

## **DISSERTATION TOPIC**

*NYIJIMD* (GOD) IN GA TRADITION AND CHRISTIAN MISSION: AN  
EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE  
RELIGIOUS TRADITION OF THE GA OF SOUTH EASTERN GHANA  
AND BIBLE TRANSLATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GA  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

By

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Pietermaritzburg, South Africa in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the  
award of the Master of Theology Degree in African Christianity.

February 2006.

Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this Dissertation is entirely my own work and is no way a reproduction either in part or full. I wish to state also that this work has not been submitted to any university for the award of degree.



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February 2006.

As supervisor, I have agreed that this dissertation be submitted for examination.



Professor Kwame Bediako

(Supervisor)

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear wife, Naa Oyoe and our lovely daughter, Naa Dromo in gratitude for their sacrifice, steadfast love and support that enabled me complete this work.

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### **ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH**

In recent times, there are some indications which suggest an attempt to relegate the traditional or pre-Christian notion of *Nyorjmo* to the background in the face of recent Christian expansion within the Ga community. This may be observed basically in two forms. First is the attitude and thinking which attempt to separate *Nyorjmo*, who is considered a holy God, totally from the creation, considered unholy. This view suggests that *Nyorjmo* is holy and therefore his name cannot be attached to any aspect of the creation which is considered corrupted with sin and evil. In this regard, a distinction is thus made between *Nyorjmo*, the Supreme Being, and *nyorjmo*, rain. A new word *nugbo*,<sup>1</sup> literally 'water stranger' or 'foreign water' has therefore emerged and is now being used for rain by some Ga.

Secondly, there is the assumption, especially among some Ga Christians, that hitherto, the Ga did not know about God and that it was Christianity and the proclamation of the Christian message that introduced the knowledge of God into the Ga religious culture.

These views are, however, contrary to the thoughts of the traditional Ga. The pre-Christian notion of *Nyoymo* is that of a Supreme Being, who is not far removed from creation but deeply involved in its daily activities. Thus one finds the name of *Nyorjmo* attached to some elements within the creation, as the configurations of *Nyoymo*<sup>2</sup> indicate. Again, contrary to the views held by some Ga Christians, oral and early written sources indicate that the notion of *Nyorjmo* was well established within the Ga religious and social life before the coming of Christianity.

However, one realises that with the influence of Christianity and Bible translation, the concept *Nyorjmo* has expanded and assumed a new meaning to become the Christian God of the Bible, 'the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

<sup>1</sup> E. T. A. Abbey, *Kedzi Afo Yordan (Gbele Ke Yarafeemo)*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1968), p 37.

<sup>2</sup> Johanness Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra - or Ga -Language and some Specimen of it from the mouth of the Natives*, (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1858), pp 243-244. See also M. E. Kropp Dakubu, 'Linguistic Pre-History and Historical Reconstruction: the Ga-Adangme Migrations' in *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. XIII (i), (Legon, June 1972), p 119.

This research attempts to investigate the 'development' of *Nyorjmo* as a religious concept from its pre-Christian usage to the present. It looks at how *Nyorjmo* was recognised in the traditional religious life. This is done by analysing the general historical and religious backgrounds of the Ga people, focusing on key elements within the social, political, economic and religious settings.

The work further assesses the impact of Christian influence on Ga culture, especially in the area of Bible translation, and also observes how the concept has gained a new meaning as a result of this engagement.

The researcher concludes by exploring some of the implications raised in the work and attempts some suggestions on how Ga Christian theology may be developed to address these concerns.

## **ABSTRACT IN GA (MOTHER TONGUE)**

### **WOLO Lɛ MLI SANE KUKU**

*Ye bei nee amlɛ ni Kristojamo ebahe shi ni loolo le aabo moderj ni agbe Kristojamo ashwa ye Ga shikpoji ano le, tamo noni hie miɛhe akpa boni wonuo wiemo 'Nyonmo' le shishi wohaa ye wo blema shihile mli aloo dani Kristojamo le bashe bie. Enejeo kpofann ye gbei srotoi enyo ano. Klerjklen le, tamo noni ye wo nifeemoi ke wo susumoi amlɛ le wokaa ake woten Nyonmo he nfoniri ko. Noji ake wonaa ake eye Kronkron ni nohewo le esda ni ake egbei bataa adeboo noko he kwraa ejaake nofeeno ni yoo je le mli le kpa ye he ni ehe ewo muji ke esha. Enehewo le mei komei taoo ni amegbla Nyonmo ni ji Tse Ofe le ke nyonmo ni neo le ten. Arjoo nyonmo ni neo le ake nugbo.<sup>1</sup> Emli jalemo ji nu ni ebato gbo. Nugbo nee ji gbei ni nmenerjmele le Gamei komei ketseo nyonmo ni neo nee.*

*No ni ji enyo le, Ga Kristofoi komei susuo ake Gamei lee Nyonmo ye blema bei le amlɛ. Ene le eji sane ni naa wa ni yoo ahuntoo. Ye neke mei nee asusumo naa le, Kristojamo ke Nyonmo wiemo le gbee ke shwamo le ji noni ha Gamei na le ake Nyonmo ko ye, ye amejamo ke shihile mli.*

*Shi moy neke susumo nee, jee Ga shikweebii asusumo ni. Eke noni amele ye Nyonmo he kpda gbee kwraa. Anokwale le ji ake beni Kristojamo ba ko Ga shikpon le no beebe le, Gamei le Nyonmo ake Ofe ni eta adeboofee no, ni asan ejieo eheshi ye adeboo nibii komei ke Gamei anifeemo nii ke ame daa gbi shihile mli. Ene hewo je ni woyoseo ake Gamei ke Nyonmo gbei le ebata adeboo mli nibii komei ahe le.<sup>2</sup> Asan jwerjmo nee ni kristofoi komei yoo ye Nyonmo he le jee ja keke ni ejda, shi moy ye Gamei awiemo ke woji ni anmlafee amlɛ le, ejee kpo fanrj ake Gamei le Nyonmo ye ame jamo ke jen shihile fee mli dani Kristojamo ba.*

<sup>1</sup> E. T. A. Abbey, *Kedzi Afo Yordan (Gbele Ke Yarafeemo)*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1968), p 37.

<sup>2</sup> Johanness Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra - or Ga -Language and some Specimen of it from the mouth of the Natives*, (Stuttgert: J. F. Steinkopf, 1858), pp 243-244. See also M. E. Kropp Dakubu, 'Linguistic Pre-History and Historical Reconstruction: the Ga-Adangme Migrations' in *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. XIII (i), (Legon, June 1972), p 119.

*Shi ksle, woyoseo hu ake Kristojamo ke IJmals Kronkron shishitsoomo eye ebua ni else shishinumo ni Gamei yoo ye Nyonmo he le mli: agbene Gamsi naa Nyonmo ake Kristofoi aNyonmo, moni IJmale Kronkron yeo ehe odase ake eji wo Nuntso ke Yiwalaherelo Yesu Kristo Tse le.*

*Oti ni yoo mi ninmaa nss mli ji ake magbls shi ni matao boni Gamei naa Nyonmo ye ame jamo ke ams shihils mli amshaa, ksjs blema, dani Kristojamo ba ks agbene tsakemoi srotoi ni eba ksje nakai bei le amla aahuu kebashi nmsns. Boni afee ni mi nine ashe oti nss he Is, mitao Gamsi ayino saji ks ams blema shihils amla, ni titri Is mikws ame jen shihils, mankuramo, nitsumoi, jarayeli ke jamoi fee aks meni abaanye akaseys nibii nee amla.*

*Nokome hu ni miffee ye nikasemo nee mliji ake, mikws shishinumo hee ni Gamsi ena ye Nyonmo he, titri Is kstso IJmals Kronkron le shishitsoomo no, ks agbene boni Kristojamo hu etsake ams ashihils eha, ketso IJmale Kronkron Is kanemo no.*

*Mimu shibgbalsmo nee naa ke naawoo: gbe no ni abaatso ni Kristo he nilee baa shwere ye Gamsi aten. Eji mihemoksyeli aks nikasemo hee ni jso shigblsmo nee mli Is baa hsle Gamei ashi, titri le Kristofoi, koni ameyose ake nibii babao ye ame jen shihile ke blema saji amla ni baaye ebua ams bo ni afee ni ams nu Nyonmo shishi jogbann ni asan ams nys ameja le ye ame disrjtss ams shishinumo naa ksjetj shihils mli.*



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## **GLOSSARY OF GA WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS**

**ABESE FANTE** a section of the *Abese* quarter at La that migrated from Moure, a Fanti neighbouring town

**ABLEKUMA ABAKUMA WD** may good fortune reside among us

**ABOLA** a quarter in Ga-Mashie, which is of Fanti origin. They hold the office of the chief fisherman

**AKPADE** a type of red clay

**AKUTSEIATSCMCI** leaders of the various quarters of a town

**AKUTSO** (plural: *Akutsei*) a division or quarter of a town

**AKUTSOTSɛ** head of the quarter

**AMRALO** a Portuguese loan word used for government

**AMRALO BI AMRALO** a title for the *Nai* deity. It is used especially during traditional prayers when *Nai* is being invoked

**ANAANU** spider

**ASAFO** a military company, a group or a multitude

**ASAFOIATSCMCI** leaders of the military companies

**ATAA** a title for father or grandfather

**ATAA-NAA NYDTJMD** grandfather-grandmother God

**ATAA NYDQMD** grandfather God

**AKWASHOJTSe** head of the council of elders

**A WO** a title for mother or grandmother

**BONNY** a town believed to be in the present day Nigeria where the Ga claim to have migrated from

**BOSUM MPO MENSAH** a title given to the sea especially in traditional prayers

**DAIMONION** evil spirit

**DANTU** the god of time in Ga Mashie

**FAAFOO** a rite signifying the 'crossing a river' to the land of the dead

**GBALD** prophet

**GBATSU** (lit. house of prophecy) a shrine

**GBESHI** an immaterial element associated with the human personality

**GBDMD ADESA** (short form: *Gbomo*) human being

**GBDMDTSO** the physical body of the human being

**GBOHIAJEJJ** the world of the dead

**GONFI MAA** a religious rite performed to place a ban on fishing in lakes and lagoons

**HDMDWD** (lit. hooting of hunger) the major annual festival celebrated by the Ga people between August and September

**HIIAMLI** male compound

**HULU MAFj** (lit. sun's town or abode of the sun) the physical world

**JEMAWDF** (plural: *jemawoji*) a generic name for a certain category of Ga deities considered very powerful

**KING BI KING** a title for the *Nai* deity. It is used especially during traditional prayers when *Nai* is being invoked

**KLA** an immaterial element associated with the human personality

**KPAKPATSCWE** a quarter in Ga-Mashie

**KPELE** an ancient religious cult practiced by the Ga

**KPESHI** the aborigines who inhabited the coast and among whom the Ga settled

**KPOKPOI** a ceremonial food associated with the *Homowo* festival

**KRISTO ASAFO** Church

**KULO** a kind of pot used for rituals

**MAIJBII** (lit. children of the town) townsfolk, citizens

**MAIJTSC** (lit. father or owner of the town) king or a chief

**MVMD** spirit

**MUMD KRDQKRDr** Holy Spirit

**NAA** a title for grandmother

**NAA KDDLE** the deity of the *Koole* lagoon

**NAAMCI** female ancestors

**NAA NYDIJMD** grandmother God

**NAA YOO** a deity found in the Ga littoral

*NAI* the sea deity

*NAI WULJMD* the high priest of the Ga Mashie state

*Nil* a title conferred on kings, chiefs, traditional priests and old men

*NIIMÆI* male ancestors

*NUGBD* (lit. water guest or foreign water) used by some people in reference to rainfall

*NYANKONTON* a Fanti word for rainbow

*NYDIJ MD* a night being or person

*NYDIJMD* the Supreme Being

*NYDIJMD-BI* son or child of God

*NYDIJMDBIETC* carrion kite

*NYDIJMD BII* children or sons of god

*NYDIJMDBITCTE* (lit. God's firstborn) swallow

*NYDIJMD DEIJGBELE* (lit. death at God's hand) used in reference to a death considered as natural death

*NYDJJMDFAA* (lit. God's river) used in reference to child birth

*NYDIJMD Hie* (lit. God's face) heaven

*NYDQMDI* gods

*NYDIJMD KANE* moonlight

*NYDIJMD KPLCMD* lightening

*NYDIJMDIJKRAKO* imperial scorpion

*NYDIJMD LEMA* thunderbolt / stone axe

*NYDIJMD MAIJ* (lit. God's town or abode of *Nyotjmo*) heaven or realm of God

*NYDLJMDMLI* (lit. the inside of *Nyoymo*) heaven

*NYDIJMD IJA* mole, mother spot or freckle

*NYDIJMDIJTC* (lit. God's stone) hailstone

*NYDIJMD SATSO* (lit. God's bedstead) a tree of peculiar form

*NYDIJMD SHIMD* thunder

*NYDIJMD TSA* a deity found in the Ga littorals

*NYDIJMD TSANAA* a deity found in the Ga littorals

*NYDIJMD TSAWE* a deity found in the Ga littorals

*NYDIJMD TSINA* (lit. God's cow) a giant beetle

*NYDIJMD YOO* goddess, a deity found in the Ga littorals

**IJMAADUMD** (lit. planting of millet) a traditional rite signifying the beginning of the *Homowo* celebration in Ga Mashie

**TJWEI** sky or heavens

**OKDMFO** an Akan loan word which means prophet, a traditional priest.

**ONYANKOPON** an Akan name for the Supreme Being

**OTUBLOHUM** a quarter in Ga Mashie considered the remnants of the Akwamu

**SAKUMD** the war deity of Tema and Ga Mashie

**SHIA-ONUKPAI** elders of various households

**SHITSe** owner of the land

**SISA** ghost

**SUSUMA** soul

**TAYAA WDIJ** war deity

**TD** gourd

**TDJJ** rainwater collected directly from the sky, which is uncontaminated

**TSSIJ GBLAMD** pulling of the beard

**TSOFATSC** (plural: *tsfatsemei*) herbalist

**WE** household, lineage

**WEKU-NUKPAI** family heads

**WDIJ** cult object or idol

**WDIJTSC** (lit. father or owner of *woy*) male medium of a deity

**WJIJTSU** shrine

**WDIJYELI** (lit. fetish-eating) a treaty

**WDWDI** spirit beings synonymous to *jemawoji*

**WDYOO** (plural: *woyei*) traditional priestess, female medium of a deity

**WOLCIATSe** chief fisherman

**WULDMD** traditional priest

*YEIAML* female compound

*YOOFDYOO* a sympathetic and caring person, usually used in reference to good and caring woman

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH**

##### **Background**

The Ga occupy the South-eastern coast of Ghana. The Ga area is made up of six towns. These together form the city of Accra, which is the present capital of Ghana. Due to its location as a coastal town and a capital city, the Ga have over the years had a lot of contact and interactions with various groups of people. First, they had early contact with the European traders, colonial officials and with Christian missionaries. They also had contact with peoples from different parts of the country especially the neighbouring Akuapem and Fanti towns.

These contacts and interactions impacted the social, political and religious development of the Ga. Evidence of this is found in the development of chieftaincy, an institution that was borrowed from the neighbouring Akan communities. There are also traces of Akan words and concepts in most of the Ga traditional prayers and songs. But the lasting impression on Ga social and religious development comes from the missionaries. A major contributing factor has been Bible translation. The vernacular translation has contributed to the development of the Ga language and concepts. The case of the development of the concept of '*Nyoymo*' (God) will form the basis of this investigation.

##### **Motivation**

In recent times, there has been a resurgence of the concept of *Nyorjmo*, a 'new thinking' among the Ga about *Nyorjmo* by both traditionalists and Christians. The discussion is centred on what I refer to as the 'conflict of thought' between *Nyorjmo* as the Supreme Being and *Nyorjmo* as rain. In this discussion, there is the attempt to make a distinction between *Nyorjmo*, the Supreme Being, and *Nyorjmo*, rain. Evidence of this 'new thinking', which is rapidly gaining ground, first appeared in the 1960's, especially in the writings of E. T. A. Abbey in his book *Kedzi Afo*

*Yordan* and a publication of the Bureau of Ghana Languages with the title *Ga Wiemo Le IJmaa* (A Handbook on the writing of Ga). Abbey, however, did not offer any explanation for the use of *nugbo*. In an interview with Rev. I. A. Sowah, a Bible translator and a member of the orthography committee commissioned for the review of the Ga language and the revision of the 1907 edition of the Ga New Testament, he claimed that the original word for rain was *nugbo*, literally 'water stranger' but this was corrupted to *Nyonmo*. He further explained that since the Ga associate the heavens and all things coming from above with God, rain was conceived as depicting the blessing of God, hence the use of *Nyonmo* for rain. However, he was quick to add that the translators of the Ga Bible maintained *nyonmo* for rain because of its wide acceptance and usage over the years (See 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, Matthew 5:45 & James 5:17).

There are others also who see the separation as necessary. They come into the discussion with the view that *Nyonmo* (the Supreme Being) is Holy and Transcendent and therefore his holy name cannot be applied to any part of his creation, which is tainted with sin. This view finds support in the Ga myth of creation where *Nyonmo* was portrayed as a holy being, who withdrew from human beings into the heavens due to human sin.

There are still others who maintain that the original name for rain is *nyonmo* and point to the configurations of the divine name such as *nyonmoshimo* (thundering), and *nyonmokplemo* (lightning). Other configurations of God referred to below are also considered. For such people, *nyonmo* as the name for rain should be maintained.

The difficulty arises when we consider the belief of the Ga that *Nyonmo* is not only a Transcendent Being but also one who has radically broken into the universe, residing within creation and expressing himself daily through it. This thought finds

<sup>1</sup> E. T. A. Abbey, *Kedzi Afo Yordan (Gbele Ke Yarafeemo)*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1968), p 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ga Wiemo Le IJmaa: A Handbook on the writing of Ga*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1996), p 76.

expression in the various configurations of *Nyoymo*<sup>3</sup> in the life and thought of the Ga, as we shall observe later in the work.

A more serious issue that emerges is the assertion by some Ga Christians who randomly claim that the Ga had no knowledge of *Nyoymo* until the advent of Christianity. They often remark: *Tsuutsu le wo le Nyoymo, blofomei batsoo wo Nyoymo jamo* (in former times we did not know about God, it was the Whites who came and showed us how to worship God). The Whites referred here are the early European missionaries. Such people associate the knowledge and concept of *Nyoymo* with Christianity and for them it was Christianity that introduced *Nyoymo* into Ga religion and culture. They find it difficult to identify the *Nyoymo* within the Ga religious culture with the *Nyoymo* of the Bible who is the Christian God. They thus separate the traditional *Nyoymo*, whom they regard as a minor deity, from the Christian *Nyoymo*, whom they regard as holy. Such sentiments have often brought discontentment between a section of the Christian community and some traditional authorities, as the Christians look down upon traditionalists and their religion while traditionalists in turn want to assert and claim that they worship the one and the same true *Nyoymo*.

To resolve such confusion and misunderstanding and also to foster good a relationship between Ga Christians and Ga traditionalists, it is important to carry out an in-depth investigation of the whole concept of *Nyoymo*. This will help the Ga to appreciate the place and role of the concept of *Nyoymo* within Ga society. It will help us to understand better how *Nyoymo* as a religious concept evolved from the pre-Christian era to the present, as reflected in the various translations of the Ga Bible. Further, it will help Ga Christians to worship *Nyoymo* better as Ga and as Christians at the same time. This becomes the motivation for this dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> Johanness Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra (sic) or Ga-Language and some Specimen of it from the mouth of the Natives*, (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1858), pp 243-244. See also M. E. Kropp Dakubu, 'Linguistic Pre-History and Historical Reconstruction: the Ga-Adangme Migrations' in *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. XIII (i), (Legon, June 1972), p 119.

## **PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

Literature on the Ga available so far indicates that very little has been written on 'Nyonmo' as a religious concept. The basic literature is therefore the various translations of the Ga Bible<sup>4</sup> and the preliminary work done by Philip Laryea.<sup>5</sup> A critical analysis of the concept *Nyorjmo* and how it has been used in the various translations of the Ga Bible reveals that it has undergone a variety of developments. For example in the 1872 version of the Ga New Testament, Zimmermann translated the word *deoi'm* Acts 7: 40 and Acts 14: 11 as *Nyonmei*, (literally night people). *Nyorjmsi* may also refer to nocturnal beings. In his article, '*Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17:22-31 in Ga: A critical Examination of the Issues, Meanings and Interpretations Arising from Exegesis in the Mother Tongue*', Philip Laryea criticized this translation and suggested that the use of *Nyorjmei* was an attempt to avoid using the word '*Nyorjmo*' since Zimmermann was aware that *Nyorjmo* has no plural form.<sup>6</sup> Though this was revised in subsequent versions, the new rendering *Nyorjmoi* is equally not adequate. Laryea has pointed out 'as far as Ga religion is concerned there is only one Supreme Being who goes by the name *Nyorjmo* and therefore to refer to lesser deities as *nyorjmoi* is theologically incorrect, for that idea will sound strange in the ears of the Ga.'<sup>7</sup>

Generally, therefore, it can be observed from the above that there were real difficulties as the translators sought to find expressions and concepts in the receptor language that would adequately express the message in the source language.

Further, though the vernacular translation played an important role in the development of the concept, we need to recognise that this is not the full story. The people through their own religious experiences developed the actual concept. Both Margaret Field and Marion Kilson in their research indicated that *Nyorjmo* was initially not considered a Supreme Being, but was one of the gods associated with

<sup>4</sup> See the 1843, 1872, 1889, 1907 and 1977 editions of the Ga Bible.

<sup>5</sup> Philip T. Laryea 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17:22-31 in Ga: A critical Examination of the Issues, Meanings and Interpretations Arising from Exegesis in the Mother Tongue' in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 6 No 1, (June, 2003), pp 35 - 43. See also 'Letting the Gospel re-shape Culture: Theological Creativity in Mother Tongue' in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4 No1, (June, 2001), pp27-32.

<sup>6</sup> Laryea, 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17:22-31 in Ga, p 36.

<sup>7</sup> Laryea, 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17:22-31 in Ga, p 36.

rain and that 'the idea of a Supreme God in the Christian sense may well have come from Europeans, who after all have been on the coast some 500 years.'<sup>8</sup> *Nyorjmo* however evolved to occupy the supreme position among the other divine beings within the Ga cosmology.<sup>9</sup> This is an indication that the development of the Ga concept of *Nyorjmo* evolved within the social, cultural and religious development of the Ga people and this provides a framework for further research.

## **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The research would address itself to the following main question and other sub questions.

### **Research question**

- How has Bible translation contributed to the development of the concept of *Nyorjmo*?

### **Sub questions**

- What is the place of *Nyorjmo* in Ga cosmology?
- How was *Nyorjmo* conceived in Ga pre-Christian tradition?
- How has the concept of *Nyorjmo* influenced the development of Ga Christian theology?
- What social and religious factors influenced the translation of the various versions of the Ga Bible?
- Is the present concept of *Nyorjmo* adequate for the Ga to fully understand and appreciate the Christian faith?

## **Hypothesis**

As already indicated, there is no doubt that the vernacular translation of the Bible has contributed immensely to the development of Ga theology; for it enabled the Ga to preserve the name *Nyorjmo*. According to Lamin Sanneh, 'Scripture translation helped Africans [Ga] to preserve their name for God and the religious and social world that depended on that.'<sup>10</sup> But we also realise the difficulty in translation as the

Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, London: OUP, 1937, p 61.

<sup>9</sup> Marion Kilson, *Kpele Lala: Religious Songs and Symbols*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp 58-60.

<sup>10</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary impact on Culture*, (New York, Orbis Books, 1989), p181.

Ga language is 'forced' to adopt new meanings, vocabulary and concepts as *Nyorjmsi* and *Nyorjmoi* (gods), *daimonion* (evil spirit), *mumo krorkrorj* (Holy Spirit) and *Kristo Asafo* (church) indicate.

This dissertation assumes that as the Christian faith engaged the Ga culture, the pre-Christian religious vocabulary and concepts expanded and gained new meanings. Thus the concept of *Nyorjmo* was expanded to take on new meaning. *Nyorjmo* became the holy transcendent God, 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' as God is often described in the New Testament letters especially by Paul. In recent times, the attempt to separate the Transcendent *Nyorjmo* (God) from the Immanent *nyorjmo* (rain) could also be seen as a result of Christian influence and the result of Christian impact on Ga culture.

### **Objectives**

Accordingly, this dissertation will seek to:

- investigate the development of the *Nyorjmo* as a religious concept from its pre-Christian understanding to the present;
- identify the various stages of the development of the concept and examine the factors that influenced it;
- identify the various translations of Ga Christian Scriptures, their developments, and the factors that influenced the translations;
- critically analyse the impact of the vernacular translation on Ga religious and social ideas with particular reference to the concept of *Nyorjmo*;
- identify the continuities and discontinuities between the pre-Christian concept of *Nyonmo* and present Christian understanding;
- Examine the implications for Ga Christian Theology.

### **INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Bible translation is considered as 'probably the single most important element of the Western missionary legacy.'<sup>11</sup> This view held by Kwame Bediako emphasises the importance and contribution of Bible translation for the development of African

<sup>11</sup> Kwame Bediako, 'African Theology' in David Ford (ed), *The Modern Theologies* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn), (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), p 433.

theology. The vernacular Scriptures, according to him, provided the necessary environment for an authentic interface between the Christian faith and African cultures within the African cultural milieu.

Andrew Walls relates Bible translation to the Incarnation. Writing on the translation principle in Christian history, he observed that the notion of translatability is based on the Incarnation. The Incarnation is translation in the sense that God became human: 'the divine Word became flesh' (John 1: 14) and dwelt in a human culture. According to Walls, 'Christ was not a loanword adopted into a vocabulary of humanity, he was fully translated, taken into the functional system of human language, into the fullest reaches of personality, experience and a social relationship.' Thus, translatability as a process where God's word becomes incarnate in various cultures is an act initiated by God. It is because of this assumption that we have confidence in the translated text as essentially and substantially the Word of God. Walls maintains, 'Any confidence we have in the translatability of the Bible rests on the prior act of translation. There is a history of

the translation of the Bible because there was a translation of the Word into flesh.' Thus the divine act of translation of the word into flesh informs all other subsequent translations. From this standpoint, the Ga Bible is therefore not just a written document, 'copied' from the Hebrew and Greek texts, but the authentic Word of God through which God speaks to the Ga.

Lamin Sanneh also brings to this discussion another interesting dimension. For him, the significance of Scripture translation lay in its relation to African languages and cultures. According to Sanneh, the vernacular Scriptures 'imbued African cultures with eternal significance and endowed African languages with a transcendent range' for, 'God was not disdainful of Africans as to be incommunicable in their languages.'<sup>14</sup> With the mother tongue Scriptures in their hands, African people could read and talk about God as well as communicate with God on their own

Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, (Edinburgh: T& T Clark / New York: Orbis Books, 1996), p 28.

Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p 26.

<sup>14</sup> Sanneh, 'The horizontal and the vertical in mission: An African Perspective' in *International Bulletin for Missionary Research*, Vol. 7 No. 4, (1983), p 166.



terms. They could use their local concepts and idioms to express divine truth and also develop their own theologies.

Though Walls, Sanneh and Bediako have been insistent on the significance of Scripture translation, they are not unaware of the difficulty involved in translation. This difficulty has been noted by Walls. According to him,

Exact transmission of meaning from one linguistic medium to another is continually hampered not only by structural and cultural difference; the words of the receptor language are pre-loaded, and the old cargo drags the new into areas uncharted in the source language. In the end the translator has simply to do his best and take risks in a high risk business.<sup>15</sup>

One of the difficulties is the challenge that the mother tongue Scriptures pose to the receptor language and culture; translation may compel the receptor language to expand and adopt new meanings. Thus translation leads to the opening up of the world view of the receptor language. In other words, the 'original meaning' of the receptor language expands and even sometimes adopts new terminologies, concepts and idioms to express the divine truth which is being received. Such an expansion of the receptor language may bring new challenges, new questions and new changes. This view finds expression in Sanneh's assertion that 'translation would consequently help to bring us to new ways of viewing the world, commencing a process of revitalisation that reaches into both the person and the culture.'

As a result of the translation of the Ga Bible, the concept *oiNyorjmo* was compelled to take on new meanings; this did not exist in the pre-Christian past. The research adopted the perspectives on translatability ably enunciated by Walls, Sanneh and Bediako, and investigated the transaction that took place during the Ga translation of the Bible, which resulted in the development of the concept of *Nyorjmo*.

<sup>15</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p 26.

<sup>16</sup> Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p 53.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research was based on two main sources. My primary sources were the various translations of the Ga Bible. These were 1843, 1872, 1889, 1907 and 1977 editions of the Bible. Archival sources were also consulted. These include some of the earliest translations of Bible portions into the Ga language.

Grammatical works on the Ga language such as dictionaries and handbooks were consulted. One of such works was Johanness Zimmermann's *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra or Ga-Language and some Specimen of it from the mouth of the*

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*Natives*. In addition, other traditional sources both documented and oral sources were also explored. These include traditional prayers, songs, stories, customs and festivals.

Interviews were conducted among people with varied backgrounds. These include Ga traditional priests, Bible translators, traditionalist experts as well as 'trained' and 'ordinary' readers of the Bible.

The secondary sources were written sources, which were basically literary works in Ga. These include writings by European explorers and merchants, anthropologists, historians, missionaries and church workers. In this regard much attention was focused on the writings of Margaret Field and Marion Kilson, both anthropologists, who wrote extensively on Ga religious culture. Other literature with both Christian and traditional backgrounds also served as sources.

### **Use of terms and indigenous names**

Another approach adopted in this dissertation was to use the names of people, objects and places as traditionally referred to by the people involved. However, in cases where these names are used or spelt otherwise in other sources, they are thus maintained.

I have further used the term 'primal religion' in this work to describe the indigenous religion and world view of the Ga. Some critics who see the use of the term 'primal'

*Zimmermann, A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra or Ga-Language and some Specimen of it from the mouth of the Natives, (Stuttgert: J. F. Steinkopf, 1858).*

as an alternative to the classification 'primitive' have rejected the use of the term. James L. Cox, who submits to this argument, says the term has been used to describe 'the religions of people with relatively simple subsistence economies, basic technologies and localised political structures.'<sup>18</sup> Andrews F. Walls, one of the personalities who have contributed to the development and acceptance of the term however contends that 'it is used in the absence of any term which would be more widely acceptable' and that 'it is still the best available'. According to Walls, 'the word "primal" is not a euphemism for primitive, nor are any evolutionistic undertone intended.'<sup>19</sup> Gillian Mary Bediako who also supports this notion describes the term 'primal' as 'positive that denotes anteriority.'<sup>20</sup>

Primal religion is thus prior to all other religious traditions and underlies them all. As defined by Gillian Bediako, it denotes the 'basal or elemental, the fundamental substratum to all subsequent religious experience, continuing to varying degrees in all religious traditions.' It means, therefore, the 'universal basic element of human understanding of the Transcendent and the world, essential and valid religious insight that may be built upon or suppressed but not superseded.' It is with this understanding that I use the term 'primal religion'.

### **DELIMITATION**

Archival materials that I was able to gain access to were very limited. Original manuscripts, notes and reports of translators could not be traced in the archives of the Bible Society of Ghana. I was also informed that most of the local translators kept their manuscripts and diaries. The diaries of the Basel and Scottish missionaries could also not be traced and thus I could not gain access to them.

Further, most of the people that granted me interviews had had contact with a Christian church in one way or another, thus their stories were full of Christian embellishment. Others too had rather faint ideas of the 'past' and could only

Cox J. L. 'The classification "Primal Religion" as a non-empirical theological construct' in *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 2, pt. 1, 1996, p 55.

Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, pp 120 - 121.

<sup>20</sup> Bediako G. M. 'Primal Religion and Christian Faith: Antagonist or Soul-Mates' in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 3 No 1, 2000, p 12.

<sup>21</sup> Bediako G. M. 'Primal Religion and Christian Faith', p 12.

recollect fragments of past events. In such a situation it becomes quite difficult to identify the traditional view.

Despite these limitations, materials that were made available to me were enough to compensate for what was lacking, and these contributed to the completion of this work.

### **RESEARCH ETHICS**

This research was conducted with all honesty and integrity, as I applied myself to the moral conduct that it deserves. All works consulted have been acknowledged and the rights of all persons with whom I came into contact in the course of this project were respected. The people who helped me in the research were not used as 'objects of study' but were made part of the process. Persons were cited in the work only with their full consent and approval. The right to anonymity and confidentiality of persons was respected. I also understood that the final work would be made available to the community, the church and the academic world that were part of this research.

### **STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION**

The study comprises six chapters. Chapter One generally introduces the work while spelling out the general background and approach to the thesis.

Chapter Two deals with the historical overview of the area of study.

Chapter Three looks at the primal religion and focuses on the main elements within Ga cosmology.

Chapters Four and Five are the main thrust of the dissertation. While Chapter Four investigates the development of *Nyorjmo* as a religious concept, Chapter Five examines the impact of Bible translation on the Ga religious culture.

Chapter Six which concludes this study addresses some of the issues raised in the previous chapters and explores some implications that relate to how Ga Christian theology may be developed.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE GA**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

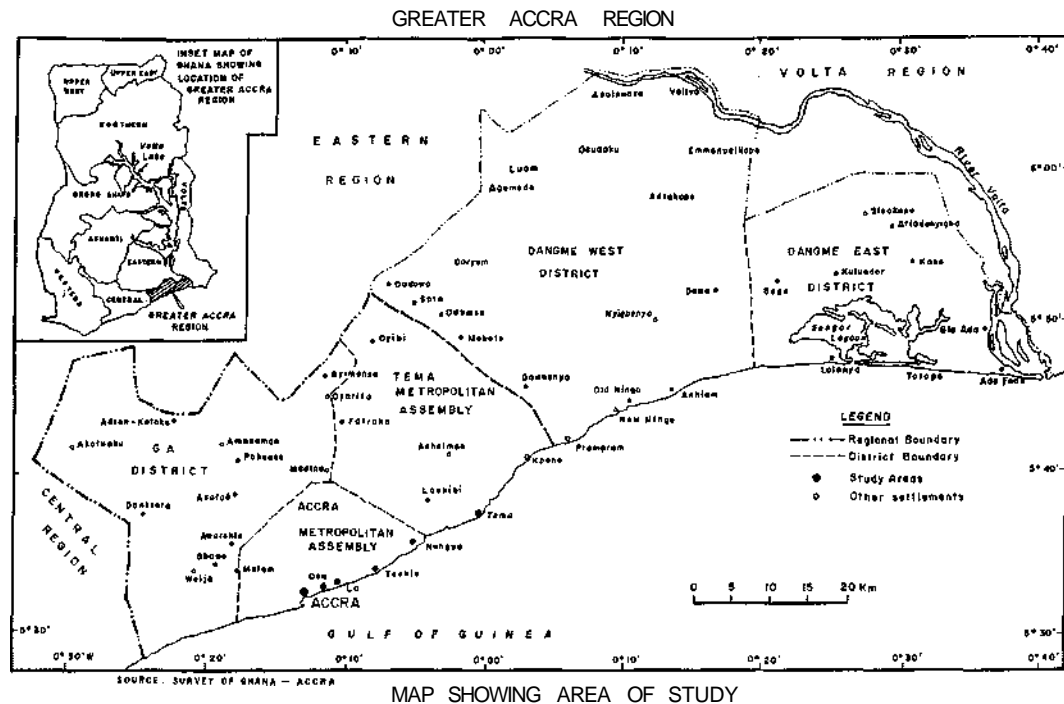
It is evident that the development of *Nyorjmo* by the Ga as a religious concept has taken place within the context of their environment and interactions with various groups of other peoples. This chapter will attempt to explore the historical background within which the development of the concept of *Nyorjmo* took place. This will give some indication of how the social, political, economic and religious environment has exerted its impact upon the emergence of the Ga understanding of *Nyorjmo*.

#### **LOCATION AND LAND AREA**

The Ga people occupy the Southeastern coast of Ghana. The present location stretches from the Atlantic coast in the south and to the foot of the Akuapem-Togoland hills in the north, and from *Larjma*<sup>1</sup> in the west to Tema in the east. They are bordered on the east by the Dangme, a group that has close association with respect to language and historical evolution to the Ga, and on the west by the Fanti, who have also influenced the Ga in a number of ways. The Ga State is made up of six communities namely Ga Mashie (Accra central), Osu (Christianborg), La (Labadi), Teshie, Nungua and Tema. (See map 1).

Due to their strategic location the Ga have, over the years, attracted various groups of people. These include people from other parts of the country as well as European explorers, merchants and missionaries. The interactions with all these groups of people and the environment within which they have lived have had an impact on their socio-economic, political and religious development.

<sup>1</sup> *Larjma* is a suburb bordering the west side of Ga Mashie.



Map 1.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE GA PEOPLE

Oral tradition on the origins of the Ga antedates any historical records. The few historical documents, which could be considered recent, are drawn from early European sources. Other materials available that also give hints are from archaeological and ethno-historical sources. Some people also consider the traditional *kpele* songs, some of which have been documented, as authentic sources of the history of the Ga.

While the Ga claim to have come from Bonny,<sup>2</sup> in present day Nigeria, the general belief seems to be that they are descendants of the Jews.<sup>3</sup> They claimed to have

<sup>2</sup> Carl Christian Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, (2nd edn. 1966), p 41.

<sup>3</sup> Both Ga and early Europeans who explored the Guinea coast in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries hold this view. E. A. Ammah, who was looking at it from the traditional perspective, presents a tabulated list showing similarities between the Jewish Passover and Ga *Homowo* festival to demonstrate that the Ga are descendants of the Jews. See E. A. Ammah 'Annual festival of the Ga People', *The Ghanaian*, Vol. 4, No. 38 (Aug 1961), pp 9 and 11; E. A. Ammah 'Ga *Homowo*', *The Ghanaian*, Vol. 4, No. 39 (Sept, 1961), pp 25-26; E. T. A. Abbey, *Kedzi Afo Yordan (Gbele Ke Yarafeemo)*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1968), pp 33-34; Römer also comments on this issue, linking circumcision of the Ga people to Judaism: See Ludewig F. Römer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea (1760)*, Selena Axelrod Winsnes, (Trans and ed) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p 100.

migrated from Israel through to the east of the Volta River and stayed at various places and times before finally settling at their present location. Such strong belief is attributed to the similarities they claim exist between some traditional rites of the Ga (the naming system, the *Akpade* rite<sup>4</sup> and the preparation of the traditional food *kpokpoi* during the annual *Homowo*<sup>5</sup> festival) and some Jewish customs and festivals. One of the strong proponents of this view is Carl Christian Riendorf, who tries to demonstrate it by drawing comparisons between some Ga festivals and rites and those of the Jews. His view is quite interesting, hence I quote him at length. According to him:

From the beginning, when not corrupted by the Tshi (sic) [Twi] people, they [the Ga] were strict observers of their religious rites, which appear to resemble to Jewish (sic). But are now corrupted by fetishism; and, in addition, they were also forbidden to have anything to do with human blood. We said Jewish form of religion, and try to prove it by citing a few facts. A week after the birth of a child, a kind of baptism is celebrated, when the father chooses the man of best character among his friends to bring the child from the room to the yard, when he throws a few drops of water on the roof of the principal room in the family compound, which returns to him in small drops, and these he throws thrice on the child and names it. Children are named after their grandfathers, grandmothers, or fathers. The circumcision which all boys of (sic) from 6 to 10 years of age are to undergo, admits them to the Courts of the principal fetishes; an uncircumcised person, even if a king, is never allowed to step in the yard of the fetish, but remain outside when performing any ceremony. Neither are any persons having superfluity of members or monstrous women admitted within. At the yearly harvest, called *Homowo*, the doorposts or walls are painted with red clay, as was done by the Israelites at their Passover; and at this time all family differences must be peacefully settled. The government of the Akras (sic) is patriarchal, and the ruler is styled *homo* or priest. *Lomo* is now slightly corrupted for *lumo* i.e. a king or governor. When it shall please the Divine Protector, who has placed such a small tribe amidst the

<sup>4</sup> The *Akpade* rite forms part of the *Homowo* festival. On the Friday afternoon preceding the celebration of *Homowo*, which falls on a Saturday, each household or family slaughters a sheep and the blood is sprinkled at the doorpost of the house. In the evening muskets are fired to drive away the *sisai* (ghosts), which are believed to have accompanied the villagers who have come to the celebration. See M.A. Barnor, *A Brief Description of Ga Homowo* (Accra: Unpublished article, 1923), p 6. In recent times, red clay is used instead of the blood of sheep.

<sup>5</sup> See E. A., Ammah 'Ga Homowo', *The Ghanaian*, pp 25-26. *Homowo*, which means 'hooting at hunger' is an annual festival celebrated in all Ga communities. It is a thanksgiving festival, an occasion during which the Ga give thanks to their gods for providing food through abundant harvest after a prolonged drought which resulted in the loss of lives.



numerous populations of the Gold Coast, to remove the superstitious blindness from their minds, and bring them to Christianity in masses, they will be recognised among the tribes as truly a favoured people.<sup>6</sup>

Wulff also corroborates the Ga-Jewish linkage but from a linguistic view point as he observes them work at sea:

The songs they sing while paddling are a mixture of the Negro language, English, Portuguese, as well as Hebrew. There are, in fact, Jews here among the Negroes, but the truth is that they are just as ignorant heathens as the others and do not know where they originated.<sup>7</sup>

It is again interesting how Erik Tilleman also links the Ga to the Jews through the rite of circumcision. According to Tilleman: 'All the inhabitants in the kingdom of Acara (sic)(apart from the Qvamboes [Akwamu]) have their children circumcised when they are more than seven years old like the Jews, which however is not done anywhere else on the entire coast.'<sup>8</sup> Paul Isert, a Danish trader who in fact settled in West Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, on the other hand, connects the Ga to the Egyptians through trade and communication as he observed how they adorned themselves with rich ornaments. He wrote:

It is possible that in the Golden Age of the Egyptians some communication existed between them and the Blacks of the Gold Coast. Indeed it may be presumed, and probably not without some grounds that the Gold Coast is the Ophir mentioned in the Bible, the place from which King Solomon acquired his gold, ivory and monkeys.<sup>9</sup>

However, there is no concrete historical evidence to support these claims. It is remarkable to observe, though, how these convictions have persisted into an

Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 35.

<sup>7</sup> Selena A. Winsnes (trans and ed), *A Danish Jew in West Africa: Wulff Joseph Wulff: Biography and Letters 1836-1842* (Trondheim: Faculty of Arts, Norwegian University of Science and Technology - NTNU, 2004) p 73.

Erik Tilleman, *A Short and Simple Account of the Country of Guinea and its Natives* (1697), Selena. A. Winsnes (trans and ed), (Madison, 1994), p 37.

Selena A. Winsnes (trans and ed), *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade: Paul Isert's Journey to Guinea and the Caribbean Islands in Columbia*, London: OUP, 1992, p 114.

ideology that cannot easily be discounted. There may be a need to study this ideology, which is beyond the scope of this work.

It must also be pointed out that, generally, these are not mutually exclusive claims as some of the communities in West Africa also express similar sentiments of affinity through their traditions and customs.<sup>10</sup> Again, communities do not need to have 'blood' relationship in other communities in order to have similar customs and traditions. The strong belief of the Ga to have come from ancient Israel for now could be seen as an 'ideology' rather than a historical fact. Further, archaeological and ethno-historical evidence for now suggests that the Ga might have lived in the Accra plains longer than what was initially conceived.

The Ga state can be described as a heterogeneous community. The people who have now come to be known as the Ga-speaking people do not comprise a single group with the same traditions and origins. While some communities in Osu, La, Teshie and a section of Ga Mashie claim their origin from the modern-day Nigeria, others within the same communities claim to have come from Osudoku and Ladoku,<sup>11</sup> both on the east of the Accra plains. Again some groups of people are the descendants of the Akwamu who ruled the Ga, and the Fanti and Akuapem who shared a common border with the Ga. There are still others who trace their background from Brazil in South America.<sup>12</sup> However they have all integrated to the extent that, as Irene Odotei, a researcher at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, suggests, one will have to investigate the cognate kin groups (*We*) within the various towns to know the traditional origin of a group of people.

Though it is difficult to state a definite date for the various migrations and settlements, it is however acknowledged that by the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Ga State was

<sup>10</sup> See K. A. Dickson, 'Hebrewism in West Africa: The Old Testament and African Life and Thought' in *Legon Journal for Humanities*, (1974), pp 23-34. Here Dickson discusses similar claims made about the Akan.

" Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 33.

<sup>12</sup> John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000, pp 163-164.

<sup>13</sup> Irene Odotei, 'External Influences on Ga Society and Culture' in *Research Review NS*, Vol. 7 Nos. 1&2, (1991), pp 61-71. See also Irene Odotei 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga' in *Research Review (NS)*, Vol. II, Nos. 1&2, (1995), pp 60-74.

already established. Before migrating to the coast, the various communities settled at different places on the Accra plains where they lived among the Kpeshi and Guan people who had already inhabited the plains. Oral history suggests that these people were either subdued or absorbed by the Ga-speaking people.<sup>14</sup> The people of Ga Mashie, for instance lived at Ayawaso<sup>15</sup> also called Great Accra, which was the initial capital of the Ga Mashie state, while the people of La settled around *Ajayote* and those of present day Nungua inhabited *Wodoku*<sup>x<sub>b</sub></sup> near the present day Kotoka International Airport of Accra.

The development of the present Ga state depended on a number of factors. First is its location and engagement in commercial activities with the European traders. This strategic location made them the middlemen and brokers<sup>17</sup> between the European traders and people of the inland communities. The Ga took advantage of their position and exploited the inland Akan states, as Brun vividly describes:

They (the Akan) know no other language than Akan and so they use an Accra as interpreter who may thus cleverly deceive the visitor... When they come on board ship they generally become sick for they are not strong by nature and are not used to the sea storms. For this reason they have to go back to dry land quickly and the Accras (sic) are entrusted with the transactions which they carry out as required from them. When they bring the trade goods to land, the Akan are not so content with them, so they go back to the ship and fetch a little spirit, which is gratefully and copiously drunk, so that they fall silent and rest content.<sup>18</sup>

The control the Ga had over the coastal trade as well as that of the trade route, from the hinterland to the coast made them rich and powerful. They were however vulnerable to attacks as other powerful hinterland states who also wanted control

<sup>14</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and As ante*, p 24. See also Irene Odotei, 'External Influences on Ga Society and Culture' in *Research Review NS*, Vol. 7 Nos. 1&2, (1991), p 61.

<sup>15</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and As ante*, p 25.

<sup>16</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 43.

<sup>17</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 62.

<sup>18</sup> Shiffarten Brun, (1624) cited in Irene Odotei 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga' in *Research Review (NS)*, Vol. II, Nos. 1&2, (1995), p 67.

over the trade on the coast frequently attacked them thus resulting in political upheavals within the Ga state.<sup>19</sup>

The Akwamu were the first to defeat the Ga in 1677; they established suzerainty over them till 1730 when they were defeated by a combined force of Ga, Dangme and the Akuapem with the help of the Akyem. The Akyem also took advantage of the prevailing situation and established control over the Ga state until they too were defeated in 1742 by the Asante who ruled until 1826 when they, in turn, were defeated by a coalition of coastal states and British forces. The British from this time onward made attempts and succeeded in the colonisation of the Ga state and finally the entire Gold Coast. In some of these instances it was the forts and castles that provided security for the Ga. According to Reindorf, the fort of the Dutch, English and Danes at Akra (sic) during the days of dissension between the Akwamus (sic) and Akras (sic), invited the latter to flee to the coast for protection from the oppression of the Akwamus. Reindorf describing one such incident wrote:

Akonno marched towards Akra with an army. He was met by a quite inadequate force, which was forced to retreat to the town and besieged. The Akras (sic) were soon compelled to seek shelter in Fort Crevecoeur. The king, Nii Ayi, with his party and nearly all the warriors entered in time, whilst Ama, with only a small body-guard, was shut out. He escaped in a canoe to sea, but the man at the helm was shot. He was fleeing with two men to James Fort...Emboldened by success, Akonno soon after declared war against Osu, Labade (sic), and Teshi, who, having failed to assist Akra, had now to face the powerful enemy. Labade (sic), being without cannon, was one night stormed, and a great many of the people were slain or captured and sold to the slave dealers. King Okpoti alone lost 1,000 of his people and soon compelled, with a few of his retainers, to flee for shelter to Christiansborg.<sup>21</sup>

All these events - the migrations, conquest and the colonisation in no small way exerted their impact on the political, social and religious development of the Ga.

<sup>19</sup> Ferdinand L. Romer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea (1760)*, Selena Axelrod Winsnes, (Trans and Ed) (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp xvi-xvii.

<sup>20</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 38.

<sup>21</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, pp 68-69.

Evidence of these influences are found in all sectors of the life of the people. As noted earlier, there are traces of European and Akan expressions and concepts in most Ga traditional prayers, songs, and regalia. Some of these would be examined in detail in the subsequent chapters.

Interestingly, the lasting impression on Ga social and religious development comes from the Christian missionaries. This is particularly so in the area of Bible translation. The vernacular translation has contributed in no small way to the development of the Ga language and ideas, with the concept of *Nyorjmo* being probably the most significant. It is the development of the concept of *Nyorjmo* (God) that will form the basis of this investigation.

### **SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF THE GA**

As already indicated, the Ga speaking people are not one people either in origin or in organisation. Each section arrived and lived independently of the other. Their coming together was a later development so they could develop a security strategy during the wars with other states as described above.<sup>22</sup> Yet, though of mixed origin, they have a common identity in the Ga language, and the practice of common social institutions such as the rites and system of naming of children, and the celebration of the annual *Homowo* festival.

#### **Social Organisation**

The Ga are patrilineal in their social organisation. Jean Barbot, an early European traveller to West Africa, comparing the Akan and the Ga, wrote:

The right of inheritance all over the Gold Coast, except Accra is very strangely settled for the children born legitimate never inherit their parents effect. Accra is the only place where the children are sole lawful heirs to the father's or mother's effects.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Margaret Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1940), p 72.

<sup>23</sup> J. Barbot, 'A description of the Coast of North and South Africa', in *Churchill Collections of Voyages and Travels V.* (London), p 2348, cited in Irene Odotei, 'External Influences on Ga Society and Culture' in *Research Review NS*, Vol. 7 Nos. 1&2, (1991), p 63.

Each Ga belongs to a patrimonial household called 'We\ Irene Odotei describing the significance of the *we* in the Ga social system writes:

It was in the *we* that a child was welcomed into the world through the custom of *kpojiemo* (outdooring); marriage transactions are made in the *we* and it was in the *we* that a member was laid in state and the last rites performed for him when he dies. Every office among the Ga was, and still is, vested in the *we*, and it is members of the *we* who decided who should hold office, subject to the approval of the elders of the town.<sup>24</sup>

A group of 'We' form a clan or *akutso* with the *akutsotse* (father of *Akutso*) as the head. A woman who marries into a family does not become part of that family; rather, she remains a member of her own household while her children belong to the man's family. Traditionally, among the Ga, men and women do not live together in the same household. The men live in their own section called '*hiiamli*' (male compound). The men of the same patrihneage occupy the *hiiamli*, while the women also stay in their own section called *yeiamli* (female compound). This is further demonstrated in public sitting, where the men and women sit at different places especially during traditional ceremonies. This is also reflected in the sitting arrangements in most Christian churches.

The naming system also plays a significant role in the social structure of the Ga. Ga families normally have two sets of names which are alternated between succeeding generations. The name does not only identify the individual but also shows the particular *akutso* and household from which he or she comes. Each *akutso* and household has a set of names that are peculiar to it. Thus, once a person's name is mentioned, it is possible to determine names of other siblings and the family from which the person comes.

The Ga are noted for the practice of male circumcision. While in some other ethnic groups the royal family is strictly prohibited from circumcision, the opposite is the

<sup>24</sup> Irene Odotei 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga' in *Research Review (NS)*, Vol. II, Nos. 1&2, (1995), p 63.

<sup>25</sup> Irene Odotei, 'What is in a Name? The Social and Historical Significance of Ga Names' in *Research Review NS*, Vol. 5 No. 2, (1989), pp 34-51.

case for the Ga. Among the Ga, circumcision is very essential for the recognition of manhood. According to Ludewig Ferdinand Romer, 'no one is considered a man unless he has been circumcised.'<sup>26</sup> The Ga take circumcision so seriously that they assume it should be a requirement for every society, hence they circumcise every male within their community irrespective of the person's background. Romer describes an incident where the Akwamu did not accept a successor to the stool because he had been circumcised during the time of his nurturing in the royal palace of the Ga. According to Romer,

The Accras (sic) instructed the young king in the fetish (sic) worship, or religion and in order for him to be worthy of being accepted in it, they had him circumcised. (All the other nations did not have this custom then; and they do not have it now.)... The Aqvamboe (sic) king could not assume power over his nation because he has lost his fore skin and was called *Akotja* (amputated) by his subjects.<sup>27</sup>

It is an abomination for a Ga male not to be circumcised. Such persons may not declare it publicly, as people will treat them with contempt and they may not even have women to marry. They may also not be eligible for any traditional office. According to Reindorf, uncircumcised people were strictly forbidden by the great fetish (sic) and to attend the king's court within the Ga state.

### **Social Philosophy**

The social philosophy of the Ga accommodates foreigners and the customs and traditions they bring, for as they say '*Ablekuma abakuma wo*' meaning 'may people come and join us.'<sup>29</sup> The Ga believe that it is through the accommodation of other people that one can develop a healthy community. It is within the context of this philosophy of hospitality and the 'polytheistic nature of Ga religion together with the habit of toleration and consideration for other people's gods'<sup>30</sup> that the Ga

<sup>26</sup> Romer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, p 100.

<sup>27</sup> Romer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, pp 116-117.

<sup>28</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 32.

<sup>29</sup> M. E. Kropp Dakubu, (ed), *Ga-English Dictionary with English-Ga Index* Accra: Black Mask Ltd, 1999, p 12.

<sup>30</sup> Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, London: OUP, 1937, P 3.

established good rapport and relationship with their neighbours. The same gesture was also extended to the Europeans, as Peter Schweizer observes:

One can easily observe that African cultures are quite open to outside influences. Whiles it is true that the leaders of communities generally liked to retain control over the process of contacts with outsiders and the assimilation of their influences, they nevertheless expected that foreigners would bring with them valuable experiences, noteworthy beliefs and abilities from which some gain for the indigenous societies could be derived. The Ghanaian attitude to outsiders of any creed or colour has always been exploratory."<sup>31</sup>

This statement, though generally true of modern Ghanaian society, applies particularly to the Ga community. It expresses the notion and the transactions that took place between the Ga and the people they came into contact with, resulting in the Ga communities becoming heterogeneous societies. It is from this same social philosophy that the Ga allowed immigrants to bring and worship their own gods and also adopted the customs, traditions and religions of their neighbours and all those they came into contact with, including the Europeans (See fig. 1).



Fig. 1: The Coat of Arms of the Ga Mashie State.

Note: The handshake, an indication of the social philosophy of the Ga people, which allows them to accommodate other groups of people.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast: the Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Accra: Smartline, 2001), p 45.

<sup>32</sup> Odotei, 'External Influences', p 67.



The chieftaincy institution adopted from the Akan is a case in point. Other significant examples are the expressions '*King bi King*' and '*Amralo bi Amralo*'<sup>33</sup> which have found their way into the libation prayers of *Nai Wuhmo*, the high priest of the Ga Mashie state.

<i>Agoo, Agoo, Agool</i>	<i>Ameel</i>
<i>IJmene ashi me?</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>IJmene ashi Jufo</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Niimeï ke Naamei a-Jufo</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Tsemei ke Nyemei a-Jufo</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Nai oool Nai</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Nai oool Nai</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Ogbedadao, Shitse, Meiwura, Odooma</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<b><i>King bi king, amralo bi amralo</i></b>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Hei Sakumo Khte</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Abo Tete ake abo Tse le</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Ofiteosaa</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Akrama Opobi, Akoto, Akoto</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Naayo-Komenye, Ashaman-Kaale</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Okropon-Wunba</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Naa Moomo, Naal</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Hei Naa Koole Aboyoo,</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Samfee kponkpo</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Bo ojoo nii ahe</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Ataa, naa, miitse nye</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Mi tse nye ke penya</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Mi tse ke kwaatseli</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Mi tse nye ni shi ajo ni mele akwe</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Ni Bleku eka he ni eshwie shi</i>	<i>Hiaol</i>
<i>Ni ngblu agbu ni atsake</i>	<i>Hiaol</i> <sup>3*</sup>

<sup>33</sup> These expressions attribute lordship and kingship to the *Nai* deity. The titles 'king' and 'Amralo' are titles given to the European governors.

<sup>34</sup> Simeon Yartey, *Mojawe* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1978), p 25. This prayer basically ascribes praise and honour to the *Nai* deity whom the Ga deem as the one who defends and protects them from their enemies, and also provides food for their sustenance. This is expressed through the use of various titles and appellations some of which are borrowed from different cultures. They are mostly Guan, Obutu and English expressions. Since most of these expressions are only found in the cultic language and used by the traditional priests, it is very difficult to find English equivalents, to adequately express or translate them.

In this prayer text, *Nai*, the sea god is addressed among other titles as King<sup>35</sup> and *Amralo*.<sup>3</sup> Margaret Field gives insight into how this might have happened. She remarked:

Among the great invisible gods who hold Ga prosperity in their hands has come a new, great, invisible god of less calculable and less tolerant quality namely 'Gov'ment'. From his fabulously wealthy, heavenly home across the waters he sends his gifts and his emissaries. If *La-kpa* were to send a famine, the *Gov'ment* could send, say, road-making work for which it would pay money. Money will purchase tinned sardines and Chinese rice. These are not fruit of the earth as normal food is, but arrive mysteriously, from nowhere. If *La-kpa* withholds rain, *Gov'ment* sends water in pipes.<sup>37</sup>

Wulff Joseph Wulff, a Danish Jew who lived among the Ga, also commenting on the religious life of the Ga wrote:

We cannot convince a Negro to believe in anything other than the fetish, (sic) and for them God is a White man who lives in Denmark as God.<sup>38</sup>

Philip Laryea,<sup>3</sup> focusing on '*amralo*', explains how the term came to be associated with *Nai*, one of the *jemawoji* (spirit beings) of the Ga. According to him:

The word 'gov'ment' translates *Amralo*, a Portuguese loan word. A study of Ga religion shows why and how this word came to be applied to *Nai*. Ga has many *jemawoji*, each with his/her function. It is possible to borrow the functions and name of a *jemawon* and give it to another, especially if the *jemaworj* dies or becomes ineffective and is no longer worshipped. The Ga may have found *Amralo* so powerful, that they may have decided to borrow his name and possibly his

<sup>35</sup> The title 'King' initially referred to monarchs in Europe who ruled the people of Gold Coast through their governors. The European king in Europe was perceived by the Ga as a powerful god who sends his emissaries to assist them. Due to this perception, the title was applied to *Nai*, who was regarded as the most powerful god of the Ga State. Later the Ga *Marjtsemei* (singular: *Marjtse*), which translates father of the town, also took on the title and they came to be known as kings. An example is King Taki Tawiah.

<sup>36</sup> *Amralo* is a Portuguese loan word which translates 'government' or 'gov'ment'.  
Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, p 131.

<sup>38</sup> Selena A. Winsnes (trans and ed), *A Danish Jew in West Africa*, p 90.

<sup>39</sup> Philip T. Laryea is an ordained reverend minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and Research Fellow at Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem in the Eastern Region of Ghana. He is recognised as a Ga Christian theologian of high repute.

functions for *Nai*. It is interesting to note that the Ga reckoned the governor and his emissaries as agents of the real God whose abode was beyond the seas.<sup>40</sup>

The adoption of the name *amralo* was not restricted to the *jemawoji* alone. People who admired the colonial masters adopted the name or gave it to their children. A family that has *Amralo*, as the family name, explained that the birth of their great grandfather coincided with the visit of the then European governor to Ada. They also claimed that at birth their great grandfather looked fair like a European and thus he was named *Amralo* after the governor. They have since used that name as the family name.<sup>41</sup>

### **Leadership among the Ga**

Like any social institution, leadership is very crucial to the social organisation of the Ga. According to oral tradition, the Ga originally had no chiefs and were ruled by the *Wuhmei* (traditional priests), who also doubled as the political head of the community. The *Wuhmo* thus performed both religious and political functions. He was supported in the administration of the town by *asafoiatsemsi* (leaders of the military companies), *akutseiatssmsi* (leaders of the various quarters) and *wekunukpai* (family heads) as well as *Shia-onukpai* (elders of the various households). The various families most often appointed these officers. The introduction of chieftaincy as an institution was a later development that emerged within the prevailing circumstances. First it was adopted as a matter of political expediency from the Akwamu and Akuapem, especially during the slave raiding expeditions and when wars were rampant. Field, giving a narration of this development wrote:

The Ga (or strictly, the Ga-speaking people) are not one people either in origin or organization. Each of the six coastal towns is an independent republic with its own territory and its own unique set of customs. There has never been any political association between the towns and they have never had a paramount chief - nor indeed any chiefs at all in the sense that the word usually conveys.<sup>42</sup>

Philip T. Laryea, 'Letting the Gospel re-shape Culture: Theological Creativity in Mother Tongue', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4, No 1, (2001), p 28.

<sup>41</sup> Titus *Amralo* who comes from this family related this information to me. The family is found in Ada, a town in the south eastern part of Ghana.

Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People*, p 72.

She further explains: 'when slave raiding became rife, the farming settlements were threatened with extermination... they therefore gathered themselves together into "towns" for mutual protection and set up military organizations.'<sup>43</sup>

The *marjtse* initially had no political powers or functions, but served as a lesser priest and a military leader. This information was corroborated by Tema *marjtse* who in an answer to a question about his status in society, claimed he is a priest as well as a chief. Carl Reindorf describing a similar situation among the Krobo, a group, which shares common social and political ties with the Ga due to their common historical evolution, wrote 'Lanimo, the father of Late Odoi, who was the first king of Krobo, was both priest and king.' In Ga tradition, the *marjtse* stool is not a monarch's throne or part of the political organisation. In fact, the stool from which he derives authority is a war deity. Thus the position and function of the *marjtse* becomes prominent only during times of war, and is insignificant in times of peace. Field, describing a typical instance, remarked:

The government of every town is a democratic gerontocracy. The *marjtse*, unless he be also a priest, has no integral part in it. He has no means of support: he lives on either the fitful charity of his relatives or, if made a *marjtse* late in life, on his own savings. He is a vestigial survival without function, like the vermiform appendix in the human body, and is of embarrassment rather than use to the organism.<sup>45</sup>

Second, the transition from traditional priest to chieftaincy was as a result of the encounter with the Europeans. In Ga traditional and religious life, the traditional priest is restricted in a number of ways. These include not wearing footwear and nobody walks behind the priest. He does not go out at certain times and days and does not shake hands with certain categories of persons. This made it difficult for the traditional priests, who became *caboceers*,<sup>46</sup> to deal with the Europeans on behalf of their communities. However, due to benefits associated with this role,

<sup>43</sup> Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People*, p 72.

<sup>44</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 70.

Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People*, p 74.

<sup>46</sup> *Caboceer* is a Portuguese word for headman. See R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, pp 78-79. Winsnes also translates it 'Mayor'. See Selena A. Winsnes (trans and ed), *A Danish Jew in West Africa*, p 89.

some of the priests relinquished the priestly role to assume political office in order to continue to deal with the Europeans as *caboceers*. Some appointed other people to act on their behalf since by virtue of their position as priests, they could not perform such a role. This marked the beginning of the creation of two offices within the community: the priest and the chief.

The third factor that led to the emergence of the distinct political office of the chief was the influence of Christianity and introduction of formal education. As Christianity began to take root within the Ga community and more people were converted and educated, especially the nobles and officeholders, the traditional offices were affected. Some of the officeholders as well as the heirs to these officers became converts and literate. This led to a series of negotiations and compromises between Christians and the traditionalists. In some instances the converted officeholder was excused from sacral duties. In other situations as in the case of *kpakpatsewe*<sup>48</sup> a clan in Ga Mashie, where the same person doubles as the *akwashoytse* (head of the council of elders) and the *Wubmo*, the office of the *Wuhmo* was relinquished to another *we*. According to Parker 'both pagan and Christian hierarchies were ready to compromise over the issue of conversion.' In his view,

The perceived benefits of enstooling literate scholars, men whose command of new skills enables them better to deal with the demands of colonial power, made often staunchly traditionalist Ga elders more willing to tolerate connection between literacy and Christianity.<sup>49</sup>

Another interesting point that is worth considering was the economic role that the chief played in the colonial administration, especially in the context of 'indirect rule'. The colonial administration needed a powerful and influential official who could collect taxes on their behalf. In pursuance of this goal they literally 'imposed' chiefs on communities that hitherto had no chiefs. They also sometimes identified

According to Ga tradition, the *Wuhmo* is forbidden to go out alone or on certain days, put on footwear. Nobody sits, stands or walks behind him. He must always be at the shrine. All these made it difficult for him to deal directly with Europeans.

<sup>48</sup> *Kpakpatse We* is one of the clans in Ga Mashie.

<sup>49</sup> Parker, *Making the Town*, p 163.

the 'wrong' person and supported him as the *caboceer*. These people later usurped the authority of the priests.

As a consequence of all these developments, the chieftaincy institution within the various Ga communities at present is a conglomerate of the features described above. The repercussions of this are being felt even in present times as in most Ga towns there is the struggle for political power by various clans within the communities, thus causing difficulty in locating the centre of political authority. This is the case of Teshie as described by Augustus Gbugblah<sup>50</sup> in the 1940s, and has persisted till the present.<sup>51</sup>

The role of *marjtse* and the whole of the chieftaincy institution have undergone tremendous reforms and changes ever since its creation. The chieftaincy institution has become glamorous and the chief now wields political power. But this has led to agitations and political upheavals within most Ga states with the *marjtsemei* always being accused of stepping beyond the boundaries of their authority. Though both documentary and oral sources point to the fact that the adoption of chieftaincy has led to political unrest within the Ga society, writers however, agree that the problem is not with chieftaincy itself, but with a misunderstanding of how the institution was operated by the colonial administration which gave undue political powers to the *marjtse* especially with the enactment of the Native Administration Ordinance, which gave legal backing to the *marjtse*. This has been the bane of the leadership problems among the Ga. Field rightly observed:

So from the very first, Europeans have wrought change upon the position of the *marjtse*, and this always against the bitter opposition of the tribe (sic). In so far as a *marjtse* now has any 'voice' it is the Europeans who have given it to him. And upon them he leans, and has always leant, for the support, which his own people deny him. Looking back into Ga history every stool palaver has been bred by

Augustus Gbugblah, *The Teshie People*, (unpublished article, 1943). In his article Gbugblah attempts a historical account of the establishment of the Teshie State; the customs and traditions, the institution of chieftaincy and its difficulties and how attempts were made to resolve these difficulties through the Native Customs Ordinance. Despite these attempts a lasting solution could not be found.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Sah, 'Ashitey Clan to nominate chief for Teshie', Daily Graphic, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2005.

European patronage, and the two different views held by the tribe (sic) and the Europeans respectively concerning the powers of the *maytse*.<sup>51</sup>

## **ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE GA**

Just as the Ga went through various phases before finally settling in their present location, so have their economic activities been. It is reasonable to assume that each time they adapted to whatever environment they found themselves in, they took to various occupations as the situation demanded. The Ga were basically farmers undertaking livestock keeping and hunting; farming was a major economic activity. At present some of these occupations have been abandoned and only traces of them exist within the Ga community, particularly in areas like La and Teshie; even that too is being threatened. With the growth of other vibrant commercial and economic activities coupled with urbanisation, which has led to the expansion of the city, the lands that were once cultivated have been turned into commercial and residential areas. What therefore may be considered as constituting the economic activities within the littoral states of Ga include farming, fishing, salt mining, and trading in gold and slaves. We discuss these briefly.

### **Farming**

Before settling on the coast, the Ga lived and farmed within their communities, which were further inland. This somehow changed with the migration to the coast. However, some farmers continued to farm in their villages and came to the towns occasionally, especially during annual festivals and other social gatherings like funerals and marriage ceremonies. The other category of farmers lived in the towns and went to stay in the farming communities only during the cropping and harvesting seasons. The crops they cultivated included millet, maize, okro, garden eggs, pepper, tomatoes, cassava, yam and gourd.

Of the many crops, two are very significant. One is the gourd, which was cultivated extensively around the present day Tema area. The Ga word for gourd is *to* hence the place was known as *Tomarj* (gourd town). Thus Tema, the name of the modern port city, is a corruption of *Tomarj*. For the Ga, the *to* (gourd) was not just an

Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People*, p 76.

economic entity; it had religious and spiritual significance. The gourd is used for making amulets, which according to Paul Isert, is not for the ordinary people but for the prominent.<sup>53</sup> The historical and religious significance of the gourd is further demonstrated by its use as a religious symbol of the Tema State (See fig. 2).



Fig. 2: A Gourd on a stool: A traditional symbol of the Tema State.

Millet is also significant in the life of the Ga in both economic and religious terms. Ga oral tradition<sup>54</sup> claims that millet was cultivated by the Ga and used to be the

Winsnes, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade*, p 132.

<sup>54</sup> In an interview with the *Nai Wohmo*, the -chief priest of the Ga state, he emphasised the significance of the millet, claiming that it was given to their forebears on their journey from Egypt to be planted wherever they were to settle. Out of the handful that was planted on their arrival, they had abundant yield. They even had maize, which was not planted. It was out of this yield that food was distributed to the whole community and seeds also given to them for cultivation. In remembrance of this millet is symbolically planted every year as part of the *HomowD* festival. The significance is that if it germinates well, it indicates prosperity and the well being of the state; but if it does not then there will be famine and mishap in the coming year. This is averted by prayer and fasting led by the *Wuhmo*. With the cessation of the cultivation of millet, maize has become the staple food for the Ga, but millet is still used for the *ymaadumo* (planting of millet) and other rituals.



staple food for the people.<sup>55</sup> Its religious significance is seen in the symbolic manner in which it is planted - a key and important ritual known as *ymaadumo* (planting of millet), which precedes the annual *Homowo* festival. This view seems to find support in the words of Odotei, who states,

Millet used to be the staple food of the Ga. This is confirmed by the fact that the word for millet (*rjmaa*) is the same word used for food in certain contexts. The historical significance of millet is highlighted by the fact that it is reckoned as the food for the gods and is used in modern times for ritual purposes.<sup>56</sup>

According to Irene Odotei, 'Although the Ga engaged in farming, they were not able to produce enough to feed themselves.' The shortfall in food supply was sometimes due to the erratic rainfall pattern and bad climatic conditions. By its location, the Ga area falls within a dry region and has modest annual rainfall. These food shortages led to severe famines that sometimes resulted in the loss of human lives. Arent Jacobsen Van Amersfoort is reported to have commented on a famine that occurred in 1640's as a result of bad harvest, which led to the loss of many lives.<sup>58</sup> R0mer also alludes to this fact when describing the drought situation in Accra:

God had become angry with the inhabitants, so that now not a drop of water falls from the heavens. Sometimes for as long as nine months, and this causes such drought that the trees wither away.<sup>59</sup>

For the Ga, famine is not only physical. It can also be interpreted in religious terms and given spiritual meaning. According to oral tradition,<sup>60</sup> there was at one time a prolonged famine. This was followed by an abundance of food which the people attributed to the intervention and blessing of the gods. The abundance of food was greeted with celebration and thanksgiving to the gods. This marked the beginning of the *Homowo* celebration. It is in this context that one will appreciate the Ga view of

<sup>5</sup> Winsnes, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade*, p 125.

<sup>56</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 62.

<sup>57</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga' p 62.

<sup>58</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 62.

<sup>59</sup> R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, p 115

<sup>60</sup> My own field research notes.

*Nyoymo* as not only the source of rain but also the Great Farmer who provides food for his people; a conception that is vividly depicted in the *kpele* songs, traditional cult songs which depict the primal world view of the Ga. This will be examined and elaborated on in chapters four and five.

### **Fishing**

The Ga have also regularly engaged in fishing as a major economic activity in addition to other occupations. Accordingly, the sea has had an impact upon the lives of the Ga since they settled along the coast. As remarked by Odotei, 'the same people, who farmed during the rainy season, became fishermen during the off season.' Initially fishing as a major activity took place in the surrounding rivers, lakes and lagoons rather than the sea. Irene Odotei, who researched into the pre-colonial occupation of the Ga, quoted Barbot to support this claim. According to Barbot, 'The fishery on the sea is inconsiderable but the want of sea fish is abundantly made amends for by the great plenty (sic) there is in lakes and rivers.'<sup>62</sup> Recent archaeological excavations at Ladoku have revealed that the people fed on molluscs and mudfish, confirming that the inhabitants fished in lakes rather than the sea.

Oral tradition also has it that the Ga were initially not seafarers and that marine fishing was introduced to them by their Fanti neighbours who are noted for this venture, and who travelled to the Ga towns seasonally to fish. Eventually some of them settled among the Ga. This view finds support in Reindorf, who claims that 'the art of sea fishing, making nets, fishing canoes... seems to have been discovered by the Fantes (sic).' Evidence of this claim persists even in present times as fishing in general among the Ga is not done on a large scale; even in the communities where fishing is undertaken, the Fanti dominance, however remote, is present. In such communities, the office of the *woleiatss* (chief fisherman) is held by the Fanti community that had been integrated into the Ga community. For

<sup>61</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 60.

<sup>62</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 60. See also Selena A. Winsnes, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade*, p 126.

<sup>63</sup> The people who now occupy present day La once inhabited Ladoku.

<sup>64</sup> My own field research notes.

<sup>65</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 261.

instance in La, the 'chief fisherman' comes from *Abese Fanti* a section of the *Abese* quarter that migrated from Moure, a Fanti town.<sup>66</sup> Again, in Ga-Mashie, it is the *Abola* quarter, another group of Fanti origin<sup>67</sup> that holds the office of the chief fisherman.

The fishing industry was well regulated: whereas the men went fishing, it was the women who marketed the fish, especially to the inland communities. To preserve the fish, it was smoked, dried or salted and often sold in this latter state.<sup>68</sup>

The relationship with the Fanti was not only at the economic level but also at the cultural and religious levels. This impact is noticed as one examines the religious itinerary of the Ga. Some of the religious practices and concepts as will be seen in the *kpele* songs are traced to the Fanti.

All this means that for the Ga, fishing is not just an economic activity; it also has a religious dimension, since most of the rivers, lakes and lagoons in which the fishing is done are either regarded as the habitation of gods or gods themselves.<sup>69</sup> For example, in Ga-Mashie, the sea is regarded as a god and is referred to in the

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traditional prayer as *Bosum Mpo Mensah*. Rituals are therefore significant in the fishing industry. Among the Ga, sea fishing is forbidden on Tuesday, a day regarded as sacred to the sea god (*Nai*). Also, just before and after the *Homowo* festival, various rituals including a temporary ban on fishing activities are performed by the *Nai Wohmo* for the sea.

Similarly, a seasonal ban is placed on fishing in the lagoons. This religious rite known as *Gonfi maa*, according to Odotei, is to enforce compliance and is performed by the traditional priest of the particular lagoon.<sup>71</sup> This religious sanction

Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 61.

<sup>67</sup> See Marion Kilson, *African Urban Kinsmen: the Ga of Central Accra* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1974), p 7.

Winsnes, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade*, p 126.

<sup>69</sup> Marion Kilson, *Kpele Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbols*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p 62.

<sup>70</sup> My own field research notes.

<sup>71</sup> Odotei, Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga, p 61.

also helped to sustain the ecological equilibrium in the lagoons and the surrounding areas.

### **Salt Industry**

Mining and trading in salt was once a major and lucrative business activity of the Ga. The surrounding lagoons (*Kpeshi, Sakumo, Koole, Khte, Sango* and *Mokwe*) in which salt was mined, produced such great quantities that it could supply both the inland and coastal trades. Quoting Ga oral sources, Odotei concluded: 'Salt from the coast was carried a long distance inland, where it was sold at a great profit. Slaves were sometimes bought with salt.'<sup>72</sup> So lucrative was the trade that by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, European participation had become significant. As Daaku reports,

In 1709 the English regretted that they were unable to persuade one Captain Greaves of the OLIVE to go to Accra for salt to compete with the Dutch, who had bought a ship load from there.<sup>73</sup>

### **Gold Trade**

Early historical documents indicate that gold was a booming industry especially from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Accra is reported to have been the most important outlet for gold from the Gold Coast. Irene Odotei cites the testimonies of early European travellers to this effect. Bosman is reported to have said that the annual export of gold was seven thousand marks a year; Drapper remarked that

Little Accra has been many years the chiefest place of trade upon the Gold Coast, next to Moure and Kormantyn where foreign merchants carry iron, linen, which they exchange in gold with much greater gain than on the other places on the Gold Coast.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Odotei, *Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga*, p 64.

<sup>73</sup> K. Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the coast 1600-1720*, (London: OUP, 1974), p 25, cited in Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 64.

<sup>74</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 65.

Insert also states:

Indeed it may be presumed, and probably not without some grounds, that the Gold Coast is the Ophir mentioned in the Bible,<sup>75</sup> that place from which King Solomon acquired his gold, ivory and monkeys.<sup>76</sup>

Most of the gold that was exported was brought in mostly from the inland Akyem, Aburi and Kwahu states. The location of Accra as a coastal town on the Gold Coast where Europeans had established forts put her in a favourable position as an outlet for the gold producing states.<sup>77</sup>

### **Slave Trading**

Alongside gold was the slave trade. Odotei cites the view held in The Royal African Company between 1672 and 1752. The Royal African Company commenting on the trading activities on the Gold Coast made the point to the effect that 'Accra is

<sup>78</sup>

always a good place for the gold and sometimes plenty of slaves.' Generally, the Ga had engaged in local trading in domestic slaves, which was practised by other

<sup>79</sup>

states in the region at that time. Such bought slaves within the Ga community were integrated into the society and made part of the household to the extent that they

<sup>80</sup>

were referred to as 'brothers' and 'sisters'. They were more often used as labourers and workers to 'augment the labour provided by wives, children, pawns and debtors on the farms and salt-making industry.'

<sup>81</sup>

However, it was the demand for human labour to work on the plantations and mines in the New World that pushed the Ga to engage in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as a commercial activity. Accra then, with its advantageous position, became one of the markets as well as outlets for the exportation of slaves. The Ga took advantage

<sup>75</sup> 2 Chronicles 8:18.

<sup>76</sup> Winsnes, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade*, p 114.

<sup>77</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 66.

<sup>78</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 65.

<sup>79</sup> See Akosua Perbi, 'Researching the Historical Background of Cultural Issues', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 2 No 2, (December 1999), pp 29-34.

<sup>80</sup> Perbi, 'Researching the Historical Background of Cultural Issues', p 34. See also her more recent work, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 66.

of this opportunity to trade commercially in slaves. Reindorf citing Bosman states 'The slave trade which was carried on at Akra (sic) chiefly by the Akwamus (sic), the Gomoas (sic), Agonas (sic), with Akras (sic) as brokers... equalled that of the whole Gold Coast put together.'<sup>82</sup> Most of the slaves, some of whom were exchanged for salt, were brought from the hinterland.<sup>83</sup>

From this brief review of the economic activities of the Ga, one can conclude that though the farming activities ensured food security and economic sustainability with occasional shortages, it is also clear that what contributed mostly to the development of modern Accra was their engagement with Europeans on the coast and the social, economic and political transactions that went with it is as narrated by Marion Kilson,

The development of Accra as modern urban centre has been dependent upon its commercial and administrative functions. Accra has been an important commercial centre from the time of earliest European contact.<sup>84</sup>

Irene Odotei also concludes:

The arrival of the Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century set in motion economic changes which affected the demographic, social, political and cultural characteristics of the Ga and the Accra littoral. By the time the British declared the Gold Coast a colony in 1874 and shifted the capital to Accra in 1877, the Ga were poised to launch into another hallmark of their history. How the Ga coped with their economic activities with all the repercussions during the pre-colonial period is a mark of their resilience and capacity to adapt to changing circumstances.<sup>85</sup>

### **EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY**

Before the introduction of European-style of formal education, the Ga had their own system of passing on information, inculcating discipline as well as instilling moral values in the society. Moral lessons are consciously or unconsciously taught in a variety of ways. These include story telling, folklore, wise sayings, the use of taboos

<sup>82</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 62

<sup>83</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 66.

<sup>84</sup> Kilson, *African Urban Kinsmen*, p 7.

<sup>85</sup> Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga', p 70.

and prohibitions, reward for good and punishment for evil. The elderly gathered the children to tell them stories. For example, we shall see in chapter four stories that were told about *Nyotjmo*. The wise sayings were and still are often used to convey information mostly by the elderly. Here the focus is not only on the building of intellectual capacity but more importantly, on instilling moral discipline in the individual as well as in the society. The approach is to cater for all aspects of human life. According to some of my resource persons, this system of education is all encompassing, embracing, cumulative and flexible, and not placing undue stress on the learner. Through this system, the Ga were able to maintain their society and also improve their social status.

Formal education was introduced to the Ga community with the coming of the European traders. This was initially restricted to the forts and castles for the European children and mulattoes; a new social class that came about as a result of marriages between the Europeans and the indigenous people. Commenting on this, Reindorf wrote 'The teaching was mainly for children begotten by them <sup>on</sup> [Europeans] in the country, and not for the people generally.' Geraldine Coldman also claims there existed a translation of the 'Ten Commandments' in Ga, published in 1805 and printed by the Royal Orphan Asylum Press in Copenhagen for the Danish schools in Ghana (Gold Coast).

The expansion of this formal education among the Ga started with the arrival of Christian missionaries. As a policy, the missionaries added formal education to their evangelising and other activities, as their 'prime goal was to offer a balanced <sup>on</sup> education leading to spiritual enlightenment and material self-sufficiency.' The missionaries saw formal education as a catalyst that will quicken the process of evangelisation and this they pursued with all seriousness, making it available to the indigenous people; sometimes this was in opposition to colonial policies. Their

My own field research notes.

<sup>87</sup> Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p 213.

<sup>88</sup> See Geraldine E. Coldam, (Compiler), *A Bibliography of Scriptures in African Languages*, (London: The British and Foreign Bible Society, VI, 1966), p 159.

<sup>89</sup> Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast*, p 81.

approach was 'to build a mission station with a chapel and a school - for preaching and for teaching.'<sup>90</sup>

Key to the education policy of the missionaries was language development; the missionaries followed 'a deliberately chosen policy of working with each targeted nation or group in its own vernacular.' Serious attention was therefore given to the study of the Ga language - the words, concepts, idioms and expressions, and the eventual translation of the Bible into the Ga language to enable the Ga to 'read the Bible for himself in order to make the word of God the basis of his life.'<sup>92</sup> But the translation of the Ga Bible was fraught with difficulties, as the process required finding expressions in the Ga language that could adequately express concepts in the source language. In certain cases, some of the concepts in the Ga language were forced to take on new meanings. The development of the concept of *Nyorjmo* from its pre-Christian usage to its 'Christian' meaning is a case in point.

It is from this perspective, that the missionaries' contribution to the religious and social life of the Ga through the transmission of the Christian faith, the establishment of schools and the translation of the Bible should be appreciated.

## **CONCLUSION**

The historical evolution of the Ga in all its dimensions - social, political, economic and religious - has been shaped by a number of factors, both local and foreign. Their encounter with various groups of people posed a lot of challenges to them; these they surmounted and negotiated to their advantage. It is within this general context that the Ga developed their various ideas including their religious concepts. Thus, the Ga were not pawns in the hands of their neighbours and the Europeans; they used these challenges and opportunities to their advantage - developing their life and a coherent world view that was consistent with their self-understanding and their identity as a people brought together by a variety of factors in a long history. Their primal religion, which is the focus of the next chapter, thus evolved out of such a rich engagement.

Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast*, p 82.

Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast*, p 88.

<sup>92</sup> John K. Agbeti, *West African Church History: Christian Missions and church Foundation (1482-1919)*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), p 69.



## CHAPTER THREE

### PRIMAL RELIGION OF THE GA

#### INTRODUCTION

In discussing the primal religion of the Ga, one needs an in-depth understanding of the amount of influence that had impacted the social, cultural, religious and political life of the people over the years. First was the local influence from the neighbouring Akan states and especially the Akwamu who defeated the Ga and established suzerainty over them. Their religious and cultural influence was so entrenched that even at present a section of the Ga - the Otublohum quarter that are considered the remnants of the Akwamu - celebrate the Akan *Odwira* alongside the annual *HomawD* festival.

Another influence came from the Fanti, notably their fishermen who settled among the Ga and who though had been assimilated into the society, have maintained their identity. For example in La, the *Abese* Fanti quarter, as the name implies, have Fanti ancestry. We also need to mention the *Kpeshi* aborigines among whom the Ga settled as well as the *Obutu* and *Akuapem* communities. Clear evidence of these influences is found in the development of chieftaincy, an institution that was borrowed from the Akan communities. There are also traces of Akan words and concepts in Ga traditional prayers and songs. This is evident in the traditional *kpele* songs, which are embellished with Guan and *Obutu* words.<sup>1</sup>

The second major influence came from the contact with Europeans. For over five centuries, beginning from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ga had a lot of interactions with Europeans of varied backgrounds. With the exception of occasional suspicion and mistrust, which led to hostilities, the relationship was more or less cordial and harmonious as depicted on the emblem of the Ga state. (Refer Fig. 1.) The extent of the influence is evident in the way some Portuguese, Danish and English words appear in Ga prayer texts and in Ga vocabulary in general. Apart from the European influence among the Ga, people from other countries like present-day Nigeria and

<sup>1</sup>Marion Kilson, *Kpele Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbols*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

Brazil who were brought in by the Europeans to settle among the Ga at various times made their impact felt; they now form part of Ga community.

There is also the Christian influence. Christianity has been on the shores of Accra for over 300 years, since the 1700's.<sup>2</sup> It is reasonable to assume that its influence would be felt within the Ga community. Commenting on the religious situation in Accra in the 1960's, Marion Kilson stated, there were a 'large number of Christian churches which include the imposing edifices of established sects and various rooms which have been transformed from residence into meeting places for indigenous spiritual churches.'<sup>3</sup>

From this standpoint, it would not be far from right for one to consider the Ga State as a meeting point of many cultures, and one will thus need to appreciate the transformation that the Ga culture has gone through over the years. The study of the primal religion of the Ga may therefore involve some speculation and conjecture. Mary Douglas, who uses the term 'primitive' instead of primal, points out that 'the primitive world view... is rarely itself an object of contemplation and speculation in the primitive culture.'<sup>4</sup> This is rightly so as most informants could only remember bits and pieces of their heritage.

Despite these influences, the Ga primal world view has fundamentally not changed. It has survived through various media, which include traditional festivals, cult rites, folklore, oral history, drum language and songs, and written sources. The Ga have a conception of cosmology which basically consists of five beings in a hierarchical order: the Supreme Being, divine beings, human beings, animals and plants. The ranking of these beings is based on some specific basic existential qualities attributed to them. An analysis of these beings by Marion Kilson gives us some insight. According to her,

The creative power of the Supreme Being differentiates it from all other classes of beings; the immortality of the gods distinguishes them from all other forms of

<sup>2</sup> Carl Christian Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn), (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966), pp 214 - 216.

<sup>3</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 103.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, (p 91) cited in Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 58.

created life; the rationality of human beings differentiates them from animals and plants; the mobility of the animals distinguishes them from plants. The value of an existential attribute that differentiates a superordinate class of being from a subordinate class not only characterizes that class but all superior classes in the hierarchy; conversely, the attribute that distinguishes the subordinate class pertains not only to that class but to all lower classes within the hierarchy.<sup>5</sup>

It is within this broad framework I discuss the primal world of the Ga.

## **THE WORLD OF SPIRITS**

### **The Supreme Being**

The Ga believe in a Supreme Being or a high god they refer to as *Nyorjmo*. Their concept of *Nyorjmo* is of a being who is a personified creative life force, immortal, rational and mobile and at the apex of a hierarchy of beings within the Ga cosmology. *Nyorjmo* is considered as the one who created the universe and all that are within it, including divinities, human beings, animals and the environment. For the Ga, *Nyorjmo* did not only create the world in the distant past but continues this creation in the present. They thus conceive of the act of creation as an ongoing process and that *Nyorjmo* is not detached from the world but actively involved in its daily affairs and acting as the source of all forms of life. Thus:

In prayer, the Ga appeal to the Supreme Being through gods and ancestral shades for blessing for living and unborn Ga, for increase in the population, for abundant food, for rain to nurture plants, for success in human endeavours, and for peace among Ga.<sup>7</sup>

*Nyorjmo*, in Ga thought, is further considered in both male and female terms; hence they refer to *Nyorjmo* using male and female titles, '*Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*' (grandfather grandmother God). *Ataa* in Ga refers to a father who protects and defends his children in times of trouble. Again for the Ga, *Naa* means more than grandmother. It conveys the idea of *yoofoyoo*: a sympathetic, accommodating and caring mother who sees not only to the needs of her children but other people as well. This may

<sup>5</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 59.

<sup>6</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 59.

<sup>7</sup> Marion Kilson, 'Libation in Ga Ritual', in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. II, Fasc. 3, (1969), p 162.

also apply to other women who may not have any children of their own. In the theological thinking of the Ga, therefore, *Nyorjmo* is recognised as playing the role of a father who protects and defends his people in times of trouble, and of a mother who is caring and loving.

Though the Ga conceive of God in both male and female terms, as *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*, it is interesting how they address *Nyorjmo* in everyday usage. Most often, *Nyorjmo* is addressed in only one of the two terms: either as *Ataa Nyorjmo*, depicting his male qualities or as *Naa Nyorjmo*, emphasising her female aspects depending on the context in which the 'caller' finds himself or herself. In precarious situations, however, one may use *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*, invoking both qualities of *Nyorjmo*.

Judgment and punishment are also attributed to *Nyorjmo*. *Nyorjmo* punishes people for violating divine injunctions and causing disruption in the ordered relationship within the universe. Such punishment may come in the form of withholding rain, famine, natural disasters and even barrenness. Such a situation can be remedied by the performance of certain calendrical rites.

Although *Nyorjmo* is considered as the source of all forms of life, the Ga does not supplicate *Nyorjmo* directly but rather through divinities. This is because of the conception that *Nyorjmo* is far removed from human beings. It is believed that initially when human beings were morally good, *Nyorjmo* was close to them but when they began to sin *Nyorjmo* moved away from them farther into the heavens. This view mostly held by the older generation, finds support in a Ga myth of creation. According to this myth, *Nyorjmo* was very close to the earth and near to human beings but there was an old woman who used to pound fufu (a meal of pounded cassava, sometimes mixed with plantain) everyday, and as she continued to raise her pestle she pushed *Nyorjmo* far into the heavens. Through this act *Nyorjmo* became far removed from human beings.<sup>8</sup> It thus became difficult for human beings to reach to *Nyorjmo* directly.

The various Akan communities, some of whom settled among the Ga, also hold a similar view. It is however difficult to tell who influenced the other.

Another view, which can be considered more recent and an Akan influence, likened *Nyorjmo* to a paramount chief who can only be approached by his subjects through the sub-chiefs and the linguists.<sup>9</sup> Both notions emphasise the 'remoteness' of *Nyorjmo*. The Ga therefore require intermediaries to help them get access to *Nyorjmo*. This is where the divinities find their place and play important roles in Ga cosmology.

It is interesting that *Nyorjmo*, though considered a high God has no priest or a shrine. Again, no image or a portrait of *Nyorjmo* can be found in the Ga littorals. The Ga therefore does not offer sacrifice to *Nyorjmo*. This is in contrast to the Akan, who though does not have a special priest for the Supreme Being, has altars and offers sacrifices to *Onyankopon*.

Despite these notions, *Nyorjmo* was not initially considered a high God. *Nyorjmo* was initially regarded as one of the many divinities, who later evolved into the status of a Supreme Being. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, which deals with the development of the concept of *Nyorjmo*.

### **Divinities**

In the Ga pantheon, divinities are regarded as next to *Nyorjmo* in the hierarchical order of beings. These divine beings, who are referred to as *jemawoji* or *wowoi*,

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though created, are immortal, rational and mobile. The Ga concept of *jemaworj* is totally different from that of fetish, for the Ga say, '*wojaaa worf* literally, 'we do not worship fetish or idols'. As one respondent claimed, 'The *gbatsu*<sup>14</sup> contains nothing but only a jar of rain water (*toy*) considered as "holy water" because it was

<sup>9</sup> My field research revealed that this is what pertains in Akan chieftaincy.

<sup>10</sup> K. A Busia, 'The Ashanti' in Daryll Forde (ed) *African Worlds: Studies in the cosmological ideas and social values of African peoples*, (Eighth impression) (London: OUP, 1991), p 192. *Onyankopon* is one of the Akan names used for the Supreme Being.

<sup>11</sup> For lack of any better expression I translate *jemawoji* as divinities, divine beings or spirit beings.

<sup>12</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 59.

<sup>13</sup> Fetish, which comes from the word 'fetico', is generally considered to be an idol or inanimate object, which possesses magical powers. In Ga society, it is mostly acquired by individuals or families for protection.

<sup>14</sup> The *gbatsu* is the place where the priest goes to consult the gods.

collected directly from the sky and is uncontaminated.' Margaret Field makes a firm assertion of this claim when she remarked:

Another idea common to West Africa but foreign to Ga worship is that of a fetish ... The typical Ga high priests have no fetishes and are not fetish priests. They are the servants of the gods and the interpreters also of the will of the gods to the people.<sup>16</sup>

She goes on to make a distinction between a fetish and *jemaworj*:

By fetish I mean a palpable inanimate object which is either permanent or intermittently the home of an invisible being. The *jemaworj* on the other hand is a rational being, which has no permanent or local habitation of its own.<sup>17</sup>

*Jemaworj*, by Field's definition is a 'powerful type of intelligent being (*worj*), not specialised in his activities but practically omnipotent and omniscient. He comes

and goes like a wind.' *Nai Wulomo*, the chief priest of the Ga State supports this view. According to him, the *jemaworj* has no permanent habitation but roams the length and breadth of the land and stays in the heavens. He, however, concedes that some powerful *jemawoji* inhabit certain topographical features such as the sea, rivers, lagoons, and mangroves; these are considered as their usual places of abode. In Ga cosmology *jemawoji* are mostly associated with lagoons and mangroves. Thus we have *Nai* (sea god), *Sakumo* (god of war), *Dantu* (god of time), *Kpeshi* (god of the *Kpeshi* lagoon) and *Naa Koole* (god of the *Koole* lagoon). Others also have shrines built for them in addition to having their own priests. For example in La there is a shrine for *La-Kpa*, and at Osu and Tema, shrines are built for *Dade* and *Naa Yoo jemawoji* respectively.

Though they are considered spirit beings and the locus of their activities is in the spirit realm, *jemawoji* may sometimes take on bodily forms like human beings or animals. Margaret Field narrates a story where on one occasion when the Asante

My own field research notes.

Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, (London: OUP, 1937), p 4.

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 4.

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 4.

were threatening the Ga with war, the *Sakumo jemaworj* turned itself into a lady and enticed the leader of the Asante to make love to her thereby delaying their attack; the Ga took them by surprise and defeated them.<sup>19</sup> Many such stories abound within the various Ga communities. During my research, though all my informants confirmed such stories, they could only cite the experiences of other people. Two persons, however, shared their personal experiences. They claimed they had seen 'strange' persons that fit the description of *jemaworj*. Kilson claims that:

Although the locus of their activity is thought to be the sky, gods may descend to earth. Certain gods are associated with specific topographical features, such as lagoons, mountains, and rivers, which are thought to be their customary places of descent. Not only may gods descend to particular terrestrial location but they may manifest themselves as moral beings of other classes and may speak directly to men through mediums.<sup>21</sup>

The activity of the *jemaworj* is basically limited to the community that it superintends and over which it has jurisdiction. It may however cross over to other communities, as the statement above indicates, to avenge or run errands on behalf of its people. Thus *jemawoji* play significant roles in the social and religious life of the Ga. This is seen in the services the *jemaworj* renders to the people. They are also regarded as intermediaries between *Nyorjmo* who is high above and human beings who cannot have direct communication with him, the Supreme Being. They carry the petitions of the human beings to *Nyorjmo*. They do not have any power on their own. All their powers and authority are derived from *Nyorjmo*, whom they serve. Thus in most religious rites, the *jemawoji* are mentioned only after *Nyorjmo* has been addressed, and it is to them that supplications are often made rather than to ancestors.<sup>22</sup>

Though most Ga claim they do not worship *worj* (fetish or idols), *worj* abounds within the Ga community. However they do not belong to the community. They are

<sup>19</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 4.1 also remember a story that went round that a man from another ethnic group killed a Ga for ritual purposes. To avenge the death of the dead person, the family's, *jemaworj* turned itself into a fishmonger and sold fish to that community. All those who bought and ate her fish died. This led to the unveiling of the truth, and pacification was made.

<sup>20</sup> My own field research notes.

<sup>21</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 62.

<sup>22</sup> Kilson, 'Libation in Ga Ritual', p 172.

privately owned either by individuals or families who 'imported' and used them as 'medicine' for the protection of their families and the prosperity of their businesses. Unlike the *jemaworj*, *worj* usually does not have a name, a shrine or a priest except the owner, who is the *worjtse*<sup>24</sup> (literally father of *worj*) or the head of the family appointed to take charge of it. The *worj* is normally considered less powerful than the *jemaworj* and its activities are specialised, limited and defined.<sup>25</sup> However it is believed to possess magical powers, which can be used to harm enemies.

### **The Environment**

The environment in Ga philosophy comprises basically the animals and plants with inanimate objects like the sky or heavens (*r/wei*), the sea, rivers, lagoons, the rocks and mountains considered as part of it. Nature is another way by which the Ga describes the environment. Even though environment lies at the base of the Ga cosmology, it is nevertheless significant and important for the maintenance of balance within the ordered universe. Underlying the need to maintain this interrelationship is the idea of 'common spirit' linking all categories of beings within the universe. They conceive of nature as also having *mumo* (spirit), which comes from *Nyor/mo* within them. The Ga belief is that animals and plants, though irrational, have *mumo* (spirit), which they sometimes refer to as *susuma* (soul) but not *kla*, and therefore can, in a limited sense, be regarded as spirit beings. The fact that animals and plants breathe supports this notion.<sup>26</sup> Some inanimate objects like the sea, rivers, lagoons, mountains and rocks are also considered the habitation of spirits. They are thus regarded as sacred places of worship. For the Ga, God did not only create the universe, but also imparted his spirit into it.

The various configurations on *Nyor/mo*, where the name is attached to the names of some animals and plants, as well as certain inanimate objects, clearly demonstrate

*Woji*, the plural of *worj*, are believed to have been introduced into the Ga community mostly by the Fanti fishermen for the protection and prosperity of their fishing industry.

<sup>24</sup> The *worjtse* is sometimes referred to as *woytsuh*, which means the 'sender of *worj*'

<sup>25</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 111.

<sup>26</sup> Joyce Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought' in Kwesi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye (eds.), *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies I* (Washington D. C: Cardinal Station, 1992), p 165.



the above assertion. The Ga therefore live in a sacramental universe where there is no sharp dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual.

Due to these beliefs, the relationship that exists between the Ga and their environment is what can be described as a 'harmonious' relationship. They do not wantonly destroy the environment. They believe that God's spirit resides in the environment just as it dwells in other beings. They therefore take the view that the environment must be taken good care of so that they do not offend God. In certain situations, the Ga perform certain rites to pacify the spirit of certain trees before they are cut for use. This thought, among others, influenced the preservation of the environment. As one respondent claimed, the recent destruction of the environment can be attributed to the advent of Christianity with its 'Enlightenment Theology' that attempts to separate God from the environment. This has led people to wantonly destroy the environment without thinking that they are 'hurting' God.

## **THE WORLD OF THE LIVING**

### **Human beings**

The human personality also forms an integral part of Ga cosmology. In terms of hierarchical order of beings, the human being comes after the Supreme Being, divinities and ancestors; the human being, however, is superior to the animals, plants and the universe. His nature as a rational, mortal and created being makes him the locus of all activities within Ga cosmology, linking the Immortal Creator with the created mortal world. The analysis of the human personality reveals that the human being is more than a mortal being.

In Ga thought, the person (*gbomo adesa*) is generally considered to have a dual nature - the corporeal part namely *gbomotso* (physical body) and spiritual part referred to as *mumo* (spirit), which departs from the body at the point of physiological death. Various attempts have been made to define what actually constitute the metaphysical part of the human being. Whereas the distinction between the body and the spirit is easily noticeable and acknowledged, the opposite

<sup>27</sup> Harold Turner, 'The Primal Religions of the World and their study', in Victor Hayes (ed), *Australian Essays in World Religions*, (Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of World Religion, 1977), p 32.

is the case when it comes to the constituents of the spiritual parts of the human being, namely the *susuma* and the *kla*.

### *Susuma*

The *susuma* is regarded as one of the immaterial entities that constitute the spiritual part of the human being. It is able to (and may in fact) leave the physical body especially during the dream state, without injuring the body or causing physical death. In a more general description, it is linked with the *kla* and referred to as *mumo* (spirit). Most Ga do not make a strict distinction between the *susuma*, *kla* and *mumo*. The three are used interchangeably.

Sometimes, reference is also made to the *susuma*, *kla* or the *mumo* to indicate the disposition of a person. In this regard one may hear the Ga remark: '*esusuma waa*' (his *susuma* is not strong), *esusuma eye eno* (his *susuma* has overcome or overpowered him referring to a situation when one's personality is dominated by another), *esusuma eje esee* or *ekla eje esse* (his *susuma* has left him) or (his *kla* has left him), *emumo nyee enemei* (his spirit can not tolerate, bear or stand such things, referring to a situation when one is confronted with a horrific episode).

At death, the *susuma*, together with the *kla* depart the body and one hears statements like '*esusuma ke heloo le mli egbla*' (the *susuma* is separated from the body) or '*emumo efa ye emlV*' (his spirit has left him). However, at the point of departure, the *susuma* separates from the *kla* and goes to *gbohiiajey* (the world of the dead), which, according to Ga belief, has no physical location but exists within the universe. The *susuma* is sometimes also linked to the *sisá* (ghost), with the belief that it is the *susuma* that turns into *sisá* after death.

The *susuma* can be 'called', seen and consulted by *woyei* (priestesses) and *tsofatsmei* (herbalists). Thus it becomes the medium by which a person consults his personality to know his destiny. Due to this strong belief, some have made philosophical postulations that the *susuma* may be a 'quasi-physical' entity or a

See E. T. A. Abbey, *Kedzi Afo Yordan (Gbele Ke Yarafeemo)*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1968), p 9.

'physical' entity because according to them, such a belief indicates that the *susuma* occupies space and time.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Kla***

The *Kla* is another seemingly distinct entity of the spiritual part of the person. Just like the *susuma*, the postulations about the *kla* are not based on empirical evidence but rather on beliefs, linguistic idioms and customs. The *kla* is considered more powerful and dignified than the *susuma* and is the 'part of God's nature in a person' that dictates the destiny of the individual. Whereas the *susuma* may leave the body without causing death, the departure of the *kla* will result in the death of the person. According to Margaret Field, 'When the *susuma* leaves the body in dreams, the *kla* has to stay to maintain breathing.'<sup>31</sup>

In Ga life and thought much emphasis is placed on the *kla*. It is considered an aspect of God's spirit and the life force in the person, determining a person's destiny. Creative force is thus attributed to the *kla* in sayings like *Le ebo bo* (the *kla* created you).<sup>32</sup> In most instances, the *susuma* is regarded as the shadow<sup>33</sup> of the *kla*. It is the *kla* that directs the *susuma*, dictates the destiny, guides and protects the person throughout his life. In very serious offensive situations when you want to address or attack the personality of the individual, it is the *kla* which may be abused as seen in such expressions as: 'your roguish *kla*', 'your *kla*'s foolish face.'<sup>34</sup>

The *kla* is morally pure. Indulging in immoral acts or misdeeds may offend one's *kla* and disrupt its 'protective force'; this may result in the *kla* 'withdrawing' his protection and guidance from the person. In such a situation the Ga will say, '*ekla eje esse*' (his *kla* has left him). Since the *kla* is associated with both the spiritual and physical well being of the person, such a disruption in the spiritual realm and the subsequent 'withdrawal' may manifest in physical illness of the person or lack of success in life. This state of affairs may be remedied by pacifying the *kla* through

<sup>29</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', pp 168-172.

<sup>30</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', p 173.

Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, p 92.

<sup>32</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', p 173.

<sup>33</sup> *Susuma* also means shadow; the reflection of an object.

<sup>34</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', p 173.

the performance of prescribed rites and rituals. When the right rituals are performed, the *kla* will again be happy (*ekla mil eshs ehe*) and 'follow the person' (*ekla nyis esse*).

The *kla* may also be 'honoured' especially on occasions like safe delivery, survival of fatal accident, recovery from a serious illness and the enjoyment of success and prosperity in life. The belief is that it is the *kla* that has enabled these 'successes' and therefore a feast is organised for the *kla* (*eyme ekla okplorj*) and relatives and friends are invited to participate and share in the joy. However, some respondents argued that the *susuma* and the family *jemawDrj* as well as the ancestors are also invited to participate in such occasions of thanksgiving.

The *kla* is also linked to the birthday of a person. The name given the person, which is according to the day on which the person was born is referred to as '*kla*-name'. Field describes how the *kla* is linked to the days of the week:

The 'day-name' which is given according to the day of the week in which a person is born, is often known as '*kla-mme*'. It is said that all people born of the same day have the same *kla*', and here again I cannot claim to understand. The day name may be used by medicine-men in killing, and furthermore the killing may reach the wrong person as well as the right one through their common name. For instance, if you wish to kill a man named Kwaku (the name means 'born on Wednesday') you call in a bad medicine-man and he prepares a medicine using the name of Kwaku, lay it on the ground, and arranges that when Kwaku walks over it he will sicken and die. However, another Kwaku may walk over it and die instead of the first.<sup>35</sup>

In her view, this account for the reason why the Ga rarely use their day or *kla*-names. Thus, people born on the same day are believed to have the same *kla*. Any ceremony in relation to the *kla* is therefore performed on the day on which the person was born. A person who is organising a feast to 'honour' his *kla* will have to do it on his birthday and also invite people who share the same birthday with him, *mei ni ke le yeo wuo*, (literally, those who eat fowl with him) to celebrate with him.

Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, pp 93-94.

### Gbeshi

*Gbeshi* is another element that is associated with the human personality. It is sometimes described as a personal fate or ill luck that follows the person. According to Joyce Engmann, any form of socially unacceptable behaviour, which neither occurs in a man's immediate family, nor cannot be attributed to heredity, is liable to be attributed to *gbeshi*?<sup>1</sup> It destroys the 'rhythm' and 'system' of the human personality, causing the person to behave in ways contrary to the accepted norms. It is thus regarded as 'a disruptive force, which interferes with the links binding the *kla* and *susuma* and prevents the victim from fulfilling his destiny.'<sup>38</sup> The behaviour such a person may exhibit includes lack of enthusiasm for work, pilfering, stealing and fits of absent-mindedness; it may even result in not being successful in whatever venture the person undertakes. When a person is perceived to be going through such a situation, it is said '*gbeshi nyie esse*', (*gbeshi* is following him). Due to its perceived disruptive nature, *gbeshi* is thought to be outside of the person and not part of his constitution. Its entrance into the person may result from the withdrawal of the *kla*'s protection from the individual.<sup>39</sup> It is believed that the intrusive *gbeshi* could be driven away, and a normal life restored to the person to fulfil his destiny by the performance of certain prescribed rites.<sup>40</sup>

The above discussions demonstrate that the human being in Ga thought is not only a physical being but also, and more importantly, a spiritual being. For the Ga, what makes a person is not the physical body but the spiritual element that is 'within' the physical body. The spiritual nature of the human being is demonstrated vividly at the death of a person, with elaborate funeral rites to 'make' one a worthy ancestor. The Ga say '*qfuu gbomo tamo afuo wuo*' (you do not bury a human being the same way you would a fowl), thus stressing the spiritual nature of the human being as against that of the animal which is considered not to have *kla*.

Kropp Dakubu, (ed), *Ga-English Dictionary with English - Ga Index*, (Accra: Black Mask Limited, 1999), p 57.

<sup>37</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', p 174.

<sup>8</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', p 174.

<sup>39</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', p 174.

<sup>40</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, p 92-99.

## **Death and Afterlife**

The concept of death and the afterlife also forms part of Ga cosmology and philosophy. It is sometimes considered as an outgrowth of the idea of 'personhood'. Just as the human being is considered to have two parts (physical and spiritual), so is the world also made up of the physical, inhabited by the living, and a spiritual realm (*gbohiiajerj*: land of the dead), occupied by the ancestors. The *gbohiiajerj* is thus seen as part of this world with only a 'river' separating them. We will refer to this understanding later in the funeral rites of the dead.

At the death of a person, the *kla* is believed to depart to *Nyorjmo* while the *susuma* becomes *sisa* (ghost) and continues in existence shuttling between the *gbohiiajerj* (the land of the dead) and the physical world for forty days before finally departing to *gbohiiajerj*. It is due to this belief that the final funeral rite of the dead is done after forty days. Death is seen as a tragedy and a disruption of the physical life, especially when it occurs to a young person. The fact of death may strike the Ga as something that requires an explanation beyond physical causes and effect.<sup>41</sup> Most often, in such situations, the Ga consult *woyei* and medicine men for such explanations. However, the tragedy of death is overcome in the belief in the afterlife.

The notion of the afterlife is further strengthened by the belief in the ancestors. The Ga philosophy of death is that death does not terminate life; it rather ushers the person into a new lease of life. Thus a person does not expire when physical death occurs but continues to live in another form. In the words of Kwesi Wiredu, 'bodily death is not the end of life, but only the inauguration of life in another form.' The dead person acquires a new kind of life: becoming an ancestor, acquiring more power and superintending the affairs of the living which according to Wiredu involves 'helping deserving ones and punishing the delinquent.'<sup>4</sup>

Kwesi Wiredu, 'Death and the Afterlife in African Culture' in Kwesi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye (eds.), *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies I*, (Washington D. C: Cardinal Station, 1992), p 146.

<sup>42</sup> Wiredu, 'Death and the Afterlife in African Culture', p 137.

<sup>43</sup> Wiredu, 'Death and the Afterlife in African Culture', p 137.

Elaborate funeral rites before, during and after the burial of the dead therefore serve as a befitting 'send-off' to the land of the ancestors as well as an 'induction' into the office of 'ancestorship'. In Ga eschatology, the journey to the land of the ancestors is made by 'crossing a river', a journey known as *faafoo*. Though it was difficult to identify the river and its location, some respondents however, pointed to the *Azizanya* estuary at Ada Foah, in the southeastern part of the country, where the river Volta enters the sea. Due to this belief, the Ga put monies into the coffin of the dead, before burial. The idea is that the money would be used to pay the fare. If the question is put as to how the dead person would use the money, the reply is: it is the 'spirit' of the money that is used and the putting of the money in the coffin is only a symbolic act. This view is corroborated by Engmann who says, 'the arrival-place of the newly-dead is known by the name of a geographical town, *Azizanya*, which is sited where the River Volta flows into the sea.' She further claims, 'At *Azizanya*, the nose is said to be broken, for ghosts are reputed to speak nasally.'<sup>44</sup> A respondent also narrated how on one occasion a relative drowned in the sea and after a couple of days when his body was not found, the family went to *Azizanya* to perform a ritual to retrieve the body.<sup>45</sup>

This idea seemed to have found support and credence in a Christian song sung during a burial procession to the cemetery. The song emphasises the idea of crossing a river, which is known now as River Jordan. They allude to the biblical story of the crossing of the River Jordan by the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land in the book of Exodus. The Ga thus believe that through the process of *faafoo*, the dead reaches the final destination of rest. They also see the biblical narrations as depicting their story, and therefore interpret it in their own terms.

<i>Beni mafo Yordanfaa Is,</i>	When I cross River Jordan,
<i>Mike dze neen nii aagbla mli,</i>	The things of this world and I will separate,
<i>Dze neen nii mashi;</i>	I will leave the things of this world;
<i>Beni mafo Yordanfaa le,</i>	When I cross River Jordan,
<i>Nanefaa kometoo mike aafu,</i>	I will cross it with one step,
<i>Faa le dale keya mitse we,</i>	The river extends to my father's house,

<sup>44</sup> Engmann, 'Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought', p 165.

<sup>45</sup> My own field research notes.

*Faa le dale nyerj mi asu kokooko,*      The river can never drown me,  
*Midzieb baahere mi atuu.*<sup>46</sup>      My redeemer will welcome and embrace me.<sup>47</sup>

Though the song enforces the Ga belief in 'river crossing', there is a two-way transaction taking place here. In this situation, the Ga traditional concept of death and the subsequent crossing of the river have reinforced the Ga Christian belief in the resurrection. The Ga Christian could only conceive of a Christian dying and departing this world to stay with God by crossing a river, hence the reference to the River Jordan. This idea is not far-fetched since Ga, as coastal dwellers, consider the sea as between them and the outside 'world', and it is by sailing across the sea that they could get to other lands. That the idea of crossing a river is a pre-Christian influence is further stressed by Kwesi Wiredu who indicates that the idea of the dead crossing a river to the land of the dead is not peculiar to the Ga, but the whole of West Africa, and that these beliefs and associated practices pre-date Christianity on the continent. According to Wiredu,

In West Africa, where people are not excessively reticent about eschatology, descriptions of the afterlife generally include explicit indications that the transition from this life to the next is by land travel; and of course, if you travel from one part of the earth by land, you can only arrive at another part of the earth. Not surprisingly, the high point of the post-mortem journey is the crossing of a river. Once having crossed the river, one enters the land of the departed and joins the society of the ancestors, a society which replicates the political order of pre-mortem society to the extent that rulers in the one retain their status in the other.<sup>48</sup>

In conclusion, one will agree with Dzobo that death is not considered by the Ga as a threat to human existence nor annihilation of life, but a transformation and bringing into communion individuals who form a new community for the rejuvenation or rebirth of a new society. This new society is the ancestors who are also sometimes

<sup>46</sup> Abbey, *Kedzi Afo Yordan*, p 34.

<sup>47</sup> My own translation. I have tried to be as literal as possible.

<sup>48</sup> Kwesi Wiredu, 'Death and the Afterlife in African Culture' in Kwesi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye (eds.), *Person and Community: Ghanaian philosophical Studies I*, (Washington D. C: Cardinal Station, 1992), p 137.

<sup>49</sup> N. K. Dzobo, 'The Image of Man in Africa' in Kwesi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye (eds.), *Person and Community: Ghanaian philosophical Studies I*, (Washington D. C: Cardinal Station, 1992), p 134.



referred to as the 'living-dead' for whiles they are dead in the flesh they continue to live in the spirit.

### **Ancestors**

Ancestors form an integral part of Ga society. For the Ga, a society is made up not only of the living, but also of the departed as well as the unborn. However, the role of the ancestors in the social and religious life of the people is one that can best be described as 'mixed'. On the one hand, the ancestors are seen to be playing a vital role; being concerned and involved in the affairs of the people. On the other hand, their role, especially as intermediaries, is subsumed under that of the *jemawoji*. For example, in most cases where they are invoked, they are only summoned as auxiliary intermediaries. In public worship, the Ga often supplicate directly the *jemawoji* rather than the ancestors. According to Marion Kilson, 'although ancestral shades are invoked in *kpele* libation prayers, they are summoned as auxiliary intermediaries between gods and men.'<sup>50</sup> The *Nai Wuhmo* also claimed that in most cases, the *Niimsi* (male ancestors) and *Naamsi* (female ancestors) are remembered and recognised than supplicated.

Less emphasis on the ancestors at public worship may also be the result of the Ga conception of the cosmos, which does not include the ancestors. However, when it comes to dealing with existential issues they are revered and consulted on all aspects of human life.

Furthermore, the lack of focus on the ancestors in the public sphere is because they are perceived as being limited in roles they play within the general framework of the society. Though held in high esteem within the community, their main responsibility is to their immediate family and kinsmen; their role as intermediaries, custodians of tradition and overseers are limited to their cognate kin groups. However, ancestors who held public office like the *marjtss* (chief) and the *Wuhmo* (priest) have obligation to the whole community. Such categories of ancestors are very much recognised in public life and are venerated by the whole community especially during annual festivals.

<sup>50</sup> Kilson, 'Libation in Ga Ritual', p 172.

The role of the ancestor is thus very much felt within the kinship groups. They become the pivot of all activities; ordering the economic, social, religious and political lives of the people. Their presence is invoked and acknowledged on every occasion, and before any decision is taken, their consent is sought. Ancestors are also known to manifest themselves in dreams and in bodily form. They are even said to have the ability to 'reincarnate' to be born into the family.<sup>51</sup>

The conclusion that may be drawn from the above is that, in the life and thought of the Ga, the roles of the ancestors are recognised at two levels: within the public life and the cognate kin group. As discussed elsewhere, the heterogeneous nature of Ga society has influenced this to a great extent.

### **CONCLUSION**

The primal world view of the Ga has a cosmology which considers *Nyorjmo* as the Supreme Being and creator who is actively involved in the creation. Other categories within the cosmology are divinities, human beings, animals and plants. These categories are interconnected and any disruption in the ordered relationship, whether accidental or intentional, by human acts may result in disastrous consequences that affect the community as well as the whole of the universe. The *kpele* rites are thus meant to redress any such disruption and re-establish the harmonious relationship within the universe and between *Nyorjmo* and human beings. This forms the foundation and sustenance of community in Ga understanding.

<sup>51</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, p 94.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF NYDDMJ**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Margaret Field, who researched into the Ga religious and social institutions remarked:

Personally, had I not gone to the Ga people with the preconceived idea of *Nyorjmo* gained from the reading of the Ga Bible and talking to Ga Christians, I should never have discovered that he differed in nature from a host of other extinct gods.<sup>1</sup>

This is a crucial statement which, I believe, should mark the beginning of any discussion on the concept of *Nyorjmo* within the Ga traditional, religious and cultural milieu. The statement immediately suggests that the *Nyorjmo* of the Ga Bible differs in nature and character from the *Nyorjmo* within the Ga traditional pantheon. This 'revelation', according to Field, comes to light only by bringing into the discussion a preconceived idea of *Nyorjmo* gained from reading the Ga Bible. The conclusion that Field arrived at was that until one comes to Ga religious culture with this preconceived idea, one would hardly notice any difference between *Nyorjmo* and the other divine beings. The question that follows is, what about the unlettered traditional Ga who does not read the Ga Bible? Will such a person notice such a distinction?

This chapter will attempt to explore the development of *Nyorjmo* as a religious concept. In doing this I will examine the etymology of the word '*Nyorjmo*', traditional notions of the concept, and find out how the whole concept evolved and was finally adopted by the early Christian missionaries, given a Christian meaning and used in the Ga Bible.

#### **EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

It has always been a very difficult attempt for anyone to try to find out the origin of a deity, or the religious experiences of a group of people. Any attempt that seeks to

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, London: OUP, 1937, pp 61-62.

locate the exact origin ends up as a speculation. For the Ga, as for many other people, religion is life and life begins with *Nyoymo*. For them there is no dichotomy between the religious life and the social life or the sacred and the profane. Human existence for them is essentially a religious experience. In this vein it will be a futile exercise to try to attempt to extract the origin of *Nyoymo* since it was not an 'already-made commodity' that was 'imported' into the community<sup>2</sup> but was developed gradually through the historical and religious experiences of the people. The idea of development therefore does not suggest the 'creation' but rather an investigation of how *Nyoymo* is known in the social, economic, political and religious itinerary of the Ga. It is an attempt to seek how *Nyoymo* is conceived among the Ga.

This difficulty is further compounded by the heterogeneous nature of the people who have now come together to be known as the Ga, and the impact of their interactions with other groups of people. As stated earlier in this work, the various groups of people the Ga encountered in their historical journey brought their own religious experiences to bear on the development of *Nyoymo* as a concept. Other influences also came from the neighbouring communities after they had settled, as well as powerful states like the Akwamu who ruled over them for some period. All these factors had their impact on the religious development of the Ga. The religious tradition of the Ga is therefore not monolithic. It is a fusion of various traditions.

It must also be noted that religious concepts and experiences are never static. Their development is never ending as they evolve and develop to suit the historical and religious evolution of the people. In certain situations ideas may be adopted, developed or changed to satisfy the religious and social needs of the people according to their changing circumstances and needs.

<sup>2</sup> John Mbiti, 'Response to the article by John Kirby' in '*Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*', Vol 3, No. 2, (April 1968) cited in Kwame Bediako, 'African Theology' in David Ford (ed), *The Modern Theologies* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn), (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), p 431.

<sup>3</sup> Marion Kilson, *Kpele Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbols*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p13.

<sup>4</sup> See the comments of Dearman and Rowley on the emergence of the name 'Yahweh' in the religious experience of Israel. J. A. Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel*, (Massachusetts: Hendricks Publishers, 1992), p 24. Also H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973), pp 48-73.

## ETYMOLOGY OF 'NYJDM<sub>y</sub>

There have been many attempts by various schools of thought to examine the concept of *Nyorjmo* through the analysis of its etymology. One such group, which I may refer to as the traditionalists, has sought to argue that *Nyorjmo* was derived from two words '*Nyorj*' and '*M?*'. *Nyorj* in Ga means night and *mo* is a being or a person. Literally, *nyorj mo* means a night being or person. From this understanding, *Nyorjmo* is considered as a nocturnal being who exhibits himself in the night. One informant claimed that *Nyorjmo* sometimes comes down to visit his people but only in the night thus human beings cannot see him. In Ga traditional thought, *Nyorjmo* is associated with other nocturnal beings like *jemawoji*, which are also known to sometimes manifest themselves in human form mostly during the darkest time of the night. It is this *Nyorjmo*, the proponents argue, that has been adapted and adopted as the Christian God due to the prominent place he held in the Ga traditional and religious system at the coming of Christian missionaries.

Another approach to the development of the concept of *Nyorjmo* is what can be referred to as an apology or a reaction of the Western view, which demonises African Traditional Religion as animist and backward.<sup>6</sup> Some Africans therefore have sought various ways to eradicate this view and demonstrate that Africans worship the true God. One such person is E. A. Amman, a man described as a poet and an authority on the Ga language.<sup>7</sup> His views on the concept of *Nyorjmo*, as expressed by J.B. Danquah in his book, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, is very insightful. Ammah, according to Danquah, explains:

The term Nyon in *Nyonmo* does not mean rain. *Nyon* is found in other compounds where it appears to mean bright, light, shine, day or the firmament. *Mo* is the Ga

<sup>5</sup> The idea of *Nyonmo* conceived as *nyorj mo* (nocturnal being) stems from the belief in Ga traditional and religious thought that spirit beings normally come out in the night. See Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, p 4.

<sup>6</sup> This was the view held about African Traditional Religion at the 1910 Edinburgh conference which was held to consider the missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world. The term 'Animism' coined by E. B. Tylor was then used to describe the religious beliefs of people regarded as more or less backward and degraded. This included Africa and, for that matter Ghana. See W. H. T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An account and interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), p 139.

<sup>7</sup> J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, (2<sup>n</sup> edn.), (London: Frank and Cass Company Limited, 1968), pp 32-33.

suffix for person acting or doing. Thus *Nyonmo* (God) possibly means "The Master of Light" or "The Actor of Light" etc. Other words in the Ga language using *Nyon* in the sense of light or brightness are *nyon-tsele*, "moon," *nyonten*, midnight. Mr Amman adds that the Ga word for rain is best written without the middle "n" or "ng," *nyomo* and not *nyonmo*, the first "o" of course, being the broad "o" as "oa" in broad, and not the "o" in "told." For the benefit of the research student it may be useful to add that the "tsele" in *nyontsele* means "brightening up"; *tse* often means neat. (*Ehe ntse*, he is neat, holy, or attractive); also the "ten" or "teng" in *nyonteng* means "the middle of ". So that *nyontsele* primitively meant, probably, "Nyon is brightening up", and *nyonten* also meant "The middle of Nyon", whatever *Nyon* may mean. In any case, there is here evidence which points to the conclusion that the "Nyon" in *Nyonmo* belongs to a certain fundamental general idea covering all the elemental changes in the firmament, and not concerned with rain. If we may venture an opinion, it would be that the *Nyon* in these words refers to the firmament as a place associated with the Shining One.<sup>8</sup>

I have quoted Ammah at length because of the influence he brings to bear on the subject. However he misses the point as he focuses on the etymology rather than the concept. Though one agrees that the *nyorj* in *Nyonmo* does not mean rain, neither does *nyorj* mean brightening up, Ammah hesitates to give the actual meaning of *nyon* and rather suggests the firmament, which is not the case. 'Nyon' as a word standing on its own is 'night'.<sup>9</sup> It is the suffix that throws more light on the meaning and gives it further expressions. Thus *nyon* (night) and *mo* (person) become night person.

This approach by Ammah and Danquah is often misleading. Philip Laryea is right when he remarks: 'Ammah, like his friend Danquah, had a tendency of making philosophical speculations by indulging in semantics and often leading his reader to wander in an etymological maze.'

J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, pp 32-33. The old Ga orthography was used and I have maintained such.

J. Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra or Ga-Language and some Specimen of it from the mouth of the Natives*, (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1858), p 242. See also Kropp Dakubu, (ed), *Ga-English Dictionary with English - Ga Index*, (Accra: Black Mask Limited, 1999), p 119.

<sup>10</sup> Philip T. Laryea, *Yesu Homowo Nur/tso: Nikasemo ni koo boni Kristofoi naa Yesu ye Gamei Akusumfeemo ke Blema Saji Amli*, (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2004), p 153.

As noted earlier in this work, there is an argument and an attempt to separate *nyorjmo* (rain) from *Nyorjmo* (Supreme Being). For the people who hold this view, whom I believe come into this discussion with Christian biases, claim that *nyorjmo* is a corruption of *nugbo*. *Nugbo* is derived from two words *nu* (water) and *gbo* (foreigner or guest). Literally, *nugbo* means 'water foreign' or 'water guest'. The thrust of their argument is that the Supreme Being cannot be equated with his creation and therefore rain cannot have the same name as the Supreme Being and be referred to as *Nyorjmo*. Though they hold the view that rainfall is divine activity and it is *Nyorjmo* who gives rain, they however find the association of *Nyorjmo* with rain worrisome.

This view is contrary to what was held by earlier Ga scholars who link *Nyorjmo* directly to rainfall. Quoting Zimmermann and Steinhuser, Wertz claims:

It is possible that according to this verb [*Nyorjmo rjne* which he translates 'heaven rains'], the word *Nyorjmo* (God), has been from the old Adangme word '*Nyu*', water, hence *Nyumo*, *Nyurjmo*, *Nyorjmo* i.e. water man, rain maker, the significance of which is obvious in the tropical countries.<sup>12</sup>

The idea of associating God with the rain, the heavens and the sky is not limited only to the Ga. The Akan of Ghana also links *Onyankopon* (the Supreme Being) to the heavens and things associated with the heavens such as the rain and the rainbow. According to Mercy Oduyoye, 'The Asante say that God is frowning when the dark rain clouds gather, and when the sun struggles through and a rainbow (Mfantse,<sup>12</sup>*Nyankonton*<sup>14</sup>) appears, children shout for joy.'<sup>15</sup>

*Nyorjmo* as a concept is further seen as a corruption of the words *Naano* (everlasting or infinity) and *mo* (being). Literally, it means 'an everlasting being' or one who lives forever. The name *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo* for people who hold this view is

<sup>11</sup> Most of the people interviewed in relation to this subject confessed to be Christians or at one time or the other had had some relationship with a Christian church.

<sup>12</sup> J Wertz, *Ga-English Dictionary* (Unpublished manuscript), I/A f/ PL 8191 W49, lodged in the rare collection room of the Africana section, Balme Library, University of Ghana, Legon, p 1515.

<sup>13</sup> The Fanti, sometimes referred to as Mfantse, is one of the Akan ethnic groups in Ghana.

<sup>14</sup> *Nyankonton* is the Fanti word for rainbow.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflection of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2002), p 29.

therefore the corruption of *Ataa Naano Mo*. Wertz corroborates this assertion when he states that *Nyonmo* is sometimes written as *Naa Nyonmo* from *Naa no Nyonmo*<sup>16</sup> (God of eternity). This idea of *Nyonmo* as an everlasting being does not only stress the infinite nature, but also points to the fact that *Nyonmo* has no beginning. This infinite nature of God is contrasted with the finite nature of *gbomo* (human being). The word '*gbomo*' according to some sources is made up of three words: *gbo* (die) and *mo* (being) *no* (thing) and this has been shortened to *gbomo*. Literally, *gbomo* is the being who dies.<sup>17</sup> Thus while the *gbomo* dies, *Nyonmo* does not. In this sense the attribute of *Nyonmo* as the creator is contrasted with that of *gbomo* the created being.

The focus of the above has been on the etymology of *Nyonmo* rather than the concept itself. The above approach often lends itself to misinterpretations and lack of objectivity. This approach, according to Kwesi Dickson 'has not been helpful as most approach the issue from theological or other bias.' In his view any etymological exercise should proceed on the basis that the meaning of the word would throw light on the origin of the word. From this standpoint, this investigation will go beyond a philological study of *Nyonmo* and examine the 'content'; that is, how the Ga perceive *Nyonmo* in life and thought. As Dickson contends, a religious system in its entirety cannot be derived only from the study of the meaning of names; such an exercise only complements what is to be derived from other sources.<sup>18</sup>

### **NYDDMJ AS A RELIGIOUS CONCEPT**

Oral and documentary evidence also indicate that *Nyonmo* as a religious concept was well established and occupied a special place in the social, economic, political and religious life of the Ga. Its usage was as well being applied to both religious and social institutions. However, there is no evidence as to the development of the concept. It is also not very clear whether it was a concept they carried along in their historical journey or borrowed from the *Kpeshi* aborigines among whom they finally

<sup>16</sup> Wertz, *Ga-English Dictionary*, p 1513.

<sup>17</sup> My own field research notes. This thought was derived from an interview I had with one of my resource persons.

<sup>18</sup> Kwesi Dickson, 'Introduction' in J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, pp xiii - xv.



settled. But this lack of information should not pose much difficulty for such an investigation since we acknowledge that the development of religious concepts spans generations and is dependent on the immediate political, social, cultural and economic situation. Further, we also need to appreciate the fact that religious concepts may also be borrowed from other neighbouring communities if they are found to be relevant to the needs of the day. If these assumptions are true, then it is not difficult to postulate that any of the following may be valid. That:

the Ga might have developed the concept and carried it along as they settled at various places before finally settling at their present location;  
they developed the concept through their historical journey;  
they borrowed it from the *Kpeshi* aborigines;  
it could also be a conglomerate of all the above assumptions.

Again, oral and documentary sources indicate that though the Ga had their own cults, they also borrowed from the various people they came into contact with to complement and enlarge their own religious system. Some of such borrowings are the *Otu* and *Akorj* cults borrowed from the Akan, the *Me* cult from the Adangme<sup>19</sup> and then the *Kple* cult from the *Kpeshi* aborigines.<sup>20</sup>

## **PRE-CHRISTIAN NOTION OF NYJDMD**

### **Nyonmo in Early European Accounts**

Before the Ga had any contact with the Europeans or even the advent of Christianity, they had knowledge of *Nyorjmo*. The statement of Paul the apostle and Christian missionary in the New Testament to the effect that 'God has not left himself without testimony' but has revealed himself variously through his creation to all manner of persons may be applied to the Ga.<sup>22</sup> Early European explorers and merchants of the 18<sup>th</sup> century who came into contact with the Ga recognised this experience in their dealings with them, but with some misgivings. According to Bosman, 'Almost all the Coast Negroes believe in one true God, to whom they

<sup>9</sup> The Dangme share a common ancestry with the Ga. They travelled together during their migrations before finally moving to their separate destinations.

<sup>20</sup> See Field, *Religion and Medicine*, pp 5-6. Also see Kilson, *Kpele Lata*, p13.

<sup>21</sup> Acts 14:17.

<sup>22</sup> Romans 1:20.

attributed the Creation of the World, and all things in it, though in a crude indigested Manner, they not being able to form a just Idea of a Deity.' Thus, the Europeans did not appreciate him in the social and religious itinerary of the Ga. Regarding most other religious activities, early European writers tended to regard them as activities of devil worship.<sup>4</sup> They therefore saw it as distasteful and looked upon it with disdain. Perhaps the frustration of F. L. R0mer summarizes the general sentiments of the Europeans at that time. R0mer remarked:

I have often reflected on [the nature of] mankind in that land, and in general I wonder whether perhaps the great creator was not in fact truly angry at that race [of Blacks], something which the old Blacks have, indeed, often stated to me in confidence, and in their simple way. Could not God use other means to eradicate them from this earthly paradise in which they live? - This people who, having God's law written in hearts, as does all mankind, yet follow the devil's blind way which leads them to that unnatural and abominable evil Satan alone could conceive.<sup>25</sup>

For this reason most of them approach the Ga religion negatively and from their own prejudices. They described the people and their religious leaders as wizards and satanic, and their belief systems as madness and magic, and worshipping false gods. *Nyoymo* as a word or concept was, therefore, very much lacking in most of their writings, though they claim to have had intimate interaction with the people and observed the religious rites closely. The question is what might have influenced such an omission? I attempt some suggestions.

First, it might be due to the lack of thorough investigation on the part of the European writers, since most of them were just explorers and merchants and lacked the interest for deeper investigation. They were passive observers who were just describing what they saw with the purpose of reporting to their home governments,

William Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (2<sup>n</sup> edition), (London, 1721), p 121.

<sup>24</sup> These include Barbort and Tilleman.

<sup>25</sup> Ludewig F. R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea* (1760), Selena Axelrod Winsnes, (trans and ed) (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p126.

<sup>6</sup> Erik Tilleman, *A Short and Simple Account of the Country of Guinea and its Natives* (1697), pp 36-37. See also Adam Jones, *German Sources for West Africa History* (1599-1669), (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), pp 36-37.

companies and colleagues the trading opportunities that existed on the coast, and also to provide guidance for sailing along the coast.

The second and perhaps a more important consideration is the shift in attention from *Nyoymo* to other deities considered as essential to the survival of the Ga at the point in time. Most of this period falls within the time when the Ga were threatened by wars from other powerful nations. It is therefore most likely that the focus of their religious rites would be on their war gods. The evolution of *Sakumo* (the war deity) of the Ga is a case in point. This will be discussed in detail when we examine the concept of *Nyoymo* in prayer and songs.

Another factor that may account for the absence of *Nyoymo* in some of the early accounts by Europeans is given by R0mer. According to R0mer most of the early European writers 'filled their writings with untruth'. Citing Bosman, he claimed: 'Bosnian did not dare to touch on the slave trade and the Negroes' religion, and when he does write about these matters, you can see that he does not wish to dwell on them.' R0mer himself admits that he had to break the promise he made to his resource persons in order to give a more reliable account of the life of the Negroes.

While some of the European writers had a negative approach to Ga religion, others took a positive view. Significant among such writers are Ferdinand L. R0mer<sup>90</sup> and Paul E. Isert<sup>91</sup> whose descriptions of some of the aspects of the Ga religion were objective. Thus they were able to identify the concept of *Nyorjmo* within Ga religious culture.

Isert in particular observed that the Ga had knowledge of the Supreme Being whom they regarded as the creator of the world and all that is within it; they referred to

R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, p 240.

R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, p 240.

R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*. See chapter 3, which deals with the religion of the Negroes.

Paul Isert, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade: Paul Erdmamm Isert's Journey to Guinea and the Caribbean Islands in Columbia (1788)*, Selena A. Winsnes, (trans and ed) (Oxford: OUP, 1992). See Eighth Letter.

Paul Isert, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade*, p 9.

him as *Numbo (Nyorjmo)*. In his view, the Ga believed that *Nyorjmo* is so exalted that he has less concern with the activities and dealings of human beings. They therefore created sub-gods who served as intermediaries between the human beings and God. It is to these sub-gods that the Ga offer their petitions.<sup>32</sup> Isert's observations are similar to recent writers like Kilson who made much the same claims.

In an analogous vein, R0mer also claimed: 'In the Accra language God is called *Niumboo [Nyorjmo]*.'<sup>34</sup> He also adds another dimension to the pre-Christian notion of *Nyorjmo* with respect to the creation story. According to him, the Ga believe that *Nyorjmo* created the human beings before all other things were created with the help of the spider, which he mentions as *Nanni [anaanu]*. Further *Nyorjmo* created other spirits to help to teach human beings how to lead virtuous and pious lives.

The above observations give ample indication that the idea of *Nyorjmo* was well established within the Ga society during this moment of their history. It was from these notions that the whole concept developed and was later expanded through the translation of the Ga Bible, as we shall observe in the next chapter.

#### **Nyonmo in Traditional Sources**

The concept of *Nyorjmo* can also be traced from Ga traditional sources. It is noted that though the religious concept of a group of people can be expressed in the general life of the *marjbii*, that is the common or ordinary people, it is very much located within the cultic language and traditional religious practices. These include traditional prayers, traditional rites and rituals, dance and music, art forms, symbols and emblems, folklore, wise sayings, as well as the cultural festival of the people. The most significant is the *kpele* cult and songs. Since these are believed to be divinely inspired, they have not been tampered with, and are therefore a more

Paul Isert, *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade*, pp 127-128.

<sup>33</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, pp 79-80. See also Marion Kilson, 'Libation in Ga Ritual', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. II, Fasc. 3, (1969), p 172.

<sup>34</sup> R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, p 80.

<sup>35</sup> *Anaanu* is the Ga word for spider.

<sup>36</sup> R0mer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea*, pp 79-86.

reliable source. Some of these sources will form the basis of discussion of the pre-Christian notion of *Nyorjmo* within the traditional milieu.

### **Nyonmo in Traditional Prayers**

*Nyorjmo* as a concept has been used variously within varied religious contexts. Though a very significant concept and used in almost all religious and social settings, *Nyorjmo* was initially not considered a superior being but was more or less regarded as just one of the many *jemawoji* without any special recognition. This notion may be gleaned from some of the traditional prayer texts.

In some of the very old traditional prayers, *Nyorjmo* is placed in the same category as the other divine beings (*jemawoji*) and even in some cases some of the *jemawoji* are deemed to be superior to *Nyorjmo*. The prayer text below which was said at the beginning of a meeting to invoke the blessing of the *jemawoji* for a successful deliberation gives such an indication.

<i>Tswa tswa tswa. Manye aba\</i>	Hail, hail, hail. <sup>37</sup> Let happiness come!
<i>Wogbei komel</i>	Are our voices one?
<i>Nii Sakumo ed^o</i>	Let Grandfather <i>Sakumo</i> give peace
<i>Akpitioko edjo</i>	Let <i>Akpitioko</i> give peace
<i>Otsiama ed\$o</i>	Let <i>Otsiama</i> give peace
<i>Awudu Sakaraka ed\$o</i>	Let <i>Awudu</i> the Almighty give peace
<i>Ata Nyorjmo edjo</i>	Let Father Rain-god give peace
<i>Tswa tswa tswa. Manye aba\</i>	Hail, hail, hail. Let happiness come. <sup>38</sup>

A careful study of the above prayer text reveals that *Nyorjmo* is mentioned in the context of other divinities who are all considered powerful, and whose protection and guidance are needed for the prosperity of the community. Again *Ata Nyorjmo* is mentioned far below the other beings, an indication that *Nyorjmo* was not the most powerful or the influential among the *jemawoji* at this particular point in the

<sup>37</sup> Field translates '*Tswa*' as 'Hail' while others translate it as 'strike'. See E. A. Ammah, *Materialism in Ga Society*, (Accra, 1965), p3. *Tswa* in its basic meaning conveys the idea of the use of force though its configuration may reveal other meanings. See Kropp Dakubu, (ed), *Ga-English Dictionary*, pp 165-166. But the context in which '*tswa*' is used in the prayer text has no equivalent in the English language which can adequately express it.

<sup>38</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p14. Field's translation.

religious history of the Ga. Nonnally within the Ga religious community, divinities are mentioned or invoked in a hierarchical order or according to their status within the community. The most powerful and prominent is mentioned first.

The invocation of *Sakumo* not only as the first, but also with the title *Nii* gives further indication of his superiority. In both Tema and Ga Mashie *Sakumo* is considered a war deity, and also the *shitse* (the owner of the land). It is therefore not surprising that at the time when the survival of the states was crucial due to frequent wars, the role of *Sakumo* was well noticed. The preferment of *Sakumo* over *Nyorjmo* at this point in time is further demonstrated by the titles applied to them. In Ga tradition, titles are important and give indication of one's position in the society. Whereas *Sakumo* is addressed as *Nii*, *Nyorjmo* is referred to as *Ataa*. The title '*Nii*' is conferred on title holders like kings, chiefs and traditional priests. It may also be used for an older respected man within the community. '*Ataa*', which is a synonym for father, on the other hand addresses any older male. In specific terms the title '*Mf*' is considered weightier than '*Ataa*'. One informant explained that this prayer was said especially during the period when wars were rampant and *Sakumo* the war deity was crucial to the survival of the Ga Mashie and Tema States. This view finds support in the following song, which was sung by the *asafo* companies during wartime. Such songs were sung in praise of the deities, which are deemed very powerful and helped the people to defeat their enemies.

<i>Awo Kole Aba mikula shi miiba o,</i>	Mother <i>Kole Aba</i> I kneel and plead with you,
<i>Mar] le agbe mom,</i>	The town should kill this person,
<i>Awo Sakumo Aba mikula shi miiba o,</i>	Mother <i>Sakumo Aba</i> I kneel and plead with
	you,
<i>Awo Kole Aba mikula shi miiba o,</i>	Mother <i>Kole Aba</i> I kneel and plead with you,
<i>Gbee le oha mi eei,</i>	Kill him for me,
<i>Awo Kole Aba mikula shi miiba o,</i>	Mother <i>Kole Aba</i> I kneel and plead with you,
<i>May Is agbe mone.<sup>yi</sup></i>	The town should kill this person.

<sup>39</sup> Emmanuel A. Anteh, *Ga IJamoi: Salutations of the Ga People*, (London: Macmillan and co. Ltd, 1969), pp 55-56.

<sup>40</sup> My own translation.

### Nyonmo in Folklore

We may probe further the traditional notion of *Nyotjmo* by looking at the folklore of the Ga. Folklore is one of the sources that capture the imagination and world view of a people. The stories serve as a means by which the people express their ideas and thoughts about their religious, social and political environment. This happens mostly in oral communities, such as is found among the Ga.

The Ga have a lot of stories that express their views about *Nyotjmo*. In most of these stories, the name of *Nyotjmo* is used. Again, *Nyotjmo* is made the principal character even though the roles assigned him in these stories do not suggest in the least that *Nyotjmo* is any more supreme than the other characters. *Nyotjmo* is portrayed in anthropomorphic form: a polygamous and wicked authoritarian man with children. Generally, in these stories, *Nyotjmo* is not all knowing and all-powerful. In some cases *anaanu* (spider) is said to have played tricks on him and outwitted him. In one story, *Nyotjmo* is said to have married many wives with the eldest being the fowl; he did not even know the sex of some of his wives hence one happened to be a male (See Appendix I). In another, *Nyotjmo* was portrayed as a mischievous and wicked farmer who employed people to weed his farm, full of all sorts of ants, with the promise of being rewarded with a big cow. He killed anybody who attempted but could not finish the work. Nobody could therefore do it except the cunning spider who was able to outwit him with his tricks. (See Appendix II).

The background to these stories points to the traditional beliefs of the people. In Ga religious tradition, divinities are either known to be male or female and can marry and have children. For instance in Tema, the *Sakumo jemawotj* is said to be a male and married to *Naa Yoo* the goddess of birth, and together they gave birth to *Awudu*. The current Tema *Matjtse*, Nii Adjei Kraku II confirmed this when he claimed that whenever the *Sakumo jemawotj* possesses a priestess she displays masculine gestures including *tsetj gblamo* (pulling of the beard); this he deemed was very significant. Thus in these stories, the early Ga sometimes conceived of *Nyotjmo* as having wives and children.

Judging from the above, one may again agree with Field that the pre-Christian notion of *Nyorjmo* was not that of a Supreme Being but one of *the jemawoji* and that the idea of a Supreme Being in the Christian sense may well have come from European missionaries.

### **Nyorjmo associated with Spirit Beings**

Another significant indication that *Nyorjmo* was not considered too different from the other divine beings is the association of *Nyorjmo* with the *jemawoji*. Within some towns in the Ga littoral we have divinities whose names are prefixed with *Nyorjmo*. For instance in Kpong, Teshie and La one finds divinities and shrines called *Nyorjmo Tsawe* and *Nyorjmo Tsanaa*<sup>42</sup> and in Ga Mashie *Nyorjmo Tsa*.<sup>43</sup> It is not clear how these divinities came to be known by these names. Though the name *Nyorjmo* is attached to their names, they gain no special attention within the religious community and are treated just like the other divinities.

For example in La, though *Nyorjmo Tsawe* was the rain god, he had no superiority over other La deities. The *La-Kpa* remained the supreme deity and it was the *La-Kpa* who gave rain through the petitioning of *Nyorjmo Tsawe*.<sup>4</sup> In Ga Mashie *Nyorjmo Tsa* was associated with the sky and heavens. He was conceived as the god of thunder and lightning and the figure in the moon. However, he is still considered the child of *Nai*<sup>45</sup> the *shitse* (owner and ruler of the land) as depicted in the *kpele* songs. In Kpong and Teshie, *Nyorjmo Tsawe* was more connected to the sea and that made him the sea god.

Again, these divinities had shrines and priests who served them and performed various rites and rituals just like the other divinities. In La, *Nyorjmo Tsawe* is said to have a sacred animal, a dog, so that the adherents of *Nyorjmo Tsawe* are not allowed to keep dogs as pets.

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 61.

Augustus A. Gbugblah, *The Teshie People*, (unpublished article), p 29.

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 61.

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, pp 61-62.

Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 174.

Kilson, *Kpele Lalai*, p 192.





Fig. 3. The Shrine of *Nyorjmotsaa* at La.

#### **Nyonmo associated with Human Beings**

The association of *Nyorjmo* is not restricted to only divine beings. There are human beings who bear names such as *Ayoko Nyorjmo* and *Obodai Nyorjmo*.<sup>41</sup> In Ga tradition, people with such names are those considered to have been petitioned from a definite divinity. Such persons are dedicated to the god, receive that god's name and remain the special 'property' of that god until puberty when they can be 'released' through the performance of certain rites. In some Ga communities, especially in villages, people still go to various divinities to petition them for children. These children sometimes have the names of the gods attached to theirs. In the case of *Ayoko Nyorjmo* and *Obodai Nyorjmo*, the shrine that might have been consulted might have had something to do with *Nyorjmo* hence the name *Nyorjmo* attached to their names. Field recounts how men went to consult many of the *Kpele* gods when their wives became pregnant. Narrating the experience of La, she states:

When the wife of one of *Nyorjmo Tsawe*'s Labadi worshippers becomes pregnant, the man takes her at night to *Nyorjmo Tsawe*'s tree and there the priest blesses

<sup>41</sup> C. C. Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante*, Accra: (Ghana Universities Press, (1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1895, 1966), p 46. In his work Reindorf mentions the name of one *Obodai Nyorjmo* who sought assistance from the king of Akra (sic) in the 1730s when he was being attacked by his enemies.

them both and gives them holy water for washing and *nyanya* leaves to use as a sponge.<sup>48</sup>

When I posed the question in my interview as to whether people will like to prefix their children's name with *Nyorjmo*, both Christians and traditionalists responded in the negative with the reason that no human being can associate himself or herself with *Nyorjmo*, the Supreme Being. This may be an indication that at the time when *Nyorjmo* was not considered a supreme being it was not difficult for people to name their children after *Nyorjmo*.

From the foregoing, one can rightly conclude that the pre-Christian understanding of *Nyorjmo* was not that of a superior being higher and above all other divine beings. Margaret Field may therefore be right when she queried 'whether the Ga ever really had a supreme creator god, *Nyorjmo*, differing in nature from all other gods, or whether *Nyorjmo* was just one of a long succession of supreme gods.'<sup>49</sup>

#### **RECOGNITION OF NY JUMP AS A SUPERIOR BEING**

The conclusion drawn above does not resolve the issue of how *Nyorjmo*, who was not supreme, was recognised at a later date as the High God above all other divinities and to be adopted by the Bible translators as the name for God. (See Appendix VI for a diagrammatic illustration of the recognition of *Nyorjmo* as a Superior Being).<sup>50</sup> To address this issue we may refer again to our prayer text cited earlier. In the prayer, out of the five divinities mentioned only *Nyorjmo* and *Sakumo* have survived with *Nyorjmo* gaining more power and recognition than *Sakumo*. According to Margaret Field, '*Akpitioko* is now very insignificant, *Otsiama* has vanished even from memory and tradition, *Awudu* is by no means almighty... Only *Sakumo* status remains unchanged.'<sup>51</sup>

First we need to examine the loss and diminishing influence of the other divinities. In Ga religious tradition, divinities can be adopted or abandoned depending on the

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 162.

<sup>49</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 34.

<sup>50</sup> For the avoidance of doubt, I should like to state that the illustration in appendix vi is mine.

<sup>51</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 14.

religious, economic, social and political needs of the people. Some informants in Tema confirmed the story of the abandonment of *Akpitioko*. According to these sources, *Akpitioko* was one of the divinities that the people of Tema brought with them to their old settlement and worshipped. *Akpitioko* and her shrine were however left when they moved to their present settlement. They brought the shrines of *Sakwno*, *Naa Yoo* and *Chemu* among others. *Akpitioko* is now forgotten by the majority of the people, except for some few elderly persons who were attached to the shrine. No rite is performed for her and she has no *Wulomo*. Though they could not give any reason for her abandonment, it must be due to the fact that she is no longer considered to be significant or relevant in the present time.

The recognition of *Nyorjmo* basically stems from his association with rain. As noted earlier, rainfall plays a significant role in the life of the Ga people. Their livelihood and sustenance as a people depended on it. However, in the historical evolution of the Ga, the significance of rain was played down especially during situations when they felt the threat of war. On these occasions they focused more on their war gods to save them. A story was narrated when the Akwamu attacked and defeated the Ga. The defeat and the loss was so heavy that they had to call on *Sakumo* who came and fought to save them. Ever since, *Sakumo* has continued to feature in the religious life of the Ga.<sup>52</sup> It was after this period that rainfall gained greater attention among the people who had not given much consideration to it.

#### *Nyonmo* as **Rain God**

The significance of rain became prominent during the 'stable' periods, especially when the Ga people had settled and needed to depend on rainfall to survive as an agricultural community. The Ga word for *Nyorjmo* is the same word that translates rain and as Margaret Field puts it 'the only way of saying it is raining is to say that *Nyorjmo* is falling.' She further notes: '*Nyorjmo* was originally anything more than rain.' This view is also held by Marion Kilson who says '*Nyorjmo* in everyday parlance means rain.' These concepts are however distinguished by the use of an

My own field research notes. This story was confirmed by *Nai Wulomo*, the traditional high priest of the Ga Mashie state.

<sup>53</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 61.

<sup>54</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 59.

upper case 'N' for *Nyoymo* (God) and a lower case 'n' for *nyoymo* (rain). But it is only the literate who will notice such a distinction. For the unlettered Ga this distinction is irrelevant and cannot be made in speech. It is only the context that determines whether it is rain or God that is being referred to. Zimmermann records occasions when people inquiring whether it will rain asked: *'Ani Nyoymo aba? Milee, leji onukpa, efeo bofeebo ni esumoo*, literally translates (will God (rain?) come? I don't know; he is the highest [sovereign] he does whatever he likes.)<sup>56</sup> It is evident that within this context, it is rainfall that is being addressed but it could also be *Nyoymo*, the rain god, for the Ga see no difference between the two as both entities are considered as one and the same embodiment.

The reference to both God and rain as *Nyoymo* is not an unconscious speculation or a matter of semantics. It is a conscious effort to demonstrate how the concept of rain relates to the concept of God. Rainfall is the direct act of *Nyoymo*, just as thunder (*nyoymoshimo*) and lightning (*nyoymokplemo*). When rain is falling, the Ga say *nyoymo yne*, which could also be rendered *Nyoymo ns* (this is God). However, conceiving *Nyoymo* as rain does not diminish his personality, for the rain is seen as the manifestation of *Nyoymo's* presence; he blesses his people through rainfall for good harvest and abundant food. It is in this vein that when there is no rain, the Ga consider it is a religious issue; it is a punishment from *Nyoymo* who is withholding himself from them, as a result of disruption in the ordered relationship according to their cosmological ideas. In these situations, they impute religious reasons for such occurrence and perform rites and rituals that seek to remedy the perceived disruption. During the 1983 drought in Ghana, people of different religious traditions and persuasions, both Christians and traditionalists, assigned various religious reasons for the lack of rain and prayed to *Nyoymo* to have mercy on them and remedy the situation. Thus when the rains later came they saw it as answer to prayer.

Further, rainfall is seen beyond the physical. For the Ga, it is personified and therefore addressed in personal terms. In situations where there is much rainfall

J Wertz, *Ga-English Dictionary*, p 1513.

Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch and Vocabulary of the Akra*, p 243.

resulting in floods and thus threatening life and property, people come out to look to the heavens and plead with the rain to stop.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the most significant indicator of rain as a manifestation of *Nyorjmo* is found in the worship life of the Ga. Central to their worship is the *gbatsu*, which comes from two Ga words: *gbaa* (to prophesy or foretell) and *tsu* (room). *Gbatsu* thus literally means prophecy or foretelling room, or house of prophecy. It is into the *gbatsu*, which is more or less regarded as the 'holy of holies' that the *gbah* (prophet) goes to receive his message to prophesy to the people. According to Ga tradition the only things found in the *gbatsu* are a stool, a broom and a big pot containing *toy* (rainwater collected directly from the <sup>co</sup> falling rains and therefore uncontaminated). This is considered as 'holy water'. When the *gbah* enters the room, he collects some of the water to wash his face; he stares at the water till he receives a message from *Nyorjmo*. This he passes on to the people. It is believed that through this process *Nyorjmo* manifests himself in the rainwater and speaks with the *gbalo*.

The assertion that rain or rainwater symbolizes *Nyorjmo* is also made by Marion Kilson. According to her 'in the shrine (*gbatsu*) that a *kpele* priest tends and the room (*worjtsu*) that the *kpele* medium uses for invocation is a pot (*kulo*) of water which is said to symbolize the god [*Nyorjmo*].<sup>59</sup>

In the view of Margaret Field, it is through the association with rain as the rain god that *Nyorjmo* has managed to survive and thus gained prominence over other divine beings some of whom have died or become insignificant to the community.<sup>60</sup> However, this did not make *Nyorjmo* supreme and far above the other gods for according to Field, 'there has been indeed a long succession of supreme gods, each

I could remember on one occasion when our house was flooded due to a heavy downpour. My mother came out and cried '*Nyorjmo eei wo mli kpa bo fai boni one efa kutomo mli fio oha wo*' (Oh *Nyonmol* we beg you, you have rained enough, minimise it for us.)

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, pp 6-7.

<sup>59</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 69.

<sup>60</sup> In Ga traditional religious thought, divine beings or deities can die and when this happens they are abandoned. On other occasions deities are neglected when their services are no longer needed or they become irrelevant. Thus in the religious history of the Ga, there were a number of occasions when deities were abandoned and others taken on as the prevailing situation demanded. An informant narrated a story indicating that the *Sakumo* (the god of war for Ga Mashie) was discovered and incorporated into the religious system of the Ga during the years of tribal war.

a giver of rain and all good things, but most of them now forgotten.<sup>61</sup> This is true of some communities such as La where the local deity, the *La-Kpa*, was regarded as supreme though they have a rain-god *Nyoymo Tsawe*.

### **Attributes of *Nyoymo* depicted in *Kpele* Songs**

The *kpele* songs, as has been noted earlier, serve as one authentic source when it comes to the examination of the traditions of the Ga. The songs cover all segments of Ga life and thought, especially issues dealing with religion and culture. We thus briefly examine some of the songs to see how *Nyoymo* is portrayed in the traditional thought and also how such portrayal would have contributed to the eventual recognition of *Nyoymo* as the Supreme Being.

### ***Nyoymo* associated with the Sky**

Apart from being the rain god, *Nyoymo* was also associated with the sky. As Field explains, certainly *Nyoymo* was a sky-god, for the sky is the home of rain.<sup>63</sup> The reference to *Nyoymo* as the sky and therefore the sky god is very prominent in the much-revered *kpele* songs. One goes as follows:

<i>Shikpotj eei,</i>	The earth is,
<i>Nyoymo ni.</i>	The sky is.
<i>Shikporj Is tetres, nyoymo tetree.</i>	The earth is flat [vast], the sky is flat [vast]. <sup>64</sup>

The rendering of *Nyoymo* as the sky or heavens is also found in earlier translations and dictionaries. Zimmermann in his works translates *Nyoymo* as *ywsi* (sky or heaven) noting that *Nyoymo* is considered as the soul of heaven and that the heavens are the outward manifestation of *Nyoymo*.<sup>65</sup> The relation of *Nyoymo* to the sky stems from the belief that the heavens are the locus of divine activity and the home of *Nyoymo*. The sky (heaven) is called *Nyoymo may* literally 'God's town' or 'abode of *Nyoymo*', while the physical world is referred to as *hulu may* (sun's town or abode of the sun). Harold Turner commenting on a religious phenomenon, which

Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 61.

<sup>ui</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, pp 61-62

<sup>63</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 61.

<sup>64</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lalka*, p 59.

<sup>65</sup> Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch and Vocabulary of the Akra*, p 243.

the Ga also share, says 'There is the belief that the physical realm is meant to be patterned on the model of the spiritual world beyond, like all other things connected with the life of man in this world, which is therefore conceived as a microcosm of the macrocosm.'<sup>66</sup> This idea is also found in the following prayer text stressing the belief that things that happen in *hulu may* are a reflection of what happens in *Nyorjmo may*.<sup>61</sup>

*Hmene ashi me? Imene ashi Hoo,  
Niimeɪ a-Hoo Naamei a-Hoo,  
Noni afeɔ ye Nyoymo may le,  
No nonn afeɔ ye **hulu may**.<sup>66</sup>  
Naa! Imene abaafo ashimashi faa,  
Joomo bii ke hoi,  
Ke ako hieo<sup>69</sup> le efee ebii [yi] enyo,  
Ni ana eko, in akewo nyomo ni abaabo le.*

Today is what day? Today is Saturday  
Grandfather's Saturday Grandmother's Saturday,  
What is done in **God's town**, (realm of God)  
The same is done in **Sun's town**, (realm of human beings)  
Today somebody will be ferried across the river, (from life into the abode of the ancestors)  
Bless children and pregnancies,  
When we take a cowry let it be two [of its children],  
So that we can get some [money] to pay for the expenses to be incurred.<sup>71</sup>

In Ga tradition, asymmetrical relations are very important and inform the religious and social construct of the people. It provides the key to understanding the ideas and actions of the people in their daily social, economic, religious and political lives. In the understanding of the Ga, the sky is superior to the earth and so is anything

<sup>66</sup> Harold W. Turner, 'The Primal Religions of the World and their Studies', in Victor Hayes (ed), *Australian Essays in World Religions*, (Bedford Park: Australian Association for the study of Religions, 1977), p 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Nyonmo man* also means the world of the spirits including the abode of the dead.

<sup>68</sup> Emphasis my own.

<sup>69</sup> *Hieo* is a cowry which is the least denomination in Ga monetary calculations. The Ga used to calculate monies by hanging cowries on a string and giving different names to various quantities. See A. A. Amartey, *Omanyɛ Aba*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn), (Accra: 1990), p 18.

<sup>70</sup> E. T. A. Abbey, *Kedzi Afo Yordan (Gbele Ke Yarafeemo)*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1968), p 37.

<sup>71</sup> This is my own translation of the text. I have tried to be as literal as possible.

associated with the sky to anything associated with the earth. Thus, the association<sup>77</sup> of *Nyorjmo* with both rain and the sky makes him superior to all other beings.

One may contest that in Ga traditional thinking the heavens are not restricted to only *Nyorjmo*, for other spirit beings are also associated with the heavens. However, the belief is that these associations are ephemeral and the permanent place of abode of these other spirit beings are located in certain topographical features such as the sea, rivers, lakes, lagoons, mangroves and rocks. In most situations, shrines are built for them and they have priests and priestesses that perform rites and rituals for them. *Nyorjmo* on the other hand dwells permanently in the heavens and only reveals himself to his people. *Nyorjmo* does not have altars or priests.<sup>73</sup> It is this notion that catapulted *Nyorjmo* to the position of Supreme Being over and above every other being. It is the conception of *Nyorjmo* as nurturant being associated with the sky that led to the recognition of *Nyorjmo* as the Supreme Being. With this position recognised, further attributes were associated with *Nyorjmo*. Some of these will next engage our attention.

<sup>72</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, pp 70-78.

Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, (Edinburgh: T& T Clark / New York: Orbis Books, 1996), p 71. See also Laryea, *Yesu Homowo Nuntso*, pp 60-61.



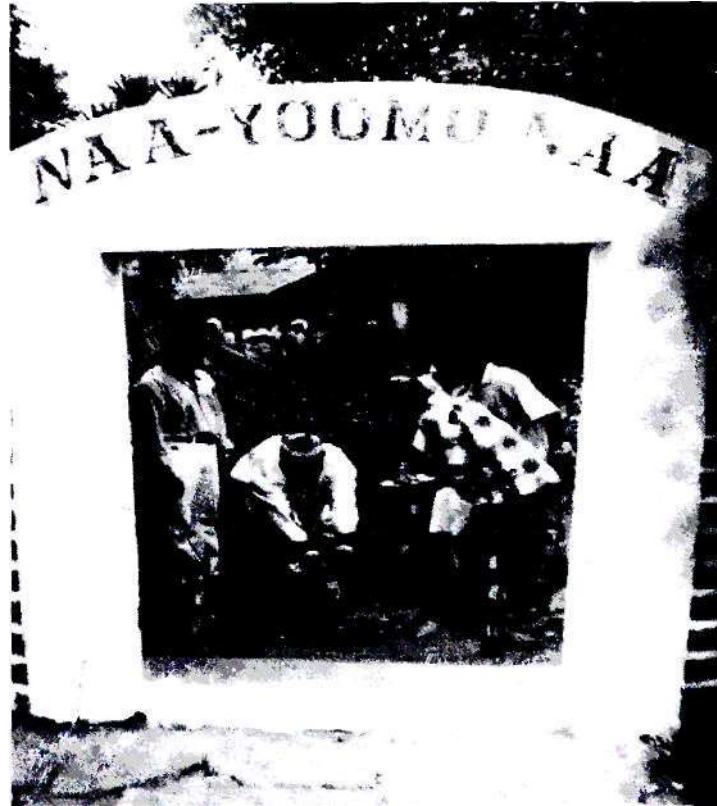


Fig. 4. The *La-Kpa Wulomo* Sprinkling *KpoKpoi* at the *Naa-Yoomo* shrine at La.

#### *Nyonmo* as the Supreme Being

*Nyorjmo* in Ga primal religion came to be regarded as Supreme Being. This is depicted in the following *kpele* song:

<i>Nyamporj</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>onukpa,</i>	God is senior, [elder]
<i>Okremaduamo</i>	<i>Is</i>	<i>ekwraa wo</i>	God looks after us,
<i>Ni</i>	<i>ekwraa</i>	<i>wo.</i>	And he looks after us. <sup>74</sup>

*Nyamporj* and *Okremaduamo* are Obutu loanwords which have found their way into Ga religious vocabulary. In this *kpele* song, they are used as titles, emphasising the supremacy of *Nyorjmo*. *Nyamporj*, according to one respondent, is the adulteration of *Nyame*<sup>15</sup> or *Onyankomporj*, both Akan words for God. Within the Ga religious system, *Nyorjmo* is acknowledged as the Supreme Being and as being above all other beings. In Ga cosmology, *Nyorjmo* is placed at the apex of the hierarchy of

<sup>74</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 116.

<sup>73</sup> *Nyame* is an Akan word for God. According to some Akan sources, the word '*Nyame*' means the one whom when you get you become satisfied.

beings, for it is *Nyorjmo* who created the other beings, the universe and all that is within it.<sup>76</sup>

The supremacy of *Nyorjmo* is observed not only in his creative power but also, and more importantly, in his ability to care for his people. For the Ga, survival in a very harsh environment, where lack of rainfall could lead to famine and loss of life, was very important. They therefore regard anyone who could provide and care for their needs as supreme. They do not only stress the supremacy of *Nyorjmo* in terms of his seniority among the divinities, but also emphasise his ability to care - *Okremaduamo Is ekwraa wo*.

*Nyorjmo* is again seen as the one who takes good care of his people. He is the ultimate source of human well-being and prosperity. The usage of *Nyamporj* and *Okremaduamo* as appellations is equally significant. In Ga religious and social life, the appellations are regarded as means of honouring people who achieve certain feats and so indicate their position within the society. In such cases, the real names of the persons are not mentioned; they are addressed by their titles. *Nyorjmo*, in this instance is addressed as both *Nyamporj* and *Okremaduamo* to express the attribute of *Nyorjmo* as caring and therefore supreme in nature.

Though one could argue that the *jemawoji* are the superintendents over the human society and all supplications are made to them, the reality is that they are regarded as intermediaries between *Nyorjmo* and human beings. They are often considered children of *Nyorjmo*. For instance, in La, the *Lakpa jemaworj* is referred to as *Nyorjmobi Tete* (the first born of *Nyorjmo*). They are thus channels through which human beings carry their petitions to *Nyorjmo*. They do not have any power of their own, and their existence depends on *Nyorjmo*, whose purpose they serve. The relationship between *Nyorjmo* and the *jemawoji* is what Bolaji Idowu, commenting on the Yoruba variant, describes as 'one and many'. In the Yoruba concept of God for instance, the divinities (*Ori\$**a*) do not have 'absolute existence' in themselves but share in the existence of the Supreme Being (*Olodumare*). According to Idowu, *Olodumare* has committed to them [*Ori\$**a*] the creation of the physical part of man

<sup>76</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lata*, p 59.

and also the creation of earth and arrangements of its trappings. [Thus] the *Orl\$*a serve the will of *Olodumare* in the creation and theocratic government of the world.<sup>77</sup> This idea explains the Ga situation.

### **Nyotimo as Creator of the Universe**

*Nyorjmo* is further conceived as the creator of the universe. In the following song, the imagery of a farmer is used to portray this notion:

<i>Nyoymj Adu Akwa,</i>	God [ <i>Adu Akwa</i> ],
<i>Leji okua agbo le.</i>	He is the great farmer,
<i>Le ebo jerj</i>	He created the world
<i>Ni eha anyeo mli ahi.</i>	And gave it to them to live in. <sup>78</sup>

*Adu Akwa* is a Ga name for a male. In this *kpele* song, *Nyorjmo* is portrayed as a great and successful farmer who produces enough to feed a lot of people. The name *Adu Akwa* is therefore used as a title to express the creative ability of *Nyorjmo*. *Leji okua agbo le, Is ebo jerj* (he is the great farmer, he created the world). Like the farmer whose aim of cultivation is to produce food crops to feed the people, so is *Nyorjmo* seen not just as creating the world for its sake, but also as producing the means to sustain human life.

The image of *Nyorjmo* as creator is interesting in two ways. First, *Nyorjmo* is the creator of the physical world (*le ebo jerj*). In the Ga creation story, the sky or heavens were the first to be created, then the earth and the sea. It is on these three entities that the other creatures, including human beings depend for survival. Marion Kilson narrates what an *Ashiakle* priest describes as the Ga creation story:

Creation, how they told us: the sky [was first], the next was the earth and on it all the rivers were created and ran down on this earth and they all gathered together and they made the sea. And so after the sky is the earth and the sea, three things. And so then at creation these three things [were] and so then I know that they hold all the power in the world.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> E. B. Idowu, *Olodumare - God in Yoruba Belief*, (London: Longmann, 1962), p 57.

<sup>78</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 114.

<sup>79</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 60.

This thought is reflected in the *Nai Wulomo's* prayer where *Mawu*,<sup>80</sup> the sky god (heavens) is first mentioned, followed by *Asaase Afia* (earth) and *Bosum Mpo Mensah* (sea). *Nyorjmo* the creator is therefore the one who sustains life through the physical world.

Second, the use of the imagery of a farmer to portray *Nyorjmo* as a creator and sustainer of life is significant. Farming and fishing constitute the two traditional subsistence activities in Ga culture. The Ga therefore depend on the sky for rainfall, the land for ploughing and sowing and on the sea for the protein requirements of the community. This makes the creation story relevant to Ga society. The farmer who also doubled as the fisherman plays an important role as the producer of the dietary needs of the people. Thus, his position is regarded with honour as the sustainer of the community. The imagery of the farmer therefore helps to explain how the Ga came to recognize the role and relevance of *Nyorjmo* within the society.

*Nyorjmo* as the creator of the universe is not just concerned with the general outlook, but also with the details of it. He therefore determines the topographical features of the physical world. He determines its features as well as their location as is conveyed in this song:

<i>Opete Kpaakpo</i>	God's lake,
<i>Mi rjto le</i>	I myself made it. <sup>82</sup>

It is *Nyorjmo* who determines the physical features of all living beings. According to the *Okposansa* (spadefish), its features were given to it by *Nyorjmo*, as expressed in the song below.

<i>Okposansa -</i>	Spadefish -
<i>Nyame ni boo mi</i> , <sup>83</sup>	God created me
<i>Minim pot</i> ),	My face is swollen,

<sup>80</sup> *Mawu* is another name for *Nyonmo*. See Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch*, p 243.

<sup>81</sup> Irene Odotei, 'Pre-Colonial Economic Activities of Ga' in *Research Review (NS)*, Vol. II, Nos. 1&2, (1995), p 60.

<sup>82</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 120.

<sup>83</sup> These are Akan expressions, which have found their way into the Ga religious vocabulary, an indication that the integration between Ga and Akan communities was not only at the social and political levels, but also at the religious level.

<i>Mitsi pon</i>	My back is swollen
<i>Nyame boo mi saa</i>	God created me this way
<i>Mi hie kpo</i>	My face is swollen,
<i>Mi see kpo;</i>	My back is swollen;
<i>Nyame ni boo mi.</i>	God created me this way. <sup>84</sup>

This thought again finds expression in another contemporary song where God is conceived as the one who determines the features of plants:

*Mi yejeene* <sup>85</sup> *nakai Nyonmo bo mi,*  
*Mi yejeene nakai Nyonmo bo mi.*  
*Hani mahi gbonyogbonyo nakai Nyonmo bo mi,*  
*Hani mahi tsereitseri nakai Nyonmo bo mi,*  
*Mi yejeene nakai Nyonmo bo mi*<sup>86</sup>

I am an onion; it is God who created me this way.  
I am an onion; it is God who created me this way.  
Let me be very nasty, that it is God who created me this way.  
Let me be in tatters, it is God who created me this way.  
I am an onion; it is God who created me this way.<sup>87</sup>

I have quoted all these to emphasise the fact that in the religious thinking of the Ga, *Nyirjmo* is seen as concerned with every detail of creation. *Nyirjmo* determines what is to be and how it should be and nobody can alter it. Human beings accept what God gives to them. Thus in Ga social life, one does not have to look down on or discriminate against the other on the basis of physical features, ethnic background or religious persuasions. Everyone is accepted within the community.

<sup>84</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, pp 120-121.

<sup>85</sup> An Akan word for onion.

<sup>86</sup> Sung by *Wulomo* Drama Troupe: One of the cultural groups that performed within Ga littoral in the 1970s.

<sup>87</sup> My translation.

### Nyonmo as an Infinite Being

Another attribute of *Nyorjmo* is his infinite nature. This notion is expressed as follows:

*Woyaahu Nyorjmo rjmo,  
Jenamo hu woye nmli.  
Woyaahu Nyorjmo rjmo,  
Ataa Naa Nyorjmo rjmo, ahuu ke gbeenaa.*

We are going to cultivate God's field,  
The whole night we are in it.  
We are going to cultivate God's field,  
One does not finish the cultivation of God's field.<sup>88</sup>

Once again the imagery of a farmer is used to express the concept of *Nyorjmo* as an infinite being. This agricultural metaphor is used to contrast an infinite *Nyorjmo* and finite human beings. The infinite nature of *Nyorjmo* is expressed in the vastness of his farm; this is actually the world, which no human being can cultivate or encompass. The infinite nature of *Nyorjmo*, as the song depicts, comes to us in many forms.

The area occupied by the Ga is comparatively small in contrast to those occupied by their neighbours. The demand for land is therefore high. There is therefore a limit to which one can acquire a parcel of land for cultivation. It is this parcel of land that a man with his whole family occupies, using part for shelter and part for the production of food for the family. A man with a big family could therefore cultivate a piece of land within a short time. This picture of a limited farm area is contrasted with the vast farm area of *Nyorjmo* which no one can finish cultivating (*Ataa Naa Nyorjmo rjmo, ahuu ke gbeenaa*). The farm of the human being is limited while that of *Nyorjmo* is boundless. This attribute of *Nyorjmo* is widespread and documented in other forms. For example in the spider stories where *Nyorjmo* is portrayed as a

Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 115.

farmer seeking somebody to cultivate his farm for a handsome reward but finds nobody except the cunning spider who was able to cultivate it.<sup>90</sup> (See Appendix II).

This portrayal of *Nyorjmo* as a farmer of a vast field gives an insight into the Ga recognition that *Nyorjmo* is not bound by time or space. Until the development of modern means of communication, the Ga had only a limited access to the environment. However, they recognise that the world is very vast and beyond them. They thus marvel at the energy with which *Nyorjmo*, as a farmer, cultivates his farm daily. It is from this perspective that the Ga recognise the infinite nature of *Nyorjmo* in terms of power, strength and wisdom.

In another spider story, *Nyorjmo* is recognised as the storehouse and source of all wisdom, which he gives to deserving people. ° (See Appendix III).

### **Nyotjmo as the Source of Peace**

Peace is essential to the development and prosperity of every human community. For the Ga this is vital, in view of their history of wars. The Ga over the years were harassed by powerful states. To avoid such constant harassment they either fought back or moved to new settlements. Due to threats of such wars, the Ga located at various places before finally settling at their present location. It is from this background that the Ga desire and cherish whatever peace comes to them. For them the source of their peace is *Nyorjmo*; thus they could sing:

<i>Opete tere Omanyee;</i>	<i>Opete</i> (God) carries peace;
<i>Manye shra,</i>	Peace encircles,
<i>Manye ba.</i>	Peace come. <sup>91</sup>

*Opete*, another Obutu loanword, is used as an appellation for *Nyorjmo* who is conceived as the 'carrier' of peace. For the Ga it is not enough for individuals to have peace while the whole community is engulfed in strife. In the light of this, the prayer of the Ga is that peace should encircle and permeate the whole community.

<sup>89</sup> E.L. Rapp, 'Sprichwörter der Ga' Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin, Jahrgang, XXXIX, Abteilung 111, Afrikanische Studien, (Berlin: Sonderabdruck, 1936), pp 24-46.

<sup>90</sup> Rapp, 'Sprichwörter der Ga', pp 24-46.

<sup>91</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, p 118.

To demonstrate this, during the annual *Homowo* celebration, a day is devoted for the settling of disputes and seeking reconciliation within each household and the community in general. It is against this background that one should appreciate the Ga prayer: '*ke woye nu wonu le wo kojii ano ajo wo*' (when we draw water and drink, peace should be on our sides).

The desire for peace is further demonstrated by starting and ending every prayer with the invocation of peace in the words: *tswa, tswa, tswa manye aha* (*tswa, tswa, tswa* let peace come!) This formula for starting and ending prayers indicates that true peace that sustains human life comes from *Nyonmo*. E. A. Ammah notes that apart from *Nyonmo* being the source of life and light, *Nyorjmo* is also the embodiment of peace.<sup>92</sup> The Ga respond to this peace of *Nyonmo* by offering thanks at different times and occasions but especially during the *Homowo* celebration. This is done in recognition of a peaceful year.

The Ga further recognise that the peace of *Nyonmo*, which sometimes manifests itself in kindness and forgiveness, does not come to human beings alone but also to other creatures as well. The following song exemplifies this understanding:

*Akoko nu nsufatsire Nyame;*<sup>9</sup> When a fowl drinks water, it shows it to God;  
*Nyamporj ji Onukpa Nyamporj* (God) is the elder.<sup>94</sup>

When a fowl drinks water it raises its head to swallow it. This is interpreted as a sign of appreciation to *Nyonmo*. This notion is also conveyed in one of the spider stories<sup>95</sup> where the fowl offended *Nyonmo* and instead of being punished, it was pardoned. Because of this, any time the fowl drinks water it raises its head as a sign of appreciation, thanking *Nyonmo* for his kindness. (See Appendix I).

### **CONFIGURATIONS OF NYDTiMD**

E. A. Ammah, 'Ghanaian Philosophy', *The Ghanaian*, Jan 1962, p 18.  
 An Akan expression.  
 Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, pp 121-122.  
 Rapp, 'Sprichwörter der Ga', pp 24-46.



The Ga conception of *Nyorjmo* as we have so far seen is therefore, not of an abstract being. *Nyorjmo* is conceived as a being who has dealings with the created universe, residing within creation and expressing himself daily through it. *Nyorjmo* thus uses creation to communicate. Thunder for example, is depicted in *kpele* songs as a medium of communication by *Nyorjmo*; the Ga say *ke nyorjmo shi huu, be Nyorjmo mli wie* (when it is thundering, then God is speaking). This thought is partly expressed in this *kpele* song:

<i>Asaase nyanii, ngkasabi;</i>	The earth is silent, it cannot speak;
<i>Nyoymo kpleo huu.</i>	The sky roars.
<i>Shikpoy be naabu ni ekewieo Ga.</i>	The earth does not have a mouth with which to speak Ga,
<i>Nyoymo kpleo huu,</i>	The sky roars,
<i>Ni ekpleo huu,</i>	And it roars,
<i>Nyoymo, Nyampoy kpleo huu.</i>	The sky roars, God roars. <sup>96</sup>

This concept has led the Ga to associate nature or natural elements with *Nyorjmo*. The various configurations<sup>97</sup> of *Nyorjmo*, where the names of plants, animals and natural objects are linked to *Nyorjmo*, are ample demonstration of this belief as found in the following:

<i>nyoymohie</i>	(God's face) heaven
<i>nyoymokane</i>	moonlight
<i>nyoymosatso</i>	(God's bedstead) a tree of peculiar form
<i>nyorjmorjte</i>	(God's stone) hailstone
<i>nyoymokaaklo</i>	imperial scorpion
<i>nyoymo-bi</i>	son, child of God
<i>nyoymobitete</i>	(God's firstborn) swallow
<i>nyoymobiete</i>	carion kite
<i>nyoymoya</i>	mole/ mother spot/ freckle
<i>nyoymobii</i>	children or sons of God
<i>nyoymolema</i>	thunderbolt / stone axe
<i>nyoymotsina</i>	(God's cow) a giant beetle
<i>nyoymoyoo</i>	goddess
<i>Nyoymo may</i>	God's town

<sup>96</sup> Kilson, *Kpele Lata*, pp 137-138.

<sup>97</sup> Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch*, pp 243-244. See also M. E. Kropp Dakubu, (ed), *Ga-English Dictionary*, p 119; Wertz, *Ga-English Dictionary*, pp 1513-1520.

From these elaborate configurations of *Nyorjmo* (see Appendix V for a diagrammatic illustration of the configurations),<sup>99</sup> it becomes clear that for the Ga, *Nyorjmo* has become the foundation of all things both animate and inanimate, for they all depend on *Nyorjmo* for their existence. It is *Nyorjmo* who sustains the whole of creation. Again, *Nyorjmo* is not conceived as one who just created the world and left it, but as one who continues to relate to it in an intimate way as a means of preserving it. Further, *Nyorjmo* does not discriminate in his creation, as all things are equally important to him.

### **CONCLUSION**

The concept of *Nyorjmo* among the Ga is not an isolated incident. It can be likened to the development of the idea in some religions of the world. For example, the name *Yahweh*, which was later adopted as the God of Israel, was borrowed from outside Israel, probably, Canaan.<sup>100</sup> According to Andrew Dearman, 'the early Israelites held a tribal clan religion honorary a patron deity without a name but referred as "god of the fathers".' He agrees with A. Alt's proposal that:

The accounts of the ancestors have passed through two major developments in the course of transmission. The anonymous 'God of the Fathers' was first identified with the manifestation of 'El known at the Canaanite sanctuaries. Subsequently 'El was identified with Yahweh the God of the Exodus and the tribal confederation of Israel.<sup>101</sup>

As a religious concept, *Nyorjmo* pre-dates the advent of Christianity. All contemporary religious persuasions within the Ga community use the word *Nyorjmo* without any hesitation. For example, both Moslems and Christians adopt it to suit their religious concepts. Whereas there is distinction in the use of 'God' (English language) by Christians and 'Allah' by Moslems, such distinction does not exist when the Ga name '*Nyorjmo*' is used. It is often remarked that one hardly notices

Laryea, *Yesu Homowo Nurjtso*, p 60.

<sup>99</sup> For the avoidance of doubt, I should like to state that the illustration in appendix v is mine.

<sup>100</sup> J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel*, p 24. See also H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel*, pp 48-73.

<sup>101</sup> J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel*, p 16.

any difference when the Moslems and Christians are praying to God in the vernacular. In this regard, both Christians and Moslems 'drink' from the same traditional source.

*Nyorjmo* as a term and a religious concept was developed by the Ga in their 'religious journey'. Though they might have borrowed notions and ideas from the neighbouring states, the concept is entirely their own; for, whatever they borrowed, they adopted and adapted it to suit their religious experiences.

It is most likely that *Nyorjmo* was initially not understood to be the Supreme Being that he later became in Ga religious consciousness. We have given some account of the early stages of that development, when *Nyorjmo* was primarily associated with rain and the heavens which is the source of rain. However, in time *Nyorjmo* became recognised as Supreme, and came to occupy the position of prominence above all other divine beings, effectively the Supreme Deity of the Ga. It is perhaps most significant that this recognition took place before the advent of Christianity. Thus, with the coming of Christianity and the Christian proclamation of a Supreme Deity, it was not difficult for Christian missionaries to adopt this Ga recognition of *Nyorjmo*, and to elaborate it further into the Ga Christian designation of the God of the Bible.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPACT OF BIBLE TRANSLATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF NYJDM

#### INTRODUCTION

In primal societies in quite diverse parts of the world, the Christian preachers found God already there, known by a vernacular name. Often associated with the sky, creator of earth and moral governor of humanity, having no altars or priesthood ... More often than not, that name has been used in Scripture translation, liturgy and preaching as the name of the God of Israel and of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

This is exactly the transaction that took place as Ga traditional religion encountered Christianity. Early Christian missionaries and Bible translators on their arrival found *Nyorjmo* among the Ga. They had little option than to adopt *Nyorjmo* as the name of the God of Israel and of the church. Thus '*Nyorjmo*' became a '*Preparatorio Evangelica*' for the translation of the Scriptures and the evangelisation of the Ga. But this was not without the difficulties that are normally associated with Bible translations: the difficulty of finding ideas and categories in the receptor language that adequately express the meaning in the source language. As noted by Aloo Mojola, translators had to 'grapple with how to express the ancient and eternal message of the Bible in their own language, practices, festivals, rituals, spiritual beings, cultural artefacts, metaphors, beliefs in the local language.'<sup>3</sup> The translation of '*Nyorjmo*' was no exception.

These difficulties sometimes result in both the receptor and source languages being drawn to uncharted paths.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the process of translation may 'force' not only the source language to have new meanings and understanding, but also open up the world view of the receptor language as it encounters the traditional religion.

Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark / New York: Orbis Books, 1996), p 71.

<sup>2</sup> John S. Mbiti, 'Eschatology' in Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (eds), *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, (London: Lutherworth Press, 1969), p 180.

Aloo Mojola, *God Speaks in our own Languages: Bible Translation in East Africa: 1884-1998, A General Survey* (Nairobi, Dodoma, and Kampala: Bible Societies of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, 1999), p xiv.

Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p 26.

This means, the receptor language is expanded to accommodate new vocabularies, concepts, idioms and ideas to express divine truth. These difficulties were evident in the translation of the Ga Scriptures, especially in relation to spirit beings within the Ga pantheon of which *Nyoyimo* forms a major part. This will form the basis of our investigation in this chapter.

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BIBLE TRANSLATION**

Documentary evidence indicates that translation of portions of the Bible into the Ga language started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Geraldine Coldam's compilation of Bible translations in Africa suggests that there existed a translation of the 'Ten Commandments' in Ga, published in 1805, and also 'The Sermon on the Mount' and selections from 'Luther's Smaller Catechism' which were translated by Major Philip Wilhelm von Wrisberg, with a literal Danish version in 1826.<sup>5</sup> However, documents accessible to me suggest that the earliest translation was the 'Lord's prayer' by Christian Protten in 1746 in which he used Danish orthography.<sup>6</sup> Research by Philip Laryea also shows that a translation of the Book of Isaiah in Ga was also in existence in 1804.<sup>7</sup>

Ever since these translations, more work has been done.<sup>8</sup> However, what can be considered as the earliest significant work is the translation of the Gospels of Matthew and John by Augustus William Hansen in 1843 with the title '*Saji kpakpai Boni Mateo ke Johane rjma ha ye Ga Wiemo Is mlV* (The Gospel According to Matthew and John in the Ga language.)'<sup>10</sup> Other significant translations include the 1872 New Testament translation by Johanness Zimmermann, which was revised in 1889. Also, the compilation of various books into the whole Bible in Ga in 1907. This is often referred to by older Ga Christians as the 'Abokobi

Geraldine Coldam, (compiler), *A Bibliography of Scriptures in African Languages*, (London: The British and Foreign Bible Society, VI, 1966), p 159.

<sup>6</sup> Christian J. Protten, (translation), *The Lord's Prayer*, (unpublished manuscript), Hernnhurt Archives, Copenhagen, 1746.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Laryea 'Letting the Gospel re-shape Culture: Theological Creativity in Mother Tongue' in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol 4, No 1, (2001), p 27.

Coldam, *A Bibliography of Scriptures in African Languages*, pp 158-168.

<sup>9</sup> Augustus William Hansen was an African clergyman who, at one time, served as a chaplain at the Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>10</sup> Augustus William Hansen, *Saji kpakpai Boni Mateo ke Johane rjma ha ye Ga Wiemo le mil* (The Gospel according to Matthew and John in Ga Language), (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1843).

Translation', having been named after the place it was translated. There is also the 1977 edition of the Ga New Testament. The latest work in Ga translation is the revision of the 1907 edition which is yet to be published.



Fig. 5. Translators working on the Ga Bible at Abokobi. They are from left L. L. Richter, Wertz, Kolle, C. C. Reindorf and Saba.

## **CONCEPTS OF 'NYDIIMy IN VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS**

### **Protten's Translation**

Though Christian Protten's translation of the 'Lord's Prayer'<sup>11</sup> may not be considered very significant because of its little impact on the general community, it is worthy of our attention, as it marks the starting point for any discussion on the translation of *Nyorjmo*. In his work, he translates 'heaven' as *Nyorjmomli*, literally 'the inside of *Nyorjmo*'. For Protten, the place of abode of *Nyorjmo* is more than what 'heaven', which is sometimes translated in Ga as *rjwsi*<sup>12</sup> or *Nyorjmohie* (the face of *Nyorjmo*), seeks to portray. The literal meaning of these translations limits *Nyorjmo* only to the heavens. For the Ga, *Nyorjmo* is everywhere and therefore cannot be limited by space and time. Thus Protten in his translation goes beyond

<sup>11</sup> Christian J. Protten, *The Lord's Prayer*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ijwsi* in Ga is any space above the earth. It also means the sky.

being faithful to the original text and rather employs a concept that gives meaning to the reader. This deep thinking exercised by Protten would have contributed immensely to our concept of *Nyorjmo* if it had been maintained; unfortunately it was revised in the subsequent translations. The question that this brings to the fore is whether it was deliberate, or later Bible translators like Hansen and Zimmermann never had access to his translation.

	1843	1872	1889	1907	1977
Jn 10:34-35	<i>Nyorjmoi</i>	<i>Nyoyme</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>
Acts 7:40	-	<i>nyoyme</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>
Acts 14:11	-	<i>Nyoyme</i>	<i>Nyorjmoi</i>	<i>Nyorjmoi</i>	<i>Nyorjmoi</i>
Acts 17:18	-	<i>woji</i>	<i>woji</i>	<i>woji</i>	<i>jemawoji</i>
Acts 19:26	-	<i>nyoyme</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>
Acts 28: 6	-	<i>nyorjmo</i>	<i>nyorjmo</i>	<i>nyorjmo</i>	<i>nyorjmo</i>
1 Cor 8: 5	-	<i>nyoyme</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>
Gal 4: 8	-	<i>nyoyme</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>	<i>nyorjmoi</i>

Table 1. Various renderings of *deoi* in Ga.

### **Hansen's Translation**

The table reveals interesting data. Apart from the passage in John, there is nowhere in the Gospels where we find the translation '*Nyoymof* (gods). All other references are found in the Book of Acts and the Epistles. What may account for this is perhaps the context in which the Gospel writers found themselves. Due to strict Jewish monotheism, the Gospel writers could hardly conceive of any other god outside of the Supreme Being. Thus no reference was made to them. It is when we move into the Graeco-Roman world that we encounter various gods and divinities which creates a problem for the translators. In John 10: 34-36 we read:

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent to the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the son of God'?"

The passage refers to Psalm 82: 6. In this text, A. W. Hansen translates *deoi* (gods) as *Nyorjmoi*. The word *deoi* does not refer to spirit beings, but is used metaphorically to refer to human beings. Was Hansen trying to assume that since human beings are children of *Nyorjmo* they could be referred to as *NyorjmoP*. I suggest some reasons that might have influenced his translation.

He might have followed faithfully the rules of Greek grammar from which he did his translation. Since the plural of *deoc*; is *deoi*, it follows that the plural of *Nyorjmo* is *Nyorjmoi* (according to Ga grammar); hence his rendering of *deoi* as *Nyorjmoi*. Again, reading Psalm 82:1-6, he might have conceived of *Nyorjmo* sitting in council and judging his subordinates (children) who are referred to in the passage as gods. This might account for his translation of gods as *Nyorjmoi*. The problem with Hansen's translation was that he tried to be faithful to the Greek text; he followed it to the letter. The question one may pose is why he used the upper case 'N' and not 'n'? What is problematic is the fact that the concept does not exist in Ga. *Nyorjmo* is a personal name and not generic; it has no plural. This is what Zimmermann wanted to avoid and so came up with *Nyorjmei* (nocturnal beings or persons), which was equally problematic.

### **Zimmermann's Translation**

In the 1872 edition of the Ga Bible, Zimmermann translated the Greek *deoi* as *Nyorjmei*. The question again is, since Zimmermann had the translation of Hansen available to him what might have accounted for the use of *Nyorjmei* instead of *Nyoymoi*? Here Laryea gives an indication. In the view of Laryea, Zimmermann avoids the use of *Nyorjmoi* as an attempt to follow his own rules of grammar that *Nyorjmo* does not have a plural form. Laryea believes that Zimmermann, in following his own rules, was compelled to translate the Greek plural of *Nyorjmo*, *6eoi* as *Nyorjmei* following from the example of *gbomo* (person), whose plural is *gbomei* (persons).

Philip Laryea, 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17:22-31 in Ga: A Critical Examination of the Issues, Meanings and Interpretations Arising from Exegesis in the Mother Tongue' in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 6 No 1, (2003), p 36.



One other reason that can be adduced is the hesitation on the part of Zimmermann to use the concept of *'jemawojV*, which have names and functions just as it obtains in ancient Greek religion.<sup>14</sup> The hesitation may be due to the connotation such cultic vocabulary may carry into the Christian Bible. Laryea points out the struggle and the difficulty in the use other of cultic expressions like *gbatsu* (the shrine of the traditional priest), *Otsaame* (the linguist or the spokesman of the traditional court) and *Wuhmo* (traditional priest) in the translation of the Ga Bible and the writing of the Ga hymnbook. Surprisingly there is a beautiful array of Ga words relating to Ga social and political institutions assembled in the Ga Bible and the Ga hymnbook to which Zimmermann made contributions to this. Laryea sees this hesitation as a deliberate attempt to avoid the traditional religious institutions.<sup>1</sup> This view finds support in an observation made by Margaret Field. According to her, while the traditional priests visit the homes of people to celebrate the yam festival and are accorded honour, they are unwelcome in the churches. She writes:

There are attempts to extend this courtesy to the gods of the Christians when he holds his annual yam feast called the harvest and appeals for donations of vegetables, fruit, and fish. The 'heathen' send generous gifts and their priests cannot understand why, when they attempt to attend the meeting in heathen style they are discouraged by the Christians who, whilst approving the gifts, disapprove of the principle of mixing Christianity with heathendom.<sup>16</sup>

The rendering of *deoi* as *Nyoymei* was therefore not a typographical error as some people claim, since the word appeared in other publications about the same time.<sup>17</sup>

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It was a conscious effort to stay away from the traditions of the people. Zimmermann again was aware that *Nyorjmei* (night beings or night people) was

<sup>14</sup> Laryea, 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17: 22-31 in Ga', p 36.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Laryea 'Letting the Gospel re-shape Culture: Theological Creativity in Mother Tongue', p 30.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, (London: OUP, 1937), p 56.

<sup>17</sup> The catechism of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana was one of such publications.

<sup>18</sup> The church has constantly discouraged their members from watching traditional festivals, as they claim the festivals will corrupt them. In the past, people were sent to spy on those who went to partake or watch such festivals and those found guilty were disciplined and sometimes dismissed if the involvement was considered grievous.

another rendering of *jemawoji* and thus by translating *deoi* as *Nyorjmei* he was not insensitive to that concept, but was attempting to avoid veering into dangerous ground. Whatever the reason for such translation, it was not adequate to convey and express the intended message. He himself might have realised the shortfall of such a translation hence the revision in the 1889 edition. Ever since, the word *nyorjmei* has not appeared in any translation.

It would be noticed that the difference between the translations of Hansen and Zimmermann is not only in the usage of *Nyorjmoi* and *nyorjmei* but also the use of the upper case 'N' for *Nyorjmoi* and the lower case 'n' for *nyorjmei* (as in the case of 1889 edition). However, the main reason for both Hansen and Zimmermann translating *deoi* as *nyorjmoi* was, I presume, to follow faithfully the Greek translation of *deoi* (gods). But this does not capture the Ga notion of God because for the Ga there is only one Supreme Being namely *Nyorjmo* and lesser deities are not *nyorjmoi* or *nyorjmei*. In the view of Laryea, such translation can create a problem particularly for a person in an oral setting, whose thought forms have been shaped by the Ga world view.

The context in which '...the gods have come to us in human form...' (Acts 14:8-18) is translated as '*Nyorjmoi le etsomo amehe tamo gbomei ksyimo shi keba worjoo*' is very interesting. Just as ancient Greeks believed gods could take the form of human beings and participate in human affairs, so do the Ga. In Ga tradition, it is the *jemawoji* that are noted for such a feat and not *Nyorjmo*. There abound various incidents where *jemawoji* have intervened in the affairs of their adherents for various reasons.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, for the Ga to capture the concept being conveyed, the right translation of *deoi* is *jemawoji* and. *wot Nyorjmoi*.

Another interesting point is the attempt to make a distinction between the Supreme Being and the lesser deities by the use of the upper case 'N' for *Nyorjmo* (Supreme

In Ga tradition *jemawoji* are generally considered as nocturnal beings since they mostly manifest themselves in the darkest time of the night. See Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 5.

<sup>20</sup> Laryea, 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17: 22-31 in Ga', p 36.

<sup>21</sup> See Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 4.

Being) and the smaller case 'n' for *nyorjmo* (lesser deities), as in the case of John 10:34-36:

*Yesu hereame no ake: Ani arjmako ye nyemla le mli ake: "Mikes nyonmoi ji nyeT' Keji mei ano ni Nyonmo wiemo le ba le tete le etseame nyonmoi, ni anyen nmale le mli aku le, nyemiikee ye moni tse le efele kronkron ni etsule le kebaje le mli hewo le ake: Obo musu, ake ni mikee ake: Nyonmo bijimi /e?*

Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, 'I said you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent to the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the son of God"?

Again, Philip Laryea gives an explanation. According to him the distinction has to do with grammar more than theology, for in accordance with the rules of Ga grammar where the definite article follows the noun, the translators were compelled to begin the sentence with the noun *Nyorjmo* with the upper case 'N' followed by the definite article *le*. In his view the translation is therefore theologically incorrect and misleading 'for whereas the difference is noticeable in writing, no such distinction exists in speech [and] the idea will therefore be strange in the ears of an unlettered Ga.'<sup>22</sup>

### **DIFFICULTY IN BIBLE TRANSLATION**

Having drawn the above conclusions, I believe the difficulty the earlier translators faced and which continue to confront translators is how to be faithful to the original text and at the same time convey ideas that are meaningful to the people. It is here that Kwame Bediako's advice that translators should go beyond the text and focus on the meanings of the categories within the text is most helpful. For him the focus of translation should not be how to transpose the exact text from the source language to the receptor language, but rather how to locate categories in the receptor language that will portray the same meaning.<sup>23</sup> With this approach, the centrality of the Ga translation would have emphasised the significance of the Ga religious and

<sup>11</sup> Laryea, 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17: 22-31 in Ga', p 36.

<sup>23</sup> Kwame Bediako *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in Africa History and Experience*, (Akropong-Akuapem / Cameroun : Regnum Africa / Editions Cle, 2000), pp 77-82.

Ga cultural categories, and translated their concepts and idioms that will facilitate Christian apprehension.

Despite these inherent difficulties, which should have posed problems to any critical reader, most people read the Ga Bible without any hesitation. The reason, according to Laryea, is that since the publication of the first translation by A. W. Hansen in 1843<sup>24</sup> most Ga Christians have come to accept the Ga Bible as part of the development of Ga Christian thought. This is due to the impact the reading of the Ga Scriptures has made on Ga religious culture and society in general. Field also attributes it to the contact that Ga had with the Europeans who had been on the coast for about 500 years.<sup>25</sup>

As the Ga reader reads 'gods' which has been translated '*nyorjmoV*' in the Ga Bible without any hesitation or raising any questions, the same person will hesitate to acknowledge the same gods as *nyorjmoi* in the traditional setting but will refer to them as either *woji* or *jemawoji*. Such a reader unknowingly places the *Gajemawoji* below the Greek gods who are referred to as *nyorjmoi* in the Ga Bible. This brings into the discussion the issue of the Ga pantheon, whether it has been altered with the introduction of *nyoymoi*, a new religious concept, into the Ga religious milieu. Put differently, we need to assess whether the 'maps' used within the Ga religious setting have been shifted or replaced. According to Andrew Walls, in such situations the maps may be shifted but not totally erased.<sup>26</sup> This is the case we find in the religious development of the Ga. Despite the immense impact of Christianity and the contribution of Bible translation, Ga traditional institutions, which are still functioning, remain strong. However, one cannot rule out that these difficulties, notwithstanding Bible translation, has had an impact upon the Ga society. Some of these engage our attention now.

<sup>24</sup> Laryea, 'Reading Acts 14:8-17 & 17: 22-31 in Ga', p 37.

<sup>25</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 61.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, (Edinburgh: T& T Clark / New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p 122.

## **IMPACT OF BIBLE TRANSLATION**

Though the impact of Bible translation can be felt in many areas of the society, one area that is most significant is in the area of the development of Ga Christian theology. As noted in many societies, the translated Bible provided the essential ingredients for the birth of theology. In other words, the Ga Scriptures provided the necessary environment for an authentic interface between the Christian faith and the Ga culture within the Ga religious and traditional milieu. This process involved a two-way transaction. Firstly, the Ga translation enabled the central categories of Christian theology to be transposed into the Ga Bible while allowing the indigenous thought patterns and concepts to shape them (though with some difficulties) to convey an 'indigenous' meaning. This made such concepts relevant to the local people. It also allowed the Ga to preserve the name of the Supreme Being (*Nyorjmo*) and to name the Christian categories in new areas where hitherto they were unknown.

Secondly, as the Gospel engaged Ga culture, the pre-Christian religious vocabulary and social concepts expanded, gained new meaning and found their way into the Ga Bible. Some of these categories are expressed more clearly in some of the songs, prayer texts, stories and other media, which express clearly the thought pattern of the local people. Due to the scope of this dissertation I shall focus on a few of these areas and examine how they have gained new meanings within the context of Ga theological reflection.

### **Impact on the concept of *Nyoymo***

#### ***Nyoymo* as the one who gives victory**

<i>O nyehaa woboa</i>	Oh let us listen
<i>woblemamsi Is ata le toi</i>	to the wars fought by our forebears
<i>ye tawu ke tagbee hewo</i>	of battle and conquest
<i>Osheboo, la shwiemo he bu</i>	Of battle cries, the shedding of blood
<i>Ni wola lala kronn wohd</i>	And sing a holy song
<i>Mankata ekaa lo ni wa</i>	To McCarthy the brave warrior

<sup>27</sup> Daniel von Allmen, 'The birth of theology - Contextualisation as the dynamic element in the formation of New Testament Theology' in *International Review of Missions*, Vol. 64, January 1975, pp 37-52.

<i>Eba ni eba wu ta</i>	He came and fought in a battle
<i>Eha mei diji ni ele kwraa</i>	For black people he did not know
<i>Eba eba shwie Ashante</i>	He came and defeated the Ashanti
<i>Ni ekda eke wu ta le</i>	And with courage he fought the battle
<i>Tse etu tsofa ta oya</i>	But his gunpowder run out quickly
<i>Kile ewu ye klante naa</i>	Yet he fought with the sword
<i>Egbo ni agbe eta le</i>	He died and the battle ended
<i>shi kele agboko le kwraa</i>	Yet they have not killed him
<i>Ete shi ye Katamanso</i>	He arose in the battle of Katamanso
<i>Emumo le shwie Ashante</i>	His spirit defeated the Ashanti
<i>Ye Katamanso ta le mli</i>	In the battle of Katamanso
<i>Mankata tswa Ashanti shi</i>	McCarthy floored the Ashanti
<i>Shi neegbe emumo yoo,</i>	But where is his spirit,
<i>efeo wo ake egbo</i>	we think he is dead
<i>Shi Nyonmo le, egboo kwraa</i>	But <b>God knows, he did not die</b>
<i>Oh Ga, kaahwa Nyonnto kwraa</i>	<b>Oh Ga, never forsake God</b>
<i>Kwa owoji le mon ni owu</i>	<b>Rather forsake your idols and fight</b>
<i>Kwe Naa Nyonmo ni oye no.</i> <sup>28</sup>	<b>Look up to God and you shall be victorious.</b> <sup>29</sup>

*O nye hda woboa woblemamei Is ata le toi* is an invitation to all Ga people to come and listen to the stories of war fought by their forebears. The focus of this song is the Katamanso war of 1826. It does not only seek to narrate the victory of the Ga over the Asante and the role they deemed the spirit of Sir Charles McCarthy played in the victory, but more importantly to re-interpret that victory in the light of their new-found faith as they read the Ga Scripture by attributing it to *Nysymo*.

The Ga fought many battles in their quest to become an independent political state, and also in their defence against enemy forces. In some of these wars they were defeated, while in others they were able to overcome their enemies. One of such celebrated victories was when the Ga defeated the Asante in the battle at Katamanso referred to as the Katamanso War.'

<sup>28</sup> Abokobi *Blema Lalai* [Accra], Song No. 65, pp 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> My own translation.

<sup>30</sup> This war was fought in 1826 between the Asante and the allied forces comprising the Dangme, Akuapem and led by the Ga. In this war, the Asante were defeated and it is regarded as a landmark in the historical events of the Ga.

Before the Ga engaged in any battle, they made adequate preparation and planning. One such preparation involved a religious rite known as *tahoomo* (cooking of war), in which the deities were consulted and the warriors were fortified with medicine provided by these deities. In event of success, the victory was attributed to the deities.<sup>31</sup> An example is the victory over the Akwamu, which was attributed to the *Sakumo* (the war deity of the Ga Mashie State). In situations where the Ga felt inadequate numerically, they sought the assistance of other states and entered into alliances with them to fight on their behalf. Such alliances, which were ratified in a religious ritual known as *woyyelv*" (literally fetish-eating), compelled both parties to be faithful to its stipulations and fight till victory was won even, sometimes, at the peril of their lives. Here again the courage and bravery of the warriors are applauded when the battle is won.

It is within this context that the Ga appreciated and applauded the courage and bravery of Mankata (McCarthy) who fought on behalf of the Protectorate's allied forces against the Asante in the battle of Nsamanko.<sup>33</sup> McCarthy, though he ran out of gunpowder and was deserted by the local allies, did not retreat but fought with his sword and was killed in the process.

With the advent of Christianity and through the reading of the Ga Bible, the Ga Christians gained new understanding of what happened in the past. First they came to an understanding of the fact that the spirits of those who die in the course of fighting to defend their people will continue to live on; they will be with them and fight for them. Thus they sang:

<sup>31</sup> Emmanuel A. Anteh, *Ga Ijamoi: Salutations of the Ga People*, (London: Macmillan and co. Ltd, 1969), pp 55-56.

<sup>32</sup> *Woijyeli* is a religious rite where parties involved in a treaty or an alliance swear in the presence of a traditional priest that they will adhere strictly to the stipulations of the treaty or alliance. This happens normally during the time of war. See Selena A. Winsnes (trans and ed), *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade: Paul Erdmann Isert's Journey to Guinea and the Caribbean Islands in Columbia (1788)*, (Oxford: OUP, 1992), pp 129-130.

<sup>33</sup> The battle of Nsamanko (Asamankwa) was fought in 1824 between the Asante on one hand and the British and her allied forces made of the Wassa, Fanti and the Ga people on the other. It was fought as a result of a threat of war against the Fanti by the Asante. In the heat of this the Fanti fled leaving the Wassa and the few British soldiers fighting with Sir Charles McCarthy, while the Ga and the Akuapem were yet to arrive. The overwhelming number of the Asante subdued the allied forces and when they ran out of gunpowder, McCarthy refused to retreat and instead fought with his sword. In the process he with many of his aides was killed. They saw in him a brave and courageous warrior, and cherished his spirit.

<i>Egbo ni agbe eta le</i>	He died and the battle ended
<i>Shi kele agbeko le kwraa.</i>	Yet they have not killed him.
<i>Ete shi ye Katamanso.</i>	He arose in the battle of Katamanso
<i>Emumo le shwie Ashante.</i>	His spirit defeated the Asante.
<i>Ye Katamanso ta le mli.</i>	In the battle of Katamanso
<i>Mankata tswa Ashante shi</i>	McCarthy floored the Asante

This idea is not a new phenomenon, for the Ga had always believed in their ancestors whom they believed were with them in all their endeavours. What is new, however, is the incorporation of the spirit of a non-Ga into the Ga fold, and more especially the new thought that the spirits of such people are alive with *Nyorjmo*. For, in the Bible they found the affirmation that the spirits of those who die in the Lord are with the Lord, and one day they will rise.<sup>34</sup> Once again they sang:

<i>Shi neegbe emumo yoo,</i>	But where is his spirit,
<i>Efeo wo ake egbo.</i>	We think he is dead.
<i>Shi Nyoyimo le, egboo kwraa.</i>	But God knows, he did not die.

Further, though they sang in praise of McCarthy, they went beyond him and the deities and attributed their victory to *Nyoyimo*. They recognised *Nyorjmo* as the one who gave them and will continue to make them victorious whenever they call on him. They therefore call on all Ga to forsake the lesser 'gods' and depend on *Nyoyimo* alone for success, thus:

<i>Oh Ga, kaakwa Nyorjmo kwraa.</i>	Oh Ga, never forsake God.
<i>Kwa owoji le morj ni owu.</i>	Rather forsake your deities.
<i>Kwe Naa Nyorjmo ni oye no</i>	Look up to God and you shall be victorious.

#### **Nyorimo Asafo Krorikroyri (God's Holy Church).**

<i>Nyeyaa no Nurjtso le nitsuhi ke ekaa nyemo</i>	Go on you workers of the Lord with courage.
<i>Nurjtso ke miitsu naakpeenii ye majiano</i>	The Lord is using me to work miracles in many towns
<i>Etabiloi le shwereo ye afiifee aml</i>	His warriors increase year after year
<i>Ame aawo lele wa nijerj muu lefee aanu</i>	They will run fast and the whole world will hear of it

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 26:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Revelation 14:13.



*Mlitii*

*Nyeyaa :/: nye nitsuhi nyeyaa :/:*

*Nyetswaa nye den nyelaa lalai*

*Nyetswaa nye den nyelaa*

***Nyoymo Asafo kroykroy Is yeo kunim***

*Nurjtso le aaye nofeeno no Jceya naano.*<sup>35</sup>  
eternity.<sup>36</sup>

Refrain

Go on!/: you workers go on!/:

Clap your hands and sing songs

Clap your hands and sing

**God's holy church is always victorious**

The Lord will rule over everything till

In line 8, the song refers to the church as *Nyorjmo asafo krorkrorj Is*. *Nyorjmo* is thus conceived as the owner of the church (*Nyorjmo Asafo*). As the Bible exerted influence on Ga society, Ga Christians saw themselves as an *asafo* but this time not in the traditional sense. *Asafo* had denoted a group which owed its allegiance to the deities and fought physical battles; *asafo* now connotes a new group which has been purified by *Nyorjmo* and owe their allegiance to *Nyorjmo*; they are engaged in a spiritual warfare. They thus refer to themselves as *krorkrorj* (holy) and *etabiloi* (his warriors). Ga Christians with the new interpretation saw themselves as part of the army of *Nyorjmo* going into battle with the hope that through their efforts *Nyorjmo* will one day finally bring all things under his control.

Warfare strategies in Ga societies involved the creation of a military wing within the community called *asafo*, a word believed to have been borrowed from the Akan culture, which literally translates multitude or crowd. This comprises all able-bodied men. A community may have several *asafo* companies, as they are normally called. They are identified by their *aflarjaa* (banner) which has their emblem printed on it. The banner is very significant to the group, for it is the symbol of their power and authority. It is also a symbol of battle readiness whenever it is hoisted. It is thus carried in front of the group. When the banner is captured in battle, the whole group is defeated. Therefore it is borne by the leader who should be courageous and powerful. With the cessation of these wars, the *asafo* companies have assumed a more social character helping in the development of their communities.

<sup>35</sup> Abokobi *Blema Lalai*, No. 40, p 19.

<sup>36</sup> My own translation.

As Ga Christians read the Bible in their own language, they saw themselves as a group of warriors with a mission to fight a righteous and religious battle for *Nyorjmo*. In other words, they saw the enterprise of evangelism as waging war against the enemy. But they do not go into the battle with empty hands. They march forward into battle with the shield and banner which identify them as the people of *Nyorjmo*. They sing:

<i>Wonya wohie gbe ke tserj ke aflarjaa</i>	We are marching forward with shield and banner
<i>Won tsu Nyonmo nii ni wo wujale ta</i>	We are working for God and fighting a righteous battle
<i>Wo ji ewebii worjnya ye ejamo le mli</i>	We are his people and we rejoice in his worship
<i>Ke yaashi Yesu aatse wo.</i>	Until Jesus will call us.
<i>Teeshi ko, ni ola ke Nyamo</i>	Rise up, and sing with joy
<i>Ni ola beni worjya wohie gbe</i>	And sing while we march forward
<i>Mlitii</i>	Refrain
<i>Wonya wohie gbe ke tserj ke aflarjaa</i>	We are marching forward with shield and banner
<i>Worj tsu Nyonmo nii ni wo wujale ta</i>	We are working for God and fighting a righteous battle
<i>Wo ji ewebii wonnya ye ejamo le mli</i>	We are his people and we rejoice in his worship
<i>Ke yaashi Yesu aatse wo.</i>	Until Jesus will call us <sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Abokobi *Blema Lalai*, No. 46, p 21.

<sup>1</sup> My own translation.

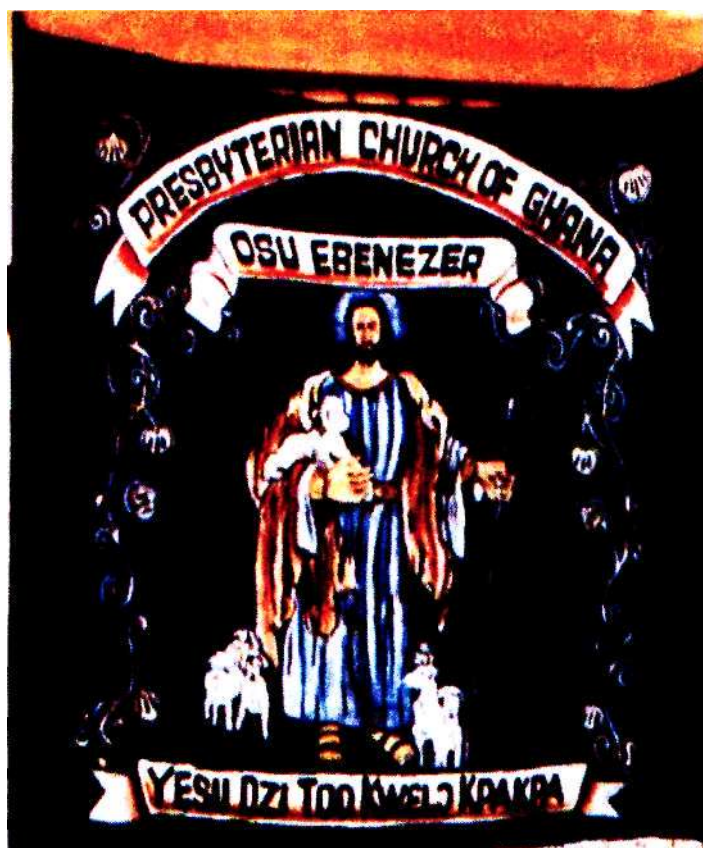


Fig. 6. The banner of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Osu Ebenezer Congregation.

Note: Jesus in the banner has been painted as a European figure. This does not mean that Ga Christians conceive of Jesus as a European. They go beyond the figure and focus on his personality as a saviour and leader as the caption 'YESU DZI TOO KWELD KPAKPA' (Jesus, the Good Shepherd) indicate.

Though the use of banners is noted in the Bible with each of the tribes of Israel identified by its own banner (Ex. 17:15, Num. 2:1-3, Isa. 11:10-12), in the case of Ga Christians, it is its usage in the cultural context that influenced them. The following hymn emphasises this notion:

*Mse aflagaa shishi oyoo*  
*Mee asafonyo ji o*  
*Kristo asafonyo ji o*  
*Loo abonsam bi ji-o*  
*Ke oji Kristofonyo le*  
*Kwemo Zion gorj le no*  
*He ni ojieh Is damo*

Under which banner are you  
 To which *asafo* do you belong  
 Do you belong to Christ's *asafo*?  
 Or are you a child of Satan  
 If you belong to Christ's *asafo*  
 Look at Mount Zion  
 Where your saviour stands



Fig. 7. One of the *Asafo* companies at Teshie parading with their banner.

Omnipresence of *Nyorimo* {*Nyoymo ye hefeehe*}

*Gbeke modirj kojimi ni misumoo mi shikporj*  
*Ni Nyorjmo ye hefeehe efeo ekpakpa sorjri*

I am an African child and I love my land  
And God is everywhere and does only good things

*JJsho ke rja, ke gorj ke koo*

The sea, the hills and the forest

*Ke ehefeofee misumo*

And I love all with their beauty

*Gbeke modirj kojimi ni misumoo mi shikpoy*  
*Mlitii*

I am an African child and I love my land  
Refrain

*Haleluyah Haleluyah Haleluyah*

Haleluyah Haleluyah Haleluyah

*Gbeke modirj kojimi ni mi s'mo tsuijuro*  
*Meidiji ashikporj le esaa hie tumo tsui*

I am an African child and I love kindness  
The land of Africa does not deserve a gloomy heart

*Morj esa nyamo lala pe ke tsui juro ke hie me*

Rather it deserves songs of "praise, kindness and contentment

*Gbeke modirj kojimi ni misumoo tsuijuro*

I am an African child and I love Kindness

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous writer.

' My own translation.

*Mlitii*  
*Haleluyah Haleluyah Haleluyah*

Refrain  
Haleluyah Haleluyah Haleluyah

*Gbeke modirj kojimi ni misumoo gbomeiffee*

I am an African child and I love all people

*Meidiji amlihile no pe sa mihie*  
*Modirj le sumo suomo ni anokwale suomo rjoo*

I am pleased with the goodness of black people  
The African appreciates love and true love is pleasant

*Gbeke modin kojimi ni misumoo gbomeiffee*  
*Haleluyah Haleluyah Haleluyah.*<sup>41</sup>

I am a black child and I love all people  
Haleluyah Haleluyah Haleluyah.<sup>42</sup>

As the first line of the song depicts, the writer is proud of himself and affirms not only his African identity but also the land of his birth. The 'land' here comprises its people, rich culture, vegetation, physical features and climatic conditions; these the writer sees as very good. Though all the references in the song may be to the Ga community, it also applies to the whole of the African continent.

There are some Ga who do not appreciate their own inheritance much; they sometimes do not seem to be proud of themselves as Ga. They wish they were people of other cultures, especially as Europeans or Americans. There is even the desire and rush to sojourn in these foreign countries. Such people do not find anything good in their culture and rather try to live according to Western standards, regarding Western standards as normative.

For the writer of the hymn, the opposite is the case. Apart from the beautiful scenery that he describes, his real motivation is the presence of *Nyorjmo*, which he acknowledges among the Ga, and the good things he has given them. He thus sings: *Nyorjmo ye hefeshe ni efeo ekpakpa sorjrj* (God is everywhere and he does only good things). He sees the goodness of *Nyorjmo* in the provision of the many natural resources he has given to them for the development and sustenance of the community. He, therefore, urges his compatriots not to be disheartened by the present predicament but rather appreciate what *Nyorjmo* had given them, and thank him for it. Thus he sings in lines eight and nine of the above cited song thus:

<sup>41</sup> Abokobi *Blema Lalai*, No. 90, pp 37-38.

<sup>42</sup> My own translation

*Meidiji ashikporj le esaa hie tumo tsui.*  
*Mon esa nyamo lala pe ke tsuijuro ke hie me*  
The land of the blacks does not deserve a gloomy heart.  
Rather it deserves songs of praise, kindness and contentment.

What is very interesting is his acknowledgement of the omnipresence of *Nyorjmo*. This is interesting for two reasons. First, he refutes the notion held by some of the Ga that it was the European missionaries who brought the worship of *Nyorjmo* to the Ga community. For him, the Ga already knew *Nyorjmo* before the coming of the missionaries. The Ga had always known and acknowledged *Nyorjmo*. What is new is the awareness that *Nyorjmo* is everywhere. One could thus agree with Mbiti that it was *Nyorjmo* who rather brought the missionaries.<sup>43</sup>

Second, his concept of *Nyorjmo* being everywhere resonates with the idea of Prottein in his translation of heaven as *Nyorjmomli*. For *Nyorjmo* to be everywhere implies *Nyorjmo* occupying the whole of the universe, and that could only happen by dwelling in himself since he is not limited by time and space. This thought is contrasted to the notion where *Nyorjmo* was conceived to be in heaven (*Nyorjmo ye tjwei*) whilst *jemawoji* were located within the Ga community. This understanding brings to the fore the concept that it is *Nyorjmo* who created the whole world and everything therein. He created both Africans and Europeans, and he loves all people.

This understanding of the song is gained only through the reading of the Bible. In other words, reading the Bible in Ga seems to contribute to the Ga realisation of the omnipresence of *Nyorjmo* in a way that places the people within God's universal economy. They appreciate the provisions of *Nyorjmo* and thank him daily for these provisions.

What is probably the most enduring impact of the Bible translation on the concept of *Nyorjmo* is the acceptance of Jesus Christ by Ga Christians as the Son of *Nyorjmo*, thus referring to him as *Nyorjmobi* (God's child). Through the engagement with the

<sup>43</sup> John Mbiti, 'Response to the article by John Kinney' in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, April, 1979, p 68.

Ga Bible, Ga Christians have come to the recognition that the historical Jesus is part of their Christian heritage; through him they have come to salvation and gained access to *Nyorjmo*. They could therefore sing:

<i>Yesu Kristo, Nyorjmo Bi,</i>	Jesus Christ, the son of God,
<i>naa mils 'mo osane leeleij;</i>	I truly love you;
<i>ni ke miba mihe shi,</i>	and when I humble myself,
<i>ye mimane be le mil le</i>	in my time of my troubles
<i>oorjo mihe eshai of am',</i>	you will forgive my sins,
<i>ni oke hejole aham'.</i>	and you will give me peace.
<i>Yesu Kristo, Nyorjmo Bi,</i>	Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
<i>Miiba mihe shi mii ha bo.</i>	I am humbling myself before you.
<i>Bo keke ono mito</i>	I have sinned against you only
<i>no hewo le mishwa mihe.</i>	therefore I am repenting.
<i>Ha mana eshaifaa keke,</i>	Let me receive your forgiveness,
<i>ni ofee mi mo hee ekorjij.<sup>44</sup></i>	and make me a new being. <sup>45</sup>

However, there are other Ga who consider Jesus as an 'outsider' and not part of their community and cultural heritage. This school of thought attempts to separate culture and religion. They cannot accept him because he is not a Ga and as someone queried, '*neegbs etsemei awe yoT*<sup>46</sup> (Where is his father's house or lineage?) The question this raises is, how do people who claim to have cultural and historical links with the Jews reject Jesus? On what basis then do Ga Christians accept Jesus as *Nyoymobi* without much difficulty? In my interviews and interactions, it has emerged that the answer lies in the traditional belief that spirit beings *Mke jemawoji* can and do have children. In fact, the Ga believe that *NyoiymD* had children and even sent angels to the Ga.<sup>47</sup> In Ga Mashie, the *Sakumo* was said to be *Nyoynubi Tete* (God's first male born). The same is said of the *La-Kpa* deity in La. It was therefore not difficult for Ga Christians to transfer the traditional thought pattern into the reading of the Bible. With the new understanding of *Nyjr/mo* gained from reading

<sup>44</sup> Ghana Presbyterian *Asafo: Solemo lala wolo* (revised), (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2000), No. 395, p 188.

<sup>45</sup> My own translation.

<sup>46</sup> Among the Ga the family line is very crucial. For one to be regarded as a true Ga, the person must be able to trace his or her lineage to a particular family house.

<sup>47</sup> Marion Kilsøn, 'The Structure of Ga Prayer' in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. IX, fasc. 3, (1978), p 182.

the Bible, Ga Christians are able to replace Jesus with *Sakurno* or *La-Kpa*, and accept him as the Son of *Nyorjmo* by referring to him as *Nyorjmobi*. Thus, they were able to understand and appreciate the 'incarnation' with little difficulty.

Related to the above is the concept of *Nyorjmo Mei Ete Ekome* (Trinity) in Ga Christian theology. Again, through the concept of *Nyorjmo*, Ga Christians were able to accept the doctrine of the Trinity. Though it seemed abstract, they are able to capture the concept without much difficulty. In Ga traditional thought, the concept of three is recognised as 'wholeness'. The Ga say *shi ete ayaa worj naa* meaning an oracle must be consulted three times for a successful outcome. This conveys the idea that the symbol of three stands for 'completeness' or 'wholeness'. Further, the idea of 'threeness' is demonstrated in the belief that the Ga community is sustained by three divine entities, namely *Nyorjmo* (the rain deity), who provides the people with rainfall, *Asaase Afia* (mother earth), the land for the planting of crops, and *Bosom Mpo Mensah* (the sea whose deity is Nai), which gives them their protein needs. This was confirmed by *Nai Wulomo* during an interview I had with him. In a general remark, he likened the Ga 'three divine entities' to the 'Christian Trinity' without comparing the personalities involved.

The Ga is also aware of spirit beings taking up and manifesting themselves in various bodily forms.<sup>4</sup> When one comes to the reading of the Ga Bible with such traditional background, it is not too difficult to appreciate that *Nyorjmo* reveals himself as *Tse, Bi ke Mumo Krorjkrorj* (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

The above indicates that the transaction that took place between the Bible and the Ga cultural traditions was that of a symbiotic interaction. For whereas the translated Bible adopted and gave a wider meaning to the concept of *Nyorjmo* it was the traditional notions that threw more light on it and eased the transition for Ga Christians.

*Nai Wulomo* was a long standing member of the Brother Lawson Church, one of the African Independent Churches in Ghana, before he became a traditional priest. He claims he is still a Christian and even showed me his baptismal certificate. One therefore wonder whether his Christian background might not have influenced his views.

<sup>49</sup> Field, *Religion and Medicine*, p 4.



## **Impact on Traditional Institutions**

### **Names**

The impact of Bible translation is also felt within Ga social rites such as the naming system. With the Ga language having assumed a 'transcendental range' through Bible translation, some Ga parents now prefer to give their children names like *Dromo* (Grace), *Mishes* (Joy), *Suomo* (love), and *Mawu Kle* (God is Great) among others instead of the English equivalents that were hitherto used. These people claim they appreciate the meanings of these names more in the vernacular than in its English equivalents. It also expresses the idea they want to convey better in the Ga. In an interview with a family as to why they gave the vernacular name '*Mawu Kle*' to one of their children instead of the English 'God is Great', they claim the vernacular captures the idea for which the name was given more and expresses it better. The writer of this dissertation is one such person who has named his only daughter *Dromo* instead of the English equivalent 'Grace', as the vernacular is more meaningful to the family than the English. The Ga language has now become a medium to express divine truth.

### **Traditional Prayers**

The impact of Christian thought associated with Bible translation is also felt within the traditional institutions. With the passage of time, Ga cultic language and traditional prayers assumed Christian colouration to the extent that one could consider some to be paraphrases from the Bible. Some elements of biblical language and concepts have found their way into some traditional prayers. The following prayer texts are typical examples:

*Agoo* <sup>50</sup>

*Tsemei ke nyemei, niinie ke naamei nmene ashi me?*

*Ijmene ashi hoo.*

Marion Kilson translates *agoo* as hail. This I find as inappropriate. *Agoo* as explained by Kropp Dakubu is an announcement of arrival, and a request to enter. See Kropp Dakubu, M. E., (ed), *Ga-English Dictionary*, p 17. Zimmermann also expresses it as giving notice of approach. See Zimmermann J., *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra- or Ga-Language*, p 8. These expressions are more appropriate than the hail, which denotes greetings or praise. When the Ga say *agoo*, it is more than just greetings. It is either a request to enter or seeking permission to approach, which is the case in traditional prayers. However, '*agoo*' is better understood if left on its own and not translated since no single word can express it.

*Naa hoobii rjtse nye shwee, rjtse nye ijmaa, rjtse nye bleku akashi ajo ni mis akwe.*

*Ofe tse nyonmo bo meni efee (sic) nwei ni ofee shikpon ni ofee tsei ke tei ke gojii ke faji ke gojii fee kwa ni bo dientse ona ake onine naa nitsutno fee hi naakpa nosee ofa gbomo adesa ni ebayefee no...*

Hail

Fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, what is today?

Today is Saturday

Lo, Saturday people (i.e., Gua people), I call you for success, I call you for food, I call you for rain to fall that the earth may be moist, that mushroom may grow.

**Almighty father God, you who made heaven and earth, and you made trees and stone, and hills and rivers and hills [mountains], all and you yourself saw that all your handwork was good indeed; after that you ordered human beings to have dominion over them...**<sup>51</sup>

*Agoo, agoo, agoo.*

*Tsemei ke nyemei, niime i ke naamei*

*IImene ashi me? IImene ashijufo*

*Tsemei ajufu, nyemei ajufu, niime i ajufu, naamei ajufu ijmaa shibaa jufo*

*Jufo ni ijmaa ntseo, rjtse nye Soo, ntse nye man, rjtse nye bii awala, rjtse nye rjha wala, rjtse nye bii awala, rjtse nye rjha wala, ntse nye bleku akashi ni nye mle akwe.*

*Ofe Nyonmo ni obo nwei ke shikpon ke shikpoi jno tsei ke tei, fai ke goji, nujo i ke nibii krokomei, see mli ni ebo adesai ni eto fee [ewoj adesai aden ketso no no eha Ga hu bofo ke mei ni yaa tai srotai aml i, ni ameya (sic) kunim. Ashanti ba rvoye kunim. Anula hu ba woye kunim. Osadefo (sic) fosagyefoj nyie modeebn ke anai aahu ni eshe Ga kunim batso ws no. Shwane wolo eyaje ehie...:~*

*Agoo, agoo, agoo.*

Fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers

Today is what day? Today is Tuesday

<sup>51</sup> Marion Kilson, 'The Structure of Ga Prayer', pp 186-188. This forms part of the prayer recorded by the *Gua Wuhmo* at *Gua IImaajaa*: annual symbolic harvest of the millet as part of the *Homowo* celebration in 1965. It sounds like a paraphrase of the creation story in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>52</sup> Marion Kilson, 'The Structure of Ga Prayer', p 182. This also forms part of the prayer recorded by the *Sakumo Wuhmo* at *Sakumo Shibaa*: an annual symbolic planting of the millet as part of the *Homowo* celebration in 1965. It also looks like a paraphrase of the creation story in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

traditional ruler regarding himself as a Christian as well. The Tema *marjtse*, Nii Adjei Kraku II, who is a Moslem, does not hesitate to recount his relationship with the church; he claims he was at one time a Christian. In an interview with him, he was proud to say that most of the principles he applied in his administration were gained when he was a youth organiser of the Tema Manhean District of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.<sup>57</sup> Again, in another interview with the *Nai Wulomo*, he claimed he still considers himself a Christian since he had been baptised and continues to worship *Nyorjmo*. He even showed me his baptismal certificate to prove his membership of the church.<sup>58</sup>

Recently, at the funeral of the late *Asafoiatss Tutuani III*, the chief warrior of La, the integration of Christian beliefs and traditional practices was made manifest. This was evident not only in the performance of traditional rites mixed with Christian prayers but also in the reading of his biography, which in part reads as follows:

Sometime in his prime of life the *Tutuani* and *Okerchirl* family of *Kpobi-We* nominated and presented him to the La *Dzaase* of *Kowe* for the vacant post of La Chief Warrior or La *Asafoiatse*, under the name of *Nii Asafoiatse Tutuani III*. He had been known as such until Tuesday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2005 when death laid its icy hands on him to terminate his life span. **'Death is swallowed up forever. Oh death where is thy sting? O death where is thy victory' 1 Cor. 15:55.**<sup>59</sup>

Today we have many traditional office holders who do not only attend church but also claim allegiance to Jesus Christ and submit themselves to Christian standards while they still hold on to their traditional office. Quite recently, some queen mothers have come together to form an association called Christian Queen Mothers Association. Such countless experiences exist within Ga traditional institutions and this is a result of the impact of Bible translation which most of the traditional rulers have come across either when they attended school or at church. In my interactions with some traditional rulers, they claim the holding of office does not contradict the Bible and as such they could still hold onto their office and be Christians, once they

This interview took place at his residence at Tema Manhean on 2 May 2005.

<sup>58</sup> This interview took place at his shrine on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

<sup>59</sup> Funeral programme for the late *Asafoiatse Tutuani III*. The funeral rite was held on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2005 at the forecourt of *Kpobi We*, La.

believe in *Nyorjmd*. This realisation, I believe, is coming from the reading of the vernacular translation. One can thus conclude that Bible translation has achieved some integration between the traditional institutions and the Christian faith.



Fig. 8. Traditional rulers in a kneeling position at a church service.



Fig. 9. A traditional ruler receiving the Holy Sacrament during a church service.

## **Folklore**

Folklore is another area that the impact of Bible translation can be noticed. This evidence can be found in the changes that had occurred in many of the spider stories that hitherto had *Nyoyrno* as a main character. In Ga communities, stories are told to teach moral lessons, as well as to depict notions about the characters used in the story. In the pre-Christian stories, the name of *Nyoyrno* was used frivolously to depict various characters. In one such story *Nyoyrno* is said to have married many wives with the fowl as the senior wife. *Nyoyrno* at a point was not aware of the sexes of some of his wives, thus one happened to be a male (Appendix I). In another one, *Nyoyrno* was said to have been a wicked and mischievous farmer who exploited the people; it was only the cunning spider that could outwit him (Appendix II). In yet another, spider was said to have demonstrated more wisdom than *Nyoyrno* who thought he had all the wisdom in the world (Appendix III).

Through the reading of the Ga Bible the Ga became aware of the seventh commandment: *'KaahTe Iehowa, o-Nyoyrno Is, gbsi amli yakayaka; edsake Iehowa ebuy moni hieo egbei amli yakayaka le bern'* (You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.)<sup>60</sup> With this injunction, the Ga felt very uncomfortable with the name of *Nyoyrno* appearing in these stories. They also understood that it was blasphemous to think of *Nyoyrno* as polygamous (marrying and having children), and also wicked and not All-knowing. They have thus desisted from the frivolous use of the name of *Nyoyrno*.

The name and character of *Nyoyrno* were thus replaced with other characters in later versions of these stories. It was replaced with characters like a wicked king, a wicked farmer or a rich king among others. A clear example is cited below. Here the main characters in the story have been replaced but the story maintained. In the first story, *Bonijee ni nilee gbe shwa je nee mli* (How wisdom spread into the whole world), *Anaanu* (spider) and *Nyoyrno* are the main characters whereas in the second, *Boni nilelo ko ke kpai-enyo yahe gbomei enyo* (How a certain wiseman

Exodus 20:7, (RSV).

used two pence to buy two persons), which may be considered a later version; *Nyotjmo* has been replaced with a king and *Anaanu* with a wiseman.

## Story I

### **Boni fee ni nilee gbe shwa je nee mli**<sup>61</sup>

*Gbi ko le Tsie Anaanu tee Nyorjmo rjoo eyakee: 'Ha mi able kulibii kpawo ni mike gbomo adesa abato bo najiarj.' Nyorjmo bi ake: 'Ani obaanye?' Eto he ekee: 'Hee.' Keke ni Nyorjmo ha le able kulibii le. Beni Tsie Anaanu ku ese eya le, ena wuoi komei: keke ni eshere able le eshwe ameterj. Beni Anaanu na ake wuoi le aterj ekome emi able le eko pe, keke ni eboi blomo ake: 'Namo wuo ne? Nyonmo able ni eeei, hewole wuotse le abato mi najiarj kpoo.' Beni wuotse le nu le etsuifa, ejaake esheo Nyonmo gbeyei. Hewole eba koni ebato najiarj, shi Anaanu ekplee ni ehe able le, hewole amo wuo le aha le. Keke ni erjo eshwe no.*

*Beni eyaa le, je na le, hewole eyato shia ko. Shiatse le tsoo le heni wuoiatsu le yo, beni afe ni eke ewuo le ayatojei. Shi Anaanu ekplee, mon eke ewuo le yato tooi atsu le mli. Leebi le ana ake tool le egbe wuo le, ni ake ni mofemo miishe Nyonmo gbeyei hewole amo too le eko aha Anaanu. Keke ni eyi mli ekorj, ni gbekenaashi le eyato shia kroko. Bie ne hu ekplee ni etoo le ke tooi ni yoo shia le awo, shi mon ekele yafutu tsinai le aterj, ni beni sheo leebi le tsinai le egbe le. Keke ni Anaanu boi blomo ake: 'Ao, te mibafe terjri? Naanyonmo too ni.' Mei le to he amekee: 'kpao, wonyerj Nyonmo sane woye; bamo wotsinai le aterj ekome ato najiarj mo.'*

*Keke shwa ni erjo shwe no ekorj, ni keyaa gbekenaashi le eyashe marj ko mli. Enaanyo ko ye man ne mli, hewole eyato erjo. Eke etsina le yafutu okporjoi ni yoo Shia le, ni leebi le beni Anaanu tee ake eyaamo etsina koni eya le, ena ake egbo. Nakai be le mli le gbomei sheo Nyonmo gbeyei po ni ehii, hewole beni amenu ake tsina le Nyorjmo no ni pe, ni amemo okporjo le ekome ameha Anaanu.*

*Anaanu yi egbe le no ekorj, ni etee ehiefio pe ni eke mei komei ni tere gbonyo kpe. Keke ni ekee: 'Nyefoi (sic) ne, nyehea mikporjo ne ni nyeke gbonyo aha mi.' Efe mei le ahie yaa, ejaake amele ake gbonyo le be senamo ko, shi ake ni*

<sup>61</sup> Rapp E. L., 'Sprichwörter der Ga' *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin*, Jahrgang, XXXIX, Abteilung III, Afrikanische Studien, (Berlin: Sonderabdruck, 1936), pp 24-25. The original story was written with the old Ga orthography. For clarity and easy reading I have revised some of the words with the new Ga orthography.

*amemiitao okporjo le hewole amekple. Tsie Anaanu he gbonyo le ni gbekenaashi beni ena ake dun ewo le, etee man le mli eyato shia ko, eshi gbonyo le ye agbo le naa.*

*Niyeli be bashe, ni beni akee Anaanu ake eyatse moni ekenyie le keba le, eto he ekee 'Nyekagbaa nye he naa; mibi le etoi wa. Keji homo boi le yeli le, ledientse ebaaba.' Ake ni amele ake gbonyo ni hewole amekkee noko. Etsee ni shiabii le yakamo shi, ni beni Anaanu sra ni ena ake onukpai le ewo le, ete eyawo gbonyo le ni eke le yafo gbekebii le aterj, ni ekee: 'Mibi le enu tsofa, hewole nyekwea ni ahia beni afe ni nyorjterj keji efite kooyo (sic) le ni nyekayia le:*

*Kske ni Anaanu tee eyawo. Lebi le etee koni eyatsie ebi le, shi ena ake egbo. Keke ni ebo ekee: 'Meni ni nyefe nee? Nyorjmo bi kometoo ni eyoo le, nyegbe le. Ja nyeto najiarj.'*

*Ene hewole ake gbekebii le aterj mokome ha le koni eke le ayaha Nyorjmo. Beni Nyorjmo na gbeke le, efee le naakpe, hewole eto eyirj ake ebake Anaanu noko. Ewo to ni abua je le mli nilee fee naa awo mli le eha le. Miishe sorjrij ni ena hewole ekwee shikpon, ni beni eku ess ebaa le ete, ni to le je ederj egbe shi ni ejwa.*

*Boniffee ni nilee gbe shwa ne, ni ake ni heni tojwa le ke Meidiji ashiporj le no jeke hewole, nilee sheejei mra; ni ene hewo ni Blofomei etee hie fe Meidiji le.*

### English Translation

#### How Wisdom spread into the whole World<sup>62</sup>

One day *Tsie Anaanu* went to *Nyorjmo* and said to him: 'Give me seven grains of maize so that I will replace them with a human being.' *Nyorjmo* asked him: 'Can you?' He replied and said: 'Yes'. Then *Nyorjmo* gave him the grains of maize. When *Tsie Anaanu* was returning he saw some fowls, so he threw the maize to them. When *Anaanu* saw that one of them had swallowed some of the maize, he started shouting: 'Whose fowl is this? It is *Nyorjmo's* maize; therefore the owner of the fowl should come and replace it if he does not want trouble.' When the owner of the fowl heard it, he was scared, because he was afraid of *Nyorjmo*. He therefore came to replace it but *Anaanu* would not take the maize, so he gave him the fowl. Then *Anaanu* continued his journey.

My own translation. I tried to be as literal as possible.

While on his way night fell so he went and stayed in a certain house. The owner of the house showed him where the hencoop was, so that he would go and put the fowl there. But *Anaanu* did not consent to that. Rather he put the fowl in the goat's pen. In the morning they saw that the goats had killed the fowl, and since everybody was afraid of *Nyonmo*, they gave a goat to *Anaanu* as replacement. Then he continued his journey again. In the evening he went and stayed in another house. Here again he did not consent to his goat sleeping with the other goats in the house; rather, he kept it with the cows, and before morning the cows had killed it. Then *Anaanu* shouted saying: 'Ao, what will I do? It is *Naanyorjmo's* goat.' The people replied: 'We are sorry, we cannot contend with *Nyonmo*, come and take one of the cows as replacement.'

He continued his journey again, and by night time, he reached a certain town. He had a friend in that town, so he went and stayed with him. Here, he kept his cow with the horses in the house and in the morning when *Anaanu* went to take his cow to leave, he saw that it was dead. In those times human beings feared *Nyonmo* seriously, therefore when they heard that the cow belonged to *Nyonmo*, they gave one of the horses to *Anaanu*.

*Anaanu* started off on his journey again, and when he had gone a little further, he met some people carrying a corpse. Then he said: 'Please take my horse and give me the corpse.' The people were surprised because they knew that the corpse was of no use; however, since they wanted the horse, they agreed. *Tsie Anaanu* took the corpse and when it was dark he went into the town and stayed in a certain house leaving the corpse at the gate of the house.

At suppertime when they asked *Anaanu* to go and bring his companion, he replied saying: 'Do not bother yourselves; my child is very stubborn, when he is hungry he will come on his own.' Since they did not know that it was a corpse, they did not say anything. Just after that the people went to sleep. When *Anaanu* was convinced that the adults had slept, he went and brought the corpse and placed it beside the children. He said: 'My child has taken a purgative, therefore be careful so that in the night if he spoils the air you do not beat him.'

Then *Anaanu* went to sleep. In the morning, he went to wake up his child but saw that he was dead. Then he started shouting: 'what is it that you have done? You have killed *Nyoymo's* only son. You will have to give me a replacement.'

Because of this *Anaanu* was given one of the children to be given to *Nyonmo*. When *Nyonmo* saw the child he was amazed. He decided to reward *Anaanu* by



giving him a gift. He took a bottle into which he had gathered all the wisdom of the world and gave it to *Anaanu*. Out of excitement, *Anaanu* did not watch his footsteps and he stumbled. The bottle fell from his hands and broke.

This is how wisdom spread into the whole world. Since the place where the bottle fell was very far from the land of the black people, wisdom did not get to them early. This is why the whites have advanced more than the blacks.

## Story II

### *Boni nileh ho ke kpai-enyo yahe gbomei enyo*<sup>63</sup>

*Gbiko le nileh ko tee emarj marjtse rjoo eyakee le ake ekpee man muu le fee ke kpe koni eke sane ko afo amehie. Marjtse le ha atwa rjorjo ye enoyelihei le fee ni man muu le bakpe.*

*Beni mei le anaa ebakpe shi le nuu le te shi edamo gwaboo wulu le ten ni ewo enaa no ake: 'Ena ake amebe gbomei boni sa ye man le mli. Nohewo le marjtse le aha le trema kpai-enyo ni eke yahe gbomei enyo abaha ame.' Ewiamo le wo mei le fee amli la pam, hewo le amewo eyi ni ameblo amewo le ake eetse ehe nileh ni eefee pii tso. Amekee eno oleete ko bejerj.*

*Shi ake ni apasafo tsu le ashda shi kpa akpaa hewo le etse ametsuii erjme amemli. Keke ni ekee nuu le ake: 'Keji oonye oke kpai-enyo adhe gbomei enyo obaha mi le no le, mihu mato bo gbenaa ko ye mimarjtseyeli nee mli. Ni aaba mli ake keji onyee oyahe gbomei le keba le no le gbo oogbo.' Keke ni aha le trema le ni eyirj tee. Neke nuu nileh nee fa gbe ketee mar/see shorjrj heko. Beni enyie nyoonnyoon ke shwaneshwane gbii kpawo le eyashe akrowa bibioo ko mli. Etee ni eke kpai-enyo le yahe shito.*

*Beni eyana moko shia eto le, ekwa eke shito le ma kpo le no heko ni wuoi baklofee. Noni etaoo le no pe afee aha le nee ni eboi wie yeli.*

*Etee eyakee eshiatse le ake ewuoi le eye marjtse shito ni efa gbe gbii kpawo too gbenyiemo eyahe le, hewo le ke esumoo ehe sane le, bele oya kpakpa ni eke*

<sup>63</sup> C. P. Moir ke R. P. Djabonor (compilers and editors), *Adesai Komei* (Ga Stories), Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot Ltd, 1963, pp 29-32. This story may be considered a later version due to its time of publication. Further, C. P. Moir, at the time of publication was a teacher at Krobo Training College, one of the schools established by the Basel Missionaries. This may explain the Christian influence and the change of the characters in the story. The original story was written with the old Ga orthography. For clarity and easy reading I have revised some of the words with the new Ga orthography.

wuo ni dafefee ato najiarj. Kejee nakai le, no le sane gbonyo ko baaba. Keke ni aha le wuonuu agbo kome.

Agbene ekeshwie no ketee akrowa kroko mli ni etee ayato nuu niiatse ko shia. Eke wuonuu le tee eyahd shiatse le shi too ni boni ekee kefata he ne: 'Wuonuu tsuru agbo nee marjtse no ni, ni shonrj heko miyahe le keje. Ehe ye ahuntoo fioo, ejaake ewoo enanemei wuoi aterj, shi toi morj eke woo. Ofai ne, ani oona heko oha mi ewo lo?' Niiatse le ha le gbe amro le norjrj ni ekee ake wuo le ayawo etoi atsu le mli. Shi beni nuu le ke wuo le tee tsu lerj woo le etsomo ekue ni eto baha. Fee see le, toi le hu naanaa eno in egbo. Beni je tsere ni ayaa jje wuo abahd notse koni eya le, naa wuonuu agbo le egbo. Mina ni ayaje jemei (sic). Yaakwe boni gbenyielo naatsolo nee fee. Ekee nuu le toi le egbe emarjtse wuo, hewo le aha le too osai ni da fe fee le koni ekeyabo amanie. Jojoojo keke ni amo too le aha le ye wuo gbonyo le najiarj ni eje jei ketee hekroko.

Gbi nee enyie aahu jenamo tuu dani eyashe akrowa kroko ko hu mli. Bie nee le akee alee kooloo kofe tsinai keke. Hewo le nuu moni eyato ewe le nda heko ake tsinai atsu mli ake too osai agbo le yawo. Shi dani ake too osai le baawo tsinai atsu le mli le nuu le ha eshiatse le le ake emarjtse no ni. Beni ake too le baawo tsinai atsu le mli le nuu le emia ese jogbarjn ni eto baha; nohewo le beni je tsereo le kooloo le egbo. Te mafee terjrj? Marjtse too ni atee shorjrj ayahe le, no nyetsinai eshoto le nee?' Ni etso ehe ni ekee nuu le ake keji esumoo ni sanefon ko aye le ke ewefee le, no le ehd tsina agbo kome ye too le najiarj koni ekeyabo marjtse le amanie. Ni efee nakai. Nu nilelo le kpla tsina le keje jei keyi emarj gbe.

Agbene beni eshwe aafee gbi kome loo no jekemo ni ebaashe emarj le, enu joi ke lalai ke yaafo ke blomoi miiba ke le abakpe. Eyaakwe le gbonyo atere kebaa nee. Eke ame kpe norjrj ni ewa edamo shi eye ame rjkomo ekee: 'Eye tsuimlishale babao ni eji dole sane kehd mi ake nye yaafu gbonyo nee eflo ni ake le woo adeka mli. Nyeke le aha mi koni mikeyaha marjtse ni efu le; ni mike tsina nee baaha nye koni nyekayafea yara nyahaa mo le susuma.' Ni ake gbonyo le ha le.

Ene see etsee ko ni gbomo le yanina akrowa kokro. Beni eshe le klotia le, eke gbonyo le tee ni etee marj le mli eke moko yawie koni eyato erjoo. Shi beni je na ni eshe woobe le nuu ni eyakee shiatse le ake eke marjtsebi ko nyie shi oblanjo le hie gboo hewo le edamo klotia le; asarj ekome ewoo nohewo le shiatse le aha eke ebii le ayawo. Nu le kple ni beni je na le ame fee ametee

*amsyakamo shi. No ni nuu nee je kpo eyawo gbonyo le ebafo eshiatse le bii le aten. Nyoonterj le anu ni gbekebii nee miishimo gbonyo le ni amelee aks gbonyo le (sic). Je tsereno ni ayaakwe le oblanyo Is egbo; shi ake ni mokomoko lee ake gbonyo akeba le hewo le, msi lefse ma no mi ake shiatss le bii le gbe oblanyo le nyoon le mli beni ameshimo le nii le.*

*Te abaafée terijj ko, ni namo yaabo amanie? Nuú hieteh kokosanfo le wo yara aks enyerj neks amanis eyabo. 'Nto nysgbe maytsebi le? Nyedientsemsi (sic) nysyaa nyeyagbaa.' Neks ewie keflo eyaafó Is mli. Awie aahu, akpa fai, afee nofeeno, nuu le ekplee. Fee ses le ekee keji adna nilehi enyo aha le le, no le eke ame yaaha mantse le ye moni egbo le najiarj, ni eedamo mli ekpa fai eha ame. Oya kpakpa ni ana gbomsí enyo aha nuu hieteb nee ni eke ame ayaha eman marjtse le.*

*Nuu nes ke gbomei le yashe ematj. Ni beni eha atswa tjorjo ni marjtso muu le fee bakpe ni abo emanie toi le, nuu nss bapue ys gwaboo wulu nee hie ke egbomei le. Abo le toi ni beni ekh egbee ni egba sane le fee le, mei le fee jie eyi ni amekafo le babao. Mantse fee le gbomo agbo disntse ni eto le gbenaa ni hi. Boni nuu naalo ke histslo ko fee ni eke kpai-enyo too pe yahe gbomei adesai enyo ne.*

### English Translation

#### **How a certain Wiseman used two pence to buy two persons**<sup>64</sup>

One day a certain wise man went to his king and asked him to assemble the whole town so that he would put an issue before them. The king caused the gong-gong to be beaten throughout his kingdom and the whole town assembled.

When the whole town had gathered, the man got up and stood in the centre of the big assembly and said he had observed that they did not have enough people in the town, therefore the king should give him two pence to go and buy two human beings for them. His speech annoyed all the people and therefore they shouted at him that he regarded himself as the wisest person in the world. They said they had never seen such a garrulous know-it-all person before.

But since one does not burn the house of a liar but rather one removes its roof, he asked the people to take heart. Then he [the king] said to the man thus: 'If you are able to use the two pence to buy two persons for me then I will give you a place of honour in my kingdom. But if it happens that you do not bring the two persons,

<sup>64</sup> My own translation. I tried to be as literal as possible.

then you will surely die.' They gave him the two pence and he took off. This wise man travelled to a distant land. When he had walked seven nights and seven days he came to a small village and he went and bought pepper with the two pence.

He went and put up in the house of a good Samaritan. He put the pepper on the compound; a place where he knew the fowls would come and eat everything. He achieved his aim and he started grumbling.

He went and told the landlord that his fowls had eaten his king's pepper which he had bought from a distant land. He told him that if he did not want any trouble, he should replace it with the biggest fowl otherwise a bad omen would befall him. The landlord obliged and gave him one big cock.

He left to another village and went and stayed in the house of a rich man. He gave his cock to the rich man to keep for him. He said: 'this red big cock is for my king, and I bought it from a distant land. It is quite troublesome because it does not sleep with its fellow fowls but rather with goats. Please, can you get a place for it to sleep?' The rich man agreed that he put the cock into the goat's pen. When the man got to the pen, he twisted the neck and the cock became dazed. Later, the goats trampled on it and it died. The following morning when they went to bring the cock to the owner so he might continue his journey, behold, the cock was dead. What followed was a sight to behold. Come and see how this litigant traveller behaved. He said the man's goats had killed his king's cock therefore they should give him a big goat so that he could go and report to his lord, the king. For peace to prevail, they gave him the goat in replacement of the dead cock and he left there for another place.

He walked till it was dark before he got to another village. Here, it was forbidden to rear any other animal except cattle. Therefore the man who hosted him could not get any place to keep the goat except the kraal. But before he put the goat in the kraal, he made it known to the landlord that the goat belonged to his king. When they were putting the goat in the kraal the man twisted its neck and it became dazed; before morning the animal was dead. 'What will I do? Have your cattle not killed the king's goat that was bought from a distant land?' He queried. Then he turned to the host and told him that if he together with his household did not want any serious trouble then he should give him one big cow as replacement for the dead goat so that he would present it to the king. They obliged and this wise man took the cow away. Then he started his journey back home.

Now, when it was about a day's journey to his town, he heard drumming and dancing, songs, weeping and shouting in his direction. He realised that the people were carrying a corpse. When he met them, he stopped and began to sympathise with them saying: 'It is disheartening and pathetic that you are going to bury this corpse without a coffin. Give it to me so that I will go and give it to my king to give it a befitting burial; I will give you this cow to use for the funeral and pacification rite for his soul.' They people agreed and gave the corpse to him.

Not long after this encounter, the man got to another village. When he reached its outskirts, he hid the corpse in the bushes and went to speak with someone to put up with him for the night. In the evening when they were about to sleep he went and told the landlord that he came in the company of the king's son but since the young man was very shy he was waiting on the outskirts of the village. He went on to say that this young man does not sleep alone so the landlord should allow him to sleep with his children. The landlord accepted his proposal and when it was night they all went to sleep. The wise man went out and brought the corpse and placed it where the children of the landlord slept. At midnight they heard the children hitting the corpse since they did not know that it was a dead body. In the morning they realised that the young man was dead. Since nobody knew that it was a dead body that was brought, all the people agreed that it was the children of the landlord who had killed the young man when they hit him during the night.

'What will I do? Who will go and report this to the king?' This wise hypocrite started crying that he could not carry this report: 'Haven't you killed the king's son? You go and report it to the king.' This is how he spoke as he cried. They spoke with him, begged him, and did all they could but the man would not listen to anything. Later he said if they could get two wise men for him, he would take them to the king as replacement for his dead son, and then he would plead on their behalf. Quickly they brought two people to the wise man to be taken to his king.

This man took the two men to his town. The gong-gong was beaten and the whole town assembled for the man to tell his story. He came before the crowd with the two persons. They listened to him and when he had narrated the entire story, they praised and exalted him. The king promoted him and gave him a place of honour in his kingdom. This is how a wise and discreet man used two pence to buy two human beings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The impact of Bible translation on the concept of *Nyorjmo* has been tremendous. *Nyorjmo*, as a religious notion, has not only been widened and deepened but has also had a wider impact on the whole society since *Nyorjmo* is related to all sectors of the Ga social, political, economic and religious life. Through Bible translation *Nyorjmo* was magnified and hallowed above all other deities and spirit beings within the Ga society. This could be seen in the changes that have occurred in the society in relation to the concept of *Nyorjmo*.

Ga Christians with their new understanding of *Nyorjmo* gained through reading the vernacular Scriptures have composed various songs about *Nyorjmo* affirming his supremacy over everything. Thus it could be said that the vernacular Scriptures have enabled the Ga language to gain a transcendental range. They also saw their 'calling' as from *Nyorjmo* with a mission to accomplish.

Perhaps, the most significant impact has been felt within the cultural life of the people. As the Ga Bible has exerted its influence upon Ga institutions, many pre-Christian notions of *Nyorjmo* have been replaced. Thus, as cultic language and traditional prayers has assumed biblical colouration, so has the names and character of *Nyorjmo*, which were used in folklore, also been replaced with other titles.

Most importantly, the vernacular Scriptures seem to have enabled the Ga to preserve the name of *Nyorjmo* as the Supreme Being. *Nyorjmo* has therefore become God of the Christian Bible and the church. He is considered the Father of Jesus Christ and comes to us in the form of the Holy Spirit.

However, one needs to recognise that the impact of the Bible on the people was not due to the vernacular translation alone, but was facilitated by their traditional thought pattern in relation to their religious beliefs. It was such indigenous views that enabled the people to understand some of the biblical concepts like the Incarnation and Trinity.

The impact of Bible translation continues to emerge in new areas of Ga social and religious lives. The continuing interaction and engagement between Ga Bible and Ga religious and cultural consciousness is yielding new developments, especially in Ga intellectual life.

In recent times, various sectors of the Ga society have been holding seminars and lectures,<sup>65</sup> which are the result of emerging awareness of this interaction and engagement. One intellectual work worth noting is the recent publication by Reverend Philip Laryea with the title: *Yesu Homowo Nurjtso*.<sup>66</sup> This work is an attempt to re-interpret the Ga historical and religious past in a Christian context.

<sup>65</sup> *Homowo: Prospects and challenges*, a lecture delivered by Philip Laryea at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Dr. Ebenezer Ako Adjei- Nene Oklemekuku Azu Mate-Korle Memorial Lecture at the Osu Ebenezer Presbyterian Church hall, Osu on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2005. It was organised by the Ga-Dangme Students Association of the University of Ghana, Legon. See also a talk given by Nii-Mensah Adjei on the topic: *Custom, Tradition and Religion*, on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2005 at Nii Adjei Nkpa We (Family House), Nmati Jarasee, La, organised by the Nii Adjei Nkpa *Weku Kpee* (a family association), during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the association.

<sup>66</sup> Philip Laryea, *Yesu Homowo Nurjtso: Nikasemo ni koo boni Kristofoi naa Yesu ye Gamsi Akusumfeemo ke Blema Saji Amlɔ*, (Akrpong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2004).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION; THE VERNACULAR PRINCIPLE AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR GA CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years there have been many calls for an indigenous Ga Christian theology that will address the needs of the Ga in general and Christians in particular; a theology that will facilitate the growth of Christianity, as well as help Ga Christians to worship God in their cultural context without anxiety. The recent confrontation between a section of the Christian community and the Ga traditional authorities can be attributed partly to the absence of such a theology.

The development of such a theology cannot be based only on the present understanding of *NyDrjmo*. There is the need for a systematic approach which will take into consideration the historical and religious milieu in which the whole concept emerged. One will therefore have to study the historical background of the Ga, their social and religious beliefs as well as the changes that occurred with the advent of Christianity. What is also crucial for this approach is to assess the impact and consequences of Bible translation within the social and religious life of the Ga. This concluding chapter will dwell on the impact and consequences of Bible translation on the concept of *Nyoymo*, which has been the focus of this dissertation.

#### **IMPACT OF BIBLE TRANSLATION**

The impact of Bible translation is felt greatly within the social, religious and cultural life of the Ga. The vernacular translation provided the necessary environment for an authentic interface between Christian Faith and Ga culture within the Ga cultural milieu. This enhanced interaction has, in turn, produced a situation where the conception of *Nyotjmo* has been deepened and widened; *Nyorjmo* has acquired a 'new status' within Ga religious culture.

Josiah N. Aryeh, 'To drum or not to drum: controversy surrounding the ban on drumming in Accra', Ghanaian Times, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1999.



*Nyoymo* on the Ga mind. Through this process, the Ga Bible has found a permanent home among the Ga. Now they are able to recognise and identify with the biblical story<sup>3</sup> and hear God speak to them in familiar idioms;<sup>4</sup> they are now able to re-interpret their historical and religious past based on their newly found understanding and faith in *Nyorjmo*. These views are captured in some of the songs the early Ga Christians composed and sang. An example is the following song:

<i>Woshia le be bie shietse</i>	This place is not our home my friend
<i>Ni haomo pii ye bie hama tee</i>	Let me leave this place which is full of difficulties
<i>Woshia le ye rjwei</i>	Our home is in heaven
<i>IJwsi wokweo, jei wowe yoo</i>	We look towards heaven, that place is our home
<i>Jeme wo Nyorjmo man yo</i>	That is where our God's town (heaven) is
<i>Nyorjmo marj :/:<sup>5</sup></i>	God's town (heaven):/: <sup>6</sup>

This same process has linked this emergent Ga theology and Christianity with the universal church and Christian faith. The enhanced appreciation of *Nyorjmo* which was gained from reading the Ga Bible was not limited to *Nyoymo*; it also applied to Jesus Christ whom the Ga have come to accept as the son of *Nyoymo* and consequently referred to as *Nyoymobi* (God's child). The vernacular Scriptures therefore have been the channel through which Christ seems to have gained an entry into Ga culture; this has made Christ 'visible' to the Ga in their own culture. Through their faith in Jesus, *Nyoymobi*, Ga Christians are linked with the universal faith of the Christian church and share in God's promise. As Bediako points out 'all believers in Christ, due to their faith in Christ become the children of Abraham.'<sup>7</sup> Thus, through *Nyorjmo* and his son Jesus Christ, *Nyoymobi*, Ga Christians now identify with other Christians all over the world sharing in common beliefs and practices of the church worldwide. The Ga Christians can now affirm *Nyoymo ye hefeehe* (God is everywhere).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Kwame Bediako, 'Scripture as the hermeneutic of Culture and Tradition' in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4 No. 1, (June, 2001), pp 3-4.

Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), p 184.

See *Abokobi Blema Lalai Komei*. No. 54.

<sup>6</sup> My own translation.

<sup>7</sup> Bediako, 'Scripture as the hermeneutic of Culture and Tradition', p 3.

<sup>8</sup> See *Abokobi Blema Lalai Komei*. No. 90.

In addition, the vernacular translation has enabled the Ga language to assume a 'transcendental range'. With the mother tongue Scriptures in their possession the Ga are able to read and talk about *Nyoymo* and also communicate with *Nyoymo* in their own categories; they can use local concepts and idioms to express divine truth and also develop their own theologies. To adopt the thoughts of Sanneh, the vernacular Scriptures has imbued Ga culture with eternal significance, and has endowed the Ga language with a transcendental range for, God was not disdainful of the Ga as to be incommunicable in their language.

Through the process of Bible translation the Ga are able to use indigenous concepts to express their understanding of the notion of *Nyoymo* within the community. A case in point is Protten's rendering of heaven as *nyoymomli* (the inside of *Nyoymo*) in his translation of the Lord's Prayer. This translation, as has been noted earlier, was reviewed in later editions of the Bible and heaven was translated as *ywei*; this could also mean the sky. If maintained, Protten's translation of heaven as *nyoymomli* would have brought a significant depth of meaning. Philip Laryea's comments on this are worth noting. According to him, 'Protten must have realised that the term "*rjwei*" was inadequate to translate God's abode and hence his use of the word "*nyoymomir* which literally means "the inside of God".' In his view,

the thought expressed by Protten's translation is deep because it is reasonable to imagine, given our knowledge about the nature of God, that the dwelling place of *Nyoymo* cannot be located anywhere apart from *Nyoymo*<sup>9</sup>

The view expressed here is very interesting for, as Laryea has demonstrated, *Nyoymo* cannot be limited by time and space. It is to be regretted therefore that this thought seems to have been lost on most people who now think of the abode of *Nyoymo* as *rjwei* since that is what has been maintained in the Bible.

Protten's concept of heaven as *nyoymomli* expresses the Ga traditional belief of the heavens being considered as part of the embodiment of *Nyoymo*. For the Ga,

<sup>9</sup> Lamin Sanneh, 'The horizontal and the vertical in mission: an African perspective' in *International Bulletin for Missionary Research*, Vol. 7 No. 4, p 166.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Laryea, *Yesu Homowo Nuytso: Nikasemo Ni Koo Boni Kristofoi Naa Yesu Ye Gamei Akusumfeemo Ke Blema Saji Amli*, (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2004), p 154.

*Nyonmo* is everywhere and not limited to any one particular place. The view of Protten would have contributed to a greater understanding and appreciation of *Nyonmo* by the Ga as a being who does not only 'dwell in' heaven and supervises what happens on earth, but one who is everywhere. Protten's contribution, therefore, cannot be entirely set aside, and may need to be re-examined in future work on the subject.

Another contribution that the vernacular translation brings to the concept of *Nyonmo* is the acknowledgement of rain as a manifestation of *Nyonmo*. The Ga translation maintains the pre-Christian word for rain (*nyonmo*) which is the same word that translates as God. The Ga Bible thus makes a distinction between 'rain' and 'water'.<sup>11</sup> It translates rain as *nyonmo* and rainwater as *nu nemo*. This is significant, since the Ga has always maintained that rain is a manifestation of *Nyonmo* and *Nyonmo* blesses his people through rainfall. They thus perceive both 'rain' and '*Nyonmo*' as one and the same embodiment. It is therefore evident that the idea that rain is separate from *Nyoiymo* and that *nyonmo* is a corruption of *nugbo* may not necessarily be valid. It could be regarded as an evolving concept where people attempt to distinguish *Nyonmo* from nature. This may also need further probing.

The association of *Nyonmo* with rain also enforces the Ga traditional notion that *Nyonmo* is synonymous with nature. In almost all situations, the Ga attribute natural phenomenon to *Nyoymo*. For example, if it is believed that the death of a person followed the course of nature, that is natural death, such a death is regarded as *Nyonmo dengbele* (death at God's hand); that is 'an act of God'. The Ga also attribute childbirth to natural occurrences and thus refer to it as *Nyorjmofaa* (God's river). Again, the milk in the coconut is attributed to *Nyonmo*. All these emphasise the belief that *Nyoymo* relates intimately with his creation and also manifests himself in creation through various media. The whole concept of the configurations of *Nyoymo* buttresses this point. It is from such observations that Margaret Field concluded that if *Nyonmo* is to be rendered by any other term than rain, then it will

<sup>11</sup> Though in all the following passages, the English translates rain, the Ga translation makes a distinction. The Ga translates 'rain' as *Nyoymo* in I Kings 17:1; 18:1, Matthew 5:45 and James 5:7, while in Genesis 7:4 and Jude 12 it renders it as *nu* (water).

be 'nature'.<sup>12</sup> This understanding, if captured in Ga Christian understanding, could have some considerable ecological implications, and affect how the environment is treated.

Another area that indigenous categories have made contributions to Christian theology is in the area of gender. The Ga refer to *Nyorjmo* either as *Ataa Nyorjmo* (Father God), *Naa Nyorjmo* (Mother God) or *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo* (Father Mother God). As Rose Abbey comments:

Among the Ga people of south-eastern Ghana, God is traditionally known as *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*. This name not only means Father Mother God, it also implies and stresses the maleness and femaleness of God. Seeing God as Father and Mother emphasizes the creative power of God as opposed to the macho image, which gives the idea of controlling power.<sup>13</sup>

The idea of inclusiveness addresses the needs of women, as they find comfort in *Nyorjmo* both as female and male. It is in this view that sometimes Ga women address *Nyorjmo* as *Awo Nyorjmo* instead of *Naa Nyorjmo*, to stress her motherhood. According to Abbey, 'to rediscover the motherhood of God is to make Christianity more relevant to all Christians in general and Ghanaian women in particular.' This is one area where Ga indigenous categories make a great contribution to Christian theology.

### **SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR GA CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

The impact of the Bible, far from weakening the foundations of traditional institutions has, in fact had the opposite effect. As Andrew Walls asserts, though Christian impact and expansion may radically change already existing African maps of the universe, their component and understanding of the world and society remain

Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, (London: OUP, 1937), p 61.

<sup>13</sup> R. T. Abbey 'Rediscovering *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo* - The Father Mother God' in Nyambura J Njoroge and Musa W Dube (eds), *Talitha cum! Theologies of African Women*, (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001), p 141.

<sup>14</sup> Both *Awo* and *Naa* in Ga carry the idea of womanhood. *Awo*, however, stresses a deeper meaning of motherhood. The other alternative is *yoofoyoo*.

<sup>15</sup> Abbey 'Rediscovering *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*', p 141.

in one guise or another. In Ga society, these 'maps' have not been erased; they have only been altered. The recent prominence gained by the traditional authorities in banning drumming and noise making in the Ga traditional area during traditional 'Lenten' periods attests to this fact. It is for this reason that a new approach to doing theology within the Ga social, religious and cultural milieu is needed.

In spite of the contribution of Bible translation to the development of the concept of *Nyorjmo* within the Ga religious and cultural tradition, there is still the need for further engagement to make the integration 'complete'. For the traditional Ga, the concept of *Nyoymo* is conceived in relation to other beings. Thus the conception of *Nyoymo* becomes meaningful only within the context of both benevolent and malevolent local deities, ancestors and objects of power. The present situation where the name '*Nyoymo*' is singled out and elevated to a supreme status and made the God of Israel and the Bible without due consideration for other divinities within the Ga cosmology does not go far, and does not touch the core of the people's belief system. What has happened so far is what Walls describes as 'the magnification of the God component' within the general world view of the people; this in his view does not eliminate the other components within the belief system of the people. According to Walls, while the other components exist, people will continue to 'rethink' and 're-evaluate' in the light of the impact of the biblical tradition and this

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will lead Christian theology to new paths. As a consequence and development so far, some possible ways forward can be discerned.

The first relates to the use of the mother-tongue Scriptures. As demonstrated above, it is the vernacular translation that has provided the fertile ground for the engagement between Ga culture and the Christian faith. It is through such constant engagement that the Christian Gospel will take further root in the Ga culture and make Christ even more visible to the people. One could therefore expect a vigorous effort at biblical research and 're-translation' of the earlier translations of the Bible by using local and cultural categories, idioms and ideas. This would provide more accurate concepts and make the Bible more meaningful to its hearers. It is only then

<sup>16</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, (Edinburgh: T& T Clark / New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p 122.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, p 129.

that Ga Christians would 'hear God in Jesus Christ addressing Himself immediately to them in their native situation and particular environment.'

One likely outcome of such an approach will be that both trained biblical scholars and the 'ordinary' readers would use the Ga Bible as the basis for biblical and theological discussions. The cumulative effect will be that academic theological discourse will connect to fundamental realities of the predominantly oral theologies found at the 'grassroots'. In other words such an approach will hasten the process of linking theory to practice and foster a relationship between theologians and 'ordinary' readers. The widening gap between the trained theologian and 'ordinary' church members will thus be bridged. Ga Christians then will be in a better position to put their faith into practice.

Another corollary of the above process will lead Ga Christians to develop their own skills of interpreting the Bible, using concepts and idioms that are familiar and meaningful to them. This will further lead to the development of indigenous theologies which will address the social, political, economic, cultural and religious issues that confront them. The suggestion by Kwame Bediako for the growth of African theology will do for the Ga:

The fact still remains that the seriousness with which African Theology will treat African mother-tongue as a fundamental medium in its theological discourse may well become an important test of the depth of the impact, not only of the Bible, but also the Christian faith itself, in African life and so determine the direction in which African Theology too will grow.<sup>19</sup>

We hope our study has shown that this observation can be applied to the Ga situation.

Another likely consequence will be a coherent effort to 'evangelise' the totality of the traditional institutions instead of 'plucking' individuals out of their communities

Bolaji Idowu, 'Introduction' in Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (eds), *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, (London: Lutherworth Press, 1969), p 16.

Kwame Bediako, 'African Theology' in David Ford (ed), *The Modern Theologies* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), p 433.

and 'planting' them in a new environment. Institutions like chieftaincy, priesthood and the households 'We', which form the basis of the community, would thus be 'evangelised' as a whole. In other words the Gospel would be proclaimed within the context of the social structure and the people's solidarity group. Long ago, John Mbiti suggested that the Gospel should not address only individual needs but the community. According to him, Christian faith becomes meaningful to the African only in the context of his group solidarity; his family, relations, clan, ethnic group and the community. In his view, the African as an individual cannot be 'saved' alone; and if we want him 'saved' then,

He must be allowed to bring with him into the Body of Christ all his relatives. Africa traditional religion is not departmentalised areas of life; they are incorporated into the whole life of the people. If the ultimate goal of preaching and accepting the gospel is to allegiance from tribal religion to the Lord Jesus Christ, then the process of transposition should be entire and not partial, radical and not casual.<sup>20</sup>

This approach recommended by Mbiti is the direct opposite of what was adopted by the early Basel missionaries among the Ga. The missionaries 'uprooted' converts from their communities and 'planted' them in Christian quarters (Salem). This approach not only isolated the converts from their relatives but also led to the 'demonising' of culture, thus bringing a separation between Christians and their heritage. Most of the early Ga Christians were even forbidden to witness traditional festivals like the *Homowo* and those who defaulted were disciplined.

One consequence of this missionary practice, for Ga Christians, is a situation Kwame Bediako refers to as 'identity crises'. Ga Christians now find themselves in a situation where it has become difficult for them to identify with their own cultural traditions. Yet, they feel within them that they should be part of their community in the celebration of their heritage. They have now become aware of their '*Ganess*' and feel the 'Ga' within them. Like many others, some Ga Christians are now 'returning emotionally and in practice to their traditional or indigenous cultures.

John Mbiti, 'Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel' in C. G. Baeta (ed), *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, (London: OUP, 1968), p 337.

They are looking at them for values which can be meaningful in giving them an identity and sense of direction as peoples.'" Ga Christians are therefore, most often, like the 'amnesiac man'" who does not know where he belongs.

Idowu, describing a similar situation in Nigeria in the mid twentieth century, said the misguided purpose of the missionaries has led to the creation of Christians who live ambivalent spiritual lives; Christians who live two different kinds of life. Their Christianity ended in the confines of the church building. Thus we have Christians who go to church and consult diviners at the same time without feeling guilty of violating any principle. In other words, the church has people of two worlds who do not find fulfilment in either of them.

Some Ga Christians, like their Nigerian counterparts, have become people of two worlds; they are not really at home in either of these; they are people who alternate easily between the world of the old belief so far as their practical lives are concerned, and in the world of the new faith in their outward appearance.<sup>23</sup>

As a result of this new approach to Ga Christian theology, Ga Christians would be able to relate their new consciousness to their 'past'. They will achieve an 'integration between their Ga pre-Christian religious experience and their Ga Christian commitment in ways that would ensure the integrity of the Ga Christian identity and selfhood.'<sup>24</sup>

As a likely consequence of such a process, one may witness a 'conversion' of not only the individual members of the society, but the whole community together with its cultural accretions since Jesus would be placed at the centre of the culture of the people as well as their cosmology, thus making him the primary source of power within the community. This view is acknowledged by Donald Jacobs who holds the

<sup>21</sup> John Mbiti, 'African Indigenous Culture in relation to Evangelism and Church Development' in Pierce R. Beaver (ed), *The Gospel and Frontier Peoples: A Report of a Consultation, December 1972*, (California, William Carey Library, 1972), p 87.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew F. Walls, 'Africa and Christian Identity' in *Mission Focus*, Vol. 6, no. 7, (November 1978), pp 11-13 cited in Kwame Bediako, 'African Theology', p 433.

<sup>23</sup> E. B. Idowu 'The Predicament of the Church in Africa' in C. G. Baeta (ed), *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, (London, OUP, 1968), pp 417-440.

<sup>24</sup> Kwame Bediako, 'African Theology', p 426.



view that unless such an engagement takes place and Jesus Christ enters the convert's cosmology as a primary source of power in a meaningful way, the experience of conversion will be brought into question as alternative power sources would dominate the lives of the people.<sup>25</sup>

The cumulative effect of the above approach will result in the emergence of an authentic Ga Christian theology: a theology that will evolve from the people's own experience as they integrate their pre-Christian experience and their new consciousness. Ga Christians will thus accommodate their 'past' and 'present' and appreciate themselves as Ga Christians, and worship God within their cultural context without anxiety and struggle.

<sup>25</sup> Donald R. Jacobs, 'Culture and the Phenomena of Conversion' in *Gospel in Context*, Vol. 1. No. 3, (July 1978), pp 13-14.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### No hewo ni Wuo shamoo le<sup>x</sup>

*Blema be le mli le Nyorjmo ke rjamei pii hi shi, ni ame ten onukpa ji wuo. Ake ni wuo sumoo awunya yeli hewole befeebe le eewie ebienyemei le ahe. Ebienyemei ne aterj mokome le nuu ni, shi ake ni Nyorjmo lee hewole eyarjo le ake ena. Wuo le ene hewole daane eegbe ebienye ne he guo eeha enanemei. Ebienye le nu ene, ni etsuifa, hewole eyatao tsofatse, ni eshee otsi ni etso yoo. Keke ni tsofatse le ha le tsofa ko ni ekee: "Hemo tsofa ne, koni ke otee shia le ni okeyashwie shia ten. Wuo yoo ne ekpaa nuarj, ekole eebaye. Mofeemo ni tsofa ne eko aasa elilei no le, keji yoo ni ebatso nuu; ni ke nuu ni le ebatso yoo. " Keke ni eda tsofatse le shi. Eba shia norjrj pe keke ni eke tsofa le shwie shia le ten. Neke be ne mli le wuo etee jaano, shi etsee kwraa ni eba. Beni ena tsofa le jwere shi le ebo ekee; "Namo nii ne?" Ebb aahu shi mokomoko efoo mli hewole ekee "Keji minaa notse le, no le mibasa minafio mo. " Beni esa enaa le, ena ake erjoo, hewole eye fee. Etsee norjrj ni emusu mo le, ni etee eyakd shi. Beni ehie tsere le ni etee ehejuu le, ena ake agbens ejee yoo dorjrj, shi morj etso nuu.*

*Sane ne wa ha wuo, ni ebo moderj beni afe ni mokomoko akana. Ejee kpo dorjrj, befeebe le emaawai le etsuo. Keji ebaabu mama le ewuo eshishi pii, hewole befeebe efee tamo moni eshi atofa.*

*Daa afi le Nyorjmo too gbi ni eke erjamei le fee yawuo rjsho. Beni wuo na ake be le miiberjke le, ekwa ehe boi yeli, ni beni gbi le she le, ehela le mli ewo wu. Nyorjmo tsu ake ayatse wuo keba, shi eke enyerj enyie. Keke ni Nyorjmo ke erjamei ni eshwe le boi ame he juu. Mofeemo tsuu ehirjmei eshwie moni wuo wieo ehe eforj le no, ejaake ale ake nuu ji le, shi efe ame fee naakpe beni amena ake yoo ji le le. Beni amaju amehe amegbe naa le, Nyorjmo tsu mei ekee: "Efeo*

<sup>1</sup> E.L. Rapp, 'Sprichwörter der Ga' Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin, Jahrgang, XXXIX, Abteilung 111, Afrikanische Studien, (Berlin: Sonderabdruck, 1936), pp 34 -35. The original story was written with the old Ga orthography. For clarity and easy reading I have revised some of the words with the new Ga orthography.

*mi aks, aks ni Wuo ji yei Is fee anukpa Is esa aks Is hu ewu ysho Is ks. Keji enyee Is, nyeyawoa Is ksbaa ni eks ehe abatso nsho Is mli ksks."*

*Beni wuo na mei ni atsu Is, eboi blomo akss: "Ao nyebaagbe mi, mi he miiye, minyen maya." Shi amskplss. Amstere wuo kstee nsho Is naa, ni aboi amamai (sic) Isjiemo beni afe ni aks Is ayatso nsho Is mli, shi ekplss. Aks ni ams he wa fe Is hewols amsnye eno amsjie. Eto ams naakpa, ejaaks wuo ewo eshishi pii. Beni ajie fee agbe naa ni amskwe Is naa, wuo jee yoo doyy, shi mon nuu. Nyoymo mli fu wuo waa dientss, ejaaks enu boni wuo gbeo ebienyemsi Is ahe guo eha Is. Kuls eto eyirj aks ebaagbla wuo toi ni ekana nu enu doyy, shi ebienyemsi Is damo mli amsha Is. Ksks ni Nyoymo kss: "Ojogbayy, wuo baanu nu moy shi eshamoy doyy."*

*Ens hewo ni wuo shamoo Is, ni ks ona wuo ni eenu nu ni ewo ehie no eekws ywsi Is, bsls eeda Nyoymo shi aks ena Is mobo ni eha Is nu eenu."*

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### Why the Fowl does not urinate<sup>2</sup>

In the olden days, *Nyorjmo* married many wives and the senior was the fowl. Fowl was jealous, therefore she always spoke ill of her rivals. One of the rivals was a male and because *Nyorjmo* did not know, he took him for a wife. Fowl knew this and therefore said bad things about this rival to her friends. The rival heard this and became scared and worried. He therefore went to consult a medicine man that was able to transform him into a female within one week. The medicine man gave him some medicine to sprinkle on the compound of their house with the conviction that anyone who ate it would be transformed; if the one was male, he would become a female and if the one happens to be a female, she will become a male. They were confident that Fowl being so pompous would certainly fall into this trap of being tempted to eat the medicine that would be sprinkled. At the time the rival got home, Fowl had gone to the market. He quickly did what the medicine man had told her by sprinkling the medicine in the middle of the house. Not long afterwards, Fowl came strutting home. On seeing the medicine on the floor, she asked whose it was. This she did persistently but got no reply. She then decided to taste to see what it was. When she did, she realised it was sweet so she ate it all. Within a short time she felt some pains in the abdomen and therefore went to bed. When she woke up and went to bath she realised that she was no more a female but had become a male.

This bothered Fowl and he tried to hide it, so that nobody will know of his predicament. He would not go anywhere; anytime he needed something, he would send his maidservants. Whenever he wanted to put on clothes, he would wear a bustle.

It happened that in those days, once every year, *Nyorjmo* took his wives to bathe in the sea. Fowl realising that the day was drawing nigh feigned sickness. He made his condition look worse on the day appointed for bathing in the sea. When *Nyorjmo* sent for him, he lied that he could not walk. *Nyorjmo* had no choice but to leave with the other wives. Since Fowl was in the habit of speaking ill of his male rival, all eyes were eager to catch a glimpse of him on this occasion. They received the shock of their lives when they realised that she was a female; this meant Fowl had lied.

<sup>2</sup> My own translation of the original text.

After all *Nyorjmo* 's wives had bathed, *Nyorjmo* proposed that Fowl being the senior, should by all means take part in the bathing ritual for he thought, if he could not walk, he could be carried and dipped into the sea.

When Fowl saw the people who had been sent to carry him, he started shouting: 'Ao, you will kill me, I am sick, I cannot go.' But they would not listen to him. They carried him to the beach and when they started removing his clothes so that they would dip him into the sea he resisted. Since they were stronger than him they subdued him and removed them. They were tired because fowl had put on a bustle. When they finished removing all the clothes, behold Fowl was not a female but a male. *Nyoymo* became very angry because fowl had been speaking ill of his rival to him. He decided to punish Fowl by not giving him any water to drink. The other rivals pleaded on his behalf. So *Nyoymo* said: 'Right, Fowl will drink water but will not urinate again.'

This is why fowl does not urinate. When you see a fowl drinking water, with its head raised to the skies, it is thanking *Nyorjmo* for having mercy on it and making it possible for it to drink water.

## APPENDIX II

### *Boni fee ni kplotoo na lilei kakadann*<sup>3</sup>

*Ani ole bonife ni kplotoo lilei fe kakadann? - Gbi ko le Nyonmo tswa nono ake eetao moko abahu erjmo mli aha le, ni ewo shi ake mofeemo ni baanye etsu nii le egbe naa le, ebahd le tsina agbo ko. Neke nmo ne nklani ke tsatsubii pii ye mli. Mei pii tee shi amenyee; ejaake mla ye he ake mokomoko be he gbe ni ekplaa tsatsubii le ye ehe be mli ni egbeko nitsumo le naa. Mei fee ni yaa ni amenyee le, agbeo ame.*

*Keke ni Tsie Anaanu tee ni eyaka ekwe. Keji etsu nii le sann ni ena ake tsatsubii le miitsere Is le, ewoo ehe no, ni ekeo: "Mitsina le ni abaahd mi le, ebie etsuru, ebie edit), ebie eyen, ebie enoli es?" ke nii. Beni ewieo neks Is bsle ekpla tsatsubii le ye ehe. Ehie neke feemo aahu ni egbe humo le naa, ni aha le tsina Is.*

*Ake ni Anaanu jifuh ni esumoo ni adodoji agba anaa keji egbe tsina Is nohewo le, ehie shikpaa aahu ksyashi eshe heko ni adodoji bs, ni egbe tsina Is.*

*Beni ehoo nii le egbe naa ni ebaaboi yeli pe, keke ni kooloo ko ba bakee: "Tomoku." Amro Is nonrj wo nyo Anaanu no, ni beni ehie tse le, kooloo le eye nii lefss ni etee. Ens wa ha Anaanu jogbanrj, ejaake homo miiye le waa dientss; shi enyee noko efe, ejaake kooloo etee momo. Eno lebi le ehoo nii Is ekon, ni beni ebaaboi yeli ps keke kooloo le ba ekon, ebakss: "Tomoku." Wo nyo Anaanu no ekon ni beni eteo shi Is kooloo le etee momo ni niyenii le hu eta.*

*Agbene Anaanu nii efee mobo, ni enaa noni efao donrj. Beni eta shi eyeo rjkomo Is, nuu ko bakee Is aks: "Keji kooloo bakee "Tomoku " le bohu okee "Tomojo ". Keke ni eda nuu le shi. Beni ehoo nii le fee, ehie keemo ake: "Ke okee mi Tomoku, mibakee o Tomojo" beni afe ni ehie akakpa no. Egbe nihoomo le naa pe ni kooloo Is bakee: "Tomoku." Enaa enyoo shi ni Anaanu to he eke*

<sup>3</sup> E.L. Rapp, 'Sprichwörter der Ga' Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin, Jahrgang, XXXIX, Abteilung 111, Afrikanische Studien, (Berlin: Sonderabdruck, 1936), pp 36-37. The original story was written with the old Ga orthography. For clarity and easy reading I have revised some of the words with the new Ga orthography.

*"Tomojo. " Amro le nonn kooloo Is gbee shi egbo, ni miishe sorjri ni Anaanu na hewole esha kooloo Is, ni beni eye nii Is egbe naa Is, esa enaa ake erjoo lo; shi beni ekws le, naa, elilsi ji kakadann nee. Sane nee wa ha Anaanu, hewole, etao gbe no ni eetso eke elilei kakadann le atsake moko no, ejaake nakai be le mli le kooloi nyo jieo ame lilei ys amedaan. Ene hewole etswa norjo, ni eto gbi ko ni kooloifee abawu nsho.*

*Gbi ne bashe, ni kooloifee ba. Beni amebaya nsho Is mli Is, mofemo jie elilsi efo shia le no. Aks ni Anaanu le noni etao hewols, eyaa shorjn ko, shi morj ewu afui le ye nsho le naa kpaakpa. Beni esra ni moko kwee Is Is, esha foi kstee shia le no ni eyako kplotoo lilei. Ksks ni ebo ekes: "Naa, aaya shia eeei." Kolo le fee je nsho mli, ni mofeemo bako elilsi, shi kplotoo enaa eno Is, hewole eko Anaanu lilei kakadann le.*

*Bonifee ni kplotoo na lilei kakadann ne, ni sane nse wa sonri ni ewa ha kplotoo hewole eka kita ekes: "Mi lilei ne mike yen nokonoko ake ja ssbo. " Ens hewo ni kplotoo yeo ssbo Is.*

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### How the Pig got a long Tongue<sup>4</sup>

Do you know how the pig's tongue became long? One day *Nyonmo* beat the gong-gong to announce that he wanted somebody to weed his farm. He made a promise that anybody who would complete the work would be given a big cow. The farm was full of all types of ants. Many people tried but they could not make it because there was a rule that you could not drive away the ants on your body when the work has not been finished. All the people who attempted and could not complete the work were killed.

*Tsie Anaanu* also went to try his luck. Whenever he was working and he realised that the ants were biting him, he would stretch and say: 'The cow that will be given to me, is this place red, is this place black, is this place white, is this place green?' and so on. While speaking he would be driving away the ants from his body. He did this several times until he finished the work and was given the cow.

*Anaanu* is known to be greedy. He did not want the housefly to disturb him when he killed the cow so he roamed through the whole town until he came to a place where there was no fly, and then he killed the cow.

When he finished cooking the meat and was just about to start eating the food, a certain animal came and said: '*Tomoku*.' Immediately, *Anaanu* fell into a deep sleep. When he woke up, the animal had eaten all the food and left. This troubled *Anaanu* because he was very hungry. But there was nothing he could do because the animal had left. The following morning, he cooked some more meat again, and when he was about to eat, the animal came again and said: '*Tomoku*'. Again, *Anaanu* fell into a deep sleep, and when he woke up the animal had eaten all the food and left.

Now, *Anaanu* became miserable and did not know what to do. While he sat brooding over his problem a man came to tell him that whenever the animal came and said '*Tomoku*' he should say '*Tomoyo*'. Then *Anaanu* thanked the man. While he was cooking he kept saying: 'if you say to me "*Tomoku*", I will say to you

<sup>4</sup> My own translation of the original text.

'To/nop".' He did this so that he would not forget the words. Just as he finished cooking and was about to eat, the animal came and said '*Tomoku*'. Before he could end, *Anaanu* replied 'Tomop'. Immediately, the animal fell and died. *Anaanu* was excited and he roasted the animal. When he finished eating his food, he tasted the animal to see whether it was delicious. Before he realised behold, his tongue had become very long. This disturbed him till he found a way by which he would exchange his long tongue with somebody else's. In those days animals were able to remove their tongues. Because of this *Anaanu* beat the gong-gong and fixed a date when all the animals would go and swim in the sea.

On the scheduled day, all the animals came. Before they entered the sea, every animal removed his tongue and placed it on the sand. Since *Anaanu* knew what he wanted to do, he did not swim far but stayed close to the shore. When he realised nobody was watching him, he ran quickly and took pig's tongue. He then shouted: 'Behold we are going home.' All the animals came out of the water and each one picked his tongue; however, the pig did not find his. He had no choice but to pick *Anaanu's* long tongue.

This is how the pig got a long tongue. Because of this he swore never to eat anything except faeces. This is why the pig eats faeces.



### APPENDIX III

#### *Boni fee ni nilee gbe shwa d\$e nee mli*<sup>5</sup>

*Gbi ko le Tsie Anaanu tee Nyorjmo rjoo eyakee: 'Ha mi able kulibii kpawo ni mike gbomo adesa abato bo najiarj.' Nyorjmo bi ake: 'Ani obaanye?' Eto he ekee: 'Hee.' Keke ni Nyorjmo ha le able kulibii le. Beni Tsie Anaanu ku ese eya le, ena wuoi komei: keke ni eshere able le eshwie ameterj. Beni Anaanu na ake wuoi le aterj ekome emi able le eko pe, keke ni eboi blomo ake: 'Namo wuo ns? Nyorjmo able ni eeei, hewole wuotse le abato mi najiarj kpoo.' Beni wuotse le nu le etsui fa, ejaake esheo Nyorjmo gbeyei. Hewole eba koni ebato najiarj, shi Anaanu ekplee ni ehe able le, hewole amo wuo le aha le. Keke ni erjo shwie no*

*Beni eyaa le, je na le, hewole eyato shia ko. Shiatse le tsoo le heni wuoiatsu le yo, beni afe ni eke ewuo le ayato jei. Shi Anaanu ekplee, morj eke ewuo le yato tool atsu le mli. Leebi le ana ake tool le egbe wuo le, ni ake ni mofemo miishe Nyorjmo gbeyei hewole amo too le eko aha Anaanu. Keke ni eyi mli ekorj, ni gbekenaashi le eyato shia kroko. Bie ne hu ekplee ni etoo le ke tooi ni yoo shia le awo, shi morj ekele yafutu tsinai le aterj, ni beni sheo leebi le tsinai le egbe le. Keke ni Anaanu boi blomo ake: 'Ao, te mibafe terjrj? Naanyorjmo too ni.' Mei le to he amekee: 'kpao, wonyerj Nyorjmo sane woye; bamo wotsinai le aterj ekome oto najiarj mo.'*

*Keke shwa ni erjo shwie no ekorj, ni keyaa gbekenaashi le eyashe man ko mli. Enaanyo ko ye may ne mli, hewole eyato erjo. Eke etsina le yafutu okporjoi ni yoo shia le, ni leebi le beni Anaanu tee ake eyaamo etsina koni eya le, ena ake egbo. Nakai be le mli le gbomei sheo Nyorjmo gbeyei po ni ehii, hewole beni amenu ake tsina le Nyorjmo no ni pe, ni amemo okporjo le ekome ameha Anaanu.*

*Anaanu yi egbe le no ekorj, ni etee ehie fio pe ni eke mei komei ni tere gbonyo kpe. Keke ni ekee: 'Nyefoi (sic) ne, nyehea mikporjo ne ni nyeke gbonyo aha mi.'*

<sup>5</sup> Rapp E. L., 'Sprichwörter der Ga' *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin*, Jahrgang, XXXIX, Abteilung III, Afrikanische Studien, (Berlin: Sonderabdruck, 1936), pp 24 - 25. The original story was written with the old Ga orthography. For clarity and easy reading I have revised some of the words with the new Ga orthography.

*Efe mei Is ahis yaa, ejaaks amele ake gbonyo Is bs ssnamo ko, shi ake ni amemiitao okporjo le hewole amekpls. Tsie Anaanu he gbonyo le ni gbske naashi beni ena aks dun ewo Is, etee may le mli eyato shia ko, eshi gbonyo le ye agbo le naa.*

*Niyeli be bashe, ni beni akee Anaanu ake eyatse moni ekenyie le keba le, eto he ekee 'Nyekagbaa nye he naa; mibi le etoi wa. Keji homo boi le yeli Is, ledientse ebaaba.' Ake ni amele ake gbonyo ni hewole amekse noko. Etsee ni shiabii le yakamo shi, ni beni Anaanu sra ni ena ake onukpai le ewo le, ete eyawo gbonyo le ni eke le yafo gbekebii le aterj, ni ekes: 'Mibi Is enu tsofa, hewols nyekwea ni ahia beni afe ni nyonterj keji efite kooyo (sic) le ni nyekayia le.'*

*Keke ni Anaanu tee eyawo. Lebi le etee koni eyatsis ebi Is, shi ena aks egbo. Keks ni ebo ekee: "Meni ni nyefe nee? Nyorjmo bi kometoo ni eyoo le, nyegbe le. Ja nyeto najian.'*

*Ene hewole ake gbekebii le aterj mokome ha le koni eke le ayaha Nyorjmo. Beni Nyorjmo na gbeke le, efee le naakpe, hewole eto eyirj ake ebake Anaanu noko. Ewo to ni abua je Is mli nilee fss naa awo mli le eha le. Miishss sorjrij ni ena hewole ekwee shikporj, ni beni eku ese ebaa le ete, ni to le je ederj egbe shi ni ejwa.*

*Boniffee ni nilee gbe shwa ne, ni ake ni heni to le jwa ye le ks Meidiji ashipon le nojeke hewole, nilee sheejei mra; ni ene hewo ni Blofomei etee hiefe Meidiji le.*

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### How Wisdom spread into the whole World<sup>6</sup>

One day *Tsis Anaanu* went to *Nyoymo* and said to him: 'Give me seven grains of maize so that I will replace them with a human being.' *Nyoymo* asked him: 'Can you?' He replied and said: 'Yes'. Then *Nyoymo* gave him the grains of maize. When *Tsie Anaanu* was returning he saw some fowls, so he threw the maize to them. When *Anaanu* saw that one of them had swallowed some of the maize, he started shouting: 'Whose fowl is this? It is *Nyoymo's* maize o; therefore the owner of the fowl should come and replace it if he does not want trouble.' When the owner of the fowl heard it, he was scared, because he was afraid of *Nyoymo*. He therefore came to replace it but *Anaanu* would not take the maize, so he gave him the fowl. Then *Anaanu* continued his journey.

While on his way night fell so he went and stayed in a certain house. The owner of the house showed him where the hencoop was, so that he would go and put the fowl there. But *Anaanu* did not consent to that. Rather he put the fowl in the goat's pen. In the morning they saw that the goats had killed the fowl, and since everybody was afraid of *Nyoymo*, they gave a goat to *Anaanu* as replacement. Then he continued his journey again. In the evening he went and stayed in another house. Here again he did not consent to his goat sleeping with the other goats in the house; rather, he kept it with the cows, and before morning the cows had killed it. Then *Anaanu* shouted saying: 'Ao, what will I do? It is *Naanyoymo's* goat.' The people replied: 'We are sorry, we cannot contend with *Nyoymo*, come and take one of the cows as replacement.'

He continued his journey again, and by night time, he reached a certain town. He had a friend in that town, so he went and stayed with him. Here, he kept his cow with the horses in the house and in the morning when *Anaanu* went to take his cow to leave, he saw that it was dead. In those times human beings feared *Nyoymo* seriously, therefore when they heard that the cow belonged to *Nyoymo*, they gave one of the horses to *Anaanu*.

<sup>6</sup> My own translation of the original text.

*Anaanu* started off on his journey again, and when he had gone a little further, he met some people carrying a corpse. Then he said: 'Please take my horse and give me the corpse.' The people were surprised because they knew that the corpse was of no use; however, since they wanted the horse, they agreed. *Tsis Anaanu* took the corpse and when it was dark; he went into the town and stayed in a certain house leaving the corpse at the gate of the house.

At suppertime when they asked *Anaanu* to go and bring his companion, he replied saying: 'Do not bother yourselves; my child is very stubborn, when he is hungry he will come on his own.' Since they did not know that it was a corpse, they did not say anything. Just after that the people went to sleep. When *Anaanu* was convinced that the adults had slept, he went and brought the corpse and placed it beside the children. He said: 'My child has taken a purgative, therefore be careful so that in the night if he spoils the air you do not beat him.'

Then *Anaanu* went to sleep. In the morning, he went to wake up his child but saw that he was dead. Then he started shouting: 'what is it that you have done? You have killed *Nyorjmo* 's only son. You will have to give me a replacement.'

Because of this *Anaanu* was given one of the children to be given to *Nyorjmo*. When *Nyorjmo* saw the child he was amazed. He decided to reward *Anaanu* by giving him a gift. He took a bottle into which he had gathered all the wisdom of the world and gave it to *Anaanu*. Out of excitement, *Anaanu* did not watch his footsteps and he stumbled. The bottle fell from his hands and broke.

This is how wisdom spread into the whole world. Since the place where the bottle fell was very far from the land of the black people, wisdom did not get to them early. This is why the whites have advanced more than the blacks.

#### APPENDIX IV

##### **Boni nileh ko ke kpai-nyo yahe gbomei enyo<sup>1</sup>**

*Gbiko Is nileh ko tee eman marjtse noo eyakes Is aks ekpee man muu le fse kskpe koni eks sane ko afo amshis. Marjtse Is ha atwa rjorjo ys enoyelihei Isfse ni man muu le bakpe.*

*Beni msi Is anaa ebakpe shi le nuu le te shi edamo gwaboo wulu le ten ni ewo enaa no ake: Ena ake amebe gbomei boni sa ye man le mli. Nohewo le marjtse le aha le trema kpai-nyo ni eke yahe gbomei enyo abahd ame.' Ewiemo le wo mei le fss amli la pam, hewo Is amewo eyi ni ameblo amewo le ake eetss ehe nilelo ni eefee pii tso. Amekes eno oleete ko bejerj.*

*Shi aks ni apasafo tsu Is ashda shi kpa akpaa hewo Is etss amtsuii enms amemli. Keke ni ekee nuu Is ake: 'Ksji oonys oks kpai-nyo adhe gbomsi enyo obaha mi Is no Is, mihu mato bo gbsnaa ko ye mimarjtseyeli nee mli. Ni adba mli ake keji onyss oyahe gbomsi Is ksba le no le gbo oogbo.' Keke ni aha le trema le ni eyin tee. Neke nuu nilelo neefa gbe ketee marjsee shorjrj heko. Beni enyis nyoorjnyoorj ke shwaneshwane gbii kpawo Is eyashs akrowa bibioo ko mli. Etee ni eks kpai-nyo Is yahe shito.*

*Beni eyana moko shia eto le, ekwa eke shito Is ma kpo le no heko ni wuoi baklo fee. Noni etaoo le no pe afee aha le nee ni eboi wie yeli.*

*Etee eyakee eshiatse le ake ewuoi le eye marjtse shito ni efa gbe gbii kpawo too gbenyiemo eyahe Is, hewo le ke esumoo ehe sane Is, bele oya kpakpa ni eke wuo ni da fe fee ato najiarj. Kejee nakai le, no le sane gbonyo ko baaba. Keke ni aha Is wuonuu agbo kome.*

*Agbene ekeshwie no kstee akrowa kroko mli ni etee ayato nuu niiatss ko shia. Eke wuonuu le tee eyahd shiatse le shitoo ni boni ekee kefata he ne: 'Wuonuu*

<sup>1</sup> C. P. Moir ke R. P. Djabonor (compilers and editors), *Adesai Komei* (Ga Stories), Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot Ltd, 1963, pp 29-32. The original story was written with the old Ga orthography. For clarity and easy reading I have revised some of the words with the new Ga orthography.

*tsuru agbo nee maytse no ni, ni shoyy heko miyahe le keje. Ehe ye ahuntoofioo, ejaake ewoo enanemei wuoi aten, shi toi mot) eke woo. Ofai ne, ani oona heko ohd mi ewo lo?' Niiatse le ha le gbe amro le noyy ni ekee ake wuo le ayawo etoi atsu le mli. Shi beni nuu le ke wuo le tee tsu ley woo le etsomo ekue ni eto baha. Fee see le, toi le hu naanaa eno in egbo. Beni je tsere ni ayaajie wuo abahd notse koni eya le, naa wuonuu agbo le egbo. Mina ni ayaje jemei (sic). Yaakwe boni ghenyielo naatsolo nee fee. Ekee nuu le toi le egbe emaytse wuo, hewo le aha le too osai ni da fefee le koni ekeyabo amanis. Jojoojo keke ni amotoo le aha le ye wuo gbonyo le najiay ni ejejei ketee hekroko.*

*Gbi nee enyis aahu jenamo tuu dani eyashe akrowa kroko ko hu mli. Bie nee le akes alee kooloo kofe tsinai keke. Hewo le nuu moni eyato ewe le naa heko ake tsinai atsu mli ake too osai agbo le yawo. Shi dani ake too osai le baawo tsinai atsu le mli le nuu le ha eshiatse le le ake emantse no ni. Beni ake too le baawo tsinai atsu le mli le nuu le mia ese jogbayy ni eto baha; nohewo le beni je tsereo le kooloo le egbo. 'Te mafee teyy? Mantse too ni atee shonn ayahe le, no nyetsinai eshoto le nee?' Ni etso ehe ni ekes nuu le ake keji esumoo ni sane foy ko aye le ke ewefee le, no le ehd tsina agbo kome ye too le najian koni ekeyabo mantse le amanie. Ni efee nakai. Nu nilelo le kpla tsina le keje jei keyi eman gbe.*

*Agbene beni eshwe aafee gbi kome loo no jksmo ni ebaashe eman le, enu joi ke lalai ke yaafo ke blomoi miiba ke le abakpe. Eyaakwe le gbonyo atere kebaa nee. Eke ams kpe noyy ni ewa edamo shi eye ame ykomo ekee: 'Eye tsuimlishdle babao ni eji dole sane ksha mi aks nye yaafu gbonyo nee eflo ni aks Is woo adeka mli. Nyske le aha mi koni mikeyaha mantse ni efu le; ni mike tsina nee baahd nye koni nyekayafea yara nyahda mo le susuma.' Ni ake gbonyo Is ha Is.*

*Ene see etsee ko ni gbomo le yanina akrowa kokro. Beni eshe Is klotia Is, eks gbonyo Is tee ni etee may Is mli eke moko yawie koni eyato eyoo. Shi beni je na ni eshe woobe le nuu nee yakee shiatse le ake eke maytsebi ko nyie shi oblanyo le hie gboo hewo le edamo klotia Is; asay ekome ewoo nohewo Is shiatss Is aha eks ebii le ayawo. Nu le kple ni beni je na le amefee ametee amsyakamo shi. No ni nuu nee je kpo eyawo gbonyo le ebafo eshiatse le bii le atey. Nyooytey le*

*ami ni gbekebii nee miishimo gbonyo le ni amelee ake gbonyo le (sic). Je tsereno ni ayaakwe le oblanyo le egbo; shi ake ni mokomoko lee ake gbonyo akeba le hewo le, mei lefee ma no mi ake shiatse le bii le gbe oblanyo le nyoon le mli beni ameshimo le nii le.*

*Te abaafée tsrjn ko, ni namo yaabo amanie? Nuú hietelo kokosanfo le wo yara ake enyen neke amanie eyabo. 'Nto nyegbe marjtsebi le? Nyedientsemei (sic) nyeyaa nyeyagbaa.' Neke ewie keflo eyaafó le mli. Awie aahu, akpa fai, afee nofeeno, nuu le ekplee. Fee see le ekes keji adna nileloi enyo aha le le, no Is eke ame yaahd mantse le ye moni egbo le najiay, ni eedamo mli ekpa fai eha ame. Oya kpakpa ni ana gbomei enyo aha nuu hietelo nee ni eke ame ayaha eman mantse le.*

*Nuu nee ke gbomei le yashe eman. Ni beni eha atswa norjo ni marjtso muu lefee bakpe ni abo emanie toi le, nuu nee bapue ye gwaboo wulu nee hie ks egbomei le. Abo Is toi ni beni eklo egbee ni egba sane le fee le, mei le fee jie eyi ni amekafo le babao. Mantse fee le gbomo agbo disntss ni eto Is gbenaa ni hi. Boni nuu naalo ks hietelo ko fee ni eke kpai-enyo too pe yahe gbomei adesai enyo ne.*

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### **How a certain wise man used two pence to buy two persons**<sup>8</sup>

One day a certain wise man went to his king and asked him to assemble the whole town so that he would put an issue before them. The king caused the gong-gong to be beaten throughout his kingdom and the whole town assembled.

When the whole town had gathered, the man got up and stood in the centre of the big assembly and said he had observed that they did not have enough people in the town, therefore the king should give him two pence to go and buy two human beings for them. His speech annoyed all the people and therefore they shouted at him that he regarded himself as the wisest person in the world. They said they had never seen such a garrulous know-it-all person before.

But since one does not burn the house of a liar but rather one removes its roof, he asked the people to take heart. Then he [the king] said to the man thus: 'If you are able to use the two pence to buy two persons for me then I will give you a place of honour in my kingdom. But if it happens that you do not bring the two persons, then you will surely die.' They gave him the two pence and he took off. This wise man travelled to a distant land. When he had walked seven nights and seven days he came to a small village and he went and bought pepper with the two pence.

He went and put up in the house of a Good Samaritan. He put the pepper on the compound; a place where he knew the fowls would come and eat everything. He achieved his aim and he started grumbling.

He went and told the landlord that his fowls had eaten his king's pepper which he had bought from a distant land. He told him that if he did not want any trouble, he should replace it with the biggest fowl otherwise a bad omen would befall him. The landlord obliged and gave him one big cock.

He left to another village and went and stayed in the house of a rich man. He gave his cock to the rich man to keep for him. He said: 'this red big cock is for my king, and I bought it from a distant land. It is quite troublesome because it does not sleep

<sup>8</sup> My own translation of the original text.



with its fellow fowls but rather with goats. Please, can you get a place for it to sleep?' The chief agreed that he put the cock into the goat's pen. When the man got to the pen, he twisted the neck and the cock became dazed. Later, the goats trampled on it and it died. The following morning when they went to bring the cock to the owner so he might continue his journey, behold, the cock was dead. What followed was a sight to behold. Come and see how this litigant traveller behaved. He said the man's goats had killed his king's cock therefore they should give him a big goat so that he could go and report to his lord, the king. For peace to prevail, they gave him the goat in replacement of the dead cock and he left there for another place.

He walked till it was dark before he got to another village. Here, it was forbidden to rear any other animal except cattle. Therefore the man who hosted him could not get any place to keep the goat except the kraal. But before he put the goat in the kraal, he made it known to the landlord that the goat belonged to his king. When they were putting the goat in the kraal the man twisted its neck and it became dazed; before morning the animal was dead. 'What will I do? Have your cattle not killed the king's goat that was bought from a distant land?' he queried. Then he turned to the host and told him that if he together with his household did not want any serious trouble then he should give him one big cow as replacement for the dead goat so that he would present it to the king. They obliged and this wise man took the cow away. Then he started his journey back home.

Now, when it was about a day's journey to his town, he heard drumming and dancing, songs, weeping and shouting in his direction. He realised that the people were carrying a corpse. When he met them, he stopped and began to sympathise with them saying: 'It is disheartening and pathetic that you are going to bury this corpse without a coffin. Give it to me so that I will go and give it to my king to give it a befitting burial; I will give you this cow to use for the funeral and pacification rite for his soul.' The people agreed and gave the corpse to him.

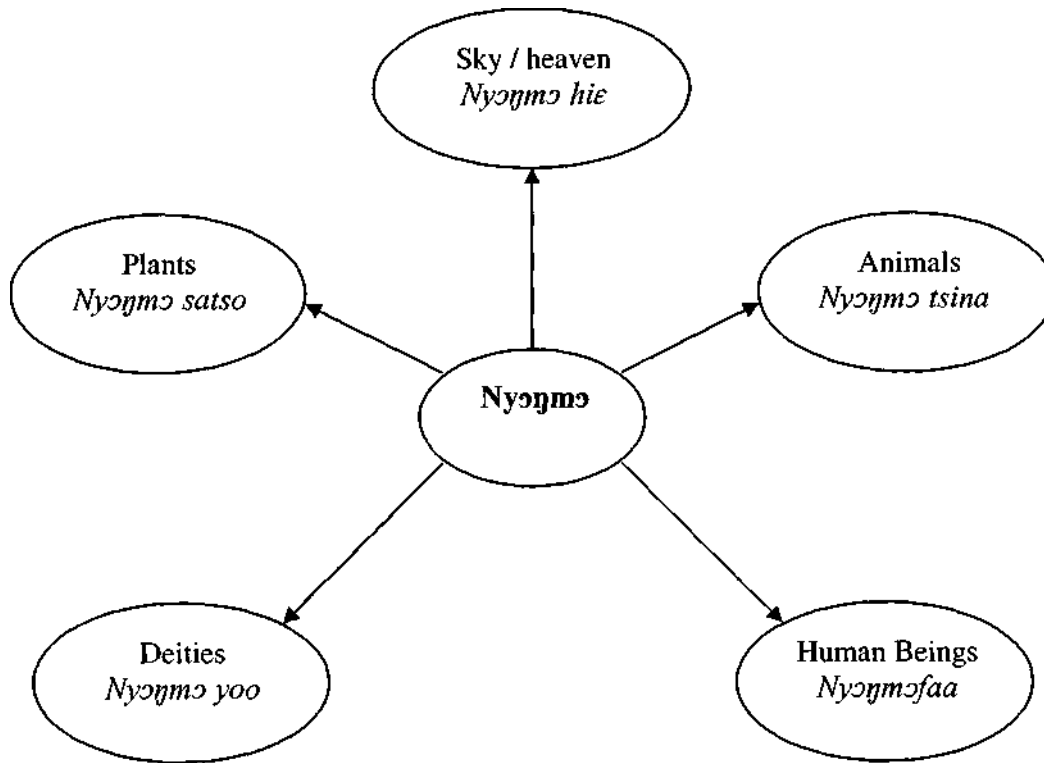
Not long after this encounter, the man got to another village. When he reached its outskirts, he hid the corpse in the bushes and went to speak with someone to put up with him for the night. In the evening when they were about to sleep he went and

told the landlord that he came in the company of the king's son but since the young man was very shy he was waiting on the outskirts of the village. He went on to say that this young man does not sleep alone so the landlord should allow him to sleep with his children. The landlord accepted his proposal and when it was night they all went to sleep. The Wiseman went out and brought the corpse and placed it where the children of the landlord slept. At midnight they heard the children hitting the corpse since they did not know that it was a dead body. In the morning they realised that the young man was dead. Since nobody knew that it was a dead body that was brought, all the people agreed that it was the children of the landlord who had killed the young man when they hit him during the night.

'What will I do? Who will go and report this to the king?' This wise hypocrite started crying that he could not carry this report: 'Haven't you killed the king's son? You go and report it to the king.' This is how he spoke as he cried. They spoke with him, begged him, and did all they could but the man would not listen to anything. Later he said if they could get two wise men for him, he would take them to the king as replacement of his dead son, and then he would plead on their behalf. Quickly they brought two people to the wise man to be taken to his king.

This man took the two men to his town. The gong-gong was beaten and the whole town assembled for the man to tell his story. He came before the crowd with the two persons. They listened to him and when he had narrated the entire story, they praised and exalted him. The king promoted him and gave him a place of honour in his kingdom. This is how a wise and discreet man used two pence to buy two human beings.

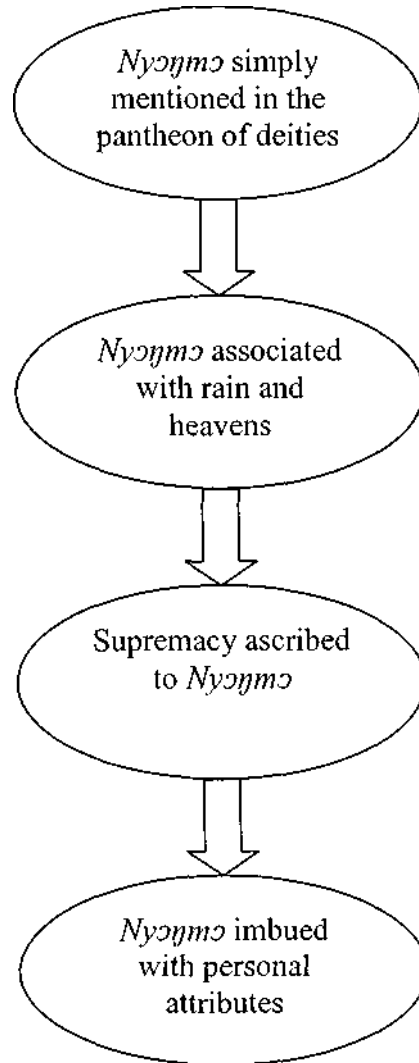
**Diagrammatic illustration of the Configurations of *Nyomns***



## APPENDIX VI

### Diagrammatic illustration of *Nyowno* as a religious concept

How *Nyowno* came to be recognized as a Superior Being



## **APPENDIX VII**

### **INTERVIEWS**

#### **List of Respondents**

**Name:** Reverend Ishmael A. Sowah

**Status:** Theologian and Bible translator

**Residence:** La

**Name:** E. A. Akuetteh

**Status:** Christian and an Elder in a church

**Residence:** Osu

**Name:** Vincent Okunor

**Status:** Linguist and Bible translator

**Residence:** Accra

**Name:** Nuumo Tettey

**Status:** Chief traditional priest of Ga Mashie

**Residence:** Ga Mashie

**Name:** E. T. A. Abbey

**Status:** Christian and consultant on Ga culture

**Residence:** Accra

**Name:** *Okomfo* Ashaley

**Status:** Traditional Priest

**Residence:** Ga Mashie

**Name:** Nii Adjei Kraku II

**Status:** Tema *Maytse* (King of Tema)

**Residence:** Tema

## **Questionnaire in Ga (Mother Tongue)**

### **SANEBIMDI**

#### **Nyorjmo**

1. *Ye Gamei anifeemoi ke wiemoi amlɩ le wonuo gbei tamo 'nyorjmo nyamporj', 'Ataa Naa Nyorjmo', 'Nyorjmo Ofe' ke nii. Ke atse gbei 'Nyorjmo' le, namo turjtu atseo le?*
2. *Dani Kristojamo ba Gamei ashikpoy le no le, ani gbei 'Nyorjmo' le ye Gamei awiemo mli?*
3. *Ke nakai le, bele mee gbei ano ke bei amlɩ wonuo neke wiemo nee aloo afoo gbei nee tsemo?*
4. *Kejee nakai le, bele neegbe osusuo ake gbei 'Nyorjmo' nee je?*
5. *Meni osusuo ye gbei tamo 'nyorjmo tsawe' aloo 'nyorjmo tsaana' he?*
6. *Meni sablai ke gbei krokomei Gamei ketseo Nyorjmo?*
7. *Meni bei amlɩ afoo Nyorjmo tsemo ake:*
  - *Ataa Nyorjmo*
  - *Naa Nyorjmo*
  - *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*
8. *Gamei woo gbomei komei agbei tamo 'Obodai nyorjmo' 'Ayoko nyorjmo' ke nii. Meni osusuo ye gbei nee ahe?*
9. *Ani Ganyo fee Ganyo baanye ewo neke gbei nee?*
  - *Ke nakai le meni hewo?*  
*Kejee nakai hu le meni hewo?*
10. *Meni sroto yoo Gamei asusumo ye Nyorjmo he dani Kristojamo ba ke rjmenjerjmene ni Kristojamo ehe shi nee ten?*
11. *Mee gbei ano osusuo ake Nyorjmo tsoo ejeo ehe kpo etsoo gbomei?*
12. *Meni shramo yoo Nyorjmo ke eboonii aterj?*

#### **Jemawoji**

1. *Wonuo ni Gamei tseo gbei komei tamo Sakumo, Kpeshi, Naa Koole ke amehenoi ye ame nifeemoi srotoi amlɩ. Namei atseo nee aloo meni ame damo shi ameha?*
2. *Meniji ame gbenaa aloo ame nitsumo?*
3. *Meni bei amlɩ afoo ame tsemo?*

4. *Ani gbomei nyeo naa ame?*
5. *Meni bei amlí afoo ame namo aloo amejieo amehe kpo ametsoo gbomei?*
6. *Meni gbei ano ame tsoo amejieo ame he kpo?*
7. *Neegbeji ame shihile he?*
8. *Meni ji ame suomonaa nii?*
9. *Meniji nibii komei ni ame hio?*
10. *Meni gbei ano atsoo asomoo ame?*
11. *Meniji nibii komei ni ake somoo ame?*
12. *Meni sroto yoo jemaworj ke Nyorjmo ten?*
13. *Meni shramo yoo jemaworj ke Nyorjmo ten?*

*Tsemei le*

1. *Befeebe ni Gamei buaa amehe naa ni amebaa fee noko le, titri ye kusum gbefarj le ametseo Niimeí ke Naamei, Namei tuntú ji Niimeí ke Naamei ni atseo nee?*
2. *Meni bei amlí afoo ame tsemo?*
3. *Meni gbenaa ameyoo ye je nee le mli?*
4. *Neegbeji ame shihile he?*
5. *Meni gbei ano atsoo asomoo ame?*
6. *Meniji nibii ekomei ni ake somoo ame?*
7. *Meniji ame suomonaa nii?*
8. *Meniji nibii ni ame hio?*
9. *Meniji sroto ni yoo Niimeí ke Naamei ke sisa ten?*
10. *Meni hewo Gamei ke woo babao haa Niimeí ke Naamei nee?*
11. *Meni shramo yoo Niimeí ke Naamei ke Nyonmo ten?*

*Gbomo Adesa*

1. *Wonaa ake ke akee gbomo adesa le jee heloo nee keke ni, shi eye sui krokomei hu. Meni ji sui nee?*
2. *Meni srotoi yoo sui nee amlí?*  

*kla*

*susuma*

*mumo*
3. *Meniji gbeshi?*

4. *Ke gbomo gbo le neegbe eyaa?*
5. *Meni shramo yoo gbomo adesa ke Nyonmo ten?*

#### **Adeboo**

1. *Wonaa ake jee gbomo adesa kome too pe yoo je le mil. Woye tsei, fai, goji, rjsho ke ame henoi. Bei komei le wobua fee naa ni wotseo ame adeboo. Ke Gamei wie adeboo he le, meni ji ameshishi numo?*
2. *Awieo ake mumo ye adeboo nibii nee ekomei aml. Meni ji osusumo ye he?*
3. *Wonaa ekon ake Gamei ke gbei kome niji Nyonmo' nee nonn tseo adebolo le ke nu ni neo kejeo nwei le. Meni osusuo ake eha eba nakai?*
4. *IJmenenmene wanaa ake wiemo nee etsake lewraa ni meikomei keo ake nu ni neo kejeo nwei le nugbo ni, shi jee Nyonmo. Meni ji osusumo ye ene hu he?*
5. *Meni hewo Gamei ke Nyonmo gbei ebata adeboo nibii komei ahe, tamo:*

*nyonmonte*  
*nyonmo nai*  
*nyonmon kaaklo*  
*nyonmobi tete*  
*nyonmo saatso*  
*nyonmo tsina*  
*nyonmo tsawe*  
*nyonmo kane*  
*Nyonmo mli gbele*

#### **Temamei ahe sane**<sup>9</sup>

1. *Ke akee Temamei le, namei tuntutu atsoo lei*
2. *Temamei le neegbe ameje dani ameba to bie nee]*
3. *Ofai ne mabi ake gbei Tema le, te eshishi hu aloo neegbe ana kejel*
4. *Wonaa ake to ji okadi ko aloo omlogo ye nye nibii pii aml tamo otsiame tso neke. Ofai ne meni hewo?*
5. *Meni nitsoomo aloo nikasemo yoo okadi nee mli!*
6. *Bei komei le, wonaa ake meikomei rjoo okadii komei ejaake amesusuo ake hewale ko ye neke okadii nee aml. Ani hewale potee ko ye to mli?*

<sup>9</sup> This set of questions was posed to only the Tema *Marjtse* in addition to the general questions.



7. *Meni aḡi Temamei yeol*
8. *Meni hewo ato aḡi nee shishil*
9. *Boni ayeo aḡi le blema le nakai norjn ayeo le nmenenmene aloo tsakemoui komei eba mlil*
10. *Meni ji tsakemoui nee ekomeil*
11. *Ofai ne oonye otsoo mi nibii ni ke tsakemoui nee bal*

## English Translation of Questionnaire

### The Supreme Being

1. We often hear the Ga mention names like '*Nyorjmo nyampon*\ '*Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*', '*Nyorjmo Ofe*' and other similar expressions. When the name '*Nyorjmo*' is mentioned, who actually is the Ga calling upon?
2. Was the word '*Nyorjmo*' part of the Ga vocabulary before the coming of Christianity?
3. If the name '*Nyorjmo*' existed before the arrival of Christian missionaries, in what context was this name being mentioned or used?
4. If the name *Nyorjmo* was not being used, where do you think the name came from?
5. What is your view on names like '*Nyorjmo tsawe*' or '*Nyorjmo tsanaa*'?
6. What other appellations and titles do Ga use for *Nyorjmo*!
7. In what context do Ga often use the following names?
  - *Ataa Nyorjmo*
  - *Naa Nyorjmo*
  - *Ataa Naa Nyorjmo*
8. Some Ga give names like '*Obodai Nyorjmo*', '*Ayoko Nyorjmo*' and other similar names to their children. What is your consideration of such names?
9. In your view, should any Ga give such a name or attach the *Nyorjmo* to his or her name?
  - If yes why?
  - If no why?
10. In your view what was the Ga concept of *Nyorjmo* before the coming of Christianity? How do they conceive of *Nyorjmo* in the present times?
11. How do Ga acknowledge the presence of *Nyorjmo*!
12. What is the relationship between *Nyorjmo* and creation?

### Spirit Beings

1. In most Ga ceremonies and rituals we hear names like *Sakumo*, *Kpeshie* and *Naa Koole* being mentioned. What do these names stand for?
2. What are their roles and responsibilities in the human society?
3. What times or within what context are they 'called'?

4. Are human beings able to see these divine beings?
5. What times do people see them or during what occasions do they reveal themselves to human beings?
6. How do these divine beings reveal themselves to human beings?
7. Where is their place of abode?
8. What services do they require of human beings?
9. In what ways do human beings serve them?
10. What are some the elements used in serving them?
11. What are some of their dislikes?
12. What is the difference between these spirit beings and *Nyorjmol*
13. What is the relationship between these spirit beings and *Nyoymol*

### **Ancestors**

1. At most family gatherings, especially when traditional prayers are said, the names of *Niime* and *Naame* are mentioned. Who do Ga refer to as *Niime* and *Naame*?
2. At what times or within which contexts are they 'called'?
3. What are their roles or responsibilities in the affairs of the family?
4. Where is their place of abode? Can they be seen by human beings?
5. Are they served by human beings?
6. How are they served?
7. What do they require of human beings?
8. What are their likes and dislikes?
9. What is the difference between an ancestor and a ghost?
10. In your view, why do the Ga give much respect and honour to the ancestors?
11. What is the relationship between the ancestors and *Nyoymol*

### **Human Beings**

1. As Ga, we all recognise that the human being is not made only of body but of other elements. What are these elements?
2. In your view, what do these concepts mean?

*kla*

- *susuma*

*mumo*

3. What is *gbeshC*?

4. What happens to a person after death?
5. What is the relationship between human beings and *Nyotjmol*

### **The Environment**

1. We realise that it is not only human beings who are in the world. We have trees, rivers, mountains, the sea and others. Sometimes we refer to these as the environment. When the Ga talk of the environment, what do they mean?
2. I have heard some people claim that elements within the environment have spirits within them. What is your view on this?
3. We also realise that the Ga use the same word '*Nyorjmo*' for the Supreme Being and rainfall. Why do you think we refer to the Supreme Being and rain using the same word '*Nyorjmo*'?
4. In recent times we have heard some people refer to the rain as *nugbo* (foreign water or water stranger) and say that it should not be referred to as *nyorjmo*. They are trying to make a distinction between the Supreme Being and rainfall. What is your view on this development?
5. Why do the Ga attach the name '*Nyorjmo*' to some of the elements within the environment? These include the following:

*nyorjmorjts*  
*nyorjmo rjai*  
*nyorjmorj kaaklo*  
*nyorjmobi tete*  
*nyorjmo saatso*  
*nyorjmo tsina*  
*nyorjmo tsawe*  
*nyorjmo kane*  
 Nyoamo mli gbele

### **Background of Tenia**<sup>10</sup>

1. Please sir, when we mention the people of Tema, which group of people are we talking about?
2. Where did they migrate from before finally settling at this place?

This set of questions was posed to only the Tema *Marjtse* in addition to the general questions.

3. Please, can you tell me the meaning of the name Tema or how you came by that name?
4. I realize that you have the gourd as a state emblem. Why the use of the gourd?
5. What lesson do we draw from the use of the gourd?
6. In some communities, people use certain symbols in the belief that it serves as a proactive device for the community. Does the gourd contain any spiritual power, or serve as a source of protection for the people of Tema?
7. What festival do the people of Tema celebrate?
8. Who instituted the celebration of this festival?
9. Why do you celebrate this festival?
10. In your own estimation has there been any significant change in the way the festival is now celebrated?
11. What are some of these changes?
12. Why do you think these changes occur?