


Jesus Shall Reign? An Examination of Christian Mission to the Akan Palace



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ABSTRACT

The Gospel and African Culture interface has remained an ongoing dialogue due to the fact of inherent tensions. The genuineness of the conversion of the traditional leadership institution that welcomed the Western missionaries has remained in doubt in some missionary established churches. The conversion challenges of the traditional leaders have resulted from ancestors and ancestral related functions that traditional leaders performed. The churches over the years created mission fields and chaplaincies with trained personnel and resources to address conversion challenges of specific and unique communities. While the creation of mission fields and appointments of chaplains have made significant responses to the conversion challenges of the people involved, the conversion challenges that traditional leaders have constantly requested for support from the churches have not been fully addressed. The study is an examination of the requests of some traditional leaders for Christian missions to be extended to the Palace and responses made so far by some of the missionary established churches. The study adopts a qualitative approach with an examination of relevant available materials and interviews. The study points to the fact that the conversion of the Palace and its functionaries must be considered as a major ministry and mission field of the church with trained ministers and resources for the specialized mission field. The study moreover calls for deeper research into matters of ancestors and ancestral related rites that have remained as areas of tension between the church and the conversion of the Palace functionaries.

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INTRODUCTION

The heart of Ghanaian culture is the chieftaincy institution. The chieftaincy institution is not only public in Ghana but its contemporary relevance cannot be denied. The institution has made remarkable contributions to almost every facet of the national development including Christian missionary enterprise. The involvement of traditional leaders in Christian expansion has been both direct and indirect. There are instances where some traditional leaders have invited missionaries into their communities to establish churches, schools and hospitals. Such traditional leaders did not only provide the missionaries with accommodation but also the protection and comfort they needed to do their work. They provided them with land for the construction of chapels, schools and manses. Christian gatherings have not only witnessed the attendance of traditional

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leaders in Ghana but the contribution of funds in support of church projects. Many traditional leaders have been invited to chair church fundraising occasions.

The interface between the Christian faith and traditional leadership however has remained a very challenging field. Despite the role traditional leaders have played in Christian missionary enterprise, they have not been considered as full members in some of the missionary established churches like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana's constitution does not encourage members to become traditional leaders. They are rather debarred from full membership if they decide to do so.

Recognition of sacred objects like the black stools and sacred rites like libation are considered to conflict with the Christian faith and therefore compromise Christian faith and commitment. Many of the traditional leaders who were Christians before their installation have insisted on holding on to their Christian faith and values. They have even made efforts towards the transformation of some aspects of the tradition that are in conflict with their faith. There are some traditional leaders who have kept their marital vows of keeping one wife even when they are pressurized by the tradition to take new wives. Nonetheless, it seems their efforts are not recognized as they are still out of the full membership list of the church. This study therefore observes the need for the creation of Christian missions to the Palace to operate towards the conversion of the Palace.

REQUESTS FOR MISSION TO THE PALACE

The requests of Palace functionaries to the missionaries and missionary established churches to extend Christian mission and ministry to the Palace is yet to receive a satisfactory response. Nene Mate Kole made a request for Christian mission to be extended to the Palace during a presentation of a welcome address that he presented at the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana at Krobo Odumase in 1960. He stated in his address that, 'the times are changing fast and it is the belief of most chiefs of Ghana that by research and deep thought the church will in no distant date embark on policies that will make all chiefs practising as well as professing Christians, and finally that the deep-rooted institutions may be purged with the light of the Christian spirit to the glory of God and to the well-being of this emerging nation.'¹ The desire of having all chiefs becoming Christians and practising Christians was a genuine request of many Palace functionaries.

The Okyehene Nana Sir Ofori Ata 1 (1912–43), had earlier on sent a similar request in 1941 in a memorandum to the Presbyterian Church during a Synod which was held at Kyebi requesting for the church to respond to the spiritual needs of traditional leaders by reviewing its positions on Palace functionaries. He called upon the Presbyterian Church to 'review her stand on a number of traditional practices, including Akan festivals- the work of Stool Functionaries and oath-taking.'² Robert Rattray had raised the issue earlier on that instead of working with the inner understanding of the cultural practices the missionaries took positions that sought to destroy the indigenous belief systems. He argues that, 'we have been at too much pains to ignore the value of their own past beliefs, and to hasten to destroy them.'³ The Okyehene's request was asking the Presbyterian Church to extend its successes in other areas and institutions to the Palace.

Christian missions and ministries have been successfully extended to areas of education, health and agriculture. Noel Smith has noted that, 'in education and in agriculture, in artisan-training and in the development of commerce, in medical services and in concern for the social welfare of the people, the name 'Basel', by the time of the expulsion of the Mission from the country, had become a treasured word in the minds of the people.'⁴ It stands to reason that the Palace functionaries wanted missions to be extended to the traditional leadership environment for a similar feat.

The request for the Basel Mission to extend missions to the Palace came from other traditional areas where they pursued ministry. The Palace functionaries have taken interest in the Christian missions and have made significant contributions to the growth of the church. According to Smith 'in both these states (Krobo and Akyem) Christianity was first introduced by the Basel Mission and the church has made great headway in both areas. The natural rulers of both states have always taken a great interest in the growth of the church and have assisted that growth in many ways, particularly in their support of education.'⁵

It was the desire and expectation of the traditional leaders that solutions would be found on whatever challenges confronting the church's mission to the Palace in order to pursue the conversion of the Palace

¹ Noel Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*. (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1966), 240.

² Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Mission Achievement. A Hundred and Fifty years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House 2011), 386.

³ Robert S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 291.

⁴ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 154.

⁵ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 3.

functionaries for their members also to attain full membership in the church. Smith noted that the concern of the traditional leaders in their memoranda to the church that, ‘the concern manifested in the memoranda is that a solution of the problem of the relationship of Christianity and the local social order might be found so as to repair the breach in tribal unity and to make a Christian State possible but the request did not attract the desired response from the church.’⁶ The reasons and impact of the refusal of the requests of the traditional leaders for Christian missions to be extended to the Palace must be examined.

One key issue of mission in Ghana is the issue of the Gospel and culture. In spite of the positive impact of Christianity on the culture of the Ghanaian, there are still areas of the culture that Christianity is yet to witness to. One such area is the question of Christianity and chieftaincy. There are many instances where Christians on ascending to stools have been confused with the stance of the Church, at least in the missionary instituted churches like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana where they are debarred from participating in the Holy Communion. Rev Herbert Anim Opong a former Clerk of General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has observed that, ‘on several occasions, chiefs have called on the Church to have a second look at this position. Christians who are chiefs have come together to form an association of Christian chiefs to try to show to the Church that one can become a chief and a Christian. That is why this kind of worship service is very significant in the quest of an effective witness of the chieftaincy institution.’⁷

Anim Opong’s call for an effective witness can be viewed from some missionary approaches adopted by the church. As part of its efforts to extend the Christian faith into some challenging communities, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana strategically created Mission Fields to facilitate the provision of specific responses to the needs of such communities. Moreover, to meet the spiritual needs of some unique people and groups the church created chaplaincies in schools, hospitals, industrial areas, prisons, police service and military. Provision of specific training and resources were made for chaplains to extend Christian mission and ministries to such sectors.

The constant calls from the Palace for the Christian faith to be extended to them raises the question of how the Christianity that is so visible in the Akan communities meets the spiritual needs of the people. Williamson has argued that, ‘the issue of importance is, not whether the church has been established, but what kind of church and whether it is integrated with Akan society and able to meet in a real and vital fashion of Akan spiritual needs.’⁸ The chieftaincy institution remains the heart of the indigenous culture. The Gospel must definitely find its way to the very heart of the community.

The uneasiness of the church to extend mission and ministry to the Palace may be explained by the sources of its Christian understanding which were developed with European world -views. According to Robert Schreiter, ‘there was a growing sense that the theologies being inherited from the older churches of the North Atlantic community did not fit well into these quite different cultural circumstances.’⁹ Kwame Bediako has subsequently described the effort as European value-setting for non-Europeans.¹⁰

Christianity must meet the spiritual needs of the Palace functionaries as they have requested for. The question that must be answered is why has the Palace not been considered as a mission field for Christian conversion and impact? Moreover, why have chaplains not been sent to the Palace for evangelism and Christian ministry? What are the needed post-missionary responses that must be offered by the church in responding to the request of Christian mission and ministry to the Palace?

METHODOLOGY

The research, as a qualitative study was pursued through primary and secondary sources. Observations and interviews were conducted at communities and Palaces of Manhyia, Asante Mampong and Akropong Akuapem in Ghana. Moreover, observation was done in some congregations of the Asante and Akuapem Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana on the conversion challenges of Christian royals. Relevant materials on Christian missions and the chieftaincy institution were specifically examined to ascertain the church’s effort to reach out to the Palace functionaries with the Gospel.

⁶ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 31.

⁷ Brochure, *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana organized by Asante Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in collaboration with Otumfoɔ Osei Tutu II, Asantehene*. (Kumasi: Imagehaus, 2010).

⁸ Sidney G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith –A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions*, (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1965), 73.

⁹ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 1.

¹⁰ Kwame, Bediako. *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture Upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*, (Oxford: Regnum Books 1992).

THE PALACE AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN GHANA

The chieftaincy institution has played a very significant role in the spread of the Christian faith in Ghana. The traditional rulers have, in many instances, been the providers of hospitality for the missionaries, lands for the Church's development and also allowed their subjects and family members to join the Churches that were founded by these missionaries. Chiefs sometimes were very good friends of the early missionaries and most of the church agents acted as advisors and letter writers for the chiefs.¹¹

Andreas Riis who pioneered the missionary work of the Basel Mission work enjoyed massive hospitality from the Omanhene and his people at Akropong Akuapem. On his arrival, 'the whole Akuapem state, with the Omanhene sitting in state, welcomed him at a big durbar at Mpeniase and promised him Akuapem protection. By this traditional ceremony, Riis was in effect permitted to begin the missionary work in the Akuapem hills.'¹² He was initially offered temporary accommodation by the Okuapemhene. When Riis decided to construct his own accommodation, the Palace provided building materials and other artisans for the work. He was assisted by 'about one hundred men from all Akuapem villages' as he began erecting the wooden frame of the house.¹³ According to Smith during the construction work of Riis, 'the Africans helped in cutting timber and in the actual building.'¹⁴ Moreover, in his main missionary work 'the people were friendly and receptive to the Gospel'.¹⁵ The friendliness and the receptivity to the Gospel can be associated with the acceptance of the missionaries at the Palace as the people easily accepted whatever the Palace authenticates. The Basel Mission's work initially had challenges due to the frequent rates of death of the missionaries. The Home Affairs decision to recall the missionaries for a possible closure of the mission received a turning point due to the words of wisdom from the Akropong Akuapem Palace. When Andreas Riis paid a departure visit to Nana Addo Dankwa I, the traditional leader provided the reasons that could lead to the unresponsiveness of the Gospel by the people and subsequently provided some response to the preaching of the Gospel. The Okuapemhene told Riis in the meeting that, 'when God created the world, He made books for the white man and fetishes for the black man. But if you can show us some black men who can read the white man's books then we will surely follow you.'¹⁶ When Rev Riis arrived in Switzerland with the message, it was received as an encouraging signal for giving the whole endeavour one more chance.¹⁷

In 1842, the Committee assigned again Riis and also the young Rev Widmann and the Liberian born trainee George Thompson to go to Jamaica in order to recruit some Christianised ex-slaves, who could support the Mission in its work on the Gold Coast.¹⁸ The invitation of the Jamaican Christians by the Basel Mission was informed by the missionary insight that came from the Akropong Akuapem Palace which later brought fulfilment to the dreams of the various missionary agencies. Debrunner noted that 'Riis and Widmann found the Christians in Jamaica prepared. Their coming fulfilled the dreams of the Rev J. Zorn, superintendent of the Moravian missions in Jamaica, and of the Rev. Mr. Miller, the head of the Mico charity schools, a friend of Buxton.'¹⁹

Some traditional leaders requested for churches and schools to be established in their towns. Christianity entered into such communities as a result of the interest of the Palace. The Bompatahene, Nana Odarkwa, in 1880 sent a request to the Basel missionaries at Abetifi for a teacher to open a Basel Mission there.²⁰ The Basel Mission accepted the request and that became the beginning of Christian mission at Asante Akyem. The extension of Christian mission to the Asante Akyem communities was as a result of a request from the Palace.

The growth of the Anglican Church in Kumasi in particular owes much to Nana Prempeh. During his period of exile in Seychelles Nana Prempeh and the Queenmother became members of the Church of England. In 1904 he was baptized as Edward and she as Victoria. One of Nana Prempeh's sons, John Prempeh, was trained for the Anglican ministry on the island of Mauritius. He returned to the Gold Coast in 1930, their

¹¹ Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House 1967).

¹² Kwamena-Poh. *Vision and Mission Achievement*, 42.

¹³ Kwamena-Poh. *Vision and Mission Achievement*, 43.

¹⁴ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 31.

¹⁵ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 47.

¹⁶ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 107.

¹⁷ Peter A. Schweizer *Survivors on the Gold Coast: The Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana*. (Accra: Smartline Limited 2000), 51.

¹⁸ Schweizer. *Survivors on the Gold Coast: The Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana*, 51.

¹⁹ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 108.

²⁰ Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Mission Achievement*, 186.

example, on their return, was a great encouragement to the work of all the Christian Missions in Asante.²¹

Rev Prof. Obiri Yeboah Mante, the current Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has observed that the missionary work of the early missionaries in Asante became possible due to the support that they received from the Palace. He has opined that, ‘the Presbyterian Church of Ghana’s Mission to Manhyia is as old as the very presence of Presbyterianism in Asante. We recognize that the foremost missionary, Reverend Fritz Ramseyer’s work in Kumasi would have been more difficult but for the support and cooperation he received from Manhyia Palace.’²²

The Asantehene Osei Tutu II has stated that the Palace is always opened to the Church. A regular relationship between the church and the Palace therefore will guarantee mutual understanding between the Church and the Palace. According to the Asantehene, ‘Manhyia doors have always been opened to Christianity and the Church. We are grateful that the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has not only given Nananom a platform to express their appreciation to God, but to mutually understand each other in order to bring glory to our Father, Who is the Originator and Sustainer of all things and without Whom nothing can exist.’²³

EFFORTS OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS TO BECOME FULL CHURCH MEMBERS

Occupants of the Palace have made constant efforts to become full members of the church. Some of the royal families have even come to consider themselves as Christian royal families. Nana Osei Bonsu the Omanhene of Asante Mampong insists that, ‘the missionaries introduced Christianity in Asante and built schools to educate people, especially the members of the royal family. People became Christians while in school and in the course of time most royals were converted to the English Church Mission. We find that our families were Christians at birth; in other words, we were born into Christianized royal families.’²⁴

The desire of traditional leaders to become full members has, however, been constantly resisted in some of the missionary instituted churches. Smith has noted that, ‘a Christian who is elected to occupy a stool forfeits full membership of the church but may, and invariably does remain an adherent.’²⁵ In supporting the resistance to full membership of the Traditional Leaders Smith reports of Emmanuel Mate of Krobo who was elected to become the Konor of Krobo. According to Smith, ‘a former Mission teacher, a nephew of Sackitey, Emmanuel Mate, was elected Konor, the first chief of Krobo to have been brought up as a Christian, but he found it impossible to combine Christianity and chieftaincy, and was later excluded from attendance at Holy Communion.’²⁶

The challenge of traditional leaders becoming full members of the church has been on the agenda of several Synods and General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. At the 1960 Synod as noted earlier on, Nene Mate Kole called upon the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to pursue the necessary research that would make traditional leaders attain full membership status of the church. In his welcome address to the Synod, he requested that, ‘the times are changing fast and it is the belief of most chiefs of Ghana that by research and deep thought the church will in no distant date embark on policies that will make all chiefs practising as well as professing Christian, and finally that our deep-rooted institutions may be purged with the light of the Christian spirit to the glory of God and to the well-being of this emerging nation.’²⁷

Nene Mate Kole’s hope of the challenge to be resolved in a distant date has not materialized over six decades. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana for example insists that, ‘no Christian is expected to be a stool/skin functionary, for almost every stool functionary has to participate in some ceremony connected with ancestral spirits and it is evident that no categorical declaration on the purely civil significance of the various stool emblems and ceremonies can be made.’²⁸

²¹ Kwamena-Poh., *Vision and Mission Achievement*, 196.

²² Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene January 2020* (Kumasi: Asante Presbytery 2020).

²³ Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene*.

²⁴ Irene Odotei and George Hagan, *The King Returns: Enstoolment of Asantehene Osei Tutu II*. (Accra: Institute of African Studies, 2002), 133.

²⁵ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 255.

²⁶ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 136.

²⁷ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 240.

²⁸ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution 2016 Edition* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House), 152.

Rev Dr. Yaw Frimpong-Manso a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, admits that the challenge that was presented to the Presbyterian Church of Ghana eight decades ago by the Okyehene still persists. He observed that ‘where these traditional rulers had been faithful Christians in good standing with their Churches before ascending the stool, their full memberships have been withdrawn by some Churches for the reason that their new position places on them the responsibility of worshipping two masters, God and the ancestors. This has been explained most often with the biblical expectation of the Christian and most chiefs have been debarred from attending Holy Communion.’²⁹

The traditional leaders who claim to be Christians insist that their services in the Palace do not take them away from the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the sovereignty of God. The Bible remains the rule of their lives and they never considered their ancestors as sovereign. Some of them even believed in Jesus Christ and God before their deaths, as their God and Saviour. Okyeame Ampratwum who was a Catechist of the Presbyterian Church was withdrawn from the Holy Communion when he accepted the office as Okyeame Pannin (Head Linguist). He insists that the efforts that some of the Traditional leaders are making to maintain their church membership are not been acknowledged by the church. The Palace functions he insists, have not replaced his core beliefs as a Christian. He has decided to remain in the church even though he has been withdrawn from full membership.³⁰

The Christ Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana at Akropong Akuapem has allocated a special space in the chapel for the Omanhene and other Palace functionaries. Church members who are not part of the Palace functionaries are not allowed to sit in the space allocated for the traditional leaders even if the chapel is full to capacity. The space is frequently occupied by the Omanhene and other chiefs on both Special occasions and ordinary Sundays. The fact however remains that the Omanhene and *Nananom* at Akropong Akuapem are not offered full membership status and therefore are not accepted to participate in the Holy Communion. *Nananom* and the royals have kept calling for the church to make it possible for them to attain full membership and subsequently participate in the Holy Communion, a request that according to Emily Akuffo is yet to receive favourable response from the church.³¹ The Akropong Akuapem Palace that offered the missionary direction to the Basel Mission to bring the Jamaican Christians to Akropong Akuapem for the ultimate success of the missionary enterprise has not ironically, been considered worthy enough for full church membership.

The churches have made a significant impact on other sectors of the nation. Obiri Yeboah Mante has observed that the church is determined to build on the foundation that has already been laid. He insists that, ‘the presence of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Asante apart from evangelism, has also been very instrumental in the expression of opportunities in the fields of education, artisan industry training, and manpower development and as a church, we seek to build on the solid foundation already laid.’³² The church has related with the Palace since the very arrival of the missionaries. The ‘solid foundation already laid’, definitely must include the Palace and therefore the kind of mission and ministry that the church seeks to extend to the Palace must be of importance to both the Church and the Palace.

ROYALS AND PALACE LEADERSHIP

Akan traditional symbols of authority are marks of identity and ownership. They provide a public demonstration of the people who have rights to traditional power and leadership.³³ Royals prove their identity through constant association with their ancestors and the authority symbols. Disassociation from the ancestors and the traditional authority symbols are a declaration of the royals’ rejection and claims to the throne. Rejection of an individual’s royal identity is a practice that royal families disapprove and societies consider as disrespectful and a disappointment from the royal families.³⁴

²⁹ Brochure, *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana organised by Asante Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in collaboration with Otumfour Osei Tutu II Asantehene* (Kumasi: Imagehaus 2010).

³⁰ Interview with Okyeame Ampratwum June 1, 2004 Asante Mampong.

³¹ Interview with Emily Akuffo May 14, 2004 Akropong Akuapem.

³² Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene*.

³³ Interview with Nana Addo Dankwa III Nov. 22, 2004, Akuapim Akropong.

³⁴ Interview with Nana Addo Dankwa III Nov. 22, 2004, Akuapim Akropong.

The descendants of the original settlers become royals in Akan communities. The royals share common ancestry, inheritance and remain the traditional leaders of the communities that their ancestors established. Owing to the fact that the royals were the original settlers, they could determine the boundaries and locate each person on the portion of land allocated to them. The original settlers therefore settled land disputes because they owned the land and therefore could tell what they offered to each person and their decisions on land disputes were accepted without difficulty. According to Nana Addo Dankwa III, the word *Odehyee* comes from the Akan word *Ono na ode ne hyee*. (S/he owns the land and its boundaries).³⁵ The word has gradually been corrupted to become *Odehyee* (Royal).³⁶

The original settlers were mostly farmers and hunters. In the effort to explain the early beginnings of the kingship institution, Nana Addo Dankwa III narrated that the hunters in those days covered long distances in search of game. For proper preservation, they constructed temporary homes in the forest to dry the meat and later to convey it to their communities. Other people who later joined in conveying the meat requested for portions of the land and also constructed temporary houses while waiting to transport the meat and other farm produce. The temporal houses gradually assumed a permanent nature as settlers kept only family ties and made the newfound community a permanent home. Others identified new lands as they moved away from bad leaders, situations of war and famine, and became settlers on new lands.³⁷

The sons and daughters of the female royals are the royals who have access to the throne. The Akan inheritance system is largely matrilineal. The assumption behind the matrilineal system, which prevails in the communities on which this study concentrated, is that mothers possess and therefore transmit royal blood. Men are considered to transmit not *mogya* (blood) but their *sunsum* (soul) and therefore do not share their blood with their children as women do. Identification and association with a person's maternal family therefore determine access to inheritance in the matrilineal communities. Such royals inherit the properties of their uncles, mothers, brothers and that of their great-grandmothers and uncles.

Akan royals are expected to maintain their royal identity and cultural belief systems. They participate in palace functions, traditional festivals, recognition of ancestors, Black Stools, libation prayers, traditional drumming and dancing. The participation in such traditional beliefs and activities has created tensions between Akan Christian royals and the church. Some royals have in the process distanced themselves from Palace beliefs and activities in order to maintain their Christian faith and positions. The church in some instances has also disciplined some royals who have accepted traditional royal functions by withdrawing them from the Holy Communion and denying them a full Christian burial.

The Akan Christian royals insist that they do not deny nor replace the Lordship of Christ and the sovereignty of God with their ancestors. The Akan royal Christians live in tension with the Christian faith in their conversion affirmation as some churches established by Western missionaries keep rejecting their conversion without disassociation from the ancestors and traditional authority symbols like the Black Stool.³⁸

FUNCTIONS OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS

The constant denial of full membership and participation of the Holy Communion of traditional leaders are closely related to the Palace functions as indicated. The major functions of the traditional leaders are administrative, executive, judicially and military. The functions however are performed in relation to the ancestors as their successor. Busia has observed that, 'as the successor of the ancestors he (the chief) performed various rites for the welfare of his people. With that office were joined other functions which may be described as administrative, executive, judicial, and military.'³⁹ It is only the chief and the other Palace functionaries that can bring all the lineages together and sacrifice to their royal ancestors on behalf of the community as a whole. To the people, this is considered as the most important function of the chief.⁴⁰

Traditional leaders have functioned as military Commanders that led their people to fight others for the security and peace of their communities. Debrunner has noted that, 'before the period of British rule,

³⁵ Interview with Nana Addo Dankwa III Nov. 22, 2004, Akuapim Akropong.

³⁶ The plural form of *Odehyee* (royal) is *Adehyee* (royals).

³⁷ Nana Addo Dankwa III. *Institution of Chieftaincy in Ghana-The future*. (Accra: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004), 2.

³⁸ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution 2016 Edition* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House), 152.

³⁹ Kofi Abrefa Busia, *The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti*, (Oxford University Press, 1951), 37.

⁴⁰ Busia. *The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti*, 37.

the primary duty expected of the chief and his council was the maintenance of peaceful relations within the community and its defence from external attacks. The community was welded together into a political unit by its common allegiance to the chief.⁴¹ The chiefs led their people into tribal wars of their nations and also taking over of other people's lands. Debrunner has further noted that, 'before 1900, when there were tribal wars, the military duty of the chief and the elders was important. They led different sections of the army during times of wars.'⁴²

The chief and the elders were responsible for the administration of the Divisions. They performed the necessary sacrifices for the welfare of the people. They were responsible for seeing that law and order were maintained and that the customs were followed.⁴³ The chief was the hub of unity for the separate lineages, villages, and sub-divisions. He held the whole community together. Without him, the elders are isolated units.⁴⁴ In the ritual, as in the constitutional aspect of his life, the chief is the focus of the unity of the tribe.⁴⁵

The Chieftaincy Act of Ghana currently considers the functions of the chiefs mainly in matters of customary law and dispute settlements of succession lines to traditional stools.

Functions of the National House of Chiefs

3. (I) The National House shall

- (a) advise a person or an authority charged with a responsibility under the Constitution or any other law for any matter related to or affecting chieftaincy,
- (b) undertake the progressive study, interpretation and codification of the customary law with a view to evolving, in appropriate cases, a unified system of rules of customary law, and compiling the customary laws and lines of succession applicable to each stool or skin,
- (c) undertake an evaluation of traditional custom and usage with a view to eliminating custom and usage that is outmoded and socially harmful, and
- (d) perform the functions conferred on it under this Act and other functions, not inconsistent with a function assigned to the House of Chiefs of a region, that Parliament may refer to it.⁴⁶

The Asantehene Osei Tutu II has argued that traditional leaders no more fight to seize other people's lands. The new form of battle that they fight are now matters of development, education, health, employment and prosperity of their people and communities. The enemies of Asante are no more other kingdoms but poverty, disease, unemployment, hunger and illiteracy.⁴⁷ The contemporary focus of the chieftaincy institution as indicated by the Asantehene seems to be in consonance with the church's social services in the communities.

CREATION OF MISSION FIELDS AND APPOINTMENTS OF CHAPLAINS

The creation of mission fields and appointments of chaplains have remained missionary strategies of the various missions right from its inception. The Danish authorities and other missionaries took care of the spiritual life of their officials by the appointments of chaplains. Mission fields were equally created for the new areas that the missions intended to expand their missionary efforts.⁴⁸

Communities that are considered to be new to the Gospel and have peculiar social and cultural challenges are offered special dispensation to develop their Christian understanding and spirituality within the given cultural milieu. Such communities are integrated into mainstream church life when the church is satisfied with its growth and maturity. The Northern Mission Field of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana which some years ago handled the Northern sector of the missionary work of the Presbyterian Church now has the Northern and Upper Presbyteries. The Sefwi Mission Field has also matured to become the Sefwi Presbytery. The Christian responsibilities are usually reduced at the mission fields while some level of patience is exercised for the converts to respond to the Christian faith within their challenging circumstances.

In his affirmation of the relevance of the church's mission to the Palace, Mante has assured that the Presbyterian Church of Ghana will improve its chaplaincy ministry to the Palace. He assured that, 'from our experiences in Asante, we will seek to improve on our provision of chaplaincy services to chiefs and

⁴¹ Debrunner. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 107-108.

⁴² Debrunner. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 107-108.

⁴³ Debrunner. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 107.

⁴⁴ Robert Rattray *Ashanti Law and Constitution*. (London: Oxford University Press), 96-97.

⁴⁵ Busia. *The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti*, 39.

⁴⁶ Ghana, *Chieftaincy Act, Act 759*. (Accra: Assembly Press, 2008).

⁴⁷ Odotei and Hagan, *The King Returns: Enstoolment of Asantehene Osei Tutu II*

⁴⁸ Kwamena-Poh., *Vision and Mission Achievement*, 19.

traditional leaders and other Chief Executives.⁴⁹

In his appreciation for the Thanksgiving service on the contribution of Nananom to Church growth, Rev Prof Emmanuel Martey a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, called for churches to plan to extend Christian mission to all Palaces. He opined that, 'it is my hope that as we thank the All-glorious and Ever-living God during this unprecedented and extraordinary Service to acknowledge the contributory role that *Nananom* have played in the growth of the Christian Church in Ghana, all Churches would plan to send mission to all Palaces not only to bring the meaningfully abundant life that Jesus the Christ of God has brought to all humankind, but also to provide a catalysis for development and nation building.'⁵⁰

CHRISTIAN MISSION TO THE PALACE

The Asantehene Osei Tutu II has indicated that, 'Manhyia upholds Christianity and always welcomes the Church to bring the Gospel message to *Nananom* and the people of Asante.'⁵¹ He considers the church's effort to reach out to the Palace with the Gospel as a good opportunity, as such moments offer them the space to thank God who they consider as their Father without whom they cannot fulfill their dreams. According to the Asantehene, 'there is so much in Asante to thank God for and we are grateful that the Presbyterian Church has given *Nananom* a good opportunity to express our gratitude to Our Father, without Whom all of us are nothing and cannot fulfill our aspirations.'⁵²

The 'good opportunity' is an affirmation that the desire of the Palace for Christian mission that was expressed some 80 years ago is still waiting for the church's full response. Even though the Christian faith was introduced to Ghanaians by Western missionaries, the acceptance of the people does not make the faith a foreign belief system. Christianity as a universal faith must therefore find an eternal home in Akan cultural milieu.⁵³ The Palace that is the heart of the culture must equally be reached for Christ a response that the post-missionary church must pay attention to.

To some of the chiefs and queens, it is a matter of great concern since some of them who, before accepting their traditional responsibility as chiefs and queens, were Christians, but now find themselves as if they were fallen between two stools, feel that something should be done to bridge the apparent gap that now exists between the traditional rulers and the Christians.⁵⁴ To achieve this, Frimpong-Manso has opined that, 'it will be necessary to take a closer look at the significance of the traditional institutions and practices to determine the extent to which Christians could participate in some of them without sacrificing their Christian principles.'⁵⁵

The call for the church to extend mission to the Palace is an indication of the fact that the Church wants to be culturally educated, and to strive to present the person of Jesus Christ and his teachings in terms of the culture which will give new insights into the culture. Anim Opong has therefore called for both the Palace and the Church to be opened to each other for a more helpful mission and ministry. He noted that, 'Chieftaincy is not irrelevant to Christianity but that chieftaincy must be opened to the Gospel, and the Gospel must be opened to the Ghanaian culture.'

Anim Opong considered living the Christian values as a divine mandate for all including Palace functionaries. He therefore expected churches to sustain processes that will facilitate Christianisation of the culture which is the heart of the Palace. He opined, 'my wish is that this gesture be seen by all as enhancing the whole way of living according to the Gospel values no matter whether we are chiefs or not. My expectation is that the Presbytery would see this event not as an end, but a continuation of the process of Christianizing the culture.'⁵⁶ He called on the church to as a matter of strengthening the church's mission to the Palace to put in

⁴⁹ Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene on January 1, 2020* (Kumasi: Asante Presbytery 2020).

⁵⁰ Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene on January 1, 2020* (Kumasi: Asante Presbytery 2020).

⁵¹ Brochure: *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana.*

⁵² Brochure: *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana.*

⁵³ Andrew Walls, . *The Missionary Movement in Christian History.* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996).

⁵⁴ Interview with Nana Owusu Afriyie June 2, 2004 Asante Mampong.

⁵⁵ Brochure: *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana.*

⁵⁶ Brochure: *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana.*

place a pragmatic strategy to sustain the process. He indicated that, ‘the Church must put in place a pragmatic strategy to sustain the process to the glory of God.’⁵⁷

There is the need for further research as a major response to the churches’ mission to the Palace for better insights into the various aspects of the Palace functions for proper understanding and integration. Frimpong-Manso however, requested *Nananom* to cooperate for such research to be done. He noted that, ‘I therefore wish to add my voice to the call for further research into Ghanaian Culture and the understanding of the meaning of activities in the traditional sphere, most of which are often regarded mistakenly as unchristian. I urge *Nananom* also to be less conservative in attitude and be prepared to co-operate with research workers for a better understanding of the Chieftaincy institution and its relevance to contemporary society.’⁵⁸

The Palace is the rallying point of the communities. There is the need to bring it under the authority of Jesus Christ. The task of a deeper understanding of the Palace and the churches’ ministry to the Palace functionaries depend mainly on Christian researchers and chiefs who considered themselves as Christians. Frimpong-Manso further points out that, ‘let *Nananom* unveil the curtain to enable researchers peep into some of the sacred areas for the effective study of the chieftaincy institution. Most of the sacred activities can be modified to suit the Christian concept of religion and biblical view of chieftaincy and be brought under the authority of Jesus Christ (Cor. 15:25-27). Obviously, chieftaincy as an institution is the rallying point for our communities and the people and has much significance even for us today.’⁵⁹

In his effort to establish the relevance of the church’s mission to the Palace, Mante has opined that the church is committed to deepening its worship services in the Palace. He noted that, ‘as we reflect on the theme ‘A Decade of Mission to the Palace-Kings will bring their Glory to the Kingdom (Rev 21:24)’, we are also delighted that on the first day of the year, Otumfoo and his retinue of Chiefs commit themselves to the care and protection of the Almighty God and also give fraternal goodwill message to the nation. Presbyterian Church of Ghana commits to pray with you and to continue the organization of the New Year Service at the Manhyia Palace.’⁶⁰ The Moderator further indicated his interest in the spread of the church’s mission to the Palace. According to him, ‘the Church will also seek to initiate such Services in places that do not have them in the coming years.’⁶¹

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE PALACE

Scripture is very emphatic of the glorious city of God prepared for those who accept to live for God in their earthly lives. The city that does not need any light will have the glory of God as its light. In the Book of Revelation, ‘the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it’ (Rev 21: 24). Scripture indicates that the kings of the earth will enter into the glorious city of God with their splendour. The kings of the earth will enter into the city not just because of their various traditional leadership positions but because they qualify to enter as they have been washed and cleansed in the blood of the lamb. The task of the churches towards the traditional leadership institutions is how to provide ministry to the Palace for the Palace functionaries to come into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ the Saviour who alone makes the entrance of the glorious city possible. The missionary instruction of Jesus remains, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matt 28:18-19).

The reign of Christ must be experienced in the Palace too but that will take the availability of the messengers of hope who will be sent to the Palace for ministry and missions. Evangelization of the Palace may need the regular Spiritual disciplines like Bible Studies, Prayer, Worship, Service and Fellowship. Some churches have initiated such programmes that suggest that the regular Christian witness and worship in the Palace is possible. The Asante Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has initiated an annual New Year’s Day church service with Asantehene at the Manhyia Palace. The programme celebrated its 10th anniversary (2010-2020) on January 1, 2020. The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana who preached the day’s

⁵⁷ Brochure: *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana.*

⁵⁸ Brochure: *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana.*

⁵⁹ Brochure: *1st Thanksgiving Service for Nananom for their contribution towards Church Growth in Ghana.*

⁶⁰ Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene.*

⁶¹ Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene.*

sermon encouraged other congregations to follow the example.⁶² Indeed Scripture indicates that thrones and authorities were created for Christ. In the Book of Colossians Paul indicated that, 'for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him' (Col 1:16). The Lordship of Christ in the Palace and evangelization of the Palace ought to be an integral missionary agenda of the post-missionary churches in Akan and other Ghanaian communities.

In his evaluation and approval of the Asante Presbytery's effort to reach Manhyia with the Gospel through the annual New Year's Day service with the Asantehene, his family and other chiefs, Rev Prof. Joseph Obiri Yeboah Mante the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, paid tribute to the initiators of the programme. He noted, 'I pay glowing tribute to Rev Dr. Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong under whose tenure as Presbytery Chairperson the programme started. We also recognize the support of the many people who have helped by working tirelessly in the background to ensure the sustenance of this New Year Day Worship Service.'⁶³ He further expressed his desire for the continuation and spread of the programme. He assured that 'the Church will continue its worship services to the Manhyia Palace and other Palaces.'⁶⁴ A purposeful regular ministry in the Palace must subsequently deepen the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the Palace. The Palace functionaries who encounter Jesus in such services must be led to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and possible conversion. Such converted Palace functionaries must not only be accepted as full members of the church but must also be welcomed to the Holy Communion.

The Asantehene has noted that the Gospel is for all people including *Nananom*. He therefore expects churches to reach out to the Palace with the Gospel. He stated in his goodwill message to the 10th anniversary that, 'on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Mission to the Palace programme of the Asante Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, we thank God for the continuing collaboration between the Church and Manhyia for the good people of God. This milestone is a demonstration and renewed commitment of making the Gospel reach all persons in the Asante Kingdom, including *Nananom*.'⁶⁵

The Asantehene Otumfoɔ Osei Tutu II's invitation to the Asante Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to worship with him at the Manhyia Palace on New Year's Day is a clear demonstration of a healthy partnership between the church and *Nananom*. It is an affirmation that Manhyia Palace is opened to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and that Jesus is welcome to abide with *Nananom*. The personal participation in all the New Year services by Otumfoɔ, his wife Lady Julia Osei Tutu and their children and some of *Nananom* points to the fact that Jesus is needed at the Manhyia Palace and that *Nananom* do accept that their sufficiency in traditional leadership is in Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who is the Provider.

The Asantehene identified the enemies and the challenges of Asanteman during the service at the Palace as hunger, illiteracy, diseases, and poverty and looked up to God to supply their needs. He stated, 'let us all use this Thanksgiving Service for *Nananom*, to ask God through His Son Jesus Christ for mercies. It is my prayer that God will continue to bless our land and supply the needs of our nation and rid it of hunger, illiteracy, diseases and poverty and also help us to know and do His will.'⁶⁶ More importantly, he requested prayer for God to help him and his people to know and do the will of God.

The New Year church services at Manhyia Palace are very unique in Ghanaian Christianity. It is an effort that must be celebrated. An effort that must attract academic, missionary and theological attention and reflection. It is an effort that must be spread to other parts of the country and even beyond. The New Year service at Manhyia Palace must challenge the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and all other churches especially the missionary established churches to provide responses to the Gospel and Culture tension that seems to frustrate traditional leaders from becoming full members in the church and participate in some Christian sacraments like baptism and Holy Communion. The effort of the Asantehene Otumfoɔ Osei Tutu II must challenge other traditional Leaders to also open their Palaces for Christian worship. God must receive our praises and thanksgiving in the Palaces too. The Lordship of Christ must be demonstrated by *Nananom* in

⁶² The Author participated in the service and was requested to say the opening prayer.

⁶³ Brochure: 10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene.

⁶⁴ Brochure: 10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene.

⁶⁵ Brochure: 10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene.

⁶⁶ Brochure: 10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene.

their Palaces as the church accepts to embark on Christian mission and ministry to the Palace. Moreover, the study recommends deeper research into traditional rites in the chieftaincy institutions that have remained areas of theological tensions between the Church and the Palace.

CONCLUSION

The study has observed that the creation of mission fields and appointments of chaplains have remained some of the key missionary strategies of the Western missionaries and missionary established churches. The study subsequently holds the position that the missionary strategies must be considered in the effort to respond to the constant request of Palace functionaries for Christian mission to be extended to the Palace. The study moreover considers deeper research into the subject of ancestors and ancestral related functions that have remained the bone of contention on the conversion of Palace functionaries. The effort it is considered will make a significant contribution towards the quest towards the evangelization and conversion experience of the Palace and its functionaries. The recognition that is given to ancestors and ancestral-related activities should not in any way limit the reign of Jesus Christ in the Palace as have been expressed by many Palace functionaries.

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APPENDIX

Interview with Okyeame Ampratwum June 1, 2004 Asante Mampong.

Interview with Nana Addo Dankwa III Nov. 22, 2004, Akuapim Akropong.

Interview with Nana Owusu Afriyie June 2, 2004 Asante Mampong.

Interview with Emily Akuffo May 14, 2004 Akropong Akuapem.