

An Evaluation Of Akan And Konkomba Witchcraft Trials & Beliefs In Ghana: In Dialogue With The Biblical, Anthropological And Psychiatrists Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The study illustrates how witchcraft accusations are confirmed and how the accused are tried in the Akan and Konkomba context in Ghana. It further examines the legitimacy of witchcraft beliefs through dialogue with the biblical, anthropological and psychiatrist's perspectives. The methodology used in the qualitative research was the interpretive paradigm which explored the views of 40 Akan and 20 Konkomba respondents through interviews. Other kinds of literature were used as secondary sources in the discourse to triangulate the findings. The study findings suggest that those who often lead the witchcraft trials among the Akan are the chiefs and traditional priests (*akomfo*) while the chief priest and landowner or the *Utindana* leads the trials in the Konkomba context at the Gnani witch camp in the Yendi municipality in Northern Ghana. Furthermore, there are similarities in the processes of witchcraft trials in the Akan and Konkomba contexts as well as divergences. The legitimacy of the beliefs in the activities of witchcraft in Ghana was tested from other perspectives and some of the beliefs were putative while others were negated. The study postulates that witchcraft beliefs in Ghana cannot be negated entirely. The research contributes to knowledge by highlighting the gaging of witchcraft trials and beliefs in Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

This discourse evaluates the validity of witch trials as practised in the Akan and Konkomba traditions of Ghana. The study further examines the "Ghanaian beliefs in witchcraft" as opined by Agyapong from the biblical, anthropological and Psychiatric perspectives.¹ Witchcraft trials in Akan and Konkomba traditions have been examined from different test tubes to ascertain their legitimacy, to suggest the way forward on how to approach such issues in Ghana. The author of this study interviewed persons from the Akan and Konkomba setting to ascertain how witchcraft is detected and to find out the processes of witchcraft trials for accused persons in the milieu. Witchcraft accusation is rampant in Ghana and rarely will a person not point fingers at a witch somewhere when an unpleasant incident occurs.² The northern part of Ghana, where all the witch camps in Ghana are situated, have experienced colossal abuses and ill-treatment of people who are accused of witchcraft possession as well as among the Akan of southern Ghana.³ Jayon, a casualty of witch accusation at the Gnani witch camp in the interview posits that "I am not a witch, but was accused of witchcraft when a snake bite killed a young girl who had gone to fetch water".⁴ The source of evil amongst the Akan and Konkomba of Ghana is generally attributed to the deeds of witches and *that leads to rampant accusations in the ambiance*.⁵ The Ghanaian experience of the beliefs in the activities of witchcraft is legitimate as some people claim to have observed the

¹ Kwasi Atta Agyapong, "Beliefs in the Activities of Witchcraft in Ghana," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies -5th Anniversary Special Edition* 6, no. 6 (2020): 281–89, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2020092>.

² Kwasi Atta Agyapong, "Pastoral And Theological Responses To The Effects Of Witchcraft Beliefs In Ghana," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)* 1, no. 5 (2020): 174–84, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2020096>.

³ Agyapong, "Pastoral And Theological Responses To The Effects Of Witchcraft Beliefs In Ghana," 175.

⁴ Agyapong, "Pastoral And Theological Responses To The Effects Of Witchcraft Beliefs In Ghana," 177.

⁵ Agyapong, "Beliefs in the Activities of Witchcraft in Ghana," 176. Italics are mine for emphasis.

phenomenon while others claim to be sufferers of their doings.⁶

The Bible's coverage of the phrase "witch" is quite insignificant for any evocative discussion but demons are often inferred to and since both seemingly carry the same connotation in the Ghanaian context, this article uses the two words: witch and demons in the discussion. The term witch and demons are used interchangeably throughout the text. Onyinah has already fused the words in his work and named it "witchdemonology", which according to him is a synthesis of Akan's concept of witchcraft and the Western concept of demons to depict contemporary understanding of evil powers in Ghana.⁷ Onyinah asserts that, in his study of the Akan people of Ghana (anthropology), the abosom could be consulted for protection against calamities and to ascertain the underlying causes of evil and also to know the outcome of an enterprise one intends to undertake. Akrong posits that witchcraft is an interpretative scheme for dealing with misfortune in Ghana.⁸

Field's ethno-psychiatric study of the Ga people in Southern Ghana concludes that witches are mainly those suffering from a mental obsession which is also affirmed by Debrunner.⁹ Jung also explains witchcraft as a "catalytic exteriorization phenomenon" which he explains to be the outward projection of the mental processes to either cause good or evil as in Akan and Konkomba witchcraft possession.¹⁰ This study reflects on the Akan and Konkomba witchcraft tests and then evaluates both trials. The rest of the study focuses on the views of witchcraft from the perspective of the biblical, psychiatrist and anthropology.

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical and philosophical perspective that informs this work is the interpretive paradigm traced from the work of Max Weber (1864-1930), who argued that the understanding of the social world can be enhanced when the effort is made to comprehend it from the viewpoints of the people being studied.¹¹ This study explores a social or human problem by building a complex holistic picture, analyzing words rather than numbers and providing detailed information on the views of 60 participants in their natural context or setting.¹² The 60 participants' sample size was due to manageability while the case selection was because it is a typical instance.¹³ The homogeneous sampling strategy was also adopted in the study.¹⁴

The data gathered in the study echoes the experiences, feelings and judgments of the individuals and their contexts.¹⁵ This study through semi-structured interviews gathers the raw data as the interviewees present their experiences, beliefs, opinions and judgments in their context concerning the phenomenon being studied.

Human Experience is shaped in particular contexts and cannot be removed from those contexts. Thus, qualitative research attempts to be as naturalistic as possible, meaning the contexts must not be constructed or modified. Research must take place in the normal, everyday context of the researched.¹⁶

The study was conducted in a particular context and for that matter, the Akan and Konkomba contexts. The Akan are among the four major ethnolinguistic groupings in Ghana.¹⁷ The northern region of Ghana was also included in the context of this study since all the five witch camps in Ghana are situated there, especially the Yendi municipality where the Gnani witch camp is found where the inhabitants are mostly Konkomba.

WITCHCRAFT BELIEFS IN GHANA

There are varying views with regards to the beliefs in the activities of witchcraft in Ghana. In pre-Christian religions in Ghana, realities are made-up of beings and objects imbued with fluctuating grades and potentials of supernatural power.¹⁸ People live in fear and suspicion because of witches; Infant mortality, mysterious deaths, chronic diseases, natural disasters and business failures are attributed to the work of witches.¹⁹ The corporeal realm and the realm of the spirit are not separate from each other, but are bound up in one whole: nothing is purely natural, since spirits imbue everything and vicissitudes transpire as a result of one spirit acting upon another.²⁰ Agyapong's work on the beliefs in

⁶ Agyapong, "Beliefs in the Activities of Witchcraft in Ghana," 282.

⁷ Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2012), 171.

⁸ Abraham Akrong, "Neo-Witchcraft Mentality in Popular Christianity," *Research Review New Series* 16, no. 1 (2000): 1-12.

⁹ Margaret J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (London: Oxford university press, 1937).

¹⁰ Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe Translation by Clara Winston and Richard Winston (London: Collins and Routledge, 1963), 152.

¹¹ Hineh Kusi, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers* (Accra: Emmpong Press, 2012), 16.

¹² John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (London: Sage Publications, 1998).

¹³ Martyn Denscombe, *A Good Research Guide for Small Scale Social Research Projects* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003), 33.

¹⁴ Kusi, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers*, 83.

¹⁵ Gajendra K. Verma & Kanka Mallick, *Researching Education: Perspectives and Techniques*. (London: Falmer Press, 1999), 27.

¹⁶ Joe L. Kincheolo, *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as the Path to Empowerment*. (London: Falmer, 1991) 144

¹⁷ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 1.

¹⁸ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*, 83.

¹⁹ Kwasi Atta Agyapong, *The Effects of the Belief in the Activities of Witchcraft in Ghana: A Case Study of Asuboni District of the Church of Pentecost* (Berlin: LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2020), 5.

²⁰ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 83.

the activities of witchcraft discusses the witchcraft theories in Ghana and posits that: “the challenges of persons are concocted by others and evil is mostly caused by witches and the generally accepted witchcraft beliefs are: the destruction of marriages, causing of barrenness, flying in the night, drinking human blood and eating their flesh, afflicting people with poverty, sickness, stealing, lying and causing misfortune to befall people and unemployment.”²¹

AKAN WITCHCRAFT TEST

In the Akan context, witchcraft accusation is dependent on several factors including the behavior of a person and the cursing or pronouncement from a person which comes to pass.²² Also when the priest of a deity has revelations by their oracles or gods, it can confirm witchcraft.²³ When misfortunes or evil happens around a person strangely, like *atofo wuo* (unnatural death) and when the abosom (gods) attack those possessed with witchcraft of which Akan term as *bosom abo no* (the god have struck him/her).²⁴

Badu posits that in the traditional Akan culture, families or individuals normally seek protection from a deity or bosom against evil and witchcraft destructive powers. When the families or individuals who are being protected by the abosom are attacked by witches, the *abosom* has a duty to strike the witches and make them confess their evil deeds.²⁵ Generally, those who are stricken by the abosom for attacking the people they protect often die after confessions of their evil deeds are made. Badu narrated an incident, where a woman whose children were not prospering in life despite all their hardworking and drudgeries, came to his shrine to seek help from his *abosom*. The *abosom* later struck the same woman who petitioned it, as she was the witch causing the family’s endeavors to fail and after a confession to witchcraft possession, she died.²⁶

Onyinah asserts that, originally, it was the king’s/ chief’s courts that dealt with witchcraft issues.²⁷ Onyinah further posits that, if a person cursed and the pronouncements came to pass, it betrayed the person’s involvement to witchcraft possession and was impeached at the chiefs’ palace. The accused witch was allowed to chew the bark of the *odum* tree (guineense) and the vomiting of the poison was well-thought-out to be an indication of innocence on the phenomenon accused of.²⁸

Other witchcraft trials to ascertain the legitimacy of witchcraft possession according to Onyinah was the *ofunu soa* (corpse carrying), where the spirit of the deceased was implored to assist the living to find who killed them.²⁹ The *ofunu soa* trial method is such that, the spirit of the deceased is said to possess the carrier of the corpse and thereby pouncing on the culprit or witch who killed the person after which the accused would be sent to the chief’s court for a hearing.

KONKOMBA WITCHCRAFT TEST

This study amongst the Konkomba was conducted at Gnani Witch Camp in the Yendi Municipality where the inmates are mostly Konkomba. Gnani *Tindan*, as it is locally known, is one of those safe spaces where the *Usoan* (the Konkomba rendition for accused witches) and wizards fleeing persecution or execution can find refuge. It is the only witch camp in the northern region of Ghana that houses wizards (males who have witchcraft spirits). Witch camps in Ghana often house women but the Gnani *Tindan* witch camp has men as inmates. Their life lacks the most basic needs: food, water, shelter, and clothing, but most of all, human recognition, companionship, and love.³⁰

It is very common in the Yendi Area where the camp is situated to be accused of *Kisoak* (witchcraft) when evil befalls another person. One of the respondents at the witch camp said “One girl went to fetch water and was bitten by a snake and on her way to the hospital she died and I was the suspected snake who bit her to death.”³¹ Powuni asserts that “a family member complained of having dreams of me chasing her and I was accused of witchcraft and sent to the camp.”³² When one is accused, the next line of action is to test the veracity of the accusation and thus rituals are performed on the accused at the witch camp. It was observed that some of the witch camp dwellers were not pleased with their stay at the witch camp but currently have no option. Life at the camp is horrible and very pathetic as they lack the basic amenities needed for human survival. The Chief Priest and *Utindana* (landowner) of the witch camp Shei Alhassan said during the

²¹ Agyapong, “Beliefs in the Activities of Witchcraft in Ghana,” 288.

²² Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, 60.

²³ Personal interview conducted by the Author with Nana Kofi Badu on October 20, 2018 at Nkawkaw (practicing fetish priest for 43 years).

²⁴ Personal Interview conducted by author with Lucy Agyapong (An Akan and a pastor’s wife) at Nkawkaw on May 15, 2020.

²⁵ Personal interview conducted by author with Nana Kofi Badu on 29th September, 2020 at Nkawkaw

²⁶ Personal interview conducted by author with Nana Kofi Badu on 29th September, 2020 at Nkawkaw.

²⁷ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, 60.

²⁸ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, 60.

²⁹ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, 61.

³⁰ Jon P. Kirby, “Toward a Christian Response to Witchcraft in Northern Ghana,” *20 International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (2015), 19.

³¹ Personal interview conducted by author with Jayon Mpagna (accused witch) at Gnani witch camp on November 11, 2018)

³² Personal interview conducted by author with Powuni idongnan (accused witch) on November 2, 2018 at Gnani witch camp

interview that, the camp is a relief to those accused of witchcraft as their families and relatives do not want to see them anymore, but at the camp, they will have peace.³³

This camp was founded some 380 years ago when a hunter discovered the shrine at the place and stayed there. The hunter's sister was accused of witchcraft and she was sent to that shrine to test its legitimacy and thereafter the camp became a place where witchcraft accusations are either affirmed or denounced.³⁴ The *Utindan* are the successors of this hunter who discovered the shrine and lived there. The chief priest in the interview said that the *liwaal* (god) in charge of the witch camp and all its rituals is *Shamshei*. The *liwaal shamshei* is responsible for the affirmation or denial of witchcraft accusations. Utindan Shei Alhassan said in the interview that, when one is accused and he/she confesses to witchcraft, the rituals performed will minimize the witchcraft powers and make the witch powerless and harmless. This is how the rituals are performed according to the Utindan: water is poured in the *kiyik* (calabash) and a ukolo (fowl) is slaughtered and its blood poured into the calabash. Soil from the shrine is also put in the calabash to make the concoction wherewith the accused witch shall drink. The accused witch must confess his/her evil if he/she is a witch, otherwise, death is inevitable after drinking the concoction. On the other hand if the accused denies the accusation and is truly innocent, though he/she may drink the concoction, he/she would not be harmed by the *liwaal shamshei*. Thus, the concoction is meant to exterminate the life of real witches who deny the accusation or witches who can confirm the accusation and have their powers minimized or rendered harmless. If one is affirmed a witch or otherwise, it behooves on the accused or the relatives who accused him/her to determine whether he/she goes back to where they stayed or joins the people at the witch camp; nevertheless, the *liwaal shamshei* permits the accused to dwell at the witch camp without hesitation.

EVALUATION OF THE WITCHCRAFT TRIALS OF THE AKAN AND KONKOMBA

The witchcraft trials in Akan and Konkomba postulates that witchcraft when legitimized in a person is often minimized through the concoctions they are made to drink at the trial center. It was also realized that the accused needed to confess the truth before the rites are performed on them, otherwise; they will die when the concoctions prepared are drunk

The author finds reasons for what the real constituents of the concoction are made up of, which can kill the accused when guilty as suggested. Could it be that, it is the spirits of the deity which kills or the potions itself that kills? It is suggested that more research be conducted by clinically examining the potions if they have the propensity to end life. The nation Ghana has laws enforced by the constitution of the land, and how legitimate will it be, for a rite that carries within its own power, the aptness to end the life of a person? The author recommends that further research should be conducted on the number of people that die in relation to witchcraft accusations and trials in Ghana so as to help legislators understand what is at stake. The acceptability of the trials cannot be affirmed nor denied as both the Akan and Konkomba claim that the spirits in charge of the rituals during the trials lead and there are no test tubes for the activities of spiritualists.

That notwithstanding, the priests in charge of the deities must receive approval from the Food and Drugs Authority before administering the concoction or potions to perceived accused witches.

THE PENTECOSTAL / CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS PERSPECTIVE (BIBLICAL)

Christians comprise more than two-thirds of the entire population of Ghana and are thereby a major stakeholder in all issues that affect the nation.³⁵ The Population and Housing Census of 2000 by the Ghana Statistical Service in 2002, for the first time had distinct records for Pentecostals and Charismatics, indicating that they are a major orientation affecting the nation.³⁶

According to the Ghana Statistical Service census for 2012, Christians make up 71.2 percent of the population, with 28.3 percent of the total population and over half of all Christians in Greater Accra regarding themselves as Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians. Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians have become the largest religious denomination in Ghana³⁷ and as result, the author seeks to verify witchcraft beliefs in Ghana from the perspective of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians.

The Pentecostal /Charismatic Christian perspective and understanding of scriptures shall form the basis of the dialogue to ascertain the correctness of witchcraft beliefs in Ghana.³⁸

³³ Interview by the author with Shei Alhassan (Chief Priest of Gnani witch camp) on November 2, 2018 at Gnani witch camp.

³⁴ Interview by the author with Shei Alhassan (Chief Priest of Gnani witch camp) on November 2, 2018 at Gnani witch camp.

³⁵ Agyapong, "Pastoral And Theological Responses To The Effects Of Witchcraft Beliefs In Ghana," 181.

³⁶ Marleen De Witte, "Pentecostal Forms across Religious Divides: Media, Publicity, and the Limits of an Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism," *Religions (MDPI)*, no. 9 (2018): 217, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9070217>.

³⁷ Ghana Statistical Service. 2012. Population and Housing Census 2010. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.

³⁸ All biblical passages are quoted from the American Standard Version (ASV) except otherwise indicated

Witchcraft beliefs on marriage and fertility

The first marriage between Adam and Eve was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden, where He commanded them to be 'fruitful and multiply' (through childbirth). Marriage, therefore, is the oldest institution established by God. "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them and blessed them to be fruitful and multiply."³⁹ God's blessings to His children according to the Bible include having a successful marriage and giving birth to children. Any thwart, in the above blessing, needs to be probed into to know why. Generally, there is a belief in Ghana that witches are responsible for matrimonial destruction and further causing barrenness in marriages.⁴⁰ Infertility amongst the Akan of Ghana is seen as evil and often attributed to the work of witches. A popular and traditional assertion of victims of infertility in Ghana is *se me kɔ awadee na manwo ba a wɔde prae apra me yam*, the literal meaning in English is that 'if I get married and cannot give birth to children, then witches have used a broom to sweep my womb.'⁴¹ Barrenness in marriage amongst married couples in the Akan society is good grounds for divorce.

The Bible postulates that God said, "Thou shalt be blessed above all peoples: there shall not be male or female barren among you or among your cattle."⁴² The scripture above suggests that infertility becomes a humiliation or a sign of curse or by witchcraft manipulation as is believed generally amongst Ghanaians. Despite the command to get married and be fruitful (giving birth) as enshrined in the Bible, there are situations where some biblical characters did not marry and others married but struggled to give birth. The Ghanaian belief in the activities of witchcraft hypothesizes that witches destroy or inhibit marriages and also strike couples with sterility. That notwithstanding, Abraham and Sarah struggled with sterility and the Lord had to re-assure them of His promise as captured: "and I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?"⁴³

Abraham and Sarah's infertility was not seen as a reproach from witches or demons because God was at the helm of affairs. Biblical characters like Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 24:60), Jacob and Rachael (Genesis 29:31) and Elkanah and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1-2) had cases of infertility for a period as follows: "And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife because she was barren. And Jehovah was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived."⁴⁴ In 1 Samuel 1:2, 6 it is read that "Elkanah had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And her rival provoked her sore, to make her fret because Jehovah had shut up her womb."

In the case of Hannah's infertility, God had shut her womb and thus preventing her from being fruitful. Juxtaposing the act of God in shutting the womb and the Ghanaians belief of witchcraft inflicting one with barrenness has points of congruence as well as divergences. The resemblances lie in the fact that spirits can shut the womb and cause barrenness while the departures lie in the fact that, in Ghana's case the ones who shut the womb are the witches, whereas the biblical example brings out that God is the one who shuts the womb. In the case of Rachael, as recorded in Genesis 29:31, the Lord opened Leah's womb and Rachel was barren."⁴⁵ Rachel's barrenness was connected with God and not a witch.

Why will Ghana's case be different from what transpired in the Bible in this regard? The biblical characters involved teach lessons that, God can sanction infertility in some women for his own purpose, so they can carry out a special mission or assignment at his own time.

Biblical perspectives however postulate that God is spirit (John 4:24) and can cause barrenness in marriage, leading to a conjecture that spirits like witchcraft can cause infertility in marriage. Witchcraft is a counterfeit and satanic spirit whose influence cannot subdue those with the Holy Spirit of God or the children of God.⁴⁶ It therefore, can be clinched that all children of God who may be experiencing infertility cannot attribute their plight to witches. If a believer in Christ assumes or thinks that a spirit might be causing infertility in him/her, then he/she can be sure that God is at work just like his dealings with Sarah, Rebecca and Hannah.

This notwithstanding, other physical and biological challenges may cause infertility amongst spouses.⁴⁷ The Bible also affirms in Genesis 30:23 that infertility is a reproach "And she conceived, and bare a son: and said, God hath taken away my reproach" and Elizabeth said in Luke 1:25, "Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men". On the other hand, God does what is good for his people and can choose to make one sterile, for his own glory.

³⁹ Genesis 1:27-28.

⁴⁰ Agyapong, "Beliefs in the Activities of Witchcraft in Ghana," 284.

⁴¹ Owusu Brempong, "They Have Used a Broom to Sweep My Womb: The Concept of Witchcraft in Ghana," *Research Review (NS)* 12, no. 1&2 (1996): 42-50.

⁴² Deuteronomy 7:14

⁴³ Genesis 17:16-17.

⁴⁴ Genesis 25:21.

⁴⁵ Genesis 29:31.

⁴⁶ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, 278.

⁴⁷ Agyapong, "Beliefs in the Activities of Witchcraft in Ghana," 284.

The belief that witches fly at night

Most Ghanaians believe that witches fly in the night to attend meetings or to cause harm.⁴⁸ This article seeks to examine the above assertions from the biblical perspective. Angels were created by God and can fly as indicated in the Scriptures.⁴⁹ According to Psalm 18:10, “And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.” Also, Isaiah 6:2 reads, “Above it stood the Seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly” “Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation” according to Daniel 9:21. “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time from the face of the serpent.”⁵⁰

The above biblical passages reveal that angels fly and people can be empowered to fly as in the case of the woman in Revelation 12:14, though, the expression may be allegoric. The Author’s view is that there is no real reference in the Bible with regards to witches flying at night as gathered from the Ghanaian perspective. That notwithstanding, the allies of Satan who were sent down from Heaven fly because they were once angels of God. It therefore stands that witches flying at night to meetings is not a biblical teaching, however, most Ghanaians believe that witches fly in the night to embark on their evil agendas and to attend meetings. There is therefore a contention with the bible when Ghanaians including some church leaders interpret dreams in which people fly to mean witchcraft possession. Dreams can be due to various reasons and equating dreams in which people fly to witchcraft possession makes the phenomenon weird and unfounded.

That notwithstanding, the woman in Revelation 12:14 who was empowered to fly, whether literally or figuratively, suggests the possibility of flying when a person is empowered or endowed with a supernatural power. The Ghanaian belief in flying seems to be authentic as angels who are spirits fly and a woman in the book of revelation was also empowered to fly. Onyinah asserts that witchcraft is related to supernatural powers that inhabit persons and therefore verify the possibility of flying by witches as suggested by some Ghanaians during the author’s interviews conducted.⁵¹

Drinking human blood and eating human flesh

The phenomenon under investigation in the Ghanaian view suggests that witches eat the flesh of humans and drink their blood. This aspect of the study examines the possibility of witches to eat human flesh and drink their blood from the biblical perspective. The Bible has instructed that eating blood is forbidden. It is recorded in Genesis 9:4 that, “flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat”. Moses, the prophet of God also admonished the people of God in Leviticus 7:26 that “ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings”. The Bible further indicates the reason for forbidding the people of God in the eating of blood. “For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off” (Leviticus 17:14).

Additionally, Leviticus 19:26 indicates that “Ye shall not eat anything with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times”. The above Scriptures teach that no person is allowed to eat the blood of any manner or kind and not even through the employment of witchcraft powers to do so. That notwithstanding it had been gathered from the data collected about the beliefs in the activities of witches in Ghana that some persons who are witches drink human blood and eat their flesh which scripture vehemently frowns upon. An incident in scripture where two women agreed to boil their children and eat them is found in 2 Kings 6:28-29.

And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, this woman said unto me, give thy son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

From a Ghanaian perspective, witches are capable of handing over relatives to be eaten by colleague witches at meetings and could that possibly be related to the incident in 2 Kings 6:28-29? Is there a possibility of these two women being equated to the Ghanaian witches as they fed on the flesh of human beings as witches in Ghana are believed to do? The women fell foul of the law of God regarding the eating of blood. John 6:53 postulates Jesus saying: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves”. Jesus has stated that humans can eat his flesh and drink his blood which seems to violate the initial statutes declared by God that no human is permitted to drink blood (Lev. 19:26). Jesus further authenticated an aspect of the command that blood eating is forbidden by referring to that same text that, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves”.

⁴⁸ Hans. W. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and Its Effects on the Akan Tribes* (Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot Ltd., 1959), 56-57.

⁴⁹ 2 Samuel 22:11.

⁵⁰ Revelation 12:14

⁵¹ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, 51.

John 6:53b affirm that life is in the blood. Why will Jesus break the initial premise of the blood being forbidden but affirm the latter part of the same text that, the life of a person is found in his blood. Does it suggest that, if one drinks the blood of another, he /she has received the other person's life ? How does this contrast with blood transfusion? Can the Jehovah Witnesses group be justifiable as they refuse blood transfusion due to the life which is in the blood? The two women in 2 Kings 6:28-29 and Jesus's assertion in John 6:53 seem to suggest that it is possible for humans to eat the human body and drink their blood if the passages are to be translated literally as in Pentecostal hermeneutics.⁵² The two women who ate the child was a real incident, but Jesus assertion seems figurative and should be accorded as such. Since the two women of whom the Bible did not actually define their spiritual state as either possessing witchcraft or being demon-possessed persons, cannot be categorically said to be witches. Cannibalism and curing some diseases like Parkinson disease with the aborted fetus of pregnant mothers may also be implicated if eating of human flesh or blood equates witchcraft possession.

Poverty, sickness and other social vices

The Bible speaks of how God created man to become fruitful and multiply in all their endeavors (Genesis 1:22, 28, 8:17, 9:1, 9:7, 17:20, 28:3). God never intended that the man he created may suffer lack and want and not to talk of poverty. However, the sin of man marred the beauty of God's repository and agenda for mankind to prosper.

Most Ghanaians then believe that poverty is bad and the life threatening forces (witches) are often responsible. In the Bible, there are cases of poor people and some are Naomi (Ruth 1:20-21, 2:2), The widow of Zarephath (1 kings 17:10) and Lazarus (Luke 16:20). In the scenarios of the poor who have been cited above, none of them accused evil spirits or witchcraft and for afflicting them with poverty. Naomi, on the other hand, said "God Almighty has afflicted me" while the widow of Zarephath and Lazarus seemed to blame no one for their poverty. The biblical implication on poverty seems to suggest that, there were no incidences where individuals were afflicted with poverty by witches. The story of the widow of Zarephath further suggests that children of God could be poor as the prophet who perhaps died in poverty leaving behind debts to be paid by the widow and children.

The incongruity lies with how God might instruct man to be fruitful but some of his children, even God's prophet, lived and died as a poor person (2 kings 4:1), just as Lazarus a righteous person who went to heaven after death but lived as a poor man on earth (Luke 16:25). The biblical passages delved into suggest that poverty is not necessarily inflicted by witches or evil spirits. Poverty can even be an act of God as Naomi declared.

With reference to witches causing sickness, there are incidences in scripture where Christ cast out a demon out of a person to heal their diseases (Matt 4:24, Luke 9:42) implying that evil spirits can cause sicknesses in persons. Jesus further attributes some sicknesses to sin (Matt 9:2, Mark 2:4-5). It can also be implied that disobedience to God's word can make one sick: greed, anger, bitterness, overeating, or wrong eating habits have been proven to cause sicknesses and the scriptures admonish readers to refrain from them. The belief that witchcraft is spiritual affirms that, since evil spirits can cause sicknesses as Jesus said, then it is possible that witches can make one sick, that is not to say that all sicknesses are witchcraft induced as biblical perspectives have suggested divergent causes of sicknesses.

Misfortune

Witchcraft is believed to be responsible for all bad events or misfortunes including illness, poverty, accidents and a host of other social and political problems bringing spiritual insecurity.⁵³ Misfortune may include illnesses, a bad marriage, rebellion of children, financial difficulties, inexplicable troubles and many others.⁵⁴ Ghanaians Pentecostals stress not only the need for regeneration but also warfare against evil spirits who are believed to be the underlying causes of poverty, suffering and other vicissitudes of life.⁵⁵

Ghanaians mostly struggle with misfortune because their contextualization of misfortune mainly stems from two angles: misfortunes are always caused by witches or evil spirits and God's goodness will not permit nor sanction misfortune.⁵⁶

However, Ntummy argues that, the notion that evil and suffering taint God's goodness is often related more to Ghanaians lack of faith in the goodness and sovereignty of God.⁵⁷ It is noteworthy to consider that contrary to Parrinder's argument that an enlightened religion, education, medicine and better social and racial conditions will help to dispel witchcraft beliefs seems not validated because all the above classes in the society seem to affirm the belief just as all the

⁵² Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 85-86.

⁵³ Allan H Anderson, *Witchdemonology, Witchcraft and Deliverance in African Pentecostalism*, ed. Lord & Clifton R. Clarke Elorm-donkor (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 122.

⁵⁴ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "Coping with Evil in Ghanaian Pentecostalism," *Exchange* 43 (2014): 254-72.

⁵⁵ Quayesi-Amakye, "Coping with Evil in Ghanaian Pentecostalism" 258.

⁵⁶ Quayesi-Amakye, "Coping with Evil in Ghanaian Pentecostalism." 265.

⁵⁷ Quayesi-Amakye, "Coping with Evil in Ghanaian Pentecostalism, 265.

other Ghanaians.⁵⁸ The Bible perhaps records various misfortunes that happened to different people at different times and periods because of different reasons or “causal orders”. The Bible traces misfortunes to sin. Genesis 3:16-19 explains the death declared for Adam and Eve for their disobedience to God. Numbers 12:10-12 also brings out Miriam’s Leprosy for speaking against God’s servant; Numbers 16:29-32 addresses Korah, Dathan, and Abiram’s rebellion and their unusual deaths. Romans 6:23 reads that the wages of sin is death. Acts 5:1-6 comments on how Ananias and Saphira’s lie, which caused their subsequent death. Acts 13:8-13 also highlights the source of the blindness of Elymas the sorcerer.

Misfortune like death could also be natural (Gen 25:8: Abraham’s death, 1 Chron 29:28: David’s death). Quayesi-Amakye places natural evil under moral and societal evil. Moral evil is a deviation from natural or moral laws and has its subsequent repercussions, while societal evil emanates from a society’s negative attitude or negligence toward life and its ramifications. Misfortunes may also be sanctioned by God for His own purpose and glory. In 1 Kings 14:13-18, Jeroboam’s son died because God found something good in him. Also in Job 1:11-12, Job’s troubles were permitted by God. 2 Corinthians 12:7-8 also presents Paul’s thorn in the flesh whilst John 9:1-3 has a record of the man born blind for God’s glory. Misfortunes may also be the work of evil spirits (2 Tim 4:14-18: Paul’s deliverance, Acts 19:14-16: seven sons of Sceva who were rendered naked and wounded by evil spirits).

It has therefore been identified that misfortune can be an act of God as well as being a natural phenomenon or orchestrated by evil spirits including witches.

Beating / Camping of witches

King Saul embarked on a campaign to do away with all persons who practised witchcraft or wizardry and those who had familiar spirits in the land of Israel (1 Sam 28:3). Saul might have taken a clue from the scriptures below as far as annihilating of witches is concerned. In Exodus 22:18 God admonishes: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live (KJV).” In Leviticus 20:27, “A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them (KJV).”

These Bible passages suggest a kind of eradication agenda towards those possessing witchcraft and familiar spirits. Could this be equated to the current challenge of Africa and the brutalities launched on supposed witches? Witchcraft indictment is a lethal epidemic in Tanzania, leading to an average of ten murders per week.⁵⁹ “...I was blamed for all these deaths in the village, wrapped up in fishing nets, and beaten up severely.” So recounted Dedjani Bora, an Indian star who is a javelin thrower. There has also been the recent target of witch-hunting in the northeastern Indian state of Assam.⁶⁰

Erstwhile to the Enlightenment in Europe, thousands of accused witches were killed.⁶¹ “Martha Corey and seven others were convicted of witchcraft and hanged in Salem, Massachusetts, September 22, 1692.”⁶²

In Ghana six witch camps are in existence to house accused or suspected witches who are chastised and dumped there, despite the difficult situation prevalent at the camp without access to the basic needs of humankind.

The New Testament data of the Holy Scriptures does not endorse the eradication or torturing of witches as captured in the Old Testament. Onyinah postulates that the word “witch” is not found in the synoptic gospels.⁶³ Jesus Christ did not refer to the term witchcraft in the scriptures and therefore did not prescribe any form of sanction for supposed or accused witches. Witchcraft has been included among the works of the flesh by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:19, hence no description or sanction was prescribed for them as in Old Testament that they could be stoned to death. Since the Bible is holistic in its teaching and should be interpreted as such, how should the supposed Ghanaian witches be handled in the light of scripture? The stigmatization of accused witches and their camping at various witch camps, when weighed holistically, denies the victim the love God demands to be expressed towards one another. Jesus affirms that the greatest of the entire commandments is love which supersedes all the other laws in the Scriptures (Mark 12:28-31). It should then be understood that the Bible frowns on all beliefs and practices that hurt fellow human beings thus denying them the love of God which is the central theme of the Scriptures.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The world Book Dictionary defines anthropology as the science of man that deals with his physical characteristics, origin and development of races and with the cultures, customs and beliefs of mankind. Anthropology is the science

⁵⁸ George Parrinder, *A Critical Study of the Belief in Witchcraft from the Records of Witch Hunting in Europe Yesterday and African Today* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 202-203.

⁵⁹ Philip Gibbs, “Beyond the Fence : Confronting Witchcraft Accusations in the Papua New Guinea Highlands,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 39, no. 1 (1973): 8–11; Christian Tsekpoe, *Response to Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, ed. Lord and Clifton R. Clarke Elorm-donkor (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 144.

⁶⁰ Robert J Priest et al., “Witchcraft and Mission Studies,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (2015), 1.

⁶¹ Gibbs, “Beyond the Fence : Confronting Witchcraft Accusations in the Papua New Guinea Highlands,” 10.

⁶² Priest et al., “Witchcraft and Mission Studies,” 2.

⁶³ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, 239.

of human beings, especially the study of people and their progenitors. With the definition above as the foci for this particular perspective, witchcraft has been an age-old social challenge that has to be battled with by almost all societies. The histories of witch tortures during the European inquiry before the Reformation have flavored witchcraft beliefs in more recent times. The utmost notable contribution of anthropological studies has been bringing to light that witchcraft has been encountered in virtually all continents of the world and it is still an important feature of contemporary times. Anthropologists have not actually dealt with the reality of witchcraft or the real activities of witches but they have sought to understand the social factors underlying witchcraft beliefs.

“Social anthropologists have been forced to interest themselves in spirit possession as a theme because they have been confronted with it personally in their field research.”⁶⁴ The western world battled with the same phenomenon years ago and people were accused and killed for witchcraft possession till the status quo was challenged to pave way for a scientific society that will make decisions based more on empiricism than on beliefs.⁶⁵ Africa has long held on to this phenomenon and its impact has greatly been felt and seems to prevent its indigenes from reasoning scientifically, which could account for her misery and poverty that abounds.

Anthropologists like Shweder indicate that some societies, like that of Job's comforters, systematically articulate a moral causal ontology—where every misfortune is due to one's own sin (maybe in an earlier life). But other societies operate with interpersonal causal ontologies, where other evil persons are understood as causing misfortune such as infertility, sickness, poverty and in such societies, Christians pray regularly for God to protect them from witches, an activity that Korean and contemporary American Christians do not practise.⁶⁶

The Ghanaian terrain is saturated with the beliefs and activities of witchcraft and a deviation from the accepted beliefs makes one look weird or being termed as a skeptic. In the Ghanaian religious (Christian, traditional) terrain, it is odd not to pray against the work of witches that instigates misfortune and evil against people. It is glaring that Ghanaians from their historical antecedents have believed in witchcraft to date and the data gathered from this research on witchcraft beliefs and activities, stem from the culture and paradigm that has pertained from time immemorial and perhaps there is now a need to reshape some of the hypotheses or beliefs that may be found wanting, as they are being tested in other laboratories by researchers. Some of the social factors outlined by some social anthropologists as being among the causes of witchcraft beliefs are misfortunes, poverty, an outbreak of diseases and others. The above-mentioned factors, however, do not justify nor defy the beliefs and there is a need to further resort to the other means of testing the beliefs in the activities of witchcraft.

PSYCHIATRISTS PERSPECTIVE

This particular laboratory will examine some of the beliefs of witchcraft from the psychiatrist's perspective. The study finds out if the beliefs and activities of witches can be explained away psychiatrically, to affirm Field's case study and assertion that witches are mainly those “mentally afflicted with obsession.”⁶⁷

Cases like people's confession of flying in the night could be psychiatrically viewed as hallucinations or delusions. Hallucination is a mental disorder that causes one to see images, hear sounds or smell things that may seem real to the victims but do not really exist. Hallucinations are perceptions of objects with no reality, usually arising from disorders of the nervous system. Ghanaian witchcraft beliefs and activities views flying in the night, drinking human blood and eating human flesh as witchcraft, but psychiatrists often attribute this to mental disorders that need medical attention to rectify such anomalies.

Additionally, delusions being a mental disorder in psychiatry can make an individual subscribe to beliefs that are not true. This can be used to explain the situation of those who confess the possession of witchcraft powers as asserted by Debrunner upon his hearing at an anti-witchcraft shrine.⁶⁸ Additionally, the Ghanaian belief that misfortunes, poverty, unemployment, poor governance are the work of witches can also be explained away with this mental condition.

Most psychiatric conditions like depression, dementia, paranoid schizophrenia, hebephrenic, catatonia, etc., to an extent, resemble the Ghanaian view of the beliefs and the activities of witchcraft. Can the psychiatrist view discussed here affirm Field's theory that witches are mainly those mentally afflicted with an obsession? The Author thinks to an extent, that this can be justified but that does not however deny the existence of witchcraft or people possessed with evil powers because the biblical perspective has affirmed that there are people who are possessed with evil powers, some of which Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul cast out of people. people. Moreover Kofi Badu posits that, Jung's assertion of

⁶⁴ Alan R. Tippett, *Spirit Possession as It Relates in to Culture and Religion: In Demon Possession*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1975), 145.

⁶⁵ Priest et al., “Witchcraft and Mission Studies,” 2.

⁶⁶ Priest et al., “witchcraft and mission studies,” 2.

⁶⁷ Margaret J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (London: Oxford university press, 1937), 136.

⁶⁸ Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and Its Effects on the Akan Tribes.*

the catalytic exteriorisation phenomenon is fetishism and not witchcraft.⁶⁹ He narrated the Akan fetish (suman) called "Sukusare" where people who have them could project them to cause evil. He cited instances where this fetish were projected to act against others. However, unlike Jung who asserts that, it is the projection of the person's psyche, Badu says it is the projection of suman. Badu's final remarks to the interview with the author, regarding Jung's response to witchcraft is that . " witchcraft is real and resident in people, which causes evil for mankind and no theory can deny its existence."

CONCLUSIONS

Witchcraft accusations and trials are ubiquitous in the Akan and Konkomba of Ghana as discussed in the study. Witchcraft beliefs have also been examined from the biblical, anthropological and psychiatrist perspectives to ascertain the correctness of the belief in the phenomenon. It has come to light that, some of the beliefs of the Ghanaians were buttressed by some of these perspectives, while others were not. The divergent perspectives postulate that the beliefs in the activities of witches in Ghana could either be buttressed or refuted because of the background of the one gauging the phenomenon.

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⁶⁹ Personal interview conducted by the Author with Nana Kofi Badu on October 20, 2018 at Nkawkaw (practicing fetish priest for 43 years)

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