

**KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,
KUMASI**

**DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL ART STUDIES, COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES**



**THE GAMBAGA “WITCHES” COLONY: ITS ARTISTIC AND
OTHER CULTURAL LIFE**

BY

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(B.ED ART HONS., DIPLOMA)

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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this submission is my own original research towards the Master of Arts Degree and that to the best of my knowledge, no part of it has previously been presented for any other degree in this university or elsewhere, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my lovely daughter Mary Kibiirsiar Duut.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE
Title Page	I
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of contents	v
List of plates	viii
List of tables	ix
List of Maps	x
List of Sketches	xi
List of figures	xii
Definition of local terms	xiii
Abstract	xiv
Chapter One	
Introduction	1
Background to the problem	4
Statement of the problem	5
Objective	6
Justification of objective	6
Hypothesis	7
Statement of assumption	7
Delimitation	7
Limitation	7
Statement of purpose	7
Importance of the study	7
Research methodology	8
Facilities available	8
Definition of terms	9
List of abbreviations	10
Organization of chapters	10

Chapter two Review of Related literature

Overview	12
Ethnographic background	12
The occupation and cultural life of the Gambaga people	15
Traditional politics at Gambaga	16
Religion	16
The historical overview of the Gambaga “witches” camp	16
Other witches camp in the Northern Region	20

Chapter Three Methodology

Overview	22
Research instruments	22
Titles and phrases coined for the thesis	23
Resource persons interviewed	23
Libraries visited	24
Sites and communities visited	24

Chapter four The Gambaga “Witches” Camp

Overview	26
The <i>Gambag-rana</i> and his palace	26
The architectural design of the Gambaga “witches” camp	28
The Tindang “witches” camp in brief	31
The test of innocence at the Gambaga “witches” camp	32
Traditional politics at the “witches” camp	35
Initiating and accommodating a new comer at the “witches” camp	37
Accommodation facilities at the camp	40
The break down of ethnic group members of the camp	49
The taboos of the camp	50
Communication among the camp members	52
Exorcism at the camp	53
Traditional worship	54
Relationship between the camp members and the host community	58
Marriage system at the camp	660

Naming ceremony at the camp	61
Death and funeral	62
Economic aspects and livelihood	63
Aid and Medical support to the inmates of the camp	66
Assistance from the Go home project	70
The role of the coalition of NGO and CBOs in Northern Ghana	77
The belief in witchcraft	78
The importance of the “witches” camp	80
New findings	81
CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSIONS, SUMMARY, SUGGESTIONS, RECOMMENDATION SAND CONCLUSION	
Discussion	85
Elder abuse	87
The effects of witchcraft on the marriages of the inmates	89
Psychological effects of witchcraft accusations on the inmates and other people	90
The economic effects of witchcraft accusation on the witches	91
The medical effects of the “witches”	92
Educational effects	92
Summary	93
Suggestions	95
Recommendations	96
Conclusion	97
Bibliography	99

LIST OF PLATES

PLATES	PAGE
4.1. The Gambaga Chiefs' Palaces	27
4.2. The <i>Gambag-rana</i> (Gambaga Chief)	27
4.2a. The compound house of the Gambaga “witches camp	28
4.2b The walls that join the rooms of a compound house	28
4.2c. Old and new roofs	29
4.2d. An eroded foundation	30
4.2e. Some <i>dawdawa</i> pods being dried	30
4.3. A view of the Tindang “witches”	32
4.4. The spokesperson (Gumah Tindoo)	32
4.10. The scar of an old wound	34
4.11. A group picture of the ethnic representative	36
4.12. A comparison of the Gambaga camp with Tindang	40
4.13 Heavy cracks	41
4.14 A newly renovated roof and an old roof	47
4.15 picture showing some economic activities	64
4.15a The inmates sharing of second hand clothing	67
4.16. An immunization exercise	68
4.17 Simon Ngota and the Researcher	72
4.18 A donkey being presented to a beneficiary	73
4.19 Madam Hawa and the Leaders of CBOs	67

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES	PAGE
4.1. A table indicating the responses on accommodation	43
4.2. A table illustrating the state of roofs	45
4.3. A statistical table showing the number of rooms with entrance doors	48
4.4. A table showing the numerical strength of various ethnic groups	49
4.5. A table showing the provision of health cares	70
4.6. A frequency table illustrating admission, death and reintegration	74
4.7. A table about the belief in witchcraft	79



LIST OF MAPS

MAP

PAGE

2.1. The District Map of Ghana showing the position of Gambaga

13

KNUST



LIST OF SKETCHES

SKETCH

PAGE

1. The Palace Shrine, Shaving knife and bathing bowl

56

KNUST



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES	PAGE
4.1. The hierarchical profile of the Gambaga camp	35
4.2. A chart showing grades on the condition of accommodation	44
4.3. A bar chart showing the state of roofs	46
4.4. A pie chart showing the number of doors	48
4.5. Bar chart showing the ethnic breakdown	49
4.6. The Venn diagram illustrating languages spoken	53
4.7 A pie chart showing the number of people covered under the NHIS	70
4.8 A frequency curve on the annual rates of admission	74
4.9. A frequency curve on the annual rates of reintegration	75
4.10 A histogram showing annual deaths at the camp	76
4.11 A Bar chart showing the level of belief in witchcraft	80

DEFINITION OF LOCAL WORDS

<i>Gambag-rana</i>	The title in Mampruli given to a stool occupant of Gambaga (Chief) literary meaning the owner of Gambaga
<i>Pokura foug.</i>	A neighbourhood whose inhabitants are “witches” (Mampruli)
<i>Mma</i>	A title for an elderly woman (Mampruli)
<i>Magazia</i>	A queen mother (Mampruli)
<i>Trokosi</i>	Ewe cultural practice in which young girls is camped into servitude
<i>Mpinawarie</i>	A marriage whose customary rites have not yet been performed (Twi)
<i>Tindana</i>	A title for a land owner sometimes referred to as a sub chief (Mampruli)
<i>Tuo-zaafi</i> (TZ)	Traditional dish prepared with maize or millet flour (Hausa)
<i>Tabani/Tubani</i>	Traditional dish prepared with bean flour (Muar, Mampruli)
<i>Kuuka</i>	The baobab leaves, pounded into powder used as an ingredient
<i>Koose.</i>	A traditional dish prepared with bean flour
<i>Gigakit</i>	Vegetable sauces eaten with <i>koose</i> compare cabbage
<i>Kooko</i>	Porridge (Muar, Mampruli)
<i>Akpele</i>	Ewe word which refer to <i>Tuo-zaafi</i>
<i>Abetie</i>	An Akan word describing <i>Tuo-zaafi</i>
<i>Pito</i>	A local alcoholic drink made from guinea corn or millet
<i>Daat Lana</i>	Mampruli word referring to firewood owner
<i>Mfa-mfa-mfa</i>	An exclamation meaning good, good, good (Mampruli)
<i>Pokura</i>	Mampruli term referring to old ladies
<i>Wanzam</i>	Traditional circumciser
<i>Muar</i>	The language of the Bimoba tribe of the northern region

ABSTRACT

The “witches” Camp at Gambaga in the East Mamprusi District of the northern Region, is a place where women who are accused of witchcraft take refuge under the protection of the Gambaga chief (the *Gambag-rana*). Although there have been some achievements from the initiative of the Gambaga ‘Out Cast Home Project’, very little has been done to expose the positive and negative attributes of the camp. The study examined the trend of events that take place at the camp from the artistic and cultural perspectives. The core objective was to identify the problems of the inmates and bring them to the public domain for possible assistance. The exercise was made possible by means of questionnaire, interviews, photographs, on site seeing and note taking, and a literature from relevant sources. The study found that the accommodation facilities of the inmates were in dilapidated state. Most of the cultural practices revealed, which the “witches” go through, were also cruel and forcible. The inmates and other concerned people who were interviewed, were of the view that something needs to be done to improve the living conditions at the camp. The “witches” stand to benefit from this study due to the recommendations made to Community Based Organization, Women Organizations, the Government Agencies such as the CHRAJ and the National Commission for Civic Education to extend their programme in aid of the women and also forestall further occurrences.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Gambaga “witches” camp remains a historic site that deserves an in-depth study by prospective students and professional researchers. The camp dating back to the 1800s has provided an ‘asylum’ to over a thousand of women alleged to practice witchcraft, but the camp has not receive any extensive documentation. The existence of “witches” camps in the Northern Region of Ghana in general, and Gambaga in particular, is linked with the peoples’ concept of witchcraft on one hand, and also the Gambaga Chief (*Gambag-rana*) on the other hand, who is believed to be ‘powerful’ enough to accommodate the “witches”. This “witchcraft phenomenon” is [however] described as a culture “universal” and mostly centred on women at varying levels of a people’s belief system; therefore it becomes a very sensitive issue to deal with (Kawkuvi, 2007).

In connection with the belief system, and the *Gambag-rana*, with regard to the running of the “witches” camp, (Ibrahim, 2004) notes that “amongst the peoples of Northern Ghana, Ganas and Mamprusis see their chiefs as benevolent “witches” using their powers to rule, unite and protect people from harm. Women on the other hand are perceived to practice the most harmful witchcraft-to kill”.

The “witches” at Gambaga are sufferers of gender inequalities among the populace because in many communities, men accused of the practice are likely to be less than women. They suffer

the withdrawal of kinship support, divorce, ostracism, degrading ordeals and death in extreme cases. It works against their innovation, creates psychological and spiritual distress among people and hampers the unfolding of the full potential of women and other social groups who blame their woes on supernatural causes

People fear to be bewitched “but cannot be sure when they themselves might be accused of the same so-called harmful practice since nearly every misfortune, especially the death of one’s child, must have a witch responsible for it” (Schauber 2002). It is also the belief that “These angry evil [witch] spirits sought to harm the living and thus the most vulnerable of the community: its children” (Carrey 1999:11). In this regard, the perceived prevalence of witchcraft and its negative impact on offspring, therefore, may be among the reasons that one must have as many offspring as possible in some traditional areas.

Further on the reasons for one to give birth to many children apart from the fear of “witches”, one writer has stated that, “it is a well known fact that in many African societies, not excluding Ghanaian ones, the typical witch is the husband’s mother or sister and vice versa, [as soon as children] are born.... because, children are seen in a way, as insurance against old age”. The statement here suggests that, if there should be a sudden death of a child of a couple, then that husband and wife are most likely to blame the misfortune on either of the mother’s in-law. While the effects of witchcraft belief on population are not so evident, its economic and human rights consequences are all too clear” (Nukunya, 2000:18-19).

The climate and environment in Northern Ghana are very susceptible to slight changes and a rainy season with little rain can mean a lean season for good drinking water and food supply. This scientifically allows for mishaps such as drought, windstorms and Cerebral Spinal Meningitis (C.S.M.) due to excessive heat, all of which are blamed on witches.

It is alleged that, the *Gambag-rana* can determine whether one is a “witch” or not; and that, if it is proven that the accused person is a “witch”, he (the *Gambag-rana*) can dislodge the spirits. Unfortunately, “the process of de-witching [exorcism] does not totally offer the accused person any option to prove her innocence. There is often an insistence on, ‘you are guilty, just confess’. The degree of violence or aggressive technique used depends on the gravity of the suspected damage, that is, the sickness, epidemic or death” (Action Aid Ghana, 2004).

“It is good that in African society, morality is upheld high. For this reason, people are made to observe taboos and customary laws to maintain high moral standard in the society for the purpose of peaceful co-existence. It is for the same reason that we have chieftaincy to serve as custodians of moral laws” (Boadi, 2000:137). Unfortunately, in the Northern Region again, chiefs seem to be doing a little in addressing conflicts resulting from witchcraft related issues. This cancer has created enmity among friends and torn families apart

In a similar situation, people even tend to dislike the relations of the accused “witches” at Gambaga, resulting in some of their daughters getting no husbands for fear of bewitching the children of other people but (Boadi, 2000) again notes that “while the traditional believers hold

that one should love one's neighbour and hate one's enemy, the Christian holds that one should love one's neighbour and one's enemy"

The Gambaga "witches'" camp has therefore remained a place where thousands of 'marginalized' individuals; mostly elderly women over the years have lived and died outside their families and matrimonial homes at the hands of fellow community members who are all together seeking refuge at the "witches'" camp in the Northern Region of Ghana.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

The phenomenon of witchcraft has various dimensions, which relate to the response systems as identified in various societies. In the Northern part of Ghana, especially the East Mamprusi District, the response to witchcraft is very aggressive and sometimes claims life. People who have found themselves in the "witches" camp were accused of bewitching others, because someone either died or was seriously sick. Such persons are usually women and the under privileged in society, for example, widows, illiterates, the physically handicapped and the barren. It is disheartening to note that while a surviving husband lives without any change in status and social standing, a surviving wife is usually accused to have killed her husband. Such unfortunate women go through severe physical assault, sometimes to death and others who survive are banished from their communities.

While some of these accused women run away from their homes for their dear lives other are sent by force to the "witches'" camps for test of innocence. When the alleged "witch" is brought to Gambaga, she is taken through a ritual that determines her guilt or innocence.

However, her chances of exoneration are always limited. The accused person then has no option rather than to stay in the “outcasts home” (“witches” camp).

Those women suffer social stigma, uncomfortable habitat, little attention from family, or total neglect, poor dieting and clothing, economic hardships, inability to access basic medical care, loss of self esteem, discrimination among people, denial of freedom of movement and association, jeering and other forms of violence against women thus preventing them in many cases, from sharing the resources of the society. All these form a source of worry since it is indeed a violation on their fundamental human rights for, the allegation has no scientific proof. “From the judicial point of view, witchcraft allegations and the treatment meted out to accused women are simply illegal” (Schauber 2002).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, since 1997, efforts have been made by Government and NGOs such as the ‘Gambaga Outcasts Home Project’ initiated by the Presbyterian Mission, to educate people against witchcraft allegation, improve the habitation and livelihood for the inmates of the Gambaga “witches” Camp and reintegrate the exorcised women into the society.

People are still accused of “killing” or causing harm to a neighbour in the community, believed to be by means of witchcraft. The only criterion to label a person, as a witch is to raise an alarm or complaint that madam A or B wants to harm or kill the complainant. The accused “witch” may then be tortured, lynched or killed. She may be ostracized to take refuge at the

Gambaga “witches” camp. Those already there were forcibly accommodated against their basic fundamental human rights.

Now that the camp involves people of different tribes of the Northern corridor, their customs, social institution, politics, traditions, beliefs, behaviors, economies, religions, marriages, funerals, languages, the physical characteristics of the people, their material products, architecture, the new environment, similarities and differences, etc, all constitute a cross culture which is not known by the general public.

Therefore, the sort of neo-culture that prevails there including their marriage or remarriage system, their accommodation, their economic activities, their social structure, their political and religious activities, among others, are the areas intended to be investigated.

1.3 OBJECTIVE

The objective is to study and document the artistic and other cultural life of the “witches” camp in order to identify possible problems.

Find ways to draw the attention of the Ghana Government and other philanthropists to their plight and consequently assist them.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

The study of the artistic and cultural life of the Gambaga “witches” camp will expose the positive and negative attributes of the camp

1.5 STATEMENT OF ASSUMPTION

This research is being conducted on the assumption that, few people are aware of the situation of banished “witches” who take refuge at the “witches” camps.

1.6 DELIMITATION

The main focus of the research was centred on the artistic and cultural life of the Gambaga “witches” camp; however, a brief mention was made in comparison, with four other camps located at Kpatinga, Kukuo, Bonyuase and Tindang near Gnyaani all in the Northern Region of Ghana

1.7 LIMITATION

The researcher was not allowed by the “witches” Camp authorities to take photographs of some of the activities and also certain parts of the *Gambag-rana’s* palace including a shrine. Due to financial and logistical constraints, the researcher could not take photographs of some of the other “witches” camps mentioned earlier.

1.8 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The research is to sensitise the populace around these communities and the general public on the plight of the “witches” and also appeal to them to improve on the living condition of the “witches”.

1.9 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

People from all walks of life especially, the inmates of the Gambaga “witches” camp will benefit in diverse ways from this research since their welfare forms the prime concern of the

research. While anticipating the reformation or possible extinction of the camp(s) in the near future, the camps now, and in future serve as potential tourist attractions in the town. Should government and other philanthropist award the place(s), on contract for infrastructural development, employment will be created for some people. Students and teachers will make use of the document as a history book. It will contribute to knowledge on witchcraft issue in that part of Ghana.

It is envisaged that the documentation of all events at the camp will serve as a reference for further studies.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research instruments for Primary information, mainly field work, consisted of one-on-one interviews, on-the-spot note taking, sketches and visitation aided by photographic camera and audio tape recorder. Questionnaire was used and discussions also held with opinion leaders.

The secondary information was obtained from textbooks, magazines, daily newspapers and other documented materials. The qualitative information was processed by descriptions, narration and discussions, and quantitative data were analyzed in terms of mathematical diagrams and interpreted.

1.11 FACILITIES AVAILABLE

The “Witches” Camps

The Gambaga Traditional Area

UDS Library, Tamale

KNUST Library, Kumasi

District Library, *Gambaga*

Regional Library, Tamale

Polytechnic Library, Tamale

Pardmore Library Osu, Accra

College of Art Library KNUST

The Balme Library UG, Legon, Accra

St. Victor's Major Seminary Library, Tamale

(TICCS) Tamale Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies Library, Tamale

1.13 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Asylum: Residential permit offered to the accused and banished “witches” by the Gambaga Chief.

Cheap labour: Services rendered by the “witches” for which they are given unrealistic wages.

Community market: A small selling centre within most communities where ingredients are mostly sold.

Home/Camp: The residence specifically for “witches” such as the Gambaga camp.

Inmates: Alleged witches who live in the “witches” camp(s)

Marginalize: A term referring to “witches” at the camp who get very negligible attention from their family members.

Out casts: A term referring to women living at the designated “witches” Camp.

Powerful:	The special spiritual strength which enables the Gambaga Chief to control the “witches” under his jurisdiction.
Spiritual Leader:	Referring to the Gambaga Chief in terms of witchcraft at the Camp.
Tame:	The gradual dislodgement exercise that the chief carries on the inmates of the camp.
Witch:	A female person who practices witchcraft.
Wizard:	Male person who practice witchcraft.

1.13 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UDS:	University for Development Studies
SVMS:	St Victor’s Major Seminary
‘GO’	Gambaga Outcasts Home
UG:	The University of Ghana
KNUST:	The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
CRS:	Catholic Relief Services
CSM:	Cerebral Spinal Meningitis

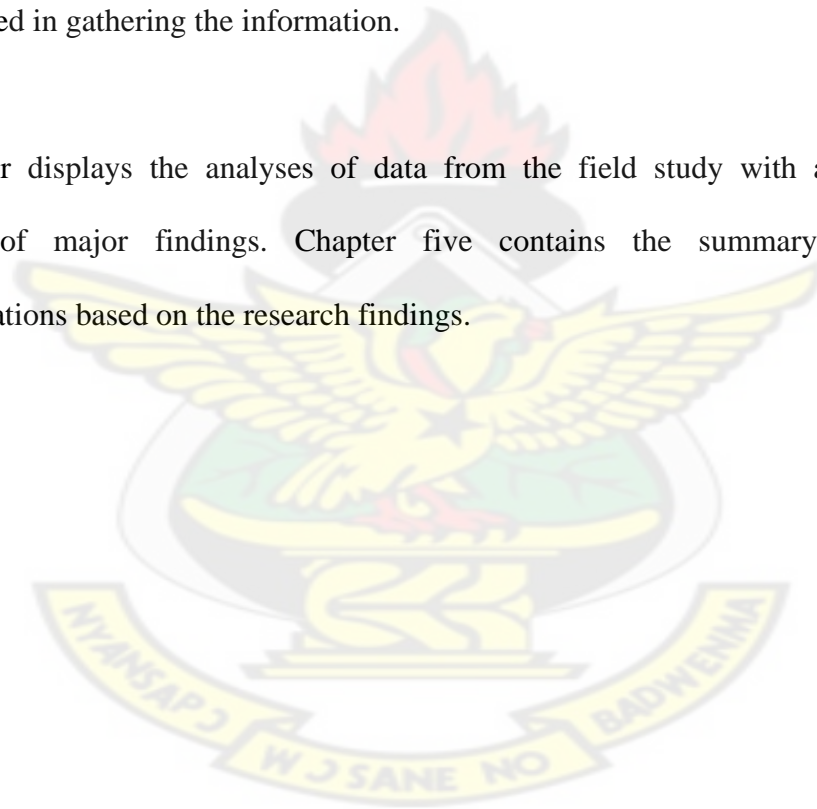
1.14 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

The entire write up consists of five chapters. Chapter one begins with an introduction – a general commentary of issues on the topic. The background study follows before the problem statement. Then the Objectives, hypothesis, assumptions, delimitation, limitation, statement of purpose, importance of the study, research methodology, facilities available, definition of

concepts, list of abbreviations and lastly, the manner in which the arrangements of the chapters have been made.

Chapter two ushers readers into a review of related literature beginning with an ethnographic background of Gambaga indicating its location and other essential tales about it. References that have a bearing on the topic from available published and unpublished sources are used and acknowledged. Chapter three presents the methodology, indicating all the research instruments that were used in gathering the information.

Chapter four displays the analyses of data from the field study with a presentation and discussion of major findings. Chapter five contains the summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the research findings.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 OVERVIEW

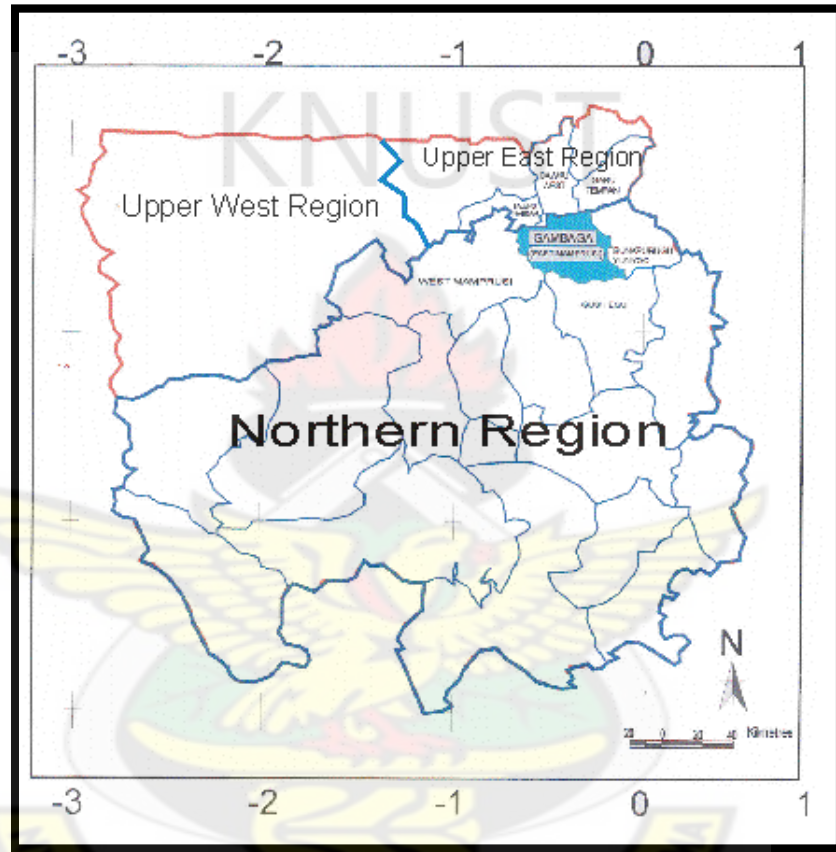
This chapter presents an examination of a very limited literature on the Gambaga “witches” camp. An extensive search throughout the above listed Libraries to obtain relevant literature by the researcher has proved futile. No researcher has been discovered to have written particularly on the Artistic and Cultural life of the Gambaga “witches” Colony’, which this research seeks to address, nor examined it in a different way. However, some authors have made a mere mention of the camp and witchcraft in their attempts to address unrelated issues. The chapter also outlines a brief ethnographic background of the Gambaga Town and the people living there.

The chapter is organized under the following subheadings: The Ethnographic Background of Gambaga, The Gambaga “witches” camp, and lastly, other “witches” camps in the Northern Region.

2.1 ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF GAMBAGA

Gambaga, the former political capital of the Northern Territories (now Northern Ghana) during the colonial administration before it was moved to Tamale, is the administrative headquarters of the East Mamprusi district. The Town is located 48 km Northeast of Walewale, where both main roads linking the Northeastern Districts and the Bolgatanga Municipality converge. On the current District Map of Ghana, Gambaga shares common boundaries with other districts

including Talensi-Nabdam, Bawku West and Garu-Tempani, in the Upper East Region. The rest are the West Mamprusi, the Bunkpurugu-Yungyoo and the Gushegu Districts both in the Northern Region. Map 1 below illustrates the position of the town.



Map 2.1 DISTRICT MAP OF GHANA INDICATING THE POSITION OF GAMBAGA (SHADED BLUE), THE EAST MAMPRUSI DISTRICT CAPITAL.

The Town is site down the top of an escarpment bearing its name and said to contain some considerable deposits of diamond. According to geological findings, “the Diamonds found in this area are of the gem type and are thus more valuable than the diamonds found elsewhere in Ghana. Other Diamond fields include those in the gravels of the White Volta near Gambaga

where the two largest stones found in Ghana so far (10½ carats and 7½ carats were discovered” (Banneh & K.B Diction, 2004: 11, 67).

The landscape is mostly hilly with plentiful sunshine within the long lean season and annual rainfall ranging up to a maximum of about 1700mm especially during the growing season, which starts by the month of May. “Temperatures range between 18°C and 39°C” (Banneh & K.B Diction, 2004: 11, 67). The town is prone to the annual changes in weather conditions and is worse hit by the North-East Trade winds or the Hamattan around December to early February.

Gambaga developed early as a trading town with trade routes converging on it from Paga and Bawku. By the late nineteenth century it was recognized as one of the principal stopping places in Northern Ghana for Mossi traders from Burkina Faso. Gambaga was also the headquarters of the British colonial administration for the Northern Territories. By 1907 the town began to lose its importance and size, following the transfer of the administrative headquarters to Tamale and the realignment of the roads from Paga and Bawku to pass through Bolgatanga. “What saved the town from further decay was its selection to be the district headquarters of the South Mamprusi”. The splitting of the district again into East and West Mamprusi deteriorated its development drastically (Songore, 2003 p 18).

2.2 THE OCCUPATION AND CULTURAL LIFE OF GAMBAGA PEOPLE

The people engage themselves in diverse kinds of occupations, including traditional yarn spinning, round-hut construction and thatch weaving, the sale of small scale provisions, labour services, white-colour jobs and mostly small scale farming.

As said above the inhabitants are mostly subsistent mixed farmers. Perennial crops grown include cereals, tubers and legumes-guinea corn, millet, yam, sweet potatoes and vegetables especially okra. The legumes are white beans and Bambara beans. The small scale farmers are said to depend on the *pokura* (inmates) of the camp for 'cheap labour'. According to some earlier writers, livestock such as cattle rearing is very lucrative due to the favorable condition. They further note that "...the only part of Ghana where mixed farming has been actively encouraged is the tsetse fly-free area of the north-east" (Dickson et al: 69).

Business is general slow at the Gambaga Township and there is only a 'community market', as compared to the large commercial market at Nalerigu, this may especially be due to siting of the traditional seat at Nalerigu, the Nalerigu Secondary School and the renowned Baptist Medical Centre (BMC). Nalerigu has claimed business popularity being the transit of travellers from extreme Bunkpurugu to the east and Walewale in the west. One can get a straight means of transport from Nalerigu to Kumasi in the south, Bolgatanga and Bawku, instead of Gambaga in spite of its being the district capital.

A few women engage in petty trading at popular markets around, namely Gushegu, Naasuan, Bunkpurugu, Bawku and Walewale. Some aged women engage themselves in cotton spinning,

traditional textile weaving and fire wood harvesting and selling. These are more pronounced among the banished “witches” taking refuge under the chief’s protection.

2.3 Traditional Politics

Its additional political importance today is based solely on the fact that it was formerly the seat of the Paramount Chief of Mamprusi, which was moved to Nalerigu in the colonial era. For now, apart from the constitutional political figures, the *Gambag-rana* is the Dominant Traditional Political leader. He is also the spiritual leader and Proprietor of the “witches” camp. The Muslim Imam is another spiritual leader who commands respect in that society. It is said that the *Magazia* (Queenmother) is the leader among the other witches.

2.4 RELIGION

There is a visual competition of various religious temples, ranging between traditional community and family shrines, Mosques and Churches. The indigenes are Muslim dominated. There are six different Christian denominations mostly patronised by strangers. Noted for its traditional significance, traditional worship is highly up held by members of the “witches” community.

2.5 THE GAMBAGA “WITCHES” CAMP

Hajia Amina states in *The Mirror* that “Around 1870, a woman accused for practicing witchcraft was almost lynched by her relatives. The Imam of Mamprugu sent her to Gambaga, where she lived as a refugee. Later on the custody of the outcast was handed over to the chief of Gambaga who established a settlement for her” (*The Mirror*, 2000).

In a related development, Mr. Kawkuvi Assasu who is a lecturer of the Language Education Department of the University of Education, Winneba said he gathered reports on the “witches” camp based on its geographical location, the total number of inmates as at year 2001, the name given to the camp in the Mampruli language, and the name of the overseer of the camp. He collected those pieces of information to include them in his unpublished write up entitled ‘The Persecution of African Traditional religion in Ghana: *Trokosi* and Witchcraft’¹. His findings revealed that, a total of 148 inmates were resident at the camp. His reports also named the camp community in the Mampruli language as the *Pakura foun*g (old ladies area). Further in his findings, he identified the overseer of the camp as Naba Antuwini (the Gambaga Chief).

Describing the camp which he himself never visited as a Humanitarian Sanctuary in his explanation, Mr. Assasu added that, according to the students who gathered the reports on his behalf, the members of the “witches” camp, were not under any servitude to their overseer as was happening at the *Trokosi* camps in the Volta Region. The lecturer therefore declared his position on the existence of the camp, calling on the Government of Ghana to recognise the Gambaga chief as a philanthropist, and honor and compensate him for providing free shelter and protection to the women. Mr. Assasu again noted from an anthropological and traditional point that, “the witches camp is a very necessary component of the society since the belief in witchcraft and witchcraft allegation were never going to be obliterated in the cultures of the peoples in the area”. He termed the belief in witchcraft as a “culture-universal”. He (the researcher) did not say anything about the artistic and cultural life about the camp (Asaasu, 2007).

¹ Mr. Kwakuvi Asaasu, said this during an interview with the researcher at his residence in Winneba on the 12th July 2007

Another mention of the Gambaga “witches” camp was by a former student of the St. Victor’s Major Seminary in Tamale in his unpublished thesis. He states that, “the ‘witches’ at the Gambaga camp are victims of syncretism because, people who all condone to send them there, have low faith in Jesus Christ, and for that matter, they consult soothsayers in order to find the causes of their misfortunes. The soothsayers attribute the blame on women and some times men” (Boatbil, 2001). The Seminarian was examining the negative impact of syncretism on the young Christian, citing the “witches” camp as one of the negatives. He noted that if people deepened their faith in God, they could cast out demons from possessed persons including those accused of witchcraft and sent to the camp.

His research which dwelled much on the worship of both gods and the True God as prescribed by Christianity, did not cover anything else on the cultural life of the ‘witches’ colony at Gambaga.

In 2000, The Mirror published that “on August 5, 1999, Mrs. ‘B’ was banished from her home to the Gambaga “witches” camp to avoid being lynched on account of witch practice, so it is true that Ghanaians abuse women as part of their culture?”. Vincent Ayumah, who made this contribution, was concerned about the way witchcraft allegations are prevalent around the northern part of Ghana under the pretext of culture. He did not extend his comments to the events that occur at the camp.

In a related contribution on a Cerebra-Spinal Meningitis (CSM) epidemic which caused several deaths in the Northern Region in the early 1990s, Waibel (2001) noted that “most of those deaths were attributed to witches and within a short period the population of the so-called

“witches” camp at Gambaga increased tremendously”. Waibel, in a further explanation, made reference to Salem which became famous in the United States’ history for executing women who were suspected of witchcraft and could not prove their innocence. Covens of witches have transformed themselves into formidable groups “nevertheless nowadays there is a new movement of women who are reclaiming their names as witches; these women are emphasizing the positive power of witchcraft; it is seen as a gift and a spiritual power”. The writer did not, however, suggest that the camp members at Gambaga should form an association nor did she outline any positive function of the inmates at Gambaga. Also, the author did not talk about the trend of events at the camp.

Dominic Baapeng, a former student of the UDS, Nyankpala also mentioned the Gambaga “witches” camp in his study on the Rural Women’s Micro Credit Scheme of the Maata-n-Tudu Women’s Association in the East Mamprusi District. (Baapeng, 2004), states, “the women’s groups are the *Suguru Dam*, the *Bimob-foung*, the *Tindaan foung*, the *Sakook-foung* and the *Pakura foung* [that is the “witches” group]”. Having identified the coven as a women’s group that could have benefited from the credit scheme, Dominic failed to provide reasons for their exclusion from the credit scheme. The student did not also investigate into the economic activities among the inmates of the camp to enable him make a recommendation.

It is the opinion of this research that the *Pakura Foung* women’s group (the “witches”) may have been disqualified from the scheme based on three factors; first, that they could not provide any collateral, second may be that, they could not get any guarantors. The third may

be because most of them are very weak to be able to embark on any sustainable business to pay back the loan.

Janet Adama in a workshop report to the Action Aid Ghana in 2004 listed “witches” camps in the Northern Region as “the Kpatinga “witches” camp, the Gambaga “witches” camp, the Tindang, the Kukuo and the Bonuase “witches” camps”. Adama coined the title of the report as ‘The silent cry’. According to her, while some participants tried to justify the need for the camps, others felt it was time to put a stop to the practice. Adama also noted that “the Gambaga “witches” camp was said to be the oldest among the rest” (Adama, 2004).

The core agenda of the workshop, according to the report was to discuss ways and means by which the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations in Northern Ghana could educate the populace in order to reduce the state of witchcraft allegations at the various communities in the three Regions. The forum accepted the fact that the existence of the “witches” camp is necessitated by the people’s belief system in the practice of witchcraft among men and women and thereby resolved to tackle the campaign at the catchment’s areas instead of at the camp communities. The report did not address the artistic and cultural lives of the inmates of any of the “witches” camps.

2.6 OTHER “WITCHES” CAMPS IN THE NORTHERN REGION

It is important to make mention in this research of the presence of four additional “witches” camps as earlier named above, dotted in other districts of the region but which have not gained popularity as that of Gambaga. The other “witches” camps, apart from the one at Gambaga include “Kpatinga which is located in the Gushegu District, the Kukuo “witches” camp near

Bimbilla in the Nanumba North District, the Tindang camp near Gnyaani which is 27km east of Yendi District Capital and lastly, the Bonyuase camp near Yapei in the Central Gonja District” (Adama, 2004). All the camps are found in the Northern Region.

According to the 1997 CHRAJ (in Tamale) Survey Report on Camps for “witches” in Northern Ghana, the number of inmates at Gambaga alone stood at 328, Kukuo 450, Kpatinga 42, Tindang 192 and only 3 at Bonyuase; and the average ages of the inmates ranged between 35 and 90. However, the number of inmates at respective camps between 8th and 29th July, 2006 (researcher’s first visit) revealed new figures as follows; Gambaga 83, Kpatinga 57, Tindang 120 including 12 males, and Kukuo 342. These figures were provided by their respective care takers.

The researcher could not visit the Bonuase camp. At Kpatinga, the care taker’s son told the researcher that of late, some people report their witchcraft accusation cases to the police for redress instead of bringing the “witches” to the camp².

To conclude this review, the researcher would want to remind readers that several attempts to get relevant literature on the theme of this research have not yielded any significant results. Some people raised eyebrows each time the researcher mentioned that he was studying the cultural life of the “witches” at Gambaga.

² The man was responding to a question from the researcher about the reasons for the decrease in the number of alleged witches at the camp. \he claims that police do settle the matter for the accused persons to stay at home.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter outlines the various procedures by which pieces of information about the true picture of the “witches” camp were obtained. While secondary information was obtained from print and electronic media, the primary data was collected with instruments listed below. These include one-on-one interviews with the opinion leaders of the Gambaga and its surrounding communities.

Topics discussed in this chapter are research tools, resource persons, Libraries, sites and communities visited, the *Gambag-rana's* palace, the architectural style of the camp under discussion, the Tindang Camp, test of innocence and political life style of the camp members, initiation, ethnic groups and taboos.

3.1 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The research was made possible with the aid of an empirical review of related literature. Series of interviews with the some opinion leaders and the inmates of the camp were conducted, and photographs of scene interest were taken. The rest are response to questionnaire. It also presents on-site notes and observations of events. Statistical diagrams including histograms, bar charts, pie chart, frequency table and curves, and Venn diagrams have all been used to illustrate primary strata collected in numerical forms.

The quantitative strata, which are represented in mathematical diagrams as states above, are analyzed and discussed descriptively. Arguments have been posed in comparison with

secondary information obtained from earlier documentation. The researcher has at some stages stayed out of the findings so as to avoid twisting the facts. However, the facts are discussed and the position of the researcher stated.

In describing and discussing the pieces of information, accompanying figures, tables and photographs of events, scenes and persons have been shown.

3.2 TERMS USED

For the purpose of this thesis, certain words and phrases have been coined and used to refer to certain categories of people. The following are some of the phrases: The overseer of the camp, the spiritual leader of the camp, The Traditional ruler, the *Gambag-rana* and the monitor of the camp, as may be used in the text, are all referring to the Gambaga Chief. Also, the title ‘Spokesperson’ refers to the man who stands in, on behalf of the Gambaga Chief during interviews pertaining to the camp. This is because the Chief, by custom, does not speak directly to subordinates and visitors. Finally, the *Magazia* is used to mean the Queenmother of the “witches” camp. The word ‘inmates’ refers to members of the “witches” camp.

3.3 RESOURCE PERSONS INTERVIEWED

The researcher first called on the Gambaga Chief, (the *Gambag-rana*), Mr. Imoro Antuwini and his spokesperson, Mba Gumah Tindoo, for first hand introduction and permission to visit and conduct the survey on the camp. The *Magazia* (Mma Miibot) and other fifty-seven women among the “witches” at the camp were interviewed. The Director of the ‘Go Home’ Project, Mr. Simon Ngota, and the Muslim Chief Imam, Malam Wumbei Aminu, both of them resident at the town, were interviewed. The researcher did not leave out Father Robert Y. Laar, the

Catholic Parish Priest of Walewale in charge of the area, and the CRS field coordinator for the East Mamprusi zone, Mr. Osman Musah. Further, the East Mamprusi District Mutual Health Insurance Scheme Manager, Mr. David Nachan was also interviewed to obtain information on the registration of the members of the camp.

All investigations conducted in the form of questions and interviews concerning the roles of the spiritual leader (*Gambag-rana*) of the camp, and other events that take place at the camp, were responded by Mr. Mba Gumah Tindoo (who is mostly referred to, in this write up as the spokesman of the *Gambag-rana*). The queenmother on the other hand has played a major role with regard to questions pertaining to her and the subordinates. Other members of the camp have been relied upon for the disclosure of other related pieces of information.

3.4 LIBRARIES VISITED

Secondary information was obtained from the following Libraries: The Tamale Institute of Cross Cultural Studies (TICCS), the St. Victor's Major Seminary Library, College of Art and KNUST main Libraries. The researcher visited the University of Ghana Balme Library, Legon and Tamale Polytechnic Library. The rest are the District Library, Gambaga and the University for Development Studies Library at Nyankpala.

3.5 SITES AND COMMUNITIES VISITED

To obtain primary information, the researcher visited the “witches” camp at Gambaga, the Gambaga town, the Tindang and Kpatinga “witches” camps which are located in the Yendi and Gushegu District of the Northern Region respectively. Others include the *Gambag-rana*'s

Palace, the Gambaga Health clinic, and the Naseriga Primary School all within the Gambaga town. The rest are Offices of the ‘Gambaga Outcasts Home Project’ manned by the Gambaga Circuit of the Presbyterian Mission, the Catholic Mission at Walewale, the East Mamprusi Mutual Health Insurance Office and the East Mamprusi District Assembly. Lastly, the Communities visited include Nakpanduri, Naasuan, Nalerigu, Kpatinga, Tindang, and Tongo, Langbinsi and Dennugu and all the surrounding villages.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALISES AND INTEPRETATIONS

4.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the findings of the field study in the camp at Gambaga. As already spelt out under the table of content, the areas that were investigated and presented include, the *Gambag-rana* and his palace, the architectural design of the “witches” camp, the Tindang “witches” camp (in brief), test of innocence at the Gambaga “witches” camp, just to mention but a few. The photographic documentation that accompanies the respective text is presented next to their respective texts.

4.1 THE GAMBAG-RANA AND HIS PALACE

The traditional ruler of the town and its environs is the *Gambag-rana*. His stool is next to the paramount seat of the East Mamprugu traditional area, which is occupied by the Na-Yiri of Nalerigu. He the (*Gambag-rana*) is also the overseer of the “witches” camp. He is said to possess spiritual powers to ‘tame’ all the alleged witches under his protection. Eventually, he is believed to be capable of exorcising the witch spirits from the “witches” After the exorcism, some of the inmates return into their hometowns. The Palace is characterized by a very large thatch-roofed compound house of eighteen single rooms. The plate in the next page is a photograph of the chief’s house which contains the palace.



Plate 4.1 a back view of the Gambag-rana's Palace

The outer-faced room, which is the largest amongst them, serves as the reception to all visitors. The inner parts of the walls which are richly decorated with traditional weapons, kingship regalia and festive costumes are not permitted to be photographed. The shrine, found at the fore court of the palace as also not permitted to be photographed however, the Chief (*Gambag-rana*), who is also the spiritual leader of the camp has been photographed and shown below.



Plate 4.2. A picture of the *Gambag-rana*

4.2 ARCHITECTURE OF THE GAMBAGA “WITCHES” CAMP

There is a little difference in the architectural style between the settlement of the camp and that of the indigenous traditional buildings. They are all built with mud; they are round structures and roofed with thatch. However, while the camp is characterized by a maximum of four bedroom compounds, the indigenous compound houses are larger of about eight to ten bed rooms excluding kitchens. There are no kitchens attached to the bed rooms at the camp. Also, the sizes of the “witches” rooms are as small as that of the kitchen of the ideal compound houses. The plate below illustrates a compound house of the camp.



Plate 4.3. One of the compound houses of the camp

The entire Camp is made up of thirty-one compound houses. The building style of the houses is the traditional round hut structures; each room of a compound house is connected to the other with a wall. The plate below shows the walls that connect the rooms to form compounds.



Plate 4.4 A wall joining two rooms

The huts are thatch-roofed. The average size per room is about six feet in diameter. The gates are oval-shaped with straw mats and sacks commonly hung as doors. However, out of the thirty-one compound houses with a total of a hundred and twenty-eight rooms, the rooms of eighteen inmates including the *Magazia's* had entrance doors made of *wawa* (*Khaya senegalensis*) boards.

The main entrance to each compound house is a U-shaped gate. The roofs, as said earlier are thatches. As at today, the 31st day of March, 2007, eight-one of the roofs are old; that is, roofs that have spent over two years. Twenty-seven are newly roofed. Eighteen rooms have no roofs and are partially broken. The old roofs are identified with a dirty-brown colour while the new roofs exhibit a very tint-yellow colour. Below is a photograph showing old roofs and new ones.



Plate 4.5. A picture of new and old roofs

In-between the mud constructed compound houses are very close spaces without drainage gutters so, erosion has created galleys to the extent of weakening some of the foundations of the building. The next plate in page 30 is a typical example of the affected rooms. There are also cracks in the walls of some of the buildings.

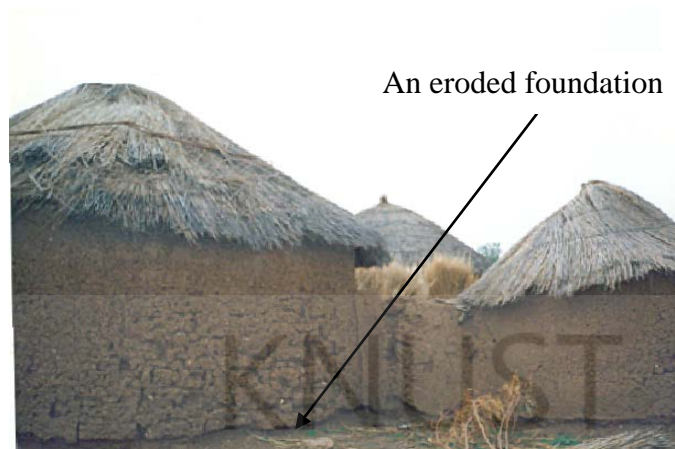


Plate 4.6. A picture showing an eroded foundation

The “witches” have themselves taken some measures to save the buildings from collapse; some quantities of cow dung are gathered and stored in earthenware pots. According to Konduuk (a “witch”) it serves as a binder for the plastering of the outer walls of their rooms. Also for a similar purpose, some quantities of powder, obtained from *dawadawa* (*Parkia clapatoniana*) pods is also used as a binder, mixed with mud for the flooring of the rooms. The researcher found spacemen of the pods being dried on the compounds. The spacemen is shown in the plate 4.7 below.



Plate 4.7 *Dawadawa* pods being dried at the yard

4.3 THE TINDANG WITCHES CAMP – IN BRIEF

The Tindang “witches” camp in the Yendi District is 27km away from the Yendi town, along the Zabzugu road to the east. It is a small rural community consisting of 250 compound houses. The estimated population is about 1500 people, (CHRAJ annual Report, Tamale, 13/12/2007). Majority of the inhabitants of the village are believed to be witches and wizards. The entire population consists of the descendants of the witches and wizards, the chief or *Tindana* (who is the head of the village) and his family and a few settlers who are thought to be neither witches nor wizards.

The number of “witches” in the camp is about 500 (Information from the *Tindana*, 11/12/2006, and CHRAJ, Tamale, 13/12/2006 and their ages range between thirty and seventy years, however most of them are in the middle age bracket. The “wizards” are very few, about ten in number and are also in the middle age group. There are about two hundred children in the camp whose ages range between two and sixteen years.

In an interview with one of the “witches” by name, Upua Nambi, a Konkomba by tribe, it came to light that while some of the strong ones engage in farming, others do fish mongering and the rest engage in the sale of shea butter and fresh vegetable ingredients especially during the rainy season. The “witches” live in one- hut unit type of houses, quite smaller than the ideal size of about 12ft in diameter occupied by the “non-witches” of the village. See the plate below, a view of the Tindang “witches” camp. There is neither a health facility nor potable water supply as at March 2007 when the researcher visited the camp. The next plate in page 32 shows a view of the camp



Plate 4.8 A view of the Tindang ‘witches’ Camp

4.4 TEST OF INNOCENCE AT THE GAMBAGA CAMP

“Women accused of witchcraft are brought to this camp by their own relatives to swear an oath of their innocence before a shrine. The chief does not go hunting for witches at their hide outs.” The Spokesperson (Gumah Tindoo) on 10th November, 2006 told the researcher. See him below, first from the left in a group picture with the researcher, the *Magazia* and two other visitors. He further, in an explanation noted that the chief, in this respect by custom, does not reject nor turn away a request by a person or group of persons who want to swear an oath of innocence before the shrine.

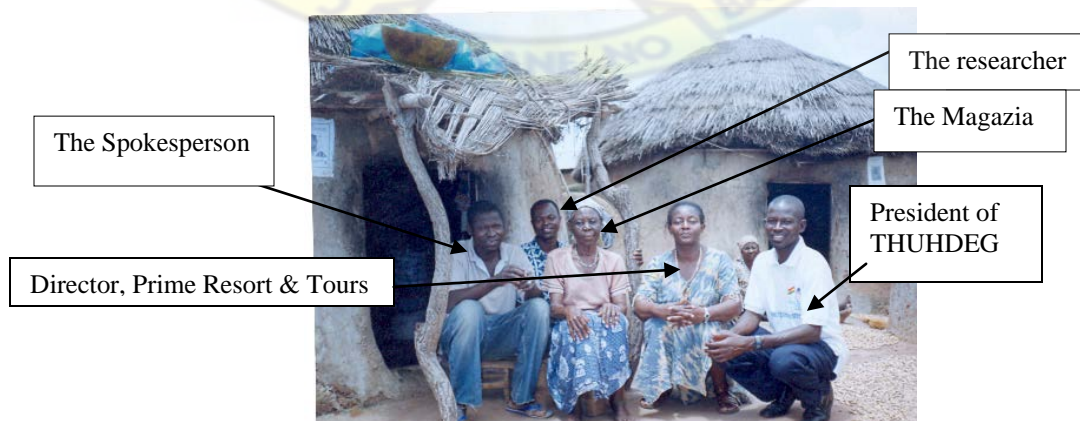


Plate 4.9 a group picture of Mr. Tindoo and the Magazia with the researcher

In pursuance of this explanation, Mr. Tindoo said “the ritual requires the accused person to offer a fowl for a sacrifice and is subsequently made to drink a herbal concoction. In each case the accused person is expected to pass the test to be exonerated”. In response to a question about the procedure and incantations on the sacrifice of the test of innocence performed by the tradition priest Mr. Tindoo was sceptical, saying that, that was the prerogative of the priest, and it was shrouded in secrecy.

The attitude exhibited by the spokesman on this topic nearly marred the interview process so, there was a pause. After a while the researcher sought permission and retired to his lodging place.

The following day, at the camp, the researcher exchanged greeting with some of the inmates. One Mma Adama was engaged in the conversation on the topic. She hinted that during the testing exercise the accused “witch” kneels before the shrine, holds the fowl and says: “I stand before you (shrine) to swear that I am not a witch, if I am a witch as alleged on me, this should be proven in the sacrifice of this fowl put before you” (An information offered by Adama Fati, 10th November 2006).

She recounted the circumstances that led to her stay at the camp, that she was accused of bewitching a boy who fell sick at their village in 1999. Adding that she encountered shouts of pressure and insistence to plead guilty instead of going through the test, and for the fear that she might take the drink and die, or be beaten mercilessly again, she confessed that, she (Adama) was responsible for the boy’s sickness.

Responding to a question by the researcher, as to how she resuscitated the sick person, the “witch” (Adama) claimed that, she obtained water from the camp, which she drank and gave the rest to the patient who also drank it.

In a similar mood, another “witch” took her turn to narrate her ordeal in tears, which took place eight years ago, Sampoka who is also a widow alleged that she was beaten up at the village and refused food overnight. “While I was put under surveillance, the men threatened me to confess that I bewitched the child who had been sick over the period”, she said. The following day her late husband’s relatives transported her to the camp at Gambaga.

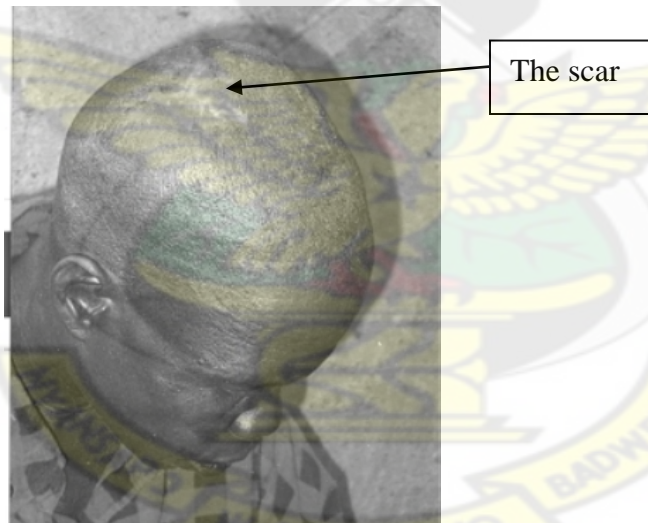


Plate 4.10 The scar of the wound sustained by a tortured alleged witch (Sampoka)

Sampoka showed the researcher a scar in the head (see above plate) which she claimed was a deep cut sustained during the physical torture. She told the researcher that she became unconscious and that... “When I woke up my body was wet and then I heard them saying:

witch, witch, you “ate” the child, you will go to Gambaga”³, she concluded. She also alleged that at Gambaga, she was compelled to drink some liquid potion which made her tipsy. Perhaps the said liquid which she claimed to have drunk and became tipsy was either containing some alcohol or a chemical that had the potency to destabilize one’s mental faculty.

4.5 POLITICS AT THE CAMP

The entire “witches” colony is under the traditional jurisdiction of the Gambaga Chief, and below is a diagram indicating the hierarchical profile and channel of communication at the Camp.

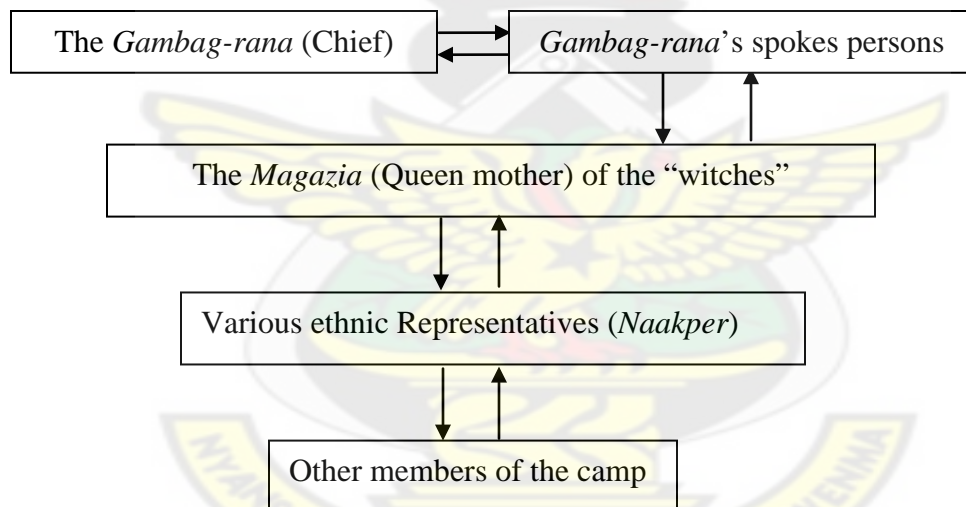


Figure 4.1 A hierarchical diagram of the colony

Among the ‘outcasts’ is a Queenmother who serves as their leader. Every issue that needs redress is communicated to the various ethnic representatives through the *Magazia*, via the spokesperson to the Chief. Any incoming chief respects, and works with her (the *Magazia*) until she returns to her home town or death takes her away. A new queenmother is appointed

³ The quotation above is a translated version from what Sampoka said in Mampruli.

by the *Gambaga-rana* if the former dies or returns to her hometown. For example, the present *Magazia* (queenmother), Mma Miibot of the Bimoba tribe took over from her predecessor, Mma Shila (the former queenmother) after she was re-integrated back to her home town.

The criterion for one to be appointed as a *Magazia* is by long stay at the camp. The age of the person is of less importance. It is also rotational among the “witches” from various tribes: the Bimobas, the Konkombas, Mamprusis, Dagombas and Talensis. An inquiry revealed that this political layout has necessitated the initiation of any new entrant to the camp. Each group of the “witches” from the various tribes has a leader known by the title, *Naakper*, under the queenmother. All “witches” in a particular group report any ailment, misunderstanding and accommodation related issues among other to their superiors for redress. The Plate below is a group picture of the ethnic representatives.



Plate 4.11 A group picture of four of the ethnic representatives

The ethnic leaders are responsible for the collecting of items of rites brought by each new entrant. The items whose uses have been described under their respective sub-headings include

three yards of white calico, some quantity of powder obtained from *dawadawa* pods, about five hundred shells of cowries and a traditional jewel box which is mostly made of calabash. The last very important items which are not under their custody are a wooden hand trowel, and two straw mats. The researcher was not allowed to take photographs of the items listed above.

The enthronement of a new *Magazia*, regardless of the ethnic background, is characterized by regalia of the Mamprugu tradition. This occasion is however not organized on a grand scale and also confined to the camp only. The *dondo* (hour glass drum) beaters and praise singers are drawn from the *Gambaga-rana's* Palace.

The “witch” to be enthroned as *Magazia* is decorated with beads and a traditional ‘crown’ and a smock fabric to look elegant. The cloth is wrapped tightly above her breasts, she is then carried head high amidst drumming and praise singing. The peers dance in cheers at their best, each one clapping her hands. The various ethnic representatives form the immediate guard entourage, each of them holding a raffia woven fan. They wave their fans at the Queenmother as she is being brought to her (the queenmother’s) room. When asked about the significance of the use of the fans, the *Magazia* responded that, it is to provide fresh air to the newly ordained queenmother, to signify ‘comfort’.

4.6 INITIATING AND ACCOMMODATING A NEW COMER

There are three categories of alleged witches accommodated and “monitored” by the *Gambag-rana*. These categories exclude children who are living there with their mothers. The first group is those who are forcibly sent by their relatives upon suspicion of bewitching other

persons. Majority of such “witches” do not go through the test of innocence because they immediately accept that they are “witches”. In the case of the accused persons who insist that, they are innocent, they are taken through the ritual of proof, which in most cases, do go against them.

The second group comprises those who have been accused of practicing witchcraft and have escaped from threats of lynching, and have run away to the camp. The third and last group is, those who have been rejected by all relations and banished from their communities to spontaneously seek ‘asylum’ in the *Gambag-rana* camp. It was impossible for the researcher to obtain the number of “witches” in each of the said groups due to time constraint.

Mma Miibot, the Queenmother told the researcher that there are also sometimes, instances of ‘passer-by’ inmates, where some other women find themselves there, not because they are accused of witchcraft, but they are people who have lost their sanity. She concluded that when such persons are detected, they are immediately escorted out of the camp.

The researcher questioned to know whether there are normally rooms constructed in anticipation for prospective new comers but in response, Mr. Gumah Tindoo, the spokesman noted that “there is normally no prepared room awaiting any new comers”, however, they are readily accommodated on arrival either temporarily with the *Magazia* of the camp or the new comers are made to sleep in the rooms with other inmates until new buildings are constructed to accommodate them.

On the other hand, for those whose relatives do not come to the camp with them, the chief thoroughly interviews them and waits for a while to see if their relatives will visit them. Such

category of new comers is normally temporarily accommodated by the respective *Naakper* (ethnic representatives) or whoever she may be assigned to. After a considerable period, if there is no follow up by the person's relatives, the *Gambag-rana* instructs his men to rehabilitate any of the abandoned rooms for her. A bill on such expenses is prepared for the relatives to pay when they come to the camp. The *Magazia* also asks the relatives of the newly arrived "witch" to provide the already mentioned initiation objects. Cooking utensils, mostly earthen wares, are provided by the new comer.

While in the transitional accommodation, the new inmate undergoes an initiation which spells out her status in the camp on the fourth day. According to one Yampok (a member), the initiate is dressed in semi ragged clothes gathered by her colleagues. Although Yampok failed to assign reasons for the use of ragged clothing, the researcher's view is that, it symbolizes the rejection of the "witch" from their original communities, as rags are rejected and thrown onto refuse dumps.

At this juncture, the initiate sips some *zom-komm* (millet-flour concoction) while clapping and singing the chorus of a song she had been taught on the previous day. The old members prepare varieties of meal and bring them together. The peers sit in a semi circle according to their status based on first come (into the camp). They sing and clap their hands while the *Magazia* tastes the individual meals. They rise and dance around in that order during which the *Naakper* then positions the new comer. The rest then stop the song and climax the event with a round of applause.

This stage, she said, marks the introduction of the various ethnic leaders by the *Magazia*, after which the meals are eaten communally. If her (the new comer's) own room is ready by then,

the “witches” dance with her in a single file, and her ethnic representative lead her into the room. Maayeni who is a praise singer amongst them said that this time round, calabashes serve as musical instruments, as they are turned upside down and drummed. Yampok concluded that the rite is performed to introduce the new member to the rest and commemorate the change of environment. This then shifted the next focus of the researcher onto the accommodation facilities.

4.7 ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES AT THE CAMP

The architectural design of the rooms of the Gambaga camp, as earlier described, is not different from the indigenous style. They are the traditional round summer huts, constructed with mud. But they are smaller in size as compared to the ideal ones. Also similar in style and size to the Gambaga camp, is the *Tindang* “witches” camp. However, while the buildings at Gambaga are compound houses, those of the Tindang camp are made up of single round-room unit structures. Each room is a complete house on its own. The Plate in the next page is a comparison of the Gambaga and Tindang “witches” camps.

The Tindang camp



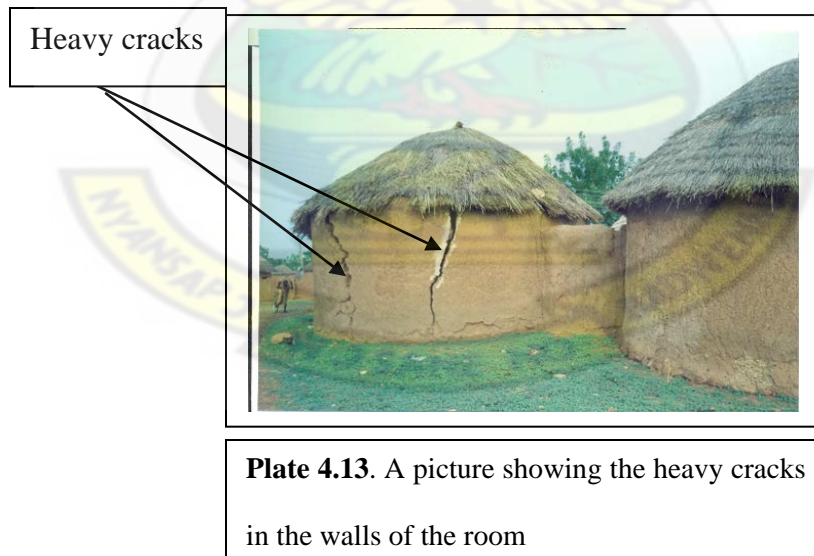
The Gambaga camp



Plate 4.12. A comparison of the Tindang and Gambaga “witches” Camps

The Kpatinga “witches” camp on the other hand is a mixture of the local mud houses in compound forms, and three units of three bed-room modern block houses. The Kpatinga camp is said to have been adopted by the St. Franciscan Sisterhood Missionaries of the Catholic Mission with funding from the World Vision International. The facilities at Kpatinga are therefore better than those of Gambaga and Tindang.

To ascertain their views on the accommodation facilities under which the Gambaga “witches” live, the researcher engaged fifty-five of the members in one-on-one interviews on different occasions. Some of them indicated that they were much worried about the gulley erosion which is fast eating into the foundation of the path ways leading to their rooms. The annual rain storms which frighten them and sometimes rip the roofs were no exception. Others pointed at cracks in their walls. An example of such heavy cracks is shown in plate 4.13 in the next page



The old nature of some of their roofs was another concern to some of them, as they complained of rain water leaking into their rooms during rainy periods. The conditions of the building structures as well as the said roofs have duly been investigated and described under their respective subheadings.

Further on, through the interrogations on the accommodation issue, the researcher realized that the inmates responded with mixed feelings, while some of them saw their stay at the camp as a form of detention, others were contempt of the conditions at the camp on the grounds that they were free from public witchcraft harassment. They felt they had no other option rather than the available facilities there, adding that neither their own children nor relatives come to help repair their buildings.

Some of the “witches”, who were found to have come from the Gushegu District, were of the view that something could be done to improve their living standard at the camp. They alleged that the conditions at the Kpatinga camp near Gushegu was better due to the provision of block house by the Catholic Sisters

No matter the state of facilities, Lamisi (one of them) claims to be in “heaven”. According to her, she was withdrawn from the primary school into forced marriage as a second wife, and her husband beat her more often than her rival because she (Lamisi) would not succumb easily to his sexual demands. After her second delivery, the baby died. She was accused of “eating” the baby, and hence, beaten to confess. This resulted in her losing some of her teeth.

Lamisi was immediately sent to the Gambaga camp, where this researcher met her. She had this to say in her jargon English: “My room no fine, water is come top, but I like stay for here. Nobody call me witch woman for here, so I no mind”

Having heard from the inmates themselves, it became necessary to solicit the views of the people of the host twin-towns (Gambaga and Nalerigu) on the state of the accommodation facilities. This was conducted on opinion leaders consisting of Traditional figures, Assembly Members, Senior High School Student Leaders, School Heads and Teachers, Medical staff and Religious Leaders, through questionnaire. A total of one hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed to one hundred individuals, out of which seventy-eight were retrieved and analyzed.

The table below displays the figures obtained under the respective grades as:

Very Good, Good and Fairly Good.

Table 4.1 A table indicating the responses on state of accommodation at the camp					
	Very Good	Good	Fairly Good	Total	Percentages
Men	6	15	13	34	44%
Women	2	10	32	44	56%
Total	8	24	45	78	100%
Percentages	10.25%	30.78%	57.69%	100%	

These findings have been interpreted in a bar chart in the next page

A bar chart showing the grades of the accommodation at the Gambaga camp

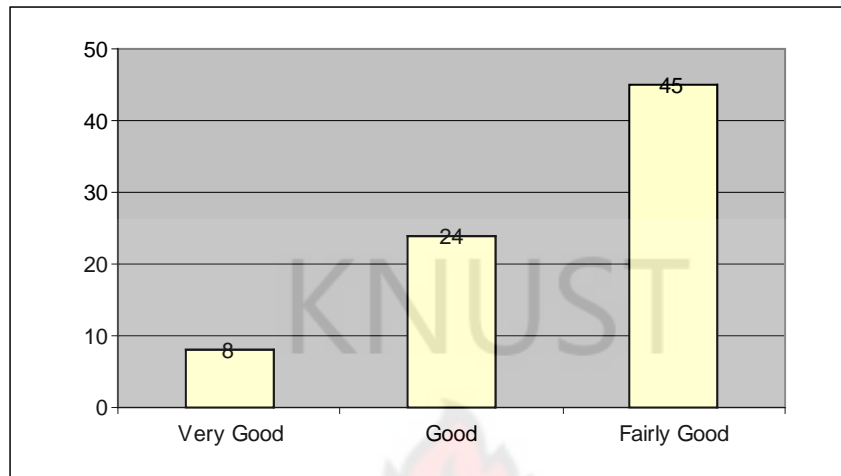


Figure 4.2. A bar chart showing the grades of the accommodation at the Gambaga camp

The table and subsequent bar chart above bring out a lot of interpretations to the study.

The percentages of scores under each grade are displayed as follows:

Very Good : 10.25%, representing 8 respondents of a total of 78

Good : 30.78%, representing 24 people out of the 78

Fairly Good : 57.69%, representing 45 respondents of total of 78

Judging from the responses obtained above, this research emphatically points out that the camp needs a sympathetic attention. The contention here is based on the fact that up to forty-five people of the total number representing 57.69% responded that the accommodation facility is 'Fairly Good'.

The Percentages of male and female respondents are as follows:

Males : 34, representing 44%

Females : 44, representing 56%

It is also worthy to comment on the gender dimension of the data collected. From the table, the female population of 56% outnumbered that of the males 44% by a difference of 12%, which is quite significant figure in an exercise like this. However, the record further displays the views of each sex almost in an opposite direction. While up to six males considered the facility as very good, only to of the females supported the idea. Also, majority of the males considered the camp facilities as Good. Their female counterparts were only ten. The females, probably, in solidarity with their fellow women were of the view that the condition of the camp is fairly good.

We shall now shift our attention to the state of the roofs as the next discussion. The researcher further took a census of the rooms in the entire camp. He found that not all the rooms of the compound house are in use. The roofs of the buildings were also studied and all together, illustrated in the following table.

Table 4.2 A table displaying figures on the state of roofs as at April, 2007					
Total number of houses	Total no. of rooms in 32 houses	No. of rooms with new roofs	No. of rooms with old roofs	No. of unroofed rooms	Total
31	128	27	81	20	
Percentages		21%	63%	16%	100%

The figures obtained above have been interpreted in terms of a bar chart in the next page

A bar chart showing the state of roofs

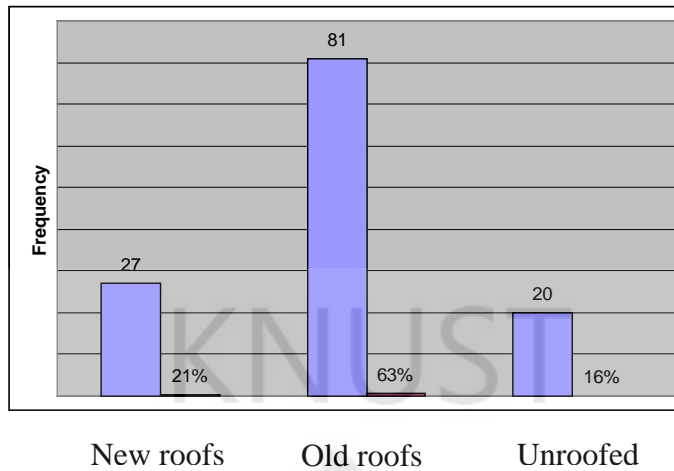


Figure 4.3. A bar chart showing the state of roofs

The survey recorded a total of one hundred and twenty-eight rooms in thirty-one compound unit houses forming the entire camp. As at the end of March, 2007, twenty of the rooms did not have roofs at all and were partially broken. Those rooms were not in use.

Twenty-seven of the rest had their roofs rehabilitated. The remaining eighty-one rooms were not retouched in any way. The Plate in page 48 shows an example of abandoned, renovated and old roofs.

A photographic illustration of these facts have been displayed in plate 14 of page 47

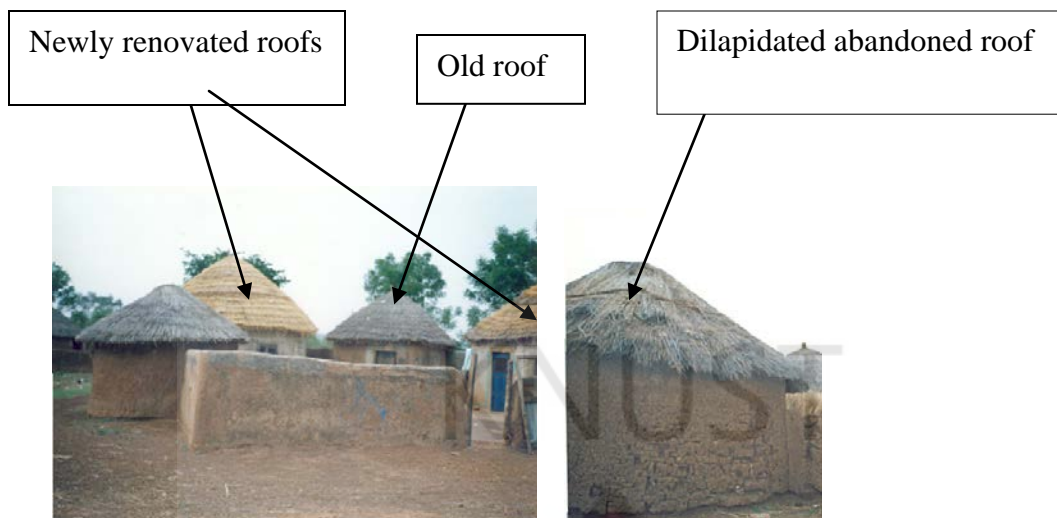


Plate 4.14. A picture showing three categories of roofs

Mr. Tindoo attributed the abandonment of some of the rooms of the houses to deaths and the annual reintegration exercise embarked upon by the Go Home project. It also came to light that some women swap into other different rooms when they are rendered vacant. The implicit explanation is that such rooms being moved into are of a better condition than the other ones being left.

The explanation below shows the proportions of the buildings with new roofs, those of old roofs and those ones without roofs (abandoned rooms) in percentages.

The new roofs are 27, representing 21% of the total number of rooms.

The number of old roofs is 81, representing 63%

The rooms without roofs are 20, representing 16%.

Still on the accommodation, the investigation conducted on the entrance doors is put in a tabular form in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Table showing the figures of rooms with wooden doors.

Total no. of rooms in use	No. of rooms with doors	No. of rooms without doors	Total
108	18	90	100%
Percentages	17%	83%	100%

The above table illustrates the number of rooms with entrance doors as well as rooms without doors. Since 20 of the rooms have been found not to be in use, the total number of rooms in use stands at 108. Eighteen of them have doors while 90 of them do not have doors. The 90 rooms without doors represent 83% of the total number, and the remaining 18 that have doors take only 17% of the total.

The Pie chat below displays the finding above.

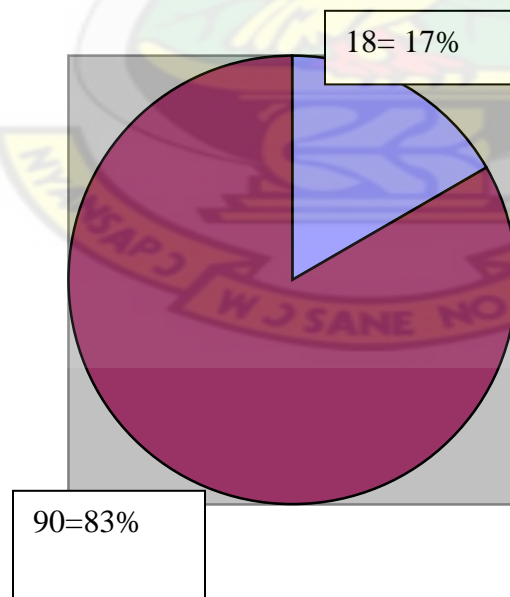


Figure 4.5 A pie chart showing the number of rooms with and without doors

4.8 THE BREAKDOWN OF ETHNIC GROUPS OF THE CAMP

To obtain the number of various ethnic group members living at the camp, the following data was collected and displayed in the table below

Table 4.4 Table showing the ethnic break down of members of the camp

Tribes	Mamprusi	Dagomba	Bimoba	Talensi	Kusaase	Konkomba	Total
Number Of Members	31	14	11	3	7	17	83
Percentages	37.34%	16.86%	13.25%	3.61%	8.43%	20.48%	100%

The table outlines the ratio of ethnic group members who form the camp community; Mamprusi being the highest and Talanses the least number. The diverse nature of the members simply indicates the cosmopolitan nature of the camp. This is also an indication of the wide spread nature of witchcraft belief among the tribes of the northern region.

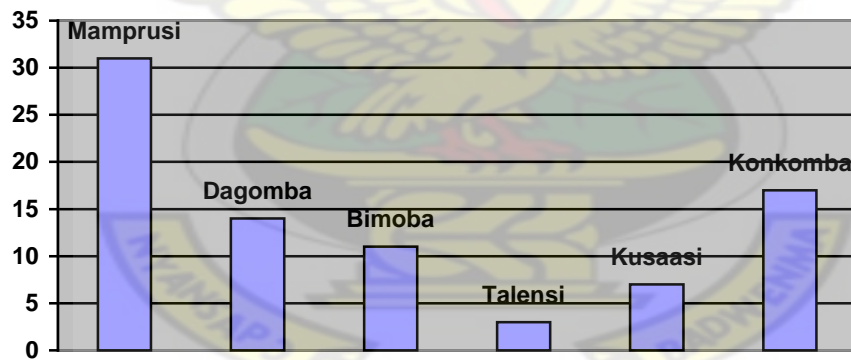


Figure 4.6 A bar chart showing the ethnic numerical strength

4.9 THE TABOOS OF THE CAMP

In an interview with the spokes person (Gumah Tindoo), he reluctantly noted that certain taboos are not declared to the public and punishment for breakers of the taboos is not also fixed, but hinting that the chief can forcibly repatriate any defaulter to her place of origin. He however, referred me to *Magazia* for a further interview about the taboos at the camp.

This aspect of the investigation was not welcomed by her in a good mood as she (the *Magazia*) was observed by the researcher to have frowned the face. There was a bit of mutiny for a while before she provided the information below. She said that the camp members are forbidden from attending public functions by their own wish. The *Magazia* is notified of any one's or group's intention to attend an occasion.

The functions are listed as funerals, durbars, naming ceremonies, political rallies and other such occasions that the general public patronizes. The reason for restricting them is that they are under surveillance because of their evil practices. Another taboo is that, one must not stay outside the camp premises beyond 12.00 mid-nights. Transporting broken earthenware from one house to the other is also a taboo. Utensils such as the *Tuo-zaafi* steering stick and the ladle must not be left in the open yard of the house throughout the night. No corpse of a deceased person remains at the camp for over one day after the death has been confirmed. Rituals associated with death must be performed before any corpse is claimed for burial. No inmate is allowed to overgrow her hair at the camp. No corpse is buried in a different dress rather than white calico. No reasons were assigned for those taboos to be observed

When I was a child, the significance of taboos remained a secret to me. Superficial answers have always been given to children who seem to be so inquisitive. But now that I am matured in age, and have acquired formal education, I can guess the significance of some taboos especially now that no reasons were given by the spokesperson for instituting those taboos at the camp. For instance, restricting the inmates from public function may be a consideration of their old age. It may be to protect them from any possible stampedes and violent incidents that always characterize occasional centers. The *Magazia* confirmed to this guess that she believed that the taboo is simply to guard against any mishap since they; the “witches” have no relatives around.

The researcher also believes that since some of them are declared “wanted” at their places of origin, people from such places who may happen to meet them at those occasional centers may be tempted to stare at them, and also point fingers at them but the *Magazia* did not confirm that. This could further increase the suffering of stigmatization in the “witches”, so banning them from such places could reduce their psychological trauma.

It is also scientific for this research to argue that the reason for burying a corpse on the day of one’s death is that, the longer it remains, especially as they are, not embalmed, the faster it will decompose; and sympathizers will shun touching it.

The attitude earlier on mentioned of the *Magazia* during the interview suggests that she might have hidden some of their taboos unrevealed. It is speculated also that she was afraid of intimidation by the camp authorities should she have divulged certain secrets of the camp.

4.10 COMMUNICATION AMONG THE “WITCHES”

The 31 compound houses are not inhabited according to ethnic groupings. Inmates of the camp consist of 11 Bimobas, 31 Mamprusis, 14 Dagombas, 7 Kusaases, 3 Talanses and 17 Konlombas, totaling 83. However, Mampruli is the dominant language.

These pocket tribes communicate in their indigenous languages. For easy comprehension in communication with a cross group member, each is supposed to speak in a shared language. The dominant languages spoken by them are Mampruli, Hausa and Twi, however, some of them can speak at least two of these languages. Such people attempt to speak in jargon of the intended language. All the nineteen children mentioned in chapter three, notwithstanding this problem, speak the Mampruli and other languages very well.

A survey conducted on the number of people who speak the three dominant languages is represented mathematically in the figure below.

The study was conducted among the “witches” alone and also focused on the other ethnic groups excluding the 31 Mamprusis because their language, Mampruli, is one of the mostly spoken languages. Out of the remaining 52, only 48 were present at the time of the study.

The number of “witches” who speak both Mampruli and Twi was - 9

The number of those who speak both Mampruli and Hausa was - 11

The number of those who speak all the three languages was - 9

Those who claimed could not speak any second language were - 19

Total number of those who can speak Mampruli $(9+9+11) = 29$

Total number of those who can speak Twi $(9+9+0) = 18$

Total number of those who can speak Hausa $(11+9+0) = 20$

Total number of those who can speak at least two languages $(11+0+9+9) = 29$

Below is a mathematical representation of the strata.

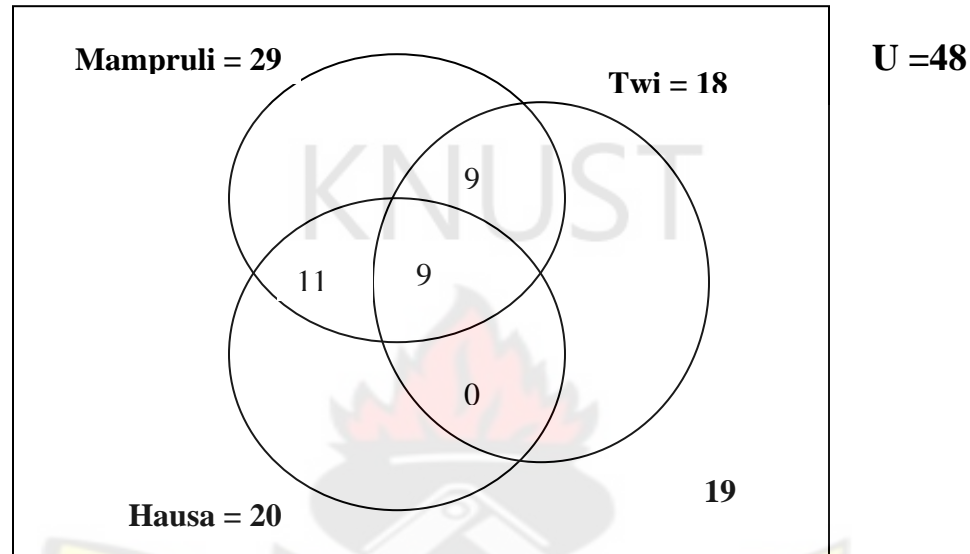


Figure 4.6: A Venn diagram illustrating the numbers of “witches” who speak the dominant languages

4.11 EXORCISM

The *Gambag-rana* allegedly exorcises the witch spirits from the inmates. But as to how he performs this exercise still remains unknown to researchers as the spokesperson does not tell how it is done; not even the alleged witches on the camp ever claimed to have witnessed the entire process. However, he Mr. Tindoo, the spokesperson, hinted that the *Gambag-rana* does that in secrecy, adding emphatically that, as to how and when the spiritual leader tames the witches or casts their spirits out entirely remains the prerogative of him, the *Gambag-rana*.

He concluded that the only ritual performed, which people think is that of exorcism is the sacrifice of a fowl and a sheep to a shrine located at the forecourt of the Gambaga chief's house, on demand by relatives, to take their woman away from the camp. Boadi (2001) notes has stated that "exorcism takes the form of confessions, disgrace by hooting, sacrifice, laying of hand in prayer and breaking of eggs on the head of the possessed person. He argues however, that such confessions are doubtful since most suspects do that out of fright and threats". But as to whether that of Gambaga takes the same form is not told.

The researcher, here is of the view that, divulging such information may mean he is breaking the taboos of the 'skin' which may attract the displeasure of the gods. It is the belief of this researcher that should the chief laid bare his procedure of exorcism; it would result in the springing up of charlatan exorcists. That may also prompt the charlatans to create their "witches" camps.

4.12 TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

According to Mr. Tindoo who speaks for the Chief, the women have the liberty to worship with the Christian denominations; however, once a person remains at the camp under the protection of the Gambaga Chief, he or she must worship the shrine of the tutelary deity of the camp. The shrine believed to be the abode of the guarding deity of the camp, is housed in a small round thatched-roofed building located at the forecourt of the *Gambag-rana* house. The name of the shrine was not given and no photograph of it was allowed.

To portray purity before the shrine, the 'witches paint their hands with mashed millet flour. They gather at the chief's compound by 4.00pm prior to the start of the worship. Each one

dresses in her traditional attire without a head gear. Some distilled concoction known as *yontoruk* collected from the shrine pot is mixed with millet flour and is put in a large calabash resting on a three-pronged stick which stands by the entrance of the compound. On arrival, each “witch” drinks a bit of it before she takes her seat in the chief’s house. When almost all have come, they are led outside by an assigned subordinate of the priest (*Gambag-rana*) who acts as a barber to all the “witches”.

The Chief himself then performs a sacrifice by slaughtering four different colored fowls, namely white, black, and red and a multi colored one. He recites some words shrouded in secrecy before the sacrifice is made.

During the worship, the women clap their hands as the slain fowls struggle to die, especially when they rest at a supine position. The priest piles the feathers and blood of the fowls on the shrine pot. The services of boys are then engaged to roast the livers of the fowls which are also stuck to the shrine pot. Each “witch” is then shaved by the traditional barber.

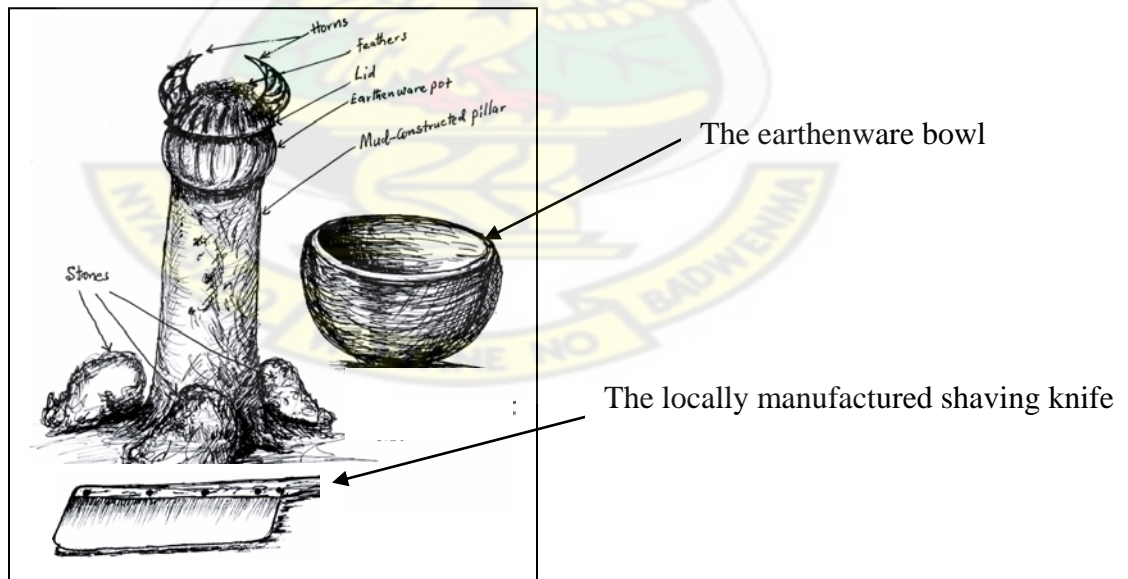
Trying to find out the significance of the lying position of the dead fowl in relation to the hand claps, Napoka, an inmate, in her own view, hinted that from her own observation, when a fowl dies at that position, the priest himself claps while authoring praises as *mmfa, mmfa, mmfa* (meaning, good, good, good). So that is why they, the participants also have to be happy and equally clap their hands.

She added on the other hand that, each time a particular fowl fails to lie dead at a supine position; such fowl’s feathers are not stuck to the shrine. It means that the sacrifice is not accepted by the deity; and the traditional priest always calls for a fowl of a different colour to

replace the “rejected” one. She could not state the colours of the fowls that are used to replace others in such cases.

The researcher’s request to take photograph of the shrine proved futile, but this did not scare him from closely examining the features of the shrine; he found at the fore court of the palace that the shrine wears a mask of horns and a ‘smock’ of feathers. The stains of blood that run from the topmost part of the lid downs to the bottom create visual strips of the fabric of the smock.

The shrine is an earthenware pot with a lid fixed on the top of a round-shaped mud pillar of about two feet in diameter and about one metre high. It is said to contain herbs and water, composed by the priest, bathed and drunk by every inmate during the periodic worship. The illustration below is a sketch of the shrine, the bowl and the shaving knife.



Sketch 4.1. A sketch of the shrine and its accoutrements

The ritual bath is the next stage. Unlike the normal bath where the individual strips naked to wash the entire body, the ritual bath is said to rather take the form of a Moslem ablution. Narrating the process, Napoka noted that some quantity of the concoction earlier sipped by each of them (the “witches”) is placed in a big earthenware bowl (see sketch above), each witch then washes the feet, the hands, the face and the hair.

It is after the washing of feet and hair that commences the barbers’ role. The barber then shaves each witch one after the other until all of them are shaved. Unfortunately, the researcher could not have access to the barber to find out how he copes with the large number of people who have to be shaved at that moment.

The old lady (Napoka) however, alleged that the barber sometimes invites other barbers (perhaps under permission) to assist in the exercise. The researcher learnt that there is no exemption in the bath and cropping. Even if any one of the “witches” is absent on a journey, she is taken through it when she returns. The spokesperson to the spiritual leader was later contacted to obtain information about the rationale of the twin ritual, but he, remaining sceptical, failed to do so.

The researcher is tempted to speculate that, since each “witch” is made to go through this periodic ritual, it implies that the chief in keeping “records” of each event. By that, he is probably able to determine the ‘strength’ of the “witches” at each point in time. Let us be reminded that, in the earlier text, we discovered that the *Gambag-rana* is believed to have the spiritual power to ‘tame’ the “witches” and also exorcise them, hence, it could be correct to speculate that the twin ritual which every “witch” is expected to go through is an event in which the chief gradually casts away the witch spirit. For that matter, the number of ritual

baths and hair cuts may then be the criterion for the chief to judge or declare whether one has been relieved of her evil spirits or not.

4.13 RELATIONS BETWEEN INMATES AND THE HOST COMMUNITY

To some extent, the “witches” at the camp interact with the citizens of Gambaga. For, as said earlier, the town has gradually expanded and merged with the camp. There is only an imaginary boundary between the two. Hence, people ply through its streets to get to their relatives at either side of the camp. One unique feature of the camp realized by the researcher is that, many people regularly pass by, but few are found to be entering the houses to say hello or for business transaction. People who were mostly met at the site were *pito* brewers and food vendors who always stood outside calling *daad lana*, *daad-lana* (meaning firewood owner), to come and sell their fire wood to them the buyers.

This notwithstanding does not completely separate their relations with the host community members; the inmates of the camp depend on the infrastructure of the town: the market, the schools, the health facilities and religious temples located in the town. Furthermore, toilet and water facilities are both shared by the “witches” and the community members. It is the view of this study that people do not frequently go to the camp because the inmates of the camp do not have relatives within the town; and the people would not visit there if they have no business to transact with them.

Mma Sumaya, an inmate who claims she was an active member of the Presbyterian Church, told the researcher that, another way by which the community relates with them is through Christian and Islamic worships which take place in the temples and mosques.

Additionally, the District Assembly and the traditional council provide cemetery space for the burial of those who pass away at the camp. In this regard, budgetary allocation for the entire population does not exclude members of the camp. The camp community is located within the *Tindana* electoral area. The Assembly man noted that budgetary allocation for his electoral area takes care of the “witches” who, for reasons known to them are always reluctant to register as voters. Of the 83 camp members who were above eighteen years of age only 38 representing 45% had voter ID cards as at the just ended District Assembly elections.

The most reason why some of the “witches” are reluctant to go for voter registration may be due to two major factors; one being physical impairment, and secondly the witchcraft issue. The study believes that, considering the ages of the old women, they may not be able to endure the long hours of standing in the queue for their turn to register their names for voting. One of the “witches” who was sceptical to disclose her identity claimed that she, in person did not want to take part for fear of possible physical attack on her by mobs. It may also be that, the witchcraft accusation against them, has socially stigmatized them; casting a psychological trauma on them such that they feel embarrassed to appear in public.

Again the old women noted that they relate with *Pito* brewers as earlier stated, who come to buy fire wood from them. During funerals also, people visit the place to mourn with them. Hawkers sell at the settlement and the “witches” also stroll to the general market to purchase ingredients for preparing soup and stew. A “witch” told the researcher that when they (the witches) walk in a group, children avoid their relationship. This makes it difficult for them to buy from children who sell things. The nineteen dependent children of school going age at the camp attend the Local Authority Primary Schools at the community. They were enrolled at the schools with the help of the Go Home Project.

According to the Head teacher of the Naseriga Primary School, Mr. Gurundoo, pupils of the camp, in the past either withdrew themselves from school or were the most defaulters in fee paying. This has however, seized because of the advent of the Capitation Grant since 2005. (The grant was instituted to cater for the school fees of all Basic School pupils). Mr. Gurundoo stated further that those children also face the stigma of discrimination by their peers who hardly associate with them.

4.15 MARRIAGE

Trying to know much about the marriage system, the *Magazia* said that, most of the women at the camp were previously married, some with children and the rest childless. According to the *Gambag-rana's* spokesman the women under his protection are not restricted from marrying or remarrying. However, it is in rare cases that some remarry especially the older ones. He also noted with deep caution that it is not his duty to determine whether or not one should marry, or to whom one should marry.

Mr. Tindoo, (the spokesperson to the chief), in response to a question, stated that if a suitor wants to marry a woman at the camp, he normally brings some kola nuts and some tobacco to him at the palace. The woman in question is then invited to testify her acceptance. Again, he said that the man is then asked to provide a white fowl for a ritual. If the marriage becomes successful, the woman remains at the camp and commutes from there to the husband's house.

Laariba and Wanyun are remarried "witches" with children who were interviewed. They both narrated similar stories claiming that they had been divorced by their former husbands on accusation of bewitching their own children. Asked whether their parents were informed of their second marriages, Laariba responded negatively while the other answered in the affirmative. Four other women who are also in remarriage contract within the town were not

readily available for interview. The *Magazia* again hinted that of the total of eighty-three women, six of them had remarried, some of them with children.

4.15 NAMING CEREMONY

There is no doubt that naming ceremonies are held at the camp since it is established that some of the “witches” have remarried while at the camp. With regard to names given to infants before their outdooring, Awolalu’s & Adeleumo (1979) note that various ethnic groups call infants different names prior to the naming ceremony, for example, “Alejo, meaning a ‘stranger’ in Yoruba language”.

The research discovered that the naming ceremony is done at the camp when children are born by the remarried women. After delivery, the chief is informed by the *Magazia* and the traditional birth attendant of the vicinity. The husband would have by then brought a care taker. According to the spokesman, the chief’s representative performs a ritual believed to prevent the infant from contracting the witch spirit. Regarding this ritual, a ball of herbal medicine is mixed with water in a pot. This concoction is boiled and the baby is bathed with it daily.

A week later, when the baby is to be named, the baby is circumcised by the *wanzam*, if it is a male. At the naming session, the ethnic representative of the baby’s mother picks a kola nut on behalf of the *Magazia* and she also pours libation. She breaks the kola nuts and distributes it among the parents and others present, before the father announces the child’s name to the Imam if they are Muslims. The hair of the infant is shaved and Qur-anic verses are recited. For almost one month the infant remains within the confines of the compound.

Mr. Ngota, the Project Director of the Go Home Project in Gambaga, having witnessed the Christian type, noted that after the chief’s representative’s approval of the programme, the parents get to the church for the pastors to complete the rest. Once the woman is at the camp on

account of witchcraft, she remains there until the remarried husband requests for the exorcism of her witch spirit to pave a way for her departure to join him.

4.16 DEATH AND FUNERAL

The *Magazia* was relied upon to avail information on this topic. She narrated that when an inmate dies at the camp, the corpse is not put in the mortuary, as often done in recent times to wait for distant relatives to arrive. As soon as one is pronounced dead, the *Gambag-rana* instructs his men to notify the *Zongo* chief and the Imam who also informs his subjects.

At this time, the chief then dispatches one of his subjects to the scene for identification and inspection of the corpse. On arrival he burns some traditional incense inside the room and around the entire house. A pot of concoction is placed by the deceased person's gate. Subsequently, the *bayaak* (corpse supervisor) sprinkles some of the concoction all over the room. The entire hair is shaved and kept as a symbolic evidence to be shown to the deceased person's relatives who later come for it. The ethnic counterparts are tasked to bath the corpse for the shaving ritual. It is dressed in a white calico and wrapped in a straw mat.

Being the chief mourner, the *Magazia* leads in the singing of dirges while waiting for the burial time. These rites (incense burning and dirges) could be likened to the Roman Catholic liturgical rites of sprinkling of water and burning of incense. The researcher wanted to know why the ritual was necessary during the funeral. The women in response said that if the ritual is not done and any incident happens, people will allege that the ghost of the deceased person is evil.

The Imam told the researcher that when a deceased inmate is a Muslim, the *Adua* (funeral) is performed shortly after burial. On the other hand the Christian denominations also organize memorial services for their deceased members.

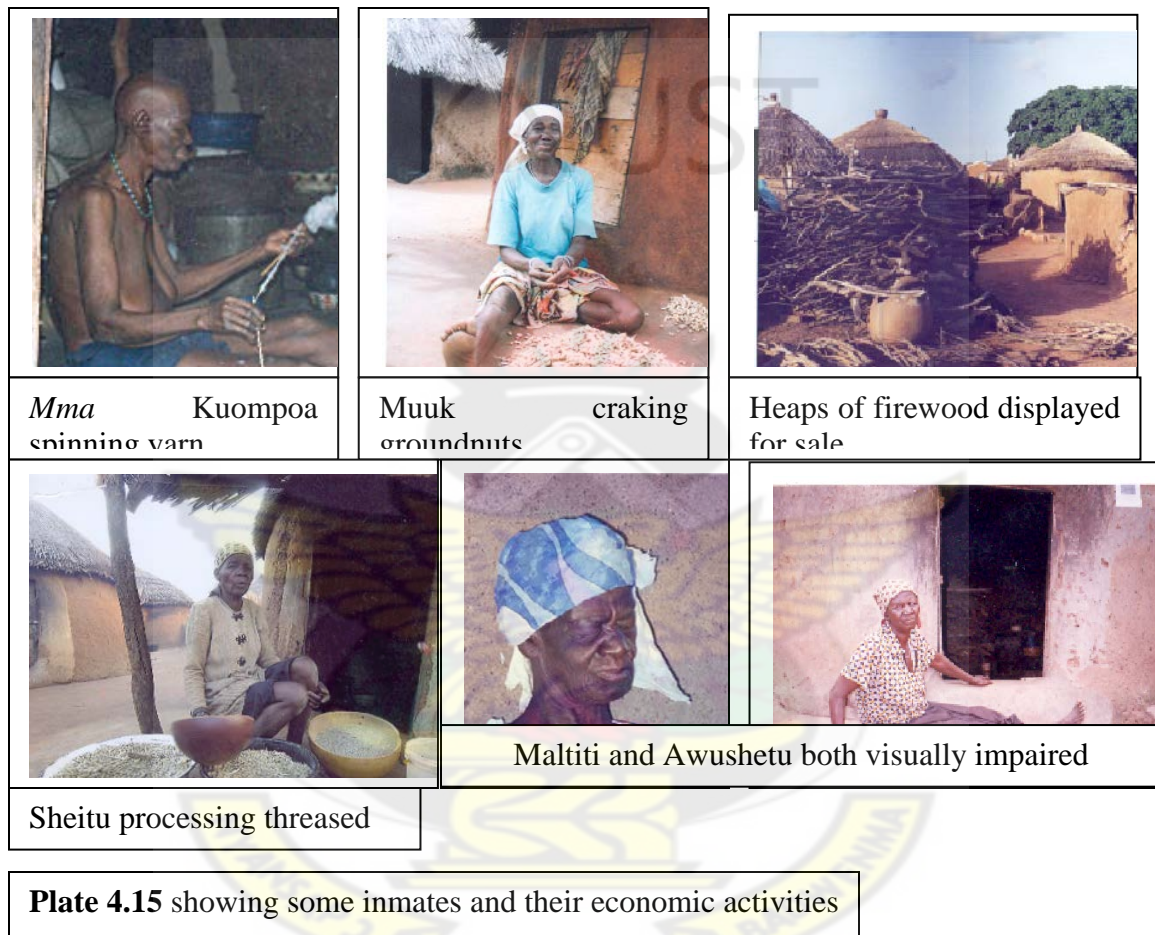
4.17 ECONOMIC ASPECTS AND LIVELIHOOD

The occupations of the “witches” like those of the indigenous people of Gambaga are farming and petty trading, including the sale of spun yarns, firewood and shear nuts, which are their main source of livelihood. Four of the inmates, who were found to have various forms of physical disabilities, told the researcher that, their sources of livelihood were, also the cracking of people’s groundnuts on commercial bases.

The mentioned disabled inmates *Mma* Kuonpua Konkomba by tribe, is a 64-year old “witch”, who cannot walk, due to the amputation of her leg at the ankle. She spins yarns as her source of livelihood.

Also *Mma* Muuk, 62, is a hearing impaired Talensi “witch”, who engages herself in the harvest and sale of firewood and the cracking of groundnut on commercial bases, as said earlier. The others especially *Mma* Maltiti, also 62, and *Mma* Awushetu 60, both Mamprusis, who have totally lost their sights largely depend on others for their domestic needs. They are however able to crack groundnuts and also de-husk corn. The two blind old “witches” are shown in the next plate.

This plate below shows some of the physically challenged inmate and some of their economic activities.



When *Mma* Muuk, the hearing impaired “witch” was asked by the researcher about how much she makes after cracking a cocoa sack full of groundnuts, she respond in a local sign language, by showing a five thousand cedi note together with the sack. She added that, it takes her about one and-a-half days to finish cracking one bag full of groundnuts.

Mr. Tindoo said that there are some of the women who have the interest to doing farming to improve their lot but they do not have their own farms. The researcher was told again that, during the farming season the strong women among the “witches” occasionally offer labour on the chief’s farm yard. At harvesting time also, they are called to winnow millet. The *Gambagara* then serves each with a quantity of the grain.

In an interview with Hon. Harunah Bukari, the Assembly Man for the Nabtinga Electoral area, he lamented that, some of the farmers rely on the inmates for “cheap labour” because they pay them ‘unrealistic’ wages as compared to the ideal local daily minimum.

In relation to that, the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in collaboration with the Go Home Project organized the strong members of the camp to embark on dry season gardening to better their lots. The Project provided seeds for them. According to Mr. Osman Musah, the CRS field officer in charge of the area, the project could not be sustained due to long distance from the farm to the camp, and rampant destruction of the gardens by stray animals of the town.

A census conducted on their ages also revealed that about 54% of the inmates living alone on their own, are over fifty years. They are therefore very weak and mostly depend on others to get their basic needs, especially crossing the main vehicular road to draw water from the stream, due to the irregular nature of the supply of water.

In an interaction with Wanyun, Fatima and Napoka, all above the age of 60, they said that some of them follow others to farms to help in winnowing threshed millet to be given some as their share. . Others pick heaps of cow dung which they sell to other people as earlier mentioned for use as a building material.

The commonest food stuff is millet grain. Dried vegetables obtained from the baobab leaf locally called *kuuka*, is common among the “witches”, because they claim it is not expensive as compared to other vegetables. Traditional grinding stones (querns) are mostly used by them for grinding millet grain into flour. The staple dishes include *Kooko*, *Tuo-zaafi*, *Tubaani*, *Gigakit* and *Koose*. *Tuo-zaafi* is prepared with maize or millet flour in the form of *akple* or *abitie*, eaten with green vegetables in okra soup. Another type of food is *Tubaani* which is prepared from bean flour; it is steamed and eaten with vegetable oil. Also, *Koose*, made of beans, is fried, and eaten with *kooko* (Porridge). The last common type of food is locally called *Gigakit*, a solely vegetable sauce, eaten with very little *Tubaani* or with *koose*.

There is no source of potable water within the settlement. There is, however, a stand pump sited in the neighborhood whose water does not flow regularly as explained above. One solar panel is pegged in front of the house in which the former queenmother lived but does not function due to the un-availability of the recharge battery. Electricity is also not connected to the various compounds.

4.18 PUBLICITY, DONATIONS AND HEALTH CARE TO THE “WITCHES”

As stated earlier in the problem statement, the “witches” colony made its debut in 1997, when the then Commissioner for CHRAJ Mr. Emile Short visited the camp. Quite a number of publications in the daily news papers were made, all trying to make the camping system a burning issue in Ghana.

The other attention received by the “witches” colony was the visitation of the *Mmaa Nkommo* (a Women’s Educational Programme, run on the Ghana Television) Group, led by Madam Afia Ansah Ampini, in 2003, when some of the inmates featured and expressed their

sentiments (The ADVOCATE, 2003). Efforts made by other concerned organizations are discussed under the following subheadings.

During the study, it was discovered that the inmates sometimes benefit from petty gifts; one Kondukper, an “outcast”, told the researcher that, of her thirteen years’ stay at the camp, it was only on three occasions that she was given second hand dresses; once by the CHRAJ in 1997 and twice by the ‘Go Home’ Project, of the Presbyterian Mission in 2002 and 2005. Mma Tiigma and Kantam, both inmates, also attested to the donation of second hand clothing to them in 2002 and 2005.

The *Magazia* on her part said it is sometimes when visitors come to the camp that some of them benefit from cash gifts through which they buy foot wears and other clothing. An evidence of the donation of used clothing is shown in the plate below.



Plate 4.15 the inmates sharing used clothing

It was also found that, there is no health facility at the camp but the inmates receive medical attention from the Gambaga Health Clinic. Wanyun who is one of the “witches” claimed that

in some cases, clinics of immunization are held at the premises of the camp free of charge. An Example of such immunization exercises is shown in the plate below.



Plate 4.16 Inmates receiving immunization and the Gambaga Health Centre

On the contrary, *Mma Tiigma*, who has stayed in the camp for the past nineteen years, said in the past, they paid money for every medical service; but now they do not pay anything. She hinted further that pictures of them had been taken by the officers of the East Mamprusi District Mutual Health Insurance Scheme for registration with the Scheme.

A further investigation at the offices of the Health Insurance and the Matron of the Gambaga health Clinic discovered that 54% of the 83 “witches” above 60 years had been registered free of charge. The cost of registration of the remaining 46%, comprising dependants and women below the age of sixty was borne by the ‘Go Home Project’. (Simon Ngota, Project Coordinator).

The Matron again alleged that during one immunization exercise with them, their team discovered that, all the inmates of the colony were consuming un-iodized salt. Unfortunately,

according to her, no action was taking by the hospital authorities to educate the “witches” on the hazards of eating raw salt.

During an enquiry with them into the allegation about the consumption of un-iodated salt, the women complained that, the iodized salt does not taste well in soups. Others said they had been eating the un-iodized salt since their childhood and had not heard of its effect being hazardous to one’s health. The rest simply saw it as expensive as compared to the untreated salt. These responses are an indication that the education on the use of iodized salt to prevent the occurrence of goiter and cretinism has not gone down well with the colony.

The practice of indigenous medicine at the site cannot be overemphasized. Residues of herbs consisting of tree barks, leaves and roots can be found scattered on their dumping ground. Consequently some bundles of similar herbs are found in pots on hearths which the *Magazia* said are boiled and bathed with, by the old ladies.

Interestingly, the researcher discovered the habit of the chewing of sticks among the Mamprusi old ladies, which Yampoka (a Mamprusi inmate) claimed was medicinal to the gums and teeth, as well as stomach absurd. She added that, that stick, which tastes bitter just like the taste of kola nuts, is a substitute to kola nuts. The sizes of the sticks are excessively larger than the common chewing sticks found in the South. They measure about half-inch in diameter, and are not split. She also alleged that when one encounters the feeling of nausea, the person can contain the situation by chewing the stick or kola nuts.

The information on the “witches” coverage under the NHIS is analyzes in mathematical table below.

Table 4.5 table showing the Inmates' coverage of Health Insurance

	Sponsors	Inmates above age 60	Inmates below age 60	Dependants below age 20	Total number covered
Registration	G.H.P.	55	28	19	102
Percentage		53.92%	27.45%	18.62%	100%

The survey outlines the coverage as 100%. It further shows 53.92% of the number of inmates above age 60, 27.45% representing those below 60, and 18.62% representing their 19 dependents.

The Pie chart below interprets the coverage of inmates under the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)

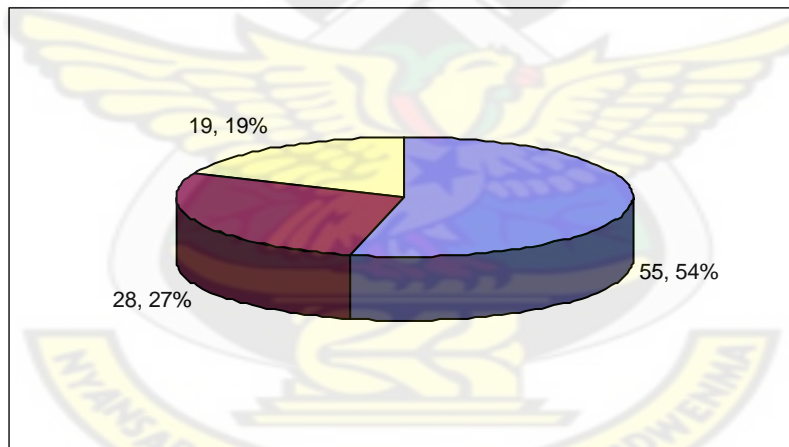


Figure 4.7 A bar chart showing the Number of People covered with each age group.

4.19 ASISTANCE FROM THE 'GO' HOME PROJECT

As one of its social responsibilities, some Presbyterian Missionaries, under the permission of the *Gambag-rana* have made an arrangement to provide philanthropic service to the inmates.

According to the Project Director, the job the staffs have found themselves in is very challenging. As a staff, one needs to be very tactful in dealing with chiefs, the communities and the women themselves. He added “When we receive a woman to stay in the home, she is interviewed to know her background, for example, the cause of the accusation and her marital status. She is then observed for some time, maybe up to one year to find out whether her relatives will visit her or whether she will return home” (Mr. Ngota, the Director). He noted further that “this is necessary because we would normally start our re-integration process on soft points”. In the explanation it was understood that the above interviews they conduct help them to know how they can handle every individual case regarding re-integration.

Asked how they go about their duty, he said, as a first step, the community is consulted about its preparedness to reintegrate the ‘exorcised’ witch. Somebody involved in the project goes to the family, and talks to the chief. If they accept the woman back the chief will have to talk to the community himself. If the situation is still hostile they do not proceed. On the other hand, if the situation is favorable for the woman to return, the mission together with the ‘*Gambagara*’s representative then release her to the chief. “In some cases, enlightened children of some of the “witches” also do come to demand the return of their mother, but that is when they feel the woman is weak and considered exorcised”

Again, Ngota, the Director, lamented that of all the total number of people who have lived at the camp, very few (figure not provided) of them have had formal education up to primary six levels, adding that some of them claim they were withdrawn from school for marriage under the marriage-by-exchange system. (A system of marriage in which people exchange sisters, as was formerly practiced by the Bimobas).

Having expressed his happiness for the stoppage of that negative cultural practice, he blamed the girl-child education desk officers of the Ghana Education Service and the Non-formal Education Officers in Northern Ghana for doing a little over the years to change the negative trend of girls' education in the areas.

During our one-on-one interaction, Mr. Ngota (picture below) said the GO Home Project seeks to always facilitate the repatriation of “witches” who after they have been considered exorcized, are willing to return home. This, however, is sometimes impeded by the reluctance of the “witches” relatives to accept them back. Some of the inmates who are childless also feel that staying at the camp is safer than in their communities of origin.



Ngota (right) being interviewed by the researcher

Plate 4.17 Mr. Ngota in his Office being interviewed by the researcher

As part of the package to reduce the social stigma and foster economic sustenance, a successfully reunited “witch” is dispatched in a pickup and presented with either a bullock and a plough or a donkey and a cart for the purpose of farming. The plate below is an example of such packages (donkey) being presented to the representative of a re-integrated “witch”. This

package, he said has suffered a downward trend as a result of lack of funding from their sponsors over the past five years.



4.18 presentation of a donkey to beneficiary

The project is keeping annual records of every event including the registration of resident inmates, new members admitted as well as those who die at the camp. A table indicating statistics obtained over the years on deaths, new admissions reintegration among others is shown below.

The table in page 74 is a Multiple Frequency table showing the annual numbers of New Admissions, Deaths, reintegrated, the number due for reintegration and the number remaining at the camp from 1997 to April 2007.

Table 4.6 A multiple frequency table showing death, admission and reintegration

Year	Number admitted at camp	No. of deaths recorded	Number due for reintegration	Number successfully reintegrated	Total number remained
1997	37	4	77	12	328
1998	10	1	47	45	292
1999	12	1	45	33	270
2000	10	2	40	34	148
2001	8	0	41	35	121
2002	7	0	53	48	80
2003	3	1	48	12	70
2004	8	2	49	6	70
2005	8	1	41	4	73
2006	10	0	43	5	78
April 2007	5	0	45	Not yet	83

The figure below is a frequency curve showing the annual rates of admission into the “witches” camp from 1997 to April 2007.

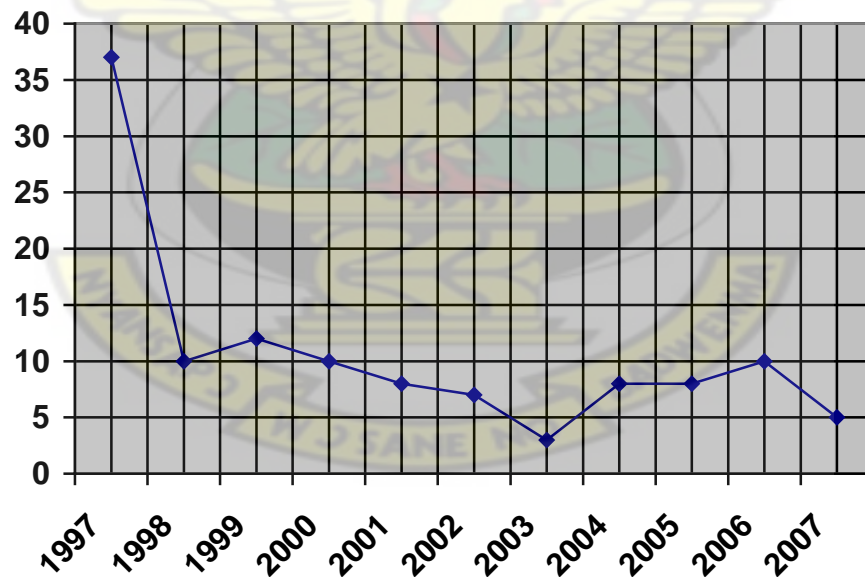


Figure 4.8. A frequency curve showing the annual numbers of admission into the camp

The graph below indicates the frequency of annual Reintegration.

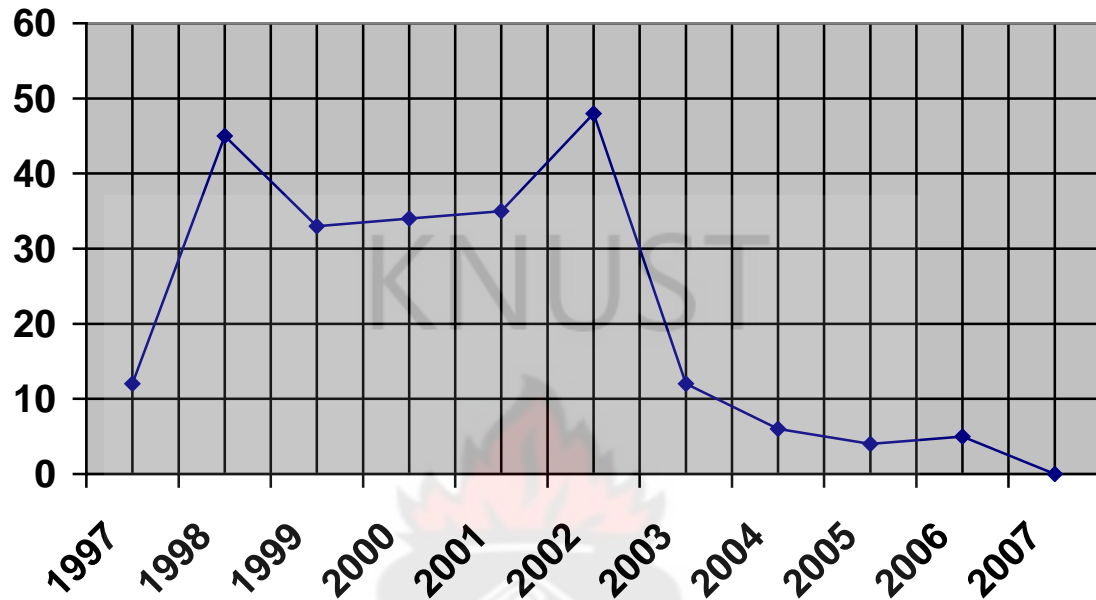


Figure 4.9 frequency curves showing the annual rate of reintegration

According to the project director, while some of the “witches” who were due for repatriation were rejected by their families at their homes of origin, the rest did not show any interest in returning to their families and were therefore allowed to remain at the camp.

As shown in the table above, in 1997, thirty-seven alleged “witches” were admitted by the *Gambag-rana* and subsequently registered by GO Home Project. Four deaths were recorded, while twelve were successfully reintegrated. The total number left at the camp was three hundred and twenty-eight. In 1998, ten were admitted, one died, forty-five were successfully reintegrated leaving a total of two hundred and ninety-two at the camp.

The admission trend between 1999 and 2002 started falling as the reintegration rate increased. The downward trend is an indication that over the period, there had been an improvement in human relations in the communities that hate witches.

Though the year 2003 recorded the lowest number of ostracized “witches” the Go Home Project succeeded in re-uniting only twelve women; that was due to lack of funding as already hinted by the Director. The reduction in financial support has reflected in the low performance of the NGO in 2004, 2005 and 2006. In April 2007, no single reintegration was made, but five new members were admitted.

The study revealed that the death rate at the camp over the period under discussion had been very minimal.

The diagram below is a bar chart showing the annual death rate.

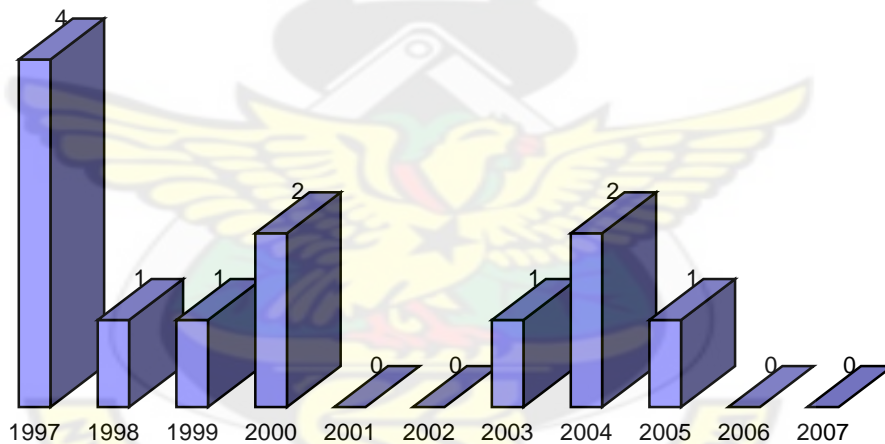


Figure 4.10 A bar chart showing the annual frequency of death.

Having come to a close of the above topic, it is necessary to look at the role played by the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations and the Community-Based Organizations in the next subheading.

4.20 ROLE PLAYED BY THE COALITION OF NGOs AND CBOs

The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) based in the three Northern Regions came together to initiate a programme known as The Anti-Witchcraft Allegation Campaign (AWAC). This was because it had been alleged that “the belief in witchcraft was a ‘forbidden’ myth to be discussed, in the culture of some communities in the Northern part of Ghana”. The President/Executive Secretary of THUHDEG, (The Human Help & Development Group) a CBO, told the researcher during an interview, adding that, this myth, however, got broken when the coalition launched the campaign to educate people.

Some of the other organization include The Dawah Academy, The Widows and Orphans Ministry, the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), the Girls Vocational and Development Foundation (GiVDeF), just to mention a few.

When the researcher questioned to know how they went about their campaign, he noted that, the programme was first launched at Gambaga in 2003 by the late Hon Madam Hawa Yakubu⁴ and the leaders of the Coalition of NGOs in Northern Ghana. A replication of the launch was held at Sandema in the Bulsa District of the Upper East Region.

Secondly, the campaign took the form of workshops for the various communities’ opinion leaders, and thirdly, the distribution of posters and flyers through Community Advocacy groups which they formed. The programme was initiated and co-coordinated by (THUHDEG), and funded by the German Development Cooperation (DED). Plate 4.19 is a group picture of the Leaders of the NGOs with Madam Hawa Yakubu.

⁴ Hon Madam Hawa led the Coalition of NGOs in Northern Ghana to launch the Anti Witchcraft Campaign in 2003.



Plate 4.19 : From left Mr. Ken Addae, Madam Hawa Yakubu and Godwin

The flyers contained messages that were aimed at educating the public against witchcraft accusations. The advocacy clubs helped to circulate the flyers and the posters to opinion leaders for display at vantage points as a start. The posters on the other hand, contained illustrations of an old lady being beaten; and the caption reads: '*It is a crime to lynch*', one of the visuals was a perpetrator also being arrested by a policeman.

Next page is a sample of the flyer

4.21 THE BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT.

This research considered the four under listed communities for the study of witchcraft belief in the Northern Region, owing to the fact that they have the highest record of number of accused persons per community, resident at the Gambaga “witches” camp. (The GO Home Project Report, 1997).

In that connection, and for the purpose of this study, the researcher has declared the said villages as ‘witchcraft prone areas’ or ‘witchcraft endemic communities. The two terms will

be used interchangeably where and when necessary. The report alleged that, the belief was deeply rooted in the people's minds such that almost every person had to blame the witch for the least misfortune.

The researcher embarked on a survey using questionnaire in the four communities, namely, Nakpanduri, Gushegu, Naasuan and Dennugu, in February and March, 2007 and has come out with the figures below. The target groups were assembly members, teachers, the *Tindana* (chiefs) and other opinion leaders and the common people. The findings are analyzed below

Table 4.7 A table showing the data collected on the peoples' belief in witchcraft

Instrument	Target group		No. of communities survey	Responses from each community			Total No. of questionnaire retrieved from respondents
	Community members				Yes	No.	
	Sex			Male	32	4	
	M	F		Female	27	12	
Questionnaire	10	10	4	Total	59	16	75

Of the 80 copies of questionnaire distributed to an equal number of males and females, only 75 were retrieved and the information supplied through the questionnaire is displayed in the table above. A total of 59 respondents representing 78.8% of the total, responded in the affirmative. The number that did not believe in witchcraft was 16, representing 21.3% of the total respondents.

The chart below is an interpretation of the data analyzed above.

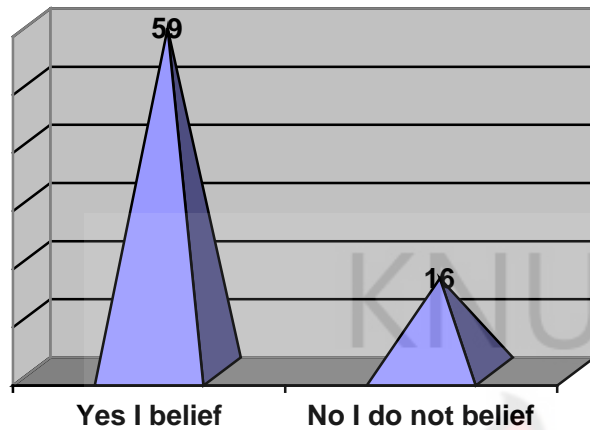


Figure 4.11 a bar chart showing the level of belief in witchcraft

The study, based on the findings above is tempted to agree on the speculation that the belief in witchcraft is deeply rooted in the said communities. The consequent implications are that, if education is not intensified, the women there will continue to take blame for every misfortune. Those communities will also remain the feeding source of “witches” to the camp.

4.22 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE “WITCHES” CAMP.

One school of thought as discovered by this research justifies the existence of the camp because it is a refugee camp where those to be killed, probably on false accusation, for protection.

The second school of thought which also justifies the existence of the camp, considers the place as a centre of reformation, since the *Gambag-rana* is believed to be capable of exorcising their witch spirits for them to be reintegrated in their societies.

Amina states that, “the Centres of Reformation can be found in Wa, Savelugu and Tamale, for people with physical and mental disabilities” (Gombilla, 1997). While some of them are government subvented, others are not. The Gambaga camp could be classified as a private centre. The worrying situation is that, it is deeply rooted in the culture of the peoples that people with various forms of physical and mental disabilities are agents of witchcraft. The link between physically fit “witches” and their disabled counterparts as perceived by the culture is the scorn and lack of compassion to both.

Furthermore, there are terms in various ethnic languages for the words, witch and witches’ camps. Though the institution of the camp may not be totally accepted as a cultural practice due to its disapproval by many people, each individual, in the performance of his duty, uses a traditional costume, objects and symbols as well as a language. Their absence therefore implies the loss of such “artistic cultural objects and verbal or literary arts” (GyeKye, 1995)

4.23 NEW FINDINGS

When this research on the subject of witchcraft with regards to the Gambaga “witches” camp began, the anticipation was a very limited or total black out of information since it had been a very dicey issue around the eastern corridor of the region. Many authors have treated the subject of witchcraft in general in various ways, but not in the way this research was intended for.

That not withstanding, the research has revealed that, the running and managing of the “witches” Camp with a shrine which in itself is an inheritance and hailed as a traditional phenomenon by the royal family. According to the Tindoo, (the spokesperson to the Gambaga

chief), and other traditional opinion leaders, the combination of the skin with the shrine, is so ingrained in the culture to the extent that, it seems almost impossible to do away with it.

According to the office of the GO HOME PROJECT, the Gambaga Township records the least cases of witchcraft accusation among people but people discuss the existence of the practice which they believe may be in a different form.

Many people who have stayed in the town for several years have the belief that the hosting of the suspected witches in the town has had a negative toll on the development of the town. They cite examples like Walewale, Nalerigu, Langbinsi, Gushegu and Sakogu as villages that were founded far later than Gambaga but have overtaken Gambaga in modern development. They claim that the Town does not command any good name in the outside world especially when it comes to the camping of women branded as witches. They also claimed that the expansion of infrastructure within the town is slower as compared to the younger communities mentioned.

This research discovered that the under development of the town may also be due to the general low level of education in Northern Ghana and Gambaga in particular. Further, divergent affiliation of the opinion leaders to political parties could be another factor because some of the informants claimed that most of the previous politicians who managed the affairs of the town came from neighboring communities over the years. The traditional rulers on the other hand, from the onset did not also permit missionaries to settle and establish schools within the town.

The terms 'exorcism' and the 'test of innocence' as narrated by some of the interviewees were found to be confusing. Exorcism "takes the form of hooting, stripping the "witches" naked and

sacrifice, among others” (Bannerman et al, 1982). But in Gambaga, the test of innocence in which the *Gambaga-rana* performs a sacrifice is what many people perceive as exorcism. “The way the *Gambag-rana* exorcises the ‘witches’ under him is known only by him”. (Gumah Tindoo, 2007). He added that, at the ‘camp; the test of innocence is publicly conducted to determine whether one is a witch or not. It then implies that, only if one is “diagnosed: to possess a witch spirit, through a test of innocence that he/she may require the ritual of exorcism. Exorcism on the other hand is not a ritual that the *Gambag-rana* performs publicly, and he has not disclosed to any one how he does it.

The research revealed that the camp as a community has its own way of life with specific reference to traditional worship of a shrine with its concomitants. The camp can be described as a cosmopolitan community since people of different ethnic backgrounds speaking different languages converge.

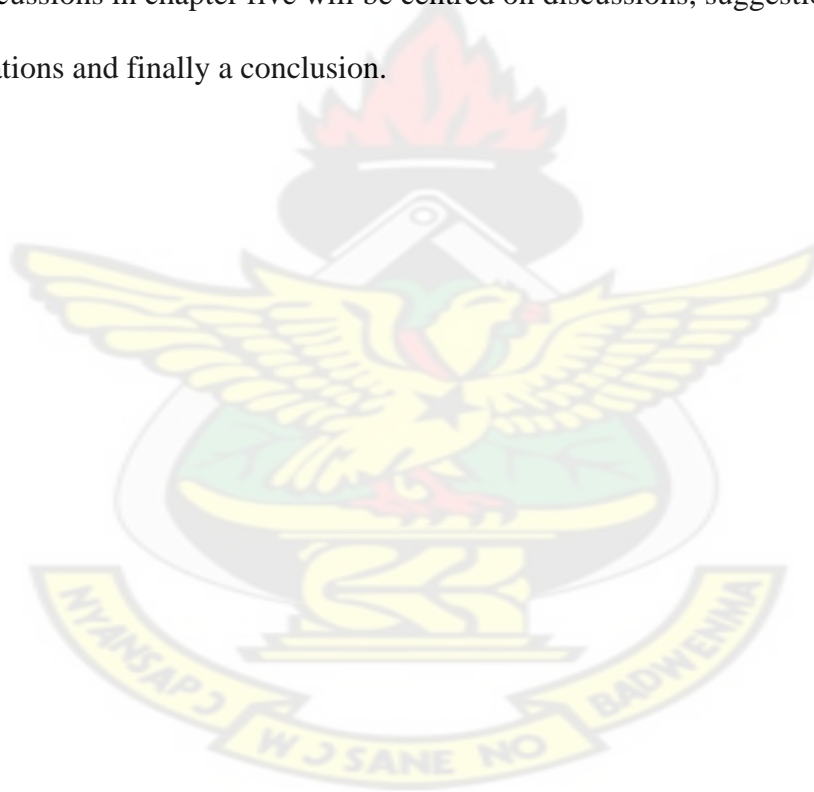
The shrine, whose name was not given, was discovered to be a traditional sculptural form rendered in mud, unlike most popular African art form used for ritual purposes which were largely made of wood. The shrine was however found to be a polar object of about two feet tall just like the wooden sculptural ones.

Another artistic finding was the spinning of yarn. Also found was the extraction of architectural material from organic sources which were used as binder for buildings. Ceramic wares were also found extensively in use as cooking stencils by the inmates. They had a sense of colour especially the colour ‘white’ which they assigned the significance of purity to it. There was a prescribed posture and structured recitals during the test of innocence to be said by the candidate.

The researcher did not witness any form of the test of innocence during the study, he was informed by some of the “witches” who went through it, as more glaring to the public at the camp rather than exorcism which is said to be shrouded in secrecy.

Let us end this chapter with the notion that, some anthropologists, sociologists and traditionalists consider certain effects of witchcraft as positive; that is the belief that “witches protect their family members against attacks from evil spirits” (Mahama, 2004).

The next discussions in chapter five will be centred on discussions, suggestions, recommendations and finally a conclusion.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, SUGGESTION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND A CONCLUSION.

This chapter presents a commentary on the new findings in a discussion. It has looked at the impact of the camp on the inmates and the society at large from various angles. It further explains the new findings in terms of the aged as elderly abuse.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

It is necessary to examine the relationship between the new findings and the background study, whose most questions desired answers from the field work. The objective sought to examine the artistic and cultural perspective of the camp, and, to find out the problems resulting from the ‘witches’ stay at that place. Having investigated identified facets of the community, this discussion has addressed the impact of the menace on the prime victim (the witch), the community and the entire society at large.

Indeed readers would like to know the link between witchcraft and other aspects of the people’s culture as well as the reasons assigned for the practice and the subsequent sending of accused persons to the witches’ camps. It has already been noticed from the study about the four “witchcraft endemic villages” that an overwhelming majority of the people believe in witchcraft.

In a related development, the Go Home Project Report also associated the belief with the outbreak of contagious and communicable diseases; citing examples of Cerebra Spinal

Meningitis (C.S.M) and High Fever during which patients are said to speak in “tongues” In 1997, according to the literature review, the hospitals recorded large numbers of C. S.M and High Fever cases; there was a relative explosion in population at the “witches” camps resulting from the accusations of women suspected to be the main brain of the epidemic. Thirty-seven women from various villages, who fall victims, were accused of being the brain behind the pandemic and were therefore ostracized to the camp. The total number of accused witches at the Gambaga camp stood at three hundred and twenty-eight by the close of the year.

The mysterious link between these mishaps and the accused, here is a question to be answered. It is a challenge to future researchers and the health professionals to come out with scientific explanations pertaining to those diseases in that corridor of the Northern Region which cause patients to tug others as witches. It must be noted in support of this stand that “owing to lack of scientific knowledge that traditional Africans attribute the causes of some diseases to evil forces and witches” (Boadi, 2000:29).

Contrary to this view, however, the Awake of November 22, 1996 notes that both the neglected angered ancestors and divinities are also believed to have power to harm those on earth. Consequently, both of them must be shown proper respect and homage. The question remains as to who is then responsible, Witches or ancestors? The dichotomy of the two is that the ancestors are already dead and gone while “witches” are still alive. If witches do exist, and according to Mahama, 2004, believed to “protect their family members against attacks from evil spirits”, then, it implies that their existence is possible, so why have they failed to use their witch expertise and methods for a possible harness with the already known science for the betterment of mankind? If they continue failing to accomplish this positive attribute of theirs as

pointed out by Mahama, then, the believers in witchcraft deserve the right to say that witches are rather destructive.

In some villages, it appears that the issue of witchcraft is the most frequently discussed; each side narrating their version of the effect on their life. This indicates, in no small way, that witchcraft is indeed a social factor, with felt consequences. Whether we like it or not, it forms part and parcel of the mental make-up of some people.

5.0.1 ELDER ABUSE

In a normal African community, the aged, be it male or female is supported by their children, grandchildren and all those who sympathize with the aged. But contrary to the norm, the aged “witches” at the camp scarcely receive such affection. Also, contrary to the norm, the children of the camp, some believed to be witches, are neglected by their parents. Of course, the children’s stay at the camp and their neglect by their parents are an infringement on their basic right because they may be considered as serving a prison sentence through no fault of theirs.

Many people interviewed have advocated the improvement of both accommodation and social amenities to create some comfort for the camp members, but what ever the case, a convict remains ever a convict and no matter how a prison is decorated, it remains a prison. For this reason, some of the “witches” strongly desire to leave the camp to rejoin their relatives and their original communities. But whether their relatives or original communities are prepared to accept them or not, it is difficult to tell. On the other hand, some of the inmates claim that they enjoy their stay at the camp and therefore want to remain there.

It is for the above reason that the researcher would again link the situation of the “witches” to what is called Elder Abuse as defined by the Action on Elder Abuse in the United Kingdom. Also adopted by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, it defines elder abuse as “a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action ...Which causes harm or distress to an older person” It identifies such an abuse under the following general categories: physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, financial, sexual and finally neglect.

The treatment meted out to the suspected witches is a physical coercion and injurious, since they are forced to undergo hair cut and drink concoctions under the pretext of testing one’s innocence. Such forcible action is also termed as drug-induced restraint since the content of the liquor is known by the *Gambag-rana* who, by scientific standards cannot prove its wholesomeness.

The inhuman treatments that made the “witches” seek refuge at the camp could be said to be an emotional abuse that have brought them mental anguish and indelible scars of mental torture. The fact that they have been suspected and maltreated and are residing at the camp is a stigma which transcends several generations of their relation.

It has become evident in this thesis that people depend on women of the camp for ‘cheap labour’. The Network defines this act as “the illegal exploitation or use of resources of the older person”. Is it possible for any farmer to walk into the street to hire labourers and at the end of the contract, pay those unrealistic wages without being taken on? This can only be done to an alleged witch, because she must fend for herself to survive.

The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse notes that deliberate isolation of older persons suffer from a non-consensual sexual contact with their spouses and the women at the camp are no exception because they no more have access to their husbands.

Finally, the research agrees with the assertion of the Network, mentioned above that, there is a deliberate refusal or failure by respective relatives to fulfill the care giving obligation to the “witches.”

5.0.2 THE EFFECTS OF WITCHCRAFT ON THE MARRIAGE LIVES OF THE “WITCHES”

It came to light that the “witches” were previously married, but had to ‘lose’ their husbands because they had to relocate to the camp. Even through, some of them were fortunate to be remarried; it was never their intention to break their first marriages. There is also no doubt that, the issue equally has an effect on the rest of the society.

Some of the old women acquired some wealth at their original homes, but the society has a luke warm attitude towards wealthy women. Because a writer confirmed that witchcraft accusation is also seen as a “tool for controlling women’s productive capacity, being branded a witch might help control a wife who becomes wealthier than her husband and therefore an embarrassment” (Daily Graphic, 2001). As a result of the psychological distress, the implicit effect is that such women abandon their economic innovation to gather wealth to improve the living standard of their children.

In the north, cultures allow for betrothing one’s daughter to a prospective husband. This was confirmed by the “witches” who married through that system. But now that they have been divorced and living at the camp, their former husbands will “forfeit dowries paid to their

former in-laws' (Rattray, 1969) about the Ashantis. The practice of betrothing could have been argued for, due to its biblical baring such the Virgin Mary and Joseph; but the fact that it denies the girl child the freedom to choose, and her rights to education are rather worrying.

A marriage which the parents do not consent to or unrecognized, in Akan culture is termed as *mpinawarie*. In that state, very few, if not none, of the Christian denominations would approve of, and bless such marriages without the parental consent. But the research discovered that some inmates, who remarried while at the camp, have had to do so without their parents featuring at the ceremony.

5.0.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS

We cannot rule out the fact that the individual inmates have cultivated inferiority complex. They are of the mind that people perceive them with scorn and shun, making them loose their self-esteem. Besides, some of those who accuse the “witches” live in fear and insecurity because they believe that the “witches” they have accused, will bewitch them. For this reason, they seek the protection of certain spirits by means of rituals.

These rituals are said to be magical and go along with charms and amulets. The spirits could be said to be diabolical. This promotes the practice of syncretism which undermines faith and conversion and indeed casts a deep adverse effect on religion. Hence within the communities in the North where the pandemic is most prevalent, it is difficult to separate religion from the belief in witchcraft.

Some people think that all traditional religious leaders or devotees, as perceived of the *Gambag-rana*, are probably witches of a superior level; and that is why they are capable of

identifying others. So also, are some Ministers of Pentecostal and other spiritual churches said to derive spiritual power from evil forces to perform miracles.

Also, while some people are living in suspicion, others live in bitterness because a relative has either been “bewitched to death, lynched, beaten or banished from the village. They rest suffer from stigmatization, either having been accused themselves, or their relatives have been accused.

This creates some amount of lasting social tensions. For, those whose bitterness results from the loss of their bewitched relative, may never forgive any suspected “witch”. Also, those whose relatives are lynched on witchcraft accusations may not forgive the murders. Belief in witchcraft has of course, led some people into premature death.

5.0.4 THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EFFECT

To the individuals especially the ‘witches’ in ‘bondage’ at the camp, since there is a total break in family ties, there is no financial support from their families. They may have lost some of their properties through mob action. Secondly, the social stigma cast on them does not grant some of the strong women the moral courage to continue with active business.

The research believes that the eighty-three “witches”, camped at one place is a waste of human capital, because they have largely remained coiled in their shells with their economic potentials.

Due to witchcraft accusation, the women at the camp are hated by their accusers and have been ostracized from their original communities. In view of this some families have been destabilized, generating tensions and conflicts here and there in lineages, clans, villages and

towns. People give up their friends for their interest and affiliation to alleged witches. Others divorce their wives and husbands on similar ground.

5.0.5 MEDICAL EFFECTS/AFFAIRS

There was no record of any HIV/AIDS case among the inmates through any means but it is imperative to comment on the use of the shaving exercise. The study realized that the same shaving knife is used, for the shaving of all the “witches” during their periodic hair cropping ritual. It is very possible to transmit the AIDS virus from one person to the other through unsterilised cropping tools. There is also the tendency to infect them with tetanus since the safety of the tool by medical standard, cannot be guaranteed.

Also, the fact that the women are found to be consuming the un-iodized salt is a source of worry since it can deteriorate their health status. It may also be correct to speculate that the physical assault meted to some of the “witches” is a contribution to their health problems which has left some of them physically weaker than their ages.

5.0.6 EDUCATIONAL EFFECTS

Although the study found the children of the inmates in schools, it also found that pupils of the camp in the past were dropouts. The implication is that very negligible children of the “witches” over the years might have had formal education up to higher levels. According to some head teachers within the town some teachers do refuse postings and transfers to the Gambaga town under the pretext of fright of “witches”

The “outcasts” at the camp do not benefit from the ongoing non-formal education programme. Some of the women who were withdrawn from schools into forced marriage would have been part of the educational work force of their communities and the nation at large.

5.1 SUMMARY

This Thesis established that the colony of “witches” live in round huts that are a relatively smaller than the ideal room size. Their economic activities have been said to be from hand to mouth. They suffer some stigma among other people, and are restricted from free movement. The study has revealed the health hazards that engulf their ritual bath and mass shaving with unsterilised tools.

Some of the “witches” claim they were comfortable, staying at the camp, but others have the desire to rejoin their families and their original communities.

The coalition of non Governmental Organisations assisted in educating the public to stop the spate of witchcraft allegations. The Go Home Project on the other hand is playing its part with the reintegration programme.

The existence of the Gambaga Outcast Home constitutes the visible tip of the iceberg of a violent manifestation of the belief in witchcraft. Dismantled or not, is not the reason for ostracizing women. Exiling of women is caused by the violent manifestation of the belief in the practice. Therefore, the belief is the source of the continuity of the allegations, suspicious and counter accusation, justifies the “witches” camp to exist.

Given the fact that formal legal support is hardly available in rural communities, women accused of witchcraft do not have the chance to find legal defense. However, a revision of the

existing laws reveals that an expressed allegation already constitutes a breach of the law because it may lead to a breach of peace and ultimately to violent action. Moreover in 1998 in Ghanaian parliament passed a legislation that amended the 19960 Criminal Code to provide additional protection for women and children. The provisions of the bill ban the practice of 'customary servitude' such as the *Trokosi* System in the Volta Region and possibly, witches camps in Northern Ghana including Gambaga.

The social space provided as deduced by this research, every person making allegations of witchcraft also implies that persons who engage in torturing of accused persons mainly bear no consequence for their actions. So, it is our suggestion that perpetrators be brought to book in consonance of the laws of Ghana

In support of this motion, let us refer to the fundamental human right and freedoms of the constitution of Ghana which stipulates that "a person who is unlawfully assaulted, arrested, detained, or restricted shall be entitled to compensation from that other person" (Wheatley, 198). Again in that direction, Wheatley in his book entitled 'The Devil and all his Works' notes that "witches were even to some extent protected, because a person who accused another of being one and failed to prove it was severely punished" (Wheatley, 1983).

The researcher is of the view that, the accused person's immediate relatives own the prime responsibility of leading the crusade in defense of their family members. It has been pointed out earlier, however, that only few persons have the courage and confidence to defend their relatives against witchcraft allegations since such persons stand the risk of the same fate.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS

It is suggested that in dealing with the “witches” camp issue, there is the need to tackle it from the various indicators or causes of the belief. These include superstitions, ignorance, fear, and abject poverty. We hence need to work towards attaining an adequate or average level of socio-economic development. It is important to help the poor attain spiritual, physical, social, economic and biological needs by ensuring that all children of school going age are enrolled. More economic ventures should be introduced to keep each person actively working to better themselves. There is also the agent need for more educative programmes on the Fundamental Human Rights need to be done by the National Commission on Civic Education.

Extensive education is needed on food security, formal education and medical services, especially encouraging people to patronize the National Health Insurance Scheme, friendliness and companionship. When people are empowered in that direction, it will minimize the rate of fear and prejudice and cultivate self-knowledge, and the quest to work towards set targets. People will attain self confidence and self esteem. This will ease the social tensions and clear the ignorance which foster the belief in witchcraft and subsequently prevent people from falsely attributing their failures to witches.

We ought to note that witchcraft is not formidable, because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). We should also be careful in our communities not to be obsessed with issues of witchcraft. If we are preoccupied with that we will be glorifying witch spirits instead of glorifying God. We should discern properly the cause of anything of any sort and take the appropriate measures rather than assigning them to other people.

We should not be indifferent towards “witches” nor should we be afraid of them. We have to love and socialize with them. The more we love them the more they become friendly towards us. The traditional leaders too must observe utmost confidentiality, impartiality, patience and caution to be able to help their accused clients.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher has outlined the following:

The Philanthropic Organisation known as the ‘Humanity’ is hereby called upon to focus its attention to the camp in question to improve the accommodation facilities for the inmates.

The Coalition of NGOs and CBOs should collaborate with the Women and Children’s Ministry to intensify the campaign against witchcraft accusation

The National Commission on Civic Education could use both the Junior and Senior High School Teachers and Students to help in educating their illiterate relatives on the rights and freedom of the individuals.

The Ghana Tourist Board should as a matter of concern adopt the “witches” Camp as one of the Tourist attractions since the possibility to extinct the camp may take a longer time.

The Commission on Human Right and Administrative Justice could design new programmes on the Rights and Freedom of the individuals to address the issue of mob action which of late is becoming the order of the day. This would help accused women who are physically assaulted to seek justice.

It is also recommended that the Police Administration should establish crises response units in the ‘witchcraft endemic’ areas in the Northern Region to quickly intervene anytime there is an attack on a suspected witch.

To the overseer of the camp (the *Gambag-rana*), the creation of the “witches” camp appears to be a cultural practice which may not be possible to stop abruptly, so he should ensure that facilities at the camp are made attractive or better than it is now. He should subsequently not admit any more new comer, and finally handle those already staying at the camp with human dignity.

To the “witches” themselves, they should try to extend messages to women leaders in authority to continue pursuing their plight until a legislation is passed address the situation

5.4 CONCLUSION

To conclude this discussion, let us be reminded that the researcher earlier on hypothesized that the study into the artistic and cultural life of the camp will expose the positive and negative attributes of the camp. Also in respect of the objective, the writer was to identify the problems facing the inmates and find ways to draw the attention of philanthropist to help them.

There were some positive developments at the camp; these were the registration of the inmates with the National Health Insurance Scheme and the enrolment of children of the inmates into Schools. The study also found that the inmates benefit from periodic donations in the form of used clothing. All those gestures constitute a sign of attention from benefactors.

The problems faced by the inmates on the other hand, were that, they are compelled to go through cruel cultural practices designed by the camp owner at the camp. These include shaving of hair, drinking of concoction and the worship of a shrine.

The rest concerns the living conditions of the “witches” at the camp. Out of the 128 rooms, 81 were found to be in deplorable state. While some of the rooms had very heavy cracks in the walls, others had bad roofs. Further on that, out of the 78 people who were interviewed, 45 of them representing 57.69% agreed that the living condition was bad.

There was also a decline in the intervention of the ‘GO Home Project’. Although death rate fell to zero in the last two years, the number of new admissions increased while reintegration dropped.

Also from the cultural perspective, the study found that the establishment of the “witches” camp at Gambaga, was necessitated by a situation which was already stated in chapter two. This ‘asylum’ has been nurtured gradually to become a full blown traditional practice of the Mamprusis. The research found that, to them, the Gambaga Traditional Stool is a tied with the “witches” camp and the shrine which all the witches worship; and prospective successive occupants of the stool are expected to inherit all.

While drawing the curtain on this concluding part, permit the researcher to call on prospective researchers to the areas that could not be investigated by the study.

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APPENDIX

Sample Questionnaire

(Set one)

Educational Status_____ Sex _____Age.....

Religious denomination_____

Please tick (✓)

How would you grade the accommodation at the Gamabaga “witches” camp?

Very Good

☐

Good

☐

Fairly good

☐

Sample Questionnaire

(Set two)

Sample Questionnaire

Educational Status_____ Sex _____Age.....

Religious denomination_____

Please tick (✓)

Do you believe that witchcraft exists and that witches can bring misfortunes to you?

Yes ☐

No ☐