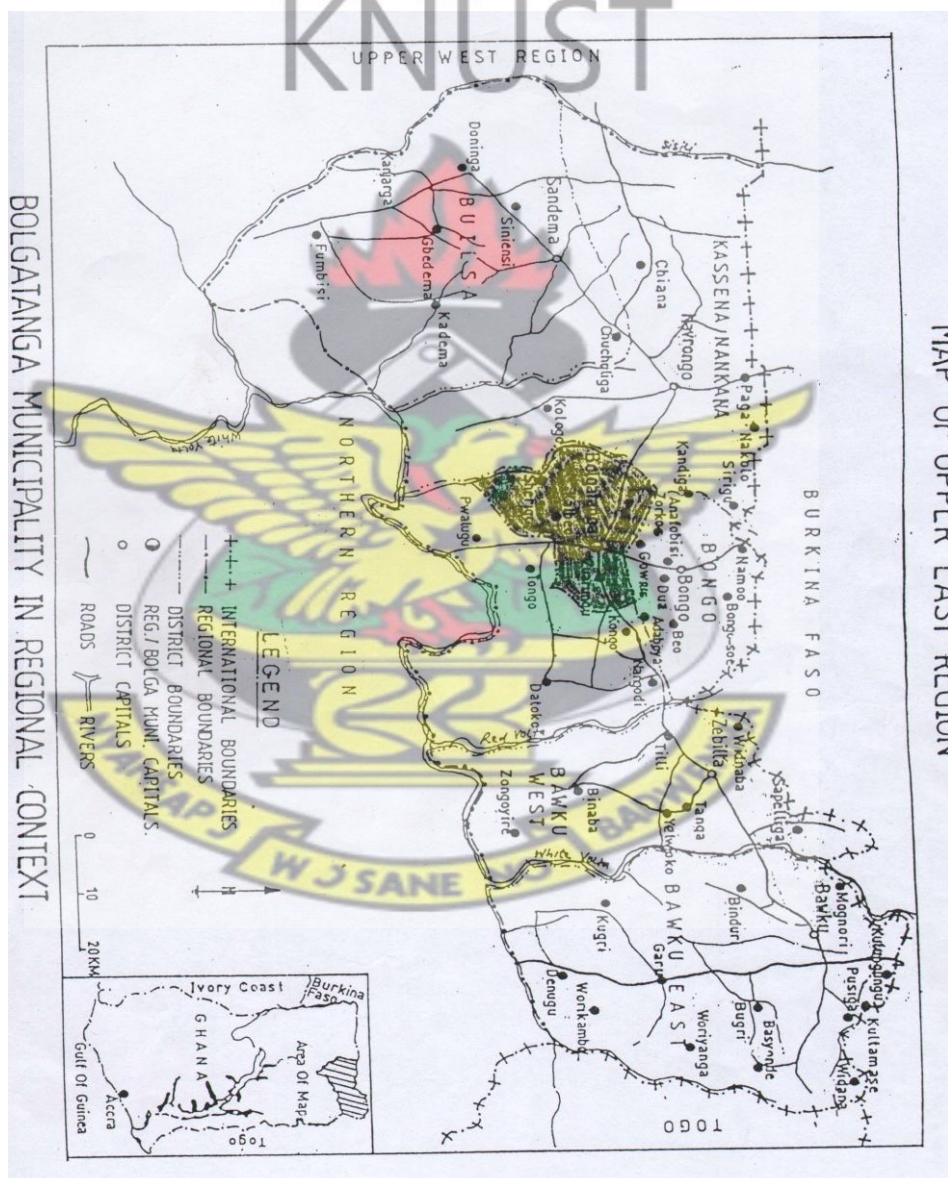
APPENDIX C

TRADITIONAL AND ETHNIC MAP OF GHANA



APPENDIX D

MAP OF UPPER EAST REGION

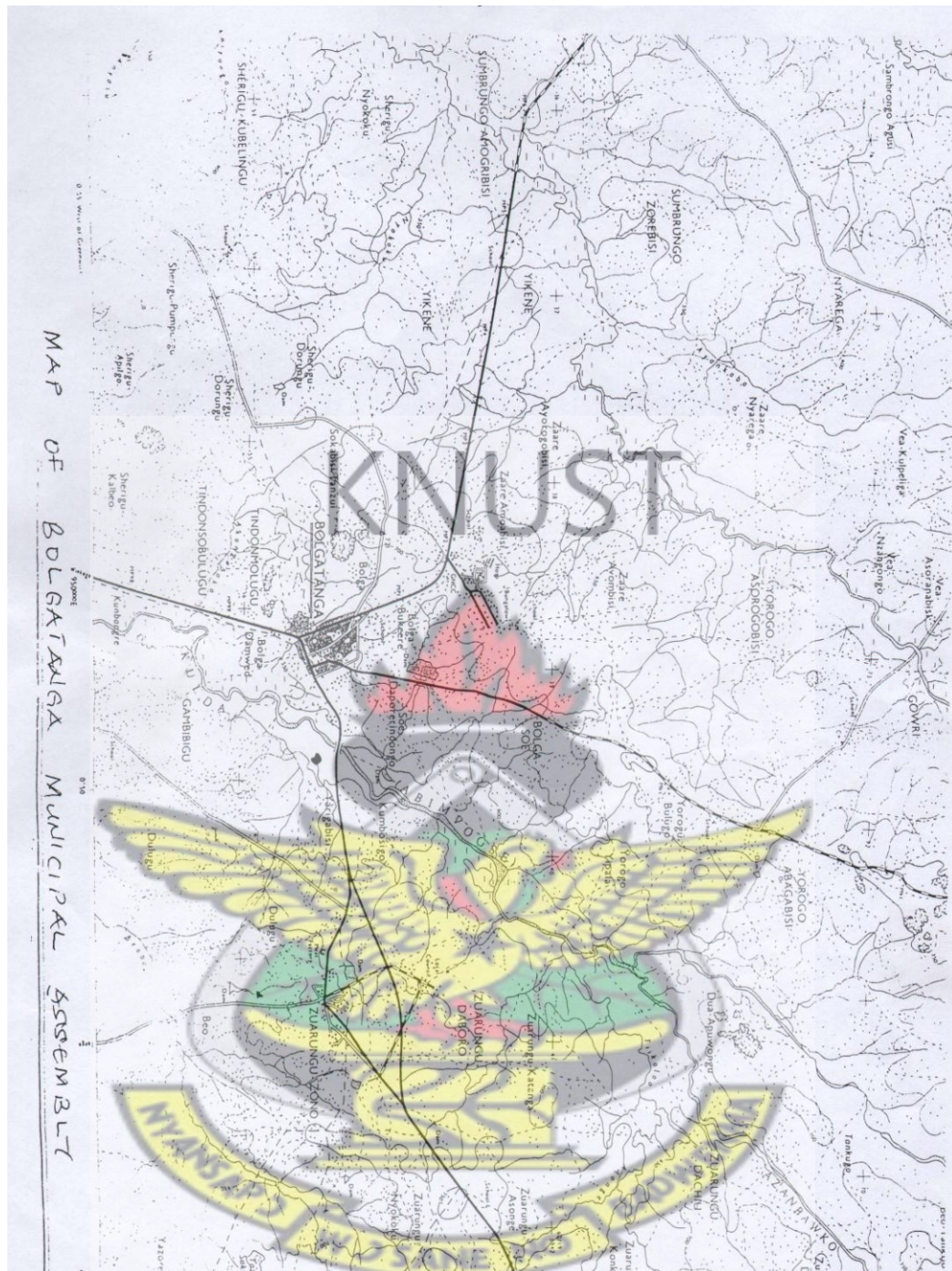


APPENDIX E

MAP OF BOLGATANGA MUNICIPAL

KNUST

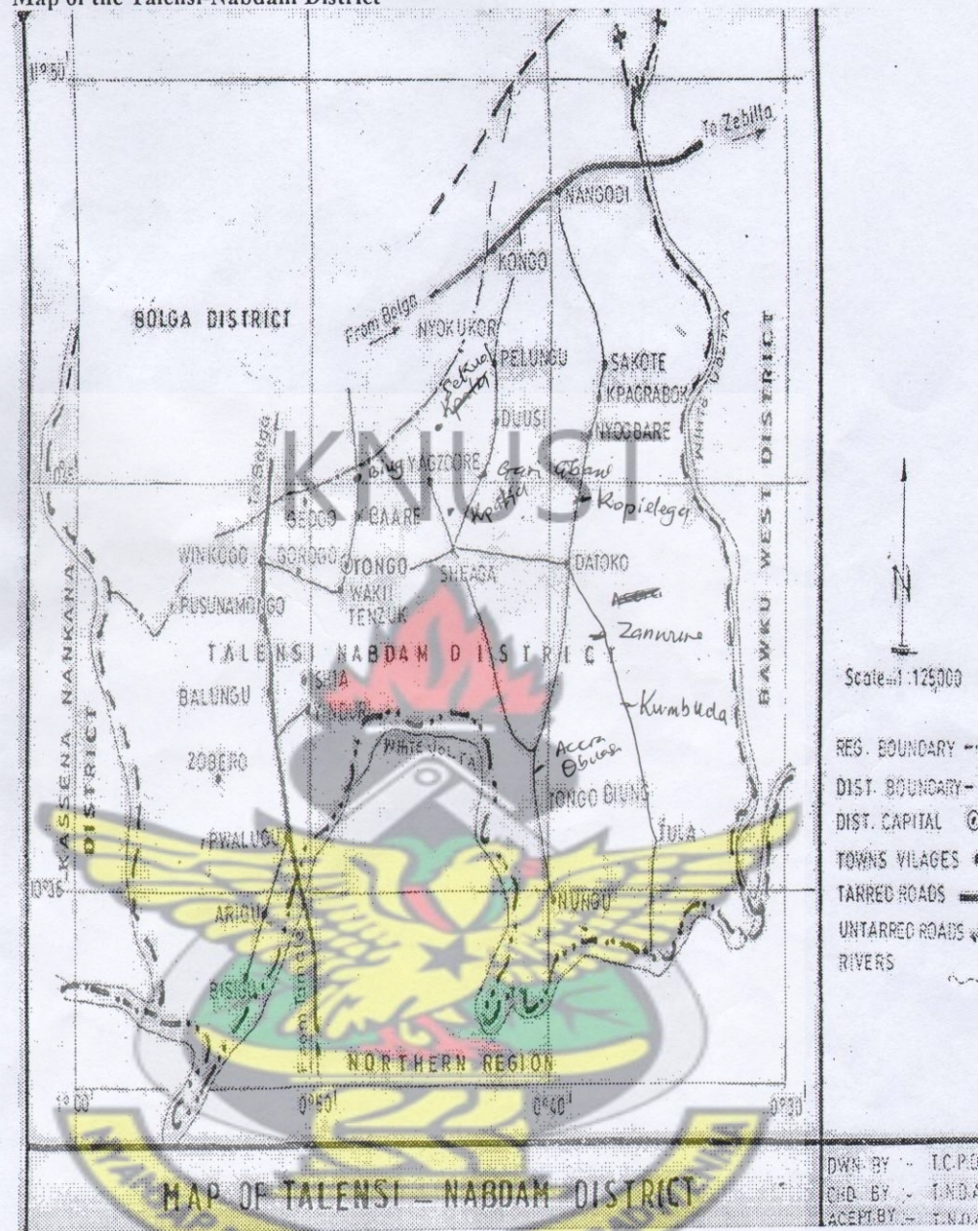




APPENDIX F

MAP OF TALENSI – NABDAM DISTRICT

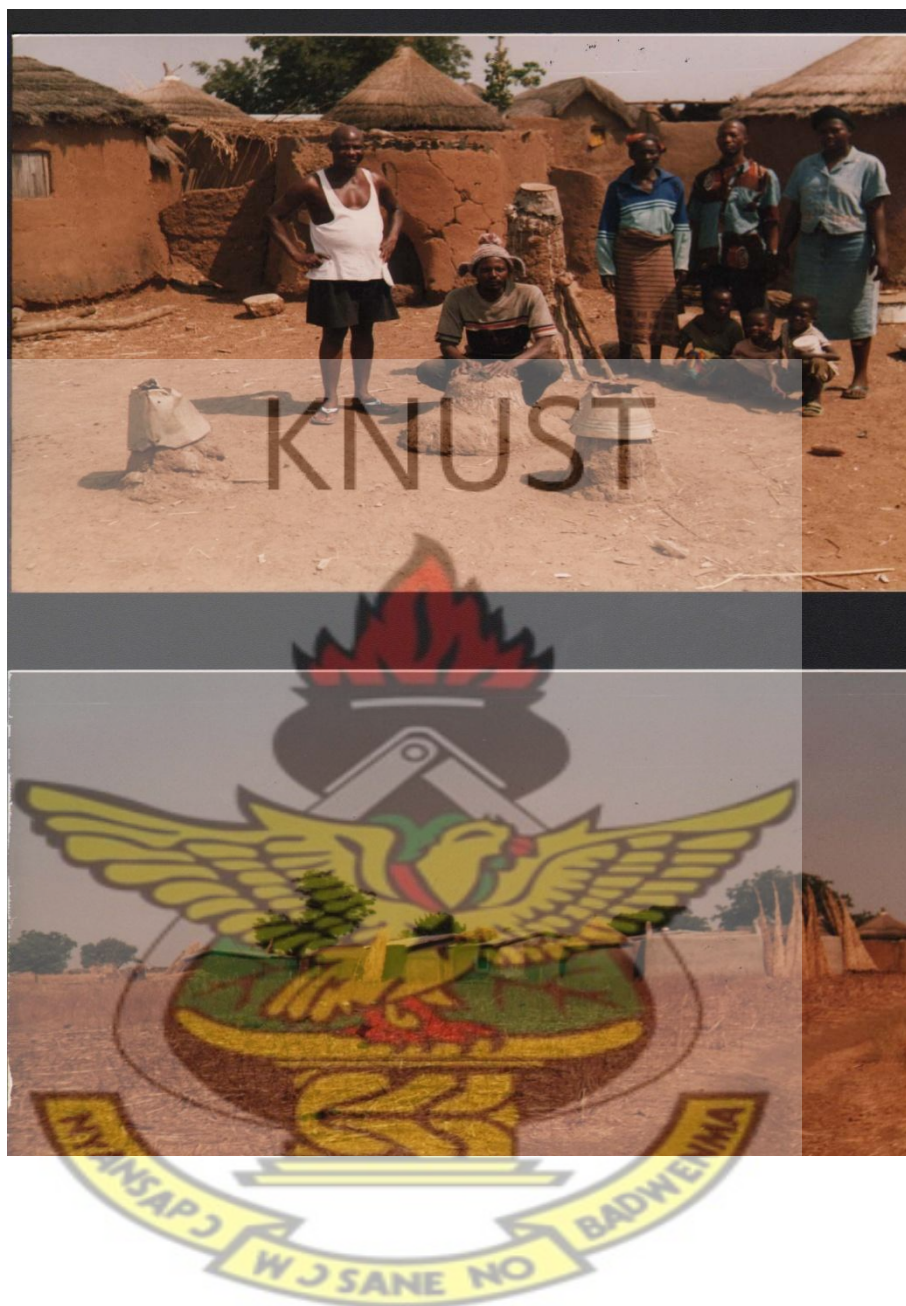
Map of the Talensi-Nabdam District



APPENDIX G

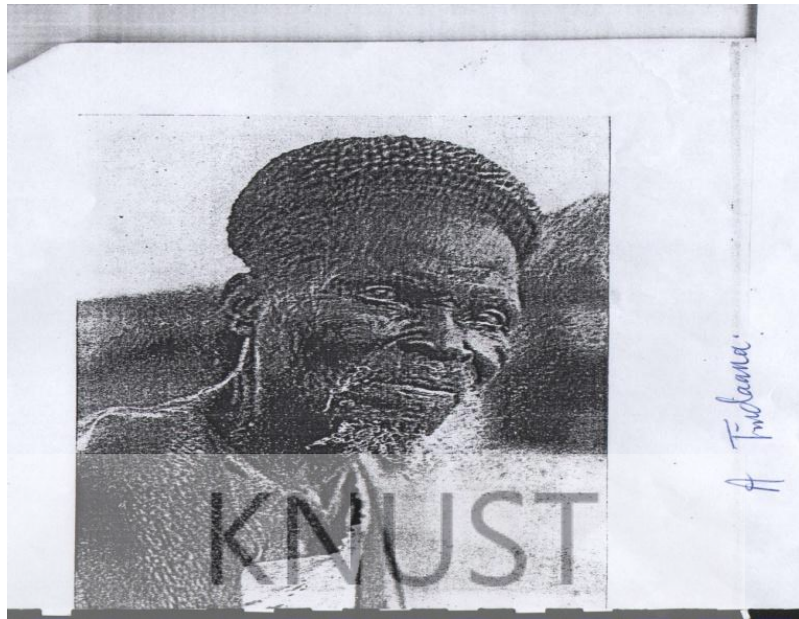
TYPICAL FRAFRA SETTLEMENT

FRONT VIEW AND BACK VIEW



APPENDIX H

FRAFRA TENDANA AND CHIEF



Na Naam Bion, Chief of Tonno (Ch. 13). He wearing his red feathered headdress (mang) the chief emblem of his office, and clad in his finest ceremonial robes.

APPENDIX I

SOME CHAPELS



APPENDIX J

SOME TRADITIONAL SACRED SITES





BAAT DAA (BAARE)



TENZUK SHRINE (TONGO HILLS)

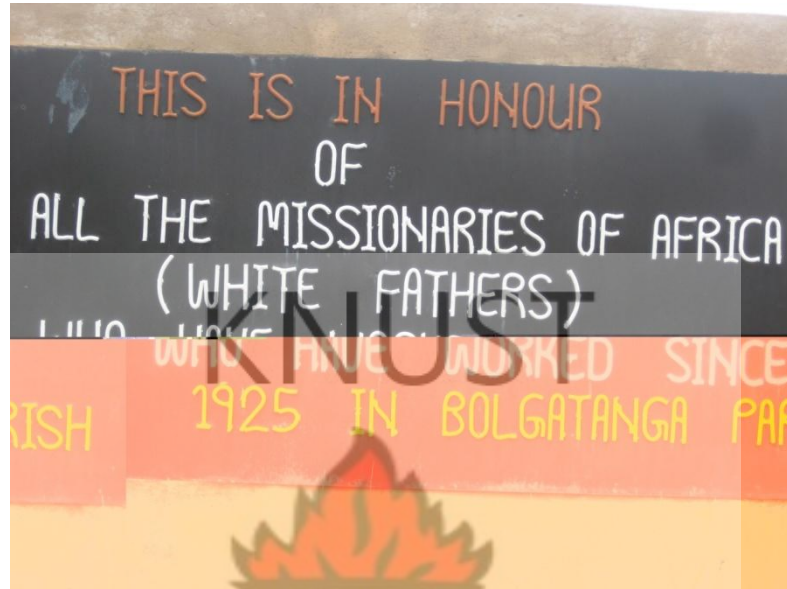
APPENDIX K

CHRISTIAN GRAVEYARD AT ZANLERIGU



APPENDIX L

MEMORIAL STONE OF THE WHITE FATHERS AT BOLGATANGA



APPENDIX M

RESEARCHER WITH SOME NOTABLE PERSONALITIES



NAAB BAYEL KAMBE (CHIEF OF DUUSI)



ANAMBANGE ASAMALOGO (BEKOT
TENDANA- ZUARUNGU