UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

THE PLACE OF TABOOS IN CONTEMPORARY AKWAMU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

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BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPHIL STUDY OF RELIGIONS DEGREE

JULY, 2017
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is not a reproduction, in part or in whole, of any work ever presented for the award of a degree. It is my own original research undertaken under supervision.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the place of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. Its primary aim is to identify taboos which are observed in Akwamu traditional society and the philosophical explanations underpinning the practice of these taboos. It is also to examine how taboos affect ethical values in the daily lives of the people and their relevance in the maintenance of social order in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. A qualitative design and phenomenological approach were used in this study. The main instruments used in gathering relevant data for the study were interview, observation and relevant information from documentary sources. In all, forty respondents comprising family heads, chiefs, queen mothers, Christians and Muslims were purposively selected for the study based on their knowledge in Akwamu traditional philosophy and cultural practices.

The key findings of the study showed that the practice of taboos among the people of Akwamu remains very strong because it reinforces the communal values of solidarity, identity and unity among the people. The study also disclosed that taboos have not been completely wiped out but have rather been either modified or toned down because of the significant roles they play in the preservation of lives among the people of Akwamu in contemporary times. The study recommended among other things that a concerted effort should be put in place by stakeholders, both government and all religious functionaries to increase people’s awareness of the relevance of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. The study therefore concluded that the sustainability of taboos in Akwamu traditional society would need a concerted effort by all stakeholders to create awareness within the people.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear wife, Mrs. Patricia Osei Kwateng and my lovely daughters, Lynette Akosua Serwa Osei and Phebe Afua Gyaubea Osei.
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Developing an exposition such as this is quite onerous. However, the venture becomes interesting as you buy into the knowledge of experts. In this regard, a special mention must be made of my supervisors, Dr. Godson Ahortor and Dr. Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, whose invaluable directions and suggestions have brought this work to its present state. To them, I express my most profound gratitude for taking time off their busy schedules to go through the work meticulously.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Every society has social control mechanisms that are meant to socialise its members so that their behaviour and ways of conducting themselves in public are within the expected norms as per their traditions and culture. One of these mechanisms according to Michael Gelfand is called taboo.\(^1\) According to Quarcoopome, taboos constitute an important source of maintaining moral values in traditional African societies therefore disobedience of taboos is strongly believed to bring evil to the society or the individual.\(^2\) He contends that any breach of a taboo is considered as an offence against God, the deities, the ancestors and other authorities.

Taboos reveal that the Supreme Being, the gods and the ancestors are real and have powers which can influence human activities. Taboos indicate that the sacred spiritual beings must not be defiled since they act as a link between the supernatural ruling powers and the living.\(^3\) Taboos are a means of social control and serve as agents of religious and social integration which help in uniting people into one common behaviour, hence they are obeyed so as to avoid punishment from the deities and ancestors.\(^4\)

In a Ghanaian traditional society like Akwamu, the significant role of taboos cannot be underestimated.\(^5\) Despite the tide of modernity and cultural imports, contemporary Akwamu traditional society remains attached to some of its fundamental

\(^{5}\) John K. Ansah, *Taboos in Ghana: The Ethical Wisdom of our fathers* (Steyler Verlag: Wort and Work, 1988), 257
values such as taboos. Although the Akwamu people have felt the impact of the full weight of the influence of Western culture, they have continued to cling on to some of their cherished values including taboos. They still believe in the reality of taboos as mechanisms of social control and order from time immemorial. They hold on to taboos as crucial indigenous social control mechanisms that are used in enforcing desirable human behaviour. They also believe that violation of taboos would bring misfortune such as barrenness. In view of this, no one is prepared to act in ways that will invite the wrath of the ancestors. Those found guilty of serious moral or legal violations of taboos are made to undergo ritual cleansing as a means of moral purification and transformation. The roles played by taboos make Edward Cassier to conclude that though taboos are not written in any revealed law, people learn them, observe them and teach others in the society.\(^6\)

In his study of the Akan people, Gyekye posits that the closest equivalent to taboo in the Akan is “Akyi\-\textit{wade}”, something which is forbidden or prohibited, and “\textit{mmusuo}”.\(^7\) The latter term is however reserved for prohibitions against very serious or extraordinary moral evils such as murder, suicide, rape, incest and religious sacrilege. Taboos may be promulgated and transmitted in the form of religious ordinances, creeds or vows. For this reason, taboos are taken more seriously and the ‘\textit{mmusuo}’ type of taboos may require blood sacrifice for the pacification and forgiveness of the gods and ancestors who might visit their wrath on the living in the form of epidemics, drought and infertility.\(^8\) Since these taboo sanctions are believed to be instantaneous and automatic, most people will

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\(^6\) Edwards Cassier, \textit{An essay on man’s introduction to a philosophy of Human Culture} (New Haven and London: Yale University press, 1972), 91.


not intentionally violate them, even if they are doubtful of their metaphysical presuppositions.

The threat associated with taboo makes traditional societies live morally acceptable behaviour and as Ackah puts it, the sins or offences which are believed to be taboo, because punishments for them are automatic make people refrain from committing them for fear of inevitable consequences. A critical deduction from Ackah’s assertion is that taboo is not a culture to be waved off so easily, because it is a fruit of every traditional society and Akwamu being no exception.

Notwithstanding the positive recognitions given to taboos in traditional Ghanaian societies, Mike Anane argues that indigenous knowledge and beliefs are being lost as more traditional societies have become influenced by Western culture and religions. Ben-Willie Golo and A.J. Yaro agree with Anane’s assertion by saying that “many lands were once considered sacred, not to be disturbed; today all the noble values are destroyed under the cover of modernity and new religions”. Yet, the important role of taboos has motivated many scholars to carry out research on taboos in many Ghanaian traditional societies. For instance, scholars such as Kofi Agyekum, Peter Sarpong, Asare Kofi Opoku and A.C. Ansah have done research work on taboos among the Akans and Ewes of Ghana in general.

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

The erosion and loss of taboos raise concern about the future of taboos in indigenous societies in general and Akwamu traditional society in particular, because should things continue this way, Akwamu people will not be able to harness the full potential of social control mechanisms for her people and society as far as morality is concerned. In view of the above argument, this research sought to examine the relevance of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate and analyse the role of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the philosophical explanations of taboos among Akwamu people.
2. Discuss how taboos affect the values and lives of Akwamu people.
3. Investigate the relevance of taboos in the maintenance of social order in contemporary Akwamu society.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

1. What philosophical explanations underpin the practice of taboos in Akwamu traditional society?
2. How do taboos affect ethical values and lives of the people of Akwamu traditional society?
3. How relevant are taboos to the maintenance of social order in contemporary Akwamu society?
1.5 Scope of the Study

There are many types of taboos observed in Akwamu traditional society. These include taboos associated with priests, diet and the environment. However, this study focused on taboos associated with chieftaincy, totems and deities. Others include taboos associated with sacred groves, dogs, taboo days and suicide. These taboos are chosen because they are sacred measures that promote good governance, cultural identity and good relationship between the physical and the spiritual world. Also, the study focuses mainly on three communities in Akwamu traditional area, namely Akwamufie, Senchi and Atimpoku. Akwamufie for instance was chosen because it is the traditional seat of Akwamu society where the traditional council from which vital information could be sought is located. Also, Atimpoku and Senchi are chosen because there are many Christians and Muslims in these communities whose opinions could be sought to find out their perception about taboos. Again, Atimpoku and Senchi are located along the Volta River which is closely associated with taboos which the respondents may be familiar with. Moreso, Senchi and Atimpoku are commercial centres where believers in all the three religions engage in trading activities. The choice of these centres is therefore convenient to the researcher due to accessibility and time.

1.6 Conceptual framework

The framework employed by the researcher to guide the study was based on the Akan concept of taboo. The framework postulates that in Akan traditional society, taboo plays significant role in promoting peace and unity in the community and therefore, it has been rooted in their day to day traditional practice.
The Akans are of view that taboo maintains harmony between the gods and human beings which is ruled by moral order as preserved by tradition. Taboos are religious prohibitions to promote the sanctity in Akan society. Again, the role of taboos in Akan traditional societies has been explained by scholars such as K. A Busia. According to Busia, traditional chieftaincy system rests on taboos. Also, R. S. Rattray argues that a chief is called only by his stool name and also he should not travel unaccompanied among others. The contribution of these scholars to the study of taboo is useful because it helped the researcher to ascertain the Akwamu traditional society’s experience in taboos which are related to chieftaincy.

1.7 Methodology and methods of data collection

Qualitative research approach which employs phenomenological design was adopted to carry out this research. In this approach, Edward Husserl argues that it involves the examination of consciousness, or the way one experiences the world. For Husserl, an individual’s experience is the fundamental source of meaning and knowledge. Data gathered through phenomenological inquiry are more than an individual’s recounting of the subjective experience. For this reason, Husserl concludes that the underlying assumption of phenomenology is that of “going back to the things themselves”. James L. Cox opines that the purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific in order to identify a phenomenon through the way they are perceived by the actors in a situation. It is basically designed to explain in an objective way a phenomenon through lived experiences. The phenomenological method therefore

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12 E. Husserl, *Logical investigations, translated by J.N. Finley* (New York: Humanities press, 1900), 21
14 James L. Cox, *Expressing the Sacred: An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion* (Harare:
allows the researcher to suspend his prejudiced mind to enable him to be objective in dealing with the issue.

The main instruments used to gather data for the study were interview, observation and documents.

1.7.1. Interview

Data collection was done using Qualitative interview guide. It gave the respondents freedom to answer questions in an unrestricted manner. Using open-ended interview guide gives the respondents free room to operate and speak confidently and openly. Digital recorder was used to record personal interviews with the respondents and were later transcribed, translated and analysed. The interview guide contained information on taboos related to Chieftaincy, totems and deities which were answered by family heads, chiefs, queen mothers, Christians and Muslims to seek their opinion on taboos in contemporary Akwamu society. This arrangement helped the researcher to engage the respondents to acquire in-depth information from them.

In all, 40 respondents were purposively selected for the study. They were made up of three family heads, six sub-chiefs, the queen mother of Akwamu traditional area, fifteen Christians and fifteen Muslims. Selection of the respondents through purposive sampling method was based on the respondents’ in-depth knowledge on taboos. A sample size of 40 was used for the study because it was based on an argument raised by Sotirios Sarantakos that it is economical to use a wisely selected sample size as compared to a very large sample size. Also, using a wisely selected sample size of respondents helped the researcher to obtain the needed information about the respondents quickly since it
saves time. Moreso; appropriate sample size selected helped the researcher to take precautions to reduce sampling errors in order to provide valid and reliable information from the respondents. This means that selecting appropriate sample size helped the researcher to use key informants to aid in data collection for the study.

1.7.2. Observation

Observation method was useful in this study because it gave the researcher first-hand information as he physically saw events that took place. The researcher visited traditional courts to observe proceedings that took place when taboo had been violated. Proceedings were recorded and notes of salient points were put down to assist in the data analysis. Also, the researcher was taken to Akwamu sacred grove sites and the shrine of the deity located at Akwamufie to observe the taboos which are associated with the sacred grove and the deity. The observation technique adopted by the researcher enhanced the quality of the research because it provided a more accurate picture of events on the basis of data gathered at a point in time.

1.7.3 Documents

Relevant information from documentary sources which are related to the study was employed. These include reviewing of books, articles, journals and sources from the internet. The reason for using secondary sources was to help the researcher to access the work of scholars in relation to the topic under investigation. Research carried out by scholars such as Kofi Agyekum, Kofi Asare Opoku and Peter K. Sarpong who have written on taboos in general among Akans were consulted to guide the study.

\[\text{Sotirios Sarantakos, } \text{Social Research} \ (\text{Sydney: Charles Sturt University, 1998}, 47).\]
1.8. Literature review

The study was undertaken in recognition of some research works that have been carried out on taboo. This involves analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem, “The place of taboo in Akwamu traditional society”. This offered the researcher the opportunity to review what scholars have done on taboo which served as a guide to the study.

Laurenti Magesa indicates that taboos play significant role in the ethical duty of transmitting and preserving life and a breach of them endangers the health and well-being of society. He argues that taboos relate to many areas of human life which include things associated with death and sacred persons. He cites example that among the Bakuria of Tanzania, satisfactory rainfall is obtained when the land is at peace and untroubled by dissention. In citing another example of an ethnic group of Bazanaki, Magesa argues that for people to enjoy the blessings of rain and other necessary gift of nature, it is important for individuals to prevent themselves from actions which might disturb the internal harmony of the community. Even though, Laurenti’s research does not focus in Ghana, he has raised important points which the researcher sees relevant to his study among the Akwamus as far as taboo practice is concerned. For instance, in Akwamu traditional society, it is a taboo to pass in front of the deity called “ɔbosom Ayensu” with dead body and violation of it would cause draught in the community. Thus, the researcher intends to use Laurenti’s material because it seems similar to what pertains in Akwamu traditional society. Magesa also identifies taboo against sexual intercourse during menstruation. He remarks that sexual taboos have to do with blood and at certain times a woman’s blood

becomes hot and until it has cooled down, she is in a condition harmful to others with whom she comes into very close contact. He asserts that since a woman’s blood is hot during her menstrual period, pregnancy and immediately after childbirth, it is a taboo to have sexual intercourse during such times.\footnote{Magesa, \textit{Africa Religion}, 149.}

This same debate about menstrual related taboos is taken up by Ansah Owusu who contends that among the Yoruba, women in menstruation are kept at a distance because menstruation is thought to pollute the chief rendering him less efficacious when they touch food items that are used to prepare food for him.\footnote{Ansah Owusu D, “Prayer, Amulets and Healing”, in \textit{The history of Islam in Africa}, Levtzion, N. and Pouwels, E. L. eds. (Anthen: Ohio University Press, 2000), 39.} The researcher notices that Magesa and Owusu provide relevant materials on taboos related to menstruation which reflect on one of the taboos associated with chieftaincy taboo that the researcher intends to examine among the people of Akwamu.

Another related work of interest in the area of taboos is by Joseph Osei. He discussed various forms of taboos and the philosophical explanations underpinning the practice of these taboos. In his view, environmental taboos are intended by traditional authorities to regulate the ethical use of the environment for the sustainable development. He argues that “among the Akan and Ewe in Ghana, some of the taboos related to the environment include: clearing of sacred forests or bushes, felling of forbidden timber species, hunting of animals or fishing during forbidden seasons and sacred days, eating of totemic animals and digging of graves for burial without due authorization from the chief or other traditional authorities”.\footnote{Joseph Osei, “The value of African Taboos for biodiversity and sustainable development”, \textit{Journal of sustainable development in Africa} 8, no 3 (2006): 42} Osei argues that violating any of these taboos will incur the wrath of the gods, including the earth goddess called “Asaase Yaa” and the goddess
of the Sea called “Maame Wata”.\textsuperscript{20} Osei claims that mismanagement of the environment will not only deprive the future generation of plants and animals, but will also affect humans and their needs for food, medicine, clean water and clean air.\textsuperscript{21} This source of material is useful in examining the place of taboos among the people of Akwamu as far as taboo associated with sacred grove is concerned.

Concerning the philosophical explanations underpinning taboos connected to the environment, Osei reiterates that in many cases, forests are reserved for the burial of traditional rulers and royals and since these royals are buried with gold and silver ornament which could be dug out for the states treasury in case of war, such forests were out of bounds for most people.\textsuperscript{22} They are effectively secured from robbery or abuse by being declared as taboo. He argues further that traditional elders though illiterate know from experience that some of the forests serve as natural wind breakers, natural foliage or cover for small streams and water sheds necessary for their survival and well-being as well as the well-being of the fish and plants.\textsuperscript{23} The researcher intends to use this material to enrich his work as far as philosophical explanations underpinning taboo related to sacred grove in Akwamu Traditional society is concerned.

Of particular interest as far as this study is concerned is an observation made by Kofi Agyekum in relation to taboos associated with chieftaincy. In his work on Akan verbal taboos, Agyekum claims that it is a taboo to mention the bare name of a chief. He points out that the rationale for this taboo is that in Akan indigenous society, when a chief is installed into office, he has been transformed from his original personality to a position

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Osei, \textit{The value of African Taboos}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Osei, \textit{The value of African Taboos}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Osei, \textit{The value of African Taboos}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Osei, \textit{The value of African Taboos}, 42.
\end{itemize}
believed to elevate him to a status which is spiritually higher than before and also placing him humanly higher than his subjects.²⁴ Even though Agyekum’s work talks about chieftaincy taboo among the Akan in general, this research is specific to the people of Akwamu.

In his article, Emmanuel Afe points out that to control crimes and indiscipline among the people of Ondo province, indigenous taboos have been formed. He contends that before the advent of modern civilization, taboos were used to fight crime in Ondo province and that taboos represent the main source of guiding principles regulating and directing the behaviour of individuals in the community towards the Supreme Being and especially the gods and ancestors in Yoruba traditional societies. He indicates that one has to obey all the taboos governing the divinity in the Yoruba state to avoid the wrath of the gods and the ancestors.²⁵ One notices that Afe’s research is specific to Ondo Province but the researcher wants to do his investigation among the people of Akwamu traditional society.

Peter Sarpong in his book, "Ghana In Retrospect, Some Aspects Of Ghanaian Culture”, he did an extensive work on taboos among the Ashanti. He indicates that murder, sexual intercourse with a woman impregnated by another man or with a girl under the age of puberty, suicide, incest, adultery with the chief’s wife and words of abuse against the chiefs are classified as taboos. He explains that in the olden days, the penalty for breaching these taboos was death, a very heavy fine, or perpetual

banishment. The work of Sarpong is relevant to this study because he touches on taboos associated with suicide and abusive words against the chief which are considered taboos among the Ashanti. This portion of his work will enrich this study. However, Sarpong did not touch on taboos associated with totem, sacred grove, sacred days, dogs and deity of which is a gap that this research intends to fill. Again, Sarpong’s work was done several years ago. Obviously, lots of changes might have occurred. This work seeks to examine the changes that have occurred since the time of his work.

The literature review above expresses scholarly works of authors who have done extensive work on taboos related to chieftaincy, totem, deity and their place in contemporary African society. These scholarly works are based on the research questions of the study with the aim to achieve the objectives of this research. The literature review would therefore be useful for the study because it lays foundation of our knowledge about the Akwamus’ worldview of taboos.

1.9. Organization of the study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one covers the introduction of the study which includes the background to the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions and scope of the study. It also covers methodology and methods of data collection, literature review, organization of the study, limitations and significance of the study. Chapter two covers conceptualization of taboos. Chapter three covers the place of taboos among the people of Akwamu. This includes among other things taboos associated with chieftaincy, totems and deities. Chapter four analyses the relevance of taboos that are related to chieftaincy, totems and deities in contemporary

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Akwamu traditional society. Chapter five is the conclusion of the study. This looks at the summary, major findings, conclusion and recommendations.

1.10 Limitations

The study sought to explore the relevance of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. In the course of the study, the researcher encountered the following constraints. First and foremost, the data collection was carried out during the funeral rites of the late queenmother of Ashanti which was attended by several chiefs from Akwamu traditional area to spend the whole period in Kumasi which eventually delayed the data collection. Again, the busy schedule of some chiefs and elders with chieftaincy dispute in Akwamu traditional area compelled the researcher to travel several times before meeting them for an interview. In spite of the constraints encountered, with patience, perseverance, ingenuity and the use of diplomacy as a guiding principle, those limitations were triumphed.

1.11. Significance of the study

The study will serve as an archive for Akan Traditional societies in general and Akwamu Traditional society in particular who are in danger of losing their culture as a result of modernity. Again, as an academic research, it will serve as documented material to what has been done already in relation to this study which will go a long way to add to knowledge in the academic field. The findings of the research will also serve as a reference point or academic material for those who would want to research into taboos. More so, if people are properly educated on the role that taboo plays in traditional societies, it would offer them the opportunity to live harmonious lives in the society.
Finally, the study will educate people on taboos that have been maintained, modified and abandoned in Akwamu traditional society.

1.12. Summary

This chapter has examined the statement of problem, research questions, objectives and the methodology of the study. Conceptual framework and selected literature to be used in this study have also been examined. From the above discussion, one would conclude that this study brings to the fore of academics in the ways in which traditional societies remain strongly attached to taboos as guidelines of moral code and their understanding of the role of taboos in contemporary societies. Aside that the findings of this study invaluably add to the existing academic discourse and contribute to the conceptual and theoretical understanding of taboos in contemporary societies. The next chapter discusses conceptualization of taboos.
CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUALISING TABOOS

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses conceptualization of taboos which touches on the concept of taboos, the Akan concept of taboo, roles and significance of taboos, taboos and moral conduct, challenges of taboos in contemporary Traditional African societies. Some prevalent taboos in traditional African societies are also discussed in this chapter.

2.2. The concept of taboo

Taboo, etymologically speaking is a derivation of the Polynesian term “tapu” which means “forbidden”. It is comparable to the word “sacer” in Latin, “Kadesh” in Hebrew, “Nso” in Igbo language and of Nigeria and “Mmusuo” in the indigenous Akan language of Ghana. According to Omobola, within its historical context, taboo was a sacred term for a set of cultic or religious prohibitions instituted by traditional religious authorities as instruments for moral motivation, guidance and objectivity for protecting the sanctity of their shrines and the wellbeing of the society. The term is also applicable to any sort of social prohibition imposed by the leadership of a community regarding certain times, places, events and people, especially, but not exclusively for religious reasons and the wellbeing of the society.

The concept of taboo has been studied for a long time from different perspectives and disciplinary angles. The term is used by psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and religious scholars alike.

27 C. Blakemore and Shelia J, Taboos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21
The debate about the relevance of traditional values to societal well-being has compelled anthropologists to posit a crucial distinction between “primitive” and “modern” societies and taboo has played an important role in establishing this distinction. For instance, British anthropologist, Mary Douglas’ analysis of the concept of pollution and taboo identified two types of cultures as far as the sanctions attached to taboos on pollution are concerned. Douglas notes that with modern societies, pollution is a matter of hygiene or etiquette which only becomes grave in so far as it may create societal embarrassment. The sanctions are social sanctions, contempt, perhaps even police action. However, in the primitive societies, the effects of pollution are much more wide ranging. Thus, a grave pollution is a religious offence. By this distinction between the functions of taboos in primitive and modern society, anthropologists relegate the importance of traditional beliefs and practices to the primitive society. Thus, taboo has little to contribute to modern society, since it relates solely to primitive societies.\(^{30}\) Holden however disagrees with anthropologists who argue that taboo is a feature of primitive society, claiming that it is inaccurate to describe taboo as having little to contribute to modern society, because in these modern African traditional societies, taboo plays important role in the daily lives of the people. According to Holden, because Douglas thinks that the term “taboo” dates back to the early colonial era when it was assumed that it was associated with primitive societies, it has little to contribute in solving contemporary problems in modern African traditional societies. In his view, taboo is not a feature of primitive societies but it is a characteristic of any society therefore it is

possible to see taboo functioning in modern African traditional societies. The researcher illustrates an example among the Akans in Ghana to support Holden’s claim. Among the Akans, Peter Sarpong indicates that it is a taboo to have sex in the bush because those who indulge in it expose themselves to the risk of being bitten by venomous creatures like the snake, the scorpion and the spider.

Sigmund Freud argues that the meaning of taboo can be viewed from two directions. On the one hand, it means sacred or consecrated, whilst on the other, it means unclean or contaminated. Emile Durkheim also views taboo from two directions, thus the “sacred” and “profane”. He argues that the sacred refers to things set apart by humans as requiring special religious treatment. On the other hand, the ‘profane’ is the realm of routine experience. Taboo being viewed as profane and sacred proposed by Freud and Durkheim is evident in African traditional societies. In African traditional society like Ghana, taboo is used in two ways, thus the spiritual usage and socio-political usage.

As has been stated by Freud and Durkheim, the spiritual usage of taboo according to Sarpong requires religious treatment, whilst the socio-political usage of taboo is believed to have been imposed by traditional leaders in the general interest of people in the community. He illustrates his point with an example that among the Akans, it is a taboo to use abusive words against a chief and whoever does that has offended the ancestors who are being represented by the chief and animal sacrifice is

32 Peter Sarpong, Ghana in retrospect: Some aspects of Ghanaian culture(Ghana Publishing Corporation:1974), 57
35 Durkheim, The Elementary forms of Religious Life, 35.
36 Sarpong, Ghana in retrospect, 53.
needed to cleanse the chief and also to ask forgiveness from the ancestors. On the hand, taboos associated with theft and assault cases are dealt with payment of fine to serve as deterrent to members in the community. The assertion raised by Sarpong is in line with Geoffrey Parrinder’s assertion that ancestors are originators and custodians of taboos. Fisher’s understanding of this relationship is that, a taboo is an offence against ancestors and the Supreme Being. This claim by Fisher confirms that taboo is an obligation and not a choice and violating it attracts the wrath of the ancestors. Taboo then becomes a prohibition which when violated produces automatically on the offender a state of ritual disability and he or she only becomes relieved through a ceremony of purification.

2.3. The Akan concept of Taboo

As Kwame Gyekye puts it, taboo includes any sort of prohibition regarding certain times, place, actions, events and people but not exclusively for religious reasons. In Africa traditional society such as the Akan in Ghana, taboos have been embedded in traditional religion to promote peace and harmony in the Community. The Akan term taboo as “Akyiwade”, that which is forbidden or prohibited. It is also related to “mmusu” which is a prohibition against very grievous evils like incest, murder and suicide.

In Akan traditional society, there are taboos related to cleanliness, for respect, for good conduct in office, for sexuality, among others. The Akan believe that breaking any of the taboos is followed by the performance of a purificatory rite in order to avert a possible disaster from the supernatural being. Taboo is therefore considered as a sacred

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37Sarpong, Ghana in retrospect, 57.
institution which is instituted to regulate the conduct of individuals in the community. This view of taboos among Akans corroborates an argument raised by Cecilia Odejobi that taboo is a sacred term for a set of cultic or religious prohibitions instituted by traditional religious leaders as instruments for moral motivation, guidance and objectivity for protecting the sanctity of their shrines and the well-being of their worshipping communities.\(^{42}\) From this explanation, it could be seen that the Akans believe that taboos have supernatural forces behind them such that those who transgress or violate such prohibitions suffer some punishments. Such a punishment is usually visited on the transgressor by the supernatural forces and a ritual cleansing is supposed to be performed to remove the consequences on an offence committed by the individual. The rationale for these taboos when examined critically is not only to promote political and religious welfare of the society, but also to promote the social welfare of the people. The communal well-being of the people therefore appears to be the principal reason for the proscription of moral evil.

Besides checking moral behaviour and the economic welfare of the community, taboos also ensure social welfare in the community. Thus taboos constitute among other things the moral code of any given society. A breach of the moral code is therefore viewed as wrong, evil, bad and ultimately a destruction of the accepted social order and peace. For instance, in some Akan traditional societies, in order to protect pregnant mothers and their unborn babies, certain taboos and regulations are observed. These include the prohibition of sex during pregnancy, avoidance of certain foods which could

interfere with the health of mother and child or both.\textsuperscript{43} He argues that the expectant mother is forbidden from eating fat, beans and meat of animals killed with poisoned arrows during the last three months of pregnancy. Also, expectant mothers are not to eat snails since it is believed to cause certain defects of the unborn child. All these show the care and protection that the mother and the child receive in traditional African societies and it goes a long way to illustrate the premium the community places on its members. Violation of any of these taboos upsets the ancestors which can affect the smooth relationship that exists in the community.\textsuperscript{44}

Concerning how taboos promote political welfare in Akan traditional society, K.A. Busia emphasizes that the traditional chieftaincy system rests on taboos.\textsuperscript{45} He noted that these are evident in areas of representation and legitimacy as well as accountability and adjudication of cases. This makes him a public office holder and a representative of the community. These taboos therefore protect the well-being of the traditional chieftaincy system. For instance, the chief according to Rattray may be called only by his stool name, he may not travel unaccompanied, he should not be insulted or challenged in public, he should not be caught in adultery or seduce the wife of a subject, he should not eat or drink in public, no one can sit on the stool of the chief, especially the Golden stool of the Ashanti.\textsuperscript{46}

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\item \textsuperscript{43}C. A. Ackah, \textit{Akan Ethics, A study of the moral ideas and moral behaviour of Akan tribes of Ghana} (Accra; Ghana Universities Press, 1988), 105.
\item \textsuperscript{44}Ackah, \textit{Akan Ethics}, 105.
\item \textsuperscript{45}K.A. Busia, \textit{The position of the chief in the modern political system of the Ashanti} (London: Frank Cass, 1960), 102.
\item \textsuperscript{46}R. S. Rattray, \textit{Religion & Art in Ashanti} (London: Oxford University, 1927), 65.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
2.4. Roles and significance of taboos

The roles of taboo according to Donald Steiner are seen in maintaining harmony between God, spirits and human beings.47 Laurenti Magesa agrees with Steiner and contends that the harmony which taboo maintains is ruled by moral order which is preserved by tradition and if followed has the power to ensure a bountiful life for humanity.48 According to him, just as Christianity or Islam, Traditional African Religion defines how people ought to live by integrating the natural, the human and the spiritual and that the moral teaching of African Religion delineates distinctive values, norms, and principles to follow so that life might be abundant for all, infusing community life with meaning and harmony. Magesa concludes that taboos are seen as moral codes intended to create harmony and order in the society.49 To throw more light on the role of taboos, Mrchay Andemariam argues that taboos clarify which attitudes and behaviour are not acceptable because they do not preserve the social code of behaving, hence breaking of a taboo endangers life and is seen as wrong because it interrupts peace and harmony.50

Joseph Osei also argues that every moral system requires the existence of guiding principles about what is not acceptable in the society. He stresses that in a society where there is no police, taboos serve as moral values. To a certain extent, taboos are better than modern law enforcing agencies, because in most cases, breaking of a taboo is associated with an automatic punishment that one does not have to be caught punished.51 Adebayo Adedeji also contends that taboos were formulated in the olden days to guide and regulate

47Donald F. Steiner, Taboo (London: Cohen and West Limited, 1956), 223.
49Magesa, Africa religion, 149.
50M. Andemariam, “Place of taboos in Gikuyu morality”, in Magesa L.ed. MIASMU Research integration papers to moral teaching and practices of Africa religion (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 111.
the activities of the citizens against evil deeds and for self-protection. He explains further that in several parts of African societies, it was an offence to whistle in the night and this was done to avoid evil spirit and also to promote peace and stability. In the work of Emmanuel A. Afe, taboos form one of the measures used to achieve peace and tranquillity among the people of the old Ondo province and other Africa societies.

Commenting on the role of taboos in checking of moral behaviour, John Mbiti states that among the Amhara of Ethiopia, taboos forbid the use of certain words which are thought to be offensive in various contexts. Thus, a word like “take” in Gurage language is phonetically the same as the Amharic word, “having intercourse”. They therefore view it as a taboo to pronounce the word. If it becomes necessary to say it, it is whispered. It is therefore wrong to break such taboos. Mbiti emphasises that one is morally wrong to molest or steal from another member of the community and adds that even if the act goes unnoticed, the ancestors, who believed to be the unseen members of the community will punish the offender. He concludes that morally good acts include politeness, kindness, and truthfulness, practicing justice in public life and keeping the community custom.

The economic welfare of the community is also ensured by means of certain taboos. These taboos as Christian A. Ackah points out are designated to influence the means of production, distribution and management of wealth at both individual and national levels. For example, shifting of boundaries without authorization, stealing of

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private or communal property and leasing but not selling land are taboos that gear towards a fair distribution of resources in the community.55

Considering taboos’ contribution to religious welfare of the community, Edward Idowu posits that since priests and diviners are in charge of religious welfare of the community, they have countless taboos surrounding them. In citing examples, he says that among the Yoruba of Nigeria, priests eat certain food only and not allowed to mix with other people. They are also prohibited from wearing certain clothes. Adherence to these taboos according to Idowu ensures peaceful co-existence between the living and the divinities. Idowu illustrates further that traditional African believers observe certain taboos which include swearing by the gods or ancestors for fun, pouring libation at a shrine with one’s sandals on or clothes not off the shoulder, showing disrespect to the priest or diviner as well as visiting the shrine right after having sex without taking a bath. These taboos as Idowu puts it promote holiness and righteousness and ultimately lead to a general communal welfare.56

In Madagascar, the importance of taboos cannot be understated. Alan J. Ruud observes that taboos are omnipresent in the daily lives of the people and that if one clashes with the taboos, he or she will find himself or herself up against many difficulties.57 According to Ruud, a taboo can be translated as a prohibition referring to what one is not allowed to do, objects which one must not come into contact with, words which must not be uttered and places which must be avoided.58 Margaret Brown observes that taboos are generally observed for two reasons. First, they are a means through

58Ruud, *Taboo*, 1
which individuals display respect for their ancestors and for their elders. Thus, taboos link individuals to their ancestors and living relatives. She contends that sharing the same taboos allows people to identify with their clans or ethnic groups. She said that by not observing ancestral taboos, individuals bring dishonour to their ancestors and can find themselves socially alienated from their community. Brown is of the view that by passing down lineage and societal norms to their children in the form of taboos, elders use their authority to naturalize the existing order.59 The second reason for which taboos are observed according to Brown is out of fear. People believe that violating their taboos invites misfortune in the form of illness, crop failure or even death. In her case study in the Northeast of Madagascar, Brown found that most of the villagers who adhered to taboos said that there was one simple reason for their adherence to taboos and that is fear for leprosy. Almost everyone she encountered was convinced that this illness is the outcome of eating a particular taboo food. It can be inferred from Brown’s assertion that every society has a shared values and standards of acceptable behaviour that members are encouraged to follow. These values have a huge effect on their lives and that the way they behave, dress, eat as well as their sexual lives are all governed by the taboos to identify themselves as one people in that society.

In a similar research conducted by Maurice Bloch in Madagascar society, he observes that specific months have definite destinies that must be observed as taboos. These destinies make people know what is good or bad and what is useful or harmful and they frequently take this into account in their everyday activities.60 He also observes that

in the Southern Highlands, the traditional priests impose specific days that people are not allowed to work as part of their destiny. These days are part of the general taboos for larger communities. Again, some days are made taboos by specific families or groups after some dramatic event happened and the family believes that by starting a day, it will avoid having these events repeat themselves. For example, Bloch mentions that death by lightning may be regarded as a sign that the family should not work on that particular day anymore.⁶¹

2.5. Taboos and moral conduct

Every moral system requires the existence of guiding principles. Additionally, some moral systems also provide moral transformation. In African traditional societies, taboos represent the main source of guiding principles regulating and directing the behaviour of individuals and the community towards the Supreme Being and especially the gods and the ancestors. The motivation for abiding by these principles is provided and reinforced by the religious sanctions from the gods and the ancestors or directly from the Supreme Being.

As Sarpong puts it, “the authority behind the interdict of taboos rests in some kind of supernatural power and the penalty consequent upon infringement of a taboo is believed to be brought about by the mere fact of performing the forbidden act and those found guilty for violating taboos are made to undergo ritual cleansing to cleanse the community of the abomination.”⁶² It must be evident that any religion that can provide taboos for the promotion of a good moral system in the society is an asset but not a hindrance to development. Taboos are an attempt by African traditional societies to

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⁶¹ Bloch, *placing the dead*, 115.
promote morality among individuals in the community. It is therefore evident from the above that taboos play effective role in protecting the physical and emotional security of the lives and liberties of the people in the society.

2.6. Taboos in contemporary Traditional African societies: Challenges

Emmanuel Afe contends that the absence of security system such as the police force to maintain law and order, society relies on other means to maintain social order. It is in this regard that taboos become relevant to maintain law and order in African traditional society. There are certain limits a person must not exceed if he is not to offend the laws of the land. Restrictions are therefore put in place ostensibly to check individual excesses. Most of these restrictions are deeply rooted in the traditional religion of the people. However, Elo Ibagere observes that taboos have continued to be less relevant in contemporary times. He points out that as a result of modernity; some attitudes and behaviour which were outright taboos with serious consequences in the past are no longer regarded as violations. Noting the erosion of taboos, Ibagere concludes that “The effect of westernization which has now translated to globalization is quite devastating to Africa in the sense of a lamentable and sometimes deliberate alteration or outright destruction of values and norms of African people and societies.” Philip Thody also argues that Christianity and Islam, coupled with modernity claim that taboos stem from myths that do not correspond to historical chronology and therefore the belief in the potency of

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63 Afe, “Taboos and maintenance of social order in Ondo province, South-Western Nigeria”, 98.
taboo is tantamount to primitivism, backwardness and superstition. He concludes that to obey a taboo is therefore considered absurd and incongruous with development.66

It can be inferred from Ibagere and Thody’s assertions that the adoption of Western values into African tradition which continue to view certain traditional norms as uncivilized is largely responsible for the erosion of taboos. For example, the endemic corruption in African traditional societies in recent times is as a result of lack of value system that is attached to taboos. Mike Anane also observes that with the introduction of formal education in Africa, local residents often learn values that conflict with indigenous beliefs. He contends that the missionaries and colonial masters who flocked Ghana and other parts of Africa saw some traditional religious practices as a hindrance to development because the missionaries discouraged traditional practices by describing them as idolatry and heathen.67 Appiah Opoku agrees with Anane when he notes that indigenous knowledge and beliefs are being lost as more and more traditional societies become assimilated into Western culture. He observes that formal education contributes to the demise of indigenous beliefs either by commission or omission. He explains further that formal education admits children into a new world which lies outside the boundaries of indigenous communities and for that matter it tends to promote Western science and values at the expense of indigenous beliefs and values. It also fails to put forward indigenous beliefs and knowledge as worthwhile subject matter and therefore create attitude in children that militate against the acquisition of indigenous beliefs and knowledge. Opoku concludes that as a result of formal education, traditional leaders such

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as chiefs who serve as representatives of the ancestors and for that matter as custodians of traditional cultural values no longer see these cultural values as relevant to modern world.\cite{opoku2007indigenous}

Furthermore, Ogbu U. Kalu suggests that African’s adoption of Western style of development is a key cause for the marginalization of indigenous knowledge of conservation in environmental policies. He argues that indigenous knowledge of conservation is seen as savage, superstition and counter-productive.\cite{ogbu2001sacred}

In similar vein, S. Luthfa, observes that indigenous knowledge of conservation is seen as superstitious as compared to the scientific knowledge of conservation. He noted that Western style of development is in conflict with indigenous knowledge of conservation in that whilst the Western style of development seeks to exploit natural resources for economic development now, the indigenous knowledge of conservation seeks to preserve the natural resources for the future generation through measures such as the institution of sacred grove, the belief in totemic animals among others.\cite{luthfa2006debunking}

Saleem A. Ali also contends that the Western perception of nature is viewed through the lenses of science, which is envisaged as a process that yields objective, rational and positivist data, hence decisions which are consistent with Western scientific knowledge often command acceptance and are more secured than indigenous knowledge and beliefs.\cite{ali2003mining}

John P. Jordan also argues that a whole system of taboos has controlled the entire life of Africans unfortunately, these

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{luthfa2006debunking} S. Luthfa, Debunking the Myths of Indigenous Knowledge: A case study of the Mandi of Madhupur, Bangladesh (Bangladesh: Lehigh University press, 2006), 15.
\end{thebibliography}
whole of taboos are no longer strictly observed because of the influence of Christian doctrines and this explains why there are so many crimes in traditional communities today.\textsuperscript{72} As Chuta puts it, the introduction of Western education in Africa brought in Western idea of rationalism and individualism into Africa and this made Africans begin to doubt their religious traditions and consequently decided to live without it.\textsuperscript{73}

In terms of politics, Christopher Ugwu argues that the king is brainwashed and indoctrinated into accepting that leadership which has no meaning here on earth and that nobody rules except God. According to him, African traditional political leaders no longer follow religiously laid down rules and ritual practices that guide their offices because of their contact with the West and this is causing serious problem among the so called “His Royal Majesties” and their subjects.\textsuperscript{74} The researcher does agree with Ugwu’s argument because in recent times, many traditional leaders who are Christians delegate their powers to other sub-chiefs to perform their religious duties on their behalf. Ugwu further argues that the powers of most of the divinities, deities and totems are undermined, underrated and treated with contempt and levity.\textsuperscript{75} The arguments raised by the above scholars suggest that indeed, the impact taboos exercise on African traditional societies seems to have been diminished due to the influence of western culture.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item J. P. Jordan, \textit{Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria} (Dublin: Glonmore and Reynolds, 1948), 151.
\item Ugwu, \textit{Man and His Religion}, 150.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
2.7. Some Prevalent Taboos in Traditional African Societies

This section discusses some prevalent taboos in African traditional societies. These are taboos related to chieftaincy, totem, deity, sacred grove, suicide, taboo days and dogs.

2.7.1. Chieftaincy Taboos

A chief according to Addo Dankwa is “an individual who in agreement with customary law has been selected, designated, enstooled or enskinned and fitted as such or as the circumstance may be, chosen and who has been registered as a chief” The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana Article (277) defines a chief as “a person, who hailing from the appropriate family and lineage has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage.” As Kwame Arhin puts it, a chief is defined as “a person elected or selected in accordance with customary usage and recognized by the government of Ghana to wield authority and performs functions derived from tradition or assigned by the central government within a specific area.”

The various definitions show that chieftaincy institution is backed by law. It is important to note that studying chieftaincy in Africa without the knowledge of stool or skin taboos, as suggested by Malefijit Annemarie de Wal, is tantamount to breaking not only the spiritual reinforcement of the society, but also the total religious and moral fabric woven around the ancestors, deities and the supernatural beings.

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argues that taboos are implicitly attached to every stool or skin and the system of such prohibitions is common in traditional priesthood, chieftaincy and leadership institutions in Ghana and other West African countries.\textsuperscript{80} Opoku further argues that leaders who are restricted by taboos do not only abide by their individual religious beliefs, but also observe such social restrictions resulting from traditional conventions. He concludes that as a custodian of the stool or the skin, it is the responsibility of a chief to ensure that all offenders in the community are punished.\textsuperscript{81}

Awedoba, Gundoona, et al indicate that the dignity which is associated with the chief and his office is symbolized by particular prohibitions regulating his behaviour. These prohibitions include language, diet, dress, demeanour and etiquette.\textsuperscript{82} Kofi Abrefa Busia also asserts that taboos are leadership cultural icons for all and for that reason every chief must swear an oath at the beginning of office taking. The oath swearing is indeed a seal of approval, assuring the state that as a leader, all the taboos in the community would be observed. The misuse of the oath is the transgression of an ethnic taboo. Taboos then become the traditional commandments through which leaders are protected from social and spiritual ambivalences.\textsuperscript{83} Busia further explains the chief’s position as follows:

From the moment that the chief is enstooled, his position becomes sacred. This is emphasized by taboos. He may not strike or be struck by anyone lest the ancestors would bring misfortune upon the tribe. He may never walk bare-footed, lest he stumbles. If he does stumble, the expected calamity has to be averted with a sacrifice. His buttocks may not touch the ground. That again would bring misfortune. All these taboos remind the chief and everybody else that he occupies a sacred position. He is the occupant of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{80} Asare Opoku, \textit{West African traditional Religion} (Jurong FED: International Private Limited, 1978), 213.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Opoku, \textit{West African traditional Religion}, 213.
\item \textsuperscript{83} K. A. Busia, \textit{The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti} (London; Frank Cass Co.,1968), 25.
\end{itemize}
stool of the ancestors (ɔte nananom akonwa so). For this reason, he is treated with the greatest veneration.84

Owusu Brempong observes that the position of the chief is shaped by taboos therefore he must exhibit good moral character and must have the charisma. He concludes that since chieftaincy is a spiritual duty these qualities cannot be achieved without being guided by taboos. He concludes that to ensure the observation of various taboos, “a good chief must have a high level of training before he assumes office and such training must help him to establish effective working relationship with the ancestors and other supernatural beings. By going through such training, the chief is expected to behave adequately to make full sacred and emotional response to his traditional heritage.”85

Kwame Gyekye also argues that “in African traditional society, the chief is considered as both a political head and a religious head. In this regard, the taboos relating to his conduct and mannerism are all intended to remind him and his subjects and others that the position he occupies is sacred”86 In Ghanaian societies, some of the taboos associated with the chief as indicated by Gyekye, “a chief is not supposed to walk barefooted and if he does that and his feet touch the ground some misfortune will befall not only on him but the community at large. Also, the chief is not supposed to strike anybody neither should he be struck. If this happens, the ancestors will bring misfortune upon the person who struck the chief and vice versa.”87 Ansah Owusu asserts that among the Yoruba, women in menstruation are kept at a distance because menstrual blood is thought

84 Bussia, The Position of the chief, 26-27
to pollute the chief rendering him less efficacious when they touch food items that are used to prepare food for him. According to Owusu, women in their menstrual period are believed to be a source of danger to people who have certain powers such as kings, traditional priests and medicine men. Giving the West African situation therefore, the palace architect provides a special space for menstruating women so that they would not break the taboo by contacting and polluting the chief.

In the Akan verbal taboos, Kofi Agyekum explains that it is a taboo to mention the bare name of a chief. He points out that the rational or the philosophy underpinning this taboo is that the chief has been transformed from his original personality to a position believed to elevate him to a status spiritually higher than before and also placing him humanly higher than his subjects.88

Generally, the chieftaincy institution existed long before the arrival of the Europeans on the shores of African countries. This institution is recognised as the custodian of the culture and traditions of a people; hence its responsibility is to enact rules to preserve certain values of the society. However, these values in recent times are being threatened by modernity and westernization. In many traditional societies such as Akwamu, Akuapem and Akyem in Ghana for example, Yankah observes that during traditional festivals, it is only the “fɔntɔnɔfrɔm” drum which is used to welcome the paramount chief and his entourage to the durbar ground. While the “fɔntɔnɔfrɔm” is performing, all other bands particularly contemporary bands present are expected to remain silent. Again, it is a taboo for a traditional chief to keep contemporary music instruments in his court or dance to contemporary music publicly. Yankah however says

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88Kofi Agyekum, Akan verbal taboos in the context of the ethnography of communication (Accra: Ghana University press, 2010), 152.
that nowadays, we see “fɔntɔnfrɔm” accompanied with instruments of Western origin such as table-top organ, a jazz set and a pair of tall traditional drums called conga. As tradition demands, the chief is normally accompanied at traditional functions by the “fɔntɔnfrɔm” band. Unfortunately, this traditional norm according to Yankah could not be maintained during traditional events because of frequent interruptions by the western instrument. As a result of this, Yankah concludes that some concerned observers begin to remark, “Na dɛn ben koraa na ɛrekɔ so ɣi?” which is translated as “but what at all is going on?”

Among the Akans of Ghana whatever the chief has to say is expected to pass through the ɔkyeame (spokesperson) whom Yankah describes as the focus of all formal interaction in the royal domain, whether social or verbal. Contrary to traditional protocol, this important role of the ɔkyeame has been subordinated to what is referred to as a “master of ceremonies” (M.C) because of modernity and rapid social change. Assimeng has noted that some years ago, it was a taboo for a woman to greet a chief or go near him while in her menses. He noted that in the days when communal war was rampant, chiefs needed to fortify themselves spiritually against their enemies. They were cautioned against contact with women in their menstrual period. The menstrual blood according to Assimeng has the potential of neutralizing the spiritual powers of the chiefs. It was for this reason that women were not supposed to greet chiefs when they were in their menstrual period. Unfortunately, this tradition according to Assimeng appears to have been overlooked in contemporary times as we see all categories of women, both young and old during traditional functions going round one after the other to greet the

90Yankah, speaking for the chief, 8.
paramount chief publicly. While the traditionalists may be thinking of a possible case of women being in their menstrual period, majority of the people may frown upon this belief because of their Christian faith.\(^9^1\)

2.7.2. Totemic Taboos

According to Gyamfi Adu, the term “totem” which comes from a North American Indian language, refers to animals that are revered by individuals, particularly group of people as holy.\(^9^2\) Totems are considered as emblem such as animals or plants that serve as symbol of a family or clan. According to him, totems are used by different group of people for different reasons including the conservation of natural resources. For this reason, Robert John Alun contends that people who believe themselves to be of one blood, descendants of common ancestors, and are bound together by common obligations to each other by common faith revere that totem.\(^9^3\) Alun further posits that totemic animals serve as identity to families or clans who are related to those totemic animals and therefore it is a taboo to kill or have sexual relations between members of those clan. This according to him suggests that totemic objects are believed to be ancestrally related to an ethnic group, clan, or family as a tutelary spirit which they attach deep feelings to.\(^9^4\)

Similarly, Charles Lumor argues that family members who are related to a totem do not eat, kill or trap such totemic animals. He again explains that when a totemic animal dies, members of that group show respect by mourning and burying it as in the

\(^9^4\)Alun, \textit{The Secret of the Totem}, 117.
case of a human being.\textsuperscript{95} In Ghana, indigenous belief system including totems has played significant roles in the conservation and management of natural resources. In his work, “traditional and indigenous methods of conserving biodiversity”, Ntiamo Baidu identifies totems as the key indigenous methods for conserving biodiversity. He indicates that totems represent traditional institutions where religiously governed norms define human behaviour.\textsuperscript{96}

It is also evident from a biblical point that God used a tree to signify life, hence the tree of life served as God’s totem of covenant between Him and man.\textsuperscript{97} The evidence from the Bible indicates that totems are important and have been part of human life since creation.\textsuperscript{98} In most cases, curses or calamities come on the people when the totemic animals are killed or mishandled. The people believe that they are being protected by the powers in such objects. In some cases, they share some characteristics with their totem. For instance, those who have parrots as their totems are believed to be very eloquent when it comes to speech, therefore, they are locally known as “Akoo te brofo”. Also, totems are medium through which family members communicate their identity in the society.

In a traditional society like Ghana, people who have the same totem cannot marry, since they share the same blood. The Akan word for totem is “akyeneboa” or “atweneboa” which literally means an animal relied upon for spiritual inspiration.\textsuperscript{99} According to Awuah-Nyamekye, there are many myths surrounding how each clan came

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item HORACE KNOWLES Revised Standard Version, the British and Foreign Bible society, 1901.
\item HORACE KNOWLES, 1901.
\item Lumor, Significance of animal symbolism, 20.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
to be associated with a particular totem. Common to all is the belief that these totemic objects play significant role in the lives of the members of the clan and their ancestors.\textsuperscript{100} The Akan tribe consists of eight different clans with each clan having its own totemic animal which depicts the characteristics of its members.

**Akan Clans and their totems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clan</th>
<th>Totem (Local Name)</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Symbolic Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asona</td>
<td>Kwakwadebi</td>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretuo</td>
<td>ʋsebɔ</td>
<td>Leopard</td>
<td>Aggressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aduana</td>
<td>ʋkraman</td>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>Humility/friendliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asakyiri</td>
<td>Opete</td>
<td>Vulture</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asene</td>
<td>Apan</td>
<td>Bat</td>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ɛkuona</td>
<td>Ekoo</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>Uprightness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agona</td>
<td>Ako</td>
<td>Parrot</td>
<td>Eloquence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyoko</td>
<td>Akromas</td>
<td>Falcon/Hawk</td>
<td>Patience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.abibitumikasa.com](http://www.abibitumikasa.com). Retrieved, 10/11/16

Quarcoopome argues that animals are chosen as totems because they are said to have qualities which people would want to emulate, therefore people identify themselves with such animals.\textsuperscript{101} Nkansah Kyeremanteng also contends that totems play political, social and religious roles in traditional societies. He argues that Fomena people of Ghana have vulture as their clan totem. These animals are considered as deities which represent their soul. David Millar also claims that traditional institutions such as totems play key role in ensuring that those who break the rules are punished. He notes that these


collective actions are expressed through religious beliefs and moral sanctions.\textsuperscript{102} In spite of roles played by totems in the management of natural resources, Eneji Ntamu asserts that these traditional beliefs have worn away as a result of Christianity which sees the practice rather inimical to the growth, unity, peace and cohesion of communities.\textsuperscript{103}

\subsection*{2.7.3. Deity Taboos}

Deity taboos refer to taboos associated with the worship of a deity. These taboos provide directions to the cultic priests, servants and the adherents in terms of who, when, where and how to worship. Examples of these deity taboos include visiting the shrine with sandals on, having sex near a shrine, the cloth not off the shoulders, showing disrespect to a deity priest, deity priests violating their vows and sexual impurity. The significance of these deity taboos can be seen in the contribution they make to the promotion of morally upright lives. Initially, this may be realised in and around the shrines, but overtime this consciousness can permeate and resonate in the lives of the entire society within their domain of religious and moral influence. According to Awuah Nyamekye, deities are believed to reside in natural substances such as rivers, trees, mountains, caves and animals.\textsuperscript{104} Awuah further explains that all the deities have particular objects as taboos and this belief influences people’s attitude towards the deities. Awuah Nyamekye seems to explain why in Akan traditional society, most taboos related to deities are taken seriously as they are believed to have been imposed by traditional rulers and priest in the general interest of the community. In view of this,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{102}D. Millar, \textit{Traditional African world views from a Cosmo- vision perspective} (Accra: Jubilee bible society, 2007), 5.
\textsuperscript{103}Eneji Ntamu, \textit{Traditional African Religion in natural resources conservation and management} (Cross riverState, Nigeria: Canadian inter of Science and Education, 2012), 45.
\textsuperscript{104}Awuah Nyamekye, \textit{Managing the environmental crisis in Ghana: the role of Africa Traditional Religion and culture with special Reference to Berekum Traditional Area} (United Kingdom: Cambridge scholars publishing, 2014), 68.
\end{flushleft}
Joseph Osei concludes that people do not temper with deity taboos because failure to observe the taboos associated with these deities may result in mis-happening such as ill-luck, disease, untimely death, drought and social sanction.\textsuperscript{105}

The Akans believe that the “\textit{abosom}” are personified spirits who are believed to be the children of God and have their respective jobs assigned. According to Cephas Omenyo, deities are believed to inhabit in natural objects like water, rock, caves and houses called “fiebosom”. Each of these divinities has its area of competence such as agriculture, morality, fertility and wealth.\textsuperscript{106} Some of these deities as Joseph Osei puts it specialize in healing people who are barren or impotent. Others according him are also good at combating the negative influence of witches on individuals or on the entire community.\textsuperscript{107} Asare Opoku says that the deities are believed to administer punishment to those who infringe upon the moral code. For this reason, he concludes that deities are believed to have powers and they are placed above human beings.\textsuperscript{108}

Among the Akans, the fear of being punished by deities compels them to observe taboos associated with them. For instance, Geoffrey Parrinder observes that deities that inhabit in trees are responsible for making the Akan people fertile, therefore it is a taboo to cut trees such as the Iroko and Mahogany because these trees are abodes for deity powers and it is believed that people who cut deity inhabited trees are made infertile, therefore the fear of infertility and retributions from totemic powers prevents people from

\textsuperscript{105}Osei, “The value of African Taboos”, 42.
\textsuperscript{107}Osei, “The value of Africa taboos,” 43.
\textsuperscript{108}Opoku, \textit{West African Traditional Religion},54.
destroying trees. This implies that the Akans use deity related taboos to conserve the environment.\textsuperscript{109}

In order to protect water bodies such as rivers, sea, lagoons and lakes from pollution, the indigenous Akan culture has instituted taboos. Also, these taboos ensure the quality of water for the inhabitants who reside near the river. It can therefore be inferred from the above scholars that taboos associated with land, water bodies and trees demonstrate how the symbolic function of Akan culture regulates human behaviour.

Notwithstanding the positive influence of deity taboos on social order in African traditional societies, Jacob Olupona points out that modernity constitutes a threat to indigenous traditions because it alters the authenticity of such traditions. He explains that urbanization and movement of people from rural areas to urban centres has led to cultural adulteration as rural people lose their cultural identity to modernity in the cities not because of employment alone, but also because of many other amenities such as education, health service and better standard of living.\textsuperscript{110} Baidoo Ntiamoah also stresses that although taboos associated with deity exist, the reverence that was usually attached to these taboos has gradually eroded and the gradual decline of the powers and fear of the taboos is as a result of the perception that the gods and other spirit beings do not live in the forest.\textsuperscript{111}

2.7.4. Sacred Grove Taboos

The idea of sacred groves is well-known in traditional African societies in general and among the Akan traditional societies of Ghana in particular. Several studies have confirmed that the concept of sacred grove is popular in Asia and Africa.\textsuperscript{112} Sacred groves, according to Awuah Nyamekye are the “indigenous reserves that have been strictly protected, and in some cases many centuries ago due to their religious and cultural significance.”\textsuperscript{113} According to Nyamekye, the institution of sacred groves continues to thrive in the Akan society because of the religious underpinning attached to them and it is the belief of the Akan that, such groves are the habitat of the gods, ancestors and other spirit beings. In his view, for any sacred grove, there is a reigning deity that oversees and controls all forms of vegetation and waters of the grove. He concludes that only qualified members such as priests, priestesses, chiefs, and family heads are permitted to enter the sacred groves to undertake official rituals on behalf of the entire community.\textsuperscript{114} Sarfo-Mensah also argues that the creation of sacred groves was informed by religious and cultural motives, but recent studies among indigenous people including those of the Akan have shown that the concept of sacred groves is also underpinned by conservationist motives.\textsuperscript{115}

According to Nyamekye, different Akan communities have different local names for sacred groves and prominent among them include “nananom mpow”, “mpanyin pow”

\textsuperscript{114}Nyamekye, “Salvaging Nature”, 25.
and “nsaman pow” which are literally known as ancestral groves, ancestral forest and burial grounds respectively. To him, within the Akan traditional society, forests are regarded as essential natural resource for humanity therefore influenced by their religion and culture, have established certain measures to preserve their forests in order to guarantee their sustainable use. He concludes that the institution of sacred groves has been one among many means the Akan use to conserve forest.116

Within the Akan society, Nyamekye opines that taboos serve the purpose of not only to preserve trees in areas marked as “sacred”, but also various species of animals, fishes and rivers in such groves. He claims that the taboo attached to the “Koraa” sacred grove in the Akan town of “Biadan” prohibits people from fishing in the river “Koraa” located in the grove and that, people who eat fish or crab from the river would experience stomach troubles or even death. In citing another purpose of taboo associated with sacred groves, Nyamekye explains that taboos play an important role in the institution of sacred groves because of the belief that such groves are the abodes of the gods and ancestors and that the gods and ancestors prohibit people from exploiting these groves. He confirms that “Osudum” sacred grove located at Aburi-Akuapem is believed to house the river goddess called “Osudum Ama”. This grove is said to have a pond with a lot of alligators and it is believed that these alligators are the children of the goddess and is a taboo for any of the alligators to move out of the grove, as this is said to bring bad omen to the entire community.117

The above explanations demonstrate that environmental consciousness had been part of the traditional Akan mind centuries ago. However, it is observed that with the

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arrival of foreign religions and formal education, some of these traditional beliefs are steadily losing their value in these communities and as a result has led to the termination of many animals and putting at risk so many others.

2.8. Summary

Chapter two examined concepts of taboos. It highlighted scholars’ views on taboos from international, national to local perspective. Some prevalent taboos practised in contemporary traditional societies including Ghana were also discussed. Some key findings from the discussion revealed that taboo plays significant role in all facets of the lives of traditional people of Africa. This is seen particularly in how taboo influences the moral conduct and the socio-religious welfare of the people. The discussion also revealed that taboo defines the identity of the traditional people of Africa. For example, the people of Akwamu are closely connected to warthog and dog as their totems which identify them as the “Aduana” or “Abrade” people. Moreover, the discussion brought to bare some of the challenges being faced by taboos in contemporary times as a result of modernity.
CHAPTER THREE

TABOOS AMONG AKWAMU PEOPLE IN HISTORY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the place of taboos among Akwamu people. This covers their historical background, traditional administration and Religious life as well as their socio-economic lives. This is to explore how religion is infused into their culture and how it affects their daily lives. Also historical overview is examined to give us a fair idea about the origin of Akwamus and the various places of their settlement up to this present day. Additionally, the traditional administration system of Akwamu state is examined to understand their traditional system in terms of the process of selecting their chiefs. The economic and social life of the people is explored in this chapter to find out the major trading activities they engage in as well as their communal lives. Taboos practised among the people of Akwamu are also discussed in this chapter to find out how taboos define their cultural identity.

3.2. History of the Akwamu People

This part discusses the history of Akwamu people. This looks at the geography of the people, the historical background, traditional administration and religious life of the people. It also looks at the socio-economic life as well as the various taboos being observed by the people. Finally, this part examines non-traditionalists’ view on taboo practice in Akwamu traditional area and how they influence their moral lives.

The Akwamus live about 64 kilometres North East of Accra in an area bounded by districts on the North by Kwahu Afram plains, South by Lower Manya, East by Ho West and to the West by Upper Manya. Its traditional capital is Akwamufie and is about
88 kilometres from Accra and it lies between latitude $5^\circ\ 44^\prime$ in the North and longitude $0^\circ\ 44^\prime$ in the West. Akwamu traditional area accounts for about 55% of the total population of 98,046 of Asuogyaman District in the Eastern Region of Ghana.\textsuperscript{118}

The administrative district capital Asuogyaman lies within the dry equatorial climate zone which experiences substantial amount of precipitation. This is characterized by a double maximum rainfall which reaches its peak period in May - July and the minor season occurs in the period of September -November. Annual rainfall usually starts in April with the peak month in June and ends in November. The dry season sets in November-December and ends in March. The annual rainfall is between 67m and 1130mm. Temperatures are warm throughout the year with maximum monthly mean of 37.2ºC and a minimum of 21.0ºC. Relative humidity is generally high ranging from the highest of 98% in June to 31% in January.\textsuperscript{119}

Some of the major towns in Akwamu traditional area are Akosombo, Atimpoku, Senchi, Akwamufie, Gyakiti, Adjena and Akrade. The population of the area is heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity and religion. The predominant ethnic group is the Akan followed by the Ewe and the Ga-Adangbe. Other ethnic groups make up the remaining portion of the population. The dominant religion is Christianity (89%), followed by Islamic (3.7%) and Traditionalist (2.4%) respectively. There also exist smaller groups of people who adhere to other religions or have no religion.\textsuperscript{120} The current chief and queen mother of Akwamu Traditional area are Nana Kwafo Akoto III and Nana Afrakomaa II.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{119} Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census, 4.
\bibitem{120} Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census, 5.
\end{thebibliography}
Figure 1: Map of Asuogyaman showing Akwamu Traditional Towns

The Akwamu State according to the Abrade or the Aduana clan, originated from Kumbu Saleh, the capital of the ancient Ghana Empire in the Western Sudan. W.E.F. Ward indicates that as a result of introduction of Islam in the Western Sudan and the zeal of the Muslims to impose their religion, they left for Kong which is the present day La Cote d’Ivoire. From Kong, they proceeded to Wam and then to Dormaa, both in the present day Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana before finally arriving at Twifo-Hemang.\footnote{W.E.F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), 55.} When Otumfo Agyen “Kɔkɔbo”, king of Twifo-Hemang died in 1520, Otumfo Asare moved with some of the Abrade people to stay to Abakrampa and later
moved to settle at Asamankese. Ward further indicates that from Abakrampa to Asamankese, they went through several Fante towns and villages and the Fantes were surprised at their large number. This made them remark “Nnipa naawɔdɔaso see; wohwe won a, na wokɔn abu.” This literally means, “These people are numerous; even merely looking at them breaks one’s neck”.\textsuperscript{122} The emigrants were from that time on called “Akɔnbufo”, meaning “neck-breaking people” which was corrupted to “Akwamufo” and the new state they established was named “Akwamu”. This shows that the name Akwamu was derived long before their settling at Nyanoase. Meanwhile, before the adopted name of Akwamu, they were called “Twiforo”.

The Akwamus found the land of Asamankese uninhabited and offered part of it to the Akyems. It is interesting to note that because of a favour offered to the Akyems by the Akwamus, they were given the name “Kyebi” which means, “offer me a part”. When Otumfo Asare died, the Akwamus went to settle at Nyanoase near Nsawam and the famous Accra market of Abonse under the leadership of Otumfo Akotia. The reason was to give the Akwamus the advantage to prevent themselves against their enemies. In Nyanoase, the Akwamus organised themselves into a powerful State under personalities like Ansa Sasraku I, II and II, Basua Addo and Akonnor in the 17\textsuperscript{th} Century.\textsuperscript{123} Nyanoaso was located on the Nyanoaso Mountain. Gyase protected the King and Queen Mother who resided at the hill top and bottom respectively.\textsuperscript{124} The tolls collection from the Akyem people by the Akwamus was made possible due to their proximity to the River Densu. The King of Accra allowed the Akwamu King to supervise the Abonse market.

\textsuperscript{122}D.E.K. Amenumey, Ghana, \textit{A concise History from Pre-Colonial Times to the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century} (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2008), 58.
\textsuperscript{124} Amenumey, Ghana, 59.
The Abonse market was managed by the King of Akwamu with permission from the King of Accra. With time, the Akwamu King could choose to close the trade way at any time due to his authority.\textsuperscript{125}

Akwamu State’s expansion started between 1629 and 1710 when they migrated into the Akuapem area, including Kyerepon and Larth, Denkyera, Ga-Adangbe; and the Ladoku states of Agona, Winneba, Afram plains, Southern Togoland and finally Ouidah in present-day Benin. The powerful king Nana Ansa Sasraku I annexed the Guans and took over the traditional areas of the Kyerepon. He ruled over them until Asonaba Nana Ofori Kuma and his followers, after a succession dispute in an effort to form their own State, engaged them in a fierce war. The Akwamus were driven away from the mountains.\textsuperscript{126}

According to some historians such as Ivor Wilks, Akwamu began with the domination of Akuapem Hills, now the Akuapem State in the middle of the 17th Century.\textsuperscript{127} This includes the Guans and the Kyerepons. Berekuso, Aburi, Awukugua, Dawu, Larth and Anum were now part of the vassal states of Akwamu after the expansion. Some Southern Akan groups near the Guan communities and the foothills of the Kwahu Scarp were also brought under Akwamu suzerainty. From 1677 to 1681, Akwamu decided to attack and conquest Accra.\textsuperscript{128} Kwabena-Poh asserts that Akwamu domination over Akuapem State was not complete until its conquest of Accra in 1681 under the headship of King Ansa Sasraku II.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{125} Amenumey, Ghana, 59.
\textsuperscript{126} Wilks, Akwamu, 1640-1750, 51.
\textsuperscript{127} Ivor Wilks, Akwamu, 1640-1750: A study of the Rise And Fall of a West African Empire (Trondheim: Vide Back, 2001), 51.
\textsuperscript{128} Wilks, Akwamu, 1640-1750, 51.
\textsuperscript{129} Kwamena M.A. Poh, Government and politics in the Akuapem State 1730-1850 (London, 1973), 53.
The Akwamus took the attack as a chance to achieve their economic and political goals. In view of this, the Akwamus took over all the overseas trade in gold and slave which were being handled by Accra under the leadership of King Okai Kwei. Accra became a branch jurisdiction of the Akwamus close to about 50 years and this helped the Akwamus to enjoy economic benefits. For instance, the tributes paid into the royal treasury by the vassal states and the rents and tolls imposed on European traders during the period when Ga-Adangbe came under the control of the Akwamu added much to the state revenue. The wealth of Akwamu did not only boost her power and prestige but also helped the rulers to maintain an effective system of administration and an efficient army. One warlord of Akwamu, Asomani in 1693 registered his displeasure at the invasion of the market by European marketers instead of blacks by attacking European traders and the Osu Christianborg Castle which then housed the Danish colonist of Gold Coast government.\textsuperscript{130}

Political organization and the rich culture with experienced military was Akwamus’ hallmark as Akan Customs portray. Among the early Akan states, Akwamu state is described by many researchers as the wealthier and powerful.\textsuperscript{131} Akwamu made significant role to the kingship scheme. The majestic Abrade fraternity was still guild with Kingship and the stool could be ascended by people of the Abrade fraternity. It was for this reason that gave chance to King Akoto I of Obomeng-Kwahu to rule after the demise of Kwafo Akoto I of Akwamu.\textsuperscript{132}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} F.K. Buah, \textit{History of Ghana A} (Accra: Macmillan, 1998), 98.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Buah, \textit{History of Ghana}, 74.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ivor Wilks, Akwamu 1640-1750: \textit{A study of the Rise And Fall of a West African Empire} (Trondheim: Vide Back, 2001), 18.
\end{itemize}
According to Wilks, Akwamu State adopted the “Atumpan” and “Fontonfrom” drums in its sovereignty.\textsuperscript{133} Though Atumpan” and “Fontonfrom” drums are still with the Akans, The Akwamus were the first to establish them with the skulls of human beings and also with the human jaw-bones. Again, it was the Akwamus who introduced the “Asesedwa” stool into the kingship organization and this extended to the Akan and non-Akan tribes.\textsuperscript{134} According to Agyekum Bafo, the Akwamus made several contributions to traditional dancing in the fields of “Adowa”. He indicates that “Adowa” spread from Akwamu to Ashanti and to the Ga people.

All Akans celebrate the Adae festival, but the Akwamu claimed to have instituted the Akwasidae, Awukudae and Odwira Festivals.\textsuperscript{135} Politically, Agyekum claims that Ansa Sasraku I invented Akwamu military organization which was copied by Akans and non-Akans. It consisted of a central wing (Adonten); right wing (Nifa); left wing (Benkum); Rearguard (Kyidom); the Household and Bodyguard (Gyase and Twafo). The Commander in Chief was the Krontihene.\textsuperscript{136}

Akwamu state collapsed in 1730 as a result of a combination of several factors. According to Bafo Agyekum, the empire grew beyond its optimum size and it was difficult for the resources of the empire to meet the organizational demands.\textsuperscript{137} Also, the rules of succession were not very clear and this led to several patricidal struggles, most of which occurred in 1730 when Prince Amu joined forces of Akuapem and Akyem to defeat the Akwamu.\textsuperscript{138} Again, power was abused where rulers began to engage in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{133}Wilks, Akwamu, 1640-1750, 20
\textsuperscript{134}Wilks, Akwamu, 1640-1750, 20.
\textsuperscript{136}Agyekum, A History of Akwamu, 273.
\textsuperscript{137}Agyekum, A History of Akwamu, 273.
\textsuperscript{138}Agyekum, A History of Akwamu, 273.
\end{flushright}
illegal enslavement of men and women. The Akwamu rulers did not check this abuse and they also became guilty of it. For instance, King Akonnor employed his own people to raid and kidnap the neighbouring territories. His successor, Ansa Kwao also went further and sent people to enslave his own subjects and to kidnap people from the Akuapem Hills. It was against this background that in 1729, the Gas launched a war and joined forces with the Akuapems against the Akwamus, but the Ga people were however defeated by the Akwamus.\footnote{Agyekum, \textit{A History of Akwamu}, 273.} When the forces realised that they could not match the Akwamus, they looked elsewhere for assistance. The Akuapems sent a delegation to the chief of Akyem Abuakwa called Ofori Panin.\footnote{Agyekum, \textit{A History of Akwamu}, 273.} The Okyenhene then ordered his own relative Safori to go to their aid. Safori raised a large army to fight side by side with the Gas, Akuapem and the Fantis until July 1730 when the Akwamus were totally defeated. They were then evicted from Nyanoase and forced to seek refuge across River Volta.\footnote{Agyekum, \textit{A History of Akwamu}, 273.} A divisional chief called Bekai led the Abrade group across the Volta. On reaching the shore of the river, the people were led by a “Warthog”, popularly called “Kɔkɔte” by the Akwamus to cross the River Volta to their present day territory of Akwamufie.\footnote{Agyekum, \textit{A History of Akwamu}, 274.}

The defeat of the Akwamus by the Akuapems, the Ga and Akyems people saw the total take-over of all the Akwamu lands up to the Densu River. These lands were incorporated into the Akuapem and Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area. Up to the present day, there are social ties between Akwamus and the communities which were absorbed into Akyem Abuakwa. At every Odwira festival of the Akwamu, delegations from the old Akwamu state are expected to attend. Whenever a new chief is installed in the old
Akwamu town, the Akwanuhene is informed. The Akwamuhene is also the arbitrator in dispute among the ancient Akwamus. One would have noticed that through wars and settlements, the Akwamus have scattered all over Ghana such Kumasi, Kwahu, Aburi, Akropong, among others and now there are Akwamu chiefs in some of these traditional areas.

3.2.1. Traditional Administration and Religious Life of Akwamu people

Religion is one of the notable aspects of Akwamu culture which manifests in their everyday lives. This confirms Mircea Eliade’s assertion that while contemporary people believe that their world is entirely profane or secular, they still at time find themselves connected unconsciously to the memory of something sacred. This shows that the profane and the sacred lives of the people of Akwamu are inseparable. Prior to Akwamus’ encounter with the Western world in the latter part of the 19th century, their indigenous religion, which is now known as African Traditional Religion, was the only religion known to them. This faith has profoundly influenced their lives and thought.

Akwamu people believe in a host of spirit beings, with “Onyame” or “Onyankopon” being the Supreme Being, creator, controller and sustainer of the universe. They regard the Supreme Being as the one who brought the world into existence and in recognition of this, He is given attributes such as the creator or “ɔboadee” and owner of the world as “asaase wura” and He is believed to be active in the lives of mankind. In everyday speech, the name of God is mentioned. For example, among the Akwamus,

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143 Agyekum, A History of Akwamu, 274.
146 Nana Samanhyia, interview, January 2017.
what one frequently hears is “Onyame ma ade pa kye me a”, thus “if God grants me a good day”; “obi nkyere akwadaw yame”, meaning “nobody need show God to a child”. These sayings show clearly that the Akwamus consider the knowledge of God to be an innate quality of man. Also, the knowledge of God by the Akwamus like the Akans is portrayed in traditional songs and verses frequently heard on drums to praise His name.

One of such verses as Peter Sarpong puts it is as follows:

From time immemorial  
The dependable God bids us all.  
Abide by His injunctions  
Then shall we get whatever we want  
Be it white or red  
It is the God Creator, the Gracious one  
Good morning to you, God, Good morning  
I am learning, let me succeed.\(^{147}\)

It may therefore be pointed out that among the Akans in general and the Akwamus in particular, the knowledge of God is revealed through poetry, designs, drum languages, among others. It is for this reason which makes Peter Sarpong conclude that “in fact, it will require only very casual observation of the Akan people to discover their deep and continual awareness of the presence of God among them”\(^{148}\)

The Akwamus also believe in deities called “abosom” as personified spirits. They have family gods and community gods that they make prayers to for protection and prosperity. The “abosom” are believed to be the children of God. They are believed to inhabit images, rocks, mountains, caves, trees, rivers, and other natural objects and this belief makes the people treat such natural objects with a form of reverential respect. In Akwamu traditional society, there is a deity called “ɔbosom Ayesu” and a totemic animal


called “Kɔ∂ɔte”. These spirit beings are said to have protected the Akwamus in various ways. The latter for instance is said to have led the Akwamus to cross the River Volta from Nyanoase to Akwamufie, being their present settlement. The former on the other hand is responsible for combating any negative influence of witches on individuals or on the entire Akwamu community. The gods abhor actions which upset the harmony of the community or ruin family life and are believed to administer punishment to those who infringe upon the moral code. The Akwamus therefore comply with all taboos which are associated with these spirit beings to avoid being punished.  

The Akwamus have a very special place for the ancestral spirits and as such, the ancestors occupy a very unique position in their lives. Ancestral spirits are the spirits of the dead who have departed from the land of the living and are believed to be in the land of the dead known in Akan as “asamando”. As Parrinder puts it, the Akwamus believe that the departed are not so far away and are believed to be watching over their families like a cloud of witnesses.  

There are certain qualities that one must assume while alive before qualified to be called an ancestor after his death. The person must have led a life worthy of emulation, died a natural death at a good ripe age and must have been given a proper burial and funeral rites. According to Nana Samanyia, the Akwamus believe that through the ancestors, they are able to communicate with God and through that they petition on peoples’ behalf when they do something wrong against the Supreme Being through libation. Nana Samanyia concludes that people are of the view that the Akwamus worship the ancestors and in his reaction, ancestors are rather respected.

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149 Nana Samanyia, interview, 10th December, 2016.
151 Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 34.
152 Nana Samanyia, interview, 10th December, 2016.
because of the exemplary lives they led on earth.\textsuperscript{153} The respondent’s claim is echoed by Peter Sarpong who concludes that “As I do not believe that ancestors are worshipped, I prefer the term ancestor veneration”.\textsuperscript{154} Among the Akwamus, they believe that the ancestor has a continual existence and may possess the ability to influence the fortune of the living. The ancestors always watch the behaviour of family members and they punish those who are evil with diseases and reward those who are good. It is for this reason that the people of Akwamu live life worthy of emulation.\textsuperscript{155}

The Akwamu people use the chieftaincy system of governance, and chiefs are selected through maternal lineage. According to a respondent, a chief in Akwamu is usually considered as the first citizen of the village, town or state. He is viewed as the source of all traditional authority, because he is regarded as representing the founding fathers of the state.\textsuperscript{156} This makes the office of the chief a sacred one, as he is regarded as the earthly representative of the ancestors. According to the respondent, the institution of a chief is normally preceded by divination and other rituals such as the offering of prayers and sacrifices which are meant to help the kingmakers in selecting a candidate that is acceptable to the people and the ancestors. Hence, the chief is accorded the greatest respect and obedience in traditional society. As in other Akan traditional societies, a chief in Akwamu has a council that assists him in the day-to-day administration of the area. The highest traditional authority is vested in the “\textit{Nyamhene}” or the Paramount Chief who is the supreme ruler of the traditional area. He is followed by the “\textit{Ghemaa}” (queen-mother), then the “Asafohene” (wing or divisional chiefs) who are

\textsuperscript{153} Nana Samanyia, interview, 10\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{154} Sarpong, \textit{Ghana in retrospect}, 33.
\textsuperscript{155} Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{156} Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
followed by the “Adikro” (town or village chiefs). The next in line are the clan or lineage heads with the household heads occupying the bottom space in the hierarchy.\textsuperscript{157}

The chief is the political, social, economic, legal and military head of Akwamu traditional state. As a political head, he is responsible for the maintenance of good order in his state. He is the guardian of the fundamental values of his people and mediated between them and the spiritual forces. He administers court fines, market tolls, and other revenues. He is also the final arbiter in the administration of justice in Akwamu society.\textsuperscript{158}

The chief also administers stool lands, holding them in trust for the people and arranges the celebration of traditional festivals. He is also the custodian of traditional beliefs and customs, passed on from one generation to another. The traditional authority also has court which adjudicates on matters relating to stool lands, lineage and family lands, chieftaincy title disputes, violations of traditions and disputes between localities, lineages.\textsuperscript{159}

3.2.2. Socio-Economic Life of the Akwamu People

Majority of the people in Akwamu traditional area are engaged in agriculture and related trades. There are three prominent types of agricultural activities in the area. These are livestock rearing, food cropping and cash cropping. However, most of the farming activities in the district are focused on the production of food crops. The major food crops produced are maize, cassava, plantain, yam and vegetable. Most of the farmers engaged in crop farming are also involved in livestock rearing. The main farming areas are

\textsuperscript{157}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{158}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{159}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
Mpakadan, Gyakiti, Ankyease and Survey Line. There are large tracks of land for commercial farming and other agro business in these areas. Currently, Bio Exotica Company produces pineapple on large scale in the area. Fishing in the Volta Lake also constitutes an important segment of the agriculture sector. Fishing is also done mainly in some communities. These communities include Dzidzokope, Atimpoku, Abume, Akosombo, Survey Line, Adomi, Mpakadan and Senchi.\textsuperscript{160}

Volta River Authority and Akosombo Textiles form the major industries employing a major proportion of the population. Major hotels and tourist sites such as Volta Hotel, Benkum Motel, NP Plaza, Senchi Royal Hotel, Akosombo Continental Hotel, Afrikiko River Front and Sajuna Beach Park also contribute to the economy by attracting tourist from all parts of the world. Atimpoku is a major commercial center due to its central location where communities in parts of Volta and Eastern meet to trade. The “Abollo” and “One Mouth Thousand” are common commodities coupled with other small to medium size commercial entities. The brisk business activities at Atimpoku, a suburb of Akwamu is as a result of the presence of the Adomi Bridge. For instance, vehicles which cross the bridge stop before and after the bridge as petty traders mostly young and elderly ladies outclass one another to reach vehicles to either sell “abollo”, “one mouth thousand”, shrimps, iced water or bread, while electronic stores and drinking bars are alive with music to attract potential customers.\textsuperscript{161}

The Akwamu community is made up of the “Abrade” or the “Aduana” clan system and bound together by totems and taboos. They place very high premium on communal life. Their obligations to family and the wider community supersede personal

\textsuperscript{160}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{161}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
needs. Major decisions are made communally. Individualism is despised. With regard to human’s relation to society, they notice that membership of a community is emphasized more than individuality.\textsuperscript{162} This is reiterated by Mbiti who points out that to be human is to belong to the whole community and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festival of that community.\textsuperscript{163}

The Akwamus’ calendar year is divided into nine cycles of forty days called “Adae”. The “Adae” is observed as a special day of worship. It is a special day when the chief and his elders visit the sacred stools. These sacred stools contain the spirits of the departed chiefs who are part of the ancestors. They blacken the stools with stain and eggs’ yolk to make them last long. According to one of the respondents, only chiefs who do well in office are honoured with stool when he dies.\textsuperscript{164} The Akwamus observe two types of Adae called “Akwasidae” and “Awukudae”.

The main rites in the Adae festival are observed in the stool house. According to a respondent, on Adae days, items such as water, food, meat are taken to the stool house. Prayer is offered to request the ancestors to help them in diverse ways including prosperity.\textsuperscript{165} The day before the Adae is called “Dapaa” and children born on the dapaa days are “Dapaa”. The Saturday that comes before the Sunday adae is called “Memeneda Dapaa”. Also, the Tuesday preceding the Wednesday adae is called “Benada Dapaa”. According to the Akwamus, children born on the “dapaa” days are called “Dapaa” just as those born on “Adae” days are called “Adae”. The “Dapaa” is the day of preparation for

\textsuperscript{162}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{164}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{165}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
On the Dapaa day, all the items required for the celebration of the Adae are made ready. Again, on Dapaa day, no one is supposed to work or travel because, it is meant for tidying the surroundings.

On the “Adae” day, the chief drummer known as “Ɔdomankoma kyerema” wakes up early in the morning and drums to call the chief and his elders to the stool’s abode where libation is poured by the stool attendant to invite the spirits to prepare for the feast.

While placing the food on the stools, the chief remarks as follows:

_Nananom nsamanfo,  
ÈnnÈ yè Adae;  
Mompra mmédidi  
Na momma yie mmra yenso;  
Momma yènwo nǹre;  
Momma yen apomden;  
Momma ophage apomden; na ɔnsae ɔman no.  
Momına mmusu mma ɔman no so; na nea ɔmpɔman no yie no, mongya ne kwan._

This is translated below:

_Spirits of my grandsires,  
Today is Adae;  
Come and receive this food  
And visit us with prosperity;  
Permit the bearers of children to bear children;  
Grant health to your servant;  
Grant health to the Queen Mother; Grant health to the Nation.  
Let no evil come upon the town; To him who wishes evil  
Let evil fall upon himself._

After the ritual, the chief moves to the courtyard to receive homage from his subchiefs and all his subjects. The public is entertained with traditional, contemporary and gospel songs throughout to the evening to bring the celebration to an end. This shows that contemporary and gospel songs are new dimensions to the celebration of festival among the people of Akwamu.

166 Nana Samanyia, interview, 16th December, 2016.  
167 Nana Samanyia, interview, 16th December, 2016.
The people of Akwamu celebrate “Odwira” festival every year which falls on the ninth “Adae”.\(^\text{168}\) This means that the ninth Adae is celebrated as “Odwira” festival. This festival has a three-fold significance. First, it is a period of remembrance thus a time when the people are reminded of the warrior kings who helped to find their present state, Akwamu State. It is also a time when the chiefs and their people bring sacrifices to their gods as thanksgiving for the mercies of the past and to ask for protection for the future. Above all, it is a time when people come together to renew their family and social ties.\(^\text{169}\) The celebrations last a whole week, beginning on the evening of Friday. The Saturday following the Friday is called the “Odwirahuruda” or the day that brings in the Odwira. It is a day of mourning and fasting to commemorate their dead relatives. The Omanhene goes first to his father's house and then to his mother's to pour libation to his departed relatives. All the Clan Heads do likewise. After that the Omanhene, his sub-chiefs, captains and state executioners form a funeral procession and parade through the streets to a sacred place called “abosompow”, or the dwelling place of the gods, where the Omanhene pours libation in honour of chiefs and important people killed in ancient battles.\(^\text{170}\)

On Sunday, a lot of rituals are performed. For instance, the warriors of Akwamu meet in battle display to present arms to their captain. This military parade starts early in the morning. At one o'clock in the afternoon, the “Akrahene” or “the chief of the soul-washers” who is responsible for the cleansing of the soul of the chief leads a band to the

\(^{168}\)Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\(^{th}\) December, 2016.  
\(^{169}\)Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\(^{th}\) December, 2016.  
\(^{170}\)Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\(^{th}\) December, 2016.
Volta River and fills covered brass pan with water from the river. This water is used by the Omanhene to cleanse his subjects.\textsuperscript{171}

When all rituals have been performed, the chief now mounts his palanquin and rides to one end of the town amidst the boisterous noise of drums, horns, musket firing, singing and shouting. From the end of the town, the procession returns to the durbar grounds. Bands of women dressed in white move from one end of the grounds to the other, singing and dancing and once in a while they run to the Omanhene to fan him with their stoles and sheepskins to demonstrate their affection and loyalty. The grand durbar brings together all chiefs to pay homage to the Omanhene or the paramount chief. During this period, all sub chiefs and the people renew their allegiance and loyalty to the paramount chief by paying homage to the palace. The paramount chief, the sub-chiefs and the elders also use the occasion to discuss political issues affecting the welfare of the community. The “\textcopyright Omanhene” renews his oath of office and pledges his service and protection to the state and all those who hold him as their ruler.\textsuperscript{172}

3.3 Taboos among the Traditional Akwamu People

This part analyses observation of taboos among the traditional Akwamu people. In order to answer one of the research questions which seeks to identify the various taboos observed in Akwamu traditional society and the philosophical explanations underpinning the practice of these taboos, this part specifically analyses taboos which are associated with chieftaincy, totems and deity in Akwamu traditional society. It also analyses taboos associated with sacred grove, dogs, “taboo days” and suicide. Also, the rationale or the philosophical explanations which underpin the practice of the taboos

\textsuperscript{171}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
\textsuperscript{172}Nana Samanyia, interview, 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 2016.
under study are discussed in this chapter. Again, how the above mentioned taboos influence the lives of the people and sanctions imposed on offenders who violate taboos are discussed in this chapter. Chiefs, queen mothers, family heads and non-traditionalists were interviewed to express their views on taboos under study and to ascertain their opinion on the rationale behind the above mentioned taboos. The intention here is to find out from the respondents, their worldview of taboos and how taboos affect the daily lives of the people of Akwamu traditional area.

3.3.1 Chieftaincy taboos in Akwamu Traditional Society

This section sought to present respondents’ views on the various taboos which are associated with chieftaincy in Akwamu traditional society. Thus the respondents were asked to identify the various chieftaincy taboos that they observe or practise in Akwamu traditional society. They were also asked to explain the rationale or the philosophical explanation of chieftaincy taboos in Akwamu traditional society. Again, the respondents were made to share their views on how chieftaincy taboos influence the ethical lives of the people and appropriate sanctions meted out against those who violate chieftaincy taboos. In all, two chiefs were each selected from Akwamufie, Senchi and Atimpoku for an in-depth interview on the subject matter mentioned above. The choice of the chiefs was based on the conviction that they have in-depth knowledge in chieftaincy issues in Akwamu traditional society. Below is the table of responses.
Table 1: Chieftaincy Taboos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of chieftaincy taboos</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is a taboo for a chief to breach an oath sworn.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A chief is forbidden to eat food prepared by a woman in her menstrual period.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A chief is forbidden to set eyes on dead body.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is a taboo to say that the “chief is dead”.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is a taboo to eat fresh yam before ritual is performed to the gods.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. It is a taboo to mention the bare name of the chief.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1 above presents the analysis of responses obtained from 6 sub-chiefs who were asked to identify taboos associated with chieftaincy in Akwamu traditional society. From the table, 1 respondent indicated that it is a taboo for a chief to breach an oath sworn, 2 respondents said that a chief is forbidden to eat food prepared by a woman in her menstrual period, whilst all the 6 respondents agreed that a chief is forbidden to set eyes on dead body. Also, 2 respondents answered that it is a taboo to say that the “chief is dead”. With taboos related to dietary and conduct, 2 respondents answered saying that it is a taboo for a chief to eat fresh yam before ritual is performed to the gods and it is also a taboo to mention the bare name of the chief respectively. The analysis above shows that each respondent at least has an idea about chieftaincy taboos in Akwamu Traditional society.

The rational underpinning chieftaincy taboos are oath swearing and the ancestral and divine witnesses that are associated to it.\textsuperscript{173} The respondent further explained that the

\textsuperscript{173}Nana Bamforo, interview, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2017.
The essence of oath swearing is to provide political direction by the chief towards his subjects. When a chief is installed into office, he takes an oath before the elders and his subjects promising to abide by the moral and religious injunctions attached to the stool which he has willingly accepted to occupy.\(^{174}\) For instance, the respondent indicated that when he became a chief at Senchi, he swore an oath to defend his people in times of war and also he declared his preparedness to die for his people in a battle rather than to run away from his enemy. He further explained that whiles oath swearing is a contract between the chief and his subjects, it serves as a reference point for destoolment should there be any breach of oath taken.\(^{175}\)

On his take on how oath swearing influences the lives of the people of Akwamu, he said that oath swearing serves as a guide to the chief to do the right thing, because he has sworn that he will defend his people in any difficult situation they find themselves. He also said that oath swearing brings unity among members in the community because the chief is always ready to defend his people and this promotes the welfare of the people. He went further to say that those who obey taboo rules are blessed by the ancestors. On the question of sanctions imposed on a chief when he violates an oath, the respondent said that when a chief violates an oath of allegiance that he sworn to the elders and his subjects he is destooled by the kingmakers.\(^{176}\) This practice is buttressed by Busia that oath swearing is a seal of approval of a chief and any misuse of the oath is the transgression of an ethnic taboo.\(^{177}\)

\(^{174}\)Nana Bamforo, interview, 26\(^{th}\) January, 2017.
\(^{175}\)Nana Bamforo, interview, 26\(^{th}\) January, 2017.
\(^{176}\)Nana Bamforo, interview, 26\(^{th}\) January, 2017.
\(^{177}\)Busia, *the position of the chief*, 25.
In connection with a chief forbidden to eat food prepared by a woman in her menstrual period, there were diverse opinions among the two respondents as far as the rationale behind it is concerned. For instance, one respondent said that blood connotes uncleanliness and so the woman is not supposed to get near the chief, lest she defiles the sacredness of his stool.\(^\text{178}\) He explained that blood is dangerous; therefore it reduces the powers of the chief. He cited Leviticus chapter 15:19-20 to buttress his point.\(^\text{179}\) He said that when a woman is in her menstrual period, she becomes ceremonially unclean and anyone who touches her during that time will be unclean.\(^\text{180}\)

However, the other respondent who had a contrary view in relation to chieftaincy taboo in connection with menstruation said that for him, he had no problem with a woman in her menstrual period and he does not see anything wrong with eating food prepared by a woman in her menstrual period especially his wife.\(^\text{181}\) He explained that he being a Christian, the Old Testament ceremonial law which forbids uncleanliness has been replaced by Jesus’ blood sacrifice for paying for the sins of humanity once and for all. For this reason, he does not see anything wrong with eating his wife’s food when she is in her menstrual period.\(^\text{182}\) This seems to suggest that some Christian chiefs do not take traditional values seriously as a result of their Christian values. His assertion corroborates with Assimeng’s statement that tradition appears to have been overlooked in this contemporary times because of Christian faith.\(^\text{183}\)

\(^{178}\)Nana Budu, interview, 27\(^{\text{th}}\) January, 2017.

\(^{179}\)“When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean.”(Lev. 15:19-20)

\(^{180}\)Nana Budu, interview, 27\(^{\text{th}}\) January, 2017.

\(^{181}\)Nana Asafo Agyei, interview, 27\(^{\text{th}}\) January, 2017.

\(^{182}\)Nana Okrukata, interview, 26\(^{\text{th}}\) January, 2017.

\(^{183}\)Assimeng, Women in Ghana, 58.
On the rationale explaining why a chief is forbidden to set eyes on dead body, all the respondents had the same idea with different explanations. For instance, 2 of the respondents explained that the dead does not have life therefore it is unclean.\textsuperscript{184} Two other respondents explained that the chief is seen as a royal person therefore he should not deal with things considered unclean.\textsuperscript{185} The rest of the respondents also explained that seeing dead body would render the chief powerless.\textsuperscript{186}

One other chieftaincy taboo which the respondents explained the rationale behind it is a taboo which forbids one to say that “the king is dead”. According to one respondent, when a chief dies, you can say that “\textbf{\textit{\textsc{\textgreek{h}ene k\textsc{\textgreek{n}akura}}}}”, which means the king has gone to his village.\textsuperscript{187} Another respondent also said that when a king dies, you can say that “\textbf{\textit{\textgreek{odup\textsc{\textgreek{n}atutu}}}}”, which also means a mighty tree has fallen.\textsuperscript{188} Concerning the philosophy or rationale behind the above taboo, the respondents gave different explanations. For instance, one of the respondents explained that the reasons why it is a taboo to say that the chief is dead is that the Akwamus regard their chief as mortal god who goes to rest with his ancestors after a job well done on earth. It is therefore very disrespectful to equate the king with a mere man who “dies” in the Akwamu traditional society.\textsuperscript{189} The other informant explained that the rationale for not saying the king is dead is that the king is in charge of the preservation of law, peace and order within his

\textsuperscript{184}Nana Bamforo and Nana Okrukata, interview, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2016.
\textsuperscript{185}Nana Gyensare and Nana Asafo Agyei, interview, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2016.
\textsuperscript{186}Nana Budu, and Nana Otuaben, interview, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2017.
\textsuperscript{187}Nana Gyensare, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2017.
\textsuperscript{188}Nana Budu, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2017
\textsuperscript{189}Nana Budu, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2017.
kingdom and therefore whenever the death of the king is announced, it will affect law and order in the community.\textsuperscript{190}

In an explanation to the rationale behind observance of this taboo associated with a chief forbidden to eat new yam before a ritual is performed, the respondent elucidated that in the olden days, yam was the only common food on Akwamu land and so people could harvest yam when it was not matured for consumption and it was found out that they were being attacked by diarrhoea when they ate the new yam. The chief gave his personal experience that when a new yam is ready for consumption; he travels to a place called “Suntwiri” which is a village community at Senchi to perform a purification ritual to the gods before he can eat the new yam.\textsuperscript{191} He explained further that unfortunately a tree has fallen on the god to destroy it and so he was preparing to put it in shape before he can perform the ritual. He said, in view of that for the past three months, he had never eaten yam. He also said that when the ritual in performed, it is believed that the god has eaten it and has blessed it for human consumption. When the researcher asked the chief if there is any sanction attached to this taboo, he said that if the chief eats the yam without following the instruction, he will develop a severe cough called “Nsamanwa” or “ghost coughs”. When the respondent was asked how the public gets to know when they can now eat the new yam, he answered that after the ritual has been performed, a small festival is celebrated at the palace where the new yam is cooked and after the chief has been served to eat the yam, everyone gathered there is served. This is done to officially inform the general public that they can now harvest the new yam for consumption. Failure to comply with this tradition will lead to severe famine in the

\textsuperscript{190}Nana Gyensare, 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 2017.
\textsuperscript{191}Nana Bamforo, interview, 27\textsuperscript{th} January, 2017.
community. The above analysis shows that among the Akwamus, the chief’s diet is governed by strict taboo rules and this supports Awedoba et al’s claim that the dignity which is associated with the chief is symbolised by particular prohibitions which include language, diet, demeanour and etiquette.

Also, why people are forbidden to mention the bare name of a chief in Akwamu traditional society was explained. In this explanation, one chief said that when a chief assumes office, a ritual is performed to transform him from his original status to another status which is considered as sacred. This is because he is named after a stool which has ancestral name. He said that after the installation of the chief, his former name has become a taboo which should not be mentioned. When the researcher asked why it is a taboo to mention the former name, the respondent explained that the philosophy behind this taboo is to prevent the chief from using the same name with other people in the community because of his status. He went further to say that if the chief’s bare name is mentioned, it will offend the ancestor whose name he bears. He again said that if the chief’s name is wrongly mentioned, it will attract serious punishment such as payment of fines in the form of schnapps, sheep and money. The finding from the encounter with the chief is in line with a study conducted by Kofi Agyekum that when a person is installed as a chief, his name has been transformed to a status which is spiritually higher and that places him humanly higher than his subjects.

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193 Awedoba, Gundoona, Nachinaba, Abobo, Anyiam and Alongya, “Traditional leadership, rites and ceremonies in the Upper Regions of Ghana”, 7
194 Nana Otuaben, interview, 26th January, 2017.
196 Agyekum, Akan verbal taboo, 152.
3.3.2 Totemic taboos in Akwamu Traditional Society

The content of this section is derived from an exclusive interview conducted in Akwamufie with Nana Samanhyia, Gyasewahene of Akwamu traditional area and the chief of staff for Akwamu paramountcy. He has an in-depth knowledge about the history of the warthog or the bush-pig and the taboo associated with it. The interview was intended to solicit his view on why the warthog became a totem for the Akwamus and why the Akwamus observe the taboo associated with the warthog.

Giving the reason why the Akwamus are forbidden to eat bush-pig, it was explained by the respondent that in 1732, a great war occurred at Nyanoase between the Akwamus and the Akuapems, Guans, Gas and the Akyems. The Akuapems and their allies thought that their freedom had been curtailed by the Akwamus, therefore all those tribes rose against the Akwamus. He said that one thing about the Akwamus was that they always took along their stool and gods along whenever they were at war with their enemies. Nana Samanhyia explained that during the war between the Akwamus and the Akuapems, they run away to Akwamufie and were pursued by their enemies until they got to a spot between the present day Senchi and Atimpoku on the West bank of the River Volta with their stool and the gods. When they got to the bank of the River Volta, one of the gods was believed to have changed into a bush-pig which is called by the Akwamus as “kɔkɔte” and created a safe way for the Akwamus to cross over the River Volta. He explained again that, when the bush pig crossed over the River Volta, it went to settle at a spot and that spot became the present day “Akwamufie”.197 The informant explained that because the bush-pig saved the Akwamus from their enemies to cross the

River Volta, the bush-pig became their protector as well as their saviour, therefore they were forbidden to eat it.

The researcher found out from the respondent whether the taboo associated with the bush-pig is limited to everyone who lives in Akwamu traditional society or to specific people. The respondent explained that the taboo is limited to only the royal family of Akwamus, but non-royals can eat bush-pig, except that one can prepare and eat it in the bush far away from the community. He said that one condition which is attached to those who eat the bush-pig is that, they are not allowed to get close to the paramount chief’s stool as well as the shrine at Akwamu. In his explanation to why members of the royal family are forbidden to eat the bush pig, he alluded to the fact that they are responsible for all rituals connected to the paramount stool and the shrine, therefore if they eat the bush pig, they will pollute themselves and this will further pollute the spirits of the stool and the shrine. Also, all non-royal members of Akwamu are permitted to eat the bush pig and if they eat it, they are forbidden to perform any ritual connected to the paramount stool and the shrine otherwise they will defile them.¹⁹⁸

On the question of sanctions associated with breaking taboo associated with the bush-pig, the respondent explained that if one is caught eating the bush pig, he or she will be made to offer seven sheep, seven schnapps and amount of money as a punishment. He said that the sheep and the schnapps are used to perform purification rituals to appease the gods and the ancestors of the shrine and the stool respectively. On the issue of those who break taboos associated with the bush-pig without being caught, the respondent said that those persons confess their sins to the chief’s linguist who intends send the offenders to “Nana mmratohene” who is responsible for those who violate taboos in the community.

to be punished according to tradition. Purification ritual is performed to appease the gods and the ancestors, otherwise the victim and the whole community will suffer from calamities such as famine and mysterious death. He also said that because the bush-pig protected the Akwamus from Nyanoase to their present settlement, there has been a close relationship between them and the bush-pig which is now their god who protects them. Therefore, as a sustainer of the community, there are certain behaviours that the god of the bush-pig prohibits. The respondent used his personal experience to explain dangers associated with breaking a taboo associated with the bush-pig. He said his daughter developed a severe measles when she unknowingly ate from a plate which had been used to serve bush-pig meat. She was taken to different hospitals, but the sickness did not go and the deity of the community was consulted and it was disclosed that she had eaten from a plate served with bush-pig meat. A purification ritual was performed before she was relieved.\footnote{Nana Samanhyia, interview, 5\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.} This finding agrees with Joseph Osei’s claim that failure to observe taboos associated with deities may result in mishaps such as ill-luck, disease and untimely death.\footnote{Osei, The value of Africa taboos, 42.}

According to the respondent, it is believed by the Akwamus that the bush-pig is regarded as a companion and a helper with supernatural powers and must be accorded much respect. They believe that to kill a bush-pig is tantamount to killing a human being. The respondent explained that killing a bush pig is considered as a murder and whoever violates that custom is visited with a disaster. This finding also supports an assertion by
Streiger that totems have strong psychological effects on an individual and for that matter anyone who breaks the taboos can contract mental or physical illnesses.\textsuperscript{201}

In a related interview with one family head in Akwamufie, it was realised that people often get drown in the River Volta as a result of violating totemic taboos. He said that the bush pig has a link with the spirit of the River Volta, therefore if one violates the taboos, he or she is punished by the spirit of the Volta. He said that a family member violated the taboo related to the bush-pig and his family members started getting drowned one after the other. The deity of Akwamu was consulted and it was realized that a member of the family had violated a taboo by bringing bush-pig meat to the community. The family was asked to provide seven sheep and seven schnapps for a purification ritual to pacify the gods. Immediately after the purification ritual, the family members were freed from the catastrophe.\textsuperscript{202}

From the above discussions, one realizes that unlike other totems which are meant for health and biodiversity purposes in other traditional societies such as Nkodurom in Ashanti region of Ghana, the totemic taboo in Akwamu traditional society is purely for religious purpose because their observations is to revere the gods for saving their lives from their enemies in times of crisis. This finding supports Gyamfi Adu’s assertion that taboos are used for different purposes.\textsuperscript{203}

\textbf{3.3.3 Deity Taboos in Akwamu Traditional Society}

One important deity which continues to receive cultic attention in the Akwamu Traditional Area is “Gbosom Ayensu”. This section is intended to solicit the respondent’s

\textsuperscript{201}B. Steiger, Totems: The transformative power of your personal Animal Totem(New York: Haper Collons Publishers, 2008), 4.
\textsuperscript{202}Abusuapanyin Kwabena Awuah, Interview, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{203}Adu, Indigenous beliefs and practices, 145.
view on the said deity which is situated at Akwamufie, the traditional capital of Akwamu traditional area. This has to do with taboos which are associated with the deity, the rationale for the observation of the deity and finally the significant role of the deity. The information about the deity was gathered from one of the sub-chiefs of Akwamu traditional area called “Nana Samanhyia” who acts as the chief of staff for the Akwamu paramountcy. He granted the interview on behalf of the queenmother of Akwamu traditional area in the person of Nana Afrakoma II who is in charge of the deity.

According to the respondent, ‘ɔbosomAyensu” was deposited by the first chief who founded Akwamu traditional society when they migrated from Nyanoase to the present day Akwamufie in the person of Otumfo ɔAgyen Kɔkɔbo.204 He said that “ɔkɔmfo Anokye” once lived in Akwamu and when he was leaving for Kumasi, he prophesied that before the Akwamus could survive, two “Odum” trees had to germinate mysteriously in the town. He explained that it is for this reason that we find two “odum” trees grown directly in front of the deity which is traditionally called “ɔbosom Ayesu”. See figure 7 for the “Odum” trees on page 135.

According to the respondent, it is only members from the royal family who qualify to visit the deity for sacrificial duties. Again, he said that when the wall surrounding the deity is broken down, they are only ones who qualify to repair it and it has to take place deep in the night in their nakedness to show a sign of respect to the deity. He further explained that it is only members of the royal family who can eat the sheep used for the sacrifice to the deity. The reason given was that those who offer the

\[204\] Nana Samanhyia, interview, 6th February, 2017.
sacrifice at that time are considered sacred because the deity frowns upon something which is considered as unholy.\textsuperscript{205}

On the question of taboos associated with the deity, it was explained that it is a taboo to carry corpse in front of the deity. He explained that the deity hates anything which is not pure therefore it is a taboo for corpse to pass in front of the deity. Concerning the significance of the deity, the respondent enumerated several of them. One of them is that it protects the Akwamu community from their enemies; from spiritual attacks. It also protects the chief from any calamity. Another important role of the deity is that it represents the main source of rules regulating and directing the behaviour of individuals and the community towards the gods and ancestors. He reiterated that carrying corpse in front of the deity is an action which is traditionally unacceptable therefore breaking the taboo is physically and mystically disastrous to the society which can suffer calamities such as famine, drought and death as punishment from the gods. Consequently, ritual or sacrifice has to be made to appease the gods when such taboos are broken. Therefore to avert such calamity, the family that violated the taboo is summoned to the palace and is made to provide seven sheep and seven schnapps for purification ritual to appease the deity. He concluded by saying that the main reason for this purification ritual is to sanctify the sacredness of the deity and to ensure absolute respect for the deity in order to promote social order in Akwamu traditional society.\textsuperscript{206}

3.3.4 Ecological Taboos among the Akwamu people

This part analyses ecological taboos among the Akwamus. 3 respondents who have in-depth knowledge in these taboos were interviewed to seek their opinion about

\textsuperscript{205}Nana Samanhyia, interview, 6\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.

\textsuperscript{206}Nana Samanhyia, interview, 6\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
taboos associated with the sacred grove and dog in Akwamu traditional society. The respondents were also asked to give the rationale for the practice of taboos associated with the sacred grove and dog in Akwamu traditional society. Table two below shows types of ecological taboos practiced among the Akwamus.

Table 2: Ecological Taboos in Akwamu Traditional society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological Taboos</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is a taboo for non-royal of Akwamu to enter the sacred grove.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is a taboo to shoot gun in the sacred grove.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is a taboo to harvest snail and other animals in the sacred grove.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is a taboo to kill or rear dog in Akwamu traditional area.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview with sub-chiefs and a family head in Akwamu traditional society, 2016.

Table 2 presents ecological taboos practised among the Akwamus. From the analysis, 1 respondent said that it is a taboo for non-royal of Akwamu to enter the sacred grove. Concerning a taboo not to shoot gun and harvest snails and other animals in the sacred grove, 1 respondent each answered these taboos. However, 2 respondents said that it is a taboo to kill or rear dog in Akwamu traditional area.

Concerning the philosophical explanation underpinning the practice of taboos associated with the sacred grove, the respondent said that the sacred grove which is located in Akwamu traditional society is known as “abosom mpɔ”, meaning the dwelling place of the gods. The sacred grove is located near the Volta River and is about 100 metres away from Akwamufie. It comprises objects such as trees, stones and a small
water body whose source is the Volta River. According to the respondent, the grove used
to be a burial ground of traditional rulers of Akwamu. It is strictly protected by taboos for
religious purposes. According to the respondent, the sacred grove of Akwamu is a place
where the paramount chief and other sub-chiefs perform all rituals during Adae and
Odwira festivals. It is also a place where all Akwamu spirits and powers live. These
spirits move the breath and length across the communities to protect the people. As a
result of belief of the protection of the spirits, the people of Akwamufie do not have
police station since they believe that the spirits ensure law and order. He said that when
any enemy tries to enter Akwamu with bad intention, the gods in the sacred grove will
disclose it to the traditional leaders through the chief priest.

The respondent recounted that there was a conflict between the Akwamus and the
Ewes over a piece of land and the Ewes decided to flock Akwamu with their weapons but
they were not able to enter Akwamu community because a big tree from the sacred grove
mysteriously fell to block the road to prevent the Ewes’ entry into the town. When the
Ewes returned, the tree moved back to its original position. This shows that the spirits
which live in the sacred grove are in the position to protect the people against their
enemies. According to him, the Akwamus believe that the fear of repercussions including
barrenness and even death plays a role in the continued preservation of the sacred grove
in Akwamu traditional society. Therefore it is expected that everybody accords the
grove maximum respect through the taboos associated with it. Also, apart from the
paramount chief, sub chiefs and executioners also qualify to enter the sacred grove for
ritual purposes. He said that if one violates any of the taboos associated with the grove,

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207 Nana Samanhyia, interview, 6th February, 2017.
he or she faces serious punishment from the gods and in such cases, sacrifices and performing certain rituals are needed to avert any ill-health and death of the offender. He noted for example that if one enters the grove, he is instantly killed by the executioners. Also, if one attempts to harvest the snails, the person will get missing for three days in the grove. He said that the mysterious aspect of it is that the person would be seen carrying the snails by the roadside but he or she cannot see anybody passing by the road. According to the respondent, the snails are edible but permission has to be granted from the palace before one can harvest them. He noted that the sacred grove is holy and sacred where the royals bring sacrifices to the gods, therefore the place is protected from misuse by unauthorized individuals. 209

In terms of significant role of the sacred grove, the respondent explained that it is purely religious because the place is regarded as the abode of the gods who protect the people of Akwamu. The respondent noted that unlike other sacred groves in Ghana such as Tano sacred grove in Kumasi which play conservationist role by protecting water bodies and also for medicinal purposes, the sacred grove at Akwamu is particularly meant to protect the gods who are believed to protect the inhabitants against their enemies. 210 The religious dimension which the Akwamus attach to sacred grove is in line with Adarkwa Dadzie’s assertion that sacred grove is fully protected by local religious beliefs. 211 The findings further corroborate with Awuah-Nyamekye’s statement that sacred groves are indigenous reserves that have been strictly protected in many centuries

ago due to their religious and cultural significance.\textsuperscript{212} Also, the discussion reveals that any non-royal person who enters the sacred grove will be killed supports a study conducted by Rattray that one’s failure to adhere to taboos associated with sacred groves leads to ill-luck and sometimes death.\textsuperscript{213}

With regard to taboos associated with dog in Akwamu traditional, another respondent was interviewed to express his opinion. According to him, the Akwamus belong to the “Aduana” or “Abrade” clan therefore their totem is a dog. According to oral tradition, the Aduana had a dog which went out to search for food and on seeing fire, the dog thought it was food and doing so got its mouth seriously burnt. When the owner saw it coming with the fire, he said, “m’atwea, woabra me adee”, meaning, “my dog, you have brought me something worthy”. This gave birth to the name of the Aduana people “Aduana Atwea Abrade”. The totem or the symbol of Aduana is the “dog and fire”.\textsuperscript{214} The symbolic qualities of the dog are honesty, industriousness, humility and friendliness. The “Aduana” people believe that at the time of creation, their ancestors descended from the sky on a golden stool with a dog placed on it. It is for this reason that the official emblem of Akwamu State is a dog placed on a golden stool.\textsuperscript{215} See appendix 3 on page 137 of the emblem of Akwamu State.

Among the Akwamus, not only is the killing of dogs a taboo, but rearing them is also a taboo.\textsuperscript{216} The respondent explained that the reason why a dog is not supposed to be

\textsuperscript{213}R.S. Rattray, \textit{Religion and Art in Ashanti} (London: Oxford University press, 1959)
\textsuperscript{214}Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 4th February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{215}Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 4th February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{216}Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 4th February, 2017.
killed or reared is that the dog serves as identity which binds the Akwamus together.\textsuperscript{217}

This supports a study conducted by Alun that killing a totemic animal is a taboo because people who believe themselves to be of one blood and descendants of common ancestors are bound together by common faith.\textsuperscript{218} On the question of why are dogs not reared in Akwamu traditional society, the respondent said that people will be tempted to kill when it offends them. He said that sometimes a dog can bring dirty things from the bush to the house and this may cause one to kill it. Therefore in order not to break the bond between them and the dog, they decided not to rear it.\textsuperscript{219}

The respondent gave another account of why a dog is not reared in Akwamu traditional society. He said that dogs were being reared at Akwamu some years ago, because when he was at age 14, he saw dogs all over the places. He said that this practice was put to a stop because it was realized that dogs were bringing bones of bush-pig into the community and it was very difficult to identify owners of such dogs to be punished for breaking a taboo. It was therefore expedient on the part of the traditional leaders to ban rearing of dogs in Akwamu in order not to attract the bones of bush-pig into the community to defile the stool. This shows that when taboos exist, there are provisions usually made for community to safeguard its prohibitions and demands and efforts are made to control the easy flouting of taboos.\textsuperscript{220}

Another respondent who had a contradictory view about taboos related to dogs said that when he became a chief, he was told that it was a taboo to rear dogs in the community because dogs were not to get closer to the shrine in the community. The

\textsuperscript{217}Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{218}Alun, \textit{the sacred of the totem}, 117.
\textsuperscript{219}Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{220}Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
rationale was to prevent the dogs from picking bones and meat which had been used as sacrifice to the gods to dirty the community.\textsuperscript{221} He however said that having noticed the security role being played by dogs in general, he did not ban rearing of dogs in the community but he rather encouraged an erection of a big wall around the shrine so that dogs would not get access to the place. He said that the initiative has helped to curb theft cases in the community.\textsuperscript{222} This finding however contradicts Andemariam’s claim that breaking of a taboo endangers life and seen as wrong because it interrupts peace and harmony.\textsuperscript{223}

### 3.3.5. “Taboo days” in Akwamu Traditional Society

This section analyses “taboo days” among the people of Akwamu. This looks at the forms of taboos associated with “taboo days” and also to examine the rationale behind the observance of these taboos. Table 3 below illustrates the responses.

#### Table 3: Taboo days in Akwamu traditional society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taboos related to Sacred days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is a taboo to travel during taboo days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is a taboo to visit the farm during taboo days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is a taboo to go on fishing during taboo days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is a taboo to organise funeral during taboo days.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview with Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, 2017

Table 3 identifies taboos related to sacred days observed in Akwamu traditional society. According to the respondent, during these days one is forbidden to travel, visit

\textsuperscript{221}Nana Budu, interview, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017

\textsuperscript{222}Nana Budu, interview, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017

\textsuperscript{223}Andemariam, “Place of taboos in Gikuyu morality”, 111.
the farm, fish and to organise funeral.\footnote{Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 10\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017} According to him, “taboo days” are called “nkyida or nnab\textsuperscript{one} by the Akwamus. He explained that “Nkyida” literally means “hateful day”.\footnote{Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 10\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.} Similarly, he said that taboo days are also called “nnab\textsuperscript{one} “which comes from the two Akan words, “da” (day) and “b\textsuperscript{one}”(bad). This means that the words “nkyida” and “nnab\textsuperscript{one}” are used interchangeably in Akwamu traditional area to denote “taboo days”. In his explanation, he said that “taboo days” or “nnab\textsuperscript{one}” are sacred days are intended for sacrifice to be offered to the ancestors and it is expected that no one works on that day in the community.\footnote{Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 10\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.} The respondent indicated further that even though the taboo days are sacred days for the ancestors, they are also hateful or bad days for people because of the repercussion or misfortune people go through when they violate the taboo rules. He noted that, there are countless number of misfortunes that befall on people who infringe upon the restrictions put in place during these taboo days. He gave a story about a man who never enjoyed a single rain on his farm for a whole year in the community because he visited the farm during these taboo days.\footnote{Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 10\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.}

As has been discussed in the previous chapter concerning Adae festival in Akwamu traditional area, Adae days are considered “nnab\textsuperscript{one}” or bad days. According to the respondent, Adae days are bad days because they are observed as special days for worship of the ancestors. It is for this reason that everyday living in the community must be part of the celebration to accord great respect to the ancestors for protecting them
throughout the year. During these taboo days, whoever violates the law would face serious misfortune such as death, accident or experiencing ghost.\textsuperscript{228}

In explaining the rational of these taboo days, the respondent said that the restrictions placed on farming, travelling and funeral during taboo days help to promote the sustainable use of natural environment by giving the land and other parts of the environment some rest in order to regenerate itself. He cited an instance where a ban on fishing on the Volta during Adae festival helps the fish which are believed to be the gods of the Volta to grow for more production. He also said that refraining from travelling and organizing funerals during taboo days are to encourage all the people in the community to attend the festivals. He explained that Akwamu traditional area is prominently a farming community and if injunction relating to taboo days is not put in place, people will not honour the traditional practices such as Adae festival. The respondent noted that because there are nine “Adaes” in the Akwamu calendar year, people get nine days rest within that period and this goes a long way to enhance their health. The respondent gave an account of an episode that led to a several deaths in the various communities of Akwamu traditional society some years ago. This misfortune compelled the traditional leaders do consult the state god called “Obosom Ayensu” at “Akwamufie” and it was revealed that farming activities throughout the week without any rest had accounted for the rampant death in the community. Traditional leaders as a result instituted the taboo days in order to curb the situation.\textsuperscript{229}

Based on the foregoing discussion, one argues that the traditional Akwamu people’s attitude towards taboo days is a positive approach not only to promote their

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{228} Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 10th February, 2017.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview 10\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
health, but also to conscientise them on the need to conserve their environment. This idea is in line with Awuah-Nyamekye’s assertion that with Akan societies, while all aspects of the universe are seen as God’s creation and must be protected, elements of creation that serve as courses of sustenance for life, such as trees, animals and rivers are given more attention.\textsuperscript{230}

3.3.6. Suicide taboos in Akwamu Traditional Society

In Akwamu traditional society for instance, death by suicide or self-inflicted death is literally inferred to as “ahokum” or “boapawuo”.\textsuperscript{231} Examples of suicidal deaths in Akwamu society are self-inflected death, gunshot, death from self-drowning, death from deliberate ingestion of substances never intended for human consumption, death from deliberate hanging and death from deliberately jumping from top of a building. It is believed among the Akwamus that when a person dies through suicide, the deceased may have done some wrong and that discovery of which would bring a disgrace to the person, therefore he or she would take his or her life to avert the humiliation. According to Nana Otuaben, the sayings which often go with suicide in Akan are, “fereene owuo de, fanyinam owuo”, meaning, “it is better to die than be dishonored”, and “animguase mfata okani ba”, meaning “disgrace does not befit the status of an Akan”. This suggests that one would want to end his or life to avoid being disgraced and this may be one of the causes of suicide.\textsuperscript{232} According to him, it is a taboo to give a befitting burial to a person who died through suicide. Thus, no time set aside for people to pay tribute to the deceased neither would there be a post-burial thanksgiving service for the deceased. There are no

\textsuperscript{230}Nyamekye, \textit{Managing the environmental crisis in Ghana}, 62.
\textsuperscript{231}Nana Otuaben, interview, 12 February, 2017
\textsuperscript{232}Nana Otuaben, interview, 12 February, 2017
singing of dirges, no drumming or dancing and no wake-keeping ceremony. Also, it is a taboo to send the deceased to the house if the person died through suicide. The reason being that the deceased is considered contaminated and therefore its long stay in the community could have adverse effect on the community. It is therefore quickly dispatched to the cemetery and quickly interred in a hurriedly-dug grave. The respondent explained that it is believed if a befitting burial is accorded the deceased person, similar suicide will occur in the family.\textsuperscript{233}

There is the belief among the Akwamus that unless propitiatory rituals are performed to ease the anger of the gods of the land, community members will inescapably suffer their wrath. To avert the anger of the gods, an offering of a prescribed number of sheep or fowls is sacrificed to appease the gods. Libation is also poured to call upon the gods to pardon the sin of the deceased and a request is made so that the spirits do not punish the living because of the suicide, rather the punishment falls squarely on the deceased himself. The respondent added that suicide is not a good thing because it brings shame onto the family and they would try to prolong its shame and agony by keeping the body around.\textsuperscript{234}

Concerning the consequences of violating mortuary rituals for people who die through suicide, the respondent narrated an event (8\textsuperscript{th} May, 2010) in which a large group youth armed with guns, knives and other weapons, stormed the chief’s palace at Atimpoku, a suburb of Akwamu traditional area, to accuse him and his elders of corruption and malfeasance in matters relating to traditional mortuary rites. According to the youth, perennial harvest from their farming activities had ceased over four years. In

\textsuperscript{233}Nana Otuaben, interview, 12 February, 2017
\textsuperscript{234}Nana Otuaben, interview, 12 February, 2017
addition, community members had suffered numerous calamity including accidents and untimely deaths. The youth attributed these misfortunes to the chief and his elders because they were alleged to have taken bribes from families whose relatives had died through suicides under the guise of consulting the ancestors of the land to obtain permission for the bereaved families to hold burial and funeral rites. The youth suspected that the woes of their community were as a result of a breach of tradition. The foregoing discussion makes one conclude that in Akwamu traditional society, suicide is regarded as an abomination against the living, the departed ancestors as well as the gods of the land.

3.4 Summary

Chapter three has discussed taboos among Akwamu people. This examined the history and taboo practice among Akwamu people. From the discussion, one observes that Akwamu people are uniquely structured as far as their tradition and culture is concerned. This can be seen for example in their socio-political way of life. Also, it is realized from the above analysis that the way the Akwamus engage their marriage institution is so unique that it promotes unity and cooperation among the family of the couple. Again, the analysis makes one understand and appreciate the unique role being played by the chieftaincy institution in Akwamu traditional society.

This suggests that in all facets of their lives, taboos play significant role. For example, in discussing the historical background of the people, it was discovered that the present settlement of the Akwamus is as a result of an effort of a warthog which led them to cross the Volta River, hence it is a taboo to eat that animal. Also, taboos play

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235 Nana Otuaben, interview, 12 February, 2017
significant role in the religious lives of the people. This is seen in their strong belief in lesser gods and ancestors. These spirit beings are believed to have protected them against evil influence and therefore they comply with taboos associated with them. Again, taboos play significant role in the traditional administrative system of the Akwamus. For instance, in the lives of the Akwamus, the chief holds the central position because he is the political head of the community. Even though he is not directly elected by the people, he has to respect the wishes of the people through oath he swears to be of good behaviour and as Kwame Gyekye puts it, “in the event of the chief’s failure to make his rule reflect the popular will, he can be defied or even disposed”.236

On the issue of the economic lives of the people, taboos play central role. All persons who engage in economic activities in Akwamu land obey taboo laws. Thus taboo days are strictly observed when no economic activity is permitted. It is also important to note that the social lives of the people of Akwamu which include festivals, inheritance and marriage are woven around taboos. In the case of marriage for instance, it is forbidden to have marriage between a man and his close relative. According to a respondent, the idea is to prevent genetic disorders suffered by children or parents with close genetic relationship and also to prevent marriage within the family so that one family can depend upon another family to create family relations.237 This assertion is in line with Peter Sarpong’s claim that “one marriage waves a web of social relations between hundreds of people”.238 This means that prohibition of marriage within the same family allows a husband to have contract relationships not only with his wife but also with all family members of his wife. The foregoing discussion points to the fact that the

237 Opanyin Kwabena Awuah, interview, 10th June, 2017.
238 Sarpong, Ghana in retrospect, 55.
socio-political lives of the Akwamus are anchored on taboos which manifest in their daily lives.

Similarly, this chapter has discussed the various taboos that are observed in Akwamu traditional society with a particular attention to the philosophical basis underpinning the practice of these taboos. Even though, the researcher paid key attention to chieftaincy, totemic and deity taboos as he indicated under the scope of study in chapter one, other taboos which he discovered from the respondents during his field study have also been discussed in this chapter. These include taboos associated with sacred grove, dogs, taboo days and suicide. Having explored the observation of taboos in this chapter, the next chapter examines the relevance of taboo practice in contemporary Akwamu traditional society.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE PLACE OF TABOOS IN CONTEMPORARY AKWAMU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analysed the place of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. The essence was to address one of the research questions which sought to examine the relevance of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. For this reason, key themes which were dealt with in this chapter were non-traditionalists’ views on taboos in Akwamu Traditional Society and how taboos influence contemporary moral life in Akwamu Traditional Society. Also, taboos such as chieftaincy, totem, deity, taboo days, suicide and sacred grove in contemporary Akwamu traditional society were analysed in this chapter. This was to find out taboos which have maintained, modified, toned down and those completely dropped out.

4.2 Non-traditionalists’ views on taboos in Akwamu Traditional Society.

This section sought the views of non-traditionalists on taboos in Akwamu traditional society. This was to find their level of awareness of the various taboos in Akwamu traditional society and as to whether they comply or otherwise with taboos in Akwamu community. The researcher also found out from the respondents how taboos influence their lives. Except the Muslims, majority of the Christians were indigenes of Akwamu traditional society. In all, 30 respondents made up of 15 Christians and 15 Muslims were interviewed. The respondents were asked whether they were aware of the various taboos in Akwamu traditional society. It was found out that all the 30 respondents indicated that they were aware of the various taboos in Akwamu traditional society. This
suggests that both Christians and Muslims are not only limited to their values but they are also aware of the traditional values in the community they find themselves.

On the question about whether the respondents comply with taboos in Akwamu traditional society, 26 of the respondents representing 87% made up 13 Christians and 13 Muslims said that they comply with taboos in Akwamu traditional society, whilst only 4 of them representing 13% made up of 2 Christians and 2 Muslims claimed that they do not comply with some taboo rules in Akwamu community with the reason that those rules infringe on their right. A Christian respondent had this to say, “I don’t comply with the taboo which forbids people for travelling on taboo days in Akwamu traditional area because it violates my right of movement.” However, a respondent among the Christians said that his reason for complying with taboo rules stems from what the Bible says in Mark 12:7 that “give unto Caesar’s what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” This suggests that as a Christian, you should obey rules which have been enacted by traditional leaders from where you live. The Muslim respondents who claimed that they comply with taboo rules gave their reason that Muslims are required to respect the dignity of mankind, regardless of religion, race, nationality or place of birth and that all mankind should be honored. A Christian respondent who declined complying with taboos said that, “every community has an owner whose rules must be respected, but those traditional laws which are in conflict with Christian doctrines will not be condoned. He said that he was not in support of purification rites which are performed to ease the anger of the ancestors when a taboo law is broken. To him, he does not see it useful, because according to the Bible in Hebrew 7:27, man has been once and for all reconciled with

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239 Saviour Wanya, YPG leader, interview, 18th February, 2017.
240 Sule Ibrahim, interview, 10th February, 2017.
241 Prince Osei, Presbyter, interview, 18th February, 2017.
God by the death of Christ. He suggested that taboo rules should be friendly to all persons.  

4.3. Taboos and moral Life in Akwamu Traditional Society

Discussing taboos and moral life in Akwamu Traditional society, all the 40 respondents admitted that taboos have positive impact on their lives. One Christian said that as for him due to the instant justice associated with taboos particularly associated with “taboo days” and sacred grove when one breaks the taboo rules, he has decided to comport himself to avoid being punished and this has straightened his life and that he has been able to live harmoniously with everybody in the community. A Muslim respondent also said that taboos associated with chieftaincy have taught him how to give maximum respect to rules which have been instituted by traditional leaders in the community.

All the 40 respondents admitted that taboos provide guidelines for moral behaviour in the society and so whether one is a Christian, a Muslim or a traditional religious practitioner, there is the expectation to conform to certain standards of behaviour in the society. To them if taboo rules are followed, it will go a long way to promote good interpersonal relationship among members in the society. It is for this reason that they comply with taboo rules which are associated with the deity called “ɔbosom Ayensu” in Akwamu traditional society.

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242 Saviour Wanya, YPG leader, interview, 18th February, 2017.
In relation to taboos associated with “taboo days” when one is not supposed to engage in any economic activity, a Christian respondent said that observing such taboos reinforces the communal values of solidarity, identity and unity among all the people. He cited an instance where during Adae festival, everybody, irrespective of his or her religious affiliation participates in the celebration and observes all the rules associated with the occasion.\textsuperscript{245} A Muslim respondent also said that he had benefited from observing taboo rules in Akwamu traditional society and improved his moral standards. He said that during taboo days when everybody is prohibited to go to farm or the River Volta to work, he sees people violating the rules, but he complies with the rules. He said that he had benefited a lot from complying with the rules because apart from the fact that he uses the day to rest in order to preserve his health, he is respected in the community as a law abiding citizen.\textsuperscript{246}

Another interesting finding noted from one of the respondents, who is a chief is that in Akwamu traditional society, members are encouraged to observe environmental ethics that helps them to regulate their interactions with their natural environment to the benefit of all members in the community. He cited example that, people in the community who have their houses close to the sacred grove at Akwamufie do not have their roofs ripped off during heavy storms, because the tall trees in the grove act as windbreaks to protect people’s houses.\textsuperscript{247} This finding shows that in many rural communities such as Akwamu traditional society, traditional belief systems such as taboos remain the prime factor for guiding people’s moral conduct towards the exploitation of natural resources. One traditional leader told the researcher that the ritual

\textsuperscript{245} Aboagye Koranteng, Choir leader of Presby church, Atimpoku, Interview, 7\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.

\textsuperscript{246} Kwku Sule, interview, 10\textsuperscript{th} February, 1027.

\textsuperscript{247} Nana Samanhyia, interview, 8\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
rites that one undergoes when a taboo is broken in Akwamu traditional community are so severe that every member in the community is obliged to make sure that these rules are observed. The respondent added that until recently, when a person violated taboo rules such as being caught for eating bush-pig or bringing a person dead through suicide into the community, he or she was made to pay a huge sum of money together with seven sheep and seven bottles of schnapps to perform propitiatory sacrifice to the gods. These measures make people live morally upright lives in the community.248

4.4 Taboos in Contemporary Akwamu Traditional Society

Notwithstanding the enormous contributions of taboos to the welfare of the people, others such as Ibagere have argued that taboos are seen to be less relevant in modern times as people begin to buy into Western values as a result of Christianity and Islam.249 It is observed for instance that formal education has contributed to the demise of indigenous belief in taboos and has admitted the young ones into a new world which lies outside the boundaries of indigenous communities and for that matter it tends to promote Western values at the expense of indigenous beliefs and values.250

In chapter three, it was discovered from some of the respondents that though they comply with traditional rules, those that are considered detrimental to their Christian or Islamic principles would not be entertained. This suggests that some of the taboos have to be reviewed in order to promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence in the community. In view of the above, this section focuses on taboo practices in contemporary Akwamu Traditional society. This includes chieftaincy taboos, Totemic taboos, Deity taboos,

248Nana Gyensare v, interview, 10th February, 2017.
250Opoku, “Indigenous Beliefs and Environmental Stewardship”, 79.
Taboo days, Suicide taboos and taboos associated with sacred groves. The purpose is to examine which among the taboos under study have been retained, amended or have been completely dropped out in Akwamu traditional society. Also, reasons behind why some taboos have been retained, amended or completely dropped out are discussed in this chapter.

4.4.1 Chieftaincy Taboos

This section sought to analyse the relevance of chieftaincy taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. The researcher sought to find out from the respondents which of the chieftaincy taboos have been maintained, modified or abolished as a result of this contemporary time and reasons for their justification.

On the issue of oath-swearing, all the 6 sub-chiefs and the 3 family heads alluded to the fact that oath-swearing has been maintained up to date and it is taken seriously among the people of Akwamu. This is because it is a means by which leaders subject themselves to spiritual, moral and social conditions. The respondents affirmed that the reason why oath-swearing is being maintained up till now is its potency to check traditional leaders to become responsible leaders who stand by their words. They said that even though most of the chiefs do not live in the traditional area as a result of their jobs in the urban centres, they visit their jurisdictions almost every week. Other chiefs have also delegated their powers to their sub-chiefs to represent them at their traditional areas in their absence. A respondent said that, “as for Nana Ansah Kwao IV, he is always present in this community every weekend to honour his traditional duties”.251 The respondent also indicated that other chiefs who have brought their office into disrepute have been

destooled. This suggests that oath-swearing is a contract between the chief and his elders which one needs to uphold.\footnote{Abusuapanyin Kwame Amo, interview, 20\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.}

With regard to chieftaincy taboo associated with menstruation, the 6 sub-chiefs had similar views in terms of their maintenance in this contemporary era. They admitted that menstruation taboo was put in place to protect the sanctity of their chiefs. The respondents said that the reason why a chief may engage many wives in the olden days was because if one of the wives menstruated, she would be relieved by another wife to cook for her husband. One respondent said that “in this modern times, many chiefs are Christians and therefore they do no longer observe these taboos strictly because of the idea of monogamy.”\footnote{Nana Bamforo, Nana Okrukata, Nana Obeng, interview, 21\textsuperscript{st} February, 2017.} One of the respondents said that many chiefs still have their wives who spend their menstrual periods in small shelter behind the palace, especially if the palace shrine observes a menstrual taboo. The respondent gave this explanation:

> “in the olden days, many chiefs secured war medicine to protect their communities and these medicines were buried in the palace and it was believed that these medicines would be rendered ineffective if menstruating women were allowed to live in the palace with their husbands, but now that Akwamus are no longer at war with any tribe, medicines are no longer buried at the palace therefore punishments which were formally levelled against women who were caught to have entered the palace in their menses have reduced to a mere pouring of libation to appease the gods.”\footnote{Nana Okrukata, interview, 20\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.}

It has been noted that in Akwamu traditional society, in the olden days, it was strictly prohibited for a chief to set eyes on a dead body because it was considered as unclean and would defile the chief. According to a respondent, chiefs in recent times attend funerals to set eyes on the dead laid in state and after the funeral a purification ritual is performed to cleanse the dirt from them.\footnote{Nana Gyensare, interview, 20\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.} In the past, it was also a taboo to publicly announce the death of a chief until a ritual is performed. All the 6 sub-chiefs
admitted that this tradition is still observed strictly by the Akwamus in spite of the proliferation of social media which spread the news as soon as a chief dies. A respondent said that, “if a chief dies, we do hear the news from the media before it is made public”. The respondent however indicated that that does not prevent people from being punished when they publicly announce the death of the chief. This shows that taboo associated with announcement of a chief’s death is maintained.

A respondent admitted that in the olden days, if a chief’s bare name was mentioned, whoever violated that taboo was made to offer seven sheep and seven schnapps for purification rituals but in recent times, the person is made to offer only two sheep and two schnapps. The reason for the reduction is to temper justice with mercy. The respondents however said that the fine which has been reduced from seven sheep and seven schnapps to two sheep and two schnapps respectively is only limited to the sub-chiefs, but that of the paramount chief remains because of his status.

With the respondents’ responses to why a chief is not supposed to eat new yam before a ritual is performed, they all said that they still stick to it because of the health consideration attached to it.

The discussion about chieftaincy taboos in contemporary society in Akwamu shows that taboos related to chieftaincy have not been completely wiped out but some maintained, others modified, whilst others toned down to satisfy all and sundry in Akwamu society. This finding however dismisses a claim made by Kwasi Yankah that

traditional values in recent times are being threatened by modernity and westernization.259

4.4.2. Totemic Taboos

We noticed the significant role that was played by the bush-pig in the lives of the Akwamus. Thus, the bush-pig saved and protected them against their enemies which safely brought them to their present settlement. It was for that reason that taboos associated with the bush-pig cannot be underestimated. In fact whoever went against the taboos was dealt with severely by offering seven sheep and seven schnapps for purification rituals to appease the anger of the ancestors and the gods. Again, the bush-pig was treated with religious respect with the belief that it is connected with the gods. A respondent said that the gods would stop protecting the people if they violated the taboo associated with the bush-pig which saved them from their enemies.260

All the 40 respondents claimed that in this contemporary Akwamu society, people still believe in the taboos associated with the bush pig. The royals still do not eat bush-pig meat because they consider it as their saviour. The Christian and Muslim respondents also claimed that they have never attempted to eat bush-pig in the Akwamu community. One Christian said that if he wants to eat bush-pig, he goes far away as custom demands to eat it. However all the 15 Muslims said that they stick to the bush-pig taboo. One of the traditional leaders said that in recent times the sanction put in place when one breaks a taboo associated with the bush-pig has been reduced from seven sheep and seven schnapps to two sheep and two schnapps. He gave a reason that due to migration, people from various tribes live together as compared to the olden days where people of one tribe

259Yankah, Speaking for the chief, 8.
used to live in one area. He said that this has made the traditional leaders assume that people must be pardoned with the severe punishment for breaking the bush-pig taboos because of ignorance.\textsuperscript{261} A Muslim respondent said that he supports the view that it is a taboo to eat bush-pig in Akwamu traditional society because Muslims in general do not eat pork which falls under the bush-pig family.\textsuperscript{262}

In a related interview with the Benkumhene of Akwamu traditional area about taboos associated with dogs, the researcher was also told that dogs can be reared in Akwamu society in recent times having noticed the security role being played by dogs. The researcher was told that in the olden days, dogs were not reared for the simple reason that they would bring bush-pig bones into the community. The respondent however explained that due to deforestation in the area, bush-pigs have moved far away from the community and so people no longer get access to them in recent times.\textsuperscript{263}

It is therefore obvious from the foregoing discussion that taboos have not been completely wiped out, but have been worthwhile in the face of modernity. The above analysis is therefore not in support with a claim made by Ntam\-u that traditional beliefs have worn away as a result of Christianity which sees the practice rather inimical to growth, unity, peace and cohesion of communities.\textsuperscript{264}

\textbf{4.4.3. Deity Taboos}

In chapter three, taboos associated with the deity called “\textcopyright bosom Ayensu” were discussed. One of the taboos associated with the deity includes prohibition for carrying

\textsuperscript{261} Nana Otuaben, interview, 20\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibrahim Shaibu, interview, 20\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{263} Nana Budu, interview, 27\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
corpse in front of the deity. The researcher was told that whoever violates that law would experience continuous death in his or her family. The researcher was further told that seven sheep and seven schnapps were needed to offer sacrifice to the deity if one breached that taboo. The researcher was once again told that bereaved families could negotiate with the traditional leaders to offer the required items which are always seven sheep and seven schnapps to pacify the deity if they want to take their corpse to pass in front the deity. The respondent explained that there is an alternate route in Akwamu where people can take their corpse to pass through, but due to expansion of Akwamu community, the easiest way people could use is in front of the deity which is situated in the middle part of the town. In view of that, poor bereaved families think that they are being discriminated by the rich because the rich could afford all the items needed for the purificatory rituals to appease the deity, whilst the poor cannot. In view of that the traditional leaders met and a consensus was reached that every bereaved family member who passes in front of the deity with a corpse will offer two sheep and two schnapps to offer sacrifice to pacify the deity.\(^{265}\)

The above discussion suggests that in spite of modernization, taboo rules in Akwamu traditional society have not been totally wiped out because of their preservation of life and well-being of the people and also to sustain the community’s traditional values and customs. The researcher discovered during the data collection that the people still retain many of the customs of their indigenous religion. A Christian respondent made this remark, “though I am a Christian convert, I abide by all the rules governing the deity in Akwamu just that I don’t worship it because of my Christian belief that only God should

\(^{265}\)Nana Afrakoma, interview, 25th February, 2017.
be worshipped”.

Another Christian respondent made this statement, “I am aware of some Christians who consult ‘Obosom Ayensu’ for help when they face misfortunes”. This shows that the people have not abandoned their indigenous beliefs in lesser gods in spite of their conversion into a new faith. Also, this explains why in Akwamu traditional society, their belief in taboo still persists, despite the inroads of Christianity and Islam. The researcher discovered that the deity in Akwamu traditional area still receives cultic attention because one respondent noted that it was common to see people trouping into the shrine of the deity on sacred days to present their petition to redeem a vow taken before the deity.

4.4.4. Taboo Days

According to the Akwamus, the institution of “taboo days” has a bearing on the management of natural resources. As a respondent explained to the researcher, “taboo days” are special days for performance of rituals to the ancestors and any form of work is forbidden in Akwamu land. They believe that the ancestors would visit their wrath upon whoever violates this traditional law. According to a respondent, perpetrators are made to pay a fine in a form of sheep and a bottle of schnapps to purify the ancestors upon violating the law. As has been discussed earlier, the institution of this taboo though for conservation purposes, it was to discipline people to attend social gathering such as festivals and also to have a day of rest.

The researcher was also told that the whole period to observe festivals is considered as a taboo which is reserved for the fingerlings in the river and the infant

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266 Rebecca Osei, interview, 27th February, 2017.
267 Wisdom Agbanyo, interview, 26th February, 2017
268 Wisdom Agbanyo, interview, 26th February, 2017
animals in the forest to grow and multiply. One respondent had this say: “Our elders instituted this taboo to preserve the environment and its inhabitants and to have a day of rest”.\textsuperscript{269} According to the respondent, the Akwamus have a high sense of land preservation and that an important aspect of the people’s cultural heritage is the preservation of the environment for future generation. The respondent affirmed that “life would be robbed of parts of its essential meaning if people refuse to respect the environment around them.”\textsuperscript{270} This finding supports the view of Asare Opoku that “our traditional attitude to the environment is not only valid but actually essential for future of the world”\textsuperscript{271}.

Concerning the relevance of “taboo days” in contemporary Akwamu traditional society, the respondents explained that the Akwamus still stick to “taboo days” not to visit the farm and organizing funeral in the traditional area. However, the ban placed on travelling during these taboo days has been lifted. The traditional elders decided to lift the ban on travelling during taboo days because they saw it as an infringement on freedom of movement.\textsuperscript{272} One of the respondents therefore exclaimed, “The laws are made for man and not man for the law, therefore we believe that laws that are inimical to human progress should be discarded”.\textsuperscript{273}

From the foregoing discussions, it is observed that in Akwamu traditional society, taboos are not completely abolished but they are rather modified to meet the needs of the present generation as a way to ensure its continuous supplementary role in contemporary

\textsuperscript{269}\textsuperscript{Nana Samanyia, interview, 28th February, 2017.}
\textsuperscript{270}\textsuperscript{Nana Samanyia, interview, 28th February, 2017.}
\textsuperscript{271}\textsuperscript{Asare Opoku, “Tradition as a way to the future: An African perspective, Trinity Journal of Church and Theology7, no 4 (1998): 46.}
\textsuperscript{272}\textsuperscript{Nana Samanyia, interview, 28th February, 2017.}
\textsuperscript{273}\textsuperscript{Nana Ansah Pre=, interview, 28th February, 2017.}
development efforts of the society. This makes one to conclude that though the influence of Christianity and Islam has described indigenous values as superstitious and counter-productive in recent times, research carried out in some traditional societies such as Akwamu proves that the people, irrespective of their religious background strongly believe that indigenous ways of addressing their daily problems are still relevant and that their methods for doing so have not been completely lost in its rural communities as far as Akwamu traditional society is concerned. Although, it appears that taboo practice seems to be waning due to a greater percentage of the indigenous population in the area being converted to Christianity or Islam, the research findings of the researcher have shown that observation of taboo practices remain very active in the life of the people in Akwamu traditional society.

4.4.5. Suicide Taboos

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, suicide from time immemorial is taken seriously by the Akwamus because of the repercussions associated with it. It is for this reason that unlike the normal death which is handled by following elaborate ritual observances, death through suicide does not receive any elaborate ritual rites. In most cases, body of the person who commits suicide is not accorded the dignity of being placed in a casket for burial, rather the body is hurriedly put in an old ragged cloth and buried. The Akwamus have the belief that death through suicide is considered as contagious, therefore the deceased person is taken through the back street of the town which the Akwamus call it “mfikyiri kwan” to the cemetery in order not to draw people’s attention to the death. At the cemetery, before the burial, libation is poured and prayer

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274Thody, “Don’t Do it”,35.
275Nana Samanyia, interview, 28th February, 2017.
offered. In the libation prayer, the spirit of the deceased is implored to go to sleep quickly, and not to return to the community to torment the living or to disturb the peace in the community. Concerning whether funeral rites are organized in honour of the suicide, the respondents responded in negative claiming that funeral rites are not performed for one who dies through suicide. Also there is no wake-keeping ceremony and again, the period of grieving or bereavement is deliberately shortened. As noted earlier on, no drumming and dancing is entertained. The researcher was told that there is no time set aside for people to pay tribute to the deceased and there is no post burial thanksgiving service. A respondent remarked, “funeral” means ‘ayɛyie’, meaning ‘glorifying’ which goes for remembering a deceased who lived a decorous life, but because suicide death is not a proper death, it is a taboo to glorify it.” According to the respondents, death through suicide is regarded as an abomination against the living, the departed ancestors as well as the gods of the land. Therefore when death occurs, a propitiatory ritual is performed to forestall any catastrophic diseases, accidents and natural disasters on the relatives.

During the researcher’s interview, the respondents raised five things as taboos associated with death through suicide. These include the casket-used for burial, messages contained in the libation being poured at the grave yard, funeral rites, wake-keeping and paying of tribute to the deceased. The researcher asked the respondents’ view on those taboos and their relevance in contemporary Akwamu society. The researcher was motivated by this development because in recent times, it is realized that Akan societies

277 Nana Ansah Prem, interview, 28th February, 2017.
are undergoing changes and these changes are reflected in mortuary rites. Thus the status of the deceased or the deceased family plays a major role in what happens to the corpse of the deceased regardless of the manner of death. On the issues of casket used to bury the death, the respondents said that formerly an inexpensive casket was hurriedly assembled by a local carpenter and the dead was placed in and then dispatched to the cemetery. Sometimes too, the deceased was not accorded the dignity of a casket burial, but was wrapped in a ragged cloth and buried. The respondents however admitted that the method has changed in recent times, where the socio-economic status of the deceased family determines the kind of casket to use. One respondent said that “there are many already made caskets on the market now which can be easily mobilized to bury the corpse than to rely on the carpenter who may take several hours to finish a casket”.278

On the respondents’ take on whether the corpse is taken to the house, they admitted that at first, the corpse was taken directly to the cemetery for burial but with a new directive from the government, a post-mortem test has to be conducted to ascertain the cause of the death before it is buried therefore the corpse is taken to the hospital. Another respondent explained that in recent times, a place called “Kristo mu”, meaning “the Christian site” has been created for Christians whose corpses are taken to that place for burial services to be performed before the corpse is taken to the cemetery.279 As to whether funeral rites are performed in honour of the deceased, the respondents said that for the Christians, they are allowed to organize funerals, except that music is not allowed to be played at the funeral ground. Also, donations are not supposed to be made public. Only food and drinks are served and such a gathering should not take more than three

278Nana Ansah Prem, interview, 28th February, 2017.
hours after burial. The reason why elaborate funeral rites are not performed for person who dies as a result of suicide is to prevent the ancestors from incurring their wrath on either the family members of the deceased or the community as a whole.

Concerning wake-keeping, all the respondents affirmed that there is no wake-keeping ceremony for the person who dies through suicide. The respondents said that in general, wake-keeping has been abolished therefore if a person dies through suicide, no wake-keeping ceremony is organized for him or her. From the foregoing, it is realized that the treatment given to a person who dies as a result of suicide stems from fear of being punished by the deities and other spirits who may be offended by the defilement. A respondent admitted that, in Akwamu traditional society in recent times, if a bereaved family wants to organize a funeral for death through suicide, an amount of two thousand Ghana Cedis together with one sheep and five schnapps is fined for ritual cleansing called “adwira” to appease the gods also to cleans the community. The rationale for allowing people to pay such a huge fine before a funeral is organized for the bereaved is to discourage people from organizing funeral for people who die through suicide.\textsuperscript{280} The analysis shows that taboos associated with suicide are still observed in Akwamu with little modification.

4.4.6. Taboos associated with sacred grove

During the researcher’s field work, he realized that the fear of repercussions or punishment for violating taboos associated with the sacred grove in Akwamu make people act in such a way that would not cause anger of the gods. According to one of the

\textsuperscript{280}The Chief Linguist of Akwamu, interview, 28th March, 2017.
respondents, that belief still persists among the Akwamus.\textsuperscript{281} Regarding which of the taboos associated with the sacred grove are still observed, one of respondents stated that, “it is still a taboo for non-royal members to enter the sacred grove, and that if a non-royal member enters that sacred grove, he or she faces serious punishment such as offering seven sheep and seven schnapps.\textsuperscript{282} The respondent said that the high fine placed on offenders make people respect taboos associated with the sacred grove.

Again, shooting of gun in the sacred grove has not been abolished; however, it has been modified. A respondent explained that in the past, one could not kill any animal in and around some parameters of the grove. The rationale was that some of the animals moved to certain parameters around the grove and such animals are not expected to be killed. He said that the law has been modified and as such people can only kill animals which are found around the grove. Also, the respondent said that in the past, no one could harvest snails from the grove and whoever violated the law would get missing for three days walking in the grove. It is believed that since the sacred grove is reserved for only the royals, non-royals are still not permitted to enter there to harvest snails, but those that move along the street and in front of the grove can be harvested.\textsuperscript{283}

The researcher asked some of the Christians and Muslims whether they believed in the taboos related to the sacred grove and they said that even though they don’t believe in them, they have been told about the history of the sacred grove and what happened to people who violated the taboos so they fear to challenge the law. One of the respondents who is related to the royal family of Akwamu confirmed what the Christian and the Muslim respondents said and added that though he had never seen anyone getting

\textsuperscript{281}Nana Anah Prem, interview, 28th February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{282}The Chief Linguist of Akwamu, interview, 28th February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{283}Nana Samanshia, interview, 28th February, 2017.
missing for three days for harvesting snails from the grove, but because the laws are believed to have come from the gods, no one wants to violate it.\textsuperscript{284} This shows that since violation of taboos is thought to invoke the anger of the gods, no one is prepared to act in such a manner that repercussion befalls on him or her.

On the issue of people being killed when they enter the sacred grove, the respondents explained that in the past, non-royal members who entered the sacred grove were instantly killed by the executioners. However, that tradition had been abolished and replaced by seven sheep and seven schnapps to perform rituals to pacify the gods and ancestors who are believed to have been defiled. The respondents said that in the olden days human blood was needed to appease the gods when they were offended, but in this 21\textsuperscript{st} century, a stop has been put on the practice of human sacrifices as a result of civilization.\textsuperscript{285} Findings from the above analysis show that the Akwamus still strictly adhere to the taboos associated with the sacred grove, but those that are inimical to human development have been wiped out.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the relevance of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. Taboos that were analysed were chieftaincy taboos, totemic taboos, deity taboos, taboo days, suicide taboos and taboos associated with sacred grove. The purpose was to ascertain the relevance of these taboos in these contemporary times in Akwamu traditional society. In connection with oath-swearing, it was realized that it is

\textsuperscript{284} Nana Ansah Prem, interview, 28\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
\textsuperscript{285} Nana Ansah Prem, interview, 28\textsuperscript{th} February, 2017.
being taken seriously among the people and its relevance is still being felt in this contemporary times due to its potency to check traditional leaders. On the issue of chieftaincy taboos associated with menstruation, it was discovered that menstruation taboos which were highly accorded in the olden days have been reduced in recent times as a result of the fact that many chiefs are now Christians and for that matter they need to maintain only one wife who could cook for them when they are in their menstrual period and a simple ritual is performed to sanctify the chief.

Concerning the fact that a chief is not supposed to set eyes on dead bodies, the study revealed that among the people of Akwamu, chiefs attend funerals and sanctify themselves through purification rituals after the funeral. It was also found that in spite of proliferation of social media in recent times which make the death of a chief to be made public even before the news gets to the family, people are still punished when they violate the taboo governing the chief’s death. One can conclude considering the foregoing discussion that chieftaincy taboos have not been totally wiped out among the people of Akwamu traditional society as we see some of them remained useful, whilst others have been modified in the face of modernity.

In the case of totemic taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society, it was found out that even though the severe punishment attached to the totemic taboos has reduced, royals and non-royals still believe in the taboos associated with the bush-pig because they believe that the bush-pig saved them from their enemies. The analysis of data collected from the deity taboos confirms that adherence to the taboos has not changed, except that two sheep and two bottles of schnapps are demanded by traditional
leaders to offer sacrifice to the gods to allow the bereaved families take their corpses in front of the shrine.

The study also revealed that the people of Akwamu still stick to “taboos days” for not visiting farms. However, taboo placed on travelling during taboos days has been wiped out. On the issue of suicide taboos in contemporary times in Akwamu traditional society, the study revealed that unlike the olden days when no funeral was organised in honour of the deceased, unelaborated funeral is organised for deceased in recent times, especially by the Christians but they have to follow traditional rules. The foregoing discussions show that the indigenous Akwamu people have not entirely abandoned their traditional values, but they have been modified to safeguard the interest of the people in these modern times.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings raised from the study in order to draw appropriate recommendations and conclusions. This takes the form of summarizing the major findings raised in chapter two which analyzes the overview of Akwamu traditional society. Again, the major findings raised in chapter three which analyzes observation of taboos in Akwamu traditional society are summarized in this chapter. More so, the major findings raised in chapter four which analyzes taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society are summarized in this chapter. Based on the findings raised from the chapters, appropriate recommendations and conclusions are drawn.

5.2. Summary of major findings of the study

This research sought to investigate the place of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. The study sought to find out the various taboos which are practised among the people and the rationale for the practice of taboos. Also, how taboos affect ethical values in the daily lives of the people and its relevance in the maintenance of social order in contemporary times was also investigated. Based on the analysis, the study revealed the following key findings:

First and foremost, the study revealed that the Akwamus are uniquely structured as far as their tradition and culture is concerned. This is so clear in their traditional administrative system as well as their beliefs and practices which promote unity and cooperation among them. It was also revealed that the Akwamu’s sense of family and community belonging are derived from their traditional family structures which are based
on communal living. It is for this reason that Mbiti said that, “To be human is to belong to the whole community and to do so involves participating in beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community”.  

Concerning observation of taboos in Akwamu traditional society with particular reference to chieftaincy, totems, deity, sacred grove, dog, “taboo days” and suicide, it was found out that traditional rules occupy a unique position in Akwamu traditional society, therefore chiefs are expected to observe taboos in order to maintain certain standards to please their subjects. This is more reason why a chief in Akwamu traditional society is not supposed to breach an oath sworn. It was also found out that Christian chiefs in Akwamu traditional society do not observe menstrual taboos strictly because for them, Jesus’ blood has replaced the Old Testament law which forbids uncleanness. The findings again revealed that the rationale for announcing the death of a chief in a proverbial way is to ensure that absolute respect for the chief who is not supposed to be equated with a mere person who dies in Akwamu community is guaranteed. It was also discovered that, the status of the chief does not permit his name to be barely mentioned and whoever does so is punished with a fine.

In relation to totemic taboos in Akwamu traditional society with reference to the bush-pig, it was revealed that the bush-big saved the Akwamus to cross the Volta River therefore it is revered as god who is not supposed to be eaten by the royals of Akwamu. Concerning the deity called “ɔbosom Ayensu” in Akwamu traditional society, it was revealed that the deity was planted by the first chief of Akwamu called “Otumfoɔ Agyen

“kɔkɔbo” upon the advice of “Ɛkɔmfo Anokye”. The main taboo associated with the deity as the study disclosed is corpse being allowed to pass in front of the deity. It was also found out that the deity protects the community against calamities such as famine, death, among others,

On the issue of the sacred grove in Akwamu traditional society, it was found out that it plays religious roles more than conservation role because it is the dwelling place of the gods. The study revealed that dogs were not reared in Akwamu society in the past because of the fear that they will bring bush-pig bones from the bush into the community, but in recent times they are reared due to the extinction of bush-pigs far away from the community. The findings of “taboo days” revealed that they were put in place to give people time to rest and then also to encourage people to attend social functions such as festivals. It was meant to promote the health of the people and also to conserve the environment.

In addition, the study established that it is a taboo to organize mortuary rites for people who died through suicide because of the people’s belief that it will encourage more death in the bereaved family. More so, the study revealed that compliance of traditional rules cuts across religious divide and this was seen among the Christians and the Muslims whose views were sought on taboos. It was found out that both Christian and Muslim respondents complied with traditional rules, except those that violate their fundamental human rights.

One other finding of the study was that all the respondents including the Christians and Muslims admitted that taboos have helped them to live morally upright lives in the community. Also taboos have helped them to live harmoniously with one
another in the community. Besides that, to them, taboos remain the prime factor of guiding principles of moral conduct towards the exploitation of natural resources in the community. Thus, the practice of taboos among the people of Akwamu traditional society remains very strong because it reinforces the communal values of solidarity, identity and unity among the people.

Findings also revealed that, under chieftaincy taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society, it was found out that oath- swearing and taboos associated with eating new yam have been maintained, whilst a chief not to set eyes on dead bodies, announcing the death of a chief and menstruation taboos have been modified.

Concerning totemic taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society, the study revealed that the taboos are retained just that the sanctions attached to them have been toned down from seven sheep and seven bottles of schnapps to two sheep and two bottles of schnapps. On the issue of deity taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society, the study disclosed that the taboos have not been completely wiped out because of its significant role in the preservation of lives of people in the community. It was noticed that some changes have been made by offering two sheep and two bottles of schnapps instead of seven sheep and seven bottles of schnapps which were imposed on offenders in the olden days. It was found out that the deity still receives cultic attention from members of all the religious groups.

With regard to “taboo days” in contemporary Akwamu traditional society, the findings revealed that formally, it was forbidden to work and travel on taboo days. The purpose was to encourage people to attend social gathering such as festivals and also to have a day of rest to improve their health. It was discovered that in this contemporary era,
apart from a ban that has been lifted on travelling during taboo days, it is still forbidden to work or organize funerals in the traditional area during taboo days. This shows that taboo days have not been wiped out completely in Akwamu traditional society but aspect of it has been modified to meet the needs of the people.

Suicide taboos were analyzed and the findings established that there have been some changing trends in contemporary times as far as mortuary rites for people who die through suicide are concerned. The study revealed that formerly, an inexpensive casket was hurriedly assembled by a local carpenter for burial but in recent times, the socio-economic status of the deceased family determines the kind of casket to use. It was also found out that unlike the olden days when simple funeral was organized for the deceased, the trend has changed in recent times, especially by the Christians who have been given a place called “kristo mu” to organize funerals for people who die through suicide except that donation, music and long hours of the funeral are not entertained. This shows that suicide taboos are still held in high esteem among the people with some modifications.

On taboos associated with sacred grove in contemporary Akwamu traditional society, the study revealed that the laws governing the sacred grove still persist with some few modifications. For instance, formerly it was a taboo to kill animals in and around the sacred grove but in recent times, except animals found in the groves, those found around can be killed. However, it is still only royals who are permitted to enter the sacred grove for rituals. Also, the findings revealed that people are no longer killed when they enter the sacred grove because that tradition has been abolished and replaced by offering seven sheep and seven bottles of schnapp to perform ritual cleaning to appease the gods and the ancestors who are believed to have been defiled. The findings from the
discussions show that taboos in Akwamu traditional society have not been completely abolished, but they have been modified and others retained to safeguard the interest of the people in contemporary times.

5.3. Recommendations

This study has established major findings emanating from the various chapters. On the basis of the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

i. One of the findings indicates how the beliefs and practices of taboos promote unity and corporation among the people of Akwamu. It is therefore recommended that the chieftaincy institution should be financially assisted by Non-governmental organizations, the District Assembly and private individuals to organize training workshops and durbars to increase people’s awareness about the importance of taboos to the Akwamu society.

ii. Another finding showed that the Akwamus still hold on to taboo days as days one is forbidden to go to farm or go for fishing. It is therefore recommended that both citizens and non-citizens in Akwamu traditional society should be made to appreciate, respect and observe taboos associated with taboo days as a means to promote unity and peace. This can be done by establishing cultural centers in the various Akwamu communities to educate people about the need to uphold cultural values such as taboo days in the area.

iii. Also, the study revealed the place of taboos as a guiding principle of moral conduct towards the exploitation of natural resources in Akwamu society. It is therefore recommended that the district assembly in collaboration with the traditional council of Akwamu traditional area integrate the cultural values into policies and programmes
by coming out with by-laws to guide the citizens towards proper management of the natural resources in the area with the aim of sustaining the environment for human survival.

iv. The traditional values and history of Akwamu traditional society should be documented and explained to the youth in the area. This will help them to appreciate the role of the traditional family system in promoting communal living among the people.

v. In relation to totemic taboos, the finding of the study showed the significant role played by the bush-pig in saving the Akwamus across the Volta River. The history about the bush-pig should be vividly documented and kept at the community’s library to serve as a reference document for researchers.

vi. On the issue of suicide taboo, it was found out that though the rules governing it have been modified, it is still held in high esteem by the Akwamus. It is therefore recommended that the youth who are potential victims should be educated on the repercussion associated with breaking taboos associated with suicide.

5.4. Conclusions

The study has discussed the various taboos that are observed among the people of Akwamu traditional society. The study has highlighted taboos which are associated with chieftaincy, totems, deity, taboo days, suicide and sacred grove among the people of Akwamu traditional society. The findings of the study indicate among other things how taboos have played significant roles in the lives of the people of Akwamu in the past and continue to play similar roles in contemporary times among the people. For example, taboos which were instituted by traditional leaders to direct the political directions of
chiefs in the past are still relevant in contemporary times. Also, deity taboos which were revered and feared in the past are still accorded much respect in contemporary times among the people because of its divine powers. It is for this reason that the deity called “ɔbosom ayensu” in Akwamu traditional area still receives cultic attention in recent times. Other taboos which are still relevant in the lives of the people of Akwamu from the past are those connected with the sacred grove, suicide and “taboo days”. These customary regulations worked very well in the olden days and are still relevant in contemporary times even though the sanctions attached to these taboos have been toned down as a result of respect for human rights which give some amount of freedom to individuals. For example, from the study, it was found out that a ban which was placed on travelling during taboo days has been lifted to give people freedom of movement. 

The Akwamus believe that a bush-pig saved them against their enemies and therefore they revere it as their totem. For this reason, they adhere to all taboos associated with the bush-pig. In order to honor the bush-pig as their totem, they are forbidden to eat it because they are spiritually related. For this reason, the taboos associated with the bush-pig become a binding mark of identity which serves as a point of reference in terms of identification and relational bond. It is against this background that any member of Akwamu is easily identified if he or she refuses to eat bush-pig meat when offered. A cursory examination of roles of taboos among the people of Akwamu in the past and present makes one conclude that though some of the taboos have been modified whilst others toned down, the future of taboos in Akwamu traditional society prove sustainable because they have been embedded in their culture and since culture is dynamic, it is no surprise to see that among the Akwamus, some of the taboos are toned down, others
transformed and the outmoded ones which retard human progress are discarded. In view of the foregoing, a conscious effort is needed by both traditional leaders and non-traditionalists in Akwamu traditional society to respect taboo laws to ensure harmonious living and also to maintain their identity.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Traditional Elders, Chiefs and Queenmothers

A research is being conducted by one of the students offering Mphil degree in the study of Religions from the University of Ghana, Legon. The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyse the place of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. You have been identified as one of my respondents for the study and your responses are therefore very important. You are assured that any information given would be kept confidential and would be used for the purpose of the study. Thank you.

SECTION A: TABOO AND ITS OBSERVATION IN AKWAMU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.

1. What Chieftaincy taboos do you observe in Akwamu traditional society?
2. What is the philosophy or the rationale behind Chieftaincy taboos in Akwamu traditional society?
3. What sanction is put in place when chieftaincy taboo is violated in Akwamu traditional area?
4. What taboo is associated with the bush-pig (kɔkɔte) of Akwamu traditional area?
5. What is the philosophy or the rationale behind the warthog (kɔkɔte) taboo of Akwamu traditional society?
6. What sanction is put in place when one violates the taboo associated with the warthog?
7. What taboos are associated with the deity called “ɔbosom ayensu” of Akwamu traditional society?
8. What is the philosophy or the rationale behind the deity taboo called “bosom Ayesu” of Akwamu traditional society?

9. What sanction is put in place when a person violates the deity taboo?

10. What other taboos are observed in Akwamu traditional society and the rationale behind them?

11. How have taboos influenced the moral lives of people of Akwamu traditional society?

SECTION B: TABOOS IN CONTEMPORARY AKWAMU SOCIETY.

1. In your view, are chieftaincy taboos relevant today in Akwamu traditional society?

2. If your answer to question 1 (one) is yes or no, explain why.

3. Which of the chieftaincy taboos would you want to be modified and why?

4. Which of the chieftaincy taboos would you want to be abandoned and why?

5. Which of the chieftaincy taboos would you want to be maintained and why?

6. Are bush-pig taboos in Akwamu traditional society relevant today?

7. If your answer to question 6(six) is yes or no, explain why.

8. Would you want the bush-pig taboos be modified, abandoned or maintained and why?

9. Are deity taboos in Akwamu traditional area relevant today?

10. If your answer to question 9(nine) is yes or no, explain why.

11. Would you want the deity taboos be modified, abandoned or maintained and why?
Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Christians and Non-Christians (Muslims)

A research is being conducted by one of the students offering Mphil degree in the study of Religions from the University of Ghana, Legon. The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyse the place of taboos in contemporary Akwamu traditional society. You have been identified as one of my respondents for the study and your responses are therefore very important. You are assured that any information given would be kept confidential and would be used for the purpose of the study. Thank you.

SECTION A: TABOO AND ITS OBSERVATION IN AKWAMU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.

1. As a Christian or a Muslim, are you aware of the various taboos practised in Akwamu traditional society?
2. If your answer to question 1(one) is yes, how do you comply with them?
3. If your answer to question 1(one) is no, explain why?
4. As a Christian or a Muslim, how have taboos influenced your moral life in Akwamu traditional society?

SECTION B: TABOOS IN CONTEMPORARY AKWAMU SOCIETY.

1. As a Christian or a Muslim, do you think that taboos are relevant in present time of Akwamu traditional society?
2. If your answer to question 1 is yes or no, explain why.
3. In your own point of view, do you think that some of the taboos need to be modified, abandoned or maintained in the present time and why?
4. If your answer to question 3 is yes, which taboos should be modified, abandoned or maintained in the present time?
5. If your answer to question 3 is no, give your reason.
Appendix 3

Fig 2. Petty traders at Atimpoku near the Adomi Bridge
Fig. 3: Akwamumanhene receiving homage during Adae Festival
Fig. 4: Akwamumanhene being carried in palanquin during Odwira festival
Fig. 5: Interview with Nana Okrukata in Akwamu Traditional Area
Fig. 6: A warthog: The Akwamus believe that a warthog led them to cross the River Volta to their present settlement, Akwamufie
Fig. 7: The Shrine of Ṣeṣom Ayensu in Akwamufie
Fig. 8: The Sacred Grove at Akwamufie
Fig. 9: The emblem of Akwamu State