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A missiological significance of using Agbadza in the Church of Pentecost among the Anlo-Ewe people

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the significance of incorporating Agbadza, a traditional Anlo-Ewe dance and music form, into the worship practices of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) in Ghana's Volta Region. It aligns with the biblical mandate for cross-cultural disciple-making and reflects the Pentecostal embrace of indigenous expressions. Employing a qualitative study approach, the research involved the purposive selection of twelve respondents from the Aflao Area of the Church of Pentecost. The findings reveal that contextualized Agbadza effectively communicates the gospel, fosters connections, diminishes cultural barriers, and encourages participation among both Anlo-Ewe Christians and traditional Anlo-Ewes who do not yet believe. Additionally, it argues that this contextual method enhances evangelism, supports church planting, and strengthens discipleship by integrating Christian practices within familiar cultural frameworks. Overall, the paper contributes to discussions on contextualization and the role of culturally rooted expressions in advancing Christian missions within diverse societies.

Keywords: Agbadza, Anlo-Ewes, Bridge, Vitality, and Discipleship.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ's ministry culminated in His call for followers to share the gospel and make disciples of all nations, as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. On the day of Pentecost, individuals from various backgrounds heard the Apostles praising God in their own languages (Acts 2:4-7), highlighting God's desire for every group to connect with Him within their cultural contexts. The Church of Pentecost (CoP), a classical Pentecostal church in Ghana, has been actively engaged in spreading the gospel, thereby fulfilling Jesus' mandate.

In the Volta Region of Ghana, the Church of Pentecost (CoP) has actively engaged various community groups, integrating cultural practices such as Agbadza into Christian worship to help indigenous populations better understand God's mission.[1] Christian Tsekpoe emphasizes that a missional church must

[1] Tsekpoe Christian Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology*: *An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective* (Fortress Press, 2022).

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vibrantly interact with local culture while remaining true to the gospel of Christ.[2] John S. Mbiti highlights that culture represents how humans engage with their environment, encompassing agriculture, arts, technology, language, philosophy, religion, and worldview.[3] Bediako supports Mbiti's perspective, defining culture as a dynamic pattern of human existence shaped by our interactions with our surroundings, characterized by continuous renewal and change.[4] Certain elements of this cultural pattern, including music and dance like Agbadza, are transmitted through generations, while others evolve in unique ways through the influence of social groups over time.[5]

When the Pentecostal Church engages with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, it is essential to communicate in languages they understand. As Nelson Mandela aptly stated, speaking to someone in a familiar language connects with their mind, but expressing oneself in their own language touches their heart.[6] Thus, contextualizing the gospel through Agbadza resonates deeply with the Anlo-Ewe people. Tsekpoe notes that the Church of Pentecost's success in cultural integration can be largely credited to its founder, Reverend James McKeown, who encouraged the use of local dialects in prayer, traditional attire, and local dances like Agbadza during worship.[7] Samuel Ofori similarly observed that the gospel becomes relevant to cultures only when it actively engages with them.[8] Contextualizing the gospel through Agbadza has enabled the Anlo-Ewe people to understand and articulate their worship of God within their traditional framework.

In communities where the presentation of the gospel may have previously encountered resistance, the introduction of the gospel in Agbadza has elicited a positive response from both believers and non-believers, who joyfully participated by dancing to the Agbadza. This enthusiastic engagement fosters an opportunity for the gospel to resonate within the community, ultimately leading some individuals to embrace the Christian faith. This observation has sparked an interest in examining the missiological significance of integrating Agbadza within the Church of Pentecost, particularly among the Anlo-Ewe community, with a focus on several key areas.

This paper commences with a concise overview of the Church of Pentecost in the Volta Region of Ghana and the Agbadza dance. It subsequently examines how the integration of Agbadza within the Church serves as a vital conduit, connecting Pentecostal Christians with traditional Anlo-Ewes, who may not share their beliefs, thereby infusing the Church with renewed energy. Additionally, the paper addresses how the inclusion of Agbadza enhances evangelism, church planting, and discipleship efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A brief overview of The Church of Pentecost in the Volta Region of Ghana

The Church of Pentecost (CoP) is a notable classical Pentecostal church in Ghana that has actively engaged with various cultures to share the gospel since its inception, fulfilling Jesus' command to spread the message far and wide. In the Volta Region, the CoP is organized into four administrative areas: Aflao, Ho, Hohoe, and Sogakope, serving a total membership of 162,929, which comprises 52,429 children and 110,500 adults. Agbadza is prominently performed in these regions as a significant aspect of their cultural heritage.

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[2] Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology*, 107.

[3] John S Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Waveland Press, 2015).

[4] Mbiti. *Introduction to African Religion, 7.*

[5] Cornelis van Dam, "Christ Coming Home: Kwame Bediako's Oeuvre as an African Christianity Project," 2021.

[6] Nelson Mandela spoke to CNN's homepage on June 26, 2008, accessed on August 1, 2022, from http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/Africa/06/24/Mandela. Quotes.

[7] Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology*.

[8] Samuel Ofori, "Christianity and the Asante Chieftaincy Institution: A Gospel and Culture Engagement" (Accra, GH: Pentecost Press Ltd, 2022), 32.

A brief overview of Agbadza

Younge described Agbadza as the oldest musical genre of the Anlo-Ewe people in Ghana's Volta region, which is known for its rich fishing and farming practices.[9]

The Anlo-Ewe area boasts a wealth of historical and ecological attractions, deeply intertwined with religious traditions. Agbadza is a vibrant form of singing, drumming, and dancing that celebrates Anlo-Ewe heritage. Participants typically dance in pairs, often featuring a female dancer positioned between two males or vice versa, while others form circles or semi-circles to engage with the rhythm.[10]

Kwashie Sylvanus Kuwor worked alongside Anlo-Ewe tradition keeper Dartey Kumodzie to explore the etymology of Agbadza, merging the Ewe words "agbe" (life) and "dza" (fresh or pure).[11] They interpret Agbadza as 'fresh life' or 'pure life,' emphasizing that such vitality emerges from the performance of Agbadza. When the Anlo-Ewe people perform Agbadza, individuals of all ages come together to dance and sing. The Church of Pentecost (COP) in the Anlo-Ewe region has adapted gospel lyrics into the Agbadza language, creating a vital means of communicating the gospel message of Christ to both believers and non-believers alike. Denteh emphasized that truly understanding the mission field requires an appreciation of the people, including their cultures, beliefs, worldviews, philosophies, political systems, and traditions. Therefore, to effectively convey the Gospel message, it is crucial to recognize and value the distinctiveness of the Anlo-Ewe people.[12]

Related Studies on Agbadza

In the early period of Christian Missions in the Gold Coast, indigenous cultural practices such as drumming, dancing, and traditional music were discouraged because they were seen as inherently linked to African Traditional Religion. As a result, many forms of indigenous artistry were excluded from church worship.[13] The prominent Ewe dance tradition, Agbadza, was frequently viewed with suspicion by missionary churches.[14] However, contemporary African Christianity has increasingly embraced contextualization and inculturation, permitting the reinterpretation of indigenous cultural forms like Agbadza as essential vehicles for Christian worship, evangelism, and cultural identity.[15] Consequently, the incorporation of Agbadza into Christian worship can be seen as part of a broader initiative to liberate worship practices and affirm African cultural expressions within the mission of the Church.

According to Asamoah-Gyadu, African Christianity thrives through worship expressions that are both contextual and culturally relevant. His perspective on African Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality indicates that indigenous forms of expression, such as music and dance, can serve as legitimate vehicles for Christian experience and mission when they are integrated within a biblical framework.[16]

De Witte and Meyer assert that the influence of Pentecostalism in Ghana extends well beyond the confines of the church into the broader public sphere. Through various channels, including media, popular culture, and public performances, Pentecostalism has shaped new forms of religious expression that impact both Christian and non-Christian communities.[17] Their research suggests that cultural forms like music and dance can be appropriated and reinterpreted as means of conveying Christian identity, worship, and public witness.

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[9] Paschal Yao Younge, *Music and Dance Traditions of Ghana: History, Performance and Teaching* (McFarland, 2024).
[10] David Locke, *Agbadza the Critical Edition* (Tempe, AZ: White Cliffs Media Company, 1992).
[11] Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor, "Africology," *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 4 (2017).
[12] Vincent Anane Denteh, *Revitalising Mission Missiology: The Way Forward in the Twenty-First Century*, 2021.
[13] Birgit Meyer, "Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana," 1999.
[14] Meyer, "Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana."
[15] Birgit Meyer, "Christian Mind and Worldly Matters: Religion and Materiality in Nineteenth-Century Gold Coast," *Journal of Material Culture* 2, no. 3 (1997): 311–37.
[16] Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013).
[17] Marleen De Witte, "Pentecostal Forms across Religious Divides: Media, Publicity, and the Limits of an Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism," *Religions* 9, no. 7 (2018): 217.

Similarly, Darko argues that dance serves as an important medium through which Christians negotiate religious identity and express spirituality within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The study demonstrates that indigenous dance forms can enhance participation and promote culturally relevant worship.[18] However, its focus remains on identity formation and worship practices rather than the missiological functions of dance. Bannerman further argues for incorporating Ghanaian neo-traditional dances, including Agbadza, into Anglican worship to enhance worship experiences and preserve indigenous cultural identity. While the study successfully demonstrates the liturgical and cultural value of these dances, it primarily focuses on church ministration and choreography.[19] A critical examination underscores that little attention is given to the missiological functions of Agbadza, particularly its role in evangelization, discipleship, and the communication of the gospel among Ewe communities.

Research Gap

The literature supports the use of traditional music, dance and public performances to enhance the Christian worship experience, especially among Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Ghana. This implies that the significance of music and dance can be a useful means of propagating the Christian message in culturally relevant ways. Agbadza, a traditional dance of the Anglo-Ewe people, over the years have become an integral part of Christian expression and worship among the indigenous Ewe people. Consequently, Christian missions by Pentecostal churches among the people continue to rely on Agbadza as a means of spreading the gospel and church planting. In spite of this continuous usage of this traditional music and dance, there is no clear direction in the literature on the missiological significance and its contribution to discipleship, especially in the Church of Pentecost among the Anlo-Ewe people. This important gap necessitates this research with the aim of exploring the missiological contribution of integrating Agbadza into the worship of the Church of Pentecost.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the missiological significance of incorporating Agbadza, a traditional Anlo-Ewe musical and dance form, into Christian worship within the Anlo-Ewe churches of the Church of Pentecost. A qualitative research design was adopted to facilitate an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations concerning the role of Agbadza in Christian worship.

Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews, which combined both structured and open-ended questions to allow participants to express their views freely while ensuring consistency across interviews. Interviews were conducted through face-to-face interactions, enabling the collection of both historical and experiential accounts relevant to the study.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique appropriate for identifying information relevant to knowledge and experience. The study involved twelve participants drawn from the Agbozume, Dekpor, Anloga, Aflao, and Keta districts within the Aflao Area of the Church of Pentecost. All participants possessed substantial knowledge of and experience in the performance of Agbadza. To broaden the scope of inquiry, two ministers of the Church of Pentecost who had either served in or originated from Anlo-Ewe communities were purposively included. Additionally, three Anlo-Ewe individuals who were not members of the Church of Pentecost participated in the study, providing complementary cultural perspectives.

The study received ethical clearance from the Pentecost University Research Ethics Committee and institutional approval from the Church of Pentecost. Participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, and significance of the research and were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary. Written or verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews commenced.

[18] J. D. Darko, "Negotiating Religious Identity through Dance in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana: A Case Study of Immanuel Congregation, Madina" (University of Cape Coast, 2017).

[19] Benjamin Katey Bannerman, " Dance and the Anglican Faith: Rethinking Ghanaian Neo-Traditional Dances for Church Ministration " (University of Ghana, 2019).

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study through the use of pseudonyms and the secure handling of interview data. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

The interviews explored participants' perspectives on the use of Agbadza in the Church of Pentecost, its contribution to church growth among the Anlo-Ewe people, its significance for Anlo-Ewe members of the church, and its relevance for the mission of the Church of Pentecost and African Pentecostal missiology more broadly.

Data were transcribed and analysed using the five-step qualitative data analysis framework proposed by O'Connor and Gibson (2003). The analytical process involved data organization, coding, identification of emerging themes, interpretation of meanings, and synthesis of findings. This approach facilitated a systematic examination of participants' narratives and enabled the identification of key missiological themes related to the integration of Agbadza into Christian worship.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Bridge that Connects the Christian to the Unbelieving Traditional Anlo-Ewes

The findings suggest that incorporating Agbadza into Christian worship acts as a cultural bridge between Christianity and Anlo-Ewe traditions. This reflects the missiological principle of contextualization, as advocated by Bediako, Walls, and Tsekpoe, which asserts that Christianity becomes more relevant when expressed through indigenous cultural forms. Agbadza enables converts to maintain their cultural identity while embracing a Christian worldview, reducing the cultural dislocation often linked to conversion.

When Western missionaries first encountered the traditional worldview and religion of Ghana, they approached it with a sense of superiority, often dismissing Ghanaian cultural practices as pagan. The Christian converts were urged by these missionaries to forsake their cultural traditions and completely embrace the faith as it was presented to them. This approach led to significant tension between the missionaries and the traditional Anlo-Ewe people, as the teachings imposed by the missionaries created considerable obstacles for the community, making it difficult for the older members to adapt.[20]

Bediako, in his exploration of Theology and Identity, conceptualized missions as a dialogue between Christianity and African traditions. He argued for continuity between Africa's pre-Christian heritage and the emerging identity of Christian believers. Opposing the idea of total discontinuity, he emphasized the importance of recognizing the African pre-Christian past as a vital foundation for nurturing faith in Jesus among the people.[21] Opoku Onyinah offers an intriguing perspective on the arrival of Pentecostalism in Ghana, suggesting that it infused African culture with a renewed sense of hope and vitality. This dynamic movement not only transformed the spiritual landscape but also uplifted communities, heralding a new era of faith and cultural pride.[22] Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson note that Pentecostals present a gospel that is both enlightening and culturally responsive, resonating deeply with diverse communities.[23] This culturally sensitive gospel undergoes a process of localization, a phenomenon Andrew F. Walls refers to as indigenization, allowing Indigenous people to understand and embrace the gospel within the context of their own cultural backgrounds.[24] One of the fundamental philosophies of Pastor James McKeown, the founder of the Church of Pentecost (CoP), is the belief that local communities should take ownership of the Church. This empowers them to worship the Lord in ways that resonate with their cultural understanding.[25] Such an approach, endorsed by the CoP, enhances the significance of the community that adopts it, allowing members to feel more connected to the Church. Essentially, individuals engage in worship and express their gratitude

[20] Anthony Kofi. Anomah, "The Encounter Between Christianity and Asante Culture: Impact and Repercussions." (Encouter, 2019).

[21] Matthew Michael, "African Theology and the Paradox of Missions: Three Intellectual Responses to the Modern Missions Crisis of the African Church," *Transformation* 31, no. 2 (2014): 79–98.

[22] Opoku Onyinah, "The Movement of the Spirit around the World in Pentecostalism," *Transformation* 30, no. 4 (2013): 273–86.

[23] Andrew F Walls, "Cross-Cultural Encounters and the Shift to World Christianity," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 81, no. 2 (2003): 112–16.

[24] Walls, "Cross-Cultural Encounters and the Shift to World Christianity."

[25] Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology*.

to God through their unique cultural traditions. Supporting this idea, Anane Denteh highlighted indigeneity as the distinct qualities and characteristics of the people within the Church, which are evident in their songs, dances, worship practices, and offerings to God.[26] Consequently, the incorporation of Agbadza into the Pentecostal Christian worship of the CoP serves as a bridge connecting the Anlo-Ewe people to Christianity, aligning with the CoP's mission to cultivate a church that worships God within its local context.[27] The bridge established allows Anlo-Ewe converts to Christianity to maintain a connection to their past identity, which traditionally centered around the use of Agbadza. This enables them to incorporate Agbadza in a contextualized manner that resonates with their new identity as Pentecostal Christians.[28] Daniel Kwami Noble-Atsu notes that Anlo-Ewe Christians experience a profound sense of belonging and preserve strong ties to their cultural roots, which in turn allows them to express themselves through the lyrics of Agbadza songs. He highlights that while Agbadza is generally embraced within the church, not all its elements are encouraged, signifying a departure from tradition.[29] The Agbadza, performed by the Anlo people, utilizes coded language to convey meaning through its songs and dances. For example, as Noble-Atsu points out, when the dancing and singing continue, swinging their arms backward may symbolize unfinished business. Additionally, Agbadza can serve as a means to propose a relationship. It is important to clarify that this study does not delve into the ethical implications of employing Agbadza. Noble-Atsu also notes that the integration of Agbadza into church practices has led to certain aspects being altered and simplified, ultimately resulting in a loss of their original coded meanings. Over time, various generations have tended to overlook the significance of these codes, which may now seem irrelevant to them.

Moses Doffey, prior to his conversion to Christianity in 1992, was an active lead singer of Agbadza within his community. He now expresses his joy in being able to sing and perform Agbadza as a means of glorifying God. Doffey acknowledges the traditional role of Agbadza, especially in the context of funerals, where performers traditionally sought the family head of the deceased to request water, milled corn, and alcoholic beverages. They would then proceed to the family's sacred space to connect with the spirits of the deceased by pouring libations and offering prayers before commencing the Agbadza performance during the wake and funeral ceremony. While the traditional use of Agbadza sought to invoke family spirits for guidance during performances, Doffey now believes that, within a Christian framework, it is the Holy Spirit that leads them as they engage in Agbadza as an act of worship.[30]

A closer examination shows that the process involves continuity, negotiation, and transformation. Traditional elements of Agbadza have been altered or omitted in Christian contexts, indicating that Agbadza in church settings is a reconstructed cultural expression influenced by Christian theology. Thus, Agbadza acts as a complex bridge that creates a third space where cultural and Christian identities are continually renegotiated. This tension highlights critical questions about contextualization boundaries. While Bediako promotes continuity with Africa's pre-Christian heritage,[31] scholars like Hiebert caution against uncritical

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[26] Anane Denteh, *Revitalising Mission, and Missiology,* 461.

[27] Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology,* 107.

[28] Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology,* 107.

[29] Daniel Kwami Noble-Atsu participated in this study as a key informant due to his distinguished background in church leadership and Ewe cultural traditions. A retired Apostle and former Executive Council member of the Church of Pentecost, he has dedicated many years to pastoral ministry, church administration, theological instruction, and missionary outreach. Originating from Agbozume in the Volta Region, he remains an active practitioner of Agbadza, reflecting a sustained engagement with the cultural heritage of the Ewe people. His dual experience as a senior Pentecostal leader and cultural practitioner positions him uniquely to provide informed perspectives on the relationship between Christianity and indigenous culture, particularly in matters of contextualization, cultural continuity, and Christian witness within traditional communities.

[30] Moses Doffey participated in this study as a key informant due to his extensive experience in both traditional Ewe culture and Christian ministry. Formerly a practitioner of traditional Agbadza, he was actively involved in composing, leading, and performing numerous Agbadza songs within his community. Following his conversion to the Christian faith, he assumed leadership roles within the Church of Pentecost and currently serves as an Elder and Evangelism Leader in the Agbozume District. His transition from traditional cultural practice to Christian leadership offers a unique perspective on issues of contextualization, cultural identity, conversion, and the interaction between indigenous traditions and Pentecostal Christianity.

[31] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

incorporation of traditional symbols that may conflict with biblical faith.[32] Traditional Agbadza performances incorporate elements such as libation and ancestor veneration. Although Christian practitioners like Moses Doffey attempt to reinterpret these through the Holy Spirit, not all participants may share this view. Some may still associate Agbadza with ancestral roots, creating ambiguity around Christian identity.
Furthermore, the loss of coded meanings, as emphasized by Noble-Atsu, highlights an unintended consequence of contextualization. Although the church has successfully integrated Agbadza into Christian worship, this adaptation may unintentionally erode the indigenous cultural knowledge inherent in the dance. Thus, while the Christian adaptation preserves the dance's form, it risks altering or even diminishing aspects of its original cultural significance. This observation challenges the oversimplified belief that contextualization always promotes cultural preservation.

The incorporation of Agbadza should be seen as a dynamic process of theological reinterpretation, cultural negotiation, and selective adaptation, rather than mere cultural continuity.

Vitality in the Church

The findings indicate that Agbadza contributes to church vitality by creating enthusiasm, participation, and a sense of belonging among Anlo-Ewe Christians. This confirms previous Pentecostal scholarship that emphasizes the importance of embodied worship expressions in cultivating communal identity and spiritual engagement. Among the Anlo-Ewe churches, the integration of Agbadza into Christian worship fosters a strong sense of belonging among members. Kwame Delasi Galley shared his reflections on his uncle, a traditional worshipper, who played the Agbadza drums during their ceremonies. He was delighted to discover that the Church also incorporated Agbadza, which made him feel truly at home. This connection inspired him to continue playing the drums in service to the living God. It is also observed during general Church gatherings, such as conventions or conferences, that when Agbadza performances occur, the atmosphere transforms. This results in an outpouring of joy and excitement among the congregation, generating a vibrant and competitive spirit.[33]

Nevertheless, the concept of vitality requires critical examination.[34] The evidence presented largely focuses on emotional responses such as excitement, joy, and enthusiasm. While these indicators are important, they do not automatically translate into spiritual maturity or sustained church growth. Pentecostal worship often values affective experiences, but missiology must distinguish between emotional excitement and genuine discipleship transformation.

A critical question emerges: Does the excitement generated by Agbadza lead to deeper commitment to Christian discipleship, or does it primarily enhance participation in worship services? The findings do not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between vitality and spiritual formation. Future research could explore whether regular participation in Agbadza-based worship correlates with increased prayer life, biblical literacy, ethical transformation, or commitment to ministry.
Moreover, the competitive spirit mentioned in the findings presents an interesting ambiguity. While competition may energize worship, it may also shift attention from God-centered worship toward performance-oriented participation. This possibility reflects a common challenge in the incorporation of artistic and cultural expressions into worship practices.

Therefore, although Agbadza appears to strengthen congregational participation and belonging, further evidence is needed to establish its long-term contribution to holistic spiritual vitality.

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[32] Paul G Hiebert, "Anthropological Insights for Missionaries. Grand Rapids," *Baker Book House*, 1985.

[33] Kwame Delasi Galley is a native of Agbozume in the Volta Region of Ghana and currently resides in Accra. He is a trained medical laboratory professional with experience in Ghana's healthcare sector. His educational and professional background, combined with his continued engagement with his cultural heritage, makes him a valuable participant in this study. His views contribute to a broader understanding of how individuals negotiate cultural identity, religious beliefs, and modern professional life within contemporary Ghanaian contexts.

[34] Ruth Powell et al., "Models of Church Vitality: A Literature Review," *NCLS Research Occasional Paper* 39 (2019).

Facilitating Evangelism and Church Planting

The findings strongly support the argument that Agbadza functions as an effective evangelistic tool among the Anlo-Ewe people. The testimony of Elder Lavoe and the Ndowukope church planting example demonstrate that culturally familiar forms can enhance receptivity to the gospel message.[35] From a missiological perspective, this result aligns closely with the incarnational model of mission.[36] Just as the gospel was communicated through the cultural forms of the biblical world, Agbadza serves as a culturally intelligible medium through which Christian truths are communicated. The evangelistic songs presented in the findings illustrate how Christian doctrine can be conveyed through indigenous musical forms without compromising the core message of salvation. The zeal of the Church of Pentecost has propelled its efforts to reach diverse people groups with the gospel over the years. Elder Lavoe noted that utilizing Agbadza for evangelistic outreach presents an excellent opportunity to engage communities with the gospel in a manner they can appreciate. He emphasized that when they enter a community and perform Agbadza, it draws many people to listen to the gospel message while enjoying the dance. Ultimately, this approach results in many souls being won for the Lord, as some Agbadza songs possess an evangelistic essence.

Xɔ Yesudzi se wo kple wo afe miakpɔ dede	You and your household believe in Jesus to be saved.
Eya menye dɔ wona me wole o	This is not based on works.
Xɔese ko eh wo kple wo afe miakpɔ dede	Just believe in Him, you and your household be Saved.
Agbe mavɔ mawue tsɔ via Yesu nami	God gave His son Jesus for Eternal life.
Mitrɔ de enu ko ne miakpɔ agbe mavɔ	Just turn to Him and have eternal life.
Elabe nuvɔ yɔ xexea me	because the world is full of sin
Mi kata ken miewɔ nuvɔ	All of us have sinned
Ke mawu ƒe nuti kɔkɔe hia mi	and have fallen short of the glory of God
Nuvɔ fe fetu yae nye eku	the wages of sin is death
Gake Mawu ƒe amenuveve nunana	but the free gift of God
ye nye agbemavɔ	is eternal life
Eya menye dɔwɔna me wole o ye	this is not about works
Xɔese ko eh wokple wo afe miapkɔ dede	You and your household believe in Jesus to receive salvation.

Church planting is a key focus for the Pentecostal Mission, as highlighted by Julie C. Ma. This evangelism, as articulated by David R. Dunaetz, involves delivering the complete message of the gospel in a manner that allows the listener to comprehend it and understand how to respond. This practice is a vital aspect of the Great Commission and serves as the foundation for a life of discipleship.[37] The researcher recalls that on February 6, 2020, a team from the Agbadza group in Agbozume was assigned to a mission in the Tadzewu District, led by the Area Evangelism leader of the Aflao Area of the Church of Pentecost (CoP). As a result of this mission trip, a new church was established in Ndowukope, located in Ketu North, Volta Region, where the group performed the Agbadza. Indeed, evangelism provides believers in Christ Jesus with the opportunity to share the good news with others, aiming to lead them to faith. Moreover, it involves the systematic teaching of these new believers to become effective witnesses who can draw others to Christ through their testimonies. In their discussion on Church Planting, Ott and Wilson articulate it as the specific directive to baptize new converts and educate them to become obedient followers, firmly rooted in Christ.[38]

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[35] Elder Lavoe is a senior member and ordained elder of the Church of Pentecost in the Agbozume District of the Aflao Area, Volta Region, Ghana. He has served the church for several years in various leadership and pastoral support roles. In addition to his Christian ministry, he is a respected practitioner and custodian of Agbadza, a traditional Ewe music and dance form widely practiced in the Volta Region. His extensive experience in both Pentecostal Christianity and Ewe cultural traditions provides valuable insights into the interaction between Christian faith, indigenous cultural expressions, and contextualized worship practices within the local community.

[36] David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis books, 2011).

[37] David R Dunaetz, "Evangelism, Social Media, and the Mum Effect, in Evangelical Review of Theology," Vol. 43, (2) (2019), 138-151.

[38] Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, "Global Church Planting," *Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication*, 2011.

Evangelism represents a crucial opportunity for believers in Christ Jesus to share the gospel with others. Anane Denteh asserts that when the local Christian church becomes passionate about the mission of God, it serves as a catalyst for church planting.[39] The objective is to guide individuals toward faith and systematically equip them to be effective witnesses, capable of leading many to Christ through their testimonies.
Jarvis David Payne describes church planting as

> focusing on bringing in the harvest, raising leaders from that harvest, and sending those leaders to work in the fields. Believers are not commanded to go into all the world and plant churches directly, but rather to make disciples of all nations. Church planting is a missiological term that refers to the processes by which churches are started, nurtured, and equipped to multiply themselves through the spread of the gospel and effective discipleship.
>
> This method of church planting uses strategic, contextualized approaches to reach unbelievers, train them as church leaders, and send them out as evangelists and church planters across the world.[40]

Tsekpoe considers contextualization to be aligned with indigenization. It emphasizes the need for missionaries to situate the gospel within a culture and permit its interpretation by the local people.[41]
However, a deeper analysis must assess whether attraction necessarily leads to conversion. The evidence indicates that Agbadza attracts listeners, but attraction alone is not equivalent to genuine faith commitment. People may attend evangelistic events because of cultural interest rather than spiritual conviction. Consequently, Agbadza should be understood as a pre-evangelistic and evangelistic resource rather than a sufficient mechanism for conversion.

Furthermore, contextualization carries the risk of what missiologists describe as cultural accommodation.[42] While Agbadza makes Christianity more accessible, there remains the question of whether converts are responding primarily to the gospel or to the preservation of cultural identity. Effective evangelism must ensure that cultural forms serve the gospel rather than overshadow it.
Another critical issue concerns transferability. The effectiveness of Agbadza appears highly contextual and largely confined to Anlo-Ewe settings. This suggests that its missiological value derives from cultural proximity rather than universal applicability. Therefore, Agbadza should be seen as one example of context-specific evangelistic contextualization rather than a universally applicable model.

Promotes Discipleship

The findings suggest that Agbadza contributes significantly to discipleship by providing a culturally familiar medium for transmitting biblical teachings. This argument is particularly compelling given the strong oral traditions of Anlo-Ewe society. The use of songs as vehicles for theological instruction corresponds with both African oral pedagogies and biblical precedents where music functions as a means of teaching and remembrance.

The insight from Gunner Liz regarding African orality strengthens the theoretical foundation of this finding.[43] In predominantly oral cultures, learning frequently occurs through performance, storytelling, songs, and communal participation rather than through textual engagement alone. Promise Nutekpor highlighted that incorporating Agbadza in church settings can serve as an effective tool for discipling members of the Anlo-Ewe community.[44] Many Agbadza songs draw from scripture and can be imparted orally, conveying teachings about the Christian faith and guidance on living victoriously. Supporting this point, Savior Djamla noted that their grandparents and parents traditionally use oral storytelling during

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[39] Denteh. *Revitalising Mission and Missiology,*380.
[40] Jervis David Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (InterVarsity Press, 2009).
[41] Tsekpoe. *Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective,* 39.
[42] Charles H Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Orbis Books, 1979).
[43] Liz Gunner, "Africa and Orality," *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature* 1 (2008): 1–18.
[44] Promise Nutekpor is an Elder in Dekpor District in Ketu North, Volta Region and a graduate of the University of Winneba, Ghana. He was born and has lived in the Adzortsi community and is a participant in this study.

festive occasions to pass down their heritage. Consequently, Agbadza provides a culturally appropriate framework for Christian formation.[45]

However, a critical distinction must be made between memorization and discipleship. While Agbadza may effectively transmit doctrinal content, discipleship involves more than the acquisition of religious knowledge. Bosch emphasizes obedience, transformation, and participation in God's mission as essential dimensions of discipleship. In line with Bosch's perspective, the CoP also considers discipleship a fundamental aspect of its missiological efforts.[46] It has incorporated discipleship as a Core Practice, as outlined below:

> Discipleship involves teaching and training believers to emulate Christ in character and make responsible choices. The emphasis is on holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, honesty, sincerity, humility, prayerfulness, and the leading of disciplined and accountable lives. Disciplining mature members takes on the responsibility of disciplining new converts. The Church plays a leading role by providing systematic teaching and practical training. Such teaching emphasizes the four-square gospel, which is Christ-centered: Jesus the Savior, Healer, Baptizer, and Soon-Coming King.[47]

Therefore, the effectiveness of Agbadza for discipleship should be evaluated not merely by its ability to communicate biblical truths but also by its capacity to shape Christian character and behavior.
Additionally, oral transmission can sometimes facilitate selective interpretation. Songs often simplify complex theological concepts for ease of memorization. While this promotes accessibility, it may also limit theological depth if not complemented by systematic teaching and biblical instruction.
Thus, Agbadza should be regarded as a valuable pedagogical tool for discipleship, but not a replacement for comprehensive Christian formation.

RECOMMENDATION

The researchers offer the following recommendations: The leadership of Pentecostal churches in the Anlo-Ewe region should purposefully integrate Agbadza into their worship services. It is crucial to allocate specific time slots to highlight Agbadza during these gatherings. Given that the songs associated with Agbadza are rooted in scripture, church leaders should emphasize their theological accuracy and significance. Additionally, Pentecostal congregations in the Anlo-Ewe area are encouraged to form Agbadza groups within their churches, utilizing these groups for effective evangelistic outreach.

CONCLUSION

The Church of Pentecost's engagement with Agbadza transcends merely enhancing worship; it embodies a missional strategy deeply rooted in Scripture. From Jesus' command to disciple all nations to the multilingual phenomenon at Pentecost, the Bible underscores God's intention to reach diverse cultures. Scholars such as Tsekpoe, Mbiti, and Bediako emphasize that culture serves as a dynamic medium for communicating God's message. By incorporating Agbadza, the Church of Pentecost resonates with the Anlo-Ewe community, both believers and non-believers, demonstrating the impact of contextualized worship. This approach continues to dismantle barriers, strengthen community identity, and promote evangelism.

Limitation

The strength of the study is that it provides compelling evidence that Agbadza functions as a culturally relevant missiological resource that promotes evangelism, discipleship, church vitality, and identity preservation among Anlo-Ewe Christians. However, the limitation is that it tends to emphasize the benefits of contextualization while giving less attention to the theological tensions, dissenting voices, and long-term spiritual implications of incorporating a traditionally religious cultural practice into Christian worship.

[45] Savior Djamla is a participant in the study. He is an Elder of the CoP at Dekpor District, a farmer for over 55 years and a retired teacher. He is an opinion leader in the Dekpor Horme and Dekpor Yia communities in Ketu North District of the Volta Region.
[46] Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*.
[47] Ministerial Handbook of the CoP, General Headquarters, 15.

Further studies should explore the theological tensions and the long-term spiritual implications of incorporating Abadza in Pentecostal Christian Worship.

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