



Shrines and Social Order in Ghana: A Study of *Duveh* Shrine in Peki, Volta Region, Ghana

Michael Kwadwo Ntiamoah¹  & Elysium Orison Ameyibor¹

¹ Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

ABSTRACT

Human communities have measures and schemes which are intended to control the social behaviour of its members. In traditional societies, the belief in the potency of supernatural beings helps to enforce social norms and values, which translate into social order within a given community. In most traditional societies including Ghana, religion plays an important role in the lives of the people, some of which include ensuring order in the society. In Ghana, the indigenous religious values, norms, customs, as well as certain practices help in the enforcement of order in various communities. The deities as well as the ancestors play key roles in ensuring order in the community by, dispensing swift justice and punishing culprits. Using a qualitative approach specifically purposive sampling, the study reveals that there are indigenous mechanisms used by *Duveh* to ensure social order in the community, which are grouped into oath swearing, hexing, trial by ordeals, and taboos that are enshrined in their prohibitions and sanctions. The study concludes that the traditional religious means of social control is effective in ensuring social order. Thus, the study proposes that traditional authorities need to be empowered to function side-by-side with the formal control system to maintain order in their communities and Ghana at large. This paper contributes to religion and social control.

Correspondence

Michael Kwadwo Ntiamoah

Email:

nanakntiamoah@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Human societies differ from each other in terms of culture, structure and civilization. However, in the face of all these differences, there are certain features common to all human societies. For example, laws, customs, norms and prescribed forms of behaviour, rules and regulations, guide all communities. It must be borne in mind that human beings can only live together peaceably if they were compelled to do so by threat of some amount of force. Durkheim, quoted in Merton, avowed that traditional communities are typified by what he calls mechanical solidarity, which is an indication of a very high level of collective conscience.¹ It follows that deviance, crime and all forms of socially unapproved behaviours, do not only have a negative impact on the sufferers but also on the community as a whole. Hence, it behoves a community to make efforts to ensure that all who deviate from the approved way

¹ Robert K. Merton, Durkheim's Division of Labor in Society. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1934): 319. Published by: The University of Chicago Press Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2768264>

of living are brought back to order. However, social order can only be achieved when effective control mechanisms are put in place to keep members of the society in check hence the need for social control. Social control denotes a system of sustaining law and order in the society, as well as ensuring that individuals of the society follow the established social norms.² Societies have developed for themselves, measures to appropriate power to maintain social order. This work avers that African societies are guided by a set of religious traditions, *ethos*, customs, norms, and values which they have internalized through socialization.

However, it must be acknowledged that, as it is with all societies, the mere presence of these norms and precepts, does not bring about social order. This is so because the norms, customs, etc, are not in themselves efficient unless the right persons or institutions enforce them through the exercise of power. Thus, in traditional societies, the belief in the potency of supernatural beings helps to enforce social norms and values which translate into social order within the community. Shrines in traditional societies are seen as the sacred home of a deity for motives such as divine intercession, healing, and many more. In most Ghanaian communities, shrines play important roles in the lives of the people because it provides protection, and healing, and it ensures order in the society. The traditional methods of social control according to studies were and are useful, however, as society became more complex, coupled with the introduction of industrialization and urbanization, traditional institutions have become more and more detached from the process of maintaining law and order.³

The claim of this paper is that a society thrives when norms, values, laws, order, and peace are sustained hence the relevance of some sort of check cannot be gainsaid. Social order thus becomes a paramount prerequisite for social development. In Ghana, the indigenous religious values, norms, customs, as well as certain practices help in the enforcement of order in various communities. In the past, the fear of, and reverence for deities coupled with the idea of 'escapelessness' from the wrath of the deities, compelled people to act with decorum.⁴ These indigenous ways of defining and delivering justice relied largely on spiritual forces, which were known to exercise control over the actions of individuals as well as the community as a whole.⁵ However, these indigenous means of social control have been threatened and challenged as a result of interactions with imported religious traditions as well as other secularizing trends.⁶ The emergence of traditions such as Christianity among others has weakened the belief in the deities and the ancestors, by denigrating the image of these beings and reducing any service to them as demonic.⁷ However, in the face of the perceived effectiveness of the formal system of maintaining order, it appears that the rising trends in crimes such as murder, theft and all forms of crimes seem to be very overwhelming for modern crime control mechanisms. It is against this backdrop that this paper set out to (1) examine the contemporary relevance of shrines in the maintenance of social order in Ghana, using *Duveh* shrine in Peki (volta region) as a paradigm, and (2) assess the various indigenous religious mechanisms that facilitate social order.

A cursory look at the Geographical Description of Peki and *Duveh* Shrine

Peki is an Ewe subgroup found within the central part of the present Volta Region of Ghana. Peki together with Hohoe and their other Ewe neighbours in terms of location are referred to as *Ewedome* (inland Ewes) since they are located north of Anlo and Tongu. Peki is a town within the South Dayi District in the Volta region of Ghana. It comprises eight sub-towns, which are Adzokoe, Afeviwofe, Avetile, Blengo, Dzake, Dzobati Tsiamé and Wudome. Each of the above-mentioned towns has its

² G.K.Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, (Accra, Ghana Universities Press, 2014), 93.

³ A.A. Achu, Emeka J Owan and Abul F. Uyang, "Traditional Methods of Crime Control and Community Security in Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State - Nigeria" *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 14 (5), (2013): 61.

⁴ Chris Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana ; Relevance of Modern Crime Prevention*". (2ed). (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1997). 66-67.

⁵ Seth Tweneboah "The Culture of *Duabɔ* (Imprecation), Legal Dysfunction and the Challenge of Human Rights Development in Ghana" *Human Rights Journal*, 9 (2014):1.

⁶ Tweneboah, "The Culture of *Duabɔ* (Imprecation)," 1.

⁷ Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*. 97.

own chief. However, all of these sub-chiefs answer to the paramount chief known as Deiga. Currently, Deiga Kwadzo Dei XII is the paramount chief of Peki. Avetile is a suburb of Peki. It shares boundaries on the west with Tsiamé, north, with Afeviwofe, and to the south with Adzokoe. Avetile houses the popular *Duveh* shrine, which explains the choice of the study unit.

Duveh is the state deity of the people of Peki and a lieutenant of *Mawu* among the people. It is said that this was the deity, which guided and protected the Peki faction of the large Ewe group through their exodus from *Dotsie* to their present home. The functions of the deity are numerous. Some of which include healing the sick. Individuals resorted to *Duveh* for spiritual and physical healing of all manner of ailments such as madness, asthma infertility and many more. In addition, *Duveh* is believed to offer protection to those who seek its help in that regard. The priest of *Duveh* mostly does this by giving the individual protective charms as well as amulets and bracelets, which are worn by the individual to repel all forms of spiritual and physical attacks and to attract good fortune. On the part of administering justice, *Duveh* is said to be very swift to those who disturb the peace of the community by visiting them with severe punishments, which acts as a deterrent to other potential felons. More so, barren couples who wanted children consulted *Duveh*. *Duveh* continues to offer the above stated services even in contemporary times.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology, which makes use of phenomenological design, was resorted to in order to carry out this study. In this methodology, Husserl maintained that it includes an assessment of how individuals understand the world around them.⁸ In light of this, Husserl says that the fundamental supposition of phenomenology is that of “going to the things themselves.”⁹ Interviews and observations were the main tools used in this paper. Purposive sampling was adopted in the collection of relevant information where respondents were purposively selected based on their in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. In all, 15 key members including priests and priestesses, chiefs and elders of Avetile, Dzake, and Blengo formed the study’s participants. These people were chosen because they constitute a section of the population who had the relevant information needed to guide the study. This was done in congruence with Cresswell’s claim that purposive sampling helps in choosing interlocutors as well as materials, which help to solve a study’s questions.¹⁰ Sources of data for this study were drawn from two main sources: firstly, fieldwork through one-on-one interviews with specific informants who are natives and observations. Secondly, data from textual sources which were relevant to the study were employed, which included reviewing journal articles, books, unpublished theses and sources from the internet. The interviews were conducted (audio recordings) in Ewe,¹¹ which were later transcribed into English and translated to enable analysis through critique evaluation of oral sources and secondary sources.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework principle is a supporting truth claim used as a theory underlying a discourse.¹² Several theories emphasize the relevance of the presence of a well-recognized form of authority to be able to prescribe punitive measures to discourage deviant behaviours in societies. The deterrent theory by Bentham, Hobbes, and Beccaria as well as the power and authority theory by Max Weber are discussed as theoretical underpinnings of this paper.

- **Deterrent Theory**

⁸ E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, translated by J.N. Finley (New York: Humanities press,1900), 21.

⁹ Husserl, *Logical investigation*, 21.

¹⁰ John W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. (California: Sage. 1994), 148.

¹¹ The native language of the respondents.

¹² M.K. Ntiamoah and S. Asiedu-Amoako. “Environmental Ethics in Akyem Abuakwa: developing the ecological zone through African worldview”. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*. 1, no.5 (2020): 185-193. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2020097>

The core principle of deterrence is that individuals observe or flout the rules after measuring the benefits and costs of their conduct.¹³ It denotes a psychological process where individuals are barred from engaging in irresponsible acts.¹⁴ Notable proponents of the deterrence theory include Cesare Beccaria, Jeremy Bentham and Thomas Hobbes. There are two forms of deterrence; general and specific. On one hand, General Deterrence is aimed at dissuading members of society from engaging in any form of misconduct within the society. As a result, the society punishes offenders in order to set a good example for those who may want to violate the established rules. The focus of general deterrence is to make members of the society conscious of the awfulness of the sanctions of the state in order to discourage them from indulging in acts that the society disapproves of. This is because, general deterrence is intended to prevent people from engaging in criminal acts, they are made to watch the pain and awful suffering which are visited on the criminals.¹⁵ The application of the death penalty and corporal punishments were examples of general deterrence, which was used in most traditional societies. Regardless of the fact that it has been rendered illegal in many nations, corporal punishment is nonetheless practiced in other communities. For example, in 2019, six men were said to be palace guards flogged a 27-year-old young man for flouting the orders of the paramount chief of the *Aowin* traditional area.¹⁶ In a similar scenario, on 27th August 2019, the Daily Guide reported that the *Dapkema* of Tamale ordered that a couple who filmed their sexual orgy should be flogged for throwing that video into the public space. The community and family members were invited to watch the horrors that awaited individuals who breached the law. Some even now demand a live telecast of executions to dissuade murder.

On the other hand, Specific Deterrence is intended to dissuade just the specific offender from committing the offense again in the future, due to the character of the prescribed punishment. Advocates of Specific deterrence also argue that imposing harsh sanctions on criminals will make them a lot less likely to engage in similar crimes later. For instance, if an armed robber is sentenced to a good number of years in jail, he/she is less likely to engage in a robbery when released. Society must administer adequate punishment to rival the pleasure gained from robbery.¹⁷

According to Hobbes, men are free-willed creatures who seek their own interests and become agitated when their desires are interfered with. According to Hobbesian theory, men typically follow their personal interests, such as monetary gains, personal safety, and social status, and in the process, they make adversaries and hurt others.¹⁸ People are driven to accomplish their own self-interests, which frequently leads to conflict and opposition in the absence of proper authority to provide security.¹⁹ However, crimes may still occur which is why Hobbes maintained that the penalties for committing a crime must be larger than the gain derived from the act. People need to be called to order when they disturb the social order. Drawing on the principles of the social contract, Beccaria, says that rules must be assessed by their ability to provide the "most pleasure shared by the majority."²⁰ Since men are rationally self-centered, they will not break the law if the costs of committing crimes outweigh the advantages of participating in it. From Beccaria's perspective, the best way to avert and manage crime is by rapid and definite punishment. Punishment must be proportionate to the crime committed

¹³ Ihekwoaba D. Onwudiwe, Jonathan Odo, and Emmanuel C. Onyeozili, *Deterrence Theory*, 2010, <https://marisluste.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/deterrence-theory.pdf>, 233-237.

¹⁴ Kirk R Williams and Richard Hawkins, "Perceptual Research on General Deterrence: A Critical Review". *Law and Society Review*. Vol. 20, No.4 (1986) 545.

¹⁵ Onwudiwe, Odo and Onyeozili, *Deterrence Theory*.

¹⁶ Aowin is located at the Western North region of Ghana. Nana, "6 men get 240 days in jail for flogging boy in Enchi palace" <https://ghanaguardian.com/6-men-get-240-days-in-jail-for-flogging-boy-in-enchi-palace> *Ghana Guardian* August 17, 2019 accessed on November 8, 2021.

¹⁷ David Carter, 'Deterrence' in Alison S. Burke; David Carter, et al, *Introduction to the American Criminal Justice System*, (Open Oregon Pressbooks), <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/ccj230/chapter/8-3-deterrence/> (accessed, November 8, 2021)

¹⁸ Onwudiwe, Odo, and Onyeozili, *Deterrence Theory*, 234

¹⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (London, 1651) 79 <https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/hobbes/Leviathan.pdf>

²⁰ Cesare Bonesana di Beccaria, *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*. (London: 1767) 8, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/>

in order to effectively serve as deterrence to others. For Beccaria, the severity of crimes should be determined by the amount of societal harm they do. Beccaria, a proponent of the pleasure-pain principle, claimed that rational people's objectives are to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Thus, to avoid crime, the pain of punishment must be greater than the pleasure derived from engaging in crime.

- **The Theory of Power and Authority**

From the standpoint of Max Weber, power is the likelihood that individuals within a social relationship are able to carry out their will in the face of resistance, regardless of the basis on which that likelihood rests.²¹ In another sense, power is the ability to attain goals, control events and maintain influence over others even in the face of opposition.²² From the above definitions of power, it is seen that power is a constituent of every social relationship, which is why in every human interaction, there is the presence of power. However, attached to the concept of power is authority. Weber avers that authority points to power, which is legitimate. In his work, *The Three Types of Legitimate Rule*, Weber points out a clear path toward how authority is legitimized. According to Weber, these types of legitimate rule include the charismatic, traditional, and rational-legal types of authority.

- a) **Traditional Authority**

Traditional authority is part of the three forms of authority identified by Weber. This type of authority comes from conventions, norms, traditions, and customs. Weber noted that traditional authority rests on an established belief in the sacredness of long-established traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under rule.²³ That is, the traditional authority is legitimized by the sanctity of tradition.²⁴ Power is legitimized by virtue of the way of life or the tradition of a society. It is based on the belief in the traditions of that society. This type of authority as discussed by Weber exists within traditional societies including the Peki traditional area. Traditional authority hinges on the belief that authority is to be accorded necessary respect and obedience because it has existed since time immemorial. It is said to be reinforced by virtue of the culture, social structures, and institutions of a traditional society, which preserves traditional authority.²⁵ Traditional authority in its nature is rooted in a set of cultural beliefs that are inherited from generations through to other generations, and that give a sense of legitimate power to anyone that occupies that role.²⁶ It requires strong respect, recognition and acceptance of the traditions that have always existed in the same form.²⁷ The analysis of this paper was largely based on the traditional authority theory, which contends that power is legitimized through time-honored traditions, which draws on the acceptance of norms, not on legal bases, but simply based on the revered tradition to function.

Indigenous Societies and Social Control: The Case of Peki.

Social order is enforced in many ways by the authorities within a given society. The techniques used by the authorities to put into effect the regulations as well as the rule that govern and ensure order in the society is what this paper claims as the mechanisms of social control. This can take the form of ridicule, punishment, law, reward, religion and many others. These are some of the ways by which a society exerts control in order to sustain order in the society.

- **Deviance and Sanctions: Traditional Understanding**

²¹ N. Uphoff. "Distinguishing Power, Authority and Legitimacy: Taking Max Weber at His Word by Using Resources-Exchange Analysis". *Polity*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1989), 299.

²² Okeke M. Arinze, *Introduction to Social Sciences*, (Onitsha: Najutel.2009), 96.

²³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 215.

²⁴ Dana Williams, "Max Weber: Traditional, Legal-Rational, and Charismatic Authority". (2003). Max Weber Traditional, Legal-Rational, and Charismatic Authority by Dana Williams - Max Weber: by - Studocu

²⁵ University of Regina, "Power, Domination, Legitimation, and Authority". *Sociology 250*, (October 1999).

²⁶ J. Larsson. "Traditions in Transition. Reflections on Teacher Authority in Late Modernity". *KAPET, Karlstads universitetens Pedagogiska Tidskrift* 8, no. 1 (2012): 92.

²⁷ M. Vukadinović and B. R. Njegovan. "Relationship between the Types of Authority and Authoritarianism". *Škola biznisa*, Broj 4, (2011), 14.

Traditional methods of controlling crime and maintaining security are not universally accepted as they are culturally relative.²⁸ Generally, crime is the violation of the laws that govern a people and it is contingent upon some authority to apply the appropriate penalties or sanctions. Crime also typifies a deviation from the social norms instituted by the society and to which sanctions ranging from the death penalty, fines, dismissal from office, or permanent ineligibility to hold any office in society may apply.²⁹ What constitutes crime generally finds expression in acts, which are culpable, and offend the strong and definite dispositions of collective consciousness as a consequence of which punitive sanctions must be applied.³⁰ In relatively smaller communities, perceptions of crime are grounded upon a moral sense of damage to the gods, the community and the individual. The laws that govern the society are not documented but they are functional in the sense that they constitute a set of norms enshrined in the common moral sense of the society. This finds expression in Durkheim idea of collective consciousness.³¹ Also, criminal activities could be attributed to the underhand dealings of demonic possession and the activities of a free moral agent. The former is explicated in terms of the purported role of malicious spirits. Abotchie observes that, "when a person committed a serious offence such as murder, incest or rape in traditional society, he is believed to have acted under some evil influence. ... stated differently, the person is possessed by some diabolical spirit."³² Any of the above stated causes of crime have implications for punishment. Victoria Ago believes that until a crime is atoned for and the appropriate punitive measures are applied, the whole community suffers. The primary reason for punishment is to bring the felon to order, placate the deities and restore calm and solidarity to the community.³³ This is rational since as stated earlier, criminal activities are seen as a form of a direct insult to the deities and also an injury to the community at large. In line with the idea of demonic possession, Abotchie argues that the rationale of punishment is "to remove the stain of impurity from society or to prevent a supernatural being from wreaking vengeance on the group."³⁴ This includes undergoing the appropriate ritual to placate the deities, exorcising the malicious spirit that instigated the evil deed, and either fining, exiling, flogging or executing the culprit depending on the gravity of his crime. Punishments may range from fines to the death penalty and anything in-between.

• The Religious Landscape of Peki

In the traditional Ghanaian as well as the Peki setting, the universe is thought of as a composite of both the natural and supernatural. So pervasive is this belief that everything is construed as having both a spiritual and a physical aspect. The belief in the omniscient, benevolent, supernatural forces in traditional communities creates another source of informal social control. Furthermore, people in such communities unconsciously alter their thought patterns and behaviour to conform to both the social and physical setting in which they are. In traditional communities, the pervasive influence of religion, which manifests itself in the widespread belief in the omnipresent and omniscient, benevolent, supernatural forces, compels people to behave properly.

Among the Peki, the notion of the supernatural could be described as polytheism. However, this type of Polytheism is one that does not give equal recognition to all beings within the spiritual hierarchy. In their conception of the spirit world, pre-eminence is given to *Mawu*. Direct sacrifices and direct worship are never ascribed to *Mawu* and there are no shrines erected in the name of *Mawu*. This is because *Mawu* cannot be confined to a *locum tenens*. He has no priests because He is believed to

²⁸ S. Box, *Recession crime and punishment*. (London: Macmillan Books, 1983). Cited in Achu, Owan, and Uyang, "Traditional Methods of Crime Control and Community Security in Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State - Nigeria" 62.

²⁹ Rita Sottie, *Social Control in a Peri-Urban Ghanaian Community, Sege in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana* (MPhil dissertation., University of Ghana 2014), 2.

³⁰ Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*, 10.

³¹ Brian Burtch, *The Sociology of Law: Critical Approaches to Social Control*. (Toronto Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada Inc, 1992).

³² Interview with Togbe Gavu at Peki Avetile; Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*, 11.

³³ Personal communication with Victoria Ago (interview: 13 July, 2021, Peki-Avetile, Ghana)

³⁴ Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*, 11.

be above ritual control except mediation through the divinities. Rather, *Mawu* is worshipped only through the divinities as well as the ancestors who function as the intermediaries between man and *Mawu*. The Ewe believe that *Mawu* is immortal and all-powerful. In Ewe cosmology, *Mawu* is at the apex of the ranking of beings. In Ewe belief, *Mawu* (God) literary meaning ‘he who supersedes all that is’, is a supreme being, the creator of the universe and all things in it, having such characteristic attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and a force only for good. As the architect of the universe, *Mawu* is the greatest power, an unfailing source of refuge and helps all people when everything fails, and a personal and moral being who judges human beings. *Mawu* is conceptualized as the source of life and everything in the universe. *Mawu* is associated with the sky which is why he is often referred to as *Mae tɔ le dzifo*.³⁵ In another etymological sense, *Mawu* could also mean “one who does not kill”. This interpretation of the name *Mawu* is an affirmation of the earlier assertion that *Mawu* is a force only for good. Even though *Mawu* is thought of as being resident in the skies, there is an Ewe saying that *Mawu le afisiafi*.³⁶ This literally means *Mawu* is everywhere at once.

Next to *Mawu*, the Ewes recognize a host of other earthly divinities (*etrɔ wo*) and ancestral spirits (*togbetobge gbɔgbɔ wo*) created by *Mawu*. The worship of the divinities denotes a well-organized structure of officials, places of worship (shrines), programs, and worshippers. The divinities perform many protective and welfare functions for their devotees. These include protection in war, prosperity in their vocations, healing the sick and infertile, and, granting individuals specific favours. Another set of functions performed by the gods is searching for truth in the face of afflictions, detecting crime, finding an offender in cases where the truth is not forthcoming, and locating lost property. The desire to search for the truth is further emphasized due to the notion of collective responsibility inherent in the social system. It is very necessary to find out the truth about crime and offenders lest innocent individuals and family members suffer as well. Also, these benevolent spirits are the embodiment of virtue, they are supervisors of the morals and the ethos that guide the society. The belief is that conforming to the moral code attracts blessings and general well-being. In effect, failure to conform equally attracts a series of hostile reactions from the deities who are conceived of as the source of justice and fair play. Therefore, in traditional societies that are purely dominated by omnipresent and omniscient Supernatural forces, religion constitutes a formidable informal mechanism of social control.

• Sanctions

The persuasive strength of social control is rooted in sanctions.³⁷ Sanctions are means by which a group of people reacts to behaviours they either disapprove or approve of. It is clear from the fore that sanctions have a dual dimension. First is the reward element, which is a mark of approval for conduct, which is very consistent with the norms of the society. On the flip side is the element of punishment, which is a mark of disapproval for conduct that typifies a deviation from the dictates of the society.³⁸ Sanctions are ways of putting into effect the rules that govern the society. In traditional societies where religion pervades all aspects of life, sanctions have a religious dimension as well as a social dimension.³⁹

Religious sanctions on one hand, according to scholars such as Nukunya, Abotchie, Adebisi and Adeokin, Ellwood, and many more, are perhaps the most ancient form of informal control and it is very important in the establishment and preservation of order. The belief in the potency of the deities

³⁵*Mae tɔ le dzifo*. This literally means or father who happens to be up in the sky. This comes close to the Christian prayer Our father who art in heaven.

³⁶ This is also a proverbial saying which tell us that *Mawu* is omnipresent, eminent as well as transcendental. Even though *Mawu* is thought of as very far from the universe, he is at the same time very close to all that he has created so much so that He manifests his presence in them.

³⁷Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*, 3.

³⁸Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*, 4.

³⁹ Kudadjie, ‘How Morality was enforced in Ga-Adamgbe Society’ 171.

helps to ensure proper behaviour and conformity to the values and norms of society.⁴⁰ Abotchie orates that the belief in the supernatural and the fear of the supernatural powers of the deities and the fact that these deities who are omnipresent and omniscient, help in ensuring law and order in society.⁴¹ In traditional societies, God, the divinities as well as the ancestors, sanction the culturally accepted ways of conduct. This provides a support structure for the moral and ethical codes that must be observed by individuals within the community. Proper adherence to these moral codes attracts blessings from God, the deities, etc. On the flip side, is the fear, threat and the actual experience of the punishment, which is certain to be visited upon those who fail to observe moral standards by God and the spirits.⁴² On the other hand, social sanctions could be divided into positive sanctions, which are intended to encourage good behaviour, and negative sanctions, which are also intended to discourage immoral behaviours. Notable examples under this section include honour and praise, parental gifts, banishments, fines etc.

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Indigenous Religious Control Mechanisms in Peki

Should it ever be that I offend someone I think that it is reasonable that I make amends or restitution however, if the person threatens to invoke a hex on me in the name of a deity for example *Duveh*, I would apologize immediately. Because should it be that *Duveh* finds me guilty, I know that, the consequences are going to be fatal. *Duveh*'s sanctions are very brutal and sometimes those sanctions have some sort of ripple effect such that even innocent family members may suffer too.⁴⁴

From the above, it is clear that the majority of the people fear *Duveh*. This fear is suggestive of the fact that they acknowledge the deterrent potential of *Duveh*. The traditional religious modes of social control and crime prevention have a deterrent effect. The belief is that, if one commits a crime and he is even able to outsmart every human effort to find him, the truth is, he can never outsmart the deities. In addition, it follows that the traditional religious modes of social control and crime prevention of *Duveh* appear to be more effective than those of the formal means of ensuring social order and crime control. This observation from the field study reveals that the traditional religious modes of social control and crime prevention were mostly being used to ensure social order within the community, which confirms Abotchie's claim that the omniscience of the deities coupled with the escape-proof nature of their sanctions is very effective in crime prevention.⁴⁵

The traditional religious modes of social control and crime prevention among the people of Peki may be understood in the light of the desire to know, that which is hidden, through supernatural means. The role of the traditional priests in such an enquiry becomes indispensable.⁴⁶ The modalities through which the hidden comes to bear are varied and may range from the simple to the most complex. The paper identified, among the people of Peki, that, in as much as the modalities of spiritual enquires are many and varied, they can be classified into (a) Hexing (*Nudedede trɔ me /Ame dede trɔ me*) (b) Invocation of a deity. (*Trɔ yɔyɔ*) (c) Trial by ordeal (*Akagbe/Akanyinyi*) (d) Oath Swearing (*Nutata*).

⁴⁰Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 102; Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*, 88-89; Adebisi Sunday and Babajide S. Adeokin. "African Traditional Method of Social Control Mechanism: A Sociological Review of Native Charms in Farm Security in Ayetoro Community, Ogun State, Nigeria." *International journal of humanities and social sciences* 12 (2018): 507-511; Charles A. Ellwood, "Religion and Social Control" 336; Kudadjie, 'How Morality was enforced in Ga-Adamgbe Society' 171-172.

⁴¹Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*, 88-89.

⁴²Kudadjie, 'How Morality was enforced in Ga-Adamgbe Society' 171.

⁴³Kudadjie, 'How Morality was enforced in Ga-Adamgbe Society' 172.

⁴⁴ This was remarked by an informant on the question what would deter people from not to steal from a neighbour or perhaps commit murder, or any crime at all. And majority of the study participants share this remarks.

⁴⁵ Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana*.

⁴⁶ T.N.O. Quarcoopome. *West African Traditional Religion*. (Ibadan: African Universities Press, 1987). 77; J, D.K, Ekem; *Priesthood in Context; A Study of Priest hood in some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana and Its Relevance for Mother-Tongue Biblical Interpretation* (Accra: Sonlife Press, 2009); John. S. Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy*. (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd, 1969). 82.

- **Hexing (*Nudedede trɔ me / Ame dede trɔ me*)**

The priest of *Duveh* indicated that hexing is one of the many ways in which people protect the things they value and also a way of seeking justice. He indicated that hexing can take many forms and it is one of the most used traditional religious means of social control and crime prevention. One could invoke a hex in the name of *Duveh* to pass judgment on an offender who may be unknown to the individual. In cases where the offender cannot be known or has been able to outsmart all human efforts, a hex can be placed on such an unknown person. Furthermore, a hex could be put on a valuable property like a farm or any other thing that one finds valuable. This is meant to prevent thieves or anyone who would want to lay false claims on such a property. Also, through a hex, one could invoke the fury of a deity say *Duveh* on a known offender. He added that, *In the case of an unknown offender, the offended individual may come to the shrine and request that sanctions be directed at the offender. The individual who has been offended may define clearly a named misfortune that should befall the offender as punishment or there is also the option to allow Duveh to decide on the suitable punishment. Sanctions may comprise blindness death, strange incurable diseases and many more.*

In the case of a known offender, the process is the same except that the name of the offender is stated and the sanction is directed at the named individual. The name of the offender may be mentioned for a specified number of times over the consultation fee and then the deity may start to dispense justice. According to Togbe Gavu, the first two instances are known as *Ame dede trɔ me*. The third instance is what he calls *Nu dede trɔ me*. In this type of hexing, a form of a protective spell is cast onto a thing or things of high value to protect it against thieves in particular. In the words of Gavu, *a hex can be put on anything one deems valuable. The idea is that anyone who tries to harm, steal or take undue advantage of the thing in question, is arrested while in the act or thereafter.* In this case of hexing, the hex could be hidden or could be made visible. One observation was that, when the hex is made very visible, the sight of the hex is enough to drive away thieves and other trespassers. However, the hex may be concealed, anyone who tries to take undue advantage or steal from a place that has been put under a protective hex, opens himself to various forms of immediate supernatural sanctions. For example, given that the protective hex is placed on a farm, workshop, or on any property, the culprit or trespasser may never find his way out of the farm or the workplace until the owner of the place comes to see him and if he wants to free him from the spell, then he may consider freeing him. In other cases, the trespassers may be rooted to the spot and may not move at all. Others may encounter very dangerous wild animals that may either scare them off never to return to the place again. If the thief escapes, certainly he will not return to that property or workshop or farm again. Thus, the creature who happens to be the spiritual guard of the property has been able to execute its job perfectly.

The paper again identified *Trɔ yɔyɔ* (invocation of a deity) as another indigenous religious social control mechanism among the people. According to the informants, any native of Peki who resides outside Peki can equally invoke a hex in the name of *Duveh* especially, when one feels wrongly accused or cheated, etc. In that case, one can invoke the name of *Duveh* to ensure justice by just mentioning the name of the deity, or through libation. The most preferred drinks for the libation include gin, schnapps, palm wine (*deha*) and *wotsi*.⁴⁷ However, the person who invokes *Duveh* must as soon as possible report to the shrine for the necessary rituals attached to be done. This involves invoking a hex in the name of *Duveh* outside the borders of Peki and also invoking a hex in the name of *Duveh* without the permission of the chief. This is so, because failure to do so, one stands an equal chance of suffering at the hands of *Duveh*.⁴⁸

Similarly, concerning *Akagbe/Akanyinyi/ Akadodo* (trial by ordeal), this study discovered it as another surest and most effective mode of ensuring justice and fair play in the community. According to the informants, it is usually employed for example in situations where acts are committed and no one can possibly be linked to the crime or in a situation where a suspect has been charged accordingly

⁴⁷ *Wotsi* (a corn flour solution) and *deha* (palm wine) are the ideal drinks for libation (prayer), as they are considered natural, pure, and unadulterated. In addition, the variety is to provide for those ancestors and deities who do not drink alcohol.

⁴⁸ Findings of the Interview held with Togbe Gavu at Peki-Dzake. On 28th February, 2022.

but has refused to accept responsibility. As indicated by Togbe Gavu and Togbe Kumi, there are many forms of such trials—some of which are very simple, others are also very complex but they are all very effective. The process begins, where a complainant must be present before the priest to pay a fee and all the suspects must be present in the shrine before the process is conducted. Here, the suspects are given a chance to either confess or stand by their declared innocence. If no one confesses at this point, then the initiation begins formally. The priest uses either *akɔdu ka bge* (banana ordeal) or *Xaxawi ka gbe* (broom ordeal). In the first process, the bananas are kept in a pot and the priest invokes *Duveh* onto them and calls the complainant and suspects at random to eat the banana. The person at fault will choke on the banana. In the other process, *Xaxawi ka gbe* (broom ordeal), *Duveh* is invoked onto a broom and the priest draws a single broomstick and puts it on the shoulders of all the suspects where the expectant results occur. Within a space of two minutes, the broom coils around the neck of those who are guilty and suffocates them until they confess their crime.⁴⁹

Another indigenous religious apparatus of social control and crime prevention at the disposal of *Duveh* is *nutata* (oath swearing). It is a common practice and an element of indigenous social control and dispute resolution in Peki. It is believed to be one of the most certain means of attaining justice. Oath-taking is one of the traditional religious modes of social control through which the offender and the offended with respect to a dispute are revealed with the aim of ensuring social balance. It is also resorted to as a last and definite way of settling disputes relating to defamation, land, adultery, etc. This is done by invoking a dreaded deity like *Duveh* concerning a lengthened matter where the complexities of the matter render the whole matter impossible to know which party is wrong or right. If the magnitude of the crime is so severe as a consequence of which men cannot handle the intricacies of the matter, the suspect(s) are brought before *Duveh* to be acquitted or punished. The idea is that whoever has invoked the oath of the deity for example *Duveh* cannot run away from the sanctions of *Duveh*. Invoking an oath in the name of a tutelary deity like *Duveh* subjects both parties (the offended and the offender) to spiritual retribution. However, the guilt or innocence of one who swears by a dreaded guardian deity like *Duveh* is made certain when a named misfortune (mostly death) befalls the suspect within a certain time or not.⁵⁰

SUMMARY

From the above discussion, it appears that the proof of innocence or guilt surely lies with the supernatural. Another observation made was that in all these modes of crime control, it appears that the severity of the punishment commiserates the bad deed which has been done. The punishments attached to these mechanisms of social control are very definite and very swift, especially with the trial by ordeal. This proves that traditional religious modes of crime control such as the trial by ordeal have a potential deterrent capacity to discourage many people from engaging in criminal acts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper postulates the need to have an indigenous agency to certify and mandate trustworthy priests to be in charge of religious means of social control to legitimize it. This is because, despite the influence of foreign religious values and some secularizing trends, the indigenous services are nicodemusly patronized and explored on large scales. These people consider traditional religious mechanisms of crime control, as free from human influence that is; the deities cannot be bribed—the reason for the high patronage it continues to receive. The paper recommends that traditional leaders must take relevant steps toward educating community members, especially individuals as well as immigrants on the rules, values and norms of the community. In addition, the general taboos of *Duveh*

⁴⁹ Findings from the interview held with Togbe Gavu and Togbe Kumi.

⁵⁰ The offended may ask the offender to invoke the oath of a dreaded deity of his (the offended) choosing as evidence of his blamelessness. Also, the suspects may also choose to swear the oath in the name of another powerful deity like *Abia*, *Dente Kosi*, *Togbe Tun* to prove his blamelessness. Given that the offended agrees to the suspect's offer to take the oath, the idea is that the matter has been given to the deity for divine adjudication. The guilty one may incur the wrath of the deity which may be expressed in terms of the conditional hex they invoked on themselves. What is more terrible is that the lineage of the guilty one may suffer as well. (interview with Togbe Gavu at Peki-Dzake. 25th February, 2022)

must be documented taught and explained to the youth within the community. This will make them aware of the punishments associated with the violation of such taboos.

CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this study has been to identify the effectiveness of the shrine in maintaining social order in Ghana using *Duveh* in Peki, to explore some of the traditional religious modes of crime control and some taboos associated with the shrine that engenders social order. The study has indicated that regardless of the many changes which have taken place in the socio-cultural space of Ghana, the indigenous religious modes of crime control and prevention have not changed. This is as a result of the widely acknowledged notion of severity and the inescapable sanctions of the supernatural which is considered enough to deter potential criminals in a given traditional society in Ghana. The paper pointed out that, indigenous religious means of social control and crime prevention have the ability to erect an unsurmountable psychic barrier against the escape of supernatural sanctions, which have the effect of discouraging crimes even at the initial stages. The researchers are of the view that regardless of the influence of modernity, formal education, migration, Christianity and Islam, the Ghanaian is aware of the potency/efficacy of the deities. The necessary steps, therefore, need to be taken to include them in restoring law and order.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Michael Kwadwo Ntiamoah, (MPhil). (PhD. Cand.) is a Lecturer at the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Elysium Ameyibor Orison, is a graduate student of the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.