THE CONCEPT OF “AFFLICTION” IN THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF THE
INDIGENOUS GA PEOPLE OF GHANA.

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July, 2016

This thesis is submitted to the University of Ghana, Legon, in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the award of MPHIL Religion degree.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, with the exception of specific quotations or paraphrases used in this study, which have been duly acknowledged, the work is my handiwork carried out at the Department for the Study of Religions, under the supervision of the under listed lecturers of the Department.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my lovely mother, Dr. Diana Heymann-Adu, who greatly inspired me to undertake such an intense research at a time when I barely knew anything about the Ga culture. Most of all, this work is for all who seek to know more about the philosophy of a very profound people – the Gas, though a herculean task, its impact reaches to generations untold.
ABSTRACT

This study investigates the phenomenon of spiritually-induced affliction among the Ga people of Ghana. The Gas, just as most African cultures, believe that the world is divided into the causal realms of the physical and the spiritual. Based on this belief, they postulate that the cause of human affliction does not only originate from the physical realm, but also from the spiritual sphere. Events attributed to affliction emanating from the spiritual world are particular mishaps which natural (ordinary) explanations do not give satisfactory accounts. To the Gas, these are not just mere chance events, but events which are spiritually-induced.

Accordingly, affliction is ultimately a spiritually-induced phenomenon resulting from either the direct actions of spiritual causative agents (SCA) such as the gods (jemawɔji) and ancestral spirits (niime ke naame), or the indirect deeds of social causative agents (SCA1) including witches (ayeĩ), bad medicine-men (tsofatsemẽi), and all other spiritual experts who can use metaphysical powers to inflict pain. SCAs act directly since they don’t rely on any other spiritual power to afflict people. On the other hand, SCA1s act indirectly because they depend on either the power of SCAs or higher spiritual powers to cause mishaps.

Spiritually-induced affliction can take the form of diseases such as fever, paralysis, epilepsy, malaria, running stomach, and diseases that defy scientific diagnosis, and at other times body weakness and physical pain including head and stomach aches. In other cases, affliction comes as psychological problems such as madness (sekeyeli), fear (gbeyishem), and even some abnormal behavior. Some cases are so severe that they lead to the death of the victim.
Employing the phenomenological method for this study, the study investigated the phenomenon of spiritually-induced affliction and discussed two associated rituals used to resolve it (i.e. prayer and blood sacrifice). This inquiry adds to other Ga scholarly works on the theology and philosophy of affliction, since academic material on the subject matter is grossly lacking. It serves as a basis for further studies for other Ga intellectuals who would like to look into the diverse aspects of affliction.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My heartfelt thanks goes out to God Almighty who has given me the grace and strength to achieve such a hefty task in completing this research work. Indeed, this saying is worthy of acceptation that God gives strength to the weary.

Subsequently, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Lawrence Boakye and Dr. Ben Willie Golo for their guidance. I am also grateful to Dr. Ossom–Batsa, Dr. Harry Agbanu, Dr. Godson Ahortor, and other lectures of the department for their objective critiques and encouragement. I also want to thank the Tuft University Academic Community, U.S.A – Boston, especially, Prof. Elizabeth Lemons and Prof. Christiana Olfert, for their comments on my work. Special thanks goes to Prof Marion Kilson for her academic mentoring and reviews of earlier editions of my work. I will not forget Dr. Philip Laryea’s insightful critiques.

Also, to all who granted me interviews especially, the late Nuumo Borketey Larweh Tsuru II, a Nungua Wulomo, Nuumo Naku Agbeti II, Osu-Klotey Wulomo, Nii Agbokome I, the Tema Agbaafouiatse, Ago Korkor Awudun, Tema Manhean medium, Eric Nii Sowah and Carlos Albert Adotey Kpakpo-Sraha, who are Nungua elders, I say God bless you for making time outside your busy schedules to grant me audience.

Finally, I am also thankful to my father, Mr. Stephen Bright Adu for funding my MPhil program, my siblings and my church, the Salem Confederation, for the love and care you have shown me, and to my grandmother for your advice and support. Last of all I wish to thank my beloved Felicia Korkor Logmannor for her editing and useful reviews of my work.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

The indigenous Ga people of Ghana, who occupy a territory which extends from the Gulf of Guinea in the south to the feet of the Akuapim Hills\(^1\), in their religious worldview, offer a profound way of looking at affliction. Affliction is ultimately a spiritually-induced phenomenon resulting from either the direct actions of spiritual causative agents\(^2\) (SCA) such as the gods (jemawji), and ancestral spirits (niime ke naame), or the indirect deeds of social causative agents (SCA1). SCAs act directly since they don’t rely on any other spiritual power to afflict people. On the other hand, SCA1s generally act indirectly, because they depend on either the power of SCAs or higher spiritual powers to cause mishaps. These SCA1’s of affliction include witches, bad medicine-men, and all other spiritual specialists who know how to use metaphysical powers to cause pain. This idea of spiritually-induced suffering is summed up in the words of Margaret Field below:

> Incidentally, it should be mentioned that there is perfectly clear distinction in the Ga mind between plain directed madness [as an affliction] and spirit possession. Madness is regarded as a disease and is treated as other diseases are treated. It may have a supernatural cause, but so have all diseases.\(^3\)

Afflictions caused by these agents come in various ways and degrees of intensity. In certain circumstances, they come in the form of diseases such as fever, paralysis, epilepsy, malaria, and other instances as diseases which defy medical diagnosis. They can also take the form of

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physical pain and weakness such as headaches, stomach aches, and running stomach, and at other times affliction comes as psychological sensations such as madness (sekeyeli), fear (gbeyeishemɔ), and even some abnormal behavior.

The Gas believe that when one goes against his or her spiritual protector (kla), the person is exposed to a strange spirit called gbeshi. This spirit can cause its victim to behave in abnormal ways⁴ such as engage in theft (juu) and drunkenness (daatɔ). Other times they come as social mishaps such as poverty, inability to be successful and so on. In extreme situations afflictions results in sudden or a horrific-violent death. For example, a person can invoke the name of a deity to cause another person instantly to drown at sea. These situations go a long way to show that affliction comes in various degrees of intensity, so that the pain is sometimes so unbearable that the victim loses his life.

Spiritually-induced affliction is a major issue amongst the indigenous Gas since anyone suffering from it is seen as being in an ‘abnormal state’ of affairs. There are three kinds of circumstances that merit an event that is spiritually-induced. It is the case that afflicted has broken certain taboos (sinned) and is being punished by the spirit powers, or that another person is using spiritual power to cause this harm. It might also be that there is disharmony within the person’s spiritual components (kla – soul, and susuma - spirit).

Upon a investigation, if person is discovered to be suffering from a spiritually-induced affliction, “an implicit or explicit decision is taken collectively [by other Ga family members] as to whether

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the situation is serious enough to justify the disturbance of normal social relations…”⁵ If it is serious, the afflicted is relieved from all social duties, isolated, and taken to a ritual specialist such as a priest (wulmɔ), a medium (wɔŋtsɛ), or a medicine-man (tsofatsemei), to undergo ritual procedures known as rituals of affliction in order to restore that person.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Human affliction is a universal reality of which particular cultures have various ways in which they explicate its nature and advance ways by which it is dealt with. The native Gas have a profound way of explaining and dealing with human affliction. Accordingly, it is something that is ultimately spiritually-induced. Thus various spiritual remedies exist in averting or attempting to avert human affliction. However, as far as my knowledge on Ga scholarly work is concerned, no author has extensively examined and systematically documented this phenomenon. Therefore, this thesis is to examine the theological and philosophical understanding of affliction in the religious context of the indigenous Gas.

1.3. Research Questions

The major question of this study is: “What is the philosophical and theological understanding of affliction in the religious context of the native Gas?” Under this question, I seek to find answers to the following sub-questions:

i. How is affliction conceived by the indigenous Ga people of Ghana?

ii. What are the responses of the indigenous Gas to the problem of affliction?

iii. To what extent do these responses help in understanding and dealing with the problem of affliction among the indigenous Gas?

1.4 Objectives

The research mainly seeks to provide a systematic account of the philosophical and theological understanding of the concept of affliction among the indigenous Ga people of Ghana. In doing so, I seek to address the following.

i. To examine the concept of affliction among the indigenous Gas.

ii. To investigate the responses of the indigenous Gas to the problem of affliction.

iii. To discuss the extent to which the responses of the Ga to affliction can help in understanding and dealing with the phenomenon among the indigenous Ga people.

1.5 Scope of Study

The Ga people are divided into six traditional states which constitutes modern day Accra. These comprise the inhabitants of Ga Mashie (Central Accra) who were the first to settle in Ghana, Osu (Christiansborg), La (Labadi), Teshie, Nungua and Tema. This study will be limited to Tema Manhean (a suburb of Tema), Osu and Nungua communities, because custodians of the practices are located in these areas and the researcher has easy access to them. The population sample will be the direct custodians of the indigenous Ga culture living in these communities.

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8 Manhean literally means “new town” from the Ga words “maŋ” [Town] and “ehee” [new].
These include native priests (wulɔmɛi- wulɔmɔ for the singular), ritual assistants, mediums, and elders of the town.

1.6. Methodology and Methods of Data Collection

1.6.1 Methodology

The phenomenological method will be employed in this research. The history of this methodology dates back to the 19th century philosopher and mathematician, Edmund Husserl. Husserl claimed that the essence of truths could be arrived at by 'bracketing' all assumptions about this perceptible world in a process called *epoché*.9 Gerardus van der Leeuw in *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*10 later on applied this mathematical approach of 'bracketing' to religion. He emerged with a more descriptive approach to the academic study of religion. Gerardus defined phenomenology 'essentially' as "the systematic discussion of what appears."11 This focused on mainly the visible manifestations of religion. However, as Ninian Smart points out, Gerardus's method "did not seriously touch upon psychology and sociology of religion as involved in structural explanations."12 Thus, Smart further stretched the idea of the phenomenology to include the psychological feature of 'intentions'.13 This involved examining

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motives behind religious practices such as *epoché* ("suspension of belief")\(^\text{14}\) and empathy ("entering into the experiences and intentions of the religious participant")\(^\text{15}\).

Extrapolating from the above discussions on phenomenology of religion, it can be clearly seen that it is fundamentally concerned with understanding, describing, and interpreting observable religious experiences. In respect to the steps to this enquiry, the researcher, initially is required to set aside all preconceived ideas, values, and opinions about the religion being studied (i.e. bracketing or *epoché*).\(^\text{16}\) This requires approaching the subject with an open mind. Subsequent to this stage involves temporarily placing of the self in the position of the religious practitioner in order to understand the matter under investigation as close as possible to the way the believer feels and comprehends the phenomenon (empathy). Smart calls it an *informed empathy* since it does not just involve trying to play the role of a participant, but using the position of a temporal participant observer to grasp as much as possible the religious phenomenon the way the believer understands it. In other words, understanding what religion means to the practitioner or believer\(^\text{17}\). In respect to applying this methodology to the topic at hand, these steps are geared towards having an empathetic understanding and examination of the religious beliefs experiences of affliction as comprehended by the native Gas.

John Creswell points out two types of the phenomenological method. They are hermeneutical and psychological phenomenology.\(^\text{18}\) The hermeneutical approach ‘describes research as oriented

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\(^{15}\) Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred*, 2.

\(^{16}\) Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 136.

\(^{17}\) Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred*, 2.

toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the “texts” of life (hermeneutics).”

By this he means that it is mainly concerned with describing people’s experiences and explaining the way they understand it. Such an approach focuses more on the way the researcher interprets his data received. On the other hand, the psychological approach focuses less on the “interpretations of the researcher and more on the description of the experiences of participations.”

In view of that, the psychological approach is just concerned with describing the experiences of people as close as possible to what they perceive, whereas the hermeneutic approach goes beyond mere description into making an interpretation. This involves taking into account not just experiences of people, but any other related information which sheds light on the experience, like the cultural beliefs, history, and so on. Pertaining to these two phenomenological approaches, the hermeneutical approach is preferred, since it allows the researcher to combine the use of several materials (secondary) in relation to primary information received from the people to explain the phenomenon of affliction. This would enable the investigator to properly interpret texts and sayings of the native Ga people to shed light on the subject.

Nevertheless, there are some problems associated with the phenomenological approach to the study. One main challenge that stands out is that of “subjectivity.” Many phenomenologists agree with the clause that "the believer is always right.” The problem is that, it has always been the case that everyone telling a story has an underlying assumption which may infect the data with bias. In my case study for instance, most of my data is based on oral sources in which the natives sometimes communicate facts tinged with folktales and myths which are empirically not confirmable. Donald Wiebe, a scholar of religious studies provides a further critique on this point

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19 Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 79.
20 Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 80.
raised. He notes that “the assumption that this holds true for all devotees is obviously problematic, especially with respect to those who have reinterpreted the tradition… It is not at all clear, then, whether the notion of bracketed realism (form of bracketing) resolves the critical problem about the religious phenomenon.”

On the other hand, another scholar of religious studies, Rita Gross, provides a viable solution. Gross points out that “First, an empathic understanding of the religion must precede evaluation.” This evaluation stage requires the capacity to detect inconsistent reasoning underlying religious traditions. Thus, she suggests that one must move beyond the descriptive stage into the critical. One reason I find this plausible is that without this evaluation phase, scholarship loses its credibility. Scholarship would just be re-describing religious claims without offering critical perspectives.

1.6.2 Methods of Data Collection

Primary sources of data collection consist of interviews, focused group discussions, and observations. The oral nature of the Ga culture requires an interactive approach of data collection. Interviews and focused group discussions provide a platform for an interactive engagement with people’s experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. This enables for an in-depth insight on the subject matter since it allows for further probing into issues that need additional clarification. Interviews will be very appropriate in retrieving information from some town officials such as local priests, because some of the information they carry are very sensitive, so it will be best if it is not shared openly. Pertaining to the elders of the town, due to

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the communalistic nature of the Ga culture, knowledge is usually shared by a body of people rather than a single person. In this case, focused group discussions works better.

Observation of ceremonial occasions like Ga traditional festivals and rituals connected with the affliction granted a more detailed understanding of the subject matter. It provided the avenue for comparing what was being said with (from interviews and focused group discussions) what was practiced for a better comprehension of the subject.

1.6.3 Sampling Procedure and Samples

The purposive sampling technique was employed to retrieve data from the custodians of the Ga culture, since their views are representative of the Ga culture. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals who have sufficient or expert knowledge of the subject by a conscious endeavor to gain a representative sample. Information was be taken from the Osu- Klọtey wulɔmɔ, Gbɔbu wulɔmɔ - head of Nungua priests, and Sakumo wulɔmɔ - head of Sakumono priests, Tema Agbaafioiatse - chief ritual assistant of Tema who is also the head of the Traditional Psychic and Healers Association (TPHA), as well as mediums and elders of these mentioned town.

Secondary sources on the Ga culture that will be utilized mainly include the works of Margaret Field, Marion Kilson, and Joyce Engmann.

The purposive sampling technique was used to retrieve information from priests, mediums, medicine men, and elders, since they are in a better position to provide an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon under investigation. This included Osu- Klọtey wulɔmɔ - head of Osu priests, Gbɔbu wulɔmɔ - head of Nungua priests, and Sakumo wulɔmɔ - head of Sakumono

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23 Creswell, 156.
priests, and Tema *agbaafioatse* - chief ritual assistant of Tema and head of the Traditional Psychic and Healers Association, along with their mediums, as well as elders of these town.

However, on two occasions when the researcher went to interview priests, some elders and indigenous Ga worshippers joined in the conversation. For instance, upon the second interview had with the Nungua *wul umo*, one medicine-man, three elders, and four indigenous Ga worshippers joined the discussion. Another instance was the third interview with the Tema Manhean *agbaafioatse*. It turned out to be a group discussion since the researcher met him at a time when he was judging people’s cases brought to him by members of the town in an open public place. This group discussion comprised of elders, mediums and native Ga worshippers. Although indigenous Ga worshippers were not the primal focus, their views added a more vivid understanding to the subject. They gave interesting insights on instances of spiritually-induced afflictions they had experienced and the way which it was dealt with.

1.7 Literature Review

Literature on the Ga philosophical and theological worldview of affliction is grossly lacking. One reason is due to limited published works of the Ga culture. This is one of the effects of the age old tradition that it was a taboo for the secrets of the Ga tradition to be publicly made known. On this issue, Charles Ammah makes a very important contribution:

> These secrets [customs and traditions] must not leak out beyond the priest’s precincts. Any attempt therefore to impart information about the origin of all sacred rituals or traditions of the Ga state is considered a taboo… a violation of secrecy in relation to sacred rituals. This is considered a grievous offence against the state. This is the main reason

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why earlier accounts of recorded history of the Gas and their exploits have been unavailable.²⁵

In addition to that, a Ga historian, David Henderson-Quartey, notes that it was not until the 16th century that the history of the Gas begun to be written²⁶, whereas 12th century records of some other Ghanaian states exist. Adu Boahen, the Ghanaian Historian, asserts that “According to oral traditions the first Akan state to emerge was Bono-Tekyiman… Calculating from the number of kings that have occupied the throne of Bono, Mrs Meyerowitz has arrived at the date 1295 for the foundation of this state.”²⁷ There are ancient accounts of trade activities of the Mande Dyula people of Northern Ghana that date around the 12th century.²⁸ This is about three centuries before any written records of the Gas. These shows how late written historical records on the Ga culture began to be documented. Thus, we will never be certain of the amount of religious history which shed light on spiritually-induced affliction during that period that has been lost.

The writings of Abraham Akrong, Barbara Hampton, Joyce Engman, Marion Kilson, Margaret Field and Philip Laryea, has served as a basis for conducting this particular research on the concept of affliction in the Ga religious context. The works of these authors were discussed within three thematic areas: (1) The Ga Religious Worldview on Affliction; (2) Role of Spiritual Agency in Affliction; (3) Ga Rituals of Affliction.

Kilson’s book entitled *Kpele Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbols* comprises of her ethnographical research she did on the Gas showing that Ga religious songs (*kpele lala*) reveal their conception of the universe and their worldview. Several cultural ideas and principles are

²⁸ Boahen, *Topics in West African History*, 54.
embedded in *Kpele* songs. It served as a basis for postulating the Ga worldview on affliction. That is, beliefs out of which the Ga concept of affliction emerges and the principles that govern it. Some songs recorded in this book reveal certain aspects of affliction.

Engman’s article, “Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought”, gives more details on the Ga worldview on affliction. In this writing, she expounds on the Ga concept of the human being by looking at cultural practices of the Ga and how it relates to it. People comprise of both spiritual and physical components. This discussion on the concept of the human being was essential to this thesis since spiritually-induced affliction is only an aspect of the spiritual set-up of a human being in Ga thought. This allowed for a better understanding of the Ga worldview on spiritually-induced affliction.

Field’s book, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga people of Ghana* consists of anthropological studies elaborating many ceremonies, rituals, and customs and traditions of the Ga religion. This literature was used to explain the role of spirit agency (SCAs and SCA1s) in causing affliction. The section of the book entitled “Medicine-in Private Practice” was very relevant for this inquiry. Field outlines seven categories of spiritually-induced illness.\(^{29}\)

Hampton’s article entitled “Music and Ritual Symbolism in the Ga Funeral”, was also very significant to discuss the role of spiritual agency. She makes mention of the way in which the spirit powers such as the ancestors punish those who violate moral codes of the society, by afflicting them with a spiritually-induced affliction.

\(^{29}\) (1) injury to the *kla*; (2) resentful *kla*; (3) absence of *susuma*; (4) resentful *susuma*; (5) breaking of taboos – either religious or magical; (6) action of big *dzemawon*; (7) anger of the dead. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga people*, 120.
Laryea’s work, *Yesu Homowo Nuŋtsɔ*, was also utilized to discuss the role of spiritual agency in causing affliction. The book discusses the way in which Jesus is the fulfillment of all Ga indigenous rituals. There were two very important issues that Laryea raised which was very useful to this study. First is the use of spiritual powers to cause spiritual affliction. Laryea explains the way in which spiritual medicine is used – for both good and bad purposes. The second is a very significant distinction that Laryea makes between the medicine practice in the public sphere and private sphere of the Gas. This distinction allowed for a much deeper analysis of the role of spiritual agency.

Akrong’s work, ‘Sacrifice in Labadi (Ga) Religion’, comprises of his research work which he did on the La people of Ghana pertaining to their sacrifice ritual. His work discusses very important issues related to Ga rituals of affliction. He examines some Ga rituals of affliction\(^30\) and the procedures involved.

1.8. Theoretical Framework

The researcher’s understanding of the Ga concept of affliction is undergirded by Kwame Gyekye’s Akan theory of causality because it serves as a basis to discuss the concept of spiritually-induced affliction. However, while Gyekye’s main aim of developing this theory is to discuss the nature of the human being a purely philosophical context, I shall rather use this theory within a religious context.

\(^{30}\) (i) reparation for wrong doing (*musukpam*); (ii) returning a curse or abomination or bad-luck (*lomxdaim*); (iii) appeasement of wrath (*kpatam*); (iv) exorcising (*gbeshiedziem*).
The theory suggests that nothing happens without a cause: Everything has a cause (asem biara wɔ ne farebae).\(^{31}\) In other words, there is no event in this world which happens by chance. These Akan wise sayings substantiate the point noted:

\[\text{se abe bɔ ne mu ase a, na cwɔ nea asase aso no.}\]
\[\text{whenever the palm tree tilts it is because of what the earth has told it.}\]\(^{32}\)

\[\text{Birebira nsi kwa.}\]
\[\text{Nothing happens without a cause.}\]\(^{33}\)

Gyekye further distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary events. Natural events are ordinary events caused by laws of nature which the Supreme Being (Onyame) has laid down to rule the world. These events include the rising and falling of the sun, the cycle of rainfall, planting and sowing of seeds, pregnancy and giving birth, and so on. These kinds of events merit scientific empirical explanations of physics, chemistry, and other related fields of study such as medicine.

On the flipside, there are other events which are considered to be extraordinary events, which demand metaphysical explanations. These occurrences are believed to be a departure of Onyame’s established order. Instances include many car accidents occurring in one day causing several deaths, people getting afflicted with strange diseases, and long periods of famine. When any of the aforementioned happens, the Akans begin to ask questions such as, why should this happen? What caused this? This is because these are irregular and uncommon events. In their belief system, these matters do not require scientific empirical answers. Again, as noted in the beginning of this discussion, among the Akan thinkers, chance events which are attributed to


\(^{32}\) Gyekye, \textit{An essay on African Philosophical Thought}, 77.

\(^{33}\) Gyekye, 82.
personal bad luck do not provide satisfactory explanation. Therefore these cases are considered on metaphysical causal grounds which originate from spirit agents. This kind of questions is what Gyekye calls why 2 since for the Akan worldview the cosmos is controlled by a system of spiritual forces which include: deities (abosom), ancestors (nsamanfo), and other spirits. These forces have the power of altering the natural order of things.

The Gas also share a similar view with the Akans. The worldview of the Gas affirms a strong belief in the causality theory of events: every problem has its cause. This is affirmed in the following two Ga proverbs:

1. *Gbɔmɔ etaa mo yaka.*
   Man is not meager without a cause.\(^{34}\)

2. *Mo enyee mo yaka.*
   Nobody hates without a cause.\(^{35}\)

The first proverb supports the idea that “man” was caused, and not by any accident. In other words, man has an origin, and whatever happens to him has a root cause. The second follows that things have an origin, so that any time someone gets angry, it can be traced to a particular cause.

The Gas as well distinguish between everyday events which merit scientific explanations and extraordinary events which warrants another form of explanations. For instance, when a mother continually keeps losing her baby during the process of child birth for the third-time, it would not be taken to be an ordinary occurrence. Like the Akans, the Gas would be asking why 2 type of questions. The cause would be explicated away from the natural world order. By way of


illustration, it is likely to be explained as resulting from a born to die spirit (gobalɔ) which keeps reappearing at the birth of the baby only to depart from the land of living.36

Spiritually-induced affliction will be discussed within the background of the Akan theory of causality. At the end of the study, findings confirmed that this theory was applicable to phenomenon of spiritually-induced affliction. However, there were certain areas of the theory that did not fully shed light on the phenomenon of affliction. These areas are mainly on divination and rituals of affliction.

1.9 Limitation of Study

There were three major challenges that the researcher faced in this work. One was that in the area of Ga philosophy and theology. Research materials are grossly lacking in these areas. In some cases it was very difficult to come across any materials, especially the very old Ga materials that are no more in print but are very valuable. In fact, in some cases, the researcher found some material by chance. This makes researching into this area very difficult, particularly if it is the first time someone is searching into this area.

Another thing is that the indigenous Ga culture seems to be fading away. In most towns that the field work was done, such as Osu and Tema Manhean, the indigenous Gəs are the minority. Hence getting indigenous respondents is no easy task at all, it was a herculean task.

The next problem has to do with the influence of Christianity to the Ga culture. In certain cases, Biblical verses were quoted by ritual officials to support “Ga rituals and concepts.” This makes it

36 Addo, Worldview, Way of Life and Worship, 68.
difficult to know the original Ga position. An example has to do with the origin of the *susuma*. Some Ga officials were of the view after the body of man was created out of clay, God breathed into man to activate it. This breath is the *susuma*. However, ritual officials who held this view always supported it with Biblical verses and illustrations. Thus, in such cases it becomes very difficult to differentiate from a purely Ga concept and that which has been borrowed.

1.10 Organization of Study

The work was divided into five chapters as follows:

The first chapter was a general introduction to the study. It opens up the discussion by providing background information for this investigation.

Chapter two explores various general concepts related to this study such as suffering, calamity, affliction, and rituals of affliction.

Chapter three draws from scholarly literature on the Ga culture to examine the way in which the phenomenon of spiritually-induced affliction is perceived and dealt with. It looks at what affliction is to the Gas and how the problem of affliction is resolved. Two main rituals shall be discussed; prayer and blood sacrifice.

Chapter four covers the extent to which the responses of the Gas to affliction can help in understanding and dealing with the phenomenon among the indigenous Ga. This comprises of field work based on data collected from priests, mediums, and medicine-men. It shall look at how these responses helps to shed light on the Ga concept of affliction and the theory of causality.
Chapter five will discuss the summary of the finding, recommendations, and the conclusion of the study.

1.11 Significance of Study

This work will add to other African scholarly works on theology and philosophy of affliction from a Ga perspective. It would also serve as a basis for further studies for other Ga scholars who would like to look into the diverse aspects of affliction.

This research is unique in the sense that, despite anthropological research done on spiritually-caused-affliction, there has not been any extensive research on the theology and philosophy of affliction. This study reveals the way in which the Ga understanding of affliction is strongly linked to their judicial system. Affliction is a way in which both the spirit powers and Ga authorities regulate moral behavior. This thesis therefore advances our knowledge and understanding of affliction in the Ga culture.
CHAPTER TWO

SUFFERING AS AFFLICTION

2.1 Introduction: The Philosophy of Suffering

Suffering is a universal human phenomenon which cuts across every society. It involves some form of physical or mental pain on a subject. Experiences of illnesses, injuries, and loss of loved ones can bring about the effect of pain on an individual. These painful experiences shape our basic understanding of the world so that the fundamental meaning of human existence is intertwined with experiences consisting of suffering.\(^{37}\) The scope of suffering occasionally transcends beyond the subjective person to entire nations and communities, threatening the lives of hundreds and thousands of people and causing damage to property and livestock. These include the outcome of natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tornadoes, to moral evils such as wars, mass murder by shooting, and genocide.

The problem of suffering as a universal phenomenon to the human endeavor reflects in the attempt made by several cultures to provide a fundamental understanding of it. The ancient Greeks perceived suffering as something which acts upon an agent. The Greek word *pascho* [πάσχω], which is translated as to "suffer", means to be acted upon by something bad such as sickness or ill-treatment.\(^{38}\) Therefore, suffering is something which happens to us that we have no control over. This view overlooks suffering as a result of conscious decisions which one is directly in control of such as athletes who intentionally endure difficult training in order to win a race.

In Eastern thought, suffering is perceived as the result of some cosmic force. The Hindus teach that all suffering is the result of the exercise of a moral law of cause-and-effect in the universe called *karma*. *Karma* is the consequence of the accumulation of one’s thought and action.\(^{39}\) Good intentions and actions yield a happy life. However, bad intentions and actions equally yield a life of suffering. Hence, suffering is the accumulation of one’s bad thoughts and actions. A person living a morally reprehensible lifestyle (bad *karma*) will be trapped in the painful process of multiple rebirths and deaths, until he or she is able to attain complete liberation by dealing with all bad *karma*.\(^{40}\)

Throughout the centuries, many debates have centered on complex conceptual problems regarding the existence of suffering in the world. One very popular dilemma in the Western world that has been usually leveled against theistic traditions such as Christianity, Islam, and other major world religions’ is the ‘problem of evil’. The problem of evil simply asserts that the existence of evil in the world is not reconcilable with the attributes of God. The major attributes of divine omnipotence, omniscience, and all-lovingness, is logically coherent with a world free from suffering. However, that is not the case. There is so much pain and suffering in the world. Hence, the existence of God comes into question.

Some versions of the ‘problem of evil’ go further to pose the evidential problem of intense and pointless suffering. All evidential arguments use inductive reasoning to show that the world is full of an overall greater amount evil and suffering, or at least some intense senseless [gratuitous] evil. William Rowe in this vein has argued that there is no rational basis for the existence of God.

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\(^{40}\) Whitman, “Pain and Suffering”, 608.
since there is too much gratuitous suffering in this world.\footnote{William Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism”, in \textit{American Philosophical Quarterly}, 1978, 335-337.} So much suffering exists in this world that achieves no greater good, hence God does not exist.

There are several ways in which scholars have responded to the problem of evil in defense for the existence of God. Perspectives of suffering attempting to reconcile the attributes of God and the presence of evil are known as 'theodicy'. Theodicies developed by Alvin Platinga\footnote{See Alvin Platinga, \textit{God Freedom, and Evil} (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977).}, Augustine of Hippo, and Gottfried Leibniz\footnote{See Gottfried Leibniz, \textit{Theodicy: Essays On The Goodness Of God, The Freedom Of Man And The Origin Of Evil} (Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1985)}, as such argue for the existence of God amidst suffering based on man’s abuse of freewill. Suffering exists because man makes wrong choices. Augustine believed that suffering in the world was the result of the “original sin.”\footnote{Man sinning against God in the Garden of Eden by choosing to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.} God created man with freewill, and man abused this freewill by committing the sin of disobedience.\footnote{Saint Augustine, \textit{The Confessions, ed. John E. Rotelle} (New York: New City Press, 1997), 39-61, 206-236.} This led to a life of suffering.

The African philosopher, Kwame Gyekye, offers an interesting mystical approach to the problem of suffering by looking at the Akan worldview. The Akans believe that God is all good, and that evil was not created by God. Rather, one of its sources is from the other deities. There are both good and evil deities.\footnote{Gyekye, 123-128.} Hence, evil is the result of the action of bad deities.

Others such as Irenaeus, Origen, and John Hick have proposed the ‘purposeful suffering defense’ which states that all suffering leads to an ultimate good. Hick believed that suffering purifies
one’s faith in God (soul-making). Certain scholars have also endeavored to resolve this dilemma by re-explaining the nature of evil. Evil is not a problem but a mystery, hence it moves beyond the realm of logic to ethics. Ravi Zacharias here notes that “Problems seek answers, but mysteries demand more—seek explanation… [It] encroaches on its own data… the questioner unwittingly becomes the object of the question. We are not merely observers to the reality of evil. We are involved in it beyond any mere academic discussion.”

A number of scholars also go for the ‘open theism’ approach which asserts that although God is all loving, he is not omniscient. A proponent of open theism, Neal Judisch, suggests that “God could not know it would occur in advance… because these evils are not part of God’s plans, they do not have a point in any sense useful to the theodist.”

These above theoretical discussions on suffering reveal the reality and complexity of suffering to the human endeavor. In that it is something that is really profound. It does not just affect individual lives, but has a wider coverage. This chapter deals with two main conceptual issues of suffering as affliction and rituals that accompany it.

### 2.2 Calamity and Suffering as Affliction

Suffering is presented in two basic forms based on its ‘reachability’. On a wider scale, suffering which affects large proportion of people such as communities and nations is a calamity. Cataclysmic disasters such as wars, epidemics, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions that wipe

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away entire cities and cause great misfortune are instances of calamity. The scope of a calamity sometimes goes beyond the destruction of human life to animals, plants, natural habitats, and even properties. Hence, there is usually intense suffering associated with calamities. This idea is further emphasized in the following definition of calamity or disaster by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, an agency of the United Nations. It notes that it is a “serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.”

Denise Martin gives us further insights on calamity from the perspective of African indigenous religion. He notes the following:

A calamity is a major disastrous event caused by natural or human agents, in which a community suffers lasting damage... Many indigenous worldviews hold that every event has a natural or physical cause, as well as a supernatural or spiritual one.

There are two important things he notes about calamity. The first is that calamity has a lasting impact on society. The subsequent is that in African religion calamity can have either a physical or a spiritual cause. Kilson reiterates this point of calamity having a spiritual cause in the Ga worldview in the following words:

If men anger God by failing to perform certain rites or by violating divine injunctions, God may punish man by withholding the means of perpetuating life or by causing calamitous events, such as epidemics and earthquakes... 

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51 Martin, “Calamity”, 149.
52 Marion Kilson, “Libation in Ga Ritual”, 162.
Secondly, suffering can emerge in the form of an affliction. Affliction generally means “a state of pain, distress, or grief; misery.”\footnote{Dictionary.com, “affliction”, accessed March 17,2016, \url{http://www.dictionary.com/browse/affliction?s=b}} In other words, it signifies a condition in which the affected suffers a form of pain or trouble. “A state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person.”\footnote{Malpas and Lickiss, in \textit{Perspectives on Human Suffering}, v.} This pain can be caused by internal agents such as depression and sickness, or external events such as the death of a loved one, the loss of personal belongings, and so on. Hence, affliction focuses on individuals.

Although the same rules that apply to calamity also apply to affliction such as all involve suffering, the fundamental difference between affliction and calamity is on the basis of scope. While a calamity is a major disaster that many are affected (e.g. a whole nation or community), an affliction generally deals with a person or two. The devastating effect of a calamity goes beyond just human agents to affect infrastructure and even plant life. In this vein, they can be easily distinguished. Nonetheless, properly speaking, certain calamities can be described as afflictions when destruction is only limited to human beings, such as an epidemic. In these cases where the reference point is only the destruction of human lives, a calamity can be said to be an extreme affliction. On the other hand, where the devastating effects reaches more than just human lives, a calamity cannot be referred to as an affliction. Most importantly, since affliction is of much interest to this study the rest of this paper shall pay attention to affliction.
The British Philosopher, Bertrand Russell, in *The History of Western Philosophy* dates the Ancient Western Era between 600 BC and 100 BC.\(^{55}\) Within this period, many philosophers gave opinions about the way in which affliction was to be dealt with.

Socrates, a renowned philosopher of this period, in his dialogues named *Phaedo* and *Crito* reveals an interesting perspective of suffering. In *Crito*, Socrates believed that affliction is justified in so far as one submitted to the laws of the state. One had to “endure in silence whatever it [the State] instructs you to endure, whether blows or bonds, and if it leads you into war to be wounded or killed…”\(^{56}\) This reveals a philosophy of enduring in suffering; one must not escape from suffering, but rather embrace it. Ultimately for Socrates, the quest of human existence is for the “soul” to be liberated [from the physical body] in order to experience true reality [i.e. the Form of life]. Without that, man would continue to suffer.

Later on in the ancient era, Stoic philosophy (300BC), which was influenced by Socrates, began to set stage in Athens. The Stoics tried to resolve this problem of affliction by suggesting that humans should only be concerned with what they have control over [i.e. the will]. “Determining our will always and only according to reason is the whole of virtue. And virtue, in turn, is the whole of human goodness or happiness, the only thing worth striving for. In this way, the problem of suffering is spirited away …”.\(^{57}\)


African Indigenous religion has a profound way of looking at affliction. The nature of affliction is tied to the understanding of the spiritual world. The African worldview comprises of a complex network of relationships where there is constant contact between the spirit and the natural (social) world which has a bearing on events. Metaphysical beings such as the Supreme deity, gods, and ancestral shades, reside in the spiritual world, which is the ultimate cause of events in the natural world. These metaphysical entities have the power to cause events to occur in the natural world. They have the power both to bless and to cause harm and misfortunes. In this regard, affliction is mainly attributed to these spiritual causative agents. This is not to say that Africans do not believe that physical causes of affliction do not exist. They do, but much more emphasis is placed on spiritually-induced-affliction.

Even in cases where these spiritual causative agents are not involved, it is believed that social agents assume the role of these spiritual causative agents to cause affliction. “Some human beings are believed to be capable of assuming extra-human positions to inflict and harm their alleged offenders, enemies, and rivals through mystical means…”

These social causative agents of affliction include witches, bad-medicine men, and so on who have been trained to use spiritual powers to inflict pain. In certain situations a medicine-man can use the same magic to cause harm to himself. For instance, not following the taboos of a spiritual medicine can harm the user. In such situations the social causative agent is at the same time the victim of affliction.

Cases of spiritually-caused affliction come in various forms. Sometimes they take the form of common sicknesses such as malaria, and diarrhea, to even strange illnesses that defy scientific

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diagnosis. Other times it takes the form of biological effects such as barrenness, and in extreme cases, spiritually-induced affliction results in the loss of life. In certain circumstances affliction can be through an indirect means such as the loss of a valuable property. These things can cause victims to be in deep distress. An important thing about all these symptoms of spiritually-induced affliction is that care is taken to distinguish between misfortunes attributed to physical and spiritual causes through the means of divination.

In African indigenous religion, unlike Western Socratic thought where affliction is to be endured, affliction is an “evil” which has to be eschewed. Evil here pertains to a morally reprehensible action, state, or thing. In the area of the ethics of affliction, evil goes beyond the description of suffering as a mere human reality or experience. It relates to a situation in which a moral verdict is passed that some kind of affliction, that is, spiritually-induced affliction, is bad. Therefore, whiles affliction is a normal human condition of pain, evil redefines this condition as an abnormal state of affairs. “Hence, suffering as evil is both without meaning and absurd.”

Since affliction in the African worldview is ‘evil’, it is dealt with by being uprooted or eradicated by means known as rituals of affliction.

Rituals are means by which societies deal with the practical problem of affliction by attempting to put back victims suffering misfortunes in the right (normal) states of affairs. Since every ritual

is context specific, they cannot be understood outside of the society that practices it.\textsuperscript{62} Each community has a different way in which affliction is perceived and treated.

Victor Turner’s work, \textit{The Ritual Process}, is worth mentioning here. He discusses the \textit{Isoma} ritual of the Ndembu tribe of Zambia, which belongs to women’s rite of procreation. The performance of this ritual is based on the belief of ancestral veneration. When people in the community fail to honor ancestral spirits by performing their social obligations, the ancestors punish them by inflicting them with some misfortune. Particularly, when women fall short of maintaining good and peaceful relations with fellow neighbors, and are not watchful of their departed family relatives (particularly mothers or grandmothers), the ancestors cause them to be barren. Therefore, the purpose of the \textit{Isoma} ritual of affliction is to cause the victims to recollect where they had faulted for that kind of treatment from the ancestors. The following words of Turner sums up the above point:

\begin{quote}
The curative rites, including \textit{Isoma}, have as one social function that of “causing them to remember” these shades (i.e. ancestral spirits), who are structural nodes of a locally residing matrilineage. The condition of barrenness these shades bring about is considered to be a temporary one, to be removed by performance of the appropriate rites. Once a woman remembers the afflicting shade and thus her primary allegiance to matrikin, the interdiction on her fertility will cease…\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

In this regard, ritual specialists perform the very important role of discerning which cases of barrenness are caused by the ancestral shades through the process of divination\textsuperscript{64} in order to apply the \textit{Isoma} ritual to stop the affliction. The \textit{Isoma} ritual is one among many rituals that reveals the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{62}] Catherine Bell, \textit{Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81-12.
\item[\textsuperscript{64}] Turner, \textit{The Ritual Process}, 13-14.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}

way in which the discourse on ritual theory and practice is very significant pertaining to the notion of affliction.

2.3. Theorizing Rituals

Scholars in ritual studies have different ways of defining what rituals are. Catherine Bell gives three main classifications by which rituals are defined based on the ‘thought-action dichotomy’. In this thought-action distinction, rituals belong to the realm of action and belief falls within the area of thought. Firstly, she notes that rituals are sometimes defined as a form of a basic structural pattern of action or behavior that emerge from mental conceptions such as beliefs, creeds, legends, symbols or myths. Rituals originate from beliefs that become habitually acted upon, mimicked, routinized and obsessive. Claud Levi-Straus, Ron Geaves, and Edward Shils hold this view. Ron Geaves for instance defines a ritual as a “repeated act performed ceremonially that carries with it an ultimate value, meaning, sacrality, or significance for the performers and any other participant”. In effect, Geaves’ implies that a ritual cannot exist on its own since it must depend on a kind of belief which gives it some meaning.

Sometimes this distinction is adjusted slightly to inculcate a closer relationship that exists between ritual and belief. Meredith McGuire holds that rituals are “symbolic actions that represent religious meaning”. This definition establishes a relationship between rituals and beliefs in that whereas “beliefs represent the cognitive aspect of religion, ritual is the enactment

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of religious meaning”. In other words, ritual acts are mediums by which religious beliefs are transmitted. The two form mirror images of the other.

The second group of definitions argues that rituals have an essential functional or structural mechanism that affirms the action-thought dichotomy. Unlike the first group of definitions where thought is plainly differentiated from action, over here rituals are defined not based on a mere thought-action distinction, rather, the role it plays or its ability to hold society together. Emile Durkheim and James Cox’s perspectives on ritual are within this range. James Cox defines a ritual as a “a repeated and symbolic dramatization directing attention to a place where the sacred enters life thereby granting identity to participants in the drama, transforming them, communicating social meaning verbally and non-verbally, and offering a paradigm how for the world ought to be”. Cox affirms that ritual-acts function as a social-communication tool through the medium of dramatization in transmitting the beliefs of a society. Furthermore, according to Durkheim, rites are means by which shared beliefs are concurrently generated, practiced, and affirmed as real by the society. Therefore, ritual is a way in which specific perception and behavior are socially appropriated. Durkheim’s theory shows how rituals incorporate individual behavior into social existence. The theoretical descriptions of Cox and Durkheim put rituals in to a kind of synthesis that shows a more complex relationship between ritual and belief.

The third model of ritual definitions describes it based on two structural patterns. In the first place, rituals are seen as something which is totally distinct from the thought-action dichotomy.

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70 Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, 20.
71 Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa, ed. James Cox (Fairwater: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), x.
72 Durkheim, Elementary Forms of Religious Life, 42- 43.
They are perceived as acts that defy social order. Consequently, rituals are then explained as the means by which the thought-action categories are reintegrated in a kind of a synthesis. Victor Turner described a ritual as the confirmation of the societal harmony as opposed to the everyday rivalry and tensions that exist in community life. Ritual is the means by which society departs from the usual life frictions that creates disunity among people in order to be enjoined as one people. Thus, they generate an ‘anti-structure’ from the rigid preservation customs and tradition, socio-political structures and hierarchies. Secondly, rituals at the same time by this ‘anti-structure’ create a means by which beliefs are properly woven in to the society.

These theoretical definitions of rituals reveal that rituals have certain important features. In the first place, rituals are action-based as opposed to a mental cognition such as a belief. These acts are socially recognized, repeated, and habituated. Additionally, these repeated acts carry symbolic meaning. By this they function as a social communication tool. Lastly, rituals are a means of social cohesion.

In this study, I have employed the second model of ritual definition. As previously pointed out, such definitions describe rituals based on its structural function of social cohesion. I have adopted this model since the main purpose of ritual in the Ga society follows a similar aim: to achieve harmony between the spiritual world and the physical world. Extrapolating from the various views, by the term ritual, I mean “a ceremonial or religious habitual act or set of actions which is socially recognized and accepted, whose main aim is to achieve harmony between the spiritual and physical world, so that society lives in peace”. In the Ga worldview, when there is

74 A. A. Akrong, ‘Sacrifice in Labadi (Ga) Religion’ (Department for the Study of Religions: University of Ghana, Legon, 1978), 16.
an imbalance between the physical and spiritual world, suffering persists. Hence, all rituals are geared towards harmonizing these two worlds.

Various scholars have different ways of categorizing rituals. Emile Durkheim divided ritual activities into ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ rites. Accordingly, negative rituals function to prevent the physical realm from coming into contact with the ‘sacred’ sphere (i.e. supernatural realm) by setting taboos, while positive rituals set out to unite the two dimensions of the world.  

Another common ritual classification is by Victor Turner. He grouped all rituals into two: ‘life-crisis rituals’ and ‘rituals of affliction’. Life-crisis (also known as life-cycle) rituals are those that are performed in an “important point in the physical or social development of an individual, such as birth, puberty and death”, as in the case of initiation ceremonies of puberty rites, and funeral rites. Moreover, rituals of affliction among Ndembu people are generally those rituals associated with mitigating spirits which afflict people with misfortune.

However, other central forms of rituals are ignored in this classification, for instance, rites of passage and marriage rites. A more elaborate and complex ritual classification is by the scholar Roland Grimes, who proposes sixteen different types. In spite of this elaborate cataloging of rituals, this classification is too broad and does not capture an important category of ritual we are concerned with (i.e. ritual of affliction). More recently, Catherine Bell has provided taxonomy of rituals. Bell in her book, *Rituals: Perspective and Dimension*, reviews some earlier theoretical

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77 Grimes ritual classification: (1) rites of passage; (2) marriage rites; (3) funerary rites; (4) festivals; (5) pilgrimage; (6) purification; (7) civil ceremony; (8) rituals of exchange; (9) sacrifice; (10) worship; (11) magic; (12) healing rites; (13) interaction rites; (14) meditation rites; (15) rituals of inversion; (16) ritual drama. Roland L. Grimes, *Research in Ritual Studies: A Programmatic Essay and Bibliography* (Metuchen: The Scare Crow Press, Inc, 1985), v-vi (68-116).
classifications of rituals, and provides a more pragmatic as well as elaborate but simple grouping. She classifies rituals into six headings: (i) rites of passage; (ii) calendar rites; (iii) rites of exchange and community; (iv) rites of affliction; (v) feasting, fasting and festival rituals; (vi) political rites.\(^78\) I identify with this ritual classification since it is more simplified and covers the main types of rituals in the Ga society\(^79\), the main interest of this study.

Rites of passage are those that mark the transition from one significant life stage to another. For instance, Ga naming rites exist to initiate new born babies into the world.\(^80\) "Just as rites of passage give order and definition to the biocultural life cycle, so calendrical rites give socially meaningful definitions to the passage of time, creating an ever-renewing cycle of days, months, and years."\(^81\) August marks the beginning of the year with the celebration of Homowo in the Ga society. Moreover, rites of exchange and communication are those in which offerings are given to gods in return for the blessings of the gods. Some Ga sacrificial rituals (af\(\text{f}le\)) are done solely for the purpose of receiving the blessings of the gods and the ancestors. Rites of affliction "attempt to rectify a state of affairs that has been disturbed or disordered; they heal, exorcise, protect, and purify."\(^82\) Furthermore, the fifth (v) class deals with a time that religious values are stressed publicly such as purity, and reverence. During the beginning of the Homowo season for instance, husbands may not have sexual intercourse with their wives in order to maintain their sacred spiritual state. The whole community is supposed to be pure in order to attract the blessings of the gods. Lastly, with regard to political rituals, they mainly create, demonstrate and

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\(^78\) Bell, *Rituals: Perspective and Dimension*, 94.

\(^79\) All rituals in the Ga society can be placed under this main heading. For instance, for rites of passage which mark a transition from one significant stage to another, Ga naming rites exist to initiate new babies into the world. An example of a calendar ritual in the Ga ritual is the *kpele* calendar rites.

\(^80\) See Marion Kilson, "Ga naming rites", in *Anthropos*, BD. 63/64, H 5./6. (Anthropos Institute, 1969), 909.

\(^81\) Bell, *Rituals: Perspective and Dimension*, 102.

\(^82\) Bell, *Rituals: Perspective and Dimension*, 115.
uphold the authority of political institutions. The rituals that accompany the installation of a chief is a clear example of political rituals.

2.3.1. Rituals of Affliction: Its Purpose and Taxonomy

Before probing further rituals of affliction, it will be important to look at a connection between the theory of undergirding this study (causality) and rituals of affliction. The theoretical framework that undergirds the experience of spiritually-induced affliction and the practice of rituals of affliction in the context of African religion, particularly the Ga religious worldview, is the theory of causality. This theory is based on the understanding that every event in this world has a cause. Events in this world are categorized into ordinary events that merit scientific or physical explanations which the Supreme Being has put in place such as sunshine and rainfall patterns, and extra-ordinary which demand spiritual explanations that is a departure from the natural order. These defy the Supreme Beings natural law guiding events. Examples include untimely deaths such as sudden accident and long period of drought.⁸³ These can’t be chance events, but spiritual factors which cause that to happen.

Spiritually-induced affliction belongs to the category of extra-ordinary events, since they merit metaphysical explanations. Gyekye makes mention of an Akwamu chief whose death was spiritually-induced. Accordingly, he had given a false witness in court and later fell ill and died.

⁸³ All the examples that Gyekye gives to explain his causal thesis are cases of spiritually-induced-affliction.
Before he died, he confessed that the reason for his illness which later led to his death was a form of a punishment from his father’s ghost for giving the false witness in court.\(^{84}\) In other words, the cause of the death was attributed to a certain spirit (Spiritual Causative Agent). One implication of this idea is that, if there are spiritual causes of affliction then physical remedies would not suffice in explaining them, rather spiritual remedies which are known as rituals of affliction. Rituals of affliction are procedures in which cultures attempt to deal with the problem of affliction. Hence, the theory of causality identifies the problem of affliction, in that it has a spiritual cause, while rituals of affliction give viable ways in which the problem is dealt with based on the cultural context.

### 2.4 Affliction as a Religious Phenomenon

Frequently, many worldviews employ the term “affliction” in a religious sense. This dates back to the *Four Noble Truth* of ancient Buddhism. The first *Noble Truth* teaches that life is *dukkha* (suffering/pain). “The second truth holds that all suffering is caused by the afflictions of craving, aversion, and ignorance”.\(^{85}\) In Christianity, there are two major characters that give us further insight on the subject of affliction. The first is Job, who suffered greatly in spite of his faith in God. The Bible records that Satan “afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head”.\(^{86}\) Another significant personality associated with affliction is Jesus. The

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\(^{84}\) Gyekye, 80.


\(^{86}\) Job 2:7, New International Version.
prophet Isaiah in forecasting the great pain Jesus will endure noted that “He was oppressed and afflicted”.\(^8^7\) Shi’ite Muslims “speak out of the rewards in the hereafter for weeping for the sufferings and afflictions of the Holy family and especially for the death of the martyred Imam Husayn”\(^8^8\). The ancient Roman Catholic Church referred to affliction as “religious self-mortification”\(^8^9\). This deals with a kind of religious piety that suppresses all worldly appetites by the denial of the self (self-discipline).

Summing up all these thoughts on affliction reveals two basic points. The principal idea is that affliction can be both passive and active. The active aspect of affliction pertains to its causative agents. In Buddhism for instance, we saw that desires of affliction are causative agents that make people suffer. Thus, anyone who is able to conquer these desires of affliction will cease to suffer. The perspective of the Shi’ite Muslims reveals another aspect of active affliction. In this case, Muslims who want to enjoy heavenly rewards have to intentionally put themselves in a state of affliction. Furthermore, the Catholic understanding of self-mortification implies actively putting one’s self in a state of affliction in order to gain heavenly rewards. The sufferer is at the same time the cause of affliction. Hence, the active causative agent of affliction can at the same time be the victim in certain circumstances.

On the other hand, by its passivity, one is in the position of the “afflicted” (victim). This goes in line with our prior understanding of affliction being a “state”, so that when an agent enters into the state of affliction, that person is in a position where an active force causes him/her to suffer pain. Like in the case of Jesus who had to endure affliction by no fault of his. Job’s case of

\(^8^7\) Isaiah 53:7, New International Version.
affliction introduces a very interesting aspect of affliction which reflects in African indigenous religion, for that matter the Ga’s of Ghana. That is, all his painful sores were caused by Satan, a spiritual entity. In other words, his affliction was spiritually-induced. This understanding of spiritually-induced affliction forms one basic tenet in the worldview of African religion.

The main purpose of ritual of affliction is to remove the effect of affliction and return the victim to a normal state of affairs. The following long but significant quote from Bell sheds more light on the subject. According to Bell, one important thing is that there are four main things in which rituals of affliction do is to heal, exorcise, protect, and purify.  

Rituals of affliction heal. In cases where the afflicted suffers from a disease, rituals have a curative purpose. At other times the afflicted is troubled with an evil spirit. In such circumstances rituals of affliction exorcise, or remove troubling spirits. An instance is the above mentioned Ndembu people. The main purpose of Isoma ritual is to stop the ancestral shades from causing bareness. The next purpose of rituals of affliction is to guards victims from potential threats of affliction. In many African cultures, people wear talisman to protect them from evil and diseases coming from the spiritual world. The last situation pertains to the purification of victims of affliction. Awolalu explains that one consequence of sin in African indigenous religion is to make the offender ceremonially impure. This position of spiritual impurity attracts punishment from the gods and other spirit powers. Rituals of affliction are

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90 Bell, Rituals: Perspective and Dimension, 115.
91 This is also known as “rituals of expunction” in the article written by Alex Kamwaria and Michael Katola “The Role of African Traditional Religion, Culture and World-View in the Context of Post-War Healing among the Dinka Community of Southern Sudan, in International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 2 No. 21, 2012, 53.
directed towards cleansing the victim (whether inwardly or externally) from that sin to stop the affliction.

Classification of rituals of affliction can be done based on its purpose. So that generally speaking, based on the four objectives that Bell outlines, there are four main types of rituals of affliction, namely; purification; protection; exorcism; and curative rituals of affliction.

In Turner's field work concerning the Ndembu people he gives three main classes of rituals of affliction. The foremost type of rituals of affliction relate to “misfortune in hunting”. The next classification pertains to “women's reproductive disorders”. Lastly, some rituals that avert affliction relate to various forms of illness resulting from the action of the spirits of the dead. Turner's category is a working ritual classification in view of the fact that it helps to group the main rituals of affliction performed by the Ndembu people.

Marion Kilson in her study of the Ga culture adopts her own taxonomy of rituals. She discusses verbal and the non-verbal. Verbal forms of rituals concern rites which emphasize mainly on some form of words, whereas non-verbal emphasize on action. Applying this to rituals of affliction, verbal forms of rituals of affliction include prayer, songs, and utterances (i.e. a form of prayer, but more unstructured). Non-verbal consists of dance healing rituals, sacrifice (by the shedding of blood), libation, special rituals (i.e. formless ritual), and water cleansing ritual. I adopt this classification since it allows me to discuss rituals of affliction in the Ga culture in-depth. I shall restrict myself to only two rituals of affliction. In relation to verbal rituals of affliction, I shall look at prayer. With respect to the non-verbal rituals, I shall talk about blood

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94 Kilson, "Libation in Ga Ritual",169.
95 James Cox’s definition of ritual as having a key element of “dramatization” is in line with non-verbal rituals. See page 13 & 14.
sacrifice. These classifications are not strict categories. Prayer usually accompanies libation rituals, and sacrifice is usually not done in isolation. Nevertheless, when these categories are separated, it allows us to glean many insights which we shall overlook if we group all the types of ritual together. In the Ga society, the emphasis of the ritual makes the difference. The main ritual is performed in association with other acts which reaffirm the first. For instance, in the sacrifice ritual, activities of prayer and singing are only to confirm to the sacrificial ritual. These are not done in isolation.

2.4.1. The Role of Rituals Specialists in Dealing with Affliction

From the above discussion on rituals of affliction, we observed that there are two main processes involved in reversing the effects of affliction. The first is to identify the source of the affliction (whether it is a spiritually-caused affliction or not), and next is to apply the appropriate ritual to reverse the affliction. All these processes involved are performed by ritual experts. Every culture has its own ritual expert or experts who mostly have undergone some form of formal training and are socially recognized, so that suffering victims will mostly go and seek their assistance.

In the Native American religion, there are indigenous medicine men (wičháša wakȟáŋ) that have the power to administer rituals of afflictions to victims suffering from spiritually-induced affliction. Black Elk\textsuperscript{96}, one popular spiritualist and healer from the Oglala Sioux tribe, was understudied by the American ethnographer, John Neihardt. Neidhardt recorded some dramatic visions of Elk regarding spiritual encounters that changed his life. Some involved meetings with spiritual powers that taught him the art of spiritual healing and gave him healing powers. Black Elk notes the following:

\textsuperscript{96} Also known as Heȟáka Sápa.
As I rode in through the rainbow door, there were cheering voices over the universe, and I saw the Six Grandfathers [Spirits] sitting in a row… And as I passed before them there, each gave again the gift that he had given me before—the cup of water and the bow and arrows, the power to make live and to destroy; the white wing of cleansing and the healing herb…

After these spiritual encounters, Elk possessed incredible powers to deliver his people from afflictions of many sorts, and also gained knowledge in spiritual-medicine to perform rituals of affliction. His dramatic visions launched him into a spiritual realm where he could see spiritual events. This is important because some medicine men are able to distinguish spiritually-induced affliction from physically caused affliction through visions (seers). Again Elk’s report reveals another significant feature. He notes that the spirit powers gave him the ability to destroy. This is very significant since some cases of rituals of affliction, certain things such as the sickness or malevolent-spirits will have to be destroyed in order for the sufferer to be delivered - exorcised.

Many African tribes similarly have ritual experts that engage in rituals of affliction. Most often, ritual offices unite priestly functions and the administering of spiritual medicine to victims of affliction. In ancient Kemet, Egypt, the priests and priestesses, who were servants of the gods (hem-netcher), “were responsible for ensuring that the state was well run and that the proper ceremonies and rituals were performed for the ancestors and deities”. This included offering of sacrifices to the gods, cleansing of sacred places (temples), leading of processions, and

maintained order (harmony between spiritual and physical world). It was the duty of priests to administer curative rituals to people undergoing spiritually-induced affliction.

The Ga indigenous religion has three main offices connected to rituals of affliction, namely, the priestly office (of *wulčmr*), mediumship (of *woyei*), and medicine-men (of *tsøψatsmei*). Although these offices have the authority to discern cases of spiritually-induced suffering and to deal with them, they all deal with specific aspects of affliction. As ceremonial heads, priests are mainly in charge of rituals in general. They are mediators between mortal-men and the gods. This position puts them in charge of all rituals relating to the gods such as pacifying the gods and ancestors in order to stop causing affliction. However, rituals involving seeing or touching the dead does not lie within the role of a priest. Since it is a taboo for priests to mourn for the dead, touch or see a dead body, rituals of affliction relating to death are not within priestly jurisdiction. These lie within the domain of medicine-men and mediums.

Medicine-men are ritualists who specialize in herbs and spiritual medicine. Rituals relating to the removal of spiritual-medicine causing harm other people and exorcism of evil spirits are the work of medicine-men as well as mediums. Unlike Western medicine that looks at the causal relationship between disease and symptoms, indigenous practice of medicine approaches health from wider perspective. The “diagnosis of illness is considered a social offence and curing
illness requires the righting of some social wrongs.”99 Hence, the medicine-men do not just deal
with the symptoms of a disease, but the psychological problems associated (to both spiritual
agents and the human agents). He uses the herbs to cure the patient, as well as the rituals to
achieve harmony between the spiritual and physical world.

While the priesthood is hereditary100, mediumship is based on a marital relationship between the
medium (wɔyɔ) and the god.101 Usually, the gods choose to their mediums they use in
communicating with the community. Mediums then become the direct mouthpieces of the gods.
During the time in which the gods are speaking through a medium, they release very important
information. This touches on issues relating to those who are suffering from spiritually-induced
affliction. The gods give them power to discern these cases, to exorcise, and to heal. We shall
deal with these issues pertaining to the role of ritual experts in greater details in the fourth
chapter.

2.5. Summary

We have discussed three concepts connected to suffering, namely, calamity, affliction, and
rituals. The main emphasis was on spiritually-induced affliction and its associated rituals. While

99 Mensah, 235.
Fasc. 3 (1971 - 1972), 176.
calamity is suffering which has a wider scope of the whole natural habitat such as animals, plants, humans, and the environment, the focus of affliction is on human suffering. Affliction can be spiritually-caused. Instances of spiritually-induced affliction include such as malaria, diarrhea, and running stomach, to even strange illnesses that defy scientific diagnosis and treatment. It usually requires the help of ritual experts who can distinguish between spiritually-caused affliction and affliction that is physically caused. Rituals of affliction are carried out on the victim of spiritually-caused affliction upon discerning in order to return the suffering victim to his or her normal state of affairs.
CHAPTER THREE
THE GA CONCEPT OF AFFLICTION

3.1. A Brief Account on the Origin of the Gas

The word “Ga” is coined from the expression gaga, connoting black-ants or a marching army of termites which form military troops devouring everything that comes their way. History tells of a similar conquest by the ancient Gas. They destroyed armies that crossed their path. The Fantes called these ants ‘nkraŋ’. Rev. Carl Reindorf suggested that when the Portuguese came to the Ga soil, they brought Fantes along with them. These Fantes called the Ga land, Nkran; the place where the black ants inhabit. The Portuguese could not pronounce the word Nkran, instead, called it Akra which was at times used to refer to the Ga people. Thus, ‘Accra’ is derived from an erroneous pronunciation by the Portuguese.

Up till now, the origin of the Ga people still remains unknown. Amartey, the Ga writer, points out that:

\begin{quote}
Dzee heni Ga dzwere mmena nee dzi Ga shi kwee he.
He ko Ga dzaku dze dani abashe bie.
Wolee shikpor ke maay potee no ni adze.
\end{quote}

The present day location is not the original home of the Gas. They left a place to come where they now reside. We don’t know the land and country they came from.

There are several hypotheses that have been propounded to attempt to resolve the problem of the origin of the Gas; however none passes the historical test. Emanuel Addo, outlines four of these:

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The ancient civilization hypothesis, Benin hypothesis, the ancient/Benin combination hypothesis, and the Ghana hypothesis. The researcher would limit himself to the ancient civilization hypothesis: due to the numerous scholarly views which fall under this. Besides, among all these hypotheses, it is the ancient hypothesis that covers the longest chronological stretch. Thus, discussing it gives a fair picture of what the other theories might resemble.

This theory traces the origin of the Gas to ancient societies such as the Phoenicians, Hamites, Cushites, and Jews. The leading proponent of the ancient Hypothesis is a Ga lawyer named A.B. Quartey-Papafio. Papafio published his writings on the Ancient Hypothesis in the early 20th century. Addo also affirms from Papafio that the Gas came from North Africa with a mixed multitude of ‘red-skinned’ people who happened to be the Phoenicians and Cutheans. This multitude evolved into the Takye dynasty amongst the Gas. Nonetheless, there are no records which support such an assertion, and there is no oral tradition that has a ‘red-skinned’ theory.

Addo further re-echoes the perspective of one Charles Nii Ammah, a Ga historian, on the Ancient Hypothesis. According to Ammah, probably the Gas met with the Jews in Sudan or somewhere in North Africa. The linguistic link that connects such a thought is that the Ga language is believed by some scholars to be of Sudanese origin. Ammah established that the Ga ancestry can be traced to the Hamites and Cushites ethnic group, who were influenced by the Jews in the upper colony of Egypt. To further advance this position, the writer stated the similarities between the Jewish culture and the Ga culture. For example, both the Gas and

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106 Addo, 27-34.
107 Addo, 26.
108 Addo, 27.
110 From Biblical history, the Cushites are descendants of Cush, the oldest son of Ham (One of Noah’s sons). Some scholars identify them as the Ethiopians. The Hamites lineage is traced from the father of Cush, Ham. See Genesis 10:6-8.
Israelites circumcise their male children on the eighth day. Again, both Jews and Gas count the year according to the lunar calendar of 12 months. The Ga writer, Hubert Abbey shares this same view that the Gas originated from Israel. Nevertheless, according to Addo, neither do these similarities tell us exactly where the Gas originated from, nor are there historical documents to fill up the missing link.

Although the origin of the Gas remains an unsettled matter, this cannot be said about the place of their present abode. When the Gas moved to Ghana, they settled on the land bordered by the Awutu on the West (Guan speaking people), and the Adangbe on the East. These comprise the inhabitants of Ga Mashie (Central Accra) who are believed to be the first to settle in Ghana, Osu (Christiansborg), La (Labadi), Teshie, Nungua and Tema. Each of these has specifically a unique way that cultural traditions are practiced. This is supported by the following Ga song:

Maŋ fɛɛ maŋ ke ekusumee! Every town says they have their own tradition.
Maŋ ko nəŋ ke ekusumee! In every town there is a tradition.

On the other hand, although there are differences as to how each specific geographical community applies cultural norms and values, on the general level, they share the same cultural values. Hence, it is meaningful to have a discourse on the Ga religious worldview.

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112 Henderson-Quartey, 60.
116 Nii Agbokome, Tema Agbaafotase, Interview, Tema Manhean, Tuesday, 8th July, 2014. This is an old Ga radio song which my correspondent, Nii Agbokome, sang during my interview with him to show how each Ga town has a unique tradition, though all Gas have cultural commonalities which bind them together.

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3.2 The Ga Religious Worldview on Affliction (Theology of Affliction)

The Gas have a dualistic conception of the universe comprising of the visible and the invisible; the physical and the spiritual; the material and the immaterial. These two spheres are closely interrelated and causally influence each other. Physical events can cause spiritual events, and spiritual events can cause physical occurrences. This dualistic understanding plays a very crucial role in the identity of man and how the spiritual world works.

The Ga religious worldview on affliction is mainly based on the belief that SCAs supervise the natural world and have the power to cause affliction. Kpele Traditional songs and rituals give insight into this. Kpele means all-encompassing. These Kpele rituals reveal that, concerning the arrangement of the universe, SCAs are at the apex of the Ga cosmological thought.\(^{117}\) In the hierarchy of beings, the Supreme Being (Nyorm) is first, followed by the gods (jemawoji) and ancestral spirits (niime ke naame), man (gbɔm adesa), animals, and plants.\(^{118}\) The main function of Kpele is to achieve harmony between the spirit powers and man\(^ {119}\) so that life (wala) may progress. Disharmony between the spiritual and physical world, results in affliction.

Rituals of SCAs are means by which the Ga people use to receive their blessings. On the other hand, it is believed that if these rituals are not performed, SCAs will intervene and cause disturbances in the natural realm, so that the year following will be full of affliction. This belief in the performance of rites as a means of requesting blessings of the gods and preventing affliction (i.e. which emanates from the spiritual world) is at the heart of the Ga religion, because


\(^{118}\) Kilson, *Kpele Lala*, 58-78.

\(^{119}\) Akrong, ‘Sacrifice in Labadi (Ga) Religion’, 16.
nearly all the festivals, rituals, and cultural practices of the Gas center on it. Below are a few examples.

Before the Homowo, the main annual festival of the Gas, silence is observed between the periods of the ritual sowing and harvesting of corn/millet. This quietness gives the gods the needed peace to look after the fertility and growth of the corn, which is an essential commodity for the Gas. Not observing these ritual cycles may cause the gods to withhold their blessings on food supply. Thus, the whole community may suffer from a decrease in crop yield.¹²⁰ On the other hand, “A luxuriant and healthy growth of the millet is a good omen which is interpreted to mean that the jemawɔji are favorably disposed to the people and therefore the coming year would be prosperous”.¹²¹ Moreover, in the Akpade rite, the two side doors of all houses are marked with clay. It is believed that this signifies protection from evil spirits.¹²² Thus, anyone who fails to perform this ritual can be a candidate of punishment from evil spirits. At the same time of this celebration, guns are shot in to the air to drive away wicked forces which cause harm.¹²³ The broom cleansing ceremony (blɔfiαhejuu) the La people is also an example. Throughout this celebration, the whole community clears away all rubbish and dirt in the community. The relevance of this act is to “prepare the home to purge the Labadi’s society of evil spirits, which have dominated human activities throughout the year”.¹²⁴ Not even the institution of marriage is free from this belief. After a wife conceives a child, it is the responsibility of the husband to buy

¹²⁰ Kilson, Kpele Laa, 21.
¹²⁴ Ammah, Ga Hɔmɔwɔ, 27.
a special piece of cloth, which would be used to cover his wife’s abdomen. This practice is believed to ward off evil spirits\textsuperscript{125} which will cause harm to the infant.

These instances reflect the belief in the ability of SCAs to impact the natural world either positively (through blessing the community) or negatively (by bringing calamity and affliction). Rituals along with these lines are geared towards gaining the favor of SCAs. However, if these rituals are not followed, affliction emerges. This raises an inquiry as to how the Gas conceive spiritually-induced affliction. In order to do that, we must look at the Ga concept of the human being.

### 3.3. The Ga Concept of a Human

The Gas hold that man is made up of mainly three interrelated parts in which only one is perceivable while the rest are unseen. The body (‘\textit{gb\textsubscript{\textasciitilde}{m\textsubscript{\textasciitilde}{tso}}’}) is corporeal. Associated with the \textit{gb\textsubscript{\textasciitilde}{m\textsubscript{\textasciitilde}{tso}}} is the ‘\textit{kla}’ and the ‘\textit{susuma}’ which fall in the class of immaterial substances. These components have to work together harmony to ensure the all-encompassing progress of the life. Anytime there is a disturbance among them, affliction follows. For instance, when witches (\textit{ayei}) harm the \textit{kla} or \textit{susuma} of someone, it can lead to weakness of the body and in extreme cases to physical death of a person\textsuperscript{126}. In occurrences as such, a priest, medicine-man or a medium will seek to know the specific part (whether the \textit{kla} or \textit{susuma}) that is in danger in order to administering the appropriate ritual of affliction.

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\textsuperscript{125} Azu, \textit{The Ga Family and Social Change}, 36.
\textsuperscript{126} Field, 93.
One major problem that confronts us here is with the distinction of these terminologies, there is no universal agreement of the meaning of them.\textsuperscript{127} This problem was encountered during an interview with some discussants. For example, while some leaders in a community maintained that the \textit{kla} and \textit{susuma} are the same, others saw them as something distinct. Hence, Joyce Engmann's approach to the subject has been adapted. Engmann indicates that in situations like that of conflicting views, it is better to point out them all. Upon further investigations from the elders of the town and other local officials, one outlook usually would yield more legitimacy than the other. So this method has been employed to attempt to solve these arising difficulties. Most local Ga officials spoken to either agreed they are different or just went forward to make the distinction between the two.\textsuperscript{128}

\textit{a. Gb\textit{w\textit{m}\textit{tso}}}

The composite word \textit{\text{gb\textit{w\textit{m\textit{tso}}}}}, comprises of the Ga terms \textit{\text{gb\textit{w\textit{m}}}} and \textit{\text{tso}}. Gb\textit{\text{w\textit{m}}} is a generic term for a person or human being in general, whether male or female. \textit{Tso} refers to a tree or 'figure of a body'. The Ga linguistic scholar, Kropp Dakubu, translates the word also as a "corporate body".\textsuperscript{129} This makes sense because when we sum up the two unit expressions, it can be interpreted as the 'corporate of body of man'. Man as a corporate entity consists of the blood (\textit{\text{la}}), bones (\textit{\text{wui}}), and flesh (\textit{\text{h\textit{e\textit{lo\textit{o}}}}}), which are responsible for all the biological processes of the human body like birth (\textit{\text{f\textit{\text{m\textit{c}}}}}), breathing (\textit{\text{\text{m\textit{u}}}}), and so on. The \textit{\text{gb\textit{w\textit{m\textit{tso}}}}} hence refers to the visible or material parts of man which consists of different component parts working together to ensure the bodily survival of man.

\textsuperscript{127}Engmann, "Immortality And The Nature Of Man In Ga Thought", 154.
\textsuperscript{128}Out of the four towns which this research was conducted, three communities agreed that the two were not the same.
The Gas have a humorous way of perceiving the human body. The body is seen as a mask called *kakamotobi*\(^{130}\). This connotes a hideous or funny facial mask worn by young men usually at Christmas time. These men go around in groups wearing these masks to entertain adults in order to receive some small amounts of money, and at the same time to frighten children. The Gas believe that upon entering the world, a person chooses a temporal mask (body) to wear. The implication of this (i.e. of man choosing a temporal body) is that man is more than the material body. This validates the Ga belief that the human being exists before birth and survives after bodily destruction.

**b. Susuma\(^{131}\)**

The *susuma* is a spiritual entity that can exit the body without causing bodily death. When it journeys outside of the body while sleep is going on, the mind (\(jwem\)) is able to record experiences it had upon its return. “For in waking life we may remember the experience, so that a re-awareness of the experience is patently temporal copresence of the *susuma* with the body”\(^{132}\). Hence, it is the actor in dreams. However, when a person's *susuma* travels in a dream and does not return to the body again, it leads to death. For this reason, the Gas do not wake people up when they are sleeping, lest their *susuma* loses its way back to the original body.\(^{133}\) It is implied from these earlier statements that the *susuma* has a will of its own independent of a person's actions. Some scholars have thus concluded that the *susuma* is unconscious.\(^{134}\) This is

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\(^{130}\) Engmann, 156.

\(^{131}\) Engmann notes that “The Ga say that when God created man, he breathed into clay, and activated it.”(157) However, the researcher thinks that this idea is not an original indigenous Ga concept, since any time such views were encountered, respondents supported them with the Biblical creation account (See Genesis 2:7). This shows the way in which Christianity has influenced some parts of the indigenous Ga culture.

\(^{132}\) Engmann, 161.

\(^{133}\) Field, 92.

\(^{134}\) Caution must be taken here not to reduce the *susuma* to an unconscious property of the ‘soul’. In Western thought, this subconscious part is just made up of psychological states like emotions of fear and hate. These
supported by the fact that two susuma’s can interact without the people being aware. In spite of that, there are exceptional cases that agents are able to subject their susuma to conscious control. These are those who have trained their psychic abilities well enough, such as witches and medicine-men. Engmann captures the point below:

… with regard to witchcraft activities… The term [sususma] is intended to cover diverse activities which witches are believed to perform out of the body by night, such as travelling to a meeting-place, taking part in a discussion or feast, and procuring food by a spiritual attack on a victim. These activities, the reality of which is very widely believed in, are said to be performed by the susumai (plu. for susuma) of witches which leave their bodies by night.135

Engmann notes that witches have the power to control their susuma to have out-of-body experiences. Witches use their susuma to inflict pain on other people. In doing so, these victims can suffer physical illness, body pains and so on.

Ritual specialists by their susuma also are able to discern such cases of spiritually-induced affliction from natural caused ones. They use this ability of the susuma to have reliable and accurate information to know which kind of remedy to give the victim. This is because a man may be mistaken about himself, but the susuma never deceives or is never incorrect. A similar incident was explained to me by the elders of the Nungua town.136 A number of them were travelling in a vehicle somewhere when they got to a locality in which they encountered roaming susumai of dead people who died by a car accident, called otofo. According to the report, their susumai saw these otofoi (plu. for otofo) on the way that was responsible for causing more accidents. Apparently, an earlier person died over there through a road accident, and the susuma

emotional capacities in the Ga setting would be attributed to the mind (jwemo). On the contrary, although the susuma is unconscious, it is still an entity that exists on its own having unique properties.

135 Engmann, 160-161.
136 Focused Group Discussion, Nungua, 23rd, August, 2014.
(i.e. *otofo*) was hovering around the area to cause more deaths and increase the population of other *susumai* in that location. Upon their *susumai* perceiving this, the elders performed a ritual which was led by the Nungua wulomɔ, Numo Borketey Larweh Tsuru II. A sheep was slaughtered and the blood was shed (*afle*). This action freed all those *otofoi* to go into the abode of the dead (*gbohiiajeng*).\(^{137}\) This is supported by the following quote:

> The *susuma* of a person who has died in an accident or by violence (*otofo*) does not travel from the place of death until after pacification has been performed. An *otofo* is angry and may haunt passers-by in a rough and frightening manner until it is pacified and its spirit transferred.\(^ {138}\)

The experiences of the *susuma* in dreams can be veridical (i.e. experiences that are real and can be physically felt). It is supported by the fact that after dreaming a person sometimes feels a physical effect. For example, when one dreams that he is fighting in dream and it reflects in his sleep, the Gas would explain that it was actually his *susuma* that was wrestling with other powers or that there is a disagreement between the kla and the *susuma*.\(^ {139}\)

c. **Kla**

The kla is the nature of God in man - the principle of life. It may be for this reason that the word *kla* is translated as life, energy, or vigor.\(^ {140}\) Unlike the *susuma* that can temporarily depart from a person, the departure of the kla leads to death. It is believed that upon death that the kla goes back to God and the *susuma* departs to the world of the dead.

The kla is responsible for a person's 'destiny'. Destiny here refers to the message or specific life purpose of an individual that the kla brings into the world. Before a person is born, it is believed

\(^{137}\) Also called *sisaiajeng*, world of ghosts.

\(^{138}\) Engmann, 165.

\(^{139}\) Field, 92.

that the kla goes to see the Creator (Nyomɔ) and chooses a ‘destiny’. It runs from this that the kla is well informed about a person even right at birth. Therefore, at birth, parents usually seek this ‘destiny’ of the child from a priest or medicine man since the kla acts as a guide. It is upon this principle that when a person mostly has pleasant or good experiences or escapes from life threatening circumstances several times, he may be described as the possessor of a good kla (‘kla kpakpa tse’).\(^{141}\)

The kla is also a man’s protector. Failing to follow one’s life mission (‘destiny’) can make the kla retreat from its proper function of protection. This exposes that person to harmful danger such physical illness and attacks from evil spirits. Gbeshi is one of them. This spirit (mumɔ) can cause a person to commit very disorderly actions which distracts a person from fulfilling his ‘destiny’. These behaviors include excessive drinking of alcohol, and stealing. This does not mean that the Gas attribute all bad behavior to the gbeshi, since this account is only plausible after Gas rule out the possibility of these deviant behaviors to hereditary factors (i.e. genetic factors), and is not identified within one's close family ties. The following quote is worth mentioning.

> Any form of socially unacceptable behavior which does not occur in man’s immediate family, and thus cannot be attributed to heredity, is liable to be attributed to a gbeshi. It is regarded as a disruptive force which interferes with the links binding the kla and the susuma, and prevents the victim from fulfilling his destiny.\(^{142}\)

Therefore, it is prudent that one works in conformity to the kla to enjoy life (wala). On the contrary, those who defy the dictates of the kla require the help of a ritualist to get rid of the gbeshi for the kla to return to its proper normal state and function.

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\(^{141}\) Engmann, 173.  
\(^{142}\) Engmann, 174.
A person's kla is linked with his day name. Those who want to kill a person can use his kla day name. A person's kla-name is not just culturally given for identity sake, but is a spiritual reality. It is also believed that witches can use this information (e.g. kla-name) to get access to a person's kla. It is by feeding on other people's kla that witches get their power. Therefore, medicine-men in cases where a person has lost power due to attacks of witches would perform rituals to heal and strengthen the kla.

To sum up on the nature of man, we have spoken about the three main components of man. The gbomotso is the corporeal part, and the susuma and the kla being the immaterial parts. This discourse sets the stage for discussing the Ga concept of affliction, since events of spiritually-induced affliction touch on the way in which spiritual components (e.g. kla, susuma) and metaphysical principles relate to affliction.

3.4. The Ga Concept of Affliction

The Indigenous Ga people of Ghana hold that affliction is spiritually-induced. There are spiritual agents responsible for causing affliction. This Ga belief of the existence of spiritually-induced affliction is further articulated in Ga linguistics. One Ga word for affliction “amanehulu” is translated as suffering or trouble. Kropp Dakubu adds a very interesting perspective to the word. She translates it as affliction, suffering, or tribulation. Therefore, the word applies to both affliction and calamity. This implies that the word applies not to only to a suffering agent but major disasters as well. Nevertheless, in this study, the researcher is restricting the word to

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143 Field, 93-94.
144 Zimmerman, 15.
145 Dakubu, Ga-English Dictionary, 32.
affliction, which means “a state of pain, distress, or grief; misery”¹⁴⁶ caused by spiritual agents (SCA or SCA1) which “threaten[s] the intactness of the person”.¹⁴⁷ The investigator shall address the issue of affliction in a religious context since for African religion, for that matter the Ga religion, many events are traced to their religious source, and hence require religious means to deal with.

Amanehulu originates from the Akan word “amanehunu” which is translated as trouble or affliction.¹⁴⁸ “Amanehunu” is derived from the word “amanee”¹⁴⁹, which literally means ‘town matters’. The word “hunu” means to witness, see or experience. Hence, ‘amanehunu’ can be translated as town matters seen or experienced. Issues which make news are mostly negative in nature. In this context the “amanehunu” can mean trouble. Putting the component terms (of the word ‘amanehunu’) together gives us the meaning ‘negative town matters seen or experienced, or trouble which is witnessed, seen or experienced’.

“Amanehunu” is sometimes used in the religious context. The following Akan saying attests to that “there is affliction in the afterlife” (obraakyi wo amane).¹⁵⁰ The Gas as well use the word sometimes in the religious context. The following Ga religious songs (Kpele) capture this idea.

(1)  Nyan'kuntong, me de?  Rainbow, what am I to do?
Mifo wiya  When I give sunshine,
Amane¹⁵¹  Affliction/trouble (my own translation)
Mito nsu,  When I give rain,
Amane¹⁵²  Affliction/trouble (my own translation)¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Malpas and Lickiss, in Perspectives on Human Suffering, v.
¹⁴⁹ From the Twi words ‘aman’ (town) and “nerma” (things).
¹⁵¹ In this song, Kilson translates the word “aman” as “I am blamed.” I rather take a more literal way of translating the text to mean “affliction.” Either way, the meaning is not lost. While “affliction” sums up the complain of man, “I am blamed” sums up Rainbow’s predicament. See Kilson’s exegesis in the second version of this song in Kpele Lala (page 143-144).
In the above text of the first song, rainbow, the spiritual agent that causes rainfall and sunshine, complains to the Nyom who is provider of all things about the ungratefulness of man regarding all its efforts. When it blesses human beings with the sunshine, they call it “amane” (affliction/pain), and when it gives rain, that is also “amane”. This provision of rain and sunshine is an affliction to man. Hence, this song reveals the way in which the provision of spiritual causative agents can occasionally be an affliction to man.

The next song is a report of Ahulu - the spirit messenger of the gods who stands for the truth. Ahulu reveals Debi’s situation - “a state trouble or affliction”. The song teaches how the spirit powers have advanced knowledge of people’s situations of affliction. This reveals a very important aspect of spiritually-caused affliction. It usually takes ritual specialists or SCAs to discern whether the affliction is spiritually-induced or not.

Field outlines seven main causes of spiritually-induced affliction: (1) injury to the kla; (2) resentful kla; (3) absence of susuma; (4) resentful susuma; (5) breaking of taboos – either religious or magical; (6) action of big dzemawon; (7) anger of the dead.

When a person’s kla is injured, it leads to spiritually-induced affliction. Earlier on we mentioned that the kla is the principle of life. Hence, when a kla is spiritually wounded it affects the

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152 Kilson, 143.
153 The reason I stick to my own translation here is that in Kilson’s work, the word “amane” does not follow a consistent translation. In song 30 (pp 143-144) it is translated as “I am blamed”; In song 94 (pp 188-189) it is translated as “trouble.” The same word is interpreted in song 223 (pp 289) as “wrong.”
physical health of a person. In the discussion of the kla and susuma it was previously noted how witches can cause harm to a person’s kla.\textsuperscript{154} In certain cases, witches feed on other people kla to gain more spiritual powers. This can lead to the death of the victim.

A resentful kla can cause spiritually-induced affliction. Everyone’s kla has its own preferences. Failure to fulfill the desires of one’s kla or ill-treatment of one’s kla can cause a spiritually-induced affliction. Field points out that the kla “is often used in a way which makes it synonymous with conscience”\textsuperscript{155}, which has to do with one’s inner moral sense of right or wrong. Things such as shame, anger, disgrace, bitterness, resentment, wickedness, among other things can make a person’s kla angry. This leads to ill-health. However, we must note that there are certain people who have bad kla which does not mind such things mentioned that can defile the kla. Field gives an example of a case involving a man who committed incest, yet was not struck by any spiritually-induced affliction. The indigenes responded that it was because he had a bad kla and that his kla did not mind the disgrace and fear that could have caused him to suffer from a spiritually-induced affliction.\textsuperscript{156}

Another cause of affliction is the departure of the susuma. Earlier on we noted although the susuma can exit the body without death, the long exit of the susuma can lead to death. It is in the departure of the susuma that it experiences harm. Field notes that a person who has been wronged can persuade a god to “take away his adversary’s susuma and punish it”.\textsuperscript{157} The side effect of this is that the one who’s susuma was taken captive does not enjoy peace.

\textsuperscript{154} See page 51 and 52.
\textsuperscript{155} Field, 115.
\textsuperscript{156} Field, 116.
\textsuperscript{157} Field, 116.
A resentful *susuma* applies to a situation where a witch tries to make a person unwillingly into a witch. The witchcraft spirit is transferable. However, in cases where a person’s *susuma* does not accept this spirit, the person goes through many difficulties. One common one is physical sickness as well as mental distress.\(^{158}\)

The most common way of attracting spiritually-induced affliction is by breaking of taboos – either religious or magical. Religious taboos are general sanctions regarding conduct. For instance, a priest is not supposed to touch a dead body.

Magical taboos are those which are connected to people’s magical objects. The Ga word *wɔŋ\(^{159}\)*, which is sometimes connected with magical objects, needs some explanation at this point. A *wɔŋ* is “anything that can work but not be seen and includes smaller beings of specialized and limited activity associated with medicines and magic…”\(^{160}\) Thus, it does not only mean a “god”, but a spiritual power or force-an invisible power or a spiritual medicine. A *wɔŋ* can be created for both good and bad purposes. A physical object used to represent a *wɔŋ* is called *amaga\(^{161}\)*, but the *wɔŋ* is the invisible power. “A *wɔŋ*—which usually has no name—will act for anyone, provided that the person has observed the proper ceremonies in becoming the owner of the medicine, and provided that he is careful about any taboos attached to it.”\(^{162}\) These taboos include not stealing, using the medicine for only its intended purpose, and so on. If these restrictions are not followed, the offender the *wɔŋ* will either desert him/her or inflict the person with pain.

\(^{158}\) Field, 157.
\(^{159}\) This word has various meanings. It can mean a ‘god’ which most often “dzema” is added to it. It can also refer to an invisible power or spirit. In this regard it can be created.
\(^{160}\) Field, 4.
\(^{161}\) This word is translated as idol, image, or statue.
\(^{162}\) Field, 111.
Spiritually-induced affliction can be caused by the action of a big dzemawon. The peculiar thing about a big dzemawon is that they act on their own volition. In other words, they have a power to decide how to act after a situation is brought to them to punish another person with a spiritually-induced affliction. The god judges the case before meeting outing punishment. However, if the person whose name has been brought before the god is innocent, the god does not totally kill him or her. The god might afflict the person with sickness.

Lastly, anger of the dead can cause spiritually-induced affliction. The ancestral spirits have taboos which going attract spiritually-induced affliction such as death, paralysis, and sickness. For instance, it is a taboo to eat the sacred food called kpokpoi, before it is dedicated to the ancestral spirits. Breaking this taboo make attract severe running stomach.

3.5. Ga Rituals of Affliction

In the Ga setting, one word for ritual is "kusum", which means custom, or a way of doing things. In this context, it applies to ways in which the Gas deal with affliction. The main aim of all Ga rituals of affliction is to restore harmony. Kilson makes the following point:

> The maintenance and restoration of order in the relations between God and man depend upon the performance of ritual by which mortal Ga attempt to establish contact with divinity and to achieve certain goals through this interconnection.\(^{163}\)

Rituals of affliction are geared towards maintaining the harmony between the physical and the spiritual world, so as to sustain peace and tranquility in the empirical world.

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Rituals are a means of creating harmony in the human being (i.e. unity between kla, gbomotsu, and susuma). In the discussion of the concept of man, it was realized that there are times when people can be afflicted as a result of disobeying their kla. The Sakum Wulm noted that everyone's kla has something it doesn't like. Going against this can be very costly. In such situations, the officiating wulm would have to call back the kla of the victim, and perform rituals to reunite the person with his kla, so that the affliction will cease.

Gas have ritual specialists who play a very important role in detecting the kind of affliction: whether a spiritual cause or a natural one. Medicine men, priests, and mediums, play very critical roles in the ritual process in every stage of the ritual process. They act as guides directing each stage.

3.5.1 Prayer (Slem) as Ritual of Affliction.

Prayer is a mode of communication between mortal beings and the gods. On one hand, human beings make their requests to the gods. On the other hand, the gods also communicate to the community to humans through mediums. The priests are the main vessels who communicate to the gods on behalf of the people, whiles mediums are possessed and used by the gods to communicate to the people. People contact priests or mediums for ritual directions through prayer to find their solutions to spiritually-induced affliction. In a discussion with Ago Korkor, a medium (wɔyo) in Tema Manhean, she revealed to the researcher that usually her god (wɔŋ)

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communicates at particular times of the day.\textsuperscript{166} During these times, people who want help from all sorts of spiritual hardships can receive their solution.

Sometimes the gods give special rituals guidelines, and at other times the gods pray on behalf of the victims present, to break any sort of bad omen or curses, or drive away any form of bad spirits, and to restore the victim’s freedom. For prayer has a twofold purpose. Firstly, it reveals the source of the problem. If anyone has been cursed, the gods can reveal it through the mediums by prayer. There are at least two ways in which it works. Either the gods tell directly the source of the problem, or the gods give very obvious clues that would lead to the source of the problem.

It was reported that one discussant from Nungua lost one of his fowls. He reported this to a medium.\textsuperscript{167} The medium gave an ultimatum after which the fowl was supposed to be returned, if not severe consequences would follow for the culprit. The medium cursed the person in the name of the gods, and called all manner of diseases upon the culprit. Later on, it was discovered that one man in the town was suffering from a strange sickness. Interestingly, the fowl was found at his residence. Thus, the prayer of the medium was able to indirectly point out the source of the problem, by giving out clues to finding the one responsible for the loss of the item.\textsuperscript{168} In that case, the offender would have to undergo some ritual cleansing to release him or her from the effect of the spiritually-induced affliction. The second implication of the above illustration is that prayer is not just a means of communication, but has the potential power to resolve problems. Thus, people who undergo spiritually-caused affliction go for prayers in order to solve their problems.

\textsuperscript{166} Awudun Korkor Ago, Tema Manhean meduim, Interview, Monday, July 17, 2014, Tema Manhean.
\textsuperscript{167} Focused Group discussion, Nungua.
\textsuperscript{168} Focused Group discussion, Nungua.
In the Ga community, there are two main forms of prayer: “structured prayer” and “unstructured prayer”. Structured prayer forms have a fixed pattern. Kilson splits structured prayer ritual into three phases: (i) Invocation of divine beings and ancestral shades, (ii) explanation for summons, (iii) supplications of divine beings. The invocation stage involves the process whereby divine beings are called upon. The investigator witnessed a libation prayer during his research. This was after he finished his interview with the Nungua Wulɔm. The Nungua Wulɔm graced the occasion with a special libation prayer of thanksgiving to honor the spirit beings for the success of the interview. The first thing the wulɔm did was to call the names of the divinities in order of precedence. As he mentioned each divinity, he poured some liquor, and those around responded.

The second stage involves the purpose for which they are called. The wulɔm mentioned the reason for our gathering, which was to thank the gods for our successful interview. Thus, it is at this point that if the purpose is to free someone suffering from spiritually-induced affliction, it is declared. In the final stage, the actual prayers are uttered. The help of the divine beings are sought to solve various requests of the community and individuals. Prayer reveals the manner in which the Gas depend on divine beings for assistance. This is because it is believed that the divinities have control over the natural world. They have the power to cause favorable as well as destructive events. The gods possess the power to avert spiritually-induced suffering.

169 Kilson, "Libation in Ga Ritual", 169.
170 The divine beings are called upon based on a hierarchical order. The name of the Supreme Being is mentioned first, followed by the gods and ancestors.
171 It was supposed to be an interview, but turned out to be a focused group discussion since other elders were invited to join in the discussion.
172 The response was "Hiao." Every line he said, we responded that way. This is a short form of "ahi aha wɔ", which means "may it be well with us."
On the other hand, prayers can take an unstructured form. These are prayers are spontaneous and non-predictive. Our discussion on the role of Ga mediums falls under unstructured form of prayer. There are times when gods descend upon them and manifest without prior notice. During these times are able to pray very specific prayers targeted at. The following is a prayer of a Ga medium, Awo Tsoo, which was recorded in Ga and translated into English sheds light on these beliefs;

Everything that will happen to us avert it and throw it away for us
Because you are like a god that we worship… We must call you… So you may help us with helping. If anything is happening to us, avert it and throw it away for us, but don't sit down for danger to flood us. So what we have seen, May we not see any again... Anybody who would stand somewhere, and says he wants us, to kill us or to do something to us behold (it rests with) you who are there.\textsuperscript{173}

From the above, it is evident that Awo Tsoo prays that all forms of evil things be overturned. This includes any bad luck, curses, and all forms of evil magic. Therefore, prayers are used as a means to relieve people from spiritually-caused affliction.

Other instances of unstructured prayer are where devotees are instructed to say words of ‘prosperity’ (utterance) upon some herbs to release them from any spiritual bondage. In such a case, prayers for success are said over the herbs to deliver the victim from their predicament. So if the victim is unemployed, all that needs to be done (depending on the kind of instructions that is given) is to say good things that someone wants to happen upon the herb, and wait to see it come to pass.

\textsuperscript{173}Dakubu, “Creating Unity”, 523-524.
Although there are personal prayers, Gas usually go to ritual specialists for prayers due to two main reasons. On one hand, these ritual specialists are closer to the divine beings and the idea of prayer ritual (like all other Ga rituals) is mainly to bring unity between the divinities and mortal beings. The functions of priests place them in constant contact with the gods. Therefore, their work puts them in a position to establish the goal of unity more easily. Secondly, these ritual agents occupy positions of spiritual authority and power. Therefore, people contact them to access the powers that they wield to solve their problems. When the researcher went to the Tema Agbafoiatse's residence, there was a long queue he joined in order to talk to him. Many of these people came there for consultations with all kinds of personal problems, knowing that his position he possessed set him aside with some supernatural powers to help. Therefore, prayer is very key in reversing the effect of spiritually-induced suffering.

3.5.2 Blood Sacrifice as a Ritual of Affliction

Blood sacrifice involves material offerings which have the essential component of the blood of an animal. In Ga thought, blood is a source of life which is used as a means of sustaining, strengthening, and saving life. Anytime the life of society or an individual is threatened, blood sacrifice is one important way of averting the danger. Blood is a means of gaining spiritual power and healing. Due to this, it is held that witches feed on people's blood to receive more power, and “that blood is capable of augmenting the potency of a wɔŋ (spiritual medicine)” so periodically people offer the blood of a fowl to revitalize their wɔŋ.

175 There seems to be a link between the kla and the blood (la). This is because the Gas believe that witches feed both on the kla and the blood to obtain more spiritual strength. Some therefore conclude that the kla of the person is located in the blood.
176 Sacrifice in Labadi (Ga), 52.
In relation to rituals of affliction, a discourse on A.A Akrong’s thesis entitled ‘Sacrifice in Labadi (Ga) Religion’ is very relevant here. He gives four functions of blood sacrifices in the Ga culture: (i) reparation for wrong doing (musukpam); (ii) returning a curse or abomination or bad-luck (lomdaim; (iii) appeasement of wrath (kpatam); (iv) exorcising (gbeshiedziem). Musukpam pertains to averting affliction connected to breaking grave offences such as incest, suicide, and murder. Since in the Ga family unit a person is connected to relatives by blood, consequences of musu is transferred firstly to immediate family members. If proper ritual proceedings are not followed to stop the affliction, it then spreads to the whole community. For instance, a person who commits suicide has defiled the land, and hence the gods first strike the immediate family with an affliction. Such a case demands that the officiating priest first appease (kpata) the gods by offering a sheep (too) or a cow (tsina), preferably white. The shedding of the blood of a cow or sheep particularly mends the broken relationship between the god (jemaw) that is causing the affliction and the offender. In addition to that, the victims involved have to be cleansed. Purification is done with a concoction of nyanyara leaves called aworke and blood to cleanse the sufferer. Although it is true that blood stops the wrath of the gods, and hence affliction must cease after appeasement (kpatam), it is not always so. This is because the destructive influence that causes the affliction set in motion by the gods is independent of the gods themselves. Hence, aside the shedding of blood to appease the wrath of the gods, blood must be shed again to cleanse the offender. This is what neutralizes or stops the source of power

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177 This word is from the Ga word “kpata”, originates from the Twi word ‘pata’ (also means to appease). Dakubu, 117.
178 Kilson, Libation in Ga ritual 164.
179 Animals accepted for sacrifices to the gods are only sheep and cattle. Fowls are never offered to the gods. They are used in situations pertaining to won and gbeshe.
180 White is often used in ritual sacrifices. White is a symbol of purity and joy. Other colors are allowed for sacrifice if the offender has only got that. However, black is never allowed for any sacrifice, since it symbolizes sorrow and death.
181 See Appendix D.
182 Akrong, 30.
that causes the affliction. In line with this, the Sakumwulumo, Numo Ashiboi Kofi II, argued that the “shedding of blood washes away any evil and expels bad spirits from the town” (Keji la shwieshi, ejie c nibii foji ke munfo foŋ fee shiçi maa mli).183

Gbeshiedziem involves the removal of a spirit called gbeshie that interferes with the functions of one’s kla leading to many misfortunes and bad behavior of the victim such as drunkenness, madness, and theft. In the removal of the gbeshie, the sex of the animal used for the blood sacrifice is very important. If the person afflicted is a male, then a woŋ or a tsofatse must offer a cock and vice versa184, since the animal stands in for the person.185 After rituals are made to remove the gbeshie from the victim, a sheep is then slaughtered and rubbed over the body of the sufferer to take away the entire affliction caused by this intruding spirit186 before the victim returns to normal state of affairs.

Lomdaim deals with breaking or returning a curse or a spell. People can inflict pain on others by cursing them through uttering mere words, using spiritual medicine, or through a jemawony. One peculiar thing pertaining to cursing in the Ga culture is that the effect of a curse can harm innocent family members of the cursed victim that were not even cursed. For this reason some Ga elders of Tema Newtown said that “a Ga does not like to offend in anything to be cursed, because the curse affects his family lineage that follow (Ganyo sumɔ ni etŋ ye noko mli ni ena lomɔ, ejaak eya keha seshibii nitsala nɔtsala nɔ).187

183 Ashiboi, Interview.
184 This same rule applies to (v) severing relations with a woŋ.
185 Akrong, 58.
186 Akrong, 47.
187 Focused Group discussion, Osu, 19th July, 2014.
There are many reasons why people curse others with an affliction. Sometimes when people commit crimes such as stealing, adultery and lying, the victims of these offences retaliate by cursing the offenders of such crimes. This sets in motion the commands of those who uttered it until a lomodaimσ is done to reverse the effect. The guilty person in such a case must perform a lomodaimσ. In the first place an inquiry must be done from a wŋ, a jemawŋ, or a medium, to know who is responsible for the curse. Confession of the wrong act by the culprit must follow. A ceremony follows where spirit powers are invoked. A fowl is then used to rub around the body of the guilty person to transfer the affliction to it. The fowl is then strangled and left on the floor to die. This ritual is believed to takes away the affliction from the offender.

In the performance of every ritual, it is believed that the patient would be cured. Every situation where the victim returns to normal state of affairs is a sign that the gods and other spirit powers have actually accepted the sacrifice, and are delighted to rectify the abnormal state of affairs. The following remark of Joseph Mensah, a Ga writer, reiterates this point.

The cure of suffering becomes a sign indicating that the gods and ancestral spirits are pleased once more in restoring the social unit to good health.

Thus the success of any sacrifice ritual is a sign that harmony between the spiritual world and the physical world has been restored. This ensures that there is individual harmony (between kla, susuma, and body), and social harmony (between the community as a whole and the spiritual society).

188 Akrong, 34.
189 Akrong, 35.
190 Mensah, Traditions and Customs of Gadamgmes of Ghana, 247.
3.6 Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed the concept of affliction rituals in the religious context of the Ga. This touches on the existential Ga meaning of affliction and the ways in which it is dealt with (rituals of affliction). Our discussion first centered on the Ga metaphysical belief system of man. Man is made up of the kla, and susuma, and the gbɔmɔtsɔ. The first two are immaterial, while the last is physical in nature. Rituals of affliction are intended to provide harmony between these three components. Human affliction is the result of disharmony. Therefore, the goal of rituals of affliction is to provide harmony (omanye). In relation to the types of rituals there are grouped into verbal and non-verbal. We focused on only prayer as verbal, and sacrifice as non-verbal form of ritual of affliction.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSIONS ON PERSPECTIVES ON THE GA CONCEPT OF AFFLICTION

4.1. Introduction

Tracing the patterns of themes of affliction from the previous chapters shows that the Ga concept of affliction seeks to answer concerns that Gas raise in relation to their understanding of the metaphysical arrangement of the universe. According to them, affliction which is spiritually-induced results in countless mishaps which range from psychological issues such as fear, medical problems like running stomach, social misfortunes including poverty and unsuccessful life, and even to physical weakness and pain. Spiritual methods of alleviation which is found in rituals like prayer and blood sacrifice was discussed in the third chapter as some of the means used to curtail spiritually-induced affliction.

The main objective of this chapter is to further examine the Ga concept of affliction by interacting with a range of indigenous views that were collected in the researcher’s field work. This is to ascertain to what extent these responses help in understanding and dealing with the problem of affliction among the indigenous Gas. The researcher shall do this by first of all presenting indigenous Ga perspectives on affliction. The methods of information collected comprise of interviews and focused group discussions had with the local Ga people. From that point follows discussion on these views presented. Subsequently, the researcher shall now look at these views in relation to the philosophical theory of causality. At the end, the investigator shall argue that although the theory was very useful in discoursing about the Ga concept of affliction, some difficulties with this theory calls for the need to postulate a new theory to fully explain the Ga concept of affliction.
4.2 Ga Indigenous Views on Affliction.

4.2.1 Background

The researcher engaged in a total of seven interviews and fifteen focused group discussions between May, 2014, and December 2015. The seven interviews comprised of three priests from Osu, Sakumono, and Nungua, one medicine-man and one medium from Tema Manhean, and two Ga elders of Nungua. Regarding group discussions the researcher carried out, they were five each from Osu, Nungua, and Tema Manhean.

All interactions had with the indigenous Gas have been grouped into four thematic areas by the application of hermeneutical phenomenology: meaning and causes of affliction (amanehulu); affliction and divination (ni ami kwem); significance of blood sacrifice as a ritual of affliction in the Ga culture; and the role of ritual officials in dealing with affliction. Data was initially collected in the local dialect and was later translated into English. Based on the hermeneutical method, the data was interpreted to shed light on the Ga concept of affliction. That is, the description of people’s experiences of spiritually-induced affliction and explaining it the way they understand it. In certain cases the direct speech of the indigenes were pointed out to help show the transition of language from Ga to English.

4.2.2 Meaning and Causes of Affliction (amanehulu).

During an interaction with Ago Korkor, a medium (wɔyo), she said that the Ga word for affliction, amanehulu, signifies anything evil (efɔŋ) or a bad omen (gbonyo). That is, something which is disgusting and horrific. This ranges from all manner of strange happenings

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191 Awudun, Interview.
such as a sudden accidents involving intense shedding of blood and epidemics that cause fatal deaths. Thus, in a situation where a spirit causative agent inflicts pain on another person, the Gas will say that “an affliction has beset that person” (*ena amane*). The following words sums up Korkor’s understanding on *amanehulu*.

**Original Speech**


**English Translation**

Amanehulu refers to the sudden and unexpected death of somebody. It is not something good. It is the destruction of something, or something is worrying you. Some of the things which causes *amanehulu* is first and foremost sin. When you sin, it brings bad repercussions. At other times, it is not caused from sin, but because someone does not like you so he or she uses bad spiritual medicine to cause you harm. The person goes to see a bad medicine man to work something against you spiritually for bad things to happen to you which causes you to suffer (*amanehulu*). Therefore, *amanehulu* is enormous suffering, or when something is destroyed. It is something evil.

Ago’s above discussion on *amanehulu* reveals two major things. The first is that affliction can be caused by sin. Sin in this context has to do with going against ritually sanctioned actions (taboos) that makes a person ceremonially unclean. Ago noted that the Ga concept of sin has to do with being aware of a ritually sanctioned action so that if a person breaks a taboo which he or she is not aware off, it is sometimes pardoned. In such a case punishment might not be meted for the

¹⁹² Awudun, Interview.
offence. For instance, when a person does not know that *kpokpoi*\(^{193}\) has to be dedicated to the gods before eating, and goes forward to eat it, the gods might not harm the offender. However, knowing this information and going forward to eat the food will necessarily attract punishment from the ancestral spirits in the form of diarrhea or diseases.\(^{194}\)

A case was cited by an informant where a lady who was in the period of ritual purification to become a *wɔyo* told her husband not to sexually touch her since the gods demanded sexual abstinence during that period.\(^{195}\) However, this man refused and made sexual advances on her. He was found dead the next morning in his house. It was reported that the gods struck him dead for disobeying ritual requirements. Such incidents show the way in which the idea of sin is tied to affliction among the Gs, in that the agent’s action and the prior knowledge of the action is responsible for the affliction.

The next thing that Ago pointed out was that people are sometimes afflicted by something through no fault of their own. In such cases, people use metaphysical powers to cause harm to other people. This can be for many trivial reasons such as jealousy, revenge, or for mere wickedness sake, or for a genuine reason such as for the sake of justice. For this cause many indigenous Gs carry protective medicine to prevent people with evil intentions from causing harm to them through spiritual medicine.

Ago cited a case where a person in Tema Manhean whose items were stolen went to see a ritualist who sent the situation before his god. The god demanded that the offender confess within some days or else death in the family will follow immediately, which he refused to.

\(^{193}\) It is also known as *kpekple*. This is the sacred food of the gods and ancestral spirits during Homowo. It is mainly made from corn which has been mixed with palm oil.

\(^{194}\) Awudun, Interview.

\(^{195}\) Focused Group discussion, Tema Manhean, 18\(^{th}\) July, 2014.
Within three weeks, five family members of the offender died under strange circumstances from particular disease. After the family investigated the source of the issue, they were told that the offender had to go and make some confessions before strange deaths in the family will stop. Ago stated that the idea of family members dying before the victim eventually dies is that if the victim is immediately killed, there will be no one to vindicate who’s items are stolen. On the other hand, multiple deaths of family member will propel the individual to say the truth and vindicate the matter. The offender eventually confessed before the god and the accused that “I went to steal this thing that is why there is death” (Neke nii nee ni miya ju ni haa ni gbele nee eba). If the truth is not said, the offender will never have peace.

In addition to that, Ago added that failing to perform rituals is one main thing that can attract calamity and affliction. According to her, rituals hold the Ga society (both spiritual and physical) together. It allows there to be harmony between the two worlds. Not performing rituals can cause the gods and ancestral spirits to be angry and punish the land with calamity. For the Gas, one main ritual indicator showing whether or not there is going to be calamity or affliction in the year is the ritual sowing (ŋmaadum) and harvest of the sacred corn (ŋmaafaa). Some informants explained that if the corn grows well and flourishes, it is a sign of blessing in the coming year. However, if it fails it is a sign that there are going to be hardships such as burning of houses, hunger, drought and so on until the next year. This is a sign that their prayers offered to the gods during this period have all not been heard. One of my correspondents also noted that “there are

196 Awudun, Interview.
197 Awudun, Interview.
198 Focused Group discussion, Nungua, 23rd August, 2014.

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rituals for twins. If these rituals are not performed, they will never have peace” (kusum ye ni afe ̃ ahaa haaji. Keji afee kusum nee ame he et ɔ ame).\(^{199}\)

4.2.3 Divination (ni ami kwemɔ) and affliction

Situations pertaining to spiritually-caused affliction demand divination rites to find the cause of the problem and which steps to be taken to avert the affliction.\(^{200}\) “Divination is a ritual process of attempting to obtain information from hidden [or spiritual] sources”.\(^{201}\) It shows which past events are responsible for a calamity or an affliction; whether the cause is from witchcraft activities, disharmony in the spiritual components of a person (susuma or kla); a curse (lomɔ); or breaking of a taboo. The final step is to show which ritual proceedings to follow in order to remove the spiritually-caused affliction.

In the researcher’s interaction with indigenous Gs, one word which Gs used to describe the art of divination is “ni ami kwemɔ”, which means “look into things” – inquire into. When Gs suspect that an issue has a spiritual origin, they will say that “we are going to inquire the matter” (aya kwe nibii amli). There are various ways of divination in the Ga culture which is used to obtain the cause of information. The most common one which most priests interviewed mentioned is that which pertains to the shrine. This is a sacred place where the gods and other spirit powers meet with the priests to communicate to them very important issues. The name of a shrine in Ga gives us more information pertaining to the art of divination. This sacred place is called “gbatsu”\(^{202}\), literally meaning conversation room, pointing to the communication which

\(^{199}\) Focused Group discussion, Nungua.  
\(^{200}\) Evans-Pritchard, “Azunde Oracles”, 43  
\(^{201}\) Philip Stevens Jnr., “Divination”, in Encyclopedia of Religious Rites, Rituals, and Festivals, 114  
\(^{202}\) Gbu means to talk or to prophesy, and tsu means a house. Thus, putting these two words together gives the idea of a room for conversation or a talking room.
goes on between the priests and spirit powers. Moreover, the Nungua wulɔmɔ pointed out that “gbatsu” is a short form of “gbalɔi-atsu”203, signifying the room of the prophets.204 This is because when the priests enter the shrine, important things pertaining to the Ga community is shown to them by the spirits. This includes information regarding how to receive blessings the coming year, or how to avert an impending danger. By this means the spirit powers also reveal to the priests a source of an affliction.

The Sakumo wulɔmɔ pointed out that one way of divination is receiving information from a shrine is through prayer and pouring of libation.205 Every priest has days which are set aside to go to the gbatsu to commune with the spirits. This is very important since the survival of the people and the community depends on it. One priest acknowledged that a time was there when he went into his gbatsu where it was revealed to him that a person had been cursed with a wɔn.206 Later on he found out that this same person was suffering during this period from a very bad headache. Hence, the source of the man’s predicament was that he had been cursed by someone else. The priest noted that after he performed certain rituals on the man’s behalf, the strange headache just departed away.

At other times, divination can be through one’s susuma or kla. This is because both the kla and the susuma can carry very important information which can allow a priest or medicine-man finds the source of a spiritually-caused affliction. The kla of a person can be contacted to know the source of an affliction. One reason for such an eventuality is that the kla is responsible for one’s destiny – life purpose. Hence, the kla knows best regarding whatever happens to a person. Thus,
the kla is in a better position to tell what the main cause of the affliction really is, and knows how to resolve the affliction. In certain circumstances, people are afflicted because they fail to obey the taboos of their kla. Gas believe that everyone’s kla has likes and dislikes. For one to enjoy life, the person has to be in harmony with the wishes of his or her kla. For instance, most priests held that all priests fast on their kla day – day they were born. Not doing this may attract punishment. In such cases, the best way to find out the cause is to contact the person’s kla.

People can also divine through their susuma. In our discussion on the stages in the ritual process we spoke about the formless ritual, where a people who have been trained to use metaphysical powers are able to use their susuma to access secret knowledge. The Osu-Klötey priest made the following important remark on the subject:

**Original Speech**

Beni Tse Ofe bɔ ƞeĩ ke shikpɔ le, efe пустумай keje ƞeĩ ebashwie shi. Neke susumai nɛe, nɔnĩ onaa ke ohiŋme le, keji obi le, ebaatsɔɔ bo, ebaatsɔɔ bo nɔnĩ ole… Wulɔmɔɔ, gbalo ni. Eke Ɲyɔŋmɔɔ wirɔ, Ɲyɔŋmɔɔ wamɔ le nqa. Ɲyɔŋmɔɔ jieɔ nɔbi etsɔɔ le. Nɔbi ni wɔbo Ɲyɔŋmɔɔ le, keji wɔbi le ojogbaŋ le etsɔɔ wo. Wɔye susuma ko nɛ wɔ ke tsuɔ nii. Neke mumɔɔ nɛe, wɔ ke ame nyiɛɔ.208

**English translation**

When Supreme Being created heaven and earth, he created certain spirits from above which descended to earth. These spirits when inquired reveal things which cannot be seen with the naked eyes. The priest is a prophet. He talks with God, and God advices him. God reveals things to him. Things that we ask God, if we ask well, he shows us. We have a spirit which we work with. We walk with these spirits.

One main issue worth pursuing is that priests have a spirit (sususma) which they work with. This pertains to their psychic ability to which they use to receive metaphysical knowledge. Hence, one

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207 Focused Group discussion, Nungua.
way in which a priest is able to receive the source of a spiritually-induced affliction is through his *susuma*.

Another means by which divination takes place is through mediumship. When the gods descend upon the mediums, they are able to reveal the source of people’s affliction. The researcher recalls one Ga dance ritual witnessed.\footnote{Observation, Osu, 19\textsuperscript{th}, July, 2014.} Drums were played for a very long time in order to allow the *gods* to possess their mediums. After a while, these devotees (mediums) were filled with high energy to move their bodies very rapidly and continuously in rhythmic patterns for a long time without getting exhausted. One thing that surprised the researcher was two ladies that I watched being possessed. In their unconscious states, they were able to dance with similar body movements having their eyes closed without falling down. In those higher conscious states, these people communicated very “esoteric knowledge” – knowledge which’s source is beyond the natural world. It was at this time point that they began to tell the cause of two cases relating to spiritually-induced affliction. The first was about a man who was suffering from severe headache for the past three weeks. The medium revealed that he had been cursed with a *wɔŋ*. Another medium spoke about a situation involving a person who had suffered running stomach as a result of disobeying his *kla*. The Nungua elders further added their voice on this subject following words:

**Original Speech**

*Ayɛ nani afeɔ ni ake tseɔ mei a susuma. Bei komei ye jemẹ ni jemawɔji boteɔ wɔyei amli. Kɛ mumɔ le bote emli le, eba la. Ayɛ susuma lala. Keji a la aahu le, gbɔmɔ ni atswa le tukpe le aloo sisabii etswa le mumɔ mli hela, esusuma baabote wɔyo le mli, ni ebaa wie tɔmɔ bɔni papa le wieɔ pepepe. Obaajwen ake papa nee ni wieɔ. Ni ebawie ake, gbɔmɔ nee, eya fee nekɛ ke nekɛ nohɛɔ esususma eje esee.*\footnote{Group discussion, Nungua.}
English Translation

There are rituals done to call someone’s spirit. There are times when the gods possess the mediums. When they possess them, they begin to sing. There are songs of the spirit. When they sing for some time, the spirit of the person who has been struck by a hostile spiritual medicine or which the ancestors have struck with a spiritual disease will enter the medium, and speak just as the man speaks. You might think that the man is speaking. The spirit will say what he had done to make his spirit has leave him.

From the above, we can see that the spirits of other people can manifest through mediums and reveal the source of people’s affliction.

4.2.4 Blood Sacrifice as a Ritual of Affliction.

The Sakumo wulmɔ, argued that blood sacrifice has three main purposes. Firstly, when people are not on talking terms, an animal has to be slain to restore the relationship. So blood has the ability to reconcile. Furthermore, blood washes away any bad omen which developed as a result of being on bad talking terms. He added that during the Homowo period, blood sacrifices are used to expel bad spirits from the town. The moment that the blood falls to the ground, the evil force causing the chaos departs from the scene.

The Gas believe that life is in blood. Blood offers spiritual power. Due to this, it is believed that witches feed on people’s blood to receive more power. Kilson also makes a similar remark when she pointed out that during Ga bloody ritual ceremonies the sprinkled blood is consumed by the gods. Therefore, when one is losing his life, blood, which is life, has to be shed to replace the loss. The blood of sheep, goats, cows, and fowls are used for the sacrifice. The

211 There seems to be link between the kla and the blood (la). This is because the Gas believe that witches feed both on the kla and the blood to obtain more spiritual strength. Some therefore conclude that the kla of the person is located in the blood.

212 Kilson, “Libation in Ga Ritual”, 175. See footnote.
number of animals employed in a blood sacrifice will depend on the success of the ritual. Generally two ‘white’ fowls are used in the sacrificial process.

There is a condition to determine if a blood sacrifice succeeds or fails. If the first time the ritual is performed, and it succeeds, then there would be no reason to slaughter the second animal. If after the fowl is slaughtered, it falls on its face (i.e. Ga word bu-shi) pointing to the floor, then it is a sign that the ritual has succeeded. Nonetheless, when after the fowl jumps for a long time and it finally falls on its back (i.e. the Ga word ka-shi) then the ritual has failed, and a second one has to be slaughtered to ensure that the intention of the ritual succeeds. If the second attempt fails, then animals have to be slaughtered until the desired effect is realized. Nonetheless, it is hardly the case that three birds will be used, since most often upon the first try the animal falls face flat.

There are several ways in which blood sacrifices are performed depending on the requirement of the spirits or the specific context being dealt with. In our discussion of the concept of man, we spoke about how a person's kla can leave him. We added that in situations like that, it makes the person prone to the control of the gbeshi. In such circumstances, blood sacrifices can be one of the means to turn away the effect. Numo Ashiboi II said that what they do is to call the person's kla, and ask what it wants in order to be restored to the individual.\textsuperscript{213} If the kla demands only a blood sacrifice, then that suffice to remove the affliction. Nonetheless, if the kla demands some other thing to be done, it should be executed in addition to blood sacrifice. For instance, some people are required to bring some schnapps\textsuperscript{214}, clean water, leaves, and sometimes uncooked eggs. In certain cases, money is involved, especially when one has offended another person.

\textsuperscript{213} Sakumo wulm\textsuperscript{w}, Interview, Tema Manhean, 26\textsuperscript{th} July, 2014.
\textsuperscript{214} A strong liquor resembling gin. It looks like water due to its colorless outward form.
Therefore, the type of ritual of affliction to be performed is not pre-determined, but context specific. After this ritual is performed, it is believed that the patient would be cured.

4.3 Roles of Ritual Officials in Dealing with Affliction

There are three main ritual offices related to dealing with spiritually-induced affliction. They are the office of the priests, medium, and medicine-man. The execution of the each of these ritual offices differs from person to person. Hence, we shall look at each of these ones in details.

4.3.1 Priests

The priests the researcher contacted informed him that they serve mainly as intermediaries between the gods and mortal men. This requires going before the gods to make requests to them for blessings on behalf of the whole community. They are the mouthpiece of the community before the spirit powers, who are the overall heads of the Ga community. During the time of prayer, the gods reveal things to them which always require certain rituals to be performed to ensure the continuance of the community, and that calamity and affliction be discarded and prevented. Hence, priests are key people in nearly all Ga communal rituals. It is for this reason that one priest remarked that “the work of a wulɔmɔ is that, he is to ensure that all rituals pertaining to the town go on as they are supposed to” (wulɔmɔ gbejianɔtoo ji akɛ, sani ekwɛ ni maŋ kusimi aya no pɛɛɛɛɛ). Community rituals are mostly led by priests. Hence, the work of the priest pertaining to affliction has to do with affliction connected to the community as a whole – ‘cooperate affliction’.

Many priests also told the investigator that they were not just responsible for helping to relief the general public from affliction, but they also were responsible for helping mediums. In fact, at one

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215 Sakumo wulɔmɔ, Interview.
of the investigator’s random visits to one priest, he saw him dealing with a spiritual problem regarding a son of a medium. This priest said the following pertaining to this subject:

**Original Speech**
Wo*yei ke wọŋtsemei tse mi osifọ. Ke noko ni enaa naa, ebaaba bi ni ma tsọọ le. Nọfeenọ ni abaa fee le sani ma nyiee ame hi. Sani mi ke daa ashwie shi dani ame baanye ame boi kusum fee kusum.216

**English translation**
Mediums call me priest. If there is something that a medium does not understand, he or she consults me and I will show the medium. Whatever they do they have to consult me so that I lead them. I have to pour libation before they can start any public ritual.

The above statement reveals that priests are responsible for dealing with affliction which besets mediums. Hence, if a medium is suffering from a spiritually-induced affliction, the priest is one of the person’s supposed to help resolve the issue.

However, many priests complained that the modern societal structure interferes with the performance of rituals. According to one priest, in the performance of community rituals such as rituals related to sowing of the sacred corn, the whole town is supposed to be enclosed – all roads are supposed to be blocked, and the community is supposed to maintain public peace and quietness.217 This allows priests the freedom to freely walk through the town to perform rituals on behalf of the town. Priests need this environment to effectively communicate with ancestral spirits who descend at these periods. However, modern societal structure permits business and commerce, and activities which allow public disturbances through-out the whole year. One priest from Tema Manhean lamented about this in the following words:

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217 Tema Manhean *agbaafoatse*, Interview, Tema Manhean, 8th July, 2014.
Original Speech

Today our rituals are fading away. It is not like the ancient times, such as when ritual officials say that all community people should sleep in the evening so that rituals can be performed for the community, everyone stays indoors. However now this is not the case, when people are told to sleep in the evening they do not. If we say we are performing community rituals in our town, they do not allow us to. It is these things that cause spiritual sickness and diverse suffering to come to the town. It causes destruction of things in the town.

From the above, the priest laments the inability to perform certain community rituals which has resulted in many disasters. In this regard Nii Agbokome, the Tema agbafoatsɛ cited some of the changes that have occurred in Ga naming ceremony that is causing long term effects of spiritually-induced afflictions. In ancient times, naming ceremony was never done on the streets as it is done in contemporary times. He continued that one resulting effect of this is the rise in the number of street children in Tema Manhean, since more new born babies are now named on streets. To him, the significance of the environment during naming ceremony reflects child’s destiny - where the child ends up.

One priest for instance cited the case of the fire-flood disaster in Accra that happened on June 3rd 2015. In this incident, Kwame Nkrumah Circle was flooded by heavy rains. Besides, there was a gas filling station around that same area. Petrol from this station mixed with the water, and

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219 Tema agbaafoatsɛ, Interview.
220 Group discussion, Tema Manhean.
eventually a small spark of fire set it ablaze. This caused a huge explosion that killed about 150 people, and many others were injured. The priest noted that the president of the Ga traditional Council, Nii Dodoo Tackie, claimed that the reason why this disaster occurred is that people were not obeying the Ga traditional rules of observing silence. This was in line with the ritual of placing a ban on drumming and noise making, between the period of the ritual of sowing and harvesting of corn/millet of the Homowo season. However, some people went for a vigil on the streets of Accra to draw attention to some problems in the nation, which according to the Ga Council disobeyed this sanction placed on noise making. Thus, the origin of this flood-fire incident is a spiritual cause, such as the punishment of the gods or ancestral shades. Hence, the inability of the priests to effectively perform their roles leads to disaster.

4.3.2 Mediums

Women are those who often become mediums, the men form the minority. Interestingly, there is a Ga word for a female medium (wɔyo), but not one for a male medium, rather the generic term wɔŋtse. Both words have the connection to one who is separated to a god. The investigator was told by one elder that the word wɔyo means ‘wɔŋ a yoo’, that is, the ‘god’s woman’ or the lady belonging to the gods. This idea reflects the way in which the gods choose a lady to be a medium for life. Unlike the priests who communicate from the people to the gods, the mediums are rather the mouthpieces of the gods, they communicate on behalf of the gods and ancestors to the people. Although the priest is higher than the medium, in the moment in which the gods are communicating through them, they are higher than the priests, and even the chiefs. The Tema agbaafoiatse made the following point on this:
**Original Speech**

Woyo le, ke aleene ni noko ey ko mba, ke won bayishi, ebaatsen, ni ana boni abaafee ni asaa... Woyo ta manʃse se ni wo shi manʃse taaw woyo se ni. Ejaake woyo le, wo okropni. Gbal ni. Jemaw jii wie nibii ketsce ene.²²¹

**English translation**

If there is something bad about to happen, and a god descends, the god will manifest through the medium to reveal the way to deal with it. Mediums sit on a chief’s seat, but chiefs do not sit on the seat of the medium because the medium is an eagle. A prophet. The gods speak through her.

In view of the above-mentioned, there is a relational authority that exists between the chief and medium. Accordingly, in the position of a medium as an eagle or prophet, the medium can occupy the seat of the chief at that time the gods are communicating through her. The reverse is not true, that is, a chief cannot sit in the seat of a medium, since the gods do not directly speak through the chief.

Every medium has a god which he or she serves under. There are two ways in which the gods speak through the mediums. Firstly, it can be without prior notice, and at certain periods there are special times when the gods speak through them. For example, one medium pointed out that her gods communicates through her mostly on Fridays, however, occasionally on some Wednesdays or even Sundays her god can communicate through her.²²² Occasionally the mediums can be so lost in the experience that they do not remember what went on when the gods were communicating through them. Sometimes the process can be intentionally aroused. For instance, one medium told the researcher that anytime there is a family problem and they want to know from the gods who is responsible, either music bells are rang for a long time or certain drums are played for a long time until the gods begin to manifest through them.

²²¹ Agbokome, Interview.

²²² Focused Group discussion, Tema Manhean.
Pertaining to affliction, mediums also reveal the source of an affliction and the remedy to it when the gods communicate through them. One medium mentioned a strange incident that occurred in the family involving the death of a man, and she was consulted to find the source of the problem.\(^{223}\) She gave them a time to come to see her since it was usually the time in which her gods manifest. During consultation, the gods revealed that the source of the problem was that someone had used “a bad medicine on him” (atwa le tukpe). E. Ammah also discusses this role of mediums in the context of funeral rites (yarafeem) that mediums are those whom family members consult to find out what caused a person’s death in the family.\(^{224}\) In this vein, one medium recounted that every true medium has a role to protect his family by giving them ritual information which will prevent impending harm from destroying them.\(^{225}\) A particular one has to do with mediums that attain an old age. Such one’s usually care for the destinies of the next generation. They stay with many other children in the community or family, whom they regularly pray for and give sound advice to ensure that these people later become respectable people in the society.

4.3.3 Medicine-men

In the Ga setting, the office of the medicine-man is the “agbaafo”. These are actually assistant priests. However, unlike the priests and mediums whose main specialty has to do with the gods, agbaafoi (plural for agbaafo) specialize with spiritual herbs or medicine. One medicine-man shared his thoughts that one major role of an agbaafo is as a spiritual protector of the town.\(^{226}\) If

\(^{223}\) Focused Group Discussion, Osu.


\(^{225}\) Tema agbaafoiats, Interview.

\(^{226}\) Agbaafoiats' is the head of agbaafoi.
there is any spiritual evil befalling the chief, he is the person supposed to intercept it. For instance, before the chief sits down on his stool, he sits first in case there is any destructive spiritual medicine that can cause harm to the chief. Since, he is invested with a lot of spiritual power he will be able to neutralize the effect of the spiritual medicine so that it does not harm the chief. However, if the spiritual medicine is more powerful than him, he will take the harm upon himself so that the chief can escape it.

Another role of agbaafôi is to discern situations, especially that which relates to use of spiritual medicine. One medium said that “the agbaafóatsɛ is someone who when the mediums have a problem, they bring before. If he is not able to adjudicate it, then its brought before the chief” (Agbaafóatsɛ jí moko ni ke wọyei, keji sane ko baa, le hie ni ake sane nɛɛ baa ba. Keji eynɛɛ naa, sani ake ya ha matse). One agba explained the case of a man who he helped to escape a spiritual trap. His friend had used some spiritual medicine against him which was to be set in motion upon the condition that the man used a certain route to his house. So he advised the man not to walk that route for some time, or else something very bad will happen to him.

The work of an agba is also to help deal with spiritual problems that arise pertaining to those in high ranking positions such as priests, chiefs, and mediums. The medical agba is the one responsible for providing spiritual medicine which protects the chief from harmful medicine. If any of there has been a spell cast through a wọŋ, the agba is responsible for providing ritual information that will heal the situation.

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227 Focused Group discussion, Osu.
228 Focused Group discussion, Osu.
However, one thing that many *agbaafoi* complained about is the way in which people perceive them. The Tema *agbaafotse* for instance told me that many people think that they use their spiritual powers to kill haphazardly. However, this perception accordingly is not the case. He continued that it is because there are many fake spiritualists who are in town using their power for all kinds of trivial purposes. Those of other faiths are not privy to this knowledge, hence they confuse the two. This is one major challenge for them in the execution of their roles as medicine-men since it distorts their identity.

4.4 Discussion of Responses

At this point discussions shall primarily be based on observations on the data collected. Four main issues shall be examined: (i) causes of affliction; (ii) stages in Ga rituals of affliction; (iii) the Ga Metaphysical Theory of Suffering.

4.4.1 Causes of Affliction

In the investigator’s study of the Ga concept of affliction, he has observed basically three causes of spiritually-induced affliction. While the first relates to SCAs, the second one pertains to SCA1s. In addition to these, disharmony in the spiritual component of man can cause affliction. Field’s categorization of spiritually-induced illness has been placed under these three headings.

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229 Agbokome, Interview.

230 (1) Injury to the *kla*; (2) Resentful *kla*; (3) Absence of *susuma*; (4) Resentful *susuma*; (5) Breaking of taboos – either religious or magical; (6) Action of big *dzemawon*; (7) Anger of the dead. Field, 109. For instance, (1), (2), (3) and (4), can be simply summed up to be under disharmony or disturbances in the spiritual components of man since they all refer to a disturbed condition of the *kla* or *susuma*. (5), (6) and (7), belong to the category of breaking taboos of spirit powers (i.e. of the gods, the ancestors, and that connect to religious or magical taboos). This is because without breaking a taboo, these spirit powers will not harm anyone. However, pertaining to (6), in a case where
SCAs such as the deities, ancestors, and other spirit powers can cause harm based on certain conditions. Firstly, it can be as a result of breaking of taboos. A taboo in the Ga is called “musu”, something abominable, forbidden, or a sacrilege. These are acts that attract serious sanctions. They include incest, suicide, raining insults on an elder, or mistakes in ritual proceedings such as entering into a shrine with shoes on.\textsuperscript{231} This is in agreement with the responses of indigenous view that sin (actions that the individual is aware of its consequences) is one cause of spiritually-induced affliction.

Ritual sanctions of sin come in two forms. The initial one pertains to the general breaking of ethical codes of SCAs, particularly the gods and ancestors which causes spirit powers to severely punish offenders with various afflictions. This idea is captured in Hampton’s words below:

Ancestors are regarded as the founders and custodians of Ga culture. Violations of the moral code of society are met with immediate retribution from the ancestors. Whenever ancestors visit the society with catastrophes the Ga believe that once the grievances are known and corrected the ancestors will go away. This is relevant to the fact that the Ga try to fulfill the wishes of the deceased as soon as possible after death, for it is not desirable to have him linger.\textsuperscript{232}

Hampton makes a very thought-provoking point worth pursuing. She calls this kind of immediate punishment of the ancestral shades “retribution”. Retribution has to do with a legal punishment for committing an offence. Hence, as Hampton points out, after proper ritual procedures are followed to rectify the issue, the affliction will cease. During one of the researcher’s random

\textsuperscript{231} Anytime the researcher went to visit a priest or a medium at a shrine, he removed his footwear. Not heeding to this can attract very serious consequences from the gods such as madness, severe headache, running stomach, and so on.

visits to a Ga elder, he shared with him a very interesting story of himself that substantiates the above point. He said that after his first wife died, he was to perform certain rituals to ensure that he severs any spiritual link with his deceased wife. However, he refused and went on to marry a second one. Unfortunately, this second wife died mysteriously shortly after he engaged her. After he went to inquire from a ritual specialist, he was told that it was the spirit of his first wife who wanted a proper burial proceeding. Eventually, this man went through these rituals. Now, he still lives happily with his third wife. The affliction has ceased as a result of following proper ritual measures.

Another kind of this affliction regarding the violation of moral codes of the SCAs pertains to the office of priesthood and mediumship. Generally, these restrictions of priests and mediums center on sexual prohibitions at certain times of the year, avoidance of any contact with the dead, attending funerals, and even mourning for the dead. Aside these moral codes, there are specific ones that differ from place to place. For instance, a priest told me that it is a taboo for him to go out on Thursdays, since his gods forbids that. Certain priests and mediums have food restrictions. They don’t eat certain foods because their deities don’t allow them. These precepts must be followed to the latter, or else serious consequences may follow. In fact, one Ga priest asserted that “if I fail to perform the rituals of the gods in a year, they will kill me” (keji mitsuuss jemawɔji le akusum afi ko le, abaa gbe mi). Kilson records such an instance where a kpele priest

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233 This is what Field calls “Anger of the dead.” However, I think all these cases fall under the breaking of taboos of the spirit powers. This is because this “anger” was caused by violating a ritual sanction. Thus, without this violation the spirit powers will not be angry in the first place to cause affliction.

234 Kilson, 87.
in Accra died right after violating a ritual sanction.\textsuperscript{235} It is a taboo for a priest to mourn for the dead. This priest’s death followed right after mourning for the loss of his son-in-law.

While the priesthood is hereditary\textsuperscript{236}, mediumship is based on a marital relationship between the medium (\textit{w\textcircled{y}o}) and the god.\textsuperscript{237} Usually, the gods choose to be their mediums they use to communicate with the community. Refusal to comply with this leads to very serious consequences. There have been reported cases about those who have refused the offer of the gods, who have suffered strange afflictions such as madness, and even in severe cases death. One such case occurred in Nungua some years ago. The researcher was told by the elders of Nungua that there was once a lady who the gods selected to be a medium, but she refused the offer. In due course of time she became mad. The Nungua town officials said that it was as a result of her refusal to accept the offer to become a medium. Field also records an interesting incident as such:

\begin{quote}
I recall again a woman who was a Christian and a church-goer, who one Sunday began to have hysterics in the church. She was diagnosed as ‘taken by the spirit’ and advised to go and train as a \textit{w\textcircled{y}o}. Being a Christian she resisted, and become more or less mad, deaf, and dumb. When she yielded and began to train as a \textit{w\textcircled{y}o}, the deafness and dumbness left her.\textsuperscript{238}
\end{quote}

Aside retribution, spirit powers cause affliction based upon requests. People who want to afflict or kill their enemies can go seek the help of a god (\textit{jemaw\textcircled{w}ŋ}). However, as Field notes, “A \textit{dzemaw\textcircled{w}ŋ} will act for a person only if called upon by name, and then only if it approves of what it is asked to do”.\textsuperscript{239} This is because the \textit{jemaw\textcircled{w}ŋ}\textsuperscript{240} has to judge the matter to see if the person is

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{235} Kilson, 87.
\textsuperscript{236} Kilson, Dancing with the Gods: Essays in Ga Ritual (New York: University Press of America, Inc, 2013), 60.
\textsuperscript{238} Field, 101.
\textsuperscript{239} Field, 111.
\textsuperscript{240} University of Ghana  http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh
\end{flushright}
at fault or not. If not, the *jemawɔnɔ* can refuse to perform the action or lessen the weight of the request. For instance, if the *jemawɔnɔ* realizes that the person being requested to be killed is innocent, the *jemawɔnɔ* will rather bring a disease upon the person rather than death.\(^{241}\)

Furthermore, affliction can fall within the range of SCA1s. This is what the researcher terms the operation of spiritual laws, since the agent involved must have some requisite knowledge or skill of some spiritual power or medicine before affliction can be appropriated. These comprise of cursing (*lomo*) and the use of spiritual or magical powers to inflict pain.

The Gas sometimes have a very intriguing way of cursing their victims, especially when the person has committed an offense. The curse is not only directed towards the victim, but extends to the reach of those who were indirectly involved in the incident. Some time ago, one discussants from Nungua lost one of his fowls. He reported this to a medium (*wɔyo*). The medium gave an ultimatum of three days after which the fowl was supposed to be returned, if not severe consequences would follow for the culprit. The medium cursed not just the person, but anyone who came into contact with the fowl, or had something to do with its disappearance. To the surprise of everyone, one man rushed to a spiritualist in the area with severe running stomach. The spiritualist directed him to the medium that uttered the curse. It was there that he realized that the strange illness was caused by the curse that the *wɔyo* uttered.

Besides cursing, spiritual powers can be used to cause harm. Spiritual powers can be made to inhabit physical objects such as herbs or wood. For that matter, some people call it spiritual medicine or herbs. An example is *nyanyara* leaves which is believed to have protective powers.

\(^{240}\) The variation in spelling comes from ancient Ga and modern Ga writing.
\(^{241}\) Field, 116.
Usually it is sometimes made into a wreath and worn around the neck of priests. In this case, the physical object is a token of the spiritual force. Although the physical object can be seen, the spiritual force behind is invisible.\footnote{Laryea, Yesu H\text{	extcopyright}m\text{	extcopyright}w\text{	extcopyright} Nu\text{	extcopyright}ts\text{	extcopyright}, 48.} Every spiritual medicine is to meet a specific need that it can meet. Spiritual medicine for having babies cannot be used for making success. However, every spiritual medicine has guidelines and restrictions for its safety use. If these guidelines are not followed properly it either makes the powers ineffective or can cause harm to the agent using it. Field gives an instance where a man died as a result of breaking taboos attached to his spiritual medicine.\footnote{Field, 118.} Such cases as these, the victim of the spiritually-induced affliction is at the same time the cause of the affliction.

Spiritual medicine can also be created solely for the purpose of causing harm to another person. However, we need to make a significant distinction in the history of the worship life of the Gas to explain who administers a \textit{w\ŋ}. Philip Laryea in his discussion of a “\textit{w\ŋ}” (spiritual medicine) describes it as an unseen power that can work wonders.\footnote{Philip Laryea, Yesu H\text{	extcopyright}m\text{	extcopyright}w\text{	extcopyright} Nu\text{	extcopyright}ts\text{	extcopyright} (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2004), 114-115.} It can be used for causing harm such as stealing and cheating without being caught, and the destruction of another person’s \textit{susuma}. For this reason many Gas have protective medicine (\textit{w\ŋ}) against all kinds of these potential threats. These protective medicines include that against spiritually-caused diseases, spells, the protection of property, life protection spiritual medicine and so on. There are conditions attached to protective medicine. One is that a protective medicine is made to serve only one purpose.\footnote{Field, Religion of the Ga, 112.} Hence, the more things a person wants to secure through the protective medicine, the more protective medicines are to be made to that effect.
Some time ago in the history of the Gas certain mediums broke away from the official religion of the Gas, and practiced their own religion. They no longer served under the *wulɔmɔ*, neither were they supervised by the *jemawɔjii*, but ended up creating their own spiritual powers which they sell to get money. Thus, there is a difference between priests who engage in the official Ga religion, and mediums who are private practitioners of the religion. Accordingly, Philip Laryea, the Ga scholar, points out that these mediums broke away from the official Ga religion and practiced their private religion. Unlike the priests of the formal worship, they commercialized it. They began to sell the *wŋ* both for good or bad purposes. This opened way for people to use this spiritual medicine to cause other people to be afflicted. For this purpose they are called “*wŋtsulɔi*”, which literally means workers of spiritual powers, since they use spiritual medicine for the desires of people – whether good or bad. Thus, any person who wants to kill his enemy or afflict him with any ailment, spiritual powers are created by the *wŋtsulɔ* to that effect.

Lastly, affliction can transpire as a consequence of disharmony between the spiritual components of a person (*kla* [soul] and *susuma* [spirit]). Going against the wishes of one's *kla* can lead to health and psychological problems. The long departure of the *susuma* can lead to sudden death.

### 4.4.2 Stages in Ga Rituals of Affliction

The investigator’s study of Ga rituals revealed that there are basically two stages involved in ritual practice. The first stage is the problem diagnosis stage and the second is the intervention stage.

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246Laryea, 115.
4.4.2.1 Diagnosis Stage (Cognitive Stage).

Ritual specialists identify the problem at this stage through a cognitive capacity. This stage is further divided into two phases. First is what we would call the phase of 'conscious' or 'intentional' divination. This involves the consultation of a higher power. In this process, there is a procedure to follow in order to access a kind of higher knowledge. On one of the researcher’s visits to a Ga ritualist, the ritual official was arbitrating a family dispute that was brought to him by some community members. He first listened to both sides of the party, and following that, he excused himself for about ten minutes into his consultation room of the spirits - shrine. When he returned, he shook his smock for about three times, and moved his body in an unconventional way. In some sense, he returned as a new person, with more confidence, and asking more specific questions. He seemed to have access to knowledge of some sort, since the kind of direct and specific questions he was asking would not have been possible without this information.

The researcher learned that when he went inside, he went to perform some rituals in order to contact his spirit powers to receive this information. From the way he spoke, it seems that he knew the source of the problem in view of the fact that the answers that were given by his correspondents confirmed the questions he asked: The correspondents only answered in the affirmative, yes, to all questions asked. These questions were very specific questions that only an informed person who had detailed background knowledge would ask during an investigation. This kind of knowledge is important for rituals of affliction, because it determines the source of the problem (whether physical or spiritual), the kind of ritual of affliction to administer, and where exactly to administer it to (whether the kla or susuma).

247 Shaking of his smock is a symbol of the removal of all falsehood from his midst. This specifically dealt with anything he had heard from each party that was not true, so that the unshakable (only the truth) could remain.

248 The researcher was not told what exactly this ritual was. Nonetheless, some elders noted that usually it is the case that when he goes in, he performs some rituals to hear what the spirits tell him.
However, sometimes the diagnosis stage does not follow a laid down order. It happens so swift that there is no formula as it were (i.e consulting a shrine), accompanied with the ritual process of inquiry. People who have highly trained their psyche are able to discern cases of spiritually-induced affliction through their *susuma*. Usually, the ability to know the problem is so spontaneous that it occurs naturally. Ritual specialists in such instances do not isolate themselves and follow laid down ritual procedures to contact other spirit powers in order to know the source of the problem. The source of the problem is revealed to them through their *susuma*. This is plausible since their previous ritual preparations place them in psychological states where they do not need to rely on any organized ritual formula such as contacting a shrine to inquire. The ritual takes no predetermined form, as in the cases where when there is a need for making a spiritual enquiry specific rituals have to be observed to receive spiritual knowledge. Hence, this is a formless ritual.

Once the researcher visited a priest and observed that one of the devotees approached him with a problem that was with a deviant behavior of a child that made it impossible for him to be attentive in class, and to follow very bad company.\(^{249}\) Immediately the person finished pouring out the grievance, the priest begun to point out the source of the difficulty.\(^{250}\) He asked that clean water be used to wash the face of the boy from the chin upwards to the hair three times. This was going to remove any bad omen from the child. The priest acted without relying on any predetermined ritual procedure. Therefore, this ritual can be rightly called a 'spontaneous ritual' due to its formless and unpredictable nature.

\(^{249}\) Observation, Osu.
\(^{250}\) The priest told the person that bad luck spirits were responsible for this plight.
The thing worth considering is that, this kind of ritual has a very striking resemblance with Christianity practiced in Ghana, particularly the ministry of prophecy. This is because there are situations where upon hearing one's problems, Ghanaian prophets are able to tell spot-on the source of the problem (which spiritual force is responsible), and give remedies similar to what the *wulombo* gave. The interesting thing is that the priest pointed out that he does a very similar job as a Ghanaian pastor (*osofo*). Both the Ga priests and pastors receive divine messages from the spiritual realm in the form of visions and dreams, engage in counseling, and live chaste and very morally upright lives.

There is still another type of spontaneous procedure in the diagnostic stage. This particularly has to do with mediums, and not the *susuma*. For the Gas, shrines do not represent the gods, but people represent the gods. In other words, the mediums are not objects, but people. The gods choose their mediums through whom they want to communicate. During festive occasions, those who are caught by the gods begin to move their body in unconscious ways in tune with the dance associated with the god. These people become the mouthpieces of the gods. Sometimes the agent is so lost in this experience that he or she does not remember anything that goes on during the time of manifestation. The individual totally loses consciousness.

Most importantly, all ritualists receive a higher social status due to their ability to access this mystical knowledge. The position of mediums, especially for women in this context, is worth mentioning here. Usually, it is the case that women are the ones that the gods choose to be their mediums. Thus, mediumship is associated with femininity. Mediumship is the highest position any Ga woman can occupy. It gives them the right to exercise some powers. This is because, in

\[\text{In many African societies, various objects are mediums. Some use pots filled with water, others also use rocks, and a number of societies use special trees as mediums to represent deities.}\]
traditional Ga societies, women are thought to be essentially inferior to men, and incapable of rational thought. The following words of Kilson below capture the point:

Mediumship represents the most powerful occupation open to women, and one of the most prestigious. Through mediumship, capable and ambitious Ga women are enabled to resolve certain psychological ambivalences arising from their inferior biosocial and socioeconomic statuses and achieve prestige and influence in contemporary Ga society.\textsuperscript{252}

As a matter of fact, although the mediums are lesser than the priests in the execution of traditional roles, in terms of mediumship they are elevated. “Since spirits may descend from the sky to speak through mediums, possessed mediums have greater authority than hereditary priests”.\textsuperscript{253}

\textbf{4.4.2.2 Intervention Stage}

The researcher labels this an "intervention stage" because unlike the diagnostic stage where diviners are rather concerned with receiving some form of higher knowledge to know the source of the problem, in this phase, they interpret received ritual information (sometimes it may come in a form of a vision) that has to be followed by victims of spiritually-induced affliction. They act as medical doctors who give clinical information based on a diagnosis of the patient. For this reason they are known as “medicine men”. They give various forms of recommendations that have to be practically followed to ensure the freedom of the agent involved in affliction. In most conversations the researcher had with ritual specialists, one thing in which they kept on mentioning is a protective-spiritual-plant called \textit{nyanyara}.\textsuperscript{254} Every time the investigator visited them, they had it on either beneath their vestment or on top of it. They wore it as a form of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{252} Kilson, \textit{Dancing with the Gods}, 92.  \\
\textsuperscript{253} Kilson, \textit{Dancing with the Gods}, 60.  \\
\textsuperscript{254} Dakubu translates it as Momordica Charantia herb. This herb has a lot of medicinal purposes. See Ga-English Dictionary, 155.
\end{flushleft}
protection from evil spirits. Most importantly, *nyanyara* is significant in the ritual process. One ritualist told me of a woman who was complaining about unemployment. Accordingly, he gave her some rituals to perform with the *nyanyara*.\textsuperscript{255} She was supposed to say words of prosperity upon the plant, bathe with some of it, and wear the plant as around her neck wherever she went, in order to drive away the bad luck and evil spirits causing her to be unemployed. After about three weeks of following this ritual, she finally had a job-employment that paid very well. Therefore, this stage of the ritual process involves working with the information given by the ritual guide.

In summary, there are two main stages involved in the ritual of affliction process. The foremost is the diagnostic stage which deals with discovering the source of the problem. This is followed by the intervention stage which involves the performance of rituals. The success of the ritual depends on not just following systematically what is given, but believing also in its efficacy.

### 4.4.3 The Ga Metaphysical Theory of Suffering

This theory just like the Akan theory of causality suggests that there are two main realms of existence: the physical and the spiritual. There are physical causes of events and there are spiritual causes of events. In this vein, the theory goes further to suggest that there are spiritual causes of suffering. It emphasizes on the association between natural and supernatural events, and how they cause people misfortune. Although Gyekye did not clearly state this, the way he presents his work suggests this, since all the examples he gives are cases of spiritually-induced

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\textsuperscript{255} Focused Group discussion, Osu.
Hence, there are spiritual methods to stop the effect of this kind of affliction. This is one aspect that Gyekye’s does not address in his causality thesis. That is, the idea of the existence of a causal relationship between physical events that has a spiritual undertone being linked to spiritual methods of dealing with affliction – rituals. This is understandable since his approach is purely philosophical. However, since I am looking at the issue of affliction in a religious context, I am using the theory of causality differently from Gyekye’s approach. While Gyekye’s main concern is to use his theory to discuss philosophical issues regarding the nature of the human being in the Akan worldview, the researcher is using the theory of causality to discuss the affliction in a religious context. All philosophical issues that are raised are within a religious context however, Gyekye’s work is not restricted to philosophical issues.

In the Ga worldview, there are certain features of spiritually-induced affliction. First and foremost, is that, events of spiritually-induced affliction defy scientific or physical diagnosis and explanation. Since these things are caused by spiritual factors such as the use of spiritual medicine, cursing, and the activities of the gods, they require spiritual explanations. It is only ritual experts who understand the spiritual world that can diagnose the cases of spiritually-induced affliction and give a viable solution.

In certain cases, they can appear as a recurring affliction. In these kinds of havoc, it applies mainly to family afflictions. As part of the execution of justice, a jemawọŋ can afflict members of a particular lineage with a spiritual induced affliction until proper ritual proceedings are followed. Hence, if a particular affliction keeps occurring in a lineage, it can be a sign of a

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256 See Gyekye, 80.
spiritual induced affliction. In this regard, Field reports of a spiritually-caused affliction resulting from a person who was attacked by a *gbeshi*. She notes that:

The patient was a goldsmith, rather difficult for his friends to get on with, and suffering from persistent bad luck. He was always in poverty – though the goldsmith’s trade is a lucrative one – and a great trial of his relatives. Field later notes that exorcism (*gbeshiedziem*) rituals were done to remove the spirit which was causing the misfortune. This *gbeshi* was causing persistent bad luck although the goldsmith was engaged in a lucrative trade. For the Gas it does not make sense why a person is engaged in a lucrative trade and is still being consistently poor. It cannot be just by chance. There must be something behind it. Or when there is a person who having done all he can to study for an exam, time and again fails in that paper. For the Gas, such a person’s situation of constant bad-luck amidst all the efforts put in has a spiritual cause to it. It reminds me of a similar issue I observed when I visited one priest. One medium had a child who had exhibited consistent bad behavior for some time. She brought the case to the priest to tell the source of the problem and the solution. The priest told her that it was a bad spirit that was causing this predicament. Hence, if it is dealt with, the boy’s behavior will return to normalcy. This idea is summed up in the fact that most often, anyone who is suffering from any symptom of spiritually-induced-affliction has something going wrong which must be restored.

In addition to that, the theory of suffering proposes that there means of distinguishing natural events from extraordinary known as divination. Ritualist play the key role of here of detecting or discovering which particular spiritual activity is behind spiritually-induced suffering. Hence, spiritually-induced afflictions do not just exist in isolation, but there are spiritual methods of

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257 Field, 95.
alleviation to dealing with spiritual mishaps. The first is to detect the issue through divination and the second is to give ritual information in resolving the affliction.

Another important aspect of this metaphysical theory is that affliction does not stand in isolation. It is part of the justice system of the Gas. Offenders of ritual sanctions must go through spiritually-induced suffering to ensure that moral codes of the society are adhered to. Even in cases where people use spiritual power for wrong reasons such as harm people haphazardly due to jealousy, anger, or sheer wickedness, there are ways in which it returns to these people. This is supported by the Ga wise saying that “the world is round” (*jẹjẹ ye kokloo*)\(^{258}\). This means that what a person does will in one way return to him. Hence, the metaphysical theory of suffering suggests that cases where people use foul means to inflict pain on other people, it returns back to them in other ways.

In a summary, the metaphysical theory of suffering is geared towards explaining the phenomenon of spiritually-induced suffering and ways in which it is discerned and dealt with.

**4.5 Findings**

i. The study affirms that indigenous Gas conceive spiritually-induced affliction as a state of evil. Anybody in a state of being affected by a spiritually-induced affliction is in an abnormal state of affairs that needs to be rectified. There are spiritual factors to explain why this is so. It might be that the person has committed a taboo and is being punished by the spirit powers.\(^ {259}\) In this regard, one informant said that “If you do what is forbidden (taboo), you see what is not seen”

\(^{258}\) Focused Group Discussion, Osu.

\(^{259}\) See Causes of Affliction, page 67.
(Ken ofee no ni afeee le, onaa no ni anaa). In certain situations it is as a result of another person’s actions. People can contact higher spiritual power to cause pain. Lastly, if there is disharmony or a disturbance in the person’s spiritual components spiritually-induced affliction occurs. This can be as a result of many reasons such as disobeying one’s kla, the activity of witches on the kla eating it up, when one’s susuma is taken captive, and disobeying the susuma.

ii. The Ga belief system of affliction has certain impacts on Ga society. Firstly, the moral impact of this idea is that helps to regulate societal behavior. In typical African societies, for that matter indigenous Ga society, many people fear that a spiritually-induced affliction might happen to them if they break certain moral codes such as insulting an elder, stealing and so on. For instance, the ancestors can punish a child who disrespects an elder by inflicting a disease upon the child. The fear that something bad will happen to them if they break such moral codes helps to regulate moral conduct. Thus, underneath the Ga concept of affliction is a justice system to regulate moral conduct of society. In fact, some rituals demand that payment and confessions be made to the victim before one can return to normalcy. Even in cases where a person uses spiritual medicine to harm another person for no significant reason such as sheer wickedness and jealousy, there is a way in which this bad act returns to the person. This Ga proverb supports this assertion: “the world is round” (jej ye kokloo). Hence, a person who caused harm to another person is likely to be afflicted in a similar way. So to prevent such an end people will do the right thing. Thus, the concept of affliction helps to regulate conduct.

iii. One major disadvantage of this concept of affliction is the over-emphasis of spiritual causation. In certain cases, spiritual factors are so much emphasized that certain important

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260 Focused Group discussion, Osu.
261 Focused Group Discussion, Osu.
physical factors that when addressed can help resolve the human problem of affliction is ignored. Hence, the problem of affliction is worsened. At other times, people do not strike the balance between natural and spiritual explanations appropriately, which creates a huge social gap between the practical issues and spiritual. An instance is responses of Ghanaians on the fire-flood incident which occurred on June 3rd 2015. It was previously noted that the president of the Ga traditional Council, Nii Dodoo Tackie, claimed that the reason why this disaster occurred is that people were not obeying the Ga traditional rules of observing silence. However, many other Ghanaians complained that it was due to the improper drainage system which caused the flood since if that was there the heavy rain will have got a place to pass and not flood the place leading to the gas explosion. In the researcher’s view, those opinions were also valid and carry weight. Although the spiritual factors are important, we could not totally ignore the natural factors. There is therefore a need to blend both the spiritual factors causing affliction and natural factors to holistically tackle the issue.

iv. The response to affliction is to undergo rituals of affliction. Rituals of affliction are the way in which Gasi restore a person to a state of normalcy. There are basically two stages in rituals of affliction. The first is the diagnosis stage where the cause of the problem is identified, and the second is the intervention stage where ritual information is received and acted upon.

v. Ritual officials such as priests, mediums, and medicine-men play a very crucial role in the ritual process. As earlier discussed, the major roles of ritual officials are to protect and prevent the town from spiritual harm. Suffering is a human phenomenon that every society attempts to

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263 See Roles of Ritual Officials in Dealing with Affliction, pages 83-91.
deal with. In doing so systems are developed to try to curtail human it. In Christian circles for instance, the ministerial offices such as apostles, prophets, and teachers are there to help people deal with problems of affliction. This is the same concerning the Ga culture. One interesting office is that of the medicine man. Previously we discussed that this role demands that one places himself in a very uncomfortable position for the preservation of society from spiritual destruction. Anytime there is a spiritual danger coming upon the society, the medicine man is the one who takes it upon himself to destroy such evil power. This evil power can sometimes be too strong that it can cause harm or loss of life to the medicine man. An example was told to the researcher by one elder in Tema Manhean about a time where a medicine-man intercepted a spiritual medicine that was supposed to destroy the chief he was protecting as he sat on his stool. He got sick for about two weeks after that incident. This sickness was supposed to cause the chief to die, however, the medicine-man took that risk. Hence, this concept of affliction reveals that suffering is real and that there are ways in which every society deals with them to preserve by preventing any spiritual harm from affecting society.

vi. This idea of rituals having a preventive purpose is something worth pursuing since Catherine Bell in her discussion of the role of rituals of affliction, omits. As earlier on noted, according to Bell, rituals have four main uses: (1). Heal; (2). Protect; (3) Exorcise; (4). Purify. However, there is no mention made of the preventive role which ritual officials perform to preserve the community. Unlike the protective nature of rituals of affliction to guard the agent from future affliction, the preventive role of rituals actually destroys affliction which is pending. This is because, as oracles, ritual officials are able to see impending affliction from far off before it

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264 Focused Group discussion, Tema Manhean.
265 Bell, Rituals: Perspective and Dimension, 115.
manifests and perform rituals that destroy the harm. Hence, the preventive role of rituals of affliction is proactive.

vii. Indigenous responses were very helpful in understanding and dealing with the problem of affliction among the indigenous Gas. In the first place it confirmed Gyekye’s Akan theory of causality that the African worldview is built upon the idea that there is a causal connection between physical events and spiritual events. In this case, spiritual events that causes physical harm. The theory of causality has been very beneficial to provide a workable framework in examining the Ga concept of affliction as a religious worldview, its causes and driving philosophy behind. The causality theory was helpful in explaining the way in which the complex dualistic relationship between the spiritual world and the physical world can originate in affliction. In the hierarchy of beings, the spiritual powers occupy a higher place, followed by man. Anytime there is an imbalance between the two worlds, affliction occurs.

viii. The causality theory had limitations in certain aspects of this study. The causality theory gives rather a general framework by which extraordinary events are caused, by stating that events can be spiritually-induced. However, the Ga concept of affliction needs a more specific theory which narrows the focus of events to human affliction. This is because the causality theory can go in two ways: (1) spiritually-caused affliction; (2) spiritual caused-favor (i.e. since the gods can also bless people with spiritual blessings). It can be that spiritually-caused agents can cause people to be blessed and favored, or can cause them to be afflicted.

Even within the discourse on affliction, this study has recognized various categorization of human suffering. Properly speaking, there is a difference between calamity and affliction. While calamity is a major disaster which can affect an entire nation or community including animals,
plants, and even buildings as its scope, an affliction pertains more directly to the human being. Thus, there is a need for a theory whose focus is wide enough to capture the different types of suffering which is spiritually-caused, yet not too general that it neglects major issues which come under the heading.

ix. The causality theory overlooks a certain important aspect of this study. This pertains to the method discerning and resolving spiritual-affliction. In chapter three, we discussed about how in the Ga culture, there are ritual experts who are be able to discern a spiritually-induced affliction from an affliction caused by empirical factors, and even provide a viable remedy. Since the theory is too general because the main emphasis is on “spiritual-causation”, it neglects central features such as “spiritual-discernment of affliction” and “rituals of affliction” which are very important in this study. In addition to that, native Ga responses showed that divination is an important aspect of the Ga concept of affliction. In that, it tells the source of the problem, and gives ritual instructions to curtail the situation. This is something the theory also ignores. Therefore, one sees both a connection and disconnection between the Ga philosophy of affliction and Gyekye’s theory of causality.

4.6 Summary

The focus of this chapter has been to analyze the Ga concept of affliction by looking at indigenous Ga views on affliction and dialoguing with it in relation to the Akan causal theory and other important issues about the concept raised in the previous chapters. In doing so, we looked at issues such as the causes of affliction, the stages in affliction, and the impact of the Ga concept of affliction. This study showed that, although the theory of causality was helpful in
explaining the Ga concept of affliction, there are major aspects the concepts ignores, mainly spiritually discernment of affliction and rituals of affliction. Hence, there is a need to construct a new theory make up for these amends. This is the Ga metaphysical theory of suffering. This theory will help to further deepen the understanding of the Ga concept of affliction.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, a summary of the results emerging from the analysis of the entire work in relation to research questions and objectives will be presented. Based on previous chapters, this chapter will also provide a conclusion to the study, general recommendations and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Summary

The researcher sought to examine the philosophical and theological understanding of affliction in the religious context of the native Gas with three sub-aims guiding the main question. That is, firstly to examine the concept of affliction among the indigenous Gas, as well as to investigate the responses of the indigenous Gas to the problem of affliction, and finally to discuss the extent to which the responses of the Ga to affliction can help in understanding and dealing with the phenomenon among the indigenous Ga people.

The first chapter of this work gave a general introduction to the work. In this vein, the Ga concept of affliction was introduced. This concept explains the meaning of spiritually-induced affliction. The Gas just like many Africans cultures, believe that the world is made up of two worlds of existence – the physical and the spiritual. Based on this belief, they postulate the claim that events of hardship in life cannot only be caused from the physical realm, but also the spiritual sphere; hence, there is spiritually-induced affliction.
Spiritually-induced affliction can take the form of diseases such as fever, paralysis, epilepsy, malaria, running stomach, and diseases that defy scientific diagnosis, and at other times body weakness and physical pain including head and stomach aches. In other cases, affliction comes as psychological problems such as madness (sekycli), fear (ghyeishemci), and even some abnormal behavior, and so on.

There are restorative measures which are used to deal with spiritually-induced affliction and that are known as rituals of affliction. These rites which restore people back to their normal state include blood sacrifice, libation, prayer, songs, and utterances (i.e. a form of prayer, but more unstructured), sacrifice (i.e. blood), special rituals (i.e. formless ritual), and water cleansing ritual. However, this study was restricted to only prayer and blood sacrifice as a form of healing.

The second chapter discussed theoretical concepts related to affliction such as calamity and suffering, worldviews of affliction, affliction as evil, the theory of causality and affliction, and rituals in theory. Suffering as a general concept of pain can come in various forms. In terms of its scope, if its reach goes beyond affecting human lives to destroying the environment, and plant life, it is called a calamity. However, when the focus is on the human being it is termed an affliction. It was in this context that the term affliction was used, that is, as pertaining to human endeavor, affliction is a state of pain, distress, grief, or misery.

The discussion on rituals was a very important aspect of this chapter. Rituals of affliction are means by which people being afflicted are restored back to their normal state of affairs. There are basically four types of rituals of affliction based on their function. They are healing rituals which have curative purposes, purification rites that aim at cleansing victims of spiritually-
induced affliction, exorcism whose aim is to remove spirits causing affliction, and protective rituals which aim at producing spiritual medicine to guard people from spiritual evils.

The third chapter focused on the Ga concept of affliction based on Ga scholarly literature. In this section issues under discussion was the Ga religious worldview of affliction which looks at the belief upon which the Ga concept of affliction rests, the Ga concept of a person which gives a workable framework for discussing affliction, and finally the Ga concept of affliction. The Ga religious worldview of affliction originates on the Ga belief that higher spiritual beings exist who have the power to control the natural world. These have rites if not obeyed can lead to affliction. Hence, rituals have the main function of bringing harmony between the natural and the spiritual world.

In examining the Ga concept of affliction, the chapter looked at Margaret Field’s work on the causes of spiritual illness. Field outlined seven causes of spiritual illness. They are: (1) injury to the kla; (2) resentful kla; (3) absence of susuma; (4) resentful susuma; (5) breaking of taboos – either religious or magical; (6) action of big dzemawon; (7) anger of the dead.

Furthermore, two rituals of affliction were examined about how the Gas deal with the problem of affliction. They are prayer and blood sacrifice. Whiles prayer is a verbal form of a ritual of affliction, blood sacrifice is a non-verbal ritual of affliction.

The fourth chapter looked at the Ga concept of affliction from data collected from indigenous Ga people who include priests, mediums, elders, and medicine-men. Their views were discussed in four thematic areas: meaning and causes of affliction (amanehulu); divination (nibimɔ) and affliction; blood sacrifice as a ritual of affliction; roles of ritual officials in dealing with
affliction. After these views were presented, they were analyzed. The analysis focused on four areas: stages in ritual of affliction; Gyekye’s Akan theory of causality and the Ga culture: merits and limitation; the metaphysical theory of suffering; impact of the Ga philosophy of affliction on Ga society.

5.3 Major Findings

Findings from the discussions on the indigenous views in the fourth chapter are in the four areas that were analyzed. Firstly, pertaining to the stages in rituals of affliction, there are two stages. The first being the diagnosis stage is to identify the problem and the second being the action stage is to resolve the affliction.

Gyekye’s Akan theory of causality was very helpful in providing a workable framework for discussing the Ga of affliction. However, one of the disadvantages is that it ignores important aspects of the Ga concept of affliction such as divination, rituals of affliction, and the justice system relating to affliction. Hence, a new theory called the Ga metaphysical theory of suffering was propounded to cater for these limitations.

The Ga metaphysical theory of suffering has four main tenets on which it hangs. The first is that there are spiritual laws which govern the world that can cause both blissful events and harmful events. The next is that it is only through the agency of divination that harmful events which are spiritually-caused can be discerned. Subsequently, any case of spiritually-induced affliction can only be resolved by spiritual means known as rituals of affliction. Lastly, the Ga concept of affliction is part of the justice system of the Gas. That is, affliction is a way in which moral codes are enforced.
Pertaining to the impact of the Ga concept of affliction, it goes both ways – negative and positive. One important thing that the Ga concept of affliction does is to regulate moral conduct. Anyone who does not comply with the ethical codes of the society will be afflicted, hence, people remain ethical to avoid punishment. On the flip side, this worldview of affliction causes people to overemphasize on spiritual factors. This can lead to the neglect of physical factors which are equally important. Since these physical factors are not addressed, suffering still persists.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the discussions on the Ga concept of affliction and findings of the researcher, these are the following proposed recommendations which shall cover the area of public interest and academic research.

The first thing the researcher recommends is that scholars in the field of Ga cultural studies, especially in ritual studies, re-define the role of ritual officials to the general public. There seems to be a shallow understanding of the general public on the Ga worldview of affliction, particularly pertaining to the role of ritual officials such as medicine-men, priests, and mediums. Many ritual officials, especially medicine-men the researcher consulted, complained about the way in which many Ghanaians are not able to distinguish between private ritual officials in practice who use spiritual medicine for both good and bad purposes and those who belong to the official Ga religion as they do. Hence, there is a need for scholars in this field to educate the general public on their major roles.
Generally the researcher is of the view that due to the limited research on the Ga culture, there is a need for more extensive research, especially on an interesting area that this research could not cover. There were two possible ways of addressing the topic at hand. That is, either by discussing spiritually-induced-affliction or its opposite, ‘spiritually-induced favor’ or blessing. By spiritually-induced favor, the researcher means the way in which Gas believe in receiving supernatural blessings from the gods and other spiritual factors in order to excel in life. For instance, when a person escapes several misfortunate incidents or enjoys good luck consistently, he is said to “possess a good kla” (kla kpakpa tsɛ). In addition to that, all rituals are geared towards receiving blessings from the gods and other spirit powers to prosper. This idea is still in its infant stage and calls for an investigation.

‘Misappropriated justice’ is a fairly new area that needs some light to be shed on. This has to do with the justice system of the gods. Most often, the gods kill innocent people in the family of an offender of a crime, so that this culprit is identified and comes to confess. That is, anybody who has been wronged and summons the guilty person before the gods, they in turn afflict other family members with a particular affliction. This is to help in the identification of the culprit since if he is supposed to be the one to be stricken by death first no one might know the whole story. Probing further in to this issue will be of much benefit to academic studies. Hence, I recommend that research be done in this area.

A similar but different variant to the above has to do with affliction as a system of justice. In the Ga culture, affliction is a means by which society regulates morality. However, since this was not part of the researcher’s objectives, this subject of affliction as a way of regulating morality

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was not thoroughly discussed. I therefore suggest that further research be done in this area. This is to look at issues such as ‘affliction as retribution from the gods and its effect on society’ and ‘affliction as punishment from human agents’. This may be for trivial reasons such as jealousy, sheer wickedness and so on, or a justified reasons such as punishment for a crime in which the offended appeals to spiritual medicine to punish the offender.

Another area worth pursing is the idea of spiritual medicine as a source of alleviation from spiritually-induced affliction. There are several ways in which Gas deal with spiritually-induced affliction, hence the study was limited to only two – prayer and blood sacrifices. However, other methods of spiritual alleviation such as libation, water cleansing ritual, confession, and so on were not discussed. This calls for further investigation.

Spiritually-induced calamity is an area that this thesis was not able to thoroughly delve into since that was not the focus of this study. Calamity concerns suffering which covers a very wide scope, and not just suffering as a human affliction which was the main focus of this study. This area has not been extensively investigated, hence I recommend that further studies be done in this area.

Lastly, the researcher has noticed that much work has not been done on the relevance of belief in the Ga ritual. That is, although rituals demand the strict following of procedures, belief also plays a major role. This is something most priests the researcher interviewed emphasized on. Thus, there is a need that Ga scholars investigate this area to find the relationship between beliefs and rituals.

5.5 Conclusion

The study showed that the Ga concept of affliction is something significant to the Ga culture
since it helps to explain the way Gas view affliction and deal with. The research illustrated that there are mainly three causes of spiritually-induced affliction, namely, breaking taboos, disharmony in the spiritual components of man, and the use of spiritual medicine. Rituals of affliction are the ways in which Gas deal with the problem of affliction. This work discussed only prayer and blood sacrifice as a ritual of affliction.

Accordingly, affliction is something grounded in the Ga ethical and justice system. It is one of the checks and balances for dealing with immoral and deviant behavior to restore order in society. However, one disadvantage of this worldview of affliction is the overemphasis on spiritual causation to the point that at certain times, important physical factors that cause affliction is left out.
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### APPENDIX A

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE:

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APPENDIX B

MAP OF CENTRAL ACCRA SHOWING GA TOWNSHIP
APPENDIX C

A PORTRAIT OF A LIBATION PRAYER RITUAL

Dkpa iyeli performed by the late Nuumo Borketey Larweh Tsuru II - Gborbu wulɔmɔ, Nungua
APPENDIX D

IMAGE OF NYANYARA SPIRITUAL HERB
APPENDIX E

AN IMAGE OF A GBATSU

In front of the Gbatsu is the Sakumọ Wulọmọ, Nii Kofi Ashiboi II.