

**RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL COHESION: A CASE
STUDY OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN EJURA IN THE
EJURA-SEKYEDUMASI MUNICIPALITY OF ASHANTI.**

By

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Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Faculty of Social Sciences
College of Art and Humanities.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except for the references to other people,,s work which have been duly acknowledged, this work is the result of my own research carried at Ejura and that, it has not been presented wholly or in part for a degree in this university or elsewhere.

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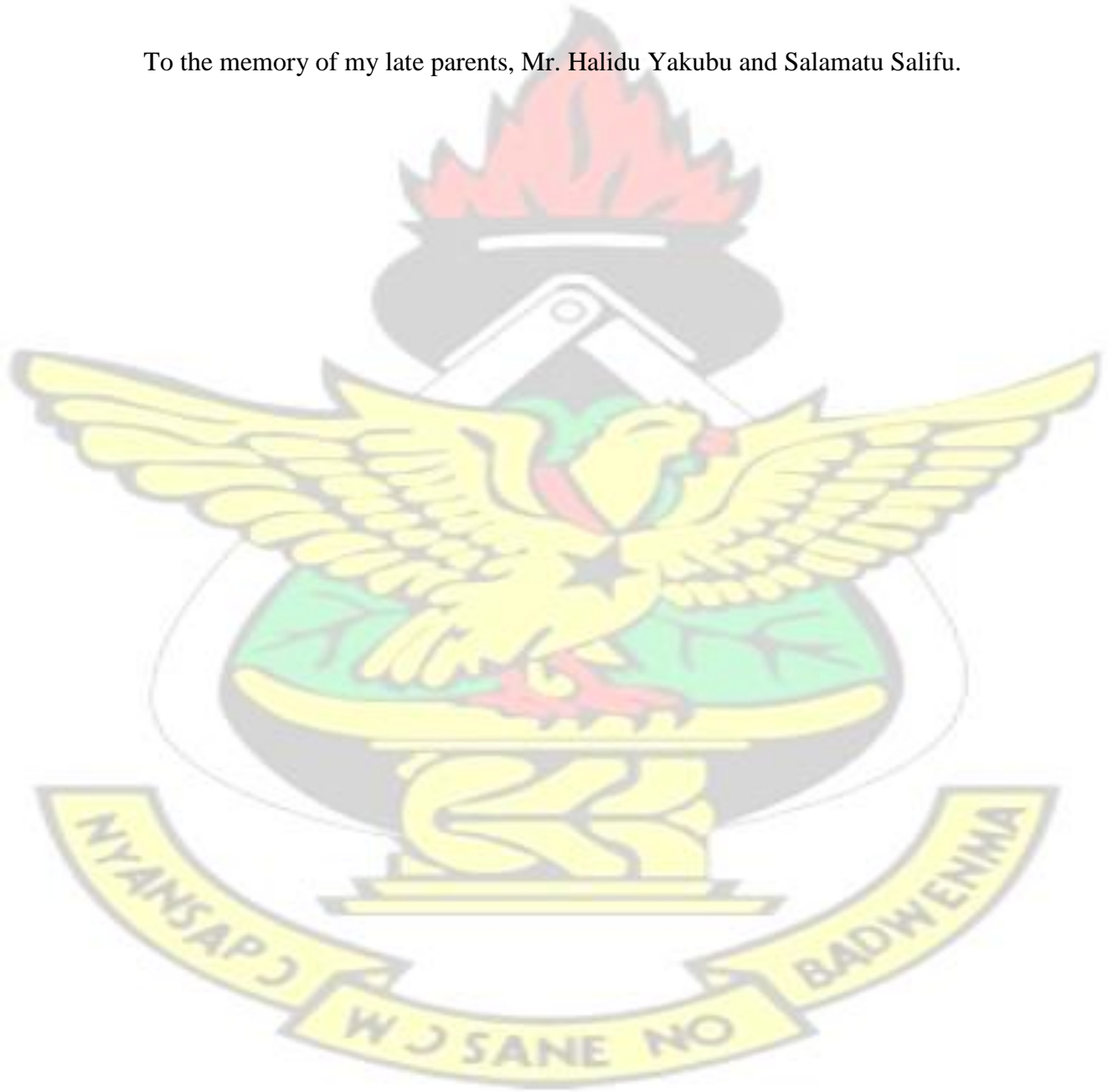
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DEDICATION

To the memory of my late parents, Mr. Halidu Yakubu and Salamatu Salifu.



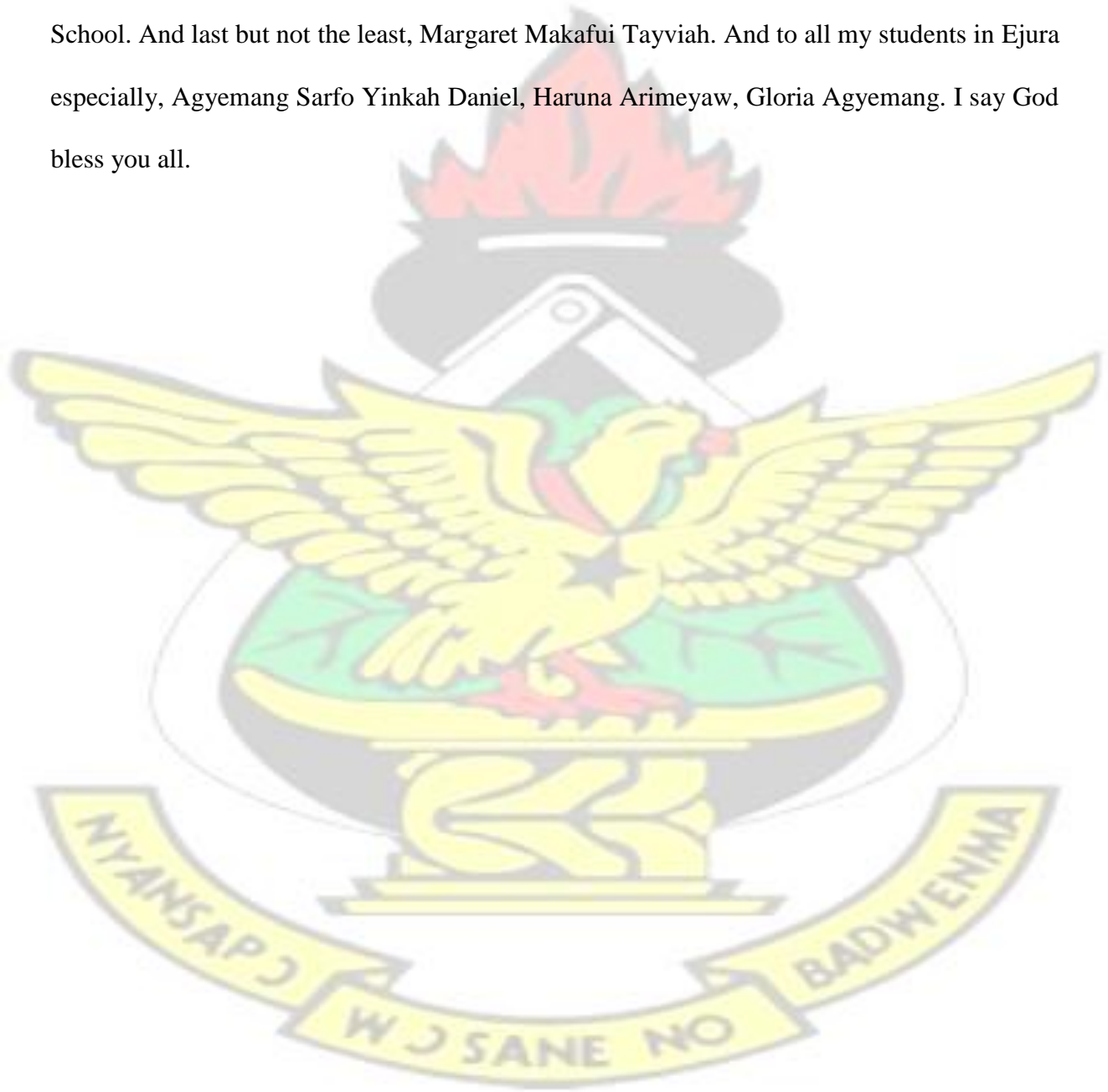
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Sunna wal Jama`a, Ejura. Abass Suleman, a youth activist, Ejura. Nana J.Y Owusu, Dwatoa Hene of Ejura, Muntaka Bamba, Assemblyman, Abota Electoral Area, Ejura, Pastor F.Y. Owusu, Yushawu Musah, Ejura. To my family and friends, my brother, Hamidu Yakubu, Lukeman Abdul-Salam, Alaru Yakubu, Hamidu Iddris, Ibrahim Mohammed, Aboagye Noel Samuel. And lastly, to Agatha Dufie of the English Department of Adu Gyamfi Senior High School. And last but not the least, Margaret Makafui Tayviah. And to all my students in Ejura especially, Agyemang Sarfo Yinkah Daniel, Haruna Arimeyaw, Gloria Agyemang. I say God bless you all.



ABSTRACT

Religion is described as one of the most important structures in all the established human societies that make up the entire social system. It is believed to be a unifying force; however, this role of religion is realized in societies where there is only one religion. Truly, most countries in the world have witnessed conflicts for many years and a large proportion of these conflicts emanate from fault lines in religion. In the current global scenario, many nations are facing problems of hatred, intimidation, incitement, and acts of violence as a result of religious differences.

This research therefore sought to find out how the religious pluralistic nature of Ejura is impacting on how Christians and Muslims in the society relate to one another or how they are “glued” together as a people. In Ejura, which is described as the town with the highest number of settlers in Ghana, Christians and Muslims have been living together peacefully as though they have no differences. The only incident of religious clash was among the Muslim groups of *Ahlu Sunna* and *Tijjaniyya*. Christians and Muslims have enjoyed a very healthy relationship even than the two Muslim groups themselves.

Apart from the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the study selected only the mission churches and among the Muslim too, the study focused on only the Sunni Muslims. It was discovered that, the religious pluralistic nature of Ejura has not had any negative impact on interpersonal relationship in the town. There is a strong social bond between Christians and Muslims. Another thing found to be contributing towards the healthy Christian-Muslim relations in the town is that, all members of the community have equal opportunity to engage in any lawful income generating activities irrespective of their religious or ethnic affiliations. No group in

Ejura feels relegated to the periphery so far as the sharing and use of the community's resources is concerned. Notwithstanding the few challenges related to education and other social issues, religion has not polarised the community probably because of the economic prosperity of the town. Muslims and Christians accept and respect the other.



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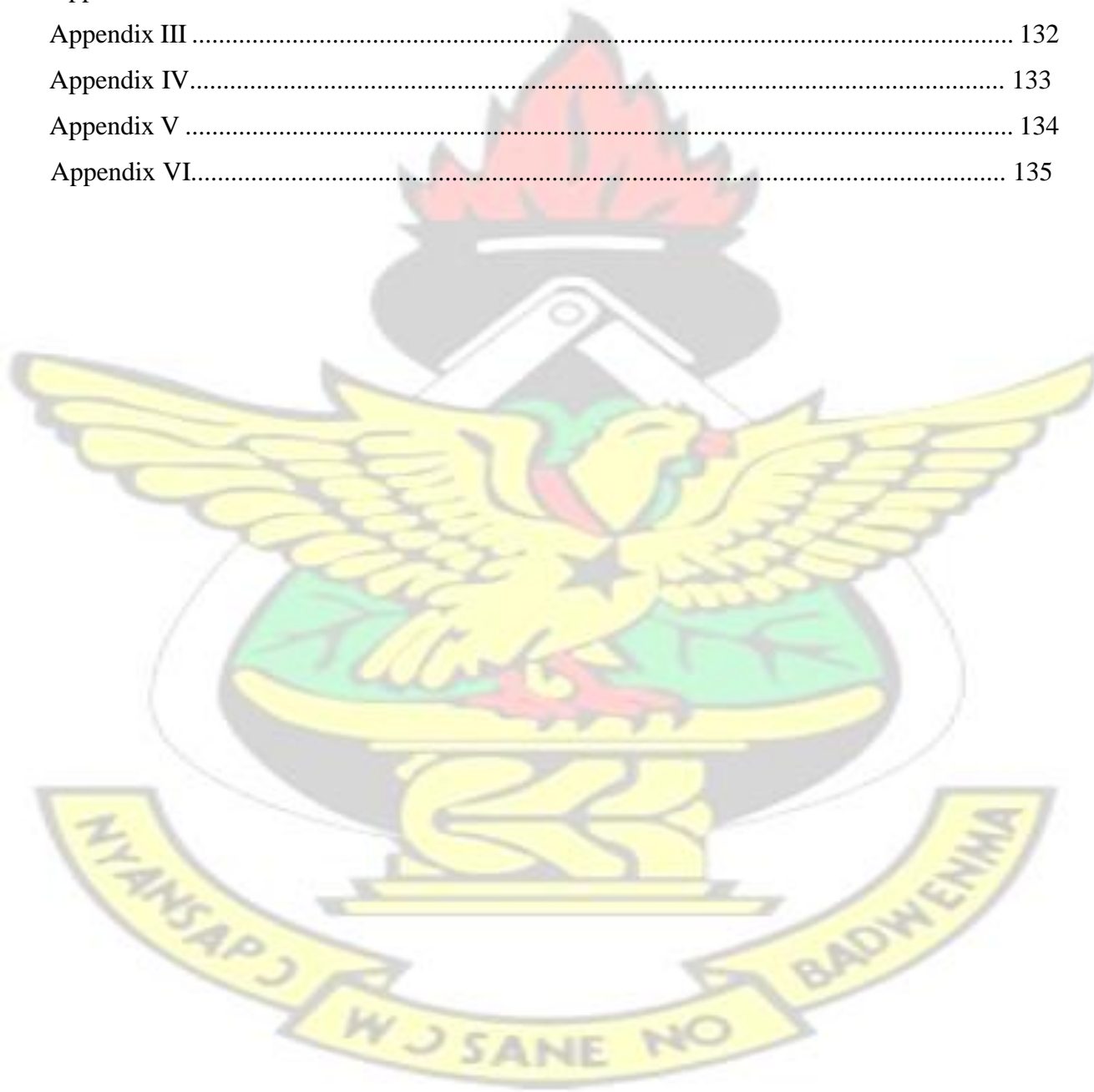
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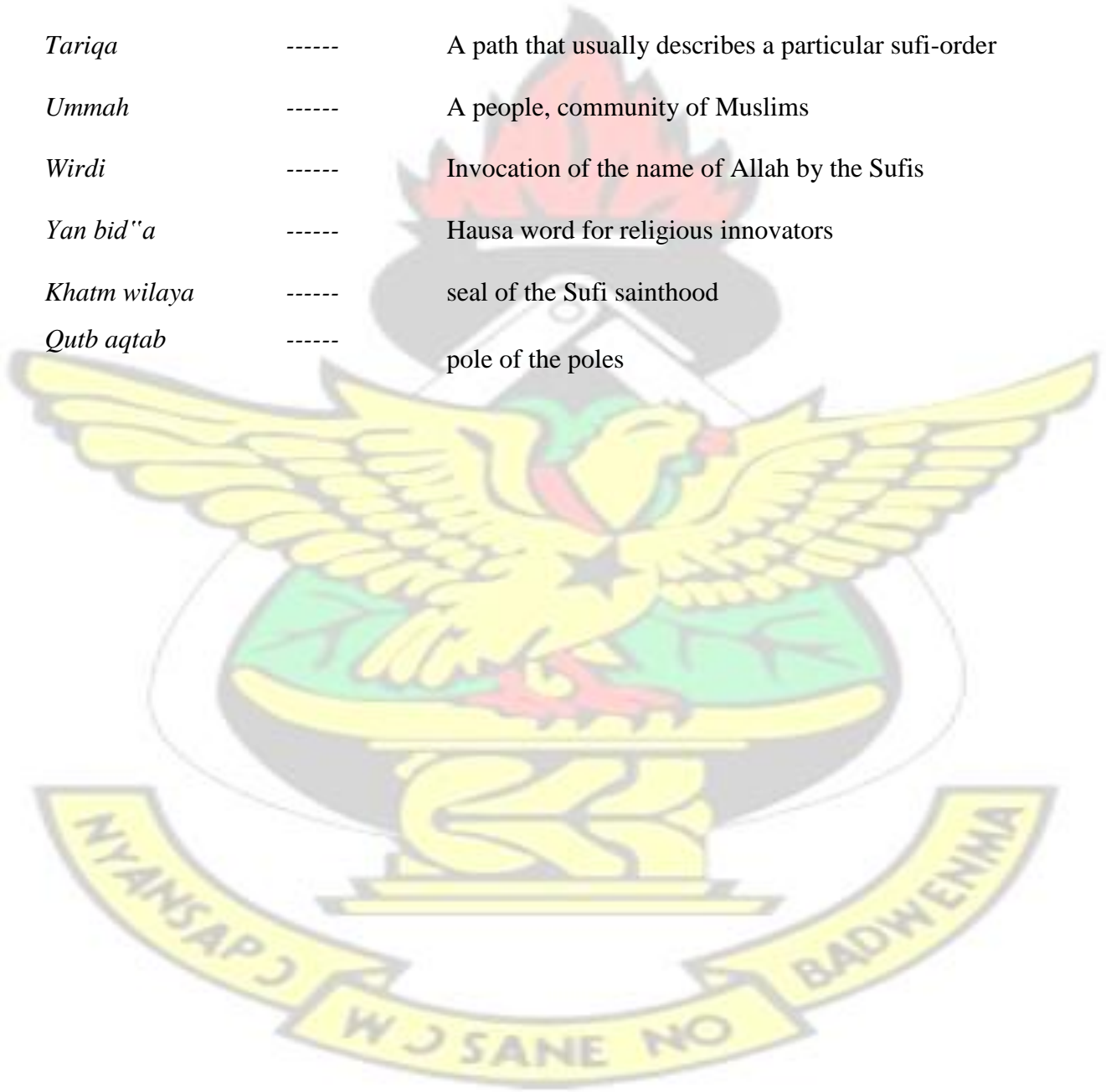
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GLOSSARY

<i>Adua</i>	----	The Hausa word for prayer or Islamic funeral
<i>al-fana</i>	----	The Arabic word for annihilation
<i>Bid''a</i>	----	Innovation
<i>Da''wa</i>	----	Propagation of the Islamic faith or call to Islam.
<i>Dhimmi</i>	----	A person who belongs to the category of protected class under Islamic state.
<i>dīn al-fithrah</i>	----	The religion which is of the true origin.
<i>Dzikir</i>	----	Remembrance of God.
<i>Ejurahene</i>	----	Chief of Ejura.
<i>Gooyo -</i>	----	A Hausa word for a period spent by women with their families after their first child birth.
<i>Iqtida</i>	----	Arabic word for emulation.
<i>Jahiliyya</i>	----	The pre-Islamic period in Arabia that was described as period of ignorance.
<i>Jahl</i>	----	Arabic word for ignorance.
<i>Kufr</i>	----	The Arabic word for disbelieve.
<i>Lumen Gentium</i>	----	The dogmatic constitution of the church.
<i>Makaranta</i>	----	the Hausa word for school.
<i>mawlid al-nabi</i>	-----	the celebration of the birth of the prophet
<i>muraqaba</i>	-----	The Sufi word for meditation
<i>Mushrikai</i>	-----	Arabic word for polytheists
<i>Naaib-deputy</i>	-----	The deputy to an imam
<i>Qudwa</i>	-----	Arabic word for example
<i>sair illallah</i>	-----	Journey towards God

<i>Sarkin Zongo</i>	-----	chief of the Zongo
<i>Shariah</i>	-----	the canonical law of Islam in the Quran and the Sunna.
<i>Shirk</i>	-----	Associating partnership with Allah
<i>Sunna</i>	-----	The traditional aspect of Muslim laws based on Prophet Mohammed's words or acts.
<i>Surah</i>	-----	A chapter of the Qur,,an
<i>Tariqa</i>	-----	A path that usually describes a particular sufi-order
<i>Ummah</i>	-----	A people, community of Muslims
<i>Wirdi</i>	-----	Invocation of the name of Allah by the Sufis
<i>Yan bid''a</i>	-----	Hausa word for religious innovators
<i>Khatm wilaya</i>	-----	seal of the Sufi sainthood
<i>Qutb aqtab</i>	-----	pole of the poles



ABBREVIATIONS



<i>AMR</i>	-----	Adventist-Muslim Relations
<i>ASWAJ</i>	-----	Ahlus Sunna wal Jama‘a
<i>AYPA</i>	-----	Anglican Youth People’s Association
<i>CBC</i>	-----	Catholic Bishops Conference
<i>CCG</i>	-----	Christian Council of Ghana
<i>CRS</i>	-----	Christian Religious Studies
<i>CSO</i>	-----	Civil Society organization
<i>GNA</i>	-----	Ghana News Agency
<i>GSS</i>	-----	Ghana Statistical Service.
<i>IRS</i>	-----	Islamic Religious Studies
<i>NDC</i>	-----	National Democratic Congress
<i>NGO</i>	-----	Non-Govenrmental Organisation
<i>NPC</i>	-----	National Peace Council
<i>NPP</i>	-----	New Patriotic Party
<i>NYEA</i>	-----	National Youth Employment Agency
<i>USAID</i>	-----	United States Agency for International Development
<i>UTC</i>	-----	Union Trading Company
<i>WAEC</i>	-----	West African Examination Council
<i>WCC</i>	-----	World Council of Churches.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

The General Adviser of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa, Johnson Mbillah, related a story that two Nigerian leaders converged to discuss a growing tension between coalition partners in central government that involved the Northern People's Congress and the National Council of Nigerian citizens. He continued that, the resulted tension brought into open differences, between the north which was predominantly Muslim and the majority Christian south and was leading into ethno-religious antagonism. As the two leaders dialogued to restore some understanding between the two groups, Dr. Azikiwe is reported to have said to Ahmadu Bello, "Let us forget our differences." Ahmadu Bello on his part had surmised, "No, let us understand our differences...By understanding our differences, we can build unity in Nigeria."¹

To Mbillah, the short conversation between the two leaders provides a real ground by which interfaith relations in Africa can be built on. That is to say accepting our differences and living with such differences in harmony.²

Historically, the Dyula Muslims were the first to bring Islam to the northern territories of Ghana in the 14th to 15th century.³ They came as traders and professional travellers. They were mainly Wangara, Yarse and Hausa people of Malian and/or Mande extraction that moved downward

¹ J. Mbillah, „African Churches and Interfaith Relations: Food for Thought“, in J. Mbillah and J. Chesworth (eds), *From the Cross to the Crescent*, Nairobi, (Procmura, 2004), 7-8 (1-14).

² J. Mbillah, African Churches and Interfaith Relations, 8.

³ Lamin, Sanneh,. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and the West African Pluralism*, Boulder, Colorado: (Westview Press, 1997) , 12.

into the Northern part of Ghana to take the opportunity of the booming commercial activities there at the time.⁴ Some of these Muslim traders became economically and politically powerful in the northern states of Ghana such as Gonja, Wa, Dagomba and later moved southwards at the invitation of some chiefs of the southern states such as Bono and Asante to engage in gold trade.⁵ The Dyula Muslims generally adhered to the Sufi Islamic tradition. They came with a different culture (Islam) but they tolerated by their hosts. They were relatively liberal, ordinary practicing Muslims who did not insist on accurate knowledge of the philosophical, theological, and doctrinal dictates of Islam as the most essential in the practice of the faith. Though they adored learning greatly, they were also not generally experts of Islamic law. They were able to easily identify themselves with the people because of their complexion resemblance as negroes. They were seen by the natives as humble and unassuming people who wherever they went showed respect for the local traditions and cultures.⁶

To Levtzion, the Dyula Muslims adopted a slow, quiet, peaceful and a non-methodological attitude towards the culture of the indigenous people which saw them intermingle with the locals, integrated with them peacefully and contributed immensely to the society. Their influence was particularly felt at the royal court. At the Gonja royal court for instance, the Muslims' support was ranged from administration and military warfare to the recording of history that eventually helped to consolidate the position of the chiefs.⁷ To scholars like Clarke,

⁴ Ivor Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in North-western Ghana*. Cambridge: (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 162.

⁵ Nehemiah Levtzion., *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in PreColonial Period*. Oxford: (Clarendon Press, 1968), 182.

⁶ Ivor Wilks . et al., *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography*, 163.

⁷ Nehemia Levtzion., *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 53-56.

Muslims supported the chief of Dagomba, Na Zangina, to ward off the attacks from the Gonjas and also kept formal lists of past chiefs and imams.⁸

Samwini is also of the view that, as time went on, these Muslims became so attached to the royal families that they eventually became part of them. In the capital city of the Asante kingdom, Kumasi, Muslims served as advisers to the rulers on important matters of state and they also came to control the distributive trade in gold, kola, salt and slaves, while at the same time securing a total control over the cattle industry. That is to say, they wielded considerable economic and political power in the Asante kingdom.

The Dyula's liberal attitude towards the traditional religion and culture of the Ghanaian societies was generally effective, particularly in Northern Ghana in the spread of Islam. The Dyula Muslims did not demand a radical break with the past. Instead, they presented rather a non-violent and largely a non-compulsion to the positive religious tenets of Islam which included the ritual prayers, the Ramadan fast, simple death and marriage ceremonies and the laicization of religious functions.⁹

Christianity on the other hand is believed to have begun in Ghana with the coming of the Portuguese merchants and explorers at the coast of Ghana in 1482.¹⁰ The Roman Catholic Augustinian missionaries, who came with the Portuguese traders, ministered at the first church which was built close to the Elmina castle and later commenced a school there, in 1529.¹¹ They

⁸ Peter, Clarke, . *West Africa and Islam: A study of religious development from the 8th to the 20th Century*. London: (Edward Arnold Publishers, 1982), 95.

⁹ Trimingham, J. S., *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*. London: (Longmans, Green, 1968), 31.

¹⁰ Hans, W. Debrunner. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*. Accra: (Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 17.

¹¹ F.K, Buah, . *A History of Ghana*, 132.

built a monastery shortly afterwards which led to the evangelisation of the Efutu people and the natives in the areas around Komenda.¹²

With some support from Sir Garnet Wolseley, the governor and military leader of the Sagrenti War, there was a decision to re-establish the Catholic Church in the country. This move also had support from another colonial official, who was a catholic, James Marshall, who worked in both Ghana and Nigeria. He enthusiastically promoted the idea of inviting more Catholic missionaries to Ghana.¹³

There was another group of missionaries, the Society of the Divine Word (S.V.D.), who arrived in Ghana in 1939 to work in the Greater Accra and the Eastern Regions.¹⁴ The Roman Catholic mission was started in Northern Ghana by the „White Fathers“ in 1906 at Navrongo among the Kassena-Nankana people.¹⁵ Other mission stations of the Catholic Church were opened at Bolgatanga in 1924, Wiaga in 1927 and at Jirapa in 1929. Meanwhile, other catholic missionary groups such as the Society for African Missions and the Society of the Divine Word had also begun vigorous activities in the south-western-coasts of the country, particularly, at Kpandu, Hohoe and Kete-Krachi. Through the careful study of the local languages and customs of the natives among other things, the Catholic Church was able to make several converts within the shortest possible time.¹⁶ Ghana, created as an ecclesiastical province in 1950, by 1980 the Catholic Church had become so well established in the country that, in addition to the two

¹² Hans W. Debrunner. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*. 19.

¹³ F. K Buah,. *A History of Ghana*, 133.

¹⁴ F.K Buah,. *A History of Ghana*, 133.

¹⁵ Hans W. Debrunner,. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*. 222.

¹⁶ Peter, Clarke,. *West Africa and Christianity*. London: (Edward Arnold Publishers, 1986), 98.

archdioceses at Cape Coast and Tamale, it had bishops in Accra, Secondi-Takoradi, Keta, Ho, Kumasi, Sunyani, Wa, Navrongo and Bolgatanga.¹⁷

The Presbyterian Church was established in the Gold Coast through an invitation from the Danish Governor of the Christianborg Castle called Major de Richelieu. The Swiss Basel Missionary Society sent out a number of missionaries to the Gold Coast in the first half of the 19th century.¹⁸

The period from 1870 to 1900 witnessed a further expansion of the Presby church into Akyem, Kwahu, Asante and later into the northern part of Ghana.¹⁹

Some churchmen of the Basel Mission were sent to work in parts of the Volta Region to assist the Bremen missionaries. These included the West Indian, Peter Hall and the Ghanaian mulato, Christian Quist. Two others who had a great impact on the area were Nicholas Clerk and Daniel Awere.²⁰

The Bremen missionaries left the country during the First World War. It was this same period that the Scottish missionaries replaced the Basel and Bremen missionaries. There are two groups of the Presbyterian Churches in the country today. These are the Presbyterian Church of Ghana which is headquartered in Accra, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church with its headquarters at the capital of the Volta Region, Ho.

¹⁷ F.K, Buah, . *A History of Ghana*. 133.

¹⁸ Peter, Clarke,. *West Africa and Christianity*, 3.

¹⁹ Elizabeth, Isichei,. *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*. Oxford: (Oxford University Press, 1977), 167.

²⁰ F.K Buah, . *A History of Ghana*, 136.

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society sent Thomas Birch Freeman to Cape Coast. Freeman worked for fifty-two (52) years, in the course of which he established many churches and laid the foundations of the Ghana Methodist Church.²¹

The Mission Churches established the Christian council of Ghana, which is a unifying organization, in 1929. It represents the Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Evangelical Presbyterian, African Methodist Episcopal Zionist, and Christian Methodist.

The English also introduced Anglicanism in Ghana just after they took over the Cape Coast Castle from the Dutch. Thomas Thompson, an Anglican priest, who was appointed to serve the traders in the castle also set out to evangelise the people of Cape Coast. Later one of his converts, a native of Cape Coast, Philip Quaake, trained in England, succeeded Thompson in 1766 and took up his post as catechist.²²

According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Ghana, Christians account for 71.2% of the population of Ghana, followed by Islam which constitutes 17.6%. In the case of the Ejura-Sekyedumasi Municipality, the 2010 census gives the percentage of Christians to Muslims for the whole municipality as 49.5% to 43% respectively.²³ However, the population of Muslims in the Ejura township is believed by many residents to be more than Christians.

The Ministry of Food and Agriculture gives Ejura's religious distribution as 65% Muslims, 30% Christians and 5% as Traditional Religion adherents.²³ Ejura has one of the oldest and biggest market centres in Ashanti region.

²¹ Baëta, C. G., "Introductory Review", in C. G. Baëta (ed.). *Christianity in Tropical Africa*. London: (Oxford University Press, 1968), 37.

²² Parsons, Robert T. *Religion in an African Society*. Leiden: (E.J. Brill, 1964), 3. ²³ Ghana Statistical Service, 2010 Population and Housing Census.

²³ mofa.gov.gh/site/?page_id=857 accessed 03/09/2016

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the local, as well as, the international context, religion can be seen as both the cause of conflicts and an important tool for conflict resolution. A multidimensional approach to religion becomes necessary, in order to understand, the role of religion as a major force for integration or marginalization.²⁴

Violence and discrimination against religious groups by governments, and rival faiths, have reached new heights in most countries. According to a new report by the Washington-based Pew Research Centre, social hostility such as attacks on minority faith groups or pressure to conform to certain religious norms was strong in one-third of the 198 countries and territories surveyed in 2012, especially, in the Middle East and North Africa. Religious-related terrorism and sectarian violence occurred in one-fifth of those countries in that year, while states imposed legal limits on worship, preaching or religious costumes in almost 30 percent of them. The report states that, "Religious hostilities increased in every major region of the world except the Americas".²⁶

Reports on conflicts, especially in Africa, often claim that Christian-Muslim intolerance is the main cause. However, there are many areas in our world today and Ghana in particular, where peaceful and harmonious exchanges take place on daily basis between Christians and Muslims. Such positive exchanges have received not much attention in the study of religions in Ghana.

²⁴ Erik Eynikel and Angelika Ziaka., *Religion and Conflict: Essays on the origins of Religious Conflicts and Resolution Approaches*. (Harpree Pub. London, 2011), 17. ²⁶ "The Telegraph, Religious conflict in global rise-report."

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/10572342/Religious-conflict-in-global-rise-report.html accessed April 17, 2016

Furthermore, Christian-Muslim conflicts across the globe have been one of the most complex underlying issues in the study of interfaith relations. What has made the Ejura case stand out is that, in the area of religion, the indigenous people form the minority whilst the settlers form the majority. Despite that, there has always been a healthy relationship among members of the two religions. Here, Christians and Muslims get along quite easily.

In fact, Christians and Muslims live in close proximity to each other in villages, communities, families, houses, and at times in rooms. They do encounter each other at school, the market place, social gatherings such as naming ceremonies, marriages, and funerals, and even at religious functions. Nevertheless, the claim that peaceful co-existence takes place in the town raises some important questions: Is the statement true? If so, then what are the issues contributing to such harmonious coexistence? What makes followers of these opposing faiths live peacefully together to the extent that their religious differences do not seem to matter so much to them? What could be done to make their encounters even better?

As Muslims and Christians interact what are the main issues that inform their judgements, decisions and actions? It is to find answers to these questions that the researcher undertakes this study. The study therefore seeks to explore the issues responsible for a healthy interfaith cooperation that ensure harmonious and cohesive Christian-Muslim relations that safeguard religious liberties and respect for diversities.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions guiding this research are as follows:

To what extent are Christians and Muslims in Ejura cooperating?

Is there any element that threatens the peaceful co-existence between these two communities of faith?

What can be done to sustain the seemingly harmonious relationship existing between these two different religious practitioners?

1.4 Research Objectives

- Examine the history of religious pluralism and its impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Ejura.
- Explore the dynamics of the encounter between these two opposing Abrahamic religions in Ejura.
- Explore the possibilities of reconstructing the interfaith encounter in order to promote cooperation.

1.5 Methodology

This study makes use of both primary and secondary materials. The primary source was obtained through the use of questionnaire and other structured interviews. Church leaders, Imams and traditional rulers were interviewed. The field data collected was augmented with further research into the secondary materials such as the periodicals, journals, textbooks, articles, and also some relevant information gathered from the internet on the topic. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed.

The quantitative aspect was limited to simple percentages used for the analysis of the data. This research strategy included both formal and informal interviews and observations. The qualitative method is useful for investigating a variety of problems including the assessment of

attitudes, opinions, demographic information, condition and procedures. This is often collected through questionnaire, interviews, or observations.²⁵ Carla Wiling argues that, qualitative research is usually concerned with meaning and in particular how people make sense of the world and how participants experience events from their own perspective.²⁶ A qualitative (descriptive) approach of this nature also provides a more accurate picture of events and seeks to explain people's perception and behaviour on the basis of the data gathered at a point in time. This method has the advantage of providing in-depth information from quite a large sample of individuals. The research again made use of open-ended questions that gave opportunity to the respondents to express their views in details. Only a few number of close-ended questions were used. The use of open-ended questions helped the researcher to elicit some crucial responses that would have been missing had he used openended questions.

In choosing the participants for the study, the researcher made use of the purposive sampling technique. This is a non-probability sampling method where elements selected for the sample are selected based on the judgement of the researcher. In using this sampling technique, the researcher relied on his own judgement in choosing the population for the study. The selection of the Christian and Muslim groups was based on the researcher's judgement. This technique is cost effective; however, it is prone to a high level of bias.²⁷ However, it must be said that, the selection of the religious and traditional leaders was based on their expertise in the specific area the researcher needed the information from.

²⁵ Gay, R. L.,. *Educational Research Competencies for Analysis for Application* (4th ed) New York: (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992) , 21.

²⁶ Wiling, C. *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Buckingham, UK: (Open University Press, 2001), 47.

²⁷ Research-methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-collection/purposive-sampling/ accessed 17/04/2016

Also, a total of eighty-seven (87) questionnaires were used in the analysis. Forty-seven (47) of the respondents were drawn from six (6) different Christian denominational churches while forty (40) were from two *Sunni* Islamic groups (*Tijaniyya* and *Ahlus Sunna wal Jama''a*).

1.6 The significance of the study.

In the first place, this study will help both Christians and Muslims enrich their knowledge on the other's tradition by making efforts towards towards a successful dialogue that avoids prejudices or judging the others faith as corrupt or wrong.

Again, it will help promote religious tolerance among Ghanaians be they Christians or Muslims.

Also, the study will add to the existing body of knowledge on religious studies.

Furthermore, the study gives recommendations to help in policy making to ensure peaceful coexistence.

1.7 Limitation of the study

The eighty-seven (87) respondents were all picked from their places of worship. The experiences and responses of those who could not attend church/mosque on that day were not captured. Again, responses collected at places such as the market, schools, homes may have been different from those collected at the places of worships. Also, most of the prospective respondents who were illiterates, declined to take part and where others agreed to take part, the researcher had to translate the questions into either Hausa or Twi for the "on the spot" interviews.

Again, by the nature of the study, there was a heavy reliance on internet sources because it was difficult getting materials for the study.

1.8 Delimitations

The study is delimited to only Christians who belong to the old or mission churches in Ghana. These are the denominations founded by the missionaries. They are popularly known as the Mainline or Historic or Orthodox Churches. They include churches such as the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church and the Baptist Church. According to Dovlo, in Ghana the New Religious Movements draw about 95% of their members from the Mainline Churches.²⁸ Even though the Seventh Day Adventist church is not considered one of the mission churches, the researcher thought it expedient to include it because of an emerging trend in Christian-Muslim relations initiated by the church and referred to as Adventist-Muslim relations.

On the Muslims part, the Sunni Muslims were chosen for this study. This includes the *Tijaniyyas* and the *Ahlus Sunnas*.

Again, though the research is not a comparative one, the researcher made several comparisons of Ejura with Mampong. This is so because, Mampong served as the entry point for the planting of most of the churches in Ejura.

²⁸ Elom, Dovlo., *The Church in Africa and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of New Religious Movements and Charismatic Churches*, in Exchange 27, Issue 1 (January 1998), 52-69.

1.9 Literature Review

The discourse on religious pluralism and Christian-Muslim Relations have seen many contributions both from Africa and the western world. The study examines the social solidarity theory of Emile Durkheim, the classical models of interreligious encounters such as the inclusivism, exclusivism, pluralism and the Suwari school of thought. Again, the theory on identity will be explored, because religion is an integral part of a person's identity. Lastly, the issue of fault line will be examined and the emphasis will be on Huntington's clash of civilisations.

1.9.1 Emile Durkheim's Concept of Social Solidarity

Emile Durkheim in his first major sociological work *The Division of Labour in Society* coined the phrase "social solidarity" to refer to the forces that bind people together. He continued that, the key to social solidarity was functional integration. To him, there are two basic forms of social solidarity. These are "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity". Mechanical solidarity on one hand is based on strongly shared beliefs, values and customs that hold small groups together. Organic solidarity on the other hand refers to an interdependence that is based on a complex division of labour. In a modern society, each person earns money from a specialized occupation and uses that money to buy goods and pay for services that thousands of others have specialized roles in providing. People are interconnected because of the differences in their skills and roles making them need each other to survive.²⁹

²⁹ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*. Trans. W. D. Halls, intro. Lewis A. Coser. New York: (Free Press, 1997), 27.

People in every given community need more than their immediate family members or their religious group members to survive. This need makes them put behind their religious identities in their quest to meet their basic needs. Christians and Muslims in this regard will have no qualms having business associates from the opposite group. This therefore validates Durkheim's assertion about the forces that bind people together in a society.

1.9.2 Religious Inclusivism

Religious inclusivism is the approach used for the understanding of the relationship between religions. This approach asserts that, while one set of beliefs is absolutely true, other sets of beliefs are at least partially true. The inclusivist view, has given rise to the concept of the "anonymous Christian" which is understood that, an adherent of a particular religion whom God saves through Christ, but who personally neither knows the Christ of the Bible nor has converted to Biblical Christianity. Christian inclusivists hold that salvation is made available through only Christian tradition and through Christ but members of other religious communities may be saved, but through grace and the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁰

Islamic inclusive stance takes the *dīn al-fithrah* approach. This view considers Islamic religion and its scripture (Holy Qur'an) as the original religion and the only measure of true religion and scripture. All other religious traditions are only deviations, of this original and authentic religion which is Islam and so, such other deviant religions are only partially correct. Thus, religions, other than Islamic religion, are given a certain level of legitimacy or authenticity by

³⁰ Goasodiocese.org/gallery-2/news-events/184-new-eveangelization-and-inter-religious-dialogue-in-theghananaian-context accessed 17/11/2016

virtue of their deviation from the original religion which is Islam.³¹ This inclusivist position was popularized by the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner³².

The fathers of the Second Vatican Council, adopted an inclusivist position in their esteemed documents *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium*, which are arguably considered as a sign of real change of attitude of the Church toward other religions. Reaffirming the centrality of the Catholic Church, in God's plan of salvation, the council fathers assert: "The Church...is necessary for salvation. For Christ, made present to us in His Body, which is the Church, as the one Mediator and unique Way of salvation". Furthermore, in these documents, the council fathers, apart from recognizing the presence in other religious traditions of "a ray of that Truth which enlightens all," enumerate some positive elements in even Islam (*Nostra Aetate*, 2) and affirm the Catholic Church's high esteem for the Muslims.³³

In his *Encyclical Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II, however, observes the human obstacles which have prevented non-Christians from the direct embrace of the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

He quotes that:

But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions, in which they live, do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions.³⁴

³¹ Goaso Diocese accessed 17/11/2016

³² Karl Rahner, S.J was born in 1904 and died in 1984. He was a German Jesuit priest and theologian. He is considered one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the 20th century.

³³ w2.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii-const_19641121_lumengentium_en.html accessed 17/11/2016

³⁴ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology_of_religions accessed 17/11/2016

1.9.3 Religious Exclusivism

Religious exclusivism refers to the theological position that holds on to the view of the finality of the Christian faith in Christ. The “finality of Christ” means that, there is no salvation in non-Christian religions. Based on the Aristotelian concept of truth as one and not many, the exclusivists regard all other religions as false and invalid since the Christian revelation is accepted as true.³⁵ Exclusivists hold that, salvation is through Christ alone and it is through a personal experience of commitment to Christ that one can receive assurance of salvation. The non-believers of Christ cannot receive such assurance since they are neither aware of the uniqueness of Christ nor acknowledge his lordship. The exclusivist view begins with the assertion that the Bible is the source of all knowledge about salvation and spirituality. As the Christian Church increasingly formulated, clarified and articulated this theology, it became increasingly clear about its own identity, especially, in relation to the „other“. Diana Eck highlights the relationship between exclusivism and identity building as:

Oneness and onliness are the language of identity... This identity is in part of what social theorists call an “oppositional identity”, built up over against who we are not. Exclusivism is more than simply a conviction about the transformative power of the particular vision one has; it is a conviction about its finality and its absolute priority over competing views. Exclusivism may therefore be the ideological foundation for isolationism. The exclusivist response to diversity, whether, theological, social, or political, is to mark ever more clearly the boundaries and borders separating “us” from “them”³⁶ In the Bible, the assertion of Jesus Christ that, “I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me”³⁷ makes it difficult to find any validity in other faiths. Even though some scholars have sought to put other interpretations to this biblical verse, the general opinion of Christians however, seems to mean

³⁵ Ken Gnanakan,. *The Pluralistic Predicament*, Bangalore: (Theological Book Trust, 1992), 63.

³⁶ D. Eck, „Is Our God Listening? Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism,“ in R. Boase, *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2005), 27.

³⁷ The Holy Bible,.(John 14:6 RSV)

that, no one will attain salvation both in this world and in the hereafter, except one is a Christian. In the same vein, Islamic exclusivism also holds to the finality of Islam as the only true religion. Quran 5:3 states “This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion”.³⁸ Another *sura* (chapter) also states “And whoever desires other than Islam as religion, never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.”³⁹

This exclusivist model is one of the several approaches to understanding the relationship between religions. It asserts that, while one set of beliefs is absolutely true, other sets of beliefs are at least only partially true.⁴⁰

1.9.4 Religious Pluralism

The terms religious pluralism and diversity are often used inter-changeably to refer to the wide array of religious faiths that co-exist. On one hand, religious diversity emphasizes the differences in religious faiths while on the other hand religious pluralism focuses on the relationship between devotees of diverse religious faiths. Religious pluralism is synonymous to freedom of worship and expression but it centres more on the notion of, „live and let live“. Religious pluralism therefore demands participation and the focus is on the relationship between devotees of diverse religious faiths. It is based on this understanding that Diana Eck opined, religious pluralism requires, “an energetic engagement with diversities”.⁴¹

³⁸ The Holy Quran- Tafsir Ibn Kathir

³⁹ The Holy Quran Imraan 3:85

⁴⁰ En.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inclusivism accessed on 27th May, 2016

⁴¹ Eck L. Diana, What is Pluralism? <http://www.academiacroom.com/topic/religious>. Accessed 27/04/2016

⁴⁴ Osemeka N. Irene. The Management of Religious Diversity in West Africa: The Exceptionalism of the Wolof And Yoruba In The Post-Independence Period, (2014). <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/4611762.pdf> Accessed 27/04/2016

The definition of religious pluralism as stated in a study by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) harps on the factor of relationship because it is at the relational level that the validity of religious faiths can be better expressed. Religious pluralism is thus defined, “as respect for distinct religious and nonreligious identities, active and positive relationships between different religious and non-religious communities and the commitment across religious lines to building a healthy, diverse and shared society”.⁴⁴ To this writer, religious pluralism is a reality of our modern society that needs to be embraced by all.

1.9.5 The Suwarian school of thought

The Suwari school of thought is another theory that seeks to prescribe an ideal Muslim-non Muslim relationship. Nehemiah Letvzion refers to this school of thought as “accommodationist Islam”. It was developed by a Soninke scholar by name Al-Hajj Salim Suwari.⁴² It presents the Suwarian position on interfaith cooperation in the following way:

First, *kufr*, unbelief, is the result of *jahl*- that is to say unbelief is a matter of ignorance and not wickedness.

Second, God’s grand design for the world is such that some people remain in the *jahiliyya*, the state of ignorance, longer than others.

Third, true conversion can, therefore occur in God’s time, and to actively proselytize is to interfere with God’s will.

Fourth, jihad against unbelievers is an unacceptable method of conversion, and recourse to arms is only permissible in self-defense should the very existence of the Muslims be threatened by unbelievers.

Fifth, Muslims may accept the authority of non-Muslims rulers, and indeed support it in so far as this enables them to follow their own way of life in accordance with the *sunna* of the Prophet.

⁴² Ivor Wilks, “The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest”, in Nehemia Levtzion and R.L. Pouwels (eds.). *The History of Islam in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, (2000):93-115.

Sixth, the Muslims have to present the unbelievers with *qudwa*, example, and so, when the time for conversion comes, thereby make *iqtida*”, emulation.

Seventh, the Muslims must ensure that, by commitment to education and learning, they keep their observance of the Law free from error.

1.9.6. The Social Identity theory

The social identity theory was formulated by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. It is defined as a person’s sense of who he/she is based on their group memberships. People therefore enhance the status of the group they belong to, in order, to increase their self-image.

The central idea of this theory is that, group members of an in-group will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group, thereby enhancing their own self-image. Tajfel proposes that there are three mental processes in evaluating some people as others as “us” (in-group) or “them” (out-group). The three mental processes are social categorization, social identification and social comparison. For the social categorization, he asserts we categorize people into black, white, Christian, Muslim in order to understand the social environment. For the social identification, he asserts that, we adopt the identity of the group we have categorized ourselves as belonging to. Lastly, the social comparison according to Tajfel, helps people to give favourable appraisal to their own group by comparing it to other groups.⁴³. Despite the fact that the people in the Ejura community see themselves as members of the same community, the individuals make a cognitive appraisals of themselves and choose whether to make their religion, tribe etcetera their primary identity. Religious affiliation has most often been people’s primary identities because of its transcending nature and the kind of social support it offers its members.

⁴³ McLeod, S. A. *Social Identity Theory*, (2008). Retrieved from www.simplepsychology.org/social-identitytheory.html accessed 13/08/2016

1.10 Organization of the work

This research is organized into six main chapters. The Chapter one deals with the introduction, the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the methodology to be used, the scope of the study, limitations of the study and the organization of the study. Chapter two deals with some conceptual issues and developments related to the study.

Chapter three looks at the people of Ejura and their religion. This chapter specifically, provides information on the history of Ejura and the planting of Islam and Christianity in that town. Chapter four deals with the analysis of the data collected from the field. Chapter five discusses the data presented in chapter four. The sixth and the final chapter covers the epoch/pinnacle of the work which is the summary of the findings, conclusions made, and the recommendations proposed.

1.11 Conclusion

Religious differences have been the bane of many African countries, such as, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Nigeria and many others. These religious differences have led to warfare. However, in Ghana, Christians and Muslims have found a way of living together in peace and harmony through their daily interactions. In view of the importance of peace in nation building, practical efforts must be made to preserve the healthy relationship that exists between Christians and Muslims in Ghana and particularly at Ejura.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the general overview of the study. It dealt with the introduction and background to the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the aim and objectives of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, literature review and the scope and content of the study together with the organization of the study and the definition of relevant concepts. This chapter examines some conceptual issues and developments on religious pluralism. Specifically, it looks at the concept of acculturation as the basis for religious pluralism/tolerance. It also looks at some reported cases of religious intolerance and conflicts in Ghana. The existing Muslims' and Christians' understanding and participation in interfaith-dialogue are examined here. The Bible and Quran are also examined as the sources of religious pluralism.

2.2 Acculturation and Religious Tolerance

Acculturation refers to the meeting of two cultures and the challenges that arise from this meeting. Herskovits in his studies of *New World Negro* cultures provides numerous analyses of what he called "syncretism or recombination of cultural elements from different societies into new wholes."⁴⁴ This therefore implies that the easy acceptance of Christianity and Islam by the African Indigenous Religion's adherents paved the way for the later yet to be experienced religious tolerance between those two different faiths; that is Christianity and Islam.

⁴⁴ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/anthropology-and-archaeology/anthropology-terms-and-concepts/acculturation> accessed 1st February, 2017

Before the introduction of Islam and Christianity in Ghana, Ghanaians were traditionalists or indigenous religious worshippers in their religious orientation. They were extremely religious with varied religious beliefs and sanctions constituting the very foundation of the society. They acknowledged these various deities in addition to the Supreme God, the creator of the mankind and the universe. This belief system was similar in most, if not all, African countries. This made the African easily borrow some religious practices and elements from other religions aside their own indigenous one in what scholars of religion refer to as „syncretism“.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, syncretism or the mixing of African Traditional Religion with either Christianity or Islam is a common phenomenon recorded in many parts of the region. This development is believed by some scholars to be the basis and explanation for the religious tolerance on the part of the African.⁴⁵ Mbiti corroborates this fact by stating that, „many millions of Africans are followers of more than one religion, even if they may register or be counted in census as adherents of only one religion“.⁴⁶

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was a well-established Muslim community in Kumasi that regarded the then Asantehene, Osei Tutu Kwame, as a friend on whom they could rely on for protection.⁴⁷ This therefore means there was an exemplary leadership on religious tolerance.

Hiskett alludes to syncretism when he wrote of the religious lives of the converted chiefs who, according to him, „...consulted both shrine priests and Muslim *imams*. They required the

⁴⁵ Howard-Hassmann, Rhoda E. *Human rights in Commonwealth Africa*. G – Reference, Information and Interdisciplinary Subjects Series; Human Rights in Commonwealth Africa:(Rowman & Littlefield(1986), 107.

⁴⁶ J.S, Mbiti, , *Concepts of God in Africa*, UK: SPC, London, 1970)

⁴⁷ Nehemia, Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 104./Owusu Ansah D. (1990)

traditional ritual from the former and Muslim prayers from the latter”.⁴⁸ This practice was perceived by scholars in different ways. Some describe it as “spiritual dualism”.⁴⁹ Osman dan Fodio referred to this as a “new Islamic religion” as practiced in Dagomba as “infidelity”.⁵⁰ To Clarke and Goody, it is called a “mix” religion.⁵¹ In the same vein, Levtzion refers to it as “half-Islamization” in reference to a Gonja chief who was neither a Muslim nor a complete pagan.⁵² There was evidence of strong reciprocal relationship between Islam and Traditional cultural practices in the Northern part of Ghana. Speaking about the sort of Islam he found in Wa, Ghana Clarke makes an observation that: “...the Muslims allied with the chiefs and took on the language and many of the customs of the local people. They also allowed Islam to be adapted to a very considerable degree of the local culture.” By this statement, Clarke confirms Levtzion’s claim of the Dagomba Muslim functioning as a shrine priest and an *imam*.⁵² Nonetheless, although some chiefs and local traders got converted to the Islamic faith they continued to perform their traditional duties.⁵³ Both Goody and Levtzion observe that in Kpembe, the capital of Eastern Gonja, the major festival Damba, was held on the anniversary of the *mawlid* (Prophet Muhammad’s birth) with hardly any Islamic features.

The African Traditional Religion, again, well tolerated Christianity. In the words of Riis as quoted by Clarke, the local people did neither become Christians nor opposed it. It is reported that, in 1857, Mohenu, the priest of Lakpa, the god of war of the Ga state in Ghana was baptized

⁴⁸ Mervyn Hiskett., *The Course of Islam in Africa*. Edinburgh: (Edinburgh University Press, 1994)

⁴⁹ J.S, Trimmingham., *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*. London: (Longmans, Green, 1968)

⁵⁰ Peter, Clarke. *West Africa and Christianity*. London: (Edward Arnold Publishers, 1986)

⁵¹ Cosmas J.E Sarbah, *A Critical Study Of Christian-Muslim Relations In The Central Region Of Ghana with special reference to Traditional Akan values*, (University of Birmingham, 2010) ⁵² Nehemiah Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 54.

⁵² Nehemiah Levtzion., *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*.

⁵³ Goody, Jack (ed.). *Literacy in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge: University Press.

and he became a Christian. He adopted the name of Paul and served the mission for thirty-years.⁵⁴

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2.3 Religious Intolerance and Conflicts in Ghana

The “The Apologetics Index”, an evangelical Christian counter-cult web site defines religious tolerance as “Acknowledging and supporting that individuals have the right and freedom to practice their own beliefs and related legitimate practices, without necessarily validating those beliefs”.⁵⁵

According to the United Nations General Assembly Commission of 1948, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance (United Nations 1948). Even though not formally legally binding, the Declaration has been adopted in or influenced many national constitutions since 1948, including Ghana’s Constitution. It also serves as the foundation for a growing number of international treaties and national laws.⁵⁶

Inter-religious conflicts are very rare in Ghana except in very few cases. However, there were violent confrontations between Christians and Muslims from the 1970s onwards. In an interview with Samwini Nathan by David Osei-Wusu, Samwini described the 1970s onwards as the “Christian-Muslim conflict periods”. He continued that:

“Churches began now to expand their territories all over the place; and now they were beginning to take the gospel from the southern bases into the Zongos (Muslim communities). Because they did not know how to minister to Muslims, some of them began to teach polemics and others also thought that it was time for them to adopt the Ahmadiyya strategy by using both the Quran and the Bible to preach to the Muslims as the Ahmadis have done without any negative consequence.

The Muslims did not take it kindly that non-Muslims handle discussions on the Quran and especially so when it was perceived to have been handled, not in, the proper way. These conflicts became very serious in the 1980s and early 1990s, leading to conflicts in Accra. Examples could

⁵⁴ Nathan, I. Samwini, . The Muslim resurgence in Ghana, 44

⁵⁵ www.religioustolerance.org/relintol1.htm

⁵⁶ Nathan I. Samwini (2014) “Religious Toleration as a key factor for Social Stability in Plural Ghana”. *Developing Country Studies*. Vol.4, No.12. www.iiste.org/org/Journals/index.../13820 accessed 14th February,2017

be found in similar cases that took place at Teshie-Nungua when a Christian Crusade was scattered and dispersed because they were using both the Quran and the Bible to preach. The Muslims mobilised from all over Accra-from Nima and other parts of the city's Muslim communities and go to Teshie-Nungua to scatter the Crusade Preachers. In the 1990s, it was more frequent to see conflicts. In Sekondi, a Christian "open-air" public or street preaching programme was scattered or dispersed by Muslim youth, because the Christian preacher used the Muslim call to prayer to call his audience. When the Muslims got there, they found this person using both the Quran and the Bible in preaching and this led to conflict and destruction of property--a situation that led to the intervention of the Christian Council of Ghana and the Forum of Religious Bodies.

In 1995, over 2000 Muslim youth were brought before the court because they did a lot of damage. The Christian Council of Ghana, The Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Forum of Religious Bodies intervened and it is of interest to know that, when they did so, they wrote to the then Minister of Interior saying that "set these people free, we will settle it at the religious level." After the young Muslims have been set free, the Forum of Religious Bodies delegation went to Sekodi to assess the damage and in the value of the currency it was over 20 million cedis (about 300 cedis to the dollar in those days). The Forum of Religious Bodies shared the amount to be paid by both groups. Up till today, the Muslims have not paid. The Christian Council paid its part of over 11 million cedis, the Muslims took 10 million but they have not paid the debt.

There were other cases also in Kumasi where conflict had been caused by Christian preaching to Muslims.... There was also a case in Tamale when an American Evangelist had to be smuggled out of the town overnight because he had preach to say that "Jesus is Lord", and this statement the Muslims thought it to be an affront to their religion and they mobilized, but the police got to know of it and smuggled the preacher out of the town. So there have been instances of conflict in Ghana. For instance, between October 1995 and October 1997 when I joined the Council and began compiling inter-religious conflicts between Christians and nonChristians, between the 2 year period, we compiled 32 cases of conflict reported in the Ghana media. Of these, 8 of them were Christian-on-Muslim; 9 were Muslim-on-Muslim conflicts; and the others were not specified. For us, in a country that boasts of peaceful co-existence between religions, 32 religious conflicts in two years was too much for us".⁵⁷

These developments do not manifest in the Ghanaian communities in present days but do sometimes occur in the educational institutions.

On 13th January, 2017, it was reported by the *Daily Guide* that seventy-three Muslim students at the St. Vincent College of Education in Yendi, Northern Region, were punished for failing

⁵⁷ Samwini I. Nathan interviewed by Owusu-Ansah David on the function and structure of the Ghana Christian Council dated 18th July, 2005. Samwini was the Director of Christian-Muslim Relations at the Ghana Christian Council at the time of interview. Diversity and Tolerance in the Islam of West Africa (<http://westafricanislam.matrix.msu.edu>) accessed 11/06/2016

to attend morning devotion. They were asked to weed around the school's football field for displaying an act of insubordination. This misunderstanding between the Muslim students and the authorities of the school led to the destruction of examination materials.⁵⁸

In March 2008, tragedy fell at the Adisadel College community in Cape Coast when a final year Muslim student fell from a storey building and died. According to the media report, the boy failed to attend church service and upon seeing the senior housemaster, he tried to flee and he fell from the fourth floor of the building and his head hit a gutter and he died. Soon after the incident, the Muslim students and some other students gathered, armed with stones, attacked and vandalized the house of another senior house master.⁵⁹

The Ejuraman Ghana Muslim Students Association on June 10th 2014 accused the Anglican Bishop of religious intolerance by attempting to halt Islamic practices and activities in the Ejuraman Anglican Senior High School. But for the timely intervention of some opinion leaders in the Muslim community, some irate Muslim youth, would have attacked the school.

The controversy was sparked off by the Muslim students' plan to build a mosque in the school.⁶⁰ It is important to note that, more than half of the students' population in the school is Muslims and for that matter, they may have felt that their numerical strength gives a good reason for them to have a place of worship which the Bishop did not assent to. It is important to note that, Ghana as a secular country offers citizens the right to practice their religions and this provision overrides those of institutions which try to limit freedom of worship.

⁵⁸ dailyguideafrica.com/73-muslim-students-punished-devotion accessed 14th February, 2017

⁵⁹ ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewArchive/Adisadel-student-jumps-to-his-death-140847 accessed 14th February, 2017

⁶⁰ <http://modernghana.com/sports/547983/1/bishop-sarfo-yinka-accused-of-violating-freedom-o.html> accessed 01/02/2017

On the 20th February 2015, the Muslim community in the Western region protested against what they referred to as “human right abuse of Muslim children” in the second cycle institutions. Their concern was that, Muslim students were being forced to take part in Christian worship. The aftermath of this protest brought about a tug of war between Muslims and the government on one side and the Christian Council of Ghana and the Conference of Catholic Bishops on other side who felt government was taking sides on the issue.

There is a recent reported case of violent clashes between Muslims and the Seventh Day Adventists at Atebubu over a piece of land. In the ensued violence, the church and the mission house were burned. Aside these, there have not been much inter religious conflicts in the country recently. Most of the religious-related conflict cases currently reported have been intra-religious or sectarian in nature. In the Muslims scene, it has often been *Ahlu Sunna* and *Tijaniyya* Muslim groups as recorded at Wenchi, in the Brong Ahafo region, Tafo and Aboabo, both in Kumasi, Ejura in the Ashanti region, Tamale in the Northern Region and some other Muslim communities.

2.4 The Two major Muslim groups

There are two major branches in Islam. These are the Sunni and Shi'a. This division occurred shortly after the death of Prophet Mohammed over the question of who was to lead the Muslim *umma* (brotherhood). The Shi'a believed it should have been the prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Imam Ali, whom he had selected before his death. A view the Sunnis did not support. The Sunnis (orthodox) are the mainstream majority and form 90 percent of the Muslim population worldwide. The Sunnis are further divided into the “Salafis” and the “Sufis”.

2.4.1 The Sufis

Sufism is the mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek divine love and knowledge through a direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of humanity and of God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.⁶¹ The historical origin of the word *Sufi* is derived from the Arabic word for wool (*suf*) mostly used in rough garments worn by ascetics in the Near East for centuries. It is further derived from *As-hab-Sufa*, a group of companions who confined themselves in the mosque meditating and learning during Prophet Muhammed's time. Their activity was ritual withdrawal from worldly affairs. Some Sufi writers highlight this meaning of the word, and they suggest that wool was the preferred dress of most of the prophets as well.

The Sufi quest is often described as a journey (*sair illallah*) beginning with the withdrawal from the world and the subsequent reflection on religious and social truths. Reflection then leads to meditation *muraqaba* which cultivates such virtues as repentance, morality, and trust in God. When the cultivation of one virtue is complete, the traveller receives signs urging him/her to move on to another. The final destination is the state of *al-fana* (annihilation): overcoming one's ego, erasing will and volition and emptying the self so that it can be filled with God's vision, love and will. This leads to a state of bliss, a sense of being one with God and the cosmos, an appreciation of the meanings of life and Islam, with heightened ethical consciousness and the patterns of social relations rooted in it.

⁶¹ Annemarie, Schimmel, *Sufism*.

<https://global.britanica.com/topic/Sufism>

accessed 25/01/2017

Sufism can assume a myriad of ethical, philosophical and institutional forms. Ethical Sufism is based on the concept of *ihsan* (goodness). *Husn*, the root from which *ihsan* is derived, refers to positive qualities in general. God is *al-Muhsin*, the doer of *Ihsan*. The Qurʿan also connects *ihsan* to everything praiseworthy, including sincerity, trust in God, worship, love and good deeds.⁶²

Ethical Sufism dates back to the first centuries of the Islamic era. It began as a moral protest against political triumphalism, rigid legalism and ritualistic piety in the early periods of Islamic history. Its most basic themes are renunciation of the individual's will and everything other than God's. It took on several distinctive forms. Hasan al-Basri (642-728) stressed abandoning concern with the material world; Rabiʿatu al-Adawiyya (713-801) is renowned for her all-consuming love of God and efforts to aid the poor despite her own poverty; AlHarith ibn Asad Al-Muhasabi(781-857), developed strategies for introspection and the cultivation of virtue. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali wove these themes together in his "Alchemy of Happiness", considered by many to be the classical formulation of ethical Sufism.

Today Sufi religious orders continue to play important roles in Muslim life nearly everywhere in the world even in countries where they have been outlawed and forced underground by Salafi (Saudi Arabia) or secular (Turkey) governments.

The North African fifteenth century Muslim philosopher and historian, Ibn Khaldun wrote this about Sufism:

Sufism belongs to the sciences of the religious law that originated in Islam. It is based on the assumption that the practices of its adherents had always been considered by the important early Muslims, the men around Mohammed and the men of the second generation, as well as those who came after them, as the path of truth and right guidance. The Sufi approach is based on

⁶² S. Murata and Chittick. *Sufism*.

constant application to divine worship, complete devotion to God, aversion to the temporal splendour of the world, abstinence from pleasure, wealth, and position to which the great mass aspire. It also includes a retirement from the world into solitude for divine worship. These things were general among the men around Mohammed and the early Muslims.⁶³

To scholars like Berhman, the introduction of Sufi brotherhoods in West Africa reinforced the Islamisation of West Africa.⁶⁴ The two most common Sufi *turuq (order)* are the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya. Jallaluddin Mohammed Rumi is considered the greatest metaphysical thinker and Sufi poet of all times. His views on religious pluralism can be summarized in the dictum that „The lamps are different but the Light is the same“. To Dumbe, Sufism was an integral part of the religious worldview of the early transmitters of Islam in the Volta Basin and the Gold Coast.⁶⁵ Umar Futi, Ahmed Futa, Al-Hajj Idrissou are some of the pioneer scholars who contributed immensely to the growth of the tariqa Tijaniyya in the GoldCoast. Abass Muhammad, the Imam of Accra was believed to have been initiated into Tijaniyya by Umar Futi somewhere in the second decade of the 20th century. The national Chief Imam of Ghana, Uthman Nuhu Sharabutu, was initiated into the order by Abass Muhammad. Also, Kamaldeen Ahmad, the current Deputy Imam, was equally introduced into the Tijaniyya by Ahmadu Futa, who himself may have been initiated by Umar Futi. At Salaga, in northern Ghana, AlHajj Idrissou from northern Nigeria was identified to have propagated the Tijaniyya in the town.⁶⁶

⁶³ Carl W. Ernst. (2011). *Sufism. An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*. Shambhala Publications. Boston

⁶⁴ Nathan I. Samwini, Nathan (2006) . *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim- Christian Relations*. Berlin: Lit Verlag,

⁶⁵ Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana:*

⁶⁶ Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana:*

In present day Ghana, the Sufis of whom the majority, belong to the *Tijaniyya Tariqqa*, do not engage in open air public *da'wa* or preaching. Their attitude still reflects that of the early Muslims who came to Ghana.

2.4.2 The Salafis

Salafism is a school of Sunni Islam that condemns theological innovation or dynamism and advocates strict adherence to *shari'a* and to the social structures that existed in the early days of Islam.⁶⁷ The idea of Salafism is that, the most authentic and true Islam is found in the lived example of the early, righteous generations of Muslims, known as the *Salaf*, who were closest to the prophet and lived in time with him. Salafism is a literalist Sunni theological and legal orientation that takes its name from the expression "*al-salaf al-salih*" "the pious predecessors", a phrase referring to the first three generations of Muslims who represent the religion's "golden age". According to Salafis, these early Muslims most accurately preserved the Prophet Muhammad's statements and actions because they knew him or those close to him.⁶⁸

The early Salafi thought was not inherently political, but became so, because, it challenged the established orthodoxy tied to institutional Sufism. Ibn Hanbal avoided the sectarian controversies that divided the Muslim community of his day. Ibn Taymiyyah, on the other hand,

⁶⁷ www.thefreedictionary.com/salafism accessed 25/01/2017

⁶⁸ Shadi H., and Rashid D. (2016),. *Islamism, Salafism, and Jihadism: A primer*
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer> Brookings institution
accessed 3rd February, 2017

was known for heated polemics that led to conflict with religious and political authorities. He was jailed for his polemical teachings five times and died in prison.⁶⁹

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was the first Salafi scholar to have the opportunity to establish his theological views as a socio-political reality. He was born into a family of Hanbalite jurists in Najd, a remote region in Eastern Arabia. He studied with leading Hanbali scholars in Syria, Iraq and Iran as well as in Mecca and Medina. He returned to Najd in 1750, and began preaching against customs and religious practices he considered to be *shirk*. His major contribution to Salafi thought was *Kitab al-Tawhid*, in which he summarized Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of *shirk*. He distinguished the greater and lesser *shirk*. He believed that both lead to eternal punishment but only greater *shirk* attracts death penalty in this world. He considers most of the practices by the Sufi, such as, the use of amulets, traditional healing practices and saint veneration as greater sin. He considered the belief in causality other than that of God and public displays of religious piety including the collective devotional practices of Sufi orders lesser *shirk*.⁷⁰

Initially Ibn Abd al-Wahhab failed to convince the people of Najd to accept Salafism. He then contracted an alliance with Muhammad Ibn Saud (d.1765) the Emir of Dar'iyah in northeastern Arabia. The alliance stipulated that Ibn Saud would support Ibn Abd al-Wahhabi's religious program in return for his endorsement of Ibn Saud's political agenda. Saudi conquests of most of Arabia led to the establishment of a Wahhabi theocracy in which the coercive power of the state is used to enforce Salafi norms.⁷¹

⁶⁹ E. Sirriyeh (1990). *Modern Muslim interpretations of shirk*. Religion 20(2): 139-159.

⁷⁰ www.terrorismanalysits.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/311/html accessed 3rd February, 2017

⁷¹ N. De Long-Bas, *Wahha Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*

Like Sufism, Salafism is not inherently political. Salafi moral authority flows from the claim that it seeks to restore Islam to its pure or pristine condition. The oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s, enabled the Saudi government and the religious foundations backed by the royal family including the Muslim World League (MWL) (Rabitaal-Alam al-Islami) to devote enormous financial resources to fund the attempts to spread Salafism.⁷² The World Muslim League has played a crucial role in promoting Salafism in Southeast Asia and West Africa through the provision of scholarships, for students to study at Saudi Arabian Islamic Universities and supports schools and mosques that graduates establish, when they return home. In Ghana, the Salafis are known by the name *Ahlus Sunna wal Jama''a*. To Kobo, Yusuf Soalih (Afa Ajura) is widely regarded as the initiator of this movement in Ghana. As he puts it, “the history of Wahhabism in Ghana is incomplete unless we trace its development to Afa Ajura’s reform activities”.⁷⁷

Dumbe was also of the view that, Salafi revivalism took different forms in Ghana after Umar Ibrahim had the opportunity to learn at the Islamic University in Madina and graduated in 1968. His efforts also led to the establishment in 1969, a modern organization known as the Islamic Research and Reformation Centre (IRRC).⁷³ As more Ghanaian students returned from Saudi universities, this group made inroads into the traditional sufi strong holds as they came to challenge the old order.

⁷² Michael Farquhar, . *Expanding the Wahhabi Mission: Saudi Arabia, the Islamic University of Medina and the Transnational Religious Economy*, (The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013).

http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3289/1/Farquhar_Expanding_the_Wahhabi_Mission.pdf accessed 3rd February, 2017. ⁷⁷

Ousman Kobo, . *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms*. Brill, Leiden: (Boston, 2012).

⁷³ Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*, (Sodertorn University, Jonathan Robson and Per Lindblom, Stockholm, 2013.)

2.5 Religious Pluralism from the Christian perspective

In 1971, the World Council of Churches (WCC), formed its sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies. From its inception the sub-unit on Dialogue has worked in close collaboration with its counterpart in the Roman Catholic Church, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Today, a number of regional and national ecumenical bodies and churches have incorporated dialogue into their life and work.⁷⁴

In 1979 the WCC produced a document entitled "Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths" which sought to identify and discuss the major practical and theological issues in interfaith relations. While it addressed some of the overall aspects, it recognized the need for more specific "guidelines" or ecumenical considerations on Christian relations with each of the major faith communities in the world.⁷⁵

This document results from the attempt to follow this up in the area of Christian-Muslim relations. It draws on the experience gained from the considerable work carried out over the years. All the meetings between Christians and Muslims organized by the sub-unit on Dialogue during the past twenty years have been documented in the WCC publication "Meeting in Faith". These meetings, however, are only a small part of a much richer history of relations and numerous dialogue encounters in many places. The document that follows is itself based on five regional meetings between Christians and Muslims organized in different parts of the

⁷⁴ World Council of Churches, 1992. Ecumenical Considerations.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/issues-in-christian-muslim-relations-ecumenical-considerations>
retrieved 7/9/2016

⁷⁵ The World Council of Churches. 1992

world. These meetings helped to identify some of the important issues which Christians and Muslims need to reflect on and continue to consider together in the years ahead. Many qualified persons in the field of Christian-Muslim relations were consulted in the process.⁷⁶

A first draft was produced under the title "Ecumenical Considerations on Christian-Muslim Relations". It was circulated widely and numerous comments were received. It was submitted to the Executive Committee for discussion (Santiago, March 1992), and subsequently revised.

The Central Committee (August 1992) reviewed the document stating that: "Although this is not a policy document, it provides careful analysis and thoughtful insight for Christians interested in inter-religious relations. It recounts the development of the WCC concern for a constructive dialogue between Christians and Muslims around the world."⁷⁷

It offers a few succinct and helpful reflections about Islam and Muslims to inform Christians at various stages of contact with their neighbours, underlining the importance for people in both faiths communities, to learn more about each other and from each other. The Central Committee received this document and referred it to the churches for study and appropriate action.⁷⁸

The Catholic Church's *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate*, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 1965 had this to say:

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her

⁷⁶ The World Council of Churches, 1992

⁷⁷ The World Council of Churches, 1992

⁷⁸ The World Council of Churches, 1992

with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod, urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding, and to preserve as well as to promote together, for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.⁷⁹

2.6 Religious Pluralism from Islamic perspective

Historically, Islam is believed to have had the advantage of being the youngest of the Abrahamic traditions and learning from the experience of its predecessors lessons about their treatment of minorities. Islam's self-understanding has included a conscious awareness of religious pluralism as the context for its own genesis since its inception in the seventh century. Instead of denying the validity of human experiences of transcendence that occur outside Islam, it recognizes and even confirms the salvific efficacy of such experiences.⁸⁰

In Islam, interfaith engagement, especially with Christians, who are referred to as the *People of the Book*, is a way to build understanding, find commonalities of belief and social responsibility, and encourage one another, in faith and good works. Quran 3:64. says " Say [O Mohammad]: O people of the book, come to a common understanding between us and you, that we shall worship no one except One God that we shall take no partners with Him and none of us shall take others for Lord beside One God".

⁷⁹ www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostraetate_en.html accessed 17/09/2016

⁸⁰ Jane. D. McAuliffe. *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*. Cambridge University Press. UK, , 2006

It was a Christian priest, Waraqah, cousin of Khadija (Prophet Muhammed's first and only wife for 25 years) who first testified that Prophet Muhammed had received divine revelation. A Christian king, Najashi of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), gave asylum to eighty (80) Muslims who migrated from Mecca because of persecution by pagan Arabs. The Qur'an says, "...nearest among them in love to the believers will you find those who say, „We are Christians“ because among these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced materialism, and they are not arrogant” (5:82).

When a delegation of Christians from the Roman Empire visited Prophet Muhammed, he invited them to stay in his mosque and allowed them to pray there according to their traditions. In 628 AD he granted a charter of privilege to the monks of St. Catherine Monastery in Mt. Sinai to assure them of their rights as a Christian minority. The charter is very significant in demonstrating the respect and tolerance of other faith communities as exemplified by the Prophet (p): “This is a letter from Mohammad ibn Abdallah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity. We are with them, they are my citizens, we will defend them.

The letter goes on to state that,

- No compulsion is to be on them.
- Neither their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries.
- No one is to destroy their house of worship, or to damage it, or to take anything from it to a Muslim's house.
- No one is to force them to fight (for Muslims). Muslims are to fight for them.
- If a Christian woman is married to a Muslim man, it should not take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from attending her church to pray.

- No one from my nation is to disobey this covenant till the Last Day.⁸¹

In Africa, Christian-Muslim relations date back to the days of Prophet Muhammed. With Christianity well established in North Africa, the valley of the Blue Nile (Nubia) which is the present day Ethiopia (Axum). The newly professed Muslims in 615 sought political asylum with the Negus of Axum. Though traditions vary somewhat, Sura al-Maryam (S. 19) is said to have played an important role; the result of the audience was that hospitality was granted to the group of Islamic refugees. One of the traditions recounts: On further questioning by the king on what they believe about Jesus Christ, Ja'far proceeded to quote some passages from the Qur'an about Jesus Christ: „Verily Christ Jesus, son of Mary, is the apostle of God and his word which he conveyed into Mary and a spirit proceeding from him.“ And when the Emperor asked him about Mary, he recited the Qur'an 19, which made the emperor weep till his beard was wet with his tears. He then replied them, “Verily this and that which Moses brought, emanate from one Lamp, go, for by Allah I will not suffer them to get at you, or even contemplate this”.⁸²

2.7 The Scriptures and Religious Pluralism

There are some aspects of the revealed scriptures that support religious pluralism or interfaith cooperation.

⁸¹ A. Zahoor, Z. Haq., Prophet Mohammed's Charter of Privileges to Christians: Letter to the Monks of St. Catherine Monastery, (1997).

⁸² MT Frederiks,. Let us understand our differences: Current trends in Christian-Muslim Relations in subSahara Africa edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/docs/1_Martha.doc retrieved 17/02/ 2016

2.7.1 The Qur'an

The Qur'an carefully makes distinction among people based on their allegiances to God. It further divides humanity into five religious categories. They are:

1. *Al Mu'minin wa al Muttaqun* (True believers and the righteous people). These are those who believe in One God, in all Biblical prophets (peace be upon them) including Muhammad (SAWS) as the seal of the prophets; on all revelations including the Qur'an as God's last revelation to humanity and the Day of Judgment. (Qur'an, 2:2-5).
2. *The Kuffar* (the unbelievers in God) or those who do not accept the existence of God. The frequent use of the word in the Qur'an is always precise. (The Qur'an, 2:6 &7). The word Kuffar is sometimes used by a section of the Muslims as a blanket term of reproach and rejection of all those felt to be enemies. Such usage is incorrect and inapplicable to most people. It has been used as a term of insult against Christians and Jews, blocking rather than opening dialogue and the possibility of peaceful relations.
3. *Al Munafiqun* (the hypocrites): This term refers to *"Those who claim they believe in God but their actions do not confirm such belief,"* Qur'an, 2:8-18. When Muhammed (SAWS) migrated to Madina, some pretended to be Muslims, but in their hearts were not
4. *Al Mushrikun* (those who associate partners with God, that is, those who worship idols): These are Makkans before Islam who were idol worshippers. It is in reference to their idol worship that the Qur'an says: *"Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; But He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed"* (4:48 and also 4:116).
5. *Ahl al-Kitab* (people of the Book, Jews and Christians). These are believers in God, but do not believe in Muhammed and the Qur'an as the last revelation of God, the Qur'an, 2:105, 3:64 and the word Ahl al-Kitab is repeated in many places.

Muslim resources for tolerance include some Quranic verses referring to Jews and Christians as “People of the Book. The Qur’an also talks of diversity as one of the wonderful works of God. It states: “If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community (*umma wahida*), but they continue to have their differences except those on whom your Lord has mercy for He created them to be this way, and the word of your Lord is final. The following Qur’anic verses clearly acknowledge the plurality of religions:

“Argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly. Say, „We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God are one [and the same]; we are devoted to Him” (Qur'an 29:46).

The Qur’an again affirms that, “There is no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error, so whoever rejects false gods and believes in God has grasped the firmest hand-hold, one that will never break” (Qur'an 2:256).

“Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know” Qur'an (30:22).

“People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him” (Qur'an 49:13, cf. 6:42).

Had your Lord willed, all the people on earth would have believed. So can you [Prophet] compel people to believe? (10:99).

“If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community, but they continue to have their differences” (Qur'an 11:118)

“Say [Prophet], „Disbelievers: I do not worship what you worship, you do not worship what I worship, I will never worship what you worship, you will never worship what I worship: you have your religion and I have mine“” (Qur'an 109:1-6).

Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord, there is no God but him. Turn away from those who join other gods with Him. If it had been God's will they would not have done so, but We have not made you their guardian, nor are you their keeper (6:107).

Closest in affection to the believers are those who say, „We are Christians,“ for there are among them people devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance (Qur'an 5:82).

2.7.2 The Bible

The Bible also clearly advocates for a peaceful coexistence between Christians and members of other faiths. Following the persecution of the early church and the dispersion of the people across the gentile lands, Peter, an elder of the church wrote a letter to the leadership of the church in dispersion urging them to honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God and honour the emperor (2 Peter 2:17). This epistle of Peter gives a clear picture on how Christians should live their lives in a secular state.

The books of the Old Testament especially, from Exodus to Deuteronomy make direct statements regarding the treatment of strangers. For example, Exodus 22:21 says: "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt". These texts

are frequently used in sermons to plead for compassion and tolerance of those who are different from adherents of Christianity and less powerful.⁸³

Hebrew 14:12 urges Christians to live at peace with all men.

Another classical evidence in the Bible that supports religious pluralism can be found in the Acts of the Apostles. Gamaliel, a Pharisee and a teacher of the law, honoured by everyone defended the apostles during their second arrest. Even though Gamaliel did not state openly he subscribed to the plurality of religions, he believed there could be other religion(s) that has divine approval. He states:

“Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. For before these days Theudas arose, giving himself out to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

After him Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!”⁸⁴

Gamaliel’s defense of the apostles was an admission that, aside their own religion of Judaism from which Christianity itself originated, there could be other equally valid religions. As he puts it “you might even be found opposing God” when you try to suppress this freedom of worship. Christians could therefore accept and work with people from other religions and leave the judgment to God.

⁸³ Samwini I. Nathan. *Religious Toleration as a key factor for Social Stability in Plural Ghana*. Developing Country Studies. Vol.4, No.12, 2014

⁸⁴ Acts of the Apostles (Acts 5:35-39) Revised Standard Version.

2.8 Religious Pluralism and Social Cohesion

According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, "cohere" means "hold firmly together, form a whole". The same word is explained in the *Oxford American Dictionary of Current English* as "(of parts or a whole) stick together, remain united". The *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, on the other hand, says that "cohesion is a state or situation in which all the parts or ideas fit together well so that they form a united whole".⁸⁵

According to Jensen, social cohesion refers to a process "... of building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities, in wealth and income and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community".⁸⁶

Sartori claims that human beings, "endlessly seek identity in some kind of belonging". In all societies, people live in social groups stratified by ethnicity, race, tribe, religion, caste, class or clan. In the past, men organized themselves in groups so as to assist each other through communal labor and so did the women.⁸⁷

Social cohesion is the connectedness among individuals of social groups that facilitate collaboration and equitable distribution of resource at household, community and state the level. It refers to those things which hold a society together. A society can cohere due to things like shared ethnicity, shared religion, for example. Religious traditions can also help to tie a society together by reinforcing a feeling of unity in its people. Social cohesion is vital for societal

⁸⁵ Joseph Chan et al. Reconsidering Social Cohesion: Developing a Definition and Analytical Framework for Empirical Research. *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Jan., 2006), pp. 273-302

⁸⁶ Tony Karbo, "Religion and social cohesion in Ethiopia", *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies* (2013) <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJPDS> Accessed August 17, 2016,

⁸⁷ *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 2013

stability and it facilitates the easing of material and psychological strands of poverty. It also affirms individual and group identities while including rather than excluding the less powerful groups.⁸⁸ Social cohesion is an aspect of social wellbeing. It is determined by the unity existing within a community, demonstrated by the shared understanding, mutual support and reciprocity in relationships. At the community level, social cohesion is an asset that provides security, regulates behavior and improves on people's standards of living.⁸⁹

Some scholars are of the view that, diversity may pose a threat to social cohesion because it is more likely that, people would trust and mix up with those who look like them, belong to their clan, speak their language and share their cultural values.⁹⁰ Proponents of this thesis argue that, the possibility of hostility increases with the increase in heterogeneity in a society. Mutual trust as a result remains low because it is rather easier to develop norms of reciprocity and trust in those societies which are ethnically and racially homogeneous.⁹¹ It is further argued that, ethnic diversity alienates people and pushes them towards isolation and segregation which reduces the possibility of a collective action, mutual help and cooperation.⁹²

It is the position of this research that, social cohesion is not only attained in a homogenous group. It could also be attained in a heterogeneous one through the acknowledgement and respecting of the diversity in a community. From the discussions of religious intolerance and conflicts in Ghana, one realizes that, in-group frictions or sectarianisms have often led to violent

⁸⁸ Tony Karbo, *Religion and social cohesion in Ethiopia*: International Journal of Peace and Development Studies, (2013). <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJPDS> accessed 11/09/2016

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Institute of Social Studies. (2013). *Diversity, Inclusiveness and Social Cohesion*, Working Paper No. 20131The Hague, The Netherlands.

⁹¹ Institute of Social Studies, 2013

⁹² Institute of Social Studies, 2013

confrontations among Muslim groups than in the out-groups. This is a clear indication that, homogeneity does not automatically promote cohesion always. In the same way, the presence of diversity need not breed conflict or alienation and disunity in a society.

2.9 Conclusion

To sum up, religious intolerance has not been much of a problem in Ghana, because, tolerance has been the defining character of most if not all Ghanaians, since the introduction of Islam and Christianity in the country. The native original religion's adherents or traditionalists either fully joined these foreign faiths or borrowed some elements from them. In recent times, many parts of the world have witnessed severe and fatal cases of religious intolerance by governments, rival faiths and in some instances, violent confrontations. Culprits of these practices base their actions on scriptural permission. However, a critical look at both the Qur'an and the Bible, for instance offer opportunity for interfaith dialogue. Regrettably, there have been some reported cases of religious intolerance between Muslims and Christians, however they have been short-lived.

The real confrontations have mostly been intra or within people of the same community of faith. It has often been either *Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a* and *Tijaniyya* groups in the same *Zongo* community or between two rival Christian groups. Elsewhere, the Salafi group which is considered a puritan Muslim group hardly engages in dialogue with even the Sufi group let alone Christians. In Ghana however, there have been the same level of cooperation between Muslims and Christians irrespective of their divergent doctrines. There seem to be a working principle of "let us agree to disagree" in our divergent beliefs. This has helped to build a strong social bond. The level of social cohesion in Ghana is so strong that, Muslims and

Christians send well wishes to each other on the occasion of *eidul fitr/adha* and Christmas or Easter respectively. Sometimes, they even enjoy the festivities together albeit not with the same motives. Muslims do attend wedding of their Christian relatives, friends, thanks giving services, ordinations of priests and even inter marry. This relationship, at the informal level, has become so strong that hardly would you attend a Christian wedding without seeing Muslim friends there or vice versa. The same can be said about funerals of both faiths. For more than a decade now, Christians on one hand have been donating food items to their Muslim brothers and sisters to help them in their annual Ramadan fasting. This gesture is not done because the Muslims are in need, but to show solidarity, love and care and to also strengthen the relationship between them. Muslims on the other hand, during *Eidul Fitr* and *Eidul adha* give food items, either cooked or raw, to their Christian neighbours, friends, relatives. These gestures backed by education to accept each other's doctrinal differences will help promote interfaith cooperation in Ghana.



CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY AND RELIGION OF EJURA

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter examined some conceptual issues and developments on religious pluralism. It looked at the concept of acculturation as the basis for religious pluralism/tolerance. It also looked at some reported cases of religious intolerance and conflicts in Ghana. Muslims and Christians understanding and participation in interfaithdialogue were also examined. The Bible and Quran were also examined as the sources of religious pluralism. This chapter presents some background issues relating to the study area, Ejura. It considers the background of Ejura with emphasis on the geographical location, economic profile, history and origin of the people, that is the residents the planting of Islam and Christianity in the town, the creation of the *zongo* community and the response of the native people to the two faiths, the impact of Islam and Christianity on the town and the role of religion and ethnicity in the town's politics.

3.1 Profile of the Ejura-Sekyedumasi Municipality

The Ejura-Sekyedumasi district was carved out of the former Sekyere and Offinso districts by a Legislative Instrument (L.I 1400) in 1988. The district was later upgraded to a municipal status by a Legislative Instrument (L.I 2098 in 2012).⁹³ According to Nana Appiah Kusi II, before 1988, Ejura was under the Sekyere district which, capital was Mampong. Sekyedumasi was also under Offinso. He continued that, the Ejura Divisional council wooed the Sekyedumasi council to join them so that they can form an independent district. That is why the names of the two towns were fused to form the name of the district as Ejura-Sekyedumasi.

⁹³ Ghana Statistical Service, 2010 Population and Housing Census, (2010)

The municipality is located in the Northeastern parts of the Ashanti Region. It shares boundaries with Atebubu-Amantin District to the Northeast, Mampong Municipality to the East, Sekyere South District to the South and the Offinso Municipality to the West. It covers a large land area of about 1340.1 square kilometers and constitutes about 7.3 percent of the region's total land area.⁹⁴ It is the fifth largest town in the Ashanti Region.

The Akan speaking people who are the indigenous group forms the largest ethnic group.

There are other ethnic groups such as the Kotokoli, Dagomba, Dagaaba, Konkomba, Gonja, Ewe, Gruma, Fulani and many others, therefore earning the district, the accolade

“ECOWAS”.⁹⁵ The district is the largest producer of maize in the Ashanti. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census Report, Ejura has a population of thirty-four thousand, four hundred and fourteen (34,414).

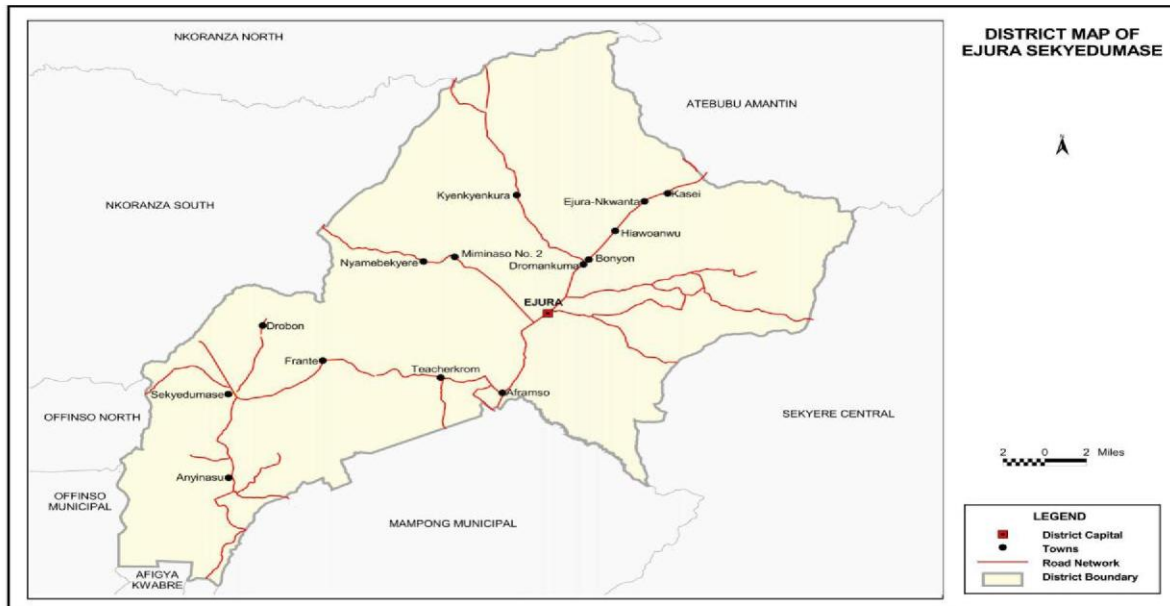


Fig. 1 Map of Ejura-Sekyedumasi Municipality.

⁹⁴ Ghana Statistical Service, 2010

⁹⁵ The 2012 Composite Budget of Ejura-Sekyedumase District Assembly

3.2 Ejura and its people

Ejura came from the Akan word, “Adwira” which is a type of plant used for purification. Tradition has it that, this plant was used to purify the warriors and to keep all evil spirits away from them after wars.⁹⁶ According to the oral tradition, the “adwira” plant was common there so the town was named after the plant. The establishment of this town is believed to be dated to the sixteenth (16) century.⁹⁷

The story recorded in traditional history is that the ancestress of this Asona family group was called Abrewa Musu who lived at Adanse Ayaase near Asante Bekwai. Her grand-daughter called Boahene had a son called Bonsie-Twum, and a daughter called Bomdawu. Bonsie Twum and his followers accompanied the Tena royal family who left Adanse and settled at Behinase.⁹⁸

They moved north-eastwards and settled at a place called Mampong-Akrofonso under the leadership of Boahenantuo, the first Beretuo royal to occupy the Mampong stool. It was during his time that Asante overthrew Denkyira, in mid-1701. Boahenantuo commanded the whole national army at the express command of Ejura, Nana Bonsie-Twum accompanied his superior officer to the war. Akuamoah Panyin succeeded Amaniampon. He is reported to have visited the site of Mampong and even began to build the town. Oral tradition has it that when they all moved from Mampong-Akrofonso to new Mampong, the Asona group under the leadership of Bonsie-Twum settled at Kubesinase. As they were still multiplying, they could not stay and expand. Nana Bonsie-Twum dispatched his nephew called Boakye on reconnaissance mission

⁹⁶ Rattray, RS(ed), “Ashanti Proverbs”, Oxford, 1916

⁹⁷ Nana Appiah Kusi Brempong II, interviewed on 02/11/2016

⁹⁸ The Spectator Friday, December 31, 2010 pg 31

and to explore the hitherto unknown lands. He was provided with one hundred gun-men. Their wandering took them to Anyinasa in the neighbourhood where the aboriginal settler directed them to look yonder and pitch their camp near the Odum tree.⁹⁹

However, they observed that the land was not suitable for their purpose, and continued the intensive search till they reached a place where the “adwira” plant was common. The only person they met there was Oduomponsem or Daa Amponsem who had a brother, Kuruboakuma. Therefore, Safohene Boakye returned to Mampong to give account of his mission.¹⁰⁰

Soon the land of Ejura came into the possession of the Asona royal group who were dwelling in Mampong-Asante. For some obvious reason, the chief of Apa who was a member of the Mampong royal house envied the land acquired by the Asona family. So the Mamponghene instructed Nana Bonsie-Twum and his adherents at Kubesinase to make Ejura their permanent home. Thus Nana Bonsie-Twum became the first chief of Ejura and Adontenhene of Mamponghene of Mampong-Asante traditional hierarchy.¹⁰¹

An oral tradition source attributes their place of origin to Akyem Duase. It states that, Nana Bonsie-Twum absconded with his household from Akyem Duase because the Asantehene sought to kill him for their defeat in a war. His first stop was at Asante Mampong-Akrofuso, near Nsuta. Among his entourage was Nana Boakye who was his second in-command and a brother. But Nana Boakye did not want to stay near Mampong for fear that they would be found out. He prevailed on the group and they moved further up north and came to their present location.

⁹⁹ The Spectator Friday, December 31, 2010

¹⁰⁰ The Spectator Friday, December 31, 2010

¹⁰¹ R. S. Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution. 204

Successive occupants of the Ejura stool were Nana Boakye, Oti Owusu Bekoe, Dua Aboodee, Apau Kumadee, Osei Hwedie, Osei Asumadu etc.

In an interview with the Kyidom Hene, Nana Appiah Kusi Brempong II, he was of the view that, Nana Boakye rather married Daa Amponsem and she trusted the Ejura land into his care. Their marriage brought forth many children who became the founding members of Ejura.¹⁰²

In the early days, Ejura commanded the trade route known as *Amaniampon Tempon* i.e. Amaniampon Highway, spanning between Kumase and the Hausa states in the north. The geographical position of Ejura therefore, made it a prosperous market centre where live-stock, blankets and smocks were brought there from the north, while traders from the Asante region brought kola nuts in exchange for cattle and coarse blankets.¹⁰³

The trading activities advertised the wealth of Ejura and attracted more influential persons who contributed to the economic and cultural development of the town. Ejura then became the economic heart of the north-east. Finally, Ejura was made the administrative capital of northeastern Asante, comprising Effiduase, Mampong, Nsuta, Asokore, Ntonso, Amanteng, Atebubu, Wiase and Dwan. Also a District Commissioner's office was established as well as a District Magistrate court set up to try both civil and criminal cases in 1913. Robert Sutherland Rattray¹⁰⁴ was posted there as an assist District Commissioner. The offices were removed to Mampong Asante at the instigation of the Mamponghene, Nana Osei Bonsu in 1921.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Nana Appiah Kubi Brempong II

¹⁰³ The Spectator Friday, December 31, 2010 pg 31

¹⁰⁴ Robert Sutherland Rattray (1818-1938) was an early Africanist. In 1906, he joined the Gold Coast Customs Service. In 1911, he became the assistant District Commissioner at Ejura.
www.revolvy.com/main/php?s=Robert+Sutherland&item_type accessed 21/09/2016

¹⁰⁵ The Spectator Friday, December 31, 2010 pg 31

3.3 Christianity in Ejura

3.3.1 The Presbyterian Church

The birth of the Presbyterian Church, was made possible in Ejura when on the 8th January 1924, a junior civil servant called T.V. Danso and his wife were posted to take over a Government Demonstration Farm at Ejura. The couple and two others, had to walk fortnightly from Ejura to Mampong which is forty (40) kilometers (km) away to attend church services. Danso then contacted some of the community members of Ejura to help establish a church since Mampong is far away. On the first Sunday, eleven members attended the church service and the sermon was delivered by a shop keeper called Gideon Tano. After the departure of Tano, Danso and one Christian Kofie, a shopkeeper of UTC took over the administration of the church.¹⁰⁶

In 1928, Danso contacted Sam Adjei, the District Pastor at Mampong to send a preacher to Ejura which he did. In 1934, Ohene Agyekum replaced Sam Adjei but after serving for one year, he left for Training College. At that same time, Danso was also transferred from Ejura and that nearly ended the life of the Presbyterian Church in Ejura.¹¹²

In 1937, Nana Ejurahene, worried about the instability of the Presbyterian Church, sent an invitation to the Anglicans, to establish a church, which Reverend Evans accepted. Upon realizing the impending threat of competition, the Mampong District pastor of the Presbyterian Church, quickly sent the first Catechist, C.H.O Bekoe to Ejura. His living room was used as a

¹⁰⁶ Ejura Presbyterian Church 90th anniversary celebration brochure. 2014

¹¹² Ejura Presbyterian Church . 2014

place for worship. On 26th October 1954, a levy of £5 and £2 were placed on the men and women of the church respectively, for the purpose of constructing a church.¹⁰⁷

The church currently has a population of about seven hundred and fifty 750. In 2008, it started a six hundred (600) capacity church building, which is currently at an advanced stage of completion. In addition to the Victory congregation, which is the mother church, the church has established other smaller branches in some suburbs of the town such as Broadcasting, Brigade and the New life congregation.¹⁰⁸

3.3.2 The Ejura St. Mary's Anglican Church

The establishment of the Anglican Church in Ejura had the blessing of the Ejura royal house. The church was established in June 1934 through the assistance of the Ejurahene, Nana Kwadwo Boakye and another man by name J.E Brenya. The chief graciously offered his old palace as chapel for the church. When the church was growing in number, he made them move to an old store room that was used by the British colonial administrators during the commissionership of Robert Rattray¹¹⁵.

This Anglican Church, has been the place of worship for most of the members of the royal family of Ejura worshipped. Nana Kwadwo Boakye, under whose reign the church came to Ejura became a Christian and a member of the church. Nana Kwaku Sarfo II who succeeded Nana kwadwo Boakye and reigned for fifty-four (54) years was also a member of the Anglican Church. The former queen mother of Ejura, Nana Akyamma was a member of the church. Nana

¹⁰⁷ Ejura Presbyterian Church . 2014

¹⁰⁸ Jacob Kofi Owusu, Catechist, Presbyterian Victory Congregation church, Ejura interviewed, 13/08/2016 ¹¹⁵
Nana J.Y. Owusu, Dwatoahene , Ejura, 2016 interviewed 21/09/2016

Ofori Timpa, the Odikro of Nokoreasa near Ejura is also a member of the Anglican Church. It currently has about eight hundred (800) members.¹⁰⁹

The first Anglican priest, and the catechist, posted to the town were Evans and Mr Odum respectively. The church and the royal house, were so close that, in 1993, the chief and his elders released two-hundred and sixty-two (262) acres of land to the church to establish a secondary school. However, the church was not able to build the school fully through its own resources. Determined to have a second cycle institution in the town, the whole community of Ejura through the Divisional Council, offered support, in the form of communal labour and voluntary contributions of money and other materials. The school therefore became a mission/community owned school hence named Ejuraman Anglican Senior High School.¹¹⁰

3.3.3 The Ejura St. Anthony Roman Catholic Church

The Ejura Roman Catholic church was founded by Adams Kudakpah and his wife Matilda Kudakpah in 1935. The couple were Ewes of Togo origin who hailed from Aguapegame in Togo. They were later joined by Kwaku Carpenter and John Fofovi. The first members of the church were Ewes and Lossos from the Volta Region of Ghana and Togo respectively. In 1936, the then Ejura chief, Nana Kwadwo Boakye II offered them a single room for Sunday service. In 1949/1950 when the church was growing, they wrote to the Mampong-Bosofour church for a Catechist to help them. When their request was not readily met, William Kudakpa and Joseph Kudakpa volunteered to hold the church service in Ewe language.

¹⁰⁹ Nana J.Y. Owusu, Dwatoahene , Ejura, 2016

¹¹⁰ Nana Appiah Kusi Brempon, Kyidomhene of Ejura

When the couple who founded the church left Ejura, John Fofovi and Joseph Kudakpa became the President and Catechist respectively. In 1952, the priest for the area, Bauchier asked the church community to have a “saint” name for the church. Three names John, Gabriel and Anthony were proposed to be balloted. Anthony polled the highest votes and so the church was called Ejura Saint Anthony Roman Catholic Church.

Tragedy struck the church on the Easter Friday of 1964 when fire gutted the church’s building, and as a result, all the liturgical books and other sacramentals and holy materials were lost. Following this tragedy, the church’s board which was headed by Kwasi Denteh went to the chief, Nana Kwabena Boakye and his elders to request for a place to build a church. Thomas Boakye, a Land’s Officer was delegated to find a suitable place for the construction of the church and other projects such as schools. They were given land that covers seventeen (17) acres.

Currently, the church has a six hundred (600) capacity church building, a Primary school, and a JHS. One unique thing about this church is that, about ninety (90%) of the members of the church are immigrants, who are mostly farmers and government employees. There are so many “Dagartis”, one of the northern tribes in the church, so, church services are held in Dagari as first mass and later Twi and English in a second mass.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Peter Stephen Nimarko Twede Aduasah,

interviewed 17th August, 2016

3.3.4 The Ejura Wesley Methodist Church

The Ejura Wesley Methodist Church was established in 1948. One Joshua Adjei and his wife Beatrice Adjei together with Abraham Antwi and his wife Sara Gyamfuaa and one Quinoo, brought the Methodist faith from Asante Mampong to Ejura. They were later joined by J.K Owusu, who happened to be the only literate among those founders, and so became the first Caretaker of the church. For the first year, they worshipped in the Presbyterian Church until a member of the church, Abraham Antwi offered his tailoring shop to be used as a place of worship. From 1951-1958, a small chapel was built by members of the church which made their worship attractive and it became a society.¹¹²

In 1960, a young man in the church, called Arthur was recommended by the leaders to be trained as Catechist at the Freeman College, Kumasi. After Arthur had completed his programme, he came back to serve the church for two years. Other catechists came later including Owusu Ansah and S.K Akuoko who prepared a place of residence for a resident Minister. In 1984, the first minister called James Kweku Forson was posted to superintend over the church. Later on, other ministers such as Albert Owusu Ansah, Emmanuel BaduBotah, and John Mensah Baffoe were posted to Ejura to serve the church. It was during the five-year (1995-2000) stay of John Mensah Baffoe that a day nursery/kindergarten and primary school was started.¹¹³

The Effiduase Diocesan Synod agreed that Ejura Methodist church must have a circuit status and this was forwarded to the Methodist conference which was being held at Accra in August 2000. Approval was given, and the Ejura/Sekyedumase was given a full Circuit status. Samuel Mponponsoh from the Moree Circuit in Cape Coast was posted to Ejura as the first

¹¹² Ejura Wesley Methodist church's Induction Brochure, 2002 pg 2

¹¹³ Ejura Wesley Methodist church, 2002

Superintendent Minister of the new Ejura/Sekyedumase circuit in October 2000. The circuit was officially inaugurated on the 27th may, 2001.¹¹⁴

3.3.5 The Baptist Church

The establishment of the Baptist church in Ejura cannot be traced to a specific date, but it is believed to have been started in the early 1960s, by a group of Yoruba merchants from Nigeria. This church was established primarily not to win souls but to meet the spiritual needs of these Yoruba merchants. They held their sermons in Yoruba language and so the indigenes, nick named the church as “Alatafoo Asore”, that is, “Yorubas church”. A Baptist minister, called Ojo, was posted from Nigeria to head the church. He lived in the town for some years till the enforcement of the “Alien Compliance Order” in 1969, which saw many Nigerians deported from Ghana. After the departure of the Nigerians, some few Akan indigenes were attracted to the church.¹¹⁵

It was during this time, that, the Ghana Baptist Convention decided to step in, to save the church from collapsing. They posted an Akan pastor, called Nsiah, to Mampong and they made him supervise the Ejura church as well. After Nsiah, another pastor called Sarkodie was posted to Mampong and he was also given an oversight responsibility of the Ejura Baptist Church. After the departure of Sarkodie, the church began to grow, so a full time pastor, called Napoleon Oware was posted to Ejura to head the church. Oware headed the church for five years.¹²³

¹¹⁴ Ejura Wesley Methodist church, 2002

¹¹⁵ Joseph Kusi Sackey, Senior Pastor, Baptist Church Convention, Ejura interviewed, 13/01/2017

¹²³ Joseph Kusi Sackey, 2017

After Oware came Joseph Kusi Sackey. Sackey was posted to Ejura in 1996 as a student pastor. He completed his programme in 1999 and has since been the senior pastor of the Church. He is assisted by Nana Safo Kantanka, a student pastor. The church used to be in a small building, which could take between forty to fifty (40-50) members. However, a new church building has been constructed. A modern church building that has the capacity to take about two hundred worshippers. There is another branch congregation of the same Baptist church that holds its church service in one of the classrooms, of the Roman Catholic school because of language barrier. Members of this congregation are Frafras from the Upper East region of Ghana, who do not understand Asante Twi.¹¹⁶

It was the Baptist church, that brought the idea of forming the Local Council of Churches, in Ejura and Joseph Kusi Sackey became its first chairman.¹¹⁷ The church has a membership of about one hundred and fifty (150) currently.

3.3.6 The Seventh Day Adventist Church

The Seventh-Day Adventist church was brought to Ejura by Nana Akwasi Sarfo, a late Kontihene of Ejura, in 1964. He was himself converted into Adventism by one Yaw Ntim of Agona Asamang. Nana Akwasi Sarfo worshipped with the Agona Adventist church. Later, he requested his membership to be transferred to the Mampong Adventist church when J.K Amoah was then the District Pastor. With the district pastor's teaching talent and through his personal contacts and home visitation, Nana Sarfo established a church at Hiawoanwu, which is eight (8) miles away from Ejura.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Joseph Kusi Sackey, 2017

¹¹⁷ Joseph Kusi Sackey, 2017

¹¹⁸ Bismark Nyantakyi, 2017, interviewed, 27th May, 2017

Sadly, the people who joined the church later started leaving. This was because some members who were mostly government workers in Ejura had to walk a distance of eight, (8), miles to worship at Hiawoanwu on every Sabbath. In 1964, permission was sought from S.K.

Osei, the then Head teacher of Ejura Anglican Primary School, for a classroom to conduct Adventist church services which he granted. The church later, moved to the Ejura Local Council premises, (Great Hall). When the need to have a permanent place of worship became necessary, an advice was sought from the District Pastor of Mampong. Two delegates, Okyeame Badu and Obeng Nimako were sent, to survey and select a site. A building was started by Boateng which now serves as the residence of the Pastor which is located at the old Mission House.¹¹⁹

At this point, the need to have a resident Pastor became necessary. The first Pastor, posted to the church was S.K. Okyere in 1975. It was at this period, that a singing Group called, 'The Best of Ejura group singers' sang on a programme called "Anopa Bosuo", a song entitled '*tie, tie, tie, Agya tie m'asem*' on GBC Radio in the 1970's led by Annor Mensah. There was no residence for the Pastor, then, so Nana Sarfo shared his own residence with him and his family, for more than a year. In 1982, A.P Mensah came to replace S.K Okyere. When A.P. Mensah left, it took some years before Oti Boateng was sent to replace him.¹²⁰

The idea of putting up a permanent church building originated at the time of E.O. Kagya. When Kagya was transferred in 1989, an evangelist, Fredrick Nubeng came, and it was during his time that the sod-cutting ceremony of the permanent church building took place by the then President

¹¹⁹ Bismark Nyantakyi, 2017

¹²⁰ Bismark Nyantakyi, 2017

of Central Ghana Conference of S.D.A church W.G. Mensah. He was assisted by J.Y. Ampadu, the then Ntonso District Pastor and some other church elders. Nubeng stayed for a very short period and was transferred to the office of the Central Ghana Conference in 1989. In 1990, Michael Achiannor was brought to Ejura. It was during his tenure of office, that the church witnessed a significant increase in membership.¹²¹

This increase was made possible through an evangelism exercise which was organized by the Central Ghana Conference with A.A. Boateng, the then Ministerial Secretary of C.G.C, as the main speaker plus and a team of seventy (70) energetic youth forming the visitation team. This evangelistic campaign yielded one hundred and forty three (143) members who were baptized and recorded into Ejura congregation on 22nd August 1992.¹²²

Andrews Kofi Agyei took over from Achianor in 1993. With the improvement of the finances of the church, a foundation stone was laid for the construction of an Ejura permanent church building. Agyei Bediako came to replace Andrew Kofi Agyei in 1998. He spent less than a year and left to continue his studies abroad. Isaac Adu took over from Agyei Bediako in 1998. It was during his time that the Ejura S.D.A Primary school was built. In the year 2000, Michael Kwadwo Adomako came to replace Isaac Adu. Adomako is credited as the one who established the Community Church and provided the church with an organist. In the year 2012, E.Y.B Barfi took over from Eric Berko-Boahene. E.Y.B Barfi is also credited as, the one who marked the celebration of the church's 50th anniversary as well as commenced the stores and conference

¹²¹ Bismark Nyantakyi, 2017

¹²² Bismark Nyantakyi, 2017

hall building from foundation level to the lintel level. The Ejura Adventist church is now under the Agona Conference that spans from Old Tafo, Kumasi through to Ejura.¹²³

3.4 ISLAM IN EJURA

Ejura can be described as a Muslim-dominated Akan community. The Muslims in the town are mostly settlers. There is no record of significant conversion of indigenes. However, it is reported some male members of the royal families intermarried with some Gonja women and gave birth to children who are Muslims. Another factor that accounts for the resurgence of Muslims in Ejura is the northern region conflicts in the 1990s.¹²⁴ Two significant Muslim groups in the town are the Tijaniyya and Ahlus Sunna wal Jama'a.

3.4.1 The Tijaniyya Group.

Unlike some of the Christian Mission churches who had their histories well documented, the history of Islam in Ejura cannot be traced to a precise date. However, it is believed to have come around the late 18th century.¹²⁵ Traditionally, the first inhabitants of the *zongo* were Muslims immigrants from Nigeria, northern Ghana and some other neighbouring West African countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Benin etc.

They were mostly traders, farmers and Islamic school teachers. According to oral tradition, the first Muslim to land in Ejura was Adam Mustapha Katsina who migrated from Katsina in

¹²³ Bismark Nyantakyi, 2017

¹²⁴ Nana Appiah Kusi Brempong II, Kyidomhene of Ejura

¹²⁵ Mohammed Mustapha Abubakar, the current chief Imam and the grandson of the first Sarkin Zongo who is believed to have left his family at Katsina at the age of seventy-eight (78). As he put it “our grandfather came to live in Ejura long before the „*Fitla*“ war”, that is, the Second World War of 1933. Interviewed 13/08/2016

¹³⁴ Nehemia, Levzion 1968. Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: a Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre- Colonial Period. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Nigeria. He became the first Sarkin Zongo. Upon assumption of office as the leader of the settlers' community, he appointed one Halidu, a Bariba (as the people of Borgu are called)¹³⁴ from Parakou to serve as the Imam. Upon the demise of the first Imam, he was succeeded by a Hausa scholar by name Awudu. The second Chief Imam was succeeded later by a Wangara scholar called Yakubu.¹²⁶

The early group of Muslims largely belonged to the Sufi tradition. This group is widely known for its tolerance of indigenous culture. A prominent Sufi order known in the history of Islam in Ejura is the Tijaniyya Muslim brotherhood. This brotherhood takes its name from the founder Ahmad al-Tijani (1737–1815). The uniqueness of this movement is related to the founder's claim that he occupies the two highest ranks in the Sufi hierarchy as *Qutb aqtab* or pole of the poles and *Khatm wilaya* or seal of the Sufi sainthood.¹²⁷

With the decline of the Salaga Market due to the civil war in 1892, Muslim traders moved to the emerging trading centres such as Atebubu, Kete Karachi, as well as Kintampo, Yeji and Techiman¹²⁸ which lie in the same area with Ejura. Settlements in the emerging trading centres, and intermarriages with local people expanded the Islamic influence in the Gold Coast.¹²⁹

There was a greater cooperation between the royal houses of Mampong and Ejura. It is believed Nana Boakye brought Muslims to Mampong. The account continues that some of them were

¹²⁶ Alhaji Mohammed Shaakib Yakubu Umar Bamba, the current deputy Chief Imam of Ejura who is also the son of the third Chief Imam, Alhaji Yakubu. He (Alhaji Yakubu) was the teacher of Afa Ajura before his relocation to Savelugu and later Tamale.

¹²⁷ Yunus Dumbe, . *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*: in Hiskett, Mervyn 1980. "The Community of Grace and Its Opponents, the Rejecters: a Debate about Theology and Mysticism in West Africa with Special Reference to Its Hausa Expression", (African Language Studies. 2011)

¹²⁸ Yunus Dumbe in Abass, 2005

¹²⁹ Dumbe, 2011

sent to Ejura. Those are the people who were made Sumankwaahene. Before that, no Muslim had crossed Afram to the south. Afram was the boundary between Asante and the north.¹³⁰

The Asantehene Osei Kwame who was the son of the Mamponghene, Sarfo Kantanka was destooled for bringing Muslims to Manhyia. He (Mamponghene) had a lot of Muslim influence so he sent some with his son so that they will protect him.¹³¹ The early Muslim migrants in Ejura just as those who settled in Kumasi may have exerted some influence on the royal house. According to the Sarkin Zongo, the Ejurahene sometimes requests for prayers from the Imams through him. This goes to suggest that, there was a mutual acceptance by both the Tijaniyya group and the indigenes. Ejura has over thirty (30) mosques and sixteen (16) Arabic schools.

As a Sufi group, the Tariqa Tijaniyya of Ejura performs *adua* (funeral) rites for their dead ones, celebrate the birth of the Prophet (*mawlid al-nabi*), engage in *dzikir* (remembrance of Allah), and also believe in intercessory prayers through Sheikh Tijani, Ibrahim Niass and others. They also perform *wirdi* and recite the *Salati fatih*. The celebration of the birth of the Prophet is given prominence in this town. Twelve *madrasas* (Islamic schools) were identified to be celebrating *mawlid* for Islamic school children and six for adults annually. Some of them are Nasariyya, Rashadiyya I and Rashadiyya II, Tadribiyaa, Hairiyya, Barhamiyya, Ihyaawu-deen, Islamiyya, Haramain, Al-Hudaibiyya, Nurul-Ameen. There are also other

¹³⁰ Nana Kronkrohene: Mampong Traditional Council. 29th March 2006. In Diversity and Tolerance in the Islam of West Africa <http://westafricanislam.matrix.msu.edu> accessed 18th August, 2016

¹³¹ Asantehene Osei Kwame (1777-1801), in whose reign the Muslim influence commenced, is reported to have been „a believer at heart“. (Levtzion, 1968:187)

Tijaniyya youth groups that celebrate *mawlid* annually. About eighty percent 80% of the Tijaniyyas in Ejura are pro-Jallo.

3.4.2 The Ahlus Sunna wal-Jama'a

Another Islamic group in Ejura, worthy of mentioning is the Ahlus Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWAJ). This group was started by a group of Ghanaian Muslim scholars who came into contact with the Arab/Muslim world and thus towing the line of Hausa/Tuareg Muslims. The group is strictly legalistic, and places great emphasis on the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet in accordance with the Wahhābīya doctrine.¹³² Being a reformist or puritan group, the Ahlus Sunna wal- Jamā'a (ASWAJ) devote considerable energy to weeding out what it considered *bid'a* (innovation) in Islam perpetuated by the mainstream Muslim group in Ghana.¹³³ The group was registered in the statutory books of Ghana in August 1997 as an independent Islamic group/denomination with an administrative headquarters at Nima (Accra).¹³⁴

Fascinating background of Ejura and Salafism is that, the pioneer Salafi, Afa Ajura was born there, but Salafism did not flourish until 1998. A grandson of Osman Abubakar, the third deputy chief Imam of the Tijaniyya group, Mohammed Hafiz, broke away from the old group and formed the Ahlus Sunna wal-Jama'a group at the age of twenty-four (24). To Mohammed Hafiz, they broke away from the Tijaniyya group because the latter engage in some practices that violate the original teachings of Prophet Mohammed.¹³⁵ This new group was met with

¹³² Samwini, 2006

¹³³ Sarbah: *A Critical Study Of Christian*

Muslim Relations In The Central Region Of Ghana With Special Reference to Traditional Akan Values. PhD Thesis

¹³⁴ Samwini, 2006

¹³⁵ There are some practices that the ASWAJ considers religious „innovation“ and do condemn. These include the idea of sainthood, the celebration of the *mawlid al-nabī*, the practice of *tawassul* (intercessions) and offering prayers at the tomb for the living. Others are the funeral rites that lead to large amount of donations to the *ulama*

severe opposition from the Tijaniyya group, that compelled the reformist (as he prefers to be called), to flee the town to seek asylum at Nigeria where he spent twenty-two (22) years learning about Salafism.¹³⁶ According to Mohammed Hafiz, close to thirty percent of the Muslims in the town belong to their group.

In view of the fact that, this town is the birth place of the founder of the Ahlus Sunna Muslim group in Ghana, Afa Ajura, it is important to present version of the story gathered from the interview with some leading Islamic scholars from the town. It is said that, Afa Ajura's parents came from Dagbon in the northern region of Ghana to settle in Ejura which is a major market centre. His father went on an expedition for which he spent more than a year. He came back only to find his wife with a child. A link can be established between this version and that of Iddrisu, (*Contesting Islam*, 28) that described Afa Ejura's birth as miraculous due to the fact that his mother was pregnant with him for two years.¹³⁷ The account continues that, his father decided to give him the name "Ajura" because of the miraculous nature of his birth. When his mother went to *gooyo*¹³⁸, his maternal grandfather said, how could a human being be given the name of a town, so he gave him the name "Yusuf" and he became known as "Yusuf Ajura". The account continues that, Afa Ajura started his education in Ejura under the third Imam, Yakubu Umar Bamba, a Wangara scholar from Mali.

is fraudulent. Contrary to the Tijaniyya funeral practice, the ASWAJ believes times of bereavement is the time to assist families financially and not for *mallams* to take donations. It also condemns the performance of miracles, which it considers the preserve of the Prophet.

¹³⁶ Mohammed Hafiz, Imam/Reformist, ASWAJ, Ejura Interviewed 13/08/2016

¹³⁷ Adulai Iddrisu, *Contesting Islam in Africa: Homegrown Wahhabism and Muslim Identity in Ghana, 1920-2010*, (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2013) 8

¹³⁸ A practice among northerners where by a woman who has given birth for the first time goes to live with her family to wean her child for three months before going back to live with her husband.

3.5 The Zongo in Ejura

The word “Zongo” is a Hausa word, which means, “stranger quarters”. It is used to refer to the residentially segregated quarters where strangers/non-natives, especially Muslims or at least people influenced by Islam, settle. In the southern as well as northern Ghana, the formalization of Zongo started during the colonial period and this was part of the efforts by the colonial authorities to regulate the development of townships.¹³⁹

Apart from Kumasi and Accra, larger *zongos* that were established in the south during the colonial period were in Ejura, Wenchi, Obuasi and Koforidua.¹⁴⁰

From its inception, the *Zongo* communities have been ethnically heterogeneous. Because of their common identification as strangers, common occupations, and common linguistic and in some cases, common religion, and cultural backgrounds, immigrants from many different areas prefer settling in that particular parts of the town referred to as the *Zongo*.¹⁵⁰

In 1928, fire destroyed seventy-five (75) compounds in the Ejura Zongo. The colonial authorities decided to rebuild the *Zongo* and part of the reconstruction cost was borne by them.¹⁵¹

The Ejura *Zongo* was originally established by some Hausas from Kano who also established that of Salaga in the northern Ghana. According to Suraj Alhassan, the Sarkin Zongo of Ejura, when his grandfather’s came to Ejura, they went to the house of Nana Boakye, who was the then Ejurahene, to seek for a place to stay. He continued that, there was however a Sarkin Zongo

¹³⁹ Holger Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism: Muslims, the State and Society in Ghana from the Precolonial to the Postcolonial Era*, (Helsinki 2008).

¹⁴⁰ (Migeod 1920, 120; Hiskett 1980, 138)

¹⁵⁰ Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 265.

¹⁵¹ Holger Weiss, 2008, 248

who was deposed before the office came to their family. To him, the chief was so pleased with the coming of the settlers that, he gave them the outskirts of the town to stay. The indigenous people, were very hospitable to the strangers. The first settlers were mostly traders. In the course of time, other settlers including the Gonjas, Wangaras, Dagombas came.

It is worth noting that, not all the migrants who went to live in the *Zongo* community were Muslims by religion. Some were adherents of African Indigenous Religion (AIR). To Claude F. Molla, both Muslims and Christians instill in the traditionalist a feeling of shame. His way of life, his clothing, his food, his ritual sacrifices, his way of burying his dead, are looked upon scornfully.¹⁴¹ Describing the African immigrant as animist is a reflection of the ethnocentrism that characterized Claude's days. The immigrants had their own civilization that was independent and different from other civilizations. It also, was responsive to their needs. However, the migrant then, is pressured socially to choose between Christianity and Islam. Since Islam predominates in the *Zongo*, many migrants who settled in there, found it expedient to become Muslims thereby incorporating into the *Zongo* political community for immigrants the adoption of Islam as a religion. Because the Ejurahene was very accommodative of the settlers, he permitted the Sarkin Zongo to allot building plots to the new settlers at no cost. Farming lands were also made available to them.¹⁴²

Other people of northern Ghana extraction who migrated into Ejura went to live at the Zongo. Early efforts of Islamicisation did not go beyond this community. No significant attempt was

¹⁴¹ Claude F. Molla, "Some Aspects of Islam South of the Sahara," *International Review of Missions* 56, no. 224 (October 1967), 462.

¹⁴² Suraji Alhassan, interviewed 02/11/2016

made to convert the indigenes. However, converts were made among the non-indigenes and some few indigenes whom for their own volition wanted to join the religion.

According to Schildkrout, the Hausa headman known as the Sarkin Zongo, or Chief of Zongo, was recognized as the apex of the "traditional" *Zongo* system and was given authority over all non-Hausa immigrants. In 1927, an amendment of the 1924 Ashanti Administrative Ordinance formally defined the Sarkin Zongo's powers and granted him a tribunal with jurisdiction over Muslims in the *zongo*. The other headsmen were ordered to disband their own unofficial courts, and to serve as a jury on the Sarkin Zongo's tribunal.¹⁴³

The Sarkin Zongo of Ejura enskins, the other tribal heads to help him administer the Zongo community. He is also the owner of the central mosque, in the town and appoints the Friday prayers Imam and his *Naib* (deputy). There are about eighteen (18) different tribes in the Ejura Zongo. Prominent among these tribes are the Gonja, Dagomba, Zabarima, Mamprusi and Kotokoli.¹⁴⁴

3.6 Favorable indigenous response to Christianity and Islam in Ejura

The early Christian evangelists, who came to Ejura, employed a very friendly approach towards Christianizing the indigenes. The Governor of St. Helena, Edwin W. Smith summarizes the Christians approach to the African indigenous religion in the following words:

It is necessary to urge that our religion be presented to the Africans, not in antagonism to, but as a fulfillment of, their aspirations.... It implies not a paganization of Christianity for the purpose

¹⁴³ Enid Schildkrout, *Islam and Politics in Kumasi: An Analysis of disputes over the Kumasi Central Mosque*: vol. 52: Part 2.(New York, 1974).

¹⁴⁴ Suraj Alhassan, Sarkin Zongo, Ejura Interviewed 04/11/2016

of making it easier to Africans, but the Christianization of everything that is valuable in the African's past experience and registered in his customs.¹⁴⁵

Ejura was a purely an African Traditional Religion community. Idol worship was very rampant and the community had so many gods. Common among these gods were Kronkroma, Tano, Boobai, Gyabaa, Asubonteng etc. Unlike the Muslims who are predominantly settlers, Christianity derived its adherents through evangelization and conversion. That is to say, the adherents of Christianity are native Akans who are the hosts.

The early Christian evangelists, who came to Ejura moved from house to house to propagate the gospel. The people were not willing to abandon their idol worship. According to the Kyidomhene of Ejura, as a result of the unwillingness of the people to accept Christianity, it took them a long time before they had formal education compared to the indigenes of the town of Mampong which served as the entry point for Christianity in Ejura. The early evangelists made the people realize how Mampong was chalking progress as a result of their acceptance of Christianity.¹⁴⁶ Truly, Mampong has witnessed tremendous development in the area of education as a result of these Christian churches. The Anglican Church alone has to its credit in Mampong a Basic school, secondary school and a college of education.

For the part of the Muslims, there is some inferential information that provides an insight into how the traditional rulers of Ejura and the Muslims related to each other that may have helped the growth of the faith. On the 9th January, 2016, the newly installed Ejurahene, Barima Osei-Hwidi II joined the Muslims at the Ejura Central Mosque on New Year's Day, to say prayers to God for unity, peace and prosperity for the country. The chief commended the Sarkin Zongo,

¹⁴⁵ R S Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, 1929

¹⁴⁶ Nana Appiah Kusi Brempong Kyidomhene, Ejura Interviewed 04/11/2016

the Imams, the various tribal chiefs, the elders and the entire Zongo community for the support they provided during the burial of the late chief, Nana Kwaku Sarfo Ababio II, and his installation and swearing-in ceremonies at Ejura and Asante-Mampong respectively.

The Ejurahene assured them to work in close collaboration with them as was done by his grandfather, the late Nana Kwaku Sarfo Ababio II, whom he had succeeded. He promised that his doors will always be opened at all times, and further assured them that, he and his elders were prepared to resolve any problem brought before them. The Sarkin Zongo, Suraj Alhassan on behalf of the Zongo chiefs, elders and the entire Zongo Community welcomed the new Ejurahene and assured him of their unflinching support.

The Chief Imam assured Nana Barima-Osei-Hwidie that the Muslims would continue to pray for him so that God would provide him with wisdom to administer the area. Mansuru Banda, the Imam of Banda and Wangara community for his part, said, they stayed with the new Ejurahene at Zongo for quite a long time and he was seen as somebody of upright character and therefore when his name came out, it was overwhelmingly accepted by the Zongo community. The Sarkin Samari or youth Chief of the Zongo, Iddrisu Kadiri , emphasized that the chief should follow the footsteps of his grandfather, Nana Kwaku Sarfo, who related nicely with the Zongo community. From this story, one can see clearly the long term collaboration between the Muslim community and the traditional leaders.

There is also a history of inter-marriages between some male members of the Ejura royal family and some Muslim women who were mostly Gonjas. Though the Hausas were the first Muslim group to come to Ejura, they did not mingle with the non-Muslims. However, the Gonjas did. There are many influential Muslims in Ejura who trace their roots to some of the

royal homes. They command a considerable amount of influence in the *Zongo* community as they are described as “Ohene nananom” or grandchildren of the chief. Prominent among these people are Hajia Ante Bee, Alhaji Sule whose Akan name is Kwabena Manu. Hajia Ante Bee’s father was the chief drummer who was called Opanin De-Ball. It is said he moved to live at the *Zongo* after his marriage to the Muslim woman.¹⁴⁷ It is important to emphasize that; acceptance of Islam by these male suitors was the condition for the inter-marriages.

3.7 Impact of Christianity and Islam in Ejura

Ejura is connected by a highway to the town of Mampong and they both lie at the north-east part of the Ashanti regional capital, Kumasi. Comparatively, Mampong received Christianity and its accompanying benefits long before Ejura. Early in 1930, Nana Agyemang Prempeh I, the Asantehene made a passionate appeal to the Anglican Bishop, Anglionby, for the establishment of an institution of learning for women in Ashanti region. In response, the Saint Monicas Women College of Education was moved from Cape Coast to Mampong with the entire population of fifty (50) students.¹⁴⁸

Most of the mission churches in Ejura have basic schools. These schools have significantly contributed to the development of the town’s human capital. There are some great individuals from the town who have passed through these schools and are now contributing immensely to the development of the town and the country, Ghana at large. Among such high profile persons is Emmanuel Kwaku Asante, a Professor of Theology and Chairman of the National Peace Council who completed the Ejura Local Authority Anglican Middle school in 1965 and was

¹⁴⁷ F. Y. Owusu, interviewed 22/08/16

¹⁴⁸ www.monicoang.edu.gh/about/our-history accessed 13th November, 2016

one time the Head of Department for Religious Studies of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.¹⁴⁹

The town also prides itself with other illustrious sons such as Yaw Frimpong Manso, a past Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and Daniel Yinkah Sarfo, the Anglican Archbishop of Kumasi.

In 2006, the Ejura congregation of the Presbyterian church of Ghana in collaboration with the Ejura Divisional Council and the Ejura-Sekyedumase Municipal Assembly honoured these three religious leaders for proving their mantle as role models and spiritual leaders.¹⁵⁰

Another impact of Christianity in the town is the apparent diminishing of idol worship in the town. Again, the Baptist Church has a multipurpose retreat centre in the town which provides accommodation for visitors during funeral times, election campaigns and also serves as a place of retreat for Christian groups.

Islam also on the other hand can be felt in all corners of Ejura. Mosques are scattered in and around the town. There are about thirty seven (37) mosques in the town. These mosques are commonly found in the settler dominated areas such as Ashaakooko, Gonja Line, Dagomba Line, Sabon Line, Al-amari, Madina, Nima etc. There are also about nine Islamic schools where secular education is taught. The initiator of the Wahhabi reformism in Ghana, Yusuf Soalih Ajura is believed to have been born in this Ejura town in 1890 and derived his name “Ajura” from the town. He is said to have started his Islamic education in Ejura before moving to

¹⁴⁹ religions.knust.edu.gh/staff/academic-staff/most-rev-prof-easante

¹⁵⁰ Ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/economy/artikel.php?ID=96967

accessed 13th November, 2016

accessed 13th November, 2016

Tamale. The Ahlus Sunna wal Jama‘a as a group has procured an 8-acre land, which it intends to build a college of education for the town.

Another indication of the strong Islamic influence in the town is how widely the Hausa language is spoken. About eighty (80%) percent of the inhabitants of the town including the indigenous Asantes understand and could also speak Hausa fluently.¹⁵¹ The late Ejurahene, Nana Safo is reported to have been very fluent in Hausa.

3.8 Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Ejura

In the Ejura-Sekyedumasi Constituency¹⁵², the two major political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), have kept changing their candidates for every election since 1996 taking into consideration the ethnicity and religious background of their candidates. The NPP is popularly believed to be an Akan and Christian party and draws its highest votes from the Akan dominated areas whereas the NDC is also believed to be Muslims/northerners and Ewes party. This phenomenon is what Samwini¹⁵³ refers to as “Religionalization” of politics and “Politicization” of religion.

In the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections, the ruling New Patriotic Party picked up the majority of votes in the Ashanti Region and the National Democratic Congress won in four regions such as the Volta, Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions.¹⁵⁴ Kufuor the NPP

¹⁵¹ Abass Sulemana, Youth Activist, Ejura. Interviewed 15/04/2017

¹⁵² According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, Ejura has 29,478 people and Sekyedumase, 10,085. A few settlements which may be classified as semi-urban include Anyinasu (4,707), Dromankuma (2,292), Frante (2,043), Kasei (1,836), Hiawoanwu (1,823) and Aframso (1,336) which serve as service centres to the numerous rural areas scattered throughout the constituency.

¹⁵³ Nathan Iddrisu Samwini is the Methodist Bishop for Northern Ghana and a Lecturer in Religious Pluralism and Cooperation in Ghana. He was one time the Head of Department for Religious Studies Department of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.

¹⁵⁴ Ben, Ephson 2003, 14

presidential candidate, won the majority of the vote in every constituency in Ashanti except three – Ejura Sekyedumase and Asawase which are (two Zongo communities), and New Edubiase (an Ewe-dominated area) in the Ashanti Region.¹⁵⁵

The Ejura case is a mirror reflection of the larger Ghanaian political landscape. Since the 1996 elections, the NDC has been winning convincingly in both the presidential and parliamentary elections held at Ejura. Even where two Akans are presented by these two parties, the NDC candidate wins as in the case of Peter Boakye-Ansah of NDC and Andrew Danso of NPP in the 1996 elections where the NDC won with sixty-two (62%) leaving the NPP with thirty-one point five (31.5%) percent. In the presidential poll, the NDC and NPP had sixty-six point four (66.4%) and thirty-one point two percent 31.2% respectively.¹⁵⁶

In 2000, Sampson Atakorah replaced Boakye-Ansah for NDC and the NPP chose Elizabeth Owusu, in an eight-candidate race which included two independent candidates. The aggregate vote of the other six candidates was 26.8%. The NPP retained the 1996 level with (31.2%) but could not defeat the NDC that had a reduced majority of 42%. Once again, the NPP was defeated at the presidential level by (42.7%) to (49.8%). That however represented eleven point five (11.5%) improvement for the NPP and sixteen point six (16.6%) percent reduction for the NDC. Not surprisingly, the NPP had its first ever victory in the constituency in the 2000 presidential run-off by fifty-two point two (52.2%) to forty-seven point eight (47.8%) percent.¹⁵⁷

The NDC, conscious of the threat of incumbency and the NPP's "Operation Thirty-Nine

¹⁵⁵ Kevin S. Fridy, 2007

¹⁵⁶ AKD. Frempong, *The Settler Factor In The Electoral Politics Of Ghana's Fourth Republic: A Study Of Five Constituencies In Ashanti And Eastern Regions*, 2006

¹⁵⁷ AK.D, Frempong, *The Settler Factor in the Electoral Politics of Ghana's Fourth Republic: A Study of Five Constituencies in Ashanti and Eastern Regions*, CODESRIA, 2005, 6.

(39)¹⁵⁸ in the region, played its trump card by going for a non-indigene and a Muslim, Issifu Mohammed Pangabu, who hails from Bawku in the Upper East Region. The strategy worked for the NDC once more; it defeated NPP by a forty-seven point two (47.2%) to a thirty-seven point six (37.6%) percent.

It is also significant to take note of the increasing dominance, of the settler factor that three (3) of the five, (5) parliamentary candidates, were of northern Ghana descent. In addition, to the winner, were Raymond Abuska of PNC and Matthias Naala of the CPP. The NDC topped that up with a fifty-three point four (53.4%) to forty-four point eight (44.8%) percent presidential victory. An interesting dynamic in this constituency is that the NDC's performance at the presidential polls has generally been twice as high as its regional average while for the NPP, it has often performed only half as much as the regional average.¹⁵⁹

Conscious of the voting trends and the underlying factors influencing voters' choice in the Ejura-SekyeDumasi constituency, the New Patriotic Party in the 2012 election, also presented a Muslim candidate, and won for the first time with a slim margin over the NDC. The then, incumbent NDC candidate, Mohammed Issifu Pangabu had forty-nine point ten 49.10% whilst the NPP candidate had forty-nine point seventy-eights 49.78% percent.¹⁶⁰

3.9 Conclusion

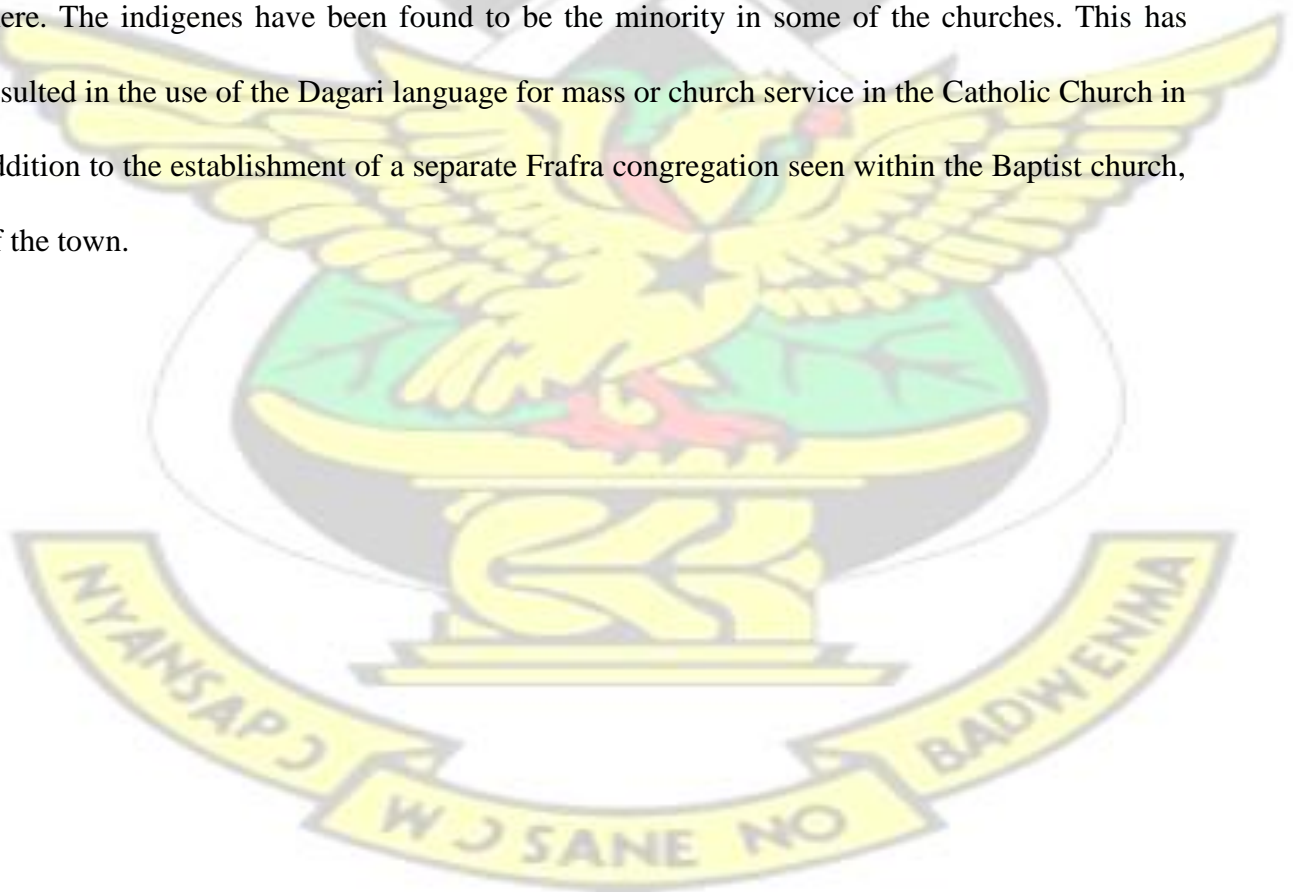
This chapter looked at the history of Ejura, its native people, and alien residents and their religions. It further discussed, the planting of the five missionary churches and the Seventh Day

¹⁵⁸ The NPP made a projection that it was going to annex all the 39 seats in the Ashanti Region.

¹⁵⁹ A.K.D. Frempong, *The Settler Factor in the Electoral Politics of Ghana's Fourth Republic*.

¹⁶⁰ Parliament: Ashanti Region Elections 2012 Results. Retrieved www.ghanaelections.peacefonline.com/pages/2012/pal/ashanti/ accessed 16/09/2016

Adventist Church, in Ejura. The planting of Islam in the town too, was discussed. How religion affects local politics in the area was also looked at. This chapter made it obvious, that the Ejura town, is a highly religiously pluralistic town. It is made up of the Akan Christians who are the indigenes and the alien resident Muslims. These two groups have well tolerated and cooperated with each other. Even though the 2010 census gave 49.5% and 43% as Christians and Muslims populations respectfully, municipal wide, the Muslims form the majority in the Ejura township itself. This development resulted from the economic opportunities the town offers as well as the northern region conflicts of the 1990s. Other places in the municipality such as Sekyedumasi, Dromankuma, Miminaso and Aframso have lesser Muslim population compared to Ejura. Among the Christians too, there are settlers and government workers, whose careers took them there. The indigenes have been found to be the minority in some of the churches. This has resulted in the use of the Dagari language for mass or church service in the Catholic Church in addition to the establishment of a separate Frafra congregation seen within the Baptist church, of the town.



CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND THE STATE OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN EJURA

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the history and religion of Ejura. It also showed the pattern of the Muslim settlement that finally led to the creation of the *Zongo*. The chapter also discussed the impacts of Christianity and Islam in the town. It also looked at the role of religion in the local politics and others. In this chapter, there is going to be a presentation of the data collected from the field. The data include the respondents' knowledge on the subject matter and their views on it. It also looks at Christian-Muslim relations in Ejura and how this relationship could be improved. The information contained in this chapter

4.1 Research Questions

The questions guiding this research are as follows:

To what extent are Christians and Muslims in Ejura cooperating?

Is there any element or factors that threaten the peaceful co-existence between these two communities of faith?

What can be done to sustain the apparent harmonious relationship existing between members of these two religions?

4.2 Methodology

A total of one hundred (100) questionnaires were administered but eighty-seven (87) were used for the study. Those that were not used, that is, the remaining thirteen (13) were either not ready

as at the time of analyzing the data, or the responses, were inconsistent and incoherent. The questionnaire material, was left with the respondents for two weeks. This was done, to enable them have ample time to fill them. Majority of the respondents filled the questionnaires themselves according to their personal understanding.

However, twenty-three (23) respondents could not read proficiently so the questions were translated into either Twi or Hausa for them and their responses recorded. This is how the respondents were selected. The researcher positioned himself, at the worshipping places of the respondents and randomly approached the prospective respondents. Gender was taken into consideration. At every church or mosque, if a male respondent is chosen, a female is chosen in the next round. This was done at all the six Christian churches and the two main mosques. For those who were willing to take part and could read and comprehend the questions, their contacts were collected and the questionnaire given to them to take home and fill. For those who could not read, the researcher conducted „on the spot“ interview for them and collected their views. The researcher maintained a close contact with the respondents who took the questionnaires home, till he (researcher) went to pick them two weeks later.

4.3 Christian-Muslim relations.

The subject of Christian-Muslim relations has been described by many scholars under different taxonomy, such as, “inter-religious relations”, “inter-religious dialogue” or “interfaith relations”. Rabiatu Ammah is of the same view with Stuart Brown that, Christian-Muslim

relations were not discovered in some meeting room but have always been with us at the informal level.¹⁶¹

In this research, all the respondents made an attempt to define Christian-Muslim relations per their own understanding. One Adventist respondent defined it as “the day to day activities that happen between Christians and Muslims”. An Ahlus Sunna respondent said “It refers to the manner in which Christians and Muslims interact and coexist in the community”. “The link that exists between Christians and Muslims was the definition given by a Presbyterian respondent. In summary, the issue of Christian-Muslim relations appears to be well known to the respondents, looking at their definitions.

A significant majority of sixty-three (63) respondents or seventy-two (72.%) included words such as “cooperation”, “mutual respect”, “inter-faith dialogue”, “positive interactions” in their definitions.

4.4 Support for Religious Programme Exchanges.

An overwhelming majority of seventy-three (73) respondents or eighty-four (84%) percent indicated they support religious programme exchange, 11 respondents indicated that, they were not sure whether those programmes were necessary at all and three (3) respondents all Muslims expressed their disapproval of this initiative. They described such programmes as *bid'a* (innovation).

¹⁶¹ Simon Mala Babs. *Christian-Muslim Relations: The Case Study of the University of Ibadan Students*. West African Association of Theological Institutions. Christian-Muslim Relations in West Africa. Papers No. 7, Ibadan, Nigeria: (Baptist Press, 2012) 116

The six 6 Baptist respondents said their church has no formal programme exchange with Muslims, however, they respect Muslims a lot. All the 10 Adventist respondents indicated that they support religious programmes exchanges and they went further to cite an annual programme they refer to as “Adventist-Muslim Relations Day”.

4.5 Knowledge and Understanding of Social Cohesion.

Sixty-three (63) respondents stated they have heard of social cohesion before. Sixteen (16) respondents said they have never heard it before and eight (8) respondents were not sure whether they ever heard it. They made an attempt to describe communal harmony. A respondent described it as “community members living in peace”. Another said “staying together peacefully and in tranquility in the community, despite, religious or ethnic etc differences”. Another stated “it is a state whereby different people within a community live peacefully and all these people, put in relentless effort to achieve stipulated results”. Another said “social cohesion refers to the principle that different people within a community or society must live together peacefully in pursuit of mutual goals”. An *Ahlu Sunna* respondent wrote “social cohesion refers to the ability of a people in a community to stay together in a peaceful manner despite their differences”.

4.6 Respondents’ perception on inequality

An overwhelming majority of 82 or 94% were of the view that the Ejura community offers equal opportunity to every member. Some cited opportunities like taking part in the Monday Ejura market to sell and make money, attending any basic school in the community or securing

land to engage in commercial farming. One respondent added that, religion or ethnicity has not been a determining factor in the sharing or using of the community's resources.

However, five respondents, who were indigenes, believe there exists some kind of inequality, which is evident in the area of politics. Out of the eight electoral areas in Ejura, only two (2) of them have Christian Assembly members while the remaining six (6) are Muslims. Local government elections are carried along religious affiliation lines. To these respondents, this development has taken a higher dimension that has made the two main political parties in Ghana, NPP and NDC have preference of presenting Muslim candidates during parliamentary elections.

In the 2012 election for example, two Muslim candidates were presented by both NPP and NDC. That was the first time the NPP presented a Muslim candidate and incidentally, that was the first time NPP won the Ejura-Sekyedumasi parliamentary seat. In the 2016 general elections, the NDC presented a Muslim candidate, who happened to be the then Municipal Chief Executive against the incumbent NPP Member of Parliament and he, the (NDC) candidate won. After the defeat of the NPP candidate, who was the incumbent Member of Parliament, his party won the general election and he has been appointed the Municipal Chief Executive.

From the above, one can infer that, religion in Ejura, is connected to power struggle, dominance and influence.

4.7 On the issue of Identity and trust

Sixty-three (63) respondents or 72 % considered their religious affiliation as their most paramount identity. Twenty-four (24) respondents or 28% considered Ghana as their most

important identity. According to Ashmore, “identity to a larger extent is constructed so if two identities are to become compatible in order to exist peacefully with each other, they would have to be redefined”.¹⁶²

Even though the majority of respondents claimed that their religious identity was the most important identity to them, all the eighty-seven (87) respondents said they trust people from other religions outside theirs. Their responses that suggest trust helps to build a strong relationship in the community.

4.8 State of Christian-Muslim Relations in Ejura

Eighty-two (82) respondents or 94% unanimously agreed there is a good relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ejura. Five respondents disagreed about such a good relationship. However, only one (1) respondent gave a reason for his response. He claimed that, the northerners who are largely Muslims, sometimes want to use their numerical strength to bully “them”, the indigenes. He recounted an incident that occurred between the *Sumawura* or the youth Chief of the Gonjas and the Krontihene of the town.

Narrating the story, the respondent said, the Gonja youth Chief went to log some teak wood which was confiscated by the Krontihene. Not satisfied with what the Krontihene did, the *Sumawura* went and stood somewhere and used some unprintable words on the chief. An informant went to inform the chief and the (Krontihene) directed that the Gonja Youth Chief or *Sumawura* be deposed. This brought about a rift between the Gonja chief and the Akan chiefs, who are the custodians of the land. However, the record must be set straight that, a skirmish

¹⁶² Richard Ashmore, *Social Identity, Inter-Group Conflict and Conflict Reduction*, Oxford: (University Press, 2001)
11

between some traditional rulers and a sub-chief Muslim settler over some wood cannot be taken as an issue of religious conflict. It is also worth noting that, the current chief of the town, Barima Osei-Hwidie II grew up in the zongo and has many Muslim friends who grew up with him.

4.9 Potential threats that could affect the good relations between Muslims and

Christians.

On the question of whether there is any threat that could affect the good relations between Muslims and Christians in Ejura, four (4) respondents, all being Muslims and SHS leavers, were of the view that, such a threat exists at the only public senior high school in the town.

One respondent added that, “they” (the Muslims) feed the school with almost its population, as they constitute about eighty percent 80% of the total school’s population, and yet, they are not treated fairly. In other words, the Muslim students and the Ejura Muslim community consider themselves one of the most important stakeholders of the school but they are not given recognition. Another respondent, out of the four, added that, there was a recent attempt by the Krontihene to push the ownership of the school, from the Anglican Church to the community but he was not successful. He added that, the move was motivated by the apparent non-contribution of the church to the development of the school.

4.10 Improving the existing good relationship between Christian and Muslims. One of the research questions was “what could be done to improve the seemingly good relationship that exist between the Muslims and the Christians?”. The respondents suggested some ways, by which the Christian-Muslim relations in Ejura could be improved. The various responds could be put into the following categories.

4.10.1 Mutual Respect

Thirteen (13) respondents suggested that, Muslims and Christians should have respect for one another. They were of the view that, respecting the differences that exist between Muslims and Christians will help build and maintain a healthy relationship. One respondent went on further to say that, if one group either Muslims or Christians respect the other but they do not see such respect reciprocated, hardly can mutual respect be sustained. Therefore, the respect must be reciprocal, empathetic and each other's humanity, and dignity be esteemed.

4.10.2 Tolerance

Ten (10) respondents suggested that, both Muslims and Christians should tolerate one another as they seek to live peacefully in the same society. A respondent, cited an example of Ejura town as a Muslim-dominated Akan community. He went on to say that, there are so many mosques in the town and each calling people to prayers from the dawn prayers through to the evening is disturbing. He is of the view that, these calls to prayers have been a source of worry to those who are Christians, but they have to tolerate this, for the sake of achieving the desired result of peaceful coexistence within the Ejura community. A Muslim respondent, also indicated, how the Muslims on their part have to tolerate the noise from Churches that are also located within the Muslim suburbs especially, on Sundays and mostly through the night on most days.

4.10.3 Avoidance of Discrimination.

Fourteen (14) respondents were of the view that, Ejura has lots of economic opportunities ranging from commercial farming to trading. One respondent believes that, the town shares a

lot in common with the part of northern Ghana they came from especially in terms of vegetation and its suitability for their work. They therefore were of the opinion that, giving people the same opportunity to engage in any lawful income generating activity irrespective of their religious or political affiliation will help promote peace. Discrimination against an individual or group in contrast creates deep-seated hatred among people.

4.10.4 Sustaining Peace through Dialogue

Eleven (11) respondents suggested dialogue as a means of maintaining the peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims. One Jacob Kofi Owusu, the catechist for the Ejura Presbyterian Victory congregation, said there has always been an effective interfaith dialogue between the Christians and Muslims in Ejura. He continued that, they know how, the Muslim youth revere their religious elders, so when there is any mishap or development that threatens the peace of the town, they engage the Muslim leadership and they in turn engage the youth. This goes to suggest that, despite how effective dialogue could be, identifying the right channel and approach to dialogue is very important.

4.10.5 Sustaining Peace through friendly games

Fifteen (15) respondents, all youth, were of the view that, sporting activities such as football, basketball can be used to promote and maintain the peaceful relationship existing between the Christians and Muslims in Ejura. To them, when such activities are properly organized and well competed, they will help make the people conscious of the need to respect their differences. One respondent had a slightly different opinion. To him, these games are good but must not be organized along religious lines, but on suburb bases. For instance, the youth of Dagomba Line

against the youth of Broadcasting, where each team, will be made up of both Christians and Muslims.

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4.11 Conclusions

The above data presented, show that, the existence of two different faiths-Christianity and Islam has not divided the people along religious lines. Despite the fact that, the people take pride in their religious identities, they still see themselves as one people of the same community, benefiting from its progress and to also suffer collectively for its fall. As part of the efforts to maintain the existing peaceful coexistence, majority of the respondents approve the use of religious programme exchanges as a way of promoting inter-faith cooperation. The people themselves have knowledge about the circumstances they find themselves in and as a result, they show a clear understanding of the subject under study and also suggest ways of maintaining the peaceful relationship, between Christians and Muslims in the society.

However, the fact that majority of the respondents consider their religious affiliation paramount to all other identities must be taken seriously. Efforts must be made to promote a preference of national identity over all other forms of identities.



CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL COHESION IN EJURA

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the data from the field. The data included the characteristics of the respondents, their knowledge on the subject matter and their approval or disapproval of religious programme exchanges. The chapter also presented the respondents views on what constitutes Christian-Muslim relations, as well as the state of this relationship in Ejura. There was the presentation of some suggestions from the respondents on how the apparent good relationship could be maintained. In this chapter, there is going to be discussion on the findings from the field in relation to some previous findings. Specifically, there will be a look at how the adherents of these two competing religions- Christianity and Islam are co-existing peacefully whereas such a peaceful co-existence seems a mirage elsewhere given a similar communal situation.

5.1 Religious Pluralism in Ejura

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire administered, one can say that, Ejura is a religiously pluralistic town. The various religious adherents acknowledge the existence and the rights of the others and also see the need to respect these rights. They believe that, aside their own faiths, there is some truth in other religious worldviews doctrines and practices that make them valid or acceptable. This stance taken, helps to avoid polemical attitudes that can breed hatred, misunderstanding, mistrust and conflicts. These were confirmed by all the fifty (50) respondents who indicated they had knowledge about religious pluralism and also approve of it.

Diana L. Eck, a scholar of religious studies, developed some four principles to guide our thinking on religious pluralism. These are:

1. Pluralism is not diversity alone, but *the energetic engagement with diversity*.
2. Pluralism is not just tolerance, but *the active seeking of understanding across lines of differences*.
3. Pluralism is not relativism, but *the encounter of commitments*.
4. Pluralism is *based on dialogue*.¹⁶³

All the above principles have been manifested in most religious pluralistic societies and Ejura is not an exception. Typically, the African's view point on religion has not been narrow. It is rather one in which, there is respect for all the religious traditions of humankind. While each religious group hold firmly to their beliefs, they also respect the rights of others to practice their own religions in their own ways, within the same community provided they do not infringe on the rights of others.

5.2 Christian-Muslim Relations in Ejura

Based on the data from the field where ninety-nine point twenty-five percent (94.25%) held the view that, there exist a very good relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ejura. From the study and interviews, there was no record of any violent confrontation between these two faiths. However, there is a record of Muslim students in the only public secondary school in the town accusing the Christians of undermining their freedom to profess their faith as already

¹⁶³ Eck, Diana L. "What is Pluralism". Pluralism Project. Harvard University. pluralism.org/what-ispluralism accessed 14/07/2017

indicated in chapter three. This reflects the nationwide trend or the view that Ghana is a highly tolerant country at the community and national level and yet, widespread accusation of religious intolerance on the part of both Christians and Muslims within the educational institutions. This is so because educational institutions unlike communities are established with specific objectives and interests. It is the desire to achieve these objectives by schools that bring the authorities into conflicts with adherence of different faiths as seen in the case of Muslims in the Ejura school for example.

In an article published on 10th March 2015 in the “*The New Crusading Guide*” and titled *Christian-Muslim Debate...SC Can Never Be The Solution*”, the researcher advocated dialogue as a panacea to ending those religious intolerance and conflicts believed to exist in the second cycle institutions. The researcher, sharing his personal experience, narrated how as a Muslim, at a point in time his education at the secondary level had to be sponsored by the Catholic Bishop for Konongo Mampong Diocese.¹⁶⁴ It is therefore important that, Christians and Muslims make an effort to work towards peaceful coexistence. If the relationship between Muslims and Christians is well-developed, it could help promote the welfare of members of these two groups.

In a speech delivered on the occasion of the sixtieth (60th) Anniversary celebration of the St. Louis Senior High School, Peter Akwasi Sarpong, the Archbishop of the Kumasi Catholic Diocese, narrated the story of a Muslim parent, who was desperate to secure admission for his daughter at the St. Louis Senior High School during the time one Miss Lydia Osei was the headmistress. Though the student did well, she could not meet the cut-off point required by the

¹⁶⁴ Habila Yakubu, “Christian-Muslim Debate... SC Can Never Be The Solution,” *The new Crusading Guide*, March 10, 2016, 4.

school, and there were many other students, who had done better than her but just as well could not be admitted, because there was no place for them. The Archbishop added that, the headmistress whether jovially or seriously told this Muslim parent, that if he wanted a Catholic education for his child by all means, then he should give the school money to build a classroom; which would cost Five Hundred Thousand Cedis (¢500,000). Without hesitation, the Muslim parent went home and brought ¢500,000 to the headmistress to build four classrooms, that could take one hundred and twenty (120) students, one of whom should be his child.¹⁶⁵

5.3. The role of Adventists in improving Christian-Muslim Relations

Another issue discovered in the process of data gathering is the Adventist-Muslim relations day. In an interview with the Agona District's Adventist-Muslim relations Director, he stated that the programme basically aims at bridging the gap between Adventists and Muslims.

Sharing his personal experience with the researcher on how far the relationships between Muslims and Adventists has grown, he stated that, in 2000, they were prevented by the Muslims from visiting a Mosque in Madina in Accra. However, there are some mosques in recent times that allow non-Muslims to enter and visit them.

He added that, the Adventist church has earmarked one day in the year that they refer to as the Adventist-Muslim Relations Day (AMRD) which started in 2012. On this day, Adventists dress like Muslims, perform ablution like Muslims and hold worship service with the Muslims. They remind themselves of their commonalities for example in both religions" like their dislike for

¹⁶⁵ Stlouisshs.edu.gh/2013/08/speech-delivered-by-most-rev-peter-akwasi-sarpong-emiretus-archbishop-ofkumasi-during-60th-anniversary/ accessed 21/05/2017

pig products. This they believe will help bridge the gap between them and the Muslims. The Muslims are also given the opportunity to share their experiences on their relations with Adventist or Christians in general. The essence of this programme, is to promote peaceful co-existence between the adherents of the two faiths. He cited one that was organized by the Adventist church in Jamasi which was well patronized by both the Tijaniyya and Ahlus Sunna Muslim groups. This town, Jamasi as well as Ejura falls under the same church district. Each district has one director who superintends over all the interfaith programmes of the church.

Religious programme exchange is gaining recognition in the Sub-region as an antidote to religious fanaticism. In 2012, the Kaduna State government of Nigeria, introduced an interreligious exchange programme for schools in the state. Christian students were made to spend a day in the Muslim schools whilst the Muslim students also were made to spend a day at the Christian schools. The main objective of the programme was to ensure a peaceful coexistence among the people of the state who were sharply divided by ethnic or religious differences. It aimed at inculcating into the students the need to learn and tolerate one another's religious views.¹⁶⁶



¹⁶⁶ www.newsghana.com.gh/kaduna-commences-inter-religious-exchange-programme/amp/ accessed 29/04/2017

Fig.2. A group photograph of Adventists and Muslims after a religious exchange programme Taken on 27/02/2016.¹⁶⁷

The question that comes to mind is whether a single day's programme is enough to foster the interfaith unity we are working for? There must be a continuous formal engagement that emanates from each of the groups. Muslims must also initiate some of these kinds of programmes and also invite Christians to take part. By doing so, we may get more than one effort geared towards the course of achieving interfaith unity and peaceful co-existence.

5.4 Religious Pluralism and its impact on social cohesion in Ejura

Some scholars of religion argue that religion serves as a cohesive force in society, but unfortunately, this role is limited to a situation where only one religion is practiced. They further assert that religion fulfills its traditional role of unifying a society if and only that society has but a single religion. The functionalist's perspective on what constitutes religion assert that, sharing the same religious interpretation of life unites a people in a cohesive and binding moral order. One of such scholars, who shares this view is Emile Durkheim.

Durkheim defined religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden--beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them".

Sharing Durkheim's view, Michael Haralambos and Robin M. Heald, assert that, a truly religious society has one faith and one church; but a situation of religious pluralism, on the contrary,

¹⁶⁷ From left to right, the woman in veil and all the other men squatting and those in traditional Muslim dress are all Adventists.

where different religious faiths exist within a single society, splinters the society and weakening the influence of religion and inhibiting religion from acting as a cohesive force within society.¹⁶⁸

Other scholars such as Huntington also argue that, the meeting of two or more cultures lead to what he referred to as a „clash“. In his book titled „*The clash of civilizations*“, he argued that culture and its related identities, at the broadest level, are civilizational identities that define the patterns of correlation, in the post-Cold War world. To him, the most important differences among people are not ideological, political, or economic, but rather cultural related. He continues that, people define themselves in terms of religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. Among all these identities, religion is the central defining characteristic of civilizations.¹⁶⁹

However, the study taken of the Ejura scenario proves the contrary view that, the meeting of two cultures, does not necessarily lead to confrontations as suggested by Huntington. People rather appreciate this diversity and learn to live by it as seen in the case of Ejura and most, if not all, communities in Ghana.

The *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity* identifies three components as determining social cohesion in Africa. These are:

- **Inequality:** The first component is the extent of perceived *inequalities* at both the group and individual levels. Group inequalities are particularly critical, for social cohesion in

¹⁶⁸ Rose C. Uzoma,. *Religious Pluralism, Cultural Differences, and Social Stability in Nigeria:* (BYU L. Rev. 651 2004)

¹⁶⁹ Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations?* *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3, (1993).

a multiethnic societies because it is such sharp inequalities between ethnic (or religious or regional) groups that usually fuel political conflicts, often leading to violence.¹⁷⁰

In a related study, as indicated in Chapter two, Jensen, refers to social cohesion as a process “... of building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community.”¹⁷¹

One would expect less social cohesion in a highly unequal societies, since the feeling of belonging to a shared national project is likely to be less.

From the data collected from the field, ninety-four point twenty-four (94.24 %) percent of the respondents agreed the Ejura community offers equal opportunities to all members of the community irrespective of their religious creed or gender. However, five point seventy-four (5.74%) percent felt there exist some sort of political inequality where Muslims are wielding most of the political powers in the town and the municipality at large.

- Trust: Fukuyama argues that, trust in a society, which is accumulated through norms, values and civic participation may be viewed as a strong predictor of cohesiveness of a society. However, trust is one of the many components of social cohesion and thus may not be viewed as the sole predictor of cohesiveness of a society.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Rothstein, B. and E. M. Uslaner (2005). "All for All: Equality, Corruption, and Social Trust." *World politics* 58(01): 41-72.

¹⁷¹ Jensen, J., 'Mapping social cohesion: the state of Canadian research', Paper SRA-321 (Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate, Ottawa: (1998)

¹⁷² Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Mark, „*A Postfunctional Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Concensus to Dissensus*”. *British Journal of Political Science*. (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2007).

Based on the data from the field, 100% of the respondents indicated they trust other members from the community, irrespective of the different religions they belong to.

- Identity: The third critical element of social cohesion, in multiethnic societies is the strength of the people's adherence to national identity in relation to their group (or ethnic) identity. This component is important for multiethnic societies, especially those, in Africa, where national boundaries have not developed organically and the nations are not natural units, but were created, relatively recently, by colonial powers. The strength of identities is related to perceived importance of group inequality, if group identities are relatively weak, group in-equality may not be perceived at all, or if perceived, it would not be regarded as important. People's perceptions of their identity is also relevant to social cohesion, because group conflict is more likely if group identities are perceived, as strong relative to national ones.

Conversely, if people put major emphasis on their national identities, it indicates that they regard themselves as involved in a shared national project.¹⁷³

According to Hicks, „individuals construct independent and different pictures of reality. To him, such individuals could be people or other entities who develop identity and formulate shared realities, such as families, working groups, teams, organisations, ethnic groups, nations, and cultures.¹⁸⁵ Religious identity may affect the relationship between national identity and

¹⁷³ CRISE 2015, Conceptualising and Measuring Social Cohesion in Africa: Towards a perceptions-based index

¹⁸⁵ Hicks, T. Another Look at Identity-Based Conflict: The Roots of Conflict in the Psychology of Consciousness, *Negotiation Journal*, (2001), p. 36.

social cohesion. Modood & Ahmad opine that, South Asians, especially Muslims, give religion rather than national origins a greater saliency in self-concepts.¹⁷⁴

A recent development, that supports the data from the field in which seventy-two percent 72% of the respondents claimed their religious affiliation is paramount to them than any identity is similar to the case of the Guantanamo Bay Prisoners. A source from the official web site of the government of Ghana indicates that, these prisoners were brought from the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, located in Oriente Province South in Cuba. They went to Afghanistan before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and were arrested by Afghan soldiers in 2001, and turned over to the USA.¹⁷⁵ While the Catholic Bishops

Conference(CBC), the Christian Council of Ghana(CCG) and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council(GPCC) expressed disappointment over the Ghana government's decision to accept these ex-detainees in view of the threat they posed, the Chief Imam pleaded that, the men be shown mercy and accepted on humanitarian grounds. As the Christian bodies considered these men as a threat to Ghana's security, the Chief Imam's spokesperson described them as people who "have had their human rights violated".¹⁷⁶ Each of the abovementioned groups, adopted a stance that reflected their religious identity. Beyond identity, theorists such as Emile Durkheim posit that, there are other forces that compel people to abandon their unique identity for that of the larger group. He used the term, organic solidarity to describe a type of social integration that arises as a result of individual's need for one another's service. As earlier

¹⁷⁴ Modood, T. and F. Ahmad (2007). "British Muslim perspectives on multiculturalism." Theory, culture and society.

¹⁷⁵ www.ghana.gov.gh accessed 07/07/2017

¹⁷⁶ www.myjoyonline.com/news/2016/January-14th/lets-accept-the-gitmo-two-chief-imam-pleads.php accessed 28/05/2017

described in chapter one, in a society characterized by organic solidarity, there is relatively a greater division of labour that fosters interdependency.¹⁷⁷ People therefore put aside their differences and work together for their common good.

In this study, it was discovered that, the religious diversity of Ejura has not had any negative impact on their interpersonal relationships. People of the community relate very well with each other notwithstanding their religious differences.

The above notwithstanding, an interesting development took place at the verge of the researcher ending his work in the Ejura community and he deems worth commenting on. On the 16th March, 2018, two female students of Ejura Islamic Senior High School were knocked down and killed instantly by a man believed to be a chief from the Brong Ahafo Region. After the incident, the suspect went to the Ejura chief's palace and was escorted to the police station. The police fearing reprisal attack from the community on the station, transferred the suspect to the Mampong Divisional Command. When the youth of the Zongo had information about the incident, they besieged the police station and demanded the release of the suspect to them to be lynched. When the police refused to grant their illegitimate request, they vandalized the police station.¹⁹⁰

Upon hearing the news, Barima Osei Hwedie II, the Ejura chief who works as the Deputy Chief of State Protocol under the office of the President travelled down with some officers from national security. He summoned the Zongo chief and other tribal heads to his place. This was the time to break the frontier of the Zongo community or the settler-domination. The Sarkin Zongo was charged to control the tribal heads that served under him and the tribal heads on the

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.britanica.com/topic/mechanical-and-organic-solidarity>

accessed 09/06/2017

other hand charged to take responsibilities for the actions of their subjects. That, the Ejura chief being the custodian of the Ejura land will expel any tribal head and his followers for taking the laws into their hand. From this new arrangement, the Muslims will not respond to issues on the basis of their religious identity but rather, on their tribal identity. When an incident happens and it involves say, a Gonja, it must be addressed by the Gonja tribal head and his followers. Other tribe members should not come to meddle themselves in. This arrangement seeks to prevent ethno-religious conflict that could be sparked from the settler-domination.

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Angry-youth-attack-Police-station-at-Ejura-635019> retrieved 05/05/2018

5.5 Religious Programme exchange and the issue of “*Bid’a*”

Another issue that came out in the course of the data collection is the issue of *bid’a*. Three (3) respondents, all Muslims considered religious programme exchange as *bid’a*. The word *bid’a* has two aspects to it. One being the linguistic definition, and the other meaning from a *Shariah* perspective. Linguistically *bid’a* means introducing something new, regardless of whether it is connected to religious affairs or other worldly matters, and regardless of whether one practices it considering it to be part of religion or otherwise. In the *Shariah*, the terminology, *bid’a* means to “introduce something into the religion of Islam that was not done during the time of Prophet Mohammed and his companions” whether verbally, practically, explicitly or implicitly.

Again, innovational actions can be put into two categories – *bid’atul hasanah* (praiseworthy innovation) and *bid’atul Sayyi’ah* (offensive innovation). *Bid’atul hasanah* is an action which

does not contradict the Quran and the *Sunnah* but came into practice after the time of the Prophet. For examples using printing machines to print the Quran, using a water pumping machine to pump out water from the *Zam- zam* well through taps within the *Haramayn* for the use by pilgrims as is the case in our time, the modern use of microphones to invite people to prayer or *Da'wah* among others.¹⁷⁸ On the contrary, *Bid'a Sayyi'ah* is that action which contradicts the Quran and the *Sunnah* and was not practiced during the time of the Prophet.¹⁷⁹

When the issue of *bid'a* is mentioned, it brings to bear the *Sufi-Salafi* controversy. In their definitions of *bid'a*, Sufi scholars argue for an inclusive, wholistic definition, the *Salafi* scholars argue for an exclusive, literal definition that entails anything not specifically performed or confirmed by the Prophet.¹⁸⁰ Practices by the Sufis such as *mawlid* (celebration of the birth of the prophet), *urs* (commemoration of the death anniversary of Sufi saints), *nasheed* (poetry), *dhikir* (remembrance of God), *tawassul* (intercession), *wasilah* (intercessory powers of the Prophet), *ziyarat* (visiting the graves of the prophets and Sufi saints), *Ṣalātil Fātiḥ* and *Jawharatul Kamāl* are considered by Salafis as *bid'a*. In the heat of the Tijaniyya Ahlus Sunna conflicts in the mid-1990s to early 2000, each of the group coined derogatory names for the other based on their appraisal of the innovative practices by the group. The Ahlu sunna on one hand call the Tijaniyyas *yan bid'a* (innovators), *mushrikai* (polytheists), *yan laaya* (wearers of charms), *akwāshi rawa* (dancers group). The Tijaniyyas on the other hand

¹⁷⁸ N.H.M, Keller. *Al-maqasid: Nawawi's manual of Islam*. Beltsville, Maryland: (Amana Publications, 2002) .

¹⁷⁹ N.H.M, Keller. *Al-maqasid: Nawawi's manual of Islam*

¹⁸⁰ *Sufi-Salafi Relations*, Retrieved https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufi-Salafi_relations accessed 13/06/2017

called the Ahlus Sunna's *Munkiray* (People who detest good things), *Yan Izāla* (The *Izāla* group) and *Wahhābiyāwā* (Followers of the ideology of Muḥammad Abdul-Wahhāb).¹⁸¹

In Nigeria, the *Jama'at Izalat al Bid'a Wa Iqamat al Sunna* (Society for Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the Sunna) was established to fight what it considered as *bid'a* practiced by the Sufi brotherhoods.

Often times, those who object to religious programme exchanges or interfaith dialogue, claim that it is part of ecumenism and ecumenism is Christian. They also maintain that, the purpose of interfaith dialogue is to create one religion for all. They again claim that, to say "Your faith is mine and there is no difference" is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. Furthermore, that, interfaith dialogue is committed to creating a new, blended, diluted worship service common to all.

In Ghana, the Salafis are much more liberal compared to the type of Salafism in Nigeria and Somalia. The Sufis participation in Christian-Muslim interactions at the community level and national levels are the same level as that of the *Salafis*. Both groups have seen the need for mutual cooperation and dialogue. Muslim groups, irrespective of their doctrinal orientations, do engage Christians at both formal and informal settings in what could be regarded as religious programme exchange. This is much done by the *Salafi* group who feels they can use *da'awa* to win Christians into Islam. In fact, the *Salafis* unlike the Sufis in Ghana have institutionalized their *da'awa* (preaching) from the districts levels to the national level. They do quarterly *da'awa* and annual national *da'awa*.

¹⁸¹ K.A. Balogun and Abdussalam A. A. Arguments and Counter-Arguments: A Critical Analysis of the AhlusSunnah and Tijāniyyah Brotherhood Dispute in Ghana. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*. (2015). Volume 4 Issue 3

In the Ashanti region and other parts of Ghana, the *Salafis* have trained themselves well in the Akan languages and most often prefer preaching in Twi or Fante using both the Quran and the Bible. They invite Christians to debates and they also accept invitations to debate or participate in Christian programmes such as the Adventist-Muslim relations day celebrations.

As Keith E. Swartley said “A true paradox is that Muslims have shown more tolerance toward non-Muslims than toward each other”.¹⁸² This statement is true, because a *Salafi* scholar may accept an invitation to debate a Christian pastor on a subject like Muslim-Christian debate on polygamous marriage, but hardly could there be such a debate like the acceptability or otherwise of *mawlid* (the birthday celebration of Prophet Mohammed) between a Salafi and a Sufi scholar. The simple reason is that, Salafism being puritanical Muslim group aims at purging Islam of practices by the Sufis they consider un-Islamic. Therefore, each of these Muslim groups attack the other at the least provocation or sometimes without provocation at all. This development mars the relationship between these two Muslim groups whilst leaves their relationship with the Christians unharmed.

Therefore, one can say that, Islam does not forbid religious programme exchange. In the Quran, *surat* 16:125 says, “Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair admonition, and argue with them in the best manner possible”. It is the view of this researcher that, it is only through mutual respect and religious programme exchanges that the responsibility on the Muslims to call the non-Muslims to Islam could be made possible.

¹⁸² Keith E. Swartley. *Encountering the World of Islam*. Authentic Media, (2005)

5.6 Second cycle institution as the source of intolerance

Four (4) Muslim respondents or four point fifty-nine (4.59%) percent identified the only public senior high school in the town of Ejura as a source of conflict. They feel that, Muslim students are not treated fairly in the school. That is, they are not allowed a place to pray in the school. Writing about the impact of Islam in Ghana, Samwini stated that, “the Islamic impact in the area of education was limited to literacy in Arabic, the Quran and other Islamic sciences”.¹⁸³ Muslim children learnt to recite and memorize the Qur'an and also learn the histories of the religion. Up to 1850, education in Ghana was mainly limited to the purpose of producing individuals to offer clerical services to the mercantile class. From the 1860s, Christian missions led the way for the establishment of the western type of education. One of the objectives of these missionary schools was to serve as a “Christian prophylactic” against idolatry.¹⁹⁷

By 1950, the Christian mission owned for more than two-thirds of Ghana’s schools and with almost all situated in the south and outside the *zongos*. The patronage of Catholic schools was high because they were free. Muslim dominated areas or the *zongos* of the south and Northern region that were considered Muslim-dominated received the western education relatively late. However, in the south, the mission schools were opened to Muslim students whose parents so desired to enroll them.¹⁸⁴

The desire for western education among the Muslims came after independence. This was necessitated by the demand for a skilled workforce. The colonial administration offered opportunity of employment for those who had formal education. This compelled the Muslim to

¹⁸³ Nathan, Samwini, Nathan I. *The Muslim resurgence in Ghana*, 61. ¹⁹⁷

Nathan Samwini, I. *The Muslim resurgence in Ghana*, 62

¹⁸⁴ Nathan, I. Samwini, *The Muslim resurgence in Ghana*, 62.

seek formal education to enable them avail themselves for such employment opportunities. However, a desire for formal education at that time meant attending the mission schools.

The trend has not changed much presently. At the basic level, there are so many Islamic primary and Junior High schools, where secular education is taught. Most of these schools were formally exclusively Arabic or *makaranta* but have now been converted into English and Arabic/Islamic schools through the help of the Islamic Education Unit. There is a growing interest of Muslim parents, to get secular education for their children; however, Muslims in Ghana are not investing much into educational infrastructure compared to their Christian counterparts. As a result, even in the wake of the few Islamic schools especially at both the basic and senior high level, most Muslim students and their parents, still prefer the Christian mission schools like the Presbyterian Senior High School at Legon, Opoku Ware, St. Louis Senior High School, Wesley Girls and others, because of the quality of their tuition and the products they churn out.

In 2014, the Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana, Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, called on the government to hand over, all mission schools in the country, to their respective bodies for effective handling. He stated, “I acquire land, I build facilities, I have my school, you have brought in teachers and then you tell me I don’t have any right to talk about them”. According to him, these mission schools were not established, to only impart knowledge but to bring up the youth according to the standard of Christian morality.¹⁸⁵

Muslims in Ghana must also make the effort to invest in areas like the provision of educational facilities that will be appropriate for their needs. Taking Ejuraman Anglican as a case in point, an estimated 60% of the students are Muslims. However, the school remains an assert of the

¹⁸⁵ Citi FM Midday News, Accra.

Anglican Church and Ejura community represented by the Divisional Council. The numerical strength of the Muslims may not be deemed as good justification to grant the building of the mosque though they have the right to pray whilst in the school. During Nana Sarfo's era, this issue emerged and it was resolved that, no religious group will be permitted to build a place of worship. However, the researcher is of the opinion that, a decent place could be provided to these students to pray at least if not a complete mosque.

In response to the controversy surrounding the Muslim students in the Anglican senior high school not accorded the right to fully practice their religion in the school; the Muslim community has established an Islamic Senior High School in 2016 to cater for the needs of their children.

5.7 State policy on Religious Pluralism

Ghana, according to the 1992 constitution, is a secular state that accords equal rights to its citizens irrespective of their religious affiliation. The main legislative basis for such religious liberty is article 21(1)(c) of the 1992 Constitution which, like article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantee the right of individual beliefs and the right to manifest them. Though Ghana is a secular country, it is not an atheist state as the preamble of its constitution begins with the statement, *'In the name of Almighty God.'* Again, the state recognizes some religious festivals in the country such as Christmas, Boxing Day and Easter as public holidays. In the same vein, Muslims are also accorded two statutory holidays annually, for the festivals of *Eidul fitir* and *Eidul Adha*.

Also, in Ghana, major public events are marked with prayers from both Christians and Muslims. This is an acknowledgement that, the government finds religious pluralism as having the potential to help build one unified and cooperative nation.

Lastly, by conventions, Christian and Muslim politicians have gone into alliance in order to show how unbiased they can be to any of the two major religious traditions in Ghana. In the 2016 General elections for example, where the NPP wanted to wrestle power from NDC, they cashed in much on the “Muslim” factor of the running mate of their flag bearer, Dr. Mahamud Bawumia in their political party that is described by its opponents, the NDC as an antiMuslims party.

5.8 Improving the Christian-Muslim relations in Ejura

One of the research questions in the study was on what can be done to sustain the current harmonious relationship existing between the Christians and Muslims in Ejura. The respondents were given the opportunity to share their views on how this improvement could be made on the existing relationship between the two groups taking into consideration their unique circumstances. All the 87 respondents’ views cut across five main themes that included the following:

5.8.1 Improving the relationship through mutual respect

Thirteen (13) respondents or 14.94% suggested that Muslims and Christians should have respect for one another. That, respecting their differences will help promote cooperation. Mutual respect is said to be a two-way street. Respect between individuals and among groups can effectively be maintained if mutually-observed.

5.8.2 Improving the relationship through tolerance.

Ten (10) respondents or 11% suggested both Muslims and Christians should tolerate one another as they seek to live peacefully together. Sharing this view, Samwini wrote:

Unlike inter-religious dialogue which seeks, among other things to build understanding on similarities between the different faiths, religious toleration does not necessarily look for similarities but seeks to bring peace even amidst acknowledged differences. The process thereby generates peaceful co-existence and enables people to promote their spiritual and cultural values, which are found in the distinct outlooks of followers of the other religions. Peaceful co-existence leads to a growth in relationship through a process of mutuality that generates greater understanding and mutual enrichment. The end result is a better relation between different religions within the same community.¹⁸⁶

5.8.3 Improving the relationship through the avoidance of discrimination.

Fourteen (14) respondents were of the view that, Ejura has a lot of economic potentials ranging from commercial farming to trading. They also believed by giving people equal opportunities in the shared resources and services, they therefore see themselves as members of the larger group. To avoid discrimination, also means giving equal opportunity to all members of a society so that people can exercise their fundamental human rights as well as ensuring their welfare.

5.8.4 Improving the relationship through dialogue.

Eleven (11) respondents suggested dialogue as a means of maintaining the peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims. Aside interfaith dialogue, another aspect of dialogue is what is referred to as “dialogue of life”. This in simple terms means coexisting peacefully with “the other” in spite of obvious religious differences. In dialogue of life, people from different religious traditions live and interact in their everyday lives. Dialogue of life is a direct challenge to religious people, non-religious individuals, towns, and communities to accept one another no

¹⁸⁶ Nathan I. Samwini., *Religious Toleration as a key factor for Social Stability in Plural Ghana*. Vol.4, No.12. Developing Country Studies, (2014) www.iiste.org accessed 26/07/2017

matter their differences in beliefs or practices. Unlike inter-religious dialogue which often involves listening to one another about the content of each other's faiths, dialogue of life involves faith communities and individuals "sharing with openness" what God is doing in the lives of his people.¹⁸⁷ To Akintunde:

The dialogue of life can help draw participants out of their cocoons of mutual mistrust and engender an atmosphere of deeper understanding, mutual esteem and respect. He continues that, the dialogue of life offers us a more effective way of addressing issues of moral philosophy, which lies at the heart of the African sacred cosmos. He believes when people share the same economic, political, and cultural situation, such a basic dialogue is essential for the promotion of common human and spiritual values in the process of building a community of justice, solidarity, and peace.¹⁸⁸

5.8.5 Improving the relationship through friendly games.

Fifteen (15) respondents all of them in their youth, were, of the view that, sporting activities such as football, basketball or volley ball can be used to promote and maintain the peaceful relationship existing between Christians and Muslims in Ejura. Their view is also recognized in Ghana's legislation. The Directive Principles of State Policy requires that, sports be promoted throughout Ghana as a means of fostering national integration, health and selfdiscipline as well as international friendly game. A programme dubbed "bridging divides" was introduced in South Africa. The programme used basketball to bring children and communities together. An assessment of the programme, indicated that, majority of the

¹⁸⁷ Nathan I. Samwini, The Need for and Importance of Dialogue of Life in Community Building: The Case of Selected West African Nations. Journal of Interreligious Studies accessed 17/03/17

¹⁸⁸ Akintunde E. Akinade., The Precarious Agenda: Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Nigeria., North Carolina: (High Point University, 2002).

This was a lecture given by Professor Jane Smiths' "Essentials of Christian-Muslim Relations" class in the summer of 2002.

participants showed fewer racial stereotype tendencies and less racism compared to those who were not part.¹⁸⁹

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5.9 Conclusion

The chapter discussed the findings from the preceding chapter in relations to other studies and findings. Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilization" and other theories were explored in order to appreciate or critique our findings. In other words, this chapter presented the central idea of the study. Religious pluralism, Christian Muslim relations were discussed at length. Special attention was paid to the role of Adventists in this emerging area of interfaith cooperation. The three components that are believed to determine social cohesion in Africa such as perceived inequalities, trust and identity helped to digest the information gathered from the field with regards to social cohesion.

¹⁸⁹ The role of sports in peace building

retrieved from www.sportanddev.org

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding remarks of the work, by summarizing the key findings and drawing some conclusions. It also presents some recommendations for the peaceful coexistence of religious groups, policy makers and provides for further areas of research.

6.1 Summary of chapters

The focus of this study was to find out how the existence of two diverse and competing faiths like Christianity and Islam, affect the daily interactions of the people of the Ejura town. Chapter One, looked at the general introduction of the study. This included but was not limited to the problem statement, the objectives, research questions, literature review, relevance of the study, with its delimitations.

Chapter Two, presented some conceptual issues and developments on the study. The chapter looked at the traditional African religion as a very tolerant religion that through acculturation allowed the Africans to adopt some aspects of the foreign religions that suit their purpose. The researcher shared the opinions of some scholars, that this encounter of the foreign religions and the African Traditional religion, created a fertile ground for religious tolerance in Africa and for that matter, Ghana. There have also been instances of alleged religious intolerance, especially, in some of the educational institutions that have received adequate media coverage. Some inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts have also been recorded in the country. It was discovered that, intra-religious conflicts especially between the Muslim groups of *Tijaniyya* and

Ahlus Sunna wal Jama'a have been more frequent than between Christian and Muslim groups.

The chapter also, examined Religious Pluralism from the perspectives of

Christianity and Islam, as religions with some supporting quotations from the Bible and the Qur'an as revealed scriptures.

Chapter Three, of the study, focused on the area of study. It included a profile of the Ejura Municipality, the history and religions of the people of Ejura. The history of the planting of the various missionary churches in the town as well as the Adventist church were examined. The history of Islam and the creation of the *Zongo* community were also discussed.

Chapter Four dealt with the data collection from the field. This included the resident participant's knowledge on religious pluralism, Christian-Muslim relations, existence of social cohesion, the state of Christian-Muslim relationships in Ejura, and some potential threats to the apparent good relationship between the two religious groups. The chapter also elicited suggestions from the respondents, on how the relationship could be improved.

Chapter Five discussed the findings from the field. Comparisons were made with past studies and findings from previous researchers.

6.2.1 Religious Pluralism in Ejura

In Ejura, religious pluralism can be equated to religious diversity. This means that, both Christians and Muslims recognize, the fact that, they are not the only religious group in the community. Christians recognize the existence of Islam in the area and give them the due recognition and vice versa.

Again, religious pluralism in Ejura involves dialogue. Both Muslims and Christians learn from each other, without attempting to convince each other of the correctness of their individual set of beliefs. It also means holding one's own faith, and at the same time, engaging other faiths with the aim of learning about their tradition from their own perspectives. This is the best means of building bridges and relationships for the promotion of communal harmony.

Also, in Ejura, religious pluralism means that, both Christians and Muslims; accept the fact that, there is some amount of validity in the teachings of each other's religion. This is, a matter of acknowledgement but not acceptance.

6.2.2 The nature of Christian-Muslim relations in Ejura.

In a community where religious pluralism is well understood and given recognition, such a community creates a good ground for a healthy relationship between and among the adherents of the various religions. Fifty (50) respondents making fifty-seven percent 57% had knowledge on religious pluralism. It is therefore not surprising that ninety-four percent 94% of the respondents said the Christian-Muslim relation in Ejura is good.

6.2.3 Religious Pluralism and its impact on social cohesion in Ejura.

The existence of the two monotheistic religions has not polarized the community. As Fuseini Wandusim quoting Johnson Mbilla puts it:

It is well known that, it is in sub-Saharan Africa...that one can notice Christians and Muslims living as members of the same family, sharing in the joys of birth and the sadness of death and celebrating religious festivals together; as if there were no stark differences between Christianity and Islam.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Michael F. Wandusim, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana: The Role of the Youth*. Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education, 2015, Vol.(4), Is. 3 Retrieved <http://kadint.net/our-journal.html> accessed 14/06/2017

6.2.4 Threats against peaceful coexistence.

Four (4) Muslim respondents were of the view that, the way Muslim students are treated in the only public senior high school in the community poses a threat to the peaceful coexistence in the community. Five (5) Christians who are mostly indigenes responded that there is unequal distribution of political power in the town, Ejura and the municipality at large between Christians and Muslims.

However, the power distribution in this community is influenced by more than one factor.

Political affiliation of an electoral candidate for instance largely determines a candidates' prospect of winning. Even in the district assembly elections which is deemed non-partisan, often times, a particular candidate is voted for by both Muslims and Christian because of the political party he/she belongs to. The issue involving the Muslim students and the Anglican leadership regarding the religious rights of the Muslim students in the Ejuraman Anglican School could be addressed through dialogue. We think the Muslim leadership could engage the Anglican leadership to find a lasting solution to this problem.

6.3 Concluding remarks.

Ejura is one of the most heterogeneous societies in the Ashanti region. It has the greatest number of settlers in the whole of Ghana. Though Ejura is part of the Ashanti region, it has a very high number of migrants from northern Ghana and some other Ecowas countries. This has earned the municipality the nick-name, „Ecowas“. The study sought to find out how the presence of the two monotheistic religions, (Christianity and Islam) impacts on the social

cohesion/interpersonal relations of the people living in Ejura. The research questions that guided the study were, to what extent are Christians and Muslims in Ejura cooperating? Is there any element that threatens the peaceful co-existence between these two communities of faith? What can be done to sustain the apparent harmonious relationship existing between these two religions?

The research also sought to identify among other things, the history of religious pluralism and its impact on Christian-Muslim relations in the town, explore the dynamics of the encounters between these two monotheistic faiths in Ejura, explore the extent to which the reconstruction of the interfaith encounter could promote greater cooperation. The study traced the history of the various mission churches and Islam into Ghana. It also looked at how these churches as well as Islam and also the Adventist church were all brought to Ejura.

This study was necessitated by the fact that, religious conflicts have risen in many places on the African continent where Islam and Christianity meet. Most theorists of religion have held the belief that, the superficial differences between Islam and Christianity lead to clashes of religion. As Diana Eck clearly expressed the exclusivists belief that, truth cannot be two and so one cannot hold the belief that his/her faith holds the final truth whilst another outside theirs also laying claim to the same truth. This exclusivist view runs counter to the pluralist view.

In the early 1990s, some parts of Ghana witnessed violence confrontations between Muslims and Christians. However, the need for interfaith cooperation and peaceful coexistence has come to be understood by these two groups as important in their quest for a conducive environment to profess their faiths. Christians and Muslims have come to understand the pluralist nature of

the modern Ghana's religious landscape and are conscious of that. This has therefore led to a very good relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ghana.

Even though there are verses in the Qur'an that prescribe salvation exclusively to Muslims, for instance, "and whoever desires other than Islam as religion, never will it be accepted from him; and he in the hereafter will be among the losers" (Q 3:85). The Bible also prescribes salvation exclusively to Christians. The Biblical text "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me".¹⁹⁰ There is also scriptural evidence that supports religious pluralism. One of such evidences can be found in the Quran that says "If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community, but they continue to have their differences" (Qur'an 11:118). The Bible also entreats Christians to live at peace with all men. For instance, "Depart from evil, and do good, seek peace, and pursue it". (Psalm 34:14)

Therefore, the good relationship existing between Muslims and Christians has led to a strong communal harmony.

Another factor that was discovered in this study that helps a community to value peace and to strive for peaceful coexistence is economic prosperity. Ejura being an economic and business hub and a major, market centre in the Ashanti Region, offers a great opportunity to members of the community to engage in income generating activities. When such opportunity exists in a community, people are compelled to think beyond their religious or ethnic identities. They freely mix with people with different identities and by doing this; a high level of social cohesion is created. In a nutshell, it is a fact to say that, the religious pluralism of Ejura town has not had

¹⁹⁰ (John 14:6 Revised Standard Version)

a negative effect on social cohesion in the town. There is rather a strong bonding between Muslims and Christians.

6.4 Recommendations.

In view of the findings from this study, the researcher makes two types of recommendations. These are specific recommendations based on the case study and general recommendations that take into consideration, the peculiarity of the Ghanaian religious landscape.

6.4.1 Specific Recommendations based on case study

First, Efforts must be made to develop the human capital of the town. This will help the residents to value human dignity and continue to respect and accept one another irrespective of their religious inclinations.

Second, conscious efforts must be made to reconstruct the feeling of “we are being dominated” and “controlled” by settlers. This could be done by the host people by constantly looking at the positive side of the presence of the settlers in the community. The settler factor is what has made the town a hub of economic activities in the Ashanti region and also made it the 7th biggest town in the region.

Again, the leadership of the settler community must take an uncompromising stance on indiscipline and always ready to disown their followers who break the law. This will instill fear in the miscreants who may instigate others and hide behind the numerical strength of the settlers to misbehave.

Also, politicians should not polarize the community for their selfish interest. The EjuraSekyedumasi Parliamentary seat is one of the most keenly contested one between the NDC

and the NPP during general elections. In view of that, the two political parties go all length to win the seat. The researcher therefore recommends that, this contest must not disintegrate the community.

6.4.2 General Recommendations

6.4.2.1 Recommendations to religious leaders

i. Moving beyond government solutions.

Both Muslims and Christians must move beyond state/government solutions in times of disagreement. They must instead focus on their lines of commonalities in addressing issues of disagreement. During the 2015 Muslim-Christian controversy over the alleged forcing of Muslim students in the senior high schools in the country to take part in Christian worship, the Muslim leadership sought solution from the state's corridor of power. The then NDC government came out with a threat to sanction school heads that compel Muslim students to take part in Christian worship. There were even calls from some legal practitioners that Muslims should go to the Supreme Court to seek for redress of their rights.

It is the position of this researcher that, in times of disagreement like that, the various religious group leaders should sit down to dialogue and find a common solution to such disagreements.

ii. Focus on the positive

Both Christians and Muslims in Ghana have friends, school mates, neighbours, business associates and even family members who belong to the other faiths. During festive seasons, Christians and Muslims exchange felicitations and presents. Therefore, religious leaders must focus on these positive exchanges in addressing their differences.

iii. Avoidance of polemical preaching

Polemical preaching is a sermon that seeks to attack a particular practice or doctrine held by another person. Muslims and Christians should avoid misrepresenting the teachings of the other, with the view to mocking them or winning them over to their religious side. When this happens, it sparks spontaneous violent physical or verbal response from the other, and that often leads to violent confrontations. It is therefore important that, accurate and sympathetic knowledge of each other's faith is attained by both Christians and Muslims, in order to avoid unnecessary misrepresentation and misinterpretation of each other's teachings and to prevent them from bearing false witness against each other.

iv. Investment in educational infrastructure.

Comparatively, Christians have performed creditably well in mobilizing resources to build educational infrastructures than Muslims. Some of these sources for revenue mobilization are through the payment of tithes, annual harvest and voluntary contributions.

Muslims religious leaders should give their members the kind of leadership that sees the need for investment in educational infrastructure. This is the only way they can create the educational environment suitable for development of the Muslim identity and also lead the call for religious tolerance by according to Christians in Islamic schools the kind of rights they want their children in Christian schools to be accorded. The desire for a quality education from the Christian mission schools may sometimes come at a cost. Therefore, if the Christians are not leading the way for such level of tolerance, Muslims should build more schools, and then set the pace for such acts.

v. Muslims' interfaith relations officer

The office of the National Chief Imam, must have an interfaith relations officer, who should be different from his personal spokesperson. This officer, must have a special role of coordinating correspondences, between the national chief Imam's office and the Christian bodies. In the same vein, the Christian Council of Ghana must also have a functional interfaith relations desk, to deal with its correspondences with Muslims on matters of mutual concern. **vi. Preaching**

peace

Religious leaders must preach peace to their followers. Both the Qur'an and the Bible have numerous verses, which directly or indirectly admonish religious people to relate peacefully with people from other religions. For instance, the Qur'an verse that says: „Surely they who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabeans, who believes in God and the last day, and works righteousness-their wage awaits them with their lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow“ (Q 2:62). Also, Gamaliel's defense of the apostles in the Bible is another good Biblical text that advocates compassion for people of other faiths.¹⁹¹

6.4.2.2 Recommendation to Heads of Schools

- i. Schools are essential avenues for interfaith dialogue and also lay the foundations for tolerant behaviour. They can effectively be used to combat fanaticism by teaching students how to learn to live peacefully with people from other religions. This therefore means that, Christians in Islamic schools should not be compelled to take part in Muslim rituals and Muslims in Christian schools, should also not be compelled to part take in

¹⁹¹ (Acts 5:34, Revised Standard Version)

Christian religious rituals. By doing this, schools would be inculcating the spirit of religious tolerance into their students. These students would then grow up to be tolerant and respect religious diversity/pluralism.

- ii. Again, the parts of schools' rules and regulations that state, „all school gatherings are compulsory to all students' must exclude exclusive religious gatherings like church services or Muslims' religious services in the case of Islamic schools. This rule contravenes the 1992 constitution of Ghana which guarantees freedom of religion to all citizens. Students in senior high schools and colleges of education whether Muslims or Christians, should not be made to take part in the other's religious activities under duress.

6.4.2.3 Recommendation to government

- i. In a democratic nation like Ghana, individuals have equal rights to speak out and to associate. The right to embrace a religion is one of the most basic human rights and all legislations on religion must pay attention to these rights. As a secular state, all religions must be given the equal opportunity to develop in the same conditions that will enable them, to find their appropriate places in their society. Governments should therefore recognize religious diversity as a foundation for national cohesion and make every effort towards building a free nation that will guarantee the citizens' freedoms.
- ii. Second, the Ministry of Education through the Curriculum Research and Development Division should review the study of religions (Christian Religious Studies (CRS), Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) at the Senior High School level to include some core topics on interfaith cooperation. This aspect should be made to take 20% of the West

African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations organised by the West Africa Examination Council. By doing so, the young adults would learn to appreciate the diversity of our country's religious landscape and learn to know how to relate to members of other religions in an open minded manner.

iii. Third, the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs on January 2017 was redesignated as the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs. It is the recommendation of this researcher that, their attention must not be on only the chieftaincy issues but those of religious as well. The ministry, must organize seminars for religious leaders, in areas that are going through religious conflicts be they inter or intra. The effects of religious conflicts being inter or intra has always been loss of properties and sometimes lives. Therefore, the programmes and policies of the Ministry must focus on how to promote both interfaith and intra-faith cooperation.

iv. Poverty is another thing that leads to crime commission. When the youth of a country are unemployed and idle, they can be recruited by self-seeking politicians and unscrupulous religious leaders to foment trouble. Government must therefore create job opportunities for the youth, so that they do not become a reservoir of cheap labour for trouble making in the society. In this regard, the researcher recommends the Youth Employment Agency be well resourced to be able to engage majority of our youth seeking employments.

- v. Lastly, the National Peace Council (NPC) must be resourced adequately to enable it carry its mandate as stipulated in the National Peace Council Act 818, 2011. The act enjoins the council to perform any other function that will be ancillary to its object. In view of that, the council should place importance on research in order to abreast itself with new trends in security matters.

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Alhaji Mohammed Shaakib Yakubu Umar Bamba	Deputy Chief Imam (<i>Naib</i>), Tijaniyya mosque	13 th August, 2016
Mr. Kofi Owusu Jacob	Catechist, Ejura Presbyterian Church	13 th August, 2016
Mallam Mohammed Hafiz	Reformist (ASWAJ)	13 th August, 2016
Amos Appiah Yeboah	AYPA, Ejura Anglican church	17 th August, 2016
Peter Stephen Nimarko Twede Aduasah	Catechist, Ejura Roman Catholic church	17 th August, 2016
F.Y. Owusu	Member of royal family	22 nd August, 2016
Alhaji Suraji Alhassan	Sarkin Zongo	2 nd November, 2016
Mr. Abass Suleman	Youth Activist, Ejura	2 nd November, 2016
Nana Appiah Kusi Brempong II	Ejura Kyidom Hene	2 nd November, 2016

Bismark Nyantakyi	Resident Pastor, Ejura SDA	13 th March, 2017
Rev. Joseph Kusi Sackey Nana Sarfo Kantanka	Senior Pastor Deputy/Student Pastor Ejura Baptist Church	13 th March, 2017 13 th March, 2017
Owusu-Ansah Gyamfi Stephen	Director, AMR	25 th May, 2017



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introductory Statement

My name is Yakubu Habila. This request is to enable me acquire information for a research thesis at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The research is about “Religious Pluralism and its impact on social cohesion”.: A case study of Christian-Muslim relations in Ejura in the Ejura-Sekyedomasi Municipality of Ashanti.

I would therefore be very grateful if you could spend some time to answer the following questions for me.

A. RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

1.What is your religious denomination?

- (a) Ahlussunna [] (b) Tijāniyya [] (c) Catholic [] (e) Methodist []
- (f) Anglican [] (g) Presbyterian [] (i) Baptist [] (h) Adventist []

2. Have you heard of the word “Religious Pluralism” before?

- (a) Yes [] (b) No [] (c) Not sure []

3. Where did you learn it from?

4. What is your understanding of it?

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5. Is it necessary? (a) Yes [] (b) No [] (c) Not sure

6. Why is it necessary or not?

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B: CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

7. What is Christian-Muslim relations?

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8. Should we promote it? (a) Yes [] (b) No [] (c) Not sure []

9. Describe the state of the Christian-Muslim Relations in Ejura.

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10. What is your mind on religious programme exchange?

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C: SOCIAL COHESION

11. Have you heard of “Social Cohesion” before?
(a) Yes [] (b) No [] (c) Not sure []

12. Can you give a further description of your understanding of the word?
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13. Do you see any sign of inequality/discrimination in the town?
(a) Yes [] (b) No []

14. Which of these identities would you consider most important to you? (a) Ghanaian []
(b) Christian/Muslim []

15. Do you trust people outside your religious circle? (a) Yes [] (b) No []

16. In your view, is the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ejura good enough?
(a) Yes [] (b) No []

17. If No, why? *(Skip this if you answered Yes to question 16)*

18. Suggest how this relationship could be improved.
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Appendix II

Ejura Central Mosque



Source: Field, 2017



Appendix III

Ejura St. Anthony Catholic Church



Source: Field, 2017



Appendix IV

The National Chief Imam, Sheikh Usman Nuhu Sharubutu and Most Rev. Gabriel Palmer-Buckle in a heartily display of love and acceptance. This is a demonstration of the peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Ghana.



Source: Ibrahim Gomda Barhama Gattuso, 2016.



Appendix V

The General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana, Rev. Dr. Kwabena Opuni Frimpong and the spokesperson for the national Chief Imam, Sheik Aremeyaw Shaibu in a display of love and acceptance after the launch of an interfaith youth sensitisation programme in 2016.



Source: Rebecca Quaiocoe Duho www.graphic.com. Sep. 08, 2016

Appendix VI

A Christian organisation, the Spiritual Churches Council of Ghana donates food items to the National Chief Imam to help Muslims in their fasting.



Source: <http://ghananet.com.gh>, 2016

