

A Theological Response to the Ban on Noisemaking Prior to the *Hɔmɔwɔ* Festival



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ABSTRACT

The ban on drumming and other forms of noisemaking in the period preceding traditional festivals is not uncommon in Ghana. Every year, the Ga traditional state imposes a one-month ban on noisemaking prior to the celebration of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Over the years, the one-month “silence” associated with the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival has resulted in several religious conflicts between the Ga Traditional Council and some Christian churches. The religious clashes became prominent in the late 1990s and have since not stopped in spite of many attempts to maintain peace in this period. This research was conducted using literature-based research methodology to assess the ban on noisemaking from the traditional and legal perspectives and to propose a way forward for future celebrations from a theological viewpoint. The paper argued that even though the demand that Christians avoid drumming and noisemaking prior to the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival may be considered an infringement upon the religious rights of Christians, it is appropriate to comply with the ban to maintain peace. Complying with the ban does not mean one is compromising their faith; rather it is a step to maintain peaceful co-existence with others on a matter that is not central to the Christian faith.

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between Christianity and traditional practices have existed since the inception of the Christian church. The encounter between Christianity and culture exists in almost all societies. This research focused on the clashes between the Ga traditional authorities and some churches in Accra during the annual prohibition on noisemaking as part of customs associated with the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The ban on noisemaking prior to the celebration of festivals or the celebration of the funerals of prominent chiefs/kings is not uncommon in Ghana. For example, the Okuapeman in the Eastern usually bans noisemaking prior to the celebration of the Odwira festival.¹ Similarly, the Munufie festival of the people of Japekrom in the Bono region is preceded by a forty-day *Adamu*, ban on noisemaking.

¹ Solomon Marfo Ayesu, *Empirical Study of Akuapem Odwira Festival and Traditional State Symbols: A Means for Design and Production of Textile Regalia for Akuapem Paramount Chief* (Master of Fine Art Thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University Science and Technology, 2015), 33.

The *Aboakyer* festival of the people of Winneba in the Central region is also preceded by a ban on noisemaking.²

The ban on noisemaking prior to the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival has led to some key religious conflicts over the years. On the one hand, the church would expect its members to oppose the prohibition of drumming and other forms of noisemaking because of its customary religious overtones.³ On the other side, the Ga-traditional leaders, being the custodians of the Ga culture, have the responsibility of ensuring that Ga traditions are adhered to, especially prior to and during the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The disagreement over the ban on noisemaking ordinance goes beyond a purely religious issue. It is also a legal matter that has to do with the freedom of religion, respect for one another, and tolerance of various communities for one another.⁴ The prohibition calls into question whether any traditional authority has the legal and constitutional authority to enact laws outside of Ghana's 1992 Constitution. This paper seeks to examine the *Hɔmɔwɔ*-related ban on noisemaking from Ga traditional and legal perspectives and to propose a way forward for future celebrations based on theological principles.

With the above introduction, the paper proceeds to examine the religious worldview of the Ga people.

The Religious Worldview of the Ga People

Belief in the Supreme Being

Kpele, the traditional religion of the Ga people, permeates every aspect of their everyday activities. The Ga people believe that all things (whether visible or invisible; including the environment, animals, humans, and deities) were created by *Nyɔɔnmɔ* (the Supreme Being or God; *nyɔɔnmɔ* means “god”).⁵ The Ga people use the names *Ataa-Naa Nyɔɔnmɔ* or *Maawu* exclusively in reference to the Almighty or Most High God. Ghanaians, like ancient Israelites, attach great importance to names and so they name objects carefully. Names in the Ghanaian context underline one's identification and qualities. For the Ga people, names denote a person's character or position in the family and society. The Ga reference to God as *Ataa-Naa Nyɔɔnmɔ*, therefore, underscores the Ga conception of the attributes and nature of God. In everyday life, “*Ataa*” means “male” (father) “*Naa*” means “female” (mother or grandmother), and “*Nyɔɔnmɔ*” means “God.” Therefore, *Ataa-Naa Nyɔɔnmɔ* means Father-Mother God, underlying both masculine and feminine attributes of God. As *Ataa* (father), *Nyɔɔnmɔ* defends and protects his children at all times. The motherhood of *Nyɔɔnmɔ* is evident in her sympathetic, accommodating, caring, and loving attributes. The name *Ataa-Naa Nyɔɔnmɔ* signifies the relational nature of God from a Ga perspective. For the Ga people, God is a personal and relational Being, not an impersonal or abstract entity.

The Ga people describe God as *Nii Bɔɔ Maawu* (literally meaning, “Grandfather Creator God”) to signify that *Nyɔɔnmɔ* is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.⁶ Adapted from the Ewe name for God (*Mawu*), *Maawu* highlights the Ga belief that God is the Originator of everything, seen and unseen. The Supreme Being is also referred to as *Ofe Nyɔɔnmɔ* (literally, “the one above all” or “Almighty God”) to emphasize both *Nyɔɔnmɔ*'s superiority over all other things and also the belief that *Nyɔɔnmɔ* lives far away in the sky.⁷ The belief that God lives in the heavens above is the reason why the Ga traditional priest points drink to the sky during the pouring of libation. The expression *Ofe Nyɔɔnmɔ* also alludes to the unlimitedness of God in terms of time, space, knowledge, and power,

² Emmanuel Obed Acquah, Augusta Arko-Mensah, and Michael Ohene-Okantah Jnr, “Music Making and Ban on Drumming among the Winneba People of Ghana,” *Journal of Culture, Society and Development* 60, no. 1 (2020): 29–35, 33.

³ Dzodzi Tsikata and Wayo Seini, “Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana,” CRISE Working Paper 5 (University of Oxford, Queen Elizabeth House, 2004), 13.

⁴ Tsikata and Seine, *Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana*, 13.

⁵ Justice Anquandah Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound: Conflict and the Negotiation of Religious Diversity in Ghana*, vol. 86 (Berlin: LIT VERLAG Dr. W. Hopf, 2018), 65.

⁶ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 66.

⁷ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 66.

among others. Furthermore, the Ga people indicate their dependability and reliability of God by referring to him /her as *Otswediapɔn* (“The Dependable One” or “One on whom one leans and does not fall”), similar to the Akan *Tweduampɔn* which has the same meaning.⁸

Nyɔɔmɔ is also considered a God of justice who judges and punishes wrongdoers; he rewards good deeds as well.⁹ Similar to the Akan conception of *Nyankopɔn* (God) as a paramount Chief, the Ga people also consider *Nyɔɔmɔ* as a Chief who cannot be approached by his subjects directly; therefore, *Nyɔɔmɔ* is approached through intermediaries who serve as “sub-chiefs” and “linguists.”¹⁰ *Nyɔɔmɔ* is considered so holy that no human being qualifies to mediate *Nyɔɔmɔ*’s relationship with humans. There is, therefore, no priest, shrine, or sacrifice dedicated to *Nyɔɔmɔ*. The intermediaries include lower divinities and ancestors. Again, no image or portrait of *Nyɔɔmɔ* can be found in the Ga religious setup because the Supreme Being cannot adequately be portrayed by any image. In addition, *Nyɔɔmɔ*, the head of all beings, is actively involved in daily human affairs and serves as the Source and Sustainer of all life forms.¹¹

Belief in Lower Divinities

Next to *Nyɔɔmɔ* in the hierarchy of the Ga pantheon are lower divinities referred to as *jemawɔjii* (“the gods of the world”). The word “*jemawɔjii*” derives from the word *wɔɔ*, meaning “something that is functional but invisible.”¹² A *dzemawɔɔ* (singular of *jemawɔjii*) is a type of *wɔɔ* that is very powerful and intelligent. Though created beings, the *jemawɔjii* are immortal, rational, and mobile. *Nyɔɔmɔ* created these beings as sons and daughters who run errands for *Nyɔɔmɔ*, represent part of *Nyɔɔmɔ*’s spirit in nature, and act as intermediaries between *Nyɔɔmɔ* and humans. In this light, the Ga people have great respect for the environment because they see it as a reflection of God.

The *jemawɔjii* have no permanent abode but can inhabit anywhere in God’s creation; including the sea, lagoons, mountains, mangroves, and other natural things.¹³ Some of the *jemawɔjii* in Ga cosmological thought are *Nai* (sea god), *Sakumɔ* (god of war), *Sakumɔ nukpa* (god of river), *Gbobu* (god of grove), *Dantu* (god of time), *Klote* (god of lake), *Kpeshi* (god of the *Kpeshi* lagoon) and *Naa Korle* (god of the *Korle* lagoon).¹⁴ The *jemawɔjii*, though spirit beings, may sometimes incarnate and appear like humans or animals. Such incarnation may be necessary in times of war to ensure the defeat of the enemy. For example, history has it that in one Asante-Ga war, the *Sakumɔ dzemawɔɔ* incarnated as a lady and enticed the Asante war leader until the Ga people took the Asantes by surprise and defeated them.¹⁵ In their spirit form, the *jemawɔjii* may communicate with the people directly through intermediaries such as traditional priests and priestesses. The *jemawɔjii* mediate the God-human relationship for blessings, protection, and preservation of both the living and the unborn generations of the Ga people.¹⁶

Belief in Ancestors

Next to the *jemawɔjii* are ancestral spirits who liaise between them and the *jemawɔjii* when the need arises. The belief in ancestors is deeply rooted in the Ga traditional worldview and the cosmology of other African societies. The Ga people will lose their traditional identity, culture, dignity, and historical roots if their ancestors (spirits of the dead) are taken away from them. There are conditions to fulfill

⁸ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 66.

⁹ Solomon Nii-Mensah Adjei, “Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission: An Exploration of the Historical Relationship Between the Religious Tradition of the Ga of South Eastern Ghana and Bible Translation and Its Implications for Ga Christian Theology” (Master of Theology Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006), 43.

¹⁰ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 66.

¹¹ Adjei, *Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission*, 42.

¹² Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 67.

¹³ Modupe Oduyoye, *The Sons of the Gods and the Daughters of Men: An Afro-Asiatic Interpretation of Genesis 1-11* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 45.

¹⁴ Adjei, *Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission*, 45; Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 67.

¹⁵ Margaret Joyce Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), 4.

¹⁶ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 66-67.

before one's spirit can become an ancestor. First, one has to live an exemplary life before their spirit can become an ancestor after death. The reason is that ancestors are moral guardians of society and so only people with exceptionally moral uprightness can become such guardians. Second, one must go through the Ga puberty rites to qualify as an ancestor after death because the Ga people consider puberty rites as a prerequisite to becoming spiritually and morally mature. Third, one's spirit can only enter the ancestral world after the funeral rites have been performed. Ga ancestors may be categorized into three. The first category consists of people who are respected for their specialties, including priests, mediums, the chief fisherman, and artisans. The second category is those who belong to particular families, and clans and the third class is those who were martyred for the sake of the Ga community. Like the Akan of Ghana and the Chewa Zambia, the Ga people consider their ancestors as having spiritual powers and authority over the living.

A proper understanding of the Ga concept of ancestor requires an examination of their concept personhood. The Gas believe humans have two natures: a physical nature called *gbomotso* and a spiritual nature called *mumo* (spirit).¹⁷ The spiritual part is made up of the *kla* and the *susuma*. The *kla* is believed to be more powerful and honorable than the *susuma*. It is a spark of God's spirit in humans and a life force that carries a person's destiny. The departure of the *kla* from the body results in a person's death. The *kla* goes back to *Nyɔɔmmɔ* after one's death to account for one's life.¹⁸ It is "honored" when a baby is delivered safely, when someone survives a fatal accident, when someone recovers from a serious illness, and when someone enjoys prosperity and long life. On such occasions, feasts are prepared for it and friends are invited to come and feast.

The soul (*susuma*) lives in the body (*gbomotso*) throughout one's mortal life, except when one is asleep when it departs and moves about without regard to time or space.¹⁹ When one dies, the *susuma* stays in the body for three days before moving out to hover around, until burial and full funeral rites (*faafoo*) are performed.²⁰ After the last burial ceremonies, the deceased's soul attains its highest social level as ancestral shades (*sisai/nsamantani*) and then enters the ethereal realm (*gbohii adze*) to reside there.²¹ This belief underlines that death is a transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead. The journey to the ethereal realm involves crossing a river. Extensive funeral rites are essential before, during, and after the burial of the dead in order to "induct" the *susuma* into the office of "ancestralship" as well as to serve as an appropriate send-off to the land of the dead.²² According to Arthur, the expense of the burial ceremonies is not a concern since the ancestors (who are more powerful than the living) will in turn support the living in a variety of ways.²³ This explains why most Ga people are buried with expensive coffins and have expensive funerals organized for them.

The *susuma* can be "called", seen, and consulted by priests/priestesses and herbalists. The ancestral shades may manifest to the living in human forms or through dreams and visions. They may be invoked to help the living in times of trouble. They preside over family meetings and may punish or reward the living based on their deeds. When the Gas pray, they make requests to God through their gods and ancestor spirits for blessings for the living and unborn, for a rise in their population, for enough food, for rains to cultivate their crops, for success in human activities, and for unity and harmony among in the Ga community.²⁴ As noted earlier, the ancestors are intermediaries between God and humankind. During libations, the ancestors are recognized, remembered, and honored.

At the center of the Ga primal religion is the traditional priest (*Wulɔmɔ*). The next section considers the role of the priest in the survival and growth of the Ga community.

¹⁷ Adjei, *Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission*, 48.

¹⁸ Adjei, *Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission*, 48.

¹⁹ Adjei, *Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission*, 49.

²⁰ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 70.

²¹ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 70.

²² Adjei, *Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission*, 54.

²³ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 70.

²⁴ Kilson as cited in Adjei, *Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission*, 42.

The Ga *Wulomɔ* (Priest)

The exposition on the Ga religious belief system shows that the Ga people are surrounded by spiritual entities who relate to them on a daily basis. The survival of the Ga community depends on the nature of the people's relationship with the supernatural. In times of difficulty, the Ga people seek assistance from the spiritual realm. Given this understanding, it is imperative for the Ga traditional leaders to ensure that the Ga community always maintains an excellent relationship with the myriad of spirits that hover around them. Maintaining an excellent relationship with the spirit world usually requires obedience to traditional norms and sacrifices, both of which are spearheaded by the traditional priest. Therefore, the Ga *Wulomɔ* is a very significant person in the Ga socio-religious setting.

There are *Kpele* cults across the entire ethnic group.²⁵ Before colonial rule, the Ga community was a theocratic community ruled directly by the *Wulomei* (high/chief priests; plural for *Wulomɔ*).²⁶ The priest of the *Nai* deity is the highest in the Ga traditional state. The *Nai Wulomɔ* is not allowed to come into contact with people who are considered spiritually unclean. Even before one is allowed to shave the hair of the *Nai Wulomɔ*, the person is made to go through a purification ritual.²⁷ They are carefully selected and trained to serve their societies.

The *Wulomei* (priests) are regarded as having both divine and human natures.²⁸ They carry messages from the gods and ancestors to the people and send the people's petitions to the gods and ancestors. They have great knowledge of healing and serve as traditional healers for the people; therefore, they also act as traditional doctors.²⁹ The physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual health of the society are all maintained through activities undertaken by the priest. They are often consulted by the Ga Mantse (chief) for counselling.³⁰ The *Wulomɔ* wears entirely white priestly attire with white headgear and walks barefoot during official duties; the white color of the garment symbolizes the priest's purity/holiness.³¹ He/she puts on black and white beads around his/her neck, wrists, and ankles on ordinary days.³² During celebrations, he/she puts on a long raffia cord and palm fronds around his/her neck.³³

Given the fact that the gods and ancestors can punish the living for disobedience of traditional norms, it is always a priority to observe norms and make sacrifices to avoid the wrath of the spiritual entities who affect the life of the Ga society. It is against this backdrop that the Ga traditional authorities, being the custodian of the Ga culture, make all efforts to have people comply with the ban on noisemaking prior to the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. The section below gives an overview of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.

The *Hɔmɔwɔ* Festival and Ban on Noisemaking

The *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival is celebrated annually (between May and September) by the people of the Ga-Dangme Traditional area, comprising Ga-Mashi, Osu, La, Teshie, Nungua, Prampram, Kpone, Ningo, Tema, and Ada to commemorate the day when hunger was defeated, hooted at, and ridiculed. Etymologically, the Ga word "*Hɔmɔwɔ*" (meaning "making fun of or hooting at hunger") derives from

²⁵ Anum, "Biblical Spirituality in the Context of *Kpele* Songs," 146.

²⁶ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 72.

²⁷ Franklin Ansong Siame, "No uncleaned person can touch my hair – Nai Wulomo," Myjoyonline (2021). [Accessed from <https://www.myjoyonline.com/no-uncleaned-person-can-touch-my-hair-nai-wulomo/> on 16th January, 2023].

²⁸ Eric Nii Bortey Anum, "Biblical Spirituality in the Context of *Kpele* Songs: The Incarnation and Ancestral Heritage among the Gas of Southern Ghana," *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 1(9) (2014): 145-154, 147.

²⁹ Anum, "Biblical Spirituality in the Context of *Kpele* Songs," 147.

³⁰ Anum, "Biblical Spirituality in the Context of *Kpele* Songs," 147.

³¹ Regina Kwakye-Opong, "Clothing and Identity: Ga Deities and Spiritual Responsibilities," *Arts and Design Studies* 25 (2014):47-60, 49.

³² Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 73.

³³ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 73.

two Ga words “*hɔmɔ*” (meaning “hunger”) and “*wɔ*” (meaning “to make fun of or to hoot at”).³⁴ Ga oral history traces the origin of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival to a time when the Ga community experienced great famine and severe hunger due to drought.³⁵ In those days, the Sea also failed to give its fish. In spite of the drought, the people gathered courage and cultivated corn, having called upon *Ataa-Naa Nyɔnmɔ*, the *jemawɔjii*, *wɔdzi*, and *sisadzi* (the ancestral spirits), through libation to make the crops survive and yield enough food for the community.³⁶ Following their prayers were heavy rainfalls that made the crops flourish and eventually yield a bumper harvest. In addition, the people caught fish in abundance and had their sheep and goats multiplied as they fed on the abundance of green pasture. The people—led by their high priest—celebrated this abundance of food, meat, and fish as a victory over hunger with a specially prepared diet from unfermented corn powder called *kpokpoi* (now being corrupted as *kpekple*) and palm nut soup made solely with fish. This was done to hoot at and ridicule hunger. In the end, it was decided that an annual event be celebrated to commemorate this great achievement. This annual festival was named *Hɔmɔwɔ*.

Given this background, the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival is considered fundamental to Ga identity, an event that facilitates a communion between the living, the ancestors, and the Ga deities in the celebration of their collective victory over a terrible famine in the past. It is a thanksgiving celebration to the deities in commemoration of a historical occurrence when the gods provided assistance to the Ga ancestors in surviving a devastating famine that consumed them as they adapted to the dry ecological niche of the Accra lowlands.³⁷ The celebration brings Ga people—both home and abroad—together to share a meal with both their living relatives and their ancestors, and to plan for the development of the Ga state.

The *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival commences in May and climaxes in August/September, depending on the Ga town in which it is celebrated. The commencement of the festival is marked by *Nmaadumɔ*, that is the planting of the corn and millet by the high priests together with the *Dantu Wulɔmɔ* who is responsible for selecting the date for the celebration. After this, the same act of planting corn and millet is done by all the principal *Wulɔmei* including *Sakumɔ*, *Korle*, *Gua*, *Naa Ede*, and *Nai* in that order according to the days of their deity. A thirty-day ban on drumming and noisemaking follows the ritual planting of the grain until it is lifted from one town to another beginning with Ga-Mashie. The ritualistic removal of the ban is referred to as *Odadaa*, a flamboyant social activity preceded by the playing of the *Obonu* (the sacred drums) which are seen only once annually.³⁸ The ban-lifting ritual signifies the success of the planted grains and the restoration of normalcy in the traditional area. The observance of silence is an important symbol for the well-being of the Ga community as they enter a new year.³⁹ Therefore, once the silence has been observed well and the ban lifted, one regularly hears people renewing their socio-religious and political lives with such expressions as: *Afiooooooooo afi* (Happy New Year), *Walaeeeeee ee Wala* (life in abundance), and *Omanyeeeeee ee Omanyee* (goodwill, success, peace).

The ban on noisemaking affects everyone living in the Ga traditional area no matter the person’s religious affiliation, ethnicity, background, age, or gender. During this period all Christian worship services are expected to be confined to the church premises and noisemaking activities such as singing, drumming, dancing, and handclapping are to cease. Positioning of loudspeakers outside church premises is prohibited and roadside evangelists are to put a hold on their activities.

While this ban on noisemaking is centuries old, the resurgence in the ban on drumming and noisemaking by traditional authorities during festivals can be traced to former Ghanaian President

³⁴ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 14; Anum, “Biblical Spirituality in the Context of *Kpele* Songs,” 147; Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 75.

³⁵ Daniel Tetteh Osabu-Kle, “The Ga People and Homowo Festival,” *Ghana Culture Magazine* No. 3 (Ontario: Carleton University, 2010), 4. (pdf version); Anum, “Biblical Spirituality in the Context of *Kpele* Songs,” 147.

³⁶ Osabu-Kle, “The Ga People and Homowo Festival,” 4.

³⁷ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 75.

³⁸ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 76.

³⁹ Daniel Avorgbedor, “Dee Hoo! Sonic articulations in healing and exorcism practices of the Anlo-Ewe,” *The world of music*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2000): 9-24, 11.

Jerry John Rawlings' cultural revival of the 1980s and 1990s dubbed *Sankɔfa* (“go back and take”). *Sankɔfa* is a Bono-Twi (Akan) word from the words *sane* (“to return”), *kɔ* (“to go”), and *fa* (“fetch,” “seek” and “take”). *Sankɔfa* is the name given to the Adinkra symbol represented either by a bird with its head pointing backward or a bird with a precious egg in its mouth while its feet point forward. The Akan Adinkra symbols were originally created by Nana Kwadwo Adinkra Kuma Tembe Agyemang (reign: 1800–1818) of the ancient Bono-Gyaman kingdom. They were largely used on stools, walls, pottery, and stools by the Bono-Gyaman people. The extensive use of the Adinkra symbols in contemporary cloth printing and fabric making, logos, and pottery in Ghana and other parts of the world underscores the great legacy the Gyaman king left behind which President Rawlings used in his cultural revival. Rawlings' *sankɔfa* revival was meant to encourage Ghanaians in particular and Africans at large to return to their traditional roots and to develop and promote their cultural heritage. According to Richard Asante, this revival was a shift from Kwame Nkrumah's suppression of traditional authority through the legal restrictions his regime imposed on the framework of the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1883, the Native Prisons Ordinance, and the Stool Properties Detention Act.⁴⁰ As the activities related to this cultural revival condensed in Accra, the traditional Ga authorities enforced the ban on drumming and noisemaking in line with the national agenda of promoting the Ghanaian cultural heritage.

The question of what actually constitute(s) “noise” does not have one answer. In the olden days, drumming and singing were considered the noisiest manmade noisy activities; therefore, the main focus was on these two sources of noise. In modern times, however, there are so many different sources of noise in the capital city, making it difficult to have a consensus on what constitutes noise. Nii Tackie Commey, the spokesperson for the Ga Traditional Council, is reported to have said in a radio interview that, so far as rain falling on roofs and thunder which sometimes accompanies rainstorms cannot be considered as noisemaking, generators cannot also be classified as such. He stated, during the program hosted by Kwame Sefah Kayi that, “...generators are excluded from the list of noisemaking activity...just as thunder and lightning...so we should know and draw the line”⁴¹

However, some traditional authorities also believe that this noisy power alternative could incur the displeasure of the traditional authorities. Writing about the Teshie tradition, Nathaniel Laryea Akwetteh defines noise as any sound not supporting or promoting the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival.⁴² This means that “silence” in the context of the celebration of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival does not mean quietude; one may make sounds that contribute to the overall success of the festival and such sounds will not be considered noise. One may also argue that noise in general is unacceptable during the *Hɔmɔwɔ* season, whether the noise is made in connection with the festival or not. No matter one's position on the matter, it is clear that the Ga traditional authorities will not allow certain noisy activities to go on during the period of the ban on drumming and noisemaking. The ban is expected to be adhered to by the general public and all religious groups within the Ga Traditional Area. The enforcement of the ban on noisemaking has generated religious clashes, which are briefly outlined below.

Religious conflicts over *Hɔmɔwɔ*-related ban on noisemaking

The Ga people were once the major inhabitants of the Accra area, making it easy to have people comply with the *Hɔmɔwɔ*-related ban on noisemaking. However, urbanization and population drift to the capital city has threatened their majority status. Accra now has many immigrants from all parts of the country who have come to settle in the capital in search of jobs. Many of the immigrants feel no ethnic affiliation with the Ga state and its religious worldview and so are unwilling to submit to the Ga

⁴⁰ Richard Asante, “Ethnicity, Religion, and Conflict in Ghana: The Roots of Ga Nativism,” *Ghana Studies* 14 (2011):81-133, 121.

⁴¹ Rebecca Addo Tetteh, “Ga Traditional Council: Generators Exempted From Ban On Noise-making, *Peacefmonline.com* (2015). [Retrieved online from <https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/local/news/201505/241522.php> on 17th December, 2022].

⁴² Nathaniel Laryea Akwetteh, “*The Road is Blocked*”: *Symbolisms of Sound and Silence in Ga Hɔmɔwɔ—A Teshie Perspective* (MPhil. Thesis, University of Ghana, 2017), 95.

traditional authority. Consequently, almost every year, some Christian denominations flout the rule governing noisemaking in the Ga traditional area. Some Christians feel that adhering to the directives of the Ga traditional authorities amounts to disloyalty to Christ.⁴³ The refusal of some Christian groups (especially, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches) to adhere to the ban on drumming and noisemaking has (over the years) led to several clashes between the Ga Traditional Council and these Christians.⁴⁴ A brief historical overview of these clashes is given below.

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed two prominent clashes between the Ga traditional authorities and some churches over the ban on noisemaking.⁴⁵ In August 1948 a group of Ga youth attacked the Apostolic Church in La, seized their musical instruments (such as drums, guitar, and tambourines), and assaulted the members of the church for flouting the prohibition of drumming and noisemaking amid the celebration of La *Hɔmɔwɔ*.⁴⁶ The pastor of the church, Pastor Lartey Adotey, was arrested and sent to the La traditional council to answer to charges of contravening the ban. He was later discharged and warned not to repeat the act. In 1953, a new branch of the Apostolic Church in Teshie, Accra, was also attacked by some Ga traditional authorities for drumming and dancing during the period of the ban prior to the Teshie *Hɔmɔwɔ* celebration.⁴⁷ The attack resulted in the injury of a few church members and the confiscation of some church properties. The Teshie traditional council invited the church on the matter and the church was subsequently given a fine before the properties were released.

Recent clashes over the ban on noisemaking amid the celebration of *Hɔmɔwɔ* can be traced to 1998. On Sunday 31st May 1998, a group of fifty (50) Ga youth and traditional leaders, led by some *Wulɔmei*, attacked the Lighthouse Chapel International headquarters at Korle-Gonno, Accra, for contravening the directives of the Ga traditional authorities.⁴⁸ The attack resulted in a violent physical clash as well as claims and counteraccusations by both parties. In the process, about forty (40) people sustained various degrees of injuries, and some of the church's musical instruments—including drums, keyboards, and guitars—were seized and sent to the police station.⁴⁹ Twelve (12) injured people became unconscious and were sent to the nearby Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital for treatment.

The incident necessitated the appointment of the Awortwi Commission which recommended that various stakeholders should be educated well on the ban before it takes place. In line with this recommendation, the Ga Traditional Council (in March 1999) wrote to inform the major stakeholders to educate their members on the ban and to encourage them to adhere to it in order to avoid clashes. The stakeholders that received communication from the Commission included the ecumenical councils, the Ghana Police Service, and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. In response, three church councils, the Catholic Bishops' Conference (now National Catholic Secretariat), the Christian Council of Ghana, and the Ghana Pentecostal Council (now Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council) released a joint communique contending that although they respect and adore the Ghanaian culture and traditional leaders, they firmly believe that the ban on noisemaking violates the fundamental human and constitutional rights of Christians. The reason is that Christians have been asked to participate in religious rituals that their belief system does not support. They insisted that the Christian religion commands them to sing, drum, and praise God and so they cannot be forced to refrain from doing these.⁵⁰

⁴³ Marleen De Witte, "Accra's Sounds and Sacred Spaces," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32 (3) (2008): 690-709, 390.

⁴⁴ De Witte, "Accra's Sounds and Sacred Spaces," 690.

⁴⁵ Amanor cited in Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 110.

⁴⁶ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 110.

⁴⁷ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 110-111.

⁴⁸ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 112.

⁴⁹ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 112.

⁵⁰ Daily Graphic, Ban on drumming: Christians seek middle road as government calls for calm," Mar 7, 1999 [Accessed from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ban-on-drumming-Christians-seek-middle-road-as-government-calls-for-calm-6433> on 16th January, 2023].

Despite this response from these Christian bodies regarding their religious liberties, the Ga Traditional Council continued to clamp down on churches which failed to comply with the ban. Some Ministers of State met the Ga Traditional Council but the meeting did not yield much fruit. In May that year (1999), many churches—including Living Light Ministry and Christ Apostolic Church, both at Darkuman and Victory Bible Church at Awoshie—were attacked by some Ga youth for not observing the ban on noisemaking. In these bloody confrontations that ensued between the youth and these churches, musical instruments were destroyed, and others confiscated. Amid the confrontations, Mr. Emile Short, the then Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) said that the ban had no legal basis and therefore, the Ga Traditional Council must entreat the Christians to comply rather than forcing them to adhere. According to the CHRAJ, although the ban on noisemaking is legally protected, its application does not affect other organizations and it does not supersede the religious rights of adherents of other religions.⁵¹ This declaration, which seemed to suggest the unconstitutional nature of the ban, could not stop the clashes.

In April 2000, the Greater Accra Regional Coordinating Council met the various parties and, in a weeklong workshop, discussed how to manage religious differences.⁵² The meeting yielded the adoption of a modified form of the ban, requiring drumming to be subdued and confined to the churches. Considering the architecture of most chapels, the requirement to confine noise from drumming to the chapel was obviously unrealistic. This document was signed by several religious bodies including the National Catholic Secretariat, the Christian Council of Ghana, the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, the Council for Indigenous Churches, Office of the National Chief Imam, the Afrikania Mission, the Federation of Muslim Councils of Ghana, The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission and the National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches, and representatives of the Ga Traditional Council and state institutions. The document advocated for the formation of a 20-member committee to oversee and manage all customary and religious-based conflicts in the Greater Accra region.⁵³ Consequently, the year 2000 was relatively calm, the major incident being an attack on the Open Heaven Mission International Church by a group of Teshie youth, who seized the church's drums and injured six worshippers in the process.⁵⁴

The May 14, 2001 issue of *The Ghanaian Chronicle* reported a clash between some youth mandated by the Ga Traditional Council and the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Osu (headquarters). The youth resorted to vandalizing the church's musical instruments and destroying the glass windows. The assailants were met with fierce resistance from the church members who refused to lie down and be trampled on. These worshippers returned the violent confrontation with equal zeal and a number of people sustained various degrees of injuries. According to the newspaper armed youngsters invaded the CAC chapel and started smashing things up, breaking glass windows while service was in progress.⁵⁵ Dramatically, the church members resisted the attackers vehemently by standing their ground and refusing to be crushed.⁵⁶ They responded to the violent altercation with the same fervor, and several individuals were injured.⁵⁷ The then General Secretary of the Christ Apostolic Church, Apostle Dr. Annor Yeboah in the process pulled a pistol and fired two warning shots to disperse the Osu youth and traditional priests.

Time and space limitations have not allowed the paper to consider all the clashes. However, based on the seriousness and emotions attached to this and other religious clashes over the ban on noisemaking in Accra prior to the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, it can be concluded that people are ready to die for

⁵¹ Ghana Review International, 18 May 1999, accessed at <http://www.ghanaweb.com> news archive

⁵² Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 122.

⁵³ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 122.

⁵⁴ Edward Lipton, *Religious Freedom in Africa* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 69.

⁵⁵ *The Ghanaian Chronicle* (May 14, 2001), 1.

⁵⁶ *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 1.

⁵⁷ *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 1.

their religion. The paper now proceeds to consider the issue from traditional, legal, and theological perspectives.

Traditional, Legal, and Theological Perspectives on the Issue Ga Socio-religious Perspective

Earlier, the point was made that the Ga people believe that they are surrounded by supernatural entities and that there is a need to maintain an excellent relationship with these entities. It was also mentioned that the traditional leaders in the Ga community have the responsibility of ensuring the existence and promotion of this excellent human-supernatural relationship. Against this backdrop, the Ga traditional leaders have (on several occasions) defended the ban as a necessity, without which the life of the community cannot be guaranteed during and after the festival. To these leaders, the ban in no way infringes upon the right of anybody. It is believed that a month before the actual celebration of the *Hɔmɔwɔ*, the gods come to dwell among the people, and as a result of this, the ban on drumming and noisemaking ensures that the gods are not disturbed within the period so that they can perform any activity that they have come to perform.

It is believed that any noisemaking within the period will incur the wrath of the gods since they have not been given the honor and respect due them. Thus, the ban on noisemaking is to prevent any disaster during the period from the gods. Failure to observe this silence can lead to a catastrophe for all inhabitants of the Ga land. The president of the Ga Traditional Council, Nii Dodoo in an interview with Rite FM, Somanya, attributed the May 9 Disaster (2001) which claimed the lives of 126 football fans, and “The June 3 Disaster” to the disregard of the ban on drumming and noise making.⁵⁸ This assertion is in line with the common African belief that whatever happens in the physical world has a spiritual antecedent. The decision taken in the spiritual realm depends largely on occurrences in the physical realm; good deeds attract reward and bad deeds attract punishment. Obviously, the traditional authorities are expected to do everything possible to prevent any calamity from befalling the community. They have been given the mandate to rule and their leadership role includes giving spiritual directions to the people in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with the supernatural. The point is this; the ban must be observed strictly, or else the living can be in trouble.

It is also believed that (as noted earlier), the gods communicate to the people in secret through speeches, songs, dreams, and revelations. Therefore, the ban on noisemaking ensures that messages coming from the gods can easily be heard and understood. The traditional priests and priestesses need a silent atmosphere to receive messages from the supernatural and convey them to the people. Any disturbance that will undermine the effectiveness of divine-human communication cannot be entertained.

Still, another reason for the ban on drumming and noisemaking is to create a conducive atmosphere for the gods to take care of the food crops—millet or corn (*ɲmaadumɔ*)—in sacred fields.⁵⁹ That is, the growth, maturity, and harvest of the ritualistically-planted maize require quietude to allow the indigenous gods the serenity they need to watch over its development and subsequent harvest and preparation into a ceremonial dish (*kpokpoi*) to “hoot at hunger” (as *Hɔmɔwɔ* translates).⁶⁰ The gods are involved in human activities and are affected by the noise made by humans. This reminisces the Akan belief that God removed his place of abode (the sky) from its former position (where it was very close to the earth) because he was constantly disturbed by the noise an old woman made through the pounding of her fufu. Given this understanding, the period of silence is required to allow supernatural beings to have peace of mind and plan good things for human life.

Again, the traditional authorities use the period of silence to fast, intercede for their people, and ask for peace, welfare, and prosperity for the Ga State, the land, and its people.⁶¹ This religious activity

⁵⁸ Nii Dodoo, President of the Ga Traditional Council made this submission in an Interview with Rite FM, Somanya on June 9, 2015.

⁵⁹ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 26.

⁶⁰ De Witte, “Accra’s Sounds and Sacred Spaces,” 690.

⁶¹ Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 6.

requires a silent atmosphere to be effective. On this, Nuumo Akwaa Mensa II observed that the prohibition constitutes a very significant aspect of the Ga culture.⁶² In order to ensure that the aspirations of the Ga people for the upcoming year are realized, the entire Ga state is commanded to maintain absolute silence and intercede for the community. Therefore, the Ga people pray to their gods and ancestors during this time for harmony and prosperity in the Ga land. Noisemaking disrupts their worship life because it primarily disturbs the gods and ancestors who come to dwell among the people in the land. Additionally, noise disturbs the *Wulomei*, who need silence to be able to connect with the gods.⁶³

Clearly, from the perspective of the Ga traditional authorities, the annual ban on noisemaking forms an integral part of the Ga tradition and must be honored. The Ga people are the owners of the land and so inhabitants of their land must be ready to adhere to the demand for a reduction in noisemaking amid the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival. Thus, traditions are time-honored and must be retained.

Legal Perspective

The debate surrounding the ban on noisemaking is not only based on the socio-religious worldview of the Ga people; it is also based on the legal framework of Ghana. The Ga traditional leaders believe that their position is backed by the constitution of the country. For this reason, the Ga-Dangme traditional authorities on many occasions have quoted Article 11(3) which recognizes Customary Law as part of the Common Law to justify the ban on drumming and noise-making. “Customary Law” is explained by the Constitution as laws that are by custom enforceable in specific Ghanaian communities.⁶⁴ The Ga-Dangme traditional authorities consider the ban as a custom rather than a religious issue. In their opinion, any view that contradicts this is a calculated attempt to draw attention away from the nature and goal of their tradition. They argue that Ga-Dangme customs, like all other customs, traditions, and cultural practices in Ghana are protected by Articles 11 and 26 of the Fourth Republican Constitution.

As a fundamental human right, the freedom to adhere to one's religion or to express one's religious convictions through instruction, practice, worship, and observance belongs to everyone. The 1992 Constitution guarantees the freedom of worship in Article 21 (1), which states, “All persons shall have the right to freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice.”⁶⁵ Short is quoted to have asserted that “the prohibition of noise-making is not legally grounded and so could not be legitimately enforced.”⁶⁶ The 1992 Constitution's Article 26 (1) gives everyone the right to enjoy, adopt, proclaim, maintain, and support any culture, language, custom, or faith pursuant to the requirements of this Constitution.⁶⁷ Yet, one religion should not prevent the practice of another religion. Again, Ghana's membership in African Union and the United Nations obliges her to ensure that diverse rights and freedoms as well as being a signatory to the UN Declaration on Human Rights are included in her legal system and social policies.⁶⁸ Therefore, for one religion to prevent the practices of another in the latter's own backyard constitutes an infringement on rights.

Archbishop Peter Akwasi Sarpong argues that “as a religious exercise, Christians cannot feel bound to observe it.”⁶⁹ They believe it is their right not to be coerced into engaging in acts that are incompatible with their beliefs; consequently, Christians have thought it is their right (even at those

⁶² Nuumo Akwaa Mensa II cited in Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 138.

⁶³ Nuumo Akwaa Mensa II cited in Arthur, *The Politics of Religious Sound*, 139.

⁶⁴ As cited in Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, *Commonwealth Caribbean Law and Legal Systems* (London: Routledge, 1998), 199.

⁶⁵ The Republic of Ghana, *The 1992 Constitution* (Accra: The Republic of Ghana, 1992), Article 21 (1).

⁶⁶ Cited in Amos Safo, “Christianity and tradition on collision,” *News and Views on Africa from Africa* Issue 39-June 1999: 6-12, 6.

⁶⁷ The Republic of Ghana, *The 1992 Constitution*, Article 26 (1).

⁶⁸ Safo, “Christianity and tradition on collision,” 7.

⁶⁹ Peter Akwasi Sarpong, “Introductory Remarks: Meeting between Representatives of the Christian Council of Ghana, the Catholic Bishops,” Conference, and the National House of Chiefs 10th December, 1997 Daily Graphic.

times) to drum within their own sacred context.⁷⁰ Sarpong has also argued that the church is part of the Ghanaian community and so the members also cherish the Ghanaian cultural heritage. The church is law-abiding and so encourages its members to fulfill their civic obligations toward their traditional leaders. Members of the church are encouraged to drum for their traditional leaders, carry them in palanquins or on horseback, cover them with the umbrella, dance in praise of their leaders, and even cook for them as means of honoring traditional leadership.⁷¹ Nonetheless, he is of the opinion that forcing Christians into matters that are religious in character, amounts to harassment.

It is argue still further that, the Northern Region of Ghana, for instance, is predominantly Islamic, and during the month of Ramadan Muslims fast for a period of 29-30 days. While fasting from dawn until sunset, Muslims refrain from consuming food, drinking liquids, smoking, and engaging in sexual relations; and in some cases, desisting from swearing. However, inhabitants in the North are not forced to refrain from consuming food, drinking liquids, smoking, engaging in sexual relations, or things related to that. Given this scenario, it is argued that even though the land of Accra undoubtedly belongs to the Ga Traditional State, this does not give them the right to impose their religious and cultural will upon the dwellers of Accra, thereby preventing them from exercising their religious rights such as singing and dancing by Christians. The argument goes further to state that the Ga traditional state can decide to hold a month of no drumming in respect for the gods for whatever reason; it is their faith/belief that Christians would not speak ill of or even challenge. But that faith should not compel Christians to observe any Ga primal religious tradition. Therefore, it is appropriate that the one month of “silence” be observed in the individual homes and communities of those who choose to follow that and not forced on other people who have nothing to do with Ga traditions.

It is against this background that the Christian Council once said the church thinks it was made very apparent that the Ga state’s declaration violated the fundamental human and constitutional rights of the members of the church and that they (the church members) were being compelled to participate in traditional religious activities they do not subscribe to.⁷² Similar claims were made by the leaders of various Charismatic churches, who argued that the ban on drumming was a direct assault on their faith in the omnipotent God. They claimed that the Ga Traditional Council lacked the authority to make and uphold laws. Additionally, it is argued that there is no constitutional clause that authorizes any group of religious believers to impose their faith on people of other faith.⁷³

Thus, from the legal point of view, the expression of one’s religious rights (freedom of worship) should not interfere with those of another religious tradition. But the question is whose religious rights are been infringed in this case? Is it the Christian who is made to remain silent or the Ga traditional worshipper whose communion with the supernatural is interfered with noise from chapels in their vicinity? This matter is not a straightforward one. One may have to leave the interpretation of the law on freedom of worship in the hands of legal experts to decide. One area that the legal experts need to help the public with is to give a clear demarcation between what is civic and what is religious.

A Theological Response

Having examined the ban from the Ga socio-religious and legal perspectives, the author now offers theological guidelines in dealing with the issue. The discussion is organized under three thematic areas.

1. The ban and idolatry

Wise Kweku Treve, writing about religious conflicts, avers that the church would expect its members to disobey and oppose the prohibition on drumming and creating noise because of its customary

⁷⁰ Sarpong, “Introductory Remarks: Meeting between Representatives of the Christian Council of Ghana, the Catholic Bishops.”

⁷¹ Sarpong, “Introductory Remarks: Meeting between Representatives of the Christian Council of Ghana, the Catholic Bishops.”

⁷² Safo, “Christianity and tradition on collision,” 7.

⁷³ Safo, “Christianity and tradition on collision,” 10.

religious overtones.⁷⁴ One of the key theological reasons why Christians would not want to observe the ban is that they consider it as a form of idolatry. It is argued that by observing this ban, Christians are practicing idolatry because they are obeying the decrees of idols/gods. The Bible is clear on God's prohibition of idolatry (cf. Exod. 20:3-4). Christians are exhorted to keep themselves from idols (1 John 5:21). Christians are also encouraged not to partake in the table of demons because they cannot serve two masters (1 Cor. 10:18, 20-21; Matt. 6:24). It is in line with this thought that Rev. Enoch Agbozo of the Ghana Evangelical Society (GES) described the ban as a cultural practice that Satan and his demonic allies have sanctioned to support idolatry and to frustrate the activities of the church.⁷⁵ Instead of obeying the decrees of the gods, Christians must obey the word of God which urges them to praise God with instruments like the harp, and sing to his glory using the ten-stringed lyre (Psa. 33:2).

While I appreciate the above biblical/theological teachings, I argue that the observance of the silence does not necessarily constitute idolatry. It is a practice that Christians can adopt to enhance their spiritual life and growth. A lesson from the Bible may be helpful. In the Old Testament, the Israelites having conquered the people in the Promised Land, would normally destroy their evil altars and then sometimes build an altar to God at the same place and make sacrifices to God. These sacrifices are made to God, not to idols, even though they are made at the same place where demonic altars used to be. The *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions* explains the reason for this practice: "Because the Israelites had associated the divine presence with elevated places (e.g., Mount Sinai), they used Canaanite high places to worship their own God, Yahweh."⁷⁶ Here, there is the conversion of what used to be used for idol worship to what is now used for the worship of the Almighty God. This is not idolatry even if the same kind of animal sacrifice is involved because the object of worship is God and not an idol. This is similar to the Christianization of what used to be a pagan festival as Christmas in ancient Rome or the Christianization of Valentine's Day celebration into something useful to Christians in the contemporary society. Most of the traditions associated with Christmas relate to the ancient Roman feast (called Saturnalia) that celebrated the solstice on 25th December.⁷⁷ This festival was observed by pagans as the birthday of the Unconquered Sun.

Christmas will be a pagan festival if it is celebrated with the same motive and in the same manner as the pagans used to celebrate it before a Christian alternative was provided. The various programs organized in contemporary churches during Valentine's Day will be unchristian if they are celebrated in the same manner and with the same intention as the world does. The point is that the observance of silence by Christians during the Ga festival may or may not be idolatry depending on the manner and purpose for which it is observed. There is no idolatrous connotation in one's silence observed with the purpose of building one's relationship with the Lord during this time. Such quietude needs to be observed in love with no evil intention. An idol is any being or entity other than God that one praises, celebrates, fixates on, and seeking for help. The believer's observance of silence without praising, celebrating, fixating on the Ga deities or any entity other than God does not amount to idolatry in any way. To observe silence for spiritual wellbeing one needs to be grounded in the theology of silence, which I discuss later in this paper.

⁷⁴ Wise Kweku Treve, *Religious Conflict and its Impacts on Society* (Master's Thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2013), 22.

⁷⁵ Enoch Agbozo, more than anyone else, inspired the emergence of the modern Charismatic Churches in Ghana. The Ghana Evangelical Society, which he led, was a veritable Bible School, which in the 1970s trained and inspired, many Ghanaian young people into the ministry of the Church.

⁷⁶ Wendy Doniger (ed.), *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 2006), 429

⁷⁷ Stephen Kyeyune, *Shaping the Society Christianity and Culture: Special Reference to the African Culture of Baganda* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2012), 227.

2. Living in peace and in faith during the period of quietude

Christians must live in peace with people of other faith. Therefore, churches must avoid physical confrontations with others. The issue in question does not touch on the core part of the Christian gospel. For the sake of peace, one can compromise such a non-central aspect of the faith. For example, one's church may traditionally have weekly worship services on Sunday. However, when the person migrates to another location where Sunday is a working day for everyone, the person can consider organizing worship services on a different day. This does not affect the person's relationship with God because they are not about the non-negotiable aspects of the gospel. Israel's system of worship changed when they went to Babylon. The Temple and the sacrificial tradition which was central to their worship life was absent in the land they now occupied as exiles. Yet, they were able to devise new ways of worshipping God throughout their seventy-year stay in exile. Rabbinic Judaism built upon Jewish tradition while adjusting to new realities. The emphasis on the Temple could not continue. The new kind of Judaism emphasized teaching and learning of the Law, not sacrifices. That was a way to manage the predicament. This strategy is applicable to the issue under consideration. Christians must adjust their worship service to meet the requirement of the ban on noisemaking, without compromising the core aspects of their faith.

The Ga traditional authority is also encouraged to avoid taking the law into their own hand and vandalizing churches that may act contrary to the ban. The Ga Traditional Religion, like any other form of traditional religion in Ghana, is "a religion of peace." It seeks to maintain harmonious relationship between the natural world and the supernatural world. Peace cannot exist where people of other religious traditions are killed, injured or beaten for failing to adhere to a traditional custom. The traditional council may report churches which ignore the ban to the necessary authority to pursue the case rather than acting unlawfully. However, the importance of dialogue in dealing with this inter-faith conflict cannot be overestimated. As stated earlier, there is the need to have a dialogue toward peacemaking. Regular consultative meetings may be held toward finding a solution to the challenge. In such consultative meetings, participants are encouraged to be objective rather than being controlled by their emotions to the extent of making subjective analysis of the issue. The Christian Council, the Police Service, the National House of Chiefs, the National/regional Peace Council and all other stakeholders are encouraged to play their roles objectively in dealing with the matter.

3. The need for theological silence

Christians need to note that silence is part of one's worship life. Silence helps one to have a deeper and more intimate relationship with God. In my view, the ban on noisemaking offers Christians an opportunity to develop their spiritual lives. Both silence and solitude are key catalysts of the spiritual growth of the Christian. Therefore, the church needs to develop and promote the theology of silence and solitude. Solitude refers to separation from all humans for some time in order to be enabled to express one's self more earnestly and freely in a divine-human engagement. The religious pilgrimages to sacred mountains and retreat centers are done to practice solitude. If Christians can travel long distances to "high places" to observe solitude and wait upon the Lord, they can equally observe quietude in the comfort of their homes and wait upon the Lord, especially in a season when everyone is prohibited from polluting the atmosphere with noise.

One of the conditions for effective practice of solitude is to conduct oneself as being alone with God, casting away and resisting all that comes to mind so that one can occupy him/herself with prayer, thanksgiving, and waiting. Christians may achieve this condition of solitude in the chapel setting through silence. Silence can enhance God's communication with the believer in a similar way the Ga traditional authority says it enhances their communication with their gods. Also, silence has a therapeutic significance. Separation from the distractions of "the world, the flesh, and the devil" helps the soul to meet itself and to find God within the self. Christians in the Ga traditional area can therefore use the period of the ban to practice Christian solitude and to promote deeper encounters with God.

This, in a way, will be like the Christianization of the silent month in the Ga state, similar to the Christianization of the pagan festival as Christmas.

CONCLUSION

The paper has considered the issue of the ban on noisemaking in the context of the *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival from traditional and legal perspectives. The paper calls on all Christian churches to restrict the use of drums in their churches and avoid noisemaking during the period of the ban. This will ensure peaceful co-existence and the enhancement of Christian spirituality through solitude and silence. It is believed that the church's compliance with the ban would make the Ga Traditional Council live harmoniously with Christians and respect their way of worship. It is important to state that the position taken by this paper does not amount to a compromise of faith because it is not only through "noisemaking" that Christians can serve the Lord. What constitutes a compromise of faith is when believers adhere to laws that contradict God's moral standards. The ban on noisemaking does not relate to God's moral character. Solitude, in general, is one of the ways by which Christians develop spiritually.

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