Towards Inculturation:  
A Theological, Pastoral and Educational Appraisal of Traditional Ga Child  
“Outdooring” and “Naming” Rites  

By  

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ABSTRACT

One of the major challenges of the church in Africa (Ghana) is that of immersing the Christian message and practices into the culture of the people. Considering the importance of the Christian rites of initiation in the life of the church, this thesis sets out to compare the initiatory cultural rites — namely the Ga Bi Kpodziem, translated as “naming” and “outdooring” — of the Ga people of Accra, Ghana, with the sacraments and theology of Christian Initiation, and examines theological approaches to the religious worldview of the Ga people. Implications for pastoral theology are considered along with suggestions for pastoral ministry.

Some African theologians of inculturation have pointed to inattentiveness and unreflective dogmatism as the problematic of inculturating the Gospel in and among African cultures and communities of memory. Some have used the theological praxis of inculturation to point to the lack of discourse on announcing the Christ event as a locative truth; while others have reflected on the nature of the lack of discourse as a result of pastoral flaw. This thesis,
however, embraces the theology of inculturation as another important theological tool of evangelization.

Inculturation is treated as a dialogue, thus privileging attentive listening and learning from the Message of Christ apropos of cultures and communities of memory. Inculturation breeds a pastoral reality: witnessing to the Gospel otherwise than standing above history and salvation. The theology of inculturation engages a community of memory with a volatile mixture of good-bye and welcome, reminding us that Christ is before, with, and after us. The before, with and after us, tied to the notion of inculturation, reminds us that the Christ event is a locative experience of the incarnation in a custom, tradition or narrative of a people or community of memory — the Word made flesh in and among a community of memory.

The study argues that the Message of Christ is propelled through a custom, tradition or narrative of a people, e.g., the Ga community of memory, and pays homage to the inevitability of inculturation, transporting communities and cultures into a substantial reality of the Christ event. It explores this assumption in light of the Ga community of memory, in accordance with the prospects of inculturation as the tool for engaging the Message of Christ among them. What this thesis particularly advocates is a co-creation of meaning, resulting in the Ga rendition of the Christian sacrament of initiation. In other words, acknowledging the Ga traditional belief system a la Jesus Christ. This is the bias that Christianity brings to the Ga community of memory without annihilating its culture, evident in the step by step description of the baptismal rites. Furthermore, it calls forth the return to the roots of
inculturation — incarnation — that delivers the construct of the Message of Christ, negotiable to that which is encountered.

This thesis, therefore, is intended to serve as theological and educational reflection in an effort to contribute to the conversation about inculturation, using the Ga outdooring and naming ceremonies and rites as a case study. In this conversation, I intend to invite additional discussion on the inevitability of inculturation as a dialogic act that points to elements of a culture that are, in fact, salvific in nature.
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DEDICATION

I wish to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to all those who have contributed to making me who I am today.

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INTRODUCTION

1. THE PROBLEM

By the turn of the 19th century, the Catholic Church had made its way into the African continent, impacting the lives of its people and culture. The Church’s impact on African cultures has raised a number of questions pertaining to its relationship with African society (values), and whether the Church embraces African culture. These questions resonate with a statement in the document of Vatican II which reads,

“The Church … fosters and takes to herself, in so far as they are good, the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples. And so in taking them to herself, she purifies, strengthens and elevates them… In virtue of this catholicity each part contributes its own gifts to the other parts and to the whole Church, so that the whole and each of the parts are strengthened by the common sharing of the things and by the common efforts to attain the fullness of unity.”

Embedded in the above statement is the relevancy of inculturation in postmodern African Catholic communities of faith. By inculturation, I mean a “reflection of the incarnation of the word, when a culture, transformed and regenerated by the gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition, original expressions of Christian life.”2 This thesis looks at Catholicism and inculturation apropos of a tradition, specifically the Ga traditional “naming” and “outdoor” rites —”Ga Bi Kpodziem.” In other words, could one contend that a theological, pastoral and educational appraisal of traditional Ga child “outdoor” and “naming” rites constitute an aspect of the ongoing process of inculturation? What are some of

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the values enshrined in these rites that embody the teachings and virtues expounded by the Catholic faith? To address this issue the thesis first explores the treatment of the concept of inculturation, looking at the history of the concept.

2. INCULTURATION: A SEARCH FOR METHOD

Roest Crollius and Theonest Nkeramihigo asked the question aptly in the title of their book, *What Is So New About Inculturation*? After all, the Church since its inception has always had to encounter peoples and cultures foreign to its origin. Jesus was born into a Palestinian Jewish culture. Jesus’ missionary activity was mainly within the Palestinian territory. His followers were chosen from among the Jews and others of Hellenic background. He gave his disciples charge to “go, teach all nations.” Paul, a convert, brought the Good News — henceforth called Christianity — to the Greco-Roman world, making contacts with the so-called gentile or pagan cultures. Therefore, the argument can be made that inculturation is both an integral and inevitable component of Christianity.

During the first few centuries, Christianity spread gradually over the Mediterranean coastlands. It is not surprising that in the first four centuries, Christianity, originating in Palestine among the Jews, obtained its theological and dogmatic formulation in the Greco-

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Roman world and culture. This was the period of the great theological and Ecumenical Councils.\(^5\)

Under Charlemagne, Christianity encountered the cultures of northern Europe, giving rise later to the dream of “Christianitas.” The Franco-Germanic tribes of the Holy Roman Empire will contribute their cultural embellishments to the Christian message, particularly in Liturgical functions.\(^6\)

Later in the middle ages, Christian theology was espoused to the mundane philosophical teachings of the time. Through systematic and formal education under the monks and religious orders, Europe could boast of having a “Christian” culture and civilization.\(^7\) In fact, European civilization and Christianity became inseparable. This was a period of apparent peace and uniformity. However, it was short-lived. The protestant reformation led by Martin Luther, coupled with the Enlightenment age with its breed of “rebellious thinkers,” called for the separation of religion and philosophy, science and faith, as well as State and Church.

The advent of the Industrial Revolution in Europe precipitated the spread of Christianity to Africa colonies, the Americas and Asia. In all these encounters, Christianity had to take on flesh from the cultures, not indiscriminately.\(^8\) However, Christianity’s encounter with these

\(^7\) Walbert Buhlmann, *God’s Chosen People* (New York: 1982), 105.
cultures has not always been fruitful, and not always without tensions, discussions, even schisms and heresies, failures and apparent short-sightedness. These foreseeable quandaries are indicative of the relevancy of inculturation, however silent, and thus the expression there is nothing so new about inculturation in the Church.

Though ancient, the relevancy of inculturation today cannot be minimized. Postmodernity’s call for attentive listening to difference drives home the relevancy of inculturation in the Church in Africa today. That attentive listening, a corollary companion of inculturation, derives from the (African) continent’s political, cultural, spiritual, and even ecclesiological underpinnings. Could these underpinnings propel a theology of inculturation? In order to answer this question, there is a need to look, first of all, at the definition of inculturation, its characteristics, internal dynamism, conditions and limitations.

3. THE WORKING DEFINITIONS OF INCULTURATION

The Synod of 1977 gave birth to the word “inculturation.” The concept — a neologism — designates the process of incarnating the Christian message (and subsequently faith) into a particular culture. Attempts to offer a befitting definition of inculturation must take into account the following: first, the historical background and development of the concept in ecclesiastical circles; second, the concept’s analogical application as compared to similar concepts in the social sciences whence it was coined.


With its history akin to the call for “aggiornamento,” inculturation has been linked to popular terms like cultural adaptation, localization and indigenization, contextualization, enculturation, acculturation, and to some extent also transculturation and deculturation. Each of these terms refers to a particular relationship between liturgy and culture. The terms convey the idea of interaction between and among two or more cultures. This analogical approach to explaining inculturation has been employed by some authors, such as Roest Crollius and Anscar Chupungco, whose works I will be referring to in this thesis. I would like to start from cultural anthropological and move on to the ecclesiastical analysis of inculturation.

Inculturation has its roots in the word culture. In cultural anthropology, Sir Edward Burnette Tylor is credited with the first classical definition of culture which has since become a point of departure for subsequent ones. He describes culture as: “…that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” 11 Other definitions of culture include, but not limited to that of Archbishop Peter Sarpong. He defined culture as a “complex or sum total of ideas, behavior, patterns, linguistic traditions, legacies of institutions and concepts of life of the human person and of the world around that have been learned and passed on from one generation to another generation in a given society.” 12 This thesis draws upon these definitions, paying special attention to Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo definition of culture. Azevedo defines culture as


“...the set of meanings, values and patterns which underlie the perceptible phenomena of a concrete society, whether they are recognizable on the level of social practice (acts, ways of proceeding, tools, techniques, customs and habits, forms, and traditions); or whether they are carriers of signs, symbols, meanings, and representations, conceptions, and feelings that consciously or unconsciously pass from generation to generation and are kept as they are or transformed by people as the expression of their human reality.”  

Azevedo’s definition underscores the general understanding of culture as follows: (1) culture is a creation of a community of people; (2) culture is historically constituted, and transcends a community of people; (3) though imbued with stability, culture precipitates change in society; (4) Culture thrives and improves itself through contact with other cultures and the ensuing cultural osmosis. Embedded in these general understanding are the following metaphors – “indigenization,” “incarnation”, “adaptation, “accommodation” and “acculturation,” all of which foreground “inculturation.” These metaphors need defining.

Indigenization, coined from the word “indigenous,” refers to the process of conferring on Christian liturgy a cultural form that is native to a local community. Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass advanced the use of this term in the liturgy in the 1970’s. According to Anscar Chupungco, what Amalorpavadass really meant was “adaptation” of the Christian liturgy in the framework of the culture of India. Indigenization, Chupungco explained aims “to give to our liturgy a more Indian setting and complexion.” Thus, “indigenization” was, in fact, another word for “Indianization.” Amalorpavadass’s view of indigenization, Chupungco opined, has three phases:

13 Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1982), 10.
“The first consist of creating an Indian setting for worship through introducing gestures, forms of homage, sacred objects, silence, and interiority, which are characteristics of Indian religious culture. The second, making adequate translation of the liturgy into the vernacular, and eventually in composing new liturgical texts. The third is reading of the sacred books of India, specifically the Rik Veda, as part of the Liturgy of the Word.”

Incarnation is Vatican II’s variation of adaptation. Article 10 of Ad gentes states that:

“If the Church is to be in a position to offer all the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among every group of people in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the people among whom he lived...In imitation of Christ, who by virtue of the incarnation made himself one with the Jewish nation the local church should strive to identify itself with the people among whom it dwells. As Christ became a Jew in all things save sin, so the Church should become not merely a Church but the Church of a particular locality.”

Incarnation, both as a Christian mystery and a technical term, enriches our understanding of the concept of adaptation. As a mystery, incarnation explains why the church and its liturgy need adapting to the culture and traditions of the people. Incarnation takes place when the church and its liturgy embody a community’s culture. As a technical term, incarnation gives depth to adaptation, which is often understood as a work of external adjustment to conformity with a situation. The liturgy is not merely adapted; it is as it were, hypostatically united with the tradition and culture of the local church. For Ruy Costa, incarnation implies that liturgical forms develop from within the experience of the local church.

15 Chupungco. Liturgical Inculturation, 14.
16 Chupungco, Liturgical Inculturation, 17.

Adaptation and accommodation are more often, not exclusively though, applied to the liturgical renewal and reform initiated in the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Adaptations “impart an even increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faith”\(^{18}\) and “strengthen whatever can help to call”\(^{19}\) God’s people “into the Church’s fold.”\(^{20}\) Accommodation is more radical, and concerns elements from the traditions and genius of individual people which could be appropriately admitted into divine worship. Accommodation requires a lot more maturity, time and effort by ecclesiastical authorities. It first involves determining which elements of a culture are to be adapted, and then allows time for preliminary experiments with the full consent of the Holy See, and the necessary consultations of experts from the variously connected disciplines.

Aylward Shorter defines acculturation as “the encounter between one culture and another, or the encounter between cultures.”\(^{21}\) An important aspect of such an encounter, Shorter explains, is that the communication between cultures comes about “on a footing of mutual respect and tolerance.”\(^{22}\) But he adds that the encounter happens on an external basis. That is why “acculturation may lead merely to juxtaposition of unassimilated cultural expression coming from various directions or origins.”\(^{23}\)

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\(^{18}\) The Rites of the Catholic Church, as revised by a Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by the authority of Pope Paul VI, (New York, 1976). Cf. also, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (Rome: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1963), nos. 37 and 40. Henceforth, referred to as SC.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.


\(^{22}\) Ibid. 8-12.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
Nevertheless, an encounter between cultures is a process that starts with external contact. Sometimes, this may result in a permanent state of juxtaposition of unrelated elements, but normally it should blossom into mutual assimilation. Shorter gives clear utterance to one of the basic principles of cultural anthropology, when he affirms that “acculturation is a necessary condition for inculturation.”

This process implies the presence of multiple cultures or cultural realities. This, therefore, may be used in analogy for the process whereby the church, introducing the gospel and faith into a culture, assumes traits and values from the culture, both as communicative vehicles and wealth for itself, thus unfolding more and more its universal character.

By analogy, one can say that the term inculturation, as used by the Church, means a process involving its inserting the gospel and faith into a culture, by the effort of a local church, fostering the right sort of cultural osmosis. This is a step towards our understanding of the ecclesiastical use of the concept inculturation. Many theologians have been trying to define inculturation from their various perspectives and fields of research. For example, Azevedo defines inculturation as “the dynamic relation between the Christian message and culture or cultures; an insertion of the Christian life into a culture, an on-going process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them.”

Crollius also defines inculturation as

“the integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in


elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the church universal.”  

While the above explanations offer some understanding of the term “inculturation”, this thesis is guided more particularly by Shorter’s definition, as well as Chupungco’s definition of liturgical inculturation. According to Shorter, inculturation is “the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures.”  

Chupungco defines liturgical inculturation as “the process of inserting the texts and rites of the liturgy into the frame work of the local culture.” Shorter and Chupungco’s definitions emphasize inculturation as a process, privileging the concept’s pastoral nature.

4. THE NEED FOR INCULTURATION OF “GA BI KPODZIEM” RITUALS.

The Ga Bi Kpodziem ceremonies are strictly-observed practices, which are traditionally conducted in accordance with their formal religious procedures or rites, in a prescribed format or ritual. These terms are oftentimes interchangeable. The Ga Bi Kpodziem rites are unique rituals among the Ga of Accra in Ghana, West Africa. There are similarities and dissimilarities between Ga Bi Kpodziem and the Christian sacraments of initiation, namely, Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Some of the dissimilarities in the Ga Bi Kpodziem rites are frowned upon by some Christians, including some Ga people who refer to the rituals as devilish, fetish, occultism and paganism. These negative attributes deter some

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of the Ga from participating in most of their traditional practices, resulting in confusion and misunderstanding between and among families. In order to help solve these difficulties, there is the need to study both rites and rituals — Christian sacraments of initiation and the Ga Bi Kpodziem rituals — and see how they both can be appraised theologically, pastorally and educationally.

Since the topic of this research is towards inculturation apropos of theological, pastoral and educational appraisal for the “outdooring” and “naming” ceremony of the Ga, it is only by studying the contents and rites of both rituals that we can understand, evaluate and suggest ways by which inculturation can take place. If inculturation, as defined by Shorter, is anything to go by as “the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures,” then the Christian message has to be incarnated into the Ga Bi Kpodziem rituals. As with Shorter, it is the contention of this work that inculturation is as relevant to the Ga people and their rituals as any other culture where the Christian faith has been planted. The Ga, as a people, had their own culture prior to the arrival of Christianity. Hence, for the Christian message to take root in the Ga Culture, it has to be inculturated through the frame work of the local culture where the faith has been planted.

The origin of Ga religious beliefs and customs are illustrated by five major rites of passage, cultural practices or ritual ceremonies that mark the social transitions during the lifespan of every Ga person, who lives to adulthood. In analyzing the Ga customs and traditional ceremonial rites of passage, Kilson (1974), observed: “The aim of the cycle of life crisis ceremonies is based on the physiological development of the human organism … each

29 Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 11.
ceremony defines an individual as a member of a bio-social category and failure to observe a
ceremony entails mystical and practical sanction.” The focus in this thesis is on three of these
rites.

These ceremonies include the Kpodziemọ, the naming ceremony that transforms an eight-
day-old child, irrespective of gender, from a biological fetal nonentity into a Ga person. A
child who dies before the naming ceremony is performed is not considered a social being,
and its mother does not achieve the socially-respected status of motherhood, such as the use
of a family/clan name, for example “Kpakpanye”.

Another ceremony on which much emphasis is placed is the hii aniq/ketia (men’s thing) –
the circumcision of all male children, performed after the kpodziem rituals (Gen. 17: 9-14),
and before the age of ten. This ritual masculinizes the boys, and differentiates the Ga from
other ethnic groups on the West Coast of Africa.

Physiological puberty rites, such as dzengniŋ, mark the transition from immaturity to
maturity. They signify the purification and preparation of both genders for the assumption of
the adulthood roles of marriage, parentage and other social responsibilities. The bio-social
transition of marriage, in particular, constitutes a major change in the process of maturation
for both men and women in the Ga customs and traditional life cycle. Without the dzengnin
rites, a person may be branded ‘immoral and stupid’, and be denied ancestral status after
death.
5. THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE RITES

There are many foreseeable difficulties in attempting to inculturate these rites and rituals. Some of these include the possibility of duplication or parallelism, super imposition of ritual meanings, syncretism and superstition, magical attitude to symbolism, particularism leading to sectarianism or tribalism, archaeologism or a sort of anti-quarianism, and a nostalgic or romantic return to the days of yore. Another risk is to superimpose meaning or to read Christian faith into Ga religious culture. This may be avoided only when a competent people are the ones to undertake such a study and make recommendations. The needed expertise in the social sciences, in all branches of theology and other related disciplines, cannot be sufficiently stressed. Among the experts should also be a local traditional person, whose deep knowledge and personal involvement in the traditional rites could be of more value than the often labelled “scientific knowledge” of some armchair or foreign anthropologists. We are dealing with a living culture which should not be sacrificed or dismembered in the name of scientific objectivity into cold and lifeless theories, often divorced from the vital cultural existence.  

Corollary to the risk of super imposition may be that of syncretism, the apparent problematic of many an African-originated sects. This often stems from either partial knowledge or superficial research, or even the overriding desire to help the adherents find some sort of cultural identity in Christ.  


31 LG no 8.
The basic aim of inculturation is to help the faithful participate in their culture as well as the Christian sacraments without undue and unwarranted concern for particularism, and its corollary companion tribalism. The faithful must be mindful of the wealth or values involved in their call to the Christian faith, as well as their allegiance to their respective cultures. The call to the Christian faith and allegiance to one’s culture often result in tensions or fragmentations for/within individuals and communities. This thesis does not frown upon the tensions and fragmentations that ensue as a result of inculturation. Shorter implicitly alludes to this when he said “Any discussion of inculturation demands an understanding of cultural pluralism and of the relationship between religion and culture.”32 The cultural plurality of humanity, by nature, is an a priori component of inculturation because of the primal invitation to negotiate contending goods within and between cultures and communities of memory. Furthermore, Shorter insists that “another notion that is fundamental to an understanding of inculturation is that of cultural change.”33 It is the contention of this thesis that any interaction between the Christian faith and a culture would precipitate a cultural change, e.g., the church attentively listening to the cultural transformation inherent in the Christian message and its impact on a local community of memory. In addition, the church cannot but learn from cultures and communities of memory through an attentive listening to the elements of cultural plurality and change, if its mission is otherwise than cooptation or dogmatic imposition.

32 Shorter, Toward a Theology of Inculturation, 45.

33 Ibid.
6. METHOD AND DIVISION

This study engages an interdisciplinary approach to explore the tenets of inculturation in the light of traditional Ga rituals. Specifically, this thesis employs both a social science and a theological approach. The former involves the ethnology and anthropology of the Ga people and the rites in question. The latter involves the theology of sacraments, particularly those of Christian initiation and the pastoral implications that go with them. This work is divided into four chapters:

Chapter One: Understanding the Ga People and Their Rituals
This chapter explores what inculturation is, and what are its internal dynamisms with regard to the encounter between cultures and Christianity.

Chapter Two: Significance of the Ga Initiatory Rites
This chapter deals with the Ga people and their culture, laying out the rituals of the Ga naming and outdooring ceremonies.

Chapter Three: The Sacraments of Christian Initiation and the “Ga Bi Kpodziem” Rites
This chapter looks at the socio-cultural values and effects found in the naming and outdooring ceremonies. This is followed by an exploration of the Ga religious landscape and what the Ga homo religiosus aspires to in life, through these and the various naming and outdooring ceremonies.
Chapter Four:  
Inculturation of Christian Ceremonies in Ga Culture

This final chapter is dedicated to the pastoral of inculturation among the Ga, with particular reference to the above findings and in line with the Church’s pronouncements. Emphasis is on the work of the church among the Ga people, with special fields of projection on the youth, catechesis and liturgical celebrations. The immediate (catechesis) addresses are the individual faithful and the community of believers and the secondary are the surrounding culture and its people.
CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE GA PEOPLE AND THEIR RITUALS

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the Ga people of greater Accra Region in the Republic of Ghana, their history location and present settlements; and introduces and explains the Ga life crisis ceremonies and the Ga Bi Kpodziem rituals in question.

1.1. LOCATION OF THE GA PEOPLE

The Ga are a small ethnic group that belong traditionally to the Ga-Adangmes tribal cluster. This cluster at present constitutes about 9% of Ghana’s estimated population of almost 27 million people. The traditional homelands of this cluster extend for about 40 miles along the Gulf of Guinea coast, from the Densu River to the Volta River estuary near Ada. The northern boundary is the Volta Lake and the Akwapim Range of hills.

Of this cluster, the Ga people occupy the seven coastal towns from the Densu River in the West to the LaloI Lagoon, and its tributary stream flowing from Aburi in the North through Akwapim Hills, and to the Shai Hills in the East. The sea is the southern boundary. The towns are Accra, Osu, Labadi, Teshi, Nungua, Tema, and Kpong. Their main occupation is


Survey Department of Ghana, 2014 Map.
fishing, at the coast. Each has a number of inland hamlets and villages where clan members are engaged in farming and hunting.  

1.2. HISTORY AND TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENT

According to oral and written history, the Ga-Adangmes moved into the present location from the “East,” most probably from the present day Benin Republic. They came by sea and by land around the 16th century, and settled at Ayawas. They were met with resistance by the natives of Ayawas which eventually led them to migrate to a coastal town known as Kpeshie in 1681. This town, which is also present day Accra, became the seat of the British Gold Coast in 1887. Today, Accra is the capital city of Ghana. Those other people who settled on Ga lands were easily assimilated into Ga polity. Thus, the Ga often identified themselves as “Ga-nyo Bi Kronn” or true Ga, from the other Ga. The Aboriginal Ga, most probably the Kpeshie, perform the Kpele rites, worship, and dance. The other Ga, descendants of the Akwamu invaders, the Nigerian port workers, and the Fante settlers brought along with them their own political set up, deities, religious cults and culture. Each Ga “town” — Accra, Osu, La, Teshie, Nungua, and Tema — consists of the descendants of one or more parties of immigrants and of the aborigines.


1.3. GA RELIGIOUS CULTURE AND WORLDVIEW

The Ga society is composed of homes — Shia, of cognitive families — We,\(^{41}\) and towns — Mang. In the home, authority is wielded either by the founder (male or female) or the eldest male, while in the We, by a senior male elected through the elders then in the Mang. Ga rule through a hierarchy of priests and priesthood families.\(^{42}\) Heading the people in each town or quarter is a wulɔmɔ or chief priest in the service of the Ga divinities. The wulɔmɔ is assisted by a caste of minor priests of lesser gods, and by a number of female mediums — wɔnntse or wɔngyɛɛ — in the religious and political administration of life.\(^{43}\) These minor priests are assigned political duties as Mangtse, Mangkralɛ and Asofoatse, and also perform official rites. These comprise daily rituals and those annually offered to Ga divinities. The Ga worship a Supreme Being — Ataa Naa Nyungmɔ — through a number of divine beings called dzenmangwɔŋ. The Ga believe that mortals cannot achieve direct contact with the Supreme Being. So Ataa Naa Nyungmɔ, the Supreme Being, created the dzenMangwɔŋdzii, these immortal, rational and mobile beings mediate between Ataa Naa Nyungmɔ and the community. These divine beings have sacred groves — aklabatsa (or “temples” — gbatsu) — where people may contact them. But in actual fact, their main duty is to guard the Ga nation and the cosmic order set up by the Supreme Being. Family and individual needs are taken care of by the deities and ancestors. The ancestors play a very important role in the Ga social, cultural and religious life. Ga believe that when a person


\(^{42}\) Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 3.

departs this earthly life, she/he enters the ancestral shades. The ancestral shade continues to guide and protect the We and its members. They also have power to bless and castigate living members duly, in matters affecting the lineage as a whole.\textsuperscript{44}

Ga believe that the human person was created by the Supreme Being and is made up of two main components, namely, the body (\textit{gbɔmɔstso}) and the soul (\textit{susuma}), plus a third spiritual force or element called \textit{kla}.\textsuperscript{45} Humans were created after God had made the universe.\textsuperscript{46}

The Ga live through life’s sojourn here on earth in stages marked by rites and rituals.\textsuperscript{47} These are the Ga child “outdooring” and “naming ceremonies” — \textit{Ga Bi Kpodziem}, circumcision for boys — \textit{hianii}, puberty rites for both boys and girls — \textit{dzengnii}, betrothal and marriage — \textit{shibim ke kpee}, and finally funeral rites. Through these, a child is “outdoored” eight days after birth and named. At circumcision, a boy acquires or asserts his masculine identity and may participate in the religious activities of the lineage.\textsuperscript{48} Through puberty rites, the Ga moves still higher in social status and acquires eligibility to other offices, including marriage.

In the very first ritual act of the \textit{Ga Bi Kpodziem}, the Ga cosmological categories are called into context. This is during the incardination into the earthly human life. The infant is

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 163.


\textsuperscript{48} Kilson, \textit{African Urban Kinsmen}, 1.
“shown to the Morning Star.” This is done by a virtuous man on behalf of humanity and in the presence of a community. The infant is shown to the Ga elements. Marion Kilson describes the Ga cosmology as comprising of five classes with special attributes (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Existential attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Being</td>
<td>Creative, Immortal, Rational, Mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Being</td>
<td>Creative, Immortal, Rational, Mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Being</td>
<td>Creative, Mortal, Rational, Mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>Creative, Mortal, Irrational, Mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants</td>
<td>Creative, Mortal, Irrational, Immobile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behind all the cosmic current of life is a creator, a Supreme Being called *Ataa Naa Nyungmo*[^50^], who is symbolized as the “Morning Star,” “Sky,” and “East”. The name *Ataa Naa Nyungmo* literally translates as Father, Grandmother, Sky and Person.[^51^] *Ataa* means Father (an affectionate title like Abba for the Jews). *Naa* means Grandmother (symbolic in the family and clan for age, antiquity, wisdom, lovingness, blessedness, procreator of life). *Nyungmo* means Sky (representing brightness, home of divine beings and of the sky family, home of rain, home of night). *Mɔ* means person or owner.

[^49^]: The community comprises of the living and the dead.


Taking the words one by one, the Ga recognize the Supreme Being as Father, *Ataa*. It is the appellative used for one’s father and for all his male siblings. It is a title of loving respect. In fact, in the *Ga Bi Kpodzie*, the outdoored infant is prayed over to grow and be respectful of the father regardless of the circumstances. In a more serious way, the Supreme Being must be respected at all times, being the procreator and provider of a community and its wellbeing.

*Naa* is the respectful title used for grandmothers, an affectionate diminutive for *Nana* of the Akan people of Ghana who call God *Nana Nyame*. The title is used to imply profound respect for the ancestors of the Ashanti people. The title among the Ga is more often used for a grandmother with many grandchildren. So for the Ga, the Supreme Being, God, is ancient and loving, with many “grandchildren.” Thus, the two names together *Atta Naa* got to make God both male and female, emphasizing God’s self-sufficiency in creating life.

The next nomenclature *Nyɔŋmɔ* is comprised of two words, *Nyɔŋ* and *Mɔ*. The latter *Mɔ* stands for person or owner. The word *Nyɔŋ* has a variety of meanings, but all connected with the sky. The two words put together give a whole array of concepts from which we can derive some attributes of God. In everyday expression, the Ga call God *Nyɔŋmɔ*, a word which also stands for the rain. This is understandable because the dry Accra plains and lagoons are always at the mercy of rains. It is no wonder rain is considered divine favor and

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Atta Naa

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54 Kilson, “The Ga Naming Rites,” 907.
blessings.\textsuperscript{55} A more usual concept is to understand \textit{Ny\textcircled{ng}} as sky, brightness and light. In this combination, the Ga attribute this to God, the owner of the sky, as well as the source of brightness and light.\textsuperscript{56} So from the nomenclature, \textit{Ataa Naa Nyungm\textcircled{r}}, the Ga believe in God as progenitor and procreator, Father, provider, omniscient, immortal and loving, self-sufficient and creator, provider of rain and other livelihood, awe-inspiring and mysterious, source of light and ineffable, and giver of life (and death).

In spite of all these attributes, the Ga have no temples or shrines for the Supreme Being. There is a Ga proverb, popular among other Ghanaian tribes that if you want to address God, speak to the wind. For the Ga people, God is omnipresent. However, to ease contacts, the Supreme Being liaisons with the \textit{Dzendmawzdzi} (plural of \textit{Dzendmaawng}).\textsuperscript{57} As intermediaries of God and the human community, \textit{Dzendmawzdzi} inhabit the sky, but may descend to earth and be localized in topographical features and elements like rivers, lagoons, the sea, groves, and other natural phenomena like the wind, thunder and even animals.\textsuperscript{58} For example, \textit{Nia} is the senior god represented by the sea; \textit{Sakum\textcircled{r} and Naa K\textcircled{le}} are lagoon gods;\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Dantu} is the time keeper god for agricultural rites; \textit{Gua} is the god of blacksmith, represented in thunder and lightning, \textit{Gb\textcircled{hu}} of the Nungua groves; \textit{Olila} is the god of the winds; \textit{Naa Afiye} is the goddess of fertility;\textsuperscript{60} and \textit{Klan} is the god of animals.\textsuperscript{61} These gods


\textsuperscript{56} Danquah, \textit{The Akan doctrine of God}, 32-33.

\textsuperscript{57} Kilson, “Libation in Ga Ritual,” 163.

\textsuperscript{58} Field, \textit{Religion and Medicine}, 28.


\textsuperscript{60} Kilson, \textit{Kpele Lala}, 1.
have shrines or groves called *Gbatsu*, literally the foretelling hut or hut of prophecy.\(^62\)

Attached to every shrine is a priest — *Wulmọ* — assisted by a number of male attendants — *Agbaafọi* (plural of *Agbaafọ*), and mediums, and all women “caught” and “married” by the god.\(^63\) Through these women — *Wọŋyoo* (*Wọŋyei* in the plural), the gods communicate to and may be contacted by human beings.\(^64\)

The Ga believe the Supreme Being created all things before human. It is the theatre of life, both human and divine. The Ga divide the universe into two visible components: the sky and the earth. The former is ritually known as *Nyọngmọ Mang* and the latter *Humu Mang*. To these two one may add a third place not easy to locate, but known to the Ga as *Gbohiajdɔŋ*.\(^65\) The first is inhabited by the divine beings and the sky family, the second by living beings, and the third by the living-dead.

According to Ga popular belief, the Supreme Being created the universe in stages, and in some distant past, and still sustains it today, providing the needs of the human community.\(^66\) People are, therefore, entitled to the fruits of the earth, but must guard against the misuse and abuse of God’s creation. Like all things, the world is governed by divine order and by

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\(^{61}\) Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 73.

\(^{62}\) Ibid.


\(^{63}\) Kilson, “Ambivalence and Power, 174.

\(^{64}\) Kilson, “The Ga Naming Rites,” 906.

\(^{65}\) Kilson, “Libation in Ga Ritual,” 162.
spiritual laws. Certain times are favorable and others are not. These have been revealed to the ancestors by the divine guardians and should be duly respected. These guardian spirits are identified in the topographical features where they usually descend and may be contacted by mortals. So to maintain the order and harmony of the cosmos, the Ga perform various rites, particularly the *Kpele*, (agricultural rites) and other weekly or even daily rites.

Nature, therefore, is also alive for the Ga, and full of invisible forces that duly reward or penalize people or a community. Against such forces, the Ga seek protection. Such protection involves calling on lineage ancestors, deities and even the Supreme Being. Medicine men, priests or mediums may be consulted for help. So while the Ga acknowledge the importance of the cosmos and the need for cosmic order and harmony, if life is to be successful they also undertake to create and order the cosmos and people or a community’s place in it. The life activities of a community must be in harmony with the natural order of the creator (macro-cosmos), and with or among members of a community.

As seen above, the Ga are life-oriented. Into this life, the Ga weave an intricate pattern made up of empirical knowledge, social relationships and religious beliefs. It is such a complex whole, that when the Ga say life, this is synonymous with culture as personal, social and religious heritage. So in their ceremonies, the Ga fulfill what pertains to all three. In the understanding of Kilson, the rituals establish and maintain order among the categories,

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67 Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 18, 21.

divine, human and natural, creating and reinforcing society, and introducing, incorporating and integrating the individual into the divine-human and socio-religious life.69

1.4. GA “INITIATORY” — “GA BI KPODZIEM”

For purposes of this project, I will call the rites or ceremonies in question “initiatory” or “Ga Bi Kpodziem.” This comprises of “outdooring” and “naming” rites as well as the rites of circumcision and puberty.70 The cycle of the Ga life may be divided into the following stages: from oblivion in the sky-family to conception; from birth and naming to puberty initiation; from adulthood to ancestor hood; and from clan memory into oblivion in the sky family.

From conception to naming, the infant is believed to be a spirit, addressed as stranger — Gb — from the sky-family. At naming, the child acquires a “personal” identity and status. Through naming, the Ga believe in nominally reincarnating the ancestor.71 If male, the infant may be “consecrated” and ritually cleansed and presented to the family shrine and divinity, through circumcision. Only through puberty initiation does the child become adult and is made ready to contribute effectively to the lineage.

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1.5. PREPARATORY RITUALS

When the child is eight days old, the *Bi Kpodziem* takes place in the house of the child’s patrikin at dawn. Two women from the patrikin are sent to collect the infant from the mother’s house. The infant is brought in under cover of darkness, wrapped up in blankets, to a room in the paternal family house. When all the invited guests are seated in the compound, patrikin on the right and matrikin on the left, the rite begins with the senior patrikinsman calling for silence. He then offers a bottle of local or imported rum on behalf of the patrikin. The senior matrikinsman offers corn wine — *Nmaa Daa* — through a spokesperson, and displays a white linen — *Tako* — and a coin, usually placed under the pot containing the drink.

The eldest patrikinsman then pours libation, first with the corn wine at the doorways of the house, and completing at the main entrance to the compound. He prays, calling the ancestors to intercede for what is about to take place. He then pours libation a second time, this time with the rum, and then takes a sip of the drink to “seal” that aspect of the rite.

1.6. INTRODUCING INFANTS TO THE GA UNIVERSE

Next, a patrikin woman sweeps a particular spot on the compound with a broom. An elderly person then takes the infant in the arms, un-wraps the blankest from it, and facing East, heaves the infant three times up and three times down, while praying this prayer:

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72 Kilson, “The Ga Naming Rites,” 912.


74 Kilson, “The Ga Naming Rites,” 907.
Agoo awoméi ké ataaméi? Améén (3 times)
Naa gbɔ lé ni eba lé, Yao
Wɔ ké lé mli tsɔŋ Tsotsobi
Ga-fomɔbi lé kɔɔyɔɔ tswa dani eweieɛɛ
Ena siteke
Enu enuko
Amale, adzu, onako
Ataa lé ataa ni, awo lé awo ni
Béé nméné lé wɔ ké bo mli tsɔŋ Tsotsobi
Obatsu onine naa nii ni oye
Tswa omanyeye aba
Mii dzɔɔ bo
Mii dzɔɔ bo
Mii dzɔɔ bo
Ohe adzɔ bo ni ona hɛdzɔlɛ
(Mii tswa bo nane, kɔ mi nane)75

Translation:

May I enter mothers and fathers? Yes. (3 times)
Lo the stranger that is come, Amen
We are showing him/her to the Morning Star Amen
Wind blows before a Ga person speaks
He sees, he has not seen
He hears, he has not heard
Do not lie, do not steal, you have not seen
Father is father, mother is mother

So today we are showing you to the Morning Star
Come and work that you may eat
Strike, May there be peace!
I am blessing you
I am blessing you
I am blessing you
I am blessing you
Be blessed and be at peace
(I am kicking you, catch my foot)76

This ritual marks the introduction of the infant to Ga Universe. The gathering chants its assent. Next, the child is placed on the “swept” spot, and sprinkled with rain water, as a

76 Ibid.
blessing. The child is given a symbolic kick, and told to grow and to emulate only virtues and
avoid vices. The infant is then given a tiny sip of the corn wine and water, followed by
another prayer. The infant is then clothed in white and other ornaments proper for the
ceremony.

1.7. TRIPLE LIBATION AND NAMING

After the outdooring, two elders, one from the patrikin and the other from the matrikin pour
libation in turns reciting this prayer:

May I enter mothers and fathers? Yes (3 times)
Strike, strike, strike, may there be peace! Amen (3 times)
Are we not of one voice? We are
May our seats be thick (numerous), Yes
May our brooms be thick, Yes
May our circles be intact, Yes
May we find water when we sink a well, Sure
May we drink and get ease on our shoulders, Yes
To the father of the stranger, long life, Yes
To its mother, long life, Yes
Its back is dark, Yes
May its front be clear, Yes
May it respect the world, Yes
May its kinsmen be enabled to provide its needs, Yes
May it work for us to enjoy, Yes
May its back be fruitful, Yes
May some survive that others may come, Yes
It came with black “hairs” may it return hoary, Yes
Strike, strike, strike, may there be peace!77

This is repeated by the next elder from the patrikin using the same prayer of the two elders. Then participants are served corn wine and some rum. Next is the climax of the whole ceremony.

The senior patrikinsman produces the “naming rum” — Ṣẹọ̀wọ̀ Daa. Then, he calls for the first time, the name that the clan gives to the infant. The name is hailed with applause and appreciation. Some exegesis of the name may follow. Participants call out other appellatives that go with the name. The senior patrikin is served a tot of the naming rum, which he gulps down after calling out the name once more. The participants are served with the naming rum and pronounce the given name before taking the drink.

1.8. INCORPORATING THE INFANT

The senior patrikinsman now leads the congregation in the incorporation ritual. This is called Kposamo, rubbing in. The senior patrikinsman rubs his palms together and places them on the child’s right shoulder. The congregation does likewise. The senior patrikinsman then repeats this gesture and places his opened palms on the child’s left shoulder. Then the invited guests take turns, placing their palms on the child’s chest. Through this ritual, Ga incorporate the infant first into its patrikin, represented by the right shoulder, then into its matrikin, represented by the left shoulder, and into Ga society. The infant now occupies the medial position with regards to both kin groups, which is symbolized by the placing of the palms on its chest.

78 Vinigi L. Grottanelli, Personal Names as a Reflection of Social Relations among the Nzema of Ghana (Takoradi Press Ltd: Ghana, 1977), 149-175.
After this ritual, the senior patrikinsman leads his folk round to thank the matrikin. The matrikin also return the gestures once the patrikin are seated. Afterwards, having ascertained that all has been fulfilled, the senior patrikinsman announces through the spokesperson the completion of the ceremony.

For the purpose of theological scrutiny the above rite is divided into three parts: (1) rituals incardinating the infant into human-earthly life; (2) rituals incardinating the infant into Ga society represented by the clan, and finally (3) rituals incardinating the infant into the kindred. These are identified with Kilson’s tripartite designation of the rituals.79

1.9. PRESENTING DONATIONS

This is the merry making part of the ceremony. Individuals offer gifts in cash or in kind. When the final donation has been made and the amount realized is announced to the gathering, the speaker for the matrikin then pours libation, using the same prayer of the three senior kinsmen. Before doing so, he seeks permission from the elders at the ceremony, and squats to receive the corn wine for the ritual act from the patrikin spokesperson. This is to express the fact that he is just a jural minor in the presence of more qualified elders. He libates on behalf of the matrikin.

To conclude, this chapter has been mainly dedicated to the phenomenological part of this paper. I have already made a short introduction of the Ga people, their location, and a brief historical knowledge of their settlement and culture, as expressed in the Ga Bi *Kpodziemɔ* rites. Life

among the Ga is a continuous rhythm, increasing in tempo and importance with age and passage through various ceremonies. It is an unbroken cycle from conception through to the ancestral world. The final aim of the Ga life is to gain access to the ancestral habitat.
CHAPTER TWO: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GA INITIATORY RITES

2. INTRODUCTION

This thesis uses initiatory rites to depict both the outdooring and naming rites of infants in the Ga community of memory. The ceremonies, as would be recalled, are founded on the Ga cosmological perception and worldview. The rites involve invoking the blessing of the God, Ataa Naa Nyɔŋmɔ, the intercession of the ancestors, and an acceptance of the infant as a bona-fide member of the clan and community. Each of these stages or beliefs have meaningful theological consequences for inculturation.

2.1 THE GA CEREMONY IN THE LIGHT OF SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

The Ga outdooring and naming rites comprise of three stages which, when woven together, form the complex whole of life. The three stages are physiological, social and the religious. Since the scope of this work is centered on religion without ignoring the importance of the other two components, this chapter will involve an examination of Ga religiosity as portrayed in these ceremonies, and in the light of Catholic Sacramental Theology. There are very striking parallels and similarities between the Sacraments of Christian Initiation and the Ga ceremonies in question.

Some obvious questions immediately come to mind: Do the Ga Bi Kpodziemɔ ceremonies have anything in common with Christian Initiation Rites? Is there the possibility of any
addition to what has already been furnished by Christian Tradition? What values of non-
Christian religious initiation can be adapted to the Christian ritual (of sacraments and 
sacramental, we presume)? Do these rites possess some sacramental nature? Is it so among 
the Ga? What could such knowledge contribute to the work of evangelization among the Ga 
and for the whole Church?

Societies, starting with the early Christian Fathers, have long struggled with the desire to 
compare the rites and rituals of the so-called pagan religion to the Christian religion, or 
Christianity. Even though they were very apologetic of Christianity’s distinct origin and 
finality from the surrounding pagan religions, some did not hesitate to adopt “what was good 
and noble in pagan religions” or borrow terminology from both secular and sacred use to 
describe features of the Christian faith.80 Justin, Clement of Alexandria and Origen saw in 
these pagan religious customs the semina verbi. For Eusebius of Caesarea, the pagan 
religious customs were a praeparatio evangelica. Others, however, thought these customs 
were of diabolic origin and invention, aimed at turning people away from salvation in 
Christ.81

In the wake of the Protestant Reformation, the sacraments and sacramental becomes the 
object of protest, resurrecting the same connection above, between the Christian sacraments 
and ancient pagan rites. In reaction, the Council of Trent apologetically decreed the divine 
origin of the seven sacraments as necessary for salvation. Somewhat about the later 19th and

81 Louis Bouyer, Rite and Man; Natural Sacredness and Christian liturgy (Notre Dame: University of Notre 
Dame Press, 1963), 3.
early 20th century, the so-called pagan religious and mystery ceremonies once more came into Christian discussion, motivated by interests in the religious heritage of the “new peoples” of the colonies.

This work underscores the positivity of Vatican II’s pronouncements on the need for dialogue with other religions. In the context of this thesis, the intent is to re-read the Ga ceremonies in question in the light of Catholic Sacramental Theology. The hope is to scour what may be termed _semina verbi_ or _praeparatio evangelica_ in the Ga religious mentality.

Therefore, we should perhaps try to more clearly define the relative similarity between the GA ceremonies, as an end towards salvation, and the sacraments in the Church. This will involve an excursion into the History of salvation. Does the excursion set Christianity apart from other “primitive” religions, in this case the Ga religious culture?82

Traete mentions that “a concept of sacrament and an actual sacramental experience are dependent on the expressions of the specific notion of God … a specific world view and a specific notion” of people.83 This holds true also for the Ga religious notions and ceremonies.

In fact, the Ga religious worldview is the ground upon which the relevancy of inculturation stands. Without due attention to their religious worldview, inculturation will become a monolithic imposition with devastating pastoral consequences for Christianity.

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A curious fact is that more often, in the studies of religions, hardly any mention is made of traditional African Religions. The tendency has been to group them under the so-called primitive religions, and therefore the subject matter for the social sciences. However, for the sake of identification in this work, I accept to categorize Ga religious ceremonies under “primitive religions” since they are very ancient and have nothing but oral traditions and these ritual ceremonies as communication vehicles throughout generations.

In all religions, one of the constant features is the desire for salvation and the quest for answers to unresolved questions about human existence. This thesis contends that the answers to humanity’s unresolved questions about existence are a religious problematic, prevalent in every religion. In Christianity, the answer comes "*a parte Dei*" in the historical conception of revelation-incarnation-redemption. It is one of a historical and biblical process of salvation offered by God to humanity in answer to the unsolved riddles of existence.

### 2.2. INCARDINATION INTO HUMAN-EARTHLY LIVES

The *Ga Bi Kpodzien* takes place always on the eighth day after birth of the infant. Ga believe the infant, having survived its seven days on earth ("seven dangers") is worthy to be called a person.84 The infant has manifested the desire to enter and partake of this earthly life via its assigned community of memory. The infant has no immediate desire of returning to the “sky-family.”

Since the *Gb*, (stranger, as the infant is addressed before naming) has come down into a particular lineage, the members of this lineage, both living and dead, are responsible for the incardination process. The ancestors are called and informed, through the libation, of the reason for gathering. When all is ready, a patrikin woman sweeps a particular spot with a broom.85 By this, she “purifies” the spot. The infant is “outdoored” naked to the Morning Star, the Sky, Earth and Water, by a virtuous man, who is a worthy representative of the

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community. This is because Ga believe that by his (the officiant/virtuous man’s) mere touch, he influences the infant’s future life. The officiant then lifts the infant — addressed as ḇi (visitor) — as it came from the womb, to the Morning Star, representing the Supreme Being. The officiant does so facing the East, from where Ga originally came. The officiant heaves the infant three times up and three times down, as an introduction to the sky, as the habitat of the Ga intermediary deities, and the Divine Beings. He places the infant on the hallowed floor, symbol of Ga desire for life over death. The earth is habitat of human life. He blesses the infant by sprinkling water on him, symbolic of rain, and sign of divine favor. He prays and admonishes the infant.

Through the prayers and the non-verbal act of triple upward and downward movements, the infant is introduced to what the Ga consider most important in life, namely, the separation of heaven and earth and the necessary interaction between heaven and earth, between the divine and the human, between the invisible and visible … if life is to be crowned with success. The infant’s role in this interaction is to live a life of diligence, circumspection and discretion, honesty and respect for elders, in short, a life following the Ga cardinal virtues.

90 Kilson, “The Ga Naming Rites,” 916.
The prayers at the same time express Ga wishes to the divine on behalf of the infant. The participants recite these with a loud “Amen!” Thus the kindred express their gratitude to the Supreme Being, from whom life ensues. The Ga believe the Supreme Being is the source life, and so offer thanks God for the gift of life evident in the birth of the new child, now sojournning among them.  

In this way, one may say, Ga celebrate life. This is symbolized by the joy that accompanies the whole ceremony, and the white dress that the infant receives as victory over death. Ga acknowledge the value of life, the need for a harmonious interaction between heaven and earth, and the divine and the human, if this life projects are to be successful. Ga, at the same time, undertake to sustain this life, as each plays his or her role in the protection of human life (as well as the nature) while transitioning through this physical world.

2.3. INCARDINATION INTO GA CLAN MEMBERSHIP

This phase of the Ga Bi Kpodzem is highlighted in the naming ritual act. Among the Ga, the name of a person communicates certain characteristics or data about the bearer, namely, the clan (We) to which the person belongs, the sex, and the birth order of the person among siblings of the same sex and from the same mother. This confirms the knowledge that the naming ritual act is to incardinate the infant, consider a stranger (gb), and now welcome it into human life, into Ga clan membership, and into a cognatic family (We). Similarly, in

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According to Gennep the notion and belief in transition is symbolized among the Ga during the outdooring and naming ceremony in the movements of the infant from indoors to outdoor, from nakedness to human clothing, from upwards to downward. Cf. Van Arnold Gennep, and Monika B. Vizedom. The rites of passage. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 50-64.

Christianity, the procedure or process of formally accepting a clergyman from one Diocese into another is a special rite, termed incardination. This is preceded by the triple libation ritual act of the three senior kinsmen, two from the patrikin and one from the matrikin. The significance of this libation ritual can be inferred from the threefold prayer that accompanies that act and the communal drink that all invited guests partake of.

The prayer of the libation ritual could serve as a link between the first act — incardination into human-earthly life and the coming one — translation of this gbɔ into a moral Ga person. This link is vital because it prepares the categories involved in the divine (and the human to some extent), but particularly the living and the dead lineage members to assume contractual roles towards the gbɔ, who is soon to be accorded personal status in the clan and community.

The prayer expresses Ga understanding of life within kinship. It is the desire of all lineages to have big family and clan membership as well as the continuity, success and prosperity for a kinship. The quest for the spiritual and existential wellbeing of clan/kinship is always considered a gift of God, and the gift of an infant is indicative of divine blessing.

In the second section of the prayer, Ga welcome and bless the gbɔ, thank the parents and look forward to the infant’s future life. The prayer calls for collaboration among the kinsmen present. This resonates with the Ga communitarian worldview: life, after all, is helping one another. Thus, the wellbeing of an individual is dependent upon the communal support he/she receives from the clan or community. The gods bless and protect the clan and community that work together, au contraire any individualistic attempts to usurp success for personal reasons. The emphasis on the community requires the individual to aspire toward a life of virtue and respect for the clan and community of memory. The prayer calls for the
blessing of the infant as a member of the clan, as well as for it to grow to contribute to the wellbeing of the clan and community (as a virtuous person).

The prayer is concluded or “sealed” with a communal drink. It is to be noted that the libation is an act of sacrifice to the gods and ancestors. This is the aim of all libation, namely the pouring of any liquid — water, beverage or blood — onto the earth with the desire of establishing contact with the spiritual world. It also serves as a contract, one necessary to ensure the success of the new life in the way Ga understand and want it, namely progeny, prosperity and long life. Once such a contract has been undertaken, the gb is accorded membership. This is requested through the act of offering the naming drink. By offering this drink on behalf of the gb, the senior patrikinsman literally seeks the permission of the gathering of ancestors, present in spirit and of the we, to grant membership to the gb. The senior patrikinsman then announces the name chosen to the gathering. He is served, and drinks of the Gbei Wɔɔ Daa (naming drink), after voicing out the name. This means accepting and witnessing to the name of the gb from now on. The same gesture is repeated by each member of the gathering, witnessing to the name of the gb from now on, and incardinating the new kinsman. The participation in the drink is also a pact of assumed responsibility of the clan/community towards this new kinsman. Besides the legal aspects of this name, Ga believe too that the name becomes such an intrinsic part of the person, so

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From personal experience in 2012, for the outdooring of a girl child of one of my parishioners, I accompanied the father of the child to his mother’s WE, with two bottles of alcoholic drink to request that her daughter be named after his paternal grandmother who had died barely a year before.
much as to involve him/her spiritually anywhere it is mentioned. Any blessing or cursing invoked upon the name is sooner or later visited upon its bearer.

In every we, there are two sets of names that alternate among generations. Thus, it is common to hear children bearing the same set of names as their grandparents and their siblings. This is implicit of the nominal reincarnation belief among Ga people. Through the name, the gbɔ is not only a kinsman now, but acquires rank and respect in the clan and the Ga community of memory. Should the core bearer of the name be deceased, Ga dote on the newly named kinsman as they would of the deceased. More often, the person is accorded the title Nii or Naa — grandfather or grandmother respectively — as a sign of affectionate respect. Attached to each Ga name are also numerous appellatives or nick-names, titles of honor which forbearers did obtain for their valor or virtue or other distinctions in life. Much as these additional names are used during day to day activities, in time of serious and official functions of cultural or ritual importance, only the name received at the Bi Kpɔdziemɔ is employed. Ga believe that the name also links the person to the ancestor, thus placing him/her in their special care. In conclusion, the child now named, acquires not only a personal Ga identity and social status, but is also voted to potential immortality, we may say, and placed under special guidance.

Another point, not too relevant but quite interesting about the naming rite, is that should the infant be the first born, the parents acquire the teknonymous title which implies recognition


97 Kilson, “The Ga Naming Rites, 917.
of their contribution to the lineage. From a lineage standpoint, if this is not too far-fetched, the naming has the message as well as the *nunc dimitis*. An elder (man or woman) would now proclaim the ease and willingness to depart this earth to the join the ancestors in the spiritual world upon witnessing the birth of a new clan family member considered a blessing (salvation) to the Ga community of memory.

2.4. INCARDINATION INTO KINDRED

Each phase of the outdoing and naming rite marks the incarnation of a child into the Ga community of memory, as well as accords the child status in Ga society. At incardination, an infant becomes a member of a specific kindred (*weku*) made up of patriarch and matrikin. The whole ceremony began with the “descent” from the sky-family of the *gb* into human life, then into Ga clan membership, and finally the “descent” into a kinship group. From another angle, the descent is one of an ascent. The *gb* is elevated into human life from “death,” and then into Ga cultural life, and now higher still into a kin group. This final movement is effected through the incorporation ritual corroborated by the donation and the final libation rituals.

Members of the gathering offer gifts. While the material aim is to help defray expenses, donations ritually establish a personal relationship between donor and infant. That is why the Ga even offer gifts on behalf of dead relations. This also confirms the Ga belief that the

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This was the Song of Simeon; Cf. Luke 2: 29-32. He could now die in peace, having seen the salvation of his people now fulfilled in the birth of Christ. 99. Kilson, “The Ga Naming Rites,” 914.
(living) dead are members of the family. The final libation act is by the speaker on behalf of the matrikin. During the final ritual, the matrikin make a contractual prayer, vowing to assume their share of the responsibility towards the infant. It should be noted that the patrikin have the bulk of the responsibility toward the child’s wellbeing during its sojourn here on earth.

In and through the infant, the blood of the two kin groups mingle into a life-giving unity, even though in unequal proportions. The infant is thus a visible sign of the link between the two kin groups. Marriage is only a social link. But through the birth of the infant, the relation is one of the kinship, the perfect type of blood unity. The principle value is community and communion, collaboration between the two kin groups for the sake of life.

In the infant therefore, the three categories of Ga life meet and interact. The infant is already fruit of divine-human (and to some extent, “living-dead”) interaction. For its earthly life, this harmonious interaction must be guaranteed throughout. One can, therefore, say the ritual interaction is life-giving, therefore the ritual is life for the Ga. Since the Ga, like all Africans,

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While emphasizing collaboration between the kin groups, it also highlights what type of collaboration is required. In this life-project, the patrikin have a superordinate role over the matrikin. Cf. Kilson, Marion. *African Urban Kinsmen*, 17. Cf. also, Kilson, “Libation in Ga Ritual,” 163.

102 Kilson, M. “The Ga Naming Rites,” 905.
are life-oriented, world-affirming as Parrinder puts it,\textsuperscript{103} ritual are therefore vital. It permeates every aspect of their life.

\textsuperscript{103} Parrinder, \textit{African Traditional Religion}, 138.
CHAPTER THREE: THE SACRAMENTS OF
CHRISTIAN INITIATION AND THE GA BI
KPODZIEMɔ RITES

3. INTRODUCTION

It is the teaching of the Catholic Church since the council of Trent, that all the seven
sacraments of the Church were “instituted” by Christ the Lord. The sacraments of Christian
Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) lay the foundation of every Christian life.
The sharing in the Divine nature given to people through the grace of Christ bears a certain
likeness to the origin, development, and nourishment of natural life. This chapter examines
the impact and effect of the sacraments of initiation and its bearings on the Ga Bi Kpodziemɔ
rites.

With the reforms initiated by Vatican II, worship and celebration are once more becoming
synonymous and inseparable aspects of the Church’s liturgy. There is a return to the early
Church’s theology of celebration, namely the celebration of life. ¹⁰⁴ By life, is meant that
divine life which is what human life in its authenticity is all about. In the sacraments the
community of faith celebrates being in existence physiologically, socially and spiritually.
This is what happens in the Ga outdooring and naming rites. Ga Bi Kpodziemɔ is a moment
of joy and gratitude by the whole community of life, psychologically, socially and spiritually.

¹⁰⁴ J. D. Crichton, Christian Celebration: The Mass, The Sacraments, The Prayer of the Church (London:
Often, the spiritual is given all the prominence, giving the impression that the Almighty is only interested, or at least, that the Church is only interested in the soul of the person and that the body or the physiological is something almost accidental, mundane and outside the church’s competence. And yet our body and its physiology were created by God, and is our very first instrument for communication. This thesis is not advocating that the sacraments be reduced to only human physiological life and its development. Rather, it is advocating that to make the whole thing ethereal would divorce it from humanity’s most important form of communication, namely the corporal. In fact, without the body, the sacraments may have to take another form other than sacramental.¹⁰⁵

Life, as presented in the sacramental celebrations, must be understood in the complete creational sense of spirit-in-body. In a culture where literacy is not a normal fact of life, communication through the body and bodily language has its advantages. We do not overlook the possible aberrations, which are to be deplored, but we cannot advocate a Christianity that hangs in the brain and in the intellect. After all, the sacraments “touch the deepest springs of human existence and … make it possible for [wo]man in Christ to live/love out the human tragedy of birth and life and death and suffering.”¹⁰⁶ So why divorce from Christian life and celebration, human joy of growth and fulfillment, which are all God-given?


Another point presented in the rubrics is the due emphasis on community and its role in any celebration, which means community and communion. This, if given the right place, will go a long way into evangelizing the Ga community of memory. The emphasis on community resonates with the Ga communitarian worldview as well as the community’s participation in rituals and ceremonies prevalent in the Ga Bi Kpodziem.

The outdooring and naming ceremonies are replete with the effects of Vatican II and its privileging of communion and community otherwise than individualism. For the Ga community of memory, salvation comes to the community, from the community and for the community. There should be no difficulty, therefore, presenting Christianity to the Ga through their worldview and belief patterns. We can see in the Ga community of memory a Christian community, a community of believers, and members of the Body of Christ. We also see in the Ga community of memory the social dimension of sin and salvation just as we see in the Christian liturgies, beliefs and practices prevalent in the liturgies.

Community solidarity in the Christian penitential liturgies is a break-through in this field. For example, in Baptism, it is the community that is added unto; it is the community that presents and stands behind the neophyte before God; it is the community that prays for the neophyte and helps the neophyte through the future life as a member of the Body of Christ. This is just one of the many possibilities in the Catholic Christian rubrics which are akin to the religious underpinnings of the Ga outdooring and naming rites. Ga Bi Kpodziem, like the Christian sacrament of initiation, is about life as well as a celebration of God’s salvific act in a community.
3.1. **ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

Baptism presents the occasion and place of a physical and spiritual welcome of the neophyte, parents and Godparents into the (ecclesial) family of God. For the Ga, there should be no problem explaining the initiatory rites of the Christian sacrament of baptism. However, care should be taken not to coopt the Ga traditional outdooring and naming rites into the Christian initiation rites. Neither should the Ga be misled to believe that the Christian initiation rites are in fact, *Ga Bi Kpodziem*.

What this thesis calls for is a co-creation of meaning, resulting in the Ga rendition of the Christian sacrament of initiation. In other words, acknowledging the Ga traditional belief system *a la* Jesus Christ. This is the bias that Christianity brings to the Ga community of memory without annihilating its culture, evident in the step by step description of the baptismal rites.

It is advisable to have a meeting place of some sort where all the candidates, faithful and invited guests, gather. The gathering and familiarizing with other have practical catechetical consequences. The gathering provides the opportunity for familiarization among families, and as well offers the pastoral opportunity for the priest to welcome the various families into the (ecclesial) family of God according to local customs. The gathering and familiarizing also underscore the all-inclusive nature of the ecclesial family of God. This point is of great importance, namely the need to emphasize during the sacrament of Baptism, God’s love for members of the community and for life as a whole. God created out of love, and this love
foregrounded the incarnation as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Christian community.

For the Ga, joining such a community of love is not at all incomprehensible. In fact, it is an attraction. Through the Ga Bi Kpodziem, the infant is introduced to the divine life, the spiritual world and to the ancestral vital forces. This is where Jesus Christ, if presented correctly, becomes the giver of the “ancestral spirit” that animates the church as a family of God. This calls to mind another important point, that of choosing baptismal names which should be explained to the faithful as done in the Ga Bi Kpodziem. Reasons should be given for the choice of name, and a short curriculum vitae of the saint read out. This means some preparation, prior to baptism, done in conjunction with the parish priest, the parents and the Godparents. The idea of patron saints is not foreign to a people who place their infant under the spiritual care of an ancestor, and who undertake to see to it that the infant grows in the footsteps of the ancestor-patron. Emphasis on the need for Christian witness issuing from the name should be made clear as well.

The Ga ceremony involves a lot of narration, where tradition is orally handed on to generations, and a sort of informal education. This method could be evaluated and adopted. The priest would have to prepare the Gospel and be able to tell it in the style of local narrations, while placing due emphasis on the necessary parts. The risk here could be many, but the idea of telling or proclaiming the Good News, could have a better impact on the Ga listeners than reading with one’s head buried between the pages with no connection to or with the congregation or assembly. After all, the faith of the early Church was proclaimed as
testimony of encounter with the mystery of Christ and not as an early morning or late night news. Reading and proclaiming the Good News would also invite open response from the faithful. Participatory responses even in between prayers could be encouraged and kept within the limits of sobriety, as for instance in the Zairean experimental Mass. The Litany of Saints in the Rite of Baptism has this advantage, and could be developed to include, not necessarily by names, some of the ancestors of the Ga. However, discretion is very important in this case.

At the end of the baptismal ceremony, a brief but affectionate thanksgiving ceremony is of the essence, and when worked out properly into the final blessings, will go a long way to showing some sort of divine concern for the newly baptized. This resonates with the sign of gratitude shown at all Ga ritual gatherings to the parents, extended family and invited guests.

The above discussions have pastoral consequences for Ga evangelization, as it is evident in the sacraments of confirmation and the Eucharist. A caveat is always in order: discretion and moderation are necessary for enhancing the Christian celebration of the sacraments.

3.2. ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Much of what has been said above, particularly concerning the liturgical celebration and active community participation, are applicable as well to this sacrament and its rite. Efforts should be made to celebrate such an important stage of development in the life of the newly confirmed, namely the indwelling of the Spirit.

The most radical proposal is about the age at which this sacrament is normally administered. In the Eastern rite, this takes place soon after baptism of the infant and is concluded by the sacrament of Holy Communion. In the Latin rite, the administration of confirmation is generally postponed until about the seventh year.\textsuperscript{108} Often this takes place after the First Holy Communion for practical reasons.\textsuperscript{109} This thesis offers additional proposals.

There is a striking resemblance between puberty initiation and the Sacrament of Confirmation. The semblance could render great service to that Christian maturity required in the catechesis of the youth. In spite of many inherent risks, this thesis calls for celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation sometime after the puberty initiation rite. This coincidentally, is the case among other Christian denominations in Ghana.

The administration of this sacrament takes place about the age of 18, often at about or right after the completion of high school. The emphasis is not on the physiological, but on the fact that a person is considered more matured then to undertake certain responsibilities in society. There are merits in such a postponement. It allows for ample time for catechetical instructions and formation between reception of Baptism and Confirmation. The instructions and formation will, therefore, have to cover the various sectors of life and the responsibilities as required of an adult. It will be noted that the rite of puberty initiation is meant to cover all


\textsuperscript{109} J. D. Crichton, \textit{Christian Celebration}, 198.
sectors of adult life and its intricacies, the religious, the political, the cultural and the social.  

Definitely, the Sacrament of Confirmation is to strengthen the faithful with the Holy Spirit towards a life of missionary witness of the faith in Christ. If made to coincide with the cultural rites of initiation, the church could take interest in the preparation of candidates for initiation in the socio-cultural realm, while giving the necessary spiritual dimension. Other advantages are to see life as a whole. This will call for the modification of the type of catechesis, and deferring Holy Communion till later in life, only after Confirmation, not before as has been the practice in the Latin Church. The theological reasons for such a progressive introduction into the Mystery of the Body of Christ will be respected as understood in the process of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation.

The Ga pre-adulthood ceremonies provide other points too for consideration. Like in the celebration of Baptism, the role of parents and godparents and of every member of the Christian community should be emphasized as the rubrics call for. The welcoming ceremony, or the kiss of peace, the admission into full communion are all occasions that could be given their full theological value in a community that celebrates in joy what is to be perfected in heaven.

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Like the period of confinement, the Christian exercise of retreat, going away to some quiet place for a more intense preparation, is of much importance. The details of such a retreat could be worked out with the help of competent people. Both clergy and lay people in the community could help give it the right significance. This is also to enhance community cohesion and involvement. In such a catechumenate, the doctrinal content is surely of top priority.\(^{112}\) The other details of the sacramental rite of Confirmation offer interesting possibilities for adaptation without harming the deposit of faith. It is superfluous to say that this adaptations are to be undertaken by the local church and subjected to the approval of the Holy See.

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the candidate is strengthened by the indwelling of the Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. It is this spirit that also fosters the communion necessary in the Body of Christ which started after the Pentecost event. Could this not be more easily understood by the Ga, who through the pre-adulthood ceremonies, are welcomed into the community of ancestors, spiritually, a vital force that animates the community of memory? Could Christ be presented as Ancestor of Christians? How about the mission of the confirmed, as compared to the initiated, whose responsibility involves transmission of that vital force of the ancestral spirit through procreation, formation and even defense of the community of memory and its traditions? Is the community consciousness created in the initiated? These questions reveal the pastoral and catechetical consequences therein inculturation apropos of Ga evangelization.

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3.3. ON THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

The Ga have no ceremony in anyway comparable to the sacrament of the Eucharist. One could only put together the important theological concepts that in a way find parallels in the Ga pre-adulthood ceremonies: communion and service, worship and sanctification, “returning” to the origins through “replaying” and “memory” of the community of memory — a sort of anamnesis, and other symbols.

On representing this sacrament to the Ga, one can only propose a couple of points for cultural embellishments. At Vatican II, much importance was given to the role of the community and quite a lot of the liturgical renewal was to make liturgy the celebration of the community, a community that is conscious of its call to worship and to participate in eternal life:

“To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes. And at the proper time a reverent silence should be observed.”¹¹³

The community is therefore the rod and measure of any adaptation that is undertaken. In the celebration of the Holy Mass, therefore, the moment of acclamation, responses, psalms, antiphons and hymns need emphasis and should be encouraged. An example could be the entry, Offertory or Communion processions. In many denominations of the Christian faith or sects, singing and dancing during these processions play quite a role in the participation of the faithful.¹¹⁴ Other parts like the Gloria, Creed and Lord’s Prayer give simple opportunities for the faithful to express joy in salvation. It is also necessary to foster, in the penitential rite

¹¹³ Cf. SC 30.

community, solidarity and the need to be responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the community. Sin and its devastating consequences on the community should be explained, not to the point of exaggeration and fear of taboo, which often accompanies the ceremonies of puberty initiation, but within the Christian coordinates of repentance, conversion and fear of God.

The idea of contributing handiwork or fruit of one’s labor to the offering of Bread and Wine is catching on a lot and could be capitalized upon. In a culture where contribution is a mark of personal involvement and responsibility, the Offertory, without exaggeration, should be made more expressive, presenting in reality “fruits of the earth and work of human hands.” This, in fact, is a usual sight in the many Independent African Churches. It could be a valid faith-expression of contributing one’s mite to the sacrifice of the Body of Christ, and participation in the communion of the community.

Chants and responses are to foster participation and unity of purpose as seen in the Ga Bi Kpodziem prayers. This will have to be taken into account in formulating the prayers of the community so as to allow maximum participation. A typical example could be the introduction of responses in between the various sections of the Preface or even the Eucharist prayers of intercession.

Other prayers that need reformulation are the Opening Prayers, the Prayers over the Gifts and that of the Dismissal Rite. Much as they contain lofty theological truths, they sure are models requiring more cultural flesh and relevance. Some are just cold theological deductions and
often too abrupt. Still more can be said of this sacrament of the highest order. The rubrics offer ample opportunities for the local Churches to adapt to the needs of their respective cultures. This can only be done effectively in fidelity to the cultural values of each person. This is the aim of inculturation, a two-way process which is also to “regenerate” the Ga culture.

### 3.4. INCULTURATION OF CHRISTIAN RITES

Vatican II saw the sacraments are sanctifying, and aimed at building up the Body of Christ, and worshiping of God. The triple global purpose of sacraments seems to coincide with, not necessarily correspond to, the triple aspiration and effect of the Ga ritual ceremonies in question. The sacraments may provide answers the Ga need about life and its dilemmas. Just a look into the triple purpose of the sacrament as given in the Church’s document on the Liturgy; Sanctity, worship, and becoming the People of God is the identikit of the Judeo-Christian history of salvation.

The Gospels set the project of Jesus life as one of faith in God, in total obedience to God’s command and worship of God alone. The execution of this project involves suffering and death as God and human. In Jesus’ humanity, he wins the image of God that was lost through the sin of Adam. Humanity is once more restored to the image of God. No wonder St. Paul considers Christ the second Adam.\(^{115}\) This therefore explains the purpose of the sacraments as celebrated over the years across different cultures. The sacraments are to restore the perfect image of God in every Christian which was lost through sin. And, with each

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\(^{115}\) Cf. Romans 5, 12-21.
sacrament, the Christian is endowed more and more with the true image of the son of God, that perfect image, and perfect worshipper of God.

During the sacramental liturgy, the Word of God is proclaimed, and God who has saved and liberated humanity, offers a personal “covenant” done once and for all in the Body and Blood of his son Jesus Christ. From the point of inculturation, baptism could be discussed as a rite that initiates the new Christian into the family of God. Through the sacrament of confirmation the full indwelling of the Spirit of God is received as it happened on Pentecost. The Christian obtains the strength of grace, and is conformed to Christ who operates through the “finger of God” as recorded in the gospel of Luke. In and through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the Christian receives the nourishment for being an adopted-child-of-God.

What is said above makes it clear why the sacraments may not be linked with anything other than “becoming children of God in Jesus Christ.” They may, therefore, not in any way be limited to physiological or even purely anthropological factors. Christ Jesus is the caput, origo and radix of the sacraments, as St Augustine puts it. And the efficacy, this salvific-conformation to Christ, is guaranteed by God through the Holy Spirit.

How then does the Ga find in Jesus Christ their heart’s longing? Is Christ the answer to their existential dilemma? How are answers provided in the three sacraments of Christian initiation?

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117 Cf. 2 Corinthians 1, 21.
As proposed earlier, we can say that the first purpose of the Ga ceremonies is a sort of “sanctification” or “consecration” in its own context. A quick reiteration is the Ga Bi Kpodziem ritual. The infant is incorporated into the divine life of the clan, which means that she/he is duly integrated into the life of the Supreme Being, of the divine beings and of the ancestors. This is also the Ga entrance into life, and “qualification” for the other life crisis ceremonies, affecting the transfer from death to life.

All these foster a certain fullness of life here on earth and in the hereafter for the Ga. The rites imply transfer from death to life, purification from all defilements, participation in the Ga life with God and the divine beings, including the clan members both living and dead, and a harmonious adult life of rights and responsibilities. The question here is that the Ga seek the fullness of life, a desire that does find fulfilment also in Christ Jesus and the sacraments. After all, Jesus declared “I am the Way the Truth and the Life.”\(^{118}\) Does Jesus not say also, “I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly”?\(^{119}\) How do these Ga aspirations to the fullness of life find fulfilment in Christ Jesus and in the sacraments of Christian Initiation?

The rites and ceremonies of the Ga outdooring and naming, as explored through the Ga community of memory’s worldview and cosmology, reveals the Ga holistic involvement in religious rites and ceremonies, and how the involvement paves the path for inculturation, especially the Good News, which is about life. This is evident in the ministry of Jesus. One of the ways of bringing the Good News to a culture is making and expressing the message as

\(^{118}\) Cf. John 14, 6.  
\(^{119}\) Cf. John 10, 10.
a locative truth. Locative truth is bringing the Good News of Christ to a people, as a locative Christ event, and integrating their experience of God with the Gospel.

The Church is by nature an ecclesial experience and witness of inculturation. However, it could be argued that the incarnation — the Word made flesh — marked the beginning of inculturation, bringing God to humanity. By virtue of this, the thesis calls for the incarnation of the Christian rites in local cultures. For this to happen, the rites cannot be celebrated as just symbolic gestures expressed in a local culture, but as a holistic spiritual expression of Jesus and the God News, from within a culture for the salvation of a community of memory. Chibueze Udeani corroborates this assertion when he said, “divine revelation within…history and culture” needs integrating.\footnote{Chibueze C. Udeani, \textit{Inculturation as Dialogue: Igbo Culture and the Message of Christ} (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V., 2007), 204.}

For purposes of the inculturation of Christian rites, Udeani proposes the theological, liturgical, pedagogical, spiritual, organizational-structural material and the mundane spheres. These spheres give currency to the inevitability of inculturation of Christian rites.

The theological sphere involves the “expression of the Message of Christ” in own way\footnote{Udeani, \textit{Inculturation as Dialogue}, 203.} The liturgical sphere involves the extension of local symbolisms “to all religious expressions of the Christian faith” in a community of memory.\footnote{Ibid., 204.} The pedagogical sphere calls for
“respect and readiness to learn from one another.”\textsuperscript{123} The spiritual sphere is integrating African “prayer forms and the deep spiritual experience and heritage of the African traditional religion and culture” with Christianity for the local church to experience and encounter the “Message of Christ.”\textsuperscript{124} The organizational-structural material sphere is about communitarianism. African communities of memory are by nature deeply communitarian, and so the Church needs no deviate attention from social, yet deeply spiritual, aspect of the African. This notion has been described in recent times as the family of God.\textsuperscript{125} The mundane sphere calls for the relationship between spirituality and the everyday life activity of the African Christian.

With Udeani, this inculturation is a constituent element of Christianity, and for the Christian rites to be rooted in a local culture or a community of memory, the Church must deplore the instrumentalization of the message of Christ and the tendency to equate the kingdom of God with the spiritual and cosmic worldview of a community. Such an effort involves utter pastoral attentiveness to cultures, listening and learning from African cultures.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 205.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 205.

CHAPTER FOUR: INCULTURATION OF CHRISTIAN CEREMONIES IN GA CULTURE

4. INTRODUCTION

So far, this thesis attempted to search for common grounds for possible dialogue towards inculturation, as well as tried to find the contours of the Ga religious humus and what language could most effectively channel the salvific message of Jesus Christ to the Ga people. The method of research so far employed may be termed “initiatic.” By this term is meant a gradual initiation into Ga religious world. There is no doubt that we started off with a hunch, a hypothesis that the Ga ritual ceremonies are very much homo religiousus. So first was presented the Ga people, their history, and the laying out of the pattern of the Ga outdooring and naming ceremony. Second was the significance of the ritual and ceremonies in the light of sacramental theology. Third was the analysis of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist within the Ga context, paying attention to the issue of inculturation of the Christian rites of initiation.

Furthermore, this thesis explored the social effects and cultural values of the outdooring and naming rites and ceremonies of the Ga people, distilling what constitutes the Ga religious culture. In short, the Ga aspires to effect a religiously oriented and religion-permeated life in close harmony and collaboration with the divine, the community of memory and the cosmic dimensions of their culture. Thus this thesis concludes that the Ga are ubiquitously religious. Life for the Ga transcends the physical mundane world to a spiritual awe that permeates every aspect of an individual’s being. Thus for the Ga, a being is spiritual, while the term
spiritual foregrounds a meaningful life. Therefore, in the celebration of the Christian
initiation rites, efforts should be made to emphasize the significance of life in every aspect of
the rites, emphasizing God’s gift of life to the community evident in the birth of a new child.
Life, viewed through the prism of the rites, calls for maintaining harmony. This is evident in
the Ga community of memory’s belief that life is sacred and needs safeguarding. In the
outdooring and naming ceremonies, the Ga re-enact, concretely, their belief in a Supreme
Being as creator, giver, and sustainer of life.

The conclusion could be made that these initiation rites and ceremonies is the face of the Ga
homo-religiousus. So having found the Ga religious humus and the Ga homo-religiousus, the
next task is to propose how to ferry across to Jesus Christ’s salvific message in a language of
the Ga community of memory. In other words, how do we provoke within the Ga the
conversion *cordis*, leading to the community’s faith-response to God’s salvation? The
response to this question calls for adding to the conversation on inculturation, the pastoral
elements of catechesis, evangelization, worship and youth formation.

### 4.1. CATECHESIS

Catechesis privileges the fidelity to the Good News of Christ, mindful of the historical
experience of the universal Church and fidelity to the cultural values of a community.
Though a community may be deeply religious or spiritual, there is the need for good
leadership and direction. Catechesis among the Ga in this case calls for engaging members of
its community of memory, especially leaders, and entrusting them with the responsibility of
nurturing the faith and protecting members of the faith community. These include, preaching,
teaching, and channeling the gifts of grace in the liturgical celebration of the Mass. This idea is not foreign to the Ga, whose community leaders are entrusted with the spiritual responsibility to cater for the community. Bringing the roles and responsibilities of the leaders of the Christian community, or the ecclesial family of God and the leaders of the Ga community of memory, is not about comparison, but making way for a co-creation of meanings between the two cultures — Church and the Ga people. This should be a primary responsibility of catechesis, and constitutes the task of inculturation, albeit with some difficulties (and maybe inadequacies). Catechesis must be engaged as a diocesan project of inculturation. Catechesis must be seen as a practical pastoral engagement, not an esoteric, theoretical endeavor. As such, catechesis, as advanced in this thesis as a mode of inculturation, requires the collaboration of diocesan level of all personnel, from the bishop right down to the catechists. Often times, catechesis is presented as a monolithic dogma, to chosen and inadequately trained members of the faith community. These members — catechists — adapt the pedagogy of memorization of the Christian doctrine. Thus, an effective catechesis should be attentive to the culture of the people and must engage a non-dogmatic approach to teaching.

Though loosely referred to as a culture, Christianity is in fact a faith. It is the Good News of salvation awaiting a community of memory’s conversion and faith-response. Therefore, catechesis as part of inculturation must ensure conversion as well as a faith-response of the Ga, and the Holy Spirit’s infusion of the Ga culture, believing that the Holy Spirit is central to the task of inculturation. The Holy Spirit, in this case, acts as a catalyst that precipitates a theological reaction between a faith and a culture, bringing forth a locative truth, a Christ
event within the Ga community of memory. It is in such circumstances that the Gospel regenerates cultures.

4.2. EVANGELIZATION

There is often truth in clichés. For instance, to be fore-warned, is to be warned. There is the fear in this work, a sort of romantic return to the old days, resulting in some form of syncretism. In many parts of Africa today, the issue of cultural renaissance is gaining momentum, and propelling political, social, economic, religious, theological, and even cultural changes. Be it whatever it is, anyone aware of the signs of the times cannot close the eyes to the fact that there is a certain renewed interest of Africans in their own cultures. In the context of the thesis, the new horizons of Vatican II, enables us to approach the culture of ancestors, no more as works of devil, but as stages of real search for God and even real encounters with God. At this particular moment, when looking for better means to communicate Christ to a community of memory people, studying such rites should not be seen as mere archaeologism, but as a genuine desire to appreciate the works of God evident in our ancestors, and to see Christ as a God-sent answer to their anxieties and hopes of a community of memory. This is the moving spirit behind most of the studies being undertaken today in this field of Christianity and African culture, which appropriately constitutes the task of evangelization.
On the practical side is the fear of undue particularism and its corollary companion, tribalism. In a cosmopolitan city like Accra, the capital of Ghana and the home of the Ga and non-Ga, care should be taken not to impose the typical Ga worldview as mode for evangelization of all peoples. The Church cannot be identified with any one culture even in its liturgical celebrations and use of symbols. The consequences of such a move are too obvious for comments. The very nature of the Church, and its mission, calls for wider horizons of evangelization. However, this must begin with a dialogue with cultures. The need for cultures and even local Churches to dialogue among themselves must be promoted. At this particular time in the history of the Church, when ecumenism is being encouraged, the need for cultures to be open to one another, equally calls for an attentive learning and listening. Evangelization without dialogue equals monolithic impositions.

This thesis has a pastoral bias: how to find the right language to evangelize in-depth the Ga culture, in order to bring about the concomitant regeneration of this culture, and to enrich the Church in its desire to become more and more what it is, namely, that “cosmopolitan sacrament of salvation.” In light of that, this thesis approaches positively the Ga, and their religious culture as embedded in their life event ceremonies. This positive approach has been warranted by ecclesial encouragements and the Church’s developments in evangelization, but most importantly by the hunch that God must have been in contact with the Ga, and sown his seeds in them and their culture. So this thesis engages an interdisciplinary study of the Ga ceremonies, and a comparative encounter with the message of Jesus Christ in the Christian sacraments. There are some suggestions on how to use the findings of this research in the evangelization of the Ga culture and people. There is the need to concentrate on the liturgy of
the sacraments of the Christian’s initiation, paying attention to what Chupungco called “first degree adaptation.” There is no denying that a deeper interdisciplinary study is needed to propel the relationship between Christianity and culture to a second degree of adaptation.

In the context of the Church and the Ga community of memory, the second degree of adaption calls for a keen interest in the culture of the people to be evangelized, and to bring those to be evangelized to take interest in their heritage. This will create the harmony necessary for both the pastoral worker and those to be evangelized. This will bid farewell to the misleading belief that no good Christian could be a good citizen of his or her own culture. This false impression derives from the belief that anything cultural and traditional was stark paganism. On the part of the pastoral worker or evangelizer, this demands deeper knowledge of the Ga people and their cultural values. It will also mean a certain amount of adaptation of mentality, namely to look beyond the obvious for the hidden treasures of God. Again, this means there should be certain amount of accommodation, linguistic and even choreographic adaptations during celebrations and pastoral encounters with the Ga. Furthermore, this will also require the use of visual aids, and the Ga cultural ceremonies, dramatized in order to encourage the Ga critique of their own culture, as well as aspects of the Christian faith, for purposes of what can be described as experiencing a genuine salvific eschatology from within one’s cultural and faith heritage.

Encouraging the Ga into appreciating their roots in their cultural ceremonies vis a vis the Christian rites of initiation is a pastoral necessity, particularly today in Africa where there is a cultural renaissance and some budding disaffection for whatever appears foreign. Christianity

stands to lose or gain in how it arouses the community of memory’s interest in their own culture, helping them to see how God has been at work already in their ancestral ceremonies. It is not to be forgotten that the Church in Africa is young both in age and constitution. Many here are only first or second generation Christians. Rarely do we find something older, and therefore communities are very conscious of their cultures. Unfortunately, western style of formal education mistakenly rendered these ancestral cultures as either ridiculous or as something backward. Such ridiculing has had negative consequences, such as African elites who studied in Europe and North America electing to abandon their newly acquired Christian faith. This is because Christianity was never really grafted onto the humus of the ancestral cultures of these elites. The only way to avoid the abandoning of Christianity is to discourage any form of superimposition of Christianity on local cultures, and gradually eviscerating them. Therefore, the Ga will have to be welcomed with their cultural and religious “baggage”.

The Christian Church has the responsibility to assist the Ga to look for the Message of Christ from within their culture. They then need to work with the cultural elements that resonate with the Message, as acclaimed values of the Christian faith. The Message of Christ calls for evangelization. Evangelization as dialogue or even dialogue as evangelization offers the pastoral ground for grafting the Message of Jesus Christ on a culture.

4.3. WORSHIP

The Ga Bi Kpodziem is replete with symbols and symbolic gestures which call for a deeper investigation and if possible adaptation for Christian worship. These symbols and gestures
include libation, outdooring the infant at dawn, floor sweeping, presenting the infant without
clothes, assigning a virtuous person with the role of godparent, carrying the infant, facing the
East or the morning star, partaking of a communal drink, and individual offering of gifts to
the infant and family.

Libation is an act of sacrificing something valuable to the divine, a sort of holocaust or
immolation. Could this not be adopted as a legitimate form of praying and sacrifice? Its
contents are not fixed and may be changed according to the circumstances. The fear of many
is that libation is prevalently used for divinities and even fetish cults, and therefore may be
indissolubly bound with superstition. This could be true and may be corrected if the same
gesture is employed for God with suitable words, after the necessary catechizing.

Outdooring the infant at dawn with no clothes on signifies liminality, and could be useful to
Christianity and worship among the Ga. The act of sweeping is to “exorcize” the grounds for
the outdooring and naming of anything evil, both material and spiritual. As a gesture, it
shows the spiritual impetus to rid an event or occasion of any diabolic machination. The
emphasis, however, is not on the devil, but on God who protects the community from evil.
The issue of liminality and cleansing are resonant with the penitential rite and the “Lord
Prayer.” The ritual of showing the child to the “morning star” while “facing the East”
symbolizes God as light and life, and surely finds equivalents in the Christian worship. The
implication or spiritual import holds true for assigning the role of a godparent to a virtuous
member of the community. Then the acts of gift giving and communal drinking are akin to
offertory giving and communion.
Some of the symbols and gestures are performed in a triple manner. Though attempts to "christen" them might result in some magical interpretation of some Christian symbols and gestures, these could pave the way for cultural explanation of the Triune God who creates, provides and protects through the Son — the Word made incarnate — and empowers the community of memory through the Holy Spirit. Recall that the Ga are incredibly religious. Thus, any reference to the Supreme Being and God's manifestation in the Ga cosmology and spiritual worldview will be an efficacious pastoral approach to making meaningful the triune nature of God. In fact, it could be said without hesitation that the Ga religious beliefs in the light of the initiation rites provide an easier and better understanding of the Trinity when compared to the Western explanations which are rather esoteric.

Looking at the Ga “outdooring and naming” rites and ceremonies, this thesis hopes to help the Ga people come to a better understanding of their own heritage and probably at various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to their ancestors too. Charles Nyamiti calls this “ancestral koinonia.” By this Nyamiti means:

“That Christ the divine descendant of God communicates his life to us as fellow descendants, endowed with the common son-ship, via the mysteries of his incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection. As the divine descendant, Jesus our brother-ancestor forms the link between the community of the church and the Trinitarian life, the ultimate provenance of the ancestral community, the church.”

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In the context of worship, ancestral koinonia becomes “the extension of Christ’s ancestor-
ship to human communities.” This means a communion with the “ancestral communion of
saints, and the ancestral and divine family of the Trinity”, which are endowed on the
Christian at baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist.

4.4. YOUTH FORMATION

Following the Synod of Africa, Pope John Paul II described the world and experience of
young Africans as problematic “in the Church community.” He situated the problem within
the “strong tendency to subjectivize the Christian faith and to belong only partially and
conditionally to the life and mission of the Church.” One might notice a striking reiteration
of the Catholic Bishops of West Africa: “The pastoral care of the youths must have a
privileged in the overall pastoral plans of dioceses and parishes … We have an unfailing
obligation to bequeath them a legacy of productivity, respect for human life, honesty,
tolerance and peaceful co-existence.”


129 Orobator, From Crisis to Kairos, 77.


The above statements prioritizes the church’s pastoral responsibility toward young people. With the guiding notion of inculturation, the Church’s ministry to young people enters the conversation about the spheres of inculturation as dialogue. This dialogue involves attentive listening and learning from young people. In Ghana — as is the case in other African countries — where young people and women are often marginalized, the Christian faith can be a reminder to their tradition as inviting of young people. Recall that the outdooring and naming rites and ceremonies initiated the infant into the community of memory, with she/he respectfully given the name of an ancestor? With this element of belonging to a community is the responsibility to live a virtuous life which recasts the Church’s gaze to a pastoral reality of leadership, rejecting the despotic assumption that young people are incapable.

For this thesis and through the inspiration of a theology of inculturation, young people are members of the community of memory and community of faith. They are to be pastorally charged with the responsibilities within the community of faith. The Church must present Jesus to young people as an exemplar par excellence: “the model for the youth is Jesus Christ who made history as a young man… youths should always follow the footsteps of Christ in order to achieve more for the good of society… youths should have special position and should be held higher than before in the African Traditional set-ups.”

4.5. CONCLUSION

This thesis embraces the theology of inculturation as another important theological tool of evangelization, as dialogue and consolidation of a people’s culture. By dialogue is meant attentive listening and learning from the Message of Christ and how it relates to the cultures

132 Abba, Special Pastoral Formation for Youths in Africa in the 21st Century, 140.
and communities of memory. Inculturation’s corollary, companion of dialogic listening and attentiveness to difference, is an efficacious sense of pastoral sensitivity. Such an approach makes the Church as witnessing to the Gospel otherwise than standing above history and salvation. The Message of Christ propelled through a custom, tradition or narrative of a people, e.g., the Ga community of memory, and undergirding the inevitability of inculturation, and transporting communities and cultures into a substantial reality of the Christ event is constitutive of the Gospel. This thesis joins Onuh in calling into question the attempts to “disorient converts culturally,” for this only “alienates.”¹³³ This thesis explores such assumptions in the light of the Ga community of memory in accordance with the prospects of inculturation as the tool for dialogically engaging the Message of Christ among them. This Thesis also call forth the return to the roots of inculturation — incarnation — that delivers the construct of the message of Christ negotiable to that which is encountered.

Christianity in postmodernity has tended to stress the inevitability of inculturation as a corollary of dialogue. Arguably, this theological and pastoral necessity has given rise to attentive listening to difference among and within cultures and communities of memory. From this point of, this thesis calls for “rereading” the dialogic context of the church’s call to inculturate the message of Christ. This rereading is inevitable, since cultures and communities of memory continue struggle with the relationship between their new found faith and their cultures. This is the case of the Ga Christian in Ghana. This Thesis addresses the issue of necessity of a theology inculturation among the Ga of Accra, Ghana as an exemplar, paying attention to how theologians, legitimate church authorities, lay faithful

¹³³ Charles O. Onuh, *Christianity and the Igbo Rites of Passage: The Prospects of Inculturation* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992), 113.
negotiate contending goods for purposes of making meaning of the face and message of Christ to a local people. This thesis dares to make the assertion that dialogue is a constituent component of inculturation and vice versa. Furthermore, inculturation as dialogue is a constituent element of the Christian faith and could be seen as a measure for the church’s call to attentive listening and listening.

Some African theologians of inculturation have pointed to inattentiveness and unreflective dogmatism as the problematic of inculturating the Gospel in and among African cultures and communities of memory. Some have used the theological praxis of inculturation to point to the lack of discourse on announcing the Christ event as a locative truth; while others have reflected on the nature of the lack of discourse as a result of pastoral flaw.

This thesis serves as theological and educational reflection in an effort to contribute to the conversation about inculturation, using the Ga outdooring and naming ceremonies and rites as a case study. In this conversation, I intend to invite additional discussion on the inevitability of inculturation as a dialogic act that points to elements of a culture that are, in fact, salvific in nature. For example, when looked at from the point of view of sacramental theology, the Ga initiatory rites are an existential theology that privileges salvific eschatology here and now, for the Ga community of memory. The Ga initiatory rites, like the Christian rites of initiation are not ritualistic acts for ritualistic reasons. On the contrary, the initiation ceremonies and rites are efficacious celebration of life and salvation for the community. It is the contention of this thesis that the relevancy of inculturation is its salvific eschatological impact for communities of memory.
As previously defined, Liturgical inculturation is explained as the process of inserting the texts and rites of the Liturgy in the framework of a local culture, as a result of which the texts and rites assimilate the people’s thought, language, value ritual, symbolic and artistic pattern. The local (Ga) culture in turn, however, incorporates its values and customs into the Christian culture, as portrayed by the following similarities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian Culture</th>
<th>Ga Tradition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptismal Name</td>
<td>Traditional Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water (Baptism)</td>
<td>Water (initiation/outdooring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invocation of the Saints (Litany)</td>
<td>Invocation of ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil (Olive for Baptism/Confirmation)</td>
<td>Oil (Palm for initiation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine (Precious blood, made from grape)</td>
<td>Alcohol (libation made from corn/palm wine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White clothing (Baptism)</td>
<td>White clothing (initiation/outdooring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers (God through Christ)</td>
<td>Prayers (God through gods/deities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following key Ga Values and Effects are nonetheless relevant for inculturation into the Ga culture … the Celebration of Life, the Importance of Names, and the Libation Prayer. The intention of the Celebration of Life rite is to effect the dual transition of an infant from biological organism to a moral Ga kinsman and from the category of death to life. Through this ceremony, the Ga acknowledge life as a gift, a blessing, precious in itself, and coming from divine favor, thus the rite of “welcoming” it into human life from the sky-family. Earthly life is possible only within a specific social context, group or clan. While welcoming
and incardinating it, the Ga establish and undertake to maintain the necessary relationship of harmonious interaction between the categories, thus ensuring success in this life – project.

In the infant, the three categories of Ga life meet and interact. The infant is already fruit of divine-human (and living-dead, to some extent) interaction. For its earthly life, this harmonious interaction must be guaranteed throughout. One can say that ritual is interaction, and interaction is life-giving. Therefore, for the Ga, ritual is vital and life-giving. Ritual permeates every aspect of Ga life, – private, social and spiritual. These sectors form one whole. The life of the infant must also become life-oriented and life-giving. The Ga, therefore, undertake to forge the life of the infant towards this future role. This is what is aimed at in the next two ceremonies of circumcision, puberty/initiation for both male and female.

The importance of the Ga Bi Kpodziemo is highlighted by the naming ritual act. Children are named strictly according to a system; each house has its own set of names which recur in alternate generations. Among the Ga, the name of a person communicates certain characteristics or data about the bearer – first the (We) to which the person belongs, then the sex, the birth-order of the person among siblings of the same sex, if they are twins, or children of the gods, the days in the week etc. Apart from the legal aspects of names, the Ga believe that a given name becomes such an intrinsic part of the person that it involves him/her spiritually anywhere it is mentioned. Any blessing or curse invoked upon the name is sooner or later visited upon its bearer. This confirms the knowledge that the naming-ritual act is to incardinate the GBO (visitor), now welcome into human life, into the Ga clan-
membership of a cognatic family-We. It is common to hear children bearing the same set of names as their grandfather and his siblings. This is implicit of the nominal reincarnation belief among the Ga. Through the name, the GBO is not only a kinsman now, but requires rank and respect. Attached to each Ga name are also numerous appellatives or nick-names, titles of honor which fore-bearers did obtain for their valor or virtue, or other distinctions in life. Much of these additional names are used during day to day activities. In times of serious and official functions of cultural or ritual importance, only the name received at the Ga Bi Kpodziemo is employed. The Ga also believe that the name also links the individual to his/her ancestors, thus placing the person in their special care. The child, now named, acquires not only a personal Ga identity and social status, but is also voted as potential immortality, we may say, and placed under a special guidance.

The prayer of the libation ritual first serves as the link between the first act (incardination into human life), and the second (translation of the GBO (visitor) into a moral Ga person). This link is vital because it prepares the categories involved, the divine (and human to some extent), and more particularly the living and the dead lineage members, to assume contractual roles towards the GBO soon-to-be-accorded personal status.

The libation prayer expresses Ga understanding of life within kinship. It is the desire of the Ga lineage to have large numbers, continuity, success and prosperity. These are only possible through life, considered a divine gift to any kinship. In the second part of this prayer, the Ga welcome the GBO and bless it, thank its parents and look forward to its future life. It calls for collaboration among the kinsmen present. The prayer is concluded or “sealed” with a
communion drink, participated by all. It is to be noted that the libation prayer is an act of sacrifice to the gods and ancestors. The aim of all libations, essentially the pouring of any liquid (water, beverage or blood) onto the earth, is to satisfy the desire of establishing contact with the beyond. It also serves as a contract that is necessary to ensure the success of the new life in the way Ga understand, and want it, namely progeny, prosperity and long life. Once such a contract has been undertaken, the GBO is accorded membership. This is requested through the act of offering the naming drink.

In essence, inculturation is about salvific eschatology, which by nature is dialogic — continuous and constructive dialogue — and allows for negotiating contending goods between and among communities of faith and memory/cultures, for mutual and optimum gain. Inculturation is not about subserviency: making the Christian faith subordinate to a culture nor making a cultural belief subordinate to the Christian faith. Inculturation is a dialogic encounter of difference, engaging theological sensitivity and sensibility. This view is corroborated by the view among some theologians that the church spent centuries of its life here on earth formulating truths that protected and promoted orthodoxy. This thesis calls for an emphasis on orthopraxis, bidding welcome to inculturation as postmodern necessity for the Church in Africa.
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BOOKS


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