DEATH AND THE HEREAFTER AMONG THE DAGAABA OF NORTHWESTERN GHANA:
A CRITICAL REFLECTION TOWARDS ANTHROPOLOGICO-RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

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THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF PhD AFRICAN STUDIES DEGREE

MAY, 2015
DEDICATION

Affectionately dedicated to the Doggu family and

My dear wife, Cynthia and children: Mezvin, Marcel, Maclean and Mildred.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except for references to work, which I have cited and duly acknowledged, this dissertation is my personal effort carried out under the supervision of the under listed supervisory committee. I further declare that this thesis has neither in whole nor in part been published nor previously presented to another University or elsewhere for the award of a degree.

I therefore remain solely responsible for any shortcomings in the entire work.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

If this work was possible at all, it is due to the guidance and grace of God. He has walked with me through every stage of this dissertation even when sometimes I seemed to be flagging. To God be the glory.

My deepest gratitude and respect goes to my supervisors. I must say I have been privileged as to get the kind of supervisors I had, Prof. Albert K. Awedoba, Prof. Steve Tonah and Dr. Edward Nanbigne, for their critical and incisive comments and the indefatigable manner in which they guided me to stay focused on this dissertation. Despite their busy work schedules, yet they made time to read, correct and direct this work.

I thank Prof. Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Director of the Institute of African Studies and other Fellows of the Institute for the many sessions of seminars they frequently sat through and all the suggestions and insightful comments and encouragement given me. But for them it would not have been easy getting to the end.

This work may not have been possible without the guidance, openhearted and enthusiastic cooperation and fullest support of the numerous people, all of whom I cannot mention but whom I contacted for views on my academic work. I am sincerely grateful to everyone. My heartfelt appreciation and thanks to Hon. Ambrose Dery who facilitated my efforts in getting financial support from GETFund to offset my first year tuition fees. To Mr. Arikor Tetteh of the Institute of African Studies, who meticulously edited the thesis, I express my profound gratitude to you.
I thank the Doggu Family in a special way for their encouragement, moral and prayerful support given me. My deepest appreciation to Mr. Charles Nyuur, (alias Kara) a key informant to most of the information I obtained for this research. I will never forget to single-out my father, Mr. Ludovic Doggu, who has been one of my main informant and made considerable inputs to some critical information on the project work. May God bless you even more so as you advance in age.

A hearty thank you to my dear wife Cynthia Doggu and children, Mezvin, Marcel, Maclean and Mildred for their love and patience, especially when they do not fully understand why daddy was frequently absent due to travels to Nandom and its environs, just to make up for this work.

Finally, I am grateful to all my friends and my course colleagues for the useful discussions and interaction.

May the good Lord meet you at the point of need and grant you all His choicest blessings.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at the beliefs and practices on death and the hereafter from the cultural context of the Dagaaba in northwestern Ghana and how these concepts helped them to be fully engaged in the ‘here and now’ because they were motivated to do their optimum. The Dagaaba, perceive life, death and the hereafter, as being solemnized and is socially, morally, religiously and materially integrated in the community. Therefore, beliefs and practices on death and the hereafter have a central place in Dagaaba culture because the notion of ancestors was reminding the people in the community about the value of good, moral life. The study examines the changing discourse on the beliefs and practices on death and the hereafter and the notion of ancestorship, among the people in an engendered, transforming and socio-cultural milieu and the impact of such changes. Therefore, the work is an attempt to provide more accurate and current versions on the performance practice of the Dagaaba rites on death and the hereafter. Hence, the study seeks to construct, explain, critique and justify these cultural practices among the Dagaaba. For the Dagaaba, death and the hereafter are pervading and encompassing reality. Death, which ultimately includes life, relates to time and is a rhythm with a cycle which includes: birth, puberty, initiation, marriage, procreation, death, and entry into the community of the departed in the eschatological-spirit world. For such a wide ranging topic, it was necessary to bring it to focus by adopting an ethnographic approach that incorporates the use of Dagaaba discourse and literature, observation and participant observation methods, funeral dirges, folk-songs, dance, symbolic actions, idioms, proverbs, poetry, story-telling, gossiping, formal and informal interviews, paradigms and mythologies which were examined, juxtaposing the realities of life as the Dagaaba see it with the myths of narratives which encapsulate the issues of death and the hereafter.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The concept of death and hereafter among the Dagaaba is best understood with reference to the significance and emotion arising from Dagaaba funerals and their ‘politics of reputation.’ It is against this background that the performances of rites during Dagaaba funerals are marked as occasions for the family to affirm its prestige and to celebrate its excellence. The concept of death, that indicates a transition from the physical to the spiritual, strikes many people as phenomena that needs explanation beyond physical causes and effects, hence the many myths on the origin of death to be found in the folklore of many African peoples, not excluding the Dagaaba. Before the advent of Christianity among the Dagaaba, their beliefs surrounding death, and life after death were helping them to be fully engaged in the ‘here and life after’. Therefore, beliefs and practices that border on life and life after death had a central place in Dagaaba culture. This is because the status of ancestors constantly reminds the people of the value of good moral life while alive.

As it were, the Dagaaba, like many African societies, have been preoccupied with profound questions about death and life hereafter and have found some answers to them. In this way, they have made an invaluable contribution to philosophy and knowledge in their bid to understand life, death and the hereafter as very critical concept in human existence.
This is to dismiss Hegel’s (1948) assertion\(^1\) that the Negro is without philosophy because it was the bases for western imperialism. According to Gusdorf (1947)\(^2\), traditional beliefs and myths are opposed to philosophy or critical thinking and this is where African philosophies are placed. He added that Africans are traditional, mythical and ritualistic with their belief systems and customs.

Inquiries and discourse with resource persons, to delve into Dagaaba culture and philosophy, constitutes an essential part of this research. Dagaaba “wisdom literature” vindicates itself, particularly that other people and cultures think differently. Here, this vindication is quite imperative because ‘Renaissance Europeans’ opinion about the African was that, he does not reason and cannot be truly wise. In a critical examination of this opinion, Bekye (1991) cited Bentley as saying, “the African, Negro or Bantu, does not think, reflect, does not reason so much that it can be dispensed with. He has prodigious memory. He has great talents of observation and of imitation; a great deal of ease with words, and shows good qualities. He can be benevolent, generous, loving, disinterested, devoted, faithful, brave, patient, and perseverant, but the faculties of reasoning and of invention remain dormant. He perceives the actually presented circumstances; he adapts himself to them, and attends to them, but to elaborate a plan seriously, or to induce with intelligence, that is beyond him.” One only way the African may be properly understood, and more so the Dagaaba, is to critically examine and understand their folk wisdom, their worldview, environment and social milieu.

\(^1\)The Negro is savage or primitive and whatever the Negro tells you need to make extraction because he is engulfed by traditional beliefs, myths and customs.

\(^2\)Georges Gusdorf. Mythe et Metaphysique, 1947
It was against this background and upon careful evaluation by African philosophers such as Temples (1970) and Mbiti (1975) that they realized Africans really have a philosophy, logic and reason except that unlike their western counterparts, it has not been written. In fact, Temples disabused the fact that the African was not savage or primitive. After the work of Temples, there were other philosophical works by Africans like, Kagame N’Daw and Fouda in the 1970s. During this time, there was an increasing trend regarding the African capacity to philosophize. Mbiti (1975) *African Philosophy and Religion* was a landmark publication. The work was influenced by anthropological and theological literature reflecting his background as a reverend minister. In the 1970s African writers such as Senghor, Cesare and Nkrumah, wrote with political over tones and their writings promoted liberation, a movement commonly called ‘Negritude’.

Idowu (1973, 1979), identified three (3) stages of Western misconception of African Traditional Religion. Idowu (1973), brings to the fore the stage of ignorance, the stage of doubt and resisted illumination and the stage of intellectual dilemma. These three stages he claims, overlap and are present, though in a less vicious form. The stage of ignorance is the period when Europeans practically knew nothing about Africa and her people. To them, Africa was a dark continent filled with savages who had no philosophy, no history, no past, no culture and no religion. In addition, in the nineteen century, European missionaries looked upon Africa as the very stronghold of Satan. For instance, the evangelist Robert Moffat (1842) who carried out missionary activities in Southern Africa, (among the Hottentots, and the Bushmen) asserted that: ‘*Satan had erased every trace of religious impression from their minds*’.

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3He looked through the African thought and saw that there was a systematic logic and reason except that it has not been philosophized.
Africa’s so called spiritual and religious bankruptcy finds further expression in the Christian propagandist popular saying that: “the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone” savages and primitive people, who have no intellectual capacity to conceptualize theologically, hence, they cannot have any knowledge of God. This statement is attributed to Ludwig (1961) in his book, *African Ideas of God*. The author rhetorically asks: “How can the untutored African conceive of God? Belief in Deity is a philosophical concept of which savages are incapable of framing”

The claim that ‘pre-literate’ people had no concept of God because of lack of intellectual capacity to conceptualize is illogical. The diffused philosophical ideas in African myths, life, belief system, customs and practices, is the African attempt to come to terms with experiences such as life, death and the hereafter, problem of change and stability, God, human and the world among others. Furthermore, on the religious front, God, ancestors and divinities, form the core of the Dagaaba belief system concerning human life, death and the hereafter. The Dagaaba sees God as the cause of everything concrete and abstract. Life is sacred and because God is the source of life, it cannot be without meaning, hence; atheistic philosophies are nonexistent to their conception of life. Dagaaba have deep philosophical thoughts about life and reality which can be offered to the world. No doubt that, the Dagaaba outlook to life and death is deeply philosophical, religious and anthropological in character and ideas. The vast body of belief system and their reflection on human life, death and the hereafter in general, is maintained as *folk philosophy* which is gradually dying out. To restore and document it forms the crust of this research.
The Dagaaba worldview of death and the hereafter signifies a multitude of conceptions about reality as a whole. The perception of their worldview is always culturally and religiously conditioned and is linked in each instance to some body of knowledge about nature. Most worldviews are centred on mythic foundations, while some may result from knowledge gained in philosophy and in the natural and human sciences. For the Dagaaba, life which ultimately involves death and subsequently the hereafter, are a pervading, encompassing reality. Human life for them is conceived in terms of spirit, power, dynamism, vitality, and conduct. Death on the other hand, is seen as a termination of life from this earth and a return to the eschatological congregation (the land of the dead). Several traditional myths speak of the divine origin of human life and death. Life hereafter, is however, a belief that there is this ‘carbon copy’ of this world elsewhere, where there is happiness and solace. There is judgment in the hereafter. The soul appears before God. Judgment is upon one’s conduct while on earth.

Following the complexity and profundity of life, death and the hereafter among the Dagaaba, engages their attention to unravel and get to the very bottom of these concepts, because they believe that, life must be understood, appreciated and accepted before it could be lived. In this way life and anything relating to it, becomes beautiful. Human person (nisaaale) as opposed to animal (dung) is composed of soul (sie) and body (yangang). The human person has reason (ya.), and is animated by vital breath- (vuuro).

According to Kuukure (1976) the Dagao (singular), believes that the soul is a significant element of man which distinguishes man from animals. The Dagaaba in their language usage, have a complicated system of beliefs and thoughts that portray the soul as a vital element that puts dynamism into the body and the absence of which implies loss of breath and hence death.
1.2 The Problem Statement

There is a critical debate and critique among some scholars about the history, medicine, politics and religion of the Dagaaba and African theology, and one of the prominent critics is Hawkins (1996, 1997 & 1998). Contemporary ethnographic scholars, such as Bodomo (1997) Barker (1999) and Lentz (2005) tend to present a rather harmonious portrait of authentic “Dagaaba (Dagara) customs”. Yet, this does not preclude the same authors and the general public from engaging in vigorous debates about the necessity of reforming some of these “traditions”, such as the cost and length of funerals and the cost of the bride price as stated by Hawkins (2002). Other practices that equally demand attention are the week-long mourning, keeping of the corpse in an unpreserved manner, with its associated health hazards, widows mourning for a year and children who have suffered the loss of a parent to mourn for three months.

There are some anthropological works on mortuary rites and their significance in traditional societies, such as those written by Van Gennep (1909), Rattray (1923), Goody (1962), Nketa (1955), and fairly recent times by Van der Geest (2000) and Lentz (2000, 2005) but all of these works have been silent on issues such as euthanasia, suicide and homicide. Furthermore, even though some scholars such as Kuukure (1985) and Tuurey (1982) etc. have done some studies on the history and life of the Dagaaba, yet not much research has been conducted on life, death and the hereafter. For instance, according to Tuurey (1982) the origin of Dagaaba society remains a point of debate, because of the absence of documented studies. The problem is beyond just history or origin, medicine, politics and religion.
The question is: what are Dagaaba notions about God and the ancestors, cultural perception and outlook to life, death, the hereafter, amidst the social changes that have occurred over the last three decades and their implications on the Dagaaba in a gendered transforming socio-cultural context?

This study will therefore, attempt to answer the question and also critique and justify the awareness that the Dagaaba, through their (perception of) worldview revealed in many forms such as their language, proverbs, funeral dirges, songs, lyrics, symbolic actions, poetry and prose, paradigms, esoteric, legends and mythologies among others express their thoughts and beliefs about life, death and the hereafter and when critically analyzed portrays significantly deep philosophical insights worthy of note. Also, to a larger extent, there is a tremendous body of wisdom enshrined in Dagaaba culture which seems to be disappearing under the eroding waves of western influence and is compounded to a degree by the lack of documentation. This wisdom needs to be explored else it may be lost when it could have been offered to generations to come. Similarly, this research is also an attempt to uncover the philosophical, religious and anthropological underpinnings that will give rise to a clear understanding of the complexity of the Dagaaba belief system of life, death and hereafter. Being a native Dagao, one of the questions that was of interest to me, as I researched on the Dagaaba, include how the contemporary situation is different from the reports of earlier ethnographic studies. Just like any other culture, the Dagaaba culture is not static, it is dynamic.
1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the Dagaaba worldview (weltanschauung) of death and the hereafter today as compared to over 50 years ago?
2. Are there any generational issues to their concept of death and the hereafter?
3. What social changes, cultural dynamics and lessons can be drawn within a gendered, transforming socio-cultural context?
4. To what extent has the Dagaaba notion about God, ancestors, and spirits-world influenced their belief system and lives?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The Objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the Dagaaba concepts of death and the hereafter through their belief systems as reflected in Dagaare discourse and literature.
2. To explain the generational issues and social changes in the concept of death and the hereafter?
3. To show how their concepts of death and the hereafter can make a unique contribution to mankind perennial bid to comprehend the profundity of life, death and the hereafter.
4. To examine how the issues that centre on God, ancestors, spirits and form the core of their belief system reflect on Dagaare discourse.

As it were, this study seeks to understand human (generic) as communitarian in nature and as an individual within the same community of the Dagaaba. Human, because is communitarian in nature, spirit incarnate in matter and in communion
with the ancestors has an ideal destiny. This is another interesting and striking aspect that the researcher wants to explore in this study.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The Dagaaba perception about death and the hereafter especially through discourse and folk literature, is one of the important cultural phenomena that researchers have not done much research about.

Thus, the significance of this study is to:

- Systematically investigate and document the Dagaaba cultural heritage. It is not an individual heritage. People build on what exist and is transmitted from generation to generation.
- Explain the cultural significance of their worldview and the extent to which this affects their lives.
- Highlight on the Dagaaba outlook to death and the hereafter within a transforming socio-cultural context.
- Provide pointers to the complex demands of life, death and hereafter, and to what extent they influence the lives and character of the Dagaaba.
- Make an attempt to construct, explain, critique and justify the Dagaaba concept of life, death, and the hereafter for a better understanding of contemporary practices of the said phenomena and re-direct holistically their inter-relationships.
- Look into aspects of social change vis-à-vis death and the hereafter. This is because the Dagaaba have been generally and greatly influenced by Christianity (Catholicism), since the establishment of the first Catholic mission in Jirapa in 1929 by the European Fathers that eventually led to some social change.
It is important to put on record that the choice of the establishment of the first Catholic mission in Jirapa was also because of its central position. Jirapa is at the crossroads between Tizza, Duori, Babile, Nadowli, Gbare, Sigri and Donweni, and the dialect which the missionaries were using was that of the Jirapa as indicated by McCoy, (1988). Despite the dominance of Catholicism, traditional religion has remained and is still practiced by some Dagaaba. Traditional religion has a pervasive influence on the people and the whole of their life is wrapped up in it. As one grows up one begins to participate in the communal rituals and ceremonies.

1.6 The Scope of this Study

The scope of this study includes the Dagaaba settlements stretching along the major trunk road from Kulmasa to Hamile in the Upper West Region (Wa being the capital town of the Region). The focus is however, on the Dagara of Nandom Traditional Area. Nandom district was created in 2012 from Lawra district.

1.7 Organizational Structure of the Study

This dissertation is organized into seven (7) chapters.

Chapter one (1) is an introduction to the work and background of the study, the problem statement, research questions, the objectives and significance of the study.

Chapter two (2) presents a survey of the Dagaaba of Northwestern Ghana, their history and (geography), socio-economic life and political organization of Dagaaba in the region.

Chapter three (3) focuses on the methodology and field work. This explores ways in which data was gathered using appropriate sampling techniques. The research instruments used for analysis of qualitative data are outlined here. The researcher also
used formal and informal interviews, questionnaires and ethnographic method, participant observation and discussions. The Dagaare discourse, legends and mythology forms part of this chapter. The researcher made use of available primary sources of materials, oral traditions and archival records as first hand or primary data sources. The use of the ethnographic method is relevant because it provided opportunity for first hand information. There was also one-to-one, in-depth conversation with resource persons of various backgrounds in Dagaaba culture in different locations, including those in the rural and urban settings and those living outside the Dagaaba land (those in the diaspora). The field work involved a critical examination of the culture of the Dagaaba, as expressed in Dagaare idioms, funeral performances, dirges, folk-songs and dances (*bine*), paradigms, symbolic actions, proverbs, songs and lyrics that are devoid of monolithic ideas.

Chapter four (4) gives a review of relevant literature on Dagaaba worldview of death and the hereafter. This provides the grounds for theoretical foundation and conceptual framework of the thesis. An attempt is made to construct, explain, critique and justify the concepts so as to enhance a good understanding and their inter-relationship.

Chapter five (5) is an exposure on the anthropological significance of Dagara funeral, the performance practice of the Dagara funeral rites and the Dagara traditional religion before the advent of Christianity, as well as the impact of Christianity, education and urbanization in the study area.

The chapter six (6) reflects on the Dagara literary traditions and the concept of death and hereafter. This chapter too contains some major findings from the research.

Finally, chapter seven (7) contains a summary, conclusion, comments and some recommendations for future researchers.
CHAPTER TWO

A SURVEY OF THE DAGAABA

2.1 Background of the Dagaaba of Northwestern Ghana

Technically speaking and for the sake of clarity, the word Dagaaba/Dagara, that is the people, indigenes or citizens of the land are terms already in the plural form which are referred to throughout the work. The term Dagao can also stand for both the homeland and a single citizen. At times the expression 'Dagawie' may be preferred to the word Dagao as strictly referring to the homeland and nothing else. Historians, describe the former usage of „Dagarti” to refer to the community of Dagaaba by the colonial administration. However, the name „Dagarti” appears to have been coined by the first Europeans to visit the region, from the vernacular root dagaa.

The term „Dagarti” is not often used by the indigenes themselves but rather by non-indigenes, but is certainly an anglo-misnomer and not appreciated by most Dagaaba.

‘Dagaare’ stands for the language of the people, the culture and the traditions and it is the major language of the people in the northwestern part of Ghana and adjoining areas of Burkina Faso. To the west and north, Dagaare extends across the Black Volta, cross the international boundary into Dano, Diebougou, Dissin, and Gaoua in the Republic of Burkina Faso.

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4Dagao is the singular form of Dagaaba and the preferred form of the adjective Dagarti.
2.2 History, (Geography) and Political Organization of the Dagaaba

In Ghana, there are several waves of internal migration that began around the beginning of the 19th century. Indigenes of Dagaaba, seasonally migrate to the middle and southern parts of Ghana for economic reasons. This has brought a sizable Dagaaba population to towns in the southern part of Ghana, notably Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions. In modern Ghana, the Dagaaba homeland of the Upper West Region includes bigger towns like, Lawra, Nandom, Nadowli, Jirapa, Kaleo, Babile, Daffiema and Hamile. Large Dagaaba communities are also found in the towns of Wa, Bogda, Tuna, and Nyoli. However, there are also many Dagaaba migrant communities in Accra, Kumasi, Cape Coast, and most major towns and villages throughout the country.

According to Wilks (1989), the British colonial office administratively separated the land of the Dagaaba from that of the Wala polity. The land of the Dagaaba (Dagao/Dagawie) was recognized by the British as starting 4 miles north of Wa, and stretching all the way to the northern border of Ghana, and even beyond into Burkina Faso, approximately from latitude 9°N to 11°N. Bodomo (1997), asserts that, Dagao stretches to the Black Volta, which marks the border between Ghana and La Cote D’Ivoire, approximately from longitude 2°W, to longitude 3°W. To the west, across the border in La Cote D’Ivoire, are more Dagaaba and Lobi. To the east, Dagao borders with Sisaala. To the south of Dagao, are Gonja, Vagla and Safalba.

Politically, the Dagaaba have evolved a highly decentralised traditional system of government. This has been inappropriately described as acephalous, suggesting a weak and loose structure in the absence of a central authority according to Hawkins, (1996 &
1997). Unlike the highly centralized systems of government found among some ethnic
groups in Ghana and other parts of Africa, where a monarch that has jurisdiction over an
ethnic group or kingdom appoints representatives to various towns and villages and
exercise control from a central headquarters, every Dagaare village or group of villages is
virtually autonomous as far as the day to day administration of its natural resources are
concerned.

The Tendana (owner of the land) is the religious cum political head at village level. In
consultation with a council of elders, who are family heads in their own right, the
tendana promulgates and administers law and order that affect cultural, religious, and
economic life as well all forms of social practices in the area under his jurisdiction.
However, in matters of defence and foreign policy, especially under crises such as the
threat of invasion from other groups, the tendana and council of elders easily exploit the
highly sophisticated interlinking of clans throughout Dagao and raise a team of
negotiators or a viable army, if necessary, to manage the situation.

The British policy of Indirect Rule between 1890 and 1957 however, substantially altered
this decentralized political system and Dagaaba are now organized into various
paramouncies or chiefdoms. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century when
institutional chieftaincy evolved and was imposed on Dagaaba by the colonial
administration, broader Dagaaba communities functioned under a system of councils of
elders according to Wilks (1989). The Dagaaba communities maintain traditional
ceremonial chieftainships. At the head of each paramouncy is a Chief (Naa), who
exercises authority over divisional chiefs.
Prior to the advent of colonial rule, political decentralization was a (democratic) system of government that worked for the Dagaaba and since political decentralization is now a democratic goal in many parts of Africa and beyond, a closer study of the Dagaaba traditional system of government may be a worthwhile exercise in the search for an appropriate democracy.

Until recently (about 20 years ago), the Dagaaba were mainly subsistence farmers. Men also hunt according to Goody, (1962). Farming is so central to the economy of Dagaao that more and more people migrate southwards in search of better lands to farm. It was fashionable for non-literate Dagaao/Dagaaba youth to migrate to southern Ghana in the dry season to farm for money. The success of their first trip has become a yardstick for measuring their growth to adulthood and their ability to live independently and raise a family. Many non-literate youth also go down south to work in the mining towns like Obuasi, Tarkwa and Prestea or to other industrial urban centres like Accra, Tema and Kumasi to work in the factories and other business establishments as factory hands, security men and other low income workers.

Furthermore, Dagaaba, especially the women, are beginning to emulate their Waala neighbours who are successful traders and businessmen and are going into the distributive or retail sector, but more importantly, with the advent of Western education, Dagaaba, who consider their ethnic group to be one of the most highly educated in the country, can be found in the formal sector as teachers, nurses, civil servants lawyers and other formal sector workers.
SOME SELECTED TOWNS/AREA OF DETAIL OF THE STUDY

NORTHWEST GOLD COAST

1929

[Map showing selected towns on the Northwest Gold Coast in 1929, including Dano, Dissin, Ginginkpwe, Nandom, Zemopare, Pina, Guo, Lambusie, Lyea, Tuopare, Ullo, Baazing, Lawra, Eremoh, Jirapa, Dapore, Konzokola, Daffiama, Kalesegra, Nadoli, Sankana, Takpo, Kaleo, Wa, and Hamile.]
2.3 Dagaaba: Location, Origin and Size

The Dagaaba as mentioned in earlier paragraphs, occupy the Upper West Region of Ghana. Their origin is still unclear. The difficulty is due to the fact that the date and the exact place of origin of earliest ancestor(s) are unknown. This problem of origin is due to the absence of documented studies on the group. It is no easy task to say with precision their place of origin. However, through legendary sources and from my informants, like Mr. Ludovic Tengan Doggu and Mr. Charles Nyuur, who are cultural and social activists, some indications of the Dagaaba origin emerged.

According to Tuurey (1982), the origin of Dagaaba communities in the pre-colonial era remains a point of debate. The evidence of oral tradition as narrated by Mr. Ludovic Doggu is that the Dagaaba are an outgrowth of the Mole-Dagbani group which migrated to the semi-arid Sahel region in the fourteenth century. They are believed to have further migrated to the lower northern part of the region in the seventeenth century. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Dagaaba lived in small scale agricultural communities, not centralized into any large state, like structure.

Ethnological studies point to oral literature which tells that the Dagaaba periodically, and successfully, resisted attempts at conquest by states in the south of modern Ghana, as well as the Kingdoms of Dagbon, Mamprugu and Gonja in the north. The colonial borders, demarcated during the *Partition and Scramble for Africa* in the late 19th century placed the Dagaaba in northwestern Ghana and southern Burkina Faso, as well as small

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populations in Côte D'Ivoire. Dagaaba communities have occasionally come into conflict with neighbouring groups like the Sisaala people and at earlier times with the Wala people especially over land rights, even as recently as the 1980s. Within the homeland (Dagawie), the Dagaaba have traditionally formed sedentary agricultural communities.

According to Dagaaba mythology as narrated by Mr. Doggu, the Dagaaba originated from Mossi land in the Upper Volta, that is, the present day Burkina Faso. Another myth has it that the, world in those days and at one time was divided into two vegetative areas namely: forest and savannah regions. The forest region (a thickly wooded area), was considered the residence of wild game. It was a curse to ask someone to build a house in the jungle. Therefore, the entire inhabitants made their settlements in the savannah region. This was because in the savannah region one could move and hunt easily. The land was also easy to clear for farming. The fact that the forest region was uninhabitable by man, resulted in the over-population of the savannah region. People started to look for new sites to make their settlements and farms. It was during these crises that the ancestors of the Dagaaba decided to move southward in order to look for new sites and farmlands for their families. In the course of their migration they came into contact with a group of settlers (now known as Ashantis) who by then had settled along the fringes of the forest.

According to another version of the origin of the Dagaaba, their ancestors originated from a “place” near the coast, known as Cape Coast in the present day Central Region of the Republic of Ghana. From the account of Mr. Ludovic Tengan Doggu, a retired and renowned cultural analyst, the Dagaaba later migrated to a place called Tengkor in the Lawra District. Tengkor, which literally means ‘old country’, is vaguely located by most
oral historians around or further south of Babile. This was the starting point of their ancestors’ journey. Among the Dagaaba, there are multiple histories about their origin.

Maurice (1912), and Père Jean, (1976), have noted that the Dagaaba are said to have originated from “Dagbon”, (Dagomba land in the present day Northern of Ghana). Not all Dagaaba claim to have originated from Dagbon area. One issue based on oral narrative is that the Dagaaba are a break away faction of Dagbon. It is however, worth noting that, all Dagaaba speakers, no matter the dialect or point of origin, identify themselves as Dagaaba and not Dagomba, Mossi, Gonja or Konkonba as indicated by Tuurey (1982). There are however, no concrete proofs to such pre-suppositions. Thus, the question of the origin of the Dagaaba remains an area for future investigations by researchers.

The 2010 census data indicate that the Dagaaba constitute about 56% of the population of the Upper West Region 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC). Also, an estimated population of the Upper West Region stands at 577,000 representing about 3% of the national population (Daily Graphic, July 24, 2014). The strategic importance of the region lies in trading activities between the country and its northern and northwestern neighbours, Burkina Faso and Cote D’Ivoire respectively. The Dagaaba occupy four (4) administrative districts: Nadowli, Jirapa-Lambussie, Lawra and Nandom districts. Bodomo, (1997:2) has stated that, the number of indigenous speakers of Dagaare and Dagara in both Ghana and Burkina Faso is estimated to be approximately two million. Although continuums of several dialects (Dagaare, Dagara, Lobi, and Birifor) are spoken; Dagaare appears to be the umbrella language for the dialects.
2.4 Dagaaba: Identity, Language and Ethnicity

Much has been written on the groups of people who today call themselves Dagara, Dagaaba, Lobi and Birifor, and who mostly inhabit the North West Region of Ghana and the south-west of Burkina Faso and Eastern Cote D’Voire. The language is spoken throughout the region and consists of different varieties of speech and dialects as stated by Girault (1967) Manessy (1979) Delplanque (1983) and Bodomo (1997).

Residents of the Nandom-Diebougou area of northwestern Ghana and southwestern Burkina Faso are the people today referred to as the Dagara according to Girault (1967). The area they occupy is Dagarateng as stated by Bodomo (1997:2). In this research, I want to keep to the particular dialect, the Dagara dialect, which is my mother tongue and I am familiar with the dialect in the use of orthography. This may vary a little from that used by other writers who have concentrated on different dialects in their fieldwork. Language is the medium by which people express their profound thoughts about life and reality. According to Manessy (1979) Dagara is a Gur or Voltaic language and is therefore, related to Gur languages like Gurenne, Lobi, Sisaali, Vagli, Safalba and Moore. However, Dakubu (1988) alluded to the fact that Dagaaba immediate geographical neighbours are not its immediate genetic relatives, for most of the languages very much related to it like, Gurenne, Frafra, and Dagbane are found in the Upper-East and Northern Regions.6

6Also, Dagaare has been classified as a member of the Oti-Volta group of the Gur branch of the Niger-Congo language family (Swadesh 1966, Bendor-Samuel 1971 Naden 1989).
Goody (1967) came out with different dialectical appellations such as *LoDagaa, LoWiili, LoPiel,* and *LoSaal,* based largely on his ethnographic work. These are directional names used by groups in reference to themselves and their neighbours. Thus, apart from slight dialectical variations, these groups are not in any way distinct groups. They are however, sub-groups belonging to a large group, generically called Dagaaba. There should however, be no confusion about the language and ethnic identity because of these internal differentiating terminologies of the Dagaaba as early researchers, like Goody (1967) claims. It must be stressed that, the Dagaaba have been diversely designated by different scholars. I will be referring to these terminologies as they all point to the same ethnic group, because the common understanding today is that the term *Dagaaba,* is the overall term used by the people themselves. Despite the fact that, there are dialects among the Dagaaba, their concepts of life, death and the hereafter, are basically the same, except for slightly intra-cultural variations. From north to south (and to a lesser extent east to west) of *Dagarateng* the dialects shade gradually into each other and it is almost impossible to draw a line of demarcation between different dialects. Variations can occur even from village to village.

The Dagaare-Birifor linguistic group seems to present one of the most complex dialect situations in Ghana. However, one common thing that binds all these groups together is that there is at least some amount of mutual „intelligibility” within the group. That is why, from a purely linguistic point of view, Dagaare, and Birifor should not be viewed as separate languages but as variants of one language.
It must be realized, however, that Dagaare is not limited to this traditional homeland as has been described above. The language to some extent has spread to many parts of Ghana because of the high degree of social and geographical mobility of the people who speak Dagaare as a native language, among other reasons. Today, there are important Dagaare speaking communities in Accra, Kumasi and most major towns and villages throughout Ghana.

In terms of native speakers, Dagaare is the fourth (4\textsuperscript{th}) largest indigenous language in Ghana after Akan, Ewe, Dagbane, and then followed by Frafra and Nzema according to Bureau of Ghana Languages (B.G.L). It has been the principal language of evangelization in northwestern Ghana since the advent of the missionaries in the colonial era. In present day language policy, Dagaare occupies a considerably important position. It is one of the nine official literacy languages of Ghana. As a result, the Bureau of Ghana Languages (B.G.L) publishes educational material in it. Dagaare is taught and offered for degree courses in the country's higher institutions such as the University of Ghana, and the University of Education, Winneba. Furthermore, it is broadcast over the Ura FM radio, which serves the three regions in Northern Ghana. There are also exciting GTV Dagaare programmes recently.

How then does one demarcate this continuum into discrete dialect areas? A way of approaching the problem is to apply the linguistic variation theory which claims that certain (prestigious) settlements (may be, the major towns of the area) are centres from which linguistic innovations spread to the individual areas of influence and may overlap each other.
Bodomo (1989), taking into consideration prominent phonological, lexical and grammatical variations, mentioned that four main dialects may be abstracted from Dagaare: Northern Dagaare, Central Dagaare, Southern Dagaare and Western Dagaare.

1. Northern Dagaare comprises Nandom, Lawra and their areas of influence. From the data, Nandom and Lawra share common linguistic features that are generally distinct from the other major dialect groups. Most of the linguistic analysis of this group of Dagaare has been undertaken by French and Francophone African linguists in Burkina Faso.

2. Central Dagaare is made up of Jirapa, Ullo, Daffiama, Nadowli and their spheres of influence. This group is called Central Dagaare because it occupies approximately the middle belt of the Upper-West Region, and it enjoys a considerable degree of intelligibility from speakers of other dialects. Probably because of this, most of the linguists who have worked on Dagaare in Ghana like Wilson (1962), Kennedy (1966) and Hall (1973), have based their analysis on it. It is the version of Dagaare used for publishing church literature, educational materials and lately, for broadcasts over the Ura-Radio because of its relatively high intelligibility with the northern and southern Dagaare dialects.

3. Southern Dagaare is the dialect of Kaleo, Metropolitan Wa and their surrounding communities. Again, Kaleo and Wa, share more common features than with all the others. If the Central dialect is the language of literacy, Southern Dagaare, especially that spoken in the Regional Capital called Waale, is the trade language and is widely spoken in markets and other trading centres of Upper West.
4. Western Dagaare is the other dialect spoken by the Tuna community. It is called Birifor. Birifor shares affinities with Northern Dagaare. A greater concentration of this dialect is also found on the western side of the Black Volta River in Burkina Faso and Cote D’Ivoire. It is only recently that speakers of Birifor moved into the area south of Wa.

Rattray (1932) draws up word lists showing differences in speech of the Dagaaba speakers from place to place. This could also be of interest to people doing a study of dialects from a temporal point of view (diachronic dialectology) because his work is one of the earliest published works in Ghana that gives word lists portraying dialect variation in Dagaare.

At the cultural level, among the most conspicuous cultural manifestations are the eating of their traditional staple food, Saabo and the drinking of their traditional alcoholic beverage i.e. Pito, (Daal/Daazie), probably borrowed from Fitoo, the Hausa word for the same drink for Pito; the wearing of the smock, (Dagakparo), the playing of xylophones, (Gyile), and drumming and dancing, especially the Bin and Bawaa dances. In the major towns and villages in Dagao and also in Dagaaba communities in other towns, in the evenings, at the weekends and on public holidays, the stranger will not fail to notice that most young men and women find their way into pito bars. Drinking pito is a favourite leisure time activity and source of entertainment in Dagao.
Ethnic Classification (Designations of the Dagaaba)

The ethnic classification of the Dagaaba clearly shows that names differ, depending on whether they are used by indigenous or non-indigenous people. For instance, over 50 years ago, the people called Lobi by Rattray (1932), Labouret (1958), also included the Birifor as well as the Dagaaba. Today, the names have changed because people, who were known as Lobi in the Lawra and Nandom districts of Ghana at the beginning of the nineteenth century, are regarded as Dagara and not Lobi since the term, Dagara is often a more prestigious term than Lobi. The latter is associated in many people's minds with the large lip plugs of gourd or metal that are worn by Lobi which modern men generally feel hostile and ambivalent about.

Dialectical or Quasi-directional Terms

This research is also to bring out the fact that there are many differences in custom and organization between neighbouring settlements, and these settlements may be referred to by the two quasi-directional terms, "Lo" (Lobi, west) and "Dagaa" (east), to distinguish different practices (for example, the use of xylophones). This has led Goody (1967) to identify a spectrum of peoples, the LoDagaa, who use these names in reference to themselves and others. They are from west to east, the true Lobi, the Birifor or LoBirifor, and the LoSaal (around Lawra), the Dagaaba or Dagarti (around Jirapa), the Dagara or LoPiel, around Nandom and Dano, the LoWiili, around Birifo, have basically dialectical appellations, but generally termed the “Dagaaba” today.
The Waala speak the Dagaaba language and constitute a small state that has its origins eastward in Dagbong. That state established itself as ruler over the southern Dagaaba and some Grusi-speaking peoples.

2.5 The Upper West

Created in 1983 by the erstwhile PNDC (People National Defence Council) government, the Upper West Region of Ghana occupies a land surface of 18,476 kilometres sq. constituting about 12.7% of the total land area of Ghana (Dickson and Benneh 1970). The policy of decentralization in 1988 saw the creation of number districts in Ghana, and the Upper West Region was no exception. Thus, with government efforts to implement the policy of decentralization, the region has now nine (9) districts, with Nandom district\(^7\) being the latest and ninth district added to the already existing eight districts namely: Jirapa-Lambusie (1988), Lawra (1988), Nadowli (1988), Sisaala East:- Tumu (2004), Sisaala West:- Gwollu (2004), Wa East:- Funi (2004), Wa Municipality:- Wa (2004), Wa West:- Wechiau (2004), Nandom District (2012).

\(^7\)Nandom, is the latest district, now separated from Lawra district
The region is located in the northwestern corner of Ghana, between longitude 1, 25\textdegree\ W and 2, 45\textdegree\ W and latitudes 9, 30\textdegree\ N and 11\textdegree\ N. To the North of the region is Burkina Faso; to the West is La Cote D’Ivoire their immediate neighbours. Wa is the regional capital and has a good concentration of Dagaaba settlers and some surrounding villages of Wa. The Dagaaba live on either side of the Black Volta, which serves as the natural boundary between Ghana and Burkina Faso, formerly known as Upper Volta. The Dagaaba are concentrated within the area where latitudes 11\textdegree\ N and 12\textdegree\ N and longitude 3\textdegree\ W interact.

2.6 Climate, Topography and Vegetation

The Dagaaba are situated within the savannah belt. The climate is tropical with an average minimum temperature of 22.6\textdegree\ C and maximum of 40.0\textdegree\ C at cold and warm seasons respectively. The area they inhabit is a harmattan prone zone and dry savannah area or high plains. The topography of the land consists of gentle undulating plains with a few trees scattered about. The landscape is usually flat and below 300m above sea level with a central plateau ranging between 1,000 and 1,150 ft. (Dickson and Benneh, 1970). As one moves northwards, the land is arid and the soil is brown with an underlying layer of ferrous soil. There are two seasons within the year, namely rainy and dry seasons. During the rainy season the grass grows tall and the trees sprout lush green leaves. The rainy season begins in May and ends in October, while the dry season starts in November and lasts till April with cold dry winds of the harmattan blowing indiscriminately across the land, swirling up clouds of dust, drying leaves and grass during the dry season.
This is followed by the intense heat in March and April just before the rains begin. As soon as the rains stop in October, the land quickly becomes bare and brown. The Dagaaba have only one farming season in a year unlike in southern Ghana. This may explain the movement of Dagaaba into other parts of Ghana, particularly southern Ghana. The dry season is their period of migrating in search of paid employment elsewhere. This is the time when most of the able-bodied young men migrate to the southern parts of Ghana to work in the mines or farms until the next farming season in Northern Ghana (Goody, 1962 & 1967; Lentz, 2006). This is one reason for the scattered Dagaaba population. Nonetheless, the Dagaaba are attached to their hometowns.

2.7 Migration and Main Occupation

The migration history of the Dagaaba is most uncertain. In a nutshell, however, the general discussion points to the fact that the ancestors of the Dagaaba are a splinter group from either the Mossi or the Dagomba who moved into the present area and assimilated (or got assimilated) by earlier settlers and/or new arrivals according to Tuurey (1982). Labouret (1958), on historical analysis in his study of migrations of Dagaaba especially the Lobi, suggests that the Dagaaba moved north, from beyond Wa, in about 1680. However, it seems that rather than saying that the Dagaaba are a splinter group from the Mossi or the Dagomba, it is more plausible to say that the Dagaaba, the Mossi, the Dagomba, the Kusaasi, the Frafra, the Mamprusi, have a common ethnolinguistic background or linguistic kinship, relating to these Mabia languages, as portrayed by Bodomo (1994).
In fact, the Dagaaba have traditionally a cousinage or joking relationship with the Frafra people, similar to that of a joking relationship between grandchildren and grandparents creating social networks in different directions.

Regarding their main occupation in economic terms, the Dagaare-speaking population is heavily agrarian. Practically each family deals in at least some sort of subsistence farming. There are a sizeable number of commercial farmers today. The major crops are millet, corn, guineacorn and beans. They also produce cashew, sheanuts and dawadawa (natural maggie cube). In addition, they rear cattle, goats, sheep and fowls. Farming is so central to the economy of Dagaao that more and more non-literate Dagaaba people migrate southwards in search of better farmlands.

Here again, present day trends show a diversification away from a heavily agricultural preoccupation to other fields of economic activity. In addition to crop production and animal rearing, there are fishing communities of Dagaaba that fish along the Black Volta, a de facto boundary of Dagaaba lands. Because the communities are found along the historical trade routes that link the coastal belt to the Sahel region, trade has long been an important occupation, but largely in local goods like millet, corn, guineacorn and beans. Market days in larger towns are usually on Sundays, with others on a six day cycle. All in all the stories convey the image of a piecemeal agricultural migration of small kin groups (Lentz, 1994).
2.8 The House and the Patriclan: *Yir*

Despite strong influence of Christianity and Islam among the Dagaaba and contact with other cultures in the area, the socio-cultural pattern of the Dagaaba has not changed especially where the clan and lineage systems are concerned. Their social organization was and is still based on the extended family and the clan systems. These units were based upon the indigenous system of local groups which existed before the introduction of chiefs by the British authorities. It is with this indigenous system that I shall be concerned below. Among the Dagaaba, the most important unit is the family (*Yir*). *Yir* in the Dagaaba language may sometimes have variant usage. It may be used to connote the meaning of a family, village, patriclan, patrilineage, domestic group, extended family and the elementary nuclear families.

Goody (1956, 1962) noted that *yir* refers to several neighbouring, agnatically linked compounds, in which case the term means ‘family’ or more precisely, ‘patrilineal kinship.’ Goody (1956, 1962) distinguishes between ‘patrilineage’ ‘patriclan sector’ and ‘patriclan’. According to him, the patrilineage, consisting of neighbouring compounds whose male inhabitants could trace their roots back to two or four generations via the patriline to a common ancestor. They make all decisions concerning inheritance of land and buildings, constitutes the community that shares food during particular rituals or in an emergency. Among the *Dagaaba*, the family or house comprises the nuclear families and the extended families, and all members of the clan, and each member has his or her duties and obligations towards all other members in the family.
Neighbouring patrilineages from a ‘patriclan sector’ co-operate on the occasions of burials, the bagre (thanksgiving festival), initiation and sacrifices at the earth shrine. Patriclans, on the other hand, are territorially unbounded, exogamous descent groups that include all those who regard themselves patrilineally as related, without being able to name an actual common ancestor. The elementary units occupy different quarters of the house and each segment is called section (logr) or gate, and named after a grandfather or an eldest brother of the respective section. The logr can refer to both the people and the section of the house. The house can be more than one section called loge (plural). These sections are divided into elementary units called diru (plural) or dio (singular), which can be considered as a nuclear family, the elementary family cell of biological production. Suom-Dery (2001) states that the basic family unit consist of a husband and wife, children and other relatives.

Among the Dagaaba as among the peoples of traditional African society, the kin group includes parents, uncles, aunts, children, brothers and sisters. Husbands and wives and their children are members of the yir and are subject to the authority of the house owner (yir-sob). In short, yir is broadly, the total patrilineage, consisting of all patrikin and members of the same patrikin cannot inter-marry because of consanguineous relationship. Every Dagao indigene belongs to the order of the patriclan, (yiilu), and then patrilineage, yir, a sub-lineage, and (logr) and is entitled to a nuptial room, (dio). As it were, yir can also be understood in the sense of ‘patriclan’, which can have thousands of members and may transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries.
*Yir* can thus be defined more narrowly or more widely, and embedded in multiple other social networks, or else are criss-crossed and eclipsed by them. For the purpose of this research, what is important is that they do not presuppose any linguistic or cultural homogeneity as in the diagramme below.

**Figure 2.8.1 The House and the Patriclan: *Yir***

![Diagram of the House and the Patriclan: *Yir*](image)

*Source:* Suom-Dery (2001)

It may be worth noting that although women are excluded from the dominant patriclan ideology, women and relationships play a central role in family networks as they belong to the patriclan of their father. They however have close ties to that of their husbands. In Nandom and Lawra area in particular, the mother’s brother and sister’s son play an important role in matters of inheritance and in many rituals. The study also shows the practice of double unilineal descent especially among the ‘Dagara’ and with their inheritance systems fixed property e.g. land etc. is inherited through patriclan and movable property by matriclan. This is to emphasize the equal importance of matriclan to the Dagara in particular.
The mother’s patrilineage may be approached for aid. Married women maintain close contact with their house of origin, while friendships also constitute an important element of one’s personal networks. This capacity of the patriclan to create networks was of strategic significance in the pre-colonial period, when there was an extensive appropriation of land by the Dagara according to Kuba and Lentz (2002).

2.9 Clan and Lineages of the Dagaaba

Bekye, (1991) states that, traditionally, the Dagaaba communities are based on the concept of family (yir), which includes all who are descendants of the same putative ancestor and all who are members of the lineage (yir-dem). The Dagara in particular are patrilineal people, but they practice a dual system of inheritance based on the ‘patri-house’ and the ‘matri-house systems’ of their social organizations. Inheritance of immovable property, such as land and houses, was from the father to the son or from father to brothers and to sons; whereas inheritance of movable property such as livestock and other personally acquired wealth is from maternal uncle to uterine nephew(s).

Membership of the lineage is traced through a person’s patrikin. In other words, patrilineal descent confers membership of a lineage. The lineage among the Dagaaba consist of members of a particular descent group who are also members of the same family (yir). Within the lineage, the conception of inter-availability of supplies is more developed, arising as it does from the idea of the land and its fruits being inherited from a common ancestor (Goody, 1962). The membership of the lineage also includes the living and the dead (ancestors), because it is believed that the spirits of the ancestors (kpîme) are also involved in the day-to-day life of the lineage because they play protective and mediatory roles between the living and the dead.
The lineage may be differentiated from the clan in that the clan reckons kinship from a putative ancestor. To the Dagaaba therefore, there is much more responsibility beholden to a member of the lineage over that to a member of the clan (Bekye, 1991). The Clan could be said to be an expanded ‘agnatic lineage’ (belu), known among the Dagara speakers and comprising of the entire father’s children (Tuurey, 1982). Each clan has a clan praise name (yir-danno) which gives an identity to each clan. Modern Dagaaba lineages consist of ten (10) clans; encompassing over two million people (Tuurey, 1982). All the clans also have prohibitions or taboo, (kyiiru) in the form of an object, animal, bird or insect. The taboo object or totem is believed to have played an important part in saving an ancestor of the clan. The taboosed object is believed to have at one time in the distant past, come to the aid of an ancestor in a critical situation. These animals, objects, birds or insects have totemic connections with the descent group. There are prohibitions common to all Dagaaba and failure to comply attracts serious sanctions. For example, endogamous marriages are not allowed because they are members of the clan and have same totem. Also, it is prohibited for consanguinely related persons to have sex (incest). Adultery, sexual intercourse in the bush, stealing and murder are equally serious offenses and are punishable. Some sanctions may include banishment from the village but not from the membership of the clan. Sacrifices for pacification to the gods and ancestors may be necessary if one commits such offences. The clan provides a more effective source of solidarity, than just the name of the clan or group. In other words, it gives that continuous reference point for group cohesion and unity.
Lentz, (1997) noted that, among the Dagara for each different patrilineage, there is a migration story recounting its ancestors places of origin and how they came to settle in their present abode. These accounts normally cover three (3) to five (5) generations and usually peculiar to specific village that seldom go further than a hundred kilometers from its present position, as the original home of the patriclan segment.

According to Barker, (1999), matrikin, unlike patrikin are spatially dispersed. Every individual belongs to both a patrilineal and a matrilineal clan. The matrilineal clans are four (4). For the Dagara of the Nandom traditional area especially, matrikin are by no means less important, for they have a double unilineal descent system and inherit property from their patrikin and their matrikin. Clan or household group, are clustered into an earth deity shrine area or earth-god, known as *Tengan*, which is usually situated in a grove in a central part of the settlement. In many accounts, particularly those of the *tengansob*, (landlord) claims to be the first settler in a village, had an ancestor, normally hunter who discovered a game and sometimes farming grounds on one of his expeditions. A temporary shack is erected and wives, children and sometimes brothers are fetched to settle at the new abode and start farming. Often, the new land turns out to be already inhabited and the account narrates how the new immigrants met the original settlers and reached agreement on how to co-settle peacefully.

### 2.9.1 The Clan and Lineage Systems: Significance and Functions

In the confines of life, death and the hereafter, we cannot rule out the need for peace and security, without which, life will be chaotic for man (generic) who is communitarian in nature and acts within time and space. The Dagaaba believe that there is always the need
for peace, security and protection even in the hereafter, which ultimately comes from God, the divinities and ancestors. Thus, among the Dagaaba, the clan and lineage systems, form an integral part of demonstrating an aspect of their life style as a domestic group. The Dagaaba clan and lineage systems when properly harnessed, helps in social transformation, security development and peace building process. The clan lineages of Dagaare communities are such that beyond the lineage, the clan members are related enough to be able to interfere if they see something wrong in the family. The system is a useful tool towards the pursuit of restoration of family relations, family conflicts, of rectifying wrongs, creating right relationships based on equity and fairness, which at times is problematic, yet imperative in our present age.

Although a lot has been written on peace and security and the impact of conflict in general, yet, the impact of colonialism on the institution of chieftaincy particularly with regards to legitimacy, customary law and land has not been systematically dealt with among the Dagaaba. It is very important to touch on the internal conflict origin among the Dagaaba of the northwestern part of Ghana and how the clan and lineage systems have worked in realizing the needed peace and security at large. It is acknowledged that the practice of the clan and lineage systems among the Dagaaba of the Upper West Region, have made significant landmarks, in that the system enforces unity, discipline, sanctions, sanity in customary norms and processes and calls for right behaviour in the community which by and large facilitates the process of increasing justice and equality in the social system as a whole. This may involve the elimination of oppression, improved sharing of resources and non-violent advocacy and resolution of conflict between groups of people in the clan or lineage system.
The clan and lineage systems, recognizes that, conflict is an inseparable part of human interaction. When social conflicts are addressed affectively, it can lead to peace and harmonious existence among families and communities. The clan and lineage systems help people transform destructive conflicts by addressing underlying needs and concerns, build sustainable relationships and changing the conflicts and conditions that foster violence. The clan and lineage systems in collaboration with youth groups and religious leaders take part in peace building process. Today, there are a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations, springing up to play different roles in areas of social conflict transformation and conflict resolution for peace building processes.

The core functions of the clan and lineage systems include:

1. It finds quick solutions to immediate internal and extended family problems and generates creative platforms within the clan and lineage systems that can simultaneously address issues.

2. The clan and lineage systems also view peace as central and rooted in the quality of relationships, and among all who are descendants from the same putative ancestor and all who are members of the lineage, yir-dem (Bekye, 1991). It thus means that both face-to-face interaction and the ways in which we structure our social, political, economic and cultural relationships, are crucial. In this sense, peace is a “process-structure”- a phenomenon that is simultaneously dynamic, adaptive and changing within a given society e.g. Dagaaba.

3. The clan and lineage systems in social conflict transformation, views peace as a continuously evolving and developing quality of relationship.
4. It is defined by intentional efforts to address the natural rise of human conflict through non-violent approaches that address issues and increase understanding, equality and respect in relationships among Dagaaba of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

The practice of social conflict transformation, security development and peace building processes can be done by establishing the following critical insights:

1. An operative frame of reference for thinking about and developing the design of social conflict transformation, security and peace building approaches. Since intractable social conflicts are usually quite complex, developing a ‘picture’ helps to develop a purpose and direction among clan and lineage group.

2. Finally, social conflict transformation, security development and peace building ‘metaphor’ provides an expanded view of:
   a) Time and Space
   b) Situates issues and crisis within a framework of relationships and social context
   c) It creates lens to look at both solutions and ongoing changes among members of the clan and lineage systems.

Conflict in general is a vehicle of change but transformation brings into focus the horizon towards which we journey, namely; the building of healthy relationships and communities both locally and globally.

This process requires significant changes in our current ways of relating. Social conflict transformation for peace, according to Lederach, (1989) does not suggest we eliminate or control social conflict but rather recognize and work with its dialectic nature; because social conflict are naturally created by humans, who are involved in relationships, but once it occurs, it changes or “transforms” events, people and relationships created initial
as a natural occurrence. It is also a prescriptive concept and can have destructive consequences but its consequences can be modified or transformed. This involves transforming perception, issues, actions and other people or groups. Social conflict can transform perception by accentuating the differences between people and positions to improve mutual understanding or transforming the way the social conflict is expressed. Owing to the fact that conflict can be expressed variously namely: competitively, aggressively or violently, non-violent advocacy, conciliation or by co-operation, there is the need for activism at each stage of the conflict to raise people awareness of an issue using non-violent advocacy to escalate and contract the conflict.

Peacemaking or Peace building and security also involves systematic transformation, the process of increasing justice and equality in the social system as a whole. This may involve the elimination of oppression, improved sharing of resources and non-violent advocacy and resolution of conflict between groups of people. Transformation of personal relationship facilitates the transformation of social systems and systematic changes facilitate personal transformation. The key to both kinds of transformation are truth, justice and mercy as well as empowerment and interdependence.

These concepts frequently seem to be in opposition to each other, however, they must come together for reconciliation or “peace” to occur, Lederach (1989) asserts. Peace justice and security are very abstract terms and mean different things to different people, but very vital in social conflict transformation and peace building process. In fact, many mediators are of the opinion that, peace and justice are imperative pillars and consensus-based, especially in social conflict resolution processes particularly in adversarial, political or legal systems. Mediation and resolution are tools that can be used to transform the expression of conflict from “mutually destructive modes through dialogue
and inter-dependence (Lederach, 1989). Social conflict transformation also involves the
pursuit of awareness, growth and commitment to change which may occur through
recognition of fear, anger, grief and bitterness. Social conflict transformation and peace
building though necessary are not simple and hard to tackle, hence, clan and lineage
systems, facilitates transformation, security and peace building through the creation of
right relationships and to ensure equitable and fair play in our legal, social, religious,
political, cultural systems and dynamics.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

3. Introduction

The researcher used ethnographic research approach. Also, observation and participant observation methods were used. The field study was undertaken between April to August and November 2012 and then in February 2013 and between April to August 2014. The period of April to August falls within the farming season and many youngsters were home. It was much easier meeting the youngsters and the elders in the evening when they returned from their farms. In the dry season, most of the youth get engaged in seasonal migration down south for economic reasons.

On the field, were two research assistants whose services the researcher engaged and who happened to be indigenes of the land (Dagawie/Dagarateng). These research assistants linked me to about ten (10) informants/resource persons for the purpose of gathering data and accurate information because of their great wisdom and knowledge in the culture and related issues centred on oral traditions and literature particularly with story-telling as the oldest literary tradition among the Dagaaba. Today the usual traditional manner of sitting around some bonfire at night to celebrate over stories and proverbs related to issues of life, death and the hereafter is increasingly diminishing. Listening to the stories as preliminary information was necessary because of the absence of earlier documentation.
The area of study is on the Dagaaba with particular attention to the Dagara people of the Nandom Traditional Area (i.e. Nandom and its environs). The study however, incorporated the views from the Dagaaba in the diaspora also, those living in Accra and Kumasi, in the collection of the data.

3.1 Data Collection

The collection of data includes primary and secondary sources, structured interviews, Dagaare discourse and literature, literary expressions such as legends, story-telling, poetry, proverbs, folk-songs, dirges, workshops, seminars, symposia, and focused group discussions. The Dagaare language was the medium of communication with those that were engaged. In some instances however, I had to explain in English to some literates who sought for clarifications especially with the scheduled interviews. There were also occasions that I had to resort to digital recordings and interviews to facilitate retention of information as the pieces of information from some non-literate interviewees were rather scattered, disjointed and too raw in the narrations especially the narrations by the traditional rulers, chiefs, diviners and elders. Some non-literate senior citizens were somewhat ‘allergic’ to tape recording as some felt uncomfortable. It was explained to them that the exercise was only meant for an academic purpose and nothing else, to put them at ease. Some interviews were conducted in pito bars, and the researcher had to share a drink at different times with the interviewees to tactically soften their fears and that the researcher was not dangerous.
3.2 Sampling Procedure and Techniques

The sampling procedure showed the methods and criteria through which the research work was conducted. How data was gathered and the justification of the criterion used in the gathering of data etc. This section is believed to be very critical in every research. The study was designed to cover the demography of the research area as indicated in earlier chapter and methods and techniques that were used in the study. Consequently, the areas included the research design, study population, profile of the research, sampling size and its justification.

This is an applied research based on the descriptive research approach. It was obvious to use a qualitative methods of gathering and analyzing data using deductive reasoning. The exploratory and the descriptive approach were used because it provided an accurate representation of the opinions, behaviours, perceptions, knowledge, and specific individual dynamics in the group. The plan was designed to meet the broad objectives of the study.

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data in research are the pieces of information that are collected to help address a research problem. People engage in research make a lot of decisions in crafting a data collection plan. Their decisions can have remarkable consequences on the quality of findings of the study. There are many methods that are employed to collect data in research and the more common ones the researcher used were surveys, interviews, observations as well as questionnaire approach to gather data.
3.4 Population and Sample

Population consists of all the subjects of study. This encompasses all the individuals, objects and events that satisfy the criterion for inclusion in a research. The study population in this case refers to my target group (population) within Nandom Traditional area and its environs as the study area.

3.5 Sample Size Selection and Sampling Design

In choosing the sample size, evaluators must decide how confident they need to be that the sample results accurately reflect the entire relevant population. A critical decision lies in the choice of sample size, which is, determining the number of replicates to run. If the experiment is interested in detecting small effects, more replicates are required than if the experiment is interested in detecting large effects. Consequently, to ensure the sample size that would be a true reflection of the population, a confidence level of 95% chosen for calculation of the sample size. In this study, the sample size of 150 chosen by means of convenience since not every respondent was in a position to provide data because of its technical nature.

3.5.1 Ethnographic Method

In this work, the researcher has widely involved the use of ethnography. ‘Ethnography is research process in which the anthropologist closely observes record and engages in the daily life of another culture emphasizing descriptive details’ (Marcus and Fisher 1986). The ethnographic method is used by anthropologists and sociologists to study and explain unfamiliar cultural practices. This is increasingly used by researchers in a wide array of disciplines, including social work, psychology, nursing, medicine, history, economics and organizational behaviour. Ethnography owes much of its current popularity to a shift
away from the positivist approach, which insists that social research be modeled after the physical sciences, and emphasizes the discovery of universal laws and description. Bronislaw Malinowski, Polish anthropologist is generally considered as the father of ethnography - the study of people as they go about their daily lives and it is best suited for this study. Like most anthropologists of his time, Malinowski did salvage ethnography, in the belief that the ethnographer’s job is to study and record cultural diversity threatened by Westernization. According to Malinowski, [1922 & 1961], the primary task of the ethnographer is to ‘grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world.’

Marcus and Fisher (1986) also argued that experimentation in ethnographic writing is necessary because all peoples and cultures have already been ‘discovered’ and must now be ‘rediscovered’ in changing historical circumstances. One key method describes in this quote, is participant observation - taking part in the events one is observing, describing and analyzing.

Geertz [1973] said ethnography is understood to mean the study of people as they go about their daily lives. If this definition is apt then, the use of ethnographic approach is best suited for this study. Geertz (1973) added, that anthropologists may choose anything in a culture that interest them, fill in details and elaborate to inform their readers about the meanings in that culture, because meanings are carried by public symbolic forms, including words, rituals, and customs. The ethnographic method facilitated the understanding of the perception of death and the hereafter, and for the interpretation and meaning of social phenomenon within context and history. As has been the practice of ethnographers, the researcher moved from the setting to another precisely from Nadowli, Lawra, and Jirapa to the newly created Nandom district.
The field techniques of this ethnographic study included a direct, first hand observation of daily behaviour through participant observation, conversation with varying degrees of formality, from the daily chitchat, that helps maintain rapport and provides knowledge about what is going on, to prolonged interviews thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour interviews.

3.5.2 Observation and Participant Observation Methods

The researcher has a keen interest in the totality of the lives of the Dagaaba in his efforts to record what he sees as he sees it and record events in a personal diary as most people were not comfortable with electronic recordings and especially gathering information during occasions of funerals, dirges, and songs and the meaning they carry as explained by the people. It was comparatively easier to gather more information among the people in the Nandom traditional area and in Lawra than in Jirapa-Lambusie because they had a different mindset (they showed signs of introvert behaviour and not accommodative enough and the Sisaala dialect was alien to the researcher). Thus, the focus was on the people of the Nandom traditional area. The researcher was also privileged to participate in forty (40) funeral ceremonies over a period of five (5) months in twenty (20) communities. This helped in the appreciation of the Dagaaba cultural practices. There can be more than two (2) funerals in a particular village.

People from neighboring villages, usually two (2) to five (5) miles away from one village to the other attend the funerals on motor cycle, tri-cycle (Nyaaba Lorry) and bicycles because these are the most common means of transport. Others also made it on foot to these funerals.
3.6 Interviews

The “Ethnographic Interviewing” model propounded by Spradley (1979) requires that a series of interviews be conducted with each informant. This was adopted by the researcher. During the interviews, the researcher took an active listening role as he questioned with particular attention to details. The interviews could last for 30-45 minutes in some cases one (1) hour depending on the type of responses the researcher gets and the availability of time on the respondent’s side. Respondents were approached sometimes without formal notice, and even some of the interviews went on under trees, in vehicles, at lorry stations and car parks. The pito bars were the commonest place where respondents were met. The reason was to increase the number of respondents in the data collection base. Between 20 and 30 people were spoken to in a day.

Interactions with different clans and households also yielded some results because it provided opportunity to meet up to 40 people representing about 80% of a household, at a time, to engage in discussions. It was a face to face discussion to gather comparable broader information and data. At each discussion session, one person stands out as a key resource person from whom further clarification or detailed information could be sought from latter if the need arises.

The conversations and especially the interview schedules enabled the ethnographic study to be more qualitative. The qualitative dimension came from follow-up questions, open-ended discussions, pauses for gossip and work with key cultural and social analyst and consultants who were contacted. The researcher realized that the qualitative method was very helpful for the study. This is because the qualitative approach captures the intricacies of social life and treats actions as part of holistic social process and context, rather than as something that can be extracted and studied in isolation.
The qualitative lends itself to the investigation of complex phenomena without predetermining or delimiting the paths that such investigation should follow. Furthermore, the strength of qualitative method lies in its unassailable explanatory power and in providing detailed information on the subject matter of research thus providing in-depth understanding of human or organizational behaviour and of social interactions as well as the rationale for such interactions.

3.7 Gossiping

Gossip forms part of the collection of data explored in this study. White (2000), attested, that ‘what is spoken in gossip is an indicator of the issues, questions and theories that circulate about humanness and reality’. Gossip is a rumor or hearsay or fact of everyday experiences and may be malicious or an ambiguous phenomenon. They are narratives of details of people’s lives, who have transgressed social norms and expectations e.g. someone deliberately causing harm or killing through the use of poisoning. This approach may however, be seen as ambiguous and unreliable, yet it can be effective if it is not ‘forced or false gossip’ and before it can be analyzed, the matter needs to be ‘seen and heard.’ The researcher is fully aware of the strength and weaknesses of each approach, but for the complementary of efforts, each approach adds some meaning or an advantage and allows for some level of comparative analysis of the results obtained (triangulation of findings).

Vansina (1985) writes that all sort of news and hearsay created in a community and passed on through the usual channels of communication do not disappear when the novelty has worn off. They exist to be tapped by latter researchers. Vansina (1985) goes on to explain that “All art is a metaphor, sayings, proverbs and tales, express the
experience of contemporary situations or events (or) express intense emotions associated with them.” Thus, several modes of discourse among the Dagaaba, their experiences and emotions on death and hereafter has been explored. By what Vansina (1985) presents, the Dagaaba would have put the experiences that they have gone through or others have gone through into the modes of gossip, stories or even folk-songs which would be passed on with or without alterations, but retaining the essential truth with which they can then be distilled for true emotion. As part of the findings through these interviews, tales and stories is that, the cardinal aspect of death is characterized by its inevitability – death “must happen” and the quality of life after death was determined by the life on earth – if one was a good person in this life, he would enjoy a good status after death.

Out of a sample size of 150 people in the Nandom traditional area (the concentrated study area), about 95% of the interviewee believed in the existence of death and life after death. Elements that came out of the interview were the belief in God, ancestors, value of life. Some Dagaaba that practice Traditional Religion in some rural communities in the Nandom district specially at Gengenkpe, Kusiele, Tangkyara, Monyupelle, Ko, Tokuu, Bu, Puffien and Fielmuo-Liero, keep and consult the shrines and continue to offer sacrifices during sickness, death, and various kinds of misfortunes or calamities in search of explanations and answers to their problems. There are also some Christians, who engage in such consultations especially during moments of misfortunes, marriage problems, sickness and death. Veneration of ancestors is a particular expression of the beliefs concerning the future of those who died. All interviewees say that, life is a gift from the Supreme Being and that the gift of life is an opportunity for people to live out their lives fully and to share it with others through the means of procreation.
When asked how they acquired information about death and the hereafter, some responded that it was usually through divination. Diviners and elders are the most influential among the Dagaaba. When calamities, accidental death and unexplained recurring death takes place in a community, they are understood in terms of ancestors not being happy and thus punishing the victim, family and the community at large. The Dagao believed that life did not end with a moment of physical death but continues after death in the eschatological world of the ancestors. About 20% claimed that death comes because God and deities intends it. Life after death was a continuation of the present life, but it was not as if it was the same because a few respondents say it is a continuation of life in the world of the spirit and there is really no life after death because it continues.

However, about 80% were of the view that a person, after having lived a good life, was to become an ancestor after death. An ancestor would intercede for the living and protect them. In that context, it meant that it is in *ancestorship* that one could find the continuation of life. Nevertheless, life after death could not necessarily be seen as a continuation in case of a bad person. When a bad person died, he would not be named after anybody or anything and the cycle of life would be interrupted because he would not be reincarnated. In that case, life after death could be seen as an interruption. The concept of the soul and the spirit are all seen as the only components or elements that continued to live after the moment of physical death. Those who died would retain their individual characteristics and would continue to live in the minds of the living. After death, there would be no death, and no hunger; no cry and no work, no labour and no toil. The hereafter would be a place of peace and joy. The dead would be able to interact with the living. Some responded that people after death would act in a similar way they used to do on earth and that they would have similar needs, though in a more spiritual sense.
Those who led a good life on earth would become ancestors and would help the living. They would be named after their ancestors and libations would be poured for them. If they were unhappy with the behaviour of the living, they could punish them. Bad people would be forgotten and feared since even after death they could try to harm the living. One respondent said that the quality of life of the ancestors depends upon the life of the people on earth. If the behaviour of the living was morally wrong, it would make the ancestors upset, if people behaved according to the moral rules of the community, it would make the ancestors happy. The ‘emotional state’ of ancestors would depend upon the behaviour of the living. The belief in life after death influenced the life of a Dagao on earth. First of all, it reminds them about the role of the Supreme Being as the provider. The Dagaaba believe that living a good life on earth was a means to receive the Supreme Being’s blessing already here on earth and then in the afterlife.

Thus people try to live good lives because it has many advantages, temporary and eternal. Doing good things on earth seemed to be the best way to remain in the memory of people after one’s death. Believing in afterlife was helping to maintain social order in the community because it was motivating people to follow moral laws. One tried to be a good person and to go through all the rites of passage in order to achieve the status of ancestor in afterlife. Following the rules of a community was mandatory in order to be of help to the community after death and to achieve the ancestral status after death. If one was a bad person here on earth, after his death, the living did not want to name their child after him since it was believed that, through the naming process, the child would inherit some qualities of the deceased person. A bad person was seen as a cursed person.
Analyzing the data, the researcher feels the data was more descriptive and primarily qualitative information [words rather than number of respondent] collected. The more time the researcher spends on the field, with the frequent and lengthier interviews in some cases, seems to show a more trusting relationship with the respondents.
CHAPTER FOUR

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

4.1 Dagara Discourse and Literature on death and the hereafter

Studies that have examined factors that contributed to the death of a child have found delays and poor care-seeking implicated in a number of deaths (Reyes et al., 1997; Aguilar et al., 1998; Terra de Souza et al., 2000; Bojalil, 2002).

Recent studies show that older adults tend to select quality of life in their end-of-life decision-making, while younger adults tend to choose quantity of life because of behaviour change and life styles between the older adults and the younger adults. In pre-industrial societies, the majority of deaths took place in the home with the entire community often involved in rituals surrounding the death.

Freeman (2005) states that there are four types of death and each type has implications both for the dying and for those left to grieve the loss. The first is social death, which represents the symbolic death of the individual in the world he/she has known. For the person dying and for the survivors, socially and interpersonally, the world as it was known begins to shrink. A second type of death is psychological death. This refers to the death of aspects of the dying individual’s personality. How dying persons move through the grieving process and deal with their losses may bring about changes in the person’s personality.

Changes may also take place as a result of the illness process and/or medications. Psychological death may precede biological and physiological death and may be one of the several losses the bereaved suffer.
A third type of death is *biological* death. With biological death, the body as a human entity no longer exists. For instance, biological death may be evident when a person suffers a heart attack severe enough to damage the heart beyond repair, causing it to stop functioning. Although the person is biologically dead, advances in medical science allow organs to be kept alive and functioning by means of artificial life support. A fourth type is *Physiological* death which takes place when there is a cessation of the operation or function of all the vital organs.

Looking at each of the four types of deaths, there are implications both for the dying and for those left to grieve the loss which very fittingly represents the cultural beliefs of present day Dagao. Freeman (2005) summarized them as follows:

1. The first task of “family grief” is the need for family members to *openly acknowledge the death* at both cognitive and emotional levels. This requires communication and conversation about the deceased, as well as family members, sharing feelings about the death and surrounding events.

2. The second task of “family grief” is to *allow mourning to occur*. The pain of mourning necessitates that family members cooperate in aiding other family members in the grieving process.

3. The third task of “family grief” is the process of *adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing*. The deceased remains in the family’s consciousness, though the family must now adapt to life without the deceased.
4. The fourth task of “family grief” is the realignment of intra-family roles. Responsibilities have to be redistributed and roles readjusted with the family unit. Role adjustment faces each family member at some level.

5. The fifth task of family grief is the realignment of extra-family roles. Family members now face the task of establishing new types of relationships with old acquaintances and making new acquaintances without the deceased family member’s presence or input.

Indeed, family grief is an extension of individual grief. Thus, according to Dagaaba beliefs, an individual becomes conscious of his/her own being and responsibilities towards self and others through connections to other persons. In this sense, what happens to the individual happens to the entire group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.

The death of a child is regarded as a particularly grievous evil event, and many Dagaaba will give special names to their children to try to ward off the re-occurrence of untimely death eg. Dery or Dery Pog: one who has returned or Iyabo in Yoruba, meaning mother has returned). I have dealt with this issue in my fourth chapter. There are many different ideas about the "place" the departed go to, a "land" which in most cases seems to be a replica of this world. For some, it is under the earth, in groves, near or in the homes of earthly families, or on the other side of a deep river. In most cases it is an extension of what is known at present, although for some peoples it is a much better place without pain or hunger. Mbiti (1969: 4 & 5) writes that a belief in the continuation of life after death for Africans "does not constitute a hope for a future and better life. To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. Even life in
the hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter.”

The notion of life hereafter (life after) death ensured the physical as well as religious survival of the Dagaaba community through the religious meaning attached to bearing children. For the Dagaaba, the issue of procreation was and still is crucial in order to become an ancestor. Thus, life after death played an important role in the overall system of the Dagaaba traditional beliefs. It affirmed the inner coherence of their worldview whereby man was its center in the life on earth and remained also its prominent figure after death as an ancestor. Such a notion stressed also the role of a Dagao in the community, namely that, one’s life on earth was defined through his belonging and involvement in the community. As an ancestor, one continued to be useful to the community as an intercessor, because he remained a part of that community, even as a dead person. The communitarian aspect of the Dagaaba worldview continued even after death. The ancestors, within this concept of life after death, made communication between people and God possible because it was believed that ancestors were closer to God. The understanding of life after death was crucial in the context of African view about the cyclic nature of life. Mbiti (1969).

Death is conceived not as the end, but rather as a passage to a new stage, with its notion of partial reincarnation through the naming process. Life after death and its understanding had a lot of implications for the maintenance of social order in the community. To become an ancestor one had to be a morally upright person, following the laws of the community, and having gone through all the rites of passage.
These factors that qualify one to become an ancestor ensured the maintenance of peace and stability in the community. It is advantageous to be a morally well-behaved person because of what is gained after death.

Comparing traditional religion with Christianity, one could argue that, since there was no notion of mercy as understood in Christian terms, everything after death depended upon one’s life on this earth. It probably was a very strong motivating factor to be a morally upright person because everything depended upon an individual. Again, the understanding of life after death was stressing personal responsibility in this life. Even though that responsibility was exercised within a community, one had a choice of not exercising it. As such it was providing a kind of counterbalance to the prominent importance in community participation as the Dagaaba worldview; since life after death, for them was understood as a copy of this life, one probably worked hard to make the best out of it. It was probably another motivating factor to be pro-active and inventive in the life on earth because it had ‘eternal’ consequences. Proceeding in the order of descending immateriality, what survives after physical death is the soul, which, for Plato, is an absolutely immaterial entity. During the life of a mortal, this entity is ‘imprisoned’ in the body so that death is actually something in the nature of liberation. When this occurs the soul reverts to a totally rarefied realm containing the immaterial and changeless originals of which the things in this world are imperfect copies. There it becomes again directly conversant with the true realities which in mortal life it was at best only capable of remembering. This soul is, of course, indestructible, and enjoys both a pre-natal and post-mortem existence. Mbiti (1969).
There is some similarity between the African and the traditional Christian images of the ‘dead-but-living’ or the ‘living-dead’. The similarity, however, is only skin deep, for the "risen" Christian is a combination of an immaterial soul and a quasi-material body whereas the "departed" African, is by original constitution, a quasi-material being nor does the latter have to wait as a split person in some transitional realm till 'the Day of Judgment' to attain the wholeness of post-mortem personality. Within the Western intellectual tradition, however, there is a conception of immortality in which immaterial and quasi-material factors are intermixed. This is the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body at Judgment Day.

On this fateful day, mortal remains of dead people, the largest proportion of them long transformed into earth, will be reassembled and reanimated with their corresponding souls. One way or another, dead individuals will be reconstituted by body and soul being put together again in such a way as to recover their pre-mortem personal identities, with the one pleasant exception that the new editions of their bodies will be so vastly improved as not to be susceptible to any physical disabilities or carnal cravings. In this purified form they will live in eternal bliss, that is, if they are accorded salvation through the (undeserved) grace of God. In the alternative they shall be consigned, presumably in not so perfect bodies, to some extremely inconvenient mode of existence forever. Freeman (2005). St. Augustine, for one, was adamant on the justice of such eternal punishment. If it seems harsh, it is only because "in the weaknes
of our mortal condition there is that highest and purest wisdom by which it can be perceived how great wickedness was committed in the first transgression”.

Three points arise, one of similarity, two of outright contrast. If we view the resurrected people as whole individuals, they are quite similar to the inhabitants of African lands of the dead. The resurrected and saved are like mortal persons in imagery, but unlike them in their mode of action. St. Augustine actually speaks of them as being "clothed in immortal and spiritual bodies" which "shall live no longer in a fleshy but a spiritual fashion." The Saint remarks furthermore, "What power of movement such bodies shall possess, I have not the audacity to conceive. . . . One thing is certain, the body shall forthwith be wherever the spirit wills, and the spirit shall will nothing which is unbecoming either to the spirit or to the body." The bodies in question are obviously neither purely material nor purely immaterial (which in any case would be self-contradictory) but, in truth, quasi-material. Freeman (2005).

The absence in the eschatology of many African peoples of a Day of Judgment together with its inexorable sequel, positive or negative, marks a very significant difference with the Christian variety. The Day of Judgment by definition is an apocalyptic watershed, bringing the end of the temporal phase of cosmic history. Hence, the question of the relationship of the inhabitants of this world with those of the next does not arise. This life is a preparation for the next, but not only that; it is a waiting for the next. That still is not all; the very meaning of this life consists in the fact that there is a next one. Historically, this point of view has been held quite widely in the Western world, though of course, not universally or always within the confines of orthodox Christianity. Freeman (2005).
Jacques Choron [1967], in his book, *Death and Modern Man*, has collected a number of striking expressions of that view from some remarkable men subscribing that: "If immortality be untrue, it matters little whether anything else be true or not and without the hope of an afterlife this life is not even worth the effort of getting dressed in the morning.”

4.2 The Rites of Passage: Birth, Puberty, Marriage and Death

There are four (4) main stages in the life cycle of a man, namely: birth, puberty, marriage and death according to Quarcoopome (1987). Each of these stages is marked by considerable ritual and ceremonies. Nowadays, the observances of these rites have been affected by the in-roads of western civilization and religions like, Christianity and Islam. In the rite of passage of death, there have been changes in the Dagaaba funeral tradition.

4.2.1 The Understanding of Life (*Nyovur*)

Mbiti, (1967) pointed out a critical aspect of human life which is in relation to time. This concept sees life as a rhythm or cycle which includes birth, puberty, initiation, marriage, procreation, old age, and death, entry into the community of the departed and finally entry into the company of the spirits. This implies that God created man with the potentialities of passing through these stages of life. Every human being must go through them, although they vary according to cultures and time. Furthermore, life, death and the hereafter are integral aspects of humankind, and equally as old as the human race, one is challenged to know how they can affect the pattern of humanness in society in diverse situations and in contexts. Among the Dagaaba, life generally starts at pregnancy through birth to old age and finally to “good” death. This is the ideal life cycle among the Dagaaba.
The Dagaaba, like all Africans, have been pre-occupied with profound questions about life. In this way, they have made an invaluable contribution to African philosophy. Birth is regarded as an important situation in life. For them life is a pervading, encompassing reality. Man is the vicerory of God (Naangmen/Naanwin). Man has power over the universe and creation (Tengzu ni Bonire). However, the question of life and all living things and all the existing realities are important to the Dagaaba. Did life come into existence by chance or through creation and by whom? For the Dagaaba, there is no reasonable evidence or explanation about the existing reality of man springing up by chance. They believed that God exist and that man was created by a supreme being- God. This affirmation of the source of existence of man is strongly upheld by the Dagaaba. Thus, God is the creator of man and the cosmos. Man is not the cause of himself. Man is caused by that which is itself uncaused i.e. God, the cause of all that exist. The Dagaaba think alike just as in the words of Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, who said that ‘from the movement of things in the world, an unmoved prime mover is inferred therefore, God must exist. God is the unmovable mover. In the same vein, the Dagaaba also believed that God exist and is the greatest ‘thing’ conceivable as in the words of Anselm – ‘God is the greatest thing conceivable, therefore, God must exist.’ Religiously, God is an unseen, divine spirit being and is not part of creation. This is very much theological attributes of God, which emphasize on God as not being part of creation. Again, they believed that God had an inexhaustible stock, from among which God could call them in being- maale (create). God created out of nothing in Hebrew transliteration, is ex-nihilo. For the Dagao, God molded man as a potter. God is a designer God. The Dagaaba believe that, even if God creates (maale) things from already determined realities, these latter must have their cause in God and could have only been directly created out of nothing.
It must be stressed here that, for the Dagao, matter alone does not account for the life of man. Matter was combined with Spirit (Vouro/ Nyovur) to form the Soul (Sie). The soul is created directly by God. Regarding the soul the Dagaaba believe that personality soul is the divine element in man. This is why; man is formed by God, made in His image i.e. in spirit and likeness. (Transcendentalism). Therefore, to say that the source of man is theistic is not what the Dagaaba reject, nor will they accept the idea of creation by chance? For the Dagaaba, man is endowed with Spirit; not what science would normally designate animal species (Dung/Bonwiir). The soul is the vital principle and life force which makes a person a living being and accompanies man in life unlike the body which decays in the ground. The soul leaves the body at death. It is seen as the indestructible part which reincarnates in offspring an - impersonal principle of descent. Man is an organic whole not a split personality. Their thought about the existence of man is outside any evolutionistic explanation.

Thus, the Darwinian evolutionary theory which claims that, man is pure a product of “animal revolution” is unacceptable to the Dagao. This is because with the Dagaaba, the common aphorism, Bon kang be dogr bon kang bile (nothing begets another’s kind), underscores this position. All living things (Bonvube) cling to their kind. They have no inherent and connatural tendency to develop into another as the evolutionist’s claims. Man was created man, body and soul by that act of creation. In sum, the Dagaaba outlook on the source of life is theistic.
Jack Goody, [1962] records that, the Dagaaba believe that the soul is triple i.e. the soul consists of three elements, namely:

1. The soul can leave the body at night when a man dreams and it is wandering and thus, becomes prey to witches.
2. The soul is a ghost and spirit that journeys to the land of the dead in the midst of witches, but it remains intact.
3. The soul is a shadow. This follows the body wherever it goes and disappears only at death. Man is endowed also with reason and is capable of inter-subjective relationships.

The Dagaaba concept of life, death and the hereafter can be summarized as follows:

a. That God is the originator of life, the creator of man, the universe and the sustainer of creation.

b. That the ancestors play an important role in the Dagaaba communal life. The ancestors are nevertheless, cut off from the living, because they still reveal themselves in dreams or appear to their living relatives to guide or correct them.

c. The assertion that life can be meaningless without natural resources such as land, combine with the three factors of production which includes land, labour and capital and all other properties in the land that makes life worth living. In order to survive, one needs food, clothing and shelter through the use of land.

d. Finally, life is a communal affair and necessarily involves the relationship, social interaction, conviviality and communion between man, God, ancestors, divinities, etc. Therefore, human life is that which is
unified and is in harmony with God, with the ancestors and also with nature. The Dagaaba believe that Supreme Being (God) is the creator of man and the universe, because of the influence of Religion (Christianity).

John Mbiti’s [1975] assertion that to be human is to belong to the whole community and participate in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community, support this very fact of life about the Dagaaba. This communal life starts from the family where the attachment and interaction among extended family members is strong; it extends to the village and clan level and the larger society. Such a relationship is mutually beneficial to the participants if they abide by certain rules, regulations and a commitment to its success. Opoku [1978] also agrees that God is the creator of the world and everything therein.

Emmanuel Mounier [1947, 1950], explains that man is wholly body and Spirit/Soul (Sie), not a conglomeration of part but a unity. The Dagaaba belief that whatever happens to the soul is seen in the light of transcendence. God created Man in the image of Himself to share in His nature. Man belongs to nature but he can also transcend nature through a progressive mastery of it. Often his mastery is understood in terms of pure exploitation of nature and nature presents man with the opportunity of fulfilling his own moral and spiritual vocation and of humanizing and personalizing. That is why the Spirit/ Soul (Sie), is the spiritual element of man. What the Dagaaba are interested in is the fact that, man is not just matter, animated by spirit which defies annihilation. In African traditional religions, life does not end with death, but continues in another realm. Life, death and the hereafter is therefore, not mutually exclusive concepts; but there are sometimes clear dividing lines between them. Human existence is a dynamic process involving the
increase or decrease of "power" or "life force," of "living" and "dying," and there are different levels of life and death. Very often when a Dagao says in Dagaare:

‘A zie be viel’

This expresses the fact that things are not going well, such as when there is sickness or the level of life is very low, a situation of abject poverty, misery and hopelessness of life.

Be that as it may, death and life after death is not an issue of speculation and hypothesis of hope. It is a positive certainty for the Dagao.

If ancestorhood is dependent upon good conduct of one’s earthly life, then, what form should man’s life take in order to earn him or fulfill his destiny?

The idea of ancestorhood obliges the Dagao to live his earthly life well, because he wants to gain admission into the land of the ancestor. According to Thomistic philosophy, ‘a person is made up of body and soul, and the essence of the person is the soul and it is also that which is immortal.’ The Dagaaba believe that the soul is immortal and finds rest in the next world. The Dagaaba also believe that the human person is an indivisible unit, composed of body and soul and is an extended being, communitarian and individual. They also believe that the body stands for the whole person in term of cure or curse e.g. the fluid of the body is associated with the same person. Therefore, any part of the body or related to the body is taken as the whole person. For instance, one’s clothing, blood, sweat etc. are all part of the person. Thus, life for the Dagaaba is not just a theoretical issue. Again, they believe that life also involves the individual identity and destiny, for that matter man is an existential being. The complexity and profundity of life of the human being, his destiny (finality) and the ideal human life in the context of the Dagaaba culture will further be discussed.
4.2.2 The Concept of Puberty (Polu sang)

Puberty is the transition from childhood to adulthood and a typical Dagara context, the occasion marked by considerable rituals and ceremony, because rituals will usher in the young adults into full adulthood and is now fit to marry and can be entrusted with responsibilities and to face adult life socially and psychologically. This rite of puberty is an initiation in itself, symbolizing change of status from childhood into adulthood. The young girls go through female circumcision and the boys and the girls may be given traditional marks. However, this aspect of puberty rite have been condemned in contemporary times as ‘outmoded’, ‘barbaric’, ‘cruel’ and ‘dehumanizing’ and a call has been made with a full and active support of some governments for its eradication.

Chastity (i.e. no sex before marriage) is a hallmark and highly treasured. For the young girls they usually begin when they inform their parents of their first menstrual period while the young boys is noted when their pubic hairs, beard etc. are growing. The advent of western civilization, Christianity and Islam, puberty rite no longer enjoys popular patronage as was in the past two decades. Dagara society had no puberty rites for initiating young men and women into society. This was a singular exception among the Dagara. The Dagara also had no national festivals embracing the entire Dagara ethnic group, until the ‘Kakube’ was recently introduced. There was, however, a festival known as the baghr, which was celebrated by individual households within the clans or families.

4.2.3 The Idea of Marriage (Kultaa)

For a Dagao, marriage is never a private matter which can be left to both partners only. Two families or clans enter into an alliance, i.e. parents and other relatives have the decisive say. The traditional marriage as an institution is the point of emphasis at this
stage. Marriage is an integral part of the social cycle through which everyone is expected to pass. Marriage is social phenomena and contract rather than an individual affair. There is the belief among the Dagaaba that, insurances of continuity of a community or lineage which the ancestors established, is by means of marriage. In fact, one paramount aspiration is procreation. Thus, a man who dies without progeny, falls in a way into oblivion. Marriage for them is a sacred duty which every ‘normal’ human being must fulfill. *For the Dagaaba, a bachelor is disqualified from ancestor status, because one major requirement is having a son.* There is a scornful attitude towards bachelorhood because it is an undesirable sign of individuality and social non-fulfillment. This is to put emphasis on the importance of marriage (and family life) for the Dagaaba as part of their outlook to life.

Though marriage may be contracted at any age, it cannot be consummated until one has reached the age of 17 and above. There are various forms of marriages among the Dagaaba. Among the Dagaaba, it is not uncommon to see an elderly man indicates his readiness to marry for instance, a female of between 10 – 15 years, with the intention that when she reaches the marriageable age, she will be given in marriage to the ‘suitor’ of that elderly man who may be between 50-60 years. This is ‘infant marriage’ among the Dagaaba. Reasons for such marriages may be many but among others is the fact that, the parents would promise to give the infant to the said elderly man or ‘suitor’, because they are overly impressed by the handsomeness of the man, respect, resourcefulness, wealth, or his courage etc. However, this kind of marriage is not binding on either side and may be broken unilaterally. The girl may grow up and objects to the marriage contract, and hence the contract is abrogated. Should the prospective suitor advance any gifts to the girl’s parents, the suitor is entitled to a refund. Thus, the Dagaaba, marriage becomes a
proper marriage and successful by the payment of the bride price or the bride wealth at the appropriate moment and the appropriate charges. Usually, the bride wealth is equated with mother of the girl sort in marriage.

However, western civilization, Christianity and Islam to some extent have adversely affected the traditional marriage institution. For instance, chastity before marriage, which was of great value during the puberty rite, has now become a thing of the past and the new sexual freedom has led to sexual depravity in marriage with its consequent high divorce rate among the Dagaaba today. (Ludovic Doggu, informant, 2013).

Marriage among the ‘Dagara Nandome’ particularly was and still is viri-local (a resident pattern). It was regarded as the bedrock of the family and of society. When a woman is married, she left her father’s family or household and went to live with her husband’s family. Marriage was a corporate affair between two families and not just a contract between two individuals, a man and a woman. It entails obligations on both families which ensured that the woman would be well treated in her husband’s home. A marriage was only regarded as valid if and when, the bride- price (kyaru) was given by the bridegroom’s family to the bride’s family. Until very recent years, it was unheard of in Dagara society for a man and a woman to begin to live together and have children without the kyaru being given. The kyaru validated the marriage and legitimized the children. It also gave stability to the marriage and gave ‘jural rights’ to the husband over his wife. Divorce was permitted in Dagara traditional marriage but until very recent times, it was not widely practiced. Even when a woman left her husband and went to live with another man, she was not considered divorced unless the kyaru was returned to her former husband’s family. If she died during co-habitation with another man, the
husband’s family performed her funeral because she was still regarded as validly married to the first husband.

4.2.4 The Perception of Death (Kuu)

The fact of death itself strikes many people as something needing explanation beyond physical causes and effects, hence the many myths on the origin of death to be found in the folklore of many Ghanaian societies. Death was not supposed to be a part of human life. The blame for it is laid on some animal; some believe, like the Dagaaba, that it was the monkey [Baumann, 1936, Mbiti, 1975, Zahan, 1979]. There is a Dagaare myth that defines the origin of death not emanating from God, but due to man’s carelessness and negligence. Man was to be immortal but God’s message to immortality was mistakenly passed down to an animal believed to be a monkey, who misrepresented the message to mean that man will be mortal, hence, God was offended and He changed His mind of immortality. In most of them, death is conceived as something that came as a result of some mistake according to the Dagaare mythology. This is a tale which is widely told throughout Africa. The connection between reality and tales about the dead lies in the moral norms which the tale proclaims: any anti-social behaviour may call up the dead or cause death [Schott 1987].

The basic message of these myths is that the human species brought death upon themselves through their own disobedience of God. Other definitions for death focus on the character of cessation of something. Death describes merely the state where something has ceased, for example, human life or any living thing. Therefore, one can convincingly say that the definition of life simultaneously defines death. Death in African traditional religion is one of the last transitional stages of life requiring passage rites, and
this too takes a long time to complete. This has found expression among the Dagaaba especially the ‘Dagara Nandome.’ Here, the emphasis on death is laid on human life most especially. The deceased must make a smooth transition to the next life as possible and because the journey to the world of the dead has many interruptions. If the appropriate funeral rites are not observed, it is believed the deceased may come back to trouble the living relatives. Usually an animal is killed in ritual, although this also serves the practical purpose of providing food for the many guests. Some personal belongings are often or may be buried with the deceased to assist in the journey. Various other rituals follow the funeral itself. Some kill an animal (cow) at the burial to accompany the deceased.

Rosalind Hackett, (1989) among the Efiks of Calabar also confirms that death does not sever family connections, but the dead become ancestors. This is similar to that of the Dagaaba world view of death and dying and the final aim of becoming an ancestor. From the foregoing, a picture of the Dagaaba (African) concept of death emerges as follows: Death is a creation of God, made for the purpose of removing people from the earth when their time is up [Idowu 1962]. It happens gradually, starting from the time of one’s departure from the earth physically, to the time when the last person who knew him physically, dies off [Mbiti, 1975]. Death is the permanent termination of the biological functions that sustain a living organism. Phenomena which commonly bring about death include predation, malnutrition, disease and accidents or intentional trauma resulting in terminal injury. The nature of death has been for some time a central concern of the world's religious traditions and of philosophical inquiry. Death is a transition which involves transformation from the physical into the spiritual as the dead continue to live as ancestors. Proverbs 22:29, echoes that death is the last chapter of time, but the first
chapter of eternity. Death is a transition which involves the transformation from the physical into the spiritual as the dead continue to live as ancestors [Opoku, 1978].

In the Dagaaba culture the practice and custom of removing a dead body through a hole in the wall of a house, and not through the door was very much withheld. Sometimes the corpse is removed feet first, symbolically pointing away from the former place of residence. Usually, funerals begin with the removal of the dead body from the mortuary in modern times to the home. Prior to a person dying, a hole is made in the side of the home. When it is time to remove the body from the home, it is taken out of the house through the hole instead of a door with the feet passing through the hole first. This is to keep the spirit from finding an easy way back into the home. A zigzag path may be taken to the burial site, or thorns strewn along the way, or a barrier erected at the grave itself. The reason was that the dead person will find it difficult or impossible to remember the way back to the living, as the hole in the wall is immediately closed.

This practice or custom of removing a dead body through a hole in the wall of a house, and not through the door, has been persistent in the last 40-50 years ago, and was done, only when the last landlord of the house dies (Yir sob per baara) and there was no elder in the said household, symbolizing that, such a family/household, now have only children as survivors. From the 1970s to the prevailing moment, many Dagaaba will make it easier for their loved ones to find their way back home. They may even be buried under or next to the home. The Dagaaba will take special care to ensure that some elders of good repute are even buried in their compounds or next to their homes in the present dispensation. It is the Dagaaba traditional belief that when a person dies, there is not some part of that person that lives on but the whole person continues to live in the spirit world, receiving a
new body identical to the earthly body, but with enhanced powers to move about as an ancestor. There are many different ideas about the place the departed go to, a land which in most cases seems to be a replica of this world. For some, it is under the earth, in groves, near or in the homes of earthly families, or on the other side of a deep river. In most cases it is an extension of what is known at present, although for some peoples it is a much better place without pain or hunger. John Mbiti [1969] writes that a belief in the continuation of life after death for African peoples does not constitute a hope for a future and better life. To live ‘here and now’ is the most important concern activities and belief for the African and hence, the Dagao.

Though inevitable, death does not terminate human existence, but is a moment of passage to the afterlife. After death the human person continues to live on as a spirit. The network of relationships that characterizes human existence is not interrupted. Gehman, [1989] summarizes it saying that “death is a necessary door through which the living passes in order to take up the inevitable role as the living-dead. Death is transition to the final destiny of all men and women”. For the Dagaaba therefore, “life goes on beyond the grave” and Taylor, [2001] endorses such a view claiming that “those who are dead are never gone; they are in the thickening shadow… they are in the wood that groans, they are in the fire that is dying… they are in the forest, they are in the house, the dead are not dead”. Death is a moment when the spirit, often associated with breathing, separates from the body and goes into the world hereafter. Some understand the hereafter as a distant place. The deceased then, equipped with food and weapons, has a journey to make before he arrives at the hereafter. For others, it is ‘here’, though it is invisible to human eye [Mbiti, 1962].
The dead person becomes a living dead in the community and is still considered as a member of the family or clan. He is in the state of personal immortality [Mbiti, 1969]. It can help the family and the community in times of trouble and it can also cause trouble if certain rituals have not been performed properly or if there are some violations of community laws. It remains in such a status for about four to five generations during which he can partially be reincarnated in a new born child. After that period, when nobody among the living remembers him by naming children after him or pouring libation, it becomes a ghost of an unknown person. A spirit becomes ‘it’ and enters the state of collective immortality. It is one of the many spirits who lost their humanness. Such spirits are usually feared by people [Mbiti, 1975]. Among the spirits; the ancestors create a special category on their own. They are those who have died long ago, have lived exemplary life and who fulfilled all social and religious duties as understood by the Dagaaba community. As a result of their good life they are remembered by the living.

Nkemnkia [1999] says that “the necessary condition to remain always alive and present in the memory of the living is to lead a good and virtuous life. What the Dagaaba fears most is to be forgotten by the living ones, the parents and the human race.” The moment of death, is not to be seen as the beginning of the process of forgetting about the dead person. Man is ontologically destined to lose his humanness but gain his full spirituality: and there is no general evolution of devolution beyond this point. God is beyond and in African concepts there is neither hope nor possibility that the soul would attain a share in the divinity of God. Death is the beginning of a permanent ontological departure of the individual from mankind to spirithood. What are very common to Dagaaba and various tribes are their beliefs in God, in good and bad spirits, in ancestors, magic and traditional medicine or medicine men and diviners.
4.3 The Moment of Death - Symptoms, Causes and Types

There are basically two types of deaths for the Dagaaba, viz: physical and supernatural death. The Dagaaba believe that no human death is natural; there is always a cause and effect. Mbiti, (1975: 118) and Gehman, (1989: 54) also attest that death is not considered as a natural event but is seen as „caused” by some external forces such as witches, spirits or a curse.

Kirwen [2008] describes death as “an inevitable event in the personal history of every living person.” Nevertheless, suffice it to say that there are causes of death in humans as a result of intentional activity that may include suicide and homicide.

Signs of death or strong indications that a person is no longer alive or cessation of breathing and cardiac arrest (no pulse) are the following:

- **Pallor mortis**, is paleness which happens in the 15–120 minutes after death
- **Livor mortis**, is a settling of the blood in the lower (dependent) portion of the body
- **Algor mortis** is the reduction in body temperature following death. This is generally a steady decline until matching ambient temperature
- **Rigor mortis**, shows how the limbs of the corpse become stiff (Latin *rigor*) and difficult to move or manipulate
- **Decomposition** is the reduction into simpler forms of matter, accompanied by a strong, unpleasant scent.
There are basically three (3) levels of causation; the immediate cause, the efficient cause and, the final cause. *The immediate cause* is the technique used to kill the deceased viz: disease, snake bite or other natural causes and forms of mystical aggressions. *The efficient cause* is to be found among the members of the community itself, the person who was behind the act of killing. *The final cause* is an ancestor, the earth shrine or a medicine shrine. Even this does not exhaust all the possibilities in the causal chain. The attribution of a death to God is rare, it is usually on mortals.

For the *Dagao* to say that an ancestor or the earth shrine is the cause of a death, they necessarily mean that supernatural agencies actually have withdrawn their protection so that the person became an easy prey for witches and sorcerers. This is very similar to the Tallensi. Meyer Fortes, (1949), reports that for the Tallensi, all deaths are in the last analysis attributed to the ancestors; other beings merely act as agents on their behalf. Thus, the Dagaaba and the Tallensi thread on the same ground because they both claim that the supernatural agencies are the cause since it is they who withdraw their protection thereby permitting the action of mystical aggression by the witches and sorcerer.

**4.4 Death, Rituals and Customs**

There are many different death rituals in Africa that are observed. There is one commonality though; most people believe that only a correct burial will bring a dead person peace. Among the Dagaaba, a ritual killing is sometimes made for the ancestors, as it is believed that blood must be shed at this time to avoid further misfortune. Some people use the hide of the slaughtered beast to cover the corpse or place it on top of the coffin as a "blanket" for the deceased. Traditionally, the funeral starts early morning (often before sunrise) and not late in the afternoon, as it is believed that sorcerers move
around in the afternoons looking for corpses to use for their evil purposes, because sorcerers are asleep in the early morning, this is a good time to bury the dead.

Family members request the departed not to bring trouble to them after they have died, as well as asking that they strengthen life on Earth. It is believed that the living, as well as the dead, has a life force. This life force does not diminish, once a person has passed into the next world. It is common to sacrifice animals as part of the death ritual among the Dagara/Dagaaba. A cow is the popular choice for the Dagaaba. It is believed that the animal will accompany the deceased person to the land of their ancestors. Due to some constraints, other families may choose to sacrifice a sheep or goat instead.

In the case of Christians, consolatory services (mass) are held at the bereaved home. The day before the funeral the corpse is brought home before sunset and placed in the bedroom. A night vigil then takes place, often lasting until the morning. The night vigil is a time for pastoral care, to comfort and encourage the bereaved. Funeral is pre-eminently a community affair in which the church is but one of many players, but the church does not always determine the form of the funeral. Some of the indigenous rites have indeed been transformed and given Christian meanings, to which both Christians and those with traditional orientation can relate. Sometimes there are signs of confrontation and the changing and discontinuance of old customs to such an extent that they are no longer recognizable in that context.

Preparing a home after the death of a loved one is an important funeral rite. For the next week or two, people in the community visit the deceased relatives to offer their respect and condolences. In Christian homes, the practice now is that a day before a funeral the dead person is brought home and placed in their bedroom or house of residence.
Family members and sympathizers will hold a vigil (known today as wake keeping) until the next morning. This was not done by the Dagaaba before the advent of Christianity. In fact, there were no wake keepings, but mourning was persistent for 3 - 4 days and the funeral often commence before sunrise. The reason for this was that witches and sorcerers are asleep at this time and are not likely to take over the corpse of their loved one. If the deceased is a man, he is laid in state to face the east. The significance is that a man wakes up before the sunrises (from the east) and goes to farm. A deceased woman is laid in state to face the west (sunset). The significance is that a woman returns from farm at sunset to take care of the domestic needs and cooking. The dead person is traditionally dressed in *Dagakparo (Fugu)* an overall up and down smock and is seated high on a stand (*Paala*).

4.5 Ritual Animal Sacrifice

An animal usually a cow, sheep or goat may be killed immediately before the funeral as a ritual bloodletting. It is believed that blood needs to be shed to prevent further misfortune in the family. Sometimes the hide of the animal may also be used to cover the person or their casket at the funeral. Although the said animal is killed for the ritual, this also serves the practical purpose of providing food for the many guests.

4.6 Funeral

In Dagaare discourse, there are different types of funerals. If it is *kuu-faa or kuudegr* bad (evil) death, it is in the category of those who are killed by fire, thunder, lightning, rains (*Saa-kuu, Man-kuu, Dog-kpi, Nati-ba-kuu, Waab-kuu*) as well as those who have sinned against the earth shrine (*Tengan-kuu*). Such death requires some amount of inquiry into the cause of death. They also need some purification rites which are preceded by the
funeral. Thus, witches, and suicide deaths and even those whose death is a result of mass epidemic and are consequently buried in a communal grave, are considered bad death. Suffice it to say that, not all deaths are mourned in public in the case of those who have died an evil death/ bad death (kuu-faa). Burial is undertaken only by specialized and trained person who buries them, else one could be contaminated by a dreadful disease or an attack through rain, thunder, lightning, fire, a result of a curse or suicide etc., they hasten to bury you with the accompanying appropriate rituals.

Jack Goody, [1962]) noted that among the Dagaaba, with reference to the case of ‘unweaned’ infants, (Bipiila-kuu) only the relatives are informed when they passed on. This is because for the Dagaaba a child who dies before being weaned is not regarded as human, since that child has not attained human status but regarded as a ‘being of the wild’ that has come to trouble the parents. Also, when the child is less than 3 - 4 months old, such a child is not mourn in public. The funeral of a child is usually very short and one finds only women weeping. The men are supposed to be stoic and take the death in their stride no matter how much they are grieving. For an adult who has not yet had children, the funeral is intense, but brief for he or she is still considered a child albeit a member of the community cut short in the prime of life. Divinations are done to find out the cause of the death and to determine if there is any malicious action by someone behind the death. At the funeral the decease is referred to in the dirges and wailing as naale woi (a calf), not a full grown cow. There is no joviality whatever. The funeral of an old person, however takes place over 2-3 days in the distant past especially among the Dagara-Nandome. Today, it is a full day’s mourning and burial takes place in the early parts of the next day, mostly by 2pm.
Through participant observation, I have noticed that after the initial few hours of serious mourning, the atmosphere is almost like a festival. There is much drinking of pito (daa), the locally brewed guinea corn and akpeteshie, locally brewed gin. Food these days is provided for all visitors and different groups from different villages, particularly in-laws and other dignitaries. Now, many even prefer take-away food for their funerals.

The final funeral rites, a year later finally puts the deceased to rest. This is another two days of rites and festivities to which all kin have to come and all in-laws have a part to play. This kind of care after death has come to be what most Dagaare old people dream of and want to be performed for them. If they cannot in their life time have the best of everything, they at least want the kind of funeral that would make their spirits happy in the realm of the ancestors. As it were, the notion of death for the Dagaaba, is a social phenomenon and attributed to some conflict in the social system, either with living persons (witches, workers of curses and sorcerers) or with past members of the society, namely the ancestors or with non-human agencies (shrines).

In Dagaare discourse, one event which again is so revealing and striking is naming. Names have deep meaning. Here, I shall limit my discussion to some examples of names in Dagaare that relates to death (Kuu) and their meaning as that may affect the people’s perception of death. It is for this reason that, an analysis of the causes of death is attributed. For the ‘non-literate Dagao,’ causes that contemporary European would regard as natural death, do not by themselves provide a sufficient explanation of the death of a human being. Every death has a cause and effect that which I mentioned early on. This is a belief of the Dagara community in general.
Names and their meaning in relation to life and death have been studied and analyzed beneath and to be explicit, I will limit myself to Dagara- Nandome. Dagara local name is given according to the circumstances of one’s birth and/ or cause of the death. For instance, two different children may be born under the same circumstances, but even then, the name is not without specific meaning. It expresses something of the essence of the person. It characterizes the bearer in his or her ontological reality. Indeed, the name of an African person not even the case of a Dagara is close to something ineffable. The birth-name is pronounced when the seriousness of an occasion is to be emphasized or in order to confirm the truth of the statement. The name may also contain some history or pre-history of an individual or the past of his or her family or the clan community. If for instance there was war at the time of birth; the person may be called ‘kuu-bom. Kuu-so’ because the likelihood of the danger of death of the person, more so, when the relative were war victims and fallen into the hands of the enemy.

Here are synopsis of Dagara names and their interpretations as samples relating to death (Kuu).

**Table 4.6.1 Synopsis of Dagara names and their Interpretations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaballe-kuu</td>
<td>Who can escape death?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aabe-kiir</td>
<td>Who will not die?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aanakume/ Aania-ekure</td>
<td>Who is my killer or who will kill me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buu-kuu</td>
<td>What kind of death?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bele-ku</td>
<td>Deceive to kill/deceitful death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kpipien</td>
<td>Die and rest /death is a rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-betersuur</td>
<td>Death has no anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-beyangdaa</td>
<td>Death awaits no one not even a week notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-buor</td>
<td>What type of death?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-faa</td>
<td>Bad death/Evil death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-nianaa</td>
<td>Kin of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-gandaa</td>
<td>Death the mighty one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-niaza</td>
<td>Any death is death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-sangniayir</td>
<td>Death have devastated the family/house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu-waabom</td>
<td>What is death?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naalu-kuu</td>
<td>Death as a result of riches/wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nang-kuu</td>
<td>Death as a result of poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naangmen-kuu/Ngmen-kuu</td>
<td>God’s death/divine death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol-kuu</td>
<td>Youthful death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pore-kuu</td>
<td>I have plucked death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yir-kuu</td>
<td>Home or house death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usually Dagaare names have some historical underpinnings or *necromantic appellations*. Most of these names were given as a reflection of the circumstances or a mystery surrounding ones birth or a trace to the family tree. (Ludovic Doggu, informant, 2013).

During one of my research trip (field work), I observed that the Dagara use deeper expression like *buu no be kpi e puone, kuu sa dogee, kuu sa nang*. When asked for the meaning, I was told, that the Dagaaba refer to some forms of occurrences of hardships as more dreadful sufferings, with physical and psychological pain which they likened to death itself and hence, the implication of such expressions.

**4.7 Mourning and Burial Rites**

In my candid opinion, funeral celebrations receive more attention than any other social event. The scale of a funeral judged in terms of the intensity of the mourning, the largeness of attendance and the meticulousness of the formalities, is taken to reflect the respect in which the deceased is held. In celebrating the funeral of a deceased, it is usually in stages. In the first place, the deceased is placed on a chair against the wall, and usually in the original ‘big’ house where the deceased hails from.
The sense of tragedy in the face of death is of course, not necessarily any less in communities with brief funeral rites than in those with extensive ones. The death in old age that is a person who has lived and led a full and productive life is not strictly an occasion for mourning. Today the Dagara would attend the funeral of such a person in white smocks or white cloths, instead of the black or red. This is taken as a mark of the recognition that the person was blessed by God with a full and completed term of life. In similar circumstances, the Dagaaba like the Akans and Yorubas actually speak of celebration characterized by dancing rather than lamentation. The Dagaaba and the Dagara Nandome especially called such dance Bine. The Dagara thought seems to be that when one has had ample time to work out one's destiny, it remains only to go and take one's place among the ancestors.

For the Dagara on the other hand, an individual who dies a minor, the question of joining the ancestors does not arise, and in many places there is not even the pretense of a funeral. Although a minor is recognized to be a human being, entitled, in an even greater degree than an adult, to help, affection, and all due consideration, still such an individual is not regarded as a ‘full’ person and therefore, cannot be a candidate for ancestorhood. Not even death is credited with the power to transform the immaturity of a child into the necessary maturity of an ancestor. Death for that matter, at any stage for the Dagao whether at young or old age, requires a special explanation. In the normal run of things, a person should grow up, raise a family and also help his community in all desirable ways before giving up the ghost. A life cut short, then, is an indication of an interruption of the normal sequence of events. A man, who dies at a good old age of about 80-90 years or above, is believed to have lived his ideal life. The average Dagao cannot still understand why a young man or woman should die while still youthful and useful, full of exuberant
energy. The death of children is regarded as a particularly grievous evil event, and many people give special names to their children to try to ward off the reoccurrence of untimely death. Added to that, non-intelligent matter operates according to regular laws, which, of themselves, cannot account for such departures from normality. Only an intelligent agent or agency can cause such an estopal of the normal flow of affairs as the nipping of a whole life's potential in the bud. This is, in effect, the train of thought which leads the traditional African mind, when there has been a premature death, to inquire whether or not some intelligent agency is the cause of the death.

The absence in the eschatology of many African peoples of a day of judgment together with its inexorable sequel, positive or negative, marks a very significant difference with the Christian variety. The Day of Judgment by definition is an apocalyptic watershed, bringing the end of the temporal phase of cosmic history. Thenceforward, this world is no more. Hence, the question of the relationship of the inhabitants of this world with those of the next does not arise. This life is a preparation for the next, but not only that; it is a waiting for the next. That still is not all; the very meaning of this life consists in the fact that there is a next one. Historically, this point of view has been held quite widely in the Western world, though of course, not universally or always within the confines of orthodox Christianity. The question therefore is: ‘can the African belief in the ancestors and the associated cultural practices survive the impact of foreign cosmologies?’ If such phenomena as religious conversion proceeded in a strictly logical fashion, it might be expected that the belief in question would, for large masses of contemporary Africans, be a thing of the past and that, in consequence, there would be quite radical alterations in their culture. In fact, however, what has often happened has been not alterations but accretions. Christian practices regarding the mourning of the dead, for example, in spite
of presupposing a different system of eschatology, have simply been added to traditional ones, thus compounding the extravagance of the funeral process where that tendency exists and this requires some care and attention so that essential cultural practices are not eroded. This is typical of the general confusion in contemporary African life deriving from the uncritical acceptance of foreign ideas.

The Dagaaba, for example, believe that a life that has meaning is one that makes reasonable achievements in the direction of personal, family, and communal welfare. A life of that sort would be a meaningful one even if there were no belief in an afterlife. Living a full and meaningful life is a condition for becoming an ancestor. They also uphold the belief that a person whose life is cut short by an accident or an `unclean' disease or any other untoward circumstance does not gain immediate access to the country of the dead; he becomes a neighborhood ghost, an occasional source of frightening apparitions, until he can come back to be born again to try to work out a complete life. This, by the way, is the nearest approximation to purgatory.

It is not accidental that in such thought-systems, belief in reincarnation is so definitively circumscribed. The ancestors being so important in the affairs of the living and status being enhanced by longevity, it is useful to have permanent ancestors. Any generalized and continuous turnover of ancestors would obviously detract from that scheme. Note again that this concept of immortality is a pragmatic one; it is immortality for the service of humankind. The land of the dead, then, is not heaven in the Christian sense. The life of the ancestors is pictured as one of dignity and serenity, rather than of bliss. There are, of course, no temptations or tribulations in that life. The one preoccupation of that existence is with the good of the living wing of the family and clan. It is upon their ability to achieve this aim that the importance of the ancestors is predicated. If we look for a
substantially analogous concept of survival after death in Western thought, it is in the theory of the astral body found in the literature of spiritualism. Death here is regarded as the departure of the soul itself, a kind of body, from the physical plane to another plane of existence, namely, the astral. The soul, in contradistinction from the physical body, is of a highly subtle constitution; but it is still basically corporal. It is, moreover, of the form of the body, and although it is generally not visible to the ordinary eyes, 'those who have eyes' can see it and even hold conversations with it.

This gives the departed soul a certain sociability and helpfulness. Thus, it is not unknown for the dead to reveal the whereabouts of lost valuables or to help crime detection with crucial information, according to ‘Dagara spiritualist’ claims. It may be said, accordingly, in terms of ontological status and social relevance the astral survivor is akin to the inhabitant of the land of the dead as spoken of in African eschatology.

What is the cultural significance of this ancestorhood and life after to the Dagaaba? I have already mentioned the role of the ancestors in the enforcement of morals. Morals, broadly construed, cover ethical rules as well as customs and taboos. It is with respect to their relevance to the last two kinds of rules of conduct, rather than the first, that the ancestors have their greatest cultural significance. This is not because their status as guardians of the morality of their living relatives, morality being taken in the narrow sense, is not important, even though often restricted. The reason is twofold. First, in the case of morality, narrowly conceived, the ancestors can only enforce rules whose basis or validity is independent of their own wishes or decisions, whereas customs and taboos are frequently of their own making; and secondly, customs and taboos are more essential to the individuality of a culture than morality.
To take the question of morality (in the narrow sense), first: It is often supposed that in Africa morality is determined by the injunctions of the ancestors and other extra-human powers. This is usually inferred from the very evident influence that beliefs about these beings have upon African conduct. If the word determine is interpreted in a causal, psychological sense, the conclusion follows tautologically from the premises, for the claim then amounts simply to the observation that the thought of the ancestors, as a matter of psychological fact, does actually cause traditional Africans to behave in certain ways. If, however, the alleged determination of morality by the ancestors is taken in a logical sense, the claim is false or, at any rate, not true of all African thought, for at least in the case of the Akans, the justification of moral rules consists solely in considerations concerning the harmonious adjustment of the interests of individuals with that of the community. The will of an ancestor, or a ‘god’ or indeed, of God, may function as an incentive for an action, but never as its justification.

In the past, (50 years ago), mourning could take a week (7 days). In the present dispensation, the period of strict mourning for the Dagaaba will usually continue for two (2) days. Since some kinsmen have to come from distant places, the displaying of the corpse for two (2) days is considered necessary in order to ensure all may see the dead before he or she is buried. During this time the bereaved stays at home. Some wear black clothes and fastened to their clothes, and in some cultural settings of the Dagaaba but for the Lobi and Birifor, some shave their hair, e.g. the widow (including facial hair- e.g. the widower) from the day after the funeral. The significance of shaving the hair symbolizes death, and the hair growing again indicates the strengthening of life according to the Dagaaba elders.
Currently, the traditional Dagara funeral requires two days. Typically in cities such as Kumasi, Accra, etc., the process is condensed into one day (twenty-four hour celebration) lasting mostly from 5 P.M. on Friday, until 5 P.M. the following day. This is designed as a convenient way for the mourners to participate while maintaining their contemporary, urban lifestyle. Despite the shortening of the funeral ceremony, the xylophones (gyile) are still responsible for providing continuous music throughout the twenty-four hour period. The best musicians take particular care in selecting appropriate songs, specific to the funeral. For example, the funeral songs or dirges for a man with a child or children will differ greatly from those of a woman without children. The musicians, typically two xylophone players, one drummer, and in the case of Dagara funerals additional singers, will alternate performing; taking only short breaks to drink, eat, and often encouraging others to play with them.

A number of people cluster around the small xylophone (logyil) which is first played and is later replaced with the big xylophone (Dagara gyil /gyil-kpee.) at the stage when the funeral gets heated and at its peak. The logyil has only 14 notes or slats (beats) as against 18 slats of the Dagara-gyil or gyil-kpee. In brief, a traditional Dagara funeral consisted in the public exposition of the deceased dressed in his or her best clothes, on a raised funeral stand. There was intense mourning and lamentations, and funeral dirges were sung by the catafalque (Paala) to the accompaniment of xylophone music and a gourd-drum.

Formally, before 1970s, the Dagara buried their dead in chamber graves. The significance of the change is that it altered the traditional values attached to the use of the chamber grave. The trench in which only ‘sinners’ and strangers were buried was now used for the burial of
‘normal’ citizens in society. This abolished the distinction formerly made between “sinners” and strangers, on one hand, and ordinary good citizens of a community, on the other. The change therefore, leveled the status of a citizen and that of a ‘sinner’, or a stranger, in society. By the 1970s and 1980s the use of the coffin in burials had become widespread among the Dagara and has become the accepted mode of burial. The Dagara have resorted not only to burying their dead in coffins but use trench graves. To offset the cost of the coffin, sometimes appeals would go to migrant kin to provide the funding that would buy a coffin that is decent and befitting the status of the deceased.

The duration of the funeral (seven (7) days) was therefore intended to give the grave diggers enough time to dig the graves. Some old people will request that they be buried in only a shroud, the traditional way as they believe that would put them close to the earth and able to join the ancestors. They fear to be locked up in a coffin and unable to get out to join the ancestral world. When an elderly person has well-to-do children, such a request might not go well with them because they fear to be ridiculed for not being able, or being too stingy to provide a coffin for their dead. In a reciprocal way, the dead give living relatives a chance to show what they have achieved in life and to show how much they care even if they did not show much care in the life time of the deceased.

Subsequently, the large xylophone – gyil-kpee/Dagara-gyil, is used and ‘militarily’ and they are usually played in pairs continuously day and night for two (2) days. The xylophones are usually played in pairs by a leading player and his accompanist. Despite the variety of genres of Dagara gyil music, certain structural aspects can be considered elements of general practice common to all the main genres. These structural elements
fall into two categories: leading parts and support/reinforcement parts. The songs are the quintessential element of Dagara gyil music. They are the main focus of attention for the audience, and the full expression of the xylophone player as a verbal artist, as it is during song sections that the xylophone melodies are used as a surrogate language. A long succession of them is usually played either as a part of song cycles, or alternated with dance-solos. Songs are always played by the lead player on the xylophone upper register, and they are sometimes very intricately elaborated or varied. The traditional Dagara performers tend to use the word “embellishment” when they refer to the intricate ways in which they recreate the basic song melodies. The way the songs are played and embellished is to some extent dependent on whether there is a second xylophone that provides the support parts, and, in the absence of a second xylophone, how constantly or fragmentarily the lead xylophone player plays the support part. However, when listening to an experienced xylophone player, the division between a support xylophone part and the leading part is not clear, as both are sometimes elaborated according to the same principle, or the xylophone player can fluctuate from one to another. The tones of the big xylophone- Dagara gyil /gyil-kpee will tell whether it is a man or a woman who has passed on. Funeral dirges, lamentations, chant are sung only to the music and tunes of the Dagara gyil.

The Dagara Traditional Xylophone (Dagara gyil)

Newcomers on arrival at the funeral grounds, move into a cleared space and begin to utter their cries, then pause in front of the catafalque (*Paala*), take a close look at the dead person’s face for a few moments, dip their hands into the skin bags or pockets of their smocks for money or cowries to throw at the deceased. The Dagara belief is that the decease will need money on his /her journey to the underworld as he/she may travel across valleys and rivers. Usually, these fresh mourner or otherwise new comers will walk across the front of the catafalque (*Paala*) three or four times, mourning whichever of the funeral greetings is applicable to their relationship with the dead person as exemplified in subsequent pages.

The necessity for recognizing the face of the deceased is an important element because there are a number of people in the neighboring settlements whom one is not sure whether or not one knows, and this doubt can be resolved only by seeing the face of the dead person. It is not just the face of the deceased the mourners or new comers pause to look at, but one has to be convinced by visual evidence that a particular person you know is indeed no longer alive. Once this has been established, the survivor can take steps to re-adjust to the loss. Also, this gesture partakes of the nature of a farewell and puts a formal end to a sequence of communicative acts and physical contacts. The newcomers who have arrived and gathered around the xylophone and begin their lamentations are joined by other earlier mourners to give support especially persons from the same settlement or patrilineage decent. It is only after recognizing the deceased; the newcomers go close to the xylophones and throw more money or cowries to the players.
Should one of the new mourners be accomplished at funerals dirges and chanting, he will begin to chant or sing, or else the task is undertaken by anyone who is well versed in the art. Those who sing the funeral dirges and chant are subsequently rewarded by a share of the money thrown to the musicians and by gifts from the clansmen.

The funeral orchestra consists of a drum (*Gangaa/Kuor*). The drum is made out of a big hollow gourd with a molitor or lizard skin covering a relatively small whole. This drum is used only at the funerals of adults and/or in ceremonial context in which its association with the death is relevant. The *Kuor* uses two principal sounds, a high open tone and a sharp slap. The open tone is created by using only the index finger on the head. Keeping the index fingers relaxed and the remaining fingers somewhat rigid, the player strikes the drum near the edge of the head using the index finger with a whip-like motion. Approximately two-thirds of the finger should come in contact with the drum head, not just the finger tip. If the index finger is relaxed it will bounce off the head quickly, producing a clear tone.

The role of the *Kuor* within the *Gyil* ensemble is slightly elusive to describe as much as it is fascinating. The *Kuor* can significantly enrich the sound of the ensemble but does not cover any vital structural functions. This lack of structural functionality provides the part with a freedom that the main supporting part does not have. Therefore, the role of the *Kuor* is to embellish, delineate, punctuate and reinforce. It links equally with the leading part as well as with the supporting “bell” part. Despite the fact that *Kuor* layers make use of fixed characteristic performance techniques and rhythmic types, the feeling one gets out of the *Kour* part is one of permanent change, surprise and unpredictability.
It delineates certain phrases, empathizes and punctuates structural instances of the music, interacts rhythmically with the “bell” part, emphasizes certain dance-steps, and provides rich textural contrast and rhythmic interest during the less intense segments of the leading xylophone part. In certain areas where Kour are not available, drummers or random participants will play the part with an empty plastic pito container, or anything that can be used as a drum.

**Figure 4.7.1 The Gourd Drum (Dagara kuor)**


The study discovered that the Dagaaba in general display no public grief at the death of an *unweaned child* and especially the Dagara, because it is not yet accorded human status. Indeed if the child dies before been ritually taken out of the house three (3) or four (4) months after birth, not even the parents will mourn in the public openly. The funeral is entirely a domestic affair.
There are various forms of mourning and display of public grief. Here are a few examples of the forms of mourning:

**N Saa woi (Oh! Father!)**

This form of crying signifies, patrilineal descent (*Saa per*) - for any member of the senior generation of one’s own patriclan and sometimes for a member of one’s father’s matriclan.

**N Maa woi, (Oh! Mother!)**

Meaning my mother, matrilineal (*Ma per*) for any wife of a father, or for an elderly member of one’s own matriclan or of one’s mother’s patriclan.

**O woi (Oh! Oh!)**

Is a cry of one who necessarily may not relate to the deceased person but a general sympathizer. It is often a cry of general applicability.

**Gandaa woi (Oh! the Great one!)**

This is the form of mourning with respect to the death of a notably powerful and great person who for instance, was a great hunter, farmer, warrior etc. or for an old man who has lived a full span.

**Naale woi (Oh! my Calf!).**

This type of mourning is associated with an adolescent female and member of the community whose life is cut short in the prime of life particularly of marriage, and which marriage would have benefited the family through exchange cows. (The Dagaaba Dowry System). At the funeral the deceased is referred to in the dirges and wailing as *Naale woi* (Oh! my Calf!). There is no joviality whatever.

It also interesting to note that present day Dagaaba do not relish going to a funeral alone even in present times. This is because on such social events, there are the “bad” ones hovering around like a “lion looking for people to devout or kill mystically”. Therefore,
on occasions that one is easily singled out from among the crowd, makes him or her liable to the attention of others and becomes a target of “African missile” (lobie) and for the attacks of sorcerers and witches.

The mourning is preceded by a gun shut into the open air by one of the members of the group that have arrived at the scene together. An act indicating the presence of a mourner or group of fresh mourners whose relations to the deceased is significant and closest. The symbolic gesture of the gun shot may repeat at any important stage of the ceremony. For this symbolic display of a gun-shut, they are rewarded with gifts of guinea fowls or a fowl or even an animal. In some sense, it is also an act to ward off the ghost of the dead and honouring the dead.

The catafalque (Paala) is a very symbolic feature among the Dagaaba, the significance of which I will soon explain. The mourners will first pay homage to the deceased and throw coins/money offerings to the dead as well as to then proceed directly to the musicians/dirge singers and xylophonists to throw coins. The money thrown at the deceased is believed that the deceased is embarking on a journey to the spirit world and needs money for the said journey for any expenses he/she might have incurred. For the Dagaaba, due to the custom of money-throwing at a corpse, it is impolite to throw money at someone still alive.
The gesture of throwing coins is performed even before the guests greet the family of the deceased, therefore stating the importance of the music to the ceremony. The musicians will divide the money evenly among themselves during short breaks. The money is not considered as payment, but more of a compliment and certainly bears some relation to the skill of the player; not all are so amply rewarded for their pains. The musicians perform at the funeral ceremony, not for the money but because it is seen as their obligation to the greater community.

In a rare circumstance where there are not enough musicians for a funeral, others will come from neighboring communities to participate, in the case of Dagarateng, but in a city the size of Kumasi or Accra, there is usually an abundance of respected musicians.

Research conducted by the researcher at funerals and particularly about the catafalque (Paala) suggests the following observations:

| - The persuasive effect of the epideictic experience e.g. height of the Paala |
| - The adornment around the Paala and on the dead body, |
| - The attendance at the funeral (who attended, who did not attend, and who is still expected to attend the funeral). |
| - The level of preparations and attention given to people at the funeral. |
| - The expensive nature of the funeral etc. |
Kuukure [1985], explained that the catafalque (*Paala*) is the site of public invitation and space for the ritual of grief, mourning and consolation and offer a fitting fare well to the deceased as he or she journeys to the land of the ancestors. First, before exposing the corpse, they dress it according to gender. Secondly, the body is seated in state for mourning either at the family head’s house, the father’s house or the deceased’s own house. Usually, they do this on Fridays and Saturdays.
To seat an adult person in state, they make a catafalque (Paala). They place an armchair in a hut or in a prepared room where the corpse is exposed in a seated position so that anyone can have a momentary look. This is very much like filling pass. If they have a coffin, they open the coffin and let everyone see.

The symbolism of the catafalque (Paala) is so important in the Dagaaba/Dagara culture because they believe that the joys and sorrows of one person or family are the joys and sorrows of everyone in the community, hence the public invitation signaled by the catafalque. It is an essential element of the Dagaaba funeral ritual and plays a significant function in the process of grief and consolation. Death disrupts the harmony of a community and calls on every member of the community to attend and assist.

Malidona [1993], rightly emphasized that the minimum a person can do to show respect for the dead and sympathy for the deceased family is to show up at the funeral ground, (Paala per), even if for just a short time. The space created by the Paala, gives people the opportunity to grief publicly. In and around the Paala, one observes an entire display in microcosm of Dagara life, belief system and cultural values. Paala is thus, a transitional abode of the deceased that offers the living the opportunity to mourn, celebrate the life of the deceased. Notably, between the catafalque and the people, there is a space, where every motion is permitted – mourning, dancing, singing, running etc. Malidona [1993], pointed out specifically that, „Grief” is the food for the psyche and the catafalque Paala sets the stage for the people to express their grief and console one another.

The direction of the catafalque (Paala) shows whether the deceased is a man or woman. If the front of the Paala faces east, it shows that the deceased is a man, but if it points to the west, then the deceased is a woman; same with the laying of the corpse in the grave.
and I shall elaborate on the symbolism of these gestures later in my work. Catafalque is a place where mourners gather for the final parting ceremony. The ceremony of the dead affirms the values of the society, which include; honour, courage, honesty, hard work, belief in life after death which are upheld by Dagaaba and these find expression in the symbolism and ritualistic manner of the celebration in and around the Paala. Another significant event is the Dagara kuor bine which is a complex traditional funeral music and dance of the Dagara, performed usually around the catafalque Paala. It is a taboo to erect the said stand under a tree. It must be an open-space. Meanwhile, any particular tree can be used to erect the stand (Gaa-daa yo nu kyiir, u na e tengan daa. O be bare tenge, bele waba a tengan daa-a, lugfu na be lug).

Figure 4.7.3 The Traditional Dagara Funeral Performance: Dirge Singers (langkonbe) Source: http://www.bangthebore.org/wp/

According to Paul Naah Yemeh [2008], the Dagaaba dirge can be said to be the culminating point of Dagaaba culture. It embraces their philosophy, drama, music, history, education, and socialization process. Indeed, the funeral scene is a re-enactment of the totality of the peoples' way of life – a mirror on the Dagaaba society. In short the
Dagaaba dirge is their culture preserved in its cyst form. However, modern formal education and subsequent technological developments, money economy, and rural-urban migration as well as the upsurge of forces which are hostile to Dagaaba traditions, particularly, Islam and other religious sects, seem to threaten the existence of the Dagaaba dirge, hence, the need to put it on record. The special features and characteristics of the Dagaaba language are also reflected in the dirges.

There are some classifications of the dirges some of which the researcher will like to mention. These dirges may vary but basically portray some cultural values and essence, ranging from:

- The Dirge on the Occasion of the death of a Chief
- The Dirge on the Occasion of the death of a Man
- The Dirge on the Occasion of the death of a Woman
- The Dirge on the Occasion of the death of an adolescent
- Insult and Praise Dirges etc.

All the above dirges in Dagara are done within the funeral context in and around the Paala, which is the funeral stand where the decease is laid on high.

**Figure 4.7.4 Dagara Funeral Dance – Women only (Kuor binε)**

**Source:** [http://www.bangthebore.org/wp/](http://www.bangthebore.org/wp/)
This is a symbolic dance and characteristically typical of Dagara funerals that cannot escape mention. It is a cultural performance (dance), whereby mourners may at times break into a 'violent' dance to the rhythm of the music. Mourners who are of the same sex jump up and join in a line and if they are men, will hold up bow or sticks in their right hands as they dance. It is important to note that among the Dagara, the closer the kinship tie with the bereaved, the greater the obligation to participate in the dance. The people dance towards the corpse, then break off and retire to their sitting places.

From my findings, there are many reasons assigned to such a symbolic gesture and dance (Kuor bine) namely:

1. As a sign of great respect for the deceased, usually to an elderly person.
2. The Kuor bine dance is a symbol and means of disassociating the living from the activities they may have performed with the deceased during his/her life times, an aspect of mimetic act especially those of the clan.
3. It is a formalization dance to express inordinate grief.

Another element of significance and worthy of note is a presentation of fowls by best friends of the deceased. There is an institutionalized means of recognition as a friend to the deceased among the Dagara, been set within the framework of lineage ties. For instance, among the Dagara, whatever the age of the dead person, the best friend will present a ‘best friend’s fowl’. Nevertheless, in all cases, the fowl is accepted by one of the deceased’s close agnates.

The "home bringing" rite is a common African ceremony. A practice that seems to be disappearing in African urban areas is the home-bringing ritual, although it is still observed in some parts of Africa especially among the Dagaaba, it was only when a
deceased person's surviving relatives have gone, and there is no one left to remember him or her, can the person be said to have really died. At that point the deceased passes into the graveyard of time or of eternity, losing individuality and becoming one of the unknown multitudes of immortals.

Laurenti Magesa [1997] noted that the performance of funeral rites simultaneously mourns for the dead and celebrates life in all its abundance. Funerals are a time for the people to be in solidarity and to regain their identity. The Lobi, Birifor and the Dagaaba have some basic dissimilarity in their ways of funeral performances. One distinctive feature among the Lobi and Birifor in their funeral celebration calls for dancing and merriment even among the immediate family members, whether a child or adult who has died. The opposite is true with Dagara, where only such dancing and merry-making is allowed only when the deceased is far advanced in age. After the funeral the people are invited to the deceased's home for the funeral meal and drinks, usually Pito and now beer and soft drinks.

The things belonging to the deceased should not be used at this time, such as the eating utensils for a deceased woman, bow and arrow for deceased men and the chairs and possessions the deceased used. Blankets and anything else in contact with the deceased are all washed. The clothes of the deceased are wrapped up in a bundle and put away for a year or until the extended period of mourning has ended, after which they are distributed to family members or destroyed by burning some of them as is still the practice today. The time of the cleansing is usually forty (40) days after the funeral, but some observe a month or even longer. The house and the family must be cleansed from bad luck, from uncleanness and "darkness." The bereaved family members are washed and a ritual killing takes place. Marthinus Daneel [1974], describes the cleansing
ceremony in some Zimbabwean churches, where the living believers escort the spirit of the deceased relatives to heaven through their prayers, after which a mediating role can be attained.

The emphasis is on the transformation of the traditional rite, while providing for the consolation of the bereaved family. This example shows how these churches try to eliminate an old practice without neglecting the traditionally conceived need that it has served. This is not different in Ghana, and more so among the Dagaaba of the northwest. Dagara funerals are a community affair in which the whole community feels the grief of the bereaved and shares in it.

A funeral, is pre-eminently a community affair in which the church is but one of many players. The church however, does not always determine the form of the funeral.

Some of the indigenous rites have indeed been transformed and given Christian meanings, e.g. prayer offerings, church service or mass before burial, to which both Christians and those with traditional orientation can relate. Sometimes there are signs of confrontation and the changing and discontinuance of old customs to such an extent that they are no longer recognizable in that context. The purpose of the activities preceding the funeral is to comfort, encourage, and heal those who are hurt. Thereafter, the churches see to it that the bereaved make the transition back to normal life as smoothly and as quickly as possible. This transition during the mourning period is sometimes accompanied by cleansing rituals by which the bereaved are assured of their acceptance and protection by God. The dominance of Christianity and Islam in Africa has resulted in the rejection of certain mourning customs e.g. where the funeral becomes an opportunity to declare faith.
Many Dagara burial rites begin with the sending away of the departed with a request that they do not bring trouble to the living, and they end with a plea for the strengthening of life on the earth and all that favors it. Family members and sympathizers usually will wear black clothing or black cloths but these days “anything goes”. Widows are expected to mourn for a year and children who have suffered the loss of a parental care expected to mourn for three months.

4.8 The Grave and Burial of the Dead

The speeches during the funeral move rapidly towards the actual burial. This is followed by three (3) or four (4) repeated chants, for deceased male or female respectively, and such chants are called “solemn praise” (kowel-gyil) led by one elder of the clan in the words rhyming such as:

A bara ye-ee!

This means, all is now finished or ended. At this moment all concerned sympathizers and especially the men gather around the xylophone amidst chanting of befitting farewell to the deceased, after which the xylophones are turned downwards. At this juncture, mourners must let go the mourning and allow the deceased to travel to the next world (abode) i.e. the unseen world of the spirits. Again, as Goody (1962) puts it, the mourning at this instance is taken up in a „heart- rendering fashion” by all those standing around. The xylophone is played in a particular phrase and rhythm and at a signal, The grave diggers or undertakers, go up the Paala to take and place the dead body in the Coffin for families that can afford a Coffin, and take it away to bury amidst loud cry and wailing, mostly the women, signifying that all is indeed finished while the men chant loudly around the xylophone.
Young people are responsible for the digging of the grave. They also perform burials in the presence of some elders. At this critical stage, the surviving spouse and relatives are held in check and firm by funeral companions to avoid a possible collapse of any of the deceased relatives. Some are prevented to go to the grave yard.

During burial, the family and relatives stand on one side of the graveside and everyone else on the other side. The deceased is buried with some vital belongings, properly dressed in customary cloths, because it is a taboo to bury him/her naked. After the burial, mourners may return to the family home. Many people follow a cleansing ritual at the gate of the house, where everyone must wash off the dust of the graveyard before entering the house. At the gate of the home, mourners are expected to wipe the graveyard dust from their feet to remove bad luck. Burial among the Dagaaba is done towards evening or at dawn, for they believe that when the sun is shining directly into the tomb, a strange soul may deliberately or accidentally enter the tomb. Secondly, it is to avoid the hot sand to immediately dawn on the corpse in addition to the heat underneath.

Some four decades ago, the Dagara, had multiple types of graves. They later advanced to the use of two (2) main modes of disposing the dead and in both situations without Coffin. The first, is building a mound (bog-sule) i.e. a mass of piled-up earth, similar to the Birifor and in a local cemetery. The second is burial in a trench grave (bog-wera).

Today, and with modernity and technology, the graves are designed to accommodate various shades of sophisticated Coffins that will easily slide into the grave. What is however common and similar now and in time past, is that, all graves are normally inspected by a senior mourner or a lineage elder.
The Dagaaba sometimes choose a particular spot around the compound of the house and dig the grave there especially for the founding elder of the extended family unit. When the grave is ready they will bury the elder right there, whereas for some people, for various reasons, they take the mortal remains to the cemetery and they bury them there. For the Dagara, the colour red is forbidden to be buried with the deceased in the grave. It is believed that the dead does not delight to depart in red to the underworld because of the dangers associated with it. (Kiu bu-suuri kyiru ni buzie).

Rattray, [1932] alluded to the fact that, the corpse is laid especially, on his right side, in sleeping position with one hand under the cheek and the other folded across the chest and facing east in the case of a male. This for the Dagaaba/Dagara is done so that the rising sun will remind him to prepare for his hunting expedition or go to the farm. It is the same direction to the east that the body will face at the time when it was placed on the stand. A woman rests on her left side, facing west, so that the setting sun will prompt her when to prepare the meal for her husband’s homecoming. It is the same direction to the west that the body will face at the time when it was placed on the stand. After burial the post of the stand (Paala) is left in the same position to stay for three days before it is dismantled finally, symbolically showing that the person is indeed no more and has gone to the spirit world. Burial may take place in a courtyard of the compound, graveyard or cemetery. Any one so ‘trained’ can bury, which implies that, it is in the domain of only those ‘trained’, who can bury but for an orphan who dies, and who did not have anyone to take care of him or her in his or her life time, can be buried by any adult. (Bi-gbaan, be ter uu-ne). He/she is buried with the face up, the body is never buried with the face facing the ground, and otherwise the mother of the deceased e.g. orphan, (Bi-gbaan), will not be able to give birth any more.
From the above, we noted how male and female were associated with the number 3 and 4 respectively, while here they are linked with east and west with the rising and setting of the sun. These points to the ‘asymmetric duality’ of the sexes, of odd and even, and of the right and left hands are often connected with one another in man’s picture of the world, and at the same time the terms in each pair are allotted different moral values.

Hertz, [1960] sees the distinction that relates to man’s body, together with those applied to special orientation, as having their origin not in facts of physical order but in the opposition of the sacred and the profane; they form part of “the dualism which is inherent in the primitive thought” One aspect of this so-called “primitive dualism” is simply the fact that in conceptualizing ‘A’, one implies ‘non-A’, in other words, ‘B’. That the Dagaaba link such opposites together in networks of association is only to be expected. It should be kept in mind that most associations of this kind are contextual as Evans Pritchard (1937), has insisted in his analysis of Neur symbolism.

One could extend the Dagaaba dichotomy between male and female categories somewhat further than what is done in this work. On the other hand, there is no indication that the Dagaaba make any general association between the earth and either the number 3 or 4, or the direction of east and west. Yet, is also clear that, the sky or rain are masculine and the Earth is feminine in its procreative aspect, and it is linked not only to the planting carried out by women, but also the preparation of the field, the tending of the growing plants, the harvesting of the grain, of which are in the hands of men. This does seems to me more empirically and contextually based than is factual. When all is finished; the tomb is closed and covered with a stone or a flap. This symbolism or metaphor of closure implies finality and is indicative of the weight placed upon the deceased relatives. Sometime
later, the grave is plastered, the top, with mixtures of cow dung and swish by the women of that particular household. In the event of grave plastering some communities will turn it into a ceremony of dancing and merriment (inclusive of the immediate family), particularly when the person is far advanced in age, e.g. 80+, thus limiting or even denying the destructive powers of death and providing the deceased with "light feet" for the journey to the other world. The Dagaaba customs are frequently held to be justified simply on account of having been laid down by their ancestors long ago. Even here it is pertinent to note that the rules concerned are supposed to have been laid down by the ancestors while they lived, so that their interest in them after death is only a continuation of pre-mortem concerns. On the face of it, a taboo is an arbitrary prohibition based on the will of some non-human power and backed by threats of unusual consequences. In fact, on deeper scrutiny, such rules may be found not to be without some rhyme or even reason. The reason for a custom or taboo is always pragmatic.

A pragmatic reason is one which may justify a practice without making it universally obligatory. Moral reasons, by contrast, are universal. It is because of this universality that moral rules cannot figure in the differentiation of a culture, for morality is too essential to human culture to vary from culture to culture. Some things do vary from culture to culture, and custom is certainly one such thing that can vary a lot. The Dagara for instance, look at the matter of ancestor in their culture, customs and taboos as important to the individuation of the person and the community at large. Besides the general relevance of the ancestors to custom and taboo, there are in many African societies elaborate and protracted customs relating to the process by which a person becomes an ancestor. Death ‘unfortunately’, is the first necessary condition for ancestorhood for the Dagaaba. When that event happens, people feel an obligation to give the deceased a
fitting send-off to the land of the ancestors. This involves both spontaneous and formalized mourning and various funeral ceremonies.

The Dagaaba population of Ghana, for example, is extremely brisk in their manner of sending off the dead to their new home, while the Akans, among others, devote major effort and time to that procedure. The Yorubas, of Nigeria are even more famous for their lavishness of attention and expense in this respect, and I have heard it said that the Luo of Kenya are not far behind. Among people of such an orientation, funerals are among the most important and visible observances in cultural life. Since, people keep on dying, they are, perhaps, the most continual. [Kwesi Wiredu 1997].

For the dagaaba, death is not the total annihilation. For when a man dies, he is transformed into a ghost and then to an ancestor, living in the land of the dead- a place of abundance, where one only needs to think of what one wants and one has it. Death is final for the Dagao and even in African religions, it is one of the last transitional stages of life requiring passage rites, and this too takes a long time to complete. If the correct funeral rites are not observed, the deceased may come back to trouble the living relatives. Some personal belongings may be buried with the deceased to assist in the journey. Some kill an ox at the burial to accompany the deceased. Others kill another animal sometime after the funeral (3 months to 2 years). Death for them is liberation of man from his earthly clutches to his survival and rest. When a man is full of age on earth according to elders, he is gathered onto his ancestors. Not all men enjoy this ancestor’s status. This depends on the way one lives his moral life. One who has lived a terrible life confined to hell-fire (Dazugovuu). It is also a widespread belief that witches and sorcerers are not admitted to the spirit world, and therefore, they are refused proper burial and in the past
or pre-colonial days sometimes their bodies were subjected to actions that would make such burial impossible, such as burning, chopping up, and feeding them to hyenas. This is no longer the practice today.

Many people believe that death is the loss of a soul, or souls and that there is recognition of the difference between the physical person that is buried and the non-physical person who lives i.e. the soul (Sie). This must not be confused with a Western dualism that separates "physical" from "spiritual." For the Dagaaba, according to the elders, when a person dies, there is not some "part" of that person that lives on, it is the whole person who continues to live in the spirit world, receiving a new body identical to the earthly body, but with enhanced powers to move about as an ancestor. The death of children is regarded as a particularly grievous evil event, and many peoples give special names to their children to try to ward off the reoccurrence of untimely death. This youthful death is a source of worry as they die early and with all the youthful energies and exuberance.

The Dagaaba therefore, have many different ideas about the "place" the departed go to, a "land" which in most cases seems to be a replica of this world. For some it is under the earth, in groves, near the homes of earthly families, or by the river side. In most cases, it is an extension of what is known at present, although for some peoples it is a much better place without pain or hunger. However, Mbiti [1969] writes that a belief in the continuation of life after death for African peoples "does not constitute a hope for a future and better life. To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. Even life in the hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter."
Njoku’s [2002], first point in the concept of life is that God is the source of life. It follows logically that God who created life, also takes it through death when the time is up. This section mainly involves a critical consideration of the general picture of the African concept of death namely; the fact that death is a creation of God made for the purpose of removing people from the world when their time is up. The problem with this view is that it does not explain whether it is God who causes premature and undesirable deaths such as those caused by suicide, violence, accidents and drowning. Moreover, will God deliberately inflict such pains and sorrows that death often brings when God is seen as a loving father?

The second point which holds that death happens gradually between the time of one’s physical departure from the earth and the time when the last person who knew him physically dies off makes it to be a lengthy and cumbersome process. It is very hard to determine who is fully dead and who is still in the process of dying. It is even harder to find out the last person who knew a dead person and the time he also dies.

The third point that states that death is a transition which involves a transformation from the physical into the spiritual, as the dead continue to live as ancestors, is based on beliefs and subjective perceptions like dreams, visions and hallucinations which cannot be independently or scientifically verified. Nevertheless, despite the arguments to the contrary, there appears to be no other plausible account for the origin of death apart from God. It is also not safe or wise to completely reject Mbiti’s views of the gradual process of death, because the one, who still lives in the minds of people and affects their lives, cannot be rightly said to be dead. Moreover, the view that death is a transition and transformation from the physical into spiritual realm, even though it cannot be verified in anyway, yet, it cannot be proved to be untrue.
On the hand, many Africans have reasons to believe that the concept of death is true, and this affects and influences their lives positively.

Mbiti [1980], sees death as a process, which removes a person gradually from the time of physical existence on earth and the period after death within which the departed is remembered by relatives and friends who knew him. An analysis of the above views gives a true reflection that there is the inevitability of death. Also, that death removes people from the world after a specific time is a fact. (Others die prematurely, within some days, a few months or years and yet other may live longer). The belief that death is not the end of life, but a transition from this world to the land of the spirits is the generally acceptable in African Traditional Religion continue to be relevant to people in Africa.

Magesa [1997] claims that “African religious perspectives persist despite the odds against them, and they serve a positive purpose”. Those beliefs find their concrete manifestation in a variety of practices that are to be found among various tribes. In order to appreciate the value of African culture, one has to be aware that “religion and religious beliefs and their effects on the African community are the key to understanding the African world and ideology” (Onwubiko, 1991).

It could be argued that some of those beliefs are of predominant importance. Without those main beliefs, African tradition would not present itself as a comprehensive set of rules to be followed. Other beliefs could be considered of lesser importance and would not constitute the core of the phenomenon called “African Traditional Religion”
Suffice it to say that, these days, the death rituals in Africa in general not only among the Dagaaba, are changing, since the introduction of Christianity and Islam. Many elements of the Christian faith can be seen in the evolution of the rituals. Ritual slaying of animals and talking with the dead are seen less frequently in modern times. Many communities are hanging onto their traditions as a way to preserve their culture and especially the Dagaaba. Churches are seen as a player, not as an overseer, in the funeral rite in these times.

4.9 The Hereafter: Preliminary Findings

4.9.1 What is Life Hereafter?

The term hereafter is also referred to as life after death, the afterlife, the Next World, or the other side. The hereafter is the belief that a part of, or essence of, or soul of an individual, which carries with it and confers personal identity, survives the death of the body of this world and this lifetime, by natural or supernatural means, in contrast to the belief in eternal oblivion after death. This continued existence often takes place in a spiritual realm, and in other popular views, the individual may be reborn into this world and begin the life cycle over again, likely with no memory of what they have done in the past. (Mbiti 1975). In this latter view, such rebirths and deaths may take place over and over again continuously until the individual gains entry to a spiritual realm. Major views on the afterlife derive from religion, esotericism and metaphysics. Many Africans believe that the dead go to the land of the spirits or ancestors which is underground. However, some do not visualize any physical or geographical separation between the physical and spiritual world as they believe that the dead simply arrives there in his spirit form (Mbiti 1975).
Gehman [1989] describes life after death in terms of similarities with this life. He added that, wherever the dead are, their abode is modeled after the pattern of the living. There is no division of the dead on the basis of character. Apart from witches and outcasts, all the living-dead, good and bad, live together in the world of spirits. Their character is much the same as in this life, partaking of jealousies and offended feelings like the living. A typical form of differentiation characterized by the nature and the operations of some physical beings i.e. witches and outcast.

It must however, be pointed out that Dagaaba belief in the afterlife, is demonstrated in their relationships between the living and the dead, because the dead are not cut off from the living, for they may reveal themselves in dreams or appear to their living relations to give instructions, warnings or information. They may summon living relatives to appear before them to explain their misconduct, and may punish them. If a person is a wizard, murderer, thief, one who has broken the community code or taboos, or one who had an unnatural death or an improper burial, then such a person may be doomed to punishment in the afterlife as a wandering ghost, and may be expelled by the ancestors or subjected to a period of torture according to the seriousness of their misdeeds.

Kwesi Wiredu [1997] in his narration on death and the afterlife in African (thought) culture, he emphasized that “there is a mildly paradoxical unanimity in African studies about the African belief in, and attitude toward, the afterlife. It is universally noted, on the one hand, that Africans generally believe that bodily death is not the end of life, but only the inauguration of life in another form.” The crucial conceptual issue concerns the nature of the after-world. In what way is it called another world? Not all Africans are familiar about death and the afterlife, but wherever there are any intimations at all of
what life in the land of the dead is like, the similarities between that form of life and the earthly one are striking. The similarities are indeed so striking that the characterization of this life as „earthly” in contrast to the „afterlife” is already metaphysically inappropriate.

However, among the Dagaaba for example, where people are excessively reticent about eschatology, descriptions of the afterlife generally include explicit indications that the transition from this life to the next is by land travel; and of course, if you travel from one part of the earth by land, you can only arrive at another part of the earth. Nevertheless, some traditional African boundaries are also marked by rivers. Therefore, the high point of the ‘post-mortem journey’ is the crossing of a river. Now, having crossed the river, the deceased enters the land of the departed and joins the society of the ancestors, a society which replicates the political order of ‘post-mortem society’ to the extent that rulers in the one retain their status in the other.

It would be interesting and relevant not to speculate, but as a statement of truth that, the whole point of going on the „last journey” is to become one of the ancestors. Now, the significance of the ancestors consists simply in the Dagaaba strong belief that, they watch over the affairs of the living members of their families, helping and giving protection but punishing the delinquent in their race or descent. If an ancestor is a ruler, the scope of his activities goes beyond his own family to the whole of his town or kingdom. In a nutshell, ancestors are there to see to the good of the living. There is, of course, a reciprocal side to this. Reciprocity is a strong feature of the Dagaaba society; it is, in fact, a feature of any moral community. Accordingly, the living feels not only beholden to the ancestors for their help and protection, but also positively obliged to do honour to them and render service to them as appropriate.
How is honour done to the ancestors? There are several ways to this end but basically, two can be stated here for the purpose of this dissertation, namely, one general, and the other particular. In the first instance you simply need to live uprightly. To every family, living your life uprightly is a source of honour to one's family, and one's ancestors constitute an integral part of one's family. On the other hand, indecent conduct, unjustified sadistic brutalities, ultimately brings disgrace to the living family and displeasure to the ancestors. The ancestors, in their post-mortem condition, are credited with veritable moral perfection and are therefore, not accessible to disgrace, but just because of their elevated moral status they are thought to be even more scandalized by wrong doing than the living elders of the family.

Doing wrong with regards to trifling with the moral law, falling foul of civil regulations or of the customs and taboos of the community and failing to take good care of family affairs is a moral responsibility. For instance, the Dagaaba (or nearly all cultures) belief that a departed member of the family if he/she has left his successor adequate resources, investments, landed property to be taken care of and use them for the good of the family, and such a person executes this duty well, it is honour done to the dead. It may also be some debts he/she has left unpaid, and if the deceased should settle the said debts, it is honour done to him or her. There may be dependents to be taken care of, or specific instructions may have been given during the person’s life time for certain things to be done, and any successor is obliged to carry them out and for the care, reputation and good of the family.

Since these matters imply definite duties, thus, non-performance on the part of Dagaao may elicit punishment from an ancestor, which usually takes the form of illnesses. These are, incidentally, the form of lapses and bad conduct that the ancestors may punish. There
are other sources of sanctions on wrongful attitude by default successors. Interestingly, the Dagaaba also believe that a form of libation and /or modest servings of food in the right place overnight from time to time, seem to be all that is required and the ancestors will be appeased. Nevertheless, such acts, especially the libation, is the last consequence, for it is through them that the living communicates their assurances of respect to the ancestors and solicit their timely assistance in connection with specific enterprises.

This is to maintain the purity of the on-going relationship with the departed. Thus, the ancestors must be conceived of having a psycho-physical constitution, namely, that they have an analogue, since they are supposed to exercise the function of “assessing” the conduct of their relatives and apportioning curses or blessings as the case may require.

From all of this, it emerges not only that the land of the dead is, geographically, not altogether dissimilar to our own but also that its population is rather like us [Kwesi Wiredu, 1997]. Even so sketchy a characterization of the second basic constituent of a person in the West African conception should make it clear that it would be a substantial oversimplification to describe it as ‘spiritual’ in the sense of the word which implies total immateriality. There is in the conception under discussion only a reduced materiality, and the reduction affects not its imagery, but its dynamics. Since at death it is this quasi-material entity which departs to the world of the dead, it is natural that talk of the afterlife should be replete with a thin-worldly imagery. This remark is applicable to the thought not only of the peoples of West Africa but also of many other Africans.

If mindful of all the foregoing, we now return to the question: in what sense is the African world termed another world? The answer must be that it is in no sense another world, but rather a part of this world, albeit a conceptually problematic part. The problem
is that the attenuations of the materiality of the place of the dead and its residents seem to
leave us with a material imagery without a solid anchorage. Nevertheless, this imagery
has been marvelously efficacious in motivating conceptions of the cultural unity of the
living with the dead in the thought of many Dagaaba people.

Given this conceptual framework, it becomes intelligible how this life can be seen as a
preparation for an afterlife whose whole significance nevertheless consists in securing the
welfare of the living. It follows, by an obvious transitivity that in this way of thinking
whatever the meaning of life is, it is to be defined in terms of the circumstances of this
life.

4.9.2 Reincarnation and Transmigration (Liewaa)

The Dagaaba profess a belief in an afterlife called a peaceful place where the souls of the
newly dead are sent. Here, souls rest, recuperate from life, and reflect on the experiences
they had during their lives. After a period of rest, the souls are reincarnated, and the
memory of their previous lives is erased. For them also the world is a light, warm, and
living place to which the dead are only too glad to return from the darkness and coldness
of the grave. The Dagaaba belief in reincarnation differ from those of major Asian
religions (especially Hinduism), the idea that, Asians view reincarnation as something to
be feared and avoided. The dead return to their communities, except for those unfortunate
ones previously mentioned, and there are no limits set to the number of possible
reincarnations - an ancestor may be reincarnated in more than one person at a time. It is
important for the Dagaaba to discover which ancestor is reborn in a child, particularly
when a child behaves and shows signs of previous ancestor for which a reason they will
express their thankfulness for the reincarnation. The destiny of a community is fulfilled through both successive and simultaneous multiple reincarnations. Thus, reincarnation refers to the soul of a dead person being reborn in the body of another. There is a close relationship between birth and death. In reincarnation, spiritual development continues after death as the deceased begins another earthly life in the physical world, acquiring a superior grade of consciousness and altruism by means of successive reincarnations. This succession leads toward an eventual liberation.

Transmigration (also called metapsychosis) denotes the changing of a person into an animal. The Dagaaba relates transmigration to a witch or sorcerer who is believed to be able to transform into an animal in order to perform evil deeds. It is their belief that people may inhabit particular animals after death. They however, do not agree to other people believing the dead will reappear in the form of the totem animal of that ethnic group, and these totems are revered (such as monkeys, lizards, lions, leopards, or crocodiles etc.).

4.10 The Dagaaba Beliefs System.

4.11 God, Deities and Man

The Dagaaba believe in God, Divinities/Deities, Ancestors, Spirit Beings, Beings of the Wild, Earth Shrine/Ancestral Cult, Witchcraft/Seers, Magic and Medicine and Totems in this order of arrangement. Their belief system and traditions have greatly influence their way of behaviour and informed by their philosophy with respect to concept of death and the hereafter.
Mr. Ludovic Tengan Doggu, (July 2012), one of my main informants, and retired catechist emphasized that, the various elements in the structure or the hierarchy are intrinsically inter-related because the world is under a unitary control. The other elements supporting the structure, links man with God, divinities and the ancestors. He added that, the Earth Shrines are the Bag-ngmeme, the Deities/Divinities are the Ngmeme, the Ferries are the Kontome, but Naangmen also recently spelled as Naamwin, is the supreme God.

4.12 God (Naangmen/Naamwin)

The Dagaaba make no dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. Life is seen as a totality and everything is seen from a religious perspective. Thus, in anthropomorphic terms, the Dagaaba speak of God as the all-wise person [Bekye 1991: 172]. Similarly, Porekuu [2001: 25] states, “this Supreme Being is called Naagmen/Naanwin and is very recurrent in the Bagre recitation. God is mythologically represented as the „old and wise person.”

In fact before the advent of Christianity, the Dagaaba conceived the universe as the product of a Supreme Being, who created everything that exists. Coming from a Supreme Being, the universe is a dynamic and complex whole. It is populated by a hierarchy of beings, life-forces that are either visibly or invisibly interrelated or interdependent. It is often difficult to classify beings into distinct categories. The material orders and the spiritual order of being constitute two sides of the same reality. For every Dagao, God is a creator, a maker, like a porter and determiner of destiny. He is a king, holy and immortal and is worshipped through the divinities and the ancestors.
They believe that this creator- who is life itself, is *Naangmen/Naanwin* (God), *Ire* (Creator), *Sore* (owner), *Dangne* (Lord). Added to that the notion *Ir* that is, to create, implies that, God has inexhaustible stock of things from which he freely selects and calls them into existence. The Dagaaba further believe that, even if God creates things from already determined realities, these latter must have their cause in God and could have only been directly created out of nothing. The Dagaaba affirm that life finds it source in that which is life itself, the author of life. There can be, therefore, no doubt that God gives existence to everything that is, but the human being is pre-immanent where the creator’s and life given action comes to culmination. In fact, the whole of creation is made for the human being. Finally, God and ancestors play a crucial place in funeral and burial rites as well as initiation rituals centred on life as a gift of God.

### 4.13 Divinities/Deities (*Ngmeme*)

McCoy (1988) states that before the introduction of Christianity among the Dagaaba by the Catholic missionaries, specifically in Jirapa in 1929, deity or spirits appeared to help some people in need. They were seen as the supernatural helper for whom anything is possible. Before the era of Christendom in Dagao, the typical traditional homes in the context of Dagaaba traditional religion, God though perceived as a supreme deity, was seen to be too remote to intervene directly in human affairs, either in life or death, hence, the belief in the deity, spirit beings, the being of the wild, ancestor and shrines. The divinities stand next in relationship to God in the hierarchy of powers. The divinities are believed to be children or sons of God brought into being in the divine order of the universe. They are primordial, nature spirits or deified ancestors and functions as intermediaries between the living and the traditional gods and are guardians of morality.
The native Dagao believes that they have their temporal dwellings in objects in nature like rivers, lakes, lagoons, trees, forests, groves, streams, mountains and hills like that of the hill side of Nandom-Ko namely, the Yesu Tang which was a typical hillside of shrines dwelling of divinities for diviners – Baghuurbe (plural). Diviners in the exercise of divination, is all about finding out the unknown or hidden secrets through the medium of oracles and divination objects like among the Dagaaba by the use of cowries (Libipula).

The diviners seek to interpret and explain the mysteries of life, convey the message of the gods, divinities, ancestors and other spirits. Diviners offer guidance and counseling as well as settlements of disputes among the Dagaaba. They also find out the cause(s) of diseases and misfortunes and offer solutions to various physical and spiritual problems as part of their roles. Thus, for the Dagao, a diviner is not necessarily a priest serving through a shrine. He often has his own shrine. These shrines are very common in Gengengkpe and Kuselle as well as Lawra and its environs.

4.14 Spirit Beings (Gyakpime)

After the divinities, come the spirit beings. The Spirit Beings are sometimes confused with deities/ divinities by other people, but the Dagara believe that they are usually those that consist of both the good and the bad ones, namely the ghosts (Gyakpime) and the witches (Sobr). Their business is very much nocturnal and they operate usually at night or at dawn. They look more like a shadow (Doosule).
4.15 Being of the Wild (*Kontome*)

Mention must be made of the *Kontome* - „beings of the wild” as a major source of wisdom. The term *Kontome* refers to the variety of imaginary beings, including other human or similar beings, which influence human thought in various ways. As such they can be located anywhere and they can take any form - humans, midgets, spirits, dwarfs, beings of the wild, etc. In the traditional Dagaaba society, many of the sophisticated inventions and practices are attributed to the *Kontome*.

According to Goody (1962:146), the *Kontom-bili* (plural) are described as dwarfs, living in particular trees in the forest (*Ficus gnaphalocarpus*) and thought to have magical powers, or even be descendants of the first humans. The *Kontome* are believed to be bearded dwarf-like creatures with human appearance. They are also believed to have descended from God and are his children and messengers. Mention must be made of the *Kontome* – “beings of the wild” as a major source of wisdom. In the traditional Dagaaba society, many of the sophisticated inventions and practices are attributed to the *Kontome*.

The *Kontome* are also believed to have descended from God and are his children and messengers Black (Bagre No. 153, 177, 212, 240). It is believed that they inhabit hills, rivers and trees. They are believed to be the immediate originators of man’s culture.

Tradition has it that the *Kontome* showed humanity how to cultivate the land, how to smith iron, how to shoot with the bow and arrow, and how to accomplish many other arts like playing the xylophone - *gyil*. Thus, they play an important role in the socio-religious life of the people. White Bagre No. 6008, contend that the *Kontome* brought the *Bagre* to the Dagaaba (White Bagre No. 6008).
The Kontome know the secrets of the supernatural and the natural. So diviners make good use of them. Interestingly, these beings of the wild sometimes „abduct” a human being into their habitation for a long spell in order to teach her/him a skill, wisdom or an art that is useful in the physical world. When the abducted individual is released by his or her abductors i.e. Kontome and reappears mysteriously after a supposed period of tutelage, the individual possess an unparalleled knowledge or a special skill, especially in the field of traditional medicine.

Dongkore (1998) writing about some of the Dagaaba powers elucidates: „Invariably the beings of the wild compel their clients to erect a cult to them. The possessors of these cults automatically become diviners to whom people turn to for consultations.” It is believed that they inhabit hills, rivers and trees. They are believed to be the immediate originators of man’s culture. They are said by Goody (1962), to be the main intermediaries in communication between mankind and other agencies. They are analogous to the Akan dwarfs, “Mmoatia” but play a very much more active role. Every diviner has shrines to Kontome, sometimes in their sleeping room or in a specially built small house in the compound yard.

4.16 Ancestors (Kpime)

Death does not alter or end the life or the personality of an individual, but only causes a change in its conditions. This is expressed in the concept of "ancestors," people who have died but who continue to "live" in the community and communicate with their families. This entry traces those ideas that are, or have been, approximately similar across sub-Saharan Africa. The concepts described within in many cases have been altered in the twentieth century through the widespread influence of Christianity or Islam, and some of
the customs relating to burials are disappearing. Nevertheless, many religious concepts and practices continue to persist. The ancestors are believed to be the past heroes of the society. In a limited sense, we also have lineage ancestors (Yir-kpime). The ancestors are intermediaries between humans and the divine beings, guardian of morality. They are the ‘unseen president or chairperson’ at family meetings, gatherings and social functions. The Dagaaba cherish their ancestors and are mostly remembered at the ancestral cult. However, those who died bad deaths and those who lived bad lives cannot become ancestors; they are regarded as evil ghosts. Ancestors are the guardians of the family traditions and life, receive requests from the living, can serve as intermediaries between God and people and can communicate with the living through various means such as dreams, possession, and divination (Gehman, 1989, Magesa, 1997). As ancestors they have some extra powers. To become an ancestor is the best one can expect after death. As such death and what follows it is not desired because the life here on earth is at the centre of human existence. When a person dies, he is slowly forgotten, with the exception of great ancestors. The length of time one is remembered depends directly on the quality of life on earth.

It should be added that, if biological (human) life comes from God, and our ancestors can serve as mediators, to take care and equip the clan, community and an ethnic group like the Dagaaba, with a moral order, it stands to reason that, in the final analysis the ancestors can be seen to have a “metaphysico-mystical character” and having some vital force certainly emanating from the life-giver who is God, because the ancestors cannot be conceived independently of the supreme being-God.
4.17 The Earth Shrine (*Tengan Bag-Ngmeme*)

The clan or household group, in series of which are clustered into *tengan*, usually situated in a grove and sacrifice to the land gods. The *bagre* (initiation) are done at the earth-shrine. The Earth looks after the community, but the ancestors supervise the lineage and are concerned with matters relating to the household and kin, that is to say, with a very wide range of human activity. Whereas the Earth is propitiated at a stone in a sacred grove, the ancestors are worshiped at “anthropomorphically” carved wooden shrines, one for each male who leaves behind sons; these are kept usually in a corner of the byre where the cattle are stalled.

4.18 The Ancestral Cult (*Tibe*)

The shrines are the preserves of the clan and households for the transactions of sacrifices to the gods of the ancestors especially the lineage ancestors. “The cult of the ancestors is the most solemn expression in which the intensification of life’s power in the ancestral mystical body reaches its summit. This is all the more true since, because researches into many African religions, have sufficiently demonstrated that to an African, there is no dichotomy between private, social, political and religious life” (Bénézet Bujo, 1998).

4.19 Witchcraft (*Sobr*) and Seers (*Niminyerebe*)

The Dagara /Dagaaba belief in *nimiyerebe* literally termed as the “seers”. These seers are believed to be people with supernatural sights, who can see the invisible even the human soul. Witchcraft is the belief in the possession of some supernatural powers by which evil or harm can be effected. For the Dagao, witchcraft is synonymous to being a “devil incarnate”. Witchcraft attacks the virtuous whereas the ancestors attack the
wicked. Witch spirits can be sent on errands looking for someone to devour. It is believed that a witch spirit can be inherited, usually through a witch mother or aunt passing down the witchcraft to her daughter but not her son. This belief among the Dagaaba, socially constitute the stereotyping of the female gender. Some people are believed to possess witchcraft at birth, yet others buy or acquire it unintentionally. Thus, women especially old women are associated with witchcraft. The Dagaaba belief is that, witchcraft is obtained from demons or the dead. Others also think that witchcraft can be possessed by intentionally or accidentally taking in food or drink supposedly laced with it. The belief is that, these witches operate in the night and diabolically in the form of birds.

The owl is one bird symbolically associated with witchcraft among the Dagaaba, or animal or fire. In short, the whole activity of the witchcraft is “spiritual cannibalism, as believed by every Dagao because the spiritual body of the victim is attacked, extracted and devoured.

Pritchard, (1937) however, declared that “witchcraft is only imaginary because it is impossible. A witch cannot harm and has in fact, no real existence; the scientific mind will always look for tangible proof of a spiritual activity”. This is sometimes impossible. Field (1937) states that witchcraft’s distinctive feature is that there is no palpable apparatus connected with it, no rites, no ceremonies, incantations or invocations that the witch has to perform. It is simply projected at the will of the mind.

4.20 Magic and Medicine (Suolu ni Tii)

Magic and traditional (black) medicine forms an integral part of the Dagaaba treatment and cure of diseases. What is important is the mysterious manner in which an incurable disease is cured or prevented through the use of magic and medicine. The medicine
provides the cure and also restoring and preserving health but the magic resorts to prevention or control. The performance of a particular magic is dependent on the type of disease or problem of an individual. The magic is an attempt to control and/or prevent people or events by supernatural means e.g. “juju”. In most Dagaaba communities, the same divinity or spirit may be in charge of both the medicine and the magic. Magic and medicine are evidenced in the use of charms, talismans and amulets to avert evil and mischief and to ensure success in life.

4.21 Totemism (Dume)

There are ideological, mystical, emotional, reverential, and genealogical relationships that exist between individuals and social groups on one side and animals or natural objects socially called totems.

The Dagaaba have group totemism and not individual totemism as in some cultures. These totems have some basic characteristics, but they occur with different emphasis and in different specific forms. For instance, the Dagaaba view the totems as a companion, relative, protector, progenitor, or helper. They ascribe to its superhuman powers and abilities, and offer it some combination of respect, veneration, awe, and fear. Most cultures use special names and emblems to refer to their totem, and engage in partial identification with the totem or symbolic assimilation to it. There is usually a prohibition or taboo against killing, eating, or touching the totem.

Although totems are often the focus of ritual behaviour, it is generally agreed that totemism is not a religion. Totemism can certainly include religious elements in varying degrees, just as it can appear conjoined with magic.
Totemism is frequently mixed with different kinds of other beliefs, such as ancestor worship, ideas of the soul, or animism. Such mixtures have historically made the understanding of particular totemistic forms difficult.

4.22 Traditional Leaders and Diviners (*Tengandem ni Bagr-bugre*)

“Divination is needed to reduce the uncertainties which must arise, and it thus, become a “pre-requisite” of religious no less than a practical action” (Nadel of Nupe, 1975). Divination is different from “necromancy” i.e. consulting the dead for revelation. Through divination, societies can be re-aligned particularly on a social problem and to correct a situation in the society.

Soothsayers or diviners (*Bagr-bugre*) can be categorized among the wise people in as far as their clients attain information from them concerning the misfortunes they are encountering in life e.g. sickness, deaths, loss of property or even to find out the secret to succeed in life, because there is the idea of sacred knowledge. Indeed, they are Dagaaba “moral psychologists.” They are versed with knowledge on cause and effect. In this perspective, the diviner is concerned with the organization of the universe and man’s relationship with God, as well as mystification. They also provide very important information for the Dagaaba sacrifice.

Mwinlaaro (2005), underlining their sacrificial importance, elucidates: The *bagr-bugre* is a specialist who seeks to discover the secret intentions of the supernatural and gives general spiritual advice especially about sacrifices. In the event when the sacrifice is not accepted it is the soothsayer that the priest goes to with the bloodstained sacrificial knife in hand.
The Traditional Leaders and Diviners are the traditional priests, the medicine man and the diviners. It is not uncommon to find one person—men and women alike in most cases—performing all these functions. It is sometimes difficult to draw the dividing lines in terms of their roles. Their major duties will include the offering of libation, prayers and making offerings, usually carried out in the early hours before sunrise. It is the beliefs also that, these roles are either inherited or particular people with the gift, appointed to the office.

Divination occurs on varying scales and in varying degrees of development in the Dagaaba society. It may be observed parenthetically that divination seems to take the place of revelation in many African cultures, not just among the Dagaaba, a fact which accounts for the absence of prophets of God in the corresponding traditional religions. Our ancestors along with other types of beings are thought to vouchsafe adequate hints and advice to their people.

The proliferation of prophets of God in the charismatic churches—a movement which has been sweeping across Africa in recent times like a wild fire, if we may be excused a rather mundane simile in connection with such a ‘spiritual’ phenomenon—is another contemporary twist to a traditional cultural trait. African divination seems to have domesticated Christian revelation!

In the Nandom Traditional Area, Chiefs and Traditional leaders of the villages automatically perform such tasks, but they are supposed to observe strict taboos and rules relating to moral and spirituality, because they are the repository of customs and traditions.
Here is a simple diagrammatical presentation of the Dagaaba religious ideology and its cosmology with respect to the above description as shown below in the vertical and horizontal structure of social relationship.

Source. (Edward Tengan, 1994)

4.23 The Idea of Man and Personhood *(Ninsaale ni Nisaalu)*

The Dagao believes that, man (used in the generic sense), is both a physical and a spiritual being. The later part links man to God and the physical determines his ancestry and right of inheritance. The soul which is a spiritual entity is immortal and connected to the destiny of man. Quarcooopome, [1987] stated that destiny is said to be determined beforehand and in principle it is unalterable. Nevertheless, in practice certain unfortunate circumstances may arise which may cut short a person’s destiny. This leads to the belief in reincarnation where the individual is reborn to complete his destiny.
The Dagaaba view about personhood is that which is achieved through a long process of incorporation and not ascribed. They believed that the society plays a vital role for one to achieve his or her personhood, either for better or worse. This is why Mbiti, (1969), echoed that ‘I am because we are, and since we are therefore, I am’. In other words, ‘cognatus sum, ergo sum’ i.e. I am related, therefore, I am. For our Western counterparts, one notices that once you are born you have achieved your personhood.

It may be in the light of the above that the European is often said to be more individualistic while the African is essentially communitarian. That is why Descartes would say ‘cogito, ergo sum’ i.e. I think, therefore, I am. For the Dagao, it is the community that defines a person or personhood and on the cosmic dimension, the individual relates also to super–human beings i.e. relationship to the gods, ancestral, spirits and ancestors etc.

Kuukure, [1975] explains that human being; ninsaale implies the idea of reason, of humility as opposed to animals. The sharp distinction between man and animal is reflected in the use of pronouns for example, the third person plural. Whereas the English will use “they” for animal and man, the Dagaaba have two different pronouns for men and animals e.g. bɛ, (they), use for “only” human beings s and never for animals. They also use a (they), for animals and never for human beings. The Dagaaba made further elaborations on the nature of man.

For instance, about the soul (sie), clothed with the body (yang or vangang), which are inseparably linked with reason or mind (ya) and animated by vital breath (vuuro). Intimately connected to man, ninsaale is the shadow (dasule) and impurity or spiritual dirt (degr) and the soul (sie) which is believed to be capable of separating or disassociating itself from the body, for instance, while the person is asleep.
Yet, others believed that the soul can disassociate itself from the body when one is terribly frightened. Also, during this period of disassociation, it makes itself for example, during its nocturnal peregrinations, the soul falls victim to the malevolent activities, (suolo) of witches. These witches will catch the soul and eat it or tie it to tree or feed the soul with dangerous concoctions e.g. blood (zie). The body persistently pines away to death, when the breath finally leaves (yi). The Dagaaba believe that the soul can separate from the body not only at death but also while the person is still alive. The soul is conceived as both visible and invisible, that is, material and immaterial substance. To some people with super-human sight (nimi-nyere), it is material and visible.

Goody, [1962] explained that the soul (sie) is similar in appearance to the body and has the same organs, except that the eyes are not there. There is the belief that, witches can catch the soul, i.e. the soul’s flesh, which they gnaw away. The soul is also believed to be within man’s capacity to influence and the soul that has separated from the body can be induced to its home through a special ceremony of „sweeping the Soul” (Sie Piiro), usually done by specialized medicine man.

Man is an intelligent creature, rational being, moral and social entity, and a spirit incarnate in matter, an element of which personality is destined to survive death. Talking about the rationality of man is his ability to reason by use of the intellect. The mind (ya) can make decisions and thoughts. Morally a man should live in accordance with the social norms of the community. Man is the center of relationships and he assumes social roles because he lives in a community. The human being generally is communitarian in nature because he belongs to a clan or lineage system, just as one marries within the community and he or she dies within a community.
A person is an individual because each person is unique, yet in harmony with others. Finally, the influence of Christian religion also teaches the biblical perspective of man as we read from Genesis 1 and 2 about creation, and the book of Ecclesiastics 3:18-21 and Psalm 8, which are a reflection of Man and his nature.

**4.24 The Destiny of Man and the Ideal Human Life on Earth**

In the works of Mbiti, (1975) he stressed that “the destiny of every man is to become a spirit after several generations of death, when a man passes from a state of ghost (Gyakpiin) to living dead” i.e. ancestors, to spirits (Kpime). This is because, not all who die attain ancestor status, and that, not all who die, are received into the eschatological congregation. This is because; it depends on how one has lived his life here on earth. As it were, ancestorhood is dependent upon the conduct of one’s earthly life.

Traditional religion naturally influenced the Dagaaba drastically vis-á-vis their mode of thinking. Their conception of destiny is deeply rooted in the understanding of the nature of man and the life hereafter, among the Dagaaba. For them, man’s destiny is to die and enjoy life beyond the grave, to leave the world and return to his home – a place of rest. Destiny therefore, is believed to control events which happen to somebody on the level of beliefs. Destiny is a supernatural determination with a supernatural origin. In this case, an event is already pre-determined to happen to the person. For the average Dagao, destiny starts before birth. Also each person’s destiny is different from another.

Destiny is a means to explain spiritual causation – a phenomenon, to explain what cannot be adequately explained. The idea of destiny implies that, man is not entirely free. Man’s freedom is limited, by supernatural and cosmic forces. A destiny can be good or bad.
However, some Africans believe that the departed return to their creator and the final destiny of man depends on how he lived on earth. God is believed to mete out judgment to men after death, and each has to give account of his earthly life.

4.25 The Meaning and Finality of Human Life (Death)

According to the Dagaaba, man finds meaning in life because he has a difficulty which gives meaning in life; which does not dissipate. The Dagaaba like many Africans, accept that, nature gives meaning to man’s existence and gains meaning also from man because nature provides space for man, to act out his destiny. Furthermore, the idea that man is made by God, gives the Dagaabo a sense of the sacredness of life. The meaning of life will really disappear, if there is no sense of the sacredness of life. This encourages the more ‘enlightened’ Dagaabo to live on, even when life seems frustrating. The Dagaaba are also so concerned about destiny of human life and the finality of life (death). As mentioned earlier on, the destiny of man is to die (kpi) and enjoy life (wonnuo) beyond the grave, (kuu-bog) to leave this world and return to his true home (Kpime-yir). The purpose of man’s life is therefore, a supernatural one, which is the reception into the “eschatological congregation” of the ancestor (Kpime-langtaa). This same fate does not await animals, and hence, the big difference between animals and man for Dagaaba. This study looks at death with anthropological, religious and philosophical lenses; it is part of a universal cycle and best described as the “final awakening” when you look at death as an end or a beginning. One thing is certain, namely; the way and manner you choose to do with your time and your life being spent here on this planet earth, as a human being. Life is finite and will not go on, at least in our present form. This is why we must give our existence meaning, because life in itself cannot be without meaning particularly that your existence is not by chance or coincidence, because coincidence explains nothing in my opinion.
CHAPTER FIVE

ANTHROPOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DAGARA FUNERAL

5.1 The Performance Practice of the Dagara Funeral Rites and its Relevance

This chapter and the last two chapters have been tailored to prominently feature the culture of the Dagara in the Nandom traditional area. The Dagara have a system of funeral performance which is very unique to them and central to their culture. A ‘cultured’ Dagara is one who knows the procedure and the funeral rites of his or her people. This person knows exactly what to do as part of the Dagara funeral rites following the death of a Dagara. Elaborate rites are performed at a Dagara funeral. However, the performance of these rites depends upon the age and social standing of the deceased. Young men and women are given fewer funeral rites during their funerals than older persons because they are younger. The particular forms of rituals used depend also upon the roles the deceased played in society, the social and economic groups to which he/she belonged, and his or her own personal achievements.

One most remarkable event or performance practice among the Dagaaba is their dirges or funeral chants. In the Dagaaba social set up, singing of dirges is gendered and it is done only by men. In the social set up of the traditional Dagaaba, dirge singers (langkonbe) are regarded as men of great wisdom. The wisdom of keeners rests on the fact that they spontaneously sing sensational and appropriate songs. Songs are composed extempore based on the social standing of the deceased. Dirges and chants are usually expressed in a performance that follows a standardized phrase of a proverbial kind and delivered by intuition and impromptu-extemporaneously. The proverbial expressions are more
condensed in idiomatic language. The sentiments expressed are usually on the pain imposed by death and especially when the death is least expected. The dirges may also carry different meanings at different funerals; depending on the life style or conduct of the deceased. Dirges also convey sentiments of praises to the deceased, good memories, irreplaceable nature of the life lost and lamentations among others. The researcher consciously made some efforts to copiously put here samples of different dirges as recorded at different funerals. Acting as a participant observer during fieldwork at Nandom and its environs, particularly in rural communities like Ketuo, Bu, Puffien, Kogle, Gengengkpe, Kusiele, Tangkyara Munyuupelle, Ko, Tokuu and Hamile-Liero.

The dirge below was sung at the funeral of a sub-chief who doubles as the head of family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dirge one (1)</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ti kpee nu lo</em></td>
<td>The mighty tree has fallen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nidere nu lo, mgarbie mur</em></td>
<td>A leader and bright star has set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dieo weg nu lo</em></td>
<td>A solid pillar has collapsed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nikpee nyi na bare</em></td>
<td>A great one is gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A yir paa lon daa daa</em></td>
<td>The house has fallen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dirge above is a metaphor that compares the deceased with a *mighty tree, a star and a solid pillar* upon which the family, and by extension, the community relied on. The deceased clan members sing praise chants (*dano*) as indicated above.
There are however, instances where other descent groups chant songs of abuse, literally “crying words” usually phrases of proverbial kind and condensed idiomatic language.

This is another dirge/funeral chant recorded at the funeral of a landlord/clan head.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Dirge two (2)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nyangala gaa sabol</strong> – A great man has passed away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kuora gandaa, kuora</strong> - A great farmer, a great farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ganda yina</strong> - The breadwinner is gone. What will you do tomorrow, how will you survive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“<strong>Kyen wie e bele wa’ei</strong>” - Gone to the farm but never returns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nindaar kabe e nyuor pori</strong> - His name will forever be remembered as great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kuu sa nang</strong> - Such death is preferred to object poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ganda le n aka kyi</strong> - The man has broken the guinea corn. (He has died before harvesting his crop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ganda le na o dome la</strong> - The strong man has died and his enemy is happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“<strong>N Saa yina e kyɛ dekpol kom ɛ</strong>” - The father is leaving behind an empty house. (He has no immediate descendants)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is a short chant recorded at the funeral of adolescence.

| **A Saa ton na, o kyen e bele wa’ie** - He was sent by the father, and never returns |
| **Dog bie o wa faafo, nindare yang** - You give birth to the child so that in future he may take care of you |
| **Taa kere nu lo, e taa boun kyya ar** - The raw sheanut fruit has rather fallen, while the ripe one stays on |
| **Aa!!! yel nga, yelbeela nu/ yelbanguura** - Aa!!! But this is a mystery |
| **Ti le yelkebonu, Naagmen tome na** – What else can we say; it is God’s work |
Dirges and funeral chants carry meaning in respect to praises, good memories and lamentations. Usually, where others chant songs/dirges of abuse, the deceased’s own lineage, sing songs and dirges of praise (dano) that minimizes the pain of the bereaved family. These dirges and chants touch on various subjects of wisdom and philosophy that centre on God, life after death and good morals. The contents of these dirges are repositories of family history, praise names and elaborations on family and individual qualities. It is important to note that, the funeral chants in the instance of a youthful-useful and able-young person, usually expresses bitterness, particularly when the death is least expected, whereas for a fully grown adult, (if especially the deceased is between 80- 90+) with children and grandchildren, it is full of joy amidst dancing and jubilation as well as chants of the praises on the prowess of the man as a great and noble person.

The grief is greater, as noticed in the case of the chants of the adolescence in the above illustration. In most of these chants, the pretense is made that, the person is not really dead at all, but either absent or sleeping. Similarly, people who sing appellations accompanying them with the playing of musical instruments are considered very wise. The theme of the songs is a combination of the deeds and sorrows of the family.

The best singer is one who can stir the maximum level of grief in the chief-mourners (kotuodeme), the closest relatives of the diseased by his choice of words. The effect of the words of the singers is echoed and amplified by the tunes of the xylophones and the sounds of the drums, which emotionally move the community to grieve. Wailing, screaming, groaning, running, jumping, dancing and singing are all acceptable ways of expressing grief.
The *kotuodeme* are expected to shed a lot of tears and behave in a way that stirs sympathizers to share the grief to the fullest by the shedding as many tears as possible. The *kotuodeme* are tagged with ropes (much like leashes) for identification purposes and for easy control by people who may want to calm them down by holding on to the rope. The more contributions and ropes one sent to other *kotuodeme* in the past, the more ropes and contributions one is likely to receive when one becomes a *kotuosob* singular, the plural of which is *kotuodeme*. Reciprocity is the guiding principle here. Although many people are likely to stop by at a funeral before continuing their daily business, the more funerals the deceased and *kotuodeme* attended, the more likely it is for their funeral to be patronized by sympathizers from all walks of life. A well-attended funeral is an indication that the household has a high social reputation. This is their concept of ‘social reputation’ or ‘good social standing.’

Another critical performance during the funeral of a man was that, certain animals are killed in the name of the deceased. Such animals could be cows, a sheep or goat. If a man acquired cattle prior to his death, one of the cows is killed in honour of the deceased. Such a cow is known as the “cow- of- the- hoe” (*Kukur Naab*). If he became wealthy through trade, a cow or a goat is killed to commemorate his trading activities. In addition, a cow known as the “cow-of–the–termination-of the funeral” (*Kowel Naab*), was killed to an adult male who died in good social standing.

Similar customs are observed during the funeral of a female. If a woman acquires livestock with money earned from brewing and selling *pito*, the local beer, or from making pots or baskets, a cow or a goat is killed to commemorate her achievements. But if she did not excel in any of these activities, her husband is nonetheless expected to kill a
cow known as “cow- of-the- tidying- of-the- farm” (Vaar daar Naah) in recognition of the work she did on the husband’s farm during her life time to assist in the upkeep of the family. These customary practices occupied a significant place in Dagara funeral customs on account of the central role agriculture plays in the economic life of the Dagara. The killing of animals and the distribution of the meat amongst those who are entitled to it ends the public mourning of the dead. These rites are still observed today even among Christians because they had nothing to do with traditional religion and the Missionaries did not forbid them among the Christians. The Christians are also not forbidden from attending the funerals of non-Christians and the two groups continue to perform their funerals together without conflict.

The Dagara perform final funeral rites normally for married persons. There are three main reasons why this is done:

(a) To test the marital fidelity of husbands and wives during their life time,
(b) To purify them from their previous intimate relations with a dead spouse, and
(c) To allow the surviving partners to remarry.

In the case of grandparents, the rites were intended to accord them the status of ancestors. These final funeral rites are known as the Ko-daa or “funeral drink” ceremonies. They brought to an end the period of mourning on the part of a surviving spouse and marked, in the case of grandparents, the transition from mere ghost to the status of ancestors. The final funeral rites last for three days. They consist of mourning on the evening of the day of the brewing of large quantities of pito in preparation of the climax of the rites on the third day. The widows and widowers who had been undergoing trials and tests of marital
fidelity are given a ritual bath, anointed with oils and are allowed to put on normal clothes and given a meal cooked with chicken sacrificed to the ancestors. These rites of purification publicly cleared them of any complicity in the death of their spouses and declared them free to re-marry or to resume their normal life in society. In the case of worthy parents or grandparents, a wood carving in the form of a man or a woman known as *Kpiin daa* or the ancestor image was dedicated to their memory in the ancestral shrine. Sacrifice is made to the ancestors and offerings of food and drink is placed beside it for the ancestors. These rites accorded the dead man or woman the status of an ancestor and his or her name could be invoked at subsequent sacrifices offered in the family shrine room.

The final funeral ceremonies reached their climax with a great merry making, particularly in the case of grandparents, when the large quantities of *pito* brewed and food cooked are given out literally to the sympathizers that participate in the final funeral rites. The *Kodaa* ceremonies are thus a periods of relaxation in contrast to the deep and intense mourning that takes place at a person’s actual funeral.

The Dagara final funeral rites had good moral element in them. They serve as a deterrent to marital infidelity on the part of married men and women. If a woman committed adultery unknown to her husband, at his death she had to publicly confess her infidelity before undergoing the final funeral rites of her husband. Similarly, if a husband had been unfaithful to his wife he too had to confess publicly his infidelity to his deceased wife before he could undergo her final funeral rites. These public confessions are dreaded by the Dagara not only because they lower the image and prestige of the men and women involved in society but also because it was believed that if a widow or widower
performed the last funeral rites of his or her spouse without confessing his or her act(s) of marital infidelity, he or she would die. Thus, the Dagara final funeral rites are a moral deterrent to irresponsible marital behavior among the Dagara.

What is the cultural significance of this? We have already mentioned the role of the ancestors in the enforcement of morals. Morals, broadly construed, cover ethical rules proper as well as customs and taboos. It is with respect to their relevance to the last two kinds of rules of conduct, rather than to the first, that the ancestors have their greatest cultural significance. This is not because their status as guardians of the morality of their living relatives - morality taken in the narrow sense-is not important, even though it is often restricted. The reason is twofold. First, in the case of morality, narrowly conceived, the ancestors can only enforce rules whose basis or validity is independent of their own wishes or decisions, whereas customs and taboos are frequently of their own making. Secondly, customs and taboos are more essential to the individuality of a culture than morality. These two considerations each require some elaboration however brief they must be in the present context.

To take the question of morality (in the narrow sense), first: It is often supposed that in Africa morality is determined by the injunctions of the ancestors and other extra-human powers. This is usually inferred from the very evident influence that beliefs about these beings have upon African conduct. If „determine' is interpreted in a causal, psychological sense, the conclusion follows from the premises, for the claim then amounts simply to the observation that the thought of the ancestors, as a matter of psychological fact, does actually cause traditional Africans to behave in certain ways. If, however, the alleged determination of morality by the ancestors is taken in a logical sense, the claim is false or, at any rate, not true of all African thought, or at least in the case of the Dagaaba, the
justification of moral rules consists solely in considerations concerning the harmonious adjustment of the interests of individuals with that of the community. The will of an ancestor, or a `god' or indeed, of God, may function as an incentive for an action, but never as its justification. This point has been re-echoed here for the purpose of emphasis.

In spite of the moral aspect of Dagara final funeral rites the Missionaries objected to their performance on account of the sacrifices involved in the ceremonies. The Christians had therefore to give them up. They however brought in a Catholic practice which has stood the test of time. The Christians had Masses said for their deceased family members, relations, friends and clansmen who had become Catholics. By this innovation, the Masses replaced the final funeral rites.

5.2 Dagara Traditional Religion before the Advent of Christianity

One more prominent feature of the culture of the Dagara was their traditional religion. Before the arrival of Christianity in Nandom, a Dagara is born into traditional religion. The Dagara are essentially monotheists. In their own view, they believed, like other African peoples, in a Supreme Being who they call by a personal name Naangmen (God). They also believed in the ancestors and other spirit beings, but they had no lesser gods apart from Naangmen.

According to the baghr legend, Naangmen created all things, visible and invisible. He is all powerful. He sees and knows everything so that nothing can be hidden from him. Naangmen is very wise and is constantly present and interested in the affairs of men. Naangmen, it is said, instituted the baghr for the Dagara so that they could approach him through it. The baghr is essentially a thanksgiving festival and is celebrated after the harvest, in late December, and early in January of the New Year.
The heads of lineages and families decided when and whether the festival should be celebrated. As a social or cultural institution, the *baghr* had its own language, ethics, taboos, music, and mythology. Apart from being a festival, it was also a secret society, but did not operate like a modern lodge. The initiates undergo a period of trials and tests before they are initiated into it. The main purpose of celebrating the *baghr* is to thank God for the good harvests, and to obtain peace and good health for a household or a family. It was also intended to ask God and the ancestors to protect the members of the household and to bestow prosperity on the family. Its religious ceremonies involved numerous sacrifices from the beginning till the end.

The head of a lineage or household does not simply initiate preparations towards celebrating the festivals. He had to be ‘inspired’ by the Deity of initiation (*Baghr-ngmen*) either through a dream or a message of misfortune which manifested itself in a strange or unknown disease in a non-initiate member of the family. The choice of the initiate is also mystically made through divination. Its celebration depended also upon the resources of the particular families concerned to carry out the ceremonies on account of the large quantities of grains needed for the brewing of the local beer (*pito*), and the many animals and fowls required in the preparation of food at various stages of the festival. If a family therefore does not have considerable stocks of food supplies, it would not venture to perform the *baghr*. There is great secrecy surrounding its religious ritual performance and only the initiates are allowed to see these or participate in them. Its membership is restricted to the initiates and they are forbidden to reveal the details of the rituals or secrets to non-initiates. Even when members of the *baghr* are converted and became Christians they would not reveal its secret ritual to non-initiates on account of the oath they took not to do so.
Membership of the baghr is thus limited to the initiates and does not extend to every Dagara man or woman. A man, woman, boy or girl could be initiated into the baghr, but there are thousands of Dagara who were never inducted into it before the arrival of Christianity in Nandom. The baghr, however, is a cherished socio-cultural institution and its suppression among the Christians would have left a void in their lives if the Missionaries had not found a substitute for it. The Christians are not allowed to take part in the initiation rites and religious rituals. Before the arrival of Christianity in Nandom, crowds of dancers, initiates and non-initiates alike, went to the baghr dances which marked the end of the religious ceremonies. To the majority of these dancers, it was the social aspect and not so much the religious rituals which mattered. There were young boys and girls and even adult men and women who were not directly involved in the religious rites, knew practically nothing or very little about what went on in the rituals as they were excluded from them. Yet they looked forward to participating in the dances and the general merry-making that characterized the end of the religious aspect of the festival. To many of them too, it was an occasion to demonstrate their friendship relations and clan’s solidarity with the families celebrating the baghr by giving presents to the initiates.

The Missionaries would have created a void in the life of the Christians if nothing had been done to replace the celebration of the baghr festival among them. The Christians were encouraged to celebrate Christmas in the manner of the baghr-seb or the baghr dances. This idea was suggested to the Missionaries by the early catechists with the view of stemming any regrets that the Christians might have about their non-participation in the social aspect of the baghr. Baptism takes place first for the new converts before Christmas and this coincides with the time span of the final rituals of the baghr festival.
The head of catechumens were shaved before they were baptized. The new Christians, like the *baghr* initiates, are encouraged to wear their best clothes not only on the day of their baptism but also to subsequent *Sunday Masses*, catechism lessons and even to the markets. More significantly, the Christians celebrate Christmas on a grand scale. On Christmas Eve large crowds gather at the mission station to dance before the mid-night Eucharistic celebration. This is similar to the *baghr* night dances. On Christmas day itself, the dances continue after *High Mass* till late afternoon when the crowd goes home, but it is in the villages that the real celebration of Christmas takes place after the manner of the *baghr-seb* as stated by (Bekye, 2009).

The celebrations in the villages are held between December 28 and the first two weeks of January. This timing of the village celebration coincides with the period of the *baghr* dances. There is again much dancing to the tune of xylophone music and the consumption of large quantities of *pito* (local beer) and there is general feasting on livestock as on the day of the *baghr-seb*. Gifts are exchanged between families, friends and relations as is usually done during the *baghr* celebrations. These Christmas festivities in the villages absorb the features of the *baghr* festival and in fact, eclipsed almost entirely the *baghr* festival itself among the Dagara in Nandom. The Christmas celebration in the villages attract not only large crowds of Christians to dances but also the non – Christians, especially young men and women, who joined in the dances, and even the elderly ones who still stick to their traditional religious practices participate in the general merry-making that goes on. Thus the Christmas celebrations took on the form of an annual festival among the Dagara in Nandom and replaced the *baghr* festival among the Christians.
The Bagre Myth is very long and describes many realities of human life, its origin and man”s destiny. It is recited in the Bagre Room. (Initiation Room). Thus, Goody (1972, 32) states that the Bagre Myth „…is the only extensive text of this kind to emerge from Africa.

Part of the Black Bagre says:

„… it was God (ka naangmin-a)

That created man (langne boma zaa)

… Obey his commandments, (ka ti tuur o

ne) Fear him, (ka z żr o dâbie)

Respect, (yanfo) and follow his word.” (ti tuur o noure), (Goody 1972: 275-276).

These verses explain that God is the origin of the universe and all it contains. These verses explain that God is the origin of the universe and all it contains. For instance, verse 276 stresses the observation of God”s commandments and his word. In another narrative Mr. Ludovic Doggu (an informant) stated that the Dagara had a very comprehensive concept of punishment and reward after death in their worldview before the arrival of Christianity. They believed that the land of the ancestors called Kpime Teng or Dapar, lay to the west and was separated from the land of the living by a ”River of Death”. When the spirits of the dead arrived at the “River of Death” they were ferried across at a nominal fee of twenty cowries, which relatives and friends provided at the funeral. This explains why the Dagara threw monies, formerly in cowries and now in coins or paper currency, to the dead on arrival at a funeral. The monies are intended to enable the dead person to pay the fee to the ferry man at the “River of Death”. The crossing of the river itself is an ordeal, the hardships of which depend on the kind of life a person lived among his people.
Good people cross the river easily while bad ones fell through the boat and keep swimming for a period of time even though the opposite bank always lay in sight. Evil doers such as murderers, thieves, debtors and witches are excluded from *Kpime Teng*. They had to wait at the bank of the “River of Death” to repay their debts or make restitution to the person they wronged on earth before they could cross over.

When they finally arrive in *Kpime Teng* the ancestors pass judgment and impose punishments. The judgment consists of the ancestors recognizing the image of their family in the deceased, and so admitting him or her among them. If the ancestors could not recognize their image in the deceased he or she was banished in a place called hell-fire (*Dazuge, Dazuge*), being a kind of shrub whose branches when dry burn with intense heat. Although God (*Naangmen*) does not seem to play a direct role in the judgment given by the ancestors, he intervened when the wicked plead for mercy and put an end to their suffering in *Dazuge-vuу. Naangmen* is thus the final judge in the matter of punishment and reward to the soul of these evil doers or anti-social persons. These beliefs of the Dagara are not so dissimilar to the Christian (Catholics) concepts in personal rewards and retribution in the next world, and the idea of soul suffering in purgatory to atone for their sins before God admits them into heaven.

These similarities in religious belief enabled many of the Dagara to accept the teachings of the Catholic faith without unduly wounding their conscience. The core of traditional religion is sacrifice. Before the arrival of Christianity among them, the Dagara made numerous sacrifices to the ancestors and other spirit beings. The acts or occasions that may necessitate sacrifice include an illness in a member of the family, death, failure of crops and even bad dreams.
The Dagara resort to diviners to ascertain the causes of these misfortunes. After the divination, the diviner usually prescribe the kind of sacrifice to be made, and the type of animal(s) or chicken which are to be used in the sacrifice. The Dagara use mainly chicken, goats, sheep and cattle as sacrificial items. Human sacrifice is unknown to them.

At the beginning of the farming season, which lasts from about May to October, the Dagara make sacrifices to the ancestors for rain and good harvests. In times of drought the Tengan-Sob or custodian of the Earth Shrine or Spirit in a village make sacrifices to the Tengan (Earth Shrine) to obtain rains. After the harvests in November and December, thanksgiving sacrifices are made to the ancestors. Above all the Dagara frequently make sacrifices to obtain peace and good health for their families. In all these sacrifices, the ancestors are used as intermediaries and are asked to convey the sacrifices to Naangmen (God). More importantly, however, the Dagara in some situation sacrifice directly to Naangmen (God). Among the Dagara, there are two types of sacrifices: the baghr and the Ngmen-baghr. The baghr was the general type of sacrifice offered to the ancestors and the Tengan (Earth Shrine). The Ngmen- baghr or God’s- sacrifice is specifically offered directly to Naangmen (God). Neither the ancestors nor the Tengan nor any spirit beings is concerned with it. The sacrificial item(s) and prayers are offered directly to Naangmen (God). In sacrifices to Naangmen the prayers begin with “You God” (Foo Ngmen). Bad dreams could be an occasion for sacrifice to Naangmen for which those offering the sacrifice wanted to find out the causes for such dreams about sicknesses, death and dying. The head of a family or a household could also offer sacrifices to Naangmen imploring or asking for good health on the family or lineage.
Sacrifice was offered directly to God (Naangmen) when grave transgression (Sangna) was to be expiated. The commission of sangna is considered a grave offence against God and not the ancestors. Such offences include murder, threats to kill a person, grave disputes or serious differences between persons. Sacrifice is also made to Naangmen when a person is struck dead by lightning because it is attributed to the anger of God. Thus his anger had to be appeased by sacrifice. It should be said, however, that in all sacrifices other than the Ngmen-baghr, Naangmen is invoked as the ultimate receiver of the sacrifice.

The Dagara depend heavily on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood. Although the Dagara are not a commercial people, they do petty trading in markets. The Nandom market (Nandom Daa) is a famous trading centre where all kinds of agricultural produce and livestock are sold. Through trading the Dagara earn money for their financial needs. During the dry season, they engage in hunting as a pastime hobby. Fishing is done on a very small scale on account of the absence of rivers and other water bodies.

5.3 Social Changes among the Dagara

Goody (1962) may have overlooked another cause for the seemingly unchanging nature of the funeral ceremony: the therapeutic nature of the funeral ritual. It is not accidental that one of the things that have remained considerably unchanged is the way funeral rites are performed. Funeral rites have proven their therapeutic worth to the people over the years and the people have responded by protecting them from “unnecessary change” yet, Christianity and Western education has made in-roads, changing the social set up of funeral among the people of Nandom and its environs.
5.3.1 Education and its Impact

Western education has had a tremendous impact on the Dagara people of Nandom and its areas of influence. Education has brought about considerable social change in the entire area of Nandom. An educated class or elite has risen from among the ordinary people whom the Colonial Administrators called the ""lower classes"" or ""common people."" Its members have become part of the upper strata of Ghanaian society. The majority of these educated elite are teachers, nurses, civil servants, who are in administrative positions at the banks and in business. Many of them are university graduates who hold high and responsible positions in both the civil and public services. Some are highly educated and are professors and lecturers in the universities and polytechnics. (Beye, 2009)

Education has brought about individualism among the Dagara of today. In Dagara traditional society, for instance, the extended family was the hub of social life. The heads of households controlled property holdings. It was the family head who controlled the provision and distribution of food and other material needs such as money to the members of their extended families. This situation has significantly changed. Educated men and women, irrespective of their age, who hold salaried positions and who live outside Dagara-teng (Nandom) on account of the requirements of their jobs, have more or less assumed the role of elders in their families and communities. Their opinions and decisions are highly respected. Heads of households and parents now rely on their literate sons and daughters to take care of family financial needs. The extended family itself is being gradually subordinated to the nuclear family of husband, wife and children. Educated people prefer the nuclear to the extended family because it is less burdensome. They however do not shirk their responsibilities and obligation to the extended family.
Education has instilled in literates new ideas about marriage and especially funeral and has led to Western patterns of conduct. About marriage for instance, although the educated elite conform to the traditional custom of giving the dowry or “bride-wealth”, direct courtship or Western style of dating or “going out with a girl” in order to determine the suitability or compatibility of partners in marriage, is cherished. The decision to marry or not to marry now rests directly with the young men and women concerned. The traditional mode of courtship is where parents and the extended family determine partners for sons and daughters has been largely replaced by this new way of direct courtship between young men and women among both literates and illiterates. Marriage itself has undergone some social change. The traditional marriage presentations or “bride-wealth” are still a *sine qua non* for a valid marriage, but the customary way in which a bride was simply led to the bridegroom’s house has significantly changed and the change has been brought about by the educated elite. The Missionaries introduced the idea of wedding ceremonies and feasts, the educated elite brought in the use of wedding gowns, suits, best men and brides” maids. They also introduced the practice of sending out invitation cards to invited guests to the wedding.

The researcher noticed that the beautiful dirges at funerals are now been replaced or interspersed with western music; different kinds of coffins are used, prescribed dressing and mortuary rites are not strictly followed. These practices have taken roots in Dagara social life and the illiterate folk. These are “unwholesome and uncultural practices” now becoming the common practices and widespread features in funeral and marriage ceremonies and celebrations today.
With the funeral performances, the Dagara still follow largely the traditional or customary practices but the educated elite has brought in innovation which is Western. This research reveals that, the Dagara were the first to begin burying their deceased family members and relations in coffins in the Wa Diocese. Prior to the introduction of Christianity in the 1920s, the Dagara buried their dead in chamber graves and not in trench graves. A trench grave is dug for a person deemed to have „sinned” against the Earth Shrine (Tengan) by committing grave crimes such as suicide. A trench grave was also dug for strangers who died while passing through a community. The non-literate followed suit and also began burying their dead in coffins. By the 1970s and 1980s the use of the coffin in burials had become widespread among the Dagara and has become the accepted mode of burial.

The significance of the change is that it altered the traditional values attached to the use of the chamber grave. The trench in which only “sinners” and strangers were buried was now used for the burial of “normal” citizens in society. This abolished the distinction formerly made between “sinners” and strangers, on one hand, and ordinary good citizens of a community on the other. The change therefore, leveled the status of a citizen and that of a “sinner”, or a stranger, in society.

Notable associations among others like the Catholic Action in the 1960s and later Family Group Movement, led to some modifications regarding the performance of funerals among the Dagara. In the past 40 years, it was not uncommon to keep a corpse for three (3) to four (4) days, to allow as many people and distant relatives to arrive and pay their last respect before the corpse is buried. Unfortunately, with the heat and the fact that corpses are not embalmed, it may happen that by the time of burial, the corpse is
decomposed. Both the Catholic Action and Family Group Movements, found this practice unhealthy, since people are exposed to the danger of diseases spreading. Thus, the issues relating to funeral performances have been taken up and some measures are taken to halt such unhealthy practices. Other unhygienic practices like removing the smock and pantaloons a corpse is dressed in before burial and keeping them to be used on another corpse or putting them into use as clothes, have been discontinued by actionists associations. As is the practice now, what a corpse is dressed and staged, is that same dress he/she had to be buried with it in the grave. These actions were as a result of education and enlightenment.

Der [1980], noted that the root of the prestige that Nandom enjoys today is on account of its achievements in education which can be traced to the educational effort of the White Fathers and the Catholic Church at large. Education has therefore, brought about social mobility and change among the Dagara. The White Fathers initially had difficulties in opening schools at the beginning on account of the Colonial Administration’s policy of educating only the children of the chiefly families. Nevertheless, they persisted in their efforts to bring Western education to the people of Nandom. Social, political, economic and religious developments in the area would thus have been retarded. (McCoy, 1988).
CHAPTER SIX

DAGAABA LITERARY TRADITIONS AND THE CONCEPT OF

DEATH AND HEREAFTER

6.1 Major Findings

The discussion here is basically about some of the major findings the researcher discovered among the Dagaaba, their perception about death and the hereafter.

Champagne [1928], observed, that the transition from traditional Dagara (African) culture to either Christianity or Islam has often been blocked by the necessity to perform the stipulated funeral rites in order not to offend the ancestors. Thus, in conformity with tradition, the dead are sent away with money and clothing, thereby maintaining the belief and expectation of an afterlife. People are prepared to incur great debts in order not to incur the displeasure of the ancestors and in order to fulfill tradition. The family solidarity is still expressed at funerals. Indeed, members of the kinship group lay down all tools and travel long distances to be with the rest of the clan when death occurs; whether the deceased is close or not because every clan cherished their dead ones. Currently, this tradition of showing clan solidarity at the death of a relative has become a serious problem because it is affecting productivity and encourages malingering to some extent. In the big towns, partly because of the fear of sudden deaths outside one's own kinship group, town-dwellers are forming themselves into societies or tribal groups. At death, the corpse is carried to the ancestral home, often at a great cost and sometimes overruling the wish of the deceased.
Traditional practices with regard to death have persisted but not without significant changes partly because of European and Christian influences. Secondly, often in addition to the traditional rites, a Church service is also held. There is the awful spectacle of relations of a deceased who never went anywhere near the church moving heaven and hell to get a church burial for the deceased. The church burial appears to have become a status symbol "higher" than the traditional rites. In some cases there is a bit of a magical attitude to the Church's funeral rites, as if without these the dead could not move on in peace [Pobee 1973:17-29]. Of course, human motives are often mixed.

Today, funerals have become an economic venture, a way of making good one's debts through donations. The point of the researcher is that the rites of passages, birth, puberty, marriage and death have been influenced by the various fronts of Christendom, Christian tradition and European culture. But for all their influence the traditional elements persist in varying degrees. Much the same picture emerges when we turn from the rites of passage to witchcraft. In the Dagaaba community; rites of passage play a very significant role and consist of three basic parts: separation, seclusion and incorporation. The rites of passage were marking permanent changes in the life of an individual. A person, who lived a good moral life, went through all rites of passage and dies natural death at old age is expected to become an ancestor that can intercede on behalf of the community.

Among other findings, the researcher has realized that most scholarly works have been quite silent on controversial issues found among the Dagaaba such as suicide, homicide and euthanasia (*Kum n peene / Kpifien*), as against ancestorship (*Kpime*). Controversial as the issues may be, the researcher presents them in the Dagaaba worldview and not in
the European prospective. With respect to suicide and especially euthanasia, subtle hints were also given that sometimes in caring for the seriously sick, euthanasia was practiced among the Dagaaba. But at the same time the Dagaaba believe that someone who commits suicide or dies through euthanasia cannot become an ancestor i.e. lineage ancestors (*Yir-kpime*).

Thus, death gives us something to think about, talk about and share in common and should be viewed as a subject of relevance. The Dagaaba culture is vital at all stages of life, so it is just as critical as life ends. Dagaaba culture provides meaning to events, objects, and people. In death, we witness the end state of the physical body. Yet, what we believe about the meaning of death, how death should be faced and what we believe happens after physical death varies according to different cultures and its associated religions.

Death, although a dreaded event, is perceived by the Dagaaba as the beginning of a person's deeper relationship with all of creation, the complementing of life and the beginning of the communication between the *visible* and the *invisible* worlds. The Dagaaba believe that the goal of life is to become an ancestor after death. This is why every Dagao who dies must be given a "correct" funeral, supported by a number of religious ceremonies. It is further believed that if this is not done, the dead person may become a wandering ghost, unable to "live" properly after death and therefore a danger to those who remain alive. There is ambivalence about attitudes to the recent dead, which fluctuate between love and respect on the one hand and dread and despair on the other, particularly because it is believed that the dead have power over the living.
It might be argued that "proper" death rites are more a guarantee of protection for the living than to secure a safe passage for the dying. Death is the one fact about the future that can be counted on for certain. Indeed, it is a universal, natural, persistent, inescapable, unavoidable, and undeniable fact of life. Death’s impact on human behaviour does not take place in isolation; it takes place in a given social context. In other words, a person’s behaviour is a dynamic interaction between the person and the social context in which he or she lives.

Thomas Fuller (1993), a historian summed it up when he said, “The first breath is the beginning of death as well as the last sleep.” Death is a normal and important part of life; the end however saddens us precisely because living is so dear to our hearts. Death, although a dreaded event, is perceived as the beginning of a person's deeper relationship with all of creation, the complementing of life and the beginning of the communication between the visible and the invisible worlds.

Many Dagaaba argued that befitting funeral rites are more a guarantee of protection for the living than to secure a safe passage for the dying. Here again, the study finds some ambivalence about attitudes towards the dead, which fluctuate between love and respect on the one hand and dread and despair on the other, particularly because it is believed that the dead have power over the living.

An unacceptable death that the Dagara/Dagaaba is still grappling with is the death of children and adolescents (Pol-bile/Pog-serale). In many cases, the family tries to establish the cause of the death through divination before proceeding with the funeral and mourning. Among the Dagara, when an adolescent passes on, only the funeral drum
(Kuor) is used not even the xylophones (Gyille) particularly in the case that the deceased has no siblings. The belief is that, should they use the xylophones at the funeral of an adolescent who has no siblings; the mother will become barren and will bear no children.

However, the death of an adult whose son(s) has begotten children is thought of in a different way. Such a person has reached the ideal end of his earthly allotted life span. He or she is too weak to arouse the anger of the shrine, ancestors or mortal; and has won an honourable place in the community having established his house in the case of the man and has thereby achieved the Dagaaba society’s ultimate purpose on earth. Only in a case of this kind, would ‘no cause’ be given for an adult’s death.

The following were some opinions the researcher gathered through interaction with elderly and knowledgeable indigenes, sons and daughters of the Nandom traditional area. The researcher was made to understand that as per the Dagara customs and traditions, if a person is a wizard, a murderer, a thief or one who has broken the community code or taboos, or had had an unnatural death or an improper burial, then such a person may be doomed to punishment in the afterlife as a wandering ghost, and may be beaten and expelled by the ancestors or subjected to a period of torture according to the seriousness of their misdeeds.

The Dagara (Dagaaba) also have a widespread perception and belief that witches and sorcerers are not admitted to the spirit world and such people could be refused proper burial. The practice was to subject their bodies to actions that deter others from engaging in such an acceptable social ills. Such bodies were burnt or chopped up and given to hyenas.
It should be stated however that during the fieldwork, no such practice was witnessed. This is an indication that the practice has undergone cultural changes compared to 50 years ago.

In sampling further views from the fieldwork, the following key findings were noted:

1. That for the Dagaaba, human life is socially and materially integrated in a community of solidarity.

2. That a Dagao (not all), see the shadow as a ghost that accompanies one after his birth and the shadow follows the body wherever it goes and disappears only at death.

3. That life finds its source in that which is life itself, the author of life. For the Dagaaba, this creator- that which is life itself is *Naangmen* (God), *Ire* (Creator), *Sore* (Owner), *Dangne* (Lord). The notion *Ir* i.e. to create implies that, God has inexhaustible stock of things from which he freely selects and calls them into existence.

4. That, the Dagaaba adapts unitary concept of the soul, with considerable diversities just the same as the three elements namely: that the soul can leave the body at night when a man dreams and it is wandering and thus, becomes prey to witches. Secondly, the soul is a ghost and spirit that journeys to the land of the dead in the midst of witches, but remains intact. Thirdly, the soul is a shadow. This follows the body wherever it goes and disappears only at death.
5. That death is a state of rest *(pieno)* or *(kulu)* - returning home to one’s true life in the eschatological congregation. The final end is the termination of his corporeal existence, and the beginning of an eternal existence. (Religious influence).

6. That the human person journeys through the invisible to the visible. Before birth or at conception it is an invisible state then comes birth, is visible and finally invisible again which is death.

7. That when a man dies, he is transformed into a ghost and then to an ancestor, living in the land of the dead, a place of abundance, where one only needs to think of what one wants and one gets it. Death is final for the Dagao.

8. That death is not the total annihilation. Death for them is liberation of man from his earthly clutches to his survival and security in the “eschatological congregation” of the ancestors.

At the news of a death or departed relative, close associate especially people of incalculable and sterling achievements, e.g. great leaders, head of a family members, chiefs, elders and other dignitaries including great hunters and farmers in the days past, there is usually a spontaneous upsurge of grief, sorrow and lamentations.

The findings also shows that some 50 years ago, among the Dagaaba the popular mind was that dying was associated primarily with a natural degeneration of the body otherwise known as “old age”. Death due to old age is desirable for the Dagaaba. Many who died were in the age brackets of 80-100 years and over, making death predictable as a corollary of the aging process. (Bekye, 2009).
Other findings of the study also show that the Dagaaba believe in the super-natural or spiritual causes of death which includes retribution from the deities or the work of malevolent forces. For the Dagaaba, the state of irreversibility of the undesirable condition leading to death is at times due to the patient’s own misdeeds or sinfulness or ‘foolishness.’ Diseases that are thought to be caused by the Supreme Being, the tutelary spirits, the ancestors, are all under this category. Here, the patient may not have any sympathy from anywhere, and his or her death may be desired, if not actually provoked.

On the other hand, it may be due to another person’s wickedness, which makes such a person act physically against the patient, rendering his condition irreversible. Such a patient wins the sympathy of many. Another situation is the belief that the person’s fate had been pre-determined. Either the gods (divinities) willed that this be so or that the person chose such a situation for himself or herself prior to conception. For the Dagaaba therefore, the process of dying and the prospect of death are universal reminders of our mortality and vulnerability to physical and spiritual decline.

Again, the study found out that, for the Dagaaba, poisoning is so abhorrent. And so, in the last five (5) decades ago, if someone is proved to have poisoned anyone they would be immediately banished from the community. This practice no longer holds today, because of fear of being a victim to the one you expose or oppose and the consequences thereof. Today, such acts are criminal and handled by the state judicial apparatus? The most virulent form of poison is thought to be the body fluids or other substances from a corpse. These could be introduced into the food of a victim. As result there is much vigilance during the preparation of a corpse for lying in state and during the burial.
Such a form of illness is incurable, if not diagnosed early enough. Other poisons include extracts of certain herbs, the bile of a crocodile and the venom of some snakes. Some of these poisons were traditionally used by the Dagaaba to poison the tips of arrows and spears and the edges of the swords.

Poisoning an individual to death among the Dagaaba is abhorred because of the way the victim may swell up before death. The belief is that such a person cannot become an ancestor. The Dagaaba consider death from a swollen stomach or body to be bad death. A person who dies with a swollen body is buried away from the community, and this is considered as having been “thrown away”. Such an event could generate a feud, if one is suspected for the deed, as a result of the victim’s family consulting diviners and mediums. The priest of the land deity (Tengan-sob) would impose very serious sanctions to prevent such occurrences becoming common.

Another major finding was that the supernatural causes of illness include those that do not respond to physical medication and illness which cannot be diagnosed. These could be swollen and distended stomach, a swollen body, and ranging fever that does not subside, even terrible diseases such as smallpox, yaws, cerebro-spinal meningitis, HIV/AIDS and more recently Ebola. These are sicknesses which the Dagaaba have been unable to understand or cure traditionally. As a result, they are attributed to super-natural agents and myths have been created around them. For instance, when the attempt to cure it consistently failed, it was assumed that this was a sickness that was brought by the enemies through witchcraft.
On the contrary, the researcher in his opinion realized that today, medical advances and increased life expectancy have demonstrated that „old age“ does not directly cause death.

The leading causes of death in the West and now also in Africa, of person 65 years of age and above are: 1) heart disease, 2) cancer, 3) cerebro-vascular disease (stroke), 4) lung diseases, 5) pneumonia, influenza, and 6) diabetes. Data presented here was obtained from National Health Reports especially the 2008 Ghana National Health Report.

By the 1930s, the hospital had become the main setting for death (Bekye, 2009). Today, approximately 75 percent to 80 percent of all deaths occur in institutions (hospitals and nursing homes), where treatment is common and with only a few friends and relatives present. In the past five decades, a number of old people express the preference to die at home and without pain, probably due to the level of education or the absence and or the paucity of the numbers of existing health centres. Today, the older a person is when he/she dies, the more likely that death will take place in a nursing home setting.

Clearly emanating from this research is that, for the Dagaaba, the prominence and dignity of a man, is to return as an ancestor after death. Life after death is therefore, a continuation of the present life, and one probably has to work hard to make the best out of it. Life continues after death but as a transition to a different stage, to the place of the forefathers (the eschatological world of the ancestors). An ancestor would intercede for the living and protect them. In that context, it means that it is in ancestorship that one could find the continuation of life. But for Camus and Sartre, human life is futile and the world has a determined purpose or meaning. This assertion however, is the direct opposite of the Dagaaba conception of life, death and the hereafter. (Suom-Dery, 1984).
In the context of interpersonal relationship in the Dagaaba community, the mystery of life is experienced. For instance at birth, the individual is supposed to enter into communion with the spiritual world by being given his Guardian Spirit (Sigra). The Soul (Sie) which is the spiritual element of man is the most vital part of the human person. The human being has material body as commonly perceived and the human personality is taken to be what accounts for our being alive- the soul, and having a particular destiny; it is that soul, whose presence means life and whose departure means death. It is itself conceived as a replica of a person and credited with the office of a guardian angel.

The ontologically interesting thing about this kind of being is that although it is conceived in the image of a person, it is exempted from the bigger characteristics of the material body. Thus, it can appear at, or disappear from, places without regard to speed limits for that matter in motion or to the laws of impenetrability. Moreover, it is capable of action at a distance in which a living person may be severely affected without perceptible contact. The question of deceivability brings us to an important property of the entities in question. They cannot be seen with the naked eye nor heard with the unaided ear, except on rare occasions when they choose to make themselves sensibly accessible to particular persons; otherwise, they can be seen or heard only by people with medicinally heightened powers of sight and hearing.

The Dagaaba believe that, to be human, is to participate in their beliefs system, rituals and festivals in the community. For them, community, care, solidarity, conscious and active participation in common life experiences are very paramount. For an individual to opt out of a community is to opt out of life itself. This is because; life for them is put in real action in the community. There is sharing and a feeling of fraternity. Perpetual efforts to live the
will of their ancestor just like living the will of the Christian God, is something unavoidable and recommendable for the Dagao. They also believe that once you are living out your life well or doing the will of the ancestors, one will certainly be renewed and rewarded with long life, wealth and children as spiritual blessings, rather than a curse. What the Dagaaba are interested in, is the fact that, man is not just matter, (ten) animated by Spirit (vouro/ nyovur) which defies annihilation. Man (generic) is endowed also with reason (ya) and will (fang) and he is capable of inter subjective relationships. For a Dagao, the fact that man is not an animal (dung/bonwie) relates warmly with persons and gives meaning to his existence.

The Dagaaba believe that rewards and punishments come to people in this life and not in the hereafter. In the land of the departed, what happens there happens automatically, irrespective of a person's earthly behaviour, provided the correct burial rites have been observed. For a Dagao, the nearest equivalent of ‘hell’ is to be cut off from the community of the ancestors when you die. The reward for bad life for a Dagao can be a shameful death, at times disaster may strike and curses are invoked and subsequently leading to the exclusion of the dead from the eschatological congregation. Therefore, indispensable values such as: honesty, charity, care, hospitality and love are but some of the prerequisites for an ideal life for a dignified person. The absence of these virtues is a disregard for the ancestors and God.

Another significant fact is that, the ideal life for the Dagaaba is broader with various applications and implications. Characteristically, the ideal life for the Dagaaba, is solemnized, socially, morally, religiously and materially integrated in the community life. Placide Temples, [1959, 1970] an African religious scholar, describes “every misfortune that Africans encounter as a diminution of vital force.”
Illness and death result from some outside agent, a person, thing, or circumstance that weakens people because the agent contains a greater life force.

This study is also an attempt to analyze some of the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and experiences about death and the hereafter in Dagaaba society and their interpretations including my own interpretations is given in the context in which they are used.

For instance a Dagare proverb which I heard from a divisional chief in Nandom-Ketuo, (known and called in private life as ‘Nabara’ meaning pretentious) goes like this:

‘Nimiri za mi mgera e tero’o laa’ which literally means „each one for himself and God for us all”’. By that, everybody or household must be responsible for their own troubles these days. He was referring to the death of a family relations and management of the funeral. This proverbial expression dismisses the question of reliability, care and dependency on any household rather than those bereaved. It is also because of the fact that these days funerals are the most sophisticated events and most expensive to handle. In the event of death of a family member.

Mr. Nyuur Charles, affectionately called Kara (2013) in my interaction with him lamented that; „a poor man on his own, cannot organize a meaningful funeral in the present dispensation”. He added; ‘Nu zagla sob be kyure baa’, meaning, if you do not have anything to give to a dog e.g. bone/food, do not invite it. You cannot give what you do not have. This is the reason why those in the ‘bush’ referring to the indigenes who are outside the village and working in the cities must always prepare well to assist with the funeral at home to avoid any “disgrace”.
The researcher’s impression is that sometimes some ‘migrant kin’ do not honour these obligations as social requirements which includes but not limited to, the provision of money and foodstuff for the celebration of funerals, festivals and sacrifices. In most cases there is tension between those at home and the „migrant kin”, hereafter referred to as those in the ‘bush’.

In another development, Dr. Sebastian Koug Bemile, (2014) in a conversation with him in Accra, said:

“The people at “home” think that those in the ‘bush’ have the money and resources in abundance, but they forget that the cost of living down south is expensive. If you listen to them „entirely” you will die before your time. He however, emphasized that the people in the ‘bush’ should not shy away from responsibilities and care towards home, aging parents and relatives. Adding that those in the habit of being complacent should avoid that especially when they are not in the position to support and for practical reasons. Honesty is the watch word here because he said; ‘Nobiri za me yangne kuc mang o menga.” A finger swallows commensurate to the size of the finger.
Speaking to a few colleague friends in a Pito bar in Accra, they shared this collective view about the people at home (Nandom and its environs).

“… they demand and expect so much from us financially. They put „all” their problems on us for solutions even in times when the situation is worse off than they can imagine. When we are unable to perform and honour their request, they begrudge angrily”

This goes to confirm the Dagara saying that; *nobeen be pegr bee lene o tuor'a*. This implies that one hand cannot wash itself; therefore, they should not expect much from him alone. The implication of this proverbial expression indicates that, every member of the family must be willing to assist in diverse ways to solving problems of the family (*yir*) as a collective responsibility, especially for the Dagara in times of bereavement just as members of same family would want to enjoy privileges as may lawfully come before the family. This is equivocal to yet another Dagara proverb which in English expression explicitly states that: “One does not chase after a Squirrel alone in the bush”. Within the Dagara traditional society, the extended family was the hub of social life. Most educated literates however, do not shirk their responsibilities and obligation to the extended family. (Ludovic Doggu, informant 2013)
6.2 Legendary Sources and Myths

Legendary incidents are peculiar to their descent groups or clans. Dagara legend and songs are pregnant in meaning with didactic purpose. For avoidance of repetitions, my earlier chapter touched on this with particular reference to the history and origin of the Dagaaba, which borders on legends and myths, because of the absence of documentation source. There is a myth that defines the origin of death not emanating from God, but due to man’s carelessness and negligence. According to the baghr legend, Naangmen created all things, visible and invisible.

6.3 Proverbs

Dagaaba proverbs belong to the common patrimony of wisdom and knowledge as a reflection of the feelings and thoughts in the society. These proverbs are short sayings to invoke pity and striking sentences or phrases, which easily catch our imagination.

The Dagaaba proverbs are manifestations of wisdom and they circulate in the society anonymously. According to Plissart (1983) “African proverbs help parents to educate their children. They use them when they want to warn their children against some foolish acts, correct, or to add a point to a well-meaning advice”. According to Korem et al (2000). When a stubborn child finds himself in trouble, a relevant proverb is quickly used to teach him/her a lesson. When used, proverbs help to convey information in a more efficient and effective way. They are particularly useful with audiences that also understand the language used and appreciate what they mean.
However, we cannot point at who formulated these proverbs unlike songs and legends. All those who imbibe their wisdom and have good memory to be able to quote them in the appropriate situations, use them. There are a myriad of such proverbs. It also suffices to say that there are a number of Dagaare proverbs and idiomatic expressions which literally symbolize or carry deep expression, just in the way Dagara/Dagaaba give their children names as shall be examined later. Let me examine and explain briefly a few of those freely circulating proverbs which I gathered during my fieldwork. There are according to the elders in the village, proverbs in Dagara which was invariably on the lips of many elders, especially those who were destitute and had little or no care from the family.

(Below are a few relevant proverbs on death during my interaction with some residents of Nandom, Hamile & Dissin (July, 2013).

- *Kuu yon nu ngogre yaro baalo* – *It is only the dead who knows the friendship of a cemetery.* To be a friend to the cemetery is unimaginable. For the Dagao, though he does not delight in death, associates death to the friendship of the cemetery, because it is the residence of the dead.

- *Kuu kyɛnɛ ni guↄ* - *Death is the friend to sleep.* In other words, death and sleep are seen to be “consanguineously” related. Here, the emphasis is on the close relationship because they are synonymous. For the Dagara, pretence is sometimes made, that the person is not dead but only asleep, because of the hope of re-emerging as a possible ancestor one day.

- *Kuu be maale o tuora kuu kyobro yele* – *A dead man does not arrange his own funeral.* Many would have wished to see to it themselves how they want their own
funerals to take good shape, but that is an impossible desire. It is only those alive who decide how a funeral and burial should go, sometimes contrary to the deceased wish was a critical expression among many Dagaaba.

- **Kuu beyang daa - Death gives no notice.** This for the Dagara is a caution to always be prepared since death gives no warning, so that you may die honourably. (A moral requiement)

- **Nyangala gaa sabol ningdaar kabe e your pore, kuu sa nang.** This literally means and for a greater segment of Dagara, death is desirous over abject poverty and misery. Indications are that, the extent or degree of bitterness to which one feels, when misery and abject poverty hits a family amidst the absence care of any family member or kin, death will be preferred. As it were, a Dagara elder of the family even prefer his name being given honour in the line of descent after death, because he had lived a good life and within the culture. Every elder thus, prefer this to living in misery and abject poverty. This explains why the Dagara are usually hard working in nature to avoid such untold hardships.

- **Dongdome puo uure, o kyaa teere kuu naa wa nyogbaare**

  “Enemies are envious and worried.” Enemies they say are not God, but other people would have wished that death should lay his icy hands on their enemies. I interviewed a man aged 73, who was virtually living with his two grandchildren who also escaped to southern Ghana. He added, ‘the enemies had killed virtually every one of my offspring except the two grandchildren who also run away to the southern part of Ghana. I even hope my children in the south are still alive, said the man very painfully. He continued, now I am the sole survivor with my two grandchildren to look after. As if my enemies are unsatisfied, they kept prowling round like angry lion looking for me to kill.’
Finding out the background to the proverb **Dongdome puo uure, o kyaa teere kuu naa wa nyogbaare**, the researcher realized that in the man’s family, all his children were well to do. After killing three of his children out of the six by his enemies, the other three disappeared. All six (6) children received good and high education and were very wealthy, so enemies sought to finish his household, and hence, the proverb.

- **Dangbol sob nu me kpi** – Only a fool will play the fool

Here death also signifies suffering, for one’s stupidity or foolishness. The challenge is to be wise in the things we do that easily lead to death.

- **Kuu naa kum e te bang e dongdem** – If I were to die then, I will know my enemies.

Diviners and soothsayers are particularly tasked to unfold the causes of death. This is because the Dagara also believes that, death is not natural, but usually associated with the enemy or some evil forces, curse. Thus, the proverb seeks to explain that, in death your enemies shall be revealed, but since he is dead, yet those left behind will take precautions about the enemies.

- **Naangmen kuu sa tengan kuu** – Death from God is preferred to that which is caused by evil of man.

The Dagara believes that God has an inexhaustible list; He calls out from this earth, which in itself is better than those caused by the enemy or evil deeds of this earth.

When you examine dirges and proverbs of some indigenous Dagaaba like Zaghe (1992, 10) Bagnikon (1999, 93): and Bergyere, in these words:

**Ni yaga be wa bang ya, kuu me ku te bare?** - When people fail to know God, death is the answer.
Who knows God? Very few

Taking a drink (Pito) with your enemies?

Even if I die, I was wise.

Meda Bergyere, a renowned xylophonist and dirge singer of his time, has left a legacy and an unbeatable standard among the Dagara till this day. This is an explanation that reminds the people of the dangers of others who can be regarded as devil-incarnate. Such reminders centre on the need for Dagara to be cautious, mindful of the potential dangers of Dagara ill-mindedness and their attempts at killing usually through poisoning, emanating out of jealousy, envy and vindictiveness. Zaghe, emphasized more on “prevention is better than cure” as he said:” Ta ta ma sce lc la bare ma nu. – (Prevention is better than cure.)

Bagnikon (1999, 93), gives a food for thought and provoking expressions, such as:

A bad brother is better than his grave. Death is symbolized by a grave, so no matter how bad a brother is, he is still better than just a grave which is valueless.

6.4 Poetry

Dagara wisdom and philosophy is also expressed in poetry. There are many Dagaaba poems, which attempt at portraying the experiences of people. Bagnikon (2002, 1)

All the proverbs, poems and riddles often describe facts of life and amply show that such knowledge is arrived at by means of the observation of reality. Some Dagaaba poems, proverbs and riddles are very sophisticated in their manner of composition and only few people can discern and interpret their actual meaning. The Myth of the Bagre is a masterpiece of Dagaare oral literature and it is perhaps unparalleled in traditional Dagaaba poems as transmitted orally and therefore memorized and recited.
During one of the usual evening gatherings for poetry recital, the researcher collected a piece of poetry that rhymes with a question and answer like this:

_E ba bura, aa pop a zu?
Lee kuo._
_Bono kuo? ... Bonu kuu?
Kuu la’o_

The above poem is one of several Dagaare poems which portrays that a man is destined to die, and death is inevitable. *(Kuu la’o)*. To this class of poems belongs the _Bagre Myth_ as discussed earlier.

### 6.5 Folk-Songs

Folk songs form an important manifestation of wisdom literature in the traditional Dagaaba society. Many of these songs express facts about human experience. The composers use their experience to compose songs that appeal to the emotions and interest of the people. Some songs are admonitions and others are condemnations of certain vices in society. Misdemeanors are usually ridiculed and condemned in the form of folk songs. Other Dagaaba songs such as praise songs (*dano*), lineage songs (*yir-dano*), eulogize good behaviour. It requires a great skill and competence to compose these folk songs.

Women are noted for the ability to compose folk songs in the traditional Dagaaba society. Examples are songs that women sing while grinding at the millstone and songs they sing during the clapping of hands to dance (*Angee* or *nuru loba*). _Angee_ is a genre of Dagaare songs that women compose, sing and dance on moon light nights during the off farming season.
Usually, such songs are very topical on events and phenomena of social happenings in the society that portrays the feelings and thoughts. They serve as making people behave responsibly and in acceptable ways. Xylophone players rank very high on this scale of competence in the composition of folk songs.

The most popular Dagaare funeral song (*Kuor yiele*) is dubbed: *Kuu woo, kuu wwo yee,

*Tengzu ka aa so’o, Aah hee kuu nibe ni a te za!!*

This song in particular brings out the fact that, this world is not our home so death comes to take us to our home. Other folk-songs are admonitions and yet others condemn certain vices like sorcery, witchcraft and juju the society. Such misdemeanors are usually ridiculed and condemned in the form of folk songs. Xylophone players rank very high on this scale of competence in the composition of folk songs. The interesting fact is that these songs are sung for amusement. Folk-Songs are very important during festive celebration of the *Bagre* initiation. Angsotinge, (1986) made a detailed and very insightful analysis of Dagaaba folklore. Tengan (2006) also made a significant contribution to the study of this myth; he outlined the historical conditions and literary framework and structure of the composition of the Black Bagre.

### 6.6 Story-telling

Bauman [1986] echoes that people recall and recount their experiences through stories when he said: “we must recognize that the symbolic forms we call folklore have their primary existence in the action of people and their roots in social and cultural life”. Oral narrative provides an essentially rich focus for the investigation of the relationship between oral literature and social life because part of the special nature of narrative is to be doubly anchored in human events.
The oldest literary tradition in Africa is story-telling. Among the Dagaaba, stories mirror the society, because the society’s true face is reflected and most of which relates to issues of life, death and the hereafter. Story-telling forms a Dagaaba wisdom edifice. It is one of the most popular forms of entertainment. It used to be that at least one person could be found in every household who was adept at telling stories. Normally the story-telling session is in the evenings or night time and before the listeners depart to bed. Now with the advent of television and radio, story-telling is increasingly diminishing. This is however not about the demise of the art of story-telling, but an examination of the issues on death and the hereafter in the genres of tales and discourse of the Dagaaba. Furniss and Gunner [1995] write:

“Oral literature provides the domain in which individual comment on social relationships and creates knowledge about it. It would be safe to assume that the Dagaaba would have a core of creative work that deals with their concerns on death and afterlife”.

Story-telling forms a Dagaaba wisdom edifice. Cultural values of the Dagaaba are conveyed in the narratives of the stories told. It also performs the dual function of entertaining and more importantly of educating about the cultural heritage of the people. Knowledge gives us facts about life but it is wisdom that teaches us how to appropriately use the facts. Indeed, wisdom is a synthesis of knowledge and the use of it in concrete situations. Experiential knowledge is a human quality, which can be acquired throughout life. The wise people among the traditional Dagaaba are therefore, the people who have successfully acquired this human quality of story-telling and use it purposefully. The people of this category enjoy a certain amount of respect from among their peers and particularly from younger people. Their pieces of advice are heeded because such is the
path to success and happiness. In the Dagaaba society, such individuals are few as noted by the researcher, and the older generations no longer engage in such activity but rather in western music and dance.

The Dagaaba have a good vision of reality as a whole, of the world and of how the good life can be lived. The ability to observe recurring events and draw correct conclusions from oral literature is of paramount importance. Thus, the Dagaaba stories are spiced, inter-woven and interspersed with songs and a number of wise sayings or proverbs. This adds to the beauty of the story being told. As it were, as one would expect, the traditional Dagaaba society, people who are themselves successful in life and therefore assume the honour of being role models and moral authorities are those who pay heed to the moral message of the story. The admonitions of such people are desired and revered. Among the Dagaaba, elders have the responsibility of the proper upbringing of all the children in good morals irrespective of whose children they are and story-telling enhances this perception. Suom-Dery (2000) sums it up by saying, ‘bibile be ter wule i’—“the education and moral upbringing of a child is not limited to any one person.” The general expectation is that wise people through story-telling, have the duty to admonish the youth and children alike. By Dagara social and moral standards, it is the duty of everyone to form and train children in the way of uprightness and moral aptitude. Closely related to this quality is that elders with high moral standards are reputed for their virtuous life. The traditional Dagaaba society is a remarkably simple society where wisdom and virtues are inter-related, interconnected and interdependent. One who is morally depraved, flouts virtue and disrespects moral values is said to be one disregarded in society and the people will often use the expression, ‘O sob be e nire.’ meaning he is not human.
A key characteristic of Dagaaba folk wisdom is that it is oral and transmitted as such. In the traditional Dagaaba society there is no literature on it, since the art of writing was alien. Articulating the absence of writing, McCoy (1988:51) says: “Moreover, as there were no schools in the northwest and no interest in the language outside the area in which it was spoken, it had never been written down. No dictionary has been compiled and there was no book of Dagaare grammar.” until later. Consequently, one cannot speak of a systematic wisdom movement in the traditional Dagaaba society. It is not also an individual’s heritage; people build on what exists and is transmitted from generation to generation.

The Dagaaba folk wisdom has become increasingly anonymous. There are no authors to specific aspects of Dagaaba oral literature. Notably such oral literature is preserved through formats like singing the dirges. For example, the dirge singers, *(Langkonbe)* have a literal format. Similarly, *(Bagre-burgbe)* has the skin with “an extensive array of mundane objects, including shells, bones, stones, and metals” (Somé 1999).

Following these findings, the researcher found out that among the Dagara, death is not as comforting as in the belief in the afterlife. It stands to reason that, one may have to give in to wishful thinking, if we must acknowledge that the question of the existence of an afterlife is one requiring both rigorous conceptual analysis and careful evaluation of evidence. It is apparent from all the above that, in one way or another, the idea of immortal ancestors dominates the Dagaaba thought and literature about death and the afterlife and that unless a befitting funeral rite of the deceased is performed, the spirit of the dead person will not join the spirit of the ancestors.
CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary

Among the Dagaaba ethnic group of Ghana in West Africa, death rites and funeral performance have a central and common place in the cosmology of the group. The Dagaaba believe that the world of the living and the world of the dead are inextricably connected and that those alive are the living-living whereas the dead are the living-dead.

Their cosmology teaches that while the two worlds are separate, both are connected and life is punctuated by moments of joy and sorrow, with human experience ending with death. The funeral, and the grieving process that accompanies death, is for the Dagaaba, an opportunity for profound connection with each other and the belief is that, the world of the dead provides the deeper wisdom required for navigating the challenges of the world of the living. From the Dagaaba perspective, grief is not only food for the soul but also a process that evaporates the barriers that stand in the way of living humanely, compassionately, and in harmony with human beings and the two worlds.

Funeral ceremonies are the most elaborate of the ceremonial occasions of the Dagaaba, be it in terms of attendance, time spent, or emotions generated. There is a general belief in life after death, and funeral rites are the passage for human beings from the Land of the Living (tengzu) to the Land of the Dead (daparewie).
For the Dagaaba, the land of the dead is not the Christian notion of heaven. The life of the ancestors is pictured as one of dignity and serenity, rather than of bliss. The belief is that, there are no temptations or tribulations nor excitements in the land of the dead. The one preoccupation of that existence is with the good of the living. It is upon their ability to achieve this aim that the importance of the ancestors is predicated. Beneficial interaction with the community of the living, thus, is the first law that dictates their existence.

For the Dagao, living a full and meaningful life is a condition for becoming an ancestor. This is probably not universally the case in Africa, but in the view of the Dagaaba of northwestern Ghana, a person whose life is cut short by an accident or a disease perceived as ‘unclean’ or one that is considered as a witch or wizard does not gain immediate access to the land of the dead; he or she becomes a neighbourhood ghost, an occasional source of frightening apparitions, until he can come back to be born again to try to work out a complete life. This, by the way, is the nearest approximation to purgatory in the Dagaaba system. It is also one of the two forms of limited reincarnation postulated in that system.

The second form is supposed to occur when a mother loses a baby and has another afterwards and there is a recurrence of death. In such circumstances, it is believed that, it is the deceased child that comes back to be reborn meaning *Dery* for a male and *Der-pog* and female. Aside from those two types of cases, any talk of reincarnation is largely metaphorical. The Dagaaba just like the Akan or Yoruba speak of the second coming of an ancestor i.e. to be sure there can be multiple comings of the same ancestor, which also means, the new addition to the family that bears striking physical or psychological resemblance to the ancestor in question. The literal component of meaning here is that the influence of the ancestor himself is at work in the phenomenon.
The ancestors are so important in the affairs of the living and status being enhanced by longevity; it is useful to have permanent ancestors. Any generalized and continuous turnover of ancestors would obviously detract from that scheme. Also, this concept of immortality is a pragmatic one; it is immortality for the service of humankind. In this way of thinking a paradisal type of immortality in which people endlessly just enjoy themselves without any responsibilities would be viewed as glorified idleness.

If we look for a substantially analogous concept of survival after death in Western thought, obviously it is not in orthodox Christianity that we will find it. The likely place would be in the theory of the astral body found in the literature of ‘Dagara spiritualism’ that death is regarded as the departure of the soul itself, a kind of body, from the physical plane to another plane of existence, namely, the astral. The soul, in contradistinction from the physical body, is of a highly subtle constitution; but it is still basically corporeal. It is, moreover, of the form of the body, and although it is generally not visible to the ordinary eye, ‘those who have eyes’ can see it and even hold and converse with it. This gives the departed soul a certain sociability and helpfulness. Thus, it is not unknown for the dead to reveal the whereabouts of lost valuables or to help crime detection with crucial information, according to spiritualist claims. It may be said, accordingly, that in terms of ontological status and social relevance the astral survivor is akin to the inhabitant of the land of the dead as spoken of in Dagaaba eschatology.

Death, particularly of infants, was frequent due to poor health care and its related hazards. Those who have not yet been weaned are not mourned in the usual way (public mourning), except by their mothers, because they are deemed to be wandering spirits, rather than humans. Precautions are taken against their return to this earth.
For all others, however, the funeral rites are long and complex, and they involve the participation of many people. The burial performance have been shortened from a week to two days or three days, (in cases of wake-keeping) in some instances, regardless of whether the deceased is a male or a female, and that performance is followed over the next year by a series of rites that gradually release the widow (or widower) and the property and personality of the deceased and dismiss the soul to "God's country."

The dead travel across the river of death with the aid of a ferryman. During the trip, those who have led evil lives may be punished for their misdeeds. In the course of the series of funeral ceremonies, a deceased also becomes an ancestor, with a shrine that thereafter receives regular offerings of food and drink from his descendants, especially from those who have inherited the deceased.

7.2. Conclusion

As a form of an eulogy from my own ingenuity, I want to conclude in these words that:

I have seen too many dear ones and friends leave this world, gone too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging. Sure, over the years, my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break, when you lose a loved one, my own mother or when a child suffers, or dies. Some tears never dries. But broken hearts are what give us strength, understanding and compassion.

A heart never broken is pristine and sterile. So, many have never laughed and so many have died before their hair could turn silver or gray, so “make hay while the sun shines.”
It is apparent from the Dagaaba discourse and literature that the idea of immortal ancestors dominates in their thought about death and the afterlife. But the question here is that “has the Dagaaba belief in the ancestors and the associated cultural practices survived the impact of foreign cosmologies?” It might be expected this belief in question would, for large masses of contemporary Dagaaba, be a thing of the past and that; in consequence, there would be quite radical alterations in their culture today. Christian practices today regarding the mourning of the dead, for example, in spite of presupposing a different system of eschatology, have simply been added to traditional ones, thus compounding the extravagance of the funeral process where that tendency exists. This is typical of the general confusion in contemporary Dagaaba life deriving from the uncritical examination prior to acceptance of foreign ideas (Westernization).

The researcher sees the social aftermath of death in two respects namely; the great preoccupation with the mourning of the dead and secondly the associated rites among the people which are worth noting. On the one hand, the outpourings of feeling on such occasions have resulted in some of the most beautiful traditional poetry in Dagarateng.

On the other hand, the cosmology of the people is not cast in stone, but has undergone changes due to agents of change, some of which changes are impacting negatively on the culture and especially on the youth of the Dagaaba today.
7.3. Recommendations

In the discourse about death and funerals among the Dagaaba in general, the elderly are “ambivalent”.

a. Once upon a time, they criticize the overemphasis on funerals at the expense of proper care during their lives. On the other hand, they would certainly not want to turn the tables. For the Dagaaba also, a poor funeral would be an “unbearable disgrace” or "disgraceful funeral" as in a public context in this sense, else, disgrace will be meaningless. For the Dagaaba however, there is a difference between a successful and a grand funeral celebration of the dead. You may spend big in the funeral, but achieve nothing significant due to poor organization and non-coordination. This for the elders of Dagaaba is a public disgrace because a poorly organized funeral worries the elderly more. In their eyes, a proper and successful funeral celebration is the most crucial service that the clan should perform to see their kin off finally to the land of the dead. The largeness and the meticulousness of the formalities and funeral rites, indicate respect for the deceased.

b. Among the Dagaaba, death and funeral performances, unlike premortem care, generate greater commitment and expenditure because clearly, the former is public and the latter is private. Neglect of the elderly and care are viewed as wrongful, but it carries lesser connotations of disgrace because it can remain negligible by others.

c. While often complaining about poverty and loneliness, the elderly themselves did not like to be too openly critical of their children because that would publicize the latter's failings and impose disgrace upon the parent; perhaps, they had failed to
give their children a proper education and thus not economically sound to meet the
needs of their parents. Public honour is of greater importance than private welfare.

A good funeral not only confers prestige upon the family in the sense that it
demonstrates that the members of the family are successful in life and are
respected and admired by others; it also makes a public display of solidarity within
the family. Most of the elders express criticism about the neglect of the living and
the ancestors are in this bracket and are nevertheless, supposed to be cut off from
the living, because they still reveal themselves in dreams or appear to their living
relatives to guide or correct them.

Just like other cultures, the Dagaaba culture is not static, and is changing at some pace.
Two aspects of the great preoccupation with the mourning of the dead and associated
rites among the Dagaaba are worth noting and highly recommendable.

1. The outpouring of feelings on such occasions have resulted not
only in some of the most beautiful traditional poetry, but also
funeral songs and improved dirges in Dagao.

2. The frequent funeral gatherings, offer constant opportunities for
the exchange of assurances of sympathy and solidarity and for
concrete acts of mutual aid.
However, it is a source of worry, then as the researcher observes, that usually in times of bereavement:

- The kin usually travel in some cases hundreds of miles to the funeral of a relative but did not find the time in many years to visit such a kin, even on their sick bed.
- In modern dispensation, employers are reluctant to grant leave to workers to visit sick relatives but give permission to employees to attend funerals of their kin. These and others may need to be seriously re-looked into.

The researcher also observes the following that:

a. The beliefs surrounding death and lifeafter death are helping the Dagaaba to be fully engaged in the “here and now”. That their best time was here on earth and because of that they are motivated to do their optimum.

b. Beliefs and practices that centre on lifeand lifeafter death in my opinion are tenets that should still be held high, active and alive in our modern society because the notion of ancestors always remind the Dagaaba about the value of good, moral life that creates a counterbalance to the danger of exploiting other people and sadistic brutalities.

c. It is observed from this research that, by and large, what particularly occupies the mind of the Dagaaba is not the death of just anybody, but the death of those who have attained adulthood. This is why death in old age of a person who has led a full and productive life is not strictly an occasion for mourning. This is taken as a mark of the recognition that the person is blessed by the Supreme Being with a full and completed term of life. In similar circumstances, the Dagaaba actually speak of celebration rather than lamentation.
The thought seems to be that when one has had ample time to work out one's destiny, it remains only to go and take one's place among the ancestors.

d. On the other hand, for an individual who dies a minor, the question of joining the ancestors does not arise, and in many places there is not even the pretense of a funeral. Although a minor is recognized to be a human being, entitled, in an even greater degree than an adult, to help, affection, and all due consideration, still such an individual is not regarded as a full person and therefore cannot be a candidate for ancestorhood just like ‘bachelorhood’ or one who has lived a very bad life are indications of disqualification for ancestorhood. Not even death is credited with the power to transform the immaturity of a child into the necessary maturity of an ancestor, yet death at any stage short of ripe age, requires a special explanation.

In the normal run of things, a person should grow up, raise a family and also help his community in all desirable ways before giving up the ghost. A life cut short, then, is an indication of an interruption of the normal sequence of events. This is, in effect, the thought which leads the Dagaaba to inquire whether or not an evil hand of the sort is involved in such a death.

Suppose a child playing with a loaded gun pulls the trigger accidentally and kills a promising young man. The gross mechanics of the situation does not elude the Dagaaba mind, but why this particular young man and at this particular juncture of his life? If this question is answerable, it will be only in terms of reasons, purposes and intentions.
Perhaps the young man has fallen victim to the envious machinations of a witch. Such a hypothesis, when seriously explored, can have the profoundest social consequences; for the suspicion would be bound to fall on some individual close by whom henceforth becomes a spoken or unspoken enemy. It may as well be that perhaps the young man may have died as punishment from the ancestors for a grievous sin committed by him. He may, for example, have committed adultery which few greater enormities can be imagined in his family life the family. Then as the adage goes, the wages of sin is death.

Therefore, the Dagaaba assumes that it can be answered, since it considers that everything has a sufficient reason, either by way of mechanical causation or by intelligent (or quasi-intelligent) design through the existence of the institution of divination, which is an extremely important component of the Dagaaba culture.

Premature death, of course, is not the only problem requiring the expertise of a diviner but also sickness, personal adversities, or even communal reverses, but death is the most worrying of them. In the contemporary times, divination seems to take the place of revelation in many African cultures, a fact which accounts for the absence of prophets of God in the corresponding traditional religions. Our ancestors along with other types of beings are thought to vouchsafe adequate hints and advice to their people. The proliferation of prophets of God in the charismatic are sweeping across Africa in recent times like a wild fire, and may be excused as a rather mundane simile in connection with such a ‘spiritual’ phenomenon - is another contemporary twist to a traditional African cultural trait. African divination seems to have domesticated Christian revelation!
There are however, some foreign (alien) ideas that influence the Dagaaba of today which the researcher terms *Dagaatization* at the influence of *Westernization*. It is at times wrong and inappropriate in accepting foreign styles and ideas. What is regrettable is to take them without critical scrutiny. If the unexamined life is not worth living, then it cannot be appreciated because such an unexamining approach may not do any good to anybody. There is no more prescribed dressing for instance, for funerals as it used to be, which gives that colourful and cultural outlook to typical Dagaaba funerals. Today, many people use western cultural styles, e.g. mortuary rites, and dressing. The traditional smock for funeral is hardly used. Many Dagaaba now listen to European music at funerals instead of the use of traditional dirges by dirge singers whose dirge message are supposed to help shape the society are now increasingly ignored especially for those performing funerals in southern Ghana. This also shows that if the Dagaaba society is giving in to these practices, the moral fibre of society will change.

It is also time to move from having expensive funerals. In times past, funerals were held in moderation but with utmost decorum and respect for the dead. In recent times the emphasis upon funerals has shown a tendency to degenerate into expensive exhibitions, which, in view of the strong pressures for conformity in our societies, can drive even the reluctant to ruinous funeral expenses. The sense of tragedy in the face of death is, of course, not necessarily any less in communities with brief funeral rites than in those with extensive ones. Finally, there is strong evidence that many Dagaaba still need to learn their culture, because this knowledge remains a major influence on the adoption of more accurate forms of their cultural performances in the subject matter of death and afterlife.
Therefore, cultural education strategy and practices are usually tenacious among the Dagaaba and traditional leaders who are opinion leaders in matters pertaining to these cultural issues. It follows therefore that, such leaders should be part of the focus of cultural education efforts to help maintain the Dagaaba cultural heritage that seems to be disappearing under the strong waves of western influence today. This does not prelude the fact that efforts to modify unwholesome cultural practices should be encouraged, especially cultural practices that are at variance with moral principles.
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NEWSPAPERS PUBLICATION

Daily Graphic, July 24, 2014
I am a Ph.D research candidate in the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ghana, Legon. The subject of the study is: Death and the Hereafter among the Dagaaba of Northwestern Ghana: A Critical Reflection toward Anthropologico-Religious and Philosophical Studies. The questions are designed to help critique and justify, to what extent is the Dagaaba cultural perception and their worldview about life, death and the hereafter, amidst the social changes that have occurred over the last two decades and their implications on the Dagaaba in a gendered transforming socio-cultural context? The data and information you provide are anonymous, and would be used solely for the purpose of this dissertation. Please let your responses to these core structured questions be accurate as possible.

Thank you.

1. Do the Dagaaba have any explicit philosophical system?

2. Are their thoughts and beliefs about life, death and the hereafter, philosophical with traces of anthropological and theological significance?

3. Is atheistic philosophy foreign or not to the Dagaaba on their perception of death and the hereafter?

4. Any traces of the origin of Dagaaba and are there any uncertainties and factors of unwritten records about the date and the exact place of origin of earliest ancestor(s)?
5. What is their belief about the soul of the departed Dagao?

6. Is there any separation of the body from the soul in the light of transcendence?

7. Are their thoughts about death at old age as against youthful age?

8. What are their major pillars of funeral performance practice?

9. What is their belief system about the ancestors and their role?

10. What are the social changes in a gendered transforming socio-cultural context?

11. What is the impact of social change in a gendered transforming socio-cultural context?

12. What is their belief about the spiritual world and guardian spirit” (Sigra) concept?

13. How do they perceive the terminally ill and the dying in the light of care?

14. Is the goal of life for every Dagao to become an ancestor after death?

15. What is their belief about personhood as against the western system?

16. Any influence of Christianity (Catholicism) among the Dagaaba about the death and the hereafter?
17. Does their world-view make any unique contribution to mankind perennial bid to comprehend the profundity of life, death and the hereafter?

18. What is the belief system about God, Ancestors, Spirits and Man, as they reflect in Dagaare discourse?

19. What is the Dagaaba cultural heritage on death and the hereafter?

20. Do you have any reservations, comments or recommendations on this subject of research for future researchers?

Source: Survey Questionnaire