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# The Africanization of Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches In Krobo-Odumase, Ghana

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Lori Elizabeth Godich  
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May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give us a spirit of unity among ourselves as we follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth we may glorify our Creator God.

*Romans 15:5-6*

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part One: Historical Context	
Chapter One: A Brief History of Christianity in Africa.....	8
Chapter Two: The Presbyterian Church of Ghana.....	14
Chapter Three: The Roman Catholic Church in Ghana.....	20
Part Two: Critical Issues.....	24
Chapter Four: Denominationalism.....	26
Chapter Five: Views of Missionary Activities.....	30
Chapter Six: Christianity's Relationship with African Traditional Religions.....	34
Chapter Seven: Language Concerns.....	39
Chapter Eight: Global Impact.....	43
Conclusion.....	45
Afterword.....	48
Informants.....	64
References.....	66

## Introduction

Although early missionaries introduced West Africa to Christian practices and thoughts with Western influences, Ghanaian Christianity is now clothed in Ghanaian culture. Today, the practice of Christianity in Krobo-Odumase reflects the Ghanaian society in which it exists. William D. Reyburn defines this change as the “Africanization” of Christianity, “the unconscious and subtle reorientation of the Christian message as received from the West into African points of view” (Reyburn 97). Currently, Christians in Krobo-Odumase are experiencing the Africanization of Christianity through a unique dialogue between their rich Ghanaian culture and strong Christian faith.

The following pages include a combination of scholarly research and fieldwork pertaining to the Africanization of Christianity, specifically the relationship between Christianity and culture in the Ghanaian village of Krobo-Odumase. Chapter One outlines a brief history of Christianity in Africa, followed by Chapters Two and Three which contain more detailed histories of the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches in Ghana. Special attention is given to Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Krobo-Odumase, where most of the study’s fieldwork was conducted. Chapters Four - Eight examine five critical issues facing churches in Krobo-Odumase and throughout the African continent as they experience the Africanization of Christianity. Finally, the Conclusion analyzes fieldwork findings in light of past scholars’ research and personal experiences, recognizing dialogue as the key for Christians worldwide to understand and benefit from the Africanization of Christianity in Krobo-Odumase, Ghana.

As a Butler University Honors student pursuing a double major in Religious Studies and English, I am required to complete a thesis for graduation in May 2000. Early in my college career, I realized my fascination with the dynamics of religion and culture and hoped to develop my thesis around a related topic. My arrival in Krobo-Odumase, Ghana, on November 10th, 1999, marked a major milestone in a two-year project focusing on the Africanization of Christianity.

During the summer of 1998, I worked as a research intern for the Polis Center's "Religion and Urban Culture" project, a six-year study of urban life and faith-based institutions of Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A. After merely three months of interviews, observations, and scholarly research, "Indianapolization" was evident. Religious groups were affected by Indianapolis' culture, and these same groups also helped to define the city's culture. Upon further reflection and analysis, I proposed a similar study of culture and religion with a focus on Christianity in Africa as the basis for my Butler University Honors Thesis.

Concurrent with my internship at the Polis Center, I interned with Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith's major social policy initiative, the Front Porch Alliance (FPA). Mayor Goldsmith created FPA as a link between grassroots organizations and local government, maintaining that faith-based institutions and community organizations provided unique solutions to social concerns such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, unemployment, and juvenile crime. Working with FPA allowed me to experience church-state relationships firsthand and continued to foster my curiosity surrounding religion and culture.



Dr. Paul Valliere of Butler University's Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies supervised the development of my Honors Thesis proposal and knew I intended to spend one semester conducting necessary fieldwork in Africa. Still, Dr. Valliere and I realized that the scope of my project required that I complete a significant amount of research prior to my semester abroad. With this in mind, I applied for and received a grant from the Butler Summer Institute (BSI) to conduct research during June and July of 1999 that focused on the Africanization of Christianity. Thus, prior to my semester abroad I spent two months locating, reading, and analyzing past research and literature pertaining to the dynamics of Christianity in Africa.

The result of my BSI research was a 40-page paper with a threefold purpose. First, I gained general knowledge of and summarized the history of Christianity in Africa. Second, upon acceptance into the School for International Training *Ghana: Arts and Culture* program, I narrowed the focus of my research to Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches due to their significant histories, contributions, and current presence in Ghana. Finally, my BSI work exposed five critical issues facing Christianity in Africa today: denominationalism, views of historic and present missionary activities, Christianity's relationship with African Traditional Religions, language and music concerns, and the global implications of Africanized Christianity.

The comprehensive nature of this study resulted in an abundance of literary references. As research spanned a period of two years, a plethora of books, articles, essays, dissertations, analyses, and comparative studies were referenced. A complete list of references and informants follows the body of this work.

A number of sources were especially important for proper treatment of this topic. Adrian Hastings' The Church in Africa 1450-1950 and A History of African Christianity 1950-1975 as well as Elizabeth Isichei's A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present served as excellent background materials on the history of Christianity in Africa. Pashington Obeng's Asante Catholicism and Noel Smith's The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960 provided insight and historical information specific to the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian movements in Ghana. Finally, Mustard Seed: The Growth of the Church in Kroboland and Ecclesia in Ghana: On the Church in Ghana and its Evangelizing Mission in the Third Millenium supplied unparalleled information pertaining to Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Churches in Krobo-Odumase. Articles of importance included those by Ronald J. Allen, Andre Droogers, Steven Kaplan, Jack Partain, and William D. Reyburn. Additionally, the works of Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong were instrumental for understanding the relationship between religion and culture.

Lastly, a few works of fiction supplied valuable information, entertainment, and motivation throughout my study. Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and No Longer At Ease provided interesting perspectives on mission work in Africa and its affect on families. Maya Angelou's All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes reflected on returning to Ghana and tracing one's roots, and Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes: A Love Story and The Girl Who Can and Other Stories uncovered unique realities of Ghanaian culture.

As part of my study abroad program, I was required to complete an Independent Study Project (ISP), and although my ISP topic was defined when I arrived in Ghana on September 2, 1999, I was under no obligation to collect data in a particular manner. Prior

research dictated that I focus my energy on fieldwork in Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches, as I had already collected extensive background information and analyses on the Africanization of these churches. I contacted Rev. Dr. Abraham A. Akrong of the Institute of African Studies after hearing his lecture on religion in Ghana and learning that he was an ordained Presbyterian minister. Upon reading my Butler Summer Institute paper, Dr. Akrong agreed that fieldwork in two Ghanaian churches would supplement my previous research nicely.

While travelling throughout Ghana, I became familiar with the Eastern Region town of Krobo-Odumase and its paramount chief, Nene Sakite II. The dialogue among Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, traditionalists, and the government was evident even after my first brief visit to Krobo-Odumase. On October 29, 1999, I returned to Krobo-Odumase to attend the annual harvest festival. The festival reflected the true character of Krobo-Odumase: a place where religion and culture are in communion, where Christian churches and the House of Chiefs share members. Impressed by such realities, I arranged to conduct fieldwork at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church during the ISP period.

I arrived in Krobo-Odumase on November 10th, 1999. Though I had made previous living arrangements, Nene Sakite II had arranged for me to stay with Mrs. Adelaide Obeng, a lay preacher and active member of Zimmermann Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Obeng introduced me to the congregation, pastors, and elders of Zimmermann Presbyterian Church promptly. Nene Sakite II suggested that Mr. George Boatey, his senior linguist, serve as my link to Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church. Thus, my ISP research began upon my arrival.

My research included formal and informal interviews of clergy, congregants, community elders, and scholars in the fields of religious studies, anthropology, and African studies. I attended multiple worship services, small group meetings, prayer services, healing in the Dangme language. We both agreed that my research would be enhanced greatly if I learned a bit of the local language. Mr. Odzawo and I enjoyed one week of intensive language study, during which time we also had daily informal interviews regarding my research. Mr. Odzawo was an invaluable addition to my research in many ways.

I conducted all of my interviews in English because I was unable to locate a sufficient translator. Initially, the people who helped me with translations gave only loose interpretations of my informants' words. Because matters of faith and people's understanding of culture are quite personal and depend on one's expression in precise words and phrases, I felt interpretations were inadequate for this research. Consequently, I limited the majority of my interviews to English-speaking informants. I did not use a translator during worship services, as it was too distracting to me and to the congregation. I was familiar with the liturgies of both churches, so I do not feel that I missed too much by not using a translator. I also chose not to use recording devices for this research because my informants felt uncomfortable under such circumstances. Finally, I believe that further training in the local languages would be imperative to continue research on the Africanization of Christianity.

My initial intentions were not to reveal my personal religious affiliations to my informants, but this proved to be impossible. Both congregations had some degree of skepticism, largely due to experiences with previous researchers. Thus, I made my

informants fully aware of my status as an American university student, researcher, and lifelong Christian. In retrospect, I feel that this policy benefited my study because it provided a common ground for my informants and me to exchange information. Sharing my faith increased my credibility in both congregations and throughout the town.

Upon collecting data from various sources, I met with local clergy, lay leaders, and congregation members to discern patterns and trends of my research. In discussing my findings with the local congregations, I was able to evaluate my thoughts and receive feedback from my informants. My informants enjoyed these informal meetings because they were exposed to my observations, opinions, and concerns regarding their congregations. Thus, my analysis of the Africanization of Christianity in Krobo-Odumase has been a collaborative effort, and it is this aspect of my research that I find to be most valuable.



## Chapter One: A Brief History of Christianity in Africa

Christianity in Africa is by no means a new development. Early Christian activities were located in the region that is now home to Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Known as the Coptic Church, this form of Christianity faced significant pressures from various external circumstances, and few examples can be found outside of Egypt and Ethiopia today. The Coptic Church is much different from the Christianity familiar to most Westerners. Nevertheless, Africa has been in contact with Christianity and can be considered to have had Christian inhabitants since the first century CE.

Although early African Christianity is important to the continent's overall history, the details of Egyptian and Ethiopian Christianity are too inaccessible to constitute a solid historical base for my study of African Christianity. Consequently, most works concentrating on Christianity in Africa choose to begin their account around 1500 CE, the date when a common continental history begins (Hastings 46). The political and religious characteristics of Africans around 1500 CE were varied and not unified. During this time, Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religions all flourished.

Just like the political characteristics of Africa during this time, the religion of the African people was varied. Migration and intermarriage among Africans only compounded theological viewpoints that were held by people of the continent. During this time, Christian practices were notable, and traditional religions continued to flourish. Islam was a significant part of African culture as well. The early history of Christianity in Africa, therefore, lacks a common thread among its many believers.

Modern Christian missionary movements in Africa began with the foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. Prior to the establishment of this Protestant

mission, African Christianity had experienced the continued but no longer expanding life of the Coptic Church. In North Africa, various Christian attempts at converting the Muslims had been unsuccessful. The Roman Catholic Church posted a few missionaries in Africa prior to the work of the Baptist Missionary Society, but none had enjoyed great success. Even in its early stages African Christianity endured a variety of trials and errors. As Elizabeth Isichei notes, "The history of all Christian missions is a theme in counterpoint, the intricate and ever-changing relationship between Christianity, the cultural packaging in which it is presented, and the culture of the host community" (Isichei 46). Isichei's assessment also applies to the present status of mission work in Africa.

Between 1737 and 1770, two Protestants initiated missionary efforts in West Africa, but their efforts were not sustained. In 1751, Reverend Thomas Thompson, Africa's first Anglican missionary, arrived in West Africa. Rev. Thompson's efforts and those of his successors were unsuccessful due to a lack of organizational support and infrastructure. Roman Catholicism persisted during the 1700's, but its base was fragile and its efforts were sporadic. Until the 1800's, Christianity's impact on Africa was limited.

The strong roots of Africa's traditional cultures, a significant shortage of Christian clergy, and the reluctance of Africans to respond to European missionaries all posed challenges to Christianity. Initially, missionary interactions with local Christians were strained due to perceived class differences, but as the missionaries continued their work without catering to any particular groups of people, the Africans were more willing to accept the missionaries' messages. Catholics and Protestants rarely viewed each other

with respect, and such disapproval was reflected in the people with whom they were working. Africans saw the ill interactions among missionaries from various groups and tended to disregard the teachings of Christianity as a whole. Thus, the missionary activities of this time were introduced and sustained through the years, but there was little understanding among the various agents. Missionary efforts did not succeed until 1828, when the Gold Coast witnessed the establishment of the Basel Mission, a Protestant enterprise that would prove to be among the most successful on the African continent and of particular importance in Ghana. At the same time, Roman Catholic missions were in decline and almost disappeared in the eighteenth century (Groves 146). With the exception of the Basel Mission, the eighteenth century was a time of Christian decline for West Africa.

In the following years, while the Basel Mission flourished and the Roman Catholic Church continued to heighten its presence in West Africa, indigenous forms of Christianity also developed. Africans instituted their own Christian churches, not funded or supported by larger denominational bodies or foreign missionary entities. The first indigenous churches to develop in Africa were rooted in South Africa and Nigeria and resembled the Coptic Church from previous centuries. The mission of these indigenous churches challenged the white domination of Christianity. The second wave of indigenous churches grew from 1910-1930, and these movements were most often developed by self-proclaimed prophets or from schisms with larger mission churches. Finally, the third group of independent churches formed in the 1940's when several small, already independent churches combined to form a common church. The increasing number of indigenous churches in the twentieth century has affected Africa's



religious scene tremendously. These communities play an important role in the religious dialogue of the continent.

Christianity was not only attractive to believers. Non-Christians living in mission areas took interest in the steady industry that Christianity seemed to foster. "After morning prayers the Christians repaired to their plantations, perhaps to try out new crops and new methods of cultivation" suggested by the missionaries (Smith 105-6).

Additionally, new tools and household goods were imported from the missionaries' homelands. Money was plentiful when the missionaries were involved in local industry, and more importantly, the missionaries educated the local people in new trades such as masonry, joinery, and blacksmithing. The presence of Christian missionaries, therefore, seemingly reduced poverty and increased education in many African communities, two results of mission work that even non-Christians were willing to embrace.

Due to the breadth of information required to detail the history of Christianity in Africa accurately, this study will now turn its attention to a single African country. Present-day Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) reflects the changing religious scene of the entire African continent. Freedom of religion is a constitutional right in Ghana, and though official numbers are difficult to determine, information from a 1998 source shows that 60% of the population is Christian. The current population of Ghana is also not known exactly, but with an annual growth rate of 3.2%, experts suggest that the 1998 population will exceed 17 million people, with the number of Ghanaian Christians reaching more than 10 million. As one author notes, "Roughly 60% of the present population of Ghana is Christian, though Christian slogan and music are so prevalent that you might easily think that should be 150%!" (Briggs 6). In addition to the 60% of

Ghana's population that are Christian, 16% are Muslim, and 20% maintain traditional religious practices.

Beyond statistics, Christianity prevails in Ghanaian society. Approximately half of the country's automobiles have Christian slogans painted across their front bumpers; "God is King," "Abide with Me," and "God Never Gives to Curse" are among the most popular. Ghanaian businesses are prone to adopting Christian corporate titles as well: "Jesus' Way Upholstery," "King of Kings Electrical," "Jehovah Jireh Motorbody Repairs," and even "The Lord is My Light Car Wash." Kente cloth, a long-standing cultural symbol of Ghana, is now woven with "Jesus Saves" and other Christian messages. On Ghana's one television channel, up to one-third of the public announcements each evening refer to Christian events. Preachers sermonize on public transportation, and one-third of all Ghanaian personal ads request Christian partners. Clearly, Christianity permeates many aspects of Ghanaian culture. A focus on the Presbyterian and Roman Catholic presence in Ghana will serve to illustrate the history and current workings of Christianity in Ghana.

This brief history of Christianity in Africa serves as the background for the analysis of fieldwork conducted in Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches in Krobo-Odumase, Ghana, West Africa. Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches have endured the many changes that have affected the religious dialogue in Ghana, and both churches have been the subject of significant studies on the Africanization of Christianity. The liturgies of the Roman Catholic mass and Presbyterian worship service are formal and consistent, allowing for comparison among Western and African experiences in both religious traditions. The next two chapters examine the history,

growth, and present status of the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian movements in Ghana and include with special attention to Krobo-Odumase's Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, the two churches that served as fieldwork sites for this study.

## Chapter Two: The Presbyterian Church of Ghana

The Presbyterian Church reached Ghana with the Basel Evangelical Mission Society in 1828. Missionaries from the West Indies, other parts of Africa, and Scotland have assisted this mission throughout the years. According to Noel Smith, a scholar who focused his studies on the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, “the pietism which characterised the Basel Missions was... a combination of religious emotion and deep thought, of individual conversion and strong Christian fellowship, its life rooted in a profound reverence for the Bible” (Smith 20). The Basel Mission was a pioneer in the Ghanaian missionary field.

The initial four Basel missionaries were selected in March of 1827. They were three Germans (Karl F. Salbach, Gottlieb Holzwarth, Johannes Henke) and a Swiss (Johannes Gottlob Schmidt). These missionaries were given strict instructions that emphasized acclimation, selection of a permanent site for the mission, mastery of the language at all costs, the foundation of a school, and the presentation of the Gospel (Smith 28). The beginnings of the Basel Mission were treacherous due to continuing slave trade efforts and mixed responses from the people of the Gold Coast. By November of 1831, all four missionaries had died, but three more were already on their way to continue the work of the Basel Mission.

The second group of missionaries also endured hardships. Twelve years after the inception of the Basel Mission, eight missionaries had died. After a few site relocations, the mission recognized its failed attempts and attributed their low number of converts to the lack of black missionaries among the entirely black population of the Gold Coast. For this reason, the Basel Mission contracted with six black families and three bachelors

to return to the Gold Coast in order to revive the mission work that had been started in the previous years. By July of 1843, a third group of Basel missionaries was in the Gold Coast. They began work immediately in the Eastern Region town of Akropong. Eventually, a settlement of thirty-two houses, a developed street, and many gardens were established. Yet despite such successes, the Basel Mission faced difficulties. By 1847, the number of missionaries had been reduced to three. Illness, death, social, and political defection were the main reasons for the decline in missionaries working at the Basel Mission, yet the work continued. Thus, a collection of positive and negative experiences marked the beginning of the Basel Mission's service in Gold Coast.

After 1850, the Gold Coast was under British rule, and the Basel Mission flourished. "By 1870 [the Basel Missions'] endeavours had resulted in the firm establishment of a Christian mission which not only through its evangelical work but also through its educational, agricultural and commercial enterprises, had begun to make its presence strongly felt" (Smith 45). From 1850-1870, eight main mission stations were established, Twi and Ga languages were reduced to writing, the educational system thrived, a seminary was in operation, the missionaries' cash crop experiments had proven lucrative, artisans were trained, and organized commerce among communities had begun. The Mission's organization was excellent, the languages of the people had been mastered, trained African teachers and catechists were available, and the Mission assumed a large role in the Gold Coast's local economy. Such positive results after major initial setbacks proved the growing success of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast.

The founder of Krobo-Odumase's Zimmermann Presbyterian Church, Reverend Johannes Zimmermann, began his missionary work in the Gold Coast. In 1851, after



working as a farmer and baker in his hometown of Wurttemberg, Germany, Zimmermann arrived at Cape Coast and immediately began working on Bible translations while teaching at a boys' school in Christiansborg. In 1859, after several relocations, Zimmermann was stationed in Krobo-Odumase. Zimmermann oversaw the construction of the first chapel at Odumase, which was ready for use in 1870. Zimmermann completed work on a Ga translation of the Bible and a Ga dictionary during his term at Krobo-Odumase, giving the Presbyterian Church a strong foundation in Kroboland.

The period of true advancement and growth for the Basel Mission and its successors fell between 1870 and 1918. Relying on the leadership of missionaries like Rev. Johannes Zimmermann, the Basel Mission concentrated its efforts in the Ga, Krobo, and Akuapem districts of the Gold Coast after 1875. Ironically, Zimmermann fell ill and was sent back to Germany where he died in 1876. A few years after Zimmermann's death, the Basel Mission's work resulted in the first General Conference of the Presbyterian Church, held at Akropong. A new church policy was implemented that allowed for special conferences with African missionary workers, Presbytery meetings with equal representation of Africans and Europeans, regular district Synods, and a General Conference every four years. The Basel Mission's new policy was acceptable to Europeans and greatly supported by the Africans.

In 1917, implications of World War I meant the Basel Mission faced a problem larger than any it had encountered previously. British authorities in control of the Gold Coast forced the Basel Mission to cease work and expelled the missionaries from the country, claiming that the Mission was a threat to Britain's rule. After ninety years of dedicated mission work, the Basel Mission was thrust out of the Gold Coast. The Synod

report from 1918 proved the Mission's success. "On eleven central stations and in almost two hundred towns and villages were Christian congregations shepherded by thirty African pastors and a host of catechists and teachers, a total Christian community of thirty thousand" (Smith 154). Despite its expulsion from the Gold Coast, the Basel Mission had reached enough people to ensure its continued presence in the country. "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' ... had become a treasured word in the minds of the people" (Smith 154). Thus, the second phase of the Basel Mission ended on a successful note, and devoted members maintained the work started by the missionaries.

The third stage in the growth of the Presbyterian Church in the Gold Coast began with the Synod of 1918 and ended with the adoption of the Revised Constitution in 1950. During this time, the Church became fully autonomous. In 1926, the Basel missionaries were allowed to return to the country, and after a few years of negotiations, The Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast was founded, marking the permanent merger of the Scottish and Basel Missions with the Presbyterian Church. During the 1940's, the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast had also turned its focus to the northern regions of the country, where little missionary activity had occurred. Within ten years, an entirely new mission field had been developed in the northern region. Shortly thereafter, the government approved religious instruction as a part of the school curriculum in the north, but only after the constitutional changes of 1949-50 did the Missions feel really free to evangelize in the north. Once these efforts were established, the work greatly resembled

that which took place in the south. Thus, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Presbyterian Church gained recognition throughout the Gold Coast.

The Gold Coast attained political independence from Britain in 1957, an event important in the life of the Church as well as the people. It was at this point that the country became known by its current name, Ghana. By the 1960's the Presbyterian Church of Ghana included over 685 congregations, 80 ministers, 250 catechists, and 65 evangelists. Communicant members were known to number 45,000 and 122,000 children attended Church-sponsored schools. The Presbyterian Church had established over 3,700 teachers who staffed 570 primary schools, 140 middle schools, six training colleges, and two secondary schools. The Church attributed much of its success during the first half of the 20th century to the "devotion and sacrifice of Basel and Scottish missionaries, upon the courage of West Indians, and upon the faith and patience of African pastors, catechists, evangelists, and teachers" (Smith 223-4). Recognizing statistics and comments like these, most people argue that independence greatly benefited the Presbyterian Church in Ghana. Currently, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana is among the largest denominations in the country. The Church continues to focus its ministries on educational advancements. Its adherents are prominent throughout the country.

For the remainder of this study Presbyterianism will be represented by Zimmermann Presbyterian Church, the district head for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Kroboland. The congregation numbers approximately 800 and supports two pastors, District Pastor Reverend Emmanuel Binadeo Djigagu and Youth Director Reverend Samuel Buenor Lawerteh. While the Presbyterian Church is respected as a significant part of Krobo and Ghanaian culture, it is still faced with challenges from



indigenous religions and social customs, some of which will be discussed in later chapters.

### Chapter Three: The Roman Catholic Church in Ghana

Catholicism is the most widespread and popular Christian denomination in Ghana today. It has been challenging the membership of its Protestant counterparts like the Presbyterians since the 1970's. However, Roman Catholic history is difficult to trace in Ghana due to the number of religious orders it includes. Information is not readily available from all of the orders, although many of them have made significant contributions to Ghana's religious scene. Scholar C.G. Baeta states, "... the most remarkable and painful gap in source materials at present is that occasioned by the absence of histories of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Roman Catholic African missions" (Baeta 5). Despite the lack of written materials on the Roman Catholic Church in Ghana, no one disputes its role as a significant contributor to Ghana's religious scene.

The Portuguese first introduced Catholicism to the Gold Coast during the late 15th century. The first public mass was said at Elmina in January of 1482. However, after the Portuguese withdrew from the Gold Coast in 1637, the Roman Catholic influence dwindled. Roman missions throughout Africa suffered during the 17th and 18th centuries. "Political changes made [missionaries'] work less easy, and the diminished power and prestige of Portugal reduced [the Roman Catholics'] opportunities" (Groves I 146). Catholic missionary efforts were rekindled with the establishment of a French mission at Elmina in 1880 and in the north with the coming of the White Fathers in 1906.

On May 18th, 1880, Father August Moreau, a missionary of the Society of African Mission, arrived at Elmina and established a relationship with the local people. Eventually, his efforts resurrected the presence of the Roman Catholic Church in the

Gold Coast. Father Moreau died at sea in 1886, but scholars agree that missionaries like him set the footings of the Roman Catholic Church in Ghana. By 1921, statistics showed the Gold Coast as home to 35,000 Catholics, 10 parishes, 364 outstations, 22 priests, 125 catechists, and 13 religious sisters (Osei-Bonsu 11). In the latter part of the 19th century, the Gold Coast received missionaries from established international Roman Catholic religious orders such as the Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits as well as newer African foundations like the Mill Hill Society of St. Joseph and the Society of the Divine Word. Unlike a number of the Protestant churches which endured significant changes at Ghana's independence, "the Catholic Church refused rather emphatically to be stamped by the arrival of independence" (Hastings III 170).

At present, Ghana is home to fifteen Roman Catholic bishops, a total that increased by 50% in May of 1995. All of Ghana's bishops are local; there are no missionary bishops as there are in most other African countries. Additionally, many Ghanaian bishops hold degrees from Western institutions and play an active part in educating their home congregations. Coupled with the internationally recognized Ghanaian Bishop Peter Kwesi Sarpong, Ghana's Catholic leadership is unmatched by any other church.

Nevertheless, one must not overlook the problems that plague the Roman Catholic Church in Ghana. There is, and has been, a continual shortage of African Catholic clergy. Ironically, though the total number of clergy is insufficient for the number of parishes in Ghana, the number of young seminarians has increased greatly. In 1960, there were 1,661 seminarians, and by 1975 that number had grown to 3,650. Still, "the general picture of the Catholic Church remains an extraordinarily priestless one"

(Hastings 34). Personal contact between the priests and the Ghanaian people has declined; while new congregations continue to form, clergy qualified to serve these Roman Catholic parishes are quite scarce.

In response to people's recently renewed interest in Roman Catholicism, Ghanaian parishes are experimenting with new forms of ministry, both authorized and unauthorized. The sacraments are being entrusted to both catechists and lay leaders, new types of village ministries are being tested, and women are taking up more leadership positions within the Church. Adrian Hastings suggests that a few points are becoming clear concerning Roman Catholicism in African countries:

First is that the typical local Catholic pastor (at present not ordained) is likely to be married, a member of the local community, not too highly trained... Second is that he is likely to work with a church council of his own village or a group of villages, which will itself send representatives to a wider council for the whole area, at present the parish... The third is that a decisive factor behind the whole evolution of Catholic ministry is that of finance and the need to be self-reliant (Hastings 34-5).

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes the specific needs of its Ghanaian members, and this reality suggests that similar adaptations may soon be evident in other areas of Roman Catholic presence.

The Roman Catholic Church in Krobo-Odumase was established during the first years of Konor Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole II's reign. Because the king had traveled extensively prior to his rule, he recognized that the Roman Catholic Church could be a community building enterprise and an institution that would benefit his people. The first Holy Mass was held near Agormanya, and shortly thereafter a primary school, Sisters' Convent, medical clinic, and teacher training college were established. From the

beginning the Roman Catholic Church found an ally in Konor Oklemekuku Azzu Mate

Kole II:

[The Konor] had become personally connected with a long line of Catholic bishops, archbishops and priests, and the priests working among his people were his friends without exception. He loved the Krobo Catholic priests with a passion and sponsored his own grandnephew to the priesthood in July, 1988. Indeed not only was the Konor a great benefactor of the Holy Trinity Church of Agormanya but he was also a faithful member of the congregation. He did not miss Mass on Sunday or feast days, and any year the Corpus Christi procession went to Odumase, Nene himself designed and built the altar at his forecourt” (Burial 30).

The Roman Catholic Church continues to grow in Krobo-Odumase, largely due to the royal family’s involvement and interest in the faith.

At present, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Krobo-Odumase hosts one thousand people for its Sunday Mass. Father Paul Lauer is a native of the area and now leads the Holy Trinity congregation serving as their head priest. Father Alexander Ebo Saim assists with the parish. The Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church complex is also home to St. Martin’s Hospital and the Handmaids of the Divine Redeemer religious order which was founded in 1957 by Rt. Rev. Joseph Oliver Bowers. Like Zimmermann Presbyterian Church, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church supports a number of social groups including women’s and men’s fellowship, youth organizations, musical ensembles, and the fraternal order known as the Knights of St. John. Constantly in search of new ways to minister God’s Word effectively, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church takes an active role in addressing critical issues relevant to the Africanization of Christianity. The next chapter highlights such efforts.

## Part Two: Critical Issues

The continuing growth of the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches in Ghana is not without struggles. Like its presence on other continents, Christianity in Africa exists amid a host of challenges, triumphs, and critical issues. The phenomenon of Africanization has altered Ghana's religious scene significantly. Past researchers have examined Ghanaian Christianity to assess its impact on global Christianity. Kwame Bediako, a scholar of Christianity in Africa, suggests:

There is probably only one word that can truly describe the present status of Christianity in Black Africa. That word is surprise. The surprise lies not just in the much-publicised demographic breakthrough that now makes Africa one of the heartlands of the Christian religion; the surprise lies at a deeper level, quite simply in the fact that Africa has become so massively Christian at all" (Bediako 192).

International Christian scholars agree with Bediako's assessment of Christianity in Africa. John S. Mbiti comments:

Such then is Christianity in Africa, with its divisions and developments, achievements and challenges, responses and successes, failures and drawbacks, superficiality and foreignness, estrangement and engagement, strength and opportunities, cultural involvement and undermining, without an indigenous theology and yet with a strong team of local and overseas workers" (Mbiti 240).

Bediako and Mbiti illuminate a range of concerns facing African Christians. Drawing from their keen observations and the dedicated work of countless African scholars, the following is an examination of five critical issues pertaining to the Africanization of Christianity as witnessed at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church of Krobo-Odumase: denominationalism, views of missionary activities,

Christianity's relationship with African Traditional Religions, language concerns, and the global impact of Africanized Christianity.



## Chapter Four: Denominationalism

Denominationalism is rampant in Krobo-Odumase and throughout Africa. Nearly every Christian denomination has attempted to sow its seeds in Krobo-Odumase. As Ghanaians are presented with so many varieties of what they assumed to be a single religion, they find it difficult to discern the truth behind Christianity. Early on, it appeared that denominational differences clouded judgment and deterred conversions to the Christian faith. Years later, inter-religious dialogue continues, and even in semi-rural Krobo-Odumase, the effects of harsh denominationalism are apparent. Mbiti's assessment of denominationalism is representative of my experiences in Krobo-Odumase:

Different Church structures and traditions have been imported from overseas, and African Christians have inherited them without even understanding their meaning or background....

Denominationalism is one of the worst divisive elements in modern Africa; and some of the denominations have engaged in physical fighting, while today they compete for converts and in homiletical propaganda (Mbiti 232).

Denominationalism results in a salad bowl of Christian traditions, rituals, and practices that appear to contradict themselves and yearn for explanation and reconciliation.

Many Christians in Krobo-Odumase are seeking ecumenical solutions to the rigid lines that denominationalism has drawn across their faith. Although conflicts arise among all Christian denominations, the most recent challenges facing Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches in Ghana involve 'spiritual churches.' Roman Catholics and Presbyterians in Krobo-Odumase acknowledged the increasing number of these evangelical, pentecostal, and apostolic ministries and claimed that these churches were



not interested in collaboration with Christians outside of their specific denominations.

Eugene Hillman points out:

Catholics and Protestants nowadays committed to ecumenism, and to respect for the traditional religious experiences of African peoples, have not yet figured out how to cope with these Christian enthusiasts currently doing outrageously what we used to do in a more subtle manner: that is, morally coercing people into joining a new religious club and accepting another time-conditioned and culturally alien religious ideology laden with Western historical accretions (Hillman 317-318).

Krobo-Odumase's mainline churches such as Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church and Zimmermann Presbyterian Church have not yet determined the best way to work in communion with these movements.

Rev. Emmanuel Binadeo Djigagu of Zimmermann Presbyterian Church agrees that denominationalism is a concern to his ministry, "We don't have to lose to [the new movements], but we have to blend with them so we don't lose the history of Presbyterianism." His congregants seemed equally as aware of harsh denominationalism in Krobo-Odumase. A young lady at the church's youth rally expressed her recent frustration that "Presby[terian] men are leaving us for Pentecostal girls, but when we Presby girls try to marry Pentecostal men, we aren't allowed." Clearly, denominationalism affects the institution of the Presbyterian Church in Krobo-Odumase as well as its local adherents.

A different response comes from the Roman Catholic Church which has advocated an inclusive approach to denominationalism throughout history. In the case of Ghana, Patrick J. Ryan explains, "I'm glad that the Jesuits came to Ghana in 1974, and not in 1554. The early missionary work of the Presbyterians, Methodists, the Catholic

Society of the African Missions, the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, and the Missionaries of Africa have made Ghana what it is today” (Ryan 18). The Roman Catholic Church strives for religious understanding among all faiths and encourages its members to work *with* people of different religious backgrounds, including Christians of other denominations. At Krobo-Odumase’s Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, Father Paul Lauer supported his fellow Christians by saying, “I will trust any people who are honest to their church, show good moral character, and focus on salvation.” The ecumenical attitudes of the congregation at Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church prove the impact of Father Lauer’s leadership and reinforce the congregation’s commitment to lessening denominationalism in Krobo-Odumase.

At the funeral of Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole II, the previous Konor of Manya Krobo, held on Sunday, May 13, 1990, there were clear indications of Krobo-Odumase’s denominationalism. The service was officiated by five clergy of various Christian denominations: His Lordship R. Revd. Bishop D.K. Andoh, Catholic Bishop of Accra; The Rt. Revd. D.A. Koranteng, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana; The Rt. Revd. Dr. J.S.A. Stevens, President of the Methodist Conference, Ghana; The Rt. Revd. Lt. Col. F.W.B. Thompson, Anglican Bishop of Accra; and Revd. Father Clements, Catholic Parish Priest, Odumase Krobo (Burial 4). Lessons and readings were given by the President of the Eastern Region House of Chiefs, and the chief’s senior linguist, Mr. George Boatey, gave the eulogy. Ruling from 1939-1990, it was obvious that Konor Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole II had personal interests in the many denominations of his traditional area, and the people of Krobo-Odumase respected these convictions by including numerous church representatives in the funeral service of their leader. The

burial service ended with benedictions from each of the officiating clergy. This was another way of bridging the gaps among denominations in Krobo-Odumase. Since the officials at the burial of the late Konor were from a variety of religious backgrounds, the people of Krobo-Odumase were aware of the many religious groups that the chief had affected and mediated among. This event proved that at least on some occasions the various Christian and traditional groups in Krobo-Odumase have been willing to reconcile differences in order to honor those individuals important to all of them.

Most scholars agree that the only weapon strong enough to dismantle the denominational barriers that segregate African Christians is dialogue among the faithful. J.N.K. Mugambi suggests, "This is finally the great challenge: unity among all the churches is needed for the sake of the Church's mission in the world - a mission of reconciliation and liberation from all the forces of greed and selfishness and prejudice that bring hatred and division to the world we live in" (Mugambi 26). Patrick J. Ryan looks to the missionaries to begin the dialogue surrounding denominationalism. "Missionaries today come to Africa or to any other cultural setting with the thought that [they] have much to learn as well as much to teach... Before the missionary engages in evangelization, the missionary must engage in interreligious dialogue" (Ryan 18). Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Christians in Krobo-Odumase echo Ryan's thought and add that the solution to denominationalism must begin with the simple recognition and acceptance of others' differences not as destructive but constructive, not as exclusive but inclusive.

## Chapter Five: Views of Missionary Activities

How did the efforts of Western missionaries appear to the Krobos who encountered them? How do Ghanaian perceptions of Christianity differ from those in the West? Most importantly, will indigenous missionary work increase, or will the Western-dominated missions prevail for years to come? Each of these questions addresses another critical issue related to the Africanization of Christianity: Ghanaian views of historical, present, and future mission work.

In response to a missionary an African once said, “We should like you much better if you traded with us and then went away, without forever boring us with preaching that word of God of yours” (Desai pamphlet). These words are characteristic of many early African encounters in which missionaries claimed good intentions but Africans perceived missionary work as invasive. Ghanaians often preferred for these early missionaries to provide social services, not spiritual leadership. Christians in Krobo-Odumase, however, represent the exception rather than the trend in Ghanaian views of missionary activities, as Krobo-Odumase’s initial encounters with missionaries were far different from those of most Ghanaians.

In 1856, Nene Odonkor Azu encouraged and welcomed Basel Missionaries to Krobo-Odumase, convinced of their positive intentions. Eventually, Nene Odonkor Azu gave two of his sons to the missionaries for education and formal training, thus permanently attaching members of Krobo-Odumase’s royal family to the Christian faith. Years later, Nene Odonkor Azu’s decision continues to affect the people of Krobo-Odumase. Nene Sakite II, the present Konor of Manya-Krobo, explained, “When the missionaries came, my forefathers had never seen a white man, but in their hearts, they

saw something good. At the same time, it was hard. Gradually, royal children were given for schooling and baptism. They became pillars of Christianity in Kroboland, and the tradition carries on. Now we take pride in having leaders of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana come from Kroboland.” Basel Missionaries increased their presence in Krobo-Odumase, and today Zimmermann Presbyterian Church acknowledges its history as the time when Krobo-Odumase’s church and state first united for the common good.

Many Ghanaians recognize mission Christianity as reflecting both positive and negative aspects of colonialism. As John S. Mbiti explains, “the image that Africans received, and to a great extent still hold, of Christianity, is very much coloured by colonial rule and all that was involved in it. We are still too close to that period to dissociate one from the other” (Mbiti 231). Such is the case in Krobo-Odumase. The Roman Catholic Bishops of Ghana concluded: “It is observed that the method of educating people in the faith has not been effective in Ghana since it was more a process of sacramentalization rather than of making disciples for the Lord. The emphasis was on the ‘question and answer method’ of catechesis and on knowledge of doctrine instead of on a Christian way of life. This did not suit the Ghanaian way of learning and, consequently, it has not made the desired impact on people’s lives” (Osei-Bonsu 25). People of all denominations recognize the positive and negative aspects of past and present missionary endeavors; the challenge comes when developing solutions that prevent poorly planned, unnecessary, or unethically implemented evangelism in Krobo-Odumase.

When asked for memories and present opinions he holds about missionaries, Nene Sakite II suggested, “The missionaries did some good, but other [negative] things came



out because of colonialism. Today, people would do it differently. I hope the present missionaries aren't doing the same thing. Maybe missionaries learned from the past." Mr. George Boatey, an elder of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church and *otsame* (linguist) to Nene Sakite II said, "Maybe early missionaries would regret how they preached. If evangelists of old came back, they would realize they've spread the Gospel but they've caused harm as well." Mr. Paul Odzawo of Zimmermann Presbyterian Church admitted, "The missionaries imported Western Christianity, which doesn't make sense. Christianity exists in and through culture." Thus, the missionaries receive credit for bringing Christianity to Krobo-Odumase but often are also criticized for compromising Ghanaian culture in the name of spreading the Gospel.

The future of African mission Christianity is uncertain. The Krobo view of mission Christianity continues to mold itself around Ghanaian experiences and beliefs as they are incorporated into Christian traditions. The Roman Catholic Church of Agormanya included these insights into mission work in its tribute to the late Konor Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole II:

The work of evangelists and missionaries includes the important one of winning men to the fold of the church militant as well as their souls for the kingdom of God. But missionaries are not angels; they are human beings exactly like all the others, needing the hearts of men and expecting to receive the patronship of rulers not less than their subjects. It becomes a fertile ground on which to nurse the seed of the divine word (Burial 29).

Additionally, at the 1999 Presbyterian Church of Ghana Mission Fields Conference, Rev. David Kpobi suggested, "Though churches are founded by missions, no church is to remain forever a mission church. It should become a missionary church" (G. Bediako 8). Similarly, through open dialogue and discussion of Ghanaian Christianity, members of

Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church anticipate that future missions will be directed by Ghanaian believers, not by the mission boards of the Western world.

## Chapter Six: Christianity's Relationship with African Traditional Religions

Once Christian missionaries established themselves in Krobo-Odumase and attracted a number of followers to their ministries, the issues facing the Church in Kroboland did not cease. S. T. Ola Akande points out, "Among new converts, there is still a tendency to revert to such practices as witchcraft, speaking with the dead, soothsaying, talismans, and incantations to ward off evil spirits" (Akande 66). Reversion to traditional ways is a serious issue among Krobo-Odumase's Christians. It is also at the heart of another critical issue in the Africanization of Christianity: Christianity's relationship with African Traditional Religions.

Prior to the arrival of Christianity in Krobo-Odumase people worshipped God through various African Traditional Religions. However, with the arrival of colonialism Christian missionaries regarded nearly all aspects of African Traditional Religions as unacceptable. One scholar wrote, "With the Christianization of a large segment of Africa, the vices, faults, and sinfulness of heathen practices were deemed incompatible with Christian morality. Thus, the converts... were expected to reject heathenism completely and to commit themselves, body and soul, to the new faith they had found in Jesus Christ" (Akande 66-67). The arrival of Christianity forced people to give up their traditional practice and created significant tension among Western missionaries and Ghanaians. Many people in Krobo-Odumase renounced their traditional ways to satisfy Christian missionaries of this period who often misunderstood and misinterpreted Ghanaian customs.

In the life history of Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole II, one reads, "The Konor, throughout his reign, established good working relationship with the Churches, being a



devout Christian himself. He attended Sunday morning mass at Agormanya Catholic Church regularly. Through this efforts, the Churches came to appreciate better the traditions and customs of the Manya Krobo” (Burial 17). The acting president of the Manya Krobo Traditional Council also explained, “He was a servant of his people. He believed in justice, he was a great administrator, statesman of Ghana, and spiritual and traditional leader and ultimately the best king we had” (Burial 24). Konor Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole II clearly had strong support in both the traditional and Christian circles of Krobo-Odumase, and though he professed Christianity for himself, it was known that the chief was supportive and respectful toward traditional practices as well.

Today issues surrounding African Traditional Religions remain at the forefront of interreligious dialogue in Krobo-Odumase. That some Christians have reverted to their traditional practices is a fact that most church leaders and members cannot deny. A common scenario in Krobo-Odumase involved a devout member of Zimmermann Presbyterian Church or Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church who remained attached to his or her previous religious tradition. Scholar E. Bolajji Idowu admits:

The church has on her hand communities of believers, who, by and large, live ambivalent spiritual lives. Christianity to them is a fashionable religion which has the habit of beginning and ending within the walls of a church building.... Thus, it is possible for an African to sing lustily in church, ‘Other refuge have I none,’ while still carrying an amulet somewhere on his person, or to go out from the church straight to the diviner, without feeling that he is betraying any principle (Akande 68).

In response to such situations in Krobo-Odumase, Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church have developed a variety of solutions to what they consider a significant problem for their congregations.

For many years, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has labeled African Traditional Religions as a real concern for its ministry. Even the earliest Basel Missionaries were warned of the heathen practices they might come across while working in Ghana. In 1851, instructions to missionaries read:

An inconsiderate damning or dismissal of heathenism is no way to win the trust of the heathen and to convince them of the truth of Christianity, but it will rather raise a spirit of stubbornness and obstinacy in holding on to the traditional beliefs, and will shut their hearts to the missionary. Much more useful will it be to find, in the faith and heart of the heathen, points of contact for Christian truth and from there begin the work of conviction (Pobee 15).

Statements like this one prove that the missionaries were not sent to their Ghanaian posts without basic education in the local culture. Still, missionaries often passed quick judgement on the African Traditional Religions they encountered and labeled all related traditions as incompatible with Christianity.

In 1929, the Presbyterian Church adopted a strict resolution stipulating that Christians, “must no longer take part in ceremonies that have any inseparable connection with idols or with heathen feast, funerals or dances. Any outward signs belonging to heathen customs, such as face marks, special modes of cutting the hair, and wearing of amulets are not allowed in the Christian congregation.... All heathen customs must be rejected” (Akande 68). Today, Presbyterian leaders in Krobo-Odumase continue to discourage such practices and insist that to live in the ‘two worlds’ of the Christian community and African Traditional Religions is unfair to the Church and to the individual. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana remains one of the most outspoken denominations on the relationship between Christianity and African Traditional Religions.

The Roman Catholic Church maintains a different philosophy regarding African

#### Traditional Religions:

It should be evident, therefore, that Traditional Religion can enrich our belief as Christians and Christianity can uplift Traditional Religion to a height that by itself it could not attain. We must, therefore, work at achieving a kind of symbiotic relationship between Traditional Religion and Christianity, serving as a platform from which the satellite of the transformation of society is launched (Osei-Bonsu 148).

Mrs. Christiana Osom, a member of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church explained, “Some churches are totally against [African Traditional Religions], but they don’t know the essence. A state without a culture is not a state. Our people knew about God, but they didn’t know the right path. We need to modernize the customs.” In Krobo-Odumase, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church has attempted to blend traditional religious elements of Dipo, a customary puberty rite for girls, with Christianity. Father Paul Lauer explained, “Dipo came to Kroboland as a social activity [to prepare girls for womanhood and marriage], not as fetish, but it became a source of employment for the fetish priests... If our intentions are [pure], then the methodology is not important. Before judgement comes understanding.” Elder Daniel Opata agreed and suggested that if the Church outwardly opposed Dipo, Christians might perform the rite in secret, thus fostering lies and deceit. Instead, Elder Opata proposed that the Church be a “vehicle of education” dedicated to equipping its members with the knowledge to properly respond to questions regarding African Traditional Religions and Christianity.

The churches in Krobo-Odumase are well aware of their members’ reversion to traditional ways. Church-sponsored efforts to deter Christians from compromising their faith continue. Udo Etuk paints a truthful picture of African Traditional Religions today:

Contrary to the wishful thinking on the part of some Christians, traditional religion with all the practices that go with it, is not about to die; rather it is regaining ground with a vengeance; and much more disconcerting is the fact that this new accommodation strategy adopted by traditional religion appears to be much more inimical to Christian witness than even outright opposition (Etuk 217).

At Ghana's First National Catholic Pastoral Congress, the Roman Catholic Bishops developed this related statement on the issues surrounding Christianity and African

Traditional Religions:

Some of us find it a pity that Traditional Religion has not been given the role it deserves in evangelisation. Many elements in traditional religion are wholesome and when evil is discovered to be associated with it, we must not throw away the baby with the bath water.

It is in this connection that we repeat the call that has been made so often: the traditional description of traditional religion, as paganism, heathenism, fetishism, animism, idolatry, polytheism is totally unjust to it and must be discarded. To give just one example, traditional religion is no more fetishistic because it uses sacred objects than Christianity is aquatic because it uses holy water or "candelistic" because of its use of candles (Osei-Bonsu 149).

Just like the issue of denominationalism and the continuing questions surrounding the Ghanaian missionary activities, Christianity's relationship with African Traditional Religions dominates many discussions in Krobo-Odumase's Christianity today.

## Chapter Seven: Language Concerns

As missionaries arrived in Ghana, they were forced to make many decisions, but none determined the future of their particular mission as much as language. Missionaries had the choice to use their own native languages or to learn the languages of their hosts for evangelization. The second option was significantly more time consuming, but many missionaries saw communication as the key to conversion. Scholar Geoffrey Parrinder gave this view: “Missionaries learned the languages and were often the only Europeans who could speak to Africans in their own tongues. With their African converts they reduced the languages to writing, produced grammars and dictionaries, reading books, and especially the Bible” (Parrinder 141). Most often, Protestant missionaries insisted on Biblical translations and mastery of the local languages while Roman Catholic missionaries remained bound to the official language of the Church, Latin, until Vatican II when it was ruled that the language of a people is the language of the Church in that area.

Kwame Bediako gives an extended explanation of the importance of language studies among Ghanaian Christians. Bediako serves as the director and supervising editor of the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre, which is dedicated to the study and documentation of the life, theology, and history of the Church in Ghana. Bediako urges local believers, his staff, and international scholars to study and practice Christianity in local languages and suggests linguistic concerns as a primary focus of worldwide Christian growth. He explains, “perhaps the exegesis of biblical words and texts is not to be taken as completed when one has established meanings in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.... Instead, the process needs to continue into all possible languages in which



biblical faith is received, meditated, and expressed” (G. Bediako 10). Bediako’s work allows more Ghanaians to understand what they are surrounded by, the outward physical signs and verbal messages of Christianity. He concluded that language studies have, “ensured that deep foundations were laid for meaningful theological dialogue to take place between the Gospel and culture, meaningful in so far as the dialogue [is] in terms of categories, not of a foreign language and an alien culture, but rather of the local language and the local culture” (Bediako 54). Kwame Bediako’s linguistic ideas serve as the background for this brief assessment of language concerns in Krobo-Odumase’s Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church.

Though Ghana’s official language is English, church officials have recognized that the majority of their congregation members prefer to worship and pray in their native tongues. The Bible is available in two versions of Dangme, the Krobo language. The earlier translation contains only the New Testament. The later version is based on a Western biblical interpretation, not translation, and relies on concepts and references inapplicable to the Krobos. Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church are looking forward to the third translation of the Bible in Dangme which includes both the Old and New Testaments and is scheduled to be printed during the year 2000.

The late Konor Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole II was outspoken in the area of language concerns, and his observations are still quite accurate of the situation in Krobo-Odumase today. Colleague Dr. Emmanuel Evans-Anfom explained one occasion on which he discussed language issues with the late Konor:

Our conversation turned on to the subject of the teaching of our Ghanaian Languages in our schools and the slipshod



manner in which the general public, particularly the educated youth, used their mother tongue.

“Many are unable to utter a single sentence without interposing some English words,” he complained. He then made reference to the Ga and Twi bibles and hymn books and the crucial role played by the early Basel missionaries such as Christaller and Zimmerman, assisted by some Gold Coast pastors and teachers of old. He then went on to recite, without any mistake, the whole of Psalm 90 in Ga. He thought the translation was classic and the poetry simply beautiful.”

“I think the universities should do more to provide leadership with the development and teaching of our Ghanaian Languages” he concluded. I recount this incident to illustrate the concern which he showed on many issues pertaining to education (Burial 27).

Clearly, the late Konor had an interest in rekindling the Ghanaian languages. The very fact that he recognized the existence of a language issue was important.

Currently, Zimmermann Presbyterian Church uses Ga, Krobo, and English Bible translations and sings Western hymns in Ga, Twi, English, Ewe, and Krobo. Mr. Paul Odzawo explained, “When there is teaching [in the church], people stay.... At times, literacy classes are held in order to allow the congregation to read the Bible by themselves in English.” In contrast, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church translates all scriptures into Krobo prior to Sunday Mass, and only the Gospel is read in Krobo and English each week. The music at Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church includes mostly traditional songs with Christian lyrics in Krobo. Mr. George Boatey, occasional composer of Holy Trinity’s music, commented, “Language is a big pivot in cultural development. If you sing in Twi, you spread Twi for them [the Akans]. People like to hear traditional things, and if it’s in Krobo, they understand it.” Thus, linguistic concerns continue for Christians in Krobo-Odumase. Language scholars press for new and better

translations of the Bible, musicians seek to blend traditions, and the Church seeks new members using both English and native languages in worship services.

## Chapter Eight: Global Impact

Bishop Fulton Sheen is well known for his statement regarding the future of Christianity, “The first chord to begin the new Grand Church Symphony will be played on the black keys of Africa” (Hunt 2). This is the perfect introduction to the most important of the critical issues facing Christianity in Ghana today: its future. Christianity promises to endure as a significant part of Ghanaian culture, but the impact of Ghanaian Christianity on the rest of the world remains to be seen. Krobo-Odumase finds itself at the heart of this dialogue.

Rev. Emmanuel Binadeo Djigagu recently returned to Krobo-Odumase after spending seven years in Germany. When asked of his impressions of changes in the church he replied, “Now is different. I came to meet the old men who didn’t want drums dancing at collection time.” This small indication of change at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church reflects a larger change that awaits worldwide Christian communities. Rev. Djigagu agreed that the future of Christianity is in the hands of the African people and points to the congregation of Zimmermann Presbyterian Church as bound up with global changes in Christian traditions.

The clergy and members of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church were of similar belief. Father Paul Lauer pointed out that the shortage of priests in the West is being helped by the increase in Roman Catholic religious leaders in Africa but also made clear that global changes to Christianity should be expected to be gradual and subtle. Mr. George Boatey added, “If there is a future, it is a very distant one,” emphasizing that the education is the agent of change that Africa lacks. With the increase of scholarly work

pertaining to the Africanization of Christianity, members of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church are realizing their changing role in worldwide Christianity.

In his article, “The Africanization of Missionary Christianity: History and Typology,” Steven Kaplan stated, “many of these elements [of Africanized Christianity] are held to be of universal value and to be worthy of incorporation into the wider church” (Kaplan 182). As people witness the transforming effects of Christianity in Ghana, they strive to initiate similar changes in their home congregations. Scholar Andrew Walls explained, “What happens within the African churches in the next generation will determine the whole shape of Church history for centuries to come. A high proportion of the world’s serious theological thinking and writing will have to be done in Africa if it is to be done at all” (Partain 1066). Although Christians in Krobo-Odumase are not yet focused on the global implications of their faith, they do recognize that they are part of the larger Christian Church and feel that ‘some day’ Westerners might turn to Africa to revitalize their struggling churches.

## Conclusion

The Africanization of Christianity was abundantly clear in Krobo-Odumase. Early missionaries introduced Western Christianity to the area, but today Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church reflect the changing face of Ghanaian Christianity and boast of a strong Christian faith colored and flavored by local culture. With rich histories and hopeful futures in Krobo-Odumase, Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church take active roles in the current dialogue surrounding the Africanization of Christianity. I have reached the following conclusions concerning five critical issues facing Christians in Krobo-Odumase and throughout Africa.

*Denominationalism.* Now more than ever, churches must address the issue of denominationalism. Ghana is home to a multitude of small, independent churches, most of them preaching against each other. The result is a fragmented Christianity in which many groups are more concerned with criticizing and disproving rival churches than with strengthening their own theology and practice. Some Christian divisions are understandable, even expected, but the severity of denominationalism in Ghana is a sad reality that is destructive of the country's hopes for Christian unity.

*View of Missionary Activities.* Though Ghanaians respect and appreciate the work of missionaries in the past, many Christians feel that the time has come for missionaries to focus their efforts elsewhere. The non-Christians agree whole-heartedly. It appears that continued mission work only complicates Ghana's current Christian situation. The Church already has too many divisions and would benefit more from collaboration, not new missionary enterprises. Moreover, the missionaries of recent years seem to focus

their ministries on material assistance when Ghanaians in Krobo-Odumase and throughout the country do not need more clothes, food, or shoes. Rather, Ghanaians are in desperate need of higher education opportunities and professional job training. Finally, amid the myriad of small Christian missions in Ghana, some people see the future of mission Christianity as a time when Ghanaians can return missionary efforts in other areas, both African and abroad.

*Christianity's Relationship with African Traditional Religions.* The relationship between Christianity and African Traditional Religions depends largely on education. It is not difficult to condemn what we do not understand, and understanding African Traditional Religions involves putting aside a multitude of stereotypes and assumptions surrounding the native practices. In Krobo-Odumase many people do not know the full history or meaning of customs rooted in African Traditional Religion, yet they assume that these traditions have no place in the lives of Krobo Christians. The problem lies in the separation of culture and religion. The relationship between Christianity and African Traditional Religions is a matter of intention, symbolism, and education which will remain at the forefront of debates concerning the Africanization of Christianity for years to come.

*Language Concerns.* Language is one of the most important challenges facing Christianity in Ghana. My experiences in Krobo-Odumase revealed a host of problems relating to language issues for Ghanaian Christians. First, the Bible is only available in a few of Ghana's 60+ languages, and this forces people to read scriptures in languages that they are uncomfortable with or do not understand. Similarly, hymns and church music are not widely translated or composed in native languages, so worshippers must also sing



in foreign tongues. Finally, because of the variety of languages spoken within one congregation, church leaders are forced to translate many portions of the service, the result being a disjointed and lengthy service. Both Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church recognize the importance of the language issue and agree that they must strive to meet the linguistic needs of Ghanaian Christians in Krobo-Odumase and throughout the country.

*Global Impact.* In observing congregations and experiencing church life at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Krobo-Odumase, I believe that many Krobo Christians remain unaware of the significant adaptations unique to the Church in Ghana. Congregants rarely understood why I wanted to study their churches. Most said, “Our church here is no different from yours in America.” My experiences, however, suggest that the Church *is* different in Krobo-Odumase. The Africanization of Christianity in Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church is a reality often overlooked by those directly involved. These communities represent an extremely valuable model of ‘inculturation’ that benefits Christians worldwide. After experiencing the Africanization of Christianity in Krobo-Odumase, I have a new understanding of my own faith. I am excited to witness the effects of my findings in Ghana on my people in America. May God guide us as our work continues.

## Afterword: Research and Reality in Krobo-Odumase

November 10 – December 7

I have chosen to write this afterword not as a way of explaining every event from my semester abroad, but as a way of illuminating some aspects of my time in Ghana. The entire semester shaped my thesis on the Africanization of Christianity, and I feel it is necessary for me to include some of my reflections to support my conclusions. The italicized portions of this work are passages taken directly from my travel journals, torn, stained, crinkled, and dirty as all four of them were.

During my semester in Ghana, I lived *without* electricity or running water and *with* goats, chickens, lizards, rats, and malaria-infected mosquitoes, yet I have never felt so fortunate. Daily life was so challenging that I forgot about the thesis that was due in April and my graduation in May. Every day I witnessed the paradoxical reality of life.

*After a long ride to Odumase, we went to the chief's palace where we met the elders and chief. The chief was dressed in a blue satin wrap with strips of kente in it – beautiful! Nene Sikite II was just the best! He had been educated at Clark in Massachusetts and had lived in the United States from 1971-1998. He had a great understanding of both American and Ghanaian cultures, and it was refreshing to listen to him. When he launched into a discussion of Christianity and tradition in Odumase, I thought I was going to jump out of my seat! He said the royal family was Presbyterian, and he explained that the town keeps up good relationships with the churches. I was so excited! My thesis in a nutshell! Everyone else was getting restless because he was talking a lot, but I was thrilled! He even talked about pouring libations and the importance of ancestors in African Christianity.*

Immediately after meeting Nene, I knew that I wanted to spend my month of independent study in Krobo-Odumase. Nene was a stout man, but his smile was inviting and his voice was soothing. He was barefoot many of the times that I saw him, but only while sitting down with his feet on a leather foot pillow, for there is a traditional belief that a chief's feet must never come in contact with the ground. Nene spoke candidly,

sharing with me his experiences in Massachusetts and in Ghana. He recalled specific moments when he realized that Christianity in Ghana was different than in America. He explained how he visited all of the churches now that he was the chief of Krobo-Odumase, simply because the people respect him more if they see him in church. He explained his views on the blending of the church and state, on the traditional and the Christian principles and practices coming together, and on the effects of missionaries in the town. Nene had all the answers.

Krobo-Odumase was full of the ‘Africanization’ of Christianity, and I was ready to uncover as much of it as I could. When Nene poured libations with us, I realized that this custom had become a standard in my experiences, and to me it was simply pouring Schnapp’s onto the ground while recognizing the importance of ancestors in every day life at the beginning of a ceremony or event. I was well aware that many Christian groups considered this polytheism, so I wanted to examine the practice more closely while doing my independent project. In Krobo-Odumase, this seemed like a complete possibility. In fact, my entire thesis (The Africanization of Christianity: Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches in Ghana) seemed to come alive in Krobo-Odumase.

*Here in Odumase for the first time, I feel that beautiful Christian beliefs and traditions are being blended with dynamic traditions of Ghana’s past, and this is what I find to be important. The reality is that only a few people still practice ‘unadulterated’ traditional African religion. To study the melding of two traditions is much more important to me. I could study anything while I’m here in Ghana, but as I feel more and more drawn to a future that focuses on practical Christianity in a changing world, I think this can be the beginning of an exciting path for me!*

And so the thesis research began. My directors agreed that Krobo-Odumase would be a perfect site for my research, and I found myself more and more engaged in the research every day. My heart (spiritually and academically) had been captured in

Krobo-Odumase. I remember visiting Krobo-Odumase for the first time, and it seemed like I was walking through a jigsaw puzzle of streets and alleys. The town was not set up on a grid pattern; instead, clusters of homes cropped up wherever people found appropriate building grounds. The area was mountainous, and we were in a valley. When I awoke each morning, I watched as the clouds lifted from the foothills and mountains that surrounded me. There was one main road that passed through Krobo-Odumase, and two other paved roads connected to it in an “H” pattern. The chief’s palace sat on the horizontal road, while the Presbyterian church and Roman Catholic church were situated on the vertical roads. The rest of the town was navigable by shortcuts and footpaths, unpaved and unmarked.

The town itself felt red. The dirt was like clay, and the houses were roofed with corrugated sheet metal that had rusted over the years. Many of the houses (mine included) were compound style, so basically, a number of cinder block and concrete-walled houses were all connected in a square formation, and the open courtyard in the middle was used for cooking, washing, and play. Unlike in the major cities, these houses did not have fences or walls around them for security. The town was small, and most of its members were related in some way, so there was no need for theft-deterrent devices. I had felt comfortable in Accra for the previous three weeks, but I started to get claustrophobic since the congestion was so bad. Heading to Krobo-Odumase was a relief in some ways; in other ways it was a complete challenge.

*It was difficult to leave Accra, but knowing I would be back in a month helped. When I arrived in Odumase, Mrs. Obeng (Auntie Adelaide) said that I could stay for free, and she would prepare my food... I was so excited!*

My house was small: two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, and living room. It belonged to Auntie Adelaide, a vibrant widow who was a prominent member of the Presbyterian church. She lived with her sister's granddaughter, Clara, a ten-year-old who didn't know how many siblings she had, as her father was husband to at least five women at one time. Clara was the typical Ghanaian school child. Even though she went to school, her reading skills were minimal and she knew things only if she memorized them word for word. Grace, a sixty-five year old housekeeper came every day to clean Auntie's house and cook her meals.

My house was known as 'the house with the yellow gate' and it was situated a few hundred yards from the main road leading to Accra. From our front porch, we looked across to an unfinished family house and a clay bread oven which was used on Wednesdays and Saturdays. It was clear to me that Auntie Adelaide was well off, as she had an electric stove, a two-burner gas stove, a refrigerator, and a deep freezer. Of course, she only used the deep freezer and occasionally the two-burner gas stove – the others were too expensive to operate. We had running water in the house, though the water typically only ran every third day and during the month that I was in Krobo-Odumase, it came only a total of three times. We had an electric fan and a television, but the current was not consistent and the television signals were faint, so there were many days that we watched a TV with no picture while fanning ourselves with our handkerchiefs after dinner.

*So tonight I ate fufu and liked it for the first time! Grace and Clara pounded it, and Auntie prepared the groundnut soup with goat meat. I still do not understand why people decided to pound yams and plantains for hours before eating them, without*



*chewing. Fufu will never become an international dish because I can't imagine another group of people spending so much time to eat a food that can be eaten so many other ways. Only in Ghana.*

I ate alone every night, but by this point, I had learned to deal with this cultural detail quite well. Auntie was an excellent cook. She had breakfast ready every morning for me at seven o'clock, and it usually included fresh fried doughnuts from a family member in town. I enjoyed tea, eggs, bread, and oatmeal nearly every day, and on special occasions, Auntie would set out powdered milk with cereal or would prepare my favorite, banana crepes. I have never eaten better crepes in my life. For dinner, Auntie always served some sort of meat with red tomato sauce, yams or plantains, or potatoes. Sometimes she cooked 'American-style,' as she had spent six years in America while her husband finished his education. American-style cooking consisted of frying potatoes in an attempt to make French fries, mixing eggs and vegetables to create a stir-fry, and even serving spaghetti with meatballs one night. Of course, 'American-style' in Ghana is far from American, but I still enjoyed the food. Auntie Adelaide's feasts were my favorite in all of Ghana.

My plans were to immerse myself in the church activities of two churches in the area, Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church. I wanted to meet the pastors, priests, nuns, catechists, parish council, elders, choir members, lay leaders, and anyone else who performed regular duties with the churches. I had intentions to go to all activities available to me in order to observe and experience Ghanaian Christianity as best as I could in such a short period of time. I was seeking out sure signs of the "Africanization" of Christianity, and in order to succeed, I needed to be



at church with the congregations as much as possible. I knew my goals and had a plan, yet the research still shocked me on a daily basis. I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

*I'm nervous about today's church service at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church; I'm being introduced and there's virtually no way for them to translate "Africanization" into Krobo. I don't know – I guess I'm scared that Africanization isn't really happening...I mean, what if these churches are really just western implants? I do hope that that is not the case. I feel like my intentions for this project are very good – I truly do want to use some African concepts in American Christian worship – sadly, I feel that people are more concerned with my color than my project. I feel like I will cry about this when I return to the U.S. ... I know people won't understand or care, but if they don't get it here and they don't get it there, then where does that leave me?*

Moments of doubt came often throughout my research, as the topic was broad and the fieldwork was intense. I wanted very much to witness "Africanization," yet there were many times when I saw that Western Christianity was the norm. In many cases, the pastors wore western suits and not traditional dress. The church architecture was completely European, with large white columns, cathedral ceilings, and long wooden pews along either side of the center aisle. The buildings were compliments of the missionaries, yet I thought there might be a few signs of traditional architecture incorporated. Even the hierarchy of the churches, with their elders and deacons, was extremely western. Sometimes Ghanaians would ask me why I thought there was anything to learn from their African churches because in their minds they were 'just trying to catch up to the west.' I struggled with being the person who wanted to study the Ghanaian churches as they were, not as the resource for how to westernize them even more.

*So just when I get most frustrated, God tugs at my heart, and I get myself all straightened out! The chief introduced me to Mr. George Boatey, his primary linguist and an elder at the Catholic church. I met Mr. Boatey at the church palace and then we headed to Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, where I hope to do most of my research.*

*First we met Mr. Michael Padi, and funny, he's the one who helps all the new priests learn Krobo! I will meet him later for an interview. I saw the rest of the grounds, met Paul the catechist and one of the sisters. The facilities are incredible, and I'm told that their services are even more African than the Presbyterian church! Interesting, the foundation of the original chapel was still on the grounds, just rotting away. They had built the new buildings around the old one. In America, we'd either flatten it or make it a historical landmark.*

Things often went as they did this afternoon. I'd get all frustrated with the signs of western culture creeping into the traditional ways, and then I'd find myself questioning the validity of my research. Of course, in these moments, I was faced with another sliver of evidence, and I was reminded of the reality of my work. Church life in Krobo-Odumase was by all means Ghanaian, but what prevented me from seeing it at the time were my changing attitudes and perceptions about Christianity and its cultural influences. I had come to understand Ghanaian culture, at least to some degree, and so I overlooked the details that really made Krobo-Odumase's Christians unique.

Church routines were quite different in Krobo-Odumase than in America. First, everybody walked to church. The town was small enough, and not many people have cars, so most people walked to Sunday services and activities throughout the week. Second, although there were designated worship times, people usually just waited to hear the ringing of the bells before heading to church. If the rains came, people waited. If the pastor was not ready, people waited. Yet, if the bells tolled, people headed out to church immediately. Finally, church was not necessarily a family affair, as it often was in America. In Krobo-Odumase, the women's groups, elders, men's fellowships, youth groups, and choirs sat in different sections of the church. It was rare that a family sat in the same section because more often than not, Sunday morning was the only time during the week that families *were not* together. This, of course, was completely due to

Ghanaian cultural influences and not the work of the missionaries, as the western tendency is to consider Sunday 'Family Day.' With this in mind, I will describe one of my most memorable experiences in Ghana, an evening revival service at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church with a guest Pentecostal evangelist.

*It all started when Auntie had me sit in the side pews up front at the Presbyterian revival service. I knew that I'd become a target, and the focus of a revival that wasn't mean to have an emphasis on color. That's just what happened, of course, leading up to the big 'incident,' there were a few classic indications of the upcoming incidents. The evangelist screamed and repeated the same phrases over and over, expecting a response. He jumped around and danced and was a show to watch. He said "Praise the Lord" whenever he didn't know what else to say. He yelled at his first translator for not doing a good job and made her sit down after humiliating her. He didn't understand that translations can not always be direct. He told people to 'hurry up' with the readings, that they should be 'fast, fast.' He didn't have time for the Word of God, but he sure had time enough to talk himself!*

*Then he preached solely to me and turned his back on the congregation for extended periods of time. Funny how he told me my 'Godly role' might be to give money to a poor congregation. As if I wasn't already ticked! Then he came and screamed at me, telling me God would surprise me. Finally, after everyone else had had the laying on of hands, etc., he called me up front and prayed with/for me. He said God would use me, blah, blah, blah. Then he told me 'my verse:' Jeremiah 3:3. Oh what a kind verse: he suspected I was a prostitute. I was so beyond angry that I just sat down.*

*When the service ended, I thanked the original translator lady and wanted to leave. As we walked home, Auntie Adelaide and her sister the catechist asked me how I felt. This was the worst part of the whole evening. I was humiliated and my faith was doubted simply because of my color. Then Auntie tried to make it seem as if that wasn't what happened. I wanted to talk to the evangelist, but I was too furious. I wasn't even sure I could continue my research at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church because of the congregation's reaction. The only good thing is that he prayed in English for me, so many of the people didn't understand.*

This was an experience that I never thought I would encounter. The evangelist was actually a Nigerian who stood close to seven feet tall and had a voice that literally made the church walls shake when he spoke. I could feel myself getting more and more angry as I thought about what had occurred. I knew that the entire group had been staring at me, some of them understanding the evangelist's words, others just staring at the white girl. Either way, I felt like a target because of my color. I couldn't figure out why it had

to be this way, which might have been silly, but I guess I had never experienced racism before. When I was called up to the front, I'm sure I just blushed and cringed as the evangelist started praying for me. I looked out to see the eager eyes of over 200 people waiting to see my reaction to a man who I had very little respect for but who they treated almost as royalty. The church was quite large, sat nearly 1000 people, but we were concentrated in only one area that night, and it felt like the wooden pews couldn't get any harder or closer together. I felt like a complete spectacle, but I had no choice but to pursue my goals and continue with my research.

*Children are constantly passing by and I hear shouts of 'Brofuno,' and 'Obrunie' and 'Hey Lady!' I am so frustrated! I hate to be called any of those names and I don't even understand why the children are taught such names. Now the children are trying to figure out how to ask me for money, and I keep wondering if they will actually ask for it or if they will just keep getting closer and closer. I'm glad that the children are trying to speak English, but this country will never progress if the people are allowed to call us by names – any of us – white, black, yellow, red. What adult wouldn't stop his/her children from calling someone those names? And how is "Hey white lady" supposed to result in any sort of respect? I can ignore or fight back, yet to fight back doesn't often work because I cannot communicate in their language. Of course, all the elders say is that the kids mean well, and I shouldn't worry. I do not believe that for a second! They know perfectly well not to call their elders "Hey Black Men" so why do it to a visitor?*

I struggled with the "Hey White Lady!" scenario throughout my time in Ghana, but it was particularly frustrating in Krobo-Odumase. I was hurt because I felt that I actually had true relationships with these people, yet "Obrunie" made me feel as though they still only saw me as the white person. I wanted to be Lori, not "White Lady." Sometimes I ignored their calls and sometimes I stopped to explain to them why I didn't appreciate their words, but mostly, I just got angry about the situation, which didn't do me any good. I didn't know how to explain to them that I didn't want the special treatment. They didn't feel like they were offending me, and they couldn't understand why I didn't respond when they called me by what I was, a white lady. I couldn't explain



the history of racism or the implicit superiority that such terms brought with them, so we basically ended up calling it a draw. My close friends learned not to call me “Obrunie” or “Brofuno” and word traveled. By the end of my stay, I could walk through town and hear whispers of, “She’s the one who doesn’t like to be called...” Still, I refused to let my research suffer because of this daily frustration.

*Sitting with Rev. Lawerteh [pastor of Zimmermann Presbyterian Church], I wanted his thoughts on my experience with the evangelist on Monday night. As I shared my concerns, we were able to talk about a lot of things. He agreed that things had gone wrong, or at least gotten off track, and he even mentioned that there was a point at which the event became focused on me instead of on God. We talked about the evangelist’s false exegesis of the text, about how his education was lacking and yet his charisma was plenty. As we talked, I realized that my frustrations came because I wanted the evangelist to understand my motives as a researcher and a Christian, and this would have been nearly impossible for him. At the same time, I wanted to understand his motives for selecting me. I wanted to understand him, and that was not a possibility. Rev. Lawerteh did say that he sensed my frustration and skepticism, and I’ll admit that both of these reactions were genuine. However, since our attitudes were so different, I learned a good lesson. I was reminded that God uses us in different ways, and often we don’t even know how we are used. More importantly, we forget that we are seen by many and they react to what we are doing, how we live and conduct ourselves. I realized that my good intentions are only as good as I make them intelligible to others.*

Here I realized that my research was useless if the people didn’t understand why I was interested in their practices. If I didn’t explain to them how I would use their information or how my church at home could benefit from my work with their congregations in Krobo-Odumase, my work was in vain. I worked on finding ways to explain my project to locals, and with Auntie’s help, I was able to talk to a few key congregation members about the intentions I had for my stay. I realized that as a researcher, I was nothing special, but as one who came and planned to incorporate her findings from Ghana into her life in America, I was a unique gift, of sorts, to both communities.

*Somewhere along the line, pastor asked me if I'd be willing to speak briefly on Friday at the youth revival service. This is just too much! Maybe I'm mixing research and personal goals, but I feel like this is what I need to do. I'm very nervous; I feel like I have been given one chance. The evangelist man stopped by, and I set up a time to see him... Maybe the revival did help me!*

My attitude about the evangelist changed as the days went by. I realized that the people were not at all scandalized by his actions, and in fact, they got a lot out of what he had said. After talking with the pastors, I realized that I might receive a better response from the congregations if they knew even more about who I was and what I believed. For this reason, I chose to speak at the youth rally. Auntie wanted me to speak on proper dress, speech, and ethical codes for youth, but I felt something else. The theme was 'Holistic Living for the Youth in the New Millenium.' I opted to talk about faith as a part of all aspects of our lives, not a separate entity. It fit right in with my own position at the time, recognizing that even though I was conducting scholarly research, faith was at the forefront of my experiences in Ghana, and there was no way or reason to deny this.

*So I spoke. It felt great! I enjoyed the challenge and I think they group understood at least some of my message. This afternoon, Mr. Evangelist came over to chat with me, as scheduled. He basically kept saying, "God told me to tell the people that the body of Christ is not divided." He got all passionate and blah, blah, blah. He lectured me on the 'cult' of the Roman Catholics and would not stop talking. Finally, when I was allowed to speak, I let out all of my frustrations. I mentioned Scripture use, time for Scriptures, translation issues, selecting the white girl, turning backs on the congregation... He listened for awhile and then launched into explanations, none of which were decent in my opinion. Just like many other evangelists, he doesn't take time to think; he responds. He doesn't discuss; he tells, he hears, he tells, etc. There was no way that we were going to make progress, and I really didn't want to.*

This was probably the first time that a woman had attempted to put the evangelist in his place. I didn't want to embarrass him or destroy his ministry, but I did feel as if his logic was faulty and his approach was questionable. He came to my house with a peace offering of chocolate, and we chatted for nearly an hour. Whenever he got excited, he



would stand up and use his arms to make emphatic gestures. Too bad he almost decapitated himself with the ceiling fan each time... Auntie joined us for the discussion, and the dynamics were quite interesting. By the end of our talk, the evangelist (Derick, I had learned) had thanked me for talking with him, and we set up another time to meet. It was the beginning of an odd but valuable friendship.

*I met Mr. Boatey at the palace tonight before meeting the chief. The man is incredible, a true role model for me. On Sunday, when he led the choir at Holy Trinity, I was amazed. The song was traditional African music with Christian application, and it was beautiful. Mr. Boatey had rewritten and arranged the entire piece. The Konor started praising Mr. Boatey's many talents this evening, and I realized how incredible this experience is – I get to 'drop by' the chief's place, hang out with amazing people like Mr. Boatey and Mr. Odzawo, and experience family and church life with Auntie Adelaide!*

My time in Krobo-Odumase was almost surreal; I was experiencing the things that I had read about in countless studies on the Africanization of Christianity. Mr. Boatey was a brilliant example of a Ghanaian who was using all of the resources he had in order to better his life and the lives of those around him. Mr. Boatey served as the chief's senior linguist, yet he never hesitated to say that he was a Christian. People tried to dispute the idea of Christianity and traditional practices co-existing, but I was experiencing what happened when they did blend. I watched as people went to church in their finest African garb, and the first thing I was asked every Sunday morning was, "Where are your beads?" Cultural norms said that beads were worn on special occasions, and Sunday was an occasion... Women pressed their clothes the night before, and children took baths on Saturday night in order to prepare for Sunday services. Seeing people center their lives around five-hour church services was something I hadn't experienced back in the States. My hometown pastor was once told that twelve minutes

would be the cutoff for any good sermon, but here they preached (and people listened) for hours.

*The Konor was right – Fr. Lauer is brilliant! He had a lot of insight as to the workings of the Roman Catholic Church and its many innovative approaches to faith. When I asked Father about denominationalism, he gave me the answer I've been seeking out – mainly that denomination does not matter but beliefs and actions do. The case was similar with the Roman Catholic response to libation and Dipo – that the prayer is important. The result is more important than the methodology. Father Lauer was inspirational yet totally practical. He even met with a few women during the interview who stopped by to have their beads blessed. Amazing, the Church doesn't require the blessing, but their culture does. Now, instead of going to the fetish priests and priestesses, the people come to the Roman Catholic Father!*

The office was quite spacious, and when I arrived, Father was upstairs watching Ghana play Brazil in the U-17 World Cup Soccer Tournament. I looked around only to see a traditional Ghanaian stool (once a symbol of the soul of the Ghanaian people) sitting atop the bookcase. On top of the stool was a western portrait of the Virgin Mary. A picture of Jesus with white skin and chestnut hair was placed next to the stool, and a cross hung next to it. The office was crowded with books, papers, and random sacred objects which seemed like proof that Father Lauer really was a student of his own faith. When the women came in to have their beads blessed, I could barely contain myself, as the evidence supporting my thesis was within an arm's reach. The women were obviously market sellers, with tattered clothes and quiet demeanors. They quickly explained their situation to Father Lauer, prayed with him, and left. I remained stunned, realizing that my research was not in vain.

*OK, before dinner tonight, Auntie and I had an interesting conversation about death, burials, mortuaries, and funerals. I don't know how it all started, but we ended up talking about Auntie's mother's death. Auntie mentioned that she bathed her mother before calling the ambulance, and I was confused. As it turns out, when a person dies at home, the family is responsible for taking the body to the mortuary. At the mortuary, bodies are kept in the fridge for preservation and they are naked except for the underwear. On the day of the wake-keeping, the family goes to get the body and usually*

*just brings the body home in a taxi. Auntie just hired a car and rode home with her mother in the back seat! Then they bathe the body and dress it for the wake. You can hire people to do this, but they don't do the bathing, just the hair and dress. The body is laid in state on Friday evening, and people come for viewing and songs. The Presbyterian Church does not endorse wake-keeping anymore, but it still happens. On Saturday, you put the body in the casket, bury it, and party all day! I asked Auntie how she got through bathing and dressing her dead mother, and she said she really didn't show emotions until they put her mom in the fridge. I couldn't imagine.*

This was the norm. In Ghana, death is so much a part of life that people are accustomed to dealing with the dead and burying their loved ones. They do not approach death as a loss but rather as a moving on to the next phase in life. On any given weekend in Krobo-Odumase, three funerals would take place. A funeral, however, is not a somber occasion. Generally, a family hosts a reception, of sorts, complete with soda, snacks, music, dancing, and fellowship. The larger and louder your family's speaker system, the better the funeral. The more soda and cake, the better the funeral. The longer and later your party can continue into the night, the better the funeral. The funeral is not a time for mourning but a time for celebration, and the Ghanaians celebrate.

Everybody owns at least two funeral cloths, one made out of red cloth which you wear when a close (blood) relative passes, and a black cloth for all other funerals. This way, people know who the mourners are and who the supporters are. These cloths used to be worn for weeks after the death of the loved one, but now, after the Sunday funeral rights are performed, it is the individual's choice as to how long they keep the garb. Still, on Saturdays, it is not uncommon to see hoards of people walking from party to party, all dressed in black or red prints, family members generally wearing clothing made from matching cloths. If a body must be transported from one location to another, they load it up into a pick-up truck or a flat-bed pushcart, and the funeral goes pile on top of the car

with instruments. They sing and serenade the body all the way to the next town, and if that means a four hour drive, no one hesitates to jump on board.

With the coming of Christianity, western funeral practices also spouted in Ghana. However, funeral customs are one area in which the Ghanaian culture overrules Christianity. The Ghanaians have not embraced our mournful ways. Instead, they have remained true to their local customs and insist on honoring and praising their dead, but not worshiping them as some researchers have thought. The entire process is so different from what we know as westerners that it is difficult to comprehend while one witnesses it. To see people singing, dancing, and partying until four in the morning is not what one expects at a funeral, yet this is the standard in Ghana, and they'd be happy to take you along to experience it for yourself. When is the last time you took a friend to a funeral?

*The chief showed up halfway through today's worship service at Zimmerman. It was the induction ceremony for the new district pastor, so I stayed to hear the chief's comments. To actually witness worship here proves one thing to me – that "Africanization" is happening, and often times the congregations don't even realize it! Christianity faces many different obstacles here, yet it continues to thrive. This is not to say that the Christians don't acknowledge their current problems and frustrations. They do, and they respond. It's amazing to witness all the theories and ideas I've read about. There are subtle differences and glaring adaptations, all under the umbrella of "Africanization."*

My observations proved my original thoughts: Africanization was occurring at alarming rates, but oftentimes the congregations did not realize it. I experienced the Africanization of Christianity when traditional songs and instruments were used in worship, when scriptures were interpreted using local phrases and ideals, when the congregation divided itself by interest group and not by family. The studies were challenging considering the language barrier and time limitations, yet the results proved worthy. There was no question in my mind that Krobo-Odumase's Christians were

experiencing a unique time in the life of the Church in their village, and I considered myself blessed to have been a part of it.

*During a discussion with a local authority on Ghanaian Christianity, Mr. Odzawo made this comment, "The reason I like Lori is because she's a researcher and a Christian." That made me feel very proud of my work. At least one or two people understand that education and faith can co-exist!*

And here was the key to my research: I was a scholar and a believer. Some people struggled with this combination, myself included. However, when I ended my time in Krobo-Odumase, I knew I had completed my research with integrity and with respect to my academic and faith communities. I had enjoyed worshiping with my friends at Zimmermann Presbyterian Church and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, yet I had not compromised my scholarly study of the Africanization of Christianity. When one of the locals recognized the balance between academics and faith that I had been trying to achieve, I felt as if all of my fieldwork was justified. I had reached my goal and was proud of my accomplishments; the challenge then, was to share my experience.



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