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Ty Thompson

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Brainwash Education:
Religiosity, Formal Education, and The Ghanaian mentality

Ty Thompson
Occidental College
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Peace and Love to everyone on The Continent.

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore how the mission education system has and continues to affect the Ghanaian mind/mentality. Christianity was introduced into West African culture by European colonizers, whose aims were domination and exploitation at any cost. Consequently, the Christian faith in Ghana is undeniably linked to western perceptions, interests and influences. This study explores:

1. The Aims of the Christian Mission
2. The Mission Education System
3. The Contemporary School System
4. Ghanaian Self-Orientation
5. The Affects of Christian Based Education System

Introduction

Christianity is the most prevalent religion in Ghana, yet it was introduced into West Africa less than six-hundred years ago. When the Portuguese first arrived in 1471¹ they brought with them the Christian faith, but it was not until the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries that European missionaries became very prevalent. This can be accredited to the fact that Christianity came to Ghana as merely an extension of colonial rule.

In the 19th century the British abolished slavery in order to start “legitimate” trade in Ghana.² This was not because the British had suddenly realized how inhumane chattel slavery was, rather as a result of the industrial revolution a shift in demand from labour to raw materials was taking place in the western world. In order for the British to access Ghana’s goods it was mandatory that they retained good relations with the people of the Gold Coast. One way this was accomplished was through evangelization³. The British needed to evangelize because knew that they would never gain access to Ghanaian resources unless the Ghanaian thought as the British.

The colonizers were so ethnocentric that they did not even try to disguise their undermining of African traditional thought. As a result there is extensive documentation, by both British and indigenous sources, on the condemnation of everything related to traditional African culture and religion. Kwesi Dickson explores how African religion has traditionally been viewed as primitive and backward in his book, *Theology in Africa. While Our Religions*, a book by H. A. Guy, is a West African religion textbook which does not so much as mention Traditional African religion. *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, by Adu Boahen (CH.10) provides useful information about the mission mentality in Ghana. J.S. Pobee’s *Invitation to be African Anglican*, H. Debrunner’s, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, and M. Crowder’s *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* are also all good sources on the history of mission presence in Ghana.

The literature available on the devaluation of African religion and culture in Ghana is plentiful, however that is not the main focus of this paper. This paper will touch on the British’s devaluation of all things indigenously Ghanaian, but only in order to make lucid will seriously explore how this negation of Africanness manifests itself in all aspects of Ghanaian life.

¹ K.K Anti, Lecture notes form “The Religious composition of Ghana” at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. 24 September 2002.

² Akosua Perdi. Lecture notes from “History of the Slave Trade in Ghana” at the University of Legon, Ghana, 30 September 2002

³ R. Addo-Fenning. Lecture notes from “The Colonial History of Ghana” at the University of Legon, Legon Ghana 30 September 2002

Methodology

Stating exactly how the mission education system has affected the Ghanaian mentality was a very difficult topic to tackle. The effects of the mission system had on Ghana are far reaching, and completely intertwined within contemporary Ghanaian culture. For this reason it was necessary for me to use primary and secondary sources, as well as heavy observation in order to arrive at any conclusions regarding my topic of research.

Interviewing a cross-section of Ghanaians was the main source of my information. Although I did not specifically reference all interviews I had in my paper, speaking with a variety of Ghanaians really helped me to better understand what the Ghanaian mentality was. One of my main objectives was to hear from as many different types of Ghanaians as possible. For this reason I interviewed: 15 students (ages 9-24), four teachers (primary, senior secondary, and university professors), six church goers (Methodist and Pentecostal), two college aged young adults, three Rastafarians and two Israelites. I chose these individuals because I felt that in order to find out what affect Christianity and education have on Ghanaians it was necessary to talk with Christians, non-Christians, students, and educators. I feel that speaking with all these individuals provided me with enough information to begin to draw conclusions about the Ghanaian mentality.

Because I conducted so many interviews I did not have a set of specific questions that I used consistently throughout my research. Instead I tried to have personable conversations with my interviewees in order to really get a feel for their thought processes. I did not want those interviewed to give me an answer they thought I wanted to hear, or to feel that I was putting words into their mouths. I simply opened up a conversation pertaining to the information I was searching for (i.e. What they thought about evangelization or why they had turned away from Christianity). After I posed the question I would see where the conversation headed, and if I felt that it was going in the wrong direction I would subtly bring up the topic I desired to learn about. Many times individuals gave me the same of similar responses to my questions, which really helped me to draw conclusions on the far-reaching effects of Christian indoctrination and formal education.

Secondary sources were also greatly helpful in my research. I used books, newspapers, academic journals, and news media to aid me in my research. Most of the books and academic journals I used came from the library of Mr. K. K. Anti and Dr. Naana Opoku-Agyemang, although I was able to attain a few books from both the University of Cape Coast and the University of Legon. Limited research time caused me to be unable to discuss how the media

effects the Ghanaian mentality, but the observations I made from the news media really helped me to gain a greater perspective on how the Ghanaian views himself.

The last method I employed was observation. Christianity and education are ever present in Ghana, which really allowed me to gain a strong sense of my topic. I was able to attend a class at Pedu M/A and JSS School, and sit in on two Mfantsepim SSS courses. Throughout my three month stay in Ghana I attended many church services and was able to be present at two annual church celebrations; The Church of Pentecost's 2002 Holy Ghost Convention¹ and The Wesley Methodist Annual Harvest and Thanksgiving Service². In addition, visual observation proved to be very useful in my research. I took many notes on individual's interactions with each other, conversations in which religion or education came up, and the daily presence of religiosity in Ghanaian life.

The greatest limitation to my study proved to be time constraint. Although one month is not a short period, analyzing the effects of Christianity on the Ghanaian mind is a very large topic to tackle. For this reason there are many interviews I had that were not able to make it into my paper. There was simply not enough space or time for them to make the final cut. In addition I was unable to include some facets of the Ghanaian mentality in which I felt formal education had made it influence, such as the media, and school subjects outside of Religious and Moral Studies.

My general appearance also proved to affect my research. Because I am obviously foreign looking and am bi-racial, people had a hard time figuring me out. In general it was obvious that people did not think that I was white, yet my appearance still seemed to mystify them. This sometimes manifested itself in a standoffish attitude towards me and my research questions. The fact that I choose to wear dreadlocks, and was asking questions about the mission education system and its consequences may have also hurt my research. Most of the time people generally overlooked them as a "Black American thing³", but on a few occasions they seemed to prohibit any in-depth conversation that may have taken place on Christianity and its repercussions. Although these obstacles were at times frustrating and disheartening, I feel that spending one month on my ISP allowed me to gather an abundance of useful, pertinent, and interesting information regarding the consequences of mission education in Ghana.

¹ The Church of Pentecost Super Anointing and Holy Ghost Convention. 22 September 2002. Komenda, Ghana.

² The Wesley Methodist Annual Harvest and Thanksgiving Service. 10 November 2002. Swedru, Ghana.

³ Ghanaians in general insisted on calling me a Black American instead of an African-American, which I says something about the separation they feel between us and them.

I. Aims of the Christian Mission

When the Western Christian church first came to Ghana its intentions were not solely for the purpose of sharing the gospel with other people of the world. The church wanted to: establish profitable trade with a Christian population, discover the strength of the Muslim Moors (enemies of Portugal), find Christian princes of Africa to aid Portuguese against the Muslim enemies, and lastly to evangelize Africans into Christianity¹. Even though Christianity arrived in 1471 with the Portuguese, it took another three hundred and fifty years before it actually began to gain success in Ghana. This can be accredited to the fact that Christianity came to West Africa hand in hand with the slave trade. Therefore, the fortune that Europeans were making in the sale of human beings took precedence over the saving of ones soul. It was not until the shift towards “legitimate” trade began in the ninetieth century that Christianity actually started to take its hold in Ghana.

In order to carry out a successful “legitimate” trade in Ghana it was necessary for the British² to obtain a positive relationship with the traditional Ghanaian power structure. The British did this in the three main ways: Indirect rule through chieftaincy, the establishment of an African middle class, and the conversion of Ghanaian to Christianity.

British Indirect Rule:

The British colonial system was on of indirect rule. They believed that, “unless African political structures and institutions were somewhat preserved and local Europeans acted as advisors to African authorities the colonial system couldn’t work³”. This meant that Traditional Ghanaian languages were allowed to be maintained, ethnic loyalties stayed in tact, and the chiefs remained in power. Although Ghana’s pre-colonial governmental system was in theory left intact, in actuality the chiefs were only allowed political mobility if their objectives matched that of British policy. For example, the chiefs were allowed to retain their position as head of the community, but the British changed their name from king to chief. This was because they felt that an African king should not share the same title as the king of England⁴. The British not only refused to call Ghanaian royalty by their proper names, they also refused to include them in their governmental system. The British considered all Africans to be subjects of the British, rather

¹ K.K Anti, Lecture notes form “The Religious composition of Ghana” at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. 24 September 2002.

² They were the dominant force in the Gold Coast during the ninetieth century.

³ Azevedo, Mario. *Africana Studies: A Survey of Africa and the African Diaspora*. (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1998), 114

⁴ Dr. R. Addo-Fenning. Lecture notes from “The Colonial History of Ghana” at the University of Legon, Legon, Ghana, 30 September 2002.

than citizens of the empire.⁵ Meaning that even though the British claimed to rule indirectly there were no black faces present within the governmental system. The British only granted the chiefs pseudo-control over their communities, granted that their decisions fit in with the colonial objectives for the Gold Coast. In order to keep conflict to a minimal the British appeased the chiefs with governmental stipends and weapons so that they could accomplish their economic goals. The chiefs would ensure his people would trade with the British, while the British stayed on the coast and waited for the goods to arrive from the interior⁶. The chief in effect performed the dirty work for the British, which resulted in a loss of complete respect for the chief and a depletion of Ghanaian resources. However, not all chiefs complied willingly with British demands, which is why the development of an African middle class was mandatory for complete colonial dominance.

The African Middle Class:

The African middle class is something that developed as a result of the trading posts and castles. They were those elite in Ghanaian society who traded with the Europeans, operating as a buffer zone between the Europeans and the African public itself⁷. In addition this newly formed middle class was introduced to British ways of life. A lifestyle which required a British style government, religion, family structure, architecture, education, and worldview. The establishment of an African middle class was possibly one of the most beneficial things that the colonial government did for itself, causing the upset of the entire African social set-up. Because a new value system was created the Ghanaian way of measuring worth lost its strength, causing the Ghanaian to reformulate his entire outlook on life. For example, the colonizing forces encouraged the African middle class to develop agriculture, not as it had been before - food crop production – but in cash crops like cocoa and palm oil for mass export to Europe⁸. During this period the Ghanaian also started to look at himself in a new light as the Christian missions began to gain popularity in the area.

Evangelization:

There are a host of reasons why the missionaries wanted to convert the peoples of the Gold Coast. Some desired to deliver the gospel in order to civilize the “backwards” parts of the

⁵ Azevedo, Mario. *Africana Studies: A Survey of Africa and the African Diaspora*. (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1998), 115

⁶ Dr. R. Addo-Fenning. Lecture notes from “The Colonial History of Ghana” at the University of Legon, Legon, Ghana, 30 September 2002.

⁷ Dickson, Kwesi A. *Theology in Africa*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 77.

⁸ Okyere, Vincent N. *Ghana: A Historical Survey*. (Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 1997), 44.

world⁹, while others felt guilt about the slave trade and felt in order to redeem themselves they owed it to African to bring him out of his “paganism¹⁰.” Although these may be part of the reasons why Europeans wanted to convert African it cannot be denied that in the foreground of all motivation was Euro-centrism and hope of economic prosperity. The Europeans thought of Africa as barbaric and so their mission took on a parental nature. The Africans were treated as an empty slate that needed to be refilled with the correct knowledge¹¹ (read Western knowledge). In their blind ethnocentrism the British desired to share with the Ghanaian his “superior” knowledge. They did not want to accept the African as he was because the African did not strive for expansion, domination, and exploitation, which were the cornerstones of colonization.

The British presented a God to the Ghanaians that was transcendent. This white Omnipotent, Omnipresent God would lift up the African out of his familiar world and reward him in heaven with all the riches denied him (by the British themselves) while on earth¹². Religion to the Ghanaian had formally been unknown because spiritually had been present in all aspects of life¹³. The European separated religiosity from everyday experience through the English language, Western medicine and Western education. When the Christian missions first came they insisted that sermons were given in English. Thomas Birch Freeman, a nineteenth century British missionary commented, ‘If our public worship in Cape Coast is not heaven come down to earth, it is pretty nearly that of England come down to Africa¹⁴.’ Admitting that the British were more interested in impressing their European culture upon the African than providing a representation of who Jesus Christ really was.

Western medicine is another area that the British used to impress their superiority. The British brought with them new medical technology. This was in some ways positive because it helped to cure some illnesses that had been previously fatal, but at the same time it caused the African to start looking down upon his indigenous medicine men¹⁵. Because the science and technology of the European was more modern and removed from nature, it began to become more revered by the Ghanaian and traditionally began to lose some of its credibility.

The introduction of Western education by the missionaries is probably the area which has had the greatest impact on the Ghanaian. In order for the Ghanaian to fully embrace Christianity they had to think as the British. The British believed that once they controlled the mind of the

⁹ Olaniyan, Richard. *African History and Culture*. (Nigeria: Longman Group Limited, 1982), 74

¹⁰ Okyere, Vincent N. *Ghana: A Historical Survey*. (Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 1997), 35

¹¹ Dickson, Kwesi A. *Theology in Africa*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 35

¹² Dickson, Kwesi A. *Theology in Africa*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 91

¹³ Abamfo Atiemo. Lecture notes from “African Traditional Religion” at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana 24 September 2002.

¹⁴ 1854 Report on the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Vol. XII.

¹⁵ K.K Anti, Lecture notes form “The Religious composition of Ghana” at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. 24 September 2002.

Ghanaian they would control their entire body. The early missions trained Africans in the church ministry so that the African would take a European approach to the gospel and mode of life¹⁶. Once an African ministry was established they would use the African as a means to enforce and obey European laws of life.

During the late eighteenth century the Anglican Church was trying to vain to convert African peoples to Christianity. They realized that as foreigners their message was gaining no credibility and thus needed to try a different approach. For this reason they chose three Africans and brought them to England in order to train them as priests. Two of the three men died before they could return to Africa, but one man, Philip Quaque survived and was ordained a deacon¹⁷. Quaque had been so thoroughly indoctrinated with eurocentrism in England that when he returned to the Gold Coast he was even more avid in the evangelization process than the white missionaries had been. Quaque encouraged the religious and moral improvement of the coast. He became a schoolmaster, teaching students how to read using the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. In addition, he taught the youth that the slave trade had been beneficial to the African, teaching them trade and bringing wealth that they had not known before.

¹⁶ Dickson, Kwesi A. *Theology in Africa*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 79

¹⁷ Boahen, Adu. *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the 19th and 20th Century*. (Accra: Sankofa Educ. Pub. Ltd., 2000), 79.

II. The Mission Education System

Western education in Ghana started in the Elmina Castle. The first pupils were children of European merchants and few wealthy African students. The school curriculum consisted of, reading, writing, arithmetic, and bible study.¹ Although it was not a missionary school, the castle school's main objective was to produce young priests, clerks, and accountants to work in the castles².

It wasn't until the beginning of the nineteenth century that missionary schooling really started to crop up, drawing in a high percentage of indigenous Ghanaians. Basel Evangelical mission (est. 1828), as well as Wesleyan Missionary Society are just two of the many mission schools established during this period. The mission statement of the Basel Missionary society was to provide, "quality education and character training"³. Their first school opened in 1843 and by 1880 they had forty-five schools throughout the country, teaching from kindergarten all the way up to a seminary teacher education program⁴.

The Wesleyan Methodist Missions had nearly the same objectives as the Basel Evangelical mission. The mission opened a variety of schools and in 1850 had over 1,000 students enrolled in their school, and by 1880 the Wesleyan mission had eighty-four schools throughout the country⁵. The Wesleyan Methodist mission started a number of day schools, using the English language as the medium of instruction in areas ranging from vocational education to academic training⁶.

Missionary School Curriculum:

The Basel Evangelical Missionary Society set-up the pattern by which most of the country's pre-tertiary education is now based. The first schools taught teaching, bible study, homiletics, music, church history, and English⁷. Because the mission's main objective in Ghana was the development and expansion of legitimate trade the schools also emphasized farming, building, and printing education. They knew that in order for their West African trade to be successful they would need some one to plant the crop, put up buildings for the clerical workers, and learn print education for publications. The Basel missionaries were actually the ones who

¹ Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 30

² Dr. Naana Opoku-Agyemang. Lecture notes form "The Education of women in Ghana" at Wa, Ghana, 05 October, 2002

³ Okyere, Vincent N. Ghana: A Historical Survey. (Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 1997), 40

⁴ Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 30

⁵ Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 32

⁶ Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 31

⁷ Okyere, Vincent N. Ghana: A Historical Survey. (Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 1997), 30

introduced the cash crops coco and cotton into Ghana in 1857, and in addition facilitated the farming of tobacco, sugar cane, coffee and bananas⁸

The Wesleyan Methodist mission schools taught bible study, reading, writing and arithmetic, but like the Basel schools they were also associated with vocational occupations as they hoped to make money off of the exportation of Ghana's raw goods. Although they had many vocational schools the academic training offered by the Wesleyan mission schools was much more sought after. This can be accredited to the fact that Africans saw those who received formal education obtaining a steady income. In addition those trained by the mission became teachers, clerks, interpreters, and clergymen receiving increased status in the community and sometimes even an opportunity to travel abroad⁹.

Motivations for the Mission Education System:

It cannot be denied that western education came to Ghana not because of a pre-existing demand for formal education, but as a necessity for the ushering in of an oppressive and colonial government. The missionaries supposedly started schools in Ghana out of a respect for education and to spread the gospel. These are in theory selfless reasons, but in actuality the missionaries were only thinking of themselves. They pushed reading, writing, and arithmetic, but only because it was necessary for keeping the books of the European businessman and for the reading the bible. In addition agriculture was encouraged, but not in the production of food crops. Cash crops were planted all over the country not so that the Ghanaian could make money off of the export business, rather so that the European could make a profit off of Ghanaian land, labour and resources.

The British got away with this through the establishment of formal education. The missionary education system taught European history and geography to the Ghanaian. The economic, social, political, and religious education taught to the Ghanaian was all the white man's knowledge¹⁰. From their very first day of school the Ghanaian began to view himself through the eyes of the European. Therefore, when the missionaries told the Ghanaian that they had been formally uncivilized he believed him because he had been trained not to see himself as he was, but to see what the white man saw in him-simplicity and barbarity. The missions condemned African religion, music, art, dance, life style, and beliefs. They refused to teach Ghanaian language and culture in school insisting that all things African were inferior and evil. These themes of indoctrination and miseducation can still be readily observed in contemporary

⁸ Boahen, Adu. Ghana: Evolution and Change in the 19th and 20th Century. (Accra: Sankofa Educ. Pub. Ltd., 2000), 82.

⁹ Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 31

¹⁰ Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 33

Ghana, in that the Ghanaian whole-heartedly believes that he cannot live an authentic existence without the use of European modes of life and thought¹¹

¹¹ Dickson, Kwesi A. *Theology in Africa*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 76

III. The Contemporary School System

The focus of the contemporary Ghanaian schools had shifted since the European introduction of formal education, yet it still continues to work in protection of the dominant western world. In 1961 the National Parliament passed The Education Act. It declared that education would be compulsory, free, and under the control of the government¹. It would appear that this act would remove the missionary element from the Ghanaian education system, but that was not the case. Under the 1961 Education act all schools fell under the control of the government, but the government did not have the funds to provide public education to all students in need. Because of this they continued to allow denominational bodies to erect schools, provide textbooks, and have some say in the general management of the institution². As it stands today the current government continues to be unable to afford to enforce the compulsory school attendance law, and therefore continues to allow the church to make a large contribution to Ghanaian public education.

Primary education in Ghana begins at the age of six or seven. At this level the students are taught six subjects: math, environmental studies, religious and moral education, music and dance, physical education, and the English language³. As soon as the students begin schooling English starts to be phased in as the medium of instruction, and by their third year of primary school the Ghanaian language is taught strictly as an additional school subject⁴. This means that by the age of six Ghanaian culture has already begun to be undermined by the western presence. Even though children speak their native tongues in the home and among friends, when it is time to gain valuable knowledge for the future it can only come in English. The abandonment of traditional language causes the Ghanaian student to alter the ways in which he/she had previously looked at the world, causing them to reorient themselves in relation to western educational thought and goals. In Ansu Datta's book, Education and Society: A Sociology of African Education, he argues that the effect that formal education had on Africa can be traced back to the colonial period, saying that:

The modern-style school set up by the colonial authorities was a powerful instrument for weakening the stability of the old society and for ushering in a process of change...the schools imparted new skills such as literacy in European language, numeracy, professional and

¹ Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 62

² Antwi, Moses K. Education, Society, and Development in Ghana. (Accra: Unimaz Publishers Limited, 1992), 68

³ Adjepong, S.K. Lecture notes from "The Educational System in Ghana" at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana, 29 October, 2002

⁴ Patricia Asomani, interview with Primary School teacher, 19 November 2002, Cape Coast, interview notes, Pedu M.A. Primary and Junior Secondary School, Cape Coast, Ghana.

vocational skills... which opened up new possibilities for their self-advancement in the authority structure and prestige-scale⁵

Datta made these observations in 1984, but if you look at the Ghanaian education system eighteen years later you can see that the same fallacy exists today. The school system by its very nature alters traditional societal thought. Its main function continues to be to facilitate the transformation from a traditional African society to a western one. One of the main ways Ghanaian culture is undermined is through the Christian presence at all levels of Ghanaian tutelage. The mission school system is seen in a relatively positive light in Ghana because of its history of introducing and funding modern-style education. For this same reason religious and moral education is the cornerstone of all public and private education and few believe that the school system would be successful without it.

Religious and Moral Education in the School System:

In an attempt to better understand why the Ghanaian school system cannot function without Religious and Moral Studies I interviewed a handful of Primary School students, Junior Secondary School students, and Senior Secondary School students. I asked them various questions about the school system, but my main focus was; what values, or lack there of, they found in religious and moral training. To my surprise every student gave me more or less the same response. Christ and morals help. Why? Because you cannot be moral without Christ. Why? Because the church says. Coming from a western perspective these responses were baffling. Twelve students from three different schools (denominational and non-denominational), a variety of ages, and each one came to the same conclusion – you cannot be a good person without God, because the church says so. It would appear unlikely for so many students to all arrive at the same conclusion from an open ended question, but upon looking at the curriculum presented to the students on religion and morals it would be almost impossible for them to think any differently.

As the policy of the Ghana education services all school curriculum is drawn out for the teachers. The education service provides a syllabus for each grade level, which maps out the direction of study each subject should take⁶. For Religious and Moral Education the lesson plan goes as follows:

- God, His Creation and Attributes
- Family and Community

⁵ Ansu Datta. *Education and Society: A Sociology of African Education*. (NY: MacMillian Publishers, 1984), 36

⁶ Angus Bodi, interview with Senior Secondary School teacher, 14 November 2002, Cape Coast, interview notes, University Practice Senior Secondary School, Cape Coast, Ghana.

- Family, Authority and Obedience
- Religious Practices and their Moral Implications
- Birth of Leaders and the Three Main Religions
- Religious Festivals
- Commitment, Reward and Punishment
- Acts of Worship
- Relationships and Responsibility
- Manners (greetings, dressing, eating)
- Work, Money and Leisure
- Religious Personalities
- Chastity and Immorality⁷.

As the student progresses in school a greater emphasis is placed on different areas of morality (i.e. chastity, appropriate dress, hygiene), but as a whole the main focus of the course throughout the student's education is the same. It shows that morality is inseparable from God and without a strong religious background you cannot live a righteous life. This idea is further enforced by the questions the teachers are prompted to ask at the end of every lecture. For example the teachers are to ask the students why they should read the scripture, but are not asked why it is important to know about traditional religion. Islam and Traditional religion are present in the Religious and Moral Education text book only six out of fifty-five pages are dedicated to these religions, not to mention the fact that no other religion ever make an appearance in the within the text. In addition, all chapter review questions are geared towards a Christian base⁸. It comes as no surprise then that every student I interviewed felt that you must be good because the church says so and not just for the sake of goodness. The school system does not allow the students to arrive at any other conclusions. Therefore the function of the education system is to, "preserve the societies dominant culture and pass it from generation to generation"⁹. Unfortunately, in the case of Ghana the school system was set-up by the missionaries, and therefore through the education system western religious ideals and culture continue to be passed down to the Ghanaian youth. Christianity was the religion of the colonizers, reading and writing were their modes of passing knowledge and morality was something they thought Africans had been living without. As a result of this in modern day society Christianity prevails, the written

⁷ Patricia Asomani, interview with Primary School teacher, 19 November 2002, Cape Coast, interview notes, Pedu M.A. Primary and Junior Secondary School, Cape Coast, Ghana.

⁸ Nkansah, Badu. Religious and Moral Education for Primary Schools.

⁹ Ansu Datta. Education and Society: A Sociology of African Education (NY: MacMillan Publishers, 1984), 33

word is more civilized than the spoken, and morals are something a Ghanaian cannot live without.

The student's textbooks are a prime example of how the education system works to protect a dominant and other culture in the Ghanaian youth. In the Religious and Moral Education textbooks students are provided with information on family, hygiene, environmental awareness, etc. that are all relevant to Ghanaian culture but when you look at images that coincide with the text a very different picture is drawn. Next to the picture of family there is a picture of Jesus, Moses, and Enoch delivering a message on how to fingers downward, insinuating that the family had not been properly regarded before the arrival of these men. Although the text is referring to a Ghanaian family structure the picture tells a different story. It says that the Ghanaian was not formally respecting the proper family structure, but because God (a white light form the top corner of the picture) loves them he has sent three white men to impart upon them the proper knowledge on how to live their lives.

Another picture gives a lesson on plants. In this chapter many different Ghanaian plants and their functions are described, yet the pictures in the chapter show evergreen trees, snowcapped mountains, North American plant life and a picture of a white God. The Ghanaian student is therefore told what he/she needs to know about his/her local environment, but is bombarded with images o things he/she will never know.

IV. Ghana's Self Orientation

The Ghanaian education system is extremely contradictory. It speaks to some Ghanaian necessities, yet at the same time plants the idea in the heads of its students that they should look like and aspire to western ideals which are impractical and unattainable. Through the projection of white/western culture onto the young Ghanaian mind stagnation is caused in the further development of traditional Ghanaian society. Because the students are always striving for western culture their own cultural development comes to a standstill. "The values, skills, habits, and attitudes transmitted by the modern school in Africa differ in respects from those of traditional societies and in effect reproduce the subculture of the dominant societal interest group¹". This, western oriented school curriculum results in the development of a western-minded subculture in the classroom, and in the population produces a western-minded Ghanaian ruling class. Professor Britwum, of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, describes this as a result of the material base of Ghanaian society still being entrenched in the imperialistic, colonial and capitalistic ways. As Professor Britwum sees it, all societies have a material base. The material base of a society consists of the forces of production for that society, and their economic and property relations in respect to that production force. For example, if the material base of a town is fishing, then all aspects of that society would serve to protect the fishing business. The school calendar, social events, market days, etc are all set up in relation to the fishing season. All societies gather their identity from their property relations, and therefore in order to keep a stable society they must do all that is in their power to make sure all economic relations serve to protect the material base of the society. The material base consists of the societies social institutions, science and technology, mental constructs and their applications². The tragedy with this is that in Ghana colonialization allowed the European to move their material base into the country.

When the Europeans arrived colonialization became the material base of society. Religion and the mission education system are just two mental constructs that developed out of a colonial material base of society. They were necessary in order to protect the colonial core of society. Therefore, when a student worships a white God, from a white textbook because the church says to it is simply because he/she is protecting Ghana's material base – western imperialism. In that case the practice of Christianity is not necessarily where the problem lies. The problem lies in the fact that Christianity's functioning role in Ghana is to protect the western

¹ Ansu Datta. *Education and Society: A Sociology of African Education* (NY: MacMillian Publishers, 1984), 35

² Atta Britwum. Interview with University of Cape Coast Professor, 7 November 2002, Cape Coast, interview notes, Cape Coast, Ghana.

superpowers. The economic base of Ghana lies in foreign ownership, monopolies, and the IMF/World Bank, all of which are outside based interests. Therefore the Ghanaian mentality is being controlled by western economic goals. In effect the Ghanaian will not desire a more relevant educational system or God until the material base of society comes from within Ghana.

The Ghanaian Mentality:

The effect of a foreign material base in Ghana have had far reaching consequences on the country. Because the education system functions as a tool in forwarding a western material base the religion and the school system are always working to forward the economic and social goals of the western world. This mentality has manifested itself in every aspect of Ghanaian life (i.e. the media, church, perception of self, life goals, morals, governmental set-up, etc).

One consequence of religion working to protect the colonial (now global) material base has been a blind faith in Christianity. Christianity has become more than just a form of worshipping God. It serves to prove and validate your status in the community. Meaning that the more dedicated to Christianity you prove yourself to be the more western you are. In a society where westernization is the core of the social stratum the more western you are means the better and closer to whiteness you have become.

As was stated earlier, when the missions first arrived in Ghana one of their main goals was to convert Ghanaians to Christianity so that they could develop an African middle class to trade with. For this reason it was necessary that Ghanaians become literate in order to understand the Bible. The missionary schools were successful in their conversions, and many that completed the mission education system went on to pass down the Christian tradition to subsequent generations.

Upon observing numerous church services in Ghana over the past three months it became evident to me that the mentality developed during the colonial period between literacy, social status, and commitment to God is still as much in place today as it was more than three hundred years ago. In every church that I visited at least half of the parishioners were taking notes throughout the sermon. This was very interesting since Ghana is a culture that values orality much more than the written word. In addition, most parishioners didn't appear to be writing down the main points of the sermon; they were instead underlining every reference to the Bible that the preacher made³. This caused me to conclude that knowing the passage wasn't necessarily the most important part of not taking during the sermon. Literacy and the written

³ Wesley Methodist Church. 10 November 2002. Swedru, Ghana. The Church of Pentecost Super Anointing and Holy Ghost Convention. 22 September 2002. Komenda, Ghana. Wesley Methodist Church. 3 November 2002. Cape Coast Ghana.

word was actually proving your dedication no just to God, but to a Christian God, and intern your dedication to the material base of society.

Almost every aspect of the Ghanaian church services preserve Ghana's neo-colonial material base. On November 10th, 2002 I was luck enough to be invited to an Annual Harvest and Thanksgiving Service of the Wesley Methodist Church in Swedru. As the church service began the preacher stepped up to the pulpit in a western suit and began to deliver a sermon that came straight from the United States. Four times throughout the sermon the preacher asked for everyone to pray that everyone would be blessed with riches and reassured the congregation if they lead good and moral lives Jesus would bless them with a big house or a new car⁴. This insinuates that it is more important to do good for a monetary reward than for the salvation of one's soul. The connection that Christianity and riches have is not just a theme I observed solely on my visit to Swedru. This concept was prevalent in all church services I attended and is reminiscent of the colonial period, when Ghanaians saw those who wore western wear, praying to Jesus, and espousing western ideas holding high status jobs and being rewarded monetarily by the colonial government.

The Offertory:

The church offertory is a central part of the church service, and happens throughout the service anywhere from two to five times during the course of the mass. On my visit to the Swedru Thanksgiving service I took detailed notes on the offertory process. In the beginning of the service there was an initial offering for the parish itself. At this point everyone went to the front of the church by pew and gave their offering. The second offering was for the preacher, more money than the first offering was donated to this cause. The third offertory was s special offering for the building of a new church. After this offering the preacher called out 500,000 cedis, for a few minutes nothing happened. Everyone was stealing glances around the room curious to see who would donate half a million cedis. Finally someone got up and gave the money. The preacher was ecstatic and everyone started dancing and praising the Jesus. From 500,000 cedis down to 100,000 cedis this same process happened. If you were able to give this much money then a special prayer was said for you by the preacher and you were asked to sit in the front of the church. After 100,000 cedis the preacher went to 50,000 down to 1,000 cedis. Although, if you gave any of these amounts no special prayer was said for you, and your donation was hardly acknowledged. The following offering was for Fante day names. When

⁴ Reverend E.K. Abaka-Wilson. Annual Harvest and Thanksgiving Service. Wesley Methodist Church. 10 November 2002. Swedru, Ghana.

your day was called you were to dance to the front of the church and place your contribution in the donation box. However, if you had no more money or did not wish to donate everyone would know that you had not risen when your name was called. This created an atmosphere of embarrassment for anyone who hadn't risen when their name was called, causing you to feel ostracized by your community. The next offering was with the Royal stool. In order to sit on the stool you had to donate cedis, but once someone else put money in the offertory box you had to get up from the stool. Parishioners would go back and forth with one another trying to retain their position on the stool. The stool offering quickly became a sort of competition of who was willing to give all of their money to sit on the stool, i.e. sit closer to God.

Just as taking notes in church proves your dedication to western values, the offertory process proves how much you will give to become western. Those wealthier parishioners give a lot of money and therefore receive extra praise and prayer from the church, and those who cannot afford to donate so much empty their pocket anyway in hopes and at their devotion to the church will soon supply them with riches as well. Thus church offertory functions as one of the greatest protectors of Ghana's foreign economic base. Instead of using their money to collectively build up the country Ghanaians donate much of their resources to the church. This guarantees that foreign companies will continue to dominate Ghanaian revenue, while Ghanaians pray to God to donate their money to and give them strength to travel through life, while their dedication to the church is the same reason they do not have any financial mobilization.

In an interview I had with one Wesley Methodist parishioner after the Thanksgiving service I asked him why he felt so many parishioners took notes during the service. At first he told me it was because they wanted to make references to those passages during the following week. Although, when I questioned as to why it appeared that some people were writing down every detail of the sermon I received an entirely different answer. "Africans sometimes use the church as a role they have to play every Sunday. If they are not extremely attentive during the service then someone might talk about them with other members of the church⁵." When I asked whether or not he felt that the offertory in some ways may force someone to feel pressure from the community to give to the church I received another shocking answer. "No elder or important person in the church is not wealthy. The church tells you how to dress, pray and act. If you don't want to donate to the church that is fine, but then you will never gain a high respect or status within the church⁶". Mr. Mensah was willing to admit to me that many things in the church are only done for show, but he also felt that without the church society would fall apart. Further proving that the mission system was completely successful in breaking up traditional

⁵ Eric Mensah. Interview notes from Wesley Methodist Church. Swedru Ghana. 10 November 2002.

⁶ Eric Mensah. Interview notes from Wesley Methodist Church. Swedru Ghana. 10 November 2002.

African society, and creating an African middle-class. Many in the church are able to give money to the church and receive social status, while the rest give anyway feeling that this will cause God to reward them monetarily as well. Meanwhile the same people who introduced Christianity into Ghana are guaranteed economic control of the country because much of Ghana's resources are going into the church. God provides the parishioners security from the problems they face in daily life, yet their dedication to the church strengthens the system responsible for their insecurities.

White Jesus:

The popularity of the white Jesus image in Ghana is quite a phenomenon. In almost all cultures the image of God takes on the likeness of the people in that society⁷, but in the case of Christianity Jesus is almost always white. Everyday when traveling around Cape Coast you cannot help but be bombarded with dozens of images of a wavy haired, blue eyed, passive looking Jesus. There are bumper stickers, sign boards, books Jesus lives graffiti art, what does it all mean?

In an interview I had with a Rastafarian I asked him what he thought of the white Jesus image. He told me that it did not allow future generation to know themselves. "People think that Jesus is the every merciful father and looks just like the pictures that portrays him. What the people fail acknowledge is that the colonizers brought that white Jesus with them to pacify the people. They brought that picture to every institution, handed out white Jesus pamphlets, and preached Christianity. Once they had indoctrinated enough people they backed off, but by then the older generations had already picked up the white Jesus and fed it to the youth. The people truly believe that Jesus must be white because white people are the richest and most powerful color in the world. Ghanaians can hardly imagine that Jesus could come from a poor place⁸.

These statements strongly enforce my argument that the material base of Ghana is a foreign and western force. The white Jesus is serving to protect the superstructure that controls Ghana. Ghanaians avidly read the Bible, yet they somehow do not internalize the fact the Jesus was poor and did not aspire to monetary wealth. In addition throughout the Bible there are descriptions of Jesus which say that he had woken hair and feet the color of charcoal. The Bible also tells countless stories of the strength of Jesus to stand up against all the people attempting to silence his truths, yet the image of Jesus Ghanaians have been presented with is calm, meek and subdued. The colonizers could not have portrayed Jesus in the way he is represented in the Bible because then the people would have risen up against the colonizers. Instead they taught a

⁷ Dr. Naana Mason. Lecture notes from "African and the Diaspora" at University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana 30 October 2002.

⁸ Paapa Wastik. Interview notes from Sabbath Bible Study at Asaase Pa, Cape Coast, Ghana. 16 November 2002.

humble, passive Jesus so that they could more easily control the Ghanaian population. It doesn't matter that the image of Jesus is in complete contradiction with the Bible because the people don't actually want to hear what the Old and New Testament teach them, they want to know a rich white Jesus who comes from Britain or America. It is not my intention to call the Christian faith into question, I only want to illuminate the fact that because Christianity in Ghana is a learned behaviour. The missions brought Christianity and the African learned it and passed it on. At the same time Christianity was introduced to Ghana so was foreign wealth. Today Christianity and wealth still remain side by side. Like almost all people, Ghanaians would like the opportunity to gain financial wealth. Christianity, wealth, and the white man all came to Ghana together, therefore when the Ghanaian raises up a white Jesus, whom he thinks came from a rich white land it is only because he has been socialized to believe so. For how can you gain a white wealth with a poor black God?

In order to test this hypothesis I showed two school children a picture of black Jesus and asked them what they thought. Immediately they both started laughing, when I asked them why they pointed to a picture of a white Jesus on the wall and said, "Jesus isn't black, he's white"⁹. When I asked them why one boy replied, "That's just the way it is"¹⁰. One boy then went on to tell me that some preachers say Jesus is black, but when he sees a black Jesus he still thinks it looks funny. When I asked him why he couldn't answer. This further proves that Christianity as is generally practiced in Ghana (whitely) is a process of reorienting yourself. The education system is constantly showing you images of what you are not and do not have, so when you see a God that looks like you it only makes sense that you could not recognize it. Christianity serves to draw you away from your African culture and perspective.

⁹ Ben Asomani Jr. interview with school child. 3 November 2002. Cape Coast. Interview notes, Cape Coast, Ghana.

¹⁰ Kofi Ocran. Interview with school child. 3 November 2002. Cape Coast. Interview notes, Cape Coast, Ghana.

V. Affects of the Christian Based Education System

As we have seen throughout this research, the education that Ghanaian students receive is not conducive to their environment. The pupils are educated from a western perspective and relate to their world in western ways. Although ninety percent of the Ghanaians are farmers¹, agriculture is not one of the main focuses of Ghana education. Agricultural development could be the key to economic development in Ghana, yet agricultural schools never caught on. This is because Ghanaian self-sufficiency was not a colonial educational goal. They were only interested in turning Ghanaian eyes westward².

Africans desired European modeled schools because they saw how successful their economy was. The problem with this is that the European economy was only so successful because of its rape of African agriculture and mineral resources. The school system further agitates the problem by equipping Ghanaians for jobs that do not exist. “Academic elementary education has generated unrealistic employment expectations for Ghanaians, causing flight from rural areas, and fostering disdain for manual occupations³”. Because student are continually indoctrinated with images of western works, wealth, and goals they set out in life to obtain something that exists half way across the world, and when these goals cannot be realised they turn to a white God and religion to help carry them through.

Formal education is mostly to blame for this phenomenon. Because primary and JSS are compulsory in Ghana there is a large expanse of educational opportunity at this level. Once you complete JSS you are to take a test. If you do not pass or do not want to continue your education beyond this point you may stop, other wise you may continue on to Senior Secondary School (SSS). Unfortunately, there are a limited number of SSS schools, so if you are not a straight A student, you will not be able to attend a competitive SSS., and therefore have virtually no chance of attending university⁴. On top of that there are only three main universities in Ghana⁵, so even if you are able to attend a top SSS, you still may not qualify for university education. If you are lucky enough to attend college once you graduate there is still a lack of job mobility and

¹ Dr. Eric Quaye. Lecture notes from “A Geography of Ghana” at Jacoranda Inn, Cape Coast, Ghana, 28 August, 2002

² C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Jean Bouman, eds. *Education and Economic Development*. (Chicago: Aldine Publishers Company, 1965), 145.

³ C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Jean Bouman, eds. *Education and Economic Development*. (Chicago: Aldine Publishers Company, 1965), 148.

⁴ S. K. Adjepong. Lecture notes from “The Education system in Ghana”, at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana, 29 October, 2002.

⁵ S. K. Adjepong. Lecture notes from “The Education system in Ghana”, at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana, 29 October, 2002.

opportunity outside of the formal education sector. As a result you will have to look elsewhere for work, which generally means you must look westward for a job.

In order to test this hypothesis I asked five young adults (three college students, and two college aged students) where they planned to be in five years time. They all replied that they hoped to be in Britain or America. The three college students all told me they would have more job opportunities and receive better pay outside of the country, while the college aged students gave me a variation of that answer. They informed me that they were not lucky and so had to work, but if they worked hard enough they would travel to my country in order to find greater fortune there⁶.

In order to survive everyone needs food, shelter, clothing and medical care⁷. Ghana has all of these resources, but because of their foreign educational base they can only think of joining a foreign economy. Ghanaian students spend all their formative years learning about what other countries have. Thus causing them to find an affinity with the western world and be drawn away from their African culture and perspective.

⁶ Kweku Davies, Robert Mensah, John Akosa, Regina Yeboah, Ofori Opoku. Interview of college students and college aged students. 9 November 2002. Cape Coast. Interview notes. Cape Coast, Ghana.

⁷ Dr. Kofi Sam. lecture notes from "Science and Technology in Ghana" at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana, 29 October 2002.

Conclusions

Although the Whitewashing of young students in the Ghanaian education system at times appears hopeless, change is slowly making its mark on the Ghanaian youth. The growing number of Rastafarians in Cape Coast are just one example of this. All of the Rastafarians I spoke with had formally been Christians, but had turned away from the faith because of the hypocrisy they saw within the church. One Rastafarian told me, ‘church means unity, yet as a Christian you are willing to pray with someone in church on Sunday and take them to court on Monday. The worst part is, these are the same people responsible for educating the Ghanaian youth. Rastafari is here not to teach, but to show the youth true Unity.¹’ Valija, another former Christian turned Israelite, gave me a very similar answer. He informed me that, “if you say you are a Christian you must have a law to govern you. The problem with Christianity today is that they have a law but no one practices it. This is why we opened Asaase Pa², it exists to show the people that proper exercise, health, and mind frame are necessary in order to be a truly spiritually rounded person. It s time for Ghanaians to see that going to church isn’t going to necessarily do anything for you. True spirituality is in every aspect of life³”.

Denouncing Christianity isn’t the only way to reinstall a sense of pride in African tradition and culture. There are many Independent African churches sprouting up today all over Ghana. These churches are attempting to indigenize Christianity and take a more accommodating and holistic approach to the Christian faith⁴. The National Baptist, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Nigritian Church are just three examples of this phenomenon. These churches stand for, “native effort, self reliance, independence, and self-respect⁵,” which exemplifies the African’s desire for self-expression and total independence from missionary goals and objectives⁶. Ghanaians may be incurably religious⁷, but once their orientation towards their God begins to change, their educational set-up and mentality will be quick to follow.

¹ Ras Kweku. Interview notes from Sabbath Bible Study at Asaase Pa, Cape Coast, Ghana, 16 November 2002.

² Asaase Pa is an Israelite owned and run health resort, restaurant and spa

³ Valijah. Interview notes from Sabbath Bible Study at Asaase Pa, Cape Coast, Ghana, 16 November 2002.

⁴ K.K Anti, Lecture notes form “The Religious composition of Ghana” at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. 24 September 2002.

⁵ Christian Council of Ghana. *The Rise of Independent Churches in Ghana*. Accra: Asempa Pub. 1990

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Suggestions for Further Study

Westernization in general has made a mark on Ghana in innumerable ways. One thing I noticed when I was typing up my ISP was what sort of websites Ghanaians frequent at Internet cafes. Every time I went to the Internet café almost everyone, with the exception of those sending e-mails, were looking at western consumer goods. People were looking at the latest cell phones, American fashions, cars, Hollywood houses, etc. It would be really interesting to see a study on what sites are most frequented by Ghanaians and why. An interesting extension to that paper might be a study on Ghanaian television. In doing my research on the Ghanaian mentality I did some observation of Ghanaian television shows. I found the majority of Ghanaian broadcasted television shows come from the United States or Europe. In addition most of these shows have absolutely no relevance to Ghanaian life. As a result of this Ghanaians have an extremely jaded perception of Western life, causing them to aspire to Western riches that are not even a reality for most westerners. A counterpart to this research may be a study on how Ghanaians are fighting back against the ushering in of global capitalism. I think that it would be a very valuable resource for people to be able to see how Ghanaian culture is fighting back against Western imperialism.

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