

The Place of Public Theology in the Relationship between the Church and Traditional Leaders Toward the Social Development of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The article affirms that there is a need for collaboration between the church and traditional leaders for the relevant strength for the promotion of social development. This collaboration the study argues, must be guided by Public Theology. Public Theology promotes moral values and a holistic approach to social development that takes into account not only economic growth but also social and moral considerations. By working collaboratively and drawing on their respective strengths, public theologians and traditional leaders can help to build a more just and inclusive community and contribute to a more prosperous future for all Ghanaians. The examination which was done with library research and interviews affirms existing relationships between the church and traditional leaders. To attain the relevant strength from the collaboration for social development the study recommends that Public Theology must provide the values and moral compass for the process towards the contribution of the two significant institutions to social development in Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

Public Theology and traditional leadership in Ghana highlight the importance of the partnership between Christian communities and traditional leaders in promoting the common good and contributing to sustainable development.¹ By working together, they create an environment of mutual respect and understanding that promotes social justice, human rights, and ethical behaviour and contributes to the well-being of all Ghanaians.

Busia has noted that the church and traditional leaders have played important roles in social development in Ghana.² While their roles may differ, they share a common goal of promoting the well-being of their communities. By leveraging their respective strengths, influence, resources and working collaboratively they can continue to contribute to sustainable development and build prosperous

¹ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions: Perspective of Akan Leadership Formation on Christian Leadership Development* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2012).

² Kofi Abrefa Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

communities for their people. The two institutions are respected by many Ghanaians and have significant influence in their respective spheres according to Esther Ofei Aboagye. The church and chiefs in Ghana have historically played important roles in social development.³

The church has played significant roles in social development by providing services such as education, healthcare, moral education, and social welfare. The church has established schools, hospitals, and other social institutions that have contributed to improving the lives of the people. In addition to providing services, the church has also been involved in advocacy and promoting issues such as moral values and ethical behaviour, human rights, peace-building, and social justice. The church has been instrumental in empowering communities through its pastoral and prophetic ministries, offering spiritual guidance, and providing hope to those who are disadvantaged or marginalized.

Traditional leadership in Ghana refers to the leadership roles and structures within indigenous communities. Nana Addo Dankwa has noted that traditional leaders, such as chiefs and queen mothers, are seen as custodians of cultural heritage, mediators of conflicts, and key decision-makers in local development initiatives.⁴ Traditional leaders have been an integral part of Ghanaian society for centuries. They have significant influence and decision-making powers within their communities, and their role in social development is based on their responsibility to their subjects. Chiefs play an important role in mobilizing their communities for development initiatives, promoting cultural heritage and identity, and motivating local economic development by allocating land for agricultural purposes and other economic activities. They also act as mediators in conflict resolution and work to maintain peace and stability within their communities. Additionally, Nana Fredua Agyeman Pambuɔ has opined that they promote cultural preservation by protecting traditional practices, beliefs, and values. They have the opportunity of creating an enabling environment for socio-economic development and can help to attract investment and other forms of social support.⁵

The study used available library information in gathering insights. However, for the purpose of confirmation and some specific information that the study is seeking, interviews were conducted with some prominent traditional leaders who have played various roles in social development including Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong and Nana Fredua Agyeman Pambuɔ. Excerpts from the interviews have subsequently been used in this article.

METHODOLOGY

The study with its qualitative approach examined available library materials including reports and brochures on the relationship between the church and traditional leaders on social development in Ghana. Interviews were further conducted with traditional leaders and experts in local government administration to ascertain what the two respected institutions can accomplish together with the strength derived from their collaboration.

Traditional Leadership and Social Development

The traditional leadership institution has been identified as a key partner in the socio-economic development of Ghana. The institution according to Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong has played various roles in the national development efforts at various stages.⁶ The chieftaincy institution as the

³ Excerpts of an Interview with Dr Esther Ofei Aboagye on Setting National Priorities September 17, 2020. Dr Esther Ofei Aboagye on Moving from Political to Developmental Constitution September 24, 2020. Dr. Esther Ofei Aboagye is a former Director of Institute of Local Government Studies Accra.

⁴ Nana Addo Dankwa, *Institution of Chieftaincy in Ghana: The Future* (Accra: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004).

⁵ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Fredua Agyeman Pambuɔ on Enhancing Development Through Traditional Leadership May 6, 2021. Nana Fredua Agyemang Pambuɔ is the pioneer board chairman of Otumfuɔ Osei Tutu II Charity foundation).

⁶ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong on Traditional Leadership and Human Resources Development July 15, 2021. Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong Omanhene of Agogo traditional area in Asante Akyem, a lawyer, a former Minister of State and a former Member of Parliament of the Asante Akyem Constituency.

indigenous leadership system was the sole responsible socio-economic development agency before the arrival of missionaries, colonial authorities, and Western merchants. Even though the church, governments, etc. have been known as key partners in socio-economic development, there is a high publicly expressed expectation in the traditional leaders to play key roles in the social development and well-being of the communities. There are expectations on the traditional institution to provide the needed developments in the communities. The traditional leadership is subjected to public disapproval and rejection if it does not satisfy the people with the expected developments as noted by Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.⁷

Governments and government agencies have the legal backing and constitutional rights for resource mobilization and appropriation. Traditional leaders like the church do not have access to state resources for the purposes of socio-economic development. The Chieftaincy Act 759 which regulates traditional leadership, for example, does not have significant provisions for national resources for socio-economic development by traditional leaders.⁸ Churches since the beginning of the arrival of missionaries have maintained relationships with traditional leaders. The relationship between the church and the palace has witnessed a recent depth to the extent of calls for intensified Christian missions to the palace as noted in the author's book *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*.⁹

A Historical Perspective

Traditional leadership as an indigenous leadership institution in Ghanaian communities existed before the arrival of missionaries, colonial authorities, and Western merchants in Ghana as indicated by Hans Debrunner.¹⁰ The indigenous leadership institution has remained very visible and relevant in various dimensions. Traditional leadership has equally played significant roles in the socioeconomic development of Ghana. It is instructive to look at the historical perspectives of the chieftaincy institution to understand where chieftaincy was as an institution and where it is today. Understanding of the indigenous leadership institutions' role in social development needs to be examined through three major periods i.e. before the arrival of Colonial Powers, under the Indirect Rule of the British Administration and Post-Independence Constitutions of Ghana.

Before the Arrival of European Colonial Powers

According to Noel Smith, before the arrival of the British Administration, the chief was the 'military leader of his people. This enhanced his prestige and importance.'¹¹ The general security and well-being of the people were the responsibility of traditional leaders. They were also responsible for the mobilization of people and resources for social development. Traditional leaders pursued resource mobilization for the social development of their communities through taxation, fines from dispute settlements, and sales of agricultural and natural resources like gold, rubber, salt etc. Rattray has noted that 'we have seen that the idea of taxation, to support the Stool, was a firmly established principle in Asante; that it was accepted by all classes as the basis of their tenure of Stool lands; and that the Native Treasuries were everywhere in existence for handling such revenues as were collected.'¹²

The chiefs were also able to call their citizens to participate in voluntary services in the communities. Members of the communities were moreover, required to present portions of their game from hunting and other farm products to the palace to support the functions of their traditional leaders. A chief never paid for anything; weavers, metal workers, and stool carvers, while working for the chief would feed at his expense, and before they left would receive *Aseda*, (appreciation).¹³

⁷ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.

⁸ *Chieftaincy Act, Act 759*. (Accra: Assembly Press, 2008).

⁹ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions: Perspective of Akan Leadership Formation on Christian Leadership Development*.

¹⁰ Hans Werner Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967).

¹¹ Noel Smith, *The Presbytery Church of Ghana 1835-1960* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966), 113.

¹² Robert S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 119, 140, 161.

¹³ Rattray, *Ashanti*, 116.

Some traditional leaders fought other communities for their prosperity and expansion of their resources and human mobilization efforts toward development. Acquisition of new lands, servants and natural resources became sources of wealth and prosperity for socio-economic development. Debrunner has noted that 'before 1900 when there were tribal wars, the military duty of the chief and the elders were important. They led different sections of the army during times of war.'¹⁴ Adanse, Denkyira, Asante, Akwamu, Akyem, etc. were noted for their fighting abilities and acquisition of other lands for their own socio-economic development. Such traditional leaders acquired their titles like *Osagyefuo*, *Ɔkotwaasua*, *Ɔseadeɛyɔ* etc. as war victory titles according to Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.¹⁵

The war between Denkyira and Asante for example, was a result of the demand to Asante to provide gold and other resources for the king of Denkyira state. Adarkwa Yiadom is famous for having been the first Asante chief to refuse to pay the tribute demanded by Denkyira. At first, the tribute had consisted of simple services i.e. the supply of firewood and such like. The demands, however, increased until they came to claim the favourite wife of each Asante chief to act as a wet nurse (*mmagyegyefo*) to the king of Denkyira's children and the filling with the gold of the great brass pan.¹⁶ Rattray has opined that 'the form this tribute took was the supplying of such simple articles as were in everyday use among a primitive people, i.e. firewood, red clay, *baha* (fibre), and the performance of menial services as noted by Robert Rattray'.¹⁷

The wars for the expansion of territories and wealth also explain the need for strong and powerful spiritual powers and deities. Traditional leaders were travelling long distances in search of powerful deities that would help them fight their enemies and bring prosperity to their communities. Okomfo Anokye became so significant in Asante traditional leadership and society due to his ability to help Asante to fight their enemies especially the traditional leaders and people of Denkyira. Nana Addo Dankwa has claimed that the association of deities to the traditional leadership institution originated due to the need to acquire spiritual powers to overcome enemies and enjoy prosperity.¹⁸

Under the Indirect Rule of the British Administration

Britain was one of the colonial authorities in Ghana. Around the 1940s, the British instituted what was then known as Indirect Rule where chiefs were sort of middlemen between the colonial authorities and the rest of the population. The British colonial powers introduced Indirect Rule as a system for Local Governance Administration. Noel Smith has observed that Asante has been administered on the system of Indirect Rule which is 'the system by which the tutelary power recognizes existing Africa societies and assists them to adapt themselves to the functions of local government'.¹⁹ This brought home not only to the chiefs but also to the people the fact that Asante was not a sovereign nation anymore. The support which Government gives to the chief is on the basis of the chief's subordinate status. The chief's powers are limited and defined by ordinances. The chief and his subjects were under the control of the Government, which the people associated with limitless power, endless wealth and high prestige. By comparison, the chief has limited powers, scanty wealth, and a lowered prestige, daily in evidence of his relationships with the District Commissioner, the Chief Commissioner, or the Governor.²⁰

Some traditional leaders could, however, attract socio-economic facilities for the development of their communities due to their close association with the colonial powers. The Indirect Rule became a source of socioeconomic development for communities whose traditional leaders were closely related to the system. Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo has opined that communities like Winneba, Kyebi,

¹⁴Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 107-108.

¹⁵ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.

¹⁶ Rattray, *Ashanti*. 170.

¹⁷ Rattray, *Ashanti*. 275.

¹⁸ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*.

¹⁹ Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 413.

²⁰ Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 117.

Nsawam, Anyinam, Oda, Asamankese, Wenkyi etc. were noted for their rapid socio-economic development during the colonial administration.²¹ Some of the communities moreover, enjoyed the settlement of colonial authority administrators. Infrastructural facilities like railways, roads, water, telephone, education, health facilities, post offices etc. were extended to such communities. They became centres of commercial activities, local government administration, security and influence. Smith noted that “there is a government police station in Wenchi and also a Post Office. The District Commissioner’s offices, bungalows, and clerk’s quarters are about a mile from the town. These institutions are outside the sphere of the Native Authority.”²²

Some prominent chiefs received scholarships and other financial support for their children and members of their communities to study in prestigious academic institutions in Europe and North America. Nana Fredua Agyeman Pambuo has indicated that between 1940 and 1951 the system of Indirect Rule was almost labelled as colonial masters being in bed with traditional leaders.²³ The nationalist movements at the time considered the idea to abolish colonial rule and chieftaincy at the same time. Most of the people saw chieftaincy in the same way as colonial rule and subsequent legislations throughout the period of the first republic to this day have ensured that in a very gradual and systematic way, the traditional leaders are kept away from national resources and political power according to Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.²⁴

Post-Independence Constitution of Ghana

The post-independence socio-economic development roles of traditional leaders have been largely determined by the constitutions and the various constitutional reforms of the nation according to Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong.²⁵ Moreover, Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo has noted that the role of traditional leaders during the Indirect Rule influenced the constitutional development and provisions of the role of the traditional leaders in the post-independence constitution. According to Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo ‘some of the nationalists at the time like Dr Kwame Nkrumah held the idea to abolish the colonial rule and the chieftaincy institution at the same time.’²⁶

The chieftaincy institution was perceived by most of the nationalists who led the independence struggle with Dr. Nkrumah as the same as the colonial powers. Legislations enacted throughout the period of the first Republic of Ghana, therefore, made efforts to keep the traditional leaders away from the local government administration. The most famous statement by Nkrumah concerning the chieftaincy institution describes this relationship as, “Those of our chiefs who are with us we do honour, those who join forces with the imperialists there shall come a time when they will run and leave their sandals behind them; in other words, chiefs in league with imperialists who obstruct our path will one day run away and leave their stools.”²⁷

In 1958, the king of Akyem Abuakwa Osagyefuo Ofori Atta II and some other chiefs were destooled by the government of Dr Nkrumah. The Okyehene was destooled by the President together with the queen mother of Akyem Abuakwa, Nana Pomaa, simply because the position of this great king was not in consonance with that of the CPP. Thereafter, over a hundred chiefs within the Akyem Abuakwa kingdom were destooled. According to Nana Agyeman Fredua “chiefs who qualified as paramount chiefs, the paramount chief of Ejisu, Nsuatre, Offinso, Tetrem and so many others were all destooled by the CPP, simply because the government of the day did not see these chiefs in alignment with the ideals of the CPP.”²⁸ Subsequent governments to this day have ensured that there is a gap

²¹ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo

²² Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 148.

²³ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Fredua Agyeman Pambuo.

²⁴ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.

²⁵ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong.

²⁶ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Fredua Agyeman.

²⁷ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*.

²⁸ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Fredua Agyeman.

between traditional leaders and political power in the governance system especially access to resources for the socio-economic development of Ghana. Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong has pointed out that, “in a very gradual and systematic way, our chieftaincy institution as it is today has lost a lot as it was prior to 1951.”²⁹

The Chieftaincy Act 759

Ghana is a democratic country with its institutions governed by status and laws. The chieftaincy institution is governed by the Chieftaincy Act 759.³⁰ The Chieftaincy Act of Ghana currently considers the functions of the chiefs mainly in matters of customary laws and dispute settlements of succession lines to traditional stools. As noted by Busia, “The chief is no longer the military leader, and the people do not look to him for defense, but to the Government. This means for the chief the loss of some prestige and authority. The maintenance of law and order is also very largely the function of the police and administrative officers of the Government.”³¹ According to Nana Fredua Agyeman, “Our constitution as it is, if you look at the Chieftaincy Act for example that seeks to govern and regulate the role of chiefs, its sole purpose is to arbitrate over customary laws and promote tradition and customs within their traditional areas and set up traditional courts to review traditional and customary issues that comes up to their attention.”³²

Expectations of the People of Traditional Leaders

Governments and government agencies have remained the major enhancers of the socio-economic development of Ghana. Traditional leaders and churches have also played major roles in the provision of socio-economic development. There are many people who expect their traditional leaders to enhance the socio-economic development of their various communities. The expectation of such people is expressed in the public space by demanding quality education, employment opportunities for young people, health care services, sanitation, decent public attitude, good roads, etc. from their traditional leaders. Traditional leaders who are unable to enhance socio-economic development in their communities have been threatened or suffered destoolments from their people. Even though the traditional leaders are not assigned common funds for socio-economic developments like the District Chief Executives and Members of Parliament, there is a growing expectation for traditional leaders to enhance the development of their communities.

There are equal expectations for churches to enhance socio-economic development in the communities in which they operate. Some of the missionary-initiated churches, for example, are known for their roles in the provision of education, health facilities, agricultural stations, gender empowerment, and social equity over the years. The historical examples sustain the expectations of the socio-economic development of the church. There is a growing expectation from Ghanaian communities for traditional and church leaders to enhance socio-economic development. The fact remains that the traditional institution and the church do not benefit from the national resources that are constitutionally made available for such purposes. The failure of the church in enhancing socio-economic development can attract condemnation from the communities. Traditional leaders even suffer harsher sanctions and destoolments from their people for lack of socio-economic development.

The New Frontiers of War

Traditional leaders fought other traditional states for lands, wealth, servants, and expansions. Currently, they can no longer pursue socio-economic development through wars as the laws of Ghana and the security agencies will not allow them to do so. There are, however, new frontiers of wars and

²⁹ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong.

³⁰ *Chieftaincy Act, Act 759*. (Accra: Assembly Press, 2008).

³¹ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 113.

³² Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Fredua Agyeman.

enemies. The enemies are poverty, disease, unemployment, hunger, and illiteracy.³³ The people expect their traditional leaders to fight for quality education, health, peace, prosperity, and social protection for the people. The lack of these amenities they consider as a failure on the part of traditional leaders that must attract their destoolments from traditional leadership positions.

Traditional leaders though do not have national resources for enhancing socio-economic development still have public respect and command public influence. The effort to use their public respect and influence for socio-economic development has led some of them to pay allegiance to some political parties and governments, an action that the constitution of Ghana frowns upon as noted by Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.³⁴ Traditional leaders who have sought to use their public respect and influence for national resources for socio-economic development have subsequently suffered political tagging.

The chieftaincy institution as it is today has lost access to national resources as it was prior to 1951. It is interesting sometimes when, the citizenry expects so much from their traditional leaders only to realize that in terms of the legislation, the chieftaincy act of the constitution literally has removed practically all the powers especially access to national resources from the traditional leaders. The revenue potential, the ability to enforce and enact laws to get people to follow even traditional roles within a municipality, and all the powers that chiefs had before, i.e., the freedom to collect taxes and enforcement of traditional laws, etc. have been taken away from them including even the ability to participate in national development except strictly by government appointment according to Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.³⁵

Traditional Leaders and Church Partnerships: The Asante Akyem Example

The relationship between the church and traditional leaders has played a major role in social development in Ghana. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) is one such church that has considered traditional leaders as key partners in its social development efforts. The PCG is known for its remarkable contributions to social development in the communities where it performs its missionary activities. Education at all levels; health care, agriculture, language development, etc. are closely associated with PCG. Church members were the most literate group in the communities during its early missionary expansion. From the earliest days, Christianity and schooling were sides of the same coin, a fact which has become indelibly impressed upon the minds of the people. Hence to a real extent, to belong to a Christian church signified membership of an elite, literate group associated with 'civilization' and 'progress'.³⁶ In education and agriculture, artisan training and in the development of commerce, medical services and concern after the social welfare of the people, the name 'Basel', by the time of the expulsion of the Basel Missionary Society from the country, had become a treasured word in the minds of the people.³⁷

The Gospel, school, trade, and spade had begun a social revolution. It can be understood that to become a Christian meant a completely new way of life: settling on mission land, being incorporated into a new community detached from the old, adopting new social customs, building a better house, being able to purchase commodities from Western Europe, sending one's children to school where they acquired skills which found them clerical and artisan posts with the Mission or with the Government.³⁸ The commercial and industrial activity continued unabated until the First World War so that the Mission became without a doubt the largest, and in the eastern area of the Gold Coast, the only agency working for the social development of the people and the country.³⁹ The remarkable

³³ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Mission*.

³⁴ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.

³⁵ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Agyeman Fredua Pambuo.

³⁶ Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 228.

³⁷ Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 154.

³⁸ Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 62.

³⁹ Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 61.

relationship between the church and traditional leaders in some specific communities may better unravel the strength of the collaboration.

Nana Asamoah and Christian Missions at Agogo

The Asante Akyem area has a spread of PCG congregations and basic schools in almost every major town. About 56 out of the 103 Presbyterian Basic Schools in the whole Ashanti Region are located within the Asante Akyem Presbytery of the PCG according to the Ashanti Regional Manager of Presbyterian Schools' 2022 Report.⁴⁰ The Asante Akyem Presbytery has in its jurisdiction the Presbyterian Senior High School at Bompata, Agogo Presbyterian Hospital, a campus of the Presbyterian University at Agogo, Agogo Presbyterian College of Education Agogo, and the Agogo Presbyterian Nurses and Midwifery Schools.

It was in 1869 that the first European missionaries came to Agogo, not to preach, but because they were prisoners i.e. Fritz Ramseyer, his wife and baby, and Johannes Kuhne. During the fighting at the east of the Volta, they had been captured by the Asante General Adu Bofofo and forced to march day after day through the Afram Plains on their way to Kumasi to be presented to the Asantehene. After three weeks they reached Agogo, where they were allowed to rest for much of the month of July. They had suffered much on the journey. Their escort treated them as slaves. Ramseyer's child was dying in the process.⁴¹

At Agogo however, they received much help, especially from Nana Yaw Asamoah then Agogohene who, out of sympathy, pleaded with the escort to allow them to rest for a few more weeks to overcome the stress and tiredness to which they had been subjected to during the past month. Nana Asamoah and his sub-chiefs and the people of Agogo offered to accommodate and feed them for as long as the escort would allow it. In fact, they offered in abundance eggs and a variety of fruits including pawpaw which was said to be Ramseyer's favorite. Even though the escort who was himself happy with this gesture of hospitality would have allowed Ramseyer to stay longer, the dying child of the Ramseyers compelled them to leave Agogo to continue the journey since the pain connected with the child's death would have erased the pleasant reception that they had received from Agogo and its people. Nana Asamoah saw them off by offering his own palanquin to carry them with palanquin carriers. Ramseyer noted that "when we had no more eggs (the food which they were trying to save their child) time and again someone who saw our sorrow brought us more. May the Lord show the friends who helped us, that He does not forget the cup of cold water given to one of his little ones (Matt 10:42). And the Lord did indeed begin to show that he had not forgotten the people of Agogo."⁴²

At the 1928 Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, the Basel Mission was requested to establish a Girls' school in Asante. The Basel Mission Girls' School and the Basel Mission Women's Training College were established in Agogo on the 1st of March 1931.⁴³ These schools were established by a young missionary teacher, Miss Helena Schlatter (later became Mrs. Haegele). She was later joined by two other missionaries, Rev. Buechner and Miss G. Goetz. The aim of opening the Training College was to train Ghanaian women teachers for the Girls' Mission school which had started and inculcated in these young teachers Christian principles that would portray them as good teachers, parents, and leaders who could build Christian homes and take up leadership roles in the society. The Agogo township and its environs have benefited so much from the socio-economic development programmes of the PCG but it took the initiative, sacrifice, and partnership of Nana Asamoah and his elders to attract the attention of the church.

Nana Kwabena Atta and the Christian Missions at Bompata

⁴⁰Report of Ashanti Regional Manager of Presbyterian Schools to Asante Akyem Presbytery 2022.

⁴¹ Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *The Reverend FA Ramseyer and the Foundation of the Presbyterian Church in Kumasi* (Ramseyer Centenary Committee, 1974).

⁴² History of Agogo Presbyterian Hospital, <https://agogopresbyhospital.org/main/history/>.

⁴³ History of Presbyterian College of Education, <https://pce.edu.gh/history/>.

The spread of Presbyterian congregations and socio-economic development in Asante Akyem is further credited to the initiative that began at Asante Akyem Bompata. The Bompatahene, Nana Kwabena Atta, in 1880 sent a request to the Basel missionaries at Abetifi for a teacher to open a Basel Mission in his community. The Basel Mission accepted the request and that became the beginning of the Christian mission at Asante Akyem.⁴⁴ Bompata later received Presbyterian Training College which was later turned into a Secondary School.

Parents in the various communities who wanted education for their children sent them to the Presbyterian School at Bompata. Arrangements were made for such children to reside with friends and families at Bompata. The pupils from the Bompata spread Presbyterian congregations and schools as they returned to their towns and villages. The extension of the Christian mission to the Asante Akyem communities was a result of a request from the Palace. Nana Akuoko Sarpong attests to the fact that the Nana Asamoah and Nana Adarkwa initiatives and later support by other missionaries facilitated the spread of Presbyterian congregations and socio-economic development at Agogo and Asante Akyem in general.⁴⁵

Nana Kwaku Adofo and Christian Mission at Kwahu

The missionary work of the Basel Mission at Kwahu was largely due to the effort of Pastor David Asante, Ramseyer, and others which was started at Kibi on 24th January 1876. The next day they travelled together to Anyinam from where they climbed the ridge. Having spent the night in the bush they reached Mpraeso the next day where they were offered accommodation and presented with foodstuffs. The next morning about six hundred people including the chief and some elders assembled to listen to Rev. Asante's sermon. Passing through Obo and Aduamoa they reached Abetifi on Friday, 28th January in the early afternoon. It had been a strenuous journey with an average of seven hours walk a day. Ramseyer first wanted to see the house where they had spent two days as prisoners with their very sick child, but the house lay in ruins. However, Nana Yaw Preko who had given him hospitality at that time invited them to stay with him.⁴⁶

The PCG has several educational and other social-economic facilities spread through the various Kwahu communities. A key factor of the success of the missionary enterprise must be accorded the then Kwahu traditional leader Nana Adofo who declared to the missionaries and the Kwahu people that, 'my whole land lies before you, and what pleases you later to take for a settlement, no one will object to'.⁴⁷ There were some religious and other realities that could have become stumbling blocks to the missionary work. Atia Yaw for instance was a powerful deity at Nkwatia that had much spiritual and political influence on the Kwahu ridge. He could not object to the spread of the gospel because of the support the missionaries had from the then Kwahumanhene.

Nene Odonkor and Christian Mission at Krobo Odumase

The resistance to the gospel on the Kroboland softened when Zimmermann became the personal friend of Nene Odonkor Azu.⁴⁸ In 1856 Zimmermann visited Kroboland and was warmly welcomed by the king, Nene Odonkor Azu. They became friends, and the king gave his son, Christian Akutei Azu (also known as Ada-Tei) to the Missionary to be educated. He later offered two other sons, Noa Akunor Aguae Azu and Peter Nyako to the missionary for the same purpose. These young men became the first Krobo Christian scholars. In 1859, Zimmermann was stationed at Odumase to oversee the Krobo Mission. Odonkor Azu himself attended church and baptismal classes. He, however, was a good friend of the missionary Zimmermann, to the extent that he involved Zimmermann in his state council meetings. In 1857, the first-ever chapel in Krobo land was built on King Odonkor Azu's farmland in

⁴⁴ Chronicle of Bompata Presbyterian Church .

⁴⁵ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Kwame Akuoko Sarpong.

⁴⁶ K. Nkansah-Kyeremateng, *One Hundred Years of the Presbyterian Church in Kwahu (1876-1976)*, 1976.

⁴⁷ Nkansah-Kyeremateng, *One Hundred Years of the Presbyterian Church in Kwahu (1876-1976)*.

⁴⁸ Dangme Tongu 50th Anniversary Brochure 2022.

Odumase.⁴⁹ In 1859, a school was opened to the public in Odumase, and in the following year, 1860, a Girls' School was opened by Mrs. Catherine Mulgrave Zimmermann in the Zimmermanns' home.

The Strength of the Traditional Leadership Institution

Traditional leadership is extremely strategic and one of the assets of Ghana. It enjoys the moral confidence of the people sometimes even more than some of the agencies of the state. They have been with communities for a very long time. The people trust and value the traditional authority system. According to Ofei-Aboagye, the institution is quite robust even though internally the institution has its own conflicts and difficulties. They are in a position where they have the capacity for mobilization.⁵⁰

The face of traditional authorities is also changing in terms of the fact that traditional authorities are now more educated. Most of them have received various levels of academic qualifications and professions. The people need representation in policy, decision making, and in governance. It is true that the people are represented by their Members of Parliament and Assembly Members. But sometimes they need non-partisan and reliable representation. Nana Fredua Agyeman has indicated that the traditional authorities have all it takes to make the needs of their people known if they are offered adequate space in the decision-making processes in matters of socio-economic development.⁵¹

There is a constant high expectation on traditional leaders to deliver socio-economic developments for their people. The expectation is demonstrated in media discourses. There are media phone calls demanding traditional leaders to provide social infrastructure such as sanitation, markets, schools, health facilities, employment, a peaceful atmosphere, security, etc. The constant calls on the enhancement of development through traditional leadership according to Nana Agyeman Fredua, Nana Akuoko Sarpong, and Esther Ofei-Aboagye is to be understood as a demonstration of the relevance and strength of the traditional leadership institution in the contemporary democratic governance system.⁵²

Mission to the Palace and Social Development

The integration of the Christian faith into primal religions has been acknowledged in the works of Bediako,⁵³ Busia,⁵⁴ Williamson,⁵⁵ and Schreiter.⁵⁶ The effort on integration has subsequently facilitated the initiatives of the Christian Mission to the palace of some churches in Ghana.⁵⁷ The mission to the palace primarily is to assist Christian royals and traditional leaders to become full members of their churches, identify their unique ministries, and faithfully serve their Lord and King. The healthy relationships that emerge from the Christian mission to the palace subsequently facilitate the socio-economic development of the communities.

Traditional leaders before the arrival of missionaries, colonial authorities, and merchants relied on their deities for spiritual powers and directions. Many traditional leaders who claim to be Christians have made several requests to the churches to consider ministry to Christian royals and traditional leaders an integral part of Christian missions. Smith has indicated that 'the times are changing fast and it is the belief of most chiefs of Ghana that by research and deep thought the church will in no distant date embark on policies that will make all chiefs practising as well as professing Christian, and finally that our deep-rooted institutions may be purged with the light of the Christian spirit to the glory of God

⁴⁹ Dangme Tongu 50th Anniversary Brochure 2022.

⁵⁰ Excerpts of an Interview with Esther Ofei-Aboagye.

⁵¹ Excerpts of an Interview with Nana Fredua Agyeman.

⁵² In interviews with Nana Agyeman Fredua, Nana Akuoko Sarpong and Esther Ofei Aboagye.

⁵³ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture Upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992).

⁵⁴ Busia, *The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti*.

⁵⁵ S.G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1965).

⁵⁶ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985).

⁵⁷ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*.

and to the well-being of this emerging nation.’⁵⁸ With many traditional leaders becoming full members of the church the Christian faith must equally provide the traditional leaders the spiritual enablement to pursue their socio-economic development efforts.

Busia has observed that, ‘as the successor of the ancestors he (the chief) performed various rites for the welfare of his people. With that office were joined other functions which may be described as administrative, executive, judicial, and military.’⁵⁹ The Asantehene Osei Tutu II has argued that traditional leaders no more fight to seize other people’s lands. The new forms of battle that they fight are now matters of development, education, health, employment, and prosperity of their people and communities. The enemies of Asante are no more other kingdoms but poverty, disease, unemployment, hunger, and illiteracy.⁶⁰ The contemporary focus of the chieftaincy institution as indicated by the Asantehene seems to be in consonance with the church’s social services in the communities.

The Asantehene stated in his goodwill message to the 10th-anniversary thanksgiving of the Asante Presbytery that, “on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Mission to the Palace programme of the Asante Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, we thank God for the continuing collaboration between the Church and Manhyia for the good people of God. This milestone is a demonstration and renewed commitment of making the Gospel reach all persons in the Asante Kingdom, including *Nananom*.”⁶¹ The Asantehene identified the enemies and the challenges of Asanteman during the service at the Palace as hunger, illiteracy diseases, and poverty and looked up to God to supply their needs. He further stated, “Let us all use this Thanksgiving Service for *Nananom*, to ask God through his Son Jesus Christ for mercies. It is my prayer that God will continue to bless our land and supply the needs of our nation and rid it of hunger, illiteracy, diseases, and poverty and also help us to know and do his will.”⁶² More importantly, he requested prayer for God to help him and his people to know and do the will of God. The social development of the nation is also considered part of God’s will for the church and the traditional leaders.

Strategic Partnership Between the Palace and the Church

The church like the traditional leaders does not have access to national resources. They, however, have the ability to mobilize the people and other resources for social development. The people that traditional leaders seek for their well-being remain the same people that the church also seeks to serve. The two institutions need to consider a stronger collaboration for the identification of the needed strength to serve the people better. The church and traditional leaders have collaborated for social development through Nana Asamoah at Agogo, Nana Kwabena Atta’s developmental initiatives at Bompata, Nana Kwaku Adofo at Kwahu, Nene Odonkor Azu at Krobo Odumase and many others need to be revisited. The model is worth considering for the social development of the communities. Church leaders are catalysts who are needed as agents to effect positive changes in the way things are done to improve social development as well as the spreading of the word of God.

Chiefs are the custodians of major lands in Ghana. They further serve as the rallying points of the communities. Government agencies, churches, and others who embark on various socio-economic developments in the communities need the support of traditional leaders to acquire portions of lands for developmental purposes. Goal 17 of the United Nations Strategic Development Goals calls for partnerships in development.⁶³ Traditional leaders may need to consider entering into strategic partnerships with the various churches in their communities for social developmental purposes. Traditional leaders may assign churches with portions of land for the construction of bore holes, schools, health facilities, etc.

⁵⁸ Smith. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1835-1960*, 240.

⁵⁹ Busia, *The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti*, 37.

⁶⁰ Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions*.

⁶¹ Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene*.

⁶² Brochure: *10th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of Mission to the Palace New Year Service with Asantehene*.

⁶³ United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Churches have the capacity to encourage their members to pull resources to boost the socio-economic development of the country. The church has loyal members who are united in purpose, therefore harnessing the collective efforts, strengths, skills, and zeal of all its members is a sure recipe for wealth creation. To improve livelihoods in the nation, Church leaders must tackle the issue of wealth creation with the same zeal with which the missionaries brought the gospel into the country during the post-missionary era. There is a need for the country to make effective use of its resources to create wealth to lift the lives of the citizenry from poverty and the partnership between the church and the palace must be of strategic interest.

Collaboration and Strength

Public Theology involves the application of Christian principles and teachings to social issues. It addresses social issues such as poverty, inequality, moral decadence, family life, and environmental degradation. It further promotes ethical business practices, corruption, work ethics, time management, responsible consumption, and other measures that contribute to social development. Many churches are involved in social development activities such as education, healthcare, and community development projects which are guided by Public Theology.

Public Theology and traditional leadership have the potential to make important contributions to social development. Together, they promote a more holistic approach to social development that takes into account not only economic growth but also social and environmental considerations. Public Theology and traditional leadership have the potential to help promote sustainable and equitable social development. By working collaboratively and drawing on their respective strengths, public theologians and traditional leaders can help to build more just and inclusive communities and contribute to a more prosperous future for all Ghanaians. As they draw on Christian teachings, public theologians can promote values such as compassion, justice, and accountability, and encourage acceptable conduct and behaviour in public and private lives. They can also provide moral support and guidance to individuals and communities, and advocate for policies that promote human well-being.

Public Theology and traditional leadership collaboration promote socio-economic transformation in Ghana. For example, traditional leaders can help to facilitate community participation in development initiatives, while public theologians can provide ethical guidance and moral support. The church has established various community-based development programmes, including microfinance initiatives, agricultural projects, and health programs. These programs are informed by the church's commitment to social justice and ethical values and are implemented in partnership with traditional leaders and local communities.

Chiefs are recognized as key decision-makers in their communities, and their involvement is crucial for effective community development initiatives. They mobilize community resources, including land, labour, and capital, for economic development projects. Traditional leaders also provide guidance on cultural and social norms that are essential for the success of development projects. When combined, Public Theology and traditional leadership foster social development by promoting values such as accountability, transparency, and social responsibility.

CONCLUSION

It has been affirmed that there is a need for collaboration between the church and traditional leaders for the relevant strength for the promotion of social development. The collaboration the study has however noted, must be guided by Public Theology. Public Theology promotes moral values and a holistic approach to social development that takes into account not only economic growth but also social and moral considerations. By working collaboratively and drawing on their respective strengths, public theologians and traditional leaders can help to build a more just and inclusive community and contribute to a more prosperous future for all Ghanaians. To attain the relevant strength from the collaboration for social development the study recommends that Public Theology must provide the values and moral compass for the process towards the contribution of the two significant institutions to social development in Ghana.

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