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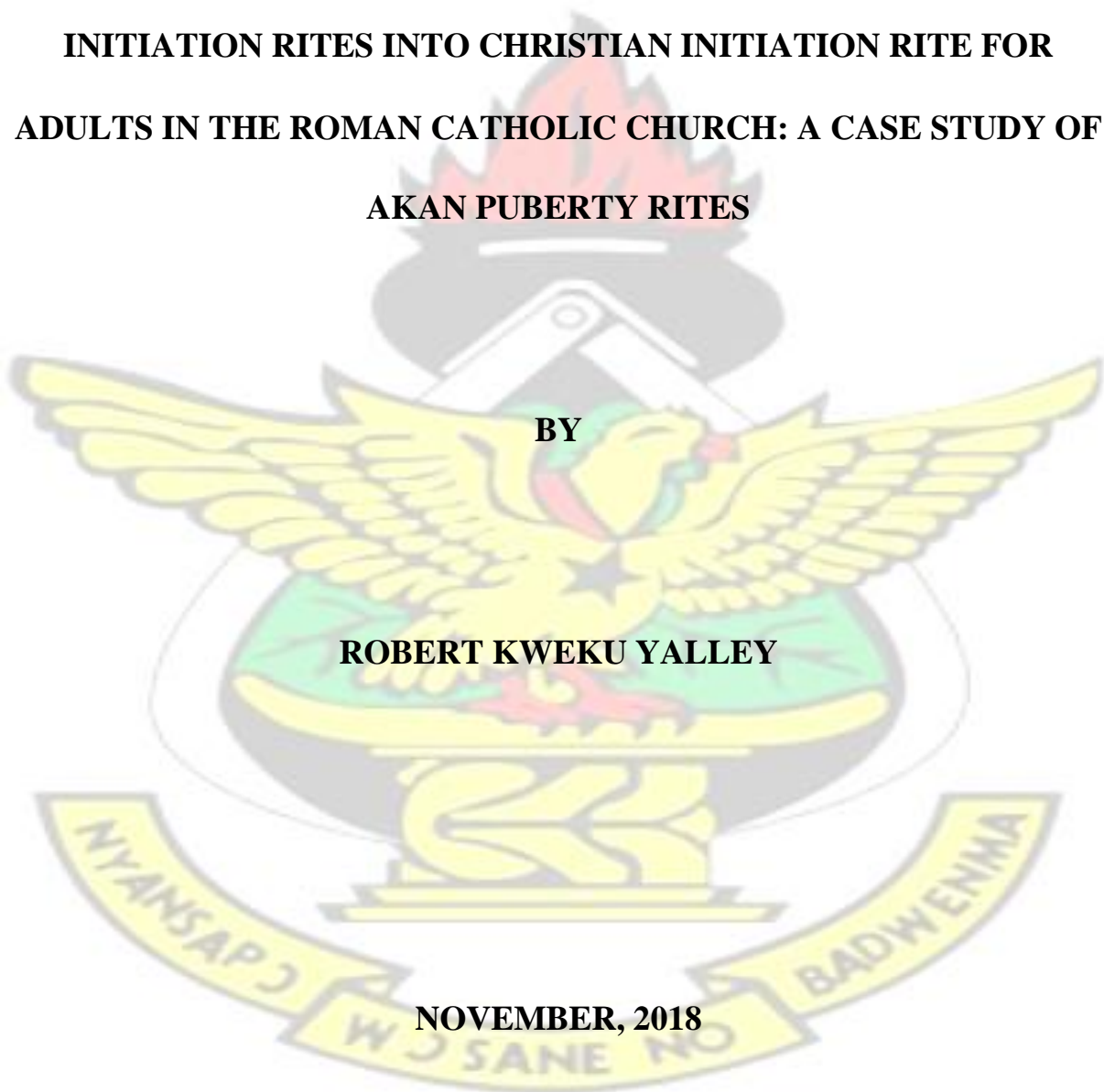
KUMASI, GHANA

KNUST

**INTEGRATING PRAGMATIC LESSONS OF TRADITIONAL
INITIATION RITES INTO CHRISTIAN INITIATION RITE FOR
ADULTS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF
AKAN PUBERTY RITES**

BY

ROBERT KWEKU YALLEY



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ROBERT KWEKU YALLEY

**A Thesis submitted to the Department of Religious Studies,
College of Humanities and Social Sciences,
In partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

NOVEMBER, 2018

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the MPhil and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person, nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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It is true that every groundbreaking achievement in life comes by collaborative efforts of many other people. This work is an attestation to this assertion for it is no exception. Although I am grateful to many people - lecturers, students, course mates and friends for their contributions to this study, I am particularly indebted to several individuals: Rev. Fr. Dr. Francis Appiah-Kubi (former Head of Department, Religious Studies, KNUST) my supervisor whose suggestions, constructive criticisms and guidance have helped this work see the light of day and to Michael Kojo Ntiamoah (Honourable) for taking time to painstakingly read, proofread and correct the ideas espoused in this work.

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While I acknowledge the great contributions of all who helped me, I bear responsibility for slips and inconsistencies that may be found in the work.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the wonderful women and men (both living and dead) who have greatly and positively impacted and influenced my life especially Maame Adwoa Boah (my late mum, who took time to explain things to me) and Emmanuel Swanzy-Krah (my beloved Dad). To you, who have shown me the path of love, hard work and the fear of the Lord, I doff my cap and celebrate you.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIR	African Indigenous Religion
AOR	All Other Religions
ATR	African Traditional Religion
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
Can	Code of Canon Law
HIV	Humano-Immuno Virus
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults



ABSTRACT

Christianity in Africa seems to have denied many religio-cultural ritual practices, regardless of their values and lessons, which are integral part of indigenous African culture. This makes the African live an uncomfortable Christian life. But it is an undeniable fact that the nature and relevance of African Christianity can be understood if it is studied in its relation to African world-view and indigenous knowledge systems, which serve as resources for indigenous education and formation.

Puberty rites mark a moment of education to teach and learn the norms, values and lessons in the ritual moments for identity formation, and initiate a transitional period in the life of an Akan person. They serve to socialise and institutionalise the individual into the new stage of life attained in the community with rights and responsibilities.

Within the Roman Catholic domains, apart from the catechism, which teaches the catechumen the basic tenets of Christianity, the doctrines and precepts of the church, there is no pattern of formation for young catechumen to mature into responsible adult Christian, who has both strong roots and understanding of the Christian faith and practices and yet firmly planted in authentic Akan religio-cultural beliefs and practices, which do not contradict the Christian faith. This prompts the quest of this research; to find out how the values and lessons of puberty rites could be integrated into the preparation and formation of young people for responsible adult Christian life in the Akan community.

The study revealed that there are great lessons that could be harnessed from this rite as an indigenous knowledge system, which will give a practical touch to the instructional sessions organised for the rite of Christian adult initiation, making the Christian young man and woman a person of his/her culture and tradition.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This chapter captures a general introduction to the work, the problem statement, Research Questions, Research Objectives, Significance of the Research, the Scope and delimitation, Limitations of the Research and the methodology employed. An attempt is made at reviewing some existing and relevant literature on the subject matter with the aim of assessing what others have said relating to the subject and critiquing their works and what relevance such materials hold for this research. Then comes the structure of the work.

1.2 Background to the study

Culture is often considered the embodiment of a people's way of life, of which, by experience, they lay claims to, involving their attitude and practices. It is the collective programming of mind, which distinguishes members of one group from the other. It encompasses the entirety of their life; their moral and ethical codes, beliefs, arts, sociopolitical and educational systems, structures and institutions.¹ For Lawrence B. Harrison, as echoed by Owusua Ahwenekoko,² Culture is that which binds people as a unique group; it differs from people to people.² Culture is not acquired inherently; it is learnt chiefly as the outcome of socio-religious interventions. There are many ritual practices based on their functionalities. There are some of them which demand the involvement of or belong to an entire community and these have their planned out timing, which gives them the colour of a ceremony. Some are also private in nature and do not have any planned out timings in the community's program. These rituals are done as and when

¹ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), xiii.

² Owusuwaa Ahwenekoko is from Africa University College of Communications, Accra. See. <https://owusuwaaahwenkoko.wordpress.com/2008/06/.../puberty-rites-in-ghana-revisit>. Puberty Rites in Ghana; Revisit, By Owusuwaa- Ahwenekoko, Retrieved on 6th August, 2016.

² See <https://owusuwaaahwenkoko.wordpress.com/2008/06/.../puberty-rites-in-ghana-revisit>. Puberty Rites in Ghana; Revisit, By Owusuwaa- Ahwenekoko, Retrieved on 6th August, 2016.

need be. Rituals and ceremonies have very crucial and significant religio-social functions in traditional African societies. To mark out a distinction in the social and the religious life of the traditional African will be very difficult if not impossible because they weave out finely in the life of the traditional African.³

Religion is a strong force in a traditional African's life, influenced by one religious belief or another.⁴ Busia opined that the cultural heritage of Africa is greatly and pervasively religious.⁵ He observed that life in traditional African communities was all religious; one could not make a distinction of a religious area of life from a nonreligious area.⁶ Parrinder had already pointed out that most African colonial masters referred to Africans as —incurably religious.⁷ It is true that traditional rites, rituals and ceremonies have their groundings in religious beliefs. It is necessary that the rationale behind these religious practices and the entirety of what goes into the practices be found out and established. There are rules, laws, regulations and practices guiding and governing traditional rituals and ceremonies which become a linkage of the traditional African to the spiritual powers/forces which form part of their worldview.

Rites of passage are crucial and pivotal to traditional African socialization, marking out the various developmental periods in a person's life, including his/her relationship and role to the larger community. A significant point in the life of the African is the transition from childhood to adulthood when the individual becomes fully socialised and introduced to the norms and customs of the culture he/she belongs to. This makes rites of passage crucial in the formation of one's identity.

³ Cf. <https://owusuwaaahwenkoko.wordpress.com/2008/06/.../puberty-rites-in-ghana-revisit>.

⁴ John Mbiti S, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1.

⁵ K. A. Busia, *Africa in Search of Democracy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 1.

⁶ Busia, 7.

⁷ Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 9.

The African is known to be one who celebrates life.⁸ He or she sees his or her whole life as a physio-spiritual bundle of existence that is marked by various stages. There is the stage of birth, puberty, marriage, and lastly (but not in finality) the stage of death.⁹ These various stages are seen as crucial in a person's life and are, therefore, marked with their accompanied rites. These rites, in many societies, are transpersonal. Members of the community need to know about the various stages that a person has entered and participate in the activities that are associated with them.¹⁰ Victor Turner refers to the various cycles of passage in a person's life as 'life-crisis'. He explains —life-crisis as a crucial moment in an individual's psychosocial development such as birth, puberty or death.¹¹¹² Turner further observes that in many societies, ceremonies or rituals are developed to observe and celebrate the movement from one of such phases of life or social status to another. The Akan of Ghana, like other African societies, perform various rites to mark the various stages in life. One of such rites is the rite of initiation into adulthood. Ganusah observes that some Christian adolescent young women would prefer not to perform the traditional rites of initiation into adulthood these days; for such Christians, the rites or certain aspects in it are unchristian.¹³ But it is interesting to discover the great lessons that could be harnessed from some of these rites, especially the rite of initiation into adulthood.

Rites of passage serve a dual purpose of keeping intact the on-going community, symbolising the community's undying and surviving self and nature, and also giving a clear and guided means for transition from one life stage and sphere of responsibility to another. They affirm the

⁸ John Mbiti S, *Introduction to African Religions* (Johannesburg: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), 20.

⁹ R.Y Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana; A Theological and Ethical Reflection on the Rites of Birth and Initiation into Womanhood* (Accra: Yamens Press Ltd., 2008), 1.

¹⁰ Ganusah, 1.

¹¹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols- Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967),
¹² .

¹³ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 1.

order, levels and importance of values of the community, projecting a pattern of personal development the individual can envisage and upon attaining each stage, examine his or her maturation against the set-out standards of the community. Initiation rites in Africa bridge the individual to the community and the community to the larger and more powerful spirit world. Rites of passage provide the basis of the African's being; the foundation for his or her identity. Puberty rites showed a community's acknowledgement that one of its young women or young men had attained the age of responsibility, fertility and productivity in the community and these rites made a lasting impression and imprint on the participant. Puberty rites, with its various forms, and some being well documented and analysed, served to mould and educate the young ones, preparing them for their new roles in life.¹⁴ Common to all types of rites, but not limited to, are particular teachings and education about life, legends of the community, sacred rules and regulations given by the elders to the young ones. The system of maintenance or otherwise of these is made known to a young adult undergoing initiation ceremony and ritual. By this, one was initiated into adult privileges with rights and responsibilities.

Among the Akan, the traditional leader is groomed through a well-defined pattern of formation to be the symbol of his or her people's heritage, customs and glory. He or she carries and embodies within himself or herself the people and what they hold dear and cherish. The Akan traditional leader is the representation of the people in inter-tribal or intercommunal relationships. He/she is the face of the people and what they stand for. This is encapsulated in the popular Akan proverb *Animguasee mfata kani ba'* (the Akan should avoid any act of

¹⁴ Sexual identity and the roles of gender identity are enshrined through rites of passage: The males are prepared for their responsibilities in the community as men, and the women prepared for their responsibilities in the nation as women-with no confusion.

disgrace).¹⁵ One of such moments of education and formation among the Akans, inter alia, is during the performance of puberty rites. The period of puberty rites and ceremony is so crucial for the Akan that a neglect of it is tantamount to a denunciation of one's ethnic root and identity. During the puberty rites the individual is taken through lessons. These lessons are believed to help, guide and inspire the initiate's life as an individual and as a member of the community. These lessons are what this study seeks to explore and see how they could inspire and be synchronised with the preparation for the sacrament of confirmation as a Christian adult initiation rite to make the sacrament of confirmation grounded and much relevant to the Akan Catholic and by extension the Akan Christian. The words of Idowu, as echoed by Dickson and Ellington, aptly sum up the idea of this research:

We seek to unravel ways in which the Christian faith could be interpreted, integrated and made meaningful to [Akan] so that [Akans] will hear God in Jesus Christ communicating and revealing Himself to them in their own native and particular circumstances.¹⁶

1.3 Statement of the problem

Christianity and its relation with African Traditional Religion or African Indigenous

¹⁵ Agyewodin Ampem G., *Akan Mmesebi* (Kumasi: University Press, 1998), 30.

¹⁶ Kwesi Dickson and P. Ellingworth, eds., *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (New York: Orbis Books, 1969), 16. ¹⁷ Scholars of the studies of African Traditional Religion debate on the appropriateness of the expression proper in describing the religion that existed in Africa before the encounter with the Western and European Christian missionaries. Some prefer the use of African Indigenous Religion to African Traditional Religion. For some the word 'indigenous' instead of 'traditional' is preferred, the reason being that 'traditional' does not necessarily mean indigenous. The word 'Tradition' is used which means: a belief, custom or way of doing what has existed for a long time amongst a particular group of people and not necessarily inborn or aboriginal; a set of these beliefs or customs. (Oxford Dictionary 2000:1271). 'Indigenous', on the other hand, means 'aboriginal, homegrown, inborn, inherent, native' (Websters Dictionary 2005:609), 'belonging to a particular place rather than coming to it from somewhere else' (Oxford Advance Dictionary 2000:609). From the above definitions it could be argued that both definitions fit and are proper as working definitions for this research, looking at the subject at hand. In this research these two expressions would be employed and used interchangeably.

Religions (ATR/AIR)¹⁷ is a delicate topic to be explored.¹⁷ This is because the nature and relevance of African Christianity can be understood if it is studied in its relation to African world-view and Indigenous Knowledge Systems.¹⁸

Omoyajowo observes that Africans influence their religious beliefs, observances and practices with a unique local character and colouration.¹⁹ Thus African societies which do not uphold and respect traditional rites of passage demonstrate loss of community identity because the young ones live with the mentality that they are automatically changed into adults once they have come of age. This portrays an undirected society of no value system. This is almost same in the Christian domain.

In the Roman Catholic church, confirmation is seen and regarded as an important Christian sacrament²⁰ that initiates a person from ‘baby-Christian life’ into adult Christian life. By contrast, in traditional African societies, it was the case that one was never considered a full adult, regardless of age, unless one underwent the traditional initiation rites. Though the process and details of initiation differed among societies and communities, the essence and underlying purpose remained the same; to socialise the individual into a new community with different values and responsibilities, basically having to do with transforming and guiding an individual from one developmental stage in life into responsible, community-oriented adults. It is observed that apart from the catechism, which teaches the catechumen the basic tenets of the

¹⁷ D.T. Adamo, ‘Christianity and the African traditional religion(s): The postcolonial round of engagement’, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32(1), Art. #285, 2011, 10 pages. doi:10.4102/ve.v32i1.285

¹⁸ for more information on Indigenous Knowledge systems, especially among Akans, see Kwabena OpuniFrimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions: Perspectives of Akan Leadership Formation on Christian Leadership Development* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2012), xv.

¹⁹ Akin Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church* (Lagos: NOK Publishing, 1982), 3.

²⁰ In the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, —the sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. Cf. the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). See also www.dictionnaire.com/browse/sacrament

Holy Bible, Christianity and the doctrines and precepts of the church, there is minimal, if any at all, pattern of formation for the young catechumen to grow, develop and mature into full-blown, responsible adult Christian who is planted in sound Akan religio-cultural beliefs and practices which synchronise with the Christian faith.

Some scholars observe that Christianity in Africa has objected and diabolised too many African cultural and traditional beliefs and practices- libation, festivals and rites of passage- and therefore made the African live an uncomfortable Christian life. Such observation and many others, to a large extent, have fuelled the quest of this research to find out how the values and lessons of puberty rites could be integrated or synchronised into Christian initiation rite for adults, confirmation, to aid in character formation of the Christian young adult. This is a problem, when we know that the Gospel message —must be heard and appropriated in the context of every people's circumstances [culture]; the scriptures must be heard speaking to people in the particularity of their life situations!.²¹

The study intends to identify the values in Akan puberty rites and explore the possibility of integrating the values into the sacrament of confirmation. But is there no way or room for the integration of African religio-cultural values into Christian practices?.²²

1.4 Research Question

The main question which is used in this research is what pragmatic lessons are there for confirmation from Akan Puberty rites? Sub questions which are aimed at helping to address this problem are:

²¹ Kwesi Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (New York: Longmann and Todd, and Orbis Books, 1984), 2. See also Nicholls, Bruce, 'Theological Education and Evangelization' in Douglas J.D. (ed.) *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* Mineapolis: World Wide, 1975. p.647

²² Cf. F. A. Agyemang, *The African: Study in Vision and Courage* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1988), 88.

1. What is African Worldview and African Traditional Religion?
2. What is rite of passage in African traditional religion?
3. What is Puberty rite among the Akans and how does puberty rite, as a rite of passage, prepare the young person for mature, responsible adult life?

1.5 Objectives

This study aims at analysing the critical role of Akan puberty rites as a form of human formation pattern and its relevance for Christian adult initiation in the Roman Catholic church. Specific objectives to the research are;

- Identifying what constitutes the African Worldview and the African Traditional Religion. This will look at the influence of beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religion on Christianity. This is to help identify whether the African traditional religion can positively influence Christian religion.
- Looking at what rites of passage in African traditional religion are and identifying their significance to community growth and human formation.
- Understanding how Akan Puberty rites prepare the young person for adult life, ascertaining lessons and impact, thereof, in puberty rites for Christian initiation rites for adults in the Roman Catholic church.

1.6 Significance

The research will contribute to knowledge, especially to the body of literature on the integration of some values in ATR into Christian human formation in the Akan society, in Ghana and in African as a whole. It will help to increase the awareness on the need to have a holistic view of the ATR and its impact on Christianity in Africa. Academically, the research seeks to add to the source of reference to global knowledge in the subject matter for individuals who may want

to research on the subject and its related issues. The findings of the study would serve as a guide for future researchers in the same field of study in Ghana and beyond.

Religiously, the study will help in the area of ensuring a holistic, balanced and culturally rooted human formation, especially for the younger generation who are the future of the society and the church in Ghana and beyond.

The recommendations and suggestions from the study would serve as supplement to the efforts made so far to bring home and practicalize the message of inculturation and integration as the basis for a formidable Christianity in Africa. The research will help educate the general public and the Catholic Church, specifically, on how to integrate Akan traditional patterns of formation into Christian initiation rites.

Again, the study offers pertinent recommendations that could contribute to knowledge on ATR's effect on women ministry in Christianity. The findings from the study hopes to conscientise catholic women, especially Christian traditional women, such as queen mothers and elderly women in the church, to have a second look at their participation, catechetically, in the formation of young people for adult Christian life.

The study will help rethink into and refine the mode of catechesis and catechism for confirmation as a kind of rite of passage in Christianity, especially among the Roman Catholic Church.

1.7 Methodology

Peter Cannolly asserts the many and various expositions on religion are from people on a specific position and stand point. By this it is almost difficult, if not impossible, to have accurate, objective accounts of religious phenomena since such phenomena are not existent, so

to say.²³ Almost all perspectives of religion are laddened with certain prejudices and presumptions. Ninian Smart calls for ‘methodological agnosticism’ as an objective way to the study of religious phenomena and traditions. But even this sound academic caveat is, hardly, practically possible.

In recognition of this challenging reality, it becomes expedient that the researcher acknowledges his/her *terminus a quo et terminus ad quem*.²⁴ One of the standpoints this research has taken is the idea of the essence and effect of religio-cultural beliefs and practices of the people selected for this research, which traditionally is at the core of their life and living.

The research was conducted within some selected Akan communities. Akan is composed of the Asante, Bono, Fante, Agona, Akyem, Wassa, Akuapem, Kwawu and others, including those living outside Ghana, and occupy about five out of the ten regions.²⁵ They are identified by the Akan language and traditional socio-political system with the traditional leader (a chief) at the centre of governance.²⁶ The sample areas included some areas of the Ashanti region (Kwamo, Fomena), Sunyani, Fiapre, Badu, Cape Coast, Sekondi and Ahanta and Wassa traditional areas of Ghana as already acknowledged. The method used in the gathering and collection of data during the field study was mainly through participant-observations and structured and semi-structured interviews. The searcher had the privilege of observing different puberty rites among some traditional communities; (in wassa Akropong and Tarkwa Bankyim (Wassa traditional area on the 18th January and 23rd February, 2017 respectively),

²³ Peter Cannolly, —Introduction, in Peter Cannolly, ed., *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999), 1.

²⁴ This is a latin expression, literally meaning the point of departure and point of arrival

²⁵ Peter Kwasi Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1977), 1.

²⁶ J. M. Assimeng, *Social Structure of Ghana: A Study in Persistence and Change* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1999), 37. See also Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, 1.

Ketan, Funko, and Diabenekrom (Ahanta traditional area on 17th December, 2016, 18th February and 11th March, 2017 respectively),²⁷ Badu on the 11th April 2017.

The researcher employed purposive sampling technique in sampling for informants. This technique was chosen because the researcher needed specific or particular informant from experts and particular people who are acknowledged to have adequate and trusted knowledge and information on the topic under study.

For clarity of response the researcher selected and interviewed some chiefs, queen mothers, linguists, elderly women, catholic priests, catechists, Roman Catholic lay faithful, students and scholars of Akan indigenous studies and Christianity and African Traditional Religious Studies. After each round of interviews the researcher paid follow-up visits to respondents to cross check that the information given was accurate and can thus represent the Akan view. In some of these follow-ups, mobile phone calls were used to seek further information and clarifications from respondents. In all, the researcher was able to interview twenty-seven (27) personalities and groups out of the proposed thirty-three (33), due to series of postponements and busy schedules of respondents stretching across the targeted area of study and other Akan communities.

This research employed qualitative methodology. This methodology became necessary because there are areas of religion, culture and values which are hard to ascertain or are immeasurable quantitatively. Much of information obtained through primary source was through individual and group interviews, group discussions and participant-observation of the puberty rites from selected Akan communities which were recorded and later transcribed.

²⁷ Most Akan calendar has two types of *Adae* that occurs in every forty-two days (42 days). These are Akwasidae/Adaekese (Sunday Adae/ Great Adae) and Awukudae (Wednesday Adae). Awukudae falls on every

These approaches were mainly used because they foster close interactions between the

twenty-four (24) days after Akwasidae and eighteen (18) days after awukudae is akwasidae. Some books calculate 23 days and 17 days respectively. The researcher got to know that the day just before adae is called dapa. This is believed to be a good day. The Saturdays and Tuesdays that precede the Sunday and Wednesday Adae are dapa; memeneda dapa and benada dapa respectively. These days are good for ritual performances and practices such as puberty rites. The Ahantas have a triple week calculation of their calendar. They have Adae ,Edim and Ayenfo. See fig. 19 and fig. 20

researcher and the interviewees and also allow one to validate the data collected. To help the researcher ascertain whether the information given by the informant is valid or otherwise, it became necessary to do group interviews and have participant-observation of the puberty rites in some selected communities.

The study also used secondary source of data. This was done by reviewing existing literature on the subject. Secondary data are very important for the study because they provide firsthand knowledge on the research object while fieldwork gets you involved with the people and helps you to know exactly what is happening on the ground. This helped the researcher to get accurate information, with a high level of credibility.

1.8 Limitation of study

The study was not without limitations. Documentary evidence on leadership formation patterns for Akan women was too sparse to effectively complement the literature survey on the Akan formation and grooming to help draw on it for lessons for Akan formation for adolescents (both boys and girls) to enhance the quality of the study. Finding literature on the subject matter was not so easy. This is due to the fact that the area of study has not attracted the much deserved scholarly attraction.

There was also no readily available instrument to serve as reference point to guide the preparation of the instruments for the data collection. The data collection was as a result of the researcher's own designed instruments which probably have some defects.

The financial constraints and the cost of travelling to seek information from the target area and the respondents were also a limitation encountered and had its own toll on the quality of research.

Moreover, some informants also felt reluctant in giving out information, as solicited. This was because such informants found it hard to understand that the solicited information was for academic purposes. Again, some informants regarded the information solicited by the researcher as the preserve of women, which should not be made known to the researcher who is a man. Their reluctance to deliver the needed information readily had an effect on the timely completion of the research.

1.9 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The research, is aimed at helping to integrate into Christian initiation rites and ceremonies some values in the religio-cultural practices in African Traditional Religion. The study has been narrowed to the catholic church's initiation rite (sacrament) of confirmation. The study looks at the preparation that goes on, as provided by the Catechism of the Catholic Church and how the Akan puberty rite, as an educational moment could be a model for the preparation and catechesis of candidates for confirmation in the catholic church among the Akans. The research is mainly delimited to Christianity and African Traditional Religion among some selected traditional Akan communities; assessing the effect ATR has on Christian Adult initiation rite in the catholic church. While discussing these, references are occasionally made to events in other cultural settings within and outside Ghana.

Ideally, this study should have covered the catholic church in the whole country, Ghana, in order to make it more broad-based and comprehensive. Approached that way, the findings of the study could be applied to the catholic churches in the entire country. But the research is delimited to only the Roman catholic church among some Akan communities.

1.10 Review of related Literature

This section of the research recognises some extant works on the subject under discussion. Other related materials which may not directly hinge on the topic were also reviewed to help know the breadth and depth of information available on the topic and what scholars have said or reviewed in relation to the topic and other related issues under research. A review would be made, briefly, on what African Traditional Religion is, how it has been viewed, explained and presented by scholars, how its encounter with missionary religion such as Christianity has been appreciated or others by scholars.

Religion is believed to be an influential agent in the African's life. Religious beliefs and observances are binding in African society. Facets of the people's socio-political and economic life hinge on one religious belief or the other. Maurice De la Fosse notes:

Aucune institution n'existe (en Afrique noire), que ce soit dans le domaine social ou dans le domaine politique, voire meme en matiere economique, qui ne repose sur un concept religieux ou qui n'ait la religion pour pierre angulaire. Ces peuples, dont on a parfois nie qu'ils aient une religion, sont en realite parmi les plus religieux de la terre.²⁸

[There is no African institution (in black Africa), be it in the social, political domain or even in the field of economics, which does not rely on a religious concept or which does not have religion as its foundation. These people who sometimes have been denied their religiosity are in reality, the most religious people on earth]

²⁸ Maurice De la Fosse, —Les Civilisations Negro Africaines, in *Les Religions de l'Afrique Noire*, by Hubert Deschamps (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, n.d.), 17–20.

The above quotation spells out the significance of religion in the African's life. By this it can be deduced that whatever governs the religious life of the people totally influences every part of their life. Idowu, mindful of this fact, defines African traditional religion as:

the religion which has come from the faith held by the forbears of the present Africans, and explicitly practised by many Africans today in varied forms, shades and intensities; but also in some cases, under the covers of westernism and Arabism...²⁹

Traditional religions are primarily communal and not individually owned, because the individual is a part of the community. In traditional African societies irreligious persons are not found; everyone has is somehow governed by the religion (beliefs and practices) of the community, with pages of ATR found in almost every facet of the community's life. To be human is to belong to and be part of the community, which involves acknowledging and partaking in the community's beliefs and ritual ceremonies. It is not possible for one to be separated from the community's religion, which could amount to cutting off from his roots, a loss of his identity and those who embody the awareness of his/her own existence [emphasis mine]. Thus, in traditional Africa, to be out of religion is to be excommunicated and estranged from the life of the community.³⁰

The quotation above portrays that religion is intrinsic to traditional African life and there are academic works on ATR attesting to this, though western minds could face the challenge of understanding this intrinsic integration. The traditional African is defined by his/her religion. To neglect or do away with religion, as a traditional African, is to give up one's identity and the communal assistance and security enshrined therein. And that is what Mbiti terms _... a self-excommunication from the entire life of society.'³¹

²⁹ Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (Ibadan: Fountain Publications, 1991), 2.

³⁰ John Mbiti S, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1969), 3.

³¹ Mbiti, 3.

African traditional religions, often described as African indigenous religions or African ethnic religions, is a term that describes the varied and various religions indigenous Africa. This is because African religious traditions are community defined. Traditional African religions come with doctrines, instructions and ritual practices which structurize traditional African societies. The traditional religions in Africa contribute greatly to make the people culturally understand, appreciate and aware of their communities. The beliefs, which are the psychological consideration and acceptance of that held to be true, actual, or valid; especially tenets approved by a group of persons, influence the practices that come with the tradition and the religion.

Religion is a challenging concept to be given a concrete and encompassing definition, and more so within the setting of life in traditional Africa. Parrinder observes that religion, which is very crucial to life in traditional Africa, is also core to African culture.³² This is due to the fact that religion in Africa is so all-pervasive and soul-encapsulating that there is hardly any facet of life activity which it has no control of or over.³³ Mbiti, in agreeing to this gives his opinion on the formal nature of religion in the various circles of human endeavour: that it has pervaded and ruled the mentality and ideologies of people of diverse backgrounds, especially Africans, so much so that it has shaped their cultures, socio-economic lives and politics.³⁴ These notwithstanding, it has pejoratively been described as ‘primitive religion’, which is derogatory and inappropriate.

In ‘The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa’, Azumah advocates for a relook at the mentality that African suffered an imposition of Christianity. He argues that Christianity side-lined ATRs with cultural values that characterise them, though ATRs exercised a non-parasitic dialogue and relationship with Christianity. In a comparative analysis of Christianity with Islam Azumah

³² Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, 9.

³³ Parrinder, 9.

³⁴ John Mbiti S, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: SPC, 1970).

observes that there is no denying the fact that there are indigenous African elements in African Muslim practices.³⁵ By extension one could conveniently say that, paraphrasing Azumah's view, that there is no denying that African Christian practices have traces of traditional African elements, and still there is more room for the influence of ATR on Christian practices. Azumah agrees thus, and by inference, is of the view that any constructive growth and development in Christianity in Africa must acknowledge the resilient character of African religious beliefs, its cultural expressions and values.

Amoah also takes up the debate in —African Indigenous Religions and Inter-Religious Relations. Amoah, just like Azumah, argues that unlike the popular notion that African Traditional Religion was a non-active recipient of Christianity; different religions in Africa meet and interact with each other, leading to an inescapable but true interaction.³⁶ She advances the argument that the obvious turning of the traditional religious people to Christianity notwithstanding, the indigenous religio-cultural beliefs, norms and customs still persist in these converted people which influence and structure their religious experience. By this, Amoah is of the view that ATRs have played and still play a significant role in transforming mission religions-especially Christianity-through a confrontation with the issue of indigenization.³⁸

It is however interesting to observe that the position of Amoah appears to be contested by that of Olupona on the power Christianity wields over ATR that the introduction of Christianity has done away with proofs of its persistence, endurance and character.³⁷ By this statement Olupona

³⁵ J. A. Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab Islam in Africa: Quest for Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2007), 7.

³⁶ Elizabeth Amoah, —African Indigenous Religions and Interreligious Relationship| (October 22, 1998), 4. ³⁸L. O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 211.

³⁷ J.K. Olupona, —Major Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion,| in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 26. *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, New York: Paragon House, 1991, p.26

appears to agree with Robin Horton³⁸ that ATR was not merely a pile of cards that crushed down when change came about, but that it has the capacity and propensity to get used to changes that happen around it.³⁹ Olupona thus, undoubtedly, affirms Amoah's viewpoint on the vibrant and unyielding character of African Traditional Religion, its religiocultural values, the ability to be influential and be controlled in interacting with other religions and cultures.

There are, indeed, different shades of belief systems in ATR, among the diverse African people. Among Ghanaians, and within various ethnic communities, beliefs and expressions of religious nature show up during religious festivals, rites of passage, etc.⁴⁰ This does not rule out the fact that while various traditional African communities have diverse and varied African traditional religious expressions, the quiddity of ATR, which is belief in a Supreme Being, lesser deities or spirits and ancestors, as espoused by Akans is almost same.⁴¹ The differences are more of expressions than basic belief. In this regard then, religious differences are nothing new or strange in traditional African communities, even prior to the coming of mission religions. Meanwhile, this does not bring about conflicts and divisions because of what Opoku describes as common trace in indigenous values.⁴²

ATRs emphasize practical living other than a set of teachings and beliefs that claim monopoly to that considered to be true. The varying traditional religious systems accommodate and interact with the different religious elements, which aids to live with and adjust to vicissitudes,

³⁸ Robin Horton, an English social anthropologist and philosopher, has carried out specialized study in comparative religion since the 1950s which has challenged and expanded views in the study of the anthropology of religion. He is notable for his scientific approach to the study of religion

³⁹ R. Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993). See also Olupona, —Major Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion, 32.

⁴⁰ Francis Acquah, —The Impact of African Traditional Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values on Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 through the Present: A Case Study of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan Area of the Central Region. (PhD. in Theology Thesis, University of Exeter, 2011), 25. (unpublished)

⁴¹ Peter Kwasi Sarpong, *Peoples Differ: An Approach to Inculturation in Evangelisation* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002), 96–101.

⁴² Asare Opoku K., *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra: FEP International, 1978), 8.

misfortunes and mishaps of life. ATRs are by this in supporting position of addressing the socio-psychological and spiritual/religious demands of the adherents.⁴³

While, to an appreciable degree, there might be truth in the fact that Christianity has minimized the absolute influence of ATR on Africans, it is never an encapsulated truth that it has really wiped off any proof or any resilience and vibrancy of ATR in African communities. ATR and African values in the culture have greatly influenced and guided African mentality, philosophy and expressions, regardless of pressures and influence of other religions. They are ingrained in the very core of Africans, and manifest in different types of behaviour and practices. In concurring with Amoah, it is apt to say that ATRs' interaction with Christianity has led to a cooperative and consensual dialogue. Indeed, Amoah and Azumah give a suiting setting with regards to this study area: while the work of Azumah studies, generally, the African continent's situation, Amoah contextualizes her work in the Ghanaian setting, but does not consider the historical evolvments and outcomes of the interreligious relations.

Boulanga, in 'Christianity without Fetishes' gives a critique of the western religio-cultural forms in which Christianity was enveloped and given to Africa under the banner of evangelization and Church planting. He advocates for the abolishing of this delusion, he terms 'western fetishes', so that Africans could express Christianity in true African religious and cultural experiences and forms.⁴⁴

Williamson's (a British Methodist Missionary, who was in Ghana from 1933 to 1959) book 'Akan Religion and the Christian Faith' is basically a comparative research on the effect of the religious and cultural life of the Akan. He particularly referred to the Ashanti and the

⁴³ Acquah, —The Impact of African Traditional Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values on Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 through the Present:,| 26.

⁴⁴ Acquah, 27.

Christianity that was brought in by the many and different western Christian denominations. In this work, he explores some of the setbacks of the church, bringing into view, some of its remarkable achievements such as being an agent of change in the establishment of schools which raised some of the early patriots who struggled for national independence. He points out in the work the significant influence of the church's doctrines and western governance that facilitated in changing some negative religio-cultural practices in Ghana.⁴⁵

Williamson's observations of western missionaries' attitudes towards the traditional religion of the Akan and the description given to it at the time are noteworthy. The religious system of the people was not given any religious acknowledgements; it was considered a pagan system without value for any human considerations. This was a view Williamson felt was not correct. He opines that the people to whom European religion and faith was presented themselves had religious practices and rites which had a variety of descriptive names. For the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, as so for nineteenth-century colonial masters and missionaries, the indigenous religious practices were idolatry/superstition, which inappropriately was referred to as fetishism.⁴⁶ Williamson himself, unfortunately, was trapped in wrongly representing the African religion as 'animistic'.⁴⁹ E. B. Tylor first used that description -animistic- for ATR in a published-article in 1866, in which he claimed, inter alia, that ATR adherents believed that objects possessed souls.⁴⁷ This claim, of course, is erroneous and does not depict what Africans who practise their religion believe. Traditional Africans are of the belief that some physical

⁴⁵ S. G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith- A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1965), 3–74.

⁴⁶ Williamson, ix.

⁴⁹ Williamson, ix.

⁴⁷ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 3. See also E. B. Tylor, —Phenomena of a Higher Civilization Traceable to a Rudimental Origin of the Savage Tribes,|| in *Report of the Papers, Discussions, and General Proceedings* (The British Association for the Advancement of Science, Nottingham, 1866), 112–16.

objects serve as abodes of some spirits and are used as media of operation. It was, therefore, equally, erroneous for Williamson to have given such a description to ATR.

However, Williamson brings out the case of the church's inability to indigenise within the Akan, and by extension the Ghanaian, setting, hence portraying the church established in Ghana as a photocopy of the European church. This, he observes, formed part of the setbacks the Akan people had to deal with to appreciate the crust of Christianity so as to see the importance of it in their lives. He, by this, dealt somehow with indigenization, a challenge the church among Akans, and in Africa as a whole, faces.

Williamson's study brings on board relevant materials pertaining to the cooperative influence of the Akan faith and Christianity. It reveals a core issue relevant to this research, which is the encounter of Christianity with the traditional religion and Akan culture and its sociocultural implications for the Akan. Although he assesses this interaction particularly with the Ashanti among the Akan, his work deals with the interaction between the Akan culture and the Christian faith; Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Due to the social implication of accepting a new religion by the individual African, Christianity encountering the sub-Africa had had to contend with how much of the beliefs and practices of the traditional religion have to be abandoned or integrated into the new religion.

1.11 Conclusion

Many of the works reviewed above admit that somehow, African religio-cultural values have been side-lined by Christianity. But, these are limited in that they have not looked at, in detail, the rites of passage and its implication for Christian initiation ceremony, particularly the sacrament of confirmation.

It is interesting to note that the aims, values and lessons of puberty rites as an educational moment to empower the young child into mature, responsible adult life is almost *sine qua non*

for the preparation of young people for adult Christian life. We shall first attempt an understanding of the traditional African and his religion. This will give an exploration into the worldview of the traditional African, with a view on the beliefs and practices related to the spirit world which encapsulates a creed, dealing with the philosophy and faith of the people, a code which captures the ethical perspective, and a cult which looks at the ritual ceremonies of the religion. A look will be given to how all these aspects affect the Akan in traditional African religion.

1.12 Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters:

Chapter One encompasses the general introduction of the study which will include the background of the study, statement of problem, research questions and objectives, the significance of the study, the delimitations/limitations, methodology, organization of the study and literature review.

Chapter Two deals with the African Traditional Worldview, African Traditional religious systems, African philosophical and religious foundations, and African religious beliefs and practices. A look was given to the concept of God in Africa- A feminine outlook and some roles played by women in ATR and ATR in Ghana. All this was to help us understand and appreciate ATR and the values it holds and teaches.

Chapter Three discusses rite of passage, its importance, initiation ceremony, puberty rite among the Akans, Confirmation as a Christian Initiation rite and the integration of lessons from Akan puberty rite into Catholic Confirmation among Akan.

Chapter Four presents the field findings and the attendant discussions.

Chapter Five covers the Summary of the research, Recommendation from the research and

Conclusions.

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CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGION; AN ATTEMPT AT UNDERSTANDING

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the African Traditional Worldview, African Traditional religious systems, African philosophical and religious foundations, and African religious beliefs and practices. Attention will be given to Akan concept of person to help understand what it takes to be recognised as a full member of an Akan community. Attention will also be given to ATR in Ghana and some roles played by women in ATR. All this is to help us understand and appreciate ATR and the values it holds and teaches.

2.2 African Traditional Worldview

According to John Fowler worldview is all that makes up one's life, dealing with issues and questions of what is real, true, ethical, etc. It is the compass, a set of guiding principles that tells of where one's cultural and spiritual heritage, serving as a *locus a quo et terminus ad quem*, a religio-cultural map, engineering the unity of man's philosophy and actions in life.⁴⁸ Accordingly, it serves to bridge and guide man's thought and life, spell out what the good, meaningful life is and how man can live or what man can do to achieve this meaningful life. Worldview is core to one's being, forming a kind of box that controls, influences and guides one's culture and values.⁴⁹ Worldview, thus, helps in shaping one's life, exerting a powerful influencing force on the individual's life. In like manner, the traditional African worldview has a powerful influencing power on the African, informing and forming them in their philosophical, cosmological, epistemological, sociological and ethical setups and systems. It

⁴⁸ John Fowler, in a presentation at the Faith and Learning Seminar University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya, 1998.

⁴⁹ C. H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Orbis Book, 2005), 44.

gives the definition of what the good life is, what it takes to achieve and secure it for one's welfare. Mathema⁵⁰ conveniently shares this view that what Africans' belief about God, nature, and important rituals associated with birth, adolescent initiation, marriage, elderhood and death-is common enough to be called the worldview of the African- an African worldview.⁵¹

The centrality of a worldview and its functions cannot be overemphasized. Many scholars in anthropology and missiology argue that worldview is a people's way of thinking that patterns out what they consider to be reality, ideal, valuable and proper.⁵² It forms the basis of cultural expressions, running through the people's thought patterns and activities, giving meaning to life and helping in the formation of one's identity and integrity. According to Kraft a worldview is a psychological reinforcement, pivotal and crucial to the formation and development of individuals and communities, functioning to evaluate, judge and validate the individual and the community.⁵³ A worldview, therefore, is a bridge linking reality, which is objectively independent of the individual person and what has been culturally agreed-upon about reality.⁵⁴ Thorpe asserts that the whole of the African world-view, which usually finds expression in art and [ritualistic moments] (emphasis is mine), stems from an African approach to and outlook of life, which is evasively religious.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Zacchaeus A. Mathema, is professor of leadership at the Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.

⁵¹ Culled from sk.sagepub.com/reference/blackstudies/n22.xml. Accessed on 19th September, 2016

⁵² Institute of World Missions, —Worldview, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. A Mission Institute Resource Material on Worldview:1.

⁵³ Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 44–45.

⁵⁴ Kraft, 298.

⁵⁵ S. A. Thorpe, *African Traditional Religions* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1991), 6.

2.3 African Traditional Religious System

It is scholarly observed that there is hardly any dichotomy in people's way of life and what they believe and practice- their culture and their religion. This does not neglect the existence of religion, though. The various and varied definitions of religion are saddled with the issue of either being too parochial, excluding the many belief systems which form part of religion, or they are too vague and ambiguous, giving a picture that it is just about anything and everything.

To arrive at an acceptably good definition of religion, the concept must be considered from a teleological, normative, substantive, functional and orienting viewpoint, among many others.

Teleologically, the aim of religion is the practical living or the practical aspects of the culture.

The fact that it provides and guides standards of morality and ethical behaviour makes it normative. Substantively, religion contributes to social integration. It is functional in that religion helps man live and cope with his world and all its mishaps, giving man an assurance of a better tomorrow. Religion is orienting because it offers and builds information on man, the cosmos, and how they exist in relationship.

Religion, then, could be defined as a set of doctrines outlining a pattern of life grounded on how the good life, which includes right purposes and actions, can be realised.⁵⁶ This is often achieved by religion's provision of an understanding of the human nature and its relationship to the entire cosmos. African Traditional Religion shares the same, if not similar characteristics with the features of this definition of religion as given above.

Every religion, if not most, has some kind of foundational systems on and around which the religion and its tenets survive. ATR is no exception. The religious system of ATR comprises the following:

⁵⁶ Cf. http://www.progressiveliving.org/definition_of_religion_defined.htm

2.3.1 Fundamental Religious Beliefs

ATRs have four fundamental religious beliefs: the belief in a Supreme Being, divinities/gods, spirit beings and impersonal/mystical power(s).⁵⁷ It is important to note that any sound and effect-oriented Christian approach to ATRs must have a start from these religious beliefs because these are the foundations and they are crucial to the religious interpretation and analysis and understanding of ATRs.

2.3.1.1 Belief in a Supreme Being (God)

Many African scholarly works, especially those of Idowu and Mbiti, spanning four decades and more, establish the fact that Africans have an idea of a supreme being, who created the universe.⁵⁸ Africans know and agree that the Supreme Being is not actively worshipped by traditional Africans. This notwithstanding, the effect of the belief in one Supreme Being as a religious belief on the entire traditional African life is very strong. Sarpong argues that ...belief in a Supreme Being is central to African Traditional Religion.⁵⁹

Idowu describes the Yoruba religion as —diffused monotheism. That is to say that originally the Yoruba religion was a worship of a single deity, but as the religion, with time broke down, the initial monotheism was taken over by the emergence of various divinities. While Idowu defines this kind of —diffused monotheism in the Yoruba religion, with akin concepts found all around Africa, it is obvious that Africans are aware of and have a belief in the Supreme Being, who is not exceptionally and singularly given worship in traditional Africa. Among many traditional African societies, the Supreme Being does not actively partake in the people's day-to-day religious life and activities; it is the lesser beings who are actively

⁵⁷ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, 96–106.

⁵⁸ Gausah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 20–21. See also Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 45–59.

⁵⁹ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, 95.

involved. The sacrifices, offerings and prayers the traditional Africans offer go to them directly.⁶⁰ In most parts of Africa, usually, mention is made of the Supreme Being in prayers, singing and in ceremonies of religious nature.

The belief in a Supreme Being, who is greater and higher than the lesser spirit beings in the hierarchy and arrangement of beings has great religious impact on traditional Africans. The Supreme Being appears not to be involingly intimate or bothered with and about humankind's world.⁶⁴ He is imminently transcendent. And so, man employs the services and powers of the lesser spirit beings to satisfy their longings and yearnings.⁶¹ Thus, man turns towards the impersonal powers, the divinities, the gods, the ancestors and the spirit beings for assistance.⁶²

There is the belief in divinities or deities but it is not as evasive as that of impersonal powers and spirit beings; this is because not all ethnic groups in traditional Africa have divinities or deities. Even though there is the greatly held belief in the Supreme Being, it does not create any religious enthusiasm or close intimacy with the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is transcendent and does not fully get involved in the daily life of the traditional African. Steyne summarises these points thus:

... the universe is basically spiritual and the physical and the spiritual are fully and wholly related. Human beings seek for external power to rule and subdue their world. It is the aim of life to search and secure the coexistence and harmony that bring about prosperity, wellbeing, contentment and assured fulfilment. To this end man ought to relate very well and right with the spiritual powers and spirit beings through rites, rituals and liturgies to attain such

benefits.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 63–66.

⁶⁴ Mbiti, 43.

⁶¹ P. M. Steyne, *Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists* (Houston, TX 99224: Touch Publications, Inc., 1990), 35.

⁶² Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, 96.

⁶⁷ Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 39.

2.3.1.2 Belief in Divinities/Deities

ATRs are noted for great hierarchy of divinities though it is not often so in parts of Southern and Western Africa. Some have no divinities nor are there special places or shrines for the worship of the divinities.⁶³

Over four decades now attempts have been made by African scholars to alter some viewpoints and how divinities in African context have been defined.⁶⁴ Many African scholars now do not appreciate the description polytheism, even though there is preference for —divinities‖ or —deities‖ debating as to —divinities‖ being worshipped as —gods‖ or serving as middlemen. Some argue that there is no worship of divinities nor ancestors in Africa; only the Supreme Being is worshipped. This argument implies the divinities and ancestors do not directly receive sacrifices⁶⁵, offerings and prayers offered to them; they are to and for the Supreme Being. Mbiti affirms this view that in traditional Africa, the use human or animal blood for sacrifices was common. He buttresses that among Africans, life is intrinsically linked with blood. So, the sacrificial use of human or animal blood has the implication that life has been returned to God, from whom all life comes and to whom all life belongs.⁶⁶

Divinities in Africa are many with specified domains of power each operates. Some divinities originate as figures of myth in legends and ancient histories of origins and cosmologies of Africa and others were heroes or heroines of certain tribes who were founded for different areas of communal and societal life. Even within one ethnic community, the multiplicity of the

⁶³ Note that the Yoruba of Nigeria are known for having several hundreds of divinities.

⁶⁴ E. B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Religion*, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans, 1966).; John Mbiti S, *Introduction to African Religions* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1975).

⁶⁵ Sacrifice is a religious act belonging to worship in which offering is made to God (or the supreme being) of some material object belonging to the offerer. It is an offering of any sort to a deity, with the idea of procuring favour or avoiding disaster - to please the deity and secure his favour. Cf. Pictorial Bible Dictionary.

⁶⁶ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1975, 63–66.

divinities with their various influence, territory and order and levels of power and importance tells much about the mode of worship, belief system and practices in religions of the African community. This allows and makes room for religious tolerance and accommodation. It is important, then, that an understanding and interpretation of Christianity in a traditional African way should be well grounded in these basic beliefs of the ATRs.⁶⁷

2.3.1.3 Belief in Spirit Beings

The Akans, like other Ghanaians and indeed most traditional African people, believe that the world is made up not only of physical things that are perceptible but also that the world has a spiritual dimension to it- a dimension that even overrules the physical. This is confirmed by Ezeanya when he asserts that the world is controlled by the spiritual beings, making the world a spiritual arena where the many spiritual beings have a kind of power show and display, with mankind depending on them.⁶⁸

The belief in spirit world forms the strong basis for the traditional African concepts of what reality and destiny are. The spirit world can be categorised into non-human spirits and ancestral spirits whose activities and the actions control and guide all social, cultural and religio-spiritual phenomena. Non-human spirits are recognised, by their nature, in order of importance depending on what they do and how powerful they are.⁶⁹ Hierarchically, the

⁶⁷ Note that with the introduction of Christianity or other religions, such as Islam, this belief with its worldview may have an added feature and it is henotheism, the worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods. There is a possibility that the Christian God who has been introduced into the African culture and soil, can be worshipped alongside other gods. The theological basis of this traditional belief allows it to take place without creating any serious theological crisis in the traditional religion. Plurality of gods or divinities permits plurality of beliefs, practices, feelings and behaviour in one religion. This belief also gives room for accommodation, adaptation and domestication of new gods or divinities into the old religion. Other gods or divinities and divergent views and practices can be tolerated without confusion.

⁶⁸ Stephen Ezeanya, —God, Spirit and the World, in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, ed. Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), 36.

⁶⁹ E. D. Oji, —Ikpu Alu (Atonement) in Igbo Traditional Religion (PhD dissertation, ECWA Theological Seminary, 1988), 17. This is an unpublished PhD dissertation.

Creator comes first, followed by divinities, spirits in objects, ancestral spirits, then good and evil non-human spirits.⁷⁰ According to Kato the entire universe has many spirits which are categorised into the bad and the good ones and where these spirits stay are as many as there are. There is the belief in spirit possession and the practice of exorcism, life hereafter, afterlife reward and punishment.⁷¹

Mbiti affirms that the African spiritual world is very heavily made of spirit beings, spirits and ancestral spirits.⁷² Ikenga-Metuh agrees thus when he echoes that the most pervading worldview is that of the spirit world; comprising the belief in the Supreme Being, the spirits and the ancestors.⁷³ Intimate association exists among the spirit beings and the mystical/impersonal forces within the domains of the supernatural. The ancestral team is closer to the human beings, serving as their custodians. Ganusah opines that the relationship between the living and the dead is a never-ending one.⁷⁴ As observed by Ganusah, many traditional African believers are of the belief that the ancestors exist and communication between them and the living cannot be cut off.⁷⁵ All spirit beings have certain powers which they use on upon the humankind to do good to them or to harm them, being —manipulated for the service of humankind and vice versa.⁷⁶ Belief in these powers and the spiritual entities backing them, coupled with humankind's desire to manipulate them engendered various specialists such as medicine men, mediums, diviners, magic men and women, etc. This brings in the need for the knowledge, expertise and services of human specialists with the experience of accessing the powers of the spirit and impersonal (mystical) forces for the wellbeing and fruitful life of

⁷⁰ E. Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Tradition Religions* (Jos: Imico Books, 1989), 125–44.

⁷¹ B. H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1975), 36–41.

⁷² Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 75.

⁷³ Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Tradition Religions*, 103–79.

⁷⁴ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 52–53.

⁷⁵ Ganusah, 53.

⁷⁶ Richard Gehman, *African Traditional Religions in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe: Kesho Publications, 1989), 55.

humankind. Rituals develop from these beliefs. For security in a world overruled by spiritual entities and forces, the traditional African believes that there is the need for a kind of ‘spiritual compass’ to give direction and practical attempts at manipulation, for safety and security through religious rites and rituals, customs and specialists.

2.3.1.4 Belief in Impersonal/Mystical Forces

The traditional concept of mystical/mysterious powers has deep foundations in the religious belief and perception of the people.⁷⁷ The religious beliefs and practices of the traditional African are formed within the context of the traditional religious worldview. An attempt to address these fundamental beliefs with their religious basis and worldview, will yield a great understanding.

Belief impersonal/mystical forces is an all-evading religious thought in traditional Africa⁷⁸ and all creation, the universe and all therein is overshadowed with this force. This force is what Smith refers to as *mysterium tremendum*.⁷⁹ In African beliefs, the origin of the *mysterium tremendum* is unknown though it is often ascribed to higher personal or impersonal —mysterious entities, which produces or leaves such powers in things. The manifestation and the usage of the mystical forces are seen in the activities of spiritual experts who manipulate natural things for charms and amulets, medicinal and magical purposes. Thus, this power serves good and bad purposes.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 41–42.

⁷⁸ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1975, 42, 165.

⁷⁹ Edwin Smith, *African Beliefs and Christian Faith* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1936). Also cf. <https://artsbeatconcepts.wordpress.com/2016/08/30/the-yoruba-metaphysical-conceptions-of-spiritsanjonu/>

⁸⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 41–43.

2.3.1.5 Order of Spiritual Beings

The worldview of traditional African considers all beings in the spiritual realm in an order of importance and power. The greatest and highest on the ladder is the Supreme Being. Then are the deities and divinities who occupy a lower position, though higher than human beings. So, spirit beings are evaluated according to their influence and power within the ontological hierarchical order of beings. By this, they govern, guide and influence what is humanly acceptable or not acceptable (morality and ethics) in the societies, being given religious values and practices. This carries immense implications on how morality and ethics are traditionally conceived and accepted.⁸⁰ The traditional Africans' conceptual view and definition of the Supreme Being, divinities/deities and ancestors in the community is based on the roles and functions of these beings. We now turn our attention to look at religious practices' foundations and justifications.

2.4 Foundational Religious Practices

Religious beliefs do come with and influence corresponding religious behaviour and practices in the traditional religious system. The foundations of traditional religious practices include creating and enforcing ties and formidable bonds with the mystical and spiritual forces in the universe. There are also the practices that involve various religio-social rites, rituals and ceremonies. Then comes the creation and affirmation of various spiritual/mystical relationships and interactions with the world of the spirits and the religio-social practices of traditional African specialists and their various activities.

⁸⁰ Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Tradition Religions*, 243–59.

Many and varied religious practices have religious and social underpinnings and interests.⁸¹

This is to help in the identification and definition of the bases and backbones of the traditional religious practices and behaviour, giving room for deep reflective definition and interpretation of traditional religious practices and religious behaviour. In traditional African religious worldview there is both the good and the evil and so in the ongoing discussions, there will be no much difference in what is straightforward religious and what is obviously social; unacceptable behaviour and practices and approved socio-religious norms and customs.

2.5 Making Bonds and Relationships with Cosmic, Spiritual and Mystical Powers

Religio-social activities employed in traditional Africa to create and tighten ties and bonds with the cosmic forces and spiritual/mystical powers. The first is by the means of wielding power and influence over the realm of mystical/spiritual powers. The second is by the restoration of cosmic balance and spiritual harmony in the universe.

These spirit/mystical powers are believed, in traditional Africa, to have something to offer mankind. And so man embarks on a quest to access and use these mystical/spiritual forces. By this, the traditional African seeks for the acquisition of these powers and avenues, rules and regulations to bolster links and bonds with them and the penalty thereof in their not being adhered to. These and many more of such inquisitions become relevant in helping to make limpid and throw more light on the great and unrevealed bases of religio-social activities which involve cosmic and spiritual forces in the universe.

⁸¹ Ideas in this section are culled from Steyne, *Gods of Power*. (1990) and Gehman, *African Traditional Religions in Biblical Perspective*. (1989).

2.5.1 Means of Influencing and Effecting Cosmic and Mystical/Spiritual Control

The traditional African has developed various socio-religious practices and ritualistic ceremonies serving as means of helping in the search to have and control cosmic and mystical/spiritual power in the world, though the avenues for this acquisition are varied and many. It is interesting that each means is guided and influenced by rules and principles that demand adherence, carefully and attentively. These spell out what behaviour and ritualistic ceremonies to adhere to so the needed desires can be attained. The traditional African could face in the search of spiritual/mystical powers the challenge of having those privileged to dispense the powers and forces needed, to be wicked or evil in themselves. Thus, there is the zest to have access to, influence and enhance the use of spiritual/mystical powers to his great benefits.

According to Steyne, the influence of forces of the universe and mystico-spiritual forces could be achieved by the incantation of powerful, mystical words, magic, charms, —jujull, witchcraft and sorcery and the power of symbolism.⁸²

The issue here is not about the condemnation or the prohibition of the act, but the belief in the avenues or places where the power can be gained and the importance and the use of such powers coupled with the surrendering of oneself to the forces or beings behind these powers.

2.5.2 Means of Maintaining Cosmic Balance and Spiritual Harmony

There are certain guiding rules and regulations governing man's relationship with the cosmic forces and spirit powers and these are made clear in certain religious practices, rites and rituals.

There is the awareness that many things do not go well as expected nor are needs always met,

⁸² Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 55–57.

⁸⁹ Steyne, 55–57.

meaning all is not well. The spirit entities that empower humankind are the very same having custody of the spiritual domains, whether things happen rightly or not. And so, things could be made right by making peace through reconciliation and restoration with these spirit forces. Steyne is of the view that through the observance of taboos, offerings and sacrifices, cosmic balance and spiritual harmony can be achieved. It is mankind who must act well and accordingly to attain the restoration of cosmic balance, peace and harmony.

2.6 Philosophical Foundations in African Traditional Religious Worldview

Traditional African religious worldview could be categorised into four basic philosophical foundations. The four categories, as Steyne outlines in the work on animism in 1990,⁸⁹ are taken and expounded as a philosophical system and worldview, that will enhance, immensely, the discourse on a grounded and substantiated attempt at defining and interpreting ATRs and African cultures.

These categoriations are:

- Organism/Unison built on the Principle of Balance and Consonance;
- Spiritualism, influenced by the Principle of Spirits;
- Dynamism, guided by the Principle of Power;
- Communalism, guided by the Principle of Kindred/Kinship

The all-evasive and dominating worldview which characterises and informs traditional African thought stems from the fundamental religious beliefs and the philosophical foundations. The philosophical foundations ground and affirm the religious foundations of the traditional worldview, from which the *raison d'être* and traditional ‘moral laws’ can be developed.

2.6.1 Organism/ Unison: The Principle of Harmony

The view of the world as a holistic entity is guided on the principle of balance and consonance. The principle of balance and consonance is and ensures an atmosphere and situation of unison or peaceful cooperation. It is the desire of the African to enjoy a harmonious living, existing in a balanced consonance and peace with the physical and spiritual worlds. Organism and unison have akin connotations: a view at the inter-relational functions among members of a whole, constituting and synchronising the entire world as a unit whiles an organism relates the entire world as a complex structure which is determined by the functions of the relations and properties its inter-dependent and subordinate elements.⁸³ Steyne uses organism as a philosophical terminology, explaining that life goes beyond the totality and summation of its particular and individual constituent members. His definition captures thus:

The world is self-interacting; The cosmos, with the living and the dead interact and interrelate, with one influencing the other; the existence or explanation of a part is nought without the other. The cosmos, world of spirits and humankind are all part of the same system, interdependent on each other.⁸⁴

This brings the African man face viz-a-viz the physical and the spiritual aspects of his world. He relates with his world and vice versa. By this Steyne observes that man feels in tune and union with the universe and the universe returns the feeling mystically and that he does not dichotomise the physical from the spiritual; the profane from the sacred/religious; work from community obligations; they are interwoven as a unit fabric.⁸⁵ Impersonal/mysterious powers and the spirit beings relate with the concept of nature, which is defined as the visible material world, made up of the living and inanimate things, natural phenomena which concern humankind, with the world of spirits fully understood as part of nature.⁸⁶ The traditional

⁸³ Cf. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1977

⁸⁴ Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 58.

⁸⁵ Steyne, 59.

⁸⁶ Oji, —Ikpu Alu (Atonement) in Igbo Traditional Religion, 15.

African worldview is conceived as a unity because the universe, man and the world of spirits flow in unity. And that is Life.

It is interesting to note that any religion that comes into contact with the African traditional religion encounters a pervading philosophical worldview and a system of religious beliefs that embrace the entirety of life. Such encounters meet the evasive and permeating worldview, encompassing all into a unit system: the Supreme Being, divinities/deities, spirits and mystical/mysterious forces, which call for the attention and consideration of man. This has led man to establish various forms of religious activities and ritualistic ceremonies to meet his needs. By this, the African man uses various ways to establish communication with the spirit beings, as much as he/she is able. He utilises the works and activities of religious specialists to be in tune with the world of spirits. One of such rituals and ceremonies by which the traditional African man links up with the spirit world, in a holistic way, is through initiation rites and ceremonies, which form part of rites of passage.

Though traditional African religious worldview, with its strong dominance in traditional Africa, is very pervasive, it is not characterised by codified beliefs; they are taught, learnt, lived and passed on. They are experienced immensely in the traditional concept of living in harmony/balance with the mystical/mysterious forces and spirit powers.

2.6.2 Spiritualism: The Principle of the Spirit

A view of the world as a spiritual entity is guided and built on the principle of spirit. This principle manifests the influence and the dominating effect of the existence of spiritual forces as a reality in African worldview. The entire universe is full of the influence and effect of the spiritual forces and many other spiritual beings. Thus, the traditional African sees that the world, essentially, is spiritual much more than physical and life is replete with the supernatural.

Steyne opines that:

All of life is dominated by the spirit world and responds to it, influencing and co-ordinating activities and happenings in the physical domain and all that happens in the spirit world bears on the physical realm. Man relates to and depends on the unseen, making life spiritually assessed and understood. All situations and events of life have spiritual responses.⁸⁷

This is what is referred to as spiritualism and it dominates and influences the whole life of the traditional African man. This is because:

All of man interacts with and is interpenetrated with the spiritual; Nothing in man's environment eludes the dominance or the spirit world's control because the world is much spiritual than physical; it is spiritually sustained⁹⁵

Steyne employed concepts and terminologies to attempt a description of the traditional religious worldview. Spiritual emphasis dominates the quest for meaning in life in traditional religious worldview. The questions and answers of life centre around the spiritual much more than the physical. The spiritual has much influence on the physical. The practice of religious specialists divining and supplying satisfactory meanings when personal resources fail stems from this spiritual perspective of life. In the daily happenings of life, traditional Africans give appreciable recognition to this quest for meaning in life and thus seek to know and understand the causalities of life's incidents.⁸⁸ In such situations a lookout for the spiritual forces behind these occurrences in life other than the obvious becomes indispensable. This is simply understood that —the unseen is present in all phenomenal. The permeating force of the principle of the spirit gives a pantheistic character to the origin and impact of the impersonal forces in traditional worldview, though the presence of a the many spirits and divinities, could be conceived as polytheism. Certain laws guide and influence the inter-connectivity and relationship of humans and spirit beings in traditional world of spirits. Religious activities and ritualistic ceremonies operate under such laws to ensure man's place and progress in this world.

⁸⁷ Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 59.

⁹⁵ Steyne, 37.

⁸⁸ The principle of causation in African thought holds that nothing happens by chance; everything that happens is caused by a spiritual force or power. Cf. Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 26.

2.6.3 Dynamism: The Principle of Power

This is to look on the world as influenced by the principle of dominance. The influence of invisible spiritual forces in the world, leads man in a quest for power to serve as his security in a world of uncertainties, evil, ills and mortality. Steyne describes this quest for power and the search for spiritual security thus:

One of the crucial desires of life is the search for power and its usage. To lack or not have access to power brings immense worry and unrest when life becomes challenging, uncertain and unpleasant, especially due to spiritual attacks. A powerless life is not worthy of living because it is deprived of the ability and capacity to control the world of uncertainties. The quest for and acquisition of power supplants all concerns of ethics or morality because that which empowers is considered right.⁸⁹

Ncube quotes in agreement with Bucher's assertion on the focal worship of ancestors in Zimbabwe primarily centring on the desire for and retention of dominance and influence to protect and prevent evil forces- a power believed to be wielded by some persons and other invisible entities.⁹⁰

Two concerns characterise the traditional African belief system: The desire for the possibility and sustenance of life, encapsulated in fertility and food concerns and also the quest to find possible solutions for the disturbances and uncertainties of life which need to be addressed and arrested. Hence, a counter force is indispensable.⁹¹ The traditional man desires life to be full and in its completeness. Therefore, there is a need to link up and relate with forces that dispense

⁸⁹ Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 60.

⁹⁰ Ncube Zebon, —Ancestral Beliefs and Practices: A Program for Developing Christian Faith Among Adventists in Zimbabwe. (Doctoral dissertation, Andrews University, 1988), 57.

⁹¹ F. J. Verstraelen, *Christianity in a New Key* (Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1996), 74.

life's power.⁹² Richard Gehman observes that man's emphasis on gaining the needed power to live a good life runs through traditional African religions and worldview.⁹³

The thought of power and how it can be handled, from an African perspective, is worthy of note. Power, in African thought, is dispensable; that is to say, it can be transferred to anything and anyone. —It dominates and influences everything though at varied and unequal levels. Primarily, power objectively serve man's needs and purposes. Steyne profoundly opines, and any religion dealing with traditional Africans must take very seriously, that man's desires cannot be totally catered for without the aid of some kind of power, and so any religion devoid of power is equally devoid of value. Such a statement probes the question of how the quest for power influences mankind and the spirit beings and forces on how they relate and the morality and ethics thereof? This pervasive notion of power consciousness is relevant to aid the appreciation of traditional Africans and how they evaluate the strength, influence and effect of a new religion or ritual practices.

2.6.4 Communalism: The Law of Kinship

In traditional Africa, the principle of kinship which guides and influences a view of man in a communal perspective is a common concept. This concept is quite akin to the concept of the world viewed as organism/holism. In traditional Africa, the world is a community and man is essentially a community. The community manifests man's inter-relationship with his world: his relationship to the world of human beings, nature and of spirits. Thus, how man, relates, in relationship, to his world defines community.

⁹² Verstraelen, 74.

⁹³ Gehman, *African Traditional Religions in Biblical Perspective*, 20.

Man lives not in an independent state; he lives by relatedness and interconnectedness, which makes him communal. This is what gives man his/her definition; his achievement of membership in the community/society through various rites of initiation and passage; his relationship with fellow human beings in the community; his relationship with nature, the spirit world and the universe as a whole. His definition as man is as a result of his relationship in the community and his disposition towards other relationships in the community. This relationship is not only with other human beings; it is in relation with the world of ancestors, spirit beings and nature. Even as an individual, man does not live for himself alone; he lives with and in relation to nature and the human community. Van der Walt gives a satisfactory description of African communalism that places much emphasis and stress on the human community: communal self-respect, interdependence, communal assurance, shared duties, etc⁹⁴. Steyne refers to these as the practice of community and they show how man perceives and appreciates communal life in a holistic view.

Kinship is the system from which the concept of community in Africa or communalism derives. Kinship, here, refers to family ties and relationships coming from a common ancestry. This relationship comes about by consanguinity and physical link to the progenitor or ancestry. The community begins and stems from this origin by blood and the consanguinial ties generated from this central ancestral base. By a rite of passage one is linked and identified with the ancestral nucleus from birth to death.⁹⁵ The point of unity and bondedness of a particular group stems from a relationship by virtue of consanguinity. Having a common origin tightens kinship bonds. This gives definition to and yields members' affiliation and consanguinial-community obligations. Social patterns of doing things, viewpoints and actions derives from this strong

⁹⁴ B. J. Van der Walt, *Being Human in a Christian Perspective* (Potchefstroom: Institute for Reformational Studies, 1997), 29–44.

⁹⁵ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 76.

networked relationship by consanguinity called kinship. One's attitude or character could be traced to a particular group of people or community. Scholars have observed, interestingly that the incorporation of ethnic groups into contemporary African states has not, will not and cannot destroy kinship.

Instead it has incorporated it and made it stronger and tighter.

2.7 Kinship as Foundation of a Community

In traditional Africa, as found in other traditional societies and communities, kinship systems form the core unit of society and all organisational structures that form the communal family centres on it because the kinship system is the standard by which communal life is governed and ordered. The most obvious and influential rule of social structure is kindred which derives from relationship by blood, characterising blood relatives' affiliation and duties. This governs and controls society's approved way of doing and viewing things and patterns interactions in the community between persons. Religio-social norms regulate interrelations of kinsmen in the society and how kinsmen interact with foreigners and non-members. These religio-cultural and religio-social norms are made known and transmitted unto the younger generation during and through rites of passage and other such ceremonies. Mbiti is right, then, when he posits that a person's detachment from his/her people's religion would amount to a cut off from his/her origins, his source of social security, kindred and the whole group from whom his/her existence is made known.⁹⁶

2.7.1 The Human Person in Community

An understanding of the social place and status of man helps in his/her community integration and conformity. Again, his awareness, consciousness and appreciation of his actions, inactions

⁹⁶ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 2.

and attitudes help him to integrate and conform to his immediate community and the world at large. These are two views of man in community.

According to Steyne, man is in a relationship with fellow humankind and other things in the universe; man identifies himself not as an individual but as a communal fellow whose existential life essentially calls for a communal relationship with others. For him, man is complete and adequate only when he/she is with community members; he is sustained by the spirit and relationship of the community. For this, man dreads —a destroyed relationship between persons of the same group; such a situation could be likened to and called sin. Man, integrally, is linked to his community through various rites of passage which enjoins on him the status of full membership in the community.⁹⁷

For Van der Walt, —man in community, in traditional African thought, is enshrined in a high regard for the group, placing much emphasis on group interests other than that of the individual; portraying the importance of law to restore and reconstitute social harmony; decisions reached by group consent and assent and everybody given a room to express his/her ideas and opinions. This yields a dialogical atmosphere. There is also a look out for factors and behavioural characteristics that yield peaceful and harmonious living. These include modesty, prudence, obedience, compliance and the readiness to compromise. Then comes the need for strong ties and relationship with brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers in the extended family.⁹⁸

2.7.2 Man as Integral and Conformable in Relationships

There is a demand on man, by the community, for communal integration and conformity; this is the purpose of the rite of passage and specifically so, initiation ceremonies. Steyne and Van

⁹⁷ Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 61–62.

⁹⁸ Van der Walt, *Being Human in a Christian Perspective*, 31–34.

der Walt opine that activities that integrate and conform man to the community are normative in nature, not limited to only the human world, but to nature and spiritual realm as well.

Man's understanding of his relationship with others is fundamental and stems from social principle of becoming a member of the community. His personhood takes form and concretises through initiation into community membership, by which he will grow into adulthood. This initiation of a person to be a community member is usually through rites and rituals that pass the individual from one stage to another stage (often the later believed to be higher and better) in the cycle of human life.

Man relates with the world of spirits, the ancestral community, and the yet-to-be born. Thus, his life is a relationship with the past, the present and the future. Human Life in the community is governed, regulated and secured by the ancestral community, who are the custodians of the communities in which they once lived. This then is, in the words of Ela,

__reliving a kinship relationship with them⁹⁹; communal life which is ancestrally owned. Steyne posits that devoid of the ancestral kindred and relationships, personhood has no meaning and life is almost an impossibility.¹⁰⁰ The continuity of this ties and relationship is ensured and assured through the various rites of passage. It is understood that man is what he is by relationship, as he partakes of the life of the family and communal life. Rites and ceremonies of initiation where a person is given identity and role in the family and community is an avenue where kinship ties and bonds are expressed, identified and strengthened. Steyne opines that having children guarantees immortality; the birth of children ensures the reincarnation of

⁹⁹ Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African*, trans. John Pairman Brown and Susan Perry (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 19.

¹⁰⁰ Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 64, 65.

deceased elders of the community; and they immortalise the ancestors through approved rituals.¹⁰¹

Man's account of morality and ethics is to be taken and appreciated within the context of kinship and affiliation to the spirit community. By virtue of this, the African cannot be solely culpable of his/her actions, as an individual; the African is a cultural addendum of his/her kinsmen and the spirit community. And so, the effects of his/her actions and inactions are shared to and by the community. This is because he believes powers beyond his control influence his actions and inactions.¹⁰² Thus, he/she must be introduced properly into his/her community to fully understand and appreciate where he/she is coming from and belongs to through a rite of initiation.

This claim of man not being solely culpable for his doings stems from the belief that he is a cultural outcome of the makings of the physical and spiritual families. This belief has great implications for morality and ethics in Africa and tells on how the traditional African lives in the world.

The philosophical underpinnings have immense impact on the religious convictions and actions of the people. This socio-religious stance is crucial to the appreciation and elucidation of traditional religio-cultural activities such as initiation ceremonies and other rites of passage.

It has been made clear what the nature and the essence of ATRs are, especially its religious beliefs and practices. From this background, there should be serious exploration into the roots of this traditional religious belief on how they could be employed in Christian rites of maturation for responsible adult Christian life. It is important to critically study, explore,

¹⁰¹ Steyne, 66.

¹⁰² Steyne, 67.

address and employ the influential effects of traditional African beliefs on traditional religious activities and mentality in Christian formation and initiation into adult Christian life.¹⁰³

2.8 The concept of a human person: An Akan Philosophical perspective

The Akan culture which pre-dates the 13th century has rich and deep cosmological, ontological, metaphysical, ethical and epistemological concepts. Of particular interest is the Akan concept of *person*; a concept that influences many socio-political and traditional institutions, cultural and religious practices, and verdicts on personal identity, moral responsibility, and the relationship between individuals and community.

Many Akan philosophers have given accounts on who a person is or is not from Akan perspective. Examining the Akan conception of personhood, Wiredu and Gyekye present discourse on the concept, particularly on the place of social recognition and innate characteristics on and to personhood. These perspectives highlight the richness of the concept in contrast with Western conceptions on how individuals achieved full personhood, and the ramifications for individual and community relationship.

Wiredu and Gyekye's arguments are not only on the essence of the concept of personhood, but how empirical facts can also be employed to influence philosophical interpretations, seeking to reconstruct the mental and practical effects of philosophical principles on daily life. In this particular case, the Akan view of personhood has great implications on social and religious-cultural practices and institutions. For the Akan, pronouncements on personhood are not just for scholarly interest, but they have significant function in highly shaping and supporting communal and moral structures. The Akan concept of personhood allows for moral equality whiles emphasizing the social foundations of personhood, to firmly instill trust, cooperation,

¹⁰³ Cf. Eph. 6:1-24.

and responsibility to the community in religio-cultural practices. The Akan philosophical notion of person provides, then, a quest at resolving identity and morality question.

Nyimpa is an Akan word which is ambiguous in meaning; it sometimes refers to a member of the human species and other times refers to a human who has achieved a kind of placement and honour in the society.¹⁰⁴ For Wiredu, this double meaning shows a significant conceptual difference between a *human*-a biological entity-and a *person*-an entity with special moral and metaphysical qualities. Status, for humans, is not put on or given to an individual as a prize for one's efforts. Either someone *is* human or he/she *is not*-there is no *becoming*. In agreeing with Wiredu, it could be said that humans attain personhood by virtue of one's achievement and human status is a *conditio sine qua non* for personhood. A person, taken in strictest sense, is someone who, by responsible thinking and action, has met his/her obligations in the society.

The unique characteristics of this concept of person, as explained by Wiredu, come clear when contrasted to Gyekye's own evaluation of the concept. Gyekye specifically contests the place of social status in Wiredu's point on personhood; he argues that it is not consistent with inherent moral impartiality of persons as a result of common denominator- humanity. That is to say that we are basically human persons before we are any other thing and this is what matters, moral considered.¹⁰⁵

According to Gyekye, it is, essentially, the human potential for reasoning that becomes the grounds for moral considerations. He argues thus:

What a person achieves are positions and personality qualities: he, *qua* person achieves and so becomes the *subject* of achievement, and being what he was before the process of achieving what he comes to

¹⁰⁴ Wiredu, Kwasi. —The Akan Concept of Mind, *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, no. 3, Oct. 1983.

¹⁰⁵ Gyekye quotes Kant's categorical imperative approvingly when arguing that human persons are, as members of the 'kingdom of ends,' equal independent of their empirical or accidental characteristics (be they social or even genetic qualities.)

achieve, he cannot be who he is by what he achieves. One is a person because of what he is, not because of what he achieves.¹⁰⁶

This position of Gyekye leaves room for questions. In Akan linguistic conventions, there are statements about people's life and behaviour that suggest that personhood is something achieved or conferred on someone for taking obligations and duties in the society. For example, *4nnye nyimpa* is an Akan morally evaluated statement describing someone who comes across as wicked, inhumane and unkind to others. Interestingly, an individual who fails in his struggles in the Akan community is thought of and evaluated to be *nyimpa hun*, literally meaning —a useless person,¹¹ which is a derogatory statement. On the contrary, a person of high moral standards is described as *4ye nyimpa paa*—literally, he/she is a real (human) person. However, according to Gyekye, these statements should not be considered literally, but instead merely to show positions and character features that one gains in the course of one's life, not personhood. For him, personhood precedes and is independent of such gains.¹⁰⁷

Per Wiredu's explanation, these customs clearly show that moral, intellectual, or social achievements are, for the Akan, *constitute* personhood, not just pointers. He opines that humanity is a necessity for personhood. According to Wiredu's viewpoint, possession of the *okra*¹⁰⁸ bestows on one *condition* of self-respect, not self-respect itself. The *okra* that forms the core of the human pre-lives one's life as a human and forms one end of this process; that underlying this process exists beyond the life of a physical human being. At the other end is the ancestor, the climax of the process of becoming a person whose memory serves as a moral landmark to the living, guiding the Akan's moral journey. Ancestors are those who through their ingenuity, reflections, wisdom and humane spirit have lived beyond the struggles of

¹⁰⁶ Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies* (Washington: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), 108.

¹⁰⁷ Wiredu and Gyekye, 108.

¹⁰⁸ The *4kra* is the transmitter of the individual's destiny (fate: *nkrabea*). It is explained as a spark of the Supreme Being. The presence of this divine essence in a human being may have been the basis of the Akan proverb, —All men are the children of God; no one is the child of the earth. Cf. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 85.

human life and are remembered for their exemplary lives. The status of those just having *okra* and those who have attained higher level of personhood is different as a result of the difference between the quality of moral *agency* and degrees of moral *responsibility*. In

Akan thought, phrases like *4nnye nyimpa* and *nyimpa hun* meaning ‘he is not a person’ and ‘useless person’ respectively, show that an individual is a moral agent, equal to all others and having the capacity for personhood fully. In fact, to say that someone is *4nnye nymipa* means the person is respected as one with moral agency; failure to respect this would be a failure to respect the individual as a moral agent.

It must be noted that the two levels of personhood posited by Wiredu could auger for much of the social and linguistic information which satisfies much of the moral impressions underlying Gyekye's position. Wiredu explains that what makes a human being is the possession of the *okra*. This translates into Gyekye's view that one's status as a human being is by virtue of one not only being a moral agent but also one's potential for rationality. The normative implication of having the *okra* or the potential for reason is that the entity has claim to an inalienable respect coupled with inalienable rights such as the right to live and right to conditions for survival. The social foundations of personhood support this basic level of innate respect. Thus, it could be deduced that not all human beings are persons though all persons are human beings. All human beings, then, are potential agents of morality.

Gyekye argues that the core themes of Western ethical thought give clear pictures and motives that encourage people to behave in particular manner. In like manner, Akan concept of personhood go to foster socially acceptable qualities and customs like unity, adroitness, assiduousness and productivity.

In talking about the individual and the community, with respect to personhood, Gyekye argues that the entire spectrum of values and customs in which the individual is necessarily ingrained

is culturally created by the community which is part of one's history. This shows an intimate connection between individual's aims and objectives¹⁰⁹ and communal systems and organizations even though it does not mean that communal systems and organizations are the sole means by which one can evaluate his/her achievements. According to Gyekye,

Individual persons who share in the communal values and customs, and are embroiled in the network of community connections, may discover that parts of those cultural heritage are unedifying, gauche, unintelligent or unilluminating and can be subject to reflective questioning and critical analysis. The assessment may bring out an individual's consent or a need for change or clarification and purification of extant communal aims, ethics and customs; but it may also yield to one absolutely abandoning them. The need and availability for re-assessment suggests that the person cannot be totally controlled by the communal and cultural structures and systems.¹¹⁸

To give the individual a room to respond to or reject the communally-agreed upon things and practices, Gyekye advocates a kind of identity whose origin does not depend on any one community, giving a self that determines or defines its own identity.¹¹⁰

On personhood and social identity, many scholars are in agreement with Gyekye that an important constituent of a human is the *4kra*¹¹¹, of which there is no consensus on its nature. According to Gyekye, the *okra* forms the core of the individual person's life, referring to it as *4krateasefo*, meaning, the living soul, an expression emphasizing that *4kra* is identical with life; a seeming tautology that yet is significant. It is believed that the *4kra* carries and gives of the individual's destiny (*nkrabea*), explained as a piece of the Supreme Being in a human being. This might auger for the Akan proverb, —All men are the children of God; no one is the child of the earth.¹¹² While Gyekye opines that the *okra* can aptly be referred to as 'soul' in English, Wiredu draws on a much subtle differentiation between the two ideas. For Wiredu *4kra* is the

¹⁰⁹ Wiredu and Gyekye, *Person and Community*, 112.

¹¹⁸ Wiredu and Gyekye, 112.

¹¹⁰ Wiredu and Gyekye, 112.

¹¹¹ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, 93.

¹¹² Kwame Gyekye, —Akan Concept of a Person, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1978): 277–87. Reprint in Richard A. Wright, ed., *African Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 85.

entity which bears the individual's destiny from God and whose presence or absence in the body spells life or death respectively.¹¹³ The important crust of their divergent views is the normative implication of the presence of *4kra*, which it confers on the one who possesses it fundamental inalienable respect with concomitant fundamental inalienable human rights and responsibilities.

Gyekye, just like Wiredu, observes that individual persons aspire and look up to certain ideals that greatly influence people's perception of themselves and their place in society. Contrary to Wiredu, Gyekye denies that facts about a person's achievements in life or society has anything to do with one's personhood. It is worthy of note that the individual strives for social status and not personhood. The strivings form part of the individual's self-expression as a *person*. So that should he/she fail to reach the expected status, he may lose community respect, but his personhood does not and should not be lost or reduced.¹¹⁴ The differences in how people are treated in the community are as a result of their social achievements in the community and not their status as persons.

Thus, if personhood is analyzed in terms of social feat and personal interactions, it is to create the links and associations necessary for the generation and propagation of knowledge and duties that auger and enhance communal consensus. So thought, the Akan perception of personhood serves to build and strengthen unity in the society, providing a system good for resolving problems and issues of a communal nature. The Akan have developed a way of encouraging people to help with the good and welfare of the society while guarding the dignity of even the most unproductive individual. Personhood, then, in an Akan thought, is what an individual gets for his/her contribution towards the good and welfare of the society serving as the grounds for

¹¹³ Wiredu, Kwasi. —The Akan Concept of Mind, *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, no. 3, Oct. 1983. p.119

¹¹⁴ Wiredu and Gyekye, *Person and Community*, 111.

the dignity of the individual, which is sourced in an independent common humanity, idealized in the community.

2.9 African Traditional Religion in Ghana

A people's religion, which outlines their belief system, worldview and guides their lives, is the most important part of their culture. Gyekye holds that religion is all pervasive in Akan society, and it can be seen that a good number of activities in the community and social institutions in the Akan society is inexplicably bounded up with religion.

In traditional and contemporary Akan communities, as in other human communities throughout the world, religion is connected with such facets as installation of traditional officers, inheritance, initiation rites and ceremonies, among others. Gyekye maintains that the African look at the universe from purely religious perspective and that the people's religion is inextricably linked to their cultural identity and heritage. He also notes that religion revolves round every aspect of the African, whether farming, fishing or the practice of medicine and healing. This means that when one is born into African society, he or she is introduced into and given a culture that is greatly and influentially religious, requiring a participation in the belief system and ritualistic activities of the community.¹¹⁵

In the words of Sarpong,¹¹⁶ no African society is without a God-figure; there is no reason why Ghana [and by extension Akan] should be an exception.¹²⁶ Even though the true Ghanaian would laugh if one spoke of the possibility of representing the Supreme Being in art or

¹¹⁵ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Peter Akwasi Sarpong is an Archbishop emeritus of the Catholic Diocese of Kumasi. He is a renowned academician and Scholar known for his contributions and research in the areas of African Anthropology, sociology, culture and socio-cultural issues. He has many books, articles and works of academic significance to his credit. ¹²⁶

Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 13.

designating shrines and temples to him neither does Supreme Being play a small part in Ghanaian Art. Designs and patterns embossed into cloths and on carvings have names referring to the Supreme Being and his attributes.¹¹⁷ This perhaps brings the contention of a few nineteenth century writers who raised doubts about the originality of the Ghanaian conception of the Supreme Being¹¹⁸ although this is completely and totally inadmissible. If the Ghanaian conception of the Supreme Being, Sarpong contends, had come or taken from missionaries, as was conceived, it would not have been possible to have it so well defined on and in the people's mentality and philosophy so as to be integrated into the artistic parts of their expressive and visible culture and daily life.¹¹⁹ There is therefore no doubt that the Ghanaian religious thought is essentially theocentric and theistic.¹²⁰ Ohemaa Boakyewa Yiadom I,¹²¹ expresses that the Traditional Religion in Ghana, like all ATRs, is not characterised by sacred literature such as the Bible or the Quran. Even though the religion has no written records¹²², the adherents have knowledge of and reverence for the practices and beliefs. This view is contested strongly by Nana Addo Dankwa III who holds that the Africans literature is enshrined in artworks, music, architecture, etc.¹²³ This view of Nana Addo Dankwa III is in consonance with what Ohemma Boakyewa Yiadom I says that the sources of information on ATR in Ghana are from both non-oral and oral artistic expressions such as

¹¹⁷ Sarpong, 9–10.

¹¹⁸ A. B. Ellis, *The Twi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of the West Africa* (London, 1887), 10.

¹¹⁹ R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford: University Press, 1923), 139–43.

¹²⁰ Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 12.

¹²¹ Ohemaa Boakyewa Yiadom I, known internationally as Nana Apeadu, is the Amanonehemaa who represents the Paramount Chief of the Akuapem area of Ghana. She is president of the Pan African Human Rights Organization in New York and an executive member of the UN Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children, New York. She is also a consultant and spokesperson of refugee women and children for the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

¹²² Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 17.

¹²³ Addo Dankwa III N. O, *The Institution of Chieftaincy: The Future* (Accra: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004), 72.

artistic symbols and theophonic names, cultic activities, songs, myths and proverbs respectively. In these sources are enshrined the belief in God, ancestors, divinities, nature and other spirit beings.

For most Ghanaians, as for most traditional Africans, it is religion that informs and forms their worldview and participation in life in the society, much more than any other thing.¹²⁴ It is an ATR belief that man does not live in this world alone; there is the sense of man's intimate connection with powerful spirit beings, nature, respecting their existence and place in the cosmos as independent yet constitutive parts of the whole.¹²⁵ This brings the African to the divine, seeking affinity with these spiritual powers. Religious beliefs are integrated into every facet of the traditional man's life, giving meaning and significance to life and living.¹²⁶

This is what Gyekye posits that to be born into African community is to be brought into a culture which is greatly influenced by religion, requiring one's participation in the beliefs and ritualistic customs of the people.¹²⁷

The Akan proverb, —*Obi nnkyere abofra nyame*”, meaning —no one teaches the child to know God! tells of the dominating influence of religion on man, portraying the African's consciousness of the divine, which is inherent in a person right from birth.

According to Mbiti, religion has dominance over many people's thought especially Africans, so much so that it has informed and formed their socio-cultural lives, political and economic organization and activities.¹²⁸ Despite the presence and activities of missionary religions,

¹²⁴ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 256.

¹²⁵ Turaki Yusufu, *Christianity and African Gods: A Method in Theology* (Nairobi: IBS-Nig. Press, 1999), 95.

¹²⁶ Christopher, I. Ejizu, *Emergent Key Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion* | <http://www.africaworld.net/afrel/ejizu.htm>, p. 7 of 12

¹²⁷ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 4.

¹²⁸ Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*.

¹²⁹ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, 96–106.

traditional religions in Ghana are still influential due to their close relationship to kinship obligations, local ethics and mores. The traditional cosmological order includes belief in a Supreme Being, divinities who are thought of as middlemen between the Supreme Being and the community, the ancestral team and other spirit beings.¹³⁹

Among all Ghanaian traditional groups, the spirit world is conceived to be as real as the world of the living, with the two realms connected by a web of interrelatedness and obligations, where the activities of the living influence the ancestors while the ancestors see to the growth and wellbeing of the family and the community. To forget and abandon this might be catastrophic.

The functions of traditional leaders such as chiefs, queens and family heads, priests and elders of the community are important for the maintenance of the harmony between the spiritual world and the physical world. During communal ceremonies and celebrations such as festivals, naming ceremonies, puberty rites, marriage ceremonies, funeral, etc, the religious roles of these community leaders and authorities come to play. At such communal moments the people gather and engage in activities like the offering of sacrifices and the pouring of libations, to renew and strengthen their ties and bonds with the ancestors. It is presumed that shrine patronage is much among the uneducated, though this does not allude that the educated Ghanaian has totally neglected tradition; some educated people patronise the shrine when faced with difficult situations.¹²⁹ Due to the religious activities of chiefs and lineage heads in the communities in which they head or are leaders, the society offers them special, specified and specific training and formation which builds them into great adults. These training and formation begins in childhood and are marked in various rites of passage, especially those ones done to usher or introduce one into adulthood from childhood. The Akans, for example have great interest and attention in how the young child grows into a good responsible and mature adult to represent

¹²⁹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 17, 20.

his or her family, community and what they espouse or stand for. For this reason, inter alia, such special occasions¹³⁰ are organised and accomplished by equally special people who are themselves groomed and are better placed to groom and help in the grooming of young people for the community. One of such rites of passage is the puberty rites. We will look at the puberty rite among the Akans, the officiating persons in this rite and the lessons therein.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the African Traditional Worldview with its traditional religious and philosophical foundations and systems, beliefs and practices. The discourse revealed that the entirety of the worldview of the African, often presented in art and ritualistic moments, is founded on an African religious approach and understanding of a person and to life. By that a view at Akan concept of person helped to understand what it takes to be recognised as a full member of an Akan community. The discussion underscored that the individual person was an intrinsic part of the community, from which he/she picks and develops his/her identity as a member of the community. The next chapter will look at what initiation rites in indigenous African communities are, with specific attention to Akan puberty rites and what lessons could be learnt to enrich the catechism for the sacrament of confirmation, as a Christian Adult Initiation rite in the Roman catholic church. This will help in the understanding and appreciation of ATR and the values it holds and teaches.

¹³⁰ Occasions such as naming ceremony, puberty and nobility rites, marriage ceremony and funeral celebrations.

CHAPTER THREE

INITIATION RITES: A MOMENT OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND FORMATION VIZ-A-VIZ CHRISTIAN CATECHESIS AND FORMATION FOR THE YOUNG ADULT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks into what rites of passage and initiation ceremony are, their importance, puberty rite among the Akans, Confirmation as a Christian Initiation rite, and how pragmatic lessons from the puberty rite could be synched to confirmation, as an initiation ceremony. This would lead to looking at the Catholic Church's attempt at recognising the values in ATR and the necessity of a kind of dialogue or synchronisation of some values for the enhancement of humanity and the two religious cultures, with attention to the Catholic Church among the Akan communities.

3.2 Rite of Passage in Traditional African Society

A rite of passage is to mark a transition in an individual's life from one stage of life to another, involving a significant change of social status. In cultural anthropological studies, the term is the English rendition of the French phrase *rite de passage*, which was coined by Arnold van Gennep, in the work *Les rites de passage*, "The Rites of Passage."¹³¹ The term is now fully accepted and integrated into anthropological studies and language of modern cultures. A rite of passage celebrates one's transition from a phase of life to another. It is a term that refers to and describes all of life's transitional moments such as Birth, adolescence, marriage and death, even though it has come to be identified with the transition from adolescence to adulthood.¹³²

¹³¹ Arnold, Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (in French, 1909) Paris: Nourry Emile, review of *Lay Summary*, by Frederick Starr, *The American Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 5 (March 1910): 707–9.

¹³² riteofpassagejourneys.org/about/faqs/what-is-a-rite-of-passage-why-is-it-important

African rituals make use of symbols and symbolic arts to verbally or nonverbally communicate meaningfully. In traditional African communities, great emphasis is put on rituals as ideal customary and symbolic way of communicating by the community of what she considered and esteems as good. These rituals are performed in particular patterns and seasons. All African traditional communities are characterised by various rituals observed according to age, though these rituals are many and vary in kind.

Rituals in Africa can be evaluated as "life cycle rituals" or "rites of passage" as expounded by Victor Turner, a British anthropologist.¹³³ Van Gennep observed three phases in rituals marking passage. These are the phases of separation, transition and incorporation. The phase of separation marked the segregation or cutting of the individual from a former degree as instituted by the community. The phase of transition ensures the smooth transience of individuals from one social level to another. The phase of incorporation marks the integration and proper reinstatement of the individual into the community, with corresponding rights, functions and obligations.¹³⁴ Turner raises the argument that the whole process of the rituals is characterised by 'in-between periods' because each of the phases occur in a specific moment between spatio-temporal epochal periods, with specified places.

Rites of passage have a crucial function in African socialization, marking out the different stages in the development of an individual, and outlining communal relations and obligations. A major stage in African life is the movement from childhood into adulthood, with the individual becoming fully integrated into the ethical systems and structures of the community. For this reason, rites of passage are very crucial, inter alia, in the formation of one's identity.

¹³³ V. W. Turner, *Liminality, Kabbalah, and the Media* (Religion 15, 1985), 205–17. One of Turner's last contributions to his theory of liminality.

¹³⁴ A. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. M. B. Viazdom and G. L. Caffé (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).

The ritual moments celebrate the individual's transience from one stage to another in life by dramatizing the transition, while bringing out the social symbolism and arts that identifies the community and incorporates the individual into this identity.

Rites of passage have the dual function of protecting and maintaining the on-going group symbolising the vitality and endurance of the community and giving a distinct and patterned way of moving from one level of life and responsibility to the next. They affirm the levels of values of the society, projecting a standardized pattern of development the individual can aspire to and reaching each level, examine one's growth and development against the community's own. Initiation rites in African relate a person to the community and in turn to the larger and powerful spiritual realm, providing the African with the basis of one's being: one's identity. Sexual/gender roles and gender identity are enforced through rites of passage: the men are prepared for their clear-cut duties and obligations in the community as men and same for the women.

Initiation rites differ in procedure and details from community to community, with varying emphasis on physical, spiritual and practical dimensions and instruction,¹³⁵ even though the basic rationale behind the ritual fundamentally deals with transforming and guiding one from a life developmental stage to the next. In most traditional African communities, one is not considered a full adult, if the individual fails to undergo the initiation rites, regardless of age.¹³⁶

A rite is a set of basic rituals observed and done according to approved norms and practices of the society; rites are constitutive parts of traditional African cultures with some being more detailed and expansive in some communities than others but the themes relate individuals and communities, providing structures for personal growth and development in traditional Africa.

¹³⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1975, 122.

¹³⁶ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 10.

Manu Ampim¹³⁷ observes that there are five main initiation rites in Africa that are basic to growth and development of the human person. These rites include naming, puberty, partnering, elderhood and death. These rites, he opines, were developed by the ancestors to relate the individual to the community and the community in turn to the much powerful spirit world. The rites, Manu asserts, are exigent to individual and community enhancement, noting that the development into responsible, community-oriented adults was not automatic; it entailed undergoing a set of rites to usher in a new phase in life, often a more mature phase.¹³⁸ The rite initiation into adulthood is the most known of the set of rites and many people think that rites of passage is only in reference to initiation into adulthood. Adulthood rites are often performed at beginning of puberty age (about 12-13 years), ensuring the formation and education of responsible, productive, community-conscious adults.¹³⁹

Many traditional African communities have a well-planned out initiation rites and ceremonies for both boys and girls, often taking the young initiates out of the community, away from the cares and burdens of daily life, instructing them on adulthood: this includes societal rules, regulations and prohibitions; moral and social instructions and responsibility on life and what it takes to live rightly in the community. Among the Akans, *bragor4* is the rite specifically designed to initiate young girls into adulthood.

¹³⁷ Manu Ampim is a renowned professor of African Studies. Cf. www.manuampim.com/AfricanInitiationRites.htm

¹³⁸ This transition to adulthood is exceedingly difficult in Western societies because there are no systems of adulthood rites to systematically guide and direct the young person through this important stage in his or her life cycle. In Western culture adulthood is seen as a status achieved at the age of 18 or 21, or simply when the person graduates from high school. Unfortunately, in most cases there is no fundamental guidance or transformation from a child to an adult that is required or expected. This —leave it for chancel approach to adulthood development is the root of most teenage and youth —adultl confusion, chaos, and uncertainty. When the youth reach a certain age, somehow they are expected to magically transform into an —adult,l even though they often receive very little guidance.

¹³⁹ Cf. www.manuampim.com/AfricanInitiationRites.html

3.3 Women in rites of passage

Women often have significant functions in rituals of status transformation that come with birth, puberty and death. At childbirth, they show appreciation to God through prayers and sacrifices,¹⁴⁰ and when they are bereaved they sing dirges to mourn. One of the most important roles of women is seen during girls' puberty and nubility rites. Marion Kilson¹⁴¹ observed that whatever the rites, the chief officiants and participants are women, which symbolically communicate the essence and cultural meaning of mature womanhood in the rituals of the community, portraying the double nature of the sexuality of women and how the good dimensions of fertility may be tapped for the good of the society and the bad dimensions of sexuality socially contained and controlled.¹⁴²

In Ghana, as in other African traditional societies, the rites and their rationale were so significant that to violate them amounted to a crime. A girl who got pregnant without or prior to undergoing the puberty rites was banished together with the man who was responsible for the pregnancy, with rites of purification performed to cleanse the community of the evil consequences of the abomination. The puberty rites did not only prepare the young for marriage but also for procreation, without which marriage was incomplete. This made the ceremonies mark and celebrate the entry of young girls into adulthood. During the period of their ritual seclusion the young girls were instructed and educated in the cultural treasures of the community, bringing them into intimate relation with the spiritual forces noted to protect and bless them with fecundity and motherliness during their period of motherhood. Mothers of such girls often prayed that their daughters grew to become responsible and mature women and

¹⁴⁰ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1975, 66.

¹⁴¹ Marion Kilson began studying Ga culture for her doctoral dissertation; she received her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Harvard University in 1967. cf. www.africanbookscollective.com/authors-editors/marionkilson

¹⁴² www.africanbookscollective.com/authors-editors/marion-kilson

wives, bearing and raising children to become mature and responsible members in the society, upholding the traditions and beliefs of the community.

3.4 Initiation rites and ceremonies

Religious beliefs and practice are to ensure moral order in the lives of the adherents, encouraging them to strive for higher standards in life.¹⁴³ Yet the practice of religion can at times degenerate into a distorted appreciation of the religious obligations. Initiation rites and ceremonies are moments when the initiand is introduced to and taught the religious ideals and demands for life. Mbiti observes that though initiation rites and ceremonies are intrinsic part of the formative and developmental stages in African society, —not all African peoples mark this period with outstanding ceremonies, but most of them give it a special recognition.¹⁴⁴ Opoku opines that the initiation rites are to ensure that one became a developed person, capable of discharging his or her duties as a full member of the society for the initiation rites contain in them the ideals of manhood or womanhood which society wishes to install into the young adults who undergo the rites.¹⁴⁵ This affirms Mbiti's view that one undergoes physical, emotional and mental transformation during this period, transitioning the individual from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. The Akan, also, has traditional initiation rites and ceremonies. Akan is composed of the Asante, Bono, Fante, Agona, Akyem, Wassa, Akuapem, Kwawu and others, including those living outside Ghana, and occupy about five out of the ten regions.¹⁵⁷ They are identified by the Akan language and traditional political system with the traditional leader (a chief) at the centre of governance.¹⁴⁶ Religion, morality and the organisation of the society were

¹⁴³ Culled from the Homily of Rev. Fr. Courage Dogbe on the 12th Oct. 2016. Fr. Courage Dogbe is an ordained Catholic Priest of the Archdiocese of Accra.

¹⁴⁴ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 98.

¹⁴⁵ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 112.

¹⁵⁷ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 1.

¹⁴⁶ Assimeng, *Social Structure of Ghana*, 37. See also Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, 1.

inextricably linked. The importance of religion as society's binding agent is much evidenced in the legal, social and moral institutions and authority of traditional leadership of the spiritual leader.¹⁴⁷ Ghanaian are known to be very passionate about their religion and they show it in religious practices, manifesting the religious consciousness that dominates the entirety of their life. It is interesting to observe that in Ghana, most public and private functions and ceremonies are characterised by or given a religious touch of a kind.¹⁴⁸ All Akan life centres around and is shrouded in religion. Man's life is not characterised by permanence but transience; no one stays in one state forever; there is a move from one state to the other and special rites and rituals are done to ensure smooth, harmonious and peaceful transition.

Rites of passage are controlled by the *abusua*. Danquah, argues that the Akan holds and considers the family system highly and proudly.¹⁴⁹ The traditional African child is literally born into a community; he/she is expected, thus, to grow into what his/her community expects of him/her. There are certain attitudes, character and behaviour patterns that are expected of him/her. To echo the words of Sarpong, he/she cannot neglect these without risking to be branded as uncouth, shameless or foolish. The child's upbringing is a communal responsibility and obligation. His/her parents and relations watch him/her closely otherwise he/she misbehaves, and correct him/her, sometimes sternly, when he goes against what is thought to be acceptable standards of conduct in the society, especially in the realms of religion.

The obvious salient role of initiation ceremonies is to introduce a youngster into adulthood. According to Sarpong, the Ghanaian child was closely followed by the adults of his/her community in whatever he/she did, said or advised. This was to ensure and help him transform

¹⁴⁷ A. Akrong, "Religion and Traditional Leadership in Ghana," in *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development*, ed., I. K. Odotei and A. K. Awedoba, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Atiemo Abamfo, *Religion and the Inculturation of Human Rights in Ghana* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 95.

¹⁴⁹ J.B. Danquah, *Akan Doctrine of God*, (2nd edi.) London, Frank Cass & Co., 1968.

into a responsible adult. Whether the child could easily get a marital partner, or be trusted in the future with a responsible task or be elected head of a village or tribe¹⁵⁰ as queen or chief depended very much on what opinion people formed of him/her during his/her childhood. It was therefore the special responsibility of parents to ensure that their children grew up into respectable and self-respecting adult men and women in the society, men and women of values and character. This was done during such initiation ceremonies as puberty rites. Like the child, the adult is expected to behave in some well-defined manner which should be in accord with her age, status in life and condition of health. Sarpong opines that this mode of adult behaviour is what is particularly signified in the various initiation ceremonies of the various African societies. He emphasises that the ceremonies or rites signify and effect something real and important, which they often communicate in symbolic ways.¹⁵¹

3.5 Puberty rite among the Akans of Ghana¹⁵²

Puberty rites vary from society to society. In some societies such as the Mende of Sierra Leone both boys and girls have to undergo the prescribed rites at puberty,¹⁵³ while among the Akans only girls undergo such rites. Ekem opines that with their numerous linguistic divisions, the Akan are the principal ethnic group in Ghana.¹⁵⁴ From the 1950s, Akan has been used in reference to the language, with dialects such as Agona, Akyem, Akuapem-Twi, Asante-Twi, Bono, Mfantse, Kwahu and Wassa spoken in the Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central, and some

¹⁵⁰ In the case where his clan is the ruling one. cf: Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, 133–38.

¹⁵¹ Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 73.

¹⁵² In this work the terms ‘puberty’ and ‘nubility’ used interchangeably. This has been done consciously to carry the message and import of the rite on the Akan girl-child. Cf. Sarpong, *Girls’ Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, x.

¹⁵³ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 112–18.

¹⁵⁴ J. D. K. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context: A Study of Priesthood in Some Christian and Primal Communities in Ghana and Its Relevance for Mother-Tongue Biblical Interpretation* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2009), 27.

areas of the Western and Eastern Regions of Ghana.¹⁵⁵ While taking cognisance of their wide geographical distribution, the Akan base or trace their descent through the female line and practice exogamy in their social organisational system and structure. Each Akan group is organised according to clans, lineages and smaller family units, respectively.¹⁵⁶

The family system among Akan is a united clan system involving the living, the dead and the yet-to-be born. Every Akan belongs to and is related to a clan by a relation of consanguinity, which is the foundation of all their social organizations. The Akan society is organized around the family or, more appropriately, the clan, which is based on a lineage system that provides the basic rules, laws and principles of life, social structure, framework that forms and informs the body politics and guard inheritance, marriage and land tenure for the Akan.¹⁵⁷ The Akan believe that the norms and ethics are from a divine source who is virtue by nature. The Akan believes that belonging to a family and a community, participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community makes one a human person. The ceremonies and rites create a bond and relates and unites the individual members as a particular group and lineage. This is considered an obligation much as it is a right, forming religious values which influence and control the entire community.¹⁵⁸

It is observed that most initiation rites in traditional Africa are female-centred. Similar rites are also found in several parts of the world outside Africa. Sarpong elucidates that the seeming silence, if not neglect or lack of elaborate ceremony on Akan boys' initiation into manhood or adulthood is because his gradual introduction into manly status begins at a very early age.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of the Akan linguistic situation see F. A. Dolphyne, *The Akan (Twi-Fante) Language: Its Sound Systems and Tonal Structure* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1988).

¹⁵⁶ Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, 28–30.

¹⁵⁷ David Brokenshaw, *Akuapem Handbook* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1972).

¹⁵⁸ Nana Apeadu, —An Akan Queen Speaks in Hinduism,|| *Special Global Family Edition* 18, no. 6 (March 1996).

¹⁵⁹ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 10–11.

The most preserved puberty rites are the *Dipo* and the *Bragor4* of the Krobo and Ashanti respectively, which mark and celebrate the entry of young women into adulthood in the community.¹⁶⁰ Girls' initiation rites take various forms and may vary from community to community.¹⁶¹ In the Akan culture women embody that which is beautiful, pure and dignifying in the society and they are protected against any form of stain and perversion by traditional customs, laws and regulations. Most impressions about life and the character of children are developed and nurtured during their early formative years, which is usually spent with mothers. For this reason and more, the Akan believes that there is the need to properly equip women, who will in turn be mothers, with good morals to train and raise good children. This calls for prominence and attention given to the initiation of women into adulthood among the Akan, to the seeming neglect of the men. Most Akan girls, especially the Asante, Fante and Bono, undergo puberty rites. Van Gennep advises that it would be better to stop calling initiation rites puberty rites.¹⁶² Van Gennep opines that physiological changes in persons that are usually used as signs for puberty vary from person to person or from race to race.¹⁶³ Puberty rites among the Akan are known as *Bragor4* or *Brapue*,¹⁶⁴ which is performed only after a girl's first menstruation and a girl who is being initiated is called *Brani* or *Sakyima*.

¹⁶⁰ In Ghana only a small section of ethnic groups usually found in the northern parts of the country have initiation rites for men and where they occur they are not given as much prominence as that for young women.

¹⁶¹ Among the *Krobo* the initiation ceremony takes place in the month of February. During this time, an announcement is made on behalf of the Earth Goddess (Nene Kloweki) that any parent with a daughter at puberty stage should come out to make her a *Krobo* woman. Immediately after this announcement, parents with such daughters present them to their clan priest or priestess responsible for —*dipo*. The priest then pours libation and asks for blessings for them. A series of ceremonies then follow.

¹⁶² Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 60.

¹⁶³ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 9–10. See also Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 66–68.

¹⁶⁴ *Brapue* is from two Akan words *bra*, which means life and *pue*, which means to come out. Thus the term is understood as to bring life out of somebody or to introduce someone into life. *Brapue*, in this context, is to be understood as the introduction of a young girl into maturity and adulthood.

More often than not, when a mother notices her daughter's first menstruation, she begins to prepare for the rites. Prior to the rites, the girl will be brought to the queen mother who, physically examining the girl, will ascertain that she has no pregnancy.¹⁶⁵ Sarpong argues that most of these considerations hold good only for the reputedly 'good' girl who can be relied upon to remain a virgin until after the completion of the rites. In the case of the girl who is in constant association with boys, or is otherwise reputed to be 'immoral', the parents are restless until she has been through her rites, lest she should conceive and bring the curse of the ancestors and the whole community upon them.¹⁷⁸ Sarpong maintains that parents of such girls look out for signs in them, assess their age, watch their development¹⁶⁶ to be sure they are not hiding the fact that they have reached puberty. They may even insist on absolute abstinence from pre-nubile love games.¹⁸⁰

The preparations for the ceremony are both spiritual and material; the spiritual preparations involve ascertaining whether the 'kra' (soul) of the girl would approve of the performance of the rite or not,¹⁶⁷ while the material preparations come with the provision of all the needed items and stuff including drinks, food items, animals, money, cloths, jewellery, cosmetics, and so on. On a set day, family members and relations, friends and 'Brannwom' groups are invited for the ceremony. On the morning of the fateful day, the mother announces the initiation ceremony by beating the metallic part of a hoe or an old pan with a stick, while people gather at the compound of the initiate singing *brannwom* to awaken people and usher in the ceremonial and ritualistic activities of the day¹⁸² these songs are more often than not have

¹⁶⁵ In the past, when a girl got pregnant before her initiation rites, she was banished from the town or village. The man who made her pregnant was also banished with her. This is known as —*Kyiribra*.¹⁷⁸ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 14.

¹⁶⁶ This may include watching the development of their breasts and occasional genital inspection

¹⁸⁰ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 15.

¹⁶⁷ Ganasah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 28.

¹⁸² *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 21.

sentiments of thanksgiving to *otweeduamp4n* and the ancestral spirits for their watchful care and protection of the neophyte to attain such a status.¹⁶⁸ This notwithstanding, Ganusah observes that such puberty songs among the Ewe-Dome of Ghana is to hoot at any evil spirit or bad luck or any ill-willed spirit that may come into the life of the neophyte.¹⁶⁹ This is understood as a means to clear the way for the neophyte to live a worthy, virtuous and responsible adult life in the society.

The first of the day's rites is the 'enstoolment' performed by an old woman known for fecundity. After the initiate has taken her bath, she covers her head to the waist, leaving the face bare, and is placed three times on a stool which is often placed on a mat covered with a blanket or 'kente' cloth, sitting on it the third time. There is libation¹⁷⁰ with palm wine or schnapps to thank the gods and the ancestors for protecting the initiate till the age of puberty. Parents, family relations and friends give gifts to the initiate, which are showcased around her. A brass basin called *Yaawa* with *adwera* or *Odwen-ahaban* (leaves of *Odwen*), an egg and a dry okro fruit is filled with water and put by her side. When gifts like coins are put in the *Yaawa*, a woman who sits by *Yaawa* sprinkles water on the girl with the *adwera* or *odwen*, with the belief that the water sprinkled on her would ward off evil spirits that may make her barren. The women sing and move around her to signify to the girl that she is to be introduced and initiated into the society and specifically into the community of women. She is therefore to identify with the women folk, for, to paraphrase Mbiti, they are, therefore, she is.¹⁸⁶ The rite thus, allows the community to participate in the events of one of its members.

¹⁶⁸ Sarpong, 21.

¹⁶⁹ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 72–73.

¹⁷⁰ Libation is the pouring down of a liquid substance, often a drink, accompanied by what is said to be supplications. See Dankwa III, *The Institution of Chieftaincy: The Future*, 79–84. ¹⁸⁶Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1975, 109.

Sarpong,

Then is the —*ti-yil* (hair cutting) ritual where the father pays for a special haircut for the initiate. Sarpong explains that this is the start-up money, capital, that comes to the initiate as of right with which her father or in his absence his brother, has the duty to ‘shave’ her. He cautions her by explaining that a refusal to do this is tantamount to renunciation of the girl.¹⁷¹ The Akan believe that every person has spiritual parents, and that by this initiation rite the initiate is to be severed from the connection with the spiritual connection. Thus the ‘*ti-yi*’ has the religious purpose of drawing the initiate from the world of spirits.¹⁷² Her finger and toe nails clipped (in some communities, some of her finger and toe nails and hair are buried at the river bank where ritual bath is done), and she is given the *Dansinkran*¹⁷³ hairstyle. With her breasts exposed, she puts beads around the neck, wrist, and ankles and dresses in new white cloth and made ready for the ritual bath which often happens in a stream or a river (a *Yaawa* could be filled with water for the same purpose if there is no stream or river in the community). She is carried to the stream, with her head and face covered with cloth, for the ritual bath which is performed by about four officiating women.

Arriving at the river bank, the officiating woman throws *et4* (mashed yam), an egg and three *odwono* leaves into the stream or river. The *Brani* is stripped of her cloth and dipped three times into the stream or river, with the officiating woman announcing their presence and purpose to the water spirits.¹⁷⁴ She is then made to sit on a stool and lime juice squeezed on her head. She is bathed with a new local sponge, soap and lime juice. She is dressed in a rich kente¹⁹¹ cloth with a pair of new —*Ahenemal* (native sandals) to match, her *dansinkran* hair

¹⁷¹ Sarpong, *Girls’ Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 27–28.

¹⁷² Sarpong, 27–33.

¹⁷³ *Dansinkran* is an Asante women’s traditional hair style. The ‘*Dansinkran*’ hairdo distinguishes the Asante woman from any other, in the same way as the ‘*Takua*’ hair style identifies the fante woman. cf: Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 100. See also Sarpong, *Girls’ Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 28.

¹⁷⁴ Cf: www.content.ghanagrio.com/templates/?a=84

¹⁹¹ *Ghana in Retrospect*, 103.

style re-shaped beautifully and carried home, like a queen with a beautiful umbrella over her, with *bragor4* songs, when the bathing is over.

Back home, she is seated on a stool for the ceremony of dedication, —*anoka* (mouth touching ceremony), performed with boiled eggs, *et4*, elephant skin, banana, and roasted groundnuts which she is made to taste, after libation is poured. It must be noted that each tasting of the food is accompanied by a prayer. For example, the officiating woman prays: —may you be as fecund as the elephant when the initiate tastes the elephant skin. She is then given boiled egg and *et4* to swallow, one after the other, with her head covered with a cloth. It is forbidden her to bite or chew the *et4* or boiled egg; the belief is held that she will be barren if she bites or chews them.

Then comes the ceremony for children where the initiate holds the hands of a boy and a girl and letting go of their hands, they rush, with other children, towards a big bowl full of *et4* and eggs, scrambling for the food, as soon as the first two children reach for the food. The initiate is blindfolded and requested to touch two of the children scrambling for the food, with the belief that the sex of the children she touches will determine the sex of the children she will give birth to.

The initiate now, in the company of her friends, enjoys a good meal for the day, amidst merriment. With the feasting over, they all assemble to celebrate the day's ceremony with a special dance. *Bragor4* songs are enjoyed, accompanied with drumming and dancing. The initiate is allowed to also dance with her close friends, shaking hands to show her appreciation to all who graced the occasion with their presents and presence. Her friends stay with her for some days, after the day's ceremony, during which period they play and learn traditional songs, dances and women's instruments such as the *Dondo*.

Sarpong,

There is the —*Ndaase*” or —*Nnaasel*, which is the Sunday after the initiation ceremony (Thanksgiving Day by the Fantes and Asantes respectively) when, in a *Kente*, a gold chain, a pair of native sandals and attractive beads, the initiate, in the company of her friends, goes round the community to show appreciation. This ‘going round to thank people’, Ganasah opines, is also a way by which the girl displays her coming of age and beautiful appearance on that day.¹⁷⁵ Ganasah observes that among the Ewes, if the girl is betrothed, she is taken to the house of her fiancée who gives her gifts generously.¹⁷⁶

It is an abomination and a breach of traditional law, forbidding a woman to be married if she has not undergone the puberty rites. And so, it was incumbent on young women to retain their virginities before the rites. This was so esteemed that women who got pregnant or broke their virginity without undergoing the rites were banished or expelled from the community, with the men responsible for the pregnancy. Sometimes, they are fined to cater for rites of purification to free the community of the adverse repercussive effects of what they have done.¹⁷⁷ This also ensured that young women grow up to be sexually-disciplined, having control over their sexuality, so as to prevent premature motherhood and unwanted babies.

One interesting fact about Akan puberty and nubility rites is that the whole ceremony is done and accompanied by prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and supplication which are expressed during moments of libation. The girl, by this rite, is not only ushered into adulthood and womanhood. She is also cleansed of anticipated misfortune, curses and disgrace and in turn

¹⁷⁵ Ganasah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 74–75.

¹⁷⁶ Ganasah, 74–75.

¹⁷⁷ www.Ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/tribes/puberty_rites.php. Puberty Rites; Shai Initiates/Krobo Initiates...compiled by David Osei-Adu. Accessed on 21st June, 2016 ¹⁹⁵
Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti, 32–33.

blessed with all the ideals of Akan womanhood; to get a good husband, have plenty children, to die a good death.¹⁹⁵

In the words of Ganusah, the child, growing into adulthood, just as in many other societies, is made to feel that physical maturity, which is evidenced in bodily changes, is not sufficient to confer on a person, all the responsibilities and privileges of an adult human being. The young girl needs to go through rites that will initiate her into the society of responsible adulthood.¹⁷⁸

The Akan believe that puberty rite is more of a rite to educate the central figure of humanity, in this case, the woman, into the important institution of, inter alia, communal and personal morality and other values that are cherished in the society.

3.6 The officiating woman/women

According to the Asante tradition and culture, the officiant of the puberty rite¹⁷⁹ is so important, if not indispensable as to be able to communicate some qualities to her subject. Aside the girl to be initiated, the officiating woman is the next important character during the puberty rite celebration.¹⁸⁰ She is, herself, a woman who has undergone the ceremony, respected in the community, of good, admirable and worth-emulating character.¹⁸¹ In sum, she must be a traditionally good and virtuous woman. Interestingly, she could also cause evil or good in the subject by unwittingly transmitting bad or good omens to her.¹⁸² The officiant, is expected, as part of her blessings, to impart fecundity to those at whose nubility she presides. In agreement with Sarpong, it is expedient to quickly add that what she does, does not necessarily bear on

¹⁷⁸ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 120–21.

¹⁷⁹ This is in reference to the woman or women who preside over and officiate at the various rituals of the nobility rite

¹⁸⁰ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 36–37.

¹⁸¹ Sarpong, 37.

¹⁸² Sarpong, 36.

Sarpong,

fertility directly, or that she should in all her actions be thinking of offspring. Sarpong argues that she may be cutting her hair and nails or enstooling the girl, yet, by reason of a mysterious communication of auspiciousness, all that can, somehow or other, be the cause of child bearing.¹⁸³ The personal fate of these officiants could not be more different; yet from the point of view of those whom they initiate, as accounted by Sarpong, they appear to be the same. Such women do not, necessarily, hold any recognised



¹⁸³ Sarpong, 36–37.

offices, but on account of their luck-imparting qualities, they become somewhat ‘priestesses of nubility’. Their own state as married women, childless married women or women with many children is irrelevant to their importance in this regard. A good officiant is reputed to possess a spiritual power (which she is scarcely aware of), by which she sacralises the girls she initiates to the satisfaction of the ancestors.

Apart from the officiating woman, the queen mother equally plays an important role in ensuring that the young girl is initiated right and groomed for responsible womanhood and adult life.¹⁸⁴ The Queen-mother, traditionally is thought of as a woman of great wisdom and motherly qualities. According to Osei Kwadwo¹⁸⁵ the queen-mother, who is the head of all the women in the community, ensures the women’s welfare¹⁸⁶ which included how they live and behave as women in the community. This position of Osei Kwadwo on the queen-mother is strongly opposed by Sarpong.¹⁸⁷ With the supervision of the queen mother, and the joint efforts of some elderly female leaders of the town or community, girls who have had their menarche are taken in seclusion from community life, during which period they are given instructions in the norms, customs and values of womanhood, sex education and birth control, proper care of and relation with men to sustain good marriages and their dignity in the community.¹⁸⁸ The queen-mother is the mother, not only to the royal family, but the society or community as a whole. Traditionally, she is considered as the person who has knowledge of the royals and other people of the community due to her motherly role to all. According to Busia, when a chief dies and a new one had to be appointed, the elders held a meeting at which the *kontihene* presided to approach the queen-mother and ask her to nominate a candidate for the stool. He further notes

¹⁸⁴ In Wenchi, a girl who has pass her menstrual period at least four or five times and is a virgin is being taken to the queen mother of the traditional area, Nana Toa Semangyedua for the rites which is *Bragor4*.

¹⁸⁵ Osei Kwadwo is a former curator of the *Manhyia* Palace Museum in Kumasi.

¹⁸⁶ Osei Kwadwo, *An Outline of Asante History II*, vol. I (Kumasi: Cita Press, 2000), 14.

¹⁸⁷ Sarpong, *Girls’ Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 3–4.

¹⁸⁸ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 71–72.

that the queen mother calls for a meeting of all the senior men and women of the royal lineage. They considered the eligible candidate in turn and choose the one they thought most suitable. When they had decided on a candidate, the queen-mother is sent to inform the kontihene.¹⁸⁹ This point is thrown into bold relief when Mercy Oduyoye, argues that the queen-mother's knowledge about the royals and other children in the society stems from her close association and nurturing functions.¹⁹⁰ In the not so distant past, the young girl took up her residence with the queen-mother for forty days for a careful surveillance of the girl to see if the queen could detect signs of pregnancy in the initiate; and the girl worked for her as one of her maids. It is noteworthy of the fact that nowadays some queen-mothers merely inspect the initiate and if they are satisfied that she is not pregnant, dismiss her. Thus, the queen-mother ensures that no defilement or calamity befalls the girl, her parents and the entire community.

Ohemaa Boakyewa Yiadom I opines that the Ohemaa, is charged with all the moral and social affairs and responsibilities of women in her clan and the community, representing the women folk on all levels of political, judicial, social and ritualistic affairs. Stoeltje observes that the duties of the queen-mother and the chief differ but run parallel in duality, that is to say, while the chief oversees the entire community, the queen-mother is also responsible for women and domestic affairs and protecting women's rights.¹⁹¹ In principle, the Ohemaa advocates and champions the interests and course of both men and women, partaking in all religious festivals and performing rites and ceremonies proper to her and her office. These are aimed at promoting and maintaining humanism, backed by religious teachings and principles of being accountable to the ancestors.

¹⁸⁹ K. A Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of the Ashanti: A Study of the Influence of Contemporary Social Change on Ashanti Political Institutions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 9.

¹⁹⁰ Mercy Oduyoye in Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, 191–93.

¹⁹¹ B. J. Stoeltje, —Asante Queen Mothers: A Study in Female Authority, ed. Fiona Kaplan, *Queens, Queen Mothers, Priestesses, and Power*, 1988, 41–71.

She is and sets the standards and yardstick for the women folk of the community. She is the custodian of the royals of the land. According to Opuni-Frimpong,¹⁹² this role of hers is ...associated with her motherly role in the royal family'.¹⁹³ Opuni-Frimpong asserts that the queen-mother, as the mother of the royal family is unrivalled in her knowledge of the royals. Nana Addo Dankwa III¹⁹⁴ confirms that the queen-mother is knowledgeable, not only in and about the blood status of the royals but also of their moral lives. Opuni-Frimpong in agreeing with Nana Addo Dankwa III affirms that the office of Akan traditional leadership is associated with values that Akan society deems important and proper. Nana Addo Dankwa III argues then that morality and acceptable behaviour patterns of traditional leaders, who represent and embody the people they rule, is a major concern to the Akan people because of the fact that the traditional leaders are considered as role models, who carry in themselves and show forth virtues and sterling qualities such as honesty, faithfulness, hard work, dedication and commitment, generosity, etc. He further argues that a chief and for that matter any traditional leader is the embodiment of what is considered proper and is a role model of the community; he command moral authority and is a shining example to his subjects.²¹³ The queen-mothers are responsible for and ensure that the grooming of the young ones is done properly. She is thought of as knowing all that is good and worthy of a person in the community. She is thus, in

¹⁹² Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). He is a former Head of the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana, where he currently lectures in Christianity and African Culture, African Christianity, etc. He is also an Adjunct Lecturer at the Pentecost University, Accra, Ghana, Moderator of the Department of Biblical Studies, All Nations University, Koforidua, Ghana and a Visiting Academic at the Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

¹⁹³ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, 190.

¹⁹⁴

the thought of Opuni-Frimpong, ‘a traditional educator’.²¹¹⁹⁵¹⁹⁶¹⁹⁷ It is then assumed that she who forms is herself properly formed for no one gives what he does not have (Latin- *nemo dat non quod non habet*).¹⁹⁸ It is interesting to observe that although queen-mothers are almost indispensable in the selection and formation of traditional leaders among the Akans, there is almost no explicit literature on the formation of queens and queenmothers. But this does not rule out the possibility of alluding to some information about their formation as queen-mothers. The motherly role of the queen-mother makes her the primary officiating leader during puberty rites of girls among the Akans. The rites of passage such as the puberty rites for girls are educational moments in Akan society. Before a girl would be allowed to go through the rites the queen-mother certifies her sincerity and virginity. They are taken through a formation system and pattern. The young girls, who are allowed to undergo the rites, are later on confined as part of the formation process. The queen-mother spends the confinement moment with the girls as an educator and counsellor. She provides education on various topics relevant to responsible adult life and womanhood.¹⁹⁹ This would include the girls’ relationship and participation in the general community life.

It is worthy to note, according to Opuni-Frimpong that the educational and counselling roles of the queen-mother go beyond the puberty rites. She is required by traditional customs to handle issues affecting women and sometimes, also men. She provides counselling to the female members of the society in times of bereavement to be strong, and in domestic problems. Though

¹⁹⁵ seadeey4 Nana Addo Dankwa III was the Okuapemhene of the Akuapem State for well over three decades. He was a professed Christian and made several attempts to articulate how the Christian faith is at home with the Akan Indigenous Knowledge Systems. His publication *The Institution of Chieftaincy in Ghana-The Future* is a very remarkable book.

¹⁹⁶ Dankwa III, *The Institution of Chieftaincy: The Future*, 23.

¹⁹⁷ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, 191–93.

¹⁹⁸ This is a latin expression which literally means no one gives what he does not have.

¹⁹⁹ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, 193–94. ²¹⁷Opuni-Frimpong, 194.

not commonly seen, traditionally, in times of war, when the men leave for war, she holds the fort by mobilising the women for comfort, support and prayers.²¹⁷ Boatén I opines that in terms of leadership positions, women in an ethnic society such as the Asantes have socio-political and ritualistic roles which are very significant and crucial. Elderly women in the clan and lineage exercise great authority and influence over other women in the clan and lineage because the elderly women are recognised as the ones fit and proper to advise and the historical stores of family.²⁰⁰

The queen-mother is also noted for settling disputes and legal matters concerning women in her palace court. She is thus a traditional legal administrator. Her role in the Akan society today involves pursuit of developmental projects, health and education of women and children. Thus, the formation of younger members of the society is further connected to the office, function and role of the queen-mother.

3.7 The Sacraments of Christian Initiation

Primarily, the sacraments of Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation constitutively form the "sacraments of Christian initiation", and upon them Christian life depends. The sacrament of Confirmation is essential to make the grace of baptism full and complete because confirmation binds the recipient intimately with the life and spirit of the church, with the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit. This makes them Christ's worthy ambassadors, with the obligation to propagate the Gospel message in words and actions.²⁰¹ In the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the three sacraments are administered to both infants and adults at the same time, though this

²⁰⁰ Boatén I, *The Changing Roles of Queenmothers in the Akan Polity*, 1991. Accessed on the 22, Feb. 2017 from RESEARCH REVIEW (NS) VOL.8, NOS. 1 & 2, 1992. See. <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/afrianjournals>.

²⁰¹ From the Introductory rite to the Rite of Confirmation

is not so in the Western Church or the Latin rite.²⁰² Worthy of note is the fact that in this work our attention will be on confirmation in the western church.

In the western church, a bishop, traditionally administers the sacrament to those old enough to appreciate it. A priest may administer the sacrament upon the baptism of an adult or the admission of a baptised individual to full membership with the Catholic Church, or a dying person.²⁰³ These situations may warrant a bishop delegating a priest to confer the sacrament of confirmation.²²² Often times, adults who gain membership into the Catholic Church during Easter Vigil Mass receive the sacrament from priests because it concludes the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program.²⁰⁴

3.8 The Sacrament of Confirmation

Many scholars are of the view that confirmation is a sacrament looking for theological understanding.²⁰⁵ After about twenty centuries one of the respectable theological encyclopaedias can still say —...it is undeniable that the theology of confirmation presents very different characteristics between one epoch and the other... the early Scholastics seem to be at a loss when they find themselves confronted with confirmation as a separate sacrament...²²⁵ The earliest Christians received baptism as adults who had converted to Christianity. In ancient times, people feared the consequences of the sins committed after

²⁰² This is to say that Confirmation is conferred on every new Eastern Christian as soon as he or she is baptized, and he/she then receives Communion for the first time as well. In the Eastern Catholic (and Eastern Orthodox) Churches, the three sacraments of initiation are administered at the same time to infants. Children are baptized, confirmed (or "chrismated"), and receive Communion (in the form of the Sacred Blood, the consecrated wine), all in the same ceremony, and always in that order. Since the timely reception of Baptism is very important, and it would be very hard for a bishop to administer every baptism, the bishop's presence, in the Eastern Churches, is signified by the use of chrism consecrated by the bishop. The priest, however, performs the confirmation

²⁰³ Can. 883

²²² Can. 884

²⁰⁴ Cf. Can. 882-888. Priests customarily ask for and are granted permission for this occasion.

²⁰⁵ W. J Bausch, *A New Look at the Sacraments* (Notre Dame: Indiana 4656, Fides/Claretian, 1977), 91.

²²⁵ Herder and Herder, *Sacramentum Mundi*, 1968, 407–9.

baptism and this prevented them from calling for baptism until at grave danger of death. Meanwhile, theologians of the middle ages were of the belief that those who died after Jesus' death, children who died, without baptism, all are not eligible to Heaven. And so, with the rate of infant mortality being high at the time, parents moved for infant baptism to safeguard their children being saved, but infant baptism did not have the explicit consent and affirmation of the child. However, Confirmation, with no Biblical evidence seen as a sacrament, emerged to have the explicit consent and affirmation of faith by those who had, paternalistically, received infant baptism. This was done when the children were mature, making most Christians relate infant baptism to confirmation.²⁰⁶

According to Bausch, there are no documents of the early church fathers giving evidence or suggesting that Christian initiation had anything more than water-baptism.²⁰⁷ He observes that of particular interest is the anointing with oil of those baptised by the priests, and later the bishop's anointing, laying his hands on or over the candidates and praying for the blessing of the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁸ This laying on of hands, with the accompanying prayers, is to make the candidate strong, bold and resolute in making a public consensual and responsible declaration of his/her faith to the people of faith or the community of believers during the confirmation.²⁰⁹ Ahiabor agrees to this when he says that this declaration comes with the candidate's affirmation of faith, public, and a responsible consent to mature Christian obligations.²¹⁰ For Arinze, confirmation is a 'serious Christian engagement'.²¹¹ Christians receive confirmation as a sign

²⁰⁶ <http://www.enotes.com/topics/roman-catholic-church>

²⁰⁷ Bausch, *A New Look at the Sacraments*, 92.

²⁰⁸ Bausch, 92.

²⁰⁹ Cf: <http://stannsw.org/baptism-sponsor-also-known-as-godparent/>

²¹⁰ Cf: <http://www.padreantonio.com>

²¹¹ Francis Arinze, *Active Participation Reconsidered: The Liturgy and the Sanctifying Office of the Bishop. Reflections Proposed to Bishops of Recent Nomination*, in Rome, September 17, 2004', *Adoremus* (Online Edition) 10.7 (October 2004).

of their Christian initiation and acceptance into full membership of the household of God, giving the confirmandi an identity of full and faithful membership in the community of believers.

According to Timothy Brunk²¹² recent commentators have drawn attention to confirmation as a sacrament that is lost, irrelevant, confusing, or without meaning for Christians.²¹³ Fischer, analyzing texts such as the Apostolic Tradition and the Gelasian sacramentary, concludes that "it is quite clear what confirmation originally was not-it had nothing to do with personal confession of the faith by those who had been too young to do this at their baptism: it was not an act of self-commitment."²¹⁴ This view is objected to by the catholic church and most christian communities. Confirmation, as the sacrament, certifies and makes strong one's Catholic or Protestant identity and membership. For protestants, confirmation is much a rite of passage in which an individual makes a declaration to be devoted to church and her doctrines but the catholic church reckons confirmation as a rite in which an individual receives grace while proclaiming his/her fidelity to God, the church and her doctrines.

Confirmation, which is traditionally the second of the sacraments of Christian initiation, culminates what began at baptism, making one responsible for his/her beliefs, while declaring this conviction publicly. In the Latin rite, adults who receive baptism also receive confirmation in that order,²¹⁵ at the same time, stressing the theological implications of that traditional

²¹² Timothy Brunk is associate professor of theology at Villanova University, where he teaches courses in sacramental theology and in pastoral care of the sick. He is particularly interested in the interplay between sacramental worship and consumer culture.

²¹³ Timothy Brunk, *The Sacrament of Confirmation in a Consumer Culture*, 2014, 333. For more information visit www.praytellig.com/index.php/2014/08/01/consumer-culture-and-the-liturgy/

²¹⁴ J.D.C. Fischer, *Confirmation; Then and Now* (Chicago: Hilenbrand Books, 2005), 137. First published in 1978 as part of the Alcuin Club Collection No. 60 by SFCK, Holy Trinity Church, London.

²¹⁵ The Eastern Church continues to confirm (or chrismate) both infants and adults immediately after Baptism.

order.²¹⁶ Confirmation, though perfects baptism, delayed until teenage years and it dispensed the grace for bold, shameless Christian living.

The sacrament ensures the continuation effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit, as happened on the day of Pentecost to Apostles, bringing into perfection the gifts of the Holy Spirit received at baptism, insuring one's participation in the Church that came into being on that first Pentecost. The CCC postulates:

Remember that you have received the seal of the spirit giving you wisdom, understanding, courage, knowledge, divine reverence, etc. Protect that which you have received. God our Father has marked you with his sign; Christ has confirmed you, placing his seal, the Spirit, in your heart.²¹⁷

The CCC finds the account in the Acts of the Apostles as the biblical evidence for confirmation:

—When the apostles in Jerusalem had heard that the word of God had reached Samaria, they sent for Peter and John who came and prayed for the reception of the Holy Spirit for them because they had not received the Holy Spirit yet even though they had received baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. So, they placed hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit.²¹⁸

3.8.1 The Form of and eligibility for Confirmation

It is presumed that the imposition of hands, which signifying the coming of the Holy Spirit, is the core action of the Sacrament of Confirmation. According to CCC, all those who have been baptized, as recognised by the church, have the eligibility for confirmation, meanwhile, Latin rite advocates for the reception of confirmation at the "age of reason" (around seven years old). But, a child in danger of death can and should receive Confirmation. It must be noted that although Confirmation is referred to as the "sacrament of Christian maturity," adult faith must

²¹⁶ Most recently in Pope Benedict XVI's apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*

²¹⁷ It is evident from its celebration cb.org/catechism/text/pt2sect2chpt1art2.html. CCC 1302-1303 (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

²¹⁸ Acts 8:14-17

not be confused with adult age by natural growth, not forgetting that the grace of baptism is free, undeserved gift, needing no "ratification" for its efficacy. St. Thomas Aquinas opines that:

The soul's age is not determined by the body's age; a child can be spiritually mature. The book of Wisdom teaches: the measure of old age is not the length of years. Many children have become martyrs through the reception of power of the Holy Spirit²¹⁹

These become _soldiers of Christ'; martyrs whose blood helped in the cultivation and growth of the christian faith and christendom. In agreement with the Holy Bible, the church teaches and holds that sin is the only thing that separates us from God; it is the blockage that severs our relationship with the Father of humankind, humanity, creation and the entire cosmos. In the catholic church's teachings and traditions, the sacrament of confession, which includes penance and reconciliation, helps the penitent to restore the broken relation with God, humanity, creation and the universe. The church thus proposes the sacrament of confession before the reception of confirmation, in the event that the latter is not received after baptism. This is to ensure and help the confirmandi receive confirmation in a state of grace. Again, this ensures and assures the confirmandi, as viewed by the community of believers, the church, that the confirmandi is worthy enough and prepared, both physically and spiritually, to receive the sacrament.

CCC advocates for the confirmation of every catholic who has received baptism, with the aim that preparation for confirmation should help the Christian build a closer relationship and a livelier intimacy with the Holy Spirit so as to be able to exercise the Christian's apostolic obligations and call of witnessing to the gospel message. To this end catechesis for

²¹⁹ CCC #1308

Confirmation should aim at awakening a consciousness of belonging to the universal Church and the local church, the parish.

Confirmation, perfecting the grace of Baptism, dispenses the Holy Spirit so to firmly ground the recipient as a child of God, incorporated intimately with Christ, strengthening the relationship and participation of the individual with the life and mission of the Church as a true witness by words and actions. Christians who receive the seal of the Holy Spirit, participate fully in the life and mission of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, making them exude "the aroma of Christ", marking and sealing the recipients' total belongingness to Christ,²²⁰ His mission and the promise of divine protection in the eschatological tribulations.

3.8.2 Confirmation as a sacrament of maturation

Although a teenager can receive confirmation years after first communion, it is considered the second of the Sacraments of Initiation.²²¹ The introduction to the Rite of Confirmation states that the baptized, by the sacrament of Confirmation, are made rich with the power of the Holy Spirit and intimately linked to the Church. The confirmed become true witnesses of Christ, and are under obligation to propagate and champion the faith by word and actions. By this the church looks on confirmation as the sacrament that asserts and affirms one's maturation in the Christian faith. Confirmation, thus, ushers the baby-Christian into adult Christian life. Confirmation is significant in the Catholic Church because it makes of the recipients "soldiers of Christ", full and mature members of the Church, with personal commitment to the defence of the Christian faith; a sacrament of Christian maturity.

²²⁰ A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object. Hence soldiers were marked with their leader's seal and slaves with their master's. A seal authenticates a juridical act or document and occasionally makes it secret.

²²¹ Baptism being the first and Holy Communion the third.

In fifth-century Gaul, Bishop Faustus of Riez advised his flock that confirmation involved being strengthened for the battle of a Christian life:

—In baptism, we have a rebirth for life, and confirmation equips for the strife of life. Baptism entails washing, confirmation strengthens and provides that needed for the struggles of life.²²²

Thomas Aquinas offers two passages that have had significant impact on the theory and practice of confirmation. He writes: Man receive(s) spiritual rebirth in Baptism, while in Confirmation man attains maturity of the spiritual life with confirmation.²²³ Later, he adds: "In this sacrament Confirmation dispenses the fullness of the Holy Spirit proper to spiritual maturity which man attains and relates closely with the Holy Spirit and the community of believers."²²⁴

Although Thomas makes it quite clear that the "perfect age" he has in mind is a matter of a spiritual age and not a chronological age,²²⁵ twentieth-century writers sometimes talked about confirmation as a sacrament that effects spiritual maturity but which requires chronological maturity. The chronological maturity is to help the individual live practically and responsibly the Christian life. Virgil Michel and Matthias Loras refer to confirmation as a ceremony marking a spiritual "coming of age"; it specifically adds that the sacrament "does not merely celebrate the attainment of maturity; it actually effects it."²²⁶ Again echoing Thomas, Michel writes:

Whereas baptism therefore gives one the priestly power to do chiefly what is necessary for salvation, confirmation gives the strength to do battle publicly against the enemies of faith and

²²² Citation taken from Paul Turner, *Sources of Confirmation: From the Fathers through the Reformers* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 35–36. Turner points out that some historians attribute this passage to the seventh-century figure Eusebius Gallicanus.

²²³ *Summa Theologiae* III, 72,1, resp. I am using the text at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.TP_Q_72.A1.html; accessed January 9, 2017.

²²⁴ *Summa Theologiae* III, 72,2, resp. I am using the text at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.TP_Q_72.A1.html; accessed January 9, 2017.

²²⁵ See *Summa Theologiae*, 111, 72,8, ad 2.

²²⁶ For Virgil Michel, see Michel, "confirmation: Our Apathy," 169. The Laros citation is taken from Laros, *Confirmation in the Modern World*, 21.

to profess one's faith openly. A child may be concerned only with its own well-being but the adult citizen is duty bound to work for the good of the community.²²⁷ According to Francis Buckley, the descent of the Spirit on an individual at confirmation is for communal purpose and for the individual alone.²²⁸ Buckley also argues that the spiritual maturity associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit "presupposes a biological and psychological maturity."²²⁹ This last point about biological and psychological maturity has also been a part of post conciliar arguments in favour of postponing confirmation until adolescence.²³⁰

In the Latin rite, confirmation is administered to those who have attained the age of reason. In those countries where the bishops conference advocates otherwise, confirmation may be administered, by a bishop, on baptised mature children who have gained adequate catechesis, and are able to, in a state of Grace, renew their baptismal vows.²³¹ In the early Church, baptism and confirmation were usually administered on infants by their first birthday because parents were responsible for their children's reception of the sacraments. Confirmation, following the Reformation, gained prominence as a rite concerned with the understanding and maturity in the faith.²³²

The 1917 Code of Canon Law recommended that Confirmation be delayed until about age seven.²³³ Sometime in June 1932 the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments allowed that

²²⁷ Virgil Michel, *Our Life in Christ* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1939), 135. Damasus Winzen writes in a similar vein. See Winzen, "Anointed with the spirit(II)," *Orationes Fratres* 20, 1946: pp.389-97, at 390.

²²⁸ F. Buckley, —What Age for Confirmation?, *Theological Studies* 27, no. #4 (1966): 660–61.

²²⁹ Buckley, 656.

²³⁰ See, for example, Kieran Sawyer, —A Case for Adolescent Confirmation, *in Confirming the Faith of Adolescents: An Alternative Future for Confirmation*, ed. Arthur Kubick (New York: Paulist, 1991), 39.

²³¹ Culled from the letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published in its 1999 bulletin, pp. 537-540

²³² Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, & the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 65–68. Accessed 16 September, 2016.

²³³ Can 788 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law

Confirmation be conferred after first Holy Communion. In the mid-20th century, Confirmation became an occasion for a youngster to make personal profession and commitment of faith; a sign of responsible adulthood and maturation in the faith. In the Latin rite, the 1983 Code of Canon Law maintained the canonical age for confirmation as the 1917 Code stipulated, specifying that the sacrament is to be administered on a faithful who attains the age of reason or a priest judges of a grave reason to do otherwise. Since Vatican II, there has been the advocacy for the restoration of the original order of the sacraments of Christian initiation.

In the thirteenth century, Bishop William Durandus of France took up military imagery and added to the ritual of confirmation a slap on the cheek.²³⁴ His approximate contemporary, Thomas Aquinas, argued that confirmation is given for strength in combat.²³⁵ Picking up a theme first raised by Rabanus Maurus in the ninth century, Thomas also argued that confirmation confers the grace to profess one's faith publicly.²³⁶ The "soldier of Christ" imagery which was used by St Cyril of Jerusalem, dating back 350, is still proper unless viewed as reflecting Confirmation as a "sacrament of maturity". The bishop's touch on the newly confirmand's cheek, saying "*Pax tecum*" (Peace be with you) was understood as a tap, reminding the confirmed to be courageous in the propagation and defence of the faith:

"Deinde leviter eum in maxilla caedit, dicens: Pax tecum" (Then he strikes him lightly on the cheek, saying: Peace be with you).²³⁷

Because confirmation perfects baptism and makes the recipients mature Christians, equipped and prepared for evangelisation as commissioned by Jesus Christ (cf. Mat. 28), there is the

²³⁴ For the ritual of Durandus, see Paul Turner, *The Meaning and Practice of Confirmation: Perspectives from a Sixteenth-Century Controversy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 290. See also Durandus' *Explanation of the Divine Offices* 6:84, 1.6.8 in the companion CD for Turner, *Ages of Initiation*, section 8.10.

²³⁵ See *Summa Theologiae* III, 72,4, ad. 3; III, 72,5, resp.; III, 72,9, ad. 1

²³⁶ *Summa Theologiae* III, 72,5, ad. 2. For Rabanus's teaching, see the citation of his *On the Institution of Clerics* 1, 30 in Turner, *Sources of Confirmation*, 36.

²³⁷ cf. the knightly custom of the accolade

obligation and necessity for a timely reception of it. Pope Benedict XVI, in *Sacramentum Caritatis* suggested that the original order of the sacraments of initiation be restored and maintained. Through sacramental communion, emphasized dramatically and memorably by confirmation, the Christian is integrated into full communion with the church, locally and universally, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit²³⁸ which come to influence the character and personality of the recipient, are *sine qua non* for a mature responsible adult life as a person.

Though, they come as gifts from the Holy Spirit, they need to be developed by the individual to make him or her fit and appreciated in the society.

3.8.3 Command of Christian Doctrine as Prerequisite for Confirmation

It is clear that adult initiation into the Christian faith was always preceded at the very least by preaching of the Gospel, a form of preparation of the candidates, a form of education given to the candidate. This paper is not aiming at tracing the full history of the evolution of the catechumenate; it is well beyond the scope of the research. The point being made here is that more or less immediate exposure and assent to basic articles of faith developed into a period, sometimes years, of preparation for initiation.²³⁹ Up until the fourth century or so the catechumenate preceded confirmation.

What does one do with those who are initiated into Christian faith and life by baptism but who have been neither catechized nor confirmed? Clearly, catechesis will now follow baptism, and in the case of those Christians baptized in infancy eventually the degree of mastery of Christian doctrine becomes a matter of some import for the celebration of

²³⁸ cf. CCC, # 1832; Gal 5:22

²³⁹ Compare the case of the baptism to that of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-38 with the catechumenate described in the Apostolic Tradition attributed to Hippolytus.

confirmation.

The rise of martial imagery in connection with the sacrament of confirmation and the attendant need to "defend" the faith goes hand-in-hand with the idea that one must be reasonably knowledgeable about the faith before one may be confirmed. This is to ensure that one led a responsible, mature Christian life. This reasonable knowledge of the faith is acquired during a preparatory period. According to Paul Turner, it was Wulfstan II, archbishop of New York in the early eleventh century, who first established a catechetical requirement for confirmation.²⁴⁰ Perhaps the most significant impetus for associating confirmation with command of doctrine was the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation and its ensuing Catholic response.

A first point to make is that prior to the rise of Protestant-Catholic polemics, western Christendom was in basic agreement about the status of confirmation as a sacrament; it had been listed among the seven sacraments at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. Now, with respect to confirmation, there were rival understandings of what was proper and true. In each camp it became important to train youth not to succumb to the false views of the other camp, but to live the authentic life of that camp. Catechesis into a "true" Christian life cannot easily be taken lightly. A second point to make is that while Reformers denied that confirmation was a sacrament, they saw value in it precisely as a moment during which the young adults could demonstrate their facility with church doctrine. Among the first to argue this case was Philip Melancthon in 1521, who claimed that being tested on doctrinal matters was a practice with ancient roots.²⁴¹ Martin Luther and Jean Calvin expressed similar views. Preaching in 1523, Luther said that:

²⁴⁰ Wulfstan held that those to be confirmed must know the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. See Wulfstan II, "Canons Written under King Edgar," 22, as quoted in the companion CD for Turner, *Ages of Initiation*, section 7.6

²⁴¹ See Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider and Henricus Ernestus Bindsell, eds., *Corporus reformatorum. Philippi Melancthonis, opera quae supersunt omnia*, vol. 21 (Halis Saxonum: C.A. Schwetschke et filium, 1834-1860;

"Confirmation should not be as the bishops will: if a pastor judges a child to be mature in the faith, he may confer the sacrament on the child."²⁶²

Responding *to* these views, Trent sought to avoid reducing the sacrament of confirmation to an examination of candidates' faith and command of doctrine;²⁶³ nevertheless, the Roman Church in 1742 for the first time universalized basic catechetical requirements for the ²⁴²rites of confirmation:

The bishop should admonish pastors and strictly order them that none of them should administer the holy sacrament... and hand over the confirmation "sheet" (as they say) to those who do not know the most important matters of faith, the main points of doctrine, and the excellence and power of the sacrament.²⁴³

Such directive from the church was to ensure that she had her members well-groomed in her teachings, practices and traditions.

This brief rehearsal of the history of doctrinal mastery as a prerequisite for confirmation and its importance for mature adult Christian life is akin to the need for puberty as a sure way of instilling traditional values and principles into the young adult. For this reason, Matthias Laros had this to say:

Since confirmation is nowadays usually administered quite soon- after First Communion- that is to say at a very early age, the advisability of changing and amplifying the preparation for this Sacrament might be considered... the methodical instruction which should precede Confirmation. We are bound by the teaching of the Church not to receive any Sacrament, until

reprint New York and London: Johnson Reprint Co., 1963), 853, as quoted in Turner, *The Meaning and Practice of Confirmation*, 23. ²⁶²

Martin Luther, "Sermon on *Laetare* Sunday Afternoon" (1523) as quoted in the companion CD for Turner, *Ages of Initiation*, section 9.7. For the nearly identical perspective of Jean Calvin, see Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.19.4, cf. <http://www.sacred texts.com/chr/calvin/inst/inst099.htm>. Accessed January 9, 2017.

²⁴² See Trent's first canon on the sacrament of confirmation.

²⁴³ Benedict XIV, *Etsi minime*, 9, as quoted in the companion CD for Turner, *Ages of Initiation*, section 10.4.

we are fully prepared for it (a preparation which is a *conditio sine qua non*). Why shouldn't the same sort of thing be done by bringing children together for dedication to the service of God?²⁴⁴

Thus for Laros, confirmation is given to the deserving candidate or person.

Seeking to defend catechetical requirements for confirmation while at the same time rebutting charges of Jansenism, Francis Buckley opines:

These abuses were not so relevant; what mattered was the desire to lead the child to a true authentic declaration of faith, so that the reception of the sacraments would be a truly human act for him.²⁴⁵

The emphasis on a "truly human act" is a manifestation of the turn to the subject that characterized much of mid-twentieth century Christian theology. In itself, this emphasis is laudable, but even if the motive for significant catechetical preparation is pure, the cultural context within which that preparation takes place cannot be ignored.

3.8.4 Effects of the Belief in Mystical/Impersonal Powers viz-a-viz the Effects of Confirmation

Belief in mystical powers, in traditional African society, is controlling and influential, manifesting its usage in the works of medicine men/women, diviners and seers who manipulate natural objects for medicine, magic, charms and amulets.²⁴⁶ The contemporary use of the word 'magic' comes from the Greek *magike*. In ancient Greece, various terms were used to differentiate the varied kinds of magic; *goetia* signified charms or the invocation of demons, whilst *theourgia* referred to the magic that involved the activities of the supernatural in human activities.²⁴⁷ Ancient Greek and Roman societies had recourse to these magical rites for

²⁴⁴ Matthias Laros, *Confirmation in the Modern World* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1938), 8–9.

²⁴⁵ Buckley, —What Age for Confirmation?, 658.

²⁴⁶ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 168–72.

²⁴⁷ For a wider discussion see Russell 1980:29-31.

personal gains and as a way of having direct interactions with the gods. Today, —magicl carries the nuance of a negative valence that has existed, and still exists as an element in our mentality, as expressed by Smith.²⁴⁸

In *Primitive Culture*²⁴⁹ Tylor referred to magic as one of the most destructive misconceptions that ever happened to humanity,²⁵⁰ esteemed by uncivilized, uneducated people of the world, who still practice it.²⁵¹ With the movement of the white man into traditional Africa, aiming at evangelization, inter alia, various colonial masters founded their churches whose membership demanded adherence to orthodox Christian teachings and practices, and Africans who basically worked for them had to abandon their traditional beliefs and customs especially magic practices, which is shrouded in the belief in mystical/impersonal powers. This was because African beliefs and practices were accused to be vain superstition, not categorized as 'religion' and denounced in authentic Christian practices.²⁵²

Mystical and mysterious powers, it is believed, are transmissible via certain object media or spiritually for specified intentions, which could be good or bad.²⁵³ And so, it is believed that good or evil manipulators of mystical powers can do whatever they please with the life of the traditional African who believes in mystical forces, a belief which very much shows in their

²⁴⁸ J. Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 218.

²⁴⁹ The full publication is available online at http://books.google.co.za/books?id=AucLAAAIAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s. (Accessed on 11 April 2017)

²⁵⁰ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, vol. 1 (London: Murray, 1871), 101. Cf. http://books.google.co.za/books?id=AucLAAAIAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s. Accessed on 11 April 2017.

²⁵¹ Tylor, 1:101. Cf. http://books.google.co.za/books?id=AucLAAAIAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s. Accessed on 11 April 2017.

²⁵² Colonial interpretation of many African practices as magic contributed to the view that Africans were 'pagans' who had no religion, and it was also used as evidence of a 'primitive origin' of religion as colonial writings fed back into European scholarship, reinforcing the view that the roots of human religious expression lay in the practice of magic.

²⁵³ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 166–68.

²⁷⁵ Mbiti, 171.

traditional religious activities and attitude. This makes the traditional African run after and seek for protection from such inimical powers and their adherents.

The use of charms and amulets as a form of security is very important in ATR.²⁷⁵ An amulet as the Oxford English Dictionary defines is that which someone wears to prevent evil attacks, and mishaps and charm is that which someone wears, believing to carry magical (mystical/impersonal) power to avert evil or ensure prosperity'. It is the belief that some of the objects are instilled with supernatural (mystical/impersonal) power or magical (mystical) function, given a meaning that is recognized by the members of the culture or community. The theme underlying this is that the people who create and use these mystical objects believed in them to affect and change their life.²⁵⁴ The experiences of life often come with mishaps and many unfortunate situations and crisis which are either physical, social or psychological. In African mentality, these phenomena are not just by chance; they are caused to happen and their cause must be ascertained in a system involving the individual, the community and the spiritual world. Evans-Pritchard describes this as a belief that all phenomena is mystically caused.²⁵⁵²⁵⁶ Spiritual forces could be employed for good or bad because traditionally, they were inherently neither good nor bad.²⁵⁷²⁵⁸

The traditional worldview of mystical/impersonal powers such as magic, are meant to empower the traditional African and make him strong to fight all that mitigate against his welfare and the progress of the community. Magic and magical objects have always been a part of the African spiritual tradition. In some African societies such as Angola, Nigeria and Dahomey the tributes

²⁵⁴ Scoresby W. Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People: The Akikuyu of British East Africa* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 269–70.

²⁵⁵ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: University Press, 1937),
²⁵⁶ .

²⁵⁷ S. Ellis, —Witching-Times: A Theme in the Histories of Africa and Europe., in *Imaging Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa.*, ed. G. ter Haar (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 2007),
²⁵⁸ .

to spirits have always existed and is deeply rooted in the culture and liturgy of the people. The practice of using magic and magical items forms part of the liturgical practices. This is because it is widely believed and understood that the mystical powers (magic) only work if carried on person so that without one being in possession of it, one will not gain any benefit, or be completely vulnerable. Thus, the adherents are eager to understand and know the rules that govern the spiritual world.²⁵⁹ The belief is strongly rooted in forces which come from spiritual realm, relating with things beyond the natural realm.²⁶⁰ These are, in African traditional worldview, rooted in the belief in impersonal (mystical) powers.

The mystical powers are accessed by the individual or the community to gain protection from spiritual predators and any kind of damage used by opposing dark forces and powers. This impersonal powers, is believed, to give great spiritual prowess against physical and spiritual attacks of an enemy. It also gave the ability to deal with the hidden psychological conditions of oneself and that of others. Thus, the mystical/impersonal powers, in African Traditional Religion, was accessed for protection and fortification. For example, charms and amulets were often created and consecrated with the power of a divine entity, spirit or power and used for various purposes such as protection and warding away bad spirits, preventing enemy's attack and also to find favour and good luck.²⁸¹ These were all intended to help spiritual growth and the realization of personal desires of the adherents.

An approach to understanding the traditional concept of mystical powers should look further than using Biblical quotations to address the religious foundations of these beliefs, which are grounded in and stems from the culture of the people. The mystical/Impersonal powers seem to work and the African traditional man is aware of their effects. The traditional religious beliefs

²⁵⁹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 168.

²⁶⁰ Dorota Starzecka and B. A. L. Cranstone, *The Solomon Islanders* (London: The British Museum, 1974), 13.

²⁸¹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 171–72.

and practices are couched within the traditional religious worldview. There must, therefore be a Christian worldview which address the religious foundations of this belief. In the Christian and by extension the Catholic domain, the sacrament of Confirmation aims at fortifying the Christian with the needed spiritual strength for the Christian journey and spiritual warfare. It dispenses the grace to live the Christian life courageously, shamelessly and maturely. Thus, confirmation and its effects are indispensably needed to help one live a truly Christian life, which strengthens the will and spirit of the Christian against the enemy and the evil one.²⁶¹ The sacrament binds the recipient intimately to Christ and his community of believers, making the recipient a full and recognised member of the community of believers, the family of God. Thus, per the sacrament the confirmed gets fully incorporated into the Christian community, enjoying the love and communal protection, which the Holy spirit gives to the individuals. As impersonal/mystical powers are believed to grant protection to the individuals in the traditional community so does the sacrament of confirmation grants the confirmed the protection through the Holy Spirit.

Confirmation yields the effects of the Holy Spirit in the recipient. This gives full rights and responsibilities to the recipient as a child of God and renders his/her bond with the Church more perfect. These spiritual gifts which are increased by the activity of the Holy spirit are to stir in the recipient a desire and longing for Christ and His Church and all that the community espouses. It strengthens the recipient to propagate and champion the faith and the message of the cross shamelessly as authentic mature Christians and adults in the faith. This special power received at confirmation gives the cofirmandi a mature Christian identity as full and mature Christians. Confirmation leaves on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, which signifies that Jesus Christ has signed the Christian with the seal of His Spirit, and by extension, being clothed

²⁶¹ Cf. CCC.1305-1317

²⁸³Jn. 16:13.

with the maturity and the responsibility of an adult Christian, ready for an adult Christian life. On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit,²⁸³ an impersonal power, which empowered and strengthened Him for all His endeavours. Confirmation as a sacrament both confirms and strengthens the baptised.

Through sacramental communion-which confirmation dramatically and memorably reinforces, the Christian is integrated into full communion with church, locally and universally, empowered and strengthened to live responsibly as a mature Christian.²⁶²

For the Christian, the belief in impersonal/mystical powers in African traditional religion brings to the adherent(s) a great feeling of spiritual security, which like an identity, makes the individual bold and confident to stand for the beliefs of the community and the community, in general. Likewise, confirmation gives to the confirmed a sense of spiritual security, marked with an identity as a true and full member of the faith community. While the belief in impersonal/mystical powers by the traditional African and the practices to live this belief in form of rituals and the use of consecrated objects such as charms and amulets are aimed at seeking the protection and fortification of a higher or supernatural power against inimical and evil powers, who seek the downfall of the adherent(s), it is also aimed at seeking progress and wellbeing from the supernatural powers for the welfare of the adherent(s). Thus, the belief in the impersonal/mystical powers is to help the believer tap into the resources of the supernatural realm for his/her personal and individual desires and wishes and that of the community, where need be. In Christian, and for that matter Catholic sense, Confirmation and its attendant effects are to help and expose the confirmed to the resources and riches of the Holy Spirit in the daily activities the individual and the church. This is to be done and enjoyed by tapping into the

²⁶² Daniel Van Slyke G., —Confirmation: A Sacrament in Search of a Theology?, *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1041 (2011): 527. Accessed January 30, 2017.

spiritual riches and resources of the Holy Spirit. The use of consecrated objects called sacramental such as scapulae, rosaries, icons and medals by the confirmed are meant to remind the confirmed of the ever-abiding presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in the individual's and the community's spiritual and physical life and journey.

3.9 The Dialogue

From the 1970s, there has been the advocacy for confirmation to be received during the adolescent years, an advocacy stemming from catechesis greatly influenced by theories of the humanities. There is the misconception that many African Christians find the traditional African worldview as a blockage to the assimilation of the message and living of the Gospel tenets., making discipling (cf. Matt. 28:19) a huge challenge. Agents of discipling are often faced with the continuous relapse of those they evangelise into unchristian customs and spiritualities. Mbiti describes the dilly-dallyings characterising Christian customs and traditional African practices as —religious concubinage²⁶³ in that African traditional customs seems to appeal and satisfy desires and yearnings of the Christian that has not been fulfilled by Christianity.²⁶³ For Shorter, dialogue between faith and culture²⁶⁴ should not be one-sided or an imposition; it should be a coexistent and tolerant correspondence. The apparent anomalies in the Christian formation of young African Christians shows that all is not well with the process of discipling, and by extension among the Akans, the younger generation. Ganusah is of the view that missionary activity ought to be a dialogical process between the missionary culture and the indigenous culture; the process must be genuinely a dialogue and not a one-sided activity.²⁸⁷ This affirms Shorter's view that the process is an 'on-going dialogue' since the enterprise of applying the Christian faith to various cultures is not a once-for-all event.

²⁶³ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 264.

²⁶⁴ A. Shorter, *Toward A Theology of Inculturation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 11.

²⁸⁷ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 149.

Culture is dynamic and so trying to relate the Gospel message or Christian message to it may also need the same dynamic process. Puberty rite is almost an extinct practice among the Akans because of cultural dynamism but the lessons and values from the rite is not and cannot be extinct. There is the need to study them and explore ways of integrating and perpetuating them into other initiation rites for adolescents such as Christian initiation rites for adults.

3.9.1 The Importance of Transforming a Worldview in Discipling People

The indispensability of a worldview as a culture's influential framework necessitates a critical consideration at the worldview when there is a move to make someone a disciple.

Obviously, it could be deduced that the early missionaries did not consider the traditional African worldview in the process of making many Africans disciples, which still persists.

Van der Walt opines that the weakening of Christianity was as a result of the neglect of the traditional African worldview, clothing and presenting the Gospel message with Westernism colonialism. He asserts that this brought double-standard Christianity, causing a distortion in the mentality and life of the African, producing a divided soul in the African.²⁶⁵ According to Van der Walt, the Africans who converted to Christianity were not helped to adequately appreciate the Gospel message. This yields the phenomena of converts reverting to the traditional faith, when faced with unfortunate situations and mishaps.²⁶⁶ This is a challenge because the Gospel message was not aimed at throwing away the traditional worldview and replacing it with the Gospel message. And so, only a small part of Christianity was encountered, with the innermost, essential aspects of the African culture untouched.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ B. J. Van der Walt, *A Christian Worldview and Christian Higher Education for Africa* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 2003), 8.

²⁶⁶ Van der Walt, 8–9.

²⁶⁷ Van der Walt, 8–9.

The affinity between Christian faith and African Traditional Religion is so great that a good and critical study of these two religions and the affinities they share will prove useful for the African Christian. It is an undeniable fact that the nature and relevance of African Christianity can be understood if it is studied in its relation to African worldview and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. African world-view and Indigenous Knowledge Systems would and must provide the framework for such a marriage. Indigenous Knowledge Systems refers to the traditional wisdom of a people in which they can claim ownership of its evolution and development. Among the Akan people, especially the Asantes, this refers to the Indigenous Knowledge Systems that existed before the encounter and adoption of western patterns of knowledge and education. This is the indigenous wisdom that is embedded within the cultural categories of the Akan people such as the language, proverbs, songs, art and craft, rites and rituals, festivals and ceremonies.²⁶⁸

In the world of the traditional African, human existence is hierarchically ordered, with persons living under forces believed to grant and warrant the good life. Drawing from Hubert Bucher, Ncube gives a critical hierarchical construct of beings and power from the *Shona* people of Zimbabwe and others of southern Africa, with God as the ultimate reality, then comes divinities, ancestors, mystical powers, sacred days which feature rites of passage and other religious events, religious specialists, laws and taboos, and the sacred nature of kindred relations.²⁶⁹

The traditional African believes in a supreme God who is imminent and yet transcendent, and whose access demands intermediaries. It thus becomes a problem when one attempts to sever

²⁶⁸ Cf. Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*, xv.

²⁶⁹ Zebron, —Ancestral Beliefs and Practices, | 57. In this dissertation Ncube cites the construct that was published in Hubert Bucher, *Spirit and Power: An Analysis of Shona Cosmology* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980), 15.

relationships with these forces and beings. A conversion to another system spells a disconnection from that which brings fullness, completeness, meaning and security to life.

This worldview needs serious consideration when evangelising and discipling traditional Africans. The religio-cultural heritage of the African must be considered critically else the convert to Christianity has no deep and firm roots in Christianity.

Communal sense that characterises the African is remarkable and a hallmark. In this troubled times, it is necessary to get institutions and systems that help in the formation and shaping of human beings. The traditional African sees peaceful relationships as core and necessary to people's formation and there is the need for the building, maintenance and sustenance of harmonious relational living. Magesa asserts that bondedness is crucial to understand that what befalls one, befalls all because an understanding of a person's identity is impossible without reference to that of others.²⁷⁰ This community sense contributes to what has unfortunately been referred to as the African religious concubinage. The traditional African religious formation which includes socialization and cultural conditioning, go a long way to build intimate communal relationships. Belonging to the family or community has a strong influence on one's actions and decisions; one exists as a corporate member of the larger community; what befalls the individual, befalls the community. Mbiti expatiates that is crucial to understanding the African perception of man; that I am because we are, and since we are, I am.²⁷¹

According to Razafiarivony, a member's going against the tradition, will amount to a rejection, and lose of all rights and privileges which are the preserve of a community member.²⁷² This poses a challenge to Christians because traditional African worldview comes with an assurance

²⁷⁰ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1997), 64.

²⁷¹ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 108.

²⁷² Davidson Razafiarivony, —Ancestor Worship in Madagascar: An Adventist Perspective (Faith and Learning Seminar, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya, 1998).

to carry on with life amidst uncertainties and mishaps. Such moments and periods of transition such as puberty, are all moments to appreciate how this world view has provided psychological or mental cushions and systems for the smooth running of life. Unfortunately, many of the rituals that mark points of transitions have spiritual characteristics. Unless the Christian ministry gives adequate consideration to this African religio-cultural heritage, the indecision between Christianity and ATRs may never be corrected because people who enjoy these communal solidarities are made to comply forcefully.

3.9.2 The Catholic Church's attempt towards ATR; Synchronization of ideas and values

Around 1945 and 1965, African scholars gave emphasis that political liberty must go in tandem with religious liberty and that there must be a change in the colonial mindset about ATRs and Christianity. In 1963, the African Society of Culture was formed to look at how ideas and values from ATR could be harnessed for development. The Vatican document, *Ecclesiae sanctae*, in 1966, called for a study of and into ATRs. Vincent Mulago founded a research centre, in Zaire, for the study in ATR at the Catholic Faculty of Theology, 1967, which championed the organisation of international conferences and the publication of many books. Pope John Paul, in 1967, also renamed the 'Non-Christian Religions' Secretariat as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, tasked with theological research on dialogue with AIR in Africa, and clearing it of the negative nuance it suggested. The Council, in 1988, came out with 'Pastoral Attention to ATR.'

Two conferences were organised, in 1970, to consider Traditional African Religion as a source of civilization values.²⁷³ African elites of varied religious backgrounds attempted a definition at ATR as the bedrock of Black culture, emphasising that it is the repository of African values and identity, serving as an important liaison between the African people and foreign religions

²⁷³ M. Nkulu-N'Sengha, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 33, no. 4 (1996): 533.

like Christianity. Due to ATR's tolerating and cooperative spirit, though not missionary in nature, it provides a platform for peaceful coexistence and interreligious living with people of other religions; therefore, it is an ideal ground for such a synchronisation of some African, and by that Akan, values with that of Christian, and by that Catholic, values.²⁷⁴

During his papal reign, Pope John II advocated and moved for inter-religious dialogue and interactions; he, personally, asked pardon of traditional religious leaders for the past mistakes of the church in 1986, during the inter-religious prayer meetings for peace in Assisi,²⁷⁵ purposefully appointing Cardinal Francis Arinze, a son of a Nigerian chief, as its head.²⁷⁶ Cardinal Arinze wrote the first Vatican pastoral letter of its kind captioned *Attention to African Traditional Religions*, acknowledging ATR, in the African context, as a partner in dialogue.²⁷⁷

In 1994, the first African Synod of the Catholic Church, in modern times, was organised in Rome and some African Bishops participated, and top priorities of the Church in Africa included the issue of *Interreligious dialogue*, noting that the religious situation at the time needed a critical look at a room for a true interreligious dialogue.²⁷⁸

The Second Vatican Council engineered the possibility of a dialogue between ATR/ NonChristian religions of the world and Christianity, recommending that there are some lights of truth from and about the same God, and forming African theology faculties to create clear awareness on dialogue with ATR.³⁰²

²⁷⁴ Nkulu-N'Sengha, 53.

²⁷⁵ L.N. Mercado, —The Change in Catholic Attitudes Towards Traditional Religion, | *Dialogue & Alliance* 18, no. 2 (2005 2004): 102.

²⁷⁶ Mercado, 102.

²⁷⁷ Mercado, 102.

²⁷⁸ Nkulu-N'Sengha, 528–56. ³⁰²Nkulu-N'Sengha, 355.

The issue with westernization and modernization in Africa, which needs a re-focussing is the replacing of the family as the basic unit of society with individualism. But while exploring and unbarring the importance and relevance of these rituals, it becomes incumbent and imperative on community members to restore them to their proper place, using them to build and enhance the future of the individual and the community. Africans had a culture that educated and highlighted what it meant to be a man or a woman. It is interesting yet unfortunate to observe that most Africans today have abandoned and neglected African wisdom, with many young people having no fundamental knowledge on doing things as Africans. African children are left to gain their knowledge and understanding from the television and other social media and not from authentic indigenous culture and traditional religious heritage.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on the rite of passage as an initiation rite marked by ritual ceremony to usher an individual into a new stage of life and existence in the community. This marks and celebrates a significant change to a higher cultural, traditional and social status, celebrated in ritual moments which carry with them lessons and values for the individual and the community in which the rites are celebrated. The rites of passage thus provided culturally and socially acceptable way of moving away from a prior status into another, ensuring that the participants are properly socialised and reinstated into the society with legitimate and new roles, and corresponding rights, duties, privileges and responsibilities.

The study revealed that rite of passage marks a significant change to higher cultural, traditional and social status. This brought to light that among Akans, the transitions are celebrated in ritual moments which carry with them lessons and values for the individual and the community in which the rites are celebrated. It came to light that the process and details of initiation differ

among societies and emphasis varies by society but the fundamental and underlying purpose is to help ensure the transformation of the individual, giving guidance to the person who matures from one stage in life to the other. Thus, initiation rites can be considered as intrinsic to Akan communal life and socialisation process. The study stressed that adolescent initiation rite plays very vital and pivotal function in Akan socialisation marking the various epochal moments in an individual's development, role and relationship to the larger community. This helps the individual to form an identity legitimised by the community.

The study underscored that the Akan life, cultural beliefs, activities and life cycle are shrouded in religion. Akan initiation rites are a part of Akan religious beliefs that are aimed at helping the individual to have a deep and sound religious and moral standards in life, striving at higher ideals in life. The rites are to ensure that one became a holistically developed person, capable of discharging his/her duties as a full member of the society.

With a look at the sacrament of confirmation, as a rite of christian adult initiation, it should be possible to synchronise ideas and values from Akan puberty rites into the sacrament. The next chapter, then will be dedicated to the presentation, analyses and discussions of findings from the field, with a view at a possibility of integrating lessons and values of Akan puberty rites into the catechism for rite of Christian Adult Initiation in the Roman Catholic Church.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, analysis and discussions from the field of study on the topic under research, which was guided by a set of interview questions. It gives a descriptive presentation of findings and information from the field as was gathered by participant observation and through structured and semi-structured interviews and discussions. The data used is a transcribed translation of information recorded and gathered from the field. It comes out with thematic analysis and discussion of the data gathered with a view at a possibility of integrating lessons and values of Akan puberty rites into the catechism for rite of Christian Adult Initiation in the Roman Catholic Church.

4.2 Field work approach

The research was conducted within some selected areas of the Ashanti region (Kwamo, Fomena), Sunyani, Fiapre, Badu, Cape Coast, Sekondi and Ahanta and Wassa traditional areas of Ghana as already acknowledged. The method used in the gathering and collection of data during the field study was mainly through structured and semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The searcher had the privilege of observing different puberty rites among some traditional communities; in Wassa Akropong and Tarkwa Bankyim (Wassa traditional area on the 18th January and 23rd February, 2017 respectively), Ketan, Funko, and Diabenekrom (Ahanta traditional area on 17th December, 2016, 18th February and 11th March, 2017 respectively),²⁷⁹ Badu on the 11th April 2017.

²⁷⁹ Most Akan calendar has two types of *Adae* that occurs in every forty-two days (42 days). These are Akwasidae/Adaekese (Sunday Adae/ Great Adae) and Awukudae (Wednesday Adae). Awukudae falls on every twenty-four (24) days after Akwasidae and eighteen (18) days after awukudae is akwasidae. Some books

For clarity of response the researcher selected and interviewed some chiefs, queen mothers, linguists, elderly women, catholic priests, catechists, Roman Catholic lay faithful, students and scholars in Akan indigenous studies and Christianity and African Traditional Religious Studies. After each round of interviews the researcher paid follow-up visits to respondents to cross check that the information given was accurate and can thus represent the Akan view. In some of these follow-ups, mobile phone calls were used to seek further information and clarifications from respondents. Much of information obtained through primary source was through individual and group interviews, group discussions and participant-observation of the puberty rites from selected Akan communities which were recorded and later transcribed. These approaches were mainly used because they foster close interactions between the researcher and the interviewees and also allow one to validate the data collected. To help the researcher ascertain whether the information given by the informant is valid or otherwise, it became necessary to do group interviews and have participant-observation of the puberty rites in some selected communities.

In all, the researcher was able to interview twenty-seven (27) personalities and groups out of the proposed thirty-three (33), due to series of postponements and busy schedules of respondents stretching across the targeted area of study and other Akan communities.

4.3 Presentation of research findings

4.3.1 Puberty rites among Akans

On the question of what puberty rite is among Akans, twenty-three respondents, representing eighty-five percent (85%) of the total respondents answered that puberty rite is a ritual

calculate 23 days and 17 days respectively. The researcher got to know that the day just before adae is called dapa. This is believed to be a good day. The Saturdays and Tuesdays that precede the Sunday and Wednesday Adae are dapa; memeneda dapa and benada dapa respectively. These days are good for ritual performances and practices

such as puberty rites. The Achantas have a triple week calculation of their calendar. They have Adaye, Edim and Ayenfo. See fig. 19 and fig. 20

ceremony performed for a young Akan girl (often between the ages of 14-18) to usher her into adulthood from childhood. Many of the respondents were of the view that the rites, when performed, out-dooed the young girl into womanhood thereby making her eligible to marriage and marital responsibilities; a level of mature, responsible adult life.

In an interview with Akwasi Sarpong²⁸⁰ he opines that puberty rites ushered a person from ‘infancy’ into adulthood. This affirms Mbiti’s position that where the practice is followed, anyone who does not undergo it is considered a child, no matter how old he/she might be.²⁸¹ Particularly for the Akan, the rite is done to introduce the young girl into womanhood with much emphasis of marriage, allowing the young woman to assume marital responsibilities, making the rite a nubile in nature.

He recounted that though part of the responsibility of puberty rite is to give to the initiand physical adulthood, this does not make an individual a —sociological adult. If this is true, then puberty rite enjoins on the individual a social status. Akwasi Sarpong elucidates that to become a sociological adult means being able to identify and accept one’s duties and responsibilities in the society whiles claiming and enjoying rights and privileges that come with it, knowing the attendant rules that govern life and living in the community.

²⁸⁰ Akwasi Sarpong is an Emeritus Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana, and a Scholar in Akan culture and traditions. He is from Offinso, in the Ashanti Region. The interview was on the 22nd March, 2017, at his residence at Santasi Christian Village.

²⁸¹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 97.

According to Mena Ama Kaya²⁸² with the onset of the first menses, the Akan girl is due for the puberty rite. She is prepared then, by her parents who informs the queen mother of a possible candidate for the rite. This assertion was common to all the Akan communities.

Nana Nyamaa Apoduo II²⁸³ observes that the process of the rite began with the examination of the candidate by the queen mother or her representative, who is most times the queen mother's linguist. There is the examination of the eyes, under the neck and the navel for signs of pregnancy. She stated that this examination, among the Bono people of Sunyani traditional area spun three times, once every three months. This was to allow the examiners to be very sure that the young girl is not pregnant. If she was found to be pregnant it was a spell of doom for the young girl, her family and the one responsible for her pregnancy. After a successful examination and the girl found worthy of the rite she is then prepared and a day fixed for the ritual ceremony.²⁸⁴ This involved the gathering of food stuff and meat and other items such as cloth, beads and ornaments, etc. This was done by her parents and supported by the community.

According to Maama Aba Ntsifua²⁸⁵ the puberty rite lasted for six days. During this period the candidate is given a —queenly treatll. She does not do any kind or form of house chores except to bath, dress, eat and rest. Her peers and friends come to her house to do all the chores. She is given —*abaawa*ll who serves as her maid, accompanying and assisting her in all things. She is

²⁸² Mena Ama Kaya is a ninety-four (94) year old woman from the royal house of Ketan, a suburb of Sekondi in the western region. She has been an officiant of the puberty rite in ketan for about fifty years (50). This was in an interview she granted at her house on the 19th August, 2017.

²⁸³ Nana Nyamaa Apoduo II is the Omanhemma of Sunyani Traditional Area. She is a Catholic and a leader of the St. Theresah of the Child Jesus society in the Catholic church. She is a member of the Pastoral and marriage counsel of the Sunyani Catholic Cathedral and also a member of the National Peace Council, Ghana. Interviewed on 2nd August, 2017, at her residence at Berlin-top, Sunyani.

²⁸⁴ Akans have their own calendar when they reckon good and bad days...Asantes have *fofie*, *awukudae* and *Adae* (refer to Sarpong and Opuni on *Adae*). Mena Ama Kaya explained that among the Ahantas, *Adae* is the special period for such rites but *Edim* is not a good season or week for the performance of the rite. See fig. 19 and fig. 20

²⁸⁵ th

Maame Aba Ntsifua is the chief linguist to the Agona Nkwanta queen mother. Interviewed on 17 July, 2017 at her house in Agona Nkwanta, Western region, Ghana.

made to feel special and honoured for the honour she has brought unto herself, her family and the community.

The ceremony often began in the morning, with the women busily cooking. An elderly woman serves as the officiant, who sits with the candidate for the rite and begins to cut her finger and toe nails. She does this while admonishing the young girl on the new stage in life she has reached. These words could come as prayer, advice or encouragement. After this, she is taken to a bathhouse and her pubic hairs shaven. This shaving, according to Nana Gyamiah²⁸⁶ is to symbolise a new beginning for the young adult; the old hairs are gotten rid of and new ones allowed to grow. She asserts that in Badu traditional area, the pubic hair on the vagina is —cut and not shaven. The ‘cutting’ forms part of the ceremony, called ‘*hwirige*’.²⁸⁷ According to Akosua Tawiah³¹² the hair is cut with the ‘*oyiwa*’; a shaving knife which is considered so sacred that no one is allowed to see it not even the one who shaves with it.²⁸⁸ It is done in the deep night. The cutting of the hair, she stated, is the sole preserve of a particular woman, who treats it as her religious obligation to the community and its continuity. She cuts the hair and puts it on a piece of kente cloth and covered. It was explained that this piece of kente cloth with the pubic hair is buried with the woman who is in charge of the cutting of the hair, in the event that she dies.³¹⁴

²⁸⁶ Nana Gyamiah is the Twafohemma of Badu Traditional Area. She is a Catholic and a member of the National Teachers Council, Ghana. She is known in private life as Dr. Mrs. Lucy Acheampong (PhD).

²⁸⁷ ‘*hwirige*’ is the name of the puberty rite among the people of the Tain District in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. The name comes as a result of the cutting of the hair on the vagina of the young girl who is due for the puberty rite. ³¹² Akosua Tawiah is an eighty (80) year old woman, a royal from Badu who is in charge of all women’s rites and rituals in the community. She is in charge and oversees widowhood and puberty rites, among others.

²⁸⁸ Akosua Tawiah explained that the ‘*oyiwa*’ is believed to have been brought from their ancestral home and that an attempt to look at it might cause blindness. It is as sacred as a chieftaincy stool. It is a family heirloom and that it is inherited and revered. ³¹⁴ Sarpong (1977: 27) talks of the ‘hair cutting’ ritual. He is silent on the expertise of the person who shaves the hair of the initiate but he augments that symbolically it is the girl’s father. Mbiti also talks of ‘cutting of the foreskin’ in a form of circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls by a qualified person, as part of rituals for ushering one from childhood into adulthood in some African communities, without which one was still considered a child, regardless of one’s advancement in age (Mbiti, 1991: 97)

The candidate is also given a ritual bath by the officiant. Before the bath, she is made to wash her face, three times, with a mixture of water, alcohol, *esutsen*, *nyenya*, *eprow*,²⁸⁹ white clay.

Mena Ama Kaya explained that

__the washing of the face is done to wash off the old self...and to clear her face for newness, brightness, good luck, good fortune and glory. This is the beginning of her blessings.²⁹⁰ The *nyenya* is strung into a necklace and put around the initiand's neck while prayer is said, in libation, by her maternal or paternal uncle thus;

__Today you have been seated...we implore and petition our ancestors that all dirt, ills, and misfortune should be washed off you and blessings and good fortune follow you all the days of your life. *Nananom*, this is your granddaughter... May you bless her with a good husband to marry; may she be blessed to have many children; may she be a blessing and great source of help to her husband; may she never see shame; may glory and honour be her portion, now and always.²⁹¹

It is important to note that even though puberty rites among Akans is predominantly a women-folk activity, this is but one of the few instances where a man is required to perform a role so indispensable.

Mena Ama Kaya explained that during the ritual bathing prayer for blessing, fertility prosperity and all good wishes are asked for the young initiand. After the bath, the young initiand is dressed with *sasaa and abam*,²⁹² new cloths and sandals and seated on a spread mat. Two kids- a boy and a girl- are seated on her laps while prayers are invoked on her that she may be fruitful with kids of the opposite yet complementary sexes; that she may be productive and a

²⁸⁹ *Esutsen* is a kind of leaves that grow on river banks. *Esutsen* and *eprow* are leaves that are believed to contain ritual cleansing powers. See fig. 21 and fig. 22

²⁹⁰ This is a translation of what Mena Ama Kaya said in an interview with her. See fig.3

²⁹¹ This is a translation of the prayer from Fante to English as given by Mena Ama Kaya

²⁹² These are special beads strung and put on the wrist of the initiate for significant reason. Mena Ama Kaya explains that these beads serve as witness to shows that the person has gone through the puberty rite. See fig. 23, fig. 24 and fig. 25

mother to her own children that of others.²⁹³ She also struggles for coins from a basin of water with her officiant.²⁹⁴

Prayers are also said for the survival of the children she will give birth to, for compassion, peace, generosity, kindness and good marriage. She asserts that all these are to ensure that young girl grows into a responsible, mature adult, taking her rightful place in the community.

This is done while *et4*²⁹⁵ is used to touch the mouth of the young girl, three times and after every time she spits it out. After the third time she is given some of the *et4* to eat. This is the *anoka*.²⁹⁶ The rest of the *et4* is left to be scrambled by children and young people around. She is also given boiled egg to eat. The rest of the day is marked with merrymaking, singing drumming and eating. These merriments last for the week during which the newly initiated does not go anywhere all by herself but in the company of her *abawaa*. After the sixth day, the newly initiated dresses beautifully again in new cloths and goes to town, accompanied by her maid or her mother to pay courtesies and thank people who graced her occasion with their presence and presents. Thus by this, Mena Ama Kaya asserts, the young girl is introduced and ushered into the community of responsible adulthood.

4.3.2 Modifications and challenges to Akan Puberty rites

Most of the respondents were of the view that the rite of puberty is or has waned away due to many obvious reasons and factors that have augured for some kind of modifications in the observance of the traditional rite. In agreeing to this, Mbiti opines that western ways of life

²⁹³ See fig. 9 and fig. 10

²⁹⁴ This was explained to teach the young initiate that wealth and good life is sought after. It takes hard work, diligence, struggle and determination to make it in life. See fig. 4

²⁹⁵ *et4* is mashed cooked yam, mixed with palm oil. It is a festive and ritual meal among many traditional communities in southern Ghana. It is believed to be the meal of the gods and ancestors. The mixture could also be made from boiled plantain.

²⁹⁶ This is a ritual of touching the mouth of a girl with *It4* and boiled eggs. It is the traditional symbolism to show that a young girl has come of age. In traditional Akan societies, the *anoka* is done when a young girl is observed to have seen her first menses. See fig. 7 and fig. 8. For more information on *anoka*, see Rattery, 1927:73.

introduced to Africa have severely disrupted many traditional African customs and practices. He observes that customs connected with initiation seem difficult to retain as a whole in practice, particularly because of the introduction of western types of schooling.²⁹⁷

It was gathered that in contemporary life, little or no time is set aside to teach the young girls values that are highly esteemed in the society. Among the many contributing factors to the modification and decline in the rite of puberty, which come as challenges to the resilience of the rite, twenty-four respondents opined that westernization and modernization, technology, Christianity and formal education are hugely to blame.

In an interview with Sarpong, he observed that, though culture is dynamic the cause and course of cultural changes should be looked at critically. For him formal education, with all the great benefits it has brought to the African soil, has equally contributed woefully to the worrying changes most African cultures are experiencing. He explained that the present modern formal educational system leaves little or no time with the child and the parents. He bemoaned that

—The child leaves home very early in the morning when the sun is even not out yet so as to catch the school bus, goes for early morning studies before the scheduled lessons for the day and still stays after the scheduled periods of the day for extra classes. The child will then come home tired and exhausted in the evening only to eat and after perhaps doing assigned home works from the school will retire to bed, to begin the same routine the next day. What is worse, on vacations they still go for vacation classes and hardly spend time in the house or with their parents and relations. This is a detachment from traditional and cultural socialisation; all the child gets to know is books and book knowledge...little or no home knowledge. Is this the best? We are losing our children and their proper grooming and formation to western and formal education. This needs to be looked at critically.²⁹⁸ This system of formal education seems to have been long planned to destroy and do away with the indigenous educational system of the African. The words of Lord Macaulay confirm this assertion;

—I have journeyed across Africa and I have not seen one person who is a beggar...such wealth and people of such calibre and high moral values I have seen in this country, that I do not think we would ever overcome this country, unless we destroy the nation's foundation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Africans thinks that all that is foreign and English is

²⁹⁷ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 103.

²⁹⁸ nd

This was in an interview with him at his residence on 22 March, 2017

good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want of them, a truly dominated nation²⁹⁹

Thus, it could be argued that westernization and its concomitant attendant of formal education system was a ploy to derail the African from his true and authentic moral cultural and religious values which made the African truly human and unique.

Sarpong's views and observations on the negative impact of the present day formal education was also affirmed by Christiana Domie³⁰⁰ that these days the young child spends most of formative years in boarding houses in school and hardly have a touch with their parents except during holidays and vacations and few hours of visiting times allowed over certain weekends while they are in school. She expressed the growing worrying concern that most of the girls get their first menses while at the boarding houses and it takes their peers to help them understand their new stage in life. And most of them learn wrongly from these peers and through the unguarded and unguided use of technology and technological gadgets and devices. Young teenagers in schools use phones and thanks to internet, they get exposed to all sort of unwholesome information, pictures and videos which go to warp their rather innocent minds and character. Nana Yaa Nyamaa Apoduo II agreed to this when she stated that in modern times, due to modernization and the unbridled use of technology, many people look down on rite of initiation...some describing it as unnecessary. According to her, modern means of communication and technology such as the use of smart phones and the internet gives an early exposure to young children even before they come of age. Thus, their formative years get destroyed for ever. By these, it could be understood that the present day educational system detaches the young adult from the home where they would have benefited from values and

²⁹⁹ nd

Culled from Lord Macaulay's Address to the British Parliament on 2 February, 1835

³⁰⁰ Christiana Domie is a traditional linguist, and the leader of the St. Theresa of the Child Jesus society in Sunyani Diocese. This was in an interview at her residence in fiapre on 17th July, 2017

norms that the parents would impart to them through informal and nonformal education; values which are acceptable, expected and espoused by the society. Maame Aba Ntsifua observed that due to how formal education has been overly-prided, the traditional rite of puberty declined and only the *anoka* is done. She was of the opinion that this is partly because many people, these days, do not understand the significance of the entire ritual.

On Christianity, a good number of the respondents agreed that the teachings, actions and inactions of some early Christian missionaries to the Akan soil have gravely influenced some if not most of the cultural and traditional practices. Rose Kyei Yamoah³⁰¹ expressed that Christianity has perhaps had a negative influence on the understanding and practising of some of these cultural/traditional rites and ceremonies which have great religious underpinnings. She stressed that some of the early Christian missionaries presented the indigenous religious practices as fetish and discouraged their converts and adherents from following these practices. Mena Ama Kaya in answering to contributing factors to the decline in the practise of the rite expressed that some Christian leaders do not speak the truth or are ignorant of the traditions and customs of the community and so they speak ill of the rites and practices and condemn the traditional rites, forgetting that these have great and rich cultural and religious values for the people. She admonished that Christianity must not stop us from doing the good things and values our traditions teach and hold. The good things in our traditions must be upheld, respected and perpetuated. She was quick to add that

—the lack of appreciation and respect for our authentic traditions and culture and their values by the current younger generation, partly due to wrong indoctrination and preaching by some so-called men of God is the reason why the younger generation is *spoilt* and having a lot of moral degeneration

³⁰¹ Rose Kyei Yamoah is a Religious and Moral Education teacher. She is a member of the Catholic Diocesan Marriage Council, Sunyani and the Laity Chairperson of the Catholic Diocese of Sunyani. She is a lay Theologian and contributes at the Diocesan Catechetical Unit, Sunyani. This was in an interview at her residence, in Fiapre on 16th July, 2017.

and unthinkable vices, stemming from laziness, disrespect for life, the elderly, etc.‘ This will surely bring the moral and religious fabric of our society down.³⁰² She advocates that the old authentic traditions and cultures should not be thrown away or cast aside but should be studied and refined for future posterity.

4.3.3 Akan Puberty Rites; The Rationale and Values

The question of what the rationale and values behind the puberty rite was, almost all the respondents had similar, if not same, reasons expressed in different ways. Many of the respondents were of the view that the rite was primarily done to show that a girl had reached womanhood and that she is now open and eligible to marriage.

On the issue under discussion, Akwasi Sarpong stated that puberty rites usher the person from infancy into adulthood...and _for the Akan, the emphasis is more on marriage; allowing the woman to assume marital responsibilities. This is what gives the rite its nubile nature and character‘.³⁰³ He reiterated that through the rites the young girl is introduced to qualities of a good wife, motherhood, motherliness, good manners. He firmly explained that the qualities of motherliness and motherhood, for example, would kick against abortion, laziness, same-sex marriage, prostitution, unfaithfulness, lies, mendacity would be an abomination; a troublesome, quarrelsome woman is nobody’s desire. Esther Munufie,³⁰⁴ in contributing to the question at hand stated that the celebration of the rite was an opportunity for the family/community to teach the young adult what motherhood was, how to take good care of one’s self how to work hard to support one’s spouse, how to train up children. Thus, the rite offered the young adult the moment to learn how and what it takes to keep a good home. Rose Kyei Yamoah, agreeing to

³⁰² This is a translation from Fante into English of what Mena Ama Kaya said.

³⁰³ This was in an interview with Akwasi Sarpong at his residence, on 22nd March, 2017

³⁰⁴ Esther Munufie is a nurse by profession. She lectures at the Ntotroso and Tanoso nurses training colleges with specialization in reproductive health care. She is the Sunyani Catholic Diocesan Youth secretary. This was in an interview at her office on 16th July, 2016.

the ongoing discussion explained that the rationale of the rite was to help and teach the young adult to abstain from illicit sexual behaviour and activities, to be serious with house chores and home chores, keep personal cleanliness. For her, the rite had a value to give a sense of pride and honour to the girl and her family, especially when the girl is found worthy of the rite and is able to undergo the rite and the ceremony.

Maame Aba Ntsifua was of the view and explained that the ceremony showed and testified that the young girl has lived decently as a child and is now mature for adult life. She further stated that this was highly placed that insults and insinuations are cast on people who fail to undergo this rite. Nana Efua Ahinmah II³⁰⁵ supporting the ongoing discussion stated that the rite was so important in the individual's and the community's life that when one died, the corpse was made to undergo the rite; the corpse is bathed with water from the sea, if she didn't undergo the rite while she lived. Until this was done, she explained that the corpse will not be buried in the community. This could be inferred to support Ganusah's observation that anyone who did not undergo the rite was not considered as a member of the community while she lived and even in death.³⁰⁶

According to Nana Gyamiah, among the people of Badu the initiand and her friends gathered clothes and utensils from people in the community, took them to the riverside and washed them clean and later, in the evening, distributed them to their owners. This showed that the young girl had come of age and was ready to take up the roles of adulthood in the community. She stated that this was to teach the young girl the lessons and value of community service, generosity and hospitality. Christiana Domie stated that the puberty rite was a period or occasion to make the young adult aware of themselves sexually and socially, to outline her role

³⁰⁵ Nana Efua Ahinmah II is the paramount Queen mother of Sekondi Traditional area. She is a Christian and a member of the St. Andrews Anglican church, Sekondi. This was in an interview at her house on 19th August, 2017

³⁰⁶ Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, 115.

in the society her duties and responsibilities in the community. This, she said was also aimed at instilling in the young adult a kind of reverential fear and respect for themselves, the community and the people in it. Maame Aba Ntsifua noted that though there is no structured form or pattern of education given to the young girl during the performance of the rite, every stage of the ritual carries with it implicit lessons which the elderly women would say or bring out, most especially in the form of prayers or informal speech either directly to the young girl. These come as pieces of advice, encouragements, admonitions, etc.

For her, the observance of the rite gave the individual an identity of who she is, her roots and what is expected of her by and in the community.

Thus, the rite had a rationale of introducing the young growing adult into the community of responsible adults, with full rights, privileges, duties and obligations. This aimed at making the individual a full member of the community, fit and proper, having gained values such as a sense of pride, maturity, belonging, hospitality, generosity, home keeping, respect for life and the elderly, hard work, service, fidelity in relationship, etc.

4.4 Analysis and discussion of field findings

This section of the chapter will focus on analyses and discussion of findings derived from the field. In the analysis of information obtained from the field descriptive method was employed. It must be noted that the responses are based on the respondents' experiences, explanations and viewpoint. The analyses and discussion will draw on first-hand information from respondents which served as the primary source of data and on existing literature relevant to the topic under study, which served as the secondary source of data for this research.

4.4.1 The idea of Puberty rite as indigenous character formation in Akan life and thought

In Akan ontological, psycho-philosophical and ethical perspectives, the human person is born into a community of persons and other unseen realities. The human person is composed of both physical and non-physical components; the flesh and blood (*honam na bogya* respectively) form the physical part while the spirit and soul (*sunsum na Akra*) form the nonphysical part. In Akan ontology, the individual person identifies him/herself in the light and mirror of the community. This helps in building up and nurturing the individual person. Just as in most African communities, the Akan community plays very pivotal role in the life of the individual person, to make him/her a social being. The social make-up of the person is as important as the physical make-up. The traditional Akan person carries with him/her the community and what the community stands for. The human person's development is not only physical; physical development of the human person does not necessarily mean that the person is mature. Maturity, thus, goes beyond physical development. To be mature is a holistic development. The maturity of the individual person is tested and approved according to the standards of the community; an individual's proper acknowledgement and appreciation of the community's norms, values and customs go a long way to prove or otherwise the level of maturity. From Akan psycho-philosophical viewpoint, one's understanding of and contribution to issues will be dependent on the mental growth and development of the person. In traditional Akan philosophy, wisdom is the preserve of the elderly. This affirms the Akan axiom that —*panyin na obi nnye bi da, na abofra dzi obiara aye bi dal* which literally translates as —not everyone has been an elderly person but every elderly person has been a child before. This does not suggest gerontocratic inclinations but wisdom and sagacity, in Akan worldview, is almost a preserve of the elderly who are known to be mature and have wisdom and knowledge from the ancestors.

From Akan ethical point of view maturity comes with responsibility, which is socially agreed upon by the community. The individual who is considered mature is expected to act and behave in certain ways. These expectations could be rights, duties, responsibilities and privileges prescribed by the community. These are somewhat concomitant to the maturity of the individual person. Thus, for the Akan, a mature person ought to do or ought not to do certain things. Knowing how crucial the individual person's development is, especially in the community, Akans take great interest in ensuring a smooth and due transition from one sphere of life into another. These transitions are marked and celebrated in ritual moments called the rites of passage. One of such transitional periods is the moment of puberty rite.

Among Akans, this transitional period is a moment of formation and information. It is worthy of note that Indigenous Akan patterns of formation pre-dates the arrival of European merchants, missionaries and colonial authorities. This evidenced in the fact that good character formation into responsible adulthood in the community existed in Akan indigenous thought and life. The idea of character formation into responsible adulthood is linked with rites of puberty which to them becomes a moment to school and educate the candidate into who a responsible mature adult is and what it takes to become a responsible mature adult in the community. Findings from the data gathered shows that various Akan communities have various names for the puberty rites. Among the Ahantas it is called —*nhyehyeel*, the Asantes call it —*bragor4*, the people of Badu traditional area call it —*hwirigel*. Whatever the name, it was gathered that the aim of introducing a young girl into adulthood and outdoor her for marriage prospects underpinned the concept and celebration of the rite. These notwithstanding, a critical assessment of Akan ethical values as noted by the researcher may reveal that the rite also aims at ushering the young adult into rights, duties, responsibilities and privileges of adult life. It is for this very reason, inter alia, that great importance is given to ensure that the young adults grow to become responsible mature adults in the community.

Data gathered for the study reveals that puberty rites are indispensable among Akan women folk. Though there has been changes or modifications to the rite due to factors such as economic difficulty, westernization and urbanization, modernization and technology, the Akan finds it expedient to take the young adolescent through a moment of education, informal and non-formal as it may be, to form the young adult into mature responsible adulthood. For the Akan, mature responsible adulthood is not attained by a mere sudden flight; one ought to be prepared, informed and formed for this stage or level in life. Thus, this stage requires due grooming. The Akan axiom that *__abofra b4 nwa, 4mmb4 akyekyedee*³⁰⁷ points to the fact that while a child takes things easy, an adult is expected to take higher and tougher responsibilities.

From the data, it is noted that the Akan place such high premium on character formation of a person, either for traditional political, religious or domestic leadership position in the community. This explains the total attachment of importance to various structures of formation patterns to groom and develop their leaders into the ideal responsible mature person. The Akan believe that *__eniguasee mfata kani ba*’; this is to wit that an Akan person should not be identified with disgrace. By this extension, there is the need to properly train, form and inform a person to be morally, ethically, religiously and intellectually sound, apt and mature to fit into society, with responsible attitude, character and behaviour. This is done by inculcating the right and proper values due a particular stage of life into the person. It is therefore little or no wonder that pre-missionary Akan gave prominence to the very indigenous values of character and attitude formation within the family and community. It was common say to hear *__are you the child of this person and you behave like this?*’ or *__a person from such community does not act like that*’. Such comments presupposed that certain character traits, norms and values were

³⁰⁷ This literally means a child cracks the shell of a snail, not a tortoise. This proverb advises on doing what is within one’s limits and powers.

expected of a person from a particular family or community and that it was incumbent on the community or family to ensure that such values are passed on to the younger folks in appropriate manner, such as during puberty rites or initiation into adulthood. Puberty rites of pre-literate Akan thought and life ensured that the young girls were nurtured and groomed in specific values and norms that are necessary for responsible adult life, through formative agents such as mothers elderly women and officiants of the rites who at the various stages in the performance of the rite teach and impart unto the candidates the values and lessons of life, implicitly in the ritual moments. For example, in the ritual of cutting of finger and toe nails and shaving of pubic hair, the young girl is, implicitly taught personal hygiene and cleanliness, as a mature woman. Cleanliness, they say is next to godliness; thus, as great care is taken in one's relationship with a deity or divinity so must great attention be given to one's care of the body and the environment. Again, the struggle for coins in a basin of water with the officiant³⁰⁸ is to teach the young girl the spirit and value of hard work, diligence and endurance in life. The expressive public action, which is the message for the individual and the community, made known in the ritualistic and symbolic performances and the open utterances of the officiating woman in the rite, is the most effective parts of ritual ceremonies, which are a powerful symbolic means of showing and forming the Akan's values and beliefs.

Traditionally, puberty rites serve to maintain and sustain the mutual relationship that exists among gender roles and responsibilities. The rite seeks to impart unto the young girl the values and ideals of womanhood. The non-formal lessons in cooking and culinery art, home keeping and management, motherliness and motherhood, body and personal hygiene taken within the period of the puberty rite are all meant to teach and equip the young girl on what it takes to become a good woman, wife and mother in the home. She is taught how to relate to her husband

³⁰⁸ See fig.4

and her in-laws should she marry how to relate as a mature, responsible woman in the community. She, by this get to know and understand that traditionally there are somethings, roles and duties that are proper to women and must not be confused nor compromised. She is encouraged to eschew lewd behaviour and to be of high moral standards. By this, she also becomes a role model for others to follow and emulate. Thus, the puberty rite, as emphasised by respondents, becomes and presents an opportunity for the grooming of the young Akan girl bequeathing to her indigenous knowledge and values to help her take her place as a responsible mature woman in the society.

4.4.2 Educational Implications of Puberty Rites Among the Akan

The research points out that, puberty rite among Akans serve a formative and informative purpose. A good and critical analyses of the responses received from respondents suggest that there are many and varied factors that have contributed to the neglect and apparent decline of puberty rite and its educational values among the Akan. Whereas many of the respondents were of the view that foreign cultural values and religions such as modernization and Christianity and Islam respectively have contributed to the decline and neglect of the proper attention and importance due such indigenous religio-cultural practice, formal education system has also added to the widespread attitude of less attention accorded puberty rites among the Akan indigenous communities.

As part of transitional rites and rituals, which are practiced universally across all cultures, the *Brakor* rites seem to be of great importance to the Akan culture. This is because, as argued by Biney, the puberty rite is seen as the centre of the life of every young woman in the Akan society.³⁰⁹ Womanhood and more specifically motherhood and motherliness are very important

³⁰⁹ I. K. Biney, *Puberty Rites and Marriage Ceremonies in Ghana* (Accra: University of Ghana, College of Education, School of Continuing and Distance Education, 2014).

phenomena in the Akan culture. By this Quan-Baffour argues that to be called a woman in the indigenous Akan community, one had to have undergone the puberty rites.³¹⁰ In an Akan community, women play major roles in the upkeep of the family and in the upbringing of the children (since the formative years of the children are spent with their mothers). This position of Quan-Baffour goes to affirm responses from respondents that the puberty rites prepare and equip the young Akan girl her responsibilities and duties in the society. The study from the findings confirm the notion that indigenous knowledge values as enshrined implicitly in Akan puberty rites are relevant educational resources used to teach the young Akan girl particular lessons and values. It is argued that through the puberty rite, the young girl is exposed to and learns the implicitly-enshrined diplomacy and courtesy, philosophical, ideological constructions, morality, ethical and religious values of the community. It is true of what latin says that *nemo dat quod non habet* (no one gives what he/she does not have), as such, Kwapong & Aggor affirm that the Akan culture makes it a priority to educate and train their women appropriately for them to take up their roles in the society to make them good mothers who will also impart the good morals they are taught into the lives of their young ones.³¹¹

Responses from the field data present that during the performance of the puberty rites, young girls after experiencing their first menstruation are put under the supervision of the queen mother and other elderly women who teach them the ways of womanhood, child bearing, marriage and caring for the home. Several valid arguments have been made about the Akan puberty rites however, there are two main areas that do not seem to vacillate; Quan-Baffour opines that despite the influence of Christianity, western values and formal education, the Akan

³¹⁰ K. P. Quan- Baffour, *Ritual Songs for Girls' Nubility Rites at Bono Takyiman, Ghana* (MUZIKI, 2009), 26–35.

³¹¹ O. T. Kwapong and R. Aggor, *Introduction to Adult Education* (Accra: Institute of Continuing and Distance Education, 2013).

puberty rites remain a significant religio-cultural event.³¹² On the other hand, there is the school of thought that the advent of Christianity and the western standards of education has had an adverse effect on the practice of the Akan puberty rites as Christian transitional ceremonies such as confirmation are replacing the puberty rites. This affirms some of the respondents' views and observation that some churches do encourage parents to confirm their young ones in the faith as they reach adolescent by bringing them to church, in a special ceremony, to confirm and bless them for the church and for life. Theodosia W. Jackson observed that as early as in 1964, girls in the girls' fellowship of the Presbyterian Church, Ghana, were taught puberty rites, personal hygiene and home management, among others.³¹³ Pre-missionary Akan society had her own way of educating and passing on values and lessons to generations. In indigenous Akan communities, the mode of transmission of culture has been through informal and non-formal education. This form of education, Oanj observes, is continuous throughout one's lifetime, from childhood to adulthood.³¹⁴ Parents and members of the society, as a form of socialization, explain the ways of life in the community to the child and young people were advised and encouraged to observe and participate in activities in the house or community so as to acquaint themselves with it or to learn from it. This confirms the argument of Mushi that indigenous African education involves passing the inherited knowledge, skills, cultural and traditional norms and values of a community from one generation to the other.³¹⁵ Mushi's position thus affirms respondents' view that Akan puberty rites is an educational moment to celebrate such cherished values as chastity, obedience and

³¹² Quan- Baffour, *Ritual Songs for Girls' Nubility Rites at Bono Takyiman, Ghana*, 26–35.

³¹³ Culled from an interview with Mrs. Theodosia W. Jackson, in *Christian Messenger*, Vol.28, No.3, p.10, May/June, 2014.

³¹⁴ D. Oanj, *What is African Indigenous Education? Philosophical bases of African Indigenous Education. Strengths and limitations of this Education, and relevant is it to the modern Education today*, 2012. Retrieved October 25, 2017, from WordPress: <https://darisoanj.wordpress.com/2012/02/08/what-is-african-indigenouseducation-philosophical-bases-of-african-indigenous-education-strengths-and-limitations-of-this-education-andrelevant-is-it-to-the-modern-education-today/>

³¹⁵ P. A. Mushi, *History of Education in Tanzania* (Dar-es-Salaam: Dar-es-Salaam University Press, 2009).

good moral living and to pass on values such as fidelity, motherliness, cleanliness, generosity, humility, service, gracefulness, hard work, diligence and perseverance in life. It is a moment to educate the young one on how to achieve good and positive results in life. White augments that the child is educated [in this way] to avoid ‘negative’ repercussions since the contravention of a norm tends to provoke a reaction from who or what is considered a divine being or who is associated with the preservation of order in the community and the universe at large.³¹⁶ The young girls are thus groomed, by way of imparting knowledge on to them, as to how to be good mothers and consequently good wives in the community.

One of the imports of the Akan puberty rites, among others, is to prevent young girls from getting pregnant before marriage. More often than not, standards are set for young girls to meet to prevent them from getting pregnant at very young ages. Responses from the data gathered substantiates that in most Akan societies, the puberty rite serves as a means of keeping the young girls in check. This confirms Biney’s position that it helps ensure that young girls maintain their dignity and that of their families until they are ready for marriage.³¹⁷ According to Akosua Tawiah, among the Bonos of Takyiman, it is a taboo and a disgrace for a young girl to indulge in sexual intercourse or to get pregnant before undergoing the puberty rite; it is believed that in doing this, the girl brings a curse onto her family and the general community or the wrath of the gods (or whatever divine being the people revere) onto her and her family. This is in line with White’s assertion on the need to educate the child on the ways of the people to avoid the repercussions from the divine being. According to QuanBaffour a young girl who flaunts the rules by getting pregnant before the puberty rites commits *kyiribra*; such a person brings dishonour to her family; she is never respected, she is a shame onto herself and her

³¹⁶ R. White, *Rites of Passage. Wisdom in Torah* (Talmidim Teachers, 2014).

³¹⁷ Biney, *Puberty Rites and Marriage Ceremonies in Ghana*.

³⁴⁴Biney.

family.³⁴⁴ Young girls (and the men they were involved with) who fell prey to this were banned from the community as punishment. On some occasions, they are made to pay a fine for the cleansing of the community before their banishment. Nana Nyamaa Apoduo II stressed that for this reason girls who are able undergo the rite are honoured with gifts for keeping their virginity until they come of age.

Although *Bragor4* used to be practiced vehemently in the past, it is now on the decline as most families tend to replace the rites with other private recognitions and celebrations of the transition from childhood to adulthood. This, according to some respondents, augers for the bad lifestyle and its repercussions on the younger generation. Crentsil's argument that the neglect and decline on the observance and performance of the traditional puberty rites has contributed to the rise in teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS is buttressed thus.³¹⁸ Hence, there is the need for a call on the practice of the puberty rites to ensure that young girls be of high moral standards and values for life.

4.4.3 Kyirbra; An indigenous check on sexual immorality: lessons for Christian Youth Formation among Akans

Sexual morality is considered a virtue in most indigenous Akan communities; chastity and virginity among young men and women is highly extolled. In some indigenous Akan communities, it was the practice of inspecting the bedsheet of newly married couple, on their first nuptial night, to see stains of blood in the bedsheet. The bloodstained bedsheet went to prove that the newly married woman was a virgin until she was married. Such a woman was the pride of her husband and the toast of her family. A non-appearance of blood in the bedsheet, upon inspection suggested that the newly married woman had engaged in sexual activities prior to her marriage. Such a woman was scorned and looked on with shame she is hardly respected

³¹⁸ P. Crentsil, —Bragoro: A Disappearing Puberty Rite of the Akan of Ghana in Current Politics and Economics of Africal 8, no. 2 (2015).

by her husband and his people. Thus, for indigenous Akans, sexual purity connotes high moral standards and discipline. Speaking on this, Nana Dei Nyantakyi³¹⁹ explained that sexual morality and high moral standards were not only demanded of women but also men. He expatiated that married men who were caught of marital infidelity were obliged to appease their spouses with gifts of cloths, jewellery, money, or anything the woman demanded. This may suggest that abstinence from sexual immoralities of all kinds is highly demanded of every individual Akan person. A flaunt on this demand of sexual morality attracted punitive sanctions from the community.

Sexual immorality is highly unwelcomed in Akan ethical life and thought. Whether among adults or young people, sexual immorality is frowned upon in Akan communities. Incestuous acts, rape, promiscuity, unfaithfulness among spouses, abortion are all considered immoral sexual behaviours whose consequences are sanctions that could be punitive. Among Akan communities, culprits of incestuous acts or rape are as guilty as a murderer; such persons could be banished from the community, after some rituals are performed to cleanse the community of the consequences of that act. These are considered abominable. Families who have incidents of such immoral sexual offences are never the toasts of respect and honour...to marry from such a family is a shame. This goes to expatiate that Akans have deep and reverential sense for sexual morality. The Akan would not mourn a rapist, and that is to show detest of the act. Sexual acts are considered so sacred that they are not to be exposed, nor toyed with. The community spells out the parameters for sexual activities; who qualifies for sexual acts, where the act could be done and when the act could be done or otherwise.

³¹⁹ This was in an interview with Nana Dei Nyantakyi, the chief of Buorkrukruwa, Bechem, on 6th August, 2017. He is also a catechist at the Catholic church in Fiapre, Sunyani.

Among indigenous Akan communities, it is an abomination to have sexual intercourse with a woman in her menses whether the parties involved were married or not, the act constituted defilement. It is also sacrilegious to have sex in the bush or forest, among indigenous Akan communities. Such an offence is believed to incur the wrath of the gods and so there ought to be sacrifices done to appease and pacify the gods. Sexually morality, thus, is highly expected of the young person, especially the young woman before she underwent the puberty rites.

Talking on what happened if one failed to undergo the puberty rite, almost all the respondents were of the view that a failure by a girl to undergo the rite was highly frowned upon, among Akans. If a girl was found to be pregnant before she underwent the rite it was an abomination. This was called *kyiribra*.³²⁰ Explaining on this, Nana Gyamiah stated that among the people of Badu traditional area only a virgin qualified for the puberty rite. By this, it could be understood that anybody who engaged in sexual activities before the performance of the rite was *ipso facto* disqualified and incurred the wrath of the gods and the community. Thus, *kyiribra* serves to check sexual immorality among young people in indigenous Akan communities. Adding to it, Akosua Tawiah explained that *kyiribra* was a violation of traditional, cultural and religious norm and the violation came with sanctions. Sarpong brought out that the sanction for *kyiribra* could be in the form of monetary fines, sacrificial animals such as sheep or fowls. The offenders, the girl and the man who impregnated her, were all guilty of the offence and both have to undergo a ritual cleansing by the community. He asserted that the punishment was worse if the girl ever tried to abort the pregnancy; she and the man who impregnated her could be ostracised from the community. Thus, this served to deter the young girl and boy from

³²⁰ *Kyiribra* is the offence which a girl, with her accomplice, a man, commits by ‘taking seed’ before the performance of her puberty rite. For more information on *kyiribra*. See Sarpong, *Girls’ Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 47–55.

engaging in illicit and immoral sexual activities; they were to wait until they have come of age, in the eyes of the community.

Akosua Tawiah explained that in Badu, puberty rite was so highly esteemed that anybody who does not go through the rite is not seen as a proud member of the community. She further stated that anybody who committed *kyiribra* was looked on as cursed and was believed to have an unsuccessful life, afflicted with illnesses, hardships, and barrenness. Such girls are not considered suitable marriage materials and so do not get husbands. She expressed that a child born out of *kyiribra* was known as *kyiribra-ba*.³²¹ Such children, because their mothers did not undergo the puberty rite, were scorned and despised in the community; they could not hold any important traditional leadership position in the community.

Some respondents pointed out that owing to many factors, *kyiribra* is not enforced, as was done before. Nana Aba Esuon³²² bemoaned that;

These days, many parents and families hide their wards when they detect the child is pregnant. They do something little in the house for her and forget the rest. This gives impression to the young girl, and her comrades that there is nothing to fear about not undergoing the puberty rite. This has given rise to sexual laxity and immoral sexual behaviours which are destroying the beauty and the future of our children.

Kyiribra, disgraceful as it were, was a measure employed to teach young girls and boys the outcome of irresponsible lifestyle. It served to implicitly educate young girls and boys the value of chastity and virginity.

³²¹ This means a child born out of illicit sex, and that the mother didn't undergo the puberty rite. Such a child was considered an abominable child.

³²² Nana Aba Esuon is the Queen of Diabnekrom, a suburb of Sekondi. She is a Catholic and a member of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Society.

4.4.4 Pragmatic Lessons from Akan Puberty Rite as an Initiation Ceremony

4.4.4.1 Juvenile Morality and Religious Development

The Akan culture which pre-dates the 13th century has rich and deep cosmological, ontological, metaphysical, ethical and epistemological concepts, particularly, the Akan concept of *person*; a concept that influences many socio-cultural and traditional institutions and religious customs such as puberty rites, and how that helps in personality development and identity formation. Through puberty rite, the individual gets linked to the community and vice versa. This is a deeply religious step, Mbiti observes.³²³

The Akan perspective of personhood has immense implications on social and religio-cultural practices and institutions. For the Akan, pronouncements on personhood are not just for scholarly interest, but they have significant function in highly shaping and supporting communal and moral structures. The Akan concept of personhood allows for moral equality while emphasizing the social foundations of personhood, to firmly instill trust, cooperation, and responsibility to the community in religio-cultural practices. The Akan philosophical notion of person provides, then, a quest at resolving identity and morality question.

A person, in Akan philosophy, is someone who, by responsible thinking and action, has adhered to and achieved standards set by the society, and thus entrusted with both responsibilities and privileges in the community. This suggests and confirms the social bases of personhood. It goes then to substantiate Wiredu's argument that the human being does not automatically gain personhood; it is attained and reaches its full realization in the community in Akan ontological thought and life.³²⁴ In this regard, the Akan concept of personhood serves to foster socially

³²³ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 101.

³²⁴ Kwesi Wiredu, —The African Concept of Personhood, in *African-American Perspectives on Biomedical Ethics*, ed. Harley E. Flack and Edmund D. Pellegrino (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1992), 104.

³⁵² Wiredu and Gyekye, *Person and Community*, 108.

acceptable qualities and customs like unity, adroitness, assiduousness and productivity. Gyekye notes that there are statements about people's life and behaviour that suggest that personhood is something achieved or conferred on someone for taking obligations and duties in the society. For example, *4nnye nyimpa* is an Akan morally evaluated statement describing someone who comes across as wicked, inhumane and unkind to others. Interestingly, an individual who fails in his struggles in the Akan community is thought of and evaluated to be *nyimpa hun*, literally meaning —a useless person,^l which is a derogatory statement. On the contrary, a person of high moral standards is described as *4ye nyimpa paa*—literally, he/she is a real (human) person.³⁵²

Akan language structure differentiates infants from full persons based on their lack of intellectual and moral maturity, which points to certain kinds of achievements and thus is *constitutive* of personhood. In Akan thought, phrases like *4nnye nyimpa* and *nyimpa hun* meaning ‘_he is not a person’ and ‘_useless person’ respectively, show that an individual is a moral agent, equal to all others and having the capacity for personhood fully. In fact, to say that someone is *4nnye nipa* means the person is respected as one with moral agency; failure to respect this would be a failure to respect the individual as a moral agent.

The acceptance and maintenance of established morality is highly esteemed in Akan indigenous communities. From the data gathered, respondents affirmed that the puberty rite ensured juvenile morality. In indigenous Akan communities, sexual intercourse by a girl before puberty is abominable and a crime. It is a *kyiribra*. Thus, the rite behoves on the girls to refrain from illicit sexual acts at all costs. This affirms Sarpong's observation that the hatred for *kyiribra* ceremony plays a part in restraining the Akan young boy and girl from indulging in sexual immorality.³²⁵ The shame and disgrace the *kyiribra* brings upon a culprit of Akan sexual immorality is enough to deter the young adult from engaging in such immorality. The puberty

³²⁵ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 83.

rite is therefore a means of encouraging the young adult to stay morally pure and clean, upholding virginity and chastity. Among the Asante, if a girl was found to be ‘defiled’ sexually before she undergoes puberty rite or was found to be pregnant, such a girl would have to go through a very disgraceful ritual called *kyiribra*. This ritual would include slaughtering of a sheep on the girl, allowing its blood to gush out on to the girl’s head and trickle down her body. Sarpong observes that for the purification of this ritual to be effective and effected at all, the blood must run down the genitals of the girl.³²⁶ Opoku affirms that in societies such as the krobo, the man who is found responsible for making a girl break the Dipo³²⁷ rite is made to bear the cost of purification rites that would have to be performed in both households.³⁵⁶ This goes to ensure that the young adult grows into a responsible adult, with high moral standards. Christianity and by extension the Catholic Church equally encourages and would like to have young adults growing and developing into responsible mature adults. Sexual immorality is eschewed and frowned upon by Christianity. The Bible and Doctrines of the Catholic Church exhorts the human person to espouse sexual purity. This lesson could be incorporated into the catechism program to educate the young adult on the need, importance and beauty of staying out of pre-mature and pre-marital sexual activities for the purpose of keeping the body holy and chaste, while living a morally sound and upright life.

One of the most important functions of initiation ceremony is to usher the child into adulthood, with corresponding rights and accompanying responsibilities. Sarpong attests that with one’s initiation ceremony comes rights and equal obligations to do acts that were initially out of bounds. Some of such acts are to be involved in marriage ceremonies, funerals, and such occasions that call for family gatherings. These gatherings are moments and occasions to

³²⁶ Sarpong, 50.

³²⁷ Dipo is the name of the puberty rite among the krobo, in Ghana.

³⁵⁶ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 118.

transmit indigenous knowledge and wisdom of the community to the younger generation. It is only after such admission into the sphere of the adults through the initiation ceremony does one become eligible to such pearls of knowledge and wisdom. It is worthy of note that these ceremonies all come with rituals which capture and encapsulate the religious beliefs and practices of the people. Elements of religion are introduced into initiation ceremony such as pouring of libation and sacrifices.³²⁸ By participating in these rituals, the young adult opens himself/herself to the wealth of religious and spiritual wisdom of the people.³²⁹ The young adult learns how to pour libation, perform sacrifices and certain rituals. These sacred and religious activities serve, create and sustain the link of relationship between the humans and the non-humans.³³⁰ This brings to the young Akan adult that his/her world goes beyond just what is seen or corporeal. For the Akan, as for many Africans, the physical world has a relationship with the spiritual world; the seen world is influenced by the unseen world. The spirit world, ancestors and ancestresses exert influence and some amount of power and control on the world of the human beings. The living human beings get their inspirations on how to live their day-to-day lives from the world of the spirits. From the cradle to the grave from the womb to the tomb the African person is in a constant, unbroken relationship with the spirit world. By his/her birth the African person is believed to have come from the spiritual world with a plan of life which will define his/her life. And by this the life he/she lives is to be as the spirit world prescribes. At birth prayer³³¹ is offered for the life of the new born baby, asking for blessings from the spirit world upon his/her life. At puberty, prayer is also offered for guidance and well-being on the young member of the community as he/she attains a new level in the

³²⁸ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 101.

³²⁹ These could be the secrets of the society in regard to sacred lores, spiritual mediumship and other important information which as children they were not privy to.

³³⁰ The non-humans could be gods, deities, divinities, ancestors and ancestresses.

³³¹ This is often in the form of libation. See Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 25.

community. At marriage similar prayers and intercessions are invoked on the newly married and at death the deceased is equally entrusted back to the world of the spirit where he/she had come from.³³² These moments of progressive developments in the African's life depict the religious consciousness that envelops the total life of the African person. Thus Mbiti and Idowu are not far from right when they describe the African as known for his/her religion.³³³ The young adult by virtue of the initiation ceremony or rite gets the opportunity to witness and observe some of these religious practices, learning from them and developing a good sense of the sacred as the culture seeks to promote. There are purification rituals and punitive measures that aim at deterring and curbing the proclivity for social deviation. Religion, many scholars argue, is distinct and separate from morality but in traditional Africa, there is just a thin line between the two. Most of the norms, customs and taboos are aimed at ensuring the community's protection and promoting peaceful, harmonious living. This sense of the sacred and a deep religious awareness could be integrated into the lessons for the catechumen.

4.4.4.2 Educational and Transformational Moment

The values and cherished attitudes and conducts of a traditional community are often seen in the life and norms of the family system and some religio-cultural institutions, rites and practices because the beliefs and knowledge of our people are evasively evidenced in every facet of their life and carried over from generation to generation. The positive cultural practices, in which are enshrined Akan rich cultural heritage with religious significance, are visible in the various rites of passage such as the initiation rites.

Rites of initiation carry great and valuable implications for the individual's life and that of the community. During the rites, the candidates are made to know the 'treasured secrets' of the

³³² Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 29–32.

³³³ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 256.

community. These rites and ceremonies are symbolic to one's development. It was gathered, for example, from respondents that the ritual bathing of the candidate was to wash her of all unwanted things and make her clean and proper for her new stage in life. Akan initiation process aims at a critical and comprehensive traditional and indigenous education. Nana Nyamaa Apoduo II explained that before the performance of the rites, the young girl(s) is made to have some moments with some elderly women in the community to educate them on the ethos, diplomacy and courtesy of life and the community, including housewifery and housekeeping, marriage, motherliness and motherhood, birth and responsible sexual life, and such duties that make one a recognised member in the adult community. This is aimed at making the individual an acceptable and proud member of the society. The initiand acquires knowledge about good womanhood and responsible adult life. The young girls get to be educated in the, customs, art and traditions of her community such as cooking, hospitality and cooperation. The initiation rites and ceremonies serve to favourably communicate the people's wisdom and the ideals of peaceful co-existence in the community. Nana Aba Esuon note that the period of the puberty rite is a moment of education to teach the young girl values cherished in the society and their attendant importance; they are taught values such as industry, respect and hospitality, homecraft and sexual morality like chastity, fidelity and self-control. Thus, they would go through the rite and come out looking beautiful, inwardly and outwardly, with the disposition that would enable them to manifest the standards that are cherished in the society. For example, as the girls were expected to have retained their virginity as at the time of the performance of the rite, they would have had to avoid sexual laxity. This is expected to prepare them to have a high sense of marital fidelity in later life.

A critical assessment of African female communities shows a theme of grooming girls into women of traditionally acceptable behaviour. Initiation into adulthood in the Akan society is psychologically and spiritually transformative. During the period of the rite, the initiands give

up the ‘behaviours of children’ which are characterised as infantile, assuming duties and obligations of womanhood in the community. In Akan ontology, it is believed that children born in the physical realm remain infants until they undergo adolescent initiation rites and ceremonies as prescribed in the community. If this is anything to go by, then it suggests that the individual ritually dies as infant or shed off the infantile self and is metaphysically reborn or put on a new self as an adult, during the rite. Among some indigenous Akan communities such as the Ahanta and Wassa, information from the data collected explains that at a particular point in time during the initiation process, candidates are given ritual bath at a riverside, symbolic of new birth. The ontological feature of initiation ceremonies in traditional Akan society is truly metamorphic.

A critical study of the Akan society reveals that initiation into adulthood through the puberty rite changes a girl into a responsible woman and acknowledges her as such, groomed and equipped to live as a responsible, mature woman in the community, in tune with the culture and tradition of the community. Thus, the young girl grows mature, confident, conscious and with self-awareness and full of joy. This may suggest that the rite grooms the initiate into a full, complete being, equipped to take on duties and obligations. They are taught how to speak to elders, show respect to their parents and behave well with others in the community; they are transformed into proper, acceptable young adults the community is proud of, mature and responsible. Mbiti sums it that during this period the young people undergo a period of education or traditional schooling which equips them to live as full members of the society.³³⁴

³³⁴ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 102.

4.4.4.3 Personality development and Character formation

Personhood, described in terms of social accomplishments and interpersonal relations is to create the links and associations necessitating the propagation and passing on of knowledge and duties that auger and enhance communal consensus. So thought, the Akan perception of personhood serves to build and strengthen unity in the society, providing a system good for resolving problems and issues of a communal nature. The Akan have developed a way of encouraging people to help with the good and welfare of the society while guarding the dignity of even the most unproductive individual. Personhood, then, in an Akan thought, is what an individual gets for his/her contribution towards the good and welfare of the society serving as the grounds for the dignity of the individual, which is sourced in an independent common humanity, idealized in the community.

The Akans' ideas about the rite of initiation into womanhood are such that not to undergo the rite is to remain a child, not an adult, in the eyes of the community. The data collected reveals that in the past a woman who had not undergone the rite was not tasked with any adult responsibility nor did she enjoy communal adult rights and privileges. Thus, the rite is performed to raise the young girl to the level of responsible adulthood and to make her appreciate and cherish her new status in the society. Nana Efua Ahimah affirmed that puberty rite serves the purpose of helping the young adult develop a good and pleasant personality. Sarpong observes that among Akans the puberty rite is a period for the young girl to show and be shown off as a woman by the Akan standards.³³⁵ The girl develops the attitude and character of a good woman with motherliness, humility and submissiveness. Sarpong, expounding on this, expatiates that _mothers always looked for girls with peaceful dispositions, who can live

³³⁵ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 13–17.

amicably with the women of matrilineages into which they marry'.³³⁶ For this reason and many others, the young girls are helped and encouraged to build and develop personality traits that would make them pleasant for possible marriage in the future. In the words of Sarpong 'the ideal Ghanaian [Akan] woman is one who combines 'motherliness' with her motherhood.'³³⁷ This may suggest that there are certain expectations of an Akan woman; she is expected to provide adequate food for her children and shelter them, those of others and strangers, when need be.³³⁸ Such qualities paint well the proverbial Ghanaian, and by extension Akan hospitality of kindness, generosity, concern for other people's well-being, which are qualities cherished in the Akan society. The values of valour, courage, fortitude, pride, loyalty, faithfulness are equally extolled and are shown to be appropriate to their way of life and social relations.

Societies develop and establish their unique ethos, customs, norms, taboos and incentives by which obedience, loyalty and adherence to the norms, customs and social standards are applauded and encouraged. Just as so for the Akan, puberty rites serve to educate the young girl on obedience and submission to her parents and elders, preventing her from pregnancy prior to the rite. The rites equip the girl with good and approved morals, giving her the chance of getting a good suitor because through the rites traditional Africans endeavour to form and inform people, inculcating in them the ideas and relevance of virtuous living and moral uprightness.

Among Akan communities, there are certain attitudes and behaviour patterns that are expected of a child. One cannot neglect these without risking to be branded as uncouth, shameless,

³³⁶ Sarpong, 84.

³³⁷ Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 69.

³³⁸ J.H. Nketia, *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* (Achimota, 1955), 35. (no publisher)

uncultured or foolish.³³⁹ According to Sarpong the moral standards that puberty seeks to ensure go farther and wider than the sexual sphere.³⁴⁰ In Akan settings there are certain attitudes and behaviours that define a cultured person or otherwise. These are acceptable patterns of doing things or character traits that mark a person as a true member of the society from a cultured home and background. The elders in the community watch the growing young adult closely lest he/she misbehaves, especially in the realms of religion. Respondents affirmed that among Akans, it is expected of a child or a young adult to be respectful, not gloomy but smiles when talking to elders, be willing and ready to go on errands, not be abusive, greet people, etc. This agrees with Sarpong's observation that an Akan child must know what he/she must do as a child in the community.³⁴¹ A person with such character traits is said to be cultured and of good character.³⁴² During the period of the puberty rite the young adult is taught these manners and their essence or value in the society; the young adult is taught what the community or society upholds and cherishes in terms of manners, attitude or character. The period is thus a moment of character formation when the neophyte is encouraged to be brave, respectful, hardworking, serviceable, clean, tolerant, patient, kind, friendly, etc. By this the young adult develops a strong and beautiful character that would befit the Akan description of *Nyimpa*. In Akan ethical thought, someone who took care and charge of the upbringing and nurturing relations or to the duty of ensuring the welfare and taking care of foreigners, becoming hospitable to everyone will be very much respected and esteemed as an individual with great personality and personhood; he/she will be described as *4ye nyimpa paa*, - he/she is a real person. Individuals falling below community expectations are looked with dissatisfaction and derogation, described as *4nnye nyimpa* - he is not a real person, literally expressing that the person is not

³³⁹ Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 73.

³⁴⁰ Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, 83.

³⁴¹ Sarpong, 83.

³⁴² The Akan refers to such people of good character as *4w4 ntetie pa* or *4w4 suban pa*.

living up to expectation, and is not a person of good character. People with these traits are envisaged to develop and grow into mature responsible adults in the community.

4.4.4.4 Communal Sense and Acceptability

Virtue and values in African traditional setup such as hospitality, respect for elders and human dignity, honesty, courage and humaneness are the communally defined, approved and accepted, and related to the communal dimension of life. A girl who successfully completes the rites of initiation is celebrated by the whole community because she has brought honour and pride to herself, family and the entire community. She gets money, cloths, and other items as gifts from her parents and people in the community and by this she acquires some capital for her future. This teaches her that she is accepted into the community and that her life is equally important to the society. Magesa emphasizes that an understanding of a person's identity is impossible without reference to that of others, showing the importance of community.³⁴³ This supports Gyekye's claim, agreeing that the entire spectrum of values and customs in which the individual is necessarily ingrained is culturally created by the community which is part of one's history. This shows an intimate connection between individual's aims and objectives and communal systems and organizations.³⁴⁴ Mbiti opines that a failure to undergo the rites makes one be considered a non-member of the community.³⁴⁵ It is important to observe that there is a spiritual dimension to the need to be accepted by the community.

In Akan cosmological thought, it is believed that the life that is lived on this earth is believed to be the exact copy of the one in the life-hereafter. As such, just as women who have not performed the rites are considered to be not fully accepted and regarded as women in the

³⁴³ Magesa, *African Religion*, 64.

³⁴⁴ Wiredu and Gyekye, *Person and Community*, 112.

³⁴⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 1991, 98.

³⁷⁵Mbiti, 98.

society, so also, it is believed, they would not be accepted as women in the community in the life-hereafter. This explains why, from some Akan indigenous communities, the rite would have to be performed for a dead woman who did not undergo the rite, at the outskirts of the town or community before she is brought into the community to be accepted for proper burial and funeral rites. To be a full member of the community, being accepted in the physical and the spiritual worlds of one's community, Ganusah opines, is a key element in the performance of the puberty rite. Mbiti affirms that the rite ties the individual to the community and the people, among whom he/she has been born as a child, grows and develops into responsible and mature adulthood.³⁷⁵

By the rite of initiation into womanhood, a young woman is groomed and equipped physically, psychologically and emotionally, socially, spiritually and materially to take her place in the community as a responsible adult member. It makes the young initiate feel truly accepted by her community. Everyone shares a joyful time with her and she now belongs to a group which, for the rest of her life, has a shared important common experience. This is because Akans believe that everyone needs a 'place to feel at home'. Communal acceptance makes one feel really at home and comfortable. In the mind of Mbiti, initiation is a public recognition that the individual is now passing from childhood to adulthood. Thus, the individual is accepted as such in the community and given responsibilities and duties, with corresponding rights and privileges.³⁴⁶

The traditional Akan person is a custodian of the culture and tradition and is expected to present or showcase the culture and tradition in the best way possible. The rites help in making people understand and respect their own traditions; guarding them against the temptation of going with

³⁴⁶ Mbiti, 98.

every wind of change, or copy blindly what they see from others. In the view of Gyekye, traditional African societies cherish communalism, expressing it in the esteem for the common good of the community, respect for mutual obligation and interdependence, resolving differences for the good of the individual and the society. While recognising and acknowledging claims of individuality, it is an African ethical demand to avoid and eschew extreme individualism, which is believed to have the potential and propensity to destroy the value, meaning and essence of human community. The consideration and acknowledgement of all human beings as kin from a common human species is crucial to the African. The fact that we human beings within our individual nations do not often succeed in conforming our actions to this ideal does not mean that it is a mere utopia and not a realizable ideal or goal.³⁴⁷ Wiredu and Gyekye observe that individual persons aspire and look up to certain ideals that greatly influence people's perception of themselves and their position in the community. These also could be synchronised with the Catechesis³⁴⁸ to build the young adult into a mature responsible Christian.

4.5 Synchronising lessons from Akan puberty rites into Christian adult initiation; An attempt at Integration

The study points out that there is a possibility of synchronizing lessons from Akan puberty rites with Christian adult initiation. This is stemming from the observation that many African intellectuals, as has been seen in discussions in previous chapters, define African Traditional Religion as the bedrock and backbone of African culture. An analysis of respondents' responses seeks to give credence to the fact that African Traditional Religion constitutes an important

³⁴⁷ Wiredu and Gyekye, *Person and Community*, 111.

³⁴⁸ The name catechesis is given to the totality of the church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ. Catechesis is thus an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation- *Catechesi tradendae* 1;2

store of African values and identity and by this the research revealed that the tolerating nature of ATR, and non-missionary in practise, creates the grounds for peaceful, interreligious existence; which is an ideal platform for such a synchronisation of the authentic values and lessons in Akan puberty rites with that of Christian adult initiation rite, such as confirmation among Catholics.³⁴⁹

A critical analyses of the responses received suggests that the authentic values and lessons in the Akan puberty rites should not be thrown away or neglected but should be studied to help refine the religio-cultural practices such as puberty rites among Akans. The human person's maturity should be holistic, taking into account the physical, psychological and spiritual/religious development and maturity. Buckley argues that the spiritual maturity associated with confirmation "presupposes a biological and psychological maturity."³⁵⁰ This position of Buckley may suggest that the spiritual/religious maturity of a person should move in tandem with his/her physical and psychological maturity. A neglect of one might render the other inadequate. By this many respondents agreed that whiles confirmation and its rituals mark and celebrate the spiritual/religious attainment of growth and maturity in the community of believers, so does puberty rites mark and celebrate the physical and sociological development and maturity of a person in the community.

Data collected reveals that while many young girls, due to schooling, urbanisation and modernization, misconceptions and false indoctrinations, among others, are not undergoing the puberty rite, they could be given lessons on the values and expectation of their new stage in life by the church. It comes then as a matter of urgency, mandate and a call to duty to respond and address the need to revive the values of authentic African traditional and religiocultural

³⁴⁹ Nkulu-N'Sengha, 53.

³⁵⁰ Nkulu-N'Sengha, 656.

heritage. This substantiates what Mbiti shares that the propagated missionary Christianity did not have the potency and endurance to meet and survive the religious vitality and demands of the traditional African. There is much more to do than has been done in terms of helping the African to become a true Christian from an African soil. He, Mbiti, affirms vehemently that Christianity has not infiltrated very well into the religiosity of Africans.³⁵¹

A review of African initiation rites shows great implications and lessons for communities in contemporary times. In these rites of passage are multi-pronged approaches and addresses to issues and challenges coming from years of ignorance and brainwashing. By remembering and acknowledging the wisdom of our forebears, applying and living them, we come to discover our real and true identity, making us mature, responsible and community-minded adults. A recourse to fundamental ideals of tried and true ancient heritage³⁵² is necessary to help adjust and adopt methods of the modern and current situations as practical and systematic remedy to challenges confronting African communities and by extension Akan Christians. Knowledge of our identity is the first step; working with that knowledge within our own real and practical domains is the next logical direction and move in life.

Rights to adulthood must be appreciated within the broader sphere. There are various goodintended programs and initiatives but there are no good-willed, facilitators who have gone through initiation. And so they cannot give what they do not have- *nemo dat quod non habet*. Aside self-examination and self-awareness, it will be good to encourage and organise programs and institutions for African adults to address lack of maturity, self-discipline, selfesteem, paranoia, etc. There is the African proverb that —one who learns, teaches. Attention should

³⁵¹ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 233.

³⁵² This encapsulates the Akan philosophy of *sankofa*. This is the philosophy that espouses that it is never wrong nor out of place to go back for the knowledge, practices and ideas of the past if they are necessary for the present.

be given to programs or organizations for contemporary young adults, addressing lack of purpose-driven life and self-growth, aiming at giving to the next generation exemplary lives.

The proclamation and propagation of the Faith and Gospel message is not a single-man's endeavour; it is a group or communal enterprise. The joy of the Gospel is best experienced in company or when shared with others. This means that we must strive at living out our faith as Christians in the cultural milieu, with a communal sense and spirit. Most African minds, like Sarpong, vehemently hold and espouse that the Christian faith proclaimed by the Gospel must be indigenised and synchronised with authentic African values. By extension the Akan needs contextualised evangelism, that is awaken and conscious to the prevailing historico-cultural situation in places that the church witnesses to the Gospel message. Pope Benedict XVI asserts that faith does not mean an alienation from any culture for any particular people because all cultures await Christ and are not destroyed by the Lord. In fact, they reach their maturity and perfection.

From the above discussion it could be inferred that the Christian message has not fully identified with African religious life and thought. This leaves the Christian message to the African just a skin deep and might pose a challenge to the Akan Christian to appreciate the Gospel message and its implication authentically as he/she should, with an African religious sense and value. This notwithstanding, it becomes expedient that the lessons from a heritage such as puberty rite be integrated and synched with the rite of Christian initiation for adults to fill in the gap and serve the purpose of helping the Akan identify the values and lessons embedded in the traditional initiation rites for young adults and how these could help make a better Christian life, with mature and responsible young adults in the community.

4.6 Conclusion

The current chapter has presented and discussed data collected from respondents from the field, making analyses to synthesize and crystalize the ideas from the field and how they fit in or otherwise, views of scholars and the researcher. This was done thematically, in line with the research questions, aims and objectives. The chapter also looked at the methods adopted for data collection from the field. The next chapter will capture the summary of the research findings, draw conclusions from the work, suggest and give plausible recommendations from the entire study.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Overview

The chapter prior to this focussed of the presentation and discussion of data gathered from the field. Critical attention was given to analyses from the field findings. This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the entire research work, highlighting the grounds for drawing conclusions based on the findings. It also captures plausible recommendations from the researcher towards future study, research and investigations, to ensure that the optimum benefits are harnessed for the betterment and improvement of the problem under study.

5.2 Summary

The study sought to, with a retrospective look, delve into ancient traditional rites such as the puberty rites as a socio-religious remedy for contemporary preparation and formation of young people for adult Christian life, with an eye toward a future of well defined, refined and integrated formation pattern for the young Akan Catholic Christian with an eye on the sacrament of confirmation among Akan Catholic.

Generally, the study was designed to delve into understanding the African traditional worldview, with its philosophical and traditional religious systems, and the influence it has on the individual's life and that of the traditional African community. This sought to find out whether the African traditional religion could serve as a soil for the synchronization of the Christian message. This attempt would enable the researcher to make recommendations to improve upon the situation of young Akan Christian people who have little or no knowledge of their culture and cultural practices, and as a result look on some of religio-cultural practices

with disdain. This would also go to expose the implications of such a disposition for further research.

Specifically, the research delved into understanding puberty rites among Akan and how the rites served to prepare the young Akan individual for mature and responsible adult life. By so doing, the work looked at ascertaining lessons, values and impact thereof in the Akan puberty rites for Christian adult initiation, the sacrament of confirmation.

The population and sample was made up of selected chiefs and queen mothers, elderly women, palace courtiers such as linguists, Catholic Priests and Catechists and scholars of Akan indigenous culture and studies. These comprised the twenty-seven respondents couched from some selected Akan communities from Bono, Asante, Fante, Ahanta and Wassa speaking areas. The research instrument used in gathering data was through structured and semi-structured individual and group interviews and discussions, employing a participant observation methodology.

The study, therefore, expounds the intellectual inquiry into the phenomenon and presents findings and outcomes from reviews and interviews, looking at how ideas were analysed and synthesized into the conceptual framework. The study also presents findings and analyses from the data gathered from the field. The findings from interviews are from discourses with some Akan Traditional leaders, experts in the study of African Traditional Religion, African Studies and African Cultural Studies, Catholic Priests, religious ministers and lay Christians.

5.3 Conclusion

The ongoing discourse has revealed that culture sums up a people's life, their philosophies and convictions, practices and rites, beliefs and religion; it is a way of life by which people learn to live in a particular community. The study also underscored that religion plays very central role

in indigenous African society in that religious beliefs control areas and facets of people's life. Ritual practices, which are integral part of indigenous African culture, have great social and religious role and place in the community. Traditional rites, rituals and ceremonies all have attendant laws and guidelines by which traditional adherents are connected to the supernatural beings and forces that form part of their worldview.

The research makes it clear that the role of traditional African cultural education, closing generational gap between the old and the young adults, is gradually losing out. But tradition is unavoidable and indispensable. Rites of passage, which celebrate and initiate the transitional periods in an African's life, are moments of education to teach and learn the norms, values and lessons in the ritual moments for identity formation, as a person. They serve to socialise and institutionalise the individual into the new stage of life attained in the community.

The Akans of Ghana perform rites and rituals to mark the various stages in life. Puberty rite, a rite of initiation into adulthood for young girls, are one of such rites. Inter alia, the puberty rite provides a distinct and guiding channel of moving from one phase in life to another of great and higher responsibility, confirming the order and importance of values in the community, mirroring a standardized pattern of personal development one can aspire to and attaining each stage, assess and examine one's maturation against that of the community. Akan initiation rites connect the individual to the community and in turn to the larger and more powerful spiritual realm. The rites provide the Akan with the foundation of his or her being; the foundation for his or her identity. Puberty rites signalled the Akans' approval of a young woman reaching the age of responsibility, fecundity and service in community. These rites had great and lasting effects on those who underwent them; they were avenues to mould and educate the youngsters in preparation for their new role in life and in the community.

We gather from the study that the rites of puberty, among Akans, give a deep understanding of reality, teaching and giving meaning to values that the Akan holds dear and cherishes. Though, there are great lessons that could be harnessed from this rite as an indigenous knowledge system, some Christian adolescent young women and girls would not perform the rites these days because they consider the rites or certain aspects in it to be unchristian and out of vogue. The church can thus, integrate the lessons into her catechesis for Christian adult initiation. Such integration will give the Akan a greater sense of the church's acknowledgement and acceptance of a religio-cultural practice that does not undermine Christian faith, Biblical or ecclesial teachings. This will make a conviction that the Christian faith is not antagonistic to the African to Matteo Ricci and the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, the study has revealed that it is unwholesome traditional religion, only aiming at destroying and abolishing traditional beliefs and practices. Taking cue from the advice to persuade people to change their customs, norms and values as long as they are not contradictory to religion and morality.³⁵³ This goes to suggest that there is no point denying any religio-cultural practice of people; instead the church can and should accommodate and help integrate practices that do not undermine the Christian faith or biblical teachings.

5.4 Recommendation

From the research so far, the following recommendations should be considered;

Policy-makers and researchers must consider and reconsider the religio-cultural aspects of African life, bringing on board fresh and innovative ideas that are beneficial to the African and the African society, customizing programs aimed at maintaining the status quo of African life,

³⁵³ Andrew Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China (1542-1742)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 185.

introducing principles that will contribute to the advancement and development of the African community.

To enhance and foster a good integration of religio-cultural values and tradition into Christianity and Christian practices and beliefs, it is expedient to introduce academic programs and curriculum that focus on the understanding and appreciation of a good marriage between Christianity and African traditional religion to make Christianity much meaningful and appreciated to the traditional and converted African. Such programs could be introduced into the curricula of basic schools, Senior High Schools, universities and other tertiary educational institutes, seminaries and centres of human formation and developments. A step could even be advanced towards this venture by establishing centres in universities, seminaries and other educational institutes to promote the learning, understanding and appreciation of the indigenous traditional African values and how they could be integrated into mission religions such as Christianity.

The traditional African worldview is a challenging issue to Christians. The missionary Christianity was powerful enough to endure and meet the traditional African's religious vitality and demands. We can therefore say that Christianity propagated by the missionaries did not sink well into the religiosity of the African.³⁵⁴ For this reason, there is the need for purposeful discipling programs aimed at helping people to imbibe and incorporate the Christian values and tradition, while not doing away with the authentic African values that are not at variance with the Christian message. This is because the 'African Renaissance', which is advocated by many African minds and elites, is, unfortunately, glazed with Afrocentrism, which does not auger for the Christian formation of African people. People who embrace and profess Christ must be encouraged to develop in Him and to love their authentic traditional values; grounded in a true

³⁵⁴ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 233.

Christian spirituality, built and secured on Christ, the solid Rock, equally identified in the culture and tradition of the people.

Historically, rites and ritualistic practices have been composite and essential part of Akan life at every point in time. It must be noted that modernization has engendered, favourably, knowledge and appreciation of other cultures. It must also be noted that the Akan is unique and diverse; his/her ways of relating to the world is unique and distinct unto him/her. There must be the recognition that an awareness of one's identity is crucial and indispensable to decisions that will eventually affect that person. There is no challenging the question that, as a people, there should be the need to adapt and adjust to development. There is the need for a definition of what development is for the African, as an individual and as a member of a community. Whatever the definition may be, development should not neglect or reject tradition and traditional practices but a blended or combined part, intertwining interlocking and interspersing the old wisdom and knowledge with the new for posterity and the future. Life is not an imitation of other people. An awareness and knowledge of one's identity allows one to look and consider how to relate to issues and situations, specifically as Akans.

Though many look on rites and rituals of passage as antiquated and old-fashioned traditional and cultural events, with no relevance and meaning to contemporary times, in modern day multicultural milieu, it is ever more expedient to maintain, guard and protect the identity and nature of authentic Akan culture and tradition. With increasing westernization, globalization and acculturation of Africa toward foreign patterns and standards, it appears that many Africans are neglecting and rejecting old practices and traditional rites of passage. It is worth remembering or recognizing the values in these religio-cultural heritage, translating and relating them into contemporary lives of African Christians and for that matter African Catholics.

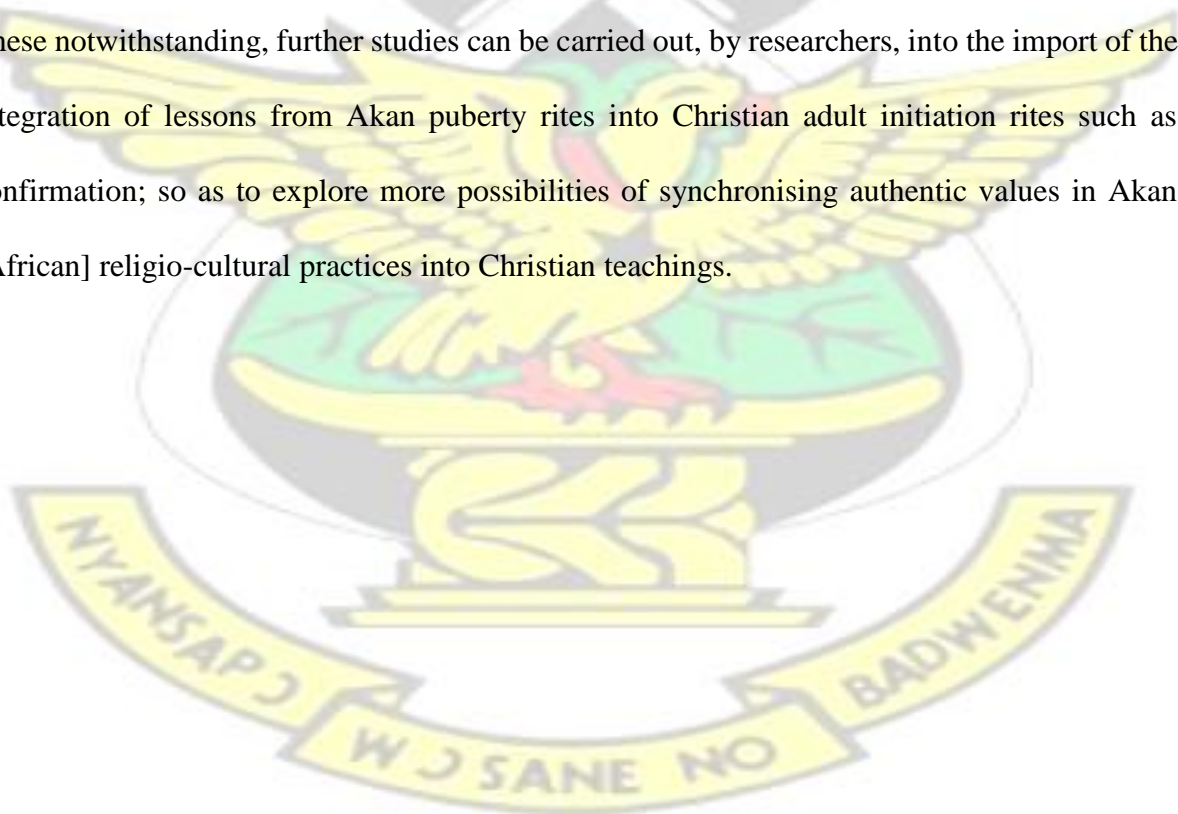
It must also be noted that society is made up of both the male and female genders; these genders are opposite and complementary. An attention on just one of the genders will be to have a problem half-solved. The Akans have it that *__woretu 4kra fo no na woretu m4m4ne nso fo'*. This is to wit; while advising the cat, one must not forget to equally advise the salted fish. Therefore, even though, the rites of puberty among Akans is solely for young girls, the values and lessons the rite seeks to espouse are equally beneficial to the young male folks. The values of chastity, hard work, honesty, fidelity, valour, respect, cleanliness, etc., are all essential for the development of the young boy into a responsible mature adult. Men and women have and play complementary roles in the society. Thus, the values could also go for the young boys. For example, while the puberty rite teaches and helps the young girl to abstain from sexual immoralities, it is equally necessary to teach and encourage young male adults in the community to avoid unduly pestering young girls for sexual relationships; that as young boys the consequences of such unwholesome relationship is not pleasant and has repercussions on the individual and the entire community.

In traditional Akan socio-cultural setup, it is the responsibility of a man to work hard to take care of himself and his family. A lazy man is no one's favourite. Many Akan families would proudly marry off their daughter to hard working, respectable men. For this reason, the young men would also have to be taught the spirit of hard work and diligence to mature into responsible hard working men who will be able to work to cater for their wives, children and all other responsibilities that comes with their attainment of sociological maturity. This, will help curb the breeding menace of, predominantly, young boys running after *__quick money'*, popularly known as *__sakawa'* and that comes with it issues such as murder, bloody rituals and human sacrifices, among others.

In most Christian adult initiation classes, the classes are held for both young men and women. The education of the youth, in this regard, should not be limited to only one gender; it must go for both young men and women. The lessons and values from the Akan puberty rites, when integrated into the catechesis of the Christian initiation rites will help both genders to know and understand their traditional responsibilities and expectations in the community to help them grow and mature into responsible adults. The emphasis here is on both males and females. Though, in the traditional system, the rite is for only young girls, the effort at inculcating the lessons and values in the rite should not be limited only to the young girls; the young boys must also have their share of it to make them mature responsibly to complement the women. This then suggests an attempt at finding solution to issues, such as the high rise of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, suicide, abortion, disrespect for the elderly, disrespect for honesty and fidelity in all forms of relationships (social, marital, economic), which affect the entire society, regardless of gender. It is important to educate young men on sexual morality whiles doing same for the young women. To educate the young women alone to be chaste till they undergo the rite or till they are married, without giving corresponding education to the young men is to give an incomplete solution to a problem such as teenage pregnancy, to be solved or addressed. On this, it must be recommended that there must be efforts at building good Christian homes. The home is the child's Bible from where he/she is first socialised and learns the values for life. Sarpong, in an interview, opined that there should be special catechesis, developed for the young adults, addressing their issues and concerns. This should be done employing modern means of communication such as drama, appropriate videos, etc. Even though, some respondents were of the view that the civics and educational curricula should take it up to educate young people to be responsible, some respondents were also of the view that 'experts' should be brought in during the catechism to teach and help with the impartation of the lessons and values in such religio-cultural practices. From the study, it was gathered that confirmation

was administered at the ‘age of reasoning’, when it is believed that the person is maturing. It should be ideal that the rich and authentic values and lessons in the puberty rite should be integrated into the catechism sessions or classes. This would enhance the understanding and personality of the young Christian adult to understand and imbibe the values of moral uprightness, avoiding juvenile immorality. It could be deduced that if there are many good young adult Christians in a particular community, their lives may influence positively on other people in the community. This, would give a practical touch to the instructional sessions organised for the rite of Christian adult initiation, making the young man and woman a person of his/her culture and tradition. Again, it will help both the young men and women to grow into responsible adults, knowing how to deal with and handle each other, as complementary genders.

These notwithstanding, further studies can be carried out, by researchers, into the import of the integration of lessons from Akan puberty rites into Christian adult initiation rites such as confirmation; so as to explore more possibilities of synchronising authentic values in Akan [African] religio-cultural practices into Christian teachings.



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APPENDICES

Interview Questions

In a bid to seek for information for this research the following questions were asked;

- What is puberty Rite among the Akans?
- Do we still have puberty Rites or Does Puberty Rite still exist?
- How was Puberty Rite in the olden days?
- Has there been any changes/modifications or challenges to the puberty rites?
- What was the reason/rationale behind the celebration of the puberty rit ▪ What was the effect of the puberty rite on the initiand and the community?
- What are the values that the Akan puberty rite seek to pursue?
- What is kyiribra? How effective is/was it?
- Many Akan youth or adolescents do not undergo the puberty rite these days. What, in your opinion, is contributing to this?
- How did western missionaries who worked in Akan communities relate with indigenous resources of rite of passage, especially the Akan puberty rite?
- What is the sacrament of confirmation in the Catholic sense?
- What benefits are derived from the sacrament of confirmation by the recipient?
- What, in your view, are the challenges facing the catechumen, in relation to the catechism of the sacrament of confirmation today viz-a-viz Akan personality/ character formation in the community?
- Could there be a synchronisation of the lessons/values from Akan puberty rites with the sacrament of confirmation?

Interviewees

No.	NAME	STATUS/OCCUPATION	DATE
1	Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong	Emeritus Archbishop of Kumasi Catholic Diocese, an African theologian and an Anthropologist.	22/03/2017
2	Msgr. George Kwame Kumi	A Catholic Priest and the Vicar General of Sunyani Diocese	12/04/2017
3	Rev. Fr. Dr. Peter Oppong Kumi	A Catholic Priest, a Biblical Scholar and the Chaplain of the Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre	12/04/2017
4	Rev. Fr. Dr. Anthony Naah	A Catholic Priest, a moral theologian and a lecturer at St. Gregory Provincial Seminary, Parkoso	17/03/2017
5	Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Obeng Cudjoe	A Catholic Priest, a student of sociology (University of Ghana, Legon) and a visiting lecturer at St. Gregory Provincial Seminary, Parkoso	17/03/2017
6	Nana Efua Ahinma II	Paramount Queen mother of Sekondi Traditional Area and an Anglican	19/08/2017
7	Nana Yaa Nyamaa Apoduo II	Paramount Queen mother of Sunyani Traditional Area and a Roman Catholic	02/08/2017
8	Nana Gyamiah	Twafohemaa of Badu Traditional Area, An educationist and a Roman Catholic	01/08/2017
9	Nana Aba Esuon	The Queen mother of Diabenekrom, a businesswoman and a Roman Catholic	02/09/2017
10	Nana Dei Nyantakyi	Chief of Buorkrukruwa, Bechem, a teacher and a Catechist at St. Peter's Catholic Church, Fiapre	16/07/2017
11	Nana Akwasi Akuoko	The Nifahene of Kwamo traditional area and a Catholic at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Kwamo	21/11 2016
12	Nana Korang	Abusupanyin of Fiapre, a retired teacher and the senior Catechist at St. Peter's Catholic Church, Fiapre	13/04/2017
13	Mena Ama Kaya	Obaapanyin in charge of traditional rituals for women in Ketan	20/08/2017

14	Nana Akosua Tawiah	Obaapanyin in charge of traditional rituals for women in Badu	10/08/2017
15	Nana Nketsiaba	A linguist to the deceased queen mother of Ketan and a Roman Catholic	20/08/2017
16	Maame Aba Ntsifua	A linguist to the queen mother of Ahanta Agona Nkwanta and a Roman Catholic	20/07/2017
17	Maame Adwoa Boah	Obaapanyin at Nnomabo-Nsanfo and a Roman Catholic	24/08/2017
18	Maame Eturba Esuon	Obaapanyin at Nnomabo-Nsanfo and an Anglican	24/08/2017
19	Rose Kyei Yamoah	A teacher, a Catholic marriage counselor, Laity council chairperson, Sunyani Catholic Diocese	16/07/2017
20	Christiana Domie	A retired SSNIT worker, a marriage counselor for Sunyani Catholic Diocese	17/07/2017
21	Esther Munufie	A nurse, a lecturer of Adolescent Reproductive Health at Ntotroso Nurses' Training College, and a Roman Catholic	16/07/2017
22	Ama Owusua Fordjour	A worker at Ministry of Tourism, Sunyani, and a Roman Catholic, Parish secretary to Catholic Organisation for Social and Religious Advancement (COSRA)	16/07/2017
23	Dr. Charles Oti Boateng (PhD)	A parishner at KNUST Catholic chaplaincy, chairman of Vocations committee and an Extraordinary Eucharistic minister, KNUST Catholic chaplaincy, the Immediate past retired chair of Agro-forestry, KNUST	07/08/2017
24	Emmanuel Swanzy-Krah	ketan Nsona Abusuapanyin, a member of ketan <i>besuon</i> , a civil Engineer, a Roman Catholic Church	20/08/2017
25	Bernard Kofi Godomey	A PhD student of Art Education, KNUST, a Roman Catholic	12/09/2017
26	Korkor Ocansey	A PhD student of African Cultural Studies (Art Education- KNUST)	12/09/2017
27	Noble Ahiaklo-Kuz	MPhil student, Art Education, KNUST, a Roman Catholic	13/09/2017

TABLE OF FIGURES



Fig. 1
An elderly woman, and an officiant preparing the puberty rites, early in the morning



Fig. 2
The first ritual of adorning the for initiate(s) with beads



Fig. 3
The 'face washing' moment of an initiate



Fig. 4
An initiate scrambling, with the officiant, for coins basin of concocted water



Fig. 5
A procession of the officiant and the initiates, after the initiates have been given the ritual bath and have been dressed



Fig. 6
An initiate being lowered, three times, on to a spread mat, by the officiant



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 depicting the anoka of the initiate by the officiant



Fig. 9
A first born son being placed on the laps of an initiate, who sits on a mat



Fig. 10
A first born daughter being placed on the laps of an initiate, who sits on a mat



Fig. 11
New initiates sitting on their stools, after the puberty rituals have been performed



Fig. 12
New initiates being congratulated by their father, after the puberty rites have been done



Fig. 13
The researcher with Nana Aba Esuon II
(The Queenmother of Diabenekrom)



Fig. 14
A Catholic Bishop administering the Sacrament
of Confirmation to a young girl



Fig.15
The researcher with Mena Ama Kaya, a ninety-four (94) year old woman from the royal house of Ketan, a suburb of Sekondi in the western region, who has been an officiant of the puberty rite in ketan for about fifty years (50).



Fig. 16

The Researcher with Archbishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong, at his residence on 22/03/2017



Fig. 17

Nana Gyamiah (Dr. Mrs. Lucy Acheampong, Ph.D)
(Twafohemaa of Badu Traditional Area)



Fig. 18

Nana Yaa Nyamaa Apoduo II
(Sunyanimanhemma)



SEKONDI TRADITIONAL AREA
AHANTA CALENDAR 2017

TRIPLE WEEK CALCULATIONS

Adae	Sun. – 11 th Dec.	Sat. – 17 th Dec.	2016
Edim	Sun. – 18 th Dec.	Sat. – 24 th Dec.	2016
Ayenfo	Sun. – 25 th Dec.	Sat. – 31 st Dec.	2016
Adae	Sun. – 1 st Jan.	Sat. – 7 th Jan.	2017
Edim	Sun. – 8 th Jan.	Sat. – 14 th Jan.	2017
Ayenfo	Sun. – 15 th Jan.	Sat. – 21 st Jan.	2017
Adae	Sun. – 22 nd Jan.	Sat. – 28 th Jan.	2017
Edim	Sun. – 29 th Jan.	Sat. – 4 th Feb.	2017
Ayenfo	Sun. – 5 th Feb.	Sat. – 11 th Feb.	2017
Adae	Sun. – 12 th Feb.	Sat. – 18 th Feb.	2017
Edim	Sun. – 19 th Feb.	Sat. – 25 th Feb.	2017
Ayenfo	Sun. – 26 th Feb.	Sat. – 4 th Mar.	2017
Adae	Sun. – 5 th Mar.	Sat. – 11 th Mar.	2017
Edim	Sun. – 12 th Mar.	Sat. – 18 th Mar.	2017
Ayenfo	Sun. – 19 th Mar.	Sat. – 25 th Mar.	2017
Adae	Sun. – 26 th Mar.	Sat. – 1 st Apr.	2017
Edim	Sun. – 2 nd Apr.	Sat. – 8 th Apr.	2017
Ayenfo	Sun. – 9 th Apr.	Sat. – 15 th Apr.	2017
Adae	Sun. – 16 th Apr.	Sat. – 22 nd Apr.	2017
Edim	Sun. – 23 rd Apr.	Sat. – 29 th Apr.	2017
Ayenfo	Sun. – 30 th Apr.	Sat. – 6 th May	2017
Adae	Sun. – 7 th May	Sat. – 13 th May	2017
Edim	Sun. – 14 th May	Sat. – 20 th May	2017
Ayenfo	Sun. – 21 st May	Sat. – 27 th May	2017
Adae	Sun. – 28 th May	Sat. – 3 rd June	2017

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Fig. 19

Edim	Sun. – 24 th Dec.	Sat. – 30 th Dec.
Ayenfo	Sun. – 31 st Dec.	Sat. – 6 th Jan.
Adae	Sun. – 7 th Jan.	Sat. – 13 th Jan.
Edim	Sun. – 14 th Jan.	Sat. – 20 th Jan.
Ayenfo	Sun. – 21 st Jan.	Sat. – 27 th Jan.

FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS

1. Igyapa Festival	Adae Benada	9 th
2. Asafua Festival	Adae Kwesida	18 th
3. Kete Festival	Edim Fida	30 th
4. Ebisa Kyen Festival	Adae Kwesida	9 th
5. Bombae Festival	Adae Yawda	1 st
6. Ekyen Kofi Festival	Adae Fida	1 st
7. Ekyen Paitoo Festival	Adae Yawda	
8. Saman Kwanmu Festival	Edim Fida	
9. Yam Festival	Edim Fida	
10. Apatwa / Kundum Festival	Adae Benada	
11. Kundum Closing	Adae Memenda	
12. Edim Kese	Edim Kwesida	
13. Ekyen Dadzie	Edim Fida	

Fig. 20

Fig. 18 and Fig. 19 showing Adae, Edim and Ayenfo days on the Ahanta Calendar for 2016/2017



Fig. 21
Eprow



Fig. 22
Esutsen



Fig. 23
Nsaaman, 1krasika and ebea beads



Fig.24
Sasaa and 1krasika beads



Fig. 25
Nsaaman, 1krasika and ebea beads tied with the fur of a sheep