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ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF ATONEMENT IN
THE *ABOAKYER* FESTIVAL OF THE EFFUTU TRIBE IN GHANA
AND THE *YOM KIPPUR* FESTIVAL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:
IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVENTIST MISSION
AMONG THE EFFUTU

by

Emmanuel H. Takyi

Chair: Gordon R. Doss

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ATONEMENT CONCEPT IN THE *ABOAKYER* FESTIVAL OF THE EFFUTU TRIBE IN GHANA AND THE *YOM KIPPUR* FESTIVAL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: IMPLICATION FOR ADVENTIST MISSION AMONG THE EFFUTU

Name of researcher: Emmanuel H. Takyi

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Date completed: July 2015.

Statement of Problem

History records that Christian missions have operated in Winneba since 1865 with various approaches being used to share the gospel with the Effutu. Though there have been successes, allegiance of the Effutu to their tribal gods, manifested especially during the *Aboakyer* festival, raises the need for a missiological bridge or intervention for an effective contextualized ministry among the Effutu of Winneba.

Purpose of Study

This research aims to develop a missiological model based on a comparative study of the OT *Yom Kippur* festival and the Effutu *Aboakyer* festival that will potentially facilitate more effective Adventist mission among the Effutu.

Method

To understand the concept of atonement, a literature review studied the concept of atonement in two parts—the biblical view (comprising the Old Testament and New Testament views), and the African Traditional Religion (ATR) perspective. Second an ethnographic research on the Effutu *Aboakyer* was done to understand its context, particularly, the origins, history, and the rituals of the *Aboakyer* festival. This involved individual and group interviews as well as participant observation. Using the comparative approach method, comparison and contrast between the *Aboakyer* and *Yom Kippur*, with its typological meaning (pointing to ultimate reality), was done to find (a) similarities between them that reveal points of contact and that will make *Yom Kippur* comprehensible to the Effutu; and also (b) differences that reveal inadequacies in their understanding of atonement that can be remedied by accepting the biblical model of atonement through two phases of atonement provided by Christ's sacrifice. A missiological model that comprehensively and effectively addresses the Effutu situation was accordingly proposed.

Conclusion

Based upon the redemptive analogies (similarities) found in the analysis, and the differences that posed as challenges, the *Yom Kippur*, expressing the biblical model of

atonement, was proposed as the appropriate *modus operandi* that will potentially facilitate a more effective incarnational mission among the Effutu. This model, which elucidates the two phases of atonement provided by Christ's sacrifice, was found to have the remedy for the inadequacies (differences) of the Effutu in their understanding of atonement and also the theological insights to give the sanctuary message its eschatological emphasis needed for this time. The model will also put the Effutu history and cosmology into biblical perspective and help the Effutu direct their sacrifices and worship to God rather than the lesser gods.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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July 2015

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Elizabeth, and my two daughters, Emmanuella, and Esme, who sacrificed time and emotional comfort to see me through the composition of this dissertation.

To the memory my late mother Elizabeth Esi Korkor Ghartey, whose dream to see me develop my potentials to the utmost, made her leave no stone unturned to see the dream realized.

To my siblings Elizabeth Ghartey Jr., Isaac Kingsley Quaye, William Ackom-Nkebi, Mary Eduafo-Sackey, Comfort Antwi-Boasiako, and Kingsford Tetteh-Nkebi whose timely financial intervention helped me greatly during my first year of study.

To the Winneba Seventh-day Adventist Church and the entire believers who are engaged in missionary work among the Effutu.

And to the glory of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who designed the plan of salvation and demonstrated it comprehensively in the Sanctuary ministration.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with a heart loaded with gratitude that I acknowledge the men and women who have been used by God to influence my life as I journeyed toward this academic project. First, I would like to thank my parents, Elizabeth Esi Korkor Gharthey and Kow Abdul Kaleem Nkebi, who, at my very tender age, inculcated in me the significance of education.

As I thank my primary and middle school teachers, I remember Mr. Isaac Kumah, who in late 1960s introduced me to the Bible, and Mr. Eyoro, my middle school teacher, who really challenged me to aspire for excellence.

During my high school pilgrimage, Mr. Payne, Mr. Prah, Mr. Dansou Janvier, Rev. Annor-Nyarko, and the late Mr. Opoku family, all contributed significantly to making me versatile. One person whose impeccable life challenged me to heights of morality was my high school headmaster, Mr. E. K. Caesar. His life exemplified honesty and selflessness. He was a scholar saint. To him and all, I say thanks.

In my spiritual life, I will not forget Andrews A. Boateng, who by his personal life brought me into Adventism and through sustained writing nurtured my faith. As I struggled to gain my feet in Adventism, it was Isaiah Gideon Morrison who became my companion and support.

Reminiscences of my college (university) life bring to mind people like, J. K. Brew whose incessant encouragement and initiatives helped me secure admission into Adventist Missionary College (now Valley View University) and Elder E. Y. Danso who

provided my first school fees. Others like Pr. C. B. Brew, Pr. Adu-Minta, Pr. Nguandoh-Yamoah, the late Victoria Daaku, Mary Enyimiah, Kwabena Ofori-Amoah, C. W. Odei and Madam Esme Ida Wilberforce of the Agona Swedru District of the SDA Church as well as the Yeboah family of Winneba Church, played important roles in my walk with God. Dr. Solomon O. T. Hammond, Dr. Chris Annan-Nunoo, and Dr. Thomas Techie Ocran need special thanks for their friendship which were displayed in various gestures of love.

To Karin Vestman (Sweden), Prof. Awoniyi and his wife, and all dear ones of ASWA especially Prof. Constance C. Nwosu and family (now Babcock University), I say *ese kupo* (thank you very much) for your diverse support.

Special gratitude goes to Professors Rudi Maier and Bruce Bauer together with Professor Chiemela Ikonne whose initiative brought Kelvin Onongha, Boubakar Sanou, and I to Andrews University, after our Doctor of Ministry program to pursue second doctoral degrees. They have been parents to us. I will not forget Professor Tom Shepherd who went the extra mile to solicit funds to take care of our tuition. In this vein, I thank Dr. Najeeb Nakhle, Robert Benjamin, and Steve Nash who stepped in from time to time to ensure that the financial floods did not drown us. The warm, motherly smile and love of Mabel Bowen cannot be glossed over. She was an encouragement and source of inspiration to my colleagues and me. May God richly bless her. To the Boadi-Becksons, the Adabohs, the Hamels, and the Ghanaian community, I say thanks for your support and prayers.

In connection with my data collection for my dissertation, I give special thanks to all who helped me snowball to get respondents during the field trip. Samuel Acquaye,

Grace Acquaye, and Christopher Ghartey I also thank the Valley View University family, especially the video crew, who helped me immensely. The members of the Winneba SDA Church, especially Appiah-Baffoe and Pastors George Acquaah and Isaac Boateng, deserve thanks.

I also thank my dissertation committee members Prof. Gordon R. Doss, Prof. Roy E. Gane, and Prof. Bruce Bauer for helping me in diverse ways to complete my dissertation and also Prof. Terry Robertson, for looking at my bibliography to ensure its compliance with AU standards.

Considering my home, I will not forget to mention my siblings—Elizabeth Ghartey Jr., Isaac Kingsley Quaye, William Ackom-Nkebi, Mary Eduafo-Sackey, Kingsford Tetteh Nkebi, and especially Comfort Antwi-Boasiako and her husband for their immense support. I also thank Patience Deborah Bledu and Kojo and all my loved ones for their prayers and best wishes.

The list is not exhaustive. So to all, especially my family, I say I am grateful.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Foundational to the gospel message is the concept of atonement epitomized in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Understanding this concept is therefore an essential ingredient in the goal of missiologists as they attempt to facilitate the spread of the gospel to all people, including the Effutu of Winneba in Ghana. The Bible story shows that God speaks to a people through culturally relevant and appropriate ways. This means that missionaries should communicate the gospel “in such a way that it speaks to the total context of the people to whom it is addressed.”¹

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the atonement concept was highlighted through various sacrifices and feasts (Lev 23), particularly during the *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) festival celebrated annually by the Israelites. The elaborate rituals performed by the high priest on behalf of the people during this festival (Lev 16), apart from sensitizing the people about the holiness and purity of God, pointed to the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

According to Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno, “one bridge for the communication of

¹Timothy George, *The New American Commentary: Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 321.

the biblical concepts pertaining to holiness and purity in different cultures is the concept of sacrifices.”² They propose that “local beliefs associated with sacrifice can be used as redemptive analogies to help people understand Christ’s death for all sinners.”³ It is in this vein that the *Aboakyer* festival becomes relevant.

“The *Aboakyer* (literally ‘the catching of an animal’) is the major communal ritual of the Effutu and ranks as one of the most popular festivals in southern Ghana.”⁴ In this annual festival celebrated on the first Saturday of May, a live deer caught with bare hands is ritually selected and sacrificed by the *Osoɔw Nipa* (high priest) to the Effutu tribal (national) god, *Penkye Otu*. Despite its nationalistic ties, attraction for tourists, and unbiblical elements, the festival has a lot of commonalities with the *Yom Kippur* festival of the Old Testament which seem appropriate to tap for effective mission purposes. These commonalities (see Table 1) include: annual period (specified time in the year); high priestly role (the high priest is in charge of rituals); priestly preparation (high priest purifies himself); place for the ritual (the most sacred grove or sanctuary); purification of participants (special washing of participants); and the choice of the animal for sacrifice (the animal is provided by the people and ritually selected).

²Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 223.

³Ibid.

⁴Robert W. Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana: A Study of New Religious Movements* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980), 15.

Table 1. Elements of Comparison

Elements	Yom Kippur	Aboakyer
Period	Annually on the tenth day of the seventh month	Annually on the first Saturday of May
Priestly Role	High priest in charge	High priest in charge
Priestly Preparation	High priest purifies himself through ritual sacrifice	High priest purifies himself through ritual cleansing
Place of Atonement	Sanctuary	Sacred grove
People	Provide two goats	Provide two deer
Atonement Animal	Selected ritually by lot	Selected ritually by the king stepping on the deer
Elimination of Evil	Transfer of sin and impurity onto live goat by confession and hand laying of High Priest	Transfer of <i>musu</i> (contagion) on-to live deer by the king's act of stepping on it

According to Robert W. Wyllie, Christian mission to the Effutu of Winneba, who celebrate the *Aboakyer* festival, began in 1865 when the Methodist Church made its first appearance in that region.⁵ The Seventh-day Adventist Church and other Christian missionaries joined in the proclamation of the gospel to the Effutu in the 1920s. In the late 1940s spiritist churches, generally called African Initiated Churches (AICs), emerged with their spiritual healing, power encounters, and culturally oriented worship styles which attracted some of the Effutu. But in spite of the concerted efforts and various missionary initiatives to the Effutu, the *Aboakyer* has largely withstood the challenges of

⁵Ibid. , 13.

Christianity. Although Adventists have a small Effutu membership,⁶ the other Christian denominations with greater numbers of Effutu members report a drastic drop in church attendance during the *Aboakyer* festival.⁷ Summing up the missionary efforts, Wyllie wrote in 1980:

For nearly fifty years Effutu traditional religion has had to face the competitive challenge of Spiritism and, for a much longer period, that of orthodox Christianity, as well as the effects of various economic, political, and social changes which have taken place in the community. . . . The cult of the ancestral spirits has been attacked by all the Christian churches in the town The ancestors have not yet been totally forgotten and the traditional religious practitioners are not yet prepared to vacate the field in favor of the Christian Churches, whose members, after all, represent only a minority of Effutu. The number of “active” gods may have dwindled, but those which are consulted and propitiated are widely known and seriously regarded by most towns people. And while the *Aboakyer* may require the props of carnival and commercialization for its continued existence, it is nonetheless the case that, amid the glare of publicity and the welter of commercial activity, the old rites are still performed and *Penkye Otu* still speaks of the future.⁸

In effect, the Effutu still cherish the *Aboakyer* festival and are influenced by it.

Statement of Problem

History records that Christian missions have operated in Winneba since 1865 with

⁶George Acquah, personal communication on the 2011 Statistical Report of Winneba District of Seventh-day Adventists to the author, November 13, 2011. According to him, although there are currently three Adventist churches in Winneba with “three hundred fifty six church members, . . . only fifty-eight (58) are from Winneba. The rest (that is the two hundred ninety-eight believers) are not indigenous *Effutufo*.” This means that less than seventeen percent of the members are Effutu. A careful observation of even the Effutu membership in all the Adventist churches indicates that not a single individual has been won from the fisher-folk who are the true indigenes of the town and the custodians of the traditions and festivals.

⁷Gloria Donkor (Pseudonym), interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 8, 2010.

⁸Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*, 15, 16.

various approaches being used to share the gospel with the Effutu. Though there have been successes, allegiance of the Effutu to their tribal gods, manifested especially during the *Aboakyer* festival, raises the need for a missiological bridge or intervention for an effective contextualized ministry among the Effutu of Winneba.

Purpose of Study

This research aims to develop a missiological model based on a comparative study of the OT *Yom Kippur* festival and the Effutu *Aboakyer* festival for the purpose of more effective mission among the Effutu.

Research Questions

1. What are the links between the OT *Yom Kippur* festival and the Effutu *Aboakyer* festival that are potentially appropriate and useful for Adventist mission?
2. How could these links be appropriately used in developing a model for Adventist mission?

Justification and Viability

Though anthropologists like Eva Leonie Lewin-Richter Meyerowitz⁹ and Robert W. Wyllie¹⁰ and indigenes like George P. Hagan¹¹ and Anthony Ephraim-Donkor¹² have

⁹Eva Leonie Lewin-Richter Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana: Their Ancient Beliefs* (London, UK: Faber and Faber Limited, 1958).

¹⁰Robert W. Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*.

¹¹George P. Hagan, *Divided We Stand: A Study of Social Change Among the Effutu of Coastal Ghana* (Trondheim, Norway: Department of History, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000).

¹²Anthony Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King: Patrilineal and Matrilineal Struggle among the Effutu of Ghana* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2000).

done some commendable work on the *Aboakyer* festival, their studies were more anthropological than missiological. Ephraim-Donkor and Hagan focused on the socio-cultural and political climate of the Effutu as they struggle to preserve their Guan ethnic identity amidst the populous Akan culture around them. So far it is the research of Wyllie which gives some missiological insights about the festival. His emphasis was on how the spirituality of the Effutu, particularly about how their deep concerns about dangerous spiritual influences and powers, paved the way for the spread of African Indigenous Churches in Winneba. William Brown's¹³ dissertation discussed how he felt the annual masquerading festival held every New Year's Day would take over the *Aboakyer* festival. In effect, no detailed missiological study of the *Aboakyer* has been done.

This research will provide a detailed missiologically oriented ethnography of the *Aboakyer* festival which will provide a basis for a critically contextualized ministry that will potentially promote a more effective Adventist mission among the Effutu of Winneba and potentially inform the mission of other denominations.

Furthermore, this study may also encourage research into other theological themes in African festivals that will reveal more entry points for effective, contextualized ministry among African Traditional Religionists (ATRs).

Finally, in the light of the gospel commission (Matt 28:18, 19; Rev 14:6, 7), the Adventist Church has an obligation to improve its mission to the Effutu.

¹³Kwesi Ewusi Brown, "Social Conflicts in Contemporary Effutu Festivals" (master's thesis, Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, 2005).

Delimitations

The *Aboakyer* festival has many theological themes which cannot be adequately covered by one project. The study will therefore be delimited to the theme of atonement in the *Aboakyer* festival of the Effutu of Winneba, especially as it compares with that of the *Yom Kippur* festival in the OT. This research does not assume that the biblical atonement and the Effutu *Aboakyer* can be directly equated but seeks to identify helpful similarities between them. Again there are other OT rituals that could be compared with *Aboakyer* but they are omitted due to time constraints.

Conceptual Framework

Timothy Tennent's incarnational model of communicating the gospel is the conceptual framework for my research. Tennent's incarnational model ties together two key missiological concepts: Paul Hiebert's "critical contextualization"¹⁴ and Andrew Walls's "translatability of the gospel."¹⁵ He notes that the "translatability is a valuable theological principle, which alongside the careful use of contextualization [critical contextualization], can serve an important function in helping the church to be faithful to the gospel as we cross new cultural frontiers"¹⁶ According to him "the Incarnation does not only provide the theological foundation for effective missionary communication [but]

¹⁴Hiebert explains *critical contextualization* as an effective missiological approach whereby the contextual culture is engaged phenomenologically and "evaluated in the light of Biblical norms or truth." Loyalty to scripture is not compromised. See Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 186-190.

¹⁵Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 27. Walls believes that "Incarnation is translation" because "Christ can become visible within the very things which constitute nationality [or culture]."

¹⁶Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 353.

it serves as the model for all the ways that we seek to contextualize or translate the universal gospel message into a potentially infinite number of particular settings.”¹⁷ He therefore sees the Incarnation as the ultimate example of what we call the “*translatability*” of the gospel.¹⁸

Paramount in the model is the supremacy of the Word of God. This is important because the “starting point of contextualization is the biblical text (the Word of God)”¹⁹ Like the incarnation of Christ (John 1:1, 14), the model establishes, unequivocally, the centrality²⁰ and the immanence of the Word of God, thereby providing “the theological foundation for effective missionary communication.”²¹ Faithfulness to the Word of God is therefore paramount in this model. In Tennent’s words, “the Word of God is the final arbiter in the communication process”²² to keep the church on the track of faithfulness to the gospel.

Second, the model shows that the gospel is intrinsically translatable into every culture because it has “*the ability . . . to be articulated, received, and appropriated, and reproduced into a potentially infinite number of cultural contexts*”²³ (emphasis in

¹⁷Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 325.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 351.

²⁰Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Baker Books, 2000), 72, 73.

²¹Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 353.

²²*Ibid.*, 352, 353.

²³*Ibid.*, 325.

original). In other words, the model allows the gospel to be communicated effectively in a way that mirrors the incarnation of Jesus contextually so that God can be “at home in specific segments of social reality [or culture].”²⁴ In this way the Word of God becomes experientially tangible and audible to the recipients. As George W. Peters submits, “salvation is Christ, and to experience salvation is to experience Christ. Salvation is person-centered. It is Christ-identification. It is not the experience of *something*, but the experience of *Someone*.”²⁵

Finally, the incarnational model calls for the careful use of contextualization in the process of translation, especially when dealing with contexts oriented around spiritual power like the *Aboakyer* festival. Craig Ott and Stephen Strauss intimate that an “approach to issues of spiritual dynamics must [not only] be rooted in scripture [but must in addition] respond carefully to cultures oriented around spiritual power.”²⁶ This concept of “critical contextualization” is therefore very significant because it “stresses the importance of ‘formulating, [and] presenting . . . the Christian faith in such a way that is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualization, expression and application; yet maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency.’”²⁷ This critical contextualization provides the needed platform that brings Old Testament atonement and the *Aboakyer* festival into a healthy theological

²⁴Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, xvii.

²⁵George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute, 1984), 65.

²⁶Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2010), 240.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 347. See also Enoch Wan, “Critiquing the Method of the Traditional Western Theology and Calling for Sino-Theology,” *Chinese Around the World* (November 1999): 13.

dialogue that will potentially provide new insights into biblical atonement for mission among the Effutu people. It therefore suggests a phenomenological hermeneutic that “engages culture exegetically to allow the phenomena to be seen for what they are”²⁸ and consequently allow the system to exude the thought patterns or meanings to their forms whether ritual time, ritual space, ritual objects, ritual identity, or ritual action.²⁹ In this way some of “the real needs of the African [and the Effutu in particular]”³⁰ may be fathomed for appropriate missiological intervention.

Methodology

In the light of the incarnational model, a comparative descriptive analysis that brings Old Testament atonement and the *Aboakyer* festival into a healthy theological dialogue was used. This involved a phenomenological description of the *Aboakyer* festival and a biblical understanding of the *Yom Kippur*. A four-step process was used.

First, a literature review studied the theme of atonement in two parts—the biblical view (comprising the Old Testament and New Testament views), and the African Traditional Religion (ATR) perspective.

Second, ethnographic field research of the *Aboakyer* festival was conducted to

²⁸Bruce Ellis Benson, *Graven Ideologies: Nietzsche, Derrida & Marion on Modern Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 27.

²⁹Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, Third Edition (Waterloo, Canada: Ritual Studies International, 2010), 19-32. See also Catherine Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Second Edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction, 2008).

³⁰John Parratt, “Conclusion: Current Issues in African Theology,” *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, ed. John Paratt (Kaduna, Nigeria: Baraka Press, 2004), 142.

help the researcher gain a first-hand understanding of the Effutu context and worldview³¹ as well as other factors involved in the celebration of the festival. This included participant observation and interviews.

Two kinds of interviews (individual interview and focus group) were conducted with three groups “to elicit the deeper meaning of [Effutu] symbols of communication particularly words, actions, and artifacts and/or visible objects used for the purpose of discovering ‘cultural patterns and themes’”³² about atonement and the effect of the festival on the Christian churches and church members.

The first group, who were interviewed individually, included approximately ten adults, purposefully chosen before and during the festival. The group was representative of gender, the two warrior groups of the Effutu (*Dentsiwo* and *Tuawo*),³³ and fisher folk. Because the selection was purposeful, the snowballing³⁴ method of sampling was used.

The second set of interviews was done with two focus groups of six individuals each. Participants were interviewed immediately after the festival. Carefully selected, mature, and experienced Effutu adults, capable of providing the needed information for

³¹Worldview is described by Hiebert as “the fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions a group of people make about the nature of reality and which they use to order their lives.” See Gordon R. Doss, Lecture Handout for MSSN731 Seminar in Cultural and Religious Analysis I, Babcock University, Andrews University Extension Campus, Summer 2007.

³²Carol A. B. Warren, “Qualitative Interviewing” [83-101] in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 85.

³³The *Dentsiwo* and *Tuawo* constitute the two warrior groups of the Effutu community who hunt for the deer. Their identity is discussed in full in Chapter 3.

³⁴Pranee Liamputtong, *Focus Group Methodology: Principles and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011), 50, 51. Snowballing is a kind of purposive sampling which identifies and selects specific people who are of interest, and who will best enable you to discover appropriate answers to your research questions.

the research, constituted the groups. Focus Group 1 comprised key leaders/personalities who were/have been directly involved in aspects of the *Aboakyer* festival. The second focus group (Focus Group 2) was composed of Christian leaders—pastors and elders and committed members. Focus Group 2 furnished the researcher with information on the impact of the festival on church activities and membership. This group was purposively selected from selected denominations in Winneba—the AME Zion Church, the Church of Pentecost, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church—to reflect different Christian perspectives. Interview data was collected by digital recording and/or written notes as appropriate.

Video recording of important aspects of the festival (see Appendix D) was done by professional video technicians to help the researcher recapture significant scenes of the festival for effective data analysis. Data was collated and analyzed manually.

Third, research findings regarding the *Aboakyer* festival were placed into dialogue with the OT *Yom Kippur*. Comparisons and contrasts as well as compatibilities and incompatibilities were identified using William W. Hallo³⁵ and Gerald A. Klingbeil's delineation of appropriate comparative methodology and Roy E. Gane's books on

³⁵William W. Hallo, "Biblical History in its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach," in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 34, ed. Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo, and John B. White (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick, 1980), 1-26; Harry A. Hoffner, "Hittite-Israelite Cultural Parallels," in *Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (Leiden, BO: Brill, 2003) 3:xxix-xxxiv; James C. Moyer, "Hittite and Israelite Cultic Practices: A Selected Comparison," *Scripture in Context*, ed. William W. Hallo, James C. Moyer, and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 2:19-38; Gerald A. Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007).

atonement.³⁶ This included two things: (1) identification of similarities between the *Aboakyer* and *Yom Kippur*, with its typological meaning (pointing to ultimate reality), that reveal points of contact that make *Yom Kippur* comprehensible to the Effutu, and (2) differences that reveal inadequacies in their understanding that can be remedied by accepting the biblical model of atonement through two phases of atonement provided by Christ's sacrifice.

Fourth, a model for mission was proposed based upon redemptive analogies found in the analysis for potentially more effective mission among the Effutu.

³⁶Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005); Roy E. Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004); and Roy E. Gane, "Leviticus," *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 1:284-337.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF ATONEMENT: BIBLICAL, AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Introduction

Atonement is an integral part of real life because it is the process that restores oneness between two parties estranged by offence or sin, while ensuring cleansing, and healing, as well as the establishment of justice and fairness. According to Henry Varley, it is an intuitive truth that is an integral part of the nature of things.¹ He observes: “in the light of reason, necessity and revelation, . . . atonement stands as part of the nature of things . . . because if someone commits iniquity and atonement is not done we feel right has been outraged [and wrong condoned or enthroned]”²

People of many different religious cultures, including ancient Israelite, Christian, and African Traditional Religion (ATR), have sought atonement from time immemorial as a way to restore relationships, both with other humans and with transcendent beings. For example, in ATR, words such as *mpata* (Effutu/Akan “atonement), *ntatɔatɔ* (Effutu, literally “what is in between” or “ritual”), *atormuadze* (Akan, ritual process of

¹Henry Varley, *Atonement Shown to be an Absolute Necessity* (Boston, MA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 25, 27.

²*Ibid.*, 25, 27.

atonement), *musuyi* (removal of ritual impurity or aversion of consequences of abomination), all reflect the concept of atonement and its nuances. Around the globe, atonement is expressed in varied forms of sacrificial rituals, mediated by ritual specialists to offended beings (transcendent or immanent, spirit or human) to address iniquity or wrong.

This chapter will explore the concept and rituals of atonement as understood and practiced in biblical times, including the Old Testament sacrificial system and the New Testament antitype, and also in the African Traditional Religion (ATR) to which the Effutu subscribe. The discussion will include views about the deity/deities or spirit-powers in the supernatural realm in relation to human beings, especially concerning atonement/reconciliation as the remedy for sin. Because of the comparative nature of the project, the chapter will be done in two parts—the Biblical system of the Old Testament (OT) and the African Traditional Religious (ATR) system.

Part 1: The Biblical Concept

At the core of the goal of atonement is the restoration of the original relationship structure of the world that God set up at Creation, which is graphically shown in the OT sanctuary system. According to Harry Poe, “the good news of salvation has a relationship to the idea of a Creator God in such a way that apart from this being, the idea of salvation makes no sense. The notion is rooted in the [OT] worldview expressed by Judaism,”³ and outlined in the sanctuary typology.

³Harry L. Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning: A Theology for Evangelism and Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 56, 57.

Old Testament Background in Creation and Fall

In the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis, God is seen as the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, including humans. The entrance of sin into the biblical story (Gen 3) affirmed God, the Supreme Being over all creation, as the one against whom humans have sinned, and who alone can restore humankind. Although angels are mentioned, they are described as messengers who do God's biddings (Heb 1:7), interposing between man and the tree of life (Gen 3:24).

Apart from the creation story, which is foundational to the concept of atonement, the OT worldview is also seen in the sanctuary system, particularly during the interface of the transcendent with humans in the high priestly ministration on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*; Lev 16). Moving from the inner sanctum of the sanctuary outward, we see God, whose presence hovers over the Ark of covenant; angelic beings (cherubim here, with their wings spread); the priest; and the rest of humans outside the precincts of the sanctuary (Exod 40:1-38; Num 1:52, 53; 2:1-34; cf. Gen 1:1-3:24; Dan 7:13).

The unusual thing about the OT worldview is that the mention of the term "angel(s)" is always associated with good angels doing the bidding of the God. "Evil angels" are not mentioned per se. Rather, evil angels are termed as "spirits"—"deceiving spirit" (1 Kgs 22:22) or "evil spirit" (Judg 9:23; 1 Sam 16:14). God made it clear that allegiance to bad spirits is abominable (Exod 20:3-6; Deut 5:7-10; 13:6-16; etc.), so those who engaged in the worship of or other interaction with these "deceiving spirits" or lesser gods did so in rebellion and apostasy. According to Bill Arnold, such a belief was unusual in the early Israelite literature because the "world of biblical perspective is a

world without secondary cause.”⁴ Everything was traced to God because he was believed to be in total control of all powers. Although Israelites knew about the existence of other supernatural beings, this knowledge did not unseat God as the ultimate legitimate recipient of their worship and sacrifices.

The NT puts the biblical worldview into perspective. It states categorically that the angelic host is divided into two: those who belong to God (Michael), who are good, and those who belong to the Devil/Satan, who are bad, as seen in Rev 12:7, 9.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

These two opposing factions are in a constant spiritual struggle or warfare, termed by Adventists as the Great Controversy. The struggle is for allegiance and worship from humankind. The Devil and his angels use deception to destroy while Michael and His angels use only truth to save (John 8:44; 10:10; 2 Cor 4:4; 11:14; Col 2:18; Rev 16:13, 14; 20:3 cf. John 17:17; 14:6). The Devil and his angels accept worship, usurping the prerogative of God, but holy angels do not accept worship (Matt 4:8-10; Rev 19:10, 11; 22:8, 9).

The biblical perspective of the world at creation and the change that occurred at the Fall provides the context for atonement. With this in place, the way is opened to explore the concept and rituals of atonement in the OT.

⁴Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 240, 242.

Atonement in the Old Testament

Some biblical scholars believe that the concept of atonement originated with God at the beginning of human history. “Atonement was not an afterthought of God but was [a comprehensive salvation process], designed by Him who is wonderful in counsel and almighty in working [to restore humankind].”⁵ As confirmed by Scripture, it is God, the Creator, who initiated it, demonstrated it, and has sustained it (Gen 3:15-21; cf. Rev 13:8). Atonement was needed when humans sinned (Gen 3:1-21).

The all-embracing nature of the concept of atonement as the comprehensive reconciliation plan of God to solve the sin problem makes it central to salvation. In the language of reconciliation Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen writes:

Of all the metaphors of salvation, reconciliation [or atonement] has the potential of being the most inclusive and comprehensive, encompassing ideas such as ‘cosmic reconciliation,’ the Hebrew notion of *shalom*, the meaning of the cross, the psychological effects of conversion, the work of the Holy Spirit, the overcoming of barriers between Christians, the work of the church in the world, peacemaking, movements towards ethnic reconciliation and the renewal of ecological balances between humanity and its natural environment.⁶

Meaning of Hebrew Terms for Atonement

The Hebrew verb usually translated as “atone” is *kipper*, the *pi’el* of *kpr*, which, as observed by S. Hills, implies “a break in relationship between two persons, . . . and

⁵Henry Varley, *Atonement Shown to be an Absolute Necessity*, 26

⁶Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), 364. See also Colin E. Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (London, UK: T & T Clark, 1988), 143.

ultimately that between God and man”⁷ (italics authors). Except for one instance (Gen 32:20), the relationship involved is ultimately between God and man (Prov 16:14; and Isa 47:9).⁸ In biblical ritual texts, especially prescriptions for purification offerings (so-called “sin offerings”), the *pi’el* of *kpr* signifies “the removal of evil that disrupts the divine-human relationship, providing ritual purity [sic impurity] or prerequisite to forgiveness, as part of a process of reconciliation (at-one-ment).”⁹ From Roy Gane’s observation, “*kipper* followed by the preposition *min* (“from”) denotes removal, i.e., expiation of sin or ritual impurity *from* a person (Lev 4:26; 12:7) or from the sanctuary (Lev 16:16).”¹⁰

The Hebrew *kippurim* is an abstract plural noun related to the *pi’el* of *kpr*, carrying the idea of ransom or compensation (Exod 30:16), which could remove “the danger of death” in a serious case.¹¹ Similarly, *koper*, another noun cognate with *kipper*, refers to compensation. For example, it was used as “the legal term for the propitiatory gift or ransom in case a man was killed by a goring

⁷S. Hills, “A Semantic and Conceptual Study of the Root KPR in the Hebrew Old Testament with Special Reference to the Accaddian *Kuppuru*” (Ph. D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1954), 287. See Gane *Cult and Character*, 106.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Roy Gane, “Leviticus,” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 1:290. See also William J. Wolf, “Atonement” *Encyclopedia of Religion* (15vols) Second Edition, ed. Lindsay Jones (Thomson Gale, 2005), 1:593.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 177.

ox”¹² (Exo 21:30). *Koper* as “ransom” does not serve as a “substitute,”¹³ but as a token for pacification, as in the case of Jacob when he was going to meet his brother Esau whom he had offended (Gen 32:21).¹⁴ There could be no *koper nepesh* (ransom for life) for capital crimes, such as murder or adultery (Prov 4:35; Num 35:31-33).

In light of this brief summary, *kipper* and nouns related to it carry interrelated meanings such as: to wash away, wipe off, cover, expiate,¹⁵ to effect “ritual purification, interpersonal reconciliation, ransoming, redeeming, . . . appeasing [and the restoration of sacred space].”¹⁶ These meanings are interrelated because they all express denotations and connotations of atonement, which is concerned with impediments to relationships in order to restore peaceful relations between humans and God. This ultimate relationship with God is the primary concern of OT atonement.

Atonement as God’s Prerogative

Atonement never occurs in a vacuum. It occurs between one who has been offended and one who offends, presupposing the presence of a relational problem. When

¹²“Atonement,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

¹³William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible*, 175.

¹⁴Concerning the thought of Jacob as he planned to meet with his brother Esau, Hills (p. 287) makes a special comment on the use of the *pi’el* form of the root *kpr*. He notes that it is the only usage of that form that has to do with human-human relations. The translation “appeasement” thus becomes the most appropriate.

¹⁵Ernest Kein “כִּפֶּה” *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for readers of English* (New York, NY: McMillian, 1987), 286.

¹⁶Stephen Finlan and Daniel P. Bailey, “Atonement,” *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* Edited by John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 403.

such a problem involves violation of God's law, it is sin, which humans are unable to remedy. This understanding of sin makes atonement in the OT a work of mercy on the part of God. Humans only fulfill certain prescriptions to acknowledge reception of God's gracious gesture.

For the redemptive process of removing sins to effect the forgiveness and moral purification of the human offender through expiatory sacrifices (Lev 4:31-6:7 [Heb. 5:26]), the Bible employs three Hebrew *pi'el* verbs in addition to the removal of an impediment to the divine-human relationship indicated by *kipper: khitte'*, "to un-sin," *tihhar*, "to cleanse," and *kiddesh*, "to sanctify or restore to holiness."¹⁷ However, while rituals accomplish these things, it is only God himself who can complete the reconciliation process of atonement by granting forgiveness (Lev 4:26, 31, etc.). According to Gane, in the context of the Israelite system of expiatory rituals, "remedying sin . . . requires sacrificial כפר, then divinely granted forgiveness (סלה), and finally communal purification (טהרה) on the Day of Atonement."¹⁸ Despite the human role in some aspects of the expiatory process, the rituals are done as ordinances rather than sacraments, for "there is no suggestion whatsoever that the rites themselves are endowed with magical [or salvific] power."¹⁹ Completion of atonement for sin is by God's grace

¹⁷Samuel S. Cohon, "Atone," *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* in 10 vols., ed. Isaac Landman (New York, NY: the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1939), 1:604.

¹⁸Roy Gane, *Cult and Character*, 231.

¹⁹William J. Wolf "Atonement," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1:593.

alone and is not the direct effect of any human action.²⁰ Even the complex plethora of sacrifices entailed in the role humans play in atonement process is seen as a gracious offer. Emphasizing this point, A Rodriguez states that “applying blood to the altar had no inherent efficacy. Its כפר [kipper] function derived solely from the authority of YHWH.”²¹

The Nature of Rituals

In the OT system, atonement with YHWH, the God of Israel, was mostly done through sacrificial rituals. These usually involved blood manipulations by the priest for the worshipper (exception as accommodation for the poor: grain as purification offering in Lev 5:11-13). It is thus “connected with the ritual removal of sin or defilement.”²² Understanding the nature of rituals is helpful for understanding atonement.

Definition of Ritual

Roy Gane, in his book *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, defines ritual as “*an activity system of which the components/subsystems are fixed in terms of their inclusion, nature, and relative order, and in which the activity is believed to interact with an entity that is ordinarily inaccessible to the material domain*”²³ [Italics author’s]. It is a system because

²⁰William J. Wolf, “Atonement,” *ER*, 1:593.

²¹Gane, *Cult and Character*, 9. See also A. Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus* (Andrews University Seminary Dissertation Series 3; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), 242.

²²Samuel J. Schultz “Leviticus: God among His People” *Everyman’s Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute, 1983), 54.

²³Roy E. Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 60.

ritual involves “acts and sounds, related to each other in accordance with rules.”²⁴ This implies a “structure formed by logical relationships and this structure is hierarchical, with smaller units embedded in higher units.”²⁵ According to Olupona, every religion has a kind of ritual to buttress its beliefs. He comments: “every religion has a system that establishes how that religion is experienced (as, for example, in prayer), giving a structure to its activities and providing an intellectual basis for the believer’s perception of reality.”²⁶ In this connection it becomes significant that in performing rituals “meticulous care and proper timing are absolutely necessary.”²⁷ This makes the apparent rigid nature of the rules that govern rituals meaningful. In other words, it must be understood that rules governing rituals are purposeful, incorporating “the ideas that it is fixed with regard to inclusion of activity components, their nature, and their order [thus rendering it] a ‘formulaic activity system.’”²⁸ Gane cites the example of Leviticus 1:3-6 as rendered by Jacob Milgrom:

(3) *If* his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he *shall* offer a male without blemish. He *shall* bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, for acceptance on his behalf before the Lord. (4) He *shall* lean his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that is may be acceptable in his behalf, to expiate for him. (5) The bull *shall* be slaughtered before the Lord, and Aaron’s sons, the priests, *shall* present the blood

²⁴F. Staal *Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: 1989), 433.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Earle H. Waugh, “Introduction: Ritual,” (*WERP*), xiv.

²⁷Boyce, *Leviticus and Numbers*, 56.

²⁸Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, 13.

and dash the blood against all sides of the altar which is at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. . .[italics supplied] ²⁹

In this way the volition to offer a sacrifice is given to the offerer. However, once he chooses to offer a sacrifice, the ritual activities “must be carried out in a particular manner according to the prescription/rule.”³⁰

Ritual gives humans visible processes and protocols as they strive to please and worship God and access his blessing.³¹ Rituals are a faith enterprise with spiritual undertones and meaning. Complementing Olupona’s observation, Marty Stevens states:

But we must remember that the theological context for all rituals of the [OT sacrificial system] is grounded in the faith conviction that what happens in the cult matters to God. Because ritual matters to God, God has commanded the rituals. Consequently, accuracy in minute details is critical. Detailed rituals invoke the divine presence, which is accompanied by divine blessing, the results of which are prosperity, fertility, and long life.³²

Mediators of Rituals

Rituals involve interaction with the transcendent. They must therefore be mediated by ritual specialists. In the OT it is the high priest and the ordinary priests who were ordained (Lev 8) to maintain the sanctuary precincts, to ensure that appropriate sacrifices were brought, and to ensure that protocols of rituals were meticulously followed. In short, the priests “were in charge of the Tabernacle sanctuary where they

²⁹Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, AB 3 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 133; see also Roy Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, 45.

³⁰Gane, *Ritual Dynamics Structure*, 287.

³¹Chingota asserts that this “is part and parcel of all religions” (Chingota, “Leviticus,” *ABC*, 131).

³²Marty E. Stevens, *Theological Themes of the Old Testament: Creation, Covenant, and Character* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 109.

officiated at the outside altar and within the tent. Offerings brought to the sanctuary were presented to them and presumably approved.”³³

Priestly mediation of rituals took a different turn on *Yom Kippur*. On this day, the entire ritual complex centered on the high priest, who alone was permitted to enter into the inner sanctum of the sanctuary to perform atonement for the sanctuary, himself and his priestly family, and the community (Lev 16:16, 17, 33). This ministration highlighted the need for priestly mediation between a holy God and sinful humans, specifically, the importance of the high priest.

The Sacred Sanctuary/Temple

Rituals do not take place just anywhere. They take place in sacred spaces. This makes the sanctuary or the temple very important in the sacrificial system. Such sacred structures “were designed to be residences for deities and, as such, places for the performance of cultic rituals.”³⁴

The Old Testament Sacrificial System

A sacrifice is an offering offered to a transcendent being, such as a deity. In the OT, “sacrifice” translated from the Hebrew term *qorban*, represents “dedicated gift or offering to God” (Matt 5:23). “*Qorban* comes from the root *qarav* meaning to ‘come close,’ specifically, to come close to God. [In this way the dedicated gift or] the offering

³³Corrine Patton, “Layers of Meaning: Priesthood in Jeremiah MT,” *The Priests in the Prophets: the Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religion Specialists in the Latter Prophets* ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis (London, UK: T and T Clark International, 2004), 150 [149-176].

³⁴John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 113.

was meant to bring someone who was far near once again.”³⁵ In other words, sacrifice was a bridging process. It was provision graciously “made for ‘drawing near’”³⁶ to God.

Before the establishment of the sanctuary system, which graphically and comprehensively typified the total restoration process involved in the salvation of humanity from sin, God allowed the operation of family altars for worship. Such worship expressed loyalty to him and enacted atonement in the broad sense of restoring the human relationship with him. Examples of these altars can be found in the records of sacrifices by Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3-5), Noah (Gen 8:20), Job (Job 1:5), and Abraham (Gen 13:4; 15:9-18; 22:1-18). Notable among these family altar sacrifices are those of Noah and Abraham, to which God responded with special covenant promises that pointed toward the idea of the ultimate restoration of the relationship between the world and God.

When Israel was established as a nation, God put in place the sacrificial system, which is “the first and most important matter taken up in the Book of Leviticus.”³⁷ In this system, sacrifices that “in type and symbol, [were] substitutionary”³⁸ were offered according to meticulously patterned and organized protocols and processes. Pentateuchal ritual law detailed the kind of animals to be offered, where to perform each sacrifice, who

³⁵“Sacrifice,” accessed January 9, 2010, http://www.hebrew4christians.net/Glossary/Hebrew_Glossary_-S/hebrew_glossary_-_s.html.

³⁶John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 2:85.

³⁷R. Laird Harris, “Leviticus,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 2: 520.

³⁸*Ibid.*

was to supervise the sacrifice, when to offer what, and how to prepare and handle the sacrifice, whether individual or corporate.

The OT sacrificial system was a vital part of God's plan to save human beings.

Even before the revelation to Moses at Sinai, offerings and sacrifices were a key part of the practice of relationship with God from Cain and Abel, to Noah, to the patriarchs, to Jethro the priest of Median, to the ratification of the Mosaic covenant by sacrifice before the tabernacle was built. They remained central to the ritual systems of the tabernacle and the first and second temples and, therefore, to the Old Testament theology of God's 'presence' and his relationship to ancient Israel as his 'kingdom of priests.'³⁹

Due to the importance of sacrifices and their typology, nothing was left to chance or speculation. Ritual details were put in place to make the sacrificial system a lesson book to teach the holiness and purity of God and the heinousness of sin (Lev 2).

Felix Chingota in the *African Bible Commentary* points out that although the atonement rituals of the OT had no intrinsic salvific value, they were a necessary requirement for approaching the presence of God in the sanctuary.⁴⁰ His study brings to the fore the underlying fact that "no man can approach the presence of God without appropriate atonement being made."⁴¹ This is because the holiness of God cannot cohabit with impurity whether sin or defilement.

Sacrifices also met the intrinsic need of humans in OT times to worship. In the Old Testament, worship means sacrifice, and sacrifice meant something had to die [or be

³⁹"Sacrifice and Offering," accessed Oct 5, 2011, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/offerings-and-sacrifices.html>.

⁴⁰Felix Chingota, "Leviticus," *African Bible Commentary*, Tokunboh Adeyemo ed. (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive, 2006), 156.

⁴¹Ibid.

offered]. All had sinned, and sin meant death, if not to oneself, then to an innocent animal. [Though] few probably understood how this transaction worked in all its metaphysical details, . . . it made a certain amount of sense on an intuitive level [that] there was a debt to be paid, and it had to be paid with a life.⁴²

The realization of the debt of sin emphatically called for an appropriate response, which varied with the person, occasion, and need. The sacrificial system that God instituted through Moses made provision for different persons, occasions, and needs. The system solved not only the issue of accessibility to God but taught the holiness of God, the heinousness of sin, and more significantly, the grace of God.

Types and Quality of OT Sacrifices

The OT ritual texts outline five basic types of sacrifices, which differed in their procedures and goals: the burnt offering (lev 1:1-17; 6:8-13), grain offering (lev 2:1-16; 6:14-23), well-being (so-called peace or fellowship) offering (lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-38), purification (so called “sin”) offering (4:1-5:13; 6:24-30), and reparation (so-called guilt) offering (5:14-16; 7:1-10).⁴³ R. Laird Harris points out that “the need for various sacrifices arises from the varied needs of a people’s worship.”⁴⁴ The Book of Leviticus is full of such needs: thanksgiving, celebration, cleansing, healing, and forgiveness.

All of the major types of sacrifices by individual Israelites fall under two broad

⁴²Allan Hecht, “Living Sacrifice,” *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, July-September, 2011, 49.

⁴³Harris, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:534-552.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 538.

categories: voluntary and mandatory offerings. Voluntary offerings, which include burnt offerings, grain offerings, and well-being offerings, are performed when the offerer chooses (Lev 1:1, 3, 10, 14; 2:1-16; 3:1, 6, 7, 12). Apart from the burnt offering providing general expiation (Lev 1:4; cf. 16:24), neither the grain offering (Lev 2:1-16) nor the well-being/peace offering (Lev 3:1-17; 7:11-36) are expiatory because there is no mention of *kipper* in the prescriptions for these sacrifices. It is true that the blood of a well-being offering, like that of other animal sacrifices, ransoms (*kipper*) the life of the offerer (Lev 17:11). However, well-being offerings do not remedy particular sins. Rather, they are performed for happier worship motivations of thanksgiving (Lev 7:12-15), fulfillment of vows, and voluntary expressions of devotion to God (Lev 7:16).⁴⁵

The mandatory offerings, purification and reparation offerings, on the other hand, are for expiation from particular sins. Purification (so-called “sin”) offerings expiate for non-defiant (especially inadvertent) sins and physical ritual impurities (Lev 4:1-5:13; 12:6-8; 14:19, 30-31; 15:15, 30, etc.). Reparation (guilt or trespass) offerings expiate for sins involving misappropriation of property belonging to God or another human through sacrilege (Lev 5:14-6:7; Heb 5:26).

Expiatory purification offerings accomplish only the first part of a two-stage process of removing sin: (1) removal of sins or physical ritual impurities from the individuals who offer them, thereby bringing these sins or impurities into the sanctuary;⁴⁶ and (2) the removal of sins and physical ritual impurities from the sanctuary by special

⁴⁵Andrews Study Bible, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 129-131.

⁴⁶Gane, *Cult and Character*, 176-81. Gane states: “The priest applies blood to sancta because sacrificial purification of the offerer necessarily involves transfer of his/her evil to YHWH” (p. 180).

purification offerings on the Day of Atonement followed by the removal of sins from the Israelite camp on the goat for Azazel.⁴⁷

As mentioned above, the purification offering is not only for removal of moral faults or sins, but also “for purification from physical ritual impurities caused by flows of blood, skin disease, and dead bodies (Lev 12:6-8; 14:19; 15:15; Num 19). Although the physical impurities were not sins, they were also “responsible for the pollution of the sanctuary”⁴⁸ (Lev 15:31) because “they represented aspects of the birth to death cycle of mortality (being subject to death) that results from sin”⁴⁹ (cf. Exod 26:33; Lev 16:16).

In the sacrificial system of the OT, the value and quality of an offering was specified by God. Two important principles that run through the priestly instructions given in connection with sacrifices are the requirements for pure (i.e., fit to eat) and unblemished animals (Exod 12:5; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:6; 4:3, 23; 9:2; Num 6:14; etc.). These principles constitute essential factors in the acceptance or rejection of a sacrifice. A sacrifice should be a clean animal (bullock, heifer, ram, sheep, goat) or bird (pigeon or turtle-dove), and be physically intact and undamaged (see Lev 1:2, 10, 14; etc.).

Concerning the quality of the offerings, Robert Vasholz observes:

In its pristine design, animal sacrifice serves to maintain or restore the relationship between deity and humans. The best animals are offered as a symbol of humanity’s best intentions. The blood, symbol of life itself, is used to sanctify the altar of sacrifice. The smoke given up by burning of the animal in whole or in part rises to the

⁴⁷Ibid., 262-3.

⁴⁸Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 926. See also Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and Its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22, 170.

⁴⁹*Andrews Study Bible*, 131. See Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 60, 207.

deity's abode in heaven as a 'pleasing odor.' The human worshiper has given up something of great value and in return received some things of even greater value: relationship with God, the assurance of the divine presence, and divine blessing.⁵⁰

Grace in the OT Sacrificial System

The sanctuary system, which stood as a constant reminder of God's holiness, also displayed his grace by ensuring that his presence was accessible to all, whether rich or poor. The ritual prescriptions allow for gradations of values of sacrificial materials (especially animal victims) so that even the poor could have something to offer. Leviticus 12:8 gives an example of this concession: "And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

Beyond this arrangement, which gave even the poor access to God's grace, the regular burnt offering provided the entire Israelite community with daily access to expiation⁵¹ from sin (Exod 29:38-42; Num 28:1-8). The regular burnt offering allowed an individual sinner some time to process his/her repentance and come to the altar with the requisite offering for atonement. To make this grace sure, God commanded Aaron and his sons [the priests] to be constantly vigilant (Lev 6:13) to keep the fire of the daily sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering burning continuously.⁵²

⁵⁰Robert I. Vasholz, *Leviticus: A Mentor Commentary* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor Imprint, 2007), 119.

⁵¹Gleason L. Archer, "Kapar," in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, ed R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), 1:452-53.

⁵²Ibid.

Special OT Festivals

To demonstrate the comprehensive nature of atonement, the OT sacrificial system also required several festivals of the LORD, with specific sacrificial rituals, at their appointed times of celebration (Lev 23). These are the festivals of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Weeks (Pentecost), Trumpets, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), and Booths (Lev 23:1-44). Among these, “only three pilgrim festivals—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Pentecost or Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles—were convocations in that the Israelites were required to come to the sanctuary (Exo 23:14-17; Deut 16:16).”⁵³

As high points in the sacrificial system, these festivals had special offerings to the Lord for at least a day (Lev 23:6, 12, 18-20, 25, 27, 36; Num 28-29) and in some cases for a week (Lev 23:8; Num 29:12-24). They commemorated the great themes of redemption and restoration, reminding humans (priestly and lay) of their need for on-going divine grace. They spoke unequivocally that “without some *regular* provision for forgiveness, we [humans] are without hope.”⁵⁴

Unique among the special festivals was *Yom Kippur*⁵⁵. Through the elaborate rituals (ritual complex) performed by the high priest on this solemn day, “an additional means of atonement was made available. On one day of each year, one day of each year, *Yom Kippur*, the priest enters the Holy of Holies and makes atonement for the sanctuary

⁵³Jon L. Dybdahl, ed. *Andrews Study Bible: Light. Depth. Truth.* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 156.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵This will be studied in detail in Chapter 4.

and all the sins of the priests and people.”⁵⁶ Boyce uses the word *additional* intentionally because the festival is “not *in place* of the other sacrifices and intervening regulations, but *in addition* to these, [it is] an extraordinary means of grace”⁵⁷ in the OT system (Lev 16:16, 33, 34). The Day of Atonement rituals removed the sins of the Israelites from the sanctuary and camp, providing a second stage of atonement that affirmed God’s gracious removal of their guilt and vindicated his justice in doing so.⁵⁸

Summary of the Theology of OT Sacrifices

Despite all the meticulous rituals and significance attached to the sacrificial system, the OT made it unequivocally clear that atonement is God’s prerogative, that only God can forgive and eliminate sin. This is made graciously accessible to everyone whether rich or poor. It is also made clear that God valued the worshiper’s sincerity and respect for him over and above the sacrifices offered. He reiterated this fact in the books of the prophets and specifically in the account of King Saul’s disobedience in 1 Samuel 15. In His rebuke to King Saul, God declared that he is not primarily interested in sacrificial ritual, but in the obedience of the offerer: “To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). His repeated appeals for “a broken and contrite spirit” (Ps 34:18) “change of heart” and “the rending of hearts” (Joel 2:12, 13), all buttress the need of heartfelt repentance.

In summary, the complex and varied sacrificial system of the OT established the

⁵⁶Richard N. Boyce, *Leviticus and Numbers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 55.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Harris, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:588, 589. See also Gane, *Cult and Character*, 262, 263.

graciousness of God, his holy presence, the abominable and heinous nature of sin, which alienates us from his presence, and finally the parameters of true worship (acknowledging the holiness of God and responding accordingly). Beyond that, the sacrifices underscored the sanctity and atoning significance of blood, representing life: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11). Since the OT sacrifices were types of the real sacrifice (Heb 10:1-12; 8:1-5), the blood sacrifices therefore typified the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, which occurred in New Testament times (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:25, 26, 37, 38; Luke 23:33; John 19:23).

Atonement in the New Testament

The NT refers to atonement as God’s saving work in and through Jesus. It is the very “act by which God and man are brought together in personal relationship.”⁵⁹ Having experienced the antitypical fulfillment of the sanctuary typology, the NT sees the total life of Christ Jesus—from birth to death, and beyond—as the embodiment of atonement.⁶⁰ He was born as the seed (Gal 4:4); Emmanuel, God with us (Matt 1:21); the Savior (Matt 1:23); the ransom (Mark 10:45) the sin bearing lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7; 3:14-18; Rev 13:8); the temple (John 2:19-21); the High Priest (Heb 8:1); the justifier (Rom 3:24, 25; Rom 5:1); the resurrection (John 11:25, 26; John 14:6; Rom 6:4-6); 1 Cor 15:5); the curse bearer and reconciler (2 cor 5:17-21); the better sacrifice (Heb 10:4; 1 Pet 1:18-24); the victor over death, hell, and the devil (Rev 1:18; 20:10). It is no

⁵⁹ *Tyndale Bible Dictionary: A Comprehensive Guide to the People, Places, and Important Words of the Bible* (2001), s.v. “atonement.”

⁶⁰ Joanna Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith: Revisiting the Place of Charles Wesley in Early Methodism*, (Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009), 44

wonder that the NT sees Jesus Christ as “*the atonement*” (Rom 5:11) because He is believed to be the *ultimate* atonement, the very antitype of the OT sacrifices (emphasis mine).

The NT makes it clear that all the sacrifices of Israel were symbolic and typical of Christ’s Sacrifice. . . . All sacrifices portrayed this essential truth. [Again the sacrifices were varied because] no one offering [or sacrifice], however, can typify Christ’s many-sided work which includes propitiation, atonement, communion, consecration, worship, and much more.”⁶¹

Having witnessed the multifaceted nature of atonement, especially through the phases of the mission of Christ, NT writers did not attempt to develop a systematic theory of atonement. Rather, they used concrete metaphors, suitable to the occasion and audience, to elucidate or emphasize the different aspects of Christ’s sacrifice and to facilitate the understanding of atonement as they engaged in cross-cultural mission. Poe states,

None of the apostolic writers espoused a theory of the atonement. Rather, they all shared a profound awareness of the multidimensional implications of the death of Jesus for sins. The different aspects of what that death meant would have spoken more powerfully in some situations than in others. The apostles addressed the meaning of Jesus’ death appropriately to various audiences with different issues relating to life and eternity.⁶²

Paul, for instance, used several of these metaphors. He used law court illustrations to present the “Deity as the Supreme advocate and judge who dispenses justice faithfully and in righteousness.”⁶³ . . . [He also employed] images of Christ which describe Him as

⁶¹ Harris, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:536.

⁶² Harry L. Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning: A Theology for Evangelism and Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 146.

⁶³William Wolf, “Atonement,” *ER*, 595.

the victor over sin, wrath, demons, and death”⁶⁴ (Rom 8:1, 34-37 cf. 1 Cor 15:25-28).

Remarkable in the NT is the inclusion of the supernatural world of sin in the scope of atonement. This is found in Paul’s assertion that the domain of influence of the “atoning death and resurrection of Christ [goes] beyond the merely human dimensions of salvation to include the world of spirits and of nature itself in its groaning and travail (Col 1:13-21; Rom 8:19-23).”⁶⁵ By the inclusion of the world of spirits, the NT puts the universality of atonement into perspective and reveals the widespread contagion of sin.

Theories of Atonement

Atonement, particularly the attempt to explain the torture and violent nature of the crucifixion of Christ, has over the years attracted many debates and discussions among theologians. Consequently, a wide variety of views have been proffered by theologians, each emphasizing an aspect or some aspects of the atonement.⁶⁶ Notable among the views are the ransom theory, the satisfaction theory, the moral influence, and the penal substitution. Each of these theories was an attempt to contextualize the understanding that the cross is the apogee of atonement.

Ransom

The ransom theory evolved gradually through people like Irenaeus, Gregory of

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid. “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness . . . to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col 1:13, 20).

⁶⁶Joanna Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith*, 44.

Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus as the early fathers tried to find an appropriate way to explain the ransom properties of the cross. They settled on terms of an exchange transaction where a price was paid to redeem someone from a captor. Here sin was seen as slavery demanding a ransom (a payment) to effect release. This theory raised the question: Was God or Satan of the recipient of the ransom? The inability to explain why God would require such a cruel death as payment for sin by humans or view Satan (a mere creature) as the creditor exacting such a payment from God, led to the satisfaction theory by Anselm.⁶⁷

Satisfaction

Anselm's attempt to "express the meaning of the cross in terms of the key concepts of the feudal system"⁶⁸ birthed the satisfaction theory of atonement. The theory implied that Christ's death satisfied or restored honor to God, whose reputation has been tarnished by the sin of humans.⁶⁹ When the feudal system declined, the theory did not seem clear. So another, the moral influence theory, was developed by Peter Abelard.

Moral Influence

The idea of moral influence was a means to avoid any kind of payment transaction in the violent death of Christ, and rather to see the cross as an example of the

⁶⁷Lawrence Oladini, "A Comparative Study of the Concept of Atonement in the Writings of John R. W. Stott and Ellen G. White" (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2011), 18-28.

⁶⁸Theodore W. Jennings Jr., *Transforming Atonement: A Political Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 27,

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 28.

invincibility of love that will defy any agony and die for others (John 15:13).⁷⁰ This was the motivation of Christians in the face of persecution and oppression.⁷¹

Penal Substitution

In substitutionary theory, Jesus is seen as the Substitute, who bore the curse and God's wrath, which was due humans (Gal 3:13).⁷² This substitution of Jesus for humans formed the foundation of the Protestant Reformation championed by Martin Luther.

Christus Victor

This theory, developed by Gustaf Aulén (1882-1977), “focuses on divine conflict and victory”⁷³ and describes how God through Jesus Christ triumphed over Satan and the malevolent spirits (his angels) liberating humanity from the bondage of sin and death. This concept of atonement have particular value for ministry among ATR adherents. Despite the demonstration of God's superiority over Satan and the malevolent spirits, this theory does not capture God's wrath and Jesus Christ's substitution and sacrifice⁷⁴ on behalf of humanity to avert it.

All of these theories underpin the fact that the atonement accomplished by Christ is not only multifaceted, but deals with mysterious processes that are beyond human logic and language. “No single term (or combination of terms for that matter) is capable of

⁷⁰Lawrence Oladini, “A Comparative Study of the Concept of Atonement,” 36-40.

⁷¹Jennings, Jr., *Transforming Atonement*, 222.

⁷²Lawrence Oladini, “A Comparative Study of the Concept of Atonement,” 40-52.

⁷³Andrew Sung Park, *Triune Atonement: Christ's Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole Creation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 11.

⁷⁴Robert D. Falconer, *Atonement Synthesis: Meaning and Significance for African Metaphysics* (Lexington, KY: 2014), 4.

wholly containing the meaning of the atoning work of Christ.”⁷⁵ Atonement is God-made, God-managed and God-executed. It is therefore God-explained.

Part 2: African Traditional Religion

This section focuses on African Traditional Religion (ATR) concept and practice of atonement. Since the understanding of atonement is tied to the worldview of a people, how ATR adherents perceive their world will be considered in relation to sin and the various elements of atonement.

ATR Socio-Cosmological Structure

The ATR cosmology is a three-tiered structure in constant dynamic interaction.

According to Geoffrey Kapenzi:

Most Africans . . . are monotheistic in that they believe in one High God whose role is that of Creator. He is a benevolent God, responsible for mankind and the establishment of the laws of nature and human customs. He also has the ability to keep his established sense of order operating in the universe by influencing the forces of nature. Under certain circumstance he will exercise that power on man’s behalf. Many African religions, however, are polytheistic in that pantheons of gods, spirits, ancestors or the divinities may stand between man and the ultimate God.⁷⁶

In this description, we see God (the Supreme Being and Creator of the universe) at the topmost position; the pantheon of gods and spirit powers (ancestors) who constitute the invisible powers (good and evil) in the middle; and the human being (limited and vulnerable) at the bottom. In the strictest sense this structure displays two worlds, the

⁷⁵John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986), 16.

⁷⁶Geoffrey Kapenzi, “Shona and Navaho: A Comparative Study of Beliefs and Practices,” *Missiology: An International Review* 2/4 (1974): 490.

world of spirits and the world of human beings.⁷⁷ Each of these worlds, according to Cyrill Okorochoa and Kingsley Larbi, is divided into two.

The African cosmos which portrays a delicate blend of the transcendence and immanence of the Creator God is divided into two inter-penetrating and inseparable, yet distinguishable, parts,⁷ namely, the world of spirits and the world of humans. This broad two-fold classification is further divided into four additional parts namely, the Supreme God, divinities/gods, ancestors, and charms or amulets.⁷⁸

The Supreme Being

African ontology presents God as the Supreme Being who is at the top of their socio-cosmological structure.⁷⁹ Attributed to him are all the superlatives of intelligence, wisdom, strength, power, wealth, and honor. He is therefore variously called by the Akans *Totrobonsu*, “the giver of rain,” *Twereduampon* “the dependable mighty tree on which you can lean and never fall,” *Onyankopon*, “the loftiest one denoting his supremacy”, *Onyame* or *Nyame*, “the ultimate satisfier,” or *Odomankoma*, the only one with infinite resources including his graciousness.⁸⁰ The awareness of God is so deep and profound in the culture that there is no need to prove his existence to even the

⁷⁷Tokunboh Adeyemo, “Unapproachable God: The High God of African Traditional Religion,” in *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* ed. Aida Besangon Spencer and William David Spencer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 128.

⁷⁸Emmanuel Takyi, “Friendship with God in the African Context: Implication for Mission,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 9 no. 2, (2013): 71; See also Cyrill C. Okorochoa, *The Meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa*, (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1987); and E. Kingsley Larbi, “The Nature of Continuity and Discontinuity of Ghanaian Pentecostal Concept of Salvation in African Cosmology,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 1 (2002): 99-119.

⁷⁹Robert Falconer, *Atonement Synthesis*, 163.

⁸⁰E. Kingsley Larbi, “The Nature of Continuity and Discontinuity of Ghanaian Pentecostal Concept of Salvation in African Cosmology,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 1 (2002): 99-119.

African child.⁸¹ Ewe (Ghanaian) names like *Mawu-li* (God-exists) *Mawu-nyo* (God-is sweet) and others prefixed or suffixed by *Mawu* give him an important place in ATR naming ceremonies. He is seen as the Father. Therefore, Ghanaian ethnic groups like the Akan, Gas, and the Effutu call him respectively, *Egya*, *Attaa*, and *Ate* meaning Father of the universe.

From the above attributes, the Supreme Being, though transcendent, is not seen as someone absent from the mundane life of the African. He is respectfully regarded as the *Ototorobonsu*, *t_o nsu b_o awia* “the owner and provider of rain and sunshine” and therefore the sustainer of life and all activities that go with it. This understanding presents the African’s cosmos as a delicate blend of the transcendence and immanence of the Creator God. The African is therefore not left alone to face life and its troubles.

It is interesting to note that the ATR concept of sin is tied to myths about God’s transcendence. Findings from mythological studies by Robert Falconer revealed Africans believe that God was initially very close to humankind. He withdrew because of the disobedience, disturbance, and wickedness of humanity.⁸² This withdrawal accordingly caused a disruption of the primal harmony. Therefore sacrifices were offered to help restore the lost relationship with God and the spirits.⁸³

⁸¹Robert Falconer, 164; See also Y. Turaki, *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview* (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers Limited, 2006).

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³David R. Shenk, *Global Gods: Exploring the Role of Religions in Modern Societies* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999), 75. Shenk in his book rightly associates the origin of sacrifices to human sin (breaking of relationship with the transcendent) and he buttresses his argument with the observation that “hundreds of myths across the continent also picture a disruption in the primal harmony. Something went wrong in the distant past. Consequently the close relationship between God and humanity is now distorted. This distortion affects every area of human life . . . [particularly] relationships of the community to nature.”

World of Spirits

Beside the Supreme God, “the traditional African worldview emphasizes invisible powers [both good and evil] operating in ordinary, everyday living.”⁸⁴ They believe, like the Scriptures affirm (Eph 6:12; Col 1:13, 14), that “our world is not a closed system, but rather a battlefield”⁸⁵ where all the beings are in a survival struggle. No wonder the African draws no line between the physical world and the spirit world but rather believes in a dynamism, “wherein all things—whether animals, people, or nature—exercise a continuous, mystical influence over all other things.”⁸⁶ We have “gods, ghosts and other spirits [intervening] in the world and in man’s affairs bringing benevolent and malevolent tidings.”⁸⁷

The ghosts here-mentioned, though in the world of spirit, are different from the spirits. They are believed to be composed of dead respected ancestors (termed “the living dead”⁸⁸) who are constantly monitoring the living to ensure that tradition is not breached. ATRs believe that “when these ancestors are displeased, they show their displeasure by causing diseases or calamities”⁸⁹ which must be pacified or assuaged by various ritual sacrifices. Generally, the worship or veneration of beings in this realm (whether through

⁸⁴Ruby Mikuencak “Science and Magic Collide in African Medicine,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 23/4 (1987):358.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 362.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷Geoffrey Kapenzi, 490; See also Clyde Kluckjohn and D. Leighton, *The Navaho* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), 139.

⁸⁸J. S. Mbiti, (Oxford, UK: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1989), 82.

⁸⁹Ruby Mikuencak “Science and Magic, 358; See also Jack Partain, “Christians and Their Ancestors: A Dilemma of African Theology,” accessed June 5, 2007, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1078>.

heavenly or earthly bodies as well as creatures), and expressed in various sacrificial rituals, are done to be *at one* with them for protection and prosperity. All these are direct outgrowths of this cosmology.

World of Humans with Charms and Amulets

The dimension of the world humans includes the realm of charms and amulets. This world is fluid because it is made up of humans (including shamans, priests, and witches and wizards with flesh and blood) who use charms and amulets to manipulate the spirit world either for good or bad. In ATR, no one lives without a kind of spiritual protection. Because of the awareness of their vulnerability in the battlefield of spirits,⁹⁰ everyone is bound under a spiritual protector. Although witches and wizards who possess flesh and blood have spiritual powers, they are not consulted as specialists, rather they are seen as dispensers of evil and spiritual harms. Those who facilitate or mediate protection are the ritual specialists who have been chosen or have attained a high spiritual development giving them ability to communicate with or manipulate the spirit world. Vinson H. Sutlive Jr. views the ritual specialists as shamans, mediums, and priests.

Concerning their roles he states:

Shamans [*Akomfo*] are practitioners of what were the earliest religious and healing traditions. . . . Mediums are persons who are believed to have a gift to mediate between the seen and unseen worlds. [While the priests (*Asofo*)] in major religions . . . are usually full-time specialists who have undertaken education and training necessary for the performance of their activities [as mediators between individuals/community and the world of spirits].⁹¹

⁹⁰Mikuencak, "Science and Magic," 362.

⁹¹Vinson H. Sutlive Jr., "Ritual Specialists," *Encyclopedia of Religious Rites, Rituals, and Festivals*, ed. Frank A. Salamone (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 366-369.

Concept of Atonement

African Traditional Religionists' (ATR) concept of atonement is closely linked with their socio-cosmological structure, which is overtly spiritual in function. In this mysterious structure saturated with the invisible and the supernatural, human beings see their vulnerability and limitation and are constantly in search of an "outside power" to insulate them from "inimical agencies" and to ensure their sustainable progress in life. Therefore, they are constantly caught in a web of sacrifices and rituals of atonement to attach to the most powerful supernatural/invisible being. They believe that "through prayer, sacrifices and other emotional pleadings, man can influence the spirits by his appeal."⁹²

Sacrifices: *At-One-Ment* with the Spirit World

In the African context, the issue of atonement is expressed in the ritual sacrifices performed by people due to a crucial need of the individual as well as the community in the survival struggle to find a place in the cosmic world.⁹³ In fact, atonement is tied to the African's ontology and identity so far as spirituality is concerned. Explaining this complexity Eric O. Ayisi comments: At the core of the religious consciousness there are . . . elements of genuine experience giving true insight into the real. The experience, however, is never merely intellectual, but is permanently rooted in emotional needs. Man

⁹²Geoffrey Kapenzi, "Shona and Navaho: A Comparative Study of Beliefs and Practices," *Missiology: An International Review* 2/4 (1974): 490.

⁹³Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 14.

requires to be *reconciled to his place in nature*⁹⁴ [emphasis supplied]. Thomas A. Idinopolos substantiates the African concern for atonement with the revelation that ATR has “the vision of the transcendence and the will to live in relation to it.”⁹⁵

As intimated above, the atonement concept undergirds most of the communal festivals of the African.⁹⁶ It is so significant that without it, festivals are incomplete. Festival atonement rituals consequently carry deep religious meaning and significance. This is because they constitute sacred reconciliatory acts employed to show communal reverence to deities and ancestors. Thus, like the *Aboakyer* of the Effutus of Winneba, which revolve around rituals of sacrifice, sacrifices become very significant.

Sacrifices

Sacrifices fundamentally constitute sacred reconciliatory rituals, facilitated by priests through the lesser deities [as mediators] via sacrifice to achieve the “at-one-ment” which is the ultimate desire of the African. Interestingly, in the African cosmology, although the Supreme God is mentioned as the highest above everything, he has no temple dedicated to him. No sacrifices are made exclusively to him. This difference notwithstanding, the sacrificial process in most ATR festivals projects the idea of mediation by means of a substitute which is lucid in the OT typology.

ATR atonement is facilitated through sacrifices (blood or bloodless) mediated by

⁹⁴Eric O. Ayisi, *An Introduction to African Culture* (Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers, 1979), 76.

⁹⁵Thomas A. Idinopolos, “What Is Religion?” Accessed July 23, 2007, <http://www.crosscurrents.org/whatisreligion.htm>.

⁹⁶Isaac Kwesi Prah, *A Complete Textbook on Social Studies for Senior Secondary Schools* (Takoradi, Ghana: Saint Francis Press, 2004), 142.

intermediaries like the priests [*Asɔɔ* (Effutu)] or *shamans* [*Akomfo* (Akan, Ghana), *babalola* (Yoruba, Nigeria)]. These are “persons [believed to be] in touch with God or his spiritual representatives, who meditate between God and man, in order that communication be established.”⁹⁷

Types of Sacrifices

Various types of sacrifices exist ranging from thanksgiving to sin offering. These include: (1) thank offerings to hold communion with the spiritual world; (2) gift offerings to maintain cosmic order; (3) communication offerings, which are mostly personal, for spirit-consultation for answers and solution; (4) propitiation offerings in the form of substitution to appease offended spirits.⁹⁸

Sacrifices, whether blood or non-blood, are graduated depending on the situation (crisis or sickness, taboo-breaking or irreverence), purpose/expectation, and event or person. For example, “the presence of the ‘living dead’ is often acknowledged, particularly at meals or when drinking. Small portions are set aside or spilled on their behalf. [However] in times of extremity, expensive gifts may be offered to gain relief or enlist help.”⁹⁹

However, when a taboo is broken, for instance in the Akan tradition (incest, and irreverence or disrespect for parents, elders, rulers, or ancestors), a blood sacrifice, preferably an unblemished sheep, is the requirement. This is because such offense or

⁹⁷Geoffrey Kapenzi, “Shona and Navaho: A Comparative Study of Beliefs and Practices,” 491.

⁹⁸J. O. Awolalu, *Yoruba Belief & Sacrificial Rites* (New York, NY: Athelia Henrietta Press, 1996), 143.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 143.

mess is likened to the spilling of the putrefied fluid of a decaying dead body (*woabo musu*) and therefore considered to be an abomination to the society. In some extreme cases the culprit of the offence is cut off to appease the gods or ancestors (*ode ne ti to*).

During festivities or communal celebrations, special sacrifices are made. Elements of sacrifices on these occasions are most often decided upon by the gods. The Effutu god, for example, requires an annual sacrifice of a live deer caught with bare hands for ritual purgation, purification of the state, veneration of ancestral spirits, and the pacification of the gods including the Supreme God.¹⁰⁰

Intermediaries or Mediators

The ATR belief that God is too holy and too transcendent to be approached¹⁰¹ directly or easily, makes the role of intermediaries not only essential but crucial. These intermediaries, mostly spirit beings like ancestors, are invisible to mere humans because God is a spirit. Specially chosen, dedicated priests of the lesser gods, by virtue of their chosenness or spiritual development, mediate as sub-intermediaries between the spirits and the humans.¹⁰² The priests, like the OT priests, are custodians of sacred spaces (temples, shrines, etc.), the directors of ritual sacrifices, and the spiritual time keepers (prompting and announcing sacred times such as taboo days and festivals).

¹⁰⁰Ibid. See also Stephen J. Salm, and Toyin Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana*. (London, UK: Greenwood Press, 2002), 152.

¹⁰¹Peter E. Adotey Addo, "African Traditional Religion," accessed June 4, 2007, <http://www.authorsden.com/visit/viewarticle.asp?AuthorID=1217&id=3510>.

¹⁰²Ibid.

Ancestors as mediators. Deceased ancestors are by default considered excellent intermediaries between the Supreme God and the people. This is because they are part of the community and are also spirits—the living dead—a nature that facilitates their dual role. Again, since ancestor-canonization is dependent upon usefulness and dedication to the family or community, these ancestor-intermediaries fall within the bracket of the most respected members of the family. Subsequently, they are trusted to continue their good work in this new role.¹⁰³ Horst Balz describes their dual role:

The ancestors are in general *intermediaries* between the divine and the human, transmitting God's gift to the living and their guardian angels, without themselves being creators or absolute lords of the world. Their tribal limitation is an aspect of their humanity; only God is universal¹⁰⁴

Their role in securing “at-one-ment” is made effective by the trust the living invest in them because the living know that “to be cut off from relationships with one’s ancestors is to cease to be a whole person.”¹⁰⁵ This gives the ancestors the power to “sanction society’s customs, norms and ethics . . . without [which] Africans are left without moral guidelines or motivation, and society is powerless to enforce ethics.”¹⁰⁶

From this background, one comes to understand why the Effutu call ancestors *ateane* “reverend fathers” and why they sacrifice so much to continue with the traditions and customs (including the rituals of the *Aboakyer* festival) which they have left behind.

¹⁰³Horst Balz, “Ancestor Worship II (in Africa),” *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, eds. Karl Muller, Theo Sundermeier, Steven B. Bevans, and Richard H. Bliese (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 21.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶Jack Partain, “Christians and Their Ancestors: A Dilemma of African Theology,” accessed June 5, 2007, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1078>.

Human intermediaries. Ritual specialists are important figures in the ATR because their presence and function at the shrine or during ritual ceremonies is very significant. They have the specialization to intercede for humans through appropriate communication with the spirit world. Without them worship virtually comes to a halt and communication with the supernatural ceases.¹⁰⁷ “[These] traditional priests are regarded as specialized practitioners through whom the spirits of the gods may grant directions. . . . in the arts of medicine, divination, and other related disciplines. These are consulted on a more regular basis by the public.”¹⁰⁸ They are in charge of festivities and communal spiritual cleansing in the event of disasters or calamities.

Purpose of ATR Sacrifices

“Sacrifice usually brings Deity/deity and worshippers together in an intimate fashion.”¹⁰⁹ Sacrifices of ATR are offered as a means to effect reconciliation between the human wrongdoer and the offended being, human or transcendent recipients.¹¹⁰ In this vein, sacrifices are made to decry sin and uphold purity, veneration, and reverence. According to Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou “sin is fundamentally a break in the covenant relationship with God, both personal and corporate. The solution to sin is sacrifice.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷Emmanuel Takyi “Presenting the Adventist Message in a Winsome Way to Pentecostal Students at Valley View University in Ghana” (Doctoral thesis, Andrews University, 2010), 74.

¹⁰⁸“Religion in Ghana: Christianity and Islam,” accessed July 30, 2007, [http://atheism.about.com/library/world/AJ/bl_Ghana Traditional.htm](http://atheism.about.com/library/world/AJ/bl_Ghana%20Traditional.htm).

¹⁰⁹Veli-Matti Krkkinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 342. See also Colin E. Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (London, UK: T & T Clark, 1988), 143.

¹¹⁰Robert D. Falconer, *Atonement Synthesis*, 190.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 219.

Sacrifices are therefore the media by which reconciliation is achieved and hence the atonement process.

ATR adherents understand that the ritual of sacrifice originated with rebellion and apostasy of humans against the Creator who was immanent.¹¹² Since the time of rebellion, which incidentally pushed him far into the inaccessible abode in the sky, humans have had to appease him with sacrifices of his choice through intermediaries. So in ATR “most people perform sacrifices to change the mind of the deity or to placate a deity’s anger.”¹¹³ This conveys the intermediary or atoning intention of ATR sacrifices which in turn suggests the idea of substitution: the deer substituting for the royal human victim in the *Aboakyer* Festival of the Effutu.

Second, ATR adherents constantly seek supernatural powers and meticulously perform ritual sacrifices because of the nagging fear of malevolent spirits and forces. The reason, from Geoffrey Kapenzi’s observation is that, “their concept of religion includes all areas of life which are beyond rational understanding, for example, the supernatural.”¹¹⁴ Their belief is in a power that pervades the universe, and their chief aim is to possess this power in order to have long life and happiness and to overcome inimical agencies. This craving for alliance with a greater power outside man underpins humans’ acknowledgment of their helplessness and lack of confidence in themselves. Another fact about rituals is that they are used to express hidden meaning. According to the

¹¹²Emefie Ekenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions* (Onitsa, Nigeria: IMICO Publishers, 1980), 54.

¹¹³Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou, *Folk Religion*, 223.

¹¹⁴Kapenzi, “Shona and Navaho: A Comparative Study of Beliefs and Practices,” 489; See also Paul Bohanan, *Africa and Africans* (New York, NY: Natural History Press, 1964), 222.

observation of Earle H. Waugh, the expression of meaning with rituals is not for a short period, rather, “throughout life, [they] are used to express meaning.”¹¹⁵ Jacob Olupona states:

[Rituals are] therefore the most important entry points to understanding the religious life of African communities. [The reason is that] rituals are more visible than mythic narratives [to the religious observer], but rituals often relate to myths by conveying and reinforcing the meanings and values that communities hold sacred. Rituals can have an extremely broad meaning that refers to many aspects of human life.”¹¹⁶

Summary

The ATR concept of atonement is similar to that of the OT. It sees atonement as a means to restore the disruption of the cosmic equilibrium caused by sin through appropriate sacrifices mediated by ritual specialists. This understanding of atonement is also closely tied to cosmology, which has the Supreme Creator God at the top, followed by spirit beings, and lastly humans. Africans are also conscious of the fact that humans should appease God, whom they pushed away because of the disturbance. However, because God is considered too holy to be approached directly, they depend on the mediation of the spirits who ultimately become recipients of their offerings and their worship. This is evinced in the many shrines and worship places for the gods and the absence of a sacred place for the Supreme Being. This situation has kept God outside their definition of sin. Sin has become what disrupts social equilibrium or brings curses, and blocks prosperity.

¹¹⁵Earle H. Waugh, “Introduction: Ritual,” *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices*, xiv.

¹¹⁶Jacob Olupona, “African Traditional Religion: Rituals,” *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices*, ed. Thomas Riggs (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006), 1:17.

ATR sacrifices are graduated depending on the purpose and gravity of need or offence. Unlike the OT sacrifices, which are totally gracious, the effectiveness of ATR sacrifices is tied to value and quantity of the offering as well as the appropriate mediation of a powerful ritual specialist. Grace is therefore earned rather than imparted as a gift.

Having presented the ATR concept of atonement, which puts the Effutu worldview concerning atonement into perspective, the next chapter will discuss the context of the Effutu with regard to their history, society, political structure, culture, and religion.

CHAPTER 3

ORIGINS, ECONOMY, SOCIO-CULTURAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS OF THE EFFUTU

Introduction

This chapter deals with the origin and current context of the *Aboakyer* Festival of the Effutu tribe of Winneba. It begins with the origin and identity of the Effutu of Winneba, describes their economy and their socio-cultural life, and ends with a description of their political and religious contexts.

Origins of the Effutu

The Effutu are natives of Winneba (Simpa), a town in the coastal south of Ghana.¹ They call themselves *Simpawo* or *Simpa abe* (the local dialect meaning “people of Simpa”) derived from *Osimpam*² believed to be the “the appellation of the first priest-king and founder of the town King Bondzie-Abe I. [According to Anthony

¹Salm and Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana*, 5.

²The term *Osimpam* has been interpreted in different ways. Some believe it describes the cause for seeking shelter. These base their argument on the Effutu expression *owi nsimpam* meaning “the sun was scorchingly hot” forcing the scouts, who were searching for sustainable source of water, to seek shelter under a mighty tree at Penkye—the place where the first permanent mud house of Winneba was built. So whether it was an appellation of the king or a weather condition, the term relates to building. Focus Group 1, Key Custodians of the *Aboakyer* Festival of Winneba, Ghana, interview by author, May 6, 2014.

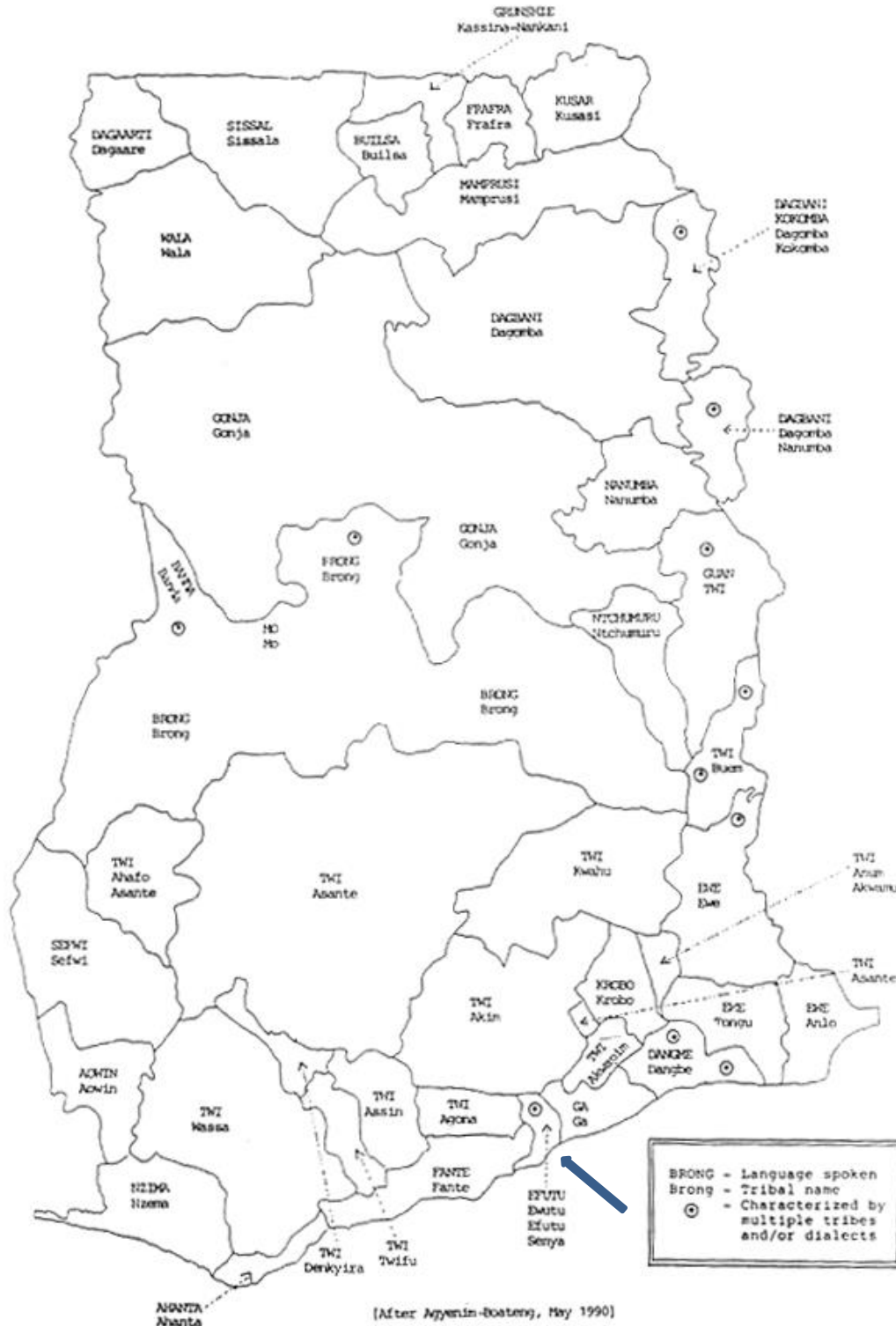


Figure 1: Map of Ghana Showing the various ethnic groups. Effutu location is shown by arrow.
 Source: Accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/field/003/ac107e/ac107e00.htm>.

Ephrim-Donkor] the appellation *osimpam* denotes to build, hence King Bondzie-Abe I was a builder.”³

Together with the people of Senya Beraku and Ewutu Beraku (respectively 8 and 20 miles east of Winneba), the Effutu of Winneba, . . . form the southernmost congeries of the great Guan ethnic group (see Figure 1) who stretch from the Gonja country in the north of Ghana and reach through a broken line of settlements to southern Ghana.⁴

The Guan

The Guan are believed, by most scholars, to be the first to migrate southward along the Volta River into the present day Ghana from the Mossi region of Burkina Faso after the demise of the Old Ghana Empire around AD 1000.⁵ Although it is debated, historians believe that the Gonja⁶ land in Northern Ghana is not only the oldest Guan settlement but also the nursery ground from where they continued southward to avert the threat of the Mossi-Dagomgba in the early 14th century (ca. AD 1333). This is reasoned from the patrilineal inheritance structure as well as the linguistic characteristics the Guan and Gonja share.⁷

Today Guans are found as small organized independent city states (tribal kinship

³Anthony Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King: Patrilineal and Matrilineal Struggle among the Effutu of Ghana* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2000), 5.

⁴George P. Hagan, *Divided We Stand: A Study of Social Change among the Effutu of Coastal Ghana* (Norway: Department of History, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000), 1.

⁵Salm and Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana*, 5.

⁶The Gonja language is a Kwa language spoken by an estimated 300,000 people, almost all of whom are of the Gonja ethnic group of northern Ghana. Gonja is related to Guan languages in the south of Ghana, it is spoken by about a third of the population in the northern region. “History of the Gonja,” accessed November 23, 2014, <http://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/03/gonja-people-ghanas-ancient-warrior.html>.

⁷“Short History of the Guans,” accessed November 23, 2014, <http://okere.ghanamps.gov.gh/about/index.php?id=35>.

groups or counties) extending over a wide area along the Volta River. This widespread nature of the Guan settlements is explained in two ways; first the migration trends and second, the powerful influence of subsequent ethnic groups.

Migration Trends

According to the author, whose historical record seems to tie together the various complex movements of the Southern Guan, the Guan's southwards migration possibly occurred in three groups via different routes. He writes:

The first group penetrated in the Afram plains where they built a powerful state under the Ataaras. [When] the last of the Ataaras, . . . king Ataaras Ofinam VIII, was ousted by the Akan who migrated from Adansi in a seven-year war (1690-1697) . . . the inhabitants fled to Atwode Akpafu, Lolobi, Logba, Kpado, Abanu, and Okere as well as Nchumuru.

The second group moved towards the Lower Volta basin, among them were the Senya, Larteh, the Kpeshie aborigins of the Ga country side, the Obutu (Awutu) whose leader [was] by the name Awietey.

The third group moved to Sefwi, Nzema, Aowin, Wasa, Ahanta, Shama, Asebu, Aguafo and the Etsii settlements.⁸

The migration story of the Effutu of Winneba which describes an eastward movement seems to logically put them in the third group.

Influence of Subsequent Groups

The other reason for the scattered, isolated, settlement of the Guan is traced to the arrival of the Akan, Ewe, and the Ga-Adangbe ethnic groups. It is believed that with their arrival the Guan were absorbed into the various ethnic groups leaving them as scattered smaller Guan-speaking enclaves along the Volta Lake, in Akuapem, and within the

⁸“Short History of the Guans,” accessed November 23, 2014, <http://okere.ghanamps>.

coastal plains between Cape Coast and Accra. It is within this last area that Winneba is located (see Figure 1). Remarkably most of them have “been subjected to Akan imperialism and have lost almost all the cultural traits which identified them as Guan.”⁹ Osofo Acquaaah in his book, *Oguaa Aban*, confirms this phenomenon. Referencing him Hagan writes:

Of all the [Guan] settlements mentioned by Osofo Acquaaah—Effutu, Eguafu, Ngydeam, Simpa and Beraku and others, only Winneba, Senya, and Beraku remain today as distinctly Guan settlements. The spread of Akan language and custom has wiped out Effutu language and custom in all but these three settlements, which have retained, besides Effutu [language], certain cultural forms which are distinct from the Akan.¹⁰

Effutu Resilience Dented but Not Eclipsed

From the above discussion, the Effutu of Winneba are considered to be one of the conservative Guan groups in the southern coast of Ghana. But unfortunately, despite their resilience, “the Akan influence is [still] evident in the [ir] systems of kinship, marriage, and politics.”¹¹ Their geography as well as their language have also been affected.

Geographically, the Effutu, surrounded by the Akan (the largest ethnic group in Ghana), have been so influenced that contemporary Winneba is linguistically divided into two parts; “the northern ‘modern’ half and the southern ancient half.”¹² The ancient section is composed of coastal suburbs of *Penkye* and *Ayipe* and the north, which has

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 15.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 13. Mention is made of this division as far as the early 1900s.

been completely Akanicized as “Abasaraba.” At the moment it is only in the ancient south, which has memorabilia of the Effutu original settlement structures, where the Awutu language has thrived.¹³ But even then its Guan-purity has not gone unscathed. It has been dented with the adoption of some Akan words making it *Effutu*, meaning “mix mix,” in the Akan language.¹⁴ Adding to this woe is the absence of Effutu textbooks forcing the children to read and write *Fante* (Akan)¹⁵ in school resulting in the inability of the elite to speak Effutu fluently or not at all. To address this language issue locally as well as nationally and also to foster peaceful coexistence, smooth trading, the fulfillment of political duty as the municipal headquarters serving both Effutu and Akan communities, and for communication of their culture, Winneba is bilingual. It is no surprise then that on grand occasions like the *Aboakyer*, *Mfantse* or *Fante* (an Akan dialect) is used as the means of communication.¹⁶ The unique thing is that though *Fante* is used for the general speeches and even in songs during the *Aboakyer*, when it comes to pouring libations, discussions, and giving instructions, Effutu is used.¹⁷

The Cultural Uniqueness

Although the Effutu language is challenged, one thing that stands out is the

¹³Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 13.

¹⁴Kwesi Ewusi Brown, “Social Conflicts in Contemporary Effutu Festivals” (master’s thesis, Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, 2005), 1.

¹⁵Akan has established itself as the second language of the Guans.

¹⁶Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 13.

¹⁷Nana Ama Agyeman, “Language Use in Winneba: Some Preliminary Observations,” *SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 16 (2013): 259, accessed January 11, 2015, https://www.soas.ac.uk/linguistics/research/working_papers/volume-16/file88044.pdf.

resilience of the Effutu culture. Despite the strong penetrating Akan influence, the Effutu culture, particularly the *Aboakyer* festival and the *Pramma* patrilineal system, has not been eclipsed. As will be discussed in detail later, these elements have mitigated the power of the Akan influence.

***Aboakyer* Festival**

The *Aboakyer* festival, for example, is a distinct cultural practice that uniquely identifies the Effutu. It is so unique among all festivals in Ghana that it has assumed national interest. Commenting on this, Ephrim-Donkor writes: “What conspicuously sets the Awutu-abe [Effutu of of Simpa] apart from their Fante [Akan] neighbors is [this unique festival specifically] the way the Awutu-abe hunt for a live deer during the *Nyantor* [*Aboakyer*] Festival, which commemorates the founding of Simpa.”¹⁸

The *Pramma*

Another fact that underpins the Effutu uniqueness is their social structure called the *Pramma* system (duolocality). This strongly rooted system of patrilineity is an essential factor mitigating the influence of the attractive and popular Akan matrilineal socio-political system.

Effutu Economy

The economic life of the Effutu is discussed in this section. It looks at the resources that dictate the occupation of the Effutu and also the role the tertiary

¹⁸ Nana Ama Agyeman, “Language Use in Winneba,” accessed January 11, 2015, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/linguistics/research/workingpapers/volume-16/file88044.pdf>.

institutions in the township play in the sustenance of the socio-economic life of the Effutu who celebrate the *Aboakyer* festival.

Economic Life

The economic life of the Effutu is dictated and supported by their geography and their educational facilities. The first gives them their natural occupation and the second their derivative economic support and stability.

As coastal people, the Effutu are fishers by trade.¹⁹ The men bring in the catch and the women preserve and market the fish. Apart from the sea, which forms their southern border, they have two historic bodies of water that are viewed as local deities—Monyi Lagoon and Ayensu River to the west and east respectively—which sustain their fishing occupation. The Monyi Lagoon, well stocked with fish, is open for fishing when the sea fishing is over, while Ayensu River affords them fishing in all season.²⁰

The Effutu also do some maize and sorghum farming because of their location within the Savannah zone of Ghana. Apart from supporting farming, this “vegetation [which] is mainly grass, low shrubs and isolated thickets of bush . . . [is well] stocked with small game such as hare, buck, antelopes, grass-cutters, and deer [which is used for sacred ritual during the Aboakyer festival].”²¹ Until recent times Winneba was an economically vibrant agronomic community.²² Unfortunately, due to soil depletion and population increase Winneba today has lost this status.

¹⁹“Winneba_Background,” accessed October 12, 2011, <http://wikieducator.org/WODIV/2009>.

²⁰Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 2.

²¹*Ibid.*, 1.

As a historic port in Ghana, Winneba enjoyed another boost to its vibrant economy. There were many warehouses which provided all kinds of jobs for people. Even during the lean fishing season, especially during the Christmas season, fishing boats were used to cart cocoa brought from the hinterland to the ships which had to anchor far from the rocky beach and also wares that had to be brought ashore from these ships. In this way, the Effutu had year-round gainful economic activity.²³

The town almost fell apart when the port was closed in 1960. All the activities that balanced the economic equation disappeared from the town as warehouses closed and “the influx of immigrants tapered off.”²⁴ Even the sons and daughters of the Effutu soil began to leave in search for greener pastures outside Winneba. But for the rise and development of the tertiary educational institutions, the glory of the town would have been history.

This advent of educational institutions with its concomitant academic needs has brought about a paradigm shift in the economic life of Winneba. Besides the explosion in population, the schools have brought petty trading, particularly food preparation to feed more mouths, and also building construction to solve the ever increasing accommodation needs.

²²Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 13.

²³Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 3-5.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 4, 5.

Educational Institutions

Winneba, with a current population of over 70,000,²⁵ has grown to become a national tertiary academic center churning out scholars and intellectuals whose services have benefitted not only Winneba, but the entire nation.²⁶ This plan, which has not only sustained the township but popularized it continentally, began in 1961 when Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, established the Winneba Ideological Institute.²⁷ The Center was intended to be the nurturing ground to train leaders for the country and the whole of Africa. When he was overthrown in 1966 the center was converted into the only Advanced Teacher Training College in Ghana.

Until recently, anyone who wanted a tertiary degree in music, fine arts or physical education had to go to Winneba because the town had the only Music Academy (National Academy of Music) and the only tertiary institution for Sports and Fine Arts (Specialists Training College) in the country. Currently, these three institutions have been merged into a university (University of Education, Winneba) with campuses in other parts of the country. With this tertiary institution fed by a host of first and second cycle institutions, Winneba can boast of facilities for all levels of education—basic, secondary, and tertiary.²⁸

Interestingly, in all these institutions the symbol that features greatly in the

²⁵Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 13.

²⁶Kwesi Ewusi, *Social Conflicts*, 1.

²⁷“Kwame Nkrumah’s Ideological Institute—Winneba Ghana,” accessed November 5, 2011, <http://www.kokorokoo.com/Ideology.aspx>. The article records the fact that “the Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Economics and Political Science, commonly known as the Winneba Ideological Institute, was decreed into existence by Nkrumah, who laid the foundation stone on 18 February 1961.”

²⁸Kwesi Ewusi, *Social Conflicts*, 1.

background of their emblems/crests or even decorative sculpture or art is the deer—the ritual animal of *Aboakyer* and the Effutu state.

The Socio-Cultural Life of the Effutu

The Effutu socio-cultural life is religiously dictated by a cycle of rituals that culminates in the “major ritual focus”²⁹—the annual *Aboakyer* festival. According to Hagan both their “culture and societal values rest on [this] cycle of communal rituals which comes to a climax in an annual Deer Hunt festival celebrated in honour of their national god *Penkye Otu*.”³⁰

Ritual Cycle

About twelve communal ritual festivals including the *Aboakyer* festival dot the annual calendar of the Effutu.³¹ These are in addition to other smaller agnatic (patrilineal) household rituals. All these are observed in their season with their rituals culminating in the grand celebration of the *Aboakyer*. As the *Aboakyer* is the focus of this work, these rituals will be briefly mentioned as viewed by Hagan.³²

Nsraho “anointing”: This anointing of the National Deity is done on a Sunday, two weeks before the the *Aboakyer*.

Nde (“Nubility or Puberty Rites”): These rites are performed and completed two weeks before the *Aboakyer*.

²⁹Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 173.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 177.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

Aboakyer festival: This is the main annual “Deer Hunt Festival” of the *Awutu-abe* celebrated on the first week-end of May.

Huro (“Hooting”): As the name implies this rite is performed throughout the town to “drive away the unwelcome spirits that attend the [*Aboakyer* festival]”³³

Kweimu Wukuda: With white marked foreheads the *Kweimu* Agnatic group celebrates this festival on the first Wednesday of July.

Turei 1: This is a 3-gun salute in honor of and performed at selected traditional houses by the members of the Hante Hante suburb of Winneba on the Saturday after the *Kweimu Wukuda*.

Turei 2: The 3-gun salute is this time performed first by the *Kweimu* people at the houses of the Chiefs on the Saturday following the first and second by the *Penkye* people the next Saturday.

Tuafo Fida: This is “the Friday of the *Tuawo*” a time for purification of the gods of the *Tuawo*—*Katawere* and *Ekue*. This event also opens the door for the ritual cleansing of individual household gods in anticipation of *Akomase*.

Cleansing of Penkye Otu: This ritual is for the cleansing of the National Deity. Libation is also offered for those who died during the year.

Akomase: This festival is celebrated for a whole week beginning on the Sunday after the cleansing of *Penkye Otu* as a time of mourning for the dead.

Petu Afahye: It is when the *Dentsiwo* (No. 2) cleanse their god and is the ritual that closes the annual cycle of rituals.

³³Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 177.

Rites of Akrama: These rites signal the death of the old year and the birth of a new one.

The mention of the above rites and their association with the agnatic *Pramma* like *Akrama* or *Hante Hante* point out the fact that the Awutu-abe's religiously patterned life is tied to their duolocality social structure. This duolocality is "a social practice emanating from a distinct cultural, religious, and political system centered around an agnatic institution called the *Pramma*, which, in praxis, is unique."³⁴

The *Pramma* System

The *Pramma* system is a social structure where the unitary family is "divided on gender lines between male and female households"³⁵ so that married couples stay separately in their respective gender households. "The male agnatic household [which determines an individual's family lineage and identity] is called the *Prama* [or *Sae yae* (father's house)] . . . and the female uterine houses are called *igyiasse* (the hearth [or kitchen])."³⁶ In this system, it is normally the wife who visits the husband at night and leaves before daylight. All her chores and business activities are done during the day time at the *igyiasse*. Though separate, the *igyiasse* is considered an extension of the *Pramma*. Here the females stay with their parents till death but males join their fathers in the *Pramma* as they come of age.³⁷ But irrespective where one stays, succession is patrilineally determined.

³⁴Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 51.

³⁵Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 49.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

Under the *Pramma* system (including the female household), succession is from father to brother, father to son, grandson, etc.; and from mother to sister, daughter to granddaughter, and finally from sibling to sibling, and not from uncle to nephew as practiced by the Akan. Where a position is military (Asafo), succession goes to a father's eldest or ablest child, male or female.³⁸

Demography

The *Pramma*, where you find most male offspring, is a big house with enough rooms for all the agnatic members, and yet only male descendants end up permanently residing in the house.³⁹ This male cluster helps in the quick mobilization of able men for teamwork ventures like fishing or war expeditions. The *Pramma* system is practiced among the Ga, who are patrilineal and also the matrilineal Fante along the coast.

As individual male family units in the *Pramma* multiply new *Pramma* are built by affluent members as annexes to the original agnatic *Pramma* which houses the family deity. During important occasions these outside members converge at the primary *Pramma* for meetings or rite performances. This can include naming rites, puberty rites, marriage rites, widowhood/widower rites, funeral rites, celebrations or even conflict resolution.⁴⁰

***Pramma* Multi-Function**

The *Pramma* is the religio-spiritual center for the Awutu-abe family unit. It is the place where the family's object of worship is located. According to Ephirim-Donkor, "all the *Pramma* housed deities whose names the *Pramma* bore, including Otu/Otuano,

³⁸Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 18, 19.

³⁹Ibid., 41.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Akrama/ Akramano, Sakagya/Sakagyano, etc.”⁴¹ The mention of these *Pramma* as examples is very significant especially when the *Aboakyer* is considered. Otu is the Effutu state god and the *Pramma* in which it is housed is the *Otuano*. This is the first house (*Pramma*) built in Winneba from which all others spread. The other two are also very important in the *Aboakyer* celebration.

***Pramma* Headship**

Because every *Pramma* has its own god, the *Pramma* “has [also] its own . . . priests, and ritual observance[s]”⁴² climaxing in the *Aboakyer* festival. For effective running of the *Pramma*, “the eldest father or male was generally the head and presided over all socio-religious and ritual observances, including the maintenance of paternal deities.”⁴³ The *Pramma* head (*Pramma Onyimpaah*) is called *ebusua onyimpaah*, an adoption of the Akan *ebusuapanyin* (‘clan head’).⁴⁴

***Pramma* Sacredness**

ATRs have high respect for sacred spaces. So among the Effutu spaces like the *Pramma* are sacredly guarded especially by the women in order to protect their sanctity. For instance, “the issue of menstrual blood kept agnatic women, except postmenopausal women, away from the *Pramma* Female agnates took particular care not to visit a

⁴¹Ibid., 41.

⁴²Ibid., 45.

⁴³Ibid., 41.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Pramma when menstruating for fear of rendering the *Pramma* unclean and requiring rites of purification.”⁴⁵

***Pramma* and the Asafo**

One other important identity proffered by the *Pramma* system is the *Asafo* (military order of the Effutu). The *Asafo* is a religio-spiritual order which is indispensable in the theocratic political structure of the Effutu. This is because traditionally “the land of Simpa is vested in [their hands] . . . on behalf of the king, [and] . . . it [is] they . . . who defend the land.”⁴⁶ In other words, they are both the custodians and the defenders of the Effutu land. Though not directly involved in the choice of a king, their acceptance or rejection of a nominee is very critical in the process of enstoolment (enthronement) or distoolment (dethronement) of a king. Consequently, the leaders from the *Asafoabe* have always constituted an essential part of the administrative body of the state whether the old council of seven that governed the Effutu state or the current council of state. In this capacity the success of a king’s reign depends on the support and function of the *Asafo*.⁴⁷

History of the Asafo

Originally the Effutu had only one *Asafo* group which defended the land in time of war. As the town expanded, and particularly when the annual leopard sacrifice for the state deity was begun, a second *Asafo* group was created with three divisions like the first. Each of these divisions is sub-divided into three demographic groups—*Enyimpa/*

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 19.

⁴⁷Ibid., 73.

Mpanyinfo “Seniors,” *Insenabi* “Intermediates,” and *Asam* “Juniors”—so that each *Asafo* company had nine divisions which together gave a total of eighteen for the two companies.⁴⁸ For discipline to be maintained, patrilineally chosen divisional leaders called *Supifo*, whose symbol of leadership is the *Asafo abae* or the whip, commanded the divisions. Under the *Supifo* are the *Asafohenfo* who are sub-divisional.⁴⁹ For the composition of the state administrative body, six noble men were drawn from the senior members of the three divisions of the *Tuawo* and *Dentsiwo*. According to Hagan,

The two companies [*Tuawo* and *Dentsiwo*] had between them six of the stools of the council. . . . *Tuawo* company No.1 selected one representative each of the three senior sections of the three subdivisions within it: (1) *Apagyafo Mpanyin*; (2) *Akonfodo Mpanyin*; and (3) *Kyiremfo Mpanyin*. *Dentsiwo* No.2 had three seats allocated to representatives of its sections: 1. *Etiwafo Mpanyin*; 2. *Petufo Mpanyin*; and 3. *Asomfo Mpanyin*.⁵⁰

The seventh stool, the *Eguaasuonhen*’s stool, was occupied by a prominent man from the house of *Oman Gyan* (Akoohen’s House).⁵¹ With this formation, the Effutu had a formidable council composed of representatives of the two *Asafo* groups headed by *Eguaasuonhen* (the chief of seven stools) who teamed up with the *Tufuhen* (chief counselor) to help the *Oma Odefey* govern the state.

These *Asafo groups* are distinguished by the colors they use during the *Aboakyer* festival. The *Tuawo* use white, blue, black, violet, and green while the *Dentsiwo* use red, gold, orange, black, and pink. Another color distinction is the use of the British flag (Union Jack) by the *Dentsiwo* and the Ghana flag by the *Tuawo* during the celebration.

⁴⁸Nana Ackom, *History of the Effutus* (Accra, Ghana: Banahene Press Ltd., 2005), 41-45

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁰Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 149.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

These are deer hunt winning trophies obtained from the colonial powers and Kwame Nkrumah in 1960 and 1965 respectively.⁵² Though this color differentiation is now being politicized by the patrilineal-matrilineal cold war currently going on, it adds color and elegance to the celebration.

Eligibility and Loyalty

In all these political structures eligibility for enlistment into the *Asafo* was still patrilineally determined. As custom stipulated each individual, whether male or female, belonged to his/her father's *Asafo*—*Dentsiwo* or *Tuawo*—and joined his/her father's religio-spiritual order. Marriage did not affect these classifications; they are for life and are to be passionately defended. “It was an accepted practice in the past and even encouraged for people to passionately state their differing views and assiduously defend their socio-religious and political positions during say, the Nyantor [*Aboakyer*] festival and then revert to their previous harmonious relations as though nothing had taken place earlier.”⁵³ This passionate defense is demonstrated by the *Tuawo* and *Dentsiwo* as they strive to out-compete each other during the deer hunt. Stemming from this competition, the spirit of mobilization of the *Asafo* for the needed preparation and execution of the deer hunt for the festival is easily facilitated.

⁵²Focus Group 1, interview, Winneba, Ghana, May 6, 2014.

⁵³Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 55.

Political Structure

Original Structure

The Effutu, like the Guan, originally operated a patrilineal monarchy headed by the *Oma Odefey* (King of the State) chosen from the Otvano Royal Family at Penkye. Because it was a sacred office, the choice was spiritually performed by a consecrated select group of the Otvano Royal Family. According to Ephirim-Donkor, The election of a king by the Awutu-abe was strictly a family affair carried out by a select few within the Gyateh family. The reason for exclusivity was because the king was also the high priest divinely chosen to perform the family's esoterica for the deities.⁵⁴

So from the birth of Simpa in the early 1400s by the Gyateh family, the *Oma Odefey*, by default, was vested with both political and religious power. He therefore functioned, like founder Gyateh Bondzie-Abe I, as both the priest and king of the people.⁵⁵ This recognition is given because *the Awutu-abe* perceive kingship as a divine institution. “(Ahendzi fir sor), meaning to be king, one must have been chosen first by heaven.”⁵⁶ Second, is the belief that the ancestral stool the king is going to occupy is not only a spiritual one but a blood-covenant symbol connecting the spirit world with the physical. Once enstooled, the king assumed the role of the high priest mediating between these two worlds. This is why the Effutu believe that ultimate failure becomes inevitable

⁵⁴ Ibid., 71-72.

⁵⁵Ibid., 79. He affirms the original dual role of the king: “the office of priest and chief of Winnebah were in ancient times one.”

⁵⁶Ibid., 15.

“when a candidate [without the consent of the ancestors] forced himself or herself on an ancestors’ stool”⁵⁷

In his capacity as the high priest, the *Oma Odefey* was automatically the head of the house of *Penkye Otu*, the tribal deity.⁵⁸ He became the servant of the deity and his very personhood became inextricably bound to the shrine and to the stool so that he had no excuse but to “make himself available when needed by the deity, Penkye Otu.”⁵⁹ The *Oma Odefey* was initially assisted by an able counselor called the *Tufuhen* (Chief Counselor). Later the *Eguaswon* (lit. seven stools/member council) was also constituted.

The *Eguaswon*

When Simpa grew into a state, the formation of a more democratic political structure that involved more hands and talents became obvious. In response to this need the *Asafo* was reconstituted, leading to the establishment of a council of seven (*Eguaswon*) whose membership was equally divided between the two *Asafo* companies with the head as the *Eguaswonhene*. The meeting of this council was “the highest judicial, executive, and military council of the state.”⁶⁰ The *Eguaswon* now became partially involved in the kingship election process which hitherto was strictly an Otuno Royal Family affair. The

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 150.

⁵⁹Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 15.

⁶⁰Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 150.

Eguasuon became the voice of the people prompting the Otvano Royal Family to provide a new king when the stool was vacant.⁶¹

The *Nsorto*: Effutu Consultative Council

“Although the *Odefey* and the *Eguasuon* had judicial powers and constituted the highest judicial body of the nation, they did not have independent legislative power.”⁶² It was the Consultative Council—the *Nsorto* or the meeting of the people without the *Odefey* and the *Eguasuon*—that actually had the power of legislation. This group, chaired by the *Tufuhen*, repealed, amended, and proposed laws that should be considered for the governance the Effutu state and for the facilitation of *oman mpontu* (national development). In this way the *Nsorto* maintained power balance between the leadership and the people. Sadly, because of internecine struggles, this helpful political body, the *Nsorto*, is no longer operative. Hagan mentions that the last time it met was in 1949.⁶³

Current Hierarchy

With the dissociation⁶⁴ of the priesthood from the original kingship which allowed the enthronement of some matrilineal kings, the strict patrilineal system of the Effutu partially broke down birthing a premature hybrid social system of double descent. *Odefeyship* ceased to be strictly patrilineal and now “oscillates between two houses, the

⁶¹Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 55.

⁶²Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 150.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 151.

⁶⁴Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African*, 205. He notes that the split separating the high priestly role from the kingship is a recent development. It was a way to settle a power struggle between two competing brothers of the royal family.

Paternal house of the Gharthey's [sic], called Otuano, and the Maternal house of the Ayirebis, called Akramano."⁶⁵ This has not only deflated the king-selection prerogative of the Otuano Royal Family but secularized the king's role.

Furthermore, because the Effutu state includes some Fante towns and villages the current composition is reflective of the heterogeneity of the groups. Consequently, the Winneba State Council has representation from the Tuawo and Dentsiwo (six); the Zongo (Hausa), and Abasraba (Fante) communities. The Chiefs of Asuekyir, Gyahadze, Gyangyenadze, and Atekyedo as well as two representatives from the fishermen are also on the council. These together with the *Tufohen*, *Supifo* (Divisional Leaders of the two *Asafo*), and the *Odefey* constitute the current council.⁶⁶

Double Descent and the Internecine Struggles

Conflict Situation

The operation of the principle of double descent, the *Nniani* (matrilineage), the Acquah Family, and the *Iseani* (patrilineage), the Gharthey Family, has given rise to a power struggle in the political life of the Effutu. The conflict at times degenerates into violent clashes between the *Nniani* and the *Iseani* family strands.⁶⁷ What is preventing the matrilineal structure from toppling the original political system is the *Prama* system where eligibility for any position whether secular or sacred is patrilineally determined.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 155.

⁶⁶Ibid., 152.

⁶⁷Ibid., 10.

⁶⁸Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*, 9, 10.

The question is: How can “a maternal group [that] has no ascribed position in either of the two *Asafo* divisions”⁶⁹ function in this double descent structure?” The issue of confused identity becomes glaring during the *Aboakyer* festival which showcases the individual’s *Asafo* affiliation.

Conflicts: Otvano Resilience

The internecine struggles of the *Awutu-abe*, which dates from the time of matrilineal king Ayerebi Acquah I, have not gone without the notice of the Ghanaian government. Since the late 19th century both the colonial powers and current governments have intervened in diverse ways—through the judicial courts and even the use of military or police force—to ensure peace, especially during the *Aboakyer* festival.

Though the present Council of State has governmental powers with national backing, it still functions in close collaboration with the Otvano Royal Family and the consent of Penkye Otu by virtue of the ancestral stool which is connected to the origin of the Effutu state of Winneba.

Kingship and *Aboakyer*

Linkage of the political climate of the Effutu to the *Aboakyer* cannot be overlooked because of the king’s sacred role in the “African belief system.”⁷⁰ This is evidenced in the special sacred role the *Oma Odefey* plays in the selection of the deer

⁶⁹Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 155.

⁷⁰Jacob K. Olupona, “African Traditional Religion: Rituals,” *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices* ed. Thomas Riggs (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006), 1:17.

which is essential for the ritual sacrifice of the festival. He must step on the deer caught first to ritually endorse its choice for the sacrifice.

Effutu Religion

The people of Winneba are very religious.⁷¹ Like any typical African, they are grounded in the African Traditional Religion (ATR). Their life from birth to death is religiously bounded and dictated. Religion to the Effutu is therefore not merely *a sine qua non* but *the sine qua non* of life. It permeates the entirety of their individual or corporate life. It shapes their cultures and gives meaning to their social life, their politics, and their economics. Observing this phenomenon Mbiti's wrote:

The whole of African life is a religious phenomenon, and every person who comes into this world is, *ipso facto*, a religious being: he cannot run away from that, and he cannot reject it because he belongs to a religious phenomenon and religious community. Long before he is born, at his birth, through his initiation rites, in marriage and procreation, at death and burial, and in the life after death—all through this long journey, he is involved in a religious drama. His vocabulary, his thought-forms, his actions, and every portion of his life, is a participation in a religious experience.⁷²

Interestingly, this religiosity is irrespective of academic scholarship or educational level because “almost all Ghanaians, regardless of class or education, are affected by indigenous religion, consciously and unconsciously. [Though they] maintain a strong belief in the power of the Supreme God and the existence of lesser gods,”⁷³ their fear of the latter is greater. The Effutu cosmology demonstrates this fear.

⁷¹There are many denominations (mainline orthodox, evangelicals and the Pentecostal in the town which are patronized—the Methodists, AME Zion, Seventh-day Adventists, the Catholic, Anglican Presbyterians, and Baptists. Some, like the Methodist Church have operated since the early 19th century.

⁷²John S. Mbiti, “Christianity and East African Culture and Religion,” in *Dini na Mila: Revealed Religion and Traditional Custom*, vol. 3, no. 1 (May, 1968): 2.

⁷³Salm and Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana*, 45.

The Effutu Cosmology

An understanding of the Effutu cosmology is necessary for understanding of the concept of atonement and especially the deity to whom the sacrifice of the deer of *Aboakyer* is made. It is also illuminating because it reveals the spiritual hierarchy as well as the various roles each deity plays in the spiritual world of the Effutu, particularly during the *Aboakyer*.

The Supreme God

The Effutu believe in the Supreme God. He is the Great Spirit, and the creator of the earth. He is anthropomorphically referred to as *Atte Nyimpo*, the father of rain.⁷⁴ All the gods of their fathers are considered as his “children.”⁷⁵ He has no temple or sanctuary built specifically for him, yet he is addressed first as the overarching spiritual power in their public prayers. Though transcendent, he may be approached indirectly through the mediation of the members of the Effutu pantheon comprising the lesser gods (*Ape*, sing. *Ope*) as well as the ancestral spirits of their fathers.

⁷⁴Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 174.

⁷⁵Ibid.

The Effutu Pantheon

Besides the Supreme God, the Effutu have a pantheon of seventy-seven gods.⁷⁶ The gods fall into two distinct categories distinguished by the way they possess their human agents. The first are “the *Tente* gods [who are] spiritual beings not man-created, which [reveal] themselves to men. . . . [The second] are the *Mire* (*Asuman*, Fante) which are spirit beings invoked into some man-made physical object to serve specific human needs of an individual or group.”⁷⁷ The *Asafo* gods and individual charms belong to this second category. Describing the way the two gods operate, Hagan continues:

The *Tente* gods do not manifest themselves in the violent trances associated with the *Mire*. When a *Tente* god possesses a *komfo* (a professed medium) the *komfo* shakes gently with slow rhythmic body movements. The possessed person dances at regular slow beats: *Tente, Tente, Tente*. Violent whirling movements and high and quick body vibrations are considered typical of the man-made gods.⁷⁸

Hierarchically, the Effutu consider *Ayensu*, *Sekum* (*Penin-jan*), and *Penkye Otu* as “the three leading deities.”⁷⁹ There are other general purpose deities, mostly agnatic gods, rendering diverse services to the people. These include *Monyi* (the historic Lagoon god in charge of law and order and also the tutelary for the No. 2 *Asafo*); *Akrama* (in charge of the land), *Adoko* (specialist for pregnancy protection against the evil eye and witchcraft), and *Akaibi Aako*.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Ibid., 187.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., 174.

⁷⁹Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 78.

⁸⁰Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 174.

The deity *Ayensu* [the tutelary for women and for the *Tuawo*/No. 1 Asafo] was described as the principal fetish and the outdoor deity of Winneba. He is also believed to own one of the two priestly stools of Simpa as the outdoor deity. The other priestly stool was associated with deity *Otu* (and *Sekum*), the indoor deity.⁸¹ *Sekum* and *Otu* are considered indoor deities because they are housed. The two are also mentioned together because they are considered to be brothers and “are kept together in the house known as *Otu-ano*.”⁸² This deity coexistence brings to the fore a belief of how deities are created. According to Ephirim, who delved deeply into the Awutu-abe cosmology and even beyond, “deities are created in pairs of the same sex as rivals or polar opposites of each other”⁸³ yet complementing each other as “*Sekum /Otu, Ayensu/Densu, Obiri/Egya Kweku (Eku Eku) at Mprumem, and Osiri/Set in ancient Egypt.*”⁸⁴

As indicated earlier the Effutu have three leading gods and a fourth river god *Kweku Monyi* who is the linguist of the Pantheon. Interestingly, these four gods are intricately associated with the settlement history of the Effutu and directly linked to the *Aboakyer* festival. According to one of the chief fetish priestess of the *Ayensu* deity, water from these water-body deities and the sea, together with special herbs from their locations, are used to purify the Asafo before they go hunt for the deer to be sacrificed to *Ope Penkye Otu*.⁸⁵

⁸¹Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 56.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., 57.

⁸⁵ Adjoa Dufua, Fetish Priestess of River Ayensu Deity, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 19, 2014.

Ope Penkye Otu

Though Sekum is the older brother of Otu, among the deities Otu is the king. As the god of national guidance,⁸⁶ Otu is considered “the spiritual progenitor of the Awutu-abe and owner of the ancestors’ stool and other sacred objects.”⁸⁷ He is the one “divined in all matters pertaining to the state”⁸⁸ whether kingship, prosperity or protection. Having ultimate power he “decided who lived or died in his realm existentially, [and granted] permission to other deities to inflict punishment on humans who may have offended a deity.”⁸⁹ He is believed to have introduced the first ancestors to the deities in Winneba, especially the lagoon deity Kweku *Monyi* that border the western part of the township. He is appellated as *otu fua* (“rises as the fog”) just as the Supreme God. According to Ephirim-Donkor, this may explain why the deity chose to reside at sea when the Gyatehs arrived in Simpa, because the clouds and rain or water are the same in essence.⁹⁰

Otu’s sanctuary, Otuno, is on the land in Penkyae, meaning he was both a sea and land deity watering the land for a plethora of fish and crops. The Awutu-abe therefore regard Otu as the total sustainer of life. “As *Odoke Kesi* Otu and the Awutu-abe are said to swim (fish) the sea as fishermen and hunt on land during the Nyantor Festival for foodstuff.”

⁸⁶Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 175.

⁸⁷Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 55.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

As stated above, Penkyae Otu is associated with Penkyae, the original settlement of the Effutu. Penkyae from *prekyae* (Effutu verb meaning to come ashore or noun meaning the landing) is the place where the the Awutu-abe led by the Gyetehs' first settled. "In time, the *prekyae* evolved into "Penkyae" and became synonymous with the deity Otu because his sanctuary, the first building of the Awutu-abe at Simpa, was located there. From Otu's sanctuary the Awutu-abe's settlement rippled outward several miles to compose what is called Winneba today.⁹¹

The Human Intermediaries

As customary with ATRs the deities are approached through human intermediaries. In the Effutu cosmology there are two distinct human intermediaries, namely *Asɔɔ* (priests) and *Abirew* (mediums), who liase between the people and the deities. The *Asɔɔ* are the patrons/matrons of the primary *Pramma* deities. Because the *Asɔɔ* inherit this custodial role from their fathers (patrilineally) they own the deities and therefore are more powerful spiritually than the *Abirew*. To continue the ancestral tradition the *Asɔɔ* are trained to maintain the household deities. Their duties include the ability to meticulously perform the rituals and sacrifices required of the deities placed in their custody as well as the various initiation rites including birth, puberty, occupational, marriage/divorce, death, widowhood. They are called in pairs, a male and a female, probably for effective ministry to the people.⁹²

⁹¹Focus Group 1, Winneba, Ghana, interview by author, May 6, 2014.

⁹²Gloria Donkor (Pseudonym) phone interview by author, January 7, 2015.

The *Abirew* on the other hand are spirit-possessed persons (male or female) who are engaged by deities or spirit forces like the *Shamans*. Their induction into *Abirewship* to give them the power of dual existence is a spiritual-power process which

Involve[s] the traditional scheme of an initiation ceremony: suffering, death, and resurrection. [Their direct link] . . . with the supernatural world is not forged without difficulty or pain; the initiation into the otherworld experienced as an upheaval that involves the destruction of the whole person by spirits, followed by a kind of resurrection as a new being who exists in both the mundane and the spiritual world.⁹³

The *Abirew* help the *Asɔɔ* in the execution of their work. In their collaborative work it is on them that the spirit descends to give direction and messages to address issues both spiritual and mundane.⁹⁴ When possessed by the deity, the *Obirew* usually speaks a special coded language so there is always someone to translate the language to the *Osɔw* and the elders.⁹⁵

The work of the *Asɔɔ* and the *Abirew* heightens during the Nyantor (*Aboakyer*) festival when they champion the preparation of the warriors for the hunt and also when the *Osɔɔ Nipa* of the national deity (*Penkye Otu*) performs the ritual sacrifice of the deer.

Cosmology and the People

Characteristically, the Effutu are spiritually sensitive and very superstitious. Their cosmology contains an understanding of the presence of *Ogyapa* (witchcraft, literally “the fire within”) and other spiritual forces in the world that contend against their peace

⁹³Chiara Ombretta Tommasi “shammanism” *Encyclopedia of Religion* (15vols) Second Edition Lindsay Jones, Editor in Chief (Thomson Gale, 2005), 1:519.

⁹⁴Gloria Donkor, phone interview.

⁹⁵Nana Ama Agyeman, “Language Use in Winneba: Some Preliminary Observations,” *SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 16 (2013): 259, accessed January 11, 2015, https://www.soas.ac.uk/linguistics/research/working_papers/volume-16/file88044.pdf.

and prosperity. Being conscious of the dangers and uncertainties in the spiritual world, the Effutu constantly seek spiritual protection to ensure their safety in even mundane activities.⁹⁶ As Adeyemo puts it:

Africans believe that these cosmic forces and social calamities that disturb their world are controllable and should be manipulated by them for their own purpose. The warding off of these cosmic [evil powers] and social evils, called *ibi* in Yoruba and *hohom fi* in the [Akan] language of Ghana, becomes the central focus of religious activities among the various African peoples. Writing on . . . *hohom fi*, Max Assimeng, a senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Ghana said “Religion in traditional Ghanaian society may thus be said to concern essentially how man should keep a proper and undiluted ritual distance from this element of *hohom fi*.”⁹⁷

Consequently, to maintain this spiritual balance they strive to sustain strong connections with ancestral spirits and deities by means of ritual sacrifices to obtain their favor.⁹⁸

These rituals assume a communal proportion during the *Aboakyer* Festival celebrated annually. On this festive occasion all the gods of Winneba are invoked, with the climax being the sacrifice of a live deer to the father god, *Penkye Otu*.⁹⁹ History records that the Effutu were even willing to go to the extent of sacrificing royal members to this father-god during this festival.¹⁰⁰ Not even the request for a live leopard will sever their connection with their god, *Penkye Otu*.

⁹⁶ Ibid..

⁹⁷Tokunboh Adeyemo, “Unapproachable God: The High God of African Traditional Religion,” in *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, ed. Aida Besangon Spencer and William David Spencer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 129, 130.

⁹⁸Tite Tiénou, “African Traditional Religions,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 47.

⁹⁹Eva Leonie Lewin-Richter Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana: Their Ancient Beliefs* (London, UK: Faber and Faber Limited, 1958), 39.

¹⁰⁰A. A. Opoku, *Festivals of Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1970), 33.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the origins, location, socio-political, cultural, and religious life of the Effutu. Findings revealed that the Effutu have been in Winneba for about 500 years. Though engulfed within the powerful Akan matrilineal influence, their *Pramma* system and the *Aboakyer* festival have kept them together as a people. The Effutu have also maintained their old religious tradition, especially the *Aboakyer*. Wyllie remarks:

For nearly fifty years Effutu traditional religion has had to face the competitive challenge of Spiritism and, for a much longer period, that of orthodox Christianity, as well as the effects of various economic, political, and social changes which have taken place in the community. . . . The cult of the ancestral spirits has been attacked by all the Christian churches in the town The ancestors have not yet been totally forgotten and the traditional religious practioners are not yet prepared to vacate the field . . . [and] the old rites are still performed and *Penkye Otu* still speaks of the future.¹⁰¹

That is to say, that despite the cultural, linguistic, economic and religious threats of the Effutu by the Akan and other religious forces, the Effutu have maintained their identity and culture.

The historical ethnography of *Aboakyer* is the focus of the next chapter. Discussion will center on details concerning how the Effutu came by the deer as the sacrificial victim and more. The chapter will essentially be a report from the field study.

¹⁰¹Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*, 15, 16.

CHAPTER 4

ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE *ABOAKYER* FESTIVAL

This chapter looks at the historical ethnography of the *Aboaker* festival. Presented first is the interesting bargain made with the gods that substituted the original human sacrifice with a leopard and finally to a fallow (wild) deer. The chapter then considers the preparation and catching of the live deer and finally the ritual processes involved in the sacrifice of the deer to the tribal god of the Effutu. Since one research visit cannot unearth all the details of the complex rituals of the festival, resources from the written works of anthropologists like Wyllie, Eva Meyerowitz, George Hagan, and Ephirim-Donkor will be used to complement the results from my observation and interviews. My advantage as part of the royal clan, which gave me access to some secret rituals, will also be employed.

History of the *Aboaker* Festival

The *Aboaker* festival cannot, in any way, be separated from the migration history of the Effutu and the founding of the town of *Simpa* (Winneba). Apart from commemorating the migration of the ancestors of the Effutu from the Western Sudan Empire to Simpa, the festival is an annual ritual appreciation of *Ope Penkye Otu* (*Otuakwan Otufua* “the traveler, protector”) who guided them safely to their new

settlement, Winneba.¹ So dear is this history to the Effutu that when the researcher was interacting with Focus Group 1, the eldest among the participants, who happened to be of the Otuno priestly family, made sure each participant was a pure Effutu of patrilineal descent. He insisted that each participant mentioned the name of his or her patrilineal great-grandfather. According to him *Aboakyer*, the epitome of the sacred history of the Effutu origin, must only be discussed by pure Effutu. He began by giving us the family tree from his paternal great grandfather and traced the lineage to himself. Every member of the group followed suit.

By this reaction the Effutu elder showed that the history is a sacred record that concretely establishes the migration movement of the Effutu, the landmark events, and particularly, the current geographical borders of *Simpa* (their final settlement); the Monyi Lagoon in the west, the Ayensu River in the east, and *Penkye* (the location of the sacred grove of *Otu*). According to one informant

The Effutu came from Timbuktu after the fall of the Songhai Empire through Takyiman in northern Ghana in search for a peaceful viable land to settle. They headed south along the Pra River and established settlements like Effutu-Tarkwa and Wassa Simpa. On their way eastward along the coast they also founded Abora and Effutu² near *Iguae* (now Cape Coast) their market (Effutu, *Igua*). After sometime, [probably due to the Akan pressures and war] they moved on led by *Ope Penkye Otu*, (*Otufua Otukwan*) who fended off wild beasts and animals to keep them safe. When they came to a place now called Dwama they settled for a while. But the search for a

¹“*Aboakyer* Festival,” accessed November 28, 2014, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/396389/1/winneba-ready-for-aboakyer-festival.html>.

²Hans W. Debrunner, in his book, *History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: Waterville Publishing House: 1967), p. 18 states that this is a historic town in the history of Christianity in Africa. It was the place where the first baptism by Portuguese missionaries occurred in 1503. “The King of Efutu and his palace officials and their families, numbering about three hundred, accepted Christianity.”

sustainable water source caused the leaders to continue their eastward journey. Fortunately after a few miles they found water (a lagoon). When they tasted the water they felt disappointed because it was salty and therefore hard to drink (*nsu ne boni*) giving the lagoon its current name *Moni Lagoon*. They crossed the lagoon and settled at *Penkye* which had a lot of islets or inlets of water. After a heavy downpour they saw some muddy coloration of the sea afar. When they explored it they discovered it was caused by a river. To their surprise it was real tasty water. *Ayee Nsu!* “behold! this is water!” they exclaimed. From this exclamation came the name *Ayensu river*.³

Interestingly these two bodies of water and the sea (which is the southern border of *Simpa*), as will be explained later, are deities who feature prominently in the spiritual preparations for the *Aboakyer* festival.

From Human Royal Sacrifice to Deer Sacrifice: The Substitutionary Process/Idea

The ritual sacrifice of a live deer by the Effutu of Winneba to *Ope Penkye Otu* is a later substitutionary development. Oral tradition records that the founding fathers of the Winneba “were greatly supported by the deity [*Penkye Otu*”⁴ as they moved from the north to their present settlement. To show their appreciation, the people consulted with *Ope Penkye Otu* for the appropriate sacrifice to offer to him. In reply, he requested an annual sacrifice of a human being, specifically, someone from the royal family.⁵ This command was obediently followed but it was not long until the Effutu realized that it was decimating the royal population and therefore they pleaded for an animal substitute. Legend records that they pleaded to offer three cows but *Ope Penkye Otu* said even if they offered twenty cows he would still not accept them since domesticated cows were unclean because “they were in constant contact with women who were defiled by

³Focus Group 1, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 6, 2014.

⁴Opoku, *Festivals in Ghana*, 33.

⁵Brown, “Social Conflicts in Contemporary Effutu Festivals,” 2.

menstrual fluids or the contamination of sexual intercourse.”⁶ *Penkye Otu* then settled on a live leopard caught with bare hands. This first animal (*aboa*) substitution began the *Aboakyer* (animal catch) festival. It is believed to have lasted a bit longer than a decade.⁷

Though the royal family was spared from ultimate annihilation, the human lives lost or maimed in the process of catching one wild cat raised additional concerns. Sensing the irreparable damage the leopard-hunt was inflicting on the population, the Effutu again pleaded with *Penkye Otu* for a better option. It was this last round of negotiations that settled on “a fallow deer caught live and whole”⁸ with bare hands that birthed the *Aboakyer* Festival as it is celebrated today.⁹ According to Ephirim-Donkor, the choice of the deer was acceptable because *Penkye Otu* revealed that *wansein mo dase kye osa mo dase* meaning “the deer’s blood was akin to that of a human.”¹⁰ To differentiate between the normal hunt for game and this ritual deer hunt the *Awutu-abe* call the latter *Nyantor* to give the hunt its ritual essence. Hence the *Nyantor* Festival.

Preparation for the Festival

In the days when humans from the Otvano Royal Family were offered as a sacrifice to *Ope Penkye Otu*, the ritual was just a family matter done in the quiet. It was solely a priestly affair and there were not many preparations. It was not a time of rejoicing or celebration. Even the substituted leopard was not made public because of the

⁶Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 131.

⁷Focus Group 1, May 6, 2014.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 32.

danger the wild cat might cause to observers. However, with the dawn of the deer hunt, the ritual assumed a festive dimension drawing people from far and near. Preparations also became more involved and elaborate, including the setting of the time of the festival, priests (the *Asoo*), and the people, especially the *Asafo* companies or the warriors.

Timing of the Hunt

The *Aboakyer* Festival was originally held toward the end of April to coincide with the planting and sowing season. But since 1965, the first week-end of May has been selected as the time for the celebration.¹¹ This change, which fixed the timing of the festival, resulted from it becoming a national tourist attraction. The time change therefore allowed observers to plan their programs and, particularly, the government to place it on the national calendar.

Before the modern calendar timing of the festival, the people were guided by the cycle of rituals performed by the prominent agnatic homes and the *Asafo* companies. However, the main person who reminded the *Oma Odefey* of the date was the matron of the shrine of *Ope Penkye Otu* through the high priest. According to Opoku the matron did the counting by the monthly (every four weeks) deposition of a chewing sponge¹² into a receptacle.

¹¹Robert W. Wyllie, "The 'Aboakyer' of the Effutu: A Critique of Meyerowitz's Account," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Jan., 1967): 81.

¹²Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 176, 177. Here Hagan mentions bathing sponge not chewing sponge and quotes A. B. Ellis' affirmation of this view. But from some informants the chewing sponge fits the sacred context. Furthermore, Ephirim-Donkor in his book *The Making of an African King*, p.37 confirms the chewing sponge view. This customary practice has long since been shelved. See also "Aboakyer Festival," accessed January 24, 2015, <http://amoafowaa.com/2014/08/08/the-aboakyer-festival-of-the-effutus/>.

On the first Sunday after the Deer Hunt, the old woman [of Kweemu] who is the chief matron of the shrine [of *Ope Penkye Otu*] rolls a ball of chewing sponge and places it in a safe container, adding one more sponge every succeeding fourth Sunday. When she has added the eleventh ball [which is the twelfth ball according to the Effutu traditional reckoning], she informs the Chief Priest [the Chief Patron]. . . . When the priest hears this he in turn informs the Omanhene or the Paramount Chief of the Effutu State [to officially set preparations for the festival rolling].”¹³

Other anthropological accounts have it that she did the deposition according to the full-moon pattern.¹⁴ But to ensure that she did not miss or become confused with the monthly count, the Chief Matron had a second receptacle for a weekly sponge deposition. When she dropped in the fourth sponge, she put three aside and deposited the fourth one into the monthly receptacle. According to anthropologist A. B. Ellis, each monthly deposition was also marked by “a knot in a piece of cord; and it is after thirteen such knots have been made, that she announces that the time for the deer custom has again come.”¹⁵ This gives a total time frame of fifty-two weeks.¹⁶ Interestingly this harmonizes with the ancient calendrical system of chronology and makes the *Awutu-abe* perhaps “the only ethnic group in Ghana to adhere to such a definite ancient calendrical system.”¹⁷ By this means, the time for the celebration was meticulously counted and the appropriate information given at the right time. This too allowed for effective preparation.

¹³Opoku, *Festivals of Ghana*, 33. From the account given it seems Opoku confuses the modern calendrical counting with the Effutu weekly reckoning.

¹⁴“*Aboakyer* Festival,” accessed 24 January 2015, <http://amoafowaa.com/2014/08/08/the-aboakyer-festival-of-the-effutus/>.

¹⁵A. B. Ellis, *The Tshi-speaking People of the Gold Coast of West Africa* (London: Chapman and Hall Limited, 1887), 226; accessed January 22, 2015, http://archive.org/stream/cu31924028647513/cu31924028647513_djvu.txt.

¹⁶Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 176.

¹⁷Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 37.

Priestly Preparation

Priestly preparations, according to the chief matron's report, begin about four weeks (28 days) before the actual week of the celebration. After informing the *Oma Odefey* (Paramount Chief) of the nearness of the time for the celebration, the *Osoo onyipa* (high priest) and his assistants together with the *Abirew* (the fetish priests and priestesses) meet at the grove to purify themselves by special ritual baths, and prepare the grove and its outer court for the deer sacrifice.¹⁸ Included in this preparation is the anointing of the image of the deity. No sexual activity is allowed during this period for the *Asow* and the *Abirew*. Because he and his team do not sleep in their houses but at the grove, it is seen as going into seclusion to prepare for the festival.

Tied to the priestly preparation is that of the *Oma Odefey* because of the sacred role he plays during the festival. Besides the spiritual ritual preparations, he with his council prepares to receive invited guests and government officials who might grace the occasion with their presence. The person specifically delegated to oversee this preparation is the *Tufuhen* who, like the commander in chief of the militia, coordinates all the activities of the people and the *Asafo*, in particular.

Preparation by the People

Every Effutu family member has a part to play in the preparation for the celebration. He or she prepares either as part of the ordinary folk (*Oma abe*) who support their affiliated *Asafo* group or as part of the *Asafo* who hunt for the deer.

¹⁸Adjoa Edufua, (*Ayensu Obirew*) Festish priestess of Ayensu, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 19, 2014.

***Oma Abe* (The Ordinary People)**

The *Oma-abe* preparation generally includes the provision of food to serve guests and visitors and rooms to accommodate them, festive dresses to be sewn for themselves and their dependents to add color to the event, and the cleaning of their homes. This involves a lot of money and places a financial burden on the women,¹⁹ especially those with larger families. That was my mother's plight as she prepared every year for the festival. As the daughter of the *Supi* of the *Dentsiwo* she had no choice but to attend the festival. I remember in the early 1970s how she would sew dresses for all members of the family with the selected *Asafo* fabric for the year and transport all of us (seven of us besides some cousins living with us) to Winneba by the cheapest means of transport (the Omnibus Service of Ghana) to save money. All through that weekend my mother and the other women cooked for the family and guests.

Generally, the women busy themselves during this time of preparation with the procurement of food and logistics to host their guests and prepare their various regalia to support their respective *Asafo* companies. Hotels, motels, and restaurants also get ready to entertain tourists who come to Winneba for the festival.

The *Asafo* (Warriors)

The preparation of the *Asafo* is detailed and comprehensive because they have the responsibility of catching the deer. Without the hunters there would be no festival. Now that the *Asafo* are part of the ritual process, their preparation is key to both the physical and the spiritual objectives of the festival. The physical preparation gives color and

¹⁹The Effutu women are considered as treasurers of the typical home.

vitality to the celebration while their spiritual preparation enables them to provide the sacrificial victim.

The physical preparation of the *Asafo*, which includes decisions on regalia and pre-festival activities, begins long before the weekend of the festival. To ensure order and peace, the selected fabric of the two companies are certified by the State Council. This is done to keep companies from using insinuating designs or satirical fabrics and styles²⁰ to incite strife and confusion. Hagan writes that “the *Odefey* and the *Tufuhen* and the District Commissioner inspect the flags or symbols which the two *Asafos* will use on the occasion. Any flags or clothes found to offend one or the other *Asafo* is banned”²¹

Unlike the physical preparations which are mostly private, the spiritual preparations of the *Asafo*, which actually herald the celebration and electrify the township, are not done quietly. They begin on the Thursday preceding the first Saturday of the month of May and continue till dawn on Saturday. It is a time to invoke all the deities of the *Awutu-abe*. The sequence of activities or events make this weekend “the period of the greatest ritual activity”²² in *Simpa*. These activities include the anointing of the *Asafo* gods, the parading of the gods through specified streets in Winneba, and finally the ritual bath and sprinkling in the early hours of Saturday, the day of the catch.

²⁰Customized Ghanaian fabrics come with inscriptions expressing moods, motives, and occasions. Designs of some un-customized fabrics are also given various interpretations by retailers. For example if one wants to tell an enemy that he or she is a hypocrite she/he will buy the cloth *kata wo dee so na bue me dee so* meaning “cover yours and reveal mine.” Some styles sewn also have insinuating tags. For example *kwasea bi di m’ akyi* “the one following me is a fool.” This can spark a big conflict between rivals if one happens to be following the other wearing that style.

²¹Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 179.

²²Wyllie, *Africa*, 81.

Thursday

Thursday is the day when the gods of the *Tuawo* and *Dentsiwo* are anointed and invoked indoors in their respective agnatic *Pramma* for spiritual power and guidance for a successful catch. The invocation is done within the context of “sacred rivalry” associated with the *Nyantor* festival and therefore the invocation is a time of spiritual tension fraught with bloody rituals performed by each *Asafo* to spiritually neutralize or overpower the other. The *Tuawo* (*Tuafo*) even begin this consultation on Wednesday.

The *asafo* companies consult their shrines for fortification, clearance, and early catch. *Tuafo* invoke the gods *Ekú* and *Katawer* on Wednesday and Thursday respectively. . . . *Dentsefo* [in turn] invoke *Sakagya*, *Efirim* (. . . ‘you’re out’ which means to be released, or freed). The gods are invoked behind closed doors between noon and sunset.²³

After these invocations that are led by the various priests and priestesses of the *Asafo*, scouts are sent into the assigned thickets for the hunt to keep hunters and poachers out who might disturb the animals, especially the deer. According to an informant these guards, who are usually elders believed to be spiritually fortified and committed to the spirit of the festival, remain in the bush until the time of the hunt and often join in the hunt.

Friday

On Friday, the eve of the hunt, members of the two *Asafo* companies (the *Tuawo* and the *Dentsiwo*) consult with their gods (*Gyamesi* and *Asakamba* respectively) and ancestors once more to press home their request for guidance and protection in the hunt the following day.

²³“*Aboakyer* Festival,” accessed January 24, 2015, <http://amoafowaa.com/>.

The image of the god *Gyemisi* (also called *Katawer* or “Jack”) is draped in white cloth and carried on a wooden board on the head by two bare-chested men wearing white shorts. The carrying is done ritually.²⁴ To prevent it from falling, the god is secured with strong cords tied to the middle of the board. How these two selected men coordinate movement interspersed with sudden bends to the left and right as well as circular turns without breaking their necks or getting tired is a marvel described by Nana Ackom as spirit possession. He writes: “The number one fetish is placed on a wooden board and carried by two people. As the invocations [gather] momentum, the two get possessed and they parade through the town followed by the Asafo group.”²⁵

When the *Tuawo* carry *Gyemisi* (their god) from *Ekum Pramma* it is taken to the sea and dunked three times to give it a ritual bath and transcendental authorization to function.²⁶ After the bath it is then paraded through specified routes in town led by a number of priests clad in white. According to Kojo Enu, one of the leaders of the *Tuawo*, the parading is done for the god to “sweep off any evil and to neutralize any spell cast by any enemy so as to have a successful festival.”²⁷

After the parading by the *Tuawo* between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., the *Dentsiwo* also come out with their god *Asakamba*. *Asakamba* is a leather cushion-like fetish with a handle carried on the head by one man holding it by the right hand and carrying a metal

²⁴To carry it, the two men are made to sit on a bench. Two priests with a pad each draw near and touch their heads three times with the pad before resting them on their heads. Their two hands too are ritually placed first on the pad and then made to hold the board when the god is finally placed on their head following the three time ritual touch.

²⁵Nana Ackom, *History of the Effutus* (Accra, Ghana: Banahene Press Ltd. 2005), 31.

²⁶Papa Kyikyibi, Chief *Tuawo* drummer, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 5, 2014.

²⁷Kojo Enu, Chief Organizer of the *Tuawo* (No. 1 Militia Group), interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 5, 2014.

spear held by the left hand on the left shoulder. The carrier is surrounded by a band of priests in white who pour a libation on the fetish with prayers of request any time the god causes the carrier to stop. According to Nana Ackom,

A string is attached to a receptacle to the ear which enables the carrier to hear from the spirit world and narrate to his followers to act; he carries a kind of sword [a metal spear] in his left hand. The spirit possessed man will go anywhere he will be directed by the god and even run like a hare without getting tired. After . . . uprooting everything [or spell] planted by the [other] group, he will finally come home ²⁸

All the members following are clad in red signifying a combination of seriousness and sacredness. By 5:00 p.m., the parading through the routes the *Asafo* will take to the hunting ground comes to an end. The crowd is then dispersed until the next day. This arrangement for the parading of the *Asafo* gods is done to ensure that both the spirit of rivalry and competition which color the festival with vitality are maintained in an atmosphere of peace and good will.

Saturday

On Saturday, the day for the *Nyantor* festival, the men go for a ritual bath in the sea just after midnight while the woman prepare an early breakfast for them.²⁹ When the practice was strictly adhered to, even the food prepared reflected the *Asafo* colors.

The women of the Tuawo prepare a [white] rice porridge popularly known as ‘rice water’ for the militia returning from the hunt. . . [while] Dentsiwo women prepared *mportroba* . . . [or] *apreprenseser* which are reddish or yellowish colored meal made from *ebrowsam* (roasted and grounded corn) and red palm oil or palm soup to reflect the major colors of the Dentsiwo.³⁰

²⁸Nana Ackom, *History of the Effutus*, 32.

²⁹Isaac Kwesi Mills, Winneba, Ghana, interview by author, May 9, 2014.

³⁰Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 76.

These days the women prepare rice porridge as an early breakfast for the hunters. Between 1:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m., the women, especially the wives, carry these foods to their husbands to ensure that they have enough energy for the hunt. From 3:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. the *Tuawo* and *Dentsiwo*, with their bodies smeared with white or red ochre according to their company color, move to their respective sacred ground (*siwso*) for the sprinkling rite of protection from the *Asafo* god. The *Tuawo* go to Ekuano and the *Dentsiwo* to Kofiano.

On reaching Ekuano, the *Tuawo* officers and men circle around a pail of sacred water two or three times in a counter-clockwise direction, scoop up some of the water with their hands, raise it, and sprinkle themselves. In the same fashion, the *Dentsiwo* also sprinkle purification water on themselves at their *siwso*. That is the first sprinkling. After the first sprinkling, “each *Asafo*, led by its drummers, *Safohenfo*, and the *Akomfo* [or *Abirew*] carrying their gods,”³¹ rush to the palace for a quick column review by the *Oma-Odefey*, assisted by his officers and state councilors—the *Tufuhen*, divisional and sub-chiefs, invited chiefs, and other prominent citizens of *Simpa*. The hunters are then dispatched with the king’s blessing for their assignment. Having dispatched the hunters, the *Oman Kyeame* (the Effutu State Linguist) on behalf of the state pours a libation imploring the Supreme God for protection and a successful hunt.

The last sacred place that the hunters pass as they head towards the hunting grounds is *Akyeampano* (now called Taxi Rank). Here the *Osoɔw Nipa*, clad in white with his team of white-clad priests and *Abirew*, will be waiting with pails of decoctions made from special herbs from the two hunting grounds and water from three historic

³¹Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 182.

deities; the sea, Moni Lagoon, and River Ayensu. Using sacred brooms the *Osoo Nipa* and his team sprinkle the hunters. After this final sacred sprinkling the hunters rush to hunt for the deer³²

The Hunt for the Deer

By 6:00 a.m. on Saturday, the *Tuawo*, whose designated place for the hunt is farther, are despatched. The *Dentsiwo* leave at 6:30 a.m. To help make their way through the thickets the hunters carry clubs and sticks. When they are gone, the *Oma-Odefey* and his officers then leave to prepare for the ritual reception of the catch at Humphrey's Park located midway between the two hunting grounds. They come to the park walking in a single file led by the Tufuhen. The priestly team follows the chiefs at the rear. Only the *Oma-Odefey* comes in a car as a state official for security reasons.

Since the two *Asafo* companies are involved in the hunt, a kind of competition is triggered as each of them attempts to catch the first deer for the ritual sacrifice. In addition to the war drums that both *Asafo* use the *Tuawo* use bugles and bullhorns while the *Dentsiwo* use bells and whistles to frighten the deer. When one is sighted it is surrounded and taken alive without the use of sticks or clubs. The deer is quickly slung over the shoulders of the one who caught it or a strong man who³³ quickly takes it to the ceremonial ground. The *Oma Odefey* will, by this time, be seated, flanked by his officers, in readiness to perform the ritual endorsement that selects the deer for the sacrifice. The carrier is followed by his group members with songs of jubilation and shouts of joy

³²Adwoa Edufua (*Ayensu Obirew*). See also Hagan, *Divided We Stand* 182.

³³Focus Group 2, Winneba, Interview by author, May 8, 2014. It was disclosed that the one who caught the deer for the year 2014 for the *Dentsiwo* was not an indigene so he was not allowed to carry it for presentation to the king. Rather it was an indigene of the *Dentsiwo* who presented it.

which is joined by the waiting members of the victorious company. The Effutu believe that the first deer caught “incarnates [the god] *Penkye Otu*.”³⁴ It is therefore considered as an *ope bi* (“son of a god”). My late grandfather, for example, believed it was *Ope Penkye Otu* who gives the *Asafo* hunters the deer to catch when he is at peace with them.³⁵ So do the *Awutu-abe*. It is therefore considered catastrophic if no deer is caught. This rarely happens as most of the time, each of the two companies succeeds in catching at least one deer making an early catch and speed the key factors to determine the choice of the deer.

After the presentation of the first deer, “the company that has not yet caught its [deer] may continue with the hunt until it succeeds, but the prey has no ritual importance.”³⁶ In 2006, for instance, the second deer caught was gratuitously given to the country (Ghanaian Government) by King Ghartey VII through the delegation from the Ministry of Tourism.³⁷

Rituals of Acceptance

The acceptance of the first deer goes through several steps. These steps can be grouped into two; the stepping by the *Oma-Odefey* at Humphrey’s Park and the *akyeampoano* tying at the Taxi Rank.

³⁴Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana*, 40.

³⁵Safohen Kwamina Tekyi, researcher’s grandfather and the *Supi* of the *Dentsiwo* until 1975.

³⁶Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana*, 40.

³⁷King Ghartey VII, Remarks after a second deer was caught May 6, 2006, Winneba, Ghana.

Ritual Stepping by *Oma-Odefey*

First, the early caught deer is placed on the skin on which the *Oma-Odefey*'s feet rest with its limbs facing away from the king. It is held by strong men to keep it still for the ritual step. The *Oma-Odefey* then pours libation to thank the gods for the catch and to dedicate the animal to *Penkye Otu*. One can hear the words *omo de woafa wo too*, meaning "this is indeed yours." After the libation, the king takes his seat for his right foot to be consecrated. He then removes his right foot from his royal slipper (*ahenemaa*), steps and drags his foot on the deer from right to left three times.³⁸ He repeats this ritual, each time putting his foot back into his slipper and removing it for the next step. This seals the choice of the animal for the ritual sacrifice and also declares the victorious *Asafo* group that carried the day.

After the confirmation, the chosen deer is then lifted up and carried through the town with the men of both companies swarming around it singing, dancing, and drumming, all the way to the *Akyeampano* (Taxi Rank). Here another series of rituals are done followed by the sacred procession to the Grove of *Penkye Otu*. These rituals include: tying, carrying, and the solemn march with the deer.

Akyeampano: Ritual Tying

By the time the victorious *Asafo* group gets to the *Akyeampano* with the deer, the crowd following becomes very heavy with shouts of jubilation that increases in a

³⁸According to Meyerowitz (see Meyerowitz, p. 40) the *Oma Odefey* sets both feet on the deer three times and sanctifies it by touching its body with the toe of his right foot, moving it from left to right, then with his left toe from right to left. Though she is right in her description of the way the step for the choice is made, the *Oma Odefey* uses only his right foot for the ritual. Using the two feet will breach the three times ritual tradition because *ope mo asoto awo mo sa* meaning "a god is approached three times."

deafening crescendo. The *Akyeampomma* (the servants of the god *Akyeampon*), who are the state executioners (slaughterers), prepare to receive the deer. The *Asafo* hand over the deer and the members retire to their homes while the state executioners continue with the sacrificial process. It is believed that the executioners constitute the right hand of *Penkye Otu*. They directly bring the sacrificial victim to the sacred grove of *Otu*, hence the saying that *Se Otu rebeye nam a nna ofir Akyeampon*, “if *Otu* is to become effective, it is through [the fetish] *Akyeampon*.”³⁹

The first step is the libation to begin the ritual tying. After the priest of *Akyeampono* has poured the libation three times, three of the *Abosomma* hold the deer firmly on the ground for a mysterious touch. According to the chief fetish priestess of the *Ayensu Deity* and another informant, the priest picks up a stick and uses it to touch the neck of the deer three times, not clubbing it with a club as intimated by Hagan. The deer is then placed on seven sticks and tied in a manner so that it lies flat on its abdomen. Finally, a strand of cloth reflecting the color of the victorious *Asafo* group is tied to one of the seven sticks to specify the tree under which the ritual slaughter would be made.⁴⁰ Having prepared the deer, the priest then pours another set of three libations after which the deer is carried, like a royal corpse, following the ritual threefold pattern⁴¹ of carrying sacred things. The procession also follows the way royal mortal remains are carried. “One of the *Abrafo* leads the procession. He has a sword in hand and he draws it on the

³⁹Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 184.

⁴⁰Adwoa Edufua, Ayensu Obirew. There are two trees in the outer court of the grove of *Penkye Otu*. One is for the *Tuawo* and the other for the *Dentsiwo*.

⁴¹It is lifted from the ground and made to touch the head of the carrier and placed down. It is the third time that it is made to rest finally on the head.

ground as he proceeds, clearing the way for the carriers. Following him is a man with a gong who beats it and shouts *won hyia o* (it is not accosted). To meet it, is considered a curse likely to result in death.⁴²

From the *Akyeampano*, where the last sprinkling was done, the procession takes the eastward path (avoiding the main roads) toward the Ayensu River and westward through the rocky lanes to the Grove of *Ope Penkye Otu*⁴³. This is where the tied deer rests all through Saturday afternoon until Sunday when the actual ritual sacrifice takes place.

At the Grove: Ritual Sacrifice of the Deer

At the grove or shrine of the god, the *Osɔo Nipa* (high priest) of the grove and his assistants receive the deer from the *abrafo*. The deer termed the *Ope bi* (“the child of the god”) is then placed before the grove until the next day when it will be slaughtered for the actual ritual sacrifice.

The Ritual Sacrifice of the Deer

At exactly 2:00 p.m. on Sunday the ritual slaughter of the deer is carried out, supervised by the *Osɔw Nipa* assisted by the chief fetish priests/priestesses. This too is contrary to the accounts of Meyerowitz and Wyllie,⁴⁴ which state that the deer is prepared and killed on Saturday. However it is not offered to *Penkye Otu*, the lesser god, and the ancestors until Sunday afternoon.

⁴²Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 185.

⁴³Ibid., 180.

⁴⁴Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana*, 40-41; Wyllie, *Africa*, 81-82.

Though the accounts of Meyerowitz and Wyllie show some variants they still provide significant insights into the ritual sacrifice of the deer. What accounts for the variants is that not all elements of the ritual are open to the public. Some are done by the *Osɔɔ Nipa* alone in the grove, therefore imposing a limitation on the amount of details one can receive in a single visit. Interestingly, Hagan has done a comprehensive documentation of the Sunday rituals which is in harmony with the researcher's interviews and observation.

Beginning with the priestly procession, Hagan walks the reader graphically through the gathering of the *Oma-Odefey* and his officers, the beheading of the deer, the flaying and cutting, and the special ritual distribution of the sacrifice. He then looks at the *Osɔɔ Nipa*'s role and the divination that punctuates the celebration, *Ebisatsir*.

Preliminaries of the Sacrifice

The ritual processes at the grove take place in the following manner with each step anticipating the next.

a. The *Otuano Asɔɔ* (Priests of Otuano) and their assistants form a single file procession at midday to the courtyard marking the start of the ritual sacrifice. They enter carrying the image of the god and proceed to the grove to place the god in its shrine. In the grove, the female *Osɔɔ* from Kweimu who is the time keeper of the state removes the old bedding materials of the god and replaces them with new ones.

b. The *Akyeamponma* (the slaughterers) arrive between 1:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. at the arena.

Their gong beater is followed by a man carrying a bowl. Behind them walks the *Akyeampon* priest, followed by a young man carrying the priest's white stool. All are clad in white. The priest has in his right hand a special knife smeared with red ochre.

The procession enters the grove and comes out. The priest and his assistants sit down in a single file with their backs to the trees of No. 2 and No. 1. *Odwompa* leaves are spread out in front of them about a yard away. A priestess brings two wooden pails and places them in front of the *Akyeampon* priests.⁴⁵

As this preparation is ongoing the men of the *Abodewur Pramma* prepare fire with specified wood (*kanto* fire wood) near the grove.

c. The arrival and seating of the *Oma-Odefey*, *Tufuhen*, divisional chiefs and other chiefs, and prominent people follows next. This ends the procession of those invited to participate in the ritual sacrifice. In 2014, the *Oma-Odefey* was not present so it was the *Tufuhen* who deputized on his behalf. But as tradition has it, the king should be the last to be seated in any meeting of the state. Once the highest in command of the nation takes his seat, the slaughter of the deer begins.

Ritual Sacrifice of the Deer

a. The priest of the *Akyeamponma* stands up and pours a libation with a bottle of schnapps. At the end of his prayer he throws some of the offering drink up which falls on some of the people who have gathered around. After his prayer the Ayensu *Obirew* is given part of the schnapps for another libation.

b. The *Akyeamponma* priestly group untie the deer which is by now dead. The selected *Obrafo*, or person to cut off the head of the deer, gets ready with an old knife in his right hand and a *bohen* (cutting stone) in his left. He raises the knife up as the *Akyeamponma* sings a special ritual song and keeps the knife raised until the song ends.

c. The *Obrafo* first runs the *bohen* down the throat of the deer three times. He then

⁴⁵Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 186.

cuts off the head of the deer with the old knife and puts it in a wooden bowl. The blood is caught in a vessel by special attendants. After this, other *Abrafo* join him to flay the animal. The hide is then removed and hung for a while on the sacred tree of the *Ope Penkye Otu* but later taken down and preserved in the sacred archive or sanctuary in town.

d. The rest of the carcass is then cut up and put in a wooden bowl before the *Osow* who selects pieces to be cooked. By this time, a new earthen pot will be placed on a fire with some water in it. The selected pieces of meat are put into a small pot one by one. The chief priest takes the selected pieces to the fireplace to cook them. He arranges the pieces neatly by picking them up one by one and pressing them to the bottom of the pot. Other deer caught are also butchered and their meat ritually shared.

e. The *Osow Nipa* (the High Priest and also the Chief Priest of Otvano) now comes and picks out with his bare hands seventy-seven of the cooked pieces from the pot—a piece for each of the seventy-seven gods of the *Awutu-abe*. When this ritual selection is finished, the hot pot is lifted up by two men from the *Adewur Pramma* and carried, without looking back, to their *Pramma* where the venison is eaten.

f. The *Osow Nipa* at this point selects, with prayers of petition, pieces of the flesh and places them before *Penkye Otu* in the grove. Hagan says the pieces are put in a receptacle but most people believe they are spread on the floor inside the grove. But whatever the description, one fact remains—the meat is given to *Ope Penkye Otu*. The head of the deer is then placed at the foot of the tree in the grove.

g. The remainder of the meat is sent to the houses of the *Osow [nipa]* the high priest, and all the other priests of the various gods as well as the important traditional

figures of *Simpa*, each of whom receives their traditional portion. (Some believe the sacred meat is eaten at night by the recipients with their families).

Final Rites of the *Aboakyer*

Two rites or rituals are performed to complete the festival. These are the *Ebisatsir* and the final rites of the priests.

The *Ebisatsir* Ritual

In 2014, the *Ebisatsir* (*ebisa* literally means “asking or soothsaying;” *tsir* is “head” meaning inquiring for your future) did not take place because of the kingship crisis explained in the third chapter. However, the focus groups as well as the individual interviews shared bits of information which helped me piece the ritual details together as follows.

After the gods have been appeased with the deer sacrifice, the next duty of the *Osoo Nipa* on Sunday afternoon is the *Ebisatsir*. Since *Ebisatsir* is connected with what the future holds, it is explained as prediction of the destiny or fate of the Effutu for the coming year. Some even believe it is a global prophecy.

The *Osoo Nimpa* (the high priest) consults with the gods to receive messages for the people. This is done by casting lots using the *tobo* (“lodestone” or “iron ball”). Hagan describes this crowning event as follows:

Three wooden pegs are fixed together in front of the grove. A small pad of soft palm sap, the size of a timple, is placed on top of the peg. From around this [“triune” peg] are drawn straight lines of red ochre, charcoal and white clay, salt and millet.

The lodestone (*tobo*), which is the deity consulted, is gently placed on top of the three pegs by the chief priest of Otvano [with prayers of petition conditioned on the sacrifice]. . . .

The priest goes three times round the god, beating a gong. If the god is happy with offering, the *tobo* rolls off with the palm pad attached. The place where it falls indicates what the year has in store for the people. If the *tobo* rolls off and the pad does not come off with it, then the sacrifice has been in vain.

When the iron ball falls on the red ochre, it signifies bloody conflicts and disasters. The white clay indicates heat and drought. The charcoal indicates rain; salt, peace and prosperity [more fish]; and millet, a bumper harvest.⁴⁶

According to Wyllie, when the lot is cast and the interpretation is given something mysterious happens to the members of the *Asafo* company.

The relationships between the two *Asafo* companies undergo a marked change. Until this point in the rituals, relationships between them are characterized by mock hostility, jeering, and insulting behavior, sometimes erupting into physical violence between members of opposing companies. [But] on Sunday evening, however, members of both companies come together in public to dance and sing in the streets and this ritual reconciliation of the *Asafo* marks the ending of the *Aboakyer*.⁴⁷

Final Rites for the Priests

When the celebration is over the priests remain at the grove for a week to cleanse the grove and themselves from any uncleanness and to re-consecrate themselves for service in the coming year. During this time they also perform certain rituals to bid farewell to visitor gods who came to grace the festival with their powers and presence.⁴⁸

According to *Ayensu Obirew* (the Fetish Priestess of the Ayensu), the *Asɔɔ* and the *Abirew* remain at the grove for a week looking forward to showers or rain. If it rains it indicates acceptance of the people's offering. Rain water is collected and used to wash all utensils used for the rituals. If it does not rain during the week, it signifies a bad omen.

⁴⁶Ibid., 187.

⁴⁷Wyllie, *Africa*, 82.

⁴⁸Adwoa Edefua (*Ayensu Obirew*), interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 19, 2014.

Rites of purification are done and sea water fetched at midnight by the priests is used to wash all the utensils. On the eighth day (the Sunday following the ritual sacrifice) very early in the morning the god is returned to his resting place with some libations and prayers. After sharing some drinks together, the priests and fetish priests and priestesses are dismissed⁴⁹ to officially end the festival.

Summary

This chapter has described the *Aboakyer* festival from its very inception to the present form of its celebration. It has also showed the various roles played by the people, the *Asafo* groups, and especially the king and the priests in the ritual sacrifice of the deer. Revealed in this description are insightful atonement elements that will provide the framework for an effective dialogue with the *Yom Kippur* festival of the Old Testament in the next chapter.

This comparison, which is the content of the next chapter, will look at both the similarities and contrasts between the two festivals in terms of the key elements described in this chapter: the time setting, the preparation of the priest and people, and the role of the high priest and his assistants particularly in the ritual sacrifices of the two festivals.

⁴⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ATONEMENT IN *ABOAKYER* AND *YOM KIPPUR* FESTIVALS

The fourth chapter described the ethnography of *Aboakyer* festival to set the stage for the comparison with the *Yom Kippur* festival of the OT. In this chapter, the comparison will discuss the similarities and dissimilarities of the two festivals. The chapter will be prefaced with the reason for the comparison and also the method for the comparison. Since the two festivals are not connected geographically, chronologically, or theologically, a blend of Hallo's comparative approach and typological comparison¹ will be applied to help in the deduction of suggestions for the missiological model for effective mission among the Effutu of Winneba.

Why the Comparison with the Old Testament *Yom Kippur* Atonement

Scholars generally agree that there are two broad biblical concepts about atonement: the typical OT concepts and the antitypical Christian concepts.² The Christian concepts of atonement are anti-typical because they are considered from what has been accomplished by Jesus Christ—the antitypical Lamb of God or the Ultimate Sacrifice—at the cross. Although the final goal of reconciliation is common in the concepts, the

¹Gerald A. Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 55.

²Wolf, "Atonement," *ER*, 1:594.

antitypical sacrificial system has no animal victim for blood sacrifice.³ The writings of Paul and some New Testament writers show that the offering of blood or animal sacrifices as substitutes was not regarded “as a Christian activity.”⁴ This antitypical nature of the NT concept, which clearly has no animal victim, therefore does not qualify as a model for the comparative study of this project. It is rather the OT typology of sacrifice that fits the research’s intention. It is in this typical OT sacrificial system that the true meaning of atonement finds its graphic presentation as well the clues needed for the comprehensive understanding of the ultimate sacrifice, of Christ.

Comparative Method

To relate an ATR festival like *Aboakyer* to the *Yom Kippur* festival is challenging because the two are in no way connected geographically, chronologically, or theologically. Comparison of this nature is only possible with comparative methodology. For this project a blend of comparative methods will be used: William Hallo’s *comparative approach* and, what Gerald Kleinbeil terms, *typological comparison*.⁵

According to Hallo, an expert on ANE cultures, every culture should be allowed to express itself within its historical context. Further, each culture has an internal set of criteria for assessing its authenticity. One set of criteria used to analyze aspects of one culture should therefore not be imposed on another especially when dealing with cultures

³J. C. Rylaarsdam “Atonement,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* vol. 1 edited by George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 310.

⁴Sacha Stern, “Sacrifice,” *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, edited by Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 392, 393.

⁵Gerald Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap*, 63 (parenthesis in brackets supplied).

that have not been in contact with each other like the cultures of the Effutu and the Israelites. Arguing along the line of historiography Hallo posits:

Historiography is a subjective enterprise in which each culture ultimately defines the ethnic parameters of its own past for itself. '[This is because] history is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past. . . . Each civilization or ethnic entity is [therefore] entitled to render account of the past *to itself* by appropriating *to itself* that portion of the past which it chooses *for itself*.'⁶

Hallo believes strongly that with this perspective, comparisons and contrasts can be done for the purpose of understanding a specific culture. James C. Moyer, who employed this method of comparison in his study of cultic practices of the Israelites of the OT and that of the Hittites explains it this way:

Before proceeding any further we must consider a possible objection concerning the validity of the comparative approach which we propose to make. It is generally agreed that the Hittites mentioned in the OT as being a native Semitic tribe have nothing to do with the Hittites of Anatolia. These alternative views, while they should keep our conclusions cautious, do not invalidate drawing comparisons between the OT and the Hittite cuneiform texts [in other words, their cultural symbols and by extension, their practices].⁷

In such comparisons, John Walton notes, "both similarities and differences must be observed, documented, and evaluated, not for the sake of critiquing, but for the sake of understanding."⁸

⁶William Hallo, "Biblical History in its Near Eastern Setting: the Contextual Approach" in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*. Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 34, edited by Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo, and John B. White, 1-26 (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick, 1980), 6.

⁷James C. Moyer, "Hittite and Israelite Cultic Practices: A Selected Comparison" in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*. Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 34, edited by Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo, and John B. White, 19-38 (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick, 1980), 20, accessed March 2, 2015, https://books.google.com/books?id=09_GggZLt8MC&pg=PR13&lpg=PR13&dq=hallo,+William+W.+Scripture+in+Contest&source=bl&ots=0f_fxmDjTi&sig=7DIjAOGPQ94VpxJFjJQ77DcxUOQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=W3zVNDYJKLIsAS08oLQBw&ved=0CEUQ6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=hallo%20William%20W.%20comparative%20method&f=true ().

⁸John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 24.

Typological comparison makes the comparative methodology appropriate for this project because it “compares societies and cultures [like the Effutu and the Israelites’ cultures] that ‘are far apart both geographically and chronologically.’”⁹ It is from the blend of these two comparative methodologies that I can compare and contrast the *Aboakyer* festival of the Effutu tribe in Ghana and the *Yom Kippur* festival of the Old Testament.

***Yom Kippur* Festival**

Yom Kippur is one of the OT festivals listed in Leviticus 23. In Hebrew it is called *Yom HaKippurim*, meaning Day of Purgation/Atonement and in post-biblical Hebrew it came to be called *Yom Kippur*.¹⁰ Among all the OT festivals, *Yom Kippur* is unique because it is the only day when the high priest enters the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary to perform special blood manipulation rituals—using a bull and a goats to effect a special comprehensive cleansing—and a special hand-leaning transfer of sin onto a live goat for *Azazel*. Leviticus 16:1-34 prescribes the details of the festival as follows:

YHWH spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached YHWH.² YHWH said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.³ “This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.⁴ He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself

⁹Gerald Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap*, 63; See also Meir Malul, *Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism* AOAT 221 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 14.

¹⁰Cf. Num 5:8, where the plural form *kippurim* is abstract in ‘*ayil hakkippurim*, the ram of atonement, referring to one ram. Also in Lev 23:27 and 25:9 where the plural *yom hakkippurim* is used for the name of the festival. See Encyclopaedia Judaica on *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement. The *Mishnah* and *Tosefta* use the biblical expression as the title of the tractate *Yom Hakkippurim*, but the later Babylonian Talmud titles the tractate *Yom Kippur*.

with water before he puts them on. ⁵From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁶“Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his house-hold. ⁷Then he is to take the two goats and present them before YHWH at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁸He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for YHWH and the other for the scapegoat. ⁹Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to YHWH and sacrifice it for a sin offering. ¹⁰But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before YHWH to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat. ¹¹“Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. ¹²He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before YHWH and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. ¹³He is to put the incense on the fire before YHWH, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die. ¹⁴He is to take some of the bull’s blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. ¹⁵“He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull’s blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. ¹⁶In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place [*from*] the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. ¹⁷No one is to be in the Tent of Meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his house-hold and the whole community of Israel. ¹⁸“Then he shall come out to the altar that is before YHWH and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull’s blood and some of the goat’s blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. ¹⁹He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. ²⁰“When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. ²²The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert. ²³“Then Aaron is to go into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there. ²⁴He shall bathe himself with water in a holy place and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. ²⁶“The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and offal are to be burned up. ²⁸The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁹“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh

month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or an alien living among you—³⁰because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before YHWH, you will be clean from all your sins. ³¹It is a sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. ³²The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments ³³and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the community. ³⁴“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.” And it was done, as YHWH commanded Moses (Lev 16:1-34 NIV)

Yom Kippur Rituals

First, it must be noted that when considering the ancient Israelite system of rituals, the only authentic source for its description and comprehension is the biblical text.¹¹ Again since the complex ritual procedure of the high priest on *Yom Kippur* has some details described outside Leviticus 16 (Num 29:11; Lev 23:27; 25:9) the researcher will not hesitate to use them in the reconstruction of the ritual process of the Day of Atonement.

Yom Kippur Ritual Complex

The prescription of the *Yom Kippur* ritual in Leviticus 16 presents a complex myriad of rituals. “The ritual is heavy in symbolism”¹² and it is considered to be “one of the most complex rituals to have reached us from any ancient society.”¹³ According to Roy Gane, who has done much study on the Day of Atonement and to whose work I am

¹¹Roy Gane, *Cult and Character*, 9.

¹²W. H. Bellinger Jnr., *New International Biblical Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 102.

¹³B. Levine, *JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 99. See also Roy Gane, *Cult and Character*, 35.

indebted for this section, this ritual complex includes three kinds of rituals with respect to the Jewish ritual calendar (Num 29:7-11): “(1) regular rituals, which are performed morning and evening on every day of the year, (2) festival offerings, which supplement the regular burnt offering, and (3) rituals prescribed in Leviticus 16 which are special to the day.”¹⁴

Jewish tradition holds that every element of the ritual should be meticulously executed by the high priest because “every activity of the Day of Atonement that is stated according to the fixed order—if he [the high priest] did one activity before its fellow, he has done nothing, at all,”¹⁵ Gane has carefully outlined the various rituals and sub-rituals of the *Yom Kippur* as follows:

Structure of the Ritual Complex¹⁶

1. morning complex

1.1 priests’ washing of hands and feet = enhance ritual purity of priests

1.2 regular burnt offering complex = offer regular food gift to YHWH

1.2.1 regular burnt offering = *offer whole animal food gift to YHWH*

1.2.2 regular cereal offering = *offer supplementary cereal food to YHWH*

1.2.3 regular wine offering = *offer supplementary drink gift to YHWH*

1.3 festival complex = supplement regular food gift to YHWH

1.3.1 Festival purification offering = *fulfill condition for purification of Israelites*

1.3.2 burnt offering repetition complex = offer extra food gift to YHWH

1.3.2.1 1st burnt offering complex = *offer extra food gift to YHWH*

1.3.2.1.1 burnt offering = *offer whole animal food gift to YHWH*

1.3.2.1.2 cereal offering = *offer supplementary cereal food gift to YHWH*

1.3.2.1.3 wine offering = *offer supplementary drink gift to YHWH*
etc.

1.3.2.9. 9th burnt offering complex = *offer extra food gift to YHWH*

1.3.2.9.1 burnt offering = *(same as above)*

¹⁴Roy E. Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 288.

¹⁵Ibid., iii.

¹⁶Ibid., 300-303.

- 1.3.2.9.2 cereal offering
- 1.3.2.9.3 wine offering
- 1.4 high priest's regular cereal offering = *render high priestly due to YHWH*
- 1.5 *šekar* libation = *offer drink to YHWH inside his residence*
- 1.6 incense ritual = *sweeten atmosphere in YHWH's residence*
- 1.7 lamp ritual—1st part = *light YHWH's residence*
- 2. purgation complex = *remove evils offensive to YHWH***
 - 2.1 high priest's full washing = *supplement enhancement of high priest's ritual purity*
 - 2.2 lot ritual = *transfer ownership of goats*
 - 2.3 overall purification offering complex—1st part = *remove evils offensive to YHWH***
 - 2.4 Azazel's goat ritual = *expel moral evils to wilderness*
 - 2.5 high priest's full washing = *supplement enhancement of high priest's ritual purity*
 - 2.6 high priest's washing of hands and feet = *enhance ritual purity of high priest*
 - 2.7 overall purification offering complex—2nd part = *remove evils from YHWH's sanctuary (postrequisites)***
 - 2.7.1 burnt offering complex for priests = *supplement purification offering on behalf of priests***
 - 2.7.1.1 burnt offering = *offer whole animal food gift to YHWH*
 - 2.7.1.2 cereal offering = *offer supplementary cereal food gift to YHWH*
 - 2.7.1.3 wine offering = *offer supplementary drink gift to YHWH*
 - 2.7.2 burnt offering complex for community = *supplement purification offering on behalf of community***
 - 2.7.2.1 burnt offering = *(same as above)*
 - 2.7.2.2 cereal offering
 - 2.7.2.3 wine offering
 - 2.7.3 "purification offering of purgations" complex—2nd part = *restore YHWH's sanctuary to purity from evils of Israelites (postrequisite activities)***
 - 2.7.3.1 . purification offering for priests – *restore YHWH's sanctuary from evils of priests*
 - 2.7.3.2 Purification offering for community = *restore YHWH's sanctuary from evils of community*
- 3. evening regular complex = *perform regular service for YHWH***
 - 3.1 priests' washing of hands and feet = *enhance ritual purity of priests*
 - 3.2 Regular burnt offering complex = *offer regular food gift to YHWH***
 - 3.2.1 regular burnt offering = *offer whole animal food gift to YHWH*
 - 3.2.2 regular cereal offering = *offer supplementary cereal food gift to YHWH*
 - 3.2.3 regular wine offering = *offer supplementary drink gift to YHWH*
 - 3.3 high priest's regular cereal offering = *render high priestly due to YHWH*
 - 3.4 *šekar* libation = *offer drink to YHWH inside his residence*
 - 3.5 incense ritual = *sweeten atmosphere in YHWH's residence*
 - 3.6 lamp ritual—2nd part = *light YHWH's residence*

***Aboakyer* Festival and *Yom Kippur* Festival: Similarities**

With Gane's structure in mind, this section of the analysis will consider similarities between the *Aboakyer* and *Yom Kippur* festivals. It will focus on the timing of the festival, the priestly role, priestly preparation, the role of the people, the atonement animal, the purgation rites (atonement rituals), and finally, the purpose of the festivals.

Timing of Celebration of Festival

Both the *Aboakyer* and the *Yom Kippur* Festivals are annual festivals with fixed times for their celebration. The times for the celebration of both festivals are predicated upon a ritual calendar. As noted in Chapter 4, the *Aboakyer* is celebrated after the *Nde* and specifically the *Nsraho* ("anointing of the gods") rites, which are prerequisite procedures performed in anticipation of the *Aboakyer*. Interestingly, the *Yom Kippur* festival was also an integral part of a "unified cycle" of rituals (Lev 23; cf. Num 28-29). The festivals were organized in such a manner that "the purpose and meaning of each feast rest upon the one preceding it and, in effect upon all the others."¹⁷ For instance, *Yom Kippur*, which is the most solemn of all the OT festivals, follows the ten-day Festival of Trumpets (Lev 23:24) which was believed to warn the people of Israel and to ready them for the judgment day.¹⁸

Of all the rituals of the Effutu, the *Aboakyer* is the climax, and the period in the year designated for its celebration is considered the most solemn period of the Effutu

¹⁷Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History Part 2: The Fall Festivals* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1996), 3.

¹⁸Ibid.

ritual calendar. This compares with the *Yom Kippur* festival, which contained the ultimate sacrifices of the unified OT Israelite ritual cycle, and was the “most solemn” of the OT calendric ritual observances.¹⁹

Priestly Role

Generally, priests are ritual specialists in charge of the ritual cult of any organized society. Their main roles, as presented in the OT, are to ensure that the sacrifices are efficacious, to protect the sacredness of ritual spaces, and to accurately keep ritual time.²⁰ In both the OT and the ATR setting, priesthood was part of a family line. The Effutu describe it as *ise ye atoo* (hereditary office along patrilineal lines) just like the OT priesthood which passed from father to son (Lev 16:32).

The different priestly roles in the sanctuary services recorded in the OT era also taught degrees or levels of holiness and set limits of operation and access for both priests and worshipers.²¹ Consequently, the OT priesthood was highly regimented with assigned duties for each order “according to the commandment of YHWH, . . . every one according to his service, and according to his burden” (Num 4:1-49). An ordained priest (*kohen*) ministered in the outer court and the holy place. But during *Yom Kippur*, the ministration in the sanctuary took a different turn. On this day, the high priest stood

¹⁹Gane, *Ritual Dynamics*, 145.

²⁰Corrine Patton, “Layers of Meaning: Priesthood in Jeremiah MT,” *The Priests in the Prophets: the Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religion Specialists in the Latter Prophets*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis (London, UK: T & T Clark International, 2004), 150.

²¹Felix Chingota, “Leviticus,” *African Bible Commentary (ABC)*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 130, 131.

on behalf of the nation to perform a corporate expiation ritual.²² Similarly, in the *Aboakyer* Festival, it is the *Osoo Nipa* (the high priest) who oversees the ritual sacrifice of the deer to atone for the people. In fact, the entire *Aboakyer* ritual ministration centered on and around him. All the *Asoo* (“priests”) and *Abirew* (“festish priests”) only assist him in performing the rituals.

Priestly Preparations

Meticulous preparation is a crucial element in both the *Aboakyer* and the *Yom Kippur* festivals. In the OT, the high priest was expected to prepare seriously for the festival. For example, the account of the Day of Atonement ritual in Leviticus 16, specifically with the reminder of the death of Nadab and Abihu (v. 1), sounded a warning to all priests regarding the seriousness they should attach to total compliance to rituals governing the performance of their duties in the tabernacle. In the opening words of warning, God unequivocally warned that failure to meticulously follow his instructions would inevitably result in instant death (Lev 16:1).²³

On the Day of Atonement the high priest is to bring a “bull for his own sin

²²Felix Chingota, “Leviticus,” *ABC*, 131.

²³This death penalty informed the way the high priest prepared for *Yom Kippur* in the second temple period. Because the ritual activities for the Day of Atonement centered on the high priest, “Every precaution had to be taken to enable him to emerge unscathed. Rabbinic tradition . . . prescribed seven days before the festival during which the high priest had to separate himself from his wife and be isolated in a special cell. He would spend time rehearsing the actions required in the rite. On the eve of the festival, he was not allowed to sleep for fear that he might have a nocturnal emission and thus be deemed impure (Lev 15:16)” (Chingota, “Leviticus,” *ABC*, 156). According to Jewish tradition, two priests were assigned to keep the high priest company. They were to engage him in reflections that would help him remember any sin element in his life to deepen his confession for cleansing so that he would be prepared for the most sacred duty he was to perform. Terry Harmon, “Jewish High Priest Garments,” accessed March 5, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOfYoD JFbcg>.

offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering” (Lev 16:11). The phrases, “for himself” and “for his own sins,” speak volumes about the necessity for the high priest’s preparation to be thorough and comprehensive. Even the Festival of Trumpets, which occurred just before the Day of Atonement, in the “unified cycle [or rituals],” was, deductively, a ten day preparation period for both the priests and the people.²⁴

Although *Yom Kippur* was not a pilgrimage festival, all the people participated in it by practicing physical self-denial (including fasting) and by abstaining from all work (Lev 16:29, 31). As commanded by YHWH, “it was the only day of fasting enjoined on Israel—‘you must deny yourselves [NIV mg., “fast”]’ (Lev 16: 29, 31)—and was to be a special Sabbath of rest and solemnity [for everybody]. It was a time of special contrition . . . and atonement.”²⁵

The *Aboakyer* has a twenty-eight day preparation especially by the priests of the various agnatic shrines. As stated in the previous chapter, two weeks before the *Aboakyer* festival, the *Osoɔw Nipa* (high priest) moves from his house to the grove to prepare himself for the rituals of the festival. Like the high priest of the OT times, he does not prepare in isolation. He is supported and assisted by the spiritual leaders of the people—the *Asɔɔ* (the priests) and the *Abirew* (the festish priests and priestesses). These assistants do not sleep in their houses but join the high priest at the outer court of the grove.

²⁴Bacchiocchi, *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*, 3. See also Roy Gane, *The NIV Application Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers*, 401-404. Here Gane sees the trumpet blasts (*teru’ah*; Lev 23:24) of the Festival of Trumpets as an urgent call or reminder (*zikkaron*) that ushers the people to into “days of awe” implying “the solemn responsibility of repentance and reformation [p.401, 402].” This is an appropriate preparation ritual needed to enter into the most solemn day in the Jewish ritual calendar, *Yom Kippur*.

²⁵Harris, *EBC*, 12:588.

Interestingly, this priestly purification preparation before approaching a deity has been a common practice from ancient times. For example, priestly purity was required by the gods of the Hittites. Among other requirements, the Hittite priests were to be ritually clean before they entered the temple; they were to abstain from any sexual acts, and to avoid casual entry into the temple.²⁶ The record adds: “Let those who prepare the daily loaves be clean. Let them be bathed (and) groomed, let their (body) hair be removed. Let them be clothed in clean dresses. [While] unclean let them not prepare (the loaves).”²⁷

The mention of dress brings to mind another element of sacred preparation. In ATR, special occasions call for special clothing. So do functions or statuses in society. How an individual dresses (particularly the color) can either tell his/her role and status in society or help deduce the occasion. Among the *Akan* ethnic group, black (*brisi*) and red (*kobene*) colors indicate mourning, while white (*fitaa*) indicates rejoicing or victory. In a spiritual sense, particularly among many tribes in Ghana, the color white has another symbolic twist. Specifically, the white calico (*krada*) has become not only a symbol of purity but sign of sacredness. For example, when the *krada* is wrapped around something (i.e., a tree), that thing assumes a kind of sacredness and may even become a fetish. When ATR priests and priestesses put on dresses made with this particular white fabric, it is believed to be an indication of their sacredness or purity. Consequently, on festive or special occasions such as the *Aboakyer*, it is customary that the *Osoɔw Nipa* and his team

²⁶Bruce Wells, *Exodus: Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 3 vols., ed. John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 1: 256.

²⁷*Ibid.* (See also Lev 16:4).

clad themselves in white to assume the sacred appearance to perform sacred duties for the people.

Interestingly, the high priest of the OT also mirrors this concept of purity associated with the color white. The biblical text even commands him to do so before entering the holy precincts on the Day of Atonement.

The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest . . . [according to the Scriptures] is to put on the sacred [white] linen garments (Lev 16:32) the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird[ed] . . . with the curious girdle of the ephod . . . [with] the mitre upon his head, and . . . the holy crown upon the mitre (Exod 29:5, 6).

Role of the People

The role of the people in both the *Yom Kippur* and the *Aboakyer* is to provide the victims for the sacrifice. In the OT, the Israelites provided the two goats and also the bull which the high priest used for the various atonement rituals (Lev 16:5). With the *Aboakyer*, the *Awutu-abe*, represented by the two *Asafo* groups, provide the deer for the sacrifice.²⁸ In short, both festivals show that communal preparation, whether spiritually or physically, is required.

Place of Sacrifice

Religious rituals are not performed arbitrarily or just anywhere. Because of their sacred nature, they are performed in sacred spaces. The first two *Yom Kippur* sacrifices, which are special purification offerings, are slaughtered in the outer court and the high

²⁸In addition to the provision of the victims, the people (*Awutu-abe*) also join to swell the jubilation that follows a successful hunt, just as the people of Israel in the post-biblical rabbinic tradition join together to celebrate the high priest's successful return from the Most Holy Place and the transference of the sins of the people onto the goat for *Azazel*, which is sent into the wilderness to perish (Lev 16:21, 22).

priest brings their blood beyond the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant rested (Lev 16:11-16).

Similarly, the *Aboakyer* festival sacrifice also takes place at the grove of the tribal god *Penkye Otu*, which the Effutu consider to be the most holy place. Though the grove has no enclosed outer-court, the actual slaughtering of the deer, like the *Yom Kippur* sacrifices, takes place in the open space outside the enclosed grove of *Penkye Otu*, the equivalent of an outer court. The ritual blood daubing and spreading of selected pieces of (deer) meat by the *Osoɔw Nipa*, however, take place inside the grove.

Atonement Animals

Though different in kind, the goats, bull, and rams (Lev 16:2, 5) used for the *Yom Kippur*, and the deer used of the current *Aboakyer* festival are all clean animals according to the Leviticus 11 specifications. A significant element of similarity concerning the condition of the sacrificial victims is that all the animals for the various rituals in both festivals are to be presented alive at the sacred space and without blemish or any defect or impurity. The animals are also to be “*presented before YHWH*”²⁹ (Lev 16:7-10) [Emphasis mine]. Since the animals are not received by God directly, the words “before YHWH” can also mean that the animals are to be presented before the representative of the deity—the high priest and the *Oma Odefey* in *Yom Kippur* and *Aboakyer* respectively.

²⁹In Lev 16:1, 2, 7, 10, 12, 13, 18, 30; 17:4 and elsewhere in pentateuchal ritual law (Exod 28:30; Num 16:40; 18:19; etc.), “before YHWH” refers to before the presence of the Lord enshrined in the holy of holies. Other texts like Exod 23:17; 27:21; Deut 16:16 refer to any place within the temple precinct as “before YHWH.” For further study see Baruch Levine comments on biblical rituals in his book titled, *In the Presence of the Lord*; and also Milgrom’s comment on this phrase in Lev 1 and Lev 16.

Another commonality between the two festivals is seen when the selection of the sacrificial victims is ritually considered. Because the two *Asafo* companies, most of the time, succeed in catching at least one deer for the sacrifice there are almost always two deer to choose from. Lots are not cast in the *Aboakyer* ritual selection process as was the case on the *Yom Kippur* to determine which of the two goats would belong to the Lord and which would belong to Azazel. Rather, the selection is done by the sacerdotal ritual step of the *Oma Odefey* on the deer presented first. In effect, both animals for the main sacrifice are ritually selected—one by lot (*Yom Kippur*) and the other by the king's step (*Aboakyer*).

Finally, and significantly for this study, both of the animals selected (YHWH's goat and the deer) are slaughtered and their blood is used to make atonement for the people, an aspect that will be discussed in detail below.

Purgation Ritual

The rituals of both the *Yom Kippur* and *Aboakyer* festivals go through some regimented steps. These are done in specified order and at specific places with mysterious undertones.

***Yom Kippur* Purgation Ritual**

The sacrifice for the removal of sin from the sanctuary and camp during the *Yom Kippur* ceremony was a complex one with several elaborate and specified steps which can be subdivided into two sub-rituals. First is a set of complex rituals for the removal of sins and physical impurities from the sanctuary, and second is the ritual of the live goat belonging to *Azazel* to remove sins from the Israelite camp into the wilderness.

Removal Rituals

As observed by Gane, the removal offerings on *Yom Kippur* involved two basic purification offerings (*hatta 't* sacrifices) that together comprised the *hatta 't hakkippurim*, “the purification offering of atonement” (Exod 30:10; Lev 16:14-19). The blood of the bull on behalf of the high priest and his family (including all the other priests) and the blood of the Lord’s goat on behalf of the rest of the Israelite community are both applied by the high priest in the inner sanctum—one sprinkling on the golden cover (*kapporet*) of the Ark of Covenant and seven times before it (Lev 16:13-16).³⁰

Up to this point, as observed by Gane, the ritual processes are considered as removal of evils (sins and physical ritual impurities) from the sanctuary. This is because the blood manipulation begins from the inner sanctum and moves outward, first to the outer sanctum and finally, to the outer court, where “the altar itself receives the sevenfold sprinkling” before the remainder of the blood is poured at its base. OT scholars such as Jacob Milgrom and Roy Gane agree that this blood manipulation before the altar accomplishes the result stated in Leviticus 16:19 (cf. Exod 29:36-37): to “purify it” (*ḥittē' kipper*) and to “consecrate it” (*māšah, qiddēš*).³¹ The suet of the two purification offerings (bull and goat) are then burned on the altar and the rest of their carcasses is disposed of by incineration outside the temple precincts according to the ritual specification. To summarize, the removal process is two-fold: “purging [the entire

³⁰Gane, *Cult and Character*, 45, 46.

³¹Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, 178; See also Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 1037.

sanctuary] from the accumulated ritual impurities and moral faults of the Israelites and reconsecrating the outer altar.”³²

Elimination Rituals

Finally, in the *Yom Kippur* festival, comes the elimination ritual of the *Azazel*'s goat, whereby the sins of the people are ritually transferred onto the live goat to be banished into the wilderness. The Scripture record of this unique double hand-leaning transfer and the banishment reads:

But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before YHWH, . . . And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness (Lev 16:10, 21, 22).

Lay persons who assisted by burning the purification offering carcasses and leading the live goat for *Azazel* into the wilderness must ritually purify themselves with water before coming back into the community (Lev 16:26).

***Aboakyer* Elimination Ritual**

Like the *Yom Kippur* ritual process, the sacrifice of *Aboakyer* is very complex. It has well-organized levels of ministration performed by different priestly units or orders including the *Oma Odefey*. As explained in the fourth chapter, the elimination process includes the ritual step of the *Oma Odefey*, the ritual tying, and finally the actual sacrifice at the grove of *Penkye Otu*.

³²Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, 179.

Ritual Step: *Musu* Transfer

The elimination process of the *Aboakyer* begins with the *Oma Odefey*'s ritual stepping which transfers the *musu* (ritual impurity) of the people on to the deer. In the Akan culture transgression of sacred spaces is termed as *musu* (taboo). This is a very strong word with deeper meaning. Etymologically it is composed of two words—*mu* from the root word *emu* (dead body) and *su* from the root *nsu* (water). *Musu* implies a transgression as putrid as the watery fluid from a decomposing dead body. *Musu* is therefore regarded by the Akan as the highest form of ritual impurity/stain, which requires more than ordinary means to erase it. Incest of every kind, and blatant disrespect of parents, rulers, and deities are examples. *Musu* therefore needs supernatural intervention or detergent to atone for and rectify such messy situations. At times it requires the blood of the victim to cover up or make atonement.

According to Nana Darkwa I, the king's step is like that of the elephant which demolishes anything (even traps) on his way. Because of the symbolic size of his foot, when he steps on a delicate matter or very sensitive issues in society, they are sealed. So in the context of adjudication of the sensitive cases mentioned above, the king/chief's step is believed to mop up or absorb all the *musu* in order to avert evil and maintain the cosmological equilibrium of the society.³³ Accordingly, by the three-fold ritual stepping of the *Oma Odefey* on the deer with his consecrated³⁴ right bare foot, which he does by

³³Nana Darkwa I, Gyaasehene of Akroso, and Saamashene of Kokofe Asante, phone interview by author, November 25, 2014, Nsaba, Ghana.

³⁴The *Oma Odefey*'s foot is consecrated with a libation before he steps on the deer.

the removal of his foot from the royal slippers, the *musu* of the *Awutu-abe* is conclusively transferred unto the deer for the ritual sacrifice.

Ritual Tying and Procession by *Akyeampoano* Priests

The second ritual is the tying of the selected deer along with many libations and prayers by the *Akyeampoano* priests. This ritual follows the mysterious touch which is said to kill the deer. Then comes the procession to the grove with the tied deer, which avoids the main roads with the warning *wonhyia oo* (do not walk towards it or not to be accosted). This is done to prevent people from breaking the taboo of coming close to the sacred sacrificial victim.

Ritual Sacrifice

The ritual sacrifice of the deer is the final step in the elimination set of rituals. Like the OT sanctuary, this deer ritual sacrifice takes place at the grove or shrine of *Ope Penkye Otu* under the supervision of the *Osɔw Nipa* (high priest) assisted by the *Asɔɔ* priests and the *Abirew* festish priests/priestesses.

Mysterious Elements

One thing that underpins the *Yom Kippur* and *Aboakyer* festivals is the display of phenomenal mysteries in the elimination processes or rituals. These give the rituals their supernatural dimension because “religious ritual . . . involves belief in a deity. . . [and involves] something ritually transferred to the sacred realm for utilization by a deity.”³⁵

³⁵Gane, *Cult and Character*, 16.

The Deer Hunt Experience

Both current and former deer hunt participants, particularly those who have become Christians, testify that the hunt has spiritual-power undertones. They affirm that during the catch no deadly or dangerous animal or insect is sighted in the thickets such as scorpions, snakes, and other wild animals. They crawl on their bellies, and squeeze their way through dangerous places without seeing any of these creatures which abound in the thickets. The surprise is that the *Asafo* most often surround portions of the thicket/bush and sneak up on the deer to catch it. But until the present time, no record of any bite or threat from these creatures has been recorded or reported, not even by those select scouts who go to guard these thickets days before the actual catch. Only the expected scratches and cuts from sharp thorns and shrubs are reported. The *Awutu-abe*, therefore, believe that the whole *Aboakyer* celebration is a spiritual power event with the Effutu gods and spiritual forces in total charge.

The Mysterious Touch

After the king's step, the triumphant *Asafo* group carries the deer to the *Akyeampon-abe* who are in-charge of ritually tying the deer. Informants say the deity slaughters the deer after a ritual stick has been used to touch its neck three times. According to the high priest, by the time it gets to the shrine of *Ope Penkye Otu*, it has already died. It must be noted that the sacrifice is termed *ope-bi*, meaning it is the god who even gives the catch.

Hot Meat Selection

The selection of the seventy-seven pieces of hot meat from the boiling pot by the high priest with bare hands is unnatural because his hands are not burned in the process. Therefore it cannot be said that there is no spirit power intervention or possession. According to informants, the preparations for the festival are meant to invoke the presence of supernatural powers.

Yom Kippur Mystery

The mystery of the *Yom Kippur* is the visible manifestation of the presence of God. Visible from the outside is the mysterious divine cloud on top of the tabernacle. Another phenomenon, visible only to the high priest on the inside, is the Shekinah Glory of God at the bottom of the cloud which shines from and above the Ark of the Covenant. Both of these mysterious phenomena declare unequivocally the visible presence of the Transcendent (Lev 16:13; Exo 40:34-38; Num 9:15). Other mysteries include the sin cleansing rituals with their complex blood manipulations and the transfer of sins by the high priest's confession onto the goat for *Azazel*.

Purpose of the Sacrifices

Generally, the purpose of the *Yom Kippur* can be derived from its name. It is a day of final comprehensive cleansing and purification. It is a day when all things are reconciled to God; the people, the priests, and the Holy Place (the sanctuary).

For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you that you may be clean from all your sins before YHWH. Then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and all the people of the assembly (Lev 16:30, 33, NKJV).

This finality of the elimination of sin had a twist when the Day of Atonement coincided with the year of Jubilee. The presumed joy of the success of the ritual on this day was accompanied by the blasting of the ram's horn to announce the beginning of the year of liberty (Lev 25:9).³⁶

Blood sacrifices, whether in the OT or ATR, carry the theological motif of atonement—whether cleansing or purification or restoration.³⁷ Even the burnt offering, “which lists no wrongdoing on the part of the worshiper, has . . . *atonement* between God [the Deity/the Supernatural] and God's people at its core: ‘You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be acceptable in your behalf as atonement for you’ (Lev 1:4).”³⁸ Richard Boyce therefore concludes: “All of the law [of rituals in the Book of Leviticus] is concerned with relationships”³⁹ and for that matter reconciliation. Reconciliation is also the ultimate aim of the *Aboakyer* blood sacrifice, which originally was a human sacrifice. Reconciliation with the deity *Penkye Otu* and also between members of the community is the goal of the festival and this is evidenced in the “ritual reconciliation of the *Asafo* [that] marks the ending of the *Aboakyer*.”⁴⁰ In effect, the ritual is to confirm and strengthen the allegiance with the deity who, as it were, holds the people together.

³⁶See also Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, 100.

³⁷Richard N. Boyce, *Leviticus and Numbers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 16.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Wyllie, *Africa*, 82.

***Aboakyer* Festival and *Yom Kippur* Festival Differences**

This analysis of the dissimilarities between the two festivals will consider the same elements discussed in the similarities: period (timing for the festival), place, preparation for both priests and people as well as the pacification rites (atonement rituals), and finally the purpose of the festivals.

The Timing of the Festival

Although they are annual festivals, the *Aboakyer* festival is celebrated during the first weekend in May, and *Yom Kippur* is celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar (Lev 16:29) which is around mid-October in the Gregorian calendar. The *Aboakyer* festival has fixed week days because it is a weekend celebration beginning on Friday, climaxing on Saturday (the Sabbath), and ending on Sunday. *Yom Kippur* falls on the tenth day of the seventh month, which can be any day of the week.

While the time of *Yom Kippur* was instituted by God and cannot be changed, the *Aboakyer* time can be changed. For example, in 2012 and 2013, the *Aboakyer* festival celebration was postponed because of national programs. The Ghanaian *Graphic Online News* captioned “Winneba Ready for Aboakyer Festival,” read; “The festival, which is on the theme, “Peace and Unity: Key for development”, was initially set for May 5, 2012, but had to be rescheduled to May 19, in view of the biometric registration exercise.”⁴¹ This postponement highlights another contrast concerning the celebrants. While *Yom Kippur* is a statutory holiday (a Sabbath) for the entire nation of Israel (Lev 23:24), the

⁴¹“Winneba Ready for *Aboakyer* Festival,” *Graphic Online News*, May 18, 2012, accessed November 28, 2014, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/396389/1/winneba-ready-for-aboakyer-festival.html>.

Aboakyer is for only the small Effutu tribe of Winneba in Ghana. This makes the Effutu plans subordinate to the national agenda.

The timing of the *Aboakyer* is also believed to have linkage with the name the *Awutu-abe* give to God—*Ate Nyimpo*—meaning “the Father/Giver of rain.” Hence, the festival is celebrated when the rains come.

Priestly Role

Although in both the *Yom Kippur* and the *Aboakyer* festivals it is the high priest or *Osɔw Nipa* who is in charge, the *Osɔw Nipa*'s role in the *Aboakyer* is more of supervision. He only comes intermittently to perform specific rites and then finish up with the final ritual. For instance, while the high priest of the OT system does the slaughtering of the goat himself (Lev 16:6-9, 11), the *Osɔw Nipa* does not slaughter the deer himself. It is rather done by the *Akyeampano* priests who are responsible for the slaughtering of victims of sacrifice.

Priestly Preparation

Priestly preparations in both festivals are a requirement. The difference lies in the length of the time for the preparation as well as the purification rites performed by the priests during the ceremonies.

The *Aboakyer* preparation of the *Asɔɔ* (priests) takes four weeks (28 days) while the OT priests take some few days (if the Festival of Trumpets is considered as a preparation period).⁴²

⁴²Gane, *The NIV Application Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers*, 402.

The Israelite high priest needed to bathe in preparation for officiating the rituals of *Yom Kippur* (Lev 16:4b, 24) and was required to offer a bull as a purification offering for his sins and impurities and those of his family. Then he had to offer incense for protection from the Lord's glory when he entered the holy of holies to approach the divine presence (Lev 16:13, 14). By contrast, the *Osɔw Nipa* was not required to do things like these. The *Aboakyer* festival has no offering like the purification offering of the high priest for the OT. Rather, the *Osɔw Nipa* only poured drink libations for his purification and access into the presence of *Ope Penkye Otu*. In the case of the the *Osɔw Nipa*, no ritual bathing or ablution at the grove of *Ope Penkye Otu* was needed, either for the Saturday or Sunday rituals of the *Aboakyer*. There is no incense burning by the *Osɔw Nipa* to mitigate any majestic splendor.

Role of the People

Festivals involve people because they celebrate the events of people. Depending on the nature of the festival, people come in either as direct participants or supporters. What makes the role of the people in the *Aboakyer* different from that of the *Yom Kippur* is that on *Yom Kippur*, the Israelite people presented the ritual animals, rested, and fasted with the high priest irrespective of where they were. But, with the *Aboakyer*, apart from the priestly group (the *Asoo* and *Abirew*), the two *Asafo* companies, who represent the people in the festival ritual, also undergo special, rigorous spiritual preparations a few days before the day for the deer hunt. During these days of preparation, the *Asafo* companies consult with their gods (*Gyamasi* for the *Tuawo*, and *Asakamba* for the *Dentsiwo*) and invoke them, particularly on the eve of the deer hunt (Friday), to seek guidance and favor to succeed in catching a deer for *Penkye Otu*. The *Asafo* members,

apart from abstaining from sexual acts, also have a ritual purification bath in the sea in the early hours of Saturday and two separate sacred sprinklings before setting out for the catch.

Second, while the people of Israel were commanded to practice physical self-denial (including fasting) during *Yom Kippur*, the rest of the population of the *Awutu-abe* only prepares in terms of hosting and accommodating family members in the diaspora as well as visitors who come because of the festival.

The Place for the Sacrifice

The place for sacred rituals in the OT is the sanctuary, which had clearly defined spaces designated with specific consecrated furniture and other items. These defined spaces organized the high priest's ritual movements during his ministration on the Day of Atonement. Unlike the OT sanctuary, which had an enclosed outer court, the African grove compound is not enclosed. Indeed, the ritual slaughter of the deer at this grove of *Penkye Otu* is observable by people outside this area. The only permanent items in the outer court of the grove are the trees designated for the *Asafo* companies, which provide shade for those who perform and witness the sacrifice. The grove also does not have designated permanent altars on which the sacrifices are burned.

Unlike the OT sanctuary, the grove, until recently had no permanent walls enclosing it. Meaning every year, the temporary structure was rebuilt or renovated for the festival. Every year, according to Oboama, my uncle, the *Dentsiwo* bring *nhwireba* (“a

type of stick used for building”) and *Tuawo* bring *apɔ* (“thatch”) for the renovation of the grove.⁴³ Now the grove has been walled, leaving the outer space open.

Atonement Animals

The Effutu wanted *Penkye Otu* to accept domesticated animals such as cows, but he refused. By contrast, the God of Israel accepted what the people could easily lay their hands on: domestic animals that were part of their property. *Ope Penkye Otu* (“the god *Penkye Otu*”) demanded higher value offerings such as royal human beings, dangerous to catch leopards, and finally hard to catch fallow deer in the wild to be caught and presented without blemish with bare hands. But God, the Creator, did not demand anything that the people of Israel could not easily give. Even outside *Yom Kippur* when God wanted something outside the domesticated animal fold (eg. a *wild* ram) from man, as was the case with Abraham, God did not require him go far to fetch the animal for the sacrifice. The *unique* ram was placed at an accessible place and it was also caught by its horns in a thicket to make catching it very easy (Gen 22). Scripture says: “behold [God placed just] behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son” (Gen 22:13). There was no struggle, chasing, sweating, and even endangering life, as happened in the *Aboakyer* festival in the early 1970s. That year (I cannot recollect the precise year) was a bad one because many of the members of the *Dentsiwo Asafo* company were brutally wounded by the deer. From this comparison we exclaim: What a God! What a grace! What a substitution!

⁴³Kobina Oboamah, Focus Group 1, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana May 6, 2014.

Purgation Ritual

Regarding the ritual for elimination of evil in the two festivals striking differences are noted. First, unlike the *Aboakyer*, which requires only one deer for the sacrifice, the two goats (YHWH's goat and the goat for *Azazel*) presented by the people during *Yom Kippur* both had ritual importance. The goat designated by lots as the Lord's goat was sacrificed as a purification offering while the non-sacrificial live goat for *Azazel* was sent into the wilderness after the unique actions of double-hand leaning and confession were done "as a sign of transference" of accumulated sins (16:20-21) from the Israelite camp.⁴⁴

Unlike the *Yom Kippur* festival in which the animals for the sacrifice (one bull, one goat, and two rams) were slaughtered on the same day that the sacrificial role of the Lord's goat was determined, the *Aboakyer* deer was sacrificed the next day after its selection. Furthermore, the Lord's goat (of *Yom Kippur*) was offered as a purification offering, the fat of which was burned on the altar and the carcass of which was incinerated outside the Israelite camp (Lev 16:27). On the other hand, the deer (of the *Aboakyer*) is not burned but slaughtered, cut in pieces, cooked with water in a pot, and distributed among the seventy-seven deities of the Effutu as well as the spiritual leaders of the town.

In the *Yom Kippur* festival, the blood manipulations are greatly emphasized in terms of their direction and repetitions of application (sprinkled one time and seven

⁴⁴See Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure and Cult and Character*. See also Milgrom's commentary on Lev 16 and David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity*.

times, and daubed on the horns of altars) (Lev 16:14-18, 19; cf. Exod 30:10).⁴⁵ All of these specifications are very significant elements that contribute to the meaning of the ritual process.⁴⁶ With the *Aboakyer*, the blood manipulation of the sacrifice at the shrine by the *Osoɔ Nipa* is not so prominent. Rather, what is emphasized is the meat that is distributed and eaten by a select group after the deities have been served.

Conspicuously absent from the *Aboakyer* evil elimination process is an equivalent to the goat for *Azazel* ritual. No live animal (deer) is sent into the wilderness (an uninhabited area) with confessed sins. However, there is a place in the ritual process where a transfer of evil (*musu*) is seen, which somewhat⁴⁷ parallels OT ritual transfer. This is the ritual step of the *Oman Odefey*, which is the symbolic transfer of *musu* (abominable taboos) to the selected deer.

Finally, the two festivals differ in terms of the theological scope of their respective removals of evil. Whereas the *Yom Kippur* festival elimination ritual mirrors the eschatological ultimate annihilation of sin and sinners from the universe, the Effutu *Aboakyer* ritual deals only with the *Awutu-abe* and their god, *Penkye Otu*.

Purpose of the Sacrifices

The *Aboakyer*, from all indications and considerations, is a thanksgiving festival. Therefore, the sacrifice has the overall purpose of showing gratitude to the deity. The

⁴⁵Poured out at the base of the altar is disposal of the remainder in Lev 4, not mentioned in Lev 16, perhaps because the blood could be used up by all the applications.

⁴⁶Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, 145.

⁴⁷I say *somewhat* because this transfer does not parallel the transfer of sins onto the live goat for *Azazel*, but onto the bull and goat that are slain as purification offerings.

sacrifice does not consider the universal issue of sin, which requires something more than sacrifices of forgiveness to exterminate it.

By contrast, Gane, highlights out the fact that the *kipper* of the Day of Atonement goes beyond the forgiveness or the purification of the offerers. Analyzing the syntactic role of the prepositional “*min*,”⁴⁸ he establishes that the *kipper* accomplished by purification offerings throughout the year is about the elimination of evils **from** [emphasis mine] the offerers. But on *Yom Kippur*, a second stage of *kipper* is about elimination of evils from the sanctuary, representing vindication of God’s character. The Azazel’s goat ritual, lacking in the *Aboakyer*, indicates that “not even ritual atonement [of blood] was enough.”⁴⁹ The accumulated impurities must be released and transferred to the goat for *Azazel*.

The *Yom Kippur* rituals show that sin has an original source (*Azazel*) and it cannot be tolerated or accommodated forever by God. Sin should be given back to its source in its totality—both the willful and the accidental (forgiven sins). Sin cannot be annihilated partially. Like a cancerous cell, sin must be wholly rooted out or it will multiply again. Annihilation of sin must deal with its originator, the Devil (*Azazel*).⁵⁰ It can only die out completely if destroyed together with this source. Therefore, it is necessary that the antitypical High Priest himself transfers the sins from God’s people to *Azazel*’s goat.

⁴⁸Gane, *Cult and Character*, 106-143. These pages, which constitute the sixth chapter of this book, deal with the object of the purification offering. The discussion looks at the privative usage of the Hebrew preposition *min*, which Gane believes “Milgrom specifically avoids” [p. 119] but which strongly confirms the idea of removal of impurities from the sanctuary.

⁴⁹Tokunboh, “Leviticus, *ABC*, 131.

⁵⁰Gane, *Cult and Character*, 136; cf. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 288-297.

Summary

The analysis of the two festivals in this chapter within the context of comparative methodology has displayed both similarities and contrasts. Similarities as well as dissimilarities were seen in the roles and rituals outlined or performed by the various celebrants in connection with ritual preparation, ritual time, ritual spaces, and symbols or objects. Though both dealt with reconciliation with the supernatural, the *Aboakyer* festival, unlike the *Yom Kippur* festival, displayed only a local sweep and focus. The *Aboakyer* dealt with the *Awutu-abe* and their quest for “at-one-ment” with their deity *Penkye Otu* through sacrifice. The *Yom Kippur* ritual complex, on the other hand, pointed beyond the local Israelite context to a universal outlook on the issue of sin. In this sense, it must be understood while the *Aboakyer* festival is localized, the *Yom Kippur* festival of the earthly sanctuary system in the OT was typical in the sense that it looked forward to the anti-typical. It was therefore a shadow patterned after the real, which is in heaven (cf. Exod 25:8, 9, 40; Heb 8:1; 9:1-6; Rev 15:8).

The ritual of Azazel’s goat, for which an equivalent is conspicuously lacking in the *Aboakyer*, shows two things. The first is the limitation of the *Aboakyer* festival in dealing with the sin problem as cosmic. Second, the atonement ritual of the *Aboakyer* festival does not address eschatology regarding sin. Through this deficit, a missiological door for the spread of the gospel message about the ultimate atonement.

On the whole, the *Aboakyer* festival, like *Yom Kippur*,⁵¹ seems to bond the

⁵¹First God and the people of Israel are reconciled which translates into the horizontal relationships—family, neighbors etc.. According to tradition reconciliation assumes a high tone when *Yom Kippur* coincides with the year of Jubilee. Generally, as structured in the cycle of rituals, the *Yom Kippur* is punctuated by the Feast of Tabernacles which brings the Israelites together in fellowship and sharing.

people together. It affirms their historic roots, expresses their appreciation to their deity (*Otu*), and by extension respect to their spiritual leaders. The yearning of the people for atonement, which occurs at the end of the festival, is also missiologically significant. Since it is the purpose of the festival to reconcile the people who are divided along *Asafo* affiliations at the end of the festival (see Chapter 4), the atonement automatically implies peace within the township; intra-peace within the *Asafo* individual companies, and inter-peace between the two *Asafo* companies. This explains why the *Asafo* companies, with the people, who are to passionately support their *Dentsiwo* and *Tuawo* affiliations as dictated by the *Pramma* social system that underlies their solidarity, are to unite as one people after the festival. The demonstration that “at-one-ment” with the transcendent is reflected among the people will be one of the missiological elements that will be discussed in the next chapter in addition to challenges that the *Aboakyer* poses to mission.

CHAPTER 6

ABOAKYER AND YOM KIPPUR FESTIVALS: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This chapter looks at the missiological significance of the analysis of Chapter 5, particularly how the findings will potentially help to craft a missiological model for a more effective Adventist mission among the Effutu. This chapter will therefore discuss the meaning, goal, and scope of mission to provide the framework for a critical contextualization of the gospel message among the Efutu. The contextualization will do two things: (1) identify atonement elements of the analysis of the *Aboakyer* festival that proffer missiological opportunities (redemptive analogies) and (2) show how the challenges posed by some of the atonement elements of the *Aboakyer* festival could be potentially addressed missiologically. The chapter will end with a Bible-based missiological model that critical contextualization would suggest for effective Adventist mission among the Effutu.

An Understanding of Mission

Definition of Mission

Mission, in one sense, is God's overarching, salvific, redemptive activity understood as *missio Dei*. This definition includes everything God is (and has been)

doing¹ to redeem mankind from the grip of sin and its consequences as detailed in the sanctuary typology and fulfilled in the life of Christ. In another sense, mission can refer to the means or agencies by which God transforms and redeems creation.² In other words, mission refers to the salvific goal of God as well as the means by which the goal is accomplished. With the inclusion of humans, mission is defined as “the central purpose of God or God’s people” in the work of salvation.³

Concerning humans, mission is the proclamation of the gospel which is the good news of the comprehensive mysterious atonement provision of God. It is about how God through “the vicarious substitutionary death of Christ brings justification” to humankind.⁴ This includes “the salvation rubrics of regeneration, sanctification, adoption, and glorification.”⁵

The Goal of Mission

The goal of mission is the ultimate salvation of the total person which involves total holistic conversion. This means that the true missiological task, whether cross-

¹See David Bosch *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1991), 391.

²Wilbert R. Shenk, “Transforming Mission,” in *Anabaptism and Mission*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk and Peter F. Penner (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld-Verlag, 2007), 23.

³Edgar J. Elliston, *Introduction of Missiological Research* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2011), 204.

⁴Harry L. Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning: A Theology for Evangelism and Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 56, 57.

⁵Ibid.

cultural or cross-religious, is not that of seeking “perpetual *pluralism* with tolerance”⁶ where there is virtually the absence of change or gravitation but only mutual respect. As Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli describe it, true mission is not the task of seeking for just a peaceful coexistence without a pursuit for truth or transformation, so that

ATRs remain [ATRs] but respect and understand and tolerate Christianity. [And] Christians, in turn, respect and understand and tolerate [ATRs to enjoy] the advantage . . . [of] relative ease [where there no need to] find or even seek the *truth* [but] only decide to tolerate others opinions. . . . [A kind of] indifferentism [where] we [just] *tolerate* things we do not deeply care about.⁷

Herein lies the onerous nature of the challenge of mission because mission is evangelization⁸ intended to expand the kingdom of God to all parts of the earth.

The Scope of Mission

Global Dimension

Mission is first global. Throughout the Scriptures, particularly in the Gospels, mission is seen as the command for believers to join God in His charge to redeem the world: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt 28:19; cf. Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15; John 17:1; Act 1:8). Beginning at Jerusalem, the gospel is to travel to the ends of the world.

⁶Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 356.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Charles van Engen, “Specialization/Integration in Mission Education,” *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals*, eds. J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 215, 227. See also Donald A. McGravan, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 23, 24.

“Beginning at Jerusalem” implies beginning at a local level (the locality of God’s agent of change), specifically, Winneba.

Cross-Cultural Dimension

Second, mission is cross-cultural. The descriptions in the books of Acts and Revelation affirm, in detail, the cross-cultural aspect of mission. Scripture says, “but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Act 1:8) “having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev 14:6). These texts emphatically present mission as a serious cross-cultural phenomenon involving the urgent spread of the everlasting gospel from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the world. Integral to this global commission is the call to all peoples to fear and worship the Creator God who so loved the world and gave his beloved Son as the lamb who takes away the sin of the world (Rev 14:6, 7; John 3:16; 1:29). These specifications of the scope of the mission imply the need to engage cultures to reach people meaningfully with the gospel. As Glenn Rogers states: “*If you want to engage in meaningful communication with a human being you must do so in a way that is consistent with that person’s worldview and culture*”⁹ [italics author’s].

⁹Glenn Rogers, *The Bible Culturally Speaking: Understanding the Role of Culture in the Production, Presentation and Interpretation of God’s Word* (Victoria, Australia: Mission and Ministry Resources, 1996), 27.

Culture and Mission

Mission does not occur in a vacuum. From the time God set the plan of redemption in motion (Gen 3:15), even before the time of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), mission has always occurred in human culture.¹⁰ In fact, all God's communication to and through His messengers (prophets or apostles) at all times has been and is still "*culture-bound and culture-laden*"¹¹ [italics author's]. The message is culture specific and culture sensitive,¹² in that it is "filled with and based on cultural references."¹³ Consequently, whether it is a family unit, a community, a tribe or a nation, mission activities occur in cultural contexts using a people's, language, customs, symbols, logic, or belief systems. The Effutu culture therefore is the appropriate medium through which the gospel must be communicated meaningfully and relevantly. But what is culture?

Definitions of Culture

Generally, culture is considered as the way of life of a people or group. Hiebert and Kraft see culture as "the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society"¹⁴ or "a society's complex, integrated coping mechanism, consisting of learned, patterned concepts and behavior, plus their underlying perspectives (worldview) and resulting artifacts (material culture)."¹⁵ In the words of

¹⁰Glenn Rogers, *The Bible Culturally Speaking*, 27.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 58.

¹²Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, 74.

¹³Rogers, *The Bible Culturally Speaking*, 58.

¹⁴Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 25.

¹⁵Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 38.

Ebbie Smith, “culture is the learned design or pattern of living for a particular group of people.”¹⁶ It is learned because, according to Hiebert, it is not instinctive but expletive and “can be viewed as the symbol systems, such as languages, rituals, gestures, and objects that people create in order to think and communicate.”¹⁷ From these definitions culture can be seen as the man-made blueprint that defines and directs the life of a group of people cognitively, affectively, and evaluatively.

Nature of Culture

Globally, human cultures display a plethora of diversity with different histories, symbols of communication, and religious beliefs. Critical observation by scholars show that culture itself has several shared characteristics. The consensus of scholars, such as Hiebert, Kraft, Grunlan, and Mayers, gravitates toward the understanding that cultures are learned, patterned, and observable.¹⁸ This means that no one is born with culture, it is imparted or adopted. Second, it is organized along some form whether language or practice. This leads to the third aspect; it is observable because it is a group’s way of doing things or thinking. Unlearning or conversion is therefore possible.

Culture is dynamic, never static. Studies confirm that the culture of a context group changes with time, reflecting strong cultural influences around it. For example, the Effutu culture has not only imbibed the Akan language but has been strongly influenced

¹⁶Ebbie C. Smith, “Culture: The Milieu of Mission,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 261.

¹⁷Quoted by Lyman E. Reed, *Preparing Missionaries for Intercultural Communication: A Bi-cultural Approach* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1985), 114.

¹⁸Stan May, “Cultures and Worldviews,” in *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices*, ed. Mike Barnett (InterVarsity Press, 2012), 339.

by the Akan matrilineal system of inheritance. In this respect, it becomes apparent that no culture is perfect. The situation becomes bleak when culture is considered from the backdrop of the fall (Gen 3:1-21), for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Every culture, including that of the Effutu, therefore exhibits traces of perversion and evil concomitant with the fall. Misconception about God and His creation, sin and redemption, leading to unbiblical practices and worship, abound in many cultures. These call for transformation and change in the light of the gospel and, hence, a task that calls for a careful identification of the commonalities that can provide significant entry points as well as challenges that need to be addressed for effective dissemination of the gospel.

Contextualization

True mission cannot be done without critical contextualization, especially when it is cross-cultural. Since no culture is wholly evil or wholly perfect, there is the need for this critical but appropriate missiological approach (critical contextualization). It is considered critical because with this approach the contextual culture is neither neglected nor slighted, but engaged phenomenologically for a comprehensive understanding of its elements and worldview. This is carefully done in order that acceptance, rejection, or substitution of its old religious beliefs, forms, rituals, and practices is done “in the light of biblical norms or truth”¹⁹ Loyalty to scripture is not compromised because, like the social

¹⁹Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 186-190.

sciences, “an uncritical acceptance of them [cultural beliefs and practices] can undermine, in the long run, the biblical foundations of the Christian faith.”²⁰

As stated in the first chapter, faithfulness to Scripture is very crucial, because the biblical text is the “starting point of [critical] contextualization.”²¹ Although the difference between the gospel and culture is taken seriously, “the gospel always stands in divine judgement on human culture.”²² Like the incarnation of Christ (John 1:1, 14), it is the Word of God that provides “the theological foundation for effective missionary communication.”²³

Critical contextualization is also called “incarnational contextualization”²⁴ because the Word of God (Christ), as it were, must incarnate into the culture “just as the infinite Creator became incarnate as human to reach finite people. [In fact] the divine revelation must take flesh in human languages and cultures.”²⁵ This means that the gospel must be “‘at home’ with them, ‘taking them on board,’ as it were, and becoming part of them. This is what the event of the incarnation implies.”²⁶

²⁰Paul G. Hiebert and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 9.

²¹*Ibid.*, 351.

²²Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way*, 72; See also Paul G. Hiebert, “The Gospel and Culture,” in *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium*, ed. Don McCurry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1979), 63.

²³Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 353.

²⁴Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way*, 72-74.

²⁵Hiebert and Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry*, 370.

²⁶Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 138.

The incarnational element brings in another dimension of critical contextualization, time; time to be with the context to study and understand it and to allow the gospel to “become sufficiently immersed in the humus”²⁷ of the context to effectively impact it.

As Edward Pentecost advocates, “if Christianity is going to attract peoples, it must be through an influence which presents desirability, and it must be presented over a period of time sufficient to make its influence felt.”²⁸ Formation of lasting, God-oriented relationships becomes essential because “all true ministry flows out of relationships”²⁹ which requires time to build. Stan May even suggests that agents of incarnational contextualized mission “must learn the culture and language in order to build lasting relationships and present Jesus Christ in a culturally relevant, relational manner. They must determine to attain the twin goals of *bilingualism* and *biculturalism*.”³⁰ This is what Paul did in his ministry (1 Cor 9:19-21):

For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

Another significant element that is needed, particularly, when dealing with cultures deeply entrenched in ATR, is understanding the reality of mystical relationships.

This is because contextualization of the gospel involves the mystery of God’s self-

²⁷Ibid., 139.

²⁸Edward C. Pentecost, *Reaching the Unreached: An Introductory Study on Developing an Overall Strategy for World Evangelization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1974), 109.

²⁹Stan May, “Cultures and Worldviews,” in *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices* edited by Mike Barnett (InterVarsity Press, 2012), 386.

³⁰Ibid.

revelation in human cultures.”³¹ This self-revelation of God comes through supernatural phenomena in nature or through miracles, dreams, or visions (Job 33:14-19).

Interestingly, these mysterious phenomena do not have their origin in the imaginations of human poets, scientists, or artists, rather they occur mysteriously to stir the minds of humans, not only to understand that “the tangible and visible does not exhaust the realities of the universe,”³² but to create in them the intense desire to seek for answers to things beyond the domain of their imagination. Magesa believes that the incarnational model takes that into cognizance, specifically, in the “fundamental mystical relationship . . . between the people and the Gospel,”³³ a key factor that makes the intervention of the Transcendent inevitable. This strongly suggests a theophanic phenomenon or encounter that “enable[s] the gospel to claim what belongs to God in a culture, and . . . enable[s] the culture in its turn to see itself in its true light as God’s word . . . [so that] African [or Effutu] Christians are not alienated from their African identity.”³⁴ It is by this self-revelation of God that strongholds of cultures are penetrated with the gospel and made susceptible to the good news of salvation.

Redemptive Analogy

In the context of the *missio Dei*, it is understood that before any missionary

³¹Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way*, 72.

³²Edwin W. Smith, *The Secret of the African: Lectures on African Religion* (London, UK: Student Christian Movement, 1929), 16.

³³Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, 99.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 144.

reaches a context to do mission, God was there and already working.³⁵ The human agent only joins God in his work in that contextual field. Because mission is joining God in His missionary work, true contextualization implies blending one's mission strategy seamlessly into God's. This demands the identification of what God has been doing and joining him or discovering the "witness" that God has planted in the culture (Acts 14:17) and engaging that "witness" as an entry point. This "witness" or "testimony," which constitutes entry points, can be a person like Cornelius (Act 10:1-48), or a practice (ritual sacrifices, festival celebrations like the *Aboakyer*) or a concept (i.e. atonement). Donald Richardson, from his "peace child"³⁶ experience as a missionary in Western New Guinea, Indonesia, classifies conceptual understanding or practices, which provide doors for contextualized mission, as "redemptive analogies." According to Richardson, redemptive analogies "are practices or understanding hidden among tribal cultures which can be used to illustrate the meaning of the Christian gospel, contextualizing the biblical representation of the incarnation or the ultimate atonement of Jesus."³⁷ Emphasizing the potency of redemptive analogies Robertson Smith noted:

No positive religion that has moved men has been able to start with a *tabula rasa*, and express itself as if religion were beginning for the first time; in form, if not in substance, the new system must be in contact all along the line with the older ideas and practice which it finds in possession. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience, and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in

³⁵David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 390-391. See also Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2008), 101-133.

³⁶"Redemptive Analogy" accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.internetevangelismday.com/redemptive-parallel.php>.

³⁷Ibid.

which all religious feeling is embodied, and without speaking a language which men accustomed to these old forms can understand.³⁸

The idea of a redemptive analogy is not just a part of critical contextualization but the very goal of this project—to discover how the atonement concept of the *Aboakyer* can provide entry points to effectively reach the Effutu with the gospel. This need leads to the identification of redemptive analogies in the *Aboakyer* festival.

Redemptive Analogy Elements

As understood in the comparative analysis of the concept of atonement discussed in the previous chapter, there are similarities and differences between the *Yom Kippur* and *Aboakyer* festivals. Interestingly, both the similarities and the differences can be used missiologically because the concept of atonement is not only universal but the sum total of the Creator's plan to redeem and restore the world.

Concept of Atonement

The very concept of atonement, which is entrenched in the socio-cultural and religious life of the Effutu, is a great missiological advantage. This is because the Effutu are conversant with the main atonement issues: blood purification, redemption, and substitution.³⁹ In fact, their religiously oriented culture is inundated with ritual sacrifices that graphically express these elements. It is no wonder that Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou believe that these elements of atonement can be used as redemptive analogies to explain

³⁸W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 2 (Black, 1894) quoted in H. St John T. Evans, "The Akan Doctrine of God" in *African Ideas of God: A Symposium* (London, UK: Edinburgh House Press, 1950), 259.

³⁹Harry L. Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning: A Theology for Evangelism and Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 139.

the ultimate atonement of Christ⁴⁰ or as a bridge to communicate the full and final sacrifice of Christ that “has an organic connection to the OT sacrificial system.”⁴¹

Blood Purification

Blood purification (Heb 9:22; cf. Lev 17:11), a crucial element in the atonement process, involves justification. In justification, divine forgiveness, which is core to the gospel message, is freely dispensed to exonerate the penitent sinner. Sadly, according to Harry Poe, this justification will make no appeal to a culture with a wrong concept about sin. Poe explains that sin is sin when the Creator-creature relationship is appreciated. This is because “apart from a Creator God, sin is a meaningless term.”⁴²

Fortunately, the worldview of the Effutu, which is similar to the OT world, proffers missiological advantages for the dissemination of the gospel through blood purification ritual of atonement. For instance, the Effutu and the OT share a similar concept of God. They believe God is the Creator God whom humans have offended and continue to offend. Cosmologically, both the OT and the Effutu see God, not as a mere spectator, but as one who is dynamically involved in their day-to-day life⁴³ (cf. Dan 4:25; 5:21). He is the *Otutorɔbonsu tɔɔ nsu bɔɔ owia* “the provider of rain and sunshine” who sustains life on earth (Act 17:26, 28). Even many of the “symbols, metaphors and rituals

⁴⁰Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 223.

⁴¹*The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 2013, s.v. “atonement.”

⁴²Harry L. Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning*, 56, 57.

⁴³Tokunboh Adeyemo, “Unapproachable God: The High God of African Traditional Religion,” in *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* ed. Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 142.

described in the Old Testament, [show] a natural affinity”⁴⁴ for the African. A good example is the belief in the mystical potency of blood sacrifice in the cleansing of ritual impurity, particularly, *musu*. In the case of *musu* it is lucidly clear that

purification deals with an entirely different issue than forgiveness or justification. The latter treat the legal dimension of transgressing the law, while purification deals with an aspect of sin that arises even where there is no knowledge of the law. Whether guilt in the West, or shame in the East, purification treats an inward aspect of the heart that remains even if the legal matters are satisfied.⁴⁵

Redemption

Redemption is part of the process and result of atonement. It is simply saving from anything that denies victims the freedom to operate. Etymologically, redemption means, “‘to buy back,’ to regain possession of something through making a payment or, conversely, to gain a payment by turning over something.”⁴⁶ In the context of atonement, it can be saving from sin, enslavement, imprisonment, captivity, or demon possession in any form. Among the Effutu it can be saving from fear of the malevolent spirits and witchcraft that bring evil and curses and even death upon the people.

On the issue of evil, the *Tufuhen*⁴⁷ of the Effutu mentioned that the festival, in its content and goal, demonstrated in the blood rituals, explicitly affirms the presence of evil. According to the *Tufuhen*, because the festival invokes sacredness, it sends strong signals to the people to purify themselves from evil so as to avoid any curse or calamity that can

⁴⁴Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, 99.

⁴⁵Harry Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning*, 140-141.

⁴⁶Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2004), 15.

⁴⁷*Tufuhen*, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 4, 2014.

threaten life. It is with this understanding that the blood rituals are basically performed.⁴⁸ In effect, the rituals are performed to uncover anything, whether corporately done or individually committed, that will negatively affect the progress of the state. The gods are thus invoked to avert such calamities.⁴⁹

From the *Tufuhen*'s explanation, sin is not seriously seen as an offense to God or something of eternal consequence. Sin is considered on the plane of the temporal mundane life in terms of protection, safety, and success. In short, sin is seen as anything that brings "physical danger, afflictions, distress, and trouble" in this temporal life.⁵⁰ Safety or deliverance from these is termed salvation.⁵¹

What is unclear in the Effutu cosmology is a skewed understanding of the Great Controversy,⁵² particularly spirit beings. The biblical view of the spirit world divides spiritual forces, not only, into good and bad angels but deceptive angels which come as angels of light (Rev 12:1-13; 2 Cor 11:14). This serious but subtle misconception allows the Effutu, who are submerged in ATR, to consider spirit-power possession, as a "gracious gift from God,"⁵³ ultimately leading to the understanding that these spirit powers or divinities, are worthy to receive "people's worship and sacrifices."⁵⁴

⁴⁸James Cox, "African Indigenous Religions, in *Introduction to World Religions*, ed. Christopher Partridge (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), 128.

⁴⁹*Tufuhen*, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 4, 2014.

⁵⁰John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London, UK: SPCK, 1970), 69.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²An Adventist term that describes the spiritual controversy between God and the evil powers played out in the history of humankind.

⁵³Ayensu Obirew, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 19, 2014.

⁵⁴Adeyemo Tokumbo, "The Unapproachable God," 131.

Cognitively, the goat for the *Azazel* ritual of *Yom Kippur* can be an object lesson or light to give the Effutu the theology of sin and its owner the devil, in the light of the Great Controversy. With this typology, they will understand the anti-typical “Day of Atonement when sin/impurity [will be] returned to its real source, i.e., Azazel [or Satan]”⁵⁵ to set humanity free forever from sin and its consequences. They will also see God as the only one who can totally eliminate sin, not only from Winneba, but from the entire universe. In the end, this will help them redirect the sacrifices for sin to the Creator instead of their deity whom they perceive as the divinely ordained mediator between the people and God.

Substitution Element

“The interpretation of the OT sacrifices in terms of sacrificial substitution [especially the penal substitution demonstrated by the death of Christ on cross] has been questioned and rejected by a great number of scholars.”⁵⁶ Some even argue that such an understanding cannot be supported by the biblical text or by ancient Near Eastern religious practices. Fortunately, in his cogent research on substitution, Angel Manuel Rodriguez carefully deflated these arguments both biblically and textually, and highlighted the esoteric meaning of the OT substitution typology. What strikes a missiological chord is his mention of the Assyrio-Babylonian practice of substitution, which is reflected in the Effutu *wonhya* procession to the grove of *Penkye Otu*. According to Rodriguez, “the substitute is brought before Šamaš, Ea, or Marduk and

⁵⁵Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts” (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1979), 258.

⁵⁶Ibid., 2.

declared to be a substitute. Usually, the individual comes into contact with it. In some cases the substitute is treated like the person for whom it is substituting would have been treated, e.g., dressed like a king, [and] buried.⁵⁷

Incidentally, this substitutionary concept is seen practiced among the Effutu in the ritual presentation of the chosen deer (substituting for the royal human sacrifice) to their deity. Because the deer substituted for the human sacrifice, it is treated like a king. First, it is carried shoulder-high, amidst heavy jubilation, as is done for a newly selected king, and finally it is carried like a royal corpse to the grove.

This element of substitution can constitute another rich missiological mine that can be used in two ways: first to draw attention to the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice, Christ Jesus (Isa 52:13-53:12; 2 Cor 5:18-21; John 1:29; 3:16; cf. Rom 3:23; 6:23); and second, to showcase the supreme love of God for the sinner, which will go to any length to save and restore the sinner. For Scripture says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

This invincible love of God is affirmed by the conclusion of Rodriguez’s exegetical work: “Sacrificial substitution in the OT is interpreted as a divine act of love. It does not have the purpose of appeasing Yahweh. Sacrificial substitution does not presume so much wrath but love. It is God’s love that moves Him to accept in place of the sinner a substitute to which sin is transferred.”⁵⁸ Having identified these main elements of atonement the question that obviously come to mind is how can a culture saturated with spirit-power phenomena be directed to God.

⁵⁷Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus,” 52.

⁵⁸Ibid., 4.

According to Focus Group 2, the *Awutu-abe* have seen and experienced the mystery of spiritual power and protection from their deities. The belief and testimony of Ayensu Obirew, for instance, gives evidence to this assertion. From her observation, any year that the *Awutu-abe* do not celebrate *Aboakyer*, something catastrophic happens. She cited, with great emotion, the cholera outbreak in the 1970s as an example.⁵⁹ With these experiences, how do you turn the minds of the *Awutu-abe* from their lesser gods to the Creator God? How can you divert the mindset of such individuals, who hold the view that these lesser gods are the children of God, from their tested, old beliefs to the understanding of the realities and deceptions of evil angels in the Great Controversy? (Eph 6:12; 2 Cor 4:4; Rev 12:13).

Challenges and Christian Responses

The ethnography and the comparative analysis above reveal many challenges. How can the gods be substituted? How can the sacred history of the Effutu be changed? How can the *Pramma* system, in a relatively stable economy, be changed? How can the throne ties with the deity be severed? How can the festival itself be substituted so it will be celebrated without the sacrifice to earthly deities, specifically, *Penkye Otu*, as it is today? Since it is the culmination of a series of rituals how can the sub-rituals be critically contextualized? What should replace all these symbols and rituals that communicate their historic foundations, give them social structure, and unite them as a people? How can these challenges be addressed to minimize unintended consequences that may arise because of systemic changes?

⁵⁹Adjoa Edefua, Ayensu *Obirew*, interview by author Winneba, Ghana, May 19, 2014.

For the purpose of this project and the fact that the Effutu are very religious, the challenges will be considered from the religious perspective in terms of history, systems, and dynamics.

The Challenge of History

The history of the origins of the Effutu, which is tenaciously tied to the *Aboakyer* Festival, not only has religious undertones, it is sacred. It is considered sacred because the Effutu believe that their migration, from Timbuktu to Simpa, was divinely led through mysterious leaders.⁶⁰ Kwesi Budu Gyeteh (Ghartey), the great grandson of King Ghartey III, in an interview by Ephirim-Donkor, confirmed this mysterious leadership.

We [the Effutu] do not have any recollections about life in Tumutu, except that we emigrated with our priest-kings, namely, Kwame Gyata Ayirebe Gyan, Gyata Sisii, and (Osimpam) Bondzie-abe. And from the time of King Bondzie-abe to Ghartey I, all of our kings had been either sons or grandsons. However, the grand patriarch was Kwame Gyateh Ayirebe Gyan; he was a mysterious man and he was over 120 years old when they embarked on their search for a homeland in the south. . . .He was a person of enormous supernatural powers. He had one secret that he kept away from almost everyone. He had many eyes around his head like the deity Tuway Enyiwa-Enyiwa who also had many eyes on his head and forehead. This is why he was called Tuway Enyiwa-Enyiwa [Tuway, the many eyes]. Kwame Gyata Ayirebe Gyan therefore wore a cap to conceal his secret and to prevent people from staring at him.

. . . One day something strange happened and we are not really sure who was exactly responsible. Some of the grandchildren of Kwame Gyata Ayirebe Gyan, thinking that the old man was asleep, removed his cap and discovered that he had three eyes on his head. They were petrified as Kwame Gyata Ayirebe Gyan transfixed his eyes upon them and told them that God commissioned him to accompany them until they found a permanent settlement. While speaking, he sunk into the earth at the spot where he was sleeping. He [his mystery] had been discovered.

In frantic attempt to retrieve him the family dug up the earth, but found nothing. Nonetheless, they kept the dug-up earth and carried it with them until they found a

⁶⁰Okyeame Kow Bortsie, Chief Linguist, interview by author, Winneba, Ghana, May 14, 2014.

permanent homeland. Then they rolled up the soil into two separate earthen balls which still exist today.⁶¹

The story underpins the theistic government structure of the Effutu and thus complicates the challenge of this sacred history which birthed the sacred *Aboakyer* festival. Commenting on sacred institutions, including festivals, Ikenga-Metuh remarks:

There are many of these institutions in every African society which have the imprint of the traditional religious beliefs and practices. Some institutions like the sacred kingship, the priest-hood, chieftaincy titles, initiation rites, festivals and so forth, are hedged round with certain beliefs, rites, observances or taboos which are inspired and sustained by firmly held religious beliefs.⁶²

In the light of the story, Bondzie Abe, the first king and founder of Simpa of the Effutu, was truly a priest-king in the line of his father and grandfather. Tradition reveals that he was “still in his teens, when he was installed [as a] priest-king”⁶³ Like most African kings, he was to be seen as someone endowed with the sacred power of the Supreme Deity or the embodiment of the well-being of the people.⁶⁴ To help him in this twin function, Bondzie Abe was assisted spiritually by a powerful *Obirew* (prophet medium or fetish priest) called Bortsie Komfo Amu, Gyata Sisii’s brother. Like the pillar of cloud/fire of the OT times, the Effutu depended on his visions, and divination, for

⁶¹Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 26-29.

⁶² Emefie Ekenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, 29.

⁶³Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 27.

⁶⁴Olupona, “African Traditional Religion: Rituals,” *WERP*, 1:11.

signals to move or camp. Thus, Bortsie Komfo Amu directed their course to Simpa after the demise of Kwame Gyateh Ayirebi Gyan.⁶⁵

Without doubt, the kingship of the Effutu was therefore established on a deity-people covenant structure. It is a kind of theocracy or a theocratic monarchy, where the king is strictly controlled by a deity. Though the priest-king roles have been split, the covenantal tie that exists between the stool and the deity is graphically portrayed in the *Aboakyer*, especially, when the *Oma Odefey*'s step ritually casts the lot that selects the deer for the atonement sacrifice.

With such a historic background, any effective contextualization of the gospel amongst the Effutu must, of necessity, take into consideration this monumental historic fact which reflects similar situations in the Bible like the Pharaoh of Egypt (Gen 39:1-Exod 14:31), and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan 1:1-4:37), both of which were difficult situations which present systemic sacred problems. Could this story not be tapped for the gospel proclamation? On the weight of Acts 17:26, 27,⁶⁶ could the statement of Kwame Gyateh Ayirebi Gyan that, "God commissioned him to accompany them until they found a permanent settlement," also not be used to re-direct the *Awutu-abe* to God, the Creator, who has not been "far from them?"

⁶⁵Ephirim-Donkor, *The Making of an African King*, 28.

⁶⁶"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:26, 27).

The Challenge of Social Systems

It is a truism that “social systems are needed for corporate activities”⁶⁷ to thrive in a sustainable way. Social systems imply a well networked social structure which determines the resistivity or receptivity of a society. The more intricately knit a society is, the more impregnable it becomes to external forces. Besides its resistance to foreign influence, “social systems are also needed to pass religious beliefs and practices on to the next generations. [This is because] inner beliefs that do not find outward expression in social systems cannot be passed on to the young and soon die.”⁶⁸ As regards the Effutu, the *Pramma* system⁶⁹ is not only strong but is surrounded and reinforced by religious forms. This is characteristic of a typical African community because “for traditional Africans, the community is basically sacred, rather than secular, and surrounded by several religious forms and symbols.”⁷⁰

From this statement, one can confidently argue that for the *Aboakyer* Festival to defy all the impact and influences “by all the Christian churches in the town [since 1865],”⁷¹ and to find space in the headlines of the national media, is in itself an

⁶⁷Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 43. See also Evan M. Zuesse, *Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), 233. Zuesse believes that well organized social systems, especially those “associated with centralized kingship [like the Effutu], assure the temporal continuity and concretization of religious practices.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹The *Pramma* social system, built around and on the belief of the sacred, is a powerful force that sustains the spiritual tone of the people. It organizes the Effutu into two distinct *Asafo* groups and ensures the adherence of strict purity, e.g., a woman in her menses is not supposed to go there to avoid contaminating *Pramma* sacredness.

⁷⁰Christopher I. Ejizu, “African Traditional Religions and the Promotion of Community-Living in Africa,” accessed January 30, 2015, <http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/community.htm>.

⁷¹Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*, 43.

indication of the strong social structure supporting it. In effect, the Effutu social structure, intricately networked with the religious rituals, has sustained their scriptures (oral traditions), myths, beliefs, symbols, institutions, and priests.⁷²

Challenge of Oral Traditions and Myths

Though the Effutu religion does not have written scriptures, as is characteristic of ATR, it has oral traditions that keep customs and practices aflame and passes them on to the succeeding generations. The oral tradition in most cases is spiced with myths which are important sources of information that help to understand the rituals performed by a community. “To the observer of religious practices, rituals are more visible than mythic narratives, but rituals often relate to myths by conveying and reinforcing the meanings and values that communities hold sacred.”⁷³

Besides the myths, the beliefs of the Effutu, particularly belief in ancestral spirits, also constitute another great missiological challenge. The ancestors are part of the community. They are considered as the “living dead.” According to Wyllie “the ancestors [of the Effutu] have not yet been totally forgotten and the traditional religious practitioners are not yet prepared to vacate the field in favor of the Christian Churches . . . [consequently] the old rites are still performed and *Penkye Otu* still speaks of the future.”⁷⁴

⁷²H. Bryon Earhart, “Journeying Through Religious Traditions: Religion and the Study of Religion,” *Religious Traditions of the World*, ed. H Bryon Earhart (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1993), 5-9.

⁷³Waugh, “Introduction: Rituals,” *WERP*, 1: xv.

⁷⁴Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*, 15, 16.

Although there have been attempts by some Christian groups, specifically the African Indigenous Churches, to indigenize the gospel, the results have not been encouraging. This is because the version of Christianity born from their efforts was more syncretistic than contextualized. Hagan remarks:

The propagation of the Christian faith by indigenous people appears to have reached full flood with the influx and springing up of the many Christian sects that operate in Winneba. . . . The vigorous movements of people in trance, and of men, women and children jumping and shaking to the hot beat of the bass guitar, and the insistent and repeated crash of percussion instruments, resemble the familiar phenomenon of spirit possession in the people's own traditional culture. And this, for the people, constitutes clear evidence that, verily, 'there is spirit in the sects' [*sunsum wo mu*].⁷⁵

There is therefore the need to employ a critically contextualized, power-oriented, biblical ministry that responds comprehensively and appropriately to the spiritual needs of the Effutu.

The Challenge of Symbols

Symbols are forms with meaning and are very important communication codes in any cultural system because it is through them that perceived reality is interpreted.⁷⁶ Symbols can be audible sounds like language, gestures (styles of greeting), mode and style of dressing, or art forms (paintings, color combinations, and sculpture). Symbols, like national flags, command a lot of emotional response as they identify a people or a nation. In religion, symbols play significant roles, in that "they generate, steer and guide, and place in mutual relationship, the entire array of cognitive, emotional, normative,

⁷⁵Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 200-201.

⁷⁶Andrea Kaserer, "Symbol, Sign, and Gesture," *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 4:1828.

social, and cultural processes.”⁷⁷ For example the crucifix, within Christian circles, has become a powerful symbol of the ultimate atonement of Christ on the cross, and, by extension, salvation.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the Effutu have an array of symbols including language, colors, dress-styles, food, flags, totems, drums, drum-rhythms, dances, and songs. Musical instruments like the *adomba* (bell) for the *Dentsiwo*, and *kakradae* for the *Tuawo*, assume their real symbolism during the deer hunt festival. While these symbols help in communication, there are some, like the *Asafo* drums and their accompanying rhythms and dances, which are charged with cultural meanings and expressions that gravitate towards idolatry. These should strike a note of warning as functional substitutes are sought for them. Consequently, when addressing some of these symbols in the African context, there is the need for deep study and divine guidance so as to prevent their use, especially during worship, from degenerating into something akin to spirit-power invocation.

Though difficult, Bronislaw Malinowski comments:

One kind of institution can be replaced by another which fulfills a similar function. But such change is difficult, and it always has to move toward something which is better in the cultural sense, that is, better endowed, giving greater scope and opportunities to the people who live in that institution.⁷⁸

Malinowski believes that change is possible. But in delicate situations, where change can disturb the very foundations of a society, his counsel is that the change must be triggered

⁷⁷Andrea Kaserer, “Symbol, Sign, and Gesture,” *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, 1828.

⁷⁸Edward C. Pentecost, *Reaching the Unreached: An Introductory Study on Developing an Overall Strategy for World Evangelization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1974), 94. See also Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 53.

by the arousal of the desire of the contextual culture for something better. That desire must be the kind that causes unrest or discontentment that craves replacement. This is because it is only “when unrest becomes felt, . . . [that] the demand for change becomes urgent. [It is at that moment that the] society may demand a functional substitute.”⁷⁹ It must be noted that this threshold for change, signified by the sustained unrest or discontentment, occurs whenever the worldview of a context is challenged by a better one. In cultures that are spirit-power oriented, like the Effutu, this threshold will occur only when the superior power of God has been tangibly demonstrated and experienced by the spiritual leaders.⁸⁰ To such people, the “only real and effective way of proving the power of the new faith was to demonstrate that the old religion has lost its powers and fears”⁸¹ and to “demonstrate that Jesus is more powerful than the gods [they] have been worshiping.”⁸²

The Challenge of the Dynamics of the Effutu Religion

Another challenge is the dynamics of the Effutu religion. These are the practices, rites, rituals, and ceremonies that show what religion does to project its dynamism. The dynamics of the Effutu religion constitute a perennial problem and have persisted through the ages because the rites and rituals operate in a cycle, one preempting or anticipating

⁷⁹Edward C. Pentecost, *Reaching the Unreached*, 94.

⁸⁰Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2008), 486, 487.

⁸¹Allan R. Tippett, *People Movement in Southern Polynesia* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971), 164.

⁸²Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness*, 486.

the other. Furthermore, the priests or adherents who uphold the practices “are not yet prepared to vacate the field [of allegiance to the spirit world] in favor of the Christian churches.”⁸³ They are not ready to vacate the field of allegiance because of supernatural signs that have occurred in *Simpa*, which are traced or attributed to the power of the deity, *Penkye Otu*. The mysterious protection of the hunters and the mysterious death of the deer dramatically portrayed during the *Aboakyer* Festival buttress the belief.

The *Aboakyer* festival as a spiritual influence to contend with is affirmed by testimonies from Pentecostals and Adventists alike. According to their testimonies, the festival divides church members’ loyalty, and also prevent others, particularly, the indigenous Effutu, from subscribing to Christianity and becoming Adventists. This is a problem that requires supernatural attention or something more than the ordinary rhetorical logic of Bible studies to address.

Particular Challenge of Adventism

Adventists face one particular challenge in addition to the general challenges discussed above. The festival climaxes on the Saturday which is the day of worship for Adventists. It is the day when the actual hunting, ritual choice of the deer, and jubilant celebration are conducted and celebrated. To complicate the problem is the suitability of Saturday for both national and international observers. This is because the *Aboakyer* Festival has become a popular national tourist feature used to showcase typical Ghanaian culture to the outside world. It has therefore assumed national interest with economic gains and subtle political undertones.

⁸³Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*, 16.

This is really a peculiar challenge to the Adventist because the festival has not created any crisis situation for the Effutu. Rather, it is part of the structural glue that holds the people together. An incautious way of addressing this particular issue can provoke the anger of both the Effutu and the nation. In this situation the counsel of Malinowski can be applied if the Effutu are willing to change. But because the very elements causing the problems are the very ones which hold the symbolism and celebration of the festival together—i.e. its function as the memorial that declare their roots, independence, identity, and unity with their gods—it will take the intervention of the Creator God to spark the desire for change, similar to what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, or the recognition of the superiority of God that the Pharaoh of Egypt confessed (Exod 8:19). In short, it will require a divine encounter akin to the incarnation to effect a worldview transformation, both at the individual and corporate levels, that visibly accepts the kingdom of God or recognize the superiority of the power of God.

Summary: Opportunities and Challenges

From the observations of both the opportunities and challenges enumerated above, there is the need for critical, biblical, power-based contextualization.⁸⁴ There is the need for such intervention because, in the African context, these challenges, despite their complexities and diversities, are outgrowths of a worldview which is strongly tied to a spirit-power oriented belief system.⁸⁵ Being steeped in ATR, the missiological response will be basically employing a power that is greater and more dependable than what the

⁸⁴Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 44.

⁸⁵Jesse Mugambi. *Religion and Social Construction of Reality* (Nairobi: University Press, 1996), 32; and *African Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1989), 128.

Effutu have known. Because one is dealing with principalities and powers, one needs a power, described by the apostle Paul as, “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought [or worldview] to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:4, 5; cf. Eph 6:12). It is only then, that the atonement elements revealed in the *Aboakyer* ritual sacrifice will have greater spiritual (typological) significance, mirroring the OT sacrificial typologies, which will help in the development of a critical contextualized approach that points to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ Jesus. In this milieu, the elements will proffer redemptive analogies that will engender appropriate Christian responses to the challenges. But as Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno cautioned, the Great Controversy rages on. “Christians must [therefore] take spiritual realities very seriously. [Though they know that] God is at work to woo people to himself, [they must never forget that] Satan and his followers are trying to blind [the] minds [of the same people] so that they do not turn to the light. Much of this battle has to do with religious systems.”⁸⁶

As the Bible intimates, challenges of sacrificial rituals, which involve or invoke spirit powers and the supernatural, are real (Eph 6:12, 13). There is a battle for the “at-one-ment” goal; the goal of uniting humans with the spirit/transcendent world. The atonement concept is therefore “one bridge [that can be used] for the communication of the biblical concepts pertaining to holiness and purity [which were typified in the OT sacrificial system, particularly the *Yom Kippur* Festival] in different cultures.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 44.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 223.

Finding the Missiological Model

The Atonement and the Effutu

From the analysis of Chapter 5, it became apparent that the Effutu have some understanding of atonement including the concept itself, the condition for atonement, the function of atonement and some aspects of the goal of atonement. These aspects of atonement are manifest in the various rituals of their ritual cycle and prominently highlighted in the annual *Aboakyer* festival. The Effutu comprehend purification, sacrifice, and ritual use of blood. They also understand the role of ritual specialists, particularly the unique role of the *Osoo Nipa* (high priest) in communal ritual purification rites. The *Aboakyer* festival as a whole is based on the element of substitution: the god *Penkye Otu* accepting an animal (the deer) in place of a royal human sacrifice. Without this concession from their god, there would be no *Aboakyer* (“animal catch”) festival as it is celebrated today. This experiential cognition of the Effutu, which has important points of contact with the OT sanctuary typology, can facilitate a redemptive analogy to point them to the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The Effutu have some understanding of atonement, but it is inadequate. Although they recognize God as the creator, whom human beings have offended, he is not the recipient of their sacrifice and worship. Furthermore, sin is not defined as an offense against him but rather as something that detracts from mundane security and success. Their atonement is therefore tantamount to sacrificing to some power other than God, which is spiritual promiscuity; “seeking help from or alliance with beings other than the Lord through illicit worship (Exod 34:15-16; Lev 20:5, Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17; 8:27, 33),

thereby violating the first of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3).”⁸⁸ This kind of confusion was practiced by some Israelites who sacrificed to “goat-demons, to whom they prostitute themselves” (Lev 17:7 NRSV). They did this out of fear to appease these demons so they would not harm them. Thus, people who are oblivious to “the colossal conflict between God—on behalf of his people—and the enslaving evil powers,”⁸⁹ find themselves in bondage to evil powers. This kind of interaction with such beings is not just dangerous but a blatant expression of “disloyalty to [God’s] exclusive sovereignty and distrust of his total power and commitment to protect his people from other powers.”⁹⁰

The *Yom Kippur* Model of Atonement

Considering the Effutu situation, the biblically prescribed enactment of atonement on *Yom Kippur* stands out as an appropriate model to walk the Effutu “step by step [from where they are] to Christian faith and maturity in their own setting.”⁹¹ The walk will potentially lead them to understand the better sacrifice and high priestly ministration of Jesus Christ, the anti-typical Lamb and High Priest (Heb 9:11-14), which save to the uttermost (Heb 7:25). “For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his

⁸⁸Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 299.

⁸⁹John Driver, *Understanding Atonement for the Mission the Church*, 73.

⁹⁰Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 300.

⁹¹Hiebert and Menneses, *Incarnational Ministry*, 19.

footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:4, 12-14).

The rituals of *Yom Kippur* in this perspective are relevant because they employ “traditional imagery and symbolism,”⁹² analogous to those that constitute the grammar of African religious experience,⁹³ to elucidate the completion (second stage) of the process of atonement while typologically pointing to the eradication of sin from our world through judgment (based on Christ’s ultimate and better sacrifice) in order to vindicate God’s character, and to completely eliminate the source of evil.

The atonement rituals on *Yom Kippur* reveal not only the heinousness of sin, but also the holiness of God and his omnipotence. The ritual of the goat for *Azazel* shows that Satan, the enemy of God and source of sin, “who disrupts creation and holds humankind in his grip”⁹⁴ is powerless before God. This demonstration of God’s power can serve as a holistic model to remedy the problems of the Effutu, whose culture is dictated by spirit power.

Finally, the *Yom Kippur* atonement model will put the Effutu identity into perspective by subsuming their sacred history under the overarching story of God’s redemption. This will help to correct their mistaken idea that powers in the spiritual realm can be neutral. They will understand the Great Controversy between God’s good and Satan’s evil and make informed decisions as to whom to give their allegiance.

In summary, the biblical *Yom Kippur* atonement model has the potential to

⁹²Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, 178

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 72.

address the missiological challenges holistically: cognitively (understanding sin and its removal and annihilation); affectively (feel the heinousness of sin vis-à-vis the holiness and love of God); and finally evaluatively (discernment in worshiping God and keeping his commandments). With this model, the Seventh-day Adventist Church would be responding to the call in Revelation 14:6-12 to take the everlasting gospel to the Effutu in order to give them a fair opportunity to accept God's gift of holy living now while anticipating the final eschatological annihilation of Satan and sin.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study was sparked by the need to discover a potentially effective missiological model for a more effective evangelization among the Effutu of Winneba, who are affected by traditional religious practices, particularly, the annual *Aboakyer* festival, even if they become Christians. Research, in that light, has explored how the concept of atonement in the festival can be used missiologically. The task involved three major assignments: (1) the need to have a clear understanding of the concept of atonement, (2) understanding the context for mission; and (3) suggesting a missiological model based on research findings in the light of the gospel.

Understanding the Concept of Atonement

A review of literature made it clear that atonement, the act of restoration or reconciliation through ritual restitution, substitution, or sacrifice, is a universal concept integral to human life, whether social or religious. It is universal because it is an intuitive truth [universal perception], which is not limited geographically, historically, ethnically, culturally, or religiously, that humanity is in a predicament needing atonement. Records of ancient Near Eastern sacred temples and ritual sacrifices (blood or non-blood) reveal pre-biblical notions of atonement, while Akan (Ghanaian) words such as *mpata* and

musuyi also evince current understanding and use. Many other examples are available. This understanding is traced to the general belief that atonement originated with God as His plan to reconcile and restore humankind.

Atonement involves mysterious processes and complex details because of its divine origin and comprehensiveness. To teach these facts to human beings, God instituted the sanctuary system and set it up among the children of Israel, whom He had intentionally groomed as a nation through the patriarchs. In the typical rituals and sacrifices performed in the Old Testament sacrificial system, which He established as an object lesson of atonement, He steadily unfolded the heinousness of sin and the details of atonement, to demonstrate and anticipate, the ultimate sacrifice—Jesus Christ—the solution of the complex sin problem. In fact, every sacrifice (blood or non-blood) for purification or expiation had a dual purpose. On one hand, it highlighted the heinousness of the sin problem vis-à-vis the holiness of God, whom humanity had offended, and, on the other hand, it demonstrated the abundant grace of God's love. These rituals were marked by feasts or festivals celebrated at fixed times of the year in a cycle. This cycle of rituals climaxed with the *Yom Kippur* festival, with its ritual complex, that included two special purification rituals, the ritual of the Lord's goat and the goat for the *Azazel*.

Although all the sacrifices revealed God as the only one who can forgive sins, the typology of the *Yom Kippur* rituals, especially the ritual of the goat for the *Azazel*, gave an eschatological twist with reference to the final annihilation of sin including the ritual transfer of sin to its originator and owner and his banishment forever from the community of God's people. Interestingly, *Yom Kippur* is followed by the Feast of Tabernacles which anticipates a blissful time for God's people, when sin (our enemy) will be no more.

This comprehensive enactment of the prophecy of the plan of salvation makes Bible scholars believe that the concept of atonement cannot be understood apart from the OT sacrificial system.

Another truth revealed by the OT sacrificial system is the OT cosmology. This is seen particularly during the interface of the transcendent with humans in the high-priestly ministration on *Yom Kippur*. Moving from the inner sanctum of the sanctuary outward, we see the worldview of the OT: God (whose presence is signified by the Shekinah and the cloud on the top of the Ark of covenant), the angels (the cherubim with their wings spread), the high priest and the priest, and the rest of humans outside the precincts of the sanctuary. Although evil angels are not mentioned, their presence can be ascertained by reference to the mysterious personality, *Azazel*, the enemy of God, and source of Israelite sins. This belief system is unlike that of the ATR which causes adherents to ignorantly worship purported spirits of ancestors and other demonic spirits in the name of God.

The NT concept of atonement stems from its witness of the biblical worldview and atonement demonstrated and embodied in Jesus Christ who is the incarnation, the earthly life and miraculous ministry, the crucifixion, the burial and resurrection, ascension and heavenly ministry of Christ. In other words the NT sees Jesus as accomplishing *the* atonement—God’s provision to avert His wrath against sinners (Rom 5:10, 11; John 3:16-18; John 1:29 1Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:18, etc). NT scholars have consequently used several metaphors to describe the concept including ransom, substitution, propitiation, and expiation, sacrifice, and victor. Interestingly, most of these metaphors reflect either an OT practice or concept of atonement. What the NT, through Paul, highlighted is the “victor” element of atonement which shows that atonement goes

beyond just the restoration of humankind but includes “the world of spirits and of nature itself in its groaning and travail (Col 1:13-21; Rom 8:19-23).”¹ Atonement, in deed, involves a cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil (Rev 12). This put atonement in its biblical perspective (Eph 6:12; 2 Cor 4:4; cf. Gen 3:15-24).

The mysterious nature of the process of atonement for sin, particularly, the attempt to explain the violent nature of the crucifixion of Christ Jesus, has led to heated debates over the years birthing various theories of atonement, each placing undue emphasis on one or some of the NT metaphors for atonement. Notable among the theories are the ransom theory, satisfaction theory, moral influence theory, penal substitution, and the *Christus Victor*. Interestingly, none of these theories is complete without the others.

The ATR concept of atonement is tied to their cosmology, which has God at the top, followed by the spirit beings (good and bad) including the venerated ancestors, and lastly the world of humans. Mediating between the world of humans and the realm of the spirits are the ritual specialists (priests, shamans, etc.). Although God is supreme he is not worshipped or offered sacrifices directly because of a radically different ontology ATR has about the being of God in relation to other spirit beings. Worship and sacrifices are rather given to the lesser gods who are believed to be the children of God or mediators delegated by God to mediate between humans and the spirit world.

¹William Wolf, “Atonement,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 595; “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness . . . to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col 1:13, 20).

Understanding the Context

The ethnography of the Effutu context was explored in Chapter 3 to help understand how their society, especially their worldview, informs their concept of atonement. This involved analysis of the origin, economy, socio-political, cultural, and religious world of the Effutu. It became apparent that the Effutu resilience to the strong Akan culture engulfing them is due to two facts: (1) the solid patrilineal structure of the *Pramma* system, which in turn maintains the *Asafo* groupings and (2) the unique *Aboakyer* festival, which is a memorial of their sacred story of their roots and origins.

Chapter 4 focused on the historical ethnography of the *Aboakyer* festival itself. Special attention was given to the Effutu sacred history, particularly the plea for the substitution of an animal for the royal human sacrifice that eventually led to the birth of the *Aboakyer* as it is celebrated today. Tools for ethnography, including researcher's observation as well as personal and group interviews, were employed. Because the sole field visit in May 2014 could not capture all the details of the rituals of the *Aboakyer*, publications by anthropologists, particularly local ones such as Ephirim-Donkor and Hagan, were of much help. Findings revealed that the festival has similarities with the *Yom Kippur* festival in the area of (1) timing, (2) priestly function/role; (3) ritual purification activities before, during, and after the festival; (4) ritual selection of animals for the sacrifice; and (5) finally the sacrifice of the animal.

Finding a Missiological Model

How the ATR festival of *Aboakyer* compares with the *Yom Kippur* was the focus of Chapter 5. The methodology employed was the approach of comparison and contrast. Findings revealed similarities as well as dissimilarities between the two festivals. For

example, while all of the atonement elements of *Yom Kippur* were typological anticipating the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, those of the *Aboakyer* festival were local and temporal. Significantly missing in the *Aboakyer* is the ritual of the goat for the *Azazel*, which revealed an important purpose of atonement—the complete removal and disposal of sin both from the presence of God and from among the community of His children. In this ritual, sin in its entirety, was transferred to its owner, the *Azazel*, and banished forever from the community of God’s people. This brings to light the conclusion of the Great Controversy: the final eschatological annihilation of sin and its originator (Satan) from God’s universe.

Chapter 6 looked at how the atonement elements discussed in Chapter 5 can be used as redemptive analogies for effective evangelization of the Effutu with a strong spirit-power oriented worldview. After a careful consideration of both the similarities and dissimilarities, the following challenges emerged: the sacred history, the religiously knit social (*Pramma*) system, and the Saturday that climaxes the festival, which has assumed national and international fame. These challenges led to identification of the incarnational contextualization of *Yom Kippur* as the appropriate missiological model for effective mission among the Effutu.

This model, potentially, is the appropriate biblical *modus operandi* for cross-cultural mission, particularly among traditional religionists. It is the mystery of God’s salvation plan in tangible terms. This model has the potential to meet the holistic needs—the cognitive, affective, and evaluative—of the Effutu in terms of truth (Word), grace, and power. In fact within this model is the power element that can deal with the fear that keeps ATR adherents perpetually subjected to the whims and caprices of deceptive

spirits. Paul says that Christ, through the atoning power of His death has the potency to “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject[ed] to bondage [by the Devil]” (Heb 2:14, 15) and reconcile them to Almighty God, their Creator and life giver.

Conclusion

Although there are dissimilarities and unbiblical elements as well as challenges in the social, cultural, and religious areas of the life of the Effutu, God has been continuously at work since the time of their emigration and has left himself with witnesses in the concept of atonement that can be used to reach them effectively. The universality and pragmatic nature of atonement, which epitomizes the gospel, make it a potential means to reach the Effutu holistically. The concept of atonement is an appropriate bridge because it is that “part of theology which is inseparably connected with life in the church and in the world, and therefore cannot be adequately treated without reference to action as well as theory [or holistic theology].”² Atonement, which is the salvation of humanity, is the everlasting message that must reach all people, including the Effutu.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel [of the Ultimate Atonement] to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Rev 14:6-7).

² Colin E. Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (London, UK: T & T Clark, 1988), 2.

Recommendations

The research revealed not only the universality of the concept of atonement but its significance and relevance as an effective bridge to share the gospel cross-culturally because atonement connects the church to the rest of the world. Since most ATR festivals and sacrifices revolve around the concept of atonement, more research into such festivals could be done to discover atonement elements that can be used as redemptive analogies to facilitate the spread of the gospel. Since atonement is tied to worldview concepts regarding the supernatural realm, a wrong worldview will certainly lead to a wrong theology of atonement and sin, which will eventually result to wrong spiritual allegiances.

Again atonement is that “part of theology which is inseparably connected with life in the church and in the world, and therefore cannot be adequately treated without reference to action as well as theory [or holistic theology].”³ Because of that, unreached people groups, especially those in areas where the gospel has not reached, need a holistic theology of atonement to enable them to relate well to the spirit world, concerning the issue of sin and spiritual power. This holistic theology cannot be known apart from the sanctuary typology of atonement by which God has demonstrated the process of atonement; hence the need for a comprehensive understanding of the OT sanctuary typology.

Although much study has been done on the earthly sanctuary, particularly within Adventist circles, the power element of the Creator God demonstrated in the goat for *Azazel* ritual service of *Yom Kippur* has not been emphasized. In this light, therefore, it is

³ Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor*, 2.

recommended that the study of the sanctuary system should be given the emphasis needed for this time, within the context of the Great Controversy. It should also be made a core study for all ministers, particularly those engaged in cross-cultural mission among people confused about power struggles in the spiritual realm. This emphasis would not only reveal the true and dangerous nature of sin as antagonistic to God's holiness, but to a greater extent, it would reveal the power of God over sin and the devil.

This omnipotence of God is embedded in the purpose of atonement—the annihilation of sin, which involves its removal and transfer to its real owner (the Devil, represented by the goat for the *Azazel*), and the eternal destruction of the devil with sin (symbolized by the banishment of the goat for *Azazel* into the wilderness). Study of this theme would facilitate understanding of the hope messages in Revelation 14:6-12 (the three angels' messages) which constitute the timely message for our contemporary world, which is gradually being drawn into all kinds of idolatrous relationships with the spiritual world (2 Cor 4:4; 11:14), worshiping the creature instead of the Creator God (Rom 1:18-24). The need for such knowledge by Christians is affirmed by Robert Sherman in the words: "Such a theology [of atonement] offers Christians of all sorts the spiritual and pastoral resources to deepen their own faith and extend a hand to those outside the church, offering them new hope, a new identity, a new sense of meaning and new courage in a world filled with uncertainty, coarseness, danger, and death."⁴

Atonement includes deliverance from any kind of power inhibiting a holistic relationship with God. Because of the fear of evil spirits or inimical agencies, ATR

⁴ Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2004), 1-2.

adherents are held bound to various powerful/supernatural beings. In order to secure the security and protection of these forces, atonement rituals are meticulously performed, sometimes at the peril of life (sacrificing a royal human or catching a live leopard like the Effutu), to ensure good relationships with the spiritual world or with the transcendent.

Since the devil works with fear (Heb 2:14, 15), there is the need for a deliverance ministry or exorcism through the power of the gospel to deliver those “who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” of the Devil so they can listen to the truth of the gospel (Luke 4:18, 19; cf. 2 Cor 4:4).

To have the *Yom Kippur* atonement model working, the researcher recommends a strong discipleship program that emphasizes the creation story, the origin and nature of sin, the nature and ministry of angels, the Holy Spirit, the life and ministry of Jesus and particularly those that demonstrate his power over evil forces and demons. This program will not only sensitize both members and leaders about the superior power of God, but will equip them for effective ministry to adherents of ATR.

One topic that could be researched is: What are the appropriate biblical boundaries for a critically contextualized style of Adventism that follow Effutu cultural expressions?

APPENDIX A

Questions for Individual Interview

1. Could you tell me how this beautiful *Aboakyer* festival came about?
2. What are the key events that make up the festival?
3. How did each of the events become part of the festival?
4. What is the purpose of the festival?
 - a. What do people say is the purpose of the *Aboakyer*?
 - b. In what ways is the festival period distinguished from the regular life of the Effutu?
 - c. Why do people attend the festival year after year?
 - d. To what extent is a sense of community fostered by the festival?
5. Who participate in the festival? Could you describe what they do?
 - a. Key people
 - The King
 - The High Priest
 - The People, especially, the *Asafo* Companies (the Warrior groups)
 - b. How do they prepare for the festival?
6. In your opinion what does the festival say about the Effutu god (Penkye Otu)?

APPENDIX B

Questions for Focus Group 1 Information on the Rituals

1. How did the *Aboakyer* festival come about?
2. What is/are involved in the deer ritual sacrifice by the high priest every year?
3. What is the purpose of this blood ritual?
4. Why is it necessary to perform this ritual annually?
5. Why should the King step on the deer? How ancient is this ritual stepping and what does it mean?
6. What conception about sin/evil does the festival relay to the Effutu community?
7. What does the festival say about the Effutu god, *Penkye Otu*?

APPENDIX C

Questions for Focus Group 2 Missiological Concerns

1. What are some challenges that the Christian churches faces during the *Aboakyer* festival? In other words, what is the impact of the *Aboakyer* festival on Christian activities and members particularly during the festival?
 - a. How have the activities of the churches been affected by the festival?
 - b. How have the members (attendance) been affected by the festival?
2. Are there any advantages that Christians can derive from the festival?
3. What are some elements in the festival that can be used to advance the gospel among the indigenous Effutu community?

APPENDIX D

Participant Observation What to Observe

1. *Preparation for the Catch*
 - a. The Parading of the Asafo Company gods
 - Tuawo Note route, stops and unique manifestations and also the Duration
 - Dentsiwo Note route, stops and unique manifestations and also the Duration
 - b. The throng —Note mood and movements. Is it camaraderie, partisan, or full of agitation?
 - c. Any other important thing as informants may draw my attention to.
2. *The Deer caught*
3. *The King's Act that Selects the Deer for the Sacrifice*
4. *Penkye Otu's Grove*
5. *Priests Activities*
 - a. Saturday rituals (Day of the catch).
 - b. Sunday rituals (Day of the sacrifice)
6. *The Priests lots and the prophecy*

7. *The Joyous celebration of the festival--*

a. The Tuafo

- i. dressing for the parades
- ii. songs and satires
- iii. parade objects—their function and their meaning

b. The Denstiwo—dressing for the parade

- i. Dressing for the parades
- ii. Songs and satires
- iii. Parade objects

c. Any other significant thing key informants may suggest.

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