1996

Understanding the Folk Islam of the Dagbani-Speaking People: a Prerequisite to Evangelism in North Ghana

Sampson Kenneth Twumasi

Andrews University

This research is a product of the graduate program in Doctor of Ministry DMin at Andrews University. Find out more about the program.

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin

Part of the Missions and World Christianity Commons

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/136
Thank you for your interest in the Andrews University Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses.

Please honor the copyright of this document by not duplicating or distributing additional copies in any form without the author’s express written permission. Thanks for your cooperation.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®
ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE FOLK ISLAM OF THE DAGBANI-
SPEAKING PEOPLE: A PREREQUISITE
TO EVANGELISM IN NORTH GHANA

by

Sampson Kenneth Kofi Twumasi

Adviser: Bruce Lee Bauer
Title: UNDERSTANDING THE FOLK ISLAM OF THE DAGBANI-SPEAKING PEOPLE: A PREREQUISITE TO EVANGELISM IN NORTH GHANA

Name of researcher: Sampson Kenneth Kofi Twumasi

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Bruce Lee Bauer, D.Miss.

Date completed: June 1996

Problem

At the beginning of this century Islam was confined to some geographical areas in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Dr. Samuel Zwemer in his writings claimed that Islam was a dying religion because it had within it "the germs of death." This claim is no longer valid as Islam has experienced a resurgence and grown proportionately well in other parts of the world.

Islam, along with animism, has gained roots in Africa, especially in North and West Africa. Both religions have grown tremendously among some of the people groups in North Ghana where Islam is mixed with hundreds of superstitions and traditions that have gripped the minds of the people for centuries. The Seventh-day Adventist Church
in North Ghana has not found a point of contact to dialogue with these Muslims and animists in this area. After thirty years of laboring for souls, the SDA Church has about three thousand members, of which the majority are from southern Ghana.

The need to study and understand this development of Islam and folk religions in North Ghana is very important. Only when we understand this phenomenon can we devise a workable strategy for both the laity and the clergy to contextualize and use it in their witnessing for Christ. A strategy to win Dagomba Muslims in North Ghana has long remained elusive to Christian missions. This dissertation is a response to this problem so that the findings from this project and the suggested ideas and recommendations may serve as a manual for aspiring workers to North Ghana.

Method

Orthodox Islam and folk customs have made the SDA Church work in North Ghana very hard. This is because the SDA Church has not studied the type of Islam that is practiced in North Ghana. SDA Church missionaries to North Ghana stereotyped this Islam as the type that is practiced in the Middle East.

This project has used field interviews to identify this unique Islam, its characteristics, and factors that hinder SDA Church growth. As a result of the survey, twelve strategies have been suggested for both the laity and the clergy.
Results

After years of unsuccessful experimentation with man-made and quick-fix methods and plans, this project is calling the SDA Church in North Ghana back to the basics—to adopt Christ’s methods of soul-winning and witnessing. This is the only divine blueprint for successful soul-winning in Muslim evangelism.

The strategy is developed to encapsulate both the laity and the clergy so that they can work together in winning Muslims for Christ in North Ghana.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

UNDERSTANDING THE FOLK ISLAM OF THE DAGBANI-
SPEAKING PEOPLE: A PREREQUISITE
TO EVANGELISM IN NORTH GHANA

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Sampson Kenneth Kofi Twumasi
June 1996
UNDERSTANDING THE FOLK ISLAM OF THE DAGBANI-SPEAKING PEOPLE: A PREREQUISITE TO EVANGELISM IN NORTH GHANA

A project report presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry

by

Sampson Kenneth Kofi Twumasi

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Bruce Lee Bauer, Chairperson
Walter B. T. Douglas
Erich W. Baumgartner

Werner K. Vyhmeister, Dean
SDA Theological Seminary

May 20, 1996
Date approved
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ................................ vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .......................... viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................... ix

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ............................... 1

  Purpose of the Project ...................... 2
  Justification of the Project ............... 3
  Methodology of the Project ............... 5
    Documents/Literature Review ............ 5
    Ethnographic Field Interviews ......... 6
  Limitations of the Project ............... 6
  Definition of Terms ....................... 7

II. THE FOUNDATION OF ISLAM IN GHANA ....... 9

  Introduction .............................. 9
  Islam in Ancient Ghana .................... 10
  Prehistoric Contacts ..................... 15
  Islam in Modern Ghana .................... 19
  Summary .................................. 22

III. THE BACKGROUND OF THE DAGOMBA
    PEOPLE OF NORTH GHANA .................. 24

  Introduction .............................. 24
  History of the Dagomba ................... 25
  Oral Traditions of Origins
    of the Dagomba .......................... 27
    The Culture of the Dagomba ............. 29
  The Socioeconomic Background of
    the Dagomba People ..................... 30
  The Religion of the Dagomba ............. 32
    Ancestor Worship ....................... 32
    Witchcraft ............................. 34
    Magic ................................. 34
  The Dagomba Gods ......................... 35
  Islam in Dagomba .......................... 36
  Summary .................................. 39

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
IV. GENERAL PERSPECTIVE ON FOLK ISLAM

Introduction
An Overview of Orthodox Islam
Arabia Before Mohammed
Folk Islam in Africa
The Five Beliefs and Practices in Islam
The Shahada
The Selat
The Zekat
The Sawn
The Haij
The Two Major Divisions of Islam
Folk Islam
Characteristics of Folk Islam
It is Dynamic
It is Flexible and Compromising
It Endorses Power and Magic
Other Forms of Mixed Religion
Mixed Religion in Secular Areas
Mixed Religion in the Biblical Times
Summary

V. DAGOMBA FOLK ISLAM

Introduction
Mixed Islam in North Ghana
Status of Christianity and Islam in North Ghana
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Growth in North Ghana
Motivation for Research
Tradition
Polytheism
Lay Religion
Simple Initiation
Superstition
Ritualistic Practices
Selected Pillars Observed
Non-combative Attitude
Family Religion
Ancestral Worship
Summary

VI. ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT EITHER STIMULATE OR HINDER SDA CHURCH GROWTH IN NORTH GHANA

Introduction
Interview Instrument
Mock Interviews
Categories of People Interviewed
Interview Questions for Dagomba SDAs

Questions Used to Interview
Dagomba Muslims
Question 1
Question 2
Question 3
Question 4
Question 5
Question 6
Question 7
Question 8
Question 9
Question 10

Selected Questions to Past
and Present Leaders
Question 1
Question 2
Question 3
Question 4
Question 5
Question 6
Question 7
Question 8
Question 9

Factors Contributing to Minimal
Growth of Seventh-day Adventism
in North Ghana
No SDA Theology of Winning Muslims
Lack of Long-Term Missionaries
No Church-Planting Initiatives
Extensive Use of Foreign Materials
for Witnessing
The Strength of Islam and
Traditional Beliefs
Negative Attitude toward Muslims
The Church Dealt with Individuals
Instead of Whole Families
or Groups
SDAs Dealt with Orthodox Islam
Instead of Folk Islam
Summary

VII. A SUGGESTED APPROACH TO EVANGELIZE
THE DAGOMBA MUSLIMS

Introduction
Christ's Methods in the Book
of Acts
Strategy #1: Communicate the Gospel
in the Native Language
Strategy #2: Lay Leadership is
Imperative to Growth
Strategy #3: Mingle with the People
LIST OF TABLES

1. Attitude Toward the Koran .............. 102
2. Perception Toward Christian Teachings .... 106
3. Specific Work and Years of Service ....... 112
4. Strongest Influence Against Soul-Winning ... 114
5. Member Witnessing Strategy ............ 115
6. Attitude Toward SDA Church Doctrines .... 116
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CGC  Central Ghana Conference
LTC  Lay Training Center
MGM  Midwest Ghana Mission
NGM  North Ghana Mission
SGC  South Ghana Conference
SWP  Sequential Witnessing Programs
VVC  Valley View College
WAUM West Africa Union Mission
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Now thank we all our God, With heart and hands and voices, Who wondrous things hath done, In whom His world rejoices; Who, from our mothers' arms Hath blessed us on our way, with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

I want to express my gratitude to the Lord Almighty for guiding me throughout my academic life. It is His grace that has sustained me thus far and His grace will be with me in the days ahead.

The saying, "one actor cannot make a play" applies to this dissertation since it was through the help of several "actors" that I gained the needed sense of direction, support, encouragement, and motivation to pursue further studies. This is my "thank you" to all such people. As they say in Ghana, "Esie ne Kagya nni aseda" (the hillock and Kagya plant need not exchange of thanks).

There are certain people and institutions that I want to mention for I am greatly indebted to them:

Dr. Bruce Bauer, my chair, for his personal interest and guidance in this project. He stepped in to direct this dissertation after the departure of my first chair, Dr. Reinder Bruinsma, from Andrews University to the Trans-European Division. Dr. Bauer's exemplary life, his interest
in the education of Africans for mission service, and his personal concern for me outside the classroom have always encouraged and challenged me. I will never forget the many times that he held my hands and prayed for me, my family, my education and the Muslims of Ghana. Bravo, Dr. Bauer.

Dr. Bruinsma, my first adviser, for his insight and editorial skills that laid the foundations for this dissertation. His departure was a blow to me, but the solid foundation he laid became the cornerstone for this dissertation. May the Lord give him success in his new appointment.

Dr. Gottfried Oosterwal who suggested this topic and challenged me to look into the area of folk Islam. His years and interest in mission service, coupled with unparalleled scholarship, have always made him a role model for me. Dank u, Dr. Oosterwal.

Dr. Walter B. T. Douglas, member of the committee, whose stimulating classes in Christianity and World Religions opened my eyes to the challenges in Islam. Dr. Douglas' insistence upon quality academic work and encouragement to students from overseas, inspired me immensely. Since he officiated at my wedding with Felicia at his church, The All Nations Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Dr. Douglas has become a father, a pastor, and a spiritual mentor. Thanks, WBTD.

Dr. Eric Baumgartner who took part in the oral
defense. Thanks for your readiness and willingness to participate when there were other assignments before you.

Dr. Jerome Thayer in the development of the questionnaire.

Mrs. Jan Higgins for her constant phone calls to remind me of the deadlines and due dates that helped me to meet all the requirements for graduation.

Bonnie Proctor, the dissertation secretary, Ann Oyerly, Diane Kobor, and Beverly Pottle for their editorial assistance that saved me from a lot of embarrassment.

The Ghanaian community in North America especially Pastors H. V. A. Kuma, S.K. Pipim, Kwabena Donkor, and Dr. Joseph Addai and Dr. B. Owusu Antwi for their suggestions, criticism, and many detailed comments that enriched this project.

My friends, Emmanuel and Esther Osei, for their tireless efforts that made it possible for me to go to Bekwai where I began my theological education. I still remember Pastor Osei's captivating words to me in 1980, "Kofi, bra asofodwuma no mu, na besua nwoma, na wo betumi efiri se Onyankopon na afre wo."

My class colleagues, David Ameyaw (together we start, together we finish), Dan Oteng and Enoch Affum, who tutored me in the use of Word Perfect. Their constant coaching and guidance over the phone saved me hundreds of dollars and headaches.
My long-standing friends and supporters—Paul and Marian Isaac (they called every week to encourage me), Elsie Gebhard, Isaiah and Gracie Williams, and Dr. Lindsay Thomas Jr. whose initial financial help gave me a strong footing.

My parents, Moses and Sarah Kwakye, my brother, Moses Jr., and sisters, Becky, Martha, and Ruth, for always standing by me.

My wife, Yaa Felicia, whose prayers, hard work, and constant support contributed to the completion of this project. She has always wondered if I would ever finish this dissertation.

My children, Kofi and Kojo, who patiently endured my absence from home whilst I worked on this project. I am sorry this project took some precious hours that belonged to them. The Lord will reward them.

Sandra White and her staff at the James White Library who helped me acquire some out-of-print books through other libraries. I am so grateful.

The Seminary Financial Aid Committee and Swallen Scholarship Fund for their financial assistance.

Above all, I thank the Lord for "putting me into the ministry." 1 Tim 1:12.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The spread of the Islamic faith is undoubtedly a great challenge confronting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in its efforts to witness to all people. This is true of my own country, Ghana, and particularly true in North Ghana. Little has been done to bring the SDA message to the various ethnic groups there.

Even during the church’s missionary thrust of the 1970s, the "Thousand Days of Reaping" in the 1980s, and the "Harvest 90" program, little was done to reach the Muslims in North Ghana. Evangelistic emphasis was placed instead on certain areas of Ghana where the SDA Church had already established a strong presence.

Between 1978 and 1986, I conducted a series of evangelistic campaigns in Ghana. A substantial number of Muslims expressed avid interest in the Seventh-day Adventist message. Yet few joined the church. From my own evangelistic experience, which has been augmented by the consensus of other laymen and pastors engaged in soul-winning among the Muslims, I observed that this minimal success of reaching Muslims in Ghana was due, in part, to our failure to understand the kind of Islam that is...
practiced in Ghana. In my pursuit of understanding and winning Muslims, I made a personal commitment of study so that I might better understand Ghana's "kramo," i.e., the Ghanaian Muslim who is winnable--if approached properly.

The above experience gave me the impetus for this study, with the hope that my findings may be the start of a dialogue on how to reach the hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Ghana. This is a part of the global strategy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church--to reach all peoples with the message.

**Purpose of the Project**

The prime purpose of this project was to:

1. Examine the history, culture, and socio-economic background of the Dagbani-speaking people of North Ghana

2. Study the unique blend of folk Islam and traditional beliefs of the Dagbani-speaking people in order to understand their worldview (This is a prerequisite to developing a Seventh-day Adventist soul-winning approach in North Ghana.)

3. Conduct interviews among selected Dagbani-speaking Adventists and non-Adventists, asking them to list contributing factors that they perceive as hindering the growth of Seventh-day Adventism among the Dagbanis

4. Review and examine the diverse approaches of other churches and groups in North Ghana, so as to
formulate a witnessing approach for the laymen and ministers in North Ghana that will be appropriate for evangelistic and personal witnessing (This approach will be based on contextualization of the unique gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.)

5. Stimulate within the leaders of all the fields in Ghana a realization of the need to introduce courses on understanding Muslims, and witnessing to them, at Valley View College.

Justification of the Project

There are over two million unreached Muslims in North Ghana, out of a total population of sixteen million people. These Muslims of North Ghana have, for a long time, been neglected and shunned, not only because of their religious preference for Islam and traditional beliefs, but also because Christianity has been erroneously regarded as a southern Ghana religion. This idea does not conform to God's principle of universal salvation to the entire human race.

Seventh-day Adventism is not only weak in North Ghana, it is virtually unknown or non-existent in several areas. The majority of members in the few Adventist churches that do exist are immigrants from the southern part of Ghana. These members, since the introduction of Seventh-day Adventism in North Ghana in 1950, have carried
with them their way of worship and style of witnessing which, until the present, has had little impact on the indigenous people. Unfortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist mission in North Ghana does not presently have an effective witnessing model for lay members and ministers to use as they minister to the indigenous people. The focus of efforts to win new members has usually been on the responsive immigrants who are already Christians of other denominations.

Public evangelism is therefore done at random, without any proper groundwork preceding it, and the turnout is poor. Dozens of noted evangelists and missionaries have been sent to North Ghana for missionary work. Coming from diverse cultures in Europe, the United States, and other parts of the world, they arrived without proper orientation to the cultural differences between themselves and the targeted indigenous people.

Demographic surveys pertaining to the differences in linguistic and tribal affinities have not been considered at the start of evangelistic work in North Ghana. In addition to these factors, efforts have not been made to concentrate on converting a winnable group that could be used as a bridge in reaching other people groups in North Ghana.

Personal observations and historical data indicate that the Seventh-day Adventist Church's traditional witnessing methods, which have been practiced successfully
in southern Ghana, have not met with substantial success in North Ghana. This necessitates a re-evaluation of the Adventist evangelistic methodology as practiced in North Ghana.

The Roman Catholics and Baptists, as well as some African Independent churches and other religious groups in North Ghana, have succeeded in planting churches with growing numbers. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North Ghana may possibly learn from their methods, cooperate with them in some projects, and devise improved contextualized approaches to be used by SDA lay people and ministers.

Methodology of the Project

Data for this project have been developed based on a literature review and ethnographic field interviews.

Documents/Literature Review

I have read and reviewed relevant material on the Dagomba of Ghana and the Islamic faith. These publications provided insights into the origin and background of the topic under review. Documentary films and video tapes also offered additional information on the socioeconomic background of the Dagomba people and Islam in Ghana.
Ethnographic Field Interviews

A structured format of questions was designed to interview selected persons as a means to:

1. Ascertain causes that are perceived as hindering the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Dagomba of North Ghana

2. Find out what the Seventh-day Adventist Church can do to attract Dagbanis to the church through outreach programs

3. Investigate and assess the approaches used by other denominations, such as the Roman Catholics, some Protestants, African Independent Churches, and Bible translation groups in North Ghana to see if we can possibly learn from their methods and cooperate with them in soul-winning work.

Limitations of the Project

This project has two apparent limitations. First, it is limited to only the Dagomba people and the Hanga, Tampulma, and some Gonja people who speak the Dagbani language around Tamale, Yendi, and the surrounding villages.

Second, since I have never worked in North Ghana among the Dagomba people, some of the information in this dissertation that helped me to develop the ideas advocated here has not been examined and so room is made for future testing and improvement.
Definition of Terms

I have purposely adopted certain contemporary terms, spellings, and pronunciations. This was done to communicate ideas adequately, and to ensure maximum clarity for the reader who may not be familiar with the Islamic faith or the situation in Ghana.

Alhaji: Has a dual meaning in the Ghanaian context. In standard use, it denotes a Muslim who has made the religious pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. In Ghanaian folklore, it can also represent a rich and influential Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and is imbued with magical powers to solve problems for people who come for consultation. A fee is normally charged for divination purposes.

Baraka: Special blessings or grace from Allah upon the faithful.

Dagbani: The predominant language spoken in North Ghana. Spoken in the markets and for trading purposes, it is also the language in which radio stations broadcast news.

Haij: The pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, which is an obligation for all Muslims (sometimes spelled "Hajj").

Kaafiri: Unbeliever, infidel.

Kramo: The Ashanti word for a practicing Muslim in Ghana.

Mullah: A Muslim who is learned in Islamic
theology and sacred law; Dagomba people referred to them as mallam.

**Muslim:** A person who believes in the Islamic faith. Muslim is used instead of Moslem.

**North Ghana Mission of Seventh-day Adventists:** The geographical territories of the northern, upper eastern, and upper western regions, and portions of the Volta Region north of the Asukawkaw and Volta rivers. It was established by the West Africa Union of Seventh-day Adventists, under the General Conference, in 1968.
CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATION OF ISLAM IN GHANA

Introduction

It would be very difficult to develop a workable witnessing strategy to evangelize the various Islamic people groups in North Ghana without a proper knowledge of the history of Islam in Ghana. The level of Islamic impact in Ghana becomes rather complex when the reader is not aware in advance of whether the issue under discussion or review is about ancient or modern Ghana.¹

The extent of Islamic influence differed widely between ancient and modern Ghana. The ancient Ghana kingdom does not exist any longer since it was destroyed in the thirteenth century. Modern Ghana, which adopted the name in 1957 upon the attainment of its independence from the British, lies over one thousand miles from the original site of the former kingdom.

The history of modern Ghana dates as far back as

¹The Ghana empire was originally called Awkar. "Ghana" in Mande, the language of the Soninkes, meant "warrior king" or "war chief." It was the title used by the kings of Ghana. Another title was Kaya Magha, meaning "king of gold." Daniel Chu and Elliot Skinner, A Glorious Age in Africa (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 23, 24.
the fifteenth century A.D. It did not start from where the ancient Ghana empire left it. Because of this, little is known of the period between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. This has left a missing historical key element between the two kingdoms that makes it very difficult to construct and synthesize the limit of Islamic influence from the old Ghana to the new Ghana.

To eliminate such ambivalence, I attempt to give a brief overview of the history of Islam in both ancient and modern Ghana to give a clearer and more precise idea of the development of Islam in Ghana.

Islam in Ancient Ghana

In formulating an evangelistic approach for North Ghana, traditional beliefs and Islamic influence on certain ethnic groups in modern Ghana demand careful investigation and analytical examination. Over the years, certain underlying factors have managed to impact and integrate traditional beliefs and Islam fully as a way of life among certain people groups in Northern Ghana. Our success in understanding these factors will help the Christian church to assess the type of Ghanaian folk Islam and to devise a proper contextualized approach in its

---

1Peter Barker of Ghana Evangelism Committee has prepared more than 310 helpful pages of comprehensive data on the people of North Ghana, churches and organizations, literacy and Bible translation, and other vital statistics. See Peter Barker, Peoples, Languages and Religion in Northern Ghana (Accra, Ghana: Asempa Pub., 1986).
mission to the unreached Muslim groups.

Through written documents and oral traditions which have been preserved over the years, one gains insight into the Islamic culture, language, and level of civilization. These have developed as a result of contacts between Muslim North Africa, the Mediterranean world and Europe, and the people of the Sahara, the savanna, and the forest area of West Africa.

From the available sources, we gather that Islam in Ghana is not a recent religious phenomenon. Even though one can with certainty trace the origin and development of Islam in ancient Ghana, the same cannot be said of modern Ghana whose earliest historical records date back to the fifteenth century when the first contacts with the Europeans were made.

Over one thousand years have elapsed since Islam made its debut in ancient Ghana, carried by traders and travellers from North Africa who socialized and transacted business with the people of West Africa. During their trade in Ghana, they involved themselves in the socio-political and religious life of the people. Their contributions in all aspects of life to the people of Ghana were recognized by the reception and favor accorded

them. For instance, the kings of Ghana extended religious liberty and tolerance to these visiting Muslims. The rulers of Ghana made such a big accommodation that they "went so far as to provide a mosque in their own part of the city for those Muslims who came in to visit or do business with them."¹ Hiskett has quoted al-Bakri on the extent of the work and influence of the Muslims in the Ghana Empire:

The Muslims were none the less deeply involved in the life of the state and they served it as government officials, scribes, and in other roles where their literacy was useful to the [ancient] Ghanaian rulers. A number of them even became ministers of state in the Ghana government and served alongside their non-Muslim colleagues.²

The location of this ancient Ghana kingdom was then known to Muslim geographers and travellers as Bilad as-Sudan, the territory of the Black people south of the Sahara.

The exact origin and date of the foundation of this kingdom remain obscure and unknown. The reason is that the people did not write down their own history. Historians have had to rely on outside sources to write ancient Ghana's history. According to T. A. Osae and S. N. Nwabara, these outside sources do not throw sufficient light on the question of Ghana's origin. They have

written that "the Arabic scholars all wrote about Ghana when the kingdom had already entered its great period of prosperity."¹ Mahmoud Brelvi² has suggested some Jewish-Syrian immigrants from Cyrainica as its original founders in about 300 C.E.³

The general consensus is that the ancient Ghana empire was situated around the modern Islamic states of Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal.⁴ Old Ghana is believed to be "the first-known political state of the Western Sudan."⁵ It stretched from the river Senegal to the present location of Timbucktu. It was about 500 miles from east to west and 300 miles from north to south. It was rich in gold, salt, ostrich feathers, slaves, and other valuable merchandise that attracted North African traders who brought items like cloth, beads, glass, and dried dates to trade.

Ghana's strategic "middleman" position in trans-

¹T. A. Osae and S. N. Nwabara, A Short History of West Africa (London: University of London Press, 1973), 32. Al-Bakri and other historians who wrote about this kingdom did not visit it. They lived in Spain and obtained their information from traders and travellers who visited it.

²Mahmud Brelvi, Islam in Africa (Lahore, Pakistan: Din Muhammed Press, 1964), 364.

³C.E. means Common Era.

⁴Some historians have suggested that the present states of Senegal and Guinea lie at the original site of the Ghana empire. See Chu and Skinner, 17.

⁵Hiskett, 21.
Saharan trade between North Africa and the tropical rainforest of West Africa spurred economic, social, and religious growth. Adu Boahen has quoted Yaqut (1212-1229), the Islamic writer and traveller:

Ghana is a great town to the south of the Maghrib, adjacent to the land of the Sudan [i.e., of the Blacks]. Merchants meet in Ghana and from there one enters the arid wastes towards the land of Gold. Were it not for Ghana, this journey would be impossible, because the land of Gold is in a place isolated from the west in the land of the Sudan. From Ghana the merchants take positions on the way to the land of Gold.¹

At the peak of the kingdom of Old Ghana, the Muslim Sanhaja Berbers played a pivotal role in the dissemination of Islam within its borders, serving as "missionaries" par excellence. Adu Boahen has authenticated that the arrival and activities of these Muslim clerics, marabouts, and scholars or mallams caused the conversion to Islam to gather momentum. He writes:

These clerics, or learned men founded their own religious centers which attracted students from all parts of the Western Sudan and who on the completion of their studies and training went back to their own homes to win converts. Many of them went on lecture or missionary tours to convert people, while others became advisers to Sudanese kings on how to become effective rulers. Some clerics devoted a great deal of their time to writing books and instructions on all aspects of Islam for the education and conversion of people or for the purification and strengthening of Islam.²

This conglomeration of Islamic religious life and the process of Islamization are thought to have remained

¹Boahen, 19.
²Ibid., 12.
in existence until the thirteenth century, when the
kingdom of Ghana ceased to exist as an organized empire.

Prehistoric Contacts

At present, little is known of any pre-historic
contact between North and West Africans. Trading between
the two is believed to have evolved in the desert. The
time of this development is still unknown to historians,
due to the limited information available.

It was the introduction of the camel, which was
capable of transporting people and goods between West and
North Africa, that contributed to the voluminous Islamic
influx.\textsuperscript{1} New trading routes began to develop, linking
people within the geographical area. And Muslims, while
searching for gold and other forest products, chose to
settle permanently in Ghana. They built towns and
intermarried with the indigenous people. Their children
born to non-Muslim wives were brought up as Muslims. Both
extension and biological growth caused the numerical
growth of Muslims in Ghana as a result of the contact
between the two groups, the local people and the
newcomers.

In the Encyclopedia Britannica, we read that the
trans-Saharan trade and the new, improved routes under
Muslim dynasties stimulated "the growth there of internal

\textsuperscript{1}Bovill, 48-49. Bovill has also shown the
possibility of the camel being brought to North Africa by
the Romans as early as 46 B.C. See Bovill, 41-42.
trade, urbanization, and monarchical government. Certainly the control of trade, towns, and government in West Africa became increasingly Islamic in form."

The economic growth contributed to the expansion of Islam, establishing a solid base for the Islamic faith. For example,

1. Muslims used trade which they had monopolized a long time to encourage the spread of Arabic as a lingua franca.

2. Islamic dress habits followed the spread of Islam and boosted both the import trade in textiles and the local textile industries.

3. The introduction of Islam led to a great increase in Islamic learning and education in the Western Sudan, which in turn greatly encouraged the trade in paper, books, and manuscripts.²

Islam became prestigious in the sight of the indigenes of West Africa who in no short time either embraced or integrated some of its teachings in their traditional religion.

Before this contact, the people of Ghana were believed to be pagans from Soninke origins. The Soninke people were a group of related tribes. They spoke the Mande language. It came as no surprise that the trade

---


²Boahen, 3.
with the Berbers of North Africa exposed them to Islam and made them vulnerable to the process of Islamization. Levtzion\(^1\) has maintained that this geographical area became receptive to the seed of Mohammed's religion due to the patterns of trade and of political organizations that conditioned the spread of Islam.

As has been stated above, the influential positions held by the Muslims helped them in transmitting Islamic ideas to the people with whom they interacted. Levtzion\(^2\), in assessing the role of the chiefs in the spread of Islam, described them as "early recipients" who sought from the Muslims prayers, amulets, and news of conditions in other countries.

Muslims offered prayers for success in diverse manners. Talismans with Koranic passages were given to soldiers in tribal wars to make them resistant to bullets. Couples with infertility problems sought Muslim prayers in the hope of bearing children. The sick and the dying depended upon Islamic charms, amulets, and herbal concoctions for healing and strength. That Muslims were contacted for rain relief in times of drought by chiefs is attested by al-Bakri. He wrote about a pagan Malah chief

\(^{1}\)Nehemia Levtzion, "The Early States of the Western Sudan to 1500" in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, History of West Africa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 124.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
faced with drought who sought the prayers and sacrifices of the local priest without any success.

Then a Muslim promised that, if the King accepted Islam, he would pray for his relief. When the King agreed, the Muslim taught him "to recite some easy passages from the Koran, and instructed him in those religious obligations which no one can be excused of not knowing." On the following Friday, after the King had purified himself, the two set out to a nearby hill. All that night the Muslim prayed, emulated by the King.¹

From these accounts it appears that Muslim prayers and Koranic passages were used to demonstrate the omnipotence of Allah, the Muslim God, as the source of all blessings. They exhibited to the local Ghanaians that their religion holds the answer to every problem confronting mankind. Their magico-religion of Islam impressed upon their host that it is the one approved by God, hence all human beings must submit to the teachings of this faith.

By the middle of the eleventh century, Ghana had been successfully attacked and occupied by the Islamic Berber tribe from North Africa. According to Ibn Khaldun...

... [the Almoravids] spread their domination over the negroes [of Ghana], devastated their territory, and plundered their property. Having submitted them to poll-tax, they imposed on them a tribute and compelled a great number of them to become Muslims.²

This defeat of Ghana further accelerated imposition of Islam as a religion for the Ghanaians even

¹Ibid., 209-210.
though most remained nominal without any deep commitment to the Islamic faith.

In 1240 Ghana was incorporated into the Susu Kingdom by the chief Sumangurukannante. Later, when the Malinke chief Sundiata levelled Ghana to the ground, Ismail and a number of others left the town and founded Walata, which is in the present country of Mali.¹

Islam in Modern Ghana

A second school of historians and nationalists has indicated the strong sentiment that some of the tribes who formed part of ancient Ghana, with Islamic orientation and contact, moved southward from Western Sudan to form modern Ghana.

A. B. Ellis² is the first known writer to raise a connection between Muslim ancient Ghana and modern Ghana in 1887. Drawing on traditional accounts, he theorized that the people of the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) moved to their present location from the Islamic city of Wangara, which was part of ancient Ghana. Ellis’s theory has been followed by Anaman, W. D. Cooley, Brodie Cruickshank, Levtzion has written that Islam, which became part of the imperial system in ancient Mali, is an integral component of the national ethos in modern Mali. Hence the people of Mali have a stronger sense of history than Ghana, whose connections are only in symbolic terms. See Levtzion, Ancient Ghana and Mali, 218-220.

Lady Lugard, and others who wrote on the "Ghana hypothesis."¹

In 1925 W. T. Balmer made a historical reconstruction of the people of ancient Ghana. He wrote of the probability that "the Fanti, Ashanti, Ahanta and Akan people in general formed the original part of this ancient negro kingdom [Ghana], dwelling in districts more or less remote from the central city of government, Walata."² J. B. Danquah advanced the "Ghana myth"³ that some of the tribes from ancient Ghana left the crumbling Ghana empire to form present Ghana. He claimed to have done extensive research at the British Museum between the Ashantis of present Ghana and the languages that were being spoken in Old Ghana.

E. L. R. Meyerowitz,⁴ in her contributions to the origins of the people of Gold Coast, argued that the rulers of present-day Akan came from the oasis of Djado in

---


the Eastern Sahara, west of Tibesti. She even cited the Bono, Gonja, and Guan as coming originally from Dia, Dja, or Nia. J. W. de Graft Johnson in 1929 published that the Wangaras and Hausas of North Ghana were part of the "ancient Arab state of Ghanah."

J. J. Williams, in his book Hebrewism of West Africa, wrote of a migration of people from the Mediterranean (Israel) to West Africa, especially to Ashanti land in Ghana. These theories gave impetus to Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, who turned to these historical traditions to choose the name Ghana for the people of the Gold Coast upon the attainment of independence in 1957. He wrote in 1956 that "the various peoples or tribal groups in the Gold Coast were originally members of the great Ghana Empire that developed in the Western Sudan during the mediaeval period."

These arguments linking the people of present-day Ghana to the Muslim ancient Ghana have been refuted as being unsupportable by Fage, Mauny, Goody, Levtzion, and

---


others. These writers have pointed out the methodological difficulties involved in linking the Old Ghana with modern Ghana. Goody, in rejecting these arguments, has cautioned that "too much of the writings about Ghana, the 'Akan,' and their 'prehistory' falls into the field of mythopoetic thought rather than of legitimate construction."  

Opponents of a possible historical connection between the two Ghanas have repeatedly said that the history of modern Ghana up to the fifteenth century is unknown. Hence, there is little, if any, connection between Old Ghana and modern Ghana.

Summary

From the available historical accounts, it is very difficult to draw concrete ethnic ties between the two Ghanas. The absorption of the Old Ghana into the Mali empire seems to have dislocated and dispersed the Ghanaians from Western Sudan. Since Mali was an Islamic empire, the people from ancient Ghana might presumably have found religious affinity there. This left the Ghanaians no unifying strength to found modern Ghana.


2Goody, 67-81.
It is interesting to note that none of the so-called tribes that historians refer to as coming from the Old Ghana to form the modern Ghana have even 1 percent of their population who are adherents of the Islamic faith. There is nothing in the historical traditions of the Ashantis, Fantes, Brong, and the other tribes in modern Ghana which point to a strong historical Islamic civilization of Old Ghana.

Islam may have come to Ghana not long ago in contrast to what historians may have us believe. The Muslim religion may have come to modern Ghana sometime between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

On this note, we move to chapter 3 to discuss the history, culture, socioeconomic and religious conditions of the Dagomba people, one of the tribal groups in North Ghana who came in contact with Islam through trade with the Muslims of North Africa.
CHAPTER III

THE BACKGROUND OF THE DAGOMBA
PEOPLE OF NORTH GHANA

Introduction

The Dagomba inhabit the northeastern corner of Ghana. The tribe is bordered by Togo on the east, Mamprusi on the north, and Gonja on the south side. Before this area and the rest of North Ghana were geographically incorporated into modern Ghana, it was considered a part of "Southern Soudan" or the "Northern Territories." Dagomba is the largest state in North Ghana, as well as the most cohesive and homogenous.¹

The two principal cities of the Dagombas are Tamale and Yendi. Tamale serves as the administrative and commercial capital, while Yendi is the seat of the tribal chief, Ya Na.² Historians believe³ that the present Dagomba state, which covers about 11,900 square

¹The traditional state of Dagomba in North Ghana covers most of Tolon, Savelugu, Tamale, Yendi, and the western half of the Gushiegu-Chereponi districts.

²The term "na" or "naba" in Mole-Dagbani means chief.

25 kilometers, was the original home of some indigenous tribes. Some of these tribes have been identified as Vagala, Isala, Komkomba, Nanumba, and probably the Lobi and Grunsi (Gurunsi).

The Dagombas developed their own culture and lived in stateless societies during the five hundred or more years they lived in North Ghana. During this period, they developed a rich history which is preserved through the medium of the drum chant. According to Duncan-Johnstone, the first drum history is "solemnly and liturgically recited from time to time. The history itself is passed down through generations of drummers, who are taught their work from their early youth."¹

According to Christine Oppong, the drum history is a rich historical narrative, interwoven with myth, which records the origins, migrations, battles and genealogy of their royal rulers. This ideological history has recently been shown to be founded upon facts in several respects by archeological, linguistic and written data, which have come to light.²

**History of the Dagomba**

In 1948, the historian W. E. F. Ward commented about the difficult and complex history of the Dagomba. In his monumental work, *History of Ghana*, he observed that the background and "beginnings of the Dagomba-Moshi


Mamprusi history are beyond the ken of contemporary Europeans or even Ashanti."\(^1\)

More than forty-eight years have passed since Ward made his observation, and archeological digs have continued to shed light on the history of the Dagomba. These findings have made it possible for historians to unearth much about the sociohistorical and religious background of the Dagomba.

It is believed that before the arrival of the Europeans in modern Ghana in 1471, four dominant tribes, Mossi,\(^2\) Mamprusi, Nanumba, and Dagomba, invaded North Ghana. Eyre-Smith has advanced the idea that "it is to the Songhois Empire that tradition seems to point as the origin of the invaders who formed the Mamprussi and Dagomba kingdoms in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast."\(^3\) Coming in small bands, they skillfully set up separate kingdoms. Their arrival and rise to power dislocated and disorganized the local people. As a result of the invasions, two segments of people emerged in North Ghana. According to Rattaray, the population of the area


\(^2\) The Mossi are the only group now living in Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta); the other three are found in Ghana.

\(^3\) St. J. Eyre-Smith, *A Brief Review of the History and Social Organization of the Peoples of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast* (Accra: Government Printer, 1933), 5.
"consists of two sections, a large mass of very old established inhabitants, and a small ruling class of recent arrivals." 1 This shift in power presumably took place between the early 1300s and A. D. 1600.

Attempts by the invading forces to superimpose themselves on the local people were met with varying degrees of success. Pellow and Chazan 2 maintain that in western Dagomba the invaders totally eclipsed the original inhabitants. In the east, however, among the Komkomba (whose masses created the basis for the Dagomba state), traditional social forms survived.

Oral Traditions of Origins of the Dagomba

According to oral traditions, a man of Zamfura background, Toha-Jie, also known as the Red Hunter, travelled from somewhere east of the Gold Coast (Ghana) on an eight-day caravan journey. He apparently performed a series of exploits on his migratory journey. During his journeys, apparently no one knew of his parental or tribal affiliations. His wanderings from the wilderness brought him westward to Pusiga, near Bawku—where he settled. This man, whose name was Zirili, sired four sons who later founded four kingdoms—of which Dagomba is one.

The founding father who established the Dagomba

kingdom was Sitobo, one of the four sons. After the death of Zirili, a series of succession disputes and disagreements arose between Sitobo and his brothers. The conflict centered over who should be the legitimate heir to the throne, and the disagreements that ensued eventually split the kingdom. This series of events led Sitobo to found the Dagomba kingdom.

Sitobo’s three other brothers built separate dynasties. Yantaure founded the Moshi (sometimes known as the Mossi) kingdom, Ngmantambo (sometimes known as Natambo) built the little kingdom of Bambilla, and the youngest, Tohogu (or Tusugu), settled at Nalerigu where he established the Mamprusi royal kingdom.

According to a popular myth collected by Tamakloe, who documented the history of the Dagomba people, the Dagomba country was once inhabited by giants remembered by the name “Kondors” or “Tiawomya.”

The giants were said to be of such extraordinary stature that "if a hawk swooped down on their chickens and carried one away, they stood up and snatched it back." They were so tall and big that their voices could be heard some twenty miles off when they sang to their drums.

The Dagomba built their original capital east of


2Ibid.
the White Volta River. It was known as Naya. It was located some sixty kilometers north of modern Tamale, near Diari. From this place, they skillfully extended their hegemony westward as far as the Ghana-Ivory Coast border. This state of affairs lasted for many years until their power was challenged by the Gonjas who "attacked with firearms while the Dagomba still relied on bows and arrows."\(^1\)

**The Culture of the Dagomba**\(^2\)

Dagbani\(^3\) is the predominant trade language in Dagomba. It is used by the Hanga, Tampulma, some Gonjas, and others who travelled to Tamale for various purposes. Dagbani is also taught in schools, along with Twi, a second language which is also widely spoken among the inhabitants of North Ghana.

The Dagbanis are the largest ethnic group in North Ghana, and their language is the only one from North Ghana which is used to broadcast local news and other programs on the national radio station (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Station 1).

---

\(^1\)Barker, 130.

\(^2\)I have depended on Barker's and Oppong's works for most of the material in this section. See Peter Barker, Peoples, Languages and Religion in North Ghana, and Christine Oppong, Growing Up in Dagbani.

They live in compact villages and townships in the savanna region of North Ghana. According to Christine Oppong, they live in nuclear settlements, in traditional residential patterns. The villages are small—with populations of less than two hundred people.

The Dagomba household, which is called yili in the Dagbani language, is headed by yili vidana, and includes his sons and brothers and their wives and children.

The practice of fostering or bringing up children of relatives is also practiced among the Dagombas. These children live away from their parents. According to Barker, "a wife or couple may send a child to be brought up by the grandparents or by their siblings, or they may 'pawn' children to get cash for a major expense, such as acquiring a skin."¹ This has contributed to the large size of the Dagbani household.

The Socioeconomic Background of the Dagomba People

Traditionally, farming has been the foundation of the Dagomba economy. Because it is the backbone of their economy, parents take little interest in sending their children to Western-style schools. They fear they will lose their service in the farm work. According to Barker, "if they want education at all, the Quranic school in the

¹Barker, 133.
village is seen as a valid and less dangerous alternative.  

Dagombas operate two types of farms. They have a farm that is near the village and another one in the bush. They do not do mechanized farming. Cow dung and other forms of manure are employed to ensure success in their farm cultivation. They sell their farm produce for export. They retain some for home consumption throughout the year. Money gotten from the sales is used to maintain the family.

Christine Oppong observed that the Dagombas depend "more upon their crops than their livestock for food." The Dagombas specialize in yam cultivation. This is done in large and small scale. According to Oppong, the fact that there are thirty-two different terms recorded in Dagbani to denote different varieties of yams is a linguistic index of the importance of yams to the Dagbani economy.

In addition to yams, the Dagomba people grow shea butter, dawadawa, baobab, kapok, mango, maize, guinea corn, millet, rice, groundnuts, and bambara beans. Oppong has documented that the above listed "trees are of considerable significance in Dagbon, for as well as providing

\[^{1}\text{Ibid.}, 135.\]
\[^{2}\text{Oppong, 17.}\]
\[^{3}\text{Ibid., 18.}\]
fruits, oil and other commodities, not least firewood for cooking and warmth as well as shade, they are of ritual and supernatural importance."

Non-farmers often specialize in other occupations. Even though over 95 percent of male adults are farmers, there are others who have specialized in tailoring, brewing pito, petty trading, making shea nut butter, barbering, blacksmithing, and butchering.

The Religion of the Dagomba

Ancestor Worship

In Africa, as elsewhere, ancestral religious beliefs and practices have played a vital role in the religious lives of many people. North Ghana is no exception.

Ancestral worship has been the custom of the Dagomba people. It is also common among the other ethnic groups in North Ghana. From time immemorial, it has been the religion of the people before Islam was introduced. Over the years it has controlled, shaped, and influenced the Dagomba societies and is very important in all their religious and social undertakings.

This ancestral religion is an inseparable part of the Dagomba society. It is based on the belief that the

1Ibid., 17.

deceased relative is not dead. The dead are active in the spirit world and see everything that goes on in life. They are involved in the daily routine of family members.

These Dagomba ancestors are reputed to have answers to complex issues in life when invoked. Because of such beliefs, people seek their help, protection, and blessings. Matters relating to sickness, war, and calamities are always taken to the ancestors. Others seek approval and counsel from them before embarking on travels, economic projects, marriage, etc.

Children are sometimes given names after ancestors. According to Barker,

The name has already been determined at a pivigibu pregnancy ceremony, when the soothsayer shows which ancestor the child is to be named after; but the name is not given till the naming ceremony on the 7th day after birth; for this the baby's hair is shaved by a wonzam (barber), animals are slaughtered and food is prepared, and an aunt names the child, making the ancestor after whom it is named responsible for its well-being.1

It is believed that naming the child after an ancestor ensures the daily presence of that ancestor in that home or community for continual blessings.

Annual visits to the graves of ancestors are also practiced. In such visits food, drinks, and gifts are placed on the graveside. Their acceptance ensures blessings in the coming year. Since they may get offended, people are careful in following all the minute details in

1Barker, 131.
worship ceremonies. Practitioners have certain days within the week that they do not work or eat certain foods.

Witchcraft

The belief in witchcraft is strong. Like almost all other African tribes, old women in Dagomba families are perceived as witches. They are considered active at night in Dagomba homes and eat the souls of their victims. In the Dagomba society, "chiefs and elders may exile innocent old women from a village, sometimes at the instigation of young men."¹

Magic

Magical powers are routinely practiced in the Dagomba marketplaces. Magicians normally gather people and display the efficacy of their magical powers. It is used to terrify and instill fear in offenders. The unsuspecting may be deceived. Money is taken from people who consult the magicians.

There are others who practice their profession at home. They sell talismans, herbal concoctions, earrings, necklaces, and powdered medicine for cooking to ward off evil spirits. They interpret dreams. Their equipment includes a "leather bag, a divining stick, blood-encrusted

¹Ibid., 136.
horns, and a calabash containing beads, buttons, nails, and similar articles."¹

The Dagomba Gods

The Dagombas believe in the "Earth God" and the "Supreme Being." The earth god is considered to be approachable in the minds of the people in contrast to the supreme being who is far removed and unapproachable. The earth god is the giver of all gifts. Dagombas have the notion that the supreme god is far removed from and beyond their daily concerns.²

Naawuni is the supreme god and creator. The Dagombas believe that Naawuni "delegates powers and functions to a host of spirits, who are thus an indispensable link with him." Naawuni "belongs to all mankind. . . . The Dagomba do not know where Naawuni lives nor the language (he) speaks."³

The lesser gods and nature spirits include the thunder god, Sapani; Tagragenti, who harasses people at night; and Tiyawonya, who helps people to harm their enemies.

The ancestor gods (Tiyanima meaning "our ancestors," female Tiyapagba) receive sacrifices from the head of the family or other descendants. It is always the

¹Ibid.
²Eyre-Smith, 15-16.
³Barker, 135.
soothsayer who determines which ancestor should be sacrificed to and the type of sacrifice to be made.

This ancestral worship has dominated the lives of the Dagomba until now, having been passed on from one generation to another. Continued allegiance by the people of Dagomba has stabilized it as it competes with all the religions that have come to North Ghana, especially Islam.

Islam in Dagomba

The infusion of Islam did little to divert the loyalty of the people from their ancestral worship. Islam adapted itself. It gradually succeeded in living side by side with the ancestral religion it encountered in North Ghana. Eyre-Smith has averred that

the wave of Mohammedanism which swept along the Soudan did not change the beliefs of the inhabitants of the Northern Territories, for we find a common religion of the soil emerging. Whatever institutions or innovations came from the outside, certain it is that they were built upon the foundation of the agrarian life of the peoples, who would probably readily adopt observances and ceremonies for approaching the Deity who controlled the forces of Nature of which they stood in awe, and on which their livelihood depended.¹

Rattray, who did a comprehensive anthropological study on the tribes of North Ghana, documented that the invaders who founded the Dagomba Kingdom brought the Islamic faith. He wrote that they were "better armed, better clothed, familiar with the idea of kingship or chieftainship in our modern sense, in some cases

¹Eyre-Smith, 15.
conversant with the rudiments of Mohammedanism and accustomed to a patrilineal manner of reckoning descent."

Ladouceur wrote that "although animistic beliefs predominated in North Ghana, Islam played an important role among certain groups, notably in the kingdoms of Gonja, Dagomba, Mamprusi, and especially Wa." The situation has not changed, as these groups still cling to hundreds of superstitions that have lost their meaning in their societies.

Historians believe that trading routes, as well as the Islamic invasions of North Ghana, may have played a key role in the entrance of Islam into the Dagomba state. The Hausas and Wangara interacted on two trading routes during the fifteenth century--one which ran from northwestern Ghana to Wangara, and the other between northeastern Ghana and Hausa. Wilks explains that "where these traders settled the ulama followed, founding mosques and associated families within which the profession of faith became hereditary." Apart from this development, it is also argued

1Rattray, xii; see also Nehemia Levtzion, Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa (London: Clarendon Press, 1968), 85.


that a strong and influential Islamic community began to emerge in the Dagomba area during the reign of Na Zangina (c. 1700-1714). According to Peter Clark,

part of the reason for this was that Na Zangina sought the support of the Muslims in his attempt to fend off Gonja, whose leaders said that one of the reasons for their success against the Dagomba was that they had the support and prayers of their Muslim followers.¹

Even though Na Zangina's commitment to Islam and its practices has sometimes been criticized, he did make important contributions during his reign. As the first Dagomba king to become circumcised and a Muslim, he worked tirelessly to create Muslim offices dealing with calendrical matters. He also instigated reforms in name selection, marriage, and burial practices.²

The impact of Islam in the Dagomba area is also seen from the things found after the Ashanti war with the Dagombas. From 1744 to 1745 the Ashantis invaded this "Mahometan kingdom of Dagombah" and plundered it fully. Rømer reported in 1760, years after the war, that the Dagomba nation "has the Turkish religion and we have received many Arabic books in Accra which the Ashantis had plundered."³

²David C. Davies, Themes in the History of Dagbon and Mamprugu (Chicago: Northwestern University, 1979), 57.
Summary

The history of the Dagomba people has always shown a strong preference for a polytheistic religion. Their interest in the traditional religion remains unquestionably strong. This is evident from the way they pay attention to their ancestral worship. Their ancestors seem to control every facet of their life from cradle to grave.

The involvement of the ancestors seems to have been a blessing they are proud of. Magic, sorcery, witchcraft, and divination are deeply rooted and stabilized in their culture. Through their ancestors they find answers to their daily chores. This is satisfactory and pleasing to them.

The presence of the ancestral spirits has several advantages for them. For example, it is a major factor in checking some unacceptable behavior in the villages of the Dagombas. Since the spirits are believed to know everything, some people are afraid to engage in an immoral life for fear that they will be caught and punished.

On the other hand, we also see the effects of the Islamic religion on the Dagomba people. Some of the people accepted Islam without eliminating their traditional religion. The people syncretized the two religions without abandoning the first one. They found some similarities in the Islamic faith. Some of the things they incorporated into Islam are not approved by the Koran.
Thus Islam and traditional worship have become inseparable in the lives of the people, with few Dagombas distinguishing between the two faiths. Dagombas create the impression publicly of being either a Muslim or traditionalist, but in practice it may be otherwise. Breaking from one or the other system seems too difficult and costly, considering the benefits they derive from each.

Since Islam and the traditional religion have always been part and parcel of the people from the beginning of their history in North Ghana, it would be ideal to approach them with the Christian message in a diverse way. This can be done if the pastors and the laymen understand the type of Islam practiced in North Ghana.

Chapter 4 attempts to survey some literature on both orthodox and folk Islam. A brief review of the five pillars of orthodox Islam and some of the characteristics of folk Islam is discussed.
CHAPTER IV

GENERAL PERSPECTIVE ON FOLK ISLAM

Introduction

The intent of this chapter is twofold—to review the development of orthodox and folk Islam in Africa, followed by a preview of the five fundamental pillars of orthodox Islam. Some of the circumstantial evidence that split Islam into two camps is also highlighted. Islam's interaction with animism in Africa, which subsequently grew into folk Islam, is also examined in its proper context.¹ Some of the characteristics of folk Islam are discussed in a concise manner, and the last section of this chapter is devoted to mixed religions in the secular world, in biblical times, and in our world today.

It is my desire that the conclusions ultimately reached will be of help in seeing the extent of the task that faces Christian missions. These conclusions will also aid us in chapters 7 and 8 of this project when certain proposals and recommendations are suggested about

how to reach the Dagomba Muslims of North Ghana.

An Overview of Orthodox Islam

Though the prime focus of study is folk Islam, I would like to give an overview of orthodox Islam that includes a brief history of its development in Saudi Arabia and a synopsis of the five pillars that unite all Muslims. Islam, which means "the peace that comes when one's life is surrendered to God," is the correct name for the religion that was started by Mohammed. It was started to function as a protest against, and concurrently a force to resist, the loose religions of Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Sabaeannism, and polytheism.

Orthodox Islam is "more concerned with matters of ethics and ideological explanation than with the everyday concerns and life crises of the peasantry." Orthodox Islam is also the theological, theoretical, and educational Islam that deals with the science, intricacies, and complexities of the Koran.

The Koran, according to Islamic teachings, is the


2Zoroastrianism at that time in Arabia taught its followers to worship fire. The largest concentration of adherents were in Persia, Bahrain, and the Gulf areas.

3The Sabaeans had the stars and the planets as their gods. The adherents were mainly in Yemen and Upper Mesopotamia.

final authority that, by divine revelation, answers all the socio-ethical issues that govern life on earth as well as the hereafter. Muslims consider the Koran as the pre-existent word of God, "sent down" from heaven as a facsimile that is infallible. According to Muslim scholars, the Koran cannot be translated into any other language from Arabic and its message cannot be questioned or doubted. H. A. R. Gibb has written:

In contrast to the tradition, the Koran itself has remained almost untouched by any breath of evolutionary criticism. Only a few Indian liberals and still fewer Arab socialists have yet ventured to question that it is the literally-inspired Word of God and that its very statement is eternally true, right and valid.¹

Among other things, the Koran also explains the idea and attributes of God. Like the Christian Bible, it deals with subjects such as the creation of the cosmos, the destiny of humankind, the ministry of angels and prophets, the enigma of sin, predestination, and much more.

In his treatise on mixed religions, E. E. Grant also referred to orthodox Islam as high religion which "seeks to deal with the questions of ultimate origin and destiny and purpose in life."² By its general characteristics, missiologists have dubbed orthodox Islam "Ideal


Islam," "Official Islam," and "Classical Islam" in many literary circles. This is due to the feeling that "it is the religion of the educated who enjoy approaching Islamic doctrines philosophically; and therefore it is a religion appealing more to the head than to the heart."1

**Arabia Before Mohammed**

Islam began in the deserts of Saudi Arabia at a time known as the "wakt-el-jahiliyeh--the time of ignorance."2 The period was also the "Dark Ages"3 in the history of the Arabians. In the opinion of Arabian historians and theologians,4 this time produced no dispensation, no inspired prophet, and no revealed book.5 The people of Arabia were grouped according to their religious beliefs and schools as follows:

The Arabs of pre-Islamic times may, with reference to religion be divided into various classes. Some of them denied the Creator, the resurrection and men's

---


4Zwemer says that these men gave Arabia a dark picture in order that "the light of God," as the prophet was called, might appear more bright in contrast. See Zwemer, *Arabia: The Cradle of Islam*, 158.

5Hitti, 87.
return to God, and asserted that Nature possesses in itself the power of bestowing life, but that Time destroys. Others believed in a Creator and a creation produced by Him out of nothing but yet denied the resurrection. Others believed in a Creator and a creation but denied God’s prophets and worshiped false gods concerning whom they believed that in the next world they would become mediators between themselves and God. For these deities they undertook pilgrimages, they brought offerings to them, offered them sacrifices and approached them with rites and ceremonies. Some things they held to be Divinely permitted, others to be prohibited. This was the religion of the majority of the Arabs.1

Before the rise of Mohammed and his religious reforms, Saudi Arabia and the surrounding area were home to many polytheistic nomads. Michael Nazir-Ali has estimated that as many as 360 idols were worshiped in Saudi Arabia.2 Mecca, one of the main cities, was the religious, social, and commercial center; that explains why it “became the Pantheon of the nation and the place of pilgrimage.”3 This tradition has even persisted until now as many continue to retreat to this city from all parts of the world to worship Allah, ceremonially purify themselves, and seek spiritual renewal and growth.

It was during this epoch that Mohammed, like the biblical Old Testament prophets, claimed to have received a series of revelations from Allah and then initiated the religion of Islam. Many Muslims do not like to be called

1Zwemer, Arabia: The Cradle of Islam, 164.


Mohammedans because they claim Mohammed did not create Islam; God did.

Mohammed also envisioned that this religious movement would ultimately serve as a puritanical body, divinely designed to draw the people to the true, undiluted, and authentic worship of Allah. At the beginning of his reforms, Mohammed received support from some of the tribes of Arabia who abhorred idolatry. Within their hearts they yearned for revival, reformation, and a genuine spiritual awakening that would drive the people to their knees and draw them to Allah. They desperately hoped and waited for God to purge the land of evil and bring a true religion.

In the words of Hassan Ibrahim Hassan:

They abandoned the worship of idols and adopted and spread a monotheistic faith, preaching the oneness of God. They abstained from idols, animals that had died, blood, and things offered to idols. They forbade the killing of infant daughters, saying that they worshipped the God of Abraham, and they publicly rebuked their people for such practices.¹

We may assume that Mohammed might have been associated with or belonged to one of the reformatory groups in Arabia. Through his alleged visions, he became committed to returning the Arabian peoples to the basics, especially to the resignation and submission of one’s will to Allah.² J. T. Addison, an authority on world religions, has stated:

¹Ibid., 30.

²Historians have often wondered what the results might have been if Mohammed had met a sincere Christian.
If Muhammad's knowledge of a decadent form of Christianity had been thorough, or if the Church which he knew so imperfectly had been stronger and sounder, the relations between the two religions might have been different. As it was, however, what passed for Christianity in his confused mind was a distorted copy of fragments of a notably defective original.  

Within a few years following its establishment, Islam expanded to various parts of the world. It penetrated other cultures, religions, schools of thought, and institutions through diverse means. Mohammed and his allies effectively employed such means as the Jihad, trade, immigration, intermarriage, persuasion, and peaceful coexistence to sow the seeds of Islam. Their targets were receptive people groups, first in Asia, Europe, and Africa.

In some areas in North Africa, Muslim evangelists succeeded in planting the new faith, but in others they were held in check by other religious and civil powers that perceived the spread of Islam as a threat not to be tolerated.

When Islam was first brought to North Africa, many people were lax in their religious commitment. Doctrinal disputes had already created schisms among the

---


2Sacred struggle with word or sword in the cause of Allah; a holy war.

Christian groups. This gave Muslims the needed spark to raze the foundations of the Christian churches. With terrific speed Islam destroyed most of the works of the over five hundred church fathers, bishops, and itinerant preachers whose writings, preaching, and spiritual labors had sustained the Christian church from the apostolic era.¹ Although not all the tribes initially accepted Islam, this new religion did unmistakably deal a deadly blow to the established Christian churches in North Africa. The intermingling of Islamic influence, culture, and animism even today demonstrates that “North Africa is permeated by a mixture of traditional Islamic society with an animistic occultism base.”²

After some time, the Muslims who brought the Islamic religion to North Africa used indigenous Africans, especially influential people like teachers, merchants, and rulers, to spread Islam to other parts of Africa, specifically targeting the sub-Saharan fringes. West Africa at this time had already developed a good communication network with North Africa through the Trans-Saharan trade routes.


Muslim traders from North Africa did not separate religion from their social activities, but rather blended religion with all aspects of life. Because of this blending, Islam gained roots and became a challenge in West Africa, seeking national identity, cultural recognition, and religious acceptance among the acephalous or stateless societies of Africa.

**Folk Islam in Africa**

The fusion of folk customs and beliefs with other orthodox religions is not a new phenomenon in the history of comparative religions. The study of Islam and its diffusion into animistic areas, particularly in Africa, has shown the vulnerability of Islam to syncretize into a folk religion. Samuel Zwemer stated rather succinctly that Islam, in its contact with animism, has not been the victor but rather the vanquished.1 According to Emmanuel Twesigye:

> This religious cultural trend, partly explains why a great number of Africans have recently become converted to either Christianity or Islam without abandoning a large portion of the African traditional religion, which they know from experience to function.2

The agents of Islam throughout Africa allowed the various people groups in the continent to maintain all

---


their pagan practices without condemning such practices. Pagan beliefs and customs were allowed to infiltrate into Islam so as to satisfy certain felt and spiritual needs that the official religion could not. J. Kritzeck and W. H. Lewis write:

As a result, Islam has become a folk religion, adjusting itself to local tribal and clan situations, blending with the pantheons of indigenous religious beliefs and prevailing social patterns. In the process, Islam has lost its universalistic dualities and assumed cult, expressing itself in a melange of localized animistic practice that would shock the sensibilities of even the least pious orthodox savant.¹

In Africa, Islam soon assumed the status of folk Islam. Due to its success in attracting a wide spectrum of illiterate and peasant classes, missiologists perceive it as low or popular Islam because “it seeks to attend to the devotee’s heart rather than to the devotee’s head.”²

Gilliland, who analyzed religious change between Islam and the other animistic concentrations in Nigeria, wrote:

Folk Islam emphasizes the altered forms of Islam which traditional society develops for the benefit of society. It is found most commonly where a weak and poorly structured Islam has existed alongside a highly ethnocentric community.³

Ben Ray has reiterated the claim that “there is much in Islam that was compatible with traditional African

²Azila, 300.
religious and social customs, and much was retained in Islamized form."¹ Borge Schantz has estimated that 90 percent of all African Muslims do not believe so much in orthodox Islam as they do in folk Islam.² Anne Cooper³ has stated that folk Islam is the "living and dynamic" institution within mission work in our time.

By its very nature, many see folk Islam as the dark side of Islam because of the acknowledgment of wicked spirits, jinns, dwarfs, and other evil beings who terrorize and harm or kill people in the spirit. Bill Musk called this whole system "the unseen face of Islam."⁴

The Five Beliefs and Practices in Islam

The Muslim faith is founded upon five indisputable pillars.⁵ These are the religious duties that are incumbent on all professed Muslims of whatever background. Every true follower must confess them publicly and obey them individually in order to be properly admitted into

¹Ray, 175.
⁵Some Muslim fundamentalists classify the Jihad as the sixth pillar.
the faith. These pillars are discussed in the following sections.

The Shahada

"La ilaha illa l’ilah, wa Muhammed rasul I’ilah."

These eight words are the first central confession of all Muslims. In English it is translated "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger (or prophet)." This is both a dogma and worship, for whosoever accepts the Islamic faith, the prophet Mohammed, and the prophets who preceded him must recite the Shahada creed "not by rote, but meditatively, purposively, with a full understanding of its meaning and with an assent from the heart."1

According to Saal,2 believing the Shahada and pronouncing it before two witnesses makes the reciter a Muslim. Its recitation provides the structure for the call to prayer in Muslim gatherings. As a test of fellowship, the Shahada is also a "covenant between the individual, the deity and the community."3

Many Islamic countries have inscribed this creed on their national flags, currency notes, government seals, and other important documents as a sign of commitment and demonstration of their faith in Allah. Many Muslims claim

1Kenneth Oster, "Evangelism Among Muslims" (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1975), 64.


3Grant, 439.
the Shahada is effective when recited to drive away evil spirits. The importance of this pillar is emphasized by the fact that this phrase is the first words that greets a newborn baby and the last words one hears before death.

The Selat

The selat is the customary prayer obligation of all Muslims. Believers are to perform this ritual at sunrise (fajr), noon (zuhr), afternoon (‘asr), sunset (maghrib), and night (‘isha). It can be done alone, in the home, or in a group at the mosque so that wherever one is, one can commune with Allah. Though the Koran stipulates four times daily for the selat, tradition says Mohammed was seen praying five times daily. It has become the practice worldwide for Muslims to follow Mohammed’s example and pray five times daily.

Friday afternoons are the time set aside for all Muslims to assemble for corporate and public prayer in the mosque.¹ In the performance of the prayer ablution,² the believer is required to pray in Arabic and turn in the direction of the Quiblah.³

¹There are several instances where these gatherings have turned into political indoctrination sessions and have become a cause of social unrest among some of the Islamic sects.

²It must be pointed out that within the various schools of Islam there are minor variations concerning how a believer should act or do the selat.

³The approximate direction of Mecca.
The Zekat

The zekat is a levy enjoined upon all Muslims. It is meant to help the poor, the debtors, new Muslims, travelers, and the infirm. The faithful are to pay zekat on their farm produce, livestock, and other income that they accrue from their labors. Kenneth Oster writes:

The amount given varies for different categories: on grains and fruits it is 10 percent if watered by rain, 5 if watered by irrigation; and 2.5 percent on money is prescribed. Money so obtained is to be spent primarily on the poor and the needy.1

The Sawn

Several fasts are mentioned in the Koran. The sawn is the mandatory one-month fast required of all Muslims. This annual sawn is observed during the ninth month of Ramadan. The fast is to be honored from sunrise to sunset, during which time no food or drink, or even one’s own saliva, is allowed to be swallowed. Sexual intercourse, smoking, the use of perfume, evil thinking, fighting, and all other forms of secular activities or distractions are forbidden during the fast.

Every mature,2 practicing Muslim is required to keep the fast, except travelers, the sick, the aged, pregnant or menstruating women, and nursing mothers. It

1Oster, 66.

2Tradition says that Mohammed gives the age of seven as the age from which parents should start teaching their children the performance of rituals. See John Prickett, ed, Initiation Rites (London: Lutterworth Educational, 1978), 80.
is expected that those who miss any of the days or defer fasting due to the circumstances listed above must compensate for it whenever it is appropriate within the year.

The Hajj

There is a Koranic injunction that all Muslims must go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lifetime, provided the person is physically and financially capable. People who go on the pilgrimage gain the title "Hajji" and "win the heavenly reward which God will give to everyone who visits the sacred places."¹

During this period, the pilgrims pay a visit to the sacred mosque, sacrifice animals, pray, kiss the holy stone, and listen to sermons. Every year thousands of Muslims throng to Mecca from all parts of the world to worship Allah, receive spiritual refreshment, and obtain forgiveness of sins. The pilgrimage has also become a unifying factor among the community of Muslims. It is the only religious gathering of Muslims that transcends national, tribal, and political differences.

The Two Major Divisions of Islam

Intense succession disputes after the death of Mohammed in 632 A.D. brought division to Islam. The

epicenter of this controversy was whether Mohammed's
cousin or one of Mohammed's Khalifs should be in charge of
the movement. Out of this contention, two major sects
emerged—the Sunnis and the Shiis.

The Sunnis (orthodox) are the mainstream majority
and form 90 percent of the Muslim population worldwide.
They are faithful to the Koran and tradition. In Africa
they form the majority and all Muslims in Ghana consider
themselves as Sunnis.

The Shia (or the party) take a pantheistic view of
God and make up 10 percent or less of all Muslims. There
are three main groups within this sect: the Twelve Imams,
the Zaydis or Five Imams, and the Ismalis or Seven Imams.
The Shiis reject the first three Caliphs as usurpers and
believe that Ali, Mohammed's cousin, should have become
the first Khalif by inheritance. The Shiis do not follow
the Hadith\(^1\) and therefore have their own collection of
traditions from Ali and his family. Grant notes:

Religiously, Shi'ism has Zoroastrian, Nestorian, and
other overtones, and has supplied Islam with
mysteries, saints, intercessors, belief in atonement
and a spirit of high cult, all of which are repugnant
to the majority of Sunnis.\(^2\)

\(^{1}\)The Hadith contains the non-Koranic teachings and
sayings of Mohammed.

\(^{2}\)Grant, 154.
Folk Islam

Paul Hiebert\(^1\) has developed a very useful analogy of folk Islam based on Geertz's comparison of a culture to a city. To understand the operations and mechanism of folk Islam, Hiebert compared and contrasted folk and official Islam to the everyday occurrences in the inner city and suburbia.

The inner city is like folk religion in that there is "a confusion of beliefs and practices with no logical consistency, a bewildering array of small vendors all selling their wares... . . . There is little effort in folk Islam to develop a single, coherent system of beliefs."\(^2\) On the other hand, Hiebert equated official Islam with suburbia, the home of the orthodox and specialist where truth is carefully laid out in formal propositions and debated by experts.

Islamicists and church-growth experts have through years of studies and observations discovered that whenever the Islamic faith spread to an animistic area, syncretism develops.\(^3\) Grant attributes this to what he calls "free


\(^2\)Ibid., 46.

thought" and "free expression" following Islam's contact with other animistic religions.¹

In this integrative phase, both Islam and animism dominate the religious, social, and political life of the people. The beliefs, customs, and rites of the two religions blend, permeating the entire fabric of the people's lives, eventually affecting their worldview.

Such syncretism does not develop overnight. It is always the result of years of accommodation and adaptation when two religions meet and dwell together in an informal way. Each passing generation takes certain symbols, values, and meanings from its local religion to the Islamic faith. Whereas orthodox Islam appears the same all over the world, folk Islam does not. Every community has its own distinctive folk beliefs. The beliefs of each community determine the exclusive type of folk Islam that is adopted by the people of that region. What is believed in one locality may not be "based on empirical evidence nor incorporated within the institutionalized belief system of a society as defined by leading representatives

¹Grant, 156.
Characteristics of Folk Islam

Since it is not an organized religion, folk Islam does not have prescribed rules or doctrines for its practitioners. Like all traditional split religions, there are no sacred books such as the Koran or the Bible, no temples for worshipers, no systematic procedures, or formal way of worship.

There is no official founder or cult leader. Everyone does what he pleases, or what is good in her sight due to the apparent absence of a creed or a set of rules to guide its adherents. Missiologists see it as "religious schizophrenia," which is caught rather than taught.

It Is Dynamic

Folk Islam is dynamic in its totality. According to Grant, it "can change over a period of time without any conscious awareness that a change is taking place." The development of folk Islam in any culture impacts in some

---


3Peter Croft, Folk Religion, no. 7 (Leominster, Herefordshire: Modern Churchmen's Union, 1961), 14.

4Grant, 424.
degree the officially prescribed form of Islam. It brings religious compromises, changes in forms and meanings, and lowers the ideal standards within official Islam.

The followers of folk Islam do not pursue strict compliance and are not wholly faithful to the teachings of the Islamic faith. Adherents of folk Islam adopt certain practices that are inconsistent, incompatible, and out of tune with the regular doctrines. According to Phil Parshall:

Muslims who are influenced by animism syncretise a very basic and inadequate knowledge of Islam with a fear and worship of the unseen spiritual and naturalistic forces of the cosmos. They are seeking to respond to felt needs. To the best of their simple understanding they are trying to interact with the power that they perceive to be resident in the universe.¹

It Is Flexible and Compromising

A notable weakness of folk Islam is the wide range of flexibility and tolerance that is permissible. When Islam and animism meet, the Islamic faith is degraded and weakened. Members are indifferent, unregenerate, and are more likely to take spiritual things for granted. According to Gilbert Olson, believers of this religious system “do not normally worship weekly or regularly as do Christians and Muslims. Rather, their worship is personal, familial, and communal for specific occasions.”²

¹Phil Parshall, Bridges to Islam (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 76.
²Olson, 42.
It Endorses Power and Magic

Another aspect of folk Islam is the tolerance of other supernatural powers that people believe to be active in their communities. Many practitioners of folk Islam employ the powers of these spirits and make amulets, talismans, and charms for personal and selfish aggrandizement. These charms, which trace their origin back to the practices of the pagan Arabians, are made in various sizes and shapes, and are worn around various parts of the body for a myriad of reasons. These amulets are

supposedly charged with magical power, that is carried on the person or displayed in a house, barn, or place of business in order to ward off misadventure, disease, or the assaults of malign beings, demonic or human.¹

Besides the wearing of charms on the body, especially by children and older folks, others hang them on sticks in some conspicuous place in their farm, workshop, bedroom, or other diverse places to drive away evil spirits and jinns, to overcome witchcraft, and to deter thieves in their mischievous activities.

Other Forms of Mixed Religion

The practice of "mixed religion" is not confined to Muslims or people in animistic areas alone. It is inherent in all religions, cultures, and people groups

worldwide. It may take different forms, meanings, and functions in different areas, yet it shares many features wherever it may be found.

Buddhists, Hindus, Confucians, and practitioners of other less-known religions such as shamanism, totemism, fetishism, spiritualism, and dynamism are all known to saturate their religions with other beliefs that are not consistent with the principles set forth in their doctrines.

Mixed Religion in Secular Areas

In the neo-pagan societies of the United States of America, Canada, Europe, and other secularized areas, "mixed religion" has assumed a disguised form. Many Christians have, over the years, incorporated strange elements into their faith that are an affront to the teachings of the Bible. Some of these strange practices are done openly, without any guilt or embarrassment to those who espouse them, while others are done secretly for fear of being censured or excommunicated from their church, family, or social affiliations.

Otto Friedrich calls this "a strange mix of spirituality and superstition." G. Van Rheenen labeled


it "New Age thinking."\(^1\) Even some religious leaders, in spite of their professed faith in God, sometimes look outside the realm of their faith and seek "extra" help to deal with difficult issues that confront and puzzle them and their parishioners.

In Africa and in the world at large, Twesigye, an authority on traditional religion, has noted that after Christians and Muslims have worshiped on their Sunday and Friday worship days, "the rest of the week's six days and a half are lived in the guidance and practice of the African traditional religion."\(^2\) It appears to be a general belief among such people that such a lifestyle works well for them.

Some of these people of mixed religion see a cause-and-effect relationship in everything that happens in life, such as calamities, misfortune, sicknesses, disasters, injury, wars, and fires. They have sometimes diagnosed the causes of these problems through the help of specialists such as the medicine man, mullahs, holy men and women, sorcerers, soothsayers, magicians, witch doctors, traditional healers, and midgets. Some of the practitioners also seek the advice and opinions of these specialists. Their ability to examine patients and

---


\(^2\)Twesigye, 86.
prescribe the perfect solution for a given trouble makes them popular. They charge fees for their work and accept other gifts that may include cash, animals, and foodstuffs.

Some practitioners of mixed religion may spend days in mission compounds, cemeteries, deep forests, or beside sacred rivers fasting and praying with the hope of finding causes or answers to their predicaments. The adherents normally employ astrology, divination, bibliomancy, and other means that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

**Mixed Religion in the Biblical Times**

When we turn to the Bible, we see that it is replete with examples of compound religion. Apart from the religion that Yahweh gave to the Israelites, the people of God developed many religions when they began to worship and venerate other gods after they had settled in Canaan. The neighboring nations (the Assyrians, the Ammonites, the Hittites, the Egyptians) each had their own mixed religions.

J. H. Brown lists five strands of mixed religions that are found in the Old Testament: prophetic, baalism, syncretism, kingly, and priestly.¹ Mixed religion is also found in the New Testament where Christ and the Apostles

encountered people who practiced mixed religion in Asia Minor and Christian Europe. Some of these mixed religions in the New Testament took the form of paganism, spiritualism, and idolatry, yet God through his appointed agents condemned such practices.

These polytheistic religious practices developed when the people of God, in addition to their worship and dependence on Yahweh, backslid and sought help from the other gods in other religions. The heathen gods from the surrounding nations became a snare to the Israelites as they shifted loyalty to these gods. This was done to the displeasure and disapproval of God who, through the works of the prophets, denounced such compromises. Peter Croft has written:

Folk religion embraces the residual religion of an atheist and the superstitious hang-ups of a committed Christian; paganism and Pelagianism; the deepest psychological needs of humankind and the biblical ideas of the kingdom.²

Recognizing this problem within Christendom, the World Council of Churches in 1966 condemned and defined folk religion as "the attempt to unite or reconcile biblically revealed Christian truth with the diverse or opposing tenets and practices of non-Christian religions or other systems of thought that deny it."³

________________________
²Croft, 1.
Summary

This study has so far shown the subsequent exodus of Islam from Saudi Arabia to the continent of Africa. Islam spread from Saudi Arabia after it had denounced the existing mixed religions and attempted to replace them with an orthodox religion that Mohammed claimed to have received from God.

Although Islam was a missionary movement, when it set foot on the continent of Africa, it transformed itself with the animistic religions of Africa. This gave birth to a liberal and syncretistic Islam. Islam in Africa has become a folk religion where the followers worship in a way that the Koran does not sanction.

The following chapters identified the ten characteristics of Dagomba folk Islam, analysis of factors that either stimulate or hinder SDA Church growth in North Ghana, and a suggested strategy to witness to the Dagomba people.
CHAPTER V

DAGOMBA FOLK ISLAM

Introduction

Having discussed and traced the history of Islam, its development in both modern and ancient Ghana, and its subsequent spread to the Dagomba people group, we now focus on the variety of folk Islam prevalent in Northern Ghana.

At least ten unique characteristics of Dagomba folk Islam are identified. These ten attributes are a synthesis of Dagomba folk customs and orthodox Islam. These findings are meant to provide a better framework within which a Christian response, experimentation, and innovation that can generate growth within and outside Dagomba communities can be developed.

As a prelude, a brief summary of the status of both Christianity and Islam in North Ghana as well as the impact that Christian missions have had since the arrival of missionaries in North Ghana is given. The origin and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North Ghana up to the present time are also assessed.
Mixed Islam in North Ghana

In 1968, the historian Nehemia Levtzion wrote that the "Dagomba may serve as the best example to illustrate the interaction of Islam and paganism in the Middle Volta States." Lucas had earlier authenticated this view concerning the Dagomba stating, "There is reason to believe from the Shereef's account that the Musselman and the Pagan are indiscriminately mixed." This practice of "mixed Islam" seems to have received a boost from the chiefs in the Dagomba communities who have historically maintained a middle position between Islam and paganism. Levtzion stated:

Chiefs found themselves in a difficult position between an influential Muslim minority, living close to the center, monopolizing the trade, and having extensive outside relations, and the majority of the pagan subjects. The way out of this dilemma was for them to maintain a middle position between Islam and paganism, to be neither real Muslims nor complete pagans. . . . From the middle position some dynasties or individual rulers sometimes advanced toward a more complete acceptance of Islam and sometimes fell back to regain closer relations with traditions.

That Islam and Dagomba folk religion have been so long amalgamated among the Dagomba communities and the whole of North Ghana is a fact that one cannot deny.

---


3Levtzion, Conversion To Islam, 211.
Traditional religion and Islam have ever since become inseparable in the religious, cultural, and social mosaic of the Dagomba people. Adherents of folk Islam in North Ghana do not differentiate between what is orthodox or merely custom.

**Status of Christianity and Islam in North Ghana**

Christianity is more prevalent in Ghana than any other religion. Statistics indicate that 60 percent of the people of Ghana consider themselves to be Christians, although only 12 percent attend church regularly. According to Marc Newsletter, one third of the population identifies itself as following Muslim and animistic religious practices of North Ghana. The survey further points out the following distribution of the Christian groups: Protestants (36%), Pentecostals (26%), Catholics (19%), and African Independent (19%).

It is estimated that 2.2 million Muslims live in Ghana, while the Dagomba population is placed at approximately 500,000. Of these 500,000 Dagomba, 60

---


percent are Muslim, 39 percent follow traditional beliefs, and only 1 percent consider themselves Christians. These statistics reflect the composite religious nature of the Dagomba population in Ghana and the extent of the enormous challenge facing Christian missions in North Ghana.

Within the Christian minority, only the Roman Catholics, the Presbyterians, and the Baptists have partially succeeded in planting some truly indigenous churches within the Dagomba communities. One reason for this is that the Dagomba state capital, Tamale, has become the hub of the Islamic religion where young missionaries are trained to spread the Islamic faith to the surrounding people. Barker points this out:

Tamale in particular is becoming an important Muslim center. Saudi Arabia and the gulf states are channeling oil wealth into promoting Islam in Africa, and in recent years a series of new Muslim institutions has appeared on the scene. In Tamale alone there are over a dozen Muslim missionaries at the present time.

The Catholics do have more than 100,000 members; both the Baptists and the Presbyterians claim to have more than fifty thousand converts. However, the majority of

---

1Barbara F. Grimes, ed., Ethnologue Languages of the World (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1988) 232.

2Barker, 60.

3Peter Sarpong has written that "Statistics are hard to come by, nor can those available be wholly relied upon, as the tendency is for each denomination or religion to inflate its numbers. See Peter Sarpong, Religion in Ghana (Accra-Tema: Ghana Information Services Department, 1977), 24.
these Christians are not indigenous Dagomba, but rather people from other ethnic groups in North and South Ghana. In some churches, most of the members are people from southern and central Ghana who have come to work as civil servants and/or settle in North Ghana. The Dagomba people themselves remain a minority within these Christian churches.

In addition to these churches mentioned above, there are some pockets of independent and spiritual churches scattered over the area, but their number is not significant. The majority of the membership are people from South Ghana who have settled in North Ghana.

**Seventh-day Adventist Church Growth in North Ghana**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church came to Ghana in 1888, but for reasons still unexplained, the church became confined to only the southern and central parts of the country. Churches and Christian institutions such as elementary and secondary schools, training colleges, seminaries, and hospitals were initially built in the Southern and Central Conferences, and these institutions generated unprecedented church growth. Unfortunately no institutions were built in North Ghana. The growth rate of Seventh-day Adventism in North Ghana cannot be compared to either that of the South or Central Ghana Conferences of the SDA Church. The people of North Ghana had to wait for sixty-two years before J. O. Gibson, a
Seventh-day Adventist expatriate worker, raised $1,000 in 1950 and sent E. B. Akyiano "to Tamale in that year to become the first resident SDA worker among the Dagomba and other ethnic groups in the north."\(^1\) Thus, Akyiano started the Seventh-day Adventist Church in that territory.

The early SDA workers who pioneered the gospel of Christ were from South Ghana whose persistent efforts saw only a handful of converts enter the church in North Ghana. The faithful few who accepted the SDA message faced serious opposition from family and peers. The Ghanaian SDA church historian, Kofi Owusu-Mensa, wrote: "A Dagomba flirting with Christianity is most likely to be approached by his muslim relations and friends to consider seriously going the northern way, that is, adopting Islam, if he has now learned about the existence of the Great God whom muslims also worship and call Allah."\(^2\) Today, after forty-three years of mission work, the SDA Church has made very little headway among the indigenous populace.

According to Owusu-Mensa, "animist traditions and muslim influences in that part of the country"\(^3\) have worked against all aspiring missionaries who make attempts to witness to the people.

---


\(^2\) Ibid., 417.

\(^3\) Ibid., 405.
Until recently, leadership roles in the SDA Church were in the hands of expatriates from the United States of America, Europe, and southern and central Ghana. The SDA Church is still dominated by people from southern and central Ghana, and until today, twi, the Ashanti language, is the dominant medium of communication in almost all SDA churches. Growth among the Dagomba people has been mainly biological and transfer growth since tent meetings and Revelation Seminars have not had the desired impact.

**Motivation for Research**

During the winter of 1995, I made a trip to North Ghana, the home of the Dagomba people, to conduct field interviews.\(^1\) Though my work was not a scientific, comprehensive survey, my aim was to study the Dagomba people group, their indigenous religions, and the impact of Islamic influence on their culture. I also planned to assess the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North Ghana Mission of SDA whose membership is about three thousand baptized believers, of which a small percentage are from among the indigenous people.

During the time I spent in Tamale, Ghana, I had the privilege to study and observe folk Islam as it is practiced in North Ghana. My informants, as I have

\(^1\)The interviews were conducted in a formal and informal way. Some of the people were interviewed in the streets, market place, homes, offices, and farms. See Appendix C for sample questionnaire.
already stated in chapter 1, were people of varied backgrounds who freely offered their impressions and opinions concerning the growth and ingrafting of Islam, traditional beliefs, and Christianity in that area.

As I interacted with the Dagomba and the people of North Ghana, I came to see the effect of the intermingling of these three religions in North Ghana. I observed how the people have taken some beliefs from Islam, some from Christianity, and some from traditional beliefs, mixing them together in their religion, politics, language, legal system, and social life. I was confronted with several traits of the Dagomba religion that over the years have developed due to the potpourri of multiple religions in North Ghana. Based on my research, I list ten distinctive factors that can be considered pillars upon which folk Islam is founded among the Dagomba in North Ghana. These are: tradition, polytheism, lay religion, simple initiation, superstition, ritual, selected pillars, non-combative attitude, family religion, and ancestral worship.

**Tradition**

Islam in North Ghana is fully based on tradition. It is the center of authority and the major source of reference for both the learned and the unlearned. It also regulates life, serves as a conscience, and guides behavioral norms within the Dagomba communities. The
beliefs of the people and their worldview are made of layers of ideas and practices handed down to them from the past. Because it is tradition-based, folk Islam is filled with some inaccurate details that are unsubstantiated. Most adherents are not able to offer coherent or well-documented reasons for what they believe.

Moreover, the rationale behind certain festivals, feasts, and customs lacks concrete explanation from the followers. Much of everyday life is rooted in the traditions of the people. Both Dagomba national history and orthodox Islam, from the time of their inception from the Middle East, have generally hinged on this heritage. William Goldsack wrote in 1919:

The importance of the traditions in Islam can hardly be over-estimated. Muslim scholars define them as wahi ghair matlu, or 'unrecited revelation', and in the theology of Islam they occupy a place second only to the Qur'an itself. Indeed they are described as the 'uninspired record of inspired sayings', and have, all down the ages, been used by Muslim divines both in the formation of canon law, and also in the exegesis of the Qur'an.1

Based upon the survey I conducted, I was able to conclude that the Mullahs (popularly referred to as Mallams) seem to be the final authorities on matters relating to worship, dogma, codes of conduct, and Koranic interpretation. More often than not, it was evident that some Dagomba community religious leaders and even the Mullahs gave only superficial responses to some of my

questions. When a response was probed further for clarification, the usual response was, "That is our custom."

The few sampled Mullahs with whom I spoke were illiterate. Since they have neither gone to Islamic nor secular schools, most of the things they teach seem to be what has been told to them from other Mullahs. In the mosque during their worship service, they preach in Arabic, yet neither they nor their flock seem to comprehend what is being said.

This illiteracy occurs not only with the Mullahs. A great percentage of the people can read neither the Koran nor the English and Arabic literature that comes to them from the Middle East, United States, Pakistan, and other Islamic states. The younger generation with secular education who could read have little interest in the faith, though they have not denounced it.

The interviews also revealed that the Dagomba peoples' knowledge of the Koran is limited to what they have been told by some Muslim cleric, prayer leader, or ritual specialist. Some of their customary rites date from many years back. The believers are ignorant of the sources of these rites. This situation is almost the same in Muslim countries where because of illiteracy many practitioners of folk Islam cannot read the Koran for themselves.

Books on the Islamic religion that I examined had
been written for the people based on collections of traditions. The people were usually more conversant with these writings than with the Koran, which is supposed to be the rule and basis for the life of the Muslim. One informant, a leader in one of the mosques, admitted to me:

Though some teachings are based on tradition, which is similar to folk religion, this is how we have been doing it from the past and nothing can weaken our belief and confidence in the Koran, Mohammed, Allah, and the Islamic faith. Allahu-Akbar.'

Often the educated elite and clerics argue and exegete from a traditional point of view rather than from a theological Koranic position. Such a trend underscores the way tradition has managed to take a firm grip on the Dagombas in their religious experiences.

Polytheism

Monotheism has from the beginning been a central teaching of the Koran. Muslims vehemently reject the Christian idea of the Trinity. They have always taught that it is even an unpardonable sin or "shirk"² to associate anything with God. Islam was originally a protest from the prophet Mohammed who preached and taught against the various religious groups in Arabia whose polytheistic worship had dominated the religions of the Arabians.

'Interview by author with a Mallam in Tamale Central Mosque, 26 January, 1995.

²Shirk is the erroneous idea of comparing God with any other person. It is forbidden in the Koran.
At the coming of Islam to North Ghana, the Muslim evangelists who disseminated the Muslim faith to the Dagomba people were impressed by their hosts' sociopolitical structure and animistic religious traditions. The Muslims adopted Dagomba culture, picked up Dagomba names, and blended their Islamic faith with the Dagomba pagan worship which, in contrast with Islam, promoted polytheism. Despite Islam's monolithic teachings, it evolved with the passage of time to become a polytheistic Islam.

Today many Dagombas continue to maintain their family gods in their secret chambers at home as an integral part of their lives and still claim to be either Christians or Muslims. According to one interviewee:

Traders and merchants who brought Islam to North Ghana were too liberal and allowed the people to merge their new faith [Islam] with their traditional religion. They were not strict to teach the Dagombas to follow the Koran.1

It is even a common phenomenon to see some Dagomba Christians still holding onto both Islamic and animistic beliefs. The reason for this behavior is, according to one informant, “to take advantage of the benefits, blessings, and the security that are in the three religions and to pay the necessary respect to the gods of the heavens [the Supreme God of the Christians] and on the earth [the lesser gods of the land] whom our ancestors

serve and which we are responsible for honoring."¹ Many people do not even attempt to hide their impressions or feelings when they disclose that they always seek help from all the religions: Islam, Christianity, and traditional worship.

Lay Religion

Christianity and other religions spread to various parts of Ghana and Africa as a whole through the efforts of foreign missionaries. The foreign church leaders not only taught biblical doctrines, but also set up rules, policies, and procedures in the governance of the churches so that the churches in the homeland and in the mission fields would maintain a universal outlook. This was to ensure that after the departure of the missionaries, there would not be a deviation from the world church.

Some missionaries stayed with their infant churches on a long-term basis in order to guide and establish the new converts in their Christian faith. With the passage of time, as these foreign missionaries stayed with their converts, a cultural diffusion occurred with the local people adopting some of the missionaries' culture.

The colonial governments that came from Christian lands in Europe also promoted the spread of the Christian faith through their direct and indirect rule. In Africa

some of these mission lands patterned their social, political, civil, and spiritual upbringing after that of their colonial Christian masters.

Unlike the spread of Christianity, it was the ordinary traders, travelers, immigrants, and merchants who, through their mercantile contact, brought Islam to Ghana. They indirectly sowed the message of the prophet Mohammed along the path where they engaged in social, political, and economic activities. From their marriages to the local people, they brought families to the Islamic faith since the men invariably insisted that their wives adopt Islam.

Though these merchants were not professional communicators, they immersed themselves deeply into the culture of the people. They worked as interpreters, secretaries, and treasurers in the government. They spoke the language, ate the food, dressed in local dress, and most significant of all, used the local people to spread the message of Islam among their own folk. In the long term, the Africans (i.e., the Ghanaians) propagated the faith of Islam themselves. Claude Molla observed:

Islam is evidently an African reality because it is promoted by Africans. The merchant who spreads out his collection of rags in the market, the man who drives his lorry, the marabout who teaches the children to recite the Koran, the Maloum who circumscribes and sells amulets--all are Africans. They have their own way of bowing down and praying in public, but they assume the role of
After establishing the faith in Ghana, the Islamic communities had no system of paid ministers or resident missionaries as is done in the Christian churches. Rather, the Muslims had a system that is akin to the Christian concept of the priesthood of all believers. All Muslims saw themselves as commissioned missionaries with a burden to witness to their faith in whatever circumstance or environment that they found themselves. Their Muslim lifestyle became a signpost that pointed many people to the path of Islam. Non-Muslims noted the Muslims' consistency in prayers, fasting, sacrifices, and pilgrimages and embraced the Islamic faith.

Religious services, funerals, weddings, and other social events were conducted by a local Imam who received no salary since each mosque and its members operate independently. The head of every family could lead or conduct worship services in their homes and villages. Individual Muslims worship and maintain their relationship with Allah wherever they are without the supervision of a minister, a paid Mullah, or a resident missionary.

These practices made the Islamic faith self-reliant, self-governing, self-teaching, and self-propagating when compared to the Christian churches, where

---

some of the functions such as preaching, teaching, baptizing, and administrating were conducted only by either a trained or a qualified official. Even now, some of the Catholic and Protestant churches have certain offices that are filled largely by expatriates.

The early marabouts who were merchants lived their faith and impressed the Ghanaians by the way they adapted themselves to local customs and rites. In Tamale and the surrounding Dagomba towns, I was told that Islam had been brought to them by people who did not only intermarry with them but also took on the Dagomba names and lifestyles and adapted easily to the Dagomba culture. One Roman Catholic Church leader, commenting on this method of the merchants who had brought Islam to his people said, "Their interest and honest appreciation of our people’s culture became a tremendous boon."¹ J. S. Trimingham has acknowledged that, since in West Africa Islam was spread through this same method, the new religion was "assimilated gradually without causing too great disruption in communal life."²

To propagate the Islamic faith required no formal academic training. Unlike the requirements for Christian pastors and elders, followers of Islam were not required to prove any merit or achievement in order to qualify to


²Trimingham, The Christian Church and Islam in West Africa, 22.
lead a soul to the faith or to officiate at the worship ceremony. Trimingham notes that "the real difference between Islam and Christianity in this respect is that an untrained Islamic cleric can perform any clerical function, whereas the Christian lay catechist cannot celebrate the central rite of the Church, which in consequence is almost unknown to the average villager."¹

Simple Initiation

From the responses and the feelings of veteran Christian workers to Tamale and the Dagomba communities, I realized that initiation into the Islamic religion is not as complex and demanding as the Christian faith. There is nothing elaborate or meticulous about admission into Islam.

No elaborate preparations from the Koran or demonstration of strict compliance with doctrines are required of new converts before indoctrination. Islam does not demand much from the people and requires just a little preparation (if any at all) to enter into membership. There is no need to renounce family or friends, refrain from eating any particular food, or put on any special dress. One veteran Christian leader admitted to me that "simplicity and modesty in Islam make it more appealing to the poorer class who find comfort, hope, and answers to

¹Ibid., 31.
life's problems in Islam." Essentially H. J. Fisher was right when he declared that in West Africa "to say I am a Muslim, is, in many cases, to be one."

Membership records are not kept to decide who is in good and regular standing. No territorial divisions within the Ghanaian Muslims restrict movements of Dagomba clerics, teachers, Imams, or other persons or limit how much can be done within or outside the religious community.

Those who are born into Islam from Muslim parentage assume ipso facto status that gives them automatic membership, as well as all the rights and privileges in that religion. It is expected that the one born into Islam will remain and practice it until death. If there should be conversion from Islam into another faith, it is considered irtihad, (i.e., apostasy).

In contrast to the Christian faith where monogamy is the ideal way of life for families, there is a wide range of freedom for marriages in Islam. Polygamy and bigamy are permitted while divorce can be initiated at any

---


point in time without reproach. Because of this lax practice, it has been very difficult for many potential converts from Islam in North Ghana to accept the Christian gospel, especially the SDA message, for fear of what will happen to their wives if they become Christians.

Superstition

The Dagomba Muslims are superstitious. This is best seen in the way people perceive, do, and accept things. The belief in magic and amulets makes superstition supreme in the lives of the people. Fisher characterized amulets as the “most convertible currency in West Africa religion.” In Dagomba towns and villages, magicians and soothsayers perform in market places, theaters, town and cinema halls, and other public places. Amulets are used to curse, protect, cure, pass exams, win competitions, protect lovers, or maintain relationships, and marriages. J. N. D. Anderson writes:

The first phase is commonly for Muslim merchants and “holy men” to visit a country, or even begin to reside there, and for the indigenous inhabitants, without any real understanding of Islam whatever, to adopt Muslim charms and to have recourse to Muslim charms as an adjunct to pagan priests (by whatever name these may go). This minor assimilation is everywhere assisted moreover, by the fact that animists, on the other hand, almost invariably believe in one supreme God—although they commonly ignore Him in favor of inferior but much more imminent and obtrusive spirits—so the Allah of Islam is not an entirely alien conception, while Muslims, on their part,

readily identify the objects of animistic ritual with the jinn, and scarcely question the efficacy—as distinct, in theory at least, from the legality—of the practises of pagan magic.¹

The Koran as a religious book of instruction is also used to work many magical and superstitious feats. Folk adherents in Dagomba towns recite certain chapters from the Koran, even when they do not comprehend them, for different purposes. Sometimes the people will copy passages in the Koran, and cast a hex on them, making a talisman which is then sold at bus terminals or door to door. Some medicine men also copy verses of the Koran on a board with chalk, wash the board with water to save it as a concoction, and then sell this water to many people who seek help from them. These Koranic concoctions and amulets are supposed to help students pass exams, cure people of all disease, help the barren, and protect travellers from accidents.

In orthodox Islam, the Baraka is supposed to be: (1) a mysterious and wonderful power, a blessing from God granted to certain people, places, and things; (2) a divine grace and mercy (as opposed to justice), protection from danger and trouble, charisma for leadership, and power to protect and heal; and (3) a gift from Allah who

always dispenses it as a blessing, which can be passed on to others.¹

During my stay in Tamale, I asked many Muslims about their understanding of the Baraka. To my surprise, I found that many Dagomba have different conceptions of what constitutes a Baraka. First, in this folk religion, Baraka is transferable among loved ones and can be passed on from one generation to another. Second, anyone can use money to buy and make money out of the blessings acquired from the Baraka. Third, the people believe that through penance Baraka can be gotten from the ancestors.

Many have come to the Islamic faith in North Ghana thinking that, in addition to their ancestral religion, Islam offers them certain status in the Dagomba communities. Due to this belief, many undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, not only to fulfill a religious obligation, but to acquire prestige and to receive supernatural power to solve some of the problems in life. Many people told me of their expectation that a visit to Mecca can give the Muslim some magical power that will enable him to serve as an intermediary in knowing the will of God and in helping to solve social, economic, and spiritual problems.

Ritualistic Practices

The observance of rituals is a widespread and vital phenomenon in both Islam and folk worship.

¹Van Rheenen, 199-200.
Community religious leaders conduct the rituals. However, where there is no specialist, convention allows a father or an elder to perform the ritual. For example, circumcision takes place eight days after the child is born. The father has every right to perform this ritual if there is no wansam or specialist present who can perform the circumcision.

In an interview with one of the leaders of the mosque in Tamale, I was told of the importance of rituals in the worship of Allah within the Dagomba environment because of the basic commonalities Islam and folk culture have. For instance, people commonly believe that only meat from animals killed by a purified Mallam or a specialist is clean for human consumption. Others indicated repeatedly that when one prays to Allah, one must always wash one’s body, especially the private parts, so that the prayers offered will be acceptable to Allah.

In Tamale, I saw a lactating mother with her triplets in a busy intersection at the market place begging for alms. Later I was told that it is customary for those women who have had multiple births to ask alms for the children from the public so that the little ones can better survive the evils of this world.

Some rituals take the form of animal sacrifice. In North Ghana, sacrifices are made to appease the gods of

1 Wansam is a Muslim who specializes in circumcision of children eight days after they are born.
the land and to seek forgiveness of sin from Allah. The diverse use of blood, the washing of the body before worship, begging and giving of alms in public places, the recitation of the Koran over loud speakers in public, counting of rosary beads during prayers, and the yearly pilgrimage to holy shrines to thank the ancestors and to seek forgiveness of sin are some of the practices that Muslims do publicly and which have become very appealing to non-Muslims.

Muslims in North Ghana towns and villages feel that to find answers to their daily needs, a simple selat (a sacrifice and ablution in their home or workplace) is adequate to reach their gods and to have their petitions answered. Because of this, they have always found Christianity less appealing. From personal observation, I realized that there are few rituals in Christianity to make it pragmatic, simple, and realistic to be embraced by Dagombas and other Muslim people groups in North Ghana.

There are so many mosques within the reach of believers in villages, along roadsides, and in marketplaces that it is very easy to worship. Even where there is no place of worship, one can easily kneel at any spot and worship Allah. The ideal for the faithful is to cleanse certain parts of the body with water before worshipping Allah, but according to the Koran, worshippers can use sand to wash themselves if no water is accessible. This provides an easy alternative to the Muslim who is
freed to worship and to pray to Allah with few, if any, constraints.

Selected Pillars Observed

The Islamic religion does require all Muslims to conform to the duties of the five pillars of Islam. This is the acid test of one's loyalty and faithfulness to the teachings of the Koran. Yet total and strict compliance to these pillars is a problem for many Dagomba due to their ties with traditional religious practices.

In the survey it became apparent to me that not all Muslims within the Dagomba community strictly follow all the five pillars. The Dagomba Muslims that I interviewed indicated their firm belief in the first pillar, the Shahada, and the ministry of angels, for without that no one could be considered a Muslim. Similarly, Barker noted concerning the Dagombas:

For one who recites the Shahada and occasionally prays cannot be denied the right to call himself a Muslim whatever his personal behaviour or neglect of the remaining “pillars of Islam.”

Both the verbal and the nonverbal responses of the interviewees tended to relegate the other four pillars to positions of less importance. It seems Muslim devotees are not consistent in observing them. The devout Dagomba Muslims indicated that they strictly pray five times daily. Nevertheless, some of the Dagomba Muslims say they

\[1\text{Barker, 138.}\]
pray once or twice but not regularly. Others said they did not pray at all, though they know it is obligatory for Muslims to pray five times daily.

Although the Koran exempts certain classes of people from the annual fast of Ramadan, I found that some Muslims do not observe this one-month daylight fast. Those skipping the fast come mainly from the secularized class who, while not denying the existence of Allah, find it unimportant to set aside one month for fasting. When asked why, they offered excuses that ranged from poor health to lack of interest.

The few privileged pilgrims who had been to Mecca told me that they went for spiritual uplifting and worship. However, some did not hide the underlying motive for their Hajj. They went on the pilgrimage so that they could acquire magical powers to help people who come to consult them, and thereby gain prestige and elevated status in their communities that come with the title, Alhaji,1 which is given only to those who have gone to Mecca. They use it as a springboard in their business enterprise since during the short stay abroad they can export and import merchandise for profit.

Non-combative Attitude

Some Muslims in other parts of the world are noted for their combative and aggressive spirit toward other

---

1See Chapter 1.
religions. Middle East Islamic fundamentalists and radicals have obeyed the directives of several ayatollahs to terrorize and wreak vengeance against various peoples, governments, and institutions.1 These radicals make headlines in the newspapers, magazines, and television news.

This is not the situation among Muslims in North Ghana. Muslims in Ghana are considered conservative Sunnis who in the past have been known for their tolerance, moderation, and broad-mindedness. It is easy to negotiate with them through their chiefs, Imams, and family heads on political, religious, and social matters. Christians and Muslims live at peace with one another with little or no religious conflict. A defamation of Allah, Mohammed, the Koran, or any of the Islamic institutions or doctrines does not evoke any reprisals or persecution from Muslims.

Marriages between Muslims and Christians are commonplace and bring little opposition from either side. In an interview with Pastor Somani,2 a veteran SDA minister with the North Ghana Mission of SDA, he told me of the marriage of his daughter to a devout Muslim. Many

1Salmon Rushie's book Satanic Verses provoked such anger among the Muslim community that a death sentence was pronounced on him by Ayatollah Khomeni of Iran.

Christians and Muslims told me that such marriages have worked successfully with few or no problems.

Both Christians and Muslims work together in communities and in politics, education, and social matters without any clash. Government schools\(^1\) have had both Muslims and Christians in the classroom, and the atmosphere has always been cordial. Until now, Muslims have allowed their children to attend Christian schools where the study of the Bible is part of the educational curriculum. M. Ali Kettani wrote:

This is due to the fact that under the colonial rule, all modern schools were in the hands of Christian missions. Even after independence, about one third of the schools of Ghana remained in the hands of Christian missions.\(^2\)

Muslims have even observed some public holidays with Christian origins. For example, in Ghana, Christmas, New Years, and Easter are public holidays that are observed by both Christians and Muslims without any protest.

**Family Religion**

Throughout my stay I saw that Islam in North Ghana is a family religion. Many of those I interviewed told me that they were from families that have preserved the Islamic faith for many years. Each family is bent on

\(^{1}\)The Ghana Education Service requires all students in the tertiary institutions to take a class in the Bible.

maintaining the Muslim traditions. Because of this, children find it very difficult to make personal decisions if they wish to change their religion from Islam to Christianity.

From infancy, parents impress upon their children the importance of studying the Koran in the Makaranta schools. The Makaranta schools are private establishments run by the Islamic sects in villages and towns within the Dagomba confines. Most are attached to the mosques in the villages to make it possible for the children to attend daily. Children are admitted without paying any fees or meeting any requirements. One church leader said, "Christian missions opened schools that they patterned with secular requirements. What they taught their people eventually secularized them instead of maintaining and affirming them within Christianity."

**Ancestral Worship**

Practitioners of folk Islam in the Dagomba towns venerate and appease the dead within their communities. They see their ancestors as the "intermediaries" between the dead and the living who can communicate the will of the gods to them. They respect and give the ancestors food on certain days and occasions. When children are born, parents or family members consult a soothsayer or a

---

religious leader to find which ancestor within the family is returning. As a sign of respect, children are named after the ancestors so that the people can receive their help and maintain spiritual contact with the ancestors.

In one area, I saw a grave in the backyard of a family's home. I inquired why they buried the person in such close proximity to the house. The response was, "This was his home and as such he deserves to be buried here so that we can always contact him and get good will."¹

Some of the practitioners of folk Islam in North Ghana offer expensive sacrifices when they infringe upon the wish of an ancestor. Fowls, goats, white calico, food, and other objects are the normal offerings. Just because a family keeps traditional sacrificial animals does not necessarily mean that the family offers sacrifices, since many families keep such animals for commercial purposes. One family told me that since ancestors dwell in an animal, they can prevent death or any bad omen that might come upon any member of the family.

Summary

Thus far we have come to understand that the interaction of orthodox Islam with the traditional

¹A Dagomba farmer, interview by author, Tamale, 26 January 1995.
religions and customs has resulted in the development of a folk religion in the Middle Volta Basin, and that this has affected the religious life of the Dagombas who live in this area. The Dagomba were impressed by what they saw of their Muslim friends with whom they traded, and Islamic rituals were eventually absorbed into their pagan worship.

Christianity has had only a small impact on the Dagomba, considering the fact that 99 percent of the people follow either folk Islam or traditional beliefs. The relative success of the Roman Catholic Church is in part due to several factors, of which the major one is a similarity between Islam and Roman Catholic belief. The syncretistic tendency in both Islam and Roman Catholicism has made it easy for many to embrace any of the multiple religions that are in North Ghana.

The field interviews provided the key to identifying ten characteristics of Dagomba folk Islam. These range from tradition to ancestral worship. It is within this context that the SDA Church in North Ghana must devise a workable strategy that both laity and ministers alike can use in North Ghana.
CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT EITHER STIMULATE OR HINDER SDA CHURCH GROWTH IN NORTH GHANA

Introduction

Interview Instrument

Before the interviews for this project were carried out among the Dagbanis in Tamale, Ghana, West Africa, a pilot test was conducted on two levels to evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of the questionnaire. This was done to allow for changes and adaptations before administering it to the target audience. This also helped to eliminate ambiguity in some of the questions.

Mock Interviews

The mock interviews were conducted on: (1) selected Ghanaian students at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA), including church members, pastors, and former administrators residing and/or

'I am indebted to both Jerome Thayer, Ph.D., and Bruce Bauer, D.Miss., whose constructive criticism and suggestions helped me to design the questionnaire. See Appendix C.
studying in the United States and (2) a crosssection of Dagbanis (both Seventh-day Adventist and non-Seventh-day Adventist), including active Seventh-day Adventist pastors, leaders, evangelists, and administrators from South and Central Ghana.

Some who understood the situation in North Ghana and others who did not were randomly interviewed using the interview instrument. Responses from these interviews further helped me to evaluate and clarify the questions. The respondents offered constructive criticism and suggestions as to the wording of the questions which helped me improve and modify them so as to solicit appropriate responses.

None of the responses provided to these preliminary interviews were taken into consideration in the findings mentioned in this paper since the purpose of this step was only to improve the interview instrument.

In contrast to the mock interviews, the actual interviews that I conducted in Tamale took a different form. Some of the respondents were interviewed at one sitting or more than once. A total of about fifty-three informants were interviewed, which took about ninety-five hours of interviewing.

\[1\text{All the students were non-Dagomba nationals.}\]
Categories of People Interviewed

The categories of people interviewed were:

Dagbani-speaking members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North Ghana, (2) non-Seventh-day Adventist Dagbani-speaking people in North Ghana, (3) conservative and illiterate Mullahs who are in charge of some Islamic mosques in Tamale in North Ghana, and (4) past and present Seventh-day Adventist Church administrators, leaders, pastors, and evangelists in the United States and Ghana.

Interview Questions for Dagomba SDAs

The major objectives of this questionnaire were to: (1) ascertain from Dagbani-speaking Seventh-day Adventist Church members which motivational factors influenced their decision(s) to become Seventh-day Adventist church members, (2) measure the members' religious experiences since becoming SDA's, and (3) find out from the Dagomba SDA's what their church can do to attract other Dagombas to Christianity.

The name, age, sex, occupation, and educational background of each interviewee was to be considered. I had planned to record the place, date, and duration of each interview and the number of times each subject was to be interviewed.

When I arrived in North Ghana I anticipated interviewing about twenty-five indigenous Seventh-day
Adventist Dagomba, but I was able to find only three.¹

Questions Used to Interview Dagomba Muslims

The purpose of the questions was to: (1) investigate and analyze the factors that, according to Dagomba Muslims, make the SDA message unattractive to the Dagombas; (2) find out from the Dagombas what approaches can open avenues for the penetration of the SDA message; and (3) solicit the views of the Dagomba Muslims on how SDA's can attract them to their church.

I recorded background information relating to the interviewees' ages, professions, and sex. The place, date, duration, and the number of times each person was interviewed were considered. Each interviewee was also asked about his or her level of education and religious affiliation. The responses of twenty-five Dagomba Muslims are summarized below.

Question 1

Question 1 asked: Are you a practicing Muslim? Fifty-two percent said in the interview that they take an "active part" in the religious life of Islam. Since they answered positively, I probed further to ask what they meant by "active part" in their religion. Respondents

¹Since I was unable to find a significant number to interview, I concentrated mainly on the other two groups whose views I will analyze. This also confirmed the extent of the enormous task which continues to face the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North Ghana.
said they pray constantly as stipulated in the Koran. They always join the faithful to fast for one month during the annual Ramadan fast, give alms to the poor as often as they can, and attend the daily and weekly group prayers and worship at the mosque.

The other 48 percent declared that they have not been practicing all the requirements of the Muslim faith. When asked what has hindered them from active participation in the Islamic religious services to Allah, they said that they had been too busy with life, family, work, and other things or that they do not find the urge to participate in corporate or individual worship.

The Dagomba Muslims do not observe fasting, pray five times daily, or read the Koran, as is expected of all followers of Islam. Some confessed that they still have many unanswered questions about Islam that are hard for them to understand, such as the credibility of Mohammed, the authenticity of the Koran, and some historical narrations from the traditions.

None of the inactive Muslims expressed any negative sentiment against the Islamic religion. They seemed loyal to the Islamic religion but had lost interest in spiritual things. They maintained that Islam is to them the true religion that Allah has established for the salvation of humankind and, as such, must be embraced.
Question 2

Question 2 asked: How often do you read the Koran and other Islamic literature? Table 1 shows that 60 percent of the interviewees do not read the Koran or other Islamic literature at all.

TABLE 1
ATTITUDE TOWARD THE KORAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of reading the Koran</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not read</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of them have the Koran and other Islamic publications in their homes, but others have never owned any before. Apart from the weekly or daily attendance at the mosque where the religious leaders read the Koran to the assembled worshipers every morning and evening, these Muslims did not read the Koran. They can read the Koran, as most of them attended the Makaranta schools, but they have lost interest in reading it.

Question 3

Question 3 asked: Do you know anything about the SDA Church in your area? The survey revealed that, after almost five decades of SDA presence in North Ghana, the
Church is still unknown to many Dagomba people. They have only a faint knowledge of the SDA Church and its teachings or beliefs. The few evangelistic efforts held in the past within Tamale and the surrounding areas were seen by these Muslims as just another one of the Christian groups opposed to the Islamic faith. As one SDA Church leader indicated, "Our focus for winning people was always the Ashantis and some other tribes from southern Ghana who are more winnable than the Dagomba."1

Only 12 percent indicated any knowledge about the SDA Church, as compared with 88 percent who said that they have no idea who the SDAs are. They seem to associate the Roman Catholic Church2 with almost every benevolent work done by any Christian group in North Ghana.

Those who had some idea of the SDA Church knew about it because of the Church's buildings, mission schools, trucks, and/or humanitarian programs. Many spoke of the Church's ADRA and Dorcas Society programs that have been involved in community food and clothing distribution and with developmental projects for the poor.

Despite years of literature distribution and the operation of schools, respondents indicated that they do


2The Roman Catholics have built institutions such as schools, hospitals, and factories, and daily seem to be in the news. Some of their leaders are actively involved in the political process of the country.
not remember reading any SDA literature. All of them claimed that they have never seen or come in contact with any of our SDA literature.¹

**Question 4**

Question 4 asked: Have you ever attended any Christian school? If so, to what level? Besides attending the Makaranta schools, which is compulsory for every child from Muslim homes, 80 percent said they have had at least part of their education in either Christian or secular schools where Bible knowledge is an academic requirement. They claimed to have come in contact with the Bible either from class study or a Christian friend who witnessed to them.

But their exposure to the Bible and their association with other Christians in various schools has done little, if anything, to influence them to convert from Islam to Christianity. The SDA Church has not benefitted much from winning Dagomba converts through their schools since it is only an elementary school where the children cannot decide to convert from Islam to Christianity. All the respondents replied that attending Christian schools did not influence them to change their religion, even

¹During an interview with Pastor Ambrose Waahu, President of North Ghana Mission of SDA, I was told that literature work has been going on for years and every summer students from SDA colleges come to sell books in Tamale and the surrounding towns (interview by author, January 26 and 27, 1995).
though they had been exposed to Christian doctrines.

**Question 5**

Question 5 asked: Do you allow your children or relatives or friends to attend Seventh-day Adventist or Christian church schools? An overwhelming 72 percent answered positively. Moreover, they did not object to public prayers and the study of the Bible as part of the school curriculum. During my visit to the SDA school in Tamale, I saw that some of the students are well-versed in the Bible as a result of the emphasis on Christian beliefs in the school curriculum.

But when asked if they would allow their relatives to switch from Islam to Christianity if convicted, 65 percent said no, 10 percent indicated yes, and the rest just said they did not know unless they were be faced with this issue.

The other 28 percent indicated that they allow their children to attend public schools but always object to the inclusion of Bible studies in the school curriculum. They claim that it is a way of converting their children to Christianity. They insist that the government curriculum in the schools should also place emphasis on the Koran so that non-Muslim students can be exposed to and acquainted with the Islamic religion. Some of the Islamic schools had refused to comply with the
government's new curriculum, which they insist has less time for Islamic education.

**Question 6**

Question 6 asked: What teachings or beliefs do you see in the Christian churches that are attractive or repulsive to you? It became evident from the responses that prayer and fasting as practiced by Christians meant so much to the respondents. (See table 2.) They repeatedly emphasized the importance of both corporate and individual prayers as a way of keeping a relationship with the Creator of humankind but expressed dissatisfaction about the way Christians pray and how they approach God. Many see irreverence and inconsistency in clapping, shouting, and dancing when Christians are praying to the Almighty God.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEPTION TOWARD CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS (in Percentages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attractive Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer &amp; fasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Testament events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almsgiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of the dead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The state of the dead, the judgment of God, tithe and almsgiving, healthful living, washing of the feet before communion service, and some Old Testament historical passages on the patriarchs such as Moses, Abraham, and Jacob were some of the most-often-cited Christian beliefs that are attractive to them.

The deity of Jesus Christ and his role in the Trinity were the two major theological teachings with which many Dagomba Muslims disagree. They vehemently denied the Christian teaching that Jesus is simultaneously the son of God and a member of the Godhead.

**Question 7**

Question 7 asked: Which is more likely to attract your attention to the SDA Church or other Christian churches: camp meetings, sporting activities, evangelistic meetings, community involvement, or a friend's lifestyle?

Dagomba Muslims have several religious festivals that they celebrate within their communities every year. These festivals are celebrated by families with great pride because of the blessings that come with them. But during the survey, many indicated that Christmas, the New Year, and Easter festivities were the three main annual events most likely to attract them to Christian churches.

Some told me that in the past they have visited and continue to visit Christian churches during these
special occasions. They have worshipped and attended some church programs before.

Public evangelistic meetings, which have been used in the past to spread the good news of Christ, were rated low by the respondents. Many questioned the way some Christian preachers carelessly handle the Bible in public and approached God in prayer.

**Question 8**

Question 8 asked: Are you in any way offended by any Christian terminologies or jargons such as “crusades,” “God’s only begotten Son,” “the remnant,” etc.? Many expressed their dissatisfaction with the Christian doctrine of “God’s only begotten Son” and “the remnant.” Jesus is seen by the Muslims as one of the prophets that followed a long line of God’s spokesmen in the Old Testament period.

**Question 9**

Question 9 asked: Which Christian doctrines or teachings are relevant to you? Christian teachings about the power and miracles of God, prayer and fasting, almsgiving, and the judgment of God are relevant to the Muslims. These are some of the basic teachings that are also found in the Koran and are a vital part of the Islamic teachings.

Although both the Koran and the Bible address
these concepts, they differ widely in their interpretation and understanding. The biblical narrations and the historical accounts on certain characters and events were in conflict with the Koran.

**Question 10**

Question 10 asked: What is your general attitude toward Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians? Eighty percent referred to the caring attitude of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in responding to the needs of the poor. They were impressed by the Church's strong participation in humanitarian projects in their communities and its quick and effective response to disasters such as fires, drought, and famine. The main problem was that many thought ADRA-sponsored projects were initiated by the Roman Catholics.

Some of them cited organizations such as World Vision, Salvation Army, Red Cross, and the Catholic Relief Agency as agencies they were familiar with. The Church's ability to provide long-term solutions to diverse problems which have generated economic, physical, and mental developments was commended.

**Selected Questions to Past and Present Leaders**

The goals in this questionnaire were: (1) to identify methods used in the past for witnessing among the
Muslims in North Ghana, (2) to pinpoint factors that in
the past have impeded the growth of the Seventh-day
Adventist work in North Ghana, and (3) to solicit opinions
on what can be done to make the SDA message meaningful to
meet felt needs among the Muslims.

The only background information requested was the
respondent's name and current position or work within the
SDA Church. I randomly selected twenty-five people within
this category. The following questions were asked.

Question 1

Question 1 asked: How long have you worked as a
pastor, administrator, elder, leader, or evangelist among
the Dagomba and other Muslims in North Ghana? With the
exception of only one respondent who has given over thirty
years of continuous service to the SDA Church in North
Ghana, the length of service of those interviewed was
between six months to five years.1 Some of them worked
for a short time and were either reassigned to other
positions within the West Africa Union Mission of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church2 or had to vacate their post
due to health or family reasons.

This disrupted the soul-winning work in North

---

1Pastor Kofi Antobam, Ministerial Secretary, North
Ghana Mission of SDA, interview by author, 28 January
1995.

2The West Africa Union Mission is comprised of
Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Gambia.
Ghana and caused some financial constraints upon the Church. It sometimes left the North Ghana Mission without a leader to mobilize the SDA Churches into productive soul-winning.

**Question 2**

Question 2 asked: What is involved with your work in North Ghana? Table 3 reveals that most of the SDA workers are either involved as district pastors, administrators, or ADRA workers. None claimed to have been sent specifically to live in North Ghana to plant churches on a long-term basis. None of them had learned either the dominant Dagbani language or any of the North Ghana local languages for effective communication and witnessing of the gospel to the people. Instead, all the missionaries interviewed communicated and administered in their native languages through interpreters, but often it was difficult to convey the intent of the expatriate to his hearers due to obvious cultural differences.

Some of the visiting evangelists to North Ghana conducted their evangelistic campaigns and seminars for a few weeks. After their evangelistic meetings, which usually attracted non-Dagbanis, the few converts were hastily placed in the care of the mission staff. But unfortunately the mission workers are usually not equipped to nurture and establish these new converts; in most
cases, their efforts and meager resources are not able to sustain new converts.

These guest evangelists who had labored in North Ghana indicated that they had not specifically targeted Muslims, though they had them in mind. The few Dagomba Muslim converts who accepted the SDA message were won by “accident” because they were not the intended target. Only one SDA missionary to North Ghana was a former Muslim. His six-week evangelistic series brought some interest, but his departure affected the seed sown. Many gave up after the meetings.

The Church had no formal, post-baptism arrangements to nurture new converts; thus many of them found no support system. They became “lone rangers” in the SDA Church and eventually left the faith. Some Dagomba converts who moved to the southern part of Ghana after joining the SDA Church quit the faith because of poor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average Time of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>From 6 months-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADRA/Relief work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>From 6 months-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting evangelist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4-6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church planter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
reception in some of the SDA churches, which never recognized their talents or helped them to develop their gifts.

Question 3

Question 3 asked: What factors in your opinion have worked against the evangelization of Muslims in North Ghana? One of the strongest factors considered by respondents as affecting the SDA Church’s efforts to win Muslims was lack of long-term missionaries to work in North Ghana. As a mission field, members had expected that aspiring missionaries would face tough scrutiny and be given a comprehensive orientation to help them know the extent of the task. It would be important to know the socioeconomic conditions of the Dagbanis before committing themselves to work in North Ghana. But often this was not done. This apparent lack of education affected the cross-cultural work of missionaries whose sudden departure orphaned the new believers who had looked to them as spiritual guardians.

As reflected in Table 4, lack of funds was never perceived as a major factor affecting Seventh-day Adventist efforts to win Muslims in North Ghana. Interviewee’s agreed that committed personnel can use limited resources to bring in souls who will in turn provide the needed funds for the expansion of God’s work.
TABLE 4
STRONGEST INFLUENCE AGAINST SOUL-WINNING
(in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTOR</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of long-term missionaries</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Islam and folk religion</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of foreign materials for witnessing</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of community reaction and hostility</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funds</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 4**

Question 4 asked: What has been done in the past to witness among the Dagbanis and other Muslim groups? What were the results? The data in Table 5 reveal several witnessing methods that have been employed in the past. Respondents rated ADRA and Dorcas community projects as an important factor that gave the Church good publicity and provided important leads for witnessing. Some of them capitalized on the good publicity that ADRA brought to the SDA Church but because ADRA is not structured for soul-winning in North Ghana, members could not maximize its full impact.

From Table 5, it is obvious that house-to-house visitation, literature distribution, and revival meetings scored low marks; these failed to bring people to the Church.
TABLE 5
MEMBER WITNESSING STRATEGY
(in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADRA and Dorcas projects</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built schools</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tent and revival meetings</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House-to-house visitation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature distribution</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health programs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 5

Question 5 asked: How long should a witnessing approach be tried? The majority of the respondents suggested that there should be no limit in how long a witnessing approach should be encouraged. They suggested that if a method works, it should be continued with a periodic review to evaluate its effectiveness.

Question 6

Question 6 asked: What SDA doctrines produce negative and positive responses? Why? A comparison of tables 2 and 6 shows identical responses concerning the Dagombas' attitude toward Christian and SDA doctrines. In both tables we can see that the deity of Christ and the Christian understanding of the Trinity is repulsive to the Muslims. The role and the place of Jesus Christ and the
Holy Spirit in relationship to the Father, Allah, differs from the Koran, which teaches in the Shahada that "there is no God but Allah."

TABLE 6
ATTITUDE TOWARD SDA CHURCH DOCTRINES (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayers and fasting</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Deity of Christ</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithe and almsgiving</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Trinity</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of the dead</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Polygamy</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Attack on the Koran</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing of feet</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Attack on Mohammed</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 7

Question 7 asked: To what lengths should we go to make accommodations in our Muslim evangelism? All the respondents unanimously agreed that it is necessary for the SDA Church to make certain accommodations that are still in harmony with the fundamental beliefs of the church. These accommodations will: (1) open doors to North Ghana Muslims who are seeking for truth and have found some of our beliefs a hindrance, (2) make Dagomba converts feel a part of the Christian Church after baptism, (3) make the transition from Islam to Christianity smoother, (4) stop the practice of making Muslim converts adopt the missionaries' culture, and (5)
assure Dagomba and other Muslim people groups that Christ is in and works through all cultures to save those who respond to his salvific redemption for all humankind.

In harmony with this, interviewees suggested the SDA Church should: (1) translate Christian songs, the Scriptures, and other Christian literature into the Dagbani and Arabic languages, (2) encourage Muslim converts to keep anything in their lifestyle that is compatible with their Christian faith to avoid family and community disruption, (3) use worship postures that resemble Muslims and include Arabic calligraphy in our publications, and (4) accept polygamists with the stipulation that they take no additional wives.

Question 8

Question 8 asked: Is public evangelism effective in reaching Muslims in North Ghana? Why? Eighty percent of the people surveyed think tent or public evangelism is not ideal for effective soul-winning in North Ghana. Many people are interested in attending these meetings but because of opposition from family members they find it hard to come to tent or public meetings.

Question 9

Question 9 asked: What should the SDA Church do to fill the family, cultural, and religious vacuums created when a Muslim converts to the SDA Church? The suggestions given are as follows: (1) re-orient new
believers for an extended time to establish them in the Christian faith; (2) where possible, the Church should help the Dagomba Muslims find jobs; (3) converts must be encouraged to pray five times a day, and (4) the Muslim converts should still make the annual Ramadan fast a part of their religious life after conversion to the Christian Church.

Factors Contributing to Minimal Growth of Seventh-day Adventism in North Ghana

This project isolated some of the basic factors that either stimulate or hinder Seventh-day Adventist Church growth in North Ghana, especially among the Muslims. It pinpointed some basic factors that have made the Muslims in North Ghana resistant and unresponsive to the SDA faith. The findings have also shown some of the mistakes that the SDA Church made in their work with Muslims over the years. I outline eight factors and the reasons behind them that have caused poor results in our evangelistic work among the Dagbani Muslim.

No SDA Theology of Winning Muslims

The Seventh-day Adventist pioneer evangelists who brought the message and teachings of the Church to North Ghana no doubt felt that lost people matter to God. They believed that people from all religious backgrounds, including Muslims, were included in Christ's redemptive work when he offered himself as a sacrifice to "whosoever"
would accept his offer of salvation. This became the motivating and challenging factor that compelled them to fulfill the gospel imperative to carry the everlasting gospel “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev 14:6-12). Their interpretation and understanding of biblical prophecies spurred them on to teach all ethnic groups the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

But when the Church came to North Ghana, such a vision of making Christ known to all people was largely limited to non-Muslim people groups who shared common affinity with the SDA Church. Muslims and other traditionalist’s were never properly fitted into the formulation of their theological considerations in evangelism. The Church lost sight of the fact that there could be “no effective and permanent evangelism without theology.”¹ As a result, the Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders in Ghana never developed an authentic theology for understanding and winning Muslims traditionalists.

Most of the effort, resources, and attention was devoted to winning non-Muslims from the other Christian denominations as the Church waited and prayed for the Holy Spirit to work gradually on the hearts of Muslims. The workers hoped that through providence Muslims would come in contact with and be convicted of the word of God. Many within the Church thought that there is salvation in

Islam, so Muslims were left out of all the major evangelistic activities of the Church.¹

In North Ghana the Church never developed a genuine concern for Muslims in their teachings, doctrines, and theological suppositions. In their cross-cultural witnessing, the SDA missionaries limited their search to some "friendly sheep" (i.e., Christians from other denominations), and paid little attention to those who were least receptive, the "ninety-nine sheep" from the other religions. Later the SDA Church interpreted the conversion of a few Muslims into the Church as a sign that it has theologically fulfilled the commission of preaching "again to many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings" in North Ghana.

In the end, only immigrants from the southern half of Ghana became the prime focus of their soul-winning endeavors. These newcomers responded to the teachings of the Church, dominated the affairs of the Church, and imposed their culture, customs, and worldview on the Church without making any room for the local people to become integrated and a part of the Church. The Church therefore became complacent and failed to impact the Muslims in North Ghana.

Many of the workers and visiting evangelists who

¹Borge Schantz, Director, Global Center for Islamic Studies of the General Conference of SDA, interview by author, Berrien Springs, MI, November 13, 1993.
labored in this territory indicated in the survey that they were never prepared in the art of dialoguing and winning Muslims during their theological training. Seminars and workshops on Muslim evangelism were never planned to deal with the intricacies of folk Islam. None of the administrators or evangelists ever prepared any working manual for witnessing to people who follow folk Islam and traditional religions. Administrators and evangelists were never equipped with the necessary tools to deal with Muslims and to train the members to engage in folk Muslim evangelism in this field.

Since the SDA Church did not have a working theology for Muslims, the Church failed to deal with the magico-religious techniques of the Dagomba mullahs whose ability to meet the felt needs of the ordinary people was attractive to many Muslims. Many Dagomba converts experienced a spiritual vacuum after they accepted Christianity. The SDA Church also could not provide a better alternative to the many Dagombas who practice polygamy. The Church's insistence that Muslim converts should do away with all but one wife frustrated many of them who found the cost too much to endure.

**Lack of Long-Term Missionaries**

Lack of long-term missionaries who are committed solely to winning Muslims was cited as one of the factors that has affected the progress and continuity of soul-
winning efforts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North Ghana. In Table 4, respondents complained that the Church workers who were sent to North Ghana did not stay long enough to complete their work. Some of them were either transferred out of the mission field after a short stay, had their appointments terminated, or their contracts were not renewed after expiration.

This affected the Church's soul-winning work in the following ways:

1. There was no continuity in the many soul-winning projects initiated. Some of the good witnessing plans laid for interactive soul-winning died prematurely after an abrupt change or termination of appointment.

2. New leaders abandoned soul-winning efforts that were started by their predecessors because there were no blueprints to follow.

3. Local workers could not benefit from working with expatriates as role models in soul-winning techniques because most of these missionaries were saddled with administrative duties that destroyed their evangelistic and witnessing skills.

4. Churches that were opened with the help of a foreign evangelist died after the departure of the evangelist because most of their converts became spiritual orphans and strayed back to Islam.
No Church-Planting Initiatives

Based on Table 3, 70 percent of the workers said they spent more time in administrative work because of the alleged shortage of pastors and had little time to plant indigenous churches for reproduction.¹ None of those interviewed went to North Ghana to plant-churches or to train church members in the art of church-planting. Despite taking some classes in church-planting during their academic training, these SDA missionaries admitted that they were not trained to plant churches where people follow folk Islam.

All the major evangelistic efforts were centered in administrative towns and commercial centers where other Christian churches had already established their presence. Even those pastors with church-planting skills complained that they hardly had the time and means to train the few Dagomba Muslim converts to engage in full-scale church-planting in the hinterlands where many Dagbanis have never come in contact with any Christian organization. The few Dagomba converts complained that they have never been consulted to give their input as to how the Church can use them as a catalyst to lead their own people from Islam

¹According to Mark Finley, growing churches have pastors who spend proportionately less time on administrative duties, Class Notes for: "Field Work In Evangelism," CHMN 560, Winter 1991, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
When I inquired as to the nature of administrative work that kept the pastors from planting indigenous churches, the following responses were given: (1) preparing budgets and recruiting workers for their churches, (2) attending church board meetings, (3) conducting revival and camp meetings, (4) organization of churches from fellowships and ordination of church officers, and (5) preaching and strengthening churches under their jurisdiction.

Another 5 percent went to North Ghana to work as mission interpreters. In addition to their pastoral duties, they also served as interpreters to visiting evangelists, but none of them had translated any SDA Church publications into the Dagbani language or had written or designed any witnessing manual, pamphlets, or lesson studies for church planting and nurturing.

The few visiting evangelists who were sent to North Ghana conducted evangelistic meetings that lasted between four to six weeks. After they opened churches, they left for their homelands or had to attend to other church business elsewhere; thus they were unable to return and visit the new converts.

---

1Pastor M. K. Amoah, a half-Dagomba, interview by author, January 27 1995.
Extensive Use of Foreign Materials for Witnessing

According to question 3, which was directed to the leaders, 60 percent blamed the extensive use of foreign religious materials as another strong factor that has contributed to the poor yields in the soul-winning work of the SDA Church in this mission field.

During my visit to North Ghana, I saw that Bible studies, worship services, and prayer meetings are all conducted in English and translated into Twi. All the visiting evangelists and resident missionaries conducted their meetings and seminars in foreign languages without any translation into the Dagbani language. Evangelistic slides, Bible studies, picture rolls, materials for Sabbath School lessons, and other religious materials were all in non-Dagbani languages.

This created a negative impact on the few Dagomba Muslims who made attempts to embrace Christianity but were put off by this tribal isolationism within the SDA Church. Many Dagomba Muslim nationalists viewed this cultural rejection and the imposition of foreign ideas as another form of neo-colonialism and White supremacy within Christendom.

The Strength of Islam and Traditional Beliefs

Apart from the fact that only a few, if any, are involved in Dagomba Muslim evangelism, respondents
indicated that the strength of Islam and traditional religion is overwhelming in North Ghana. Since Islam is a way of life with a strong community consciousness, many workers have had their years of labors in this mission field thwarted with few or no responses from the people. Many met hostile attitudes from some communities that prevented them from sowing the seeds of the SDA message. Others are yet to find a way to enter into certain areas to evangelize due to the unfriendly reactions they have encountered.

Social, cultural, and religious factors have also brought some setbacks to potential converts. Both family and community reactions have hampered religious conversion to Seventh-day Adventism due to the following reasons:

1. People born into Islam want to maintain the status quo.

2. Converts are afraid that they will be disowned by their relatives and lose their family estate.

3. Converts find themselves as "lone rangers" after they have come into the church so they quickly give up the faith.

4. A history of abuse, death threats, and excommunication from family and social circles has discouraged many converts.
5. Converts fear being labelled as "Kaafiri" by Muslims in their neighborhoods.

Negative Attitude toward Muslims

Information from question 3 pointed out that 80 percent of the people did not know the SDA Church. The Church, on the other hand, knows that they are in the midst of a Muslim majority, but they have not initiated relationships with the leaders of the Muslim community. The SDA Church has never had any joint programs with the other churches to foster cordial relationships or to exchange ideas.

Members have developed a “fortress mentality” and have failed to bring the people to the Church after they took the Church to the community through their ADRA and Dorcas welfare programs. Michael Youssef has said that "the most damaging mistake of all has been our neglect of Muslims."

The Church Dealt with Individuals Instead of Whole Families or Groups

The family unit system in North Ghana is very

\[\text{According to Pastor C. B. Mensah, the first national president of the then Ghana Mission of SDA and former secretary of the West Africa Union Mission, “both Kaafiri and Kaahoori are the titles given to Muslim converts to Christianity.” This term means “an unclean person below the status of a dog.”}

\[\text{C. Peter Wagner and Edward Dayton, eds., Unreached People ‘80s (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Pub. Co., 1980), 38.} \]
strong. Families stay together in large compound houses where strong ties keep them close. Decisions of major importance are taken in consensus. Individual Dagbanis who try to make unilateral decisions, especially in matters relating to religion, are always opposed and discouraged.

The responses in table 5 show that the Church established schools as a means of providing both academic and spiritual education to influence Muslims into the SDA Church. While many agreed that it helped expose some individual Muslims to our SDA Church doctrines, it has failed to bring not only individuals, but whole families into the Church. The few individuals who accepted the teachings of the Church faced opposition from their families and their faith withered. Individual converts were persecuted by their own families who did not understand their spiritual decisions. Their families provided no support and encouragement in their new-found faith.

Since Dagomba people make corporate decisions in all aspects of their life, the Church never worked to bring whole families or villages into the Church. Some of the few promising converts who had moved to big cities in southern Ghana never made it back to witness to their own people.
SDAs Dealt with Orthodox Islam
Instead of Folk Islam

The SDA Church operated its mission work under two misconceptions. The first misconception is that all the people in North Ghana practice Orthodox Islam. The SDA Church equated folk Islam in North Ghana to the practice of Orthodox Islam in the Middle East and some parts of Africa. In the survey, most of the workers and some of the guest missionaries admitted that they miscalculated the nature of Islam in North Ghana and approached it as Orthodox Islam in their daily encounters with the followers of this religion.

The second misconception is that the few workers who knew about folk Islam perceived it as an institution where no one went in and no one went out.

Summary

This chapter has helped us to identify factors that either stimulate or hinder church growth in North Ghana. In chapter 7 I propose some solutions and recommendations as a strategy that may lead to proper dialogue for SDA Church witnessing.
CHAPTER VII

A SUGGESTED APPROACH TO EVANGELIZE
THE DAGOMBA MUSLIMS

Introduction

The previous chapters have helped us isolate some basic factors that stabilized Islam and the traditional religions in North Ghana. The combination of these two religions have subsequently hampered the growth of Christianity, especially the SDA Church in North Ghana.

But it is against this same social and religious milieu that the Roman Catholics and other Protestant churches have grown and discipled other Muslim people groups. I believe the SDA Church can learn from and work with these churches in a joint effort to evangelize the Dagbanis and the other Muslim people groups in North Ghana.

The success story of these non-SDA churches in North Ghana raises some pertinent questions for every SDA involved in Muslim evangelism in North Ghana, questions such as: What has prevented the SDA Church from growing among the indigenous populace? Where did the SDA Church fail to make an impact on the Muslims? What was wrong with the SDA Church methodology? What can the SDA Church
do to make its message culturally relevant, meaningful, and acceptable to the Muslims? What needs to be contextualized within our teachings so that there will be no religious compromise that can destroy our biblical beliefs?

E. G. White has stated: “When in our work for God right methods are energetically followed, a harvest of souls will be gathered.”¹ Philip Samaan has averred that “too often we get so distracted by sophisticated witnessing methods that we overlook Christ's simple and common sense approach.”² Again, he says that “other methods may give us results when viewed from a limited human perspective, but only Christ’s method can result in true success.”³

It is now my responsibility to propose a Christ-centered method as an attempt to open doors for SDA Muslim evangelism in North Ghana. Readers are to be aware that these proposals are not absolutes, as situations and circumstances may vary. It is in this light that the missioner needs to take E. G. White’s counsel prayerfully:

God's workmen must be many-sided men; that is, they must have breadth of character. They are not to be one-idea men, stereotyped in their manner of working,

²Philip Samaan, Christ's Way of Reaching People (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1990), 34.
³Ibid., 36.
unable to see that their advocacy of truth must vary with the class of people among whom they work and the circumstances they have to meet.¹

**Christ's Methods in the Book of Acts**

The book of Acts provides a glimpse into the secret behind the soul-winning success of the early church. The methods and techniques of Christ which the early Church used became the approach that helped the handful of believers to break through the pagan and secular cultures of their time.

At the beginning of their work, the early Church was faced with diverse problems that threatened the spread of Christianity. But when the apostles accepted the divine imperative to "go therefore and make disciples," things began to change and souls were won. They claimed the power of the Holy Spirit, which engineered this successful church planting.

To carry out this missionary mandate, the apostles had to utilize Christ's methods: (1) to deal with a culture that was hostile to Christianity and all of its claims, (2) to dismantle cultural and social prejudices that had developed against Christianity, (3) to make Christianity more acceptable to the Jews who had opposed and rejected Christ and his teachings, (4) to communicate Christ effectively, and (5) to attract the sophisticated

and philosophical Greeks and Romans who considered the Christian teachings foolishness.

I have uncovered at least twelve of Christ’s methods from the book of Acts that provided the impetus for church growth in the apostolic church. The SDA Church can also apply the same principles for church growth in its Muslim evangelism in North Ghana. The SDA Church has been advised that “the more closely the New Testament plan is followed in missionary labor, the more successful will be the efforts put forth.”¹

Therefore I would like to propose these twelve methods for the North Ghana Mission of SDA. It is a strategy that will serve as a bulwark against some of the hindrances to SDA Church growth in North Ghana. It is my full conviction that Snyder’s conclusions are true:

Church growth is not a matter of bringing to the Church that which is necessary for growth, for if Christ is there, the seeds of growth are already present. Rather, church growth is a matter of removing hindrances to growth. The Church will naturally grow if not limited by unbiblical barriers.²

Strategy #1: Communicate the Gospel in the Native Language

Church-growth specialist Kent R. Hunter has astutely written that “the book of Acts is one episode


²Howard Snyder, The Community of the King (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-varsity Press, 1977), 119.
after another of the apostles effectively communicating Jesus Christ in a way that brought results.1 The apostles faced a mission field that was saturated by diverse social groupings and linguistic and cultural differences. The mind-set of their audiences required an effective and appropriate medium of communication to deliver the message of Christ. According to C. E. Autrey:

The Orientals were mystic in their religious thinking. The Greeks were philosophical. The Egyptians were solemn and more aware of the dead past than the living present. The Romans were practical and down-to-earth. The remarkable thing is that the Gospel preached at Pentecost, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was so understood and suited to each type of mind that every one grasped its meaning.2

Humanly speaking, the apostles' ability to speak in the language of their Greco-Roman audience became an important communication factor for the foundation of church growth on the day of Pentecost. The Bible says the crowd was "stunned to hear their own languages being spoken by the disciples"3 and wondered at how the apostles were "speaking all the native languages where we were born."4

This project has demonstrated the importance of transmitting the Christian message "on the proper wave-


4Acts 6:8.
length—the socio-cultural context of the receiving society”¹ in North Ghana. That the Dagbani language is a sine qua non for effective witnessing to the Dagbani Muslims is undisputed.

As a prerequisite to soul winning in North Ghana, I would like to recommend that aspiring missionaries en route to the North Ghana mission field should master the techniques in language acquisition, especially Dagbani. The reasons are as follows:

1. More Dagbanis will open up to the message of Christ and identify themselves with the Christian gospel if it is delivered to them in their own language. The messenger and his message will no longer be looked upon as a foreign entity to which they cannot relate.

2. Missionaries will be better equipped linguistically to preach, teach, and illustrate the message of Christ in the context of the Dagbani language which will attract the Dagomba people.

3. Dagbanis will be able to relate and view the Christian God and Jesus Christ as one who lives within and is interested in their culture.

4. The SDA Church can grow if the Christian

¹Louis J. Luzbetak, The Church and Culture (Techny, IL: Divine Word, 1963), 16.
message is communicated properly in the language of the heart.¹

William Miller stated: “Those who have been used of God in leading Muslims to Christ have usually been those who were able to speak God’s message accurately and effectively in Arabic and Persian and Turkish and Urdu and the other Muslim languages.”²

**Strategy #2: Lay Leadership Is Imperative to Growth**

Lay leadership propelled the apostolic church for missionary advance as reported in the book of Acts. The early church would not have survived without the effective role of the laity who gave their means, time, talents, and resources for the growth of the Christian churches. The book of Acts also is replete with the contributions of lay people such as Lydia, Priscilla, Aquila, Dorcas, and Philemon.

When Paul and the apostles recognized the talents of the lay members, they committed the churches they planted into their hands. The apostles equipped them to provide leadership, training, and motivation, which caused the churches to grow in numbers and in strength.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit used a handful of lay members to expand the Christian church in Jerusalem until


"a great company of priests"¹ was converted and joined the Church. This greatest of all apostolic miracles emphasizes the vital role of the laity that preceded the clergy or paid ministry in the history of the Christian church. This lay mobilization subsequently boosted the Church "and so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."² Charles Chaney has written: "The task of church planting can never be achieved by, nor should it be conceived as, the labor of clergy."³

Similarly, folk Islam grew and spread among the Dagbanis by the combined efforts of the lay members and the Mullahs. The Roman Catholics and other Protestant churches have skillfully used teachers and other lay professionals to manage their churches where there were no paid clergy, and the results have always been rewarding.

Can the SDA Church in North Ghana learn from this apostolic lay movement? Yes. I think the SDA Church can use the laity to win souls and manage churches for growth. How can this be done in North Ghana by the SDA Church? The answers are in Christ's methods as used by the apostles in the book of Acts.

Ronald Allen has shown an apostolic method that

¹Acts 6:7.
³Charles L. Chaney, Church Planting at the End of the Twentieth Century (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 1982), 81.
Paul used to reach every village, even the one's that he could not visit. Paul and the apostles preached in centers like Ephesus, which were used to spread the message and reach all of "Asia." Within two years after the establishment of the "Ephesus Lay Training Center," "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."¹

I would like to recommend the establishment of a similar center to be known as the "Lay Training Center" (LTC). This is to be headquartered in Tamale, the Dagbani capital, where Dagbanis with potential and talent could be trained in the simple arts and skills of Muslim evangelism. The LTC will:

1. Conduct sessions three times a year with each session lasting for three months
2. Give graduates a stipend and other incentives as motivation
3. Develop a curriculum that will encompass components of the Bible and the Koran, general health issues, and adult literacy education where participants will learn the basics of reading and writing
4. Dispatch trainees after graduation to their villages to disseminate the gospel in their own cultural

setting by using the tools acquired from the training center

5. Develop local evangelistic materials like religious tracks, slide films, and Bible study lessons in the Dagbani language for the benefit of lay members, guest evangelists and church planters

6. Allow theology students from Valley View College in Accra, Ghana, to use the LTC for field practicum and praxis.

**Strategy #3: Mingle with the People**

Cultural exclusivism or social snobbery developed among the apostles during and after the departure of Christ. This problem was within and without the Church. It almost destroyed the evangelistic work of the apostles.

Acts 6:1 records the “murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews” because of discrimination, favoritism, and neglect. Peter’s encounter with Cornelius in Acts 10 is also another example of how some of the apostles detached themselves from other social groups until God showed him that he must “never think of anyone as inferior.” In Acts 11:19 the good news of Christ was denied to some selected groups and preached “only to Jews.”

But when this problem was resolved, the apostles developed a global witnessing program for every group of

1Acts 10:28.
people. The church members accepted everyone, ate
together, met together for prayer, fasting, and
fellowship; and strengthened one another in the Lord.¹

In the past, Dagomba converts in the Christian
churches have complained of social neglect and tribal
ostracism. Some of them were never properly assimilated
into fellowship. Friendship was never developed to make
them feel a part of the SDA Church, so their stay in the
Church was short-lived.

To integrate them fully into becoming a part of
the SDA Church family, the Church must learn to “mingle
with them.” This can be done in accordance with Christ’s
method of showing interest and accepting people just where
they are. E. G. White has stated:

Christ’s method alone will give true success in
reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as
one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy
for them, ministered to their needs, and won their
confidence. Then He bade them “Follow Me.”²

This mingling approach may be initiated in the
following manner:

1. Some Dagomba converts should be employed
either by church members who have their own business, or
the North Ghana Mission should find a way of absorbing
some of them into our workforce where and whenever there
are vacancies for those who meet the job criteria.

¹Acts 2:42-47.

²Ellen G. White, Ministry of Healing (Mountain
2. Aspiring SDA Church workers should be placed into Dagomba rural communities where they can learn their language, customs, manners, values, and lifestyle. This will enable them to understand the Dagbani culture and relate to them at their own level in order to win them for Christ.¹

3. SDA Church workers must involve themselves and take an active part in Dagbani programs such as marriage ceremonies, funeral celebrations, and other social activities.

4. The SDA Church should organize sporting activities with Dagomba youth in order to make friends with them for Christ. If church members mingle with them, they will know them well and the Dagomba Muslims will trust and open themselves to them. Arthur McPhee has written that “making disciples of all peoples goes far beyond evangelism by proxy, merely putting money for missions into an offering plate. It means injecting ourselves into the anguish and the brokenness of people’s lives, because we care, and because that is what salvation is all about—making people whole again, recycling the wasted lives of men and women who are in the same condition we were once in.”²

¹See 1 Cor 9:22-23.

Strategy #4: Use Sequential Witnessing Programs

In his writings, Roland Allen has carefully examined the apostles' methods in the early church. Allen has shown Paul's sequential method of planting churches. He claimed that Paul and the apostles always started with a definite plan and actually carried through their plans.\(^1\) E. G. White has also written about Paul's sequential "guile," which he used to lead people through a "step by step" approach.\(^2\)

Since in the past most of our SDA outreach efforts drew only non-Dagbanis to our public meetings, the SDA Church must now develop a sequential witnessing program (SWP) that will lead people from one step to another, beginning from identified social programs of a community and leading to spiritual programs. This SWP should replace tent or public meetings.

This SWP is a conversion process that identifies felt needs to provide ultimate needs. Mark Finley has explained that felt needs differ from ultimate needs because the former have to do with social, emotional, spiritual, and physical needs that a person perceives he has, while the latter is "the assurance of eternal life, the need to have a worthwhile purpose for living, the need

\(^1\)Allen, 10.

\(^2\)White, *Evangelism*, 141, 246.
to know that my life is in the hands of God, and the need
to know that one day I will live with him forever."¹

During my visit to Tamale, I saw from the
demographic and psychographic studies that both felt and
ultimate needs have already been utilized by other non-SDA
churches to draw Muslims to the Christian faith. In an
interview with Rev. Edison Tinsare, the chairman of the
Christian Council of Churches of North Ghana, he stated
that the secret of their success in winning Muslims is the
ecumenical approach (recognize other Christian groups and
work with them), dialogue approach (make friends with
Muslims and invite them to special occasions in the
church), and the social approach (go to the people, they
will identify their needs, and you support them).²

Through this approach the churches have been able to enter
and plant churches in Dagomba villages.

I would like to propose a SWP that has two phases:
Phase A and Phase B.

In Phase A the SDA Church will open some mobile
LTC in the Dagbani towns and villages as soul-winning
clinics. This is to ensure that the church begins “where

¹Mark Finley, *Padded Pews or Open Doors* (Boise,

²Rev. Pastor Edison Tinsare, interview by author,
persons are, rather than where we would like for them to be."

1. The mobile LTC will offer two hours of adult education classes three times a week: on Sundays from 6 P.M. to 8 P.M.; Wednesdays, 6 P.M. to 8 P.M.; and on Fridays 4 P.M. to 6 P.M. Participants will start with reading and writing.

2. The mobile LTC will offer two hours of health seminars on hygienic principles, healthful cooking, and pre-and-post natal care.

Phase B will run simultaneously with Phase A.

1. Step-by-step Bible studies will be given that cover the biblical books or characters that have basic commonalities with the Koran. In tables 2 and 7, respondents indicated their interest in Old Testament stories and characters. The Bible studies will start from the familiar books in the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels to initiate the studies with the Muslims.

2. The Bible studies will be conducted in a friendly, healthy, non-confrontational way. Members will refrain from attacking Mohammed and the Koran. They will use their understanding of the Koran and lead the people to the Bible and its spiritual lessons.

---

Strategy #5: Utilize Committed Church Planters

Christ used the ordination of the twelve disciples to begin the history of church planting in the new dispensation. The power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles at Pentecost became the curtain-raiser that boosted evangelistic efforts. Peter's sermon that brought in 3,000 souls became the foundation for apostolic church planting. Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and others were all set aside by the Holy Spirit to plant churches.¹

Time and again studies have demonstrated that with the traditional style, as SDA church missionaries went to North Ghana and engaged in maintenance evangelism, the SDA Church failed to grow. This maintenance evangelism only stabilized and protected the handful of Dagomba converts and the other church members from South and Central Ghana. Members were never taught multiplication evangelism, which trains members to reproduce. According to Bill Hull, "Disciples reproduce themselves, which leads to multiplication. Multiplication is the key to reaching the world and fulfilling the Great Commission."² He added: "If the church fails to make disciples, it fails to multiply. If

¹Acts 13:2.

the church fails to multiply, it fails."¹

I would like to set forth the following guidelines as principles for people desiring to work in North Ghana:

First, the SDA Church should seek and accept the services of committed church planters who will give at least an extended time of service to plant indigenous churches among the Dagomba.

Second, where financial constraints may render a long-term stay difficult, the Church must allow missionaries to do approved "tent ministry" to support themselves and to initiate long-term soul-winning projects. This may help prevent some missionaries from leaving their jobs at the time when their services are needed.²

Last, church planters should be free from administrative work and should devote full-time work to the development of the churches.

Strategy #6: Emphasize One-On-One Witnessing

One-on-one witnessing was the trademark of Jesus and the apostles.³ Both the Gospels and the book of Acts are filled with stories of one-on-one witnessing, which was effective in reaching many people. Christ's one-on-one approach with the woman of Samaria, Nicodemus,

¹Ibid., 133.
²See Appendix E for AFM profile of church planters.
³Miles, 13-155.
Zaccheus, the rich young ruler, and others is a classic example of how members can be trained to turn one-on-one witnessing into chain witnessing. E. G. White has written that Christ "had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience; and that one soul has carried to thousands the intelligence received."\(^1\)

Philip, Paul, and the apostles used the same approach when they were faced with cultures where public or group meetings were impossible. They employed this method in the streets, houses, prisons, and in social circles.

In the interviews I conducted in North Ghana, 80 percent of the respondents indicated that tent evangelism had brought few, if any, Dagbanis to the church. Public evangelism is not the ideal method to win Dagombas and other Islamic people groups. In spite of the large investment of thousands of dollars in public evangelism by both national and expatriate workers, only people from the southern half of the country have been reached with the SDA message.

Instead of tent meetings, I would like to propose a new emphasis on "one-on-one" witnessing.

1. The LTC will train pastors and lay leaders as coaches. This coaching seminar or workshop at the LTC will last for four weeks. The morning sessions will be

\(^1\)White, *Evangelism*, 443.
devoted to learning the one-on-one witnessing techniques of Christ and the apostles. Each session will be for four hours daily with some assigned passages from the Bible and other books as collateral reading.

The afternoon sessions will be devoted to field practicum where participants will visit from house to house in the neighborhood in groups of twos. After the visitation, the participants will give brief reports, impressions, and testimonies.

2. Graduates from the LTC coaching classes will go to their churches and serve as player/coaches. As player/coaches they will train their members and work hand in hand with them in the field until they master the technique and make other disciples.

3. Trainees in the local churches will select families within their villages or neighborhood and develop friendship through regular visits and participation in Dagomba social gatherings.

4. Church members will then start Bible studies after they have made friends with their target families.

5. Then the members will be able to invite their new friends to church services and programs.

**Strategy #7: Write Muslim-oriented Literature**

Christ's teachings and the apostles' letters became manuals of instruction for the early church. Doctrinal issues, social and cultural matters, and church
governance and organization were developed for the churches. Both Christ and the apostles used local materials and illustrations to teach and edify the churches.

Many interviewee’s complained during the survey that most of materials for evangelism are in a foreign language. The workers do not know how to use them to win souls. These Western-oriented materials are not suitable to the audience in North Ghana.

In the future, local pastors should work with the LTC to develop materials for witnessing based on their witnessing methods and conversion stories. They should also write small pamphlets and literature that deal with felt needs in the areas of health, doctrine, and education. What they write must be a contextualized message that is meaningful to the Dagomba situation. Local materials must be used for illustrations to convey the importance of the message that is understandable to the people. This literature must meet the Dagomba Muslim mind in order to maximize its full benefits.

**Strategy #8: Develop a Mission Statement**

The North Ghana Mission must develop its own working mission statement. This mission statement should be different from the general SDA mission statement in that it will be a specific goal-oriented statement. The mission statement should specify the goals, needs, and
objectives of the mission in relationship to Muslim evangelism. It should also include the mission's policy on finance, hiring, administration, and education in the light of Muslim witnessing. A detailed description of the profile of the church planters needed to work among the Dagombas should be laid out as a guideline for hiring.

The purpose for such a specific mission statement is to acquaint workers aspiring to labor in North Ghana with the nature of their work and what is expected of them within this mission field. It must be approved by the West Africa Union Mission of the SDA Church so that it too will know the type of worker needed. A periodic review of all the components of this specific mission statement must be done to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

**Strategy #9: Revamp the Humanitarian Work of ADRA**

Both Christ and the apostles used humanitarian work to spread the good news. The recipients were also taught spiritual lessons of truth. This method was used to demonstrate love, concern, and sympathy with the communities where the gospel worker labored.

The ministry of ADRA and other non-Adventist humanitarian groups have been very impressive in North Ghana. From chiefs to government leaders and agencies, people have praised the work of these organizations. ADRA has always taken the Church to the community, but as was seen in the survey, it has failed to bring the people to
the Church to give them spiritual food.

I would like to recommend that: (1) ADRA should work with the LTC trainees so that they can do a follow-up of people who express interest in the SDA Church (2) a detailed follow-up program of witnessing should be initiated wherever people have been involved in ADRA projects and (3) the North Ghana Mission of SDA and the LTC should consider joint business enterprises in agriculture and livestock to generate some income for the LTC in their training and publication initiatives.

**Strategy #10: Organize Apostolic House Churches**

House churches were a common phenomenon in New Testament times. Christ used individual homes to teach, heal, and to break social barriers. The itinerant apostles met in homes to build up the believers and to establish churches. In some places they used house churches as a strategy to keep away from opposition forces who were trying to clamp down on Christianity. Some house churches were used to groom new converts until they were able to function independently. One church-growth specialist has explained that “the relaxed atmosphere of a neighbour's home can be greatly used in breaking down the
barriers and prejudices which so often hinder the gospel."

The studies have confirmed that many interested Muslim converts are not able to come to our churches to fellowship for fear of being ostracized by their families. Many who took their stand for the Christian faith faced death threats or were beaten or disowned by their families. Many will take a stand if the SDA Church can provide a better alternative where they can decide for Christ without any fear of intimidation.

Some of these problems have risen because the SDA Church dealt with individuals instead of whole families or villages. I would like to recommend the following SWF steps.

Step 1. The SDA Church should target villages to begin their evangelism among the Muslims.

Step 2. Small groups should be assigned to specific families in the villages.

Step 3. All those who show interest in our message are to be classified as either probable or possible candidates. Probable candidates are those individuals or families who show interest in the gospel but have not decided yet to join the church. They may have some reservations or unsolved doctrinal questions that may

require some time to resolve. Possible candidates are those who have an interest and desire for membership and baptism but are not able to do so because of opposition from the family or the community.

Step 4. Probable and possible Dagbani converts should be assigned to strong spiritual families who will meet with them in their homes for Bible studies and spiritual nurturing. The adopted "spiritual guardians" will be the liaison between the candidate and the SDA Church. This nurturing will continue until the person is matured to move to the next stage.

Step 5. The possible candidates in Step 4 will start meeting with other families in a small-group setting. The group will discuss doctrinal issues geared toward baptism. This will help the possible candidates to interact with other Dagomba converts so that they can share experiences and testimonies.

Step 6. The final stage is when the convert is moved from a single family unit to the large church family.

**Strategy #11: Christianize Some Rites of Passage**

Among the Dagbani-speaking people and the other people groups in North Ghana who practice folk Islam, there are several rites of passage that are observe in their communities. The three most important rites of passage that are observed in this area are birth, marriage
and death. These rites are observed with elaborate preparation and fanfare. Both the family and the people in the community team up to initiate people or help them make the transition from one stage to another.

These ceremonies are important to the Dagomba people and are observed with great anticipation, care, and preparation. Because they are part of the people's culture and traditions, the community leaders sometimes ensure that the proper procedure is strictly followed. Even where former Muslims do not observe them because of their new religious belief, family members or community leaders will sometimes take the initiative and perform it out of fear that a calamity can befall the family or the community.

Seventh-day Adventist in North Ghana have not been able to find a viable alternative for Dagbani Muslim converts who are always told to do away with these rituals as prerequisite for baptism. This sometimes creates a big gap in their religious and social lives and they have not been able to deal with them appropriately.

I would like to recommend that the SDA churches in North Ghana find a sound theological justification from the Bible and the writings of E. G. White to contextualize some of the rites of passage in the people's culture as an alternative enculturation for Muslim converts who accept the Christian teachings.
Occasions such as the birth of a child, the time of puberty, marriage, and death must be celebrated for Dagomba Muslim converts either in their homes or at the church house. In addition to the above ceremonies, baby dedications, baptisms, and funeral celebrations should also be planned as a Biblical rite of passage to help Muslim converts have an alternative to some of the rites that are observed by Dagbanis.

Invitations should be given to friends and relatives to participate in these new Christianized rites. Food, drinks and gifts should be given out during these occasions. Both the pastors and elders must dress in conformity to the Dagomba lifestyle. Since most Dagomba ceremonies are always accompanied by food and dancing, the SDA Church should plan these programs with songs of praise preferably in the Dagomba language.

**Strategy #12: Organize Small Prayer Bands**

Prayers and fasting dominated all the activities of Christ and the apostles. Both Christ and the apostles began their ministry with personal and corporate prayers and fasting. Prayers and fasting were used to overcome obstacles, demons and powers that were militating against the spread of the gospel. Some of the apostles met in homes and sometimes in churches to pray daily.

Respondents in the survey indicated that prayers and fasting are also an important Christian teaching that
appeals to them. They see prayers and fasting as a prerequisite in keeping good relationship with God. Since it is vital to them, it is practiced by every member of the family who is old enough to understand the dynamics of prayers and fasting.

I would like to recommend that: (1) Muslim converts should be encouraged to pray five times daily after conversion to the church (2) The churches must conduct daily worship service in the mornings and evenings to coincide with the time for Muslim morning and evening worship (3) Converts are to be encouraged to keep the Ramadan fast partially or fully during the time when Muslims observe them. (4) The sanctuary service and the five pillars should be used as bridges in our witnessing work.

Summary

This chapter has shown the methods that were employed by both Christ and the apostles. Through these methods, the Church grew and spread to all the corners of the world. The many churches that were planted and the success rate were all due to the proper use of Christ’s method.

The missioner must also be aware that he must be a man of prayer and fasting as it was practiced by Christ, the apostles, and members of the early church. These twelve methods can work only when they are bathed in
prayer and fasting. Every member must give himself continually to importunate prayer in order to deal with principalities and powers that are at work in a folk religion. Prayer is the armor that God has made available to the church to confront and to conquer every evil spirit.

The new converts will be faced with issues such as evil powers, spiritual sickness, polygamous marriages, loyalty to community traditions, and isolation from their families, friends, and the community. The church must be able to give answers to these questions as the people are brought into the church. Hiebert has stated: "Given no answer, they return to the diviner who gave them definite answers, for these are the problems that loom large in their everyday life." 1 E. G. White pointed out the encouraging fact that when right methods are energetically followed, in our work for God, a harvest of souls will result. 2

1Paul Hiebert, "Introduction to Animism," Tms, syllabus and lecture outlines for classroom use, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 1982.

2White, Evangelism, 330.
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to give a summary and recommendations. The summary states the impetus that gave birth to this research and the conclusions reached so far. I also state the suggested strategies for the laity and the clergy with some recommendations for the SDA Church in North Ghana.

Summary

From the studies, we have considered the history of ancient and modern Ghana in relationship to the development of Islam. Islam and traditional religions are involved in all aspects of the people's lives, whereas SDA Church missionaries have dealt only with a type of Islam that is not practiced in North Ghana. A study of the Dagomba people's culture, religion, and social system has shown the following:

1. Islam in North Ghana is not an orthodox Islam but folk Islam. It has developed into folk Islam because of many years of peaceful co-existence with the superstitions and customs of the Dagomba people.
2. The SDA Church was brought to North Ghana by foreigners from South Ghana, Europe, and North America. Their insistence on doing mission work after their own cultural patterns became a factor for non-growth in North Ghana. After years of working in this field, the NGM has only 3,000 members who are mostly from the south of Ghana. Most Dagomba converts have left the church because of poor reception from and bonding with church members. The absence of the feeling of belonging has done more harm to potential converts, who left the church and rejoined Islam.

3. There is always a vacuum for the Muslim converts because the SDA Church has not found a way to contextualize its message to make it meaningful for the people. The Dagomba people could not relate to the foreign elements in the teachings, preaching, and organizational set-up of the SDA Church.

4. The survey isolated some factors that have impeded the growth of the SDA Church. The grace and power of God can overcome these factors because other Christian churches have operated and successfully worked under the same conditions. God wants his church to grow under every conceivable situation, and he can do likewise for the SDA Church in North Ghana.

5. There is also hope for the future growth of the SDA in North Ghana. The book of Acts has given us a paradigm of growth, and out of this, twelve strategies
were developed for the SDA churches in North Ghana.

**Recommendations**

This study has alerted the SDA Church in North Ghana to the ten characteristics of Dagomba folk Islam. It has also pinpointed eight factors contributing to minimal growth of the SDA Church in North Ghana. Twelve strategies were extracted from the book of Acts and are recommended for aspiring SDA Church workers in North Ghana for evangelism and soul-winning. I would like to offer the following recommendations:

1. The North Ghana Mission of the SDA Church should seriously consider the findings in this project.

2. The NGM should endorse and create a Lay Training Center (LTC) to train both pastors and lay members in the dynamics of Muslim evangelism.

3. The West Africa Union Mission of the SDA Church should provide funds for the LTC to coordinate the training and writing of Muslim evangelism materials for all the pastors in the Ghana fields—South Ghana Conference, Central Ghana Conference, and Midwest Ghana Mission.

4. Valley View College in Accra, Ghana, should introduce courses in Islam. The following courses should be considered: Understanding Folk Islam, Witness to Folk Muslims, and Church Planting in Muslim-dominated Areas.

5. The West Africa Union Mission of SDA Church
should use the services of aspiring workers who are church planters. These church planters should be willing to stay for at least six years. They will be committed to planting indigenous churches in Dagomba villages. The converts from these churches in the villages are to be trained to win their own people to the church. The church should not burden these church planters with any administrative work.

6. Church buildings and architectural designs in Dagomba villages should be constructed to resemble a mosque.

7. The SDA Church should give study to the establishment of some walk-in clinics or mobile clinics to work with the LTC and ADRA. The health aspect of our SDA Church message should go hand in hand with the gospel so that we can fulfill the gospel commission.

8. Since Muslim evangelism is hard and sometimes the results are poor, the workers must have tolerance and patience. Many promises are in store from the Lord for them, and he will be with anyone who dedicates himself/herself to Muslim evangelism.
APPENDIX
MAP OF GHANA

MAP OF GHANA

August 10, 1995

To: Past and Present Leaders, Pastors, Administrators, and Evangelists in North Ghana.

Dear Leaders,

As chairman of Pastor Sampson Twumasi's Doctor of Ministry Committee, I request your cooperation in assisting Sampson with the requirements of his Doctor of Ministry degree. The attached questionnaire is an official part of his Doctor of Ministry project. The goal of his project is to ascertain factors that have hindered the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist work in North Ghana. The Dagombas have been selected as case study. The title of the project is "Understanding the Folk Islam of the Dagbani-speaking People: A Prerequisite to Evangelism in North Ghana." The goal is:

1. To identify methods that have been used in the past in witnessing among the Muslims of North Ghana.
2. To solicit opinions on what can be done to make the SDA message meaningful to the people.

The completed questionnaire will provide him with information enabling him to define the problem and formulate a means of improving the delivery of the gospel to this area.

As his doctoral project chairman I want to assure you that these questionnaires are intended to be entirely anonymous and confidential. Please be assured and assure the pastors and leaders that names are not in any way to be connected with the questionnaire unless their permission is given. The personal identity of the one filling out the questionnaire is totally unnecessary to the results. Demographic information is essential to the validity of the tally but is not formulated so that individuals can be identified. We need only their responses. This assurance must be absolute. Any hint of breach of confidentiality will cause persons either to refuse to respond or to respond with inaccurate answers. Either situation can easily destroy the validity of the questionnaire and ruin the project. A high rate of accuracy and return is essential to a true picture of the favor/disfavor of the field toward methods of reaching the Dagombas.

You may be asked to fill out the questionnaire from your insights and information as a conference administrator. Please do so in all Christian honesty and accuracy. Please fill it out anonymously and without delay and return it immediately to the responsible person.

Please follow the instructions closely so that the questionnaires are anonymously returned. We would appreciate greatly encouragement to pastors to quickly and fully complete and return all questionnaires. It is important that they be encouraged in a spirit of kind urgency.

Thank you very much for your kind assistance.

Yours appreciately,

Bruce L. Bauer, Chair
Department of World Mission
FORMAT USED TO INTERVIEW SDA PAST AND PRESENT LEADERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND EVANGELIST

Background

Name........................Current position\work.............

1. How long have you worked as a pastor, administrator, elder, leader, or evangelist among the Dagomba and other Muslims in North Ghana?

2. What is involved with your work in North Ghana?

3. What factors in your opinion have worked against the evangelization of Muslims in North Ghana?

4. What has been done in the past to witness among the Dagbanis and other Muslim groups?

5. How long should we a witnessing approach be tried?

6. What SDA Church doctrines produce negative and positive responses? Why?

7. To what lengths should we go to make accommodations in our Muslim evangelism?

8. Is public evangelism effective in reaching Muslims in North Ghana?

9. What should the SDA Church do to fill the family, cultural, and religious vacuums created when a Muslim convert to the SDA Church?
QUESTIONS USED TO INTERVIEW DAGOMBA MUSLIMS

Background

Interviewee's age........... Profession...........

Sex....... Place...........Duration of interview....

1. Are you a practicing Muslim?

2. How often do you read the Koran and other Islamic literature?

3. Do you know anything about the SDA Church in your area?

4. Have you ever attended any Christian school? If so, to what level?

5. Do you allow your children or relatives or friends to attend SDA or Christian church schools?

6. What teachings or beliefs do you see in the Christian churches that are attractive or repulsive to you?

7. Which is more likely to attract your attention to the SDA Church or other Christian churches: camp meetings, sporting activities, evangelistic meetings, community involvement, or a friend's lifestyle?

8. Are you in any way offended by any Christian terminologies or jargons such as "crusades," "God's only begotten son," "the remnant," etc?

9. Which Christian doctrines or teachings are relevant to you?

10. What is your general attitude toward SDAs and other Christians?
Pastor S.Z. Sumani,  Malam Salam,  
Madam Susuani Sumani  And  Madam Zara Salam  
S.D.A. Church  Walewale  
Walewale  
Daughter  Son  
Georgina Sumani  Isaac Salam  
Seamstress  Teacher  
Walewale  Walewale  
respectively invite Dr/Mrs/Mr/Miss:  

to witness the wedding ceremony of their daughter and son on  
11th December, 1994 at S.D.A. Church, Walewale followed by  
refreshment at WASECT RC  

RSVP  RSVP  RSVP  
Mr. S.S. Saaka  James K. Kpaka  Jacob Sulley  
Bolga  Walewale  Walewale
APPENDIX E

PROFILE OF AFM CHURCH PLANTERS
Overview

Adventist Frontier Missions is a missionary-sending agency which works in cooperation with the Adventist Church and is funded by private contributions. The specific mission and focus of AFM is reaching the "unreached" with the Gospel—those who are without a Christian and/or an Adventist presence. Currently, AFM has missionary families in such places as the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Mongolia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Albania, India, Thailand, China, Nepal and Cambodia. The first church planting project was completed in the Philippines in 1992.

Categories of AFM missionaries:

Short-term, Intern, and Career

Short-term

Candidates: singles/families
may or may not be students
must be 19 years of age or have completed 1 year of college
Destination: an AFM project currently staffed by career missionaries
Term: normally 9-24 months
Funds: raised by volunteers (and in some cases also by AFM)
Tracks: Regular SM (Regular Student Missionary)*
SM Plus (Student Missionary Plus)*
*To be classified as a student missionary a person must be between 19-27 years of age and have been enrolled in school full-time for at least one quarter within the last 12 months
STV (short-term volunteer)
*One who is not a student but anticipates short-term service under the supervision of a career missionary
Activities: Regular SM - stay with or near a career family;
directly supervised by them; vital part of their mission is often assisting in the homeschooling of the AFM missionary family's children; language acquisition and simple Bible/medical work
SM Plus - stay in a village/town further away from the career family; operate on a more independent basis,
yet, indirectly supervised and held accountable to the career missionaries in the area; language acquisition and simple Bible/medical work

STV - this position is available for non-student applicants seeking short term service; activities may be similar to Regular SM or SM+ positions

Training: 4 weeks in the summer required

Intern

Candidates: singles/families (each must be between 21-28 years inclusive)

Destination: near an AFM project currently staffed by career missionary; potentially in a new project

Term: 2 years initially with anticipation of career service

Funds: raised by volunteer with AFM assistance

Activities: service opportunity for those with limited or no overseas mission experience, with the primary focus of being a direct preparation for career service following the initial 2 years; may assist current career family in church planting applying similar skills and tasks of the career missionary within the same or a nearby people group i.e.. language acquisition, study of customs/culture, basic Bible/health education, agriculture skills, etc.

Training: 8 weeks in the summer required

Career

Candidates: couples with or without children/singles

Destination: people group where there is no viable Adventist and/or Christian presence; project site determined via collaboration between AFM, local mission (if present), and AFM candidates

Term: committed to a task, not a term; initial term of 6 years

Funds: raised by candidates with AFM assistance

Activities: planting of a viable, self-sustaining, evangelizing indigenous church among an unreached people group via skills of the missionary family i.e. pastoral, medical, educational, agricultural, developmental, etc.; language acquisition and cultural understanding within the people group are mandatory

Training: 8 weeks in summer required
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Eyre-Smith, St. J.  *A Brief Review of the History and Social Organization of the People of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.* Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1933.


Marc Newsletter 94 (1 March 1994): 2


VITA

Personal and family:

Name: Sampson Kenneth Kofi Twumasi
Date and Place of Birth: Nov 14, 1958, Sekodumasi, Ashanti-Ghana.

Wife's Name: Felicia (nee Nimoh) Twumasi.

1st Child: Kofi Yeboah Twumasi.
Date and Place of Birth: Nov 1, 1991, Michigan, USA.

2nd Child: Kwadwo Kwakye Twumasi.
Date and Place of Birth: May 3, 1993, Michigan, USA

Education:

Adventist Ministerial College, Bekwai-Ashanti, Ghana
Adventist Missionary College, Accra, Ghana
West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA

Diplomas and Degrees Awarded:

Certificate in Theology 1986
Bachelor of Arts in Theology 1989
Master of Divinity 1992
Doctor of Ministry 1996

Work Experience:


1988 Teacher, West Indies Pre-College

1987-88 (Summers) Literature Evangelist, Skandinaviska Bokforlaget, Swedish Union of SDA

1989-91 (Summers) Literature Evangelist, Norsk Bokforlag, West Nordic Conference

1990-91 Chaplain, Mercy Memorial Hospital, South Bend, Indiana, USA.

1989-Present Ministry to the Developmentally Disabled, South Western Michigan, Michigan, USA

1989-Present Pastoral Assistant, Chicago Ghanaian SDA Church, Chicago, IL, USA

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.