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THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM ON THE DAGBAMBA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ten regions of Ghana, it is in the Northern Region where a very large concentration of Muslims are found and this concentration is centred on the Dagbamba. Even though Islam reached Dagbon after crossing a vast stretch of land within Ghana where various tribes live, Islam did not make any serious impact on the people until it reached Dagbon. Islam has so much influenced the Dagbamba such that a majority of their cultural practices have been overshadowed by Islamic ones.

Living among the Dagbamba and making any meaningful impact on them depend on ones relations with them so far as the Islamic religion is concerned. They would not hesitate to express their heartfelt gratitude to whatever kindness that a non-Muslim would show them, but they would also lament that such kindness is coming from a non-Muslim. They believe that kindness of whatever form is the quality of Muslims. The Dagbamba refer to all non-Muslims as "chefirnema" which is a corrupted form of the Arabic word "Kafir" for an infidel. The typical traditionalist identifies himself with Islam even though he might not observe the five daily prayers or some other rites of Islam. However, this is not to suggest that all Dagbamba are Muslims but that Islam has taken the better part of the life of the majority of them. A Muslim stranger in Dagbon will find himself at home for there is always ready hospitality for him.

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Though authors such as Levtzion, Fage, Wilks, Rattray, Hodgkin, Staniland, Tamakloe, Oppong etc. have researched into the area and written about it, there has been little on it in recent times especially the second half of the twentieth century (post independence era). There is much more on the advent of Islam in Dagbon and earlier spread than how Islam is lived in Dagbon today and its influence on the people as well as its encounter with the trends of modernisation in Ghana. Besides, in most of these writings the authors limit themselves to particular areas of Dagbon which do not give a true reflection of the whole of Dagbon. It is observed also that there have been several changes in the life of the people so far as Islam is concerned during the past two decades which have not been reflected in these writings. There is therefore the need for these authors to come out with new editions of their books on the area in order to give readers a clearer view of the situation in this twentieth century. This thesis, therefore, attempts to address itself to the new developments, why and how Islam has made such strong impact on the Dagbamba and the prospects it holds for them.

I must admit that I went through difficult times in trying to get this work completed. One cannot successfully write about Dagbon today without consulting some noted opinion leaders in the area such as Ibrahim Mahamah, Afa Ajura, Lawyer Alhassan, Alhaji Yahaya Iddi and Alhaji Amadu Sana. I found it very difficult to obtain information from these opinion leaders

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between May 1987 and July, 1988 because they were arrested and detained on the orders of the Northern Regional Security Council for allegedly fanning the Yendi chieftaincy dispute which had resulted in the loss of many lives, especially in the clashes at Zokuga near Savelugu. It was not easy contacting these opinion leaders in prison either, because the prison authorities kept on moving them from one prison to the other. Besides they were not all kept in one prison but in different ones scattered in the north such as Gambaga, Wa, Tamale, Bole and then Nsawam in the Eastern Region. These oppinion leaders were so much distressed about their detention that it was just not feasible to bother them with interviews. To this end, this piece of work had to be delayed for over one year. On the 25th of July, 1988, the last two opinion leaders, Ibrahim Mahamah and Amadu Sana were released, and after one month when I was sure that they had settled down completely, I decided to continue with my interviews.

I also had to do a lot of travelling around Dagbon visiting all the big towns and some villages which matter to me. I had to carry kolanuts with me wherever I went because in Dagbon one cannot visit a chief or imam or an elder in the society without offering him kolanuts, and in some cases I was compelled to dispense with cash in order to obtain information for this work. However, some of these chiefs appreciated my efforts and urged me to work hard at it. They did not only encourage me but presented me with gifts such as Guinea fowls and yams for my meals.

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It was however disgusting to note that some Dagbamba, especially in the Nayil-fong in Yendi refused to talk to me with the excuse that the nature of the interview was such that there was the need to consult their elders first and also seek their permission. The irony of the whole thing was that such people who refused to talk to me were themselves elders. These frustrations notwithstanding, I was still determined to get the work completed, and Alhamdu lil-lah (praise be to God), it has gone through.

I hope and pray that this piece of work will give its reader a clearer insight into the history of Islam in Dagbon and the influence the Islamic religion has had on them up to this twentieth century. If I have succeeded in this task even to a small degree, I thank Allah (God) for His mercy.

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected through interviews with some prominent Islamic scholars, chiefs, educationists and traditionalists. I took field trips, served questionnaires and collated the views together. Material gathered during my field trips are contained in chapters three to six. These are not in any published form. It is hoped that by putting them to thesis, I have supplemented in my own humble way literature on the history of Islam in Dagbon.

Data was also collected from secondary sources (literature review in relation to the area) and those books

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that I worked on are: Brief History of the Dagbamba People by Tamakloe, Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa by Levtzion, The Lions of Dagbon by Staniland, Growing up in Dagbon by Oppong, The Origins of the Dagbamba of Greater Dagbon by Mahamah, Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland by Rattray and The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast by Cardinal.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is about The Influence of Islam in Dagbon in the Twentieth Century. It has six chapters and a conclusion. However, at the end of every chapter there is a brief summary of the topics covered therein. For ease of reference, all the paragraphs in the main chapters have been numbered.

The first chapter deals with the historical origins of the Dagbamba but it is not purely a discussion on the origins of the Dagbamba because I expressed my opinion on the issue which does not agree especially with the contentions of both Ibrahim Mahamah and Tamakloe. The chapter also discusses the pre-Islamic traditions which give the reader a clear view of the typical traditions of the Dagbamba before the advent of Islam in Dagbon.

In the second chapter, I recap the history of the advent of Islam in Dagbon. The activities of both the Wangara and Hausa clerics are discussed with particular reference to the services they rendered to chiefs. Na-Zangina features prominently in this context. The chapter also discusses the Muslim titles given to various groups of Muslims in Yendi and its environs and why Islam appealed to the Dagbamba. The introduction of Islamic education and how Islam got to other areas, especially the villages are also discussed. Besides, the chapter deals with one of the main factors of conflict

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among Muslims in Dagbon today which is the attitude of "mixing" that was encouraged by the early Muslim clerics who introduced Islam into Dagbon. It is a system whereby Muslims practice traditional beliefs alongside the Islamic faith. Today in Dagbon some religious leaders are drawing the attention of Muslims to the unacceptability of "mixing" in Islam. Even though it has not been easy, some headway has been made which is also a pointer to the fact that the problem could be solved by the end of the twentieth century. Finally, the chapter discusses the interaction of Muslims in Dagbon and the Asante Kingdom.

The rest of the chapters (3-6) deal mainly with field research on the nature of Islam in Dagbon in this century. In chapter three the Islamic religious observances in Dagbon today are featured. The discussions here are centred on the five pillars of Islam and how they are observed.

Chapter four deals with the socio-religious aspects of Islam in Dagbon today. Generally the chapter deals with the life of Muslims in Dagbon in relation to rites of passage, "mixing", Islamic festivals and the roles played by the imams and Afanema in Dagbon society. Additionally the chapter discusses the social life of the Dagbamba and how this life has been influenced by the Islamic culture.

Chapter five deals with the emergence of sects and the political life of Muslims in Dagbon. Discussions in this

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chapter centre on the main Islamic sects in Dagbon and the posts occupied by Muslim leaders in Yendi, the capital of Dagbon traditional area. It is indeed a chapter that shows the differences among Muslims of Dagbon religiously, politically and traditionally.

The sixth chapter is the last of the chapters and it discusses Islam, Education and Christian missions in Dagbon. The chapter deals mainly with Islamic education vis a vis secular education, English/Arabic schools and the interaction between Muslims and Christians in Dagbon.

Finally there is a conclusion which discusses the major factors that have contributed to the influence of Islam on Dagbon and the projections for the future.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to all those who contributed in diverse ways in making this piece of work a reality. To this end I wish to express great indebtedness to Dr. Elom Dovlo, lecturer in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, for supervising this work. He contributed immensely in getting this work come true. Throughout his supervisory role, he made very useful comments and suggestions that have contributed in no small measure in making this piece of work possible.

I should admit that the field trips that I took throughout Dagbon was by no means a source of pleasure. On the contrary it was a difficult and trying experience because during this period, Dagbon was engulfed in serious chieftaincy disputes and the people were not willing to talk to strangers more so when they come from the capital. However, I managed to obtain the services of some enlightened Dagbamba who were able to convince certain personalities and opinion leaders to talk to me. These include Mr. Mahami, Alhaji Shani Mahamah, Alhaji Yahya (Chairman) and all the people of "Mongu tibil gbini" all of Yendi. Others are Alhaji Yussuf Ajura, Alhaji Ibrahim Mahamah, Alhaji Basha, Alhaji Abdul-Majeed Hussein and Ahmed Suleman. To all these people, I deem it an obligation of good conscience to show gratitude for their contributions.

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I wish also to express my gratitude to all the Afanema I interviewed, the heads of all Christian missions in Dagbon I talked to and the staff of the Ghana Education Service who made available to me important documents that enabled me to write certain aspects of the thesis.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Introduction : : : iii
Abstract : : : viii
Acknowledgement : : : ix
List of Tables : : : xvi
List of Appendices : : : xvii

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE DAGBAMBA AND PRE-ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN DAGBON : : 1
(i) Origins of Dagbon : : 1
(ii) Pre-Islamic Traditions in Dagbon : 26
(a) The Supreme Being : : 26
(b) Traditional Worship : : 29
(c) Ancestor Veneration : : 39
(d) Witchcraft : : 44
(e) Magic : : 55
(iii) Rites of Passage in Dagbon : : 59
(a) Birth : : 59
(b) Marriage : : 64
(c) Death : : 70
(iv) Values : : 75
(v) Summary : : 77

CHAPTER TWO

THE ADVENT OF ISLAM IN DAGBON : : 85
(i) The Coming of the Traders : : 85
(ii) The Coming of the Hausa Muslims : 93
(iii) Islam and Chiefs in Dagbon : : 99
(iv) Na-Zanjina and Islam : : 108
(v) Muslim Leaders and Their Titles : 119
(vi) Why the Dagbamba Accepted Islam : 130
(vii) The Introduction of Arabic Schools : 135
(viii) Islam in Other Towns and Villages in Dagbon 141

University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd)

PAGE

(ix) "Mixing" as an Aspect of Islam in Dagbon : 144
(x) Interaction Between Muslims in Dagbon and the Ashanti Kingdom : : 146
(xi) Summary : : 149

CHAPTER THREE

ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES IN DAGBON TODAY : 152
(i) The Five Pillars of Islam : : 152
(ii) The Shahāda (Confession of Faith) : 153
(iii) Salāt (Ritual Prayer) : : 158
(iv) Siyām or Saum (Fasting) : : 171
(v) Zakāt (Almsgiving) : : 177
(vi) Hajj (Pilgrimage) : : 182
(vii) Summary : : 192

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF ISLAM IN DAGBON TODAY : 196
(i) The General Life Cycle of Muslims in Dagbon (Rites of Passage) : 196
(a) Birth and Naming Ceremonies : 196
(b) Marriage : : 211
(c) Divorce : : 237
(d) Death and Mourning Rites : 241
(ii) "Mixing" in Dagbon : : 253
(iii) Bugum Festival (Fire Festival) : 259
(iv) Damba (The Prophet's Birthday Ceremony) : 261
(v) Kpini (Guinea Fowl Festival) : : 264
(vi) The Significance of the Imams and Afanema : 265
(vii) Summary : : 277

University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd)

PAGE

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EMERGENCE OF SECTS AND THE POLITICAL LIFE OF MUSLIMS IN DAGBON : : 286
(i) Sects in Dagbon : : 286
(a) The Tijaniyya : : 287
(b) The Ahlal-Sunnah (Munchire) : 298
(c) The Ahmadiyya Movement : : 302
(d) The Shi'ah : : 309
(ii) Muslim Offices in Yendi : : 335
(iii) Summary : : 339

CHAPTER SIX

ISLAM, EDUCATION AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN DAGBON : 344
(i) Islamic Education (Makaranta) in the Early Days : : 344
(ii) English Schools : : 346
(iii) The Education Act of 1961 : : 347
(iv) The English/Arabic School System : 355
(v) Problems of the English/Arabic School System 375
(vi) Achievements of the English/Arabic School System : : 381
(vii) Muslim and Christian Organisation in Dagbon 383
(viii) Summary : : 390

CONCLUSION : : : : 397

APPENDICES

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LIST OF TABLES

TABLE			PAGE
I	Arabic roots of some Dagbani Words	:	7
II	Names of the months in Arabic & Dagbani	:	13
III	Muslim leaders and their titles	:	120
IV	Names of the five daily prayers in Arabic and Dagbani and the times they are observed	:	162
V	Names given to Muslim children in Dagbon, real and local Muslim names	:	199
VI	Arabic schools which started the English/Arabic school system	:	357
VII	Statistics of English/Arabic schools, teachers and enrolment between 1973 and 1981	:	363
VIII	Distribution of Churches in Dagbon	:	389

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 'A' - Newspaper Cutting (The Guardian - Nigeria): "For Adam Yakubu, Mecca is a Walking Distance".

APPENDIX 'B' (1) - Newspaper Cutting on - "Dagbon Marks Damba in Peace and Unity".

APPENDIX 'B' (2) - Newspaper Cutting on - "The Signficance of Damba, Views from Yendi".

APPENDIX 'C' - Letter from Sang Youth Youth Association appealing for the change of their English School to Arabic/English School.

APPENDIX 'D' - Letter from the Ghana Education Service regarding schooling on Thursdays and Fridays.

APPENDIX 'E' - Newspaper Cutting on Alhaji Ibrahim Basha's (Chairman of the National Council of the Islamic Education Unit) address to Muslims.

APPENDIX 'F' (1) - Interview guide (General, both literate and illiterate).

APPENDIX 'F' (2) - Questionnaire for literate Dagbamba.

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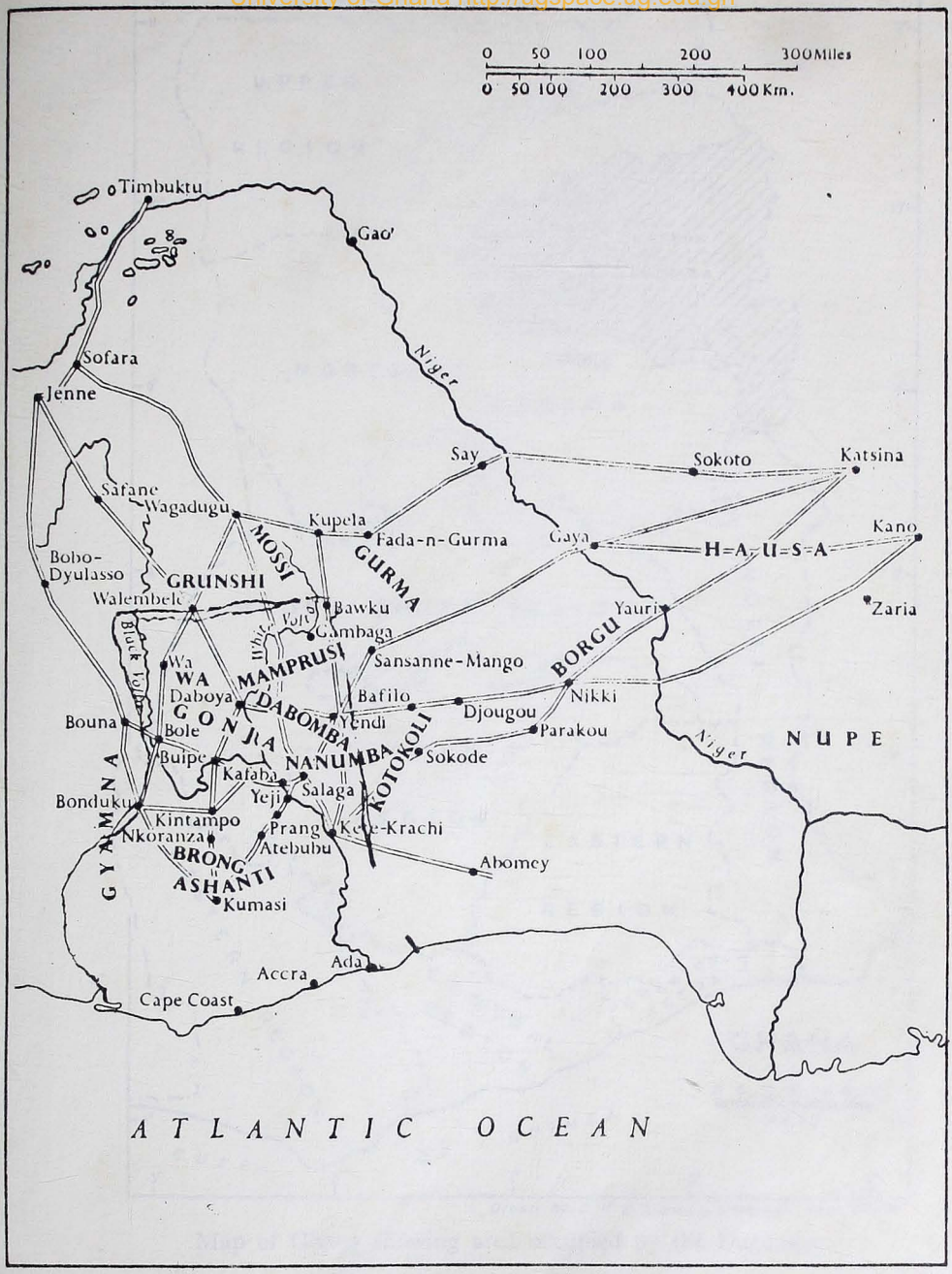

FIG. I. ROUTES TO THE VOLTA BASIN

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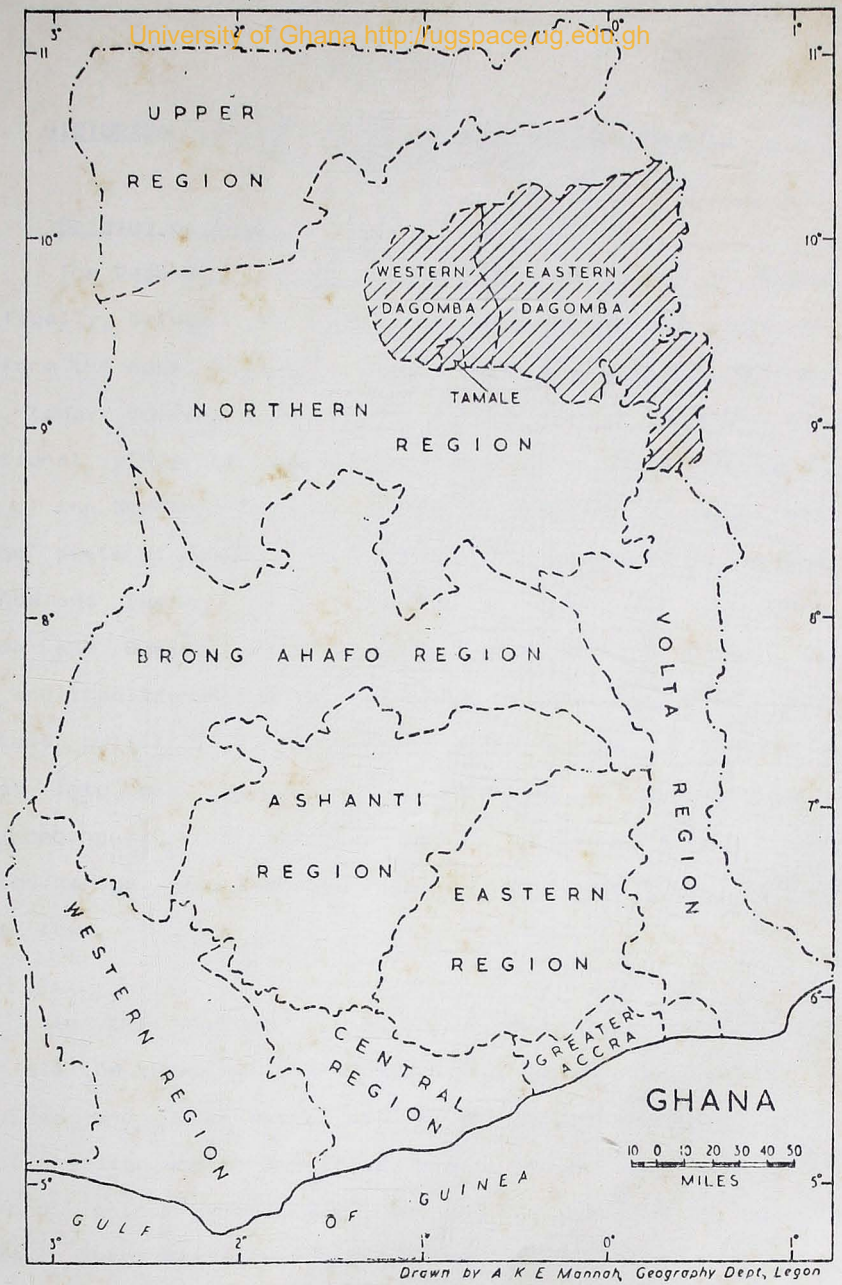

Map of Ghana showing area occupied by the Dagombas

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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE DAGBAMA AND PRE-ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN DAGBON

1.01 Origins of Dagbon

The Dagbamba live in the North-Eastern part of Ghana, specifically between 8.45° and longitudes 0.50° and and 1.30°. They form the most populous single ethnic group in Northern Ghana today numbering a little over half a million. The traditional state of Dagbon covers an area of about 8082 square miles of the Northern Region. Dagbon is bounded on the north by the state of Mamprusi, on the east by the tribes of Chakosi, Konkonba and Basari, on the south by the state of Adjah, Nanumba and Gonja, and on the west by the state of Eniga. The royal and traditional capital of Dagbon is Yendi where the most important political authority, the Ya-na resides. The state is divided into six districts as follows: Tamale, Yendi, Tolon/Kumbungu, Savelugu/Nanton, Zabzugu/Tatale and Gusheigu/Karaga. The Dagbamba refer to Yendi as Na-ya meaning chiefs' town.

1.02 In the southern part of Ghana. chiefs sit on stools but in all the three regions of the north which are, Northern, Upper-East and Upper-West, chiefs sit on skins especially the skin of the lion which signifies might, power and authority. The Yendi skin, historically is one of the oldest political systems in Ghana having existed for the past four centuries.

1.03 Very little of the pre-colonial history of the Dagbamba has been recorded and students of Dagbon history have

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had to rely heavily on oral tradition which is preserved by the medium of drum chant. This is recited solemnly and liturgically from time to time but especially during the Damba[1] festival celebrations. The most important characteristic of these drummers is the gift of retentive memory which enables them to chant the history of Dagbon in story form[2], and this talent is normally passed on from father to son. As a result of the important role drummers play in Dagbon society, there is always a chief drummer called the Namo-na. However, this title is only conferred on the chief drummer of the Ya-na. All other chief drummers in Dagbon are called Lun-na.

1.04 The origin of the Dagbamba is centred on a legendary leader known as Toha-zie meaning the red hunter. However, the earliest writer on Dagbon, Tamakloe, considers the Dagbamba to be descendants of Ad, a race which inhabited Arabia many years before the advent of Islam. In pages 1-2 of his book, A Brief history of the Dagbamba People he wrote:[3]

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1 It is a festival celebrated by the Dagbamba, Nanumba, Mamprusi, Gonja and Wala to commemorate the birth of the Prophet of Islam.

2 Normally when the drum history is chanted, it is punctuated by the crash of drums and beaten together to mark the different periods and passages of the recital.

3 Tamakloe, E.F., 1931. Brief History of the Dagbamba People, Accra.

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"It is stated that, after the confusion of tongues, the tribe of Ad, the son of Uz, the son of Aram, son of Shem, son of Noah settled in the province Hadramaut where their posterity greatly multiplied. This tribe continued to worship God but in the process of time they fell from the worship of true God into idolatry. God seeing this sent the Prophet Heber to preach and reclaim them. But when they refused to acknowledge his mission, God sent a hot and suffering wind, which blew seven nights and eight days together and which entering into their nostrils pass through their bodies and destroyed them all save the very few who had believed in Heber. This tribe we learned, were of prodigious stature, the tallest of them being said to be a hundred cubits or a hundred and fifty feet in height and the least of them sixty cubits or ninety feet. This tribe, it is said wandered towards the East and the West, settling in uninhabited countries, till they arrived in the country which is today called 'Dagbon' and their progeny were called Dagbamba."

1.05 Tamakloe attributes the name of Dagbon to the skin on which the Ad fetish priests sat. Skin in Dagbani is gbon, and according to him, "the chiefs or fetish priests amongst these settlers sat on cow skins and used various ornamented lion and tiger skins as their authority they called 'Adagbon' meaning Ada's skin hence the name of the country now corrupted to Dagbon and the inhabitants Dagbamba". Tamakloe also believes that the Dagbamba are descendants of Noah and that when they arrived in ancient Dagbon they stayed at various places including Gunayili near Karaga and Yoggo near Savelugu. He also referred to these settlers as giants known as Tiawomia in Dagbon.[1]

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[1] In some parts of Dagbon these giants are referred to as Kondar.

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1.06 According to Alhaji Ibrahim Mahamah (a popular Tamale based politician and lawyer by profession), in a pamphlet entitled 'The Origins of the Dagbamba of greater Dagbon', Tamakloe offers little evidence in arriving at the conclusion that the Dagbamba are the descendants of the Ad. He referred to Tamakloe's assertion that modern Dagbon was once inhabited by giants known as Tiawomia and that certainly the presence of giants in ancient Dagbon without further proof is not sufficient ground to arrive at the conclusion that the giants of the Ad were necessarily progenitors of the giants of ancient Dagbon. Ibrahim Mahamah went further to state that a careful examination of the culture and language of the Dagbamba would rather give support to the view that the Dagbamba might have been descendants of the Ad or of some other Arabian people. Stressing on the language aspect, he stated that Dagbani has a multitude of words which take their origin from Arabic and that some of the words are so fundamental that they cannot be said to have been acquired in recent times when the Dagbamba had contacts with Arabia at the advent of Islam just around the middle of the 17th century.

1.07 Some of the Dagbani words which Ibrahim Mahamah regarded as fundamental or crucial are: ninsala or yibunadam (human being), asiba (morning), aniya (intention), zuli (tail), gari (to get confused), alahziba (strange), ashili (secret), halli (bad temper), alaafee (health), albalaayi (calamity), saawara (consultation), and the days of the week. He contends

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that these words as set out in table 1 below and many other Dagbani words not included in the table, are clearly words which have their origin in Arabic.

1.08 Ibrahim Mahamah further stressed that in Dagbani there are no other words which can be said to be similies of the words in Table 1 and that the ancient Dagbamba cannot be said to be a people if they had no words denoting a human being, the various parts of the day, the days of the week, intention, the tail of an animal, health, secret, consultation or something strange etc. In his view therefore, these words were not acquired by the Dagbamba through their contact with Islamic Arabia but by virtue of their origin from the Ad people who belonged to the pre-Islamic Southern Arabia extending from Umman at the mouth of the Persian or Arab Gulf to Hadramaut and Yemen at the Southern end of the Red Sea. It is also his view that these Dagbani words are as old as the Dagbamba and that they arrived where they are today with these words even though some of the words have significantly changed in their form and sound but their meaning remain the same as is noted in Table 1.

1.09 Using oral traditions of Mamprugu[1] and Dagbon, Ibrahim Mahamah in a second submission to buttress his views, used the colour of the aboriginal Dagbamba who were fair in complexion to show that they were of Arab descent. According to this

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[1] It is the indigenous name for the area inhabited by Mamprusis. Both Mamprusis and Dagbamba come from the same roots.

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TABLE 1

ARABIC ROOTS OF SOME DAGBANI WORDS

DAGBANI	MEANING	ARABIC	MEANING
1. Saawara	consultation	Mushaawara	consultation, deliberation
2. Albalaayi	calamity	al-balaay	distress, misfortune, plague
3. Alaafee	health	al-aafiya	health; well-being
4. Halli	bad temper	haala	condition, state, situation, fuss etc.
5. Ashili	secret	Assir	secret
6. Asiba	morning	Assabah	morning
7. Alahziba	surprise	al-ajiiba	surprise; strange
8. Ngari	to get confused	garra	to surprise; dazzle
9. Zuli	tail	Zailún	tail; appendage
10. Ninsala	human being	Insan	human being
11. Zuliya	offspring, descendant	Zurriyya	descendant
12. Niya	intention	niya	intention
13. Aniya	thought	niya	intention
14. Yibunadam	human being	Ibn Adam	Son of Adam; human being
15. Gaafara	excuse, pardon	Gafara	to forgive
16. Yigsi	to get up, wake up	ishi	get up, wake up

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TABLE 1 (continued)

DAYS OF THE WEEK

1. Alahri dalli	Sunday	Yawm al-ahad	Sunday
2. Atani dalli	Monday	Yawn al-ithnayn	Monday
3. Atalata dalli	Tuesday	Yawn al-Thalatha	Tuesday
4. Alaba dalli	Wednesday	Yawn al-arba'a	Wednesday
5. Alamisi dalli	Thursday	Yawn al-khamis	Thursday
6. Alizimma dalli	Friday	Yawn al-Jumu'	Friday
7. Asibri dalli	Saturday	Yawn al-Sabt	Saturday

tradition, the Tindamba[1] who were the original settlers of Dagbon were killed by the invaders who were described as 'red'. Usually in Dagbon society people who are fair in complexion are referred to as 'red' e.g. Toha-zie (Red hunter). Ibrahim Mahamah further stated that since a majority of the direct descendants of the first Tindamba continue to be fair in complexion, it gives credence to the view that the aboriginal Dagbamba are descendants of the Ad or some other race of Arabia who spoke Arabic and were fair in complexion.

---

1 This is a two-word or compound name. 'Tin' means earth or land and 'damba' means owners. Both therefore mean owners of the earth/land. Its singular form is Tindana who is referred to as the earth priest.

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1.10 Ibrahim Mahamah agreed with Tamakloe in a third submission that the fire festival known as Bugum[1] of the Dagbamba emanated from Noah. Furthermore, the lunar month of the fire festival is the beginning of the year in Dagbon, Mamprugu and Nanung[2] which tallies with the beginning of the year in Arabia; and that during this period new resolutions are made and pieces of food are placed in short dividing walls in their houses for the dead. This practice, according to Ibrahim Mahamah, is one of the practices which Tamakloe refers to as their fall 'from the worship of one true God into idolatry' as indicated in 1.04. He further stated that like the Arabs, the Dagbamba have twelve lunar months in a year and even though the names of their months differ, their year begin and end with the same year with these months having either twenty nine or thirty days on both sides. He quotes H.A. Blair in Tamakloe's book as follows:

> "The big annual festival of Konkonba and other complete pagans, is their Bugum festival, the burning of the bush and fire rites in general. Therefore we are safe in assuming as a certainty that the Bugum festival existed in Dagbon prior to Muslim immigration"[3]

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1 This festival is celebrated annually. Torches are normally lit amidst drumming and dancing to the outskirts of the town or village where these torches are thrown away but especially on tree tops.

2 Nanung refers to the land area occupied by the Nanumbas who live South of Dagbon. Their language is very similar to Dagbani.

3 This was quoted from H.A. Blair's book - Essay on the Dagomba people, p.50. This assertion by Blair has been corroborated by a group of Dagbamba elders who normally converge at a spot in Yendi popularly called "Mongu tibilgbini" meaning under the small mango tree.

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1.11 The assertion by both Tamakloe and Ibrahim Mahamah that the Dagbamba originated from the Ad or some other Arab tribe is far fetched. The history of Dagbon has been preserved through the medium of drum chant which is solemnly and liturgically recited from time to time but in none of these chants is it indicated that the Dagbamba are the progenitors of some Arab tribe. The drum chant which is highly reliable among the Dagbamba rather traces the roots of the Dagbamba to Zamfara in the Sokoto State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where Toha-Zie, the Red Hunter is believed to have emerged.

1.12 Secondly most of the words enumerated by Ibrahim Mahamah in his submission are words that are not common only to the Dagbamba, but to Mamprusis, Kusasis, Nanumbas, Walas, Talensis and indeed all the tribes in Northern Ghana.[1] Some of these words also occur among most of the tribes of Muslim West Africa in their daily lives and this can only be attributed to Islamic influence. According to the minutes of the Conference of Dagbamba chiefs held at Yendi from the 21st to the 29th of November, 1930 to enquire into and record the Constitution of the State of Dagbon which was recorded by A. Duncan-Johnstone, the Commissioner of the Southern Province in 1931, observed that:

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[1] Northern Ghana in this context means the whole of the northern part of Ghana comprising the Northern, Upper East and West regions.

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> "It is interesting to note that the Dagbamba language is particularly full of Hausa words and the Hausa influence amongst the ruling dynasty must at one time have been very strong, in fact its influence in manner, dress and language can be seen to this day".

The above quotation suggests that as a result of the presence of Hausa Muslims in the court of the Ya-na's since Na-zanjina's[1] period, the Hausa language which also has so many Arabic words, crept into Dagbani and as these words were constantly used, they automatically replaced the Dagbani words. The Dagbamba did not have names for the days of the week but they identified each day with the village that was observing its market day. From Sunday to Saturday each of the big towns and big villages observe its market day and the whole week is referred to in Dagbani as da-kulo[2] which means 'one market week'. Sometimes the words naba and bakwoi are used to mean 'one week' but the latter is a Hausa word which is commonly used by the Dagbamba. The arrival of the Muslims who had names for the days of the week gradually influenced the Dagbani language and today most Dagbamba use these Arabic names for the days of the week.

1.13 It is also noticed that the words enumerated by Ibrahim Mahama form only a minute fraction of the totality of Dagbani words. Therefore, basing the argument on these

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1 Na-Zanjina was the first Muslim to become Ya-na and during his reign Muslims enjoyed his support and confidence.

2 Da-kulo is not commonly used especially in the urban areas in Dagbon. However in the rural areas it is common.

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few words will not be a sound and convincing one. Nationals of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi speak Swahili, a language which has quite a considerable amount of Arabic words. However, these people do not trace their origin to the Arabs just because their language consists of several Arabic words. What is generally attributed to the existence of Arabic words in Swahili is the Muslim influence that the area has experienced for quite a long time.

1.14 The Arabic words that are contained in Dagbani can be attributed to the fact that Muslims interacted with the Dagbamba for quite a long period of time and the severity of interaction during this period caused the original Dagbani words used in place of the enumerated Arabic words to die away. It is also noted that the Hausa Muslims who settled in Dagbon interacted so much with the Dagbamba and even if they did not speak Arabic, Hausa contains many Arabic words which the Dagbamba picked up and have become part of Dagbani. The word '<u>bakwoi</u>' already treated in 1.12 is an example of the Hausa words used in Dagbani today.

1.15 The claim by Ibrahim Mahamah stated in 1.09 that the fair complexion of the aboriginal Dagbamba gives credence to the view that they were of Arab complexion is far fetched. If the aboriginal Dagbamba were of Arab complexion as he claims, then the majority of Dagbamba would have been fair in complexion, which is not the case. So far as the drum history is concerned it is only the legendary leader, Toha-Zie who is

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described as 'red' which refers to a fair complexioned person. Granted that the aboriginal Dagbamba were fair in complexion and that they killed all the Tindamba and took control, it would stand to reason that Dagbon society would have been scattered with halfcastes and many more fair complexioned people, unless it can be proved that the colour of an Arab fades in tropical Africa with time.

1.16 The contention by Ibrahim Mahamah that since the Dagbamba observe the fire festival (Bugum) which emanated from Noah and also that since both the Arabs and Dagbamba observe the lunar calendar, then the Dagbamba must be the descendants of the Ad or some other Arab tribe is an over simplification. Firstly, the origin of the fire festival is a bit obscure because whereas some people trace it to Noah, others trace it to an incident in Dagbon where a chief's favourite son got missing and was found by torch bearing search party at night. The chief therefore instituted this festival to commemorate the incident.[1] However, it is generally agreed in Dagbon that this festival existed among the Dagbamba before the arrival of Muslims.

1.17 Secondly, it is a fact that both the Arabs and the Dagbamba observe the lunar calendar, but the names given to the various months by both groups differ. If some of the words

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[1] See 4.76 for details on the fire festival.

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used by the Arabs tally with those that the Dagbamba use, then at least two or more of the names of the months in Arabic should agree with those used by the Dagbamba. In any case the names that the Dagbamba gave to the months are all related to Islam, which is a clear case of Islamic influence as indicated in Table II below.

Table II

NAMES OF THE MONTHS IN ARABIC AND DAGBANI

ARABIC	DAGBANI
Muharram	Bugum
Safar	Damba-bla
RabT' Awal	Damba
Rabi-Thani	Bandacheni
Jumād-Awal	Gambandah
Jumād-Thani	Kpini-bla
Rajab	Kpini
Sha'bān	Nolori-bla
Ramadān	Nolori
Shawwal	Koyurichugu
Dhul-Qada	Chimsi-bla
Dhul-Hijja	Chimsi

From Table II it can be clearly noted that the names given to the various lunar months are different between the Arabs and the Dagbamba. However, the names that the Dagbamba give to these months follow an Islamic pattern. The third month of the

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Islamic calendar is Rabi-Awal, the month in which the Prophet of Islam was born, and precisely the 12th day. The Dagbamba named this month Damba and precisely on the 12th day of this month, Damba is celebrated to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet. The month before Damba is called Damba-bla which means 'small Damba' which also refers to the month prior to Damba. The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is Ramadan during which Muslims all over the world observe the fast. In Dagbani it is called Nolori meaning fasting. The month prior to it is Nolori-bla meaning 'small fasting'. From these few examples it can be noted that the observance of the lunar calendar by the Dagbamba which tallies with that of the Arabs is a case of the influence of Islam and not as a result of the contention that the Dagbamba are the descendants of the Arabs.

1.18 The most common tradition of origin preserved in the traditional drum chants centre on a legendary leader known as Toha-Zie, the Red Hunter. It is believed that Toha-Zie travelled from Zamfara in the Sokoto State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Melle empire.[1] While there Toha-Zie undertook hunting expeditions and in one of such trips far away in the bush, he came suddenly upon a hut where he found an old woman, whom he asked for a drink of water. The old woman explained that there was no water because an enormous bush cow lurked near their pool, which was their main source of water

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[1] This refers to Mali of the Western Sudanese States.

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and prevented all who came to draw water from it. Toha-Zie asked for two gourds which he took one under each arm, and went to the pool. As he dipped them into the water they made a large gurgling sound which the bush cow heard, and at which it bellowed. As the bush cow charged from its cover, Toha-Zie shot it with an arrow and killed it. He then took the tail and the horns to the old woman who greeted him with joy with the other inhabitants of the village.

1.19 The headman of the village took Toha-Zie to the chief of Melle and told him how Toha-Zie had killed the much dreaded bush cow. The chief of Melle was happy about this tremendous feat and solicited Toha-Zie's assistance in his wars against his enemies. Toha-Zie readily agreed to assist the chief and in the wars that he took part the enemies were put to flight, terrified by the tremendous feats performed by him. On his return to Melle the chief welcomed him as a hero and offered him his choice of any of his daughters as a wife. Toha-Zie chose a lame woman among the lot known as Pagwobiga. It is a two-word name with paga meaning woman and wobiga meaning lame. There might have been something special about Pagwobiga that led Toha-Zie to choose her in preference to the other princesses. After this ceremony, Toha-Zie informed the chief that he wanted to leave Melle and despite protests from the chief, he refused to change his mind and he left, carrying Pagwobiga on his shoulders.

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1.20 The old woman whom Toha-Zie met first as indicated in 1.18 was not happy about Toha-Zie's departure but she could not stop him. However, she chose three young men to follow Toha-Zie to find out where he would settle. The young men carried with them seeds of a miraculous gourd and followed Toha-Zie until he reached a cave, which he entered. The young men waited until they made sure that Toha-Zie was making it his home, and then they planted the magic gourd which in course of many years grew until it reached the old woman's hut.

1.21 Many years later when another chief had succeeded Pagwobiga's father, Melle went to war with its enemies and suffered some setbacks. The chief needed assistance to continue the war but he could not obtain it until the old woman, whose tale of years must by this time have been phenomenal, came to the chief asking him to look for Toha-Zie if he was alive. Messengers were quickly despatched to follow the guard plant in order to get to Toha-Zie's abode. When they got to the mouth of the cave, they stopped and called out loudly the name of Toha-Zie but there was no response. Just when they were about to enter the cave, a tall and powerful youth, dressed as a hunter, met them and announced that he was the son of Toha-Zie, who was dead by then. When the messengers informed him of their mission the young hunter slung his bow on his shoulder and followed them back to the chief of Melle, who explained to him the parlous state of the wars. He agreed to assist the chief as his father had done for his predecessor and

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when he appeared on the battle field, he caused a debacle in the enemy's ranks, and the chief of Melle was victorious.

1.22 The chief of Melle wished to give the young hunter a wife but he refused and left. Although the oral traditions are unanimous that Toha-Zie and his son assisted the chief of Melle in his wars against his enemies, they are silent as to the particular chiefs to whom these services were rendered. Nehemia Levtzim, writing on the emergence of Mali wrote:

> "Certainly Namadi Kani[1] recruited these hunters' associations to further his own political aims at a period when the Malinke country was introduced into the orbit of the continental trade system ...".[2]

This quotation which proves that a chief in Mali used the services of hunters to achieve political gains also goes to suggest that Toha-Zie and his son were hunters who assisted some chiefs of Mali.

1.23 Toha-Zie's son travelled through the bush for many days until he reached some thickly wooded country where he laid down in wait for possible game, but instead of game, he saw a graceful maiden carrying a calabash to the river side. He loved the maiden at first sight and leapt to his feet, while

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1 He was a member of the Keita clan of the Malinke.

2 Nehemia Levtzion: Ancient Ghana and Mali, Methuen and Company Ltd., London EC4, 1974, p.57.

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the maiden modestly run away. He however stopped her and asked her what village she had come from and she replied she came from Biung and that her father was the Tindana. She took the young hunter to her father who cried at the sight of him, a kpugi numbu na (You have brought a wonderful fellow to the village!) and from this time Toha-Zie's son was known as Kpugnumbu. He settled at Biung and married Sisabigi, the maiden daughter of the Tindana.

1.24 One day Kpugnumbu asked Sisabigi, "How does your father dress when he goes out to make sacrifice to the fetish?" She told him her father rode a donkey carrying a spear and a gungong (drum). That night Kpugnumbu mounted a donkey, took a spear and drum and rode down to the Tindana's house beating the drum. As he approached his father-in-law, he came out and Kpugnumbu killed him with the spear, cut off his head and threw it into the Tindana's younger brother's compound, he being the natural successor. Kpugnumbu then arrayed himself in the beads and skin of the dead Tindana and returned home. The next morning the son of the Tindana found his father dead and following the trail of blood, he reached his uncle's compound. This started a battle in which Kpugnumbu was so skillfully impartial in supporting first one side and then the other, that he was at length able to overcome both of them, and they agreed that "This strong warrior must be our next Tindana, seeing that he has now married into the Tindana's line." Thus, Kpugnumbu was proclaimed Tindana and in due

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course Sisabigi gave birth to a son whom she named Namzisheli which means "The chief has no strength", but literally it means, "The chief knows nothing", referring to her unfortunate father. She also gave birth to another son who was named Nyarigili, meaning "The melting" referring possibly to her approaching end, for she died soon after giving birth to this child.

1.25 Kpugnumbu was such a great warrior that he fought against many savage tribes and subdued them to the admiration of Abdul-Rahman, the chief of Grumah. He was probably a Muslim because of his name and also it is noted that the Grumahs are known to have embraced Islam in their large numbers. The Grumahs are also known to have emerged in Dagbon as clerics in the 17th century. Abdul-Rahman, in appreciation of Kpugrumbu's feats offered him his daughter called Suhuyini meaning "The faithful one". It's literal meaning is "One heart". Kpugnumbu accepted the offer and this woman gave birth to Na-Gbewa, the most revered chief in Dagbon. He is also held in high esteem by the Mamprusi, Nanumba, Moshi and Kusasi.[1] At the death of Kpugnumbu, Na-Gbewa migrated from Biung with a large following to Pusiga in the Upper-East Region of Ghana near the Ghana-Togo border.

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1 The Dagbamba, Mamprusi, Nanumba and Moshi consider Na-Gbewa as their great ancestor. The Teacher Training College at Pusiga is named after him, a non-political group formed by a group of Dagbamba in Tamale call the group Gbewa Study Group and there is a football club in Tamale called Gbewa United.

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1.26 When Na-Gbewa was old, infirm and blind, he thought seriously about his successor. Meanwhile two of his warrior sons, Zirli and Fogo had fought courageously in Grumah land. However, he desired that Fogo should succeed him and so he called for Fogo's mother but the servant he sent to call Fogo's mother knew why Na-Gbewa was sending for her and as he did not like her, he rather called Zirli's mother. Zirli's mother came to Na-Gbewa and feigned to be Fogo's mother. Then Na-Gbewa said to her, "I am now old and nearing my death. Call therefore your son Fogo from the war, that I may place upon his shoulders the skin of the chieftainship. For if I have not myself given to him the skin, Zirli will seize it by force." She then sent a secret messager to Zirli, informing him what Na-Gbewa intended. So Fogo was invited by Zirli to a meeting and he caused a pit to be dug where Fogo was to sit, and he covered it with skins, upon which he placed a cushion. When Fogo arrived, Zirli ushered him to his seat and he fell into the pit and hot pito[1] was poured on him and he died.

1.27 When the elders of Na-Gbewa heard of Fogo's fate, they were sad but they could not confront Zirli because he was powerful and neither did they have the courage to inform Na-Gbewa because they were aware Fogo was his favourite son. However, one of the elders called Gushie-Na had a group of

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It is an alcoholic drink that is common in the Northern Regions of Ghana. It is brewed from corn and Guinea corn. It takes three days to brew.

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musicians who used the lugunyini (large trumpet) with a low note, the yuya (small trumpet) with a high note and drums. When Fogo died, he caused his musicians to play a tune normally associated with death and a song entitled 'Zirli Ku Fogo' (Zirli has killed Fogo). The lugunyini trumpeters also groaned the note of sorrow and the drummers beat forth the cry 'Mbaye, Mbaye (my father, my father) which is normally cried out in times of distress. At this time Na-Gbewa was sitting in front of his house, and wen he heard of this message carried faintly to him on the clear air by Gushie-Na's musicians, he caused himself to be swallowed up by the earth which took pity on his grief. The mystery that surrounded his disappearance into the earth has won him the greatest ancestor of the Dagbamba, Mamprusi and Nanumba.

1.28 Zirli therefore claimed the nam but he was opposed by Katchiogo, his elder sister. Zirli decided to tame his sister by frightening her and to this end he went with "bull-roarers" to Katchiogo's house in the night. These "bull-roarers" made such terrifying noise that Katchiogo could not withstand and she had to flee into a hollow gun-yogu (Kapok tree). She was greatly terrified that she returned to Zirli penitent and he conferred on her the chieftainship of Gundogo[1]; and the woman who is the chief of Gundogo today is head of all the women chiefs in Dagbon. The significance of women chiefs in Dagbon

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1 This nam is so called as a result of the hollow tree Katchiogo fled to.

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has gradually waned with the times due mainly to the chieftaincy disputes and the insignificant roles they play.[1]

1.29 When Zirli died there arose a succession dispute between Tohugu and Sitobu over the nam. Tohugu claimed it as the eldest surviving son of Na-Gbewa. The rest of the sons of Na-Gbewa, Mantambo, Biemoni, Buguyeligu and Sibie supported Sitobu in his bid for the nam. The dispute became so insoluble that both Tohugu and Sitobu had to resort to arms to settle their differences. The call to arms led to the dismemberment of ancient Dagbon. Interestingly enough, this fratricidal war which characterised the selection of a successor between Tohugu and Sitobu has since become a characteristic feature of Dagbon politics. During this confusion, the family was split up with Sitobu moving out to found the state of Dagbon. The only daughter of Na-Gbewa, Katchiogo or Yantaure founded the Moshi state in the present day Republic of Burkina Faso. Tohugu, the third son of Na-Gbewa established the Mamprusi state. It is therefore no wonder that people of these states speak related languages hence they are referred to as the Moshi-Dagbamba group.

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1 Women chiefs in Dagbon do not play roles as their men counterparts. Some of them even stay in seclusion throughout their chiefship. It is therefore not surprising to note that some people are even not aware of their existence in Dagbon.

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1.30 At the end of the dynastic war between Sitobu and his brother Tohugu, Sitobu briefly stayed at Gambaga. From there he and his people moved south into a comparatively populous country of the aboriginal Dagbamba. It was at Nambrugu near Karaga that Sitobu and his followers finally arrived. He took for himself and his brothers modern Dagbon which was inhabited by the aboriginal Dagbamba ruled by the fetish priests called the Tindamba. Sometime after Sitobu had arrived in his new Kingdom, his first son, Nyagsi waged war against the indigenous people, the Tindamba. His wars were initially confined to the northern part of Dagbon. It was when his father relinquished to him the nam that he widened the scope of his conquest. His wars of conquest were totally successful for he fought and conquered without exception, all the Tindamba against whom he pitched his invading forces. He turned Dagbon into a single political unit with himself as the na in charge.

1.31 From available evidence the Dagbamba settled at Yan-Dabari[1], a village now in ruins about fifty kilometres north-east of Tamale. During the reign of Na-Dariziogo, the eleventh chief of Dagbon, the Dagbon army suffered setbacks at the hands of Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa, chief of the Gonjas. After the harassment by Ndewura jakpa, Na-Luoro, the twelfth chief of Dagbon moved to the present capital, Yendi which is eighty

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa, Oxford, 1968, p.53.

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kilometres east of Tamale, in the 17th century.[1]

1.32 The scramble for Africa which swept across the African continent in the late 19th century had disastrous consequences on the state of Dagbon. In 1896, the Dagbamba army was defeated by the Germans at Adibo, a village fifteen kilometres south of Yendi. As a result of the Anglo-German treaty of 1900, the Dagbon state was partitioned between the British and the Germans. Yendi, the capital and seat of the Ya-na fell within German territory while more than two thirds of the state became part of the British territory. In 1914 after the outbreak of the first world war, the British forces entered and occupied Yendi. Subsequently, it became part of British mandated area of Togoland but was administered with the protectorate of Northern Territories. The old Kingdom was thus united and the Ya-na's territorial jurisdiction restored.

1.33 The over-all impact of foreign rule was to systematically destroy the power of the Ya-na. Before the advent of colonialism, the Ya-na was the Commander-in-chief of the Dagbon army, the power of final adjustment in all legal issues that arose within the state. Even though this seemingly autocratic power of the Ya-na lay within the bonds allowed by

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1 Phylis Ferguson: Patters of succession to high office in Dagomba, published in M. Crowder and I. Kione: West African Chiefs: Their changing status under colonial rule and indepedence, New York, 1970.

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the conventional norms of the culture and tradition of the Dagbamba people, nevertheless, it did not obscure the fact that the Ya-na wielded immense power in the political system. With the advent of colonialism, the Ya-na was made completely subservient to the British Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories to the extent that the Ya-na's power to appoint divisional chiefs and other subordinate chiefs had to be exercised with the tacit approval of the Chief Commissioner. This systematic reduction of the power of the Ya-na, and for that matter other divisional chiefs of Dagbon, was clearly demonstrated in a statement by the Chief Commissioner, Morris to an assembly of chiefs in Tamale in 1901 that since the Ya-na was in German territory, he Morris, was henceforth their head chief.[1]

1.34 It is important to note that the imposition of foreign rule had far reaching delibitating effects on the state of Dagbon. For the first time there was the existence of a superior power who could set aside the decisions of the Ya-na and the traditional king makers. As soon as local litigants realised the existence of such a power, they began to disrespect the decisions of the king makers and have tried to exploit this situation to serve their personal interests. Regrettably enough, this state of affairs was allowed to

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1 Public Record Office, Co.879/67, African (West) 633 page 159: Major Morris to Colonial Secretary, July, 1901.

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continue after independence. Today an objective assessment of the systematic destruction of the Yendi skin witnessed in recent years should be seen against this background.

PRE-ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN DAGBON

1.35 The traditional religion of the Dagbamba is hinged on their philosophy of life which is based on the belief that a good life consists of frequent sacrifices to the ancestors, honesty, generosity, friendliness and hard work. Dagbon traditional religion fits the classification adopted by some writers on African Traditional Religion such as Geoffrey Parrinder, Bolaji Idowu, R.S. Rattray, Edwin Smith etc. for the purpose of the study of religion in society. There is the belief in God (Supreme Being), divinities, spirits, ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine.

THE SUPREME BEING

1.36 The Dagbamba believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who transcends everything. They refer to this Supreme Being as Nawuni meaning Chief God. The word is made up of Na and Wuni, Na meaning chief and Wuni meaning God. The generic name for deity in general is Wuni and the Na qualifies it in order to distinguish the Supreme Being from the divinities. Their belief in the existence of God is manifested in the saying, 'Nawun beni' which means God exists, and sometimes male

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children are given a name that corresponds to this saying thus, 'Wunbei'. This name is quite popular with the typically indigenous Dagbon societies. The Supreme Being is also referred to as Yiko-lana (owner of authority), Natitam-lana (the Sovereign) and Tinduuma (our Lord). To the Dagbamba these names are not mere labels but are the experience they have about Nawuni, his nature and their belief in him.

1.37 One of the widely acknowledged functions of Nawuni in Dagbon society is that he provides the things that make life possible. He provides needs such as rain, sunshine, children, fertility and life which are so vital to the existence of man and the satisfaction of these needs have given rise to the names or attributes the Dagbamba gave to Nawuni. The belief that it is Nawuni who sustains man is manifested in the saying that "Nawuni ndihiri ninsala" which literally means, 'It is God who feeds man". Nawuni does not only sustain life but is thought of as one who created the world. To this end the Dagbamba refer to Nawuni as 'Bin-namda-Na' meaning the 'King of creation' and it is firmly held that it is he who created the arena of man's existence. The Dagbamba also believe that if the Supreme Being can satisfy the needs of man, and can be an answer to some of the questions of man's interaction with the world, then he must have certain characteristics e.g. that he must be powerful enough to satisfy the needs of man, and know all about man and his necessities. In a sense Nawuni must be omniscent and this attribute of omniscence is often expressed

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in vivid concrete terms like sight or hearing or knowledge or sometimes in proverbs and wise sayings. For example, if a Dagbana[1] is faced with a problem and he is pessimistic about it and complains to others, he is consoled with the statement, 'Di zaa bela Nawuni sani' which means that "Everything is with God." Similarly, if one is excited over some achievement or is fascinated by an incident, one refers to God as 'Yiko-Na' meaning 'chief of authority'. Sometimes people who are faced with diverse problems are consoled with the saying, "Nawuni ni ku di logo" meaning, "God will kill the problem." When a Dagbana is making a trip elsewhere or is just moving from his home to another place and back, he is greeted with "Nawuni ne labsa na" which literally means, "God will return you" and that is the way the Dagbamba wish each other a safe trip to and fro.

1.38 The Dagbamba are unable to describe what Nawuni looks like but they are able to say that as a result of his omnipotence and omniscience, he must be qualitatively and ontologically different from man. Very often the transcendence of Nawuni is expressed in the idea that he is in the heavens which is a concrete way of showing his otherness; sometimes too it is expressed in spacio-temporal categories such as Nawuni lives in a place beyond the reach of any human being; and at other times it is expressed by associating him with the cosmic

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[1] The word Dagbana refers to an individual, that is the singular form of Dagbamba.

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objects like the sun and the moon. That is why many traditional Dagbamba could not believe when it was reported in 1969 that the Americans had landed on the moon.

1.39 If Nawuni, in the conception of the Dagbamba, created the world and sustains it by providing man with his needs, then obviously he must be loving, compassionate and absolutely good. This idea of loving kindness is often expressed in prayers to him. The Dagbamba look on Nawuni as one who is full of pity by calling him 'Nambogo-Na' which literally means 'chief of pity'. They also believe that Nawuni never withdraws the good things he gives to man and that even in adversity Nawuni is still good. The Dagbamba believe that Nawuni delegates powers and functions to a host of spirits. It is also strongly believed that it is not possible for them to come into contact with Nawuni and the possibility open to them to serve him are through the 'yan-nema' (ancestors) and 'buga' (gods). Generally the notion of Nawuni in Dagbon society is that he must not be limited in anyway and he must be powerful enough to satisfy the needs of man. As to whether Nawuni is male or female, they are unable to say, but that since Dagbon tradition places woman in a subordinate position, thus making man superior to her, Nawuni must have male characteristics.

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

1.40 In their attempt to worship Nawuni indirectly, the Dagbamba dedicated places and objects to him, and these

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symbolic representations they venerated as means of seeking Nawuni's pleasure. When the Dagbamba are asked how they came by this form of worship, their only explanation is that it was passed on to them by their ancestors. There are sacred groves or sacred spots in some parts of Dagbon where worship is carried out. The worship entail the performance of rites which establish some communion with the spiritual realm such as prayer, the pouring of libation and animal sacrifice. These elements are those that constitute the main ingredients in worship in traditional Dagbon. The significance of this worship is that it helps to express certain social sentiments such as the needs of society and also the idea of dependence of the worshippers on their deity as a source of solution to some of their existential needs. Therefore worship stands at the heart of Dagbon traditional religion.

1.41 The sacred groves and spots are known as bugli and any worship here is meant to benefit the traditional area. The priest who oversees the bugli is the Tindana who is the 'earth priest'. At Yendi, the capital of the Dagbon traditional area, there are two sacred spots where the paramount deities of the area are domiciled. These deities are Paabo and Yanneli. The more powerful of these two is Paabo who is believed to exist in the form of a hyena. It is also believed that people who go there to worship with a black goat and a black fowl are likely

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to see Paabo.[1] This deity has overall responsibility for the protection and prosperity of the state of Dagbon. Yan-neli, according to tradition, is a representation of the mother of the first Ya-na who was a Konkonba. This deity is believed to exist in stone form and it seeks the continuity of the state of Dagbon. It seems to me that Yan-neli, which is the representation of the mother of the first Ya-na, is a deified ancestor. Anyway, both Paabo and Yan-neli are served by priests called `Tugri-nam and Zohe-na respectively. The Ya-na normally appoints these priests who oversee Paabo and Yan-neli and it is he who provides the sacrificial animals when the need for sacrifice arises. Normally something good or evil must happen to necessitate sacrifice, and in Dagbon society it is the soothsayers who are consulted on how to go about the sacrifice. Both Tugri-nam and Zohe-na are only priests who officiate at ceremonies concerning the diety they oversee. They are not diviners just as the diviner or soothsayer cannot be a priest to a deity. Thus the priest and the soothsayer are two different people who perform different functions.

1.42 There are other deities associated with certain areas in Dagbon such as the Kpung at Pong-Tamale, Gukpegu for Tamale and its environs, Jagbo for Tolon and Bugiaa for Kumbungu.

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1 What I gather here is that one does not see a live hyena but a symbolic representation of it.

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These are individually referred to as bugli.[1] Sacrifices are made to these buga by their various Tindamba in time of need and during festivals such as bugum (fire). The sacrifices made to these buga are known as bagyuri.[2] In bagyuri rites, the Tindana and the elders of the area move to the sacred grove or spot with the items for sacrifice, which are normally fowls numbering about a dozen. In very serious cases such as sacrifices to the deity against drought or epidemic, cows, sheep and goats constitute the items for the sacrifice. Small pots of pito called da-duga and similar pots filled with water are sent along because the Tindana uses the pito to pour libation, but not all the pito is used as custom demands that some of it should be given to those involved in the sacrifice to drink. The water is used for the cleaning of hands and the sacrificial knife.

1.43 The Tindana is also supposed to offer prayers for prosperity and long life for the people and this act of prayer is premised on the assumption that the deity listens to prayers, that he is moved by prayers and that he is capable of meeting the demands of the people. The prayer therefore takes the form of pleading, request, intercession, thanksgiving and praise. When the sacrificial animals are specifically

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1 Bugli is the singular form for deity. Buga is the plural form.

2 Bagyuri refers to any rite performed for the yan-nema, bugli or wuni.

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slaughtered for the 'consumption' of the deity which is known as nmanjeli, the animal so slaughtered is not to be eaten by anybody but left for the deity. On the other hand if the sacrificial animal is not meant for the 'consumption' of the deity, those present are expected to eat it by preparing fire and roasting it. No such meat is expected to go beyond the sacred grove or spot.

1.44 In every village in traditional Dagbon, there is a sacred grove or spot known as Tingbani[1] which means 'the earth'. This word has some close relationship with Tindana. Whereas the Tindana is the earth priest, tingbani refers to the sacred grove or spot or shrine that is venerated. Normally it is the chief who oversees the tingbani because he is the chief who must seek the welfare of his people and the land. However, if there is a Tindana in a village, the responsibility of overseeing the tingbani is given to him. The tingbani protects the inhabitants of the village, provide their needs and in return receive the people's respect and confidence. If the village is afflicted with evil, epidemic or drought, it is to the tingbani that the people go. Even if an individual has a problem that he feels it is the tingbani that can solve it, he consults the chief and if permission is granted, he goes to the tingbani to offer sacrifice in order to achieve his aim. It is

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1 This word is also common to most of the tribes in the Northern part of Ghana. Sometimes children who are born as a result of sacrifices made to Tingbani are named TINGBANI in its honour.

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not only in cases of need that the people go to the tingbani but also when the people are satisfied with the rains, harvests and the general well being of the people. On such occasions prayer takes the form of thanksgiving and praises.

1.45 The Tindanba are by all means important personalities in Dagbon and they are considered very powerful people as a result of the relationship between them and the deity. Before the burial of a dead tindana, the corpse is carried shoulder high and a spokesman addresses it requesting that it indicates who its successor should be. If the successor lives in that very town or village, the corpse will force its carriers to the gate of the house in which he can be found. On the other hand if the successor is a native of that town or village but is not presently resident in the place, the corpse is addressed to lead the carriers towards the road leading to the place where the tindana's successor can be traced. It is believed the corpse forces the carriers towards the road where the successor can be found, and forces them to stop at a point where the spokesman addresses it requesting it to go back as soon as the name of its successor is mentioned. The spokesman then begins to mention names of known indigenes of the area who are not resident there but elsewhere along the road. When the successor's name is mentioned, the corpse again forces them to rush it back home for burial. Under no circumstances should a nominated sucessor refuse to hold the post of tindana because to do so will be tantamount to sacrilege and it may cause the death of the affected person. Therefore, people who are

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nominated as successors have no option but to take up the post.

1.46 In every home in the traditional system there is a god who protects the house and all those who live in it. This god is called wunbei and since it is a family god the head of the family serves as its priest. The wunbei shrine is quite similar to the Nyame dua of the people of Asante. Nyame dua which is in the shape of a forked branch cut from a tree holds a brass or earthenware pot. Daily offerings are usually put into this pot in honour of the Supreme Being. Wunbei on the other hand is modelled or represented by a pot which is placed on a wall (goni) which separates one hut from the other. When people in a particular family face problems, or there is a desire for a member to go into some venture, or a member is about getting married, or even to celebrate an achievement, wunbei receives sacrifices and pieces of cooked food are put on the goni in its honour.

1.47 The idea of wunbei is quite popular in all traditional homes and the family priest is expected to oversee it properly. When a problem crops up demanding consultation with Wunbei the family priest obtains a fowl and a calabash with water mixed with some little corn flour. The family priest has to ensure that he is spiritually clean (this is procured through a bath especially after having coitus). Then squatting before the wunbei, he introduces himself as a member of a particular clan as a prelude. This prelude dissociates the family priest from the profane world and consecrates him with effective communion

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with the deity. The process of invocation begins by addressing the deity as father and other appelations just to seek its pleasure. It is believed that after this invocation an effective communion has been established between the family priest and the deity. Then the purpose of approaching the deity is stated e.g. 'I have called you because so and so is having infertility problems'. Then the petition follows like this. 'Help her to get a child'. When a child is eventually born and is male, he is named Wunbei and if it is female she is named Wunpaga. After the petition, the family priest announces to the deity that he is offering it the sacrifice of a fowl in order that the desired goal is fulfilled and then he slaughters it and leaves it to struggle to die.

1.48 Apart from the Wunbei that seeks the welfare of the family members, every matured person is expected to own a wuni (god) symbolised by an image that is kept at a safe place in one's room. When a young man attains the age of maturity, in any traditional home in Dagbon, it is the responsibility of his father to mould a wuni for him. A girl is entitled to a wuni when she gets married and it is the responsibility of her husband to secure one for her. In the acquisition of a wuni for either a son or wife, the baga who is the diviner or soothsayer is contacted and it is he who intructs his client as to what procedures and items should be used for the wuni. Whenever one is faced with a problem, one goes to ones wuni seeking solutions to it by offering prayers, pouring libation and offering a sacrifice. The blood of the sacrificial animal

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is usually allowed to spill over the wuni and if it is a fowl, which is normally the case, some of its tiny feathers are pasted on the wuni. When this has been done, there is no doubt in the mind of the owner of the wuni that the problem will be solved. People who are able to bear children through the power of their wuna[1] name their children after these gods and one such name is Wunpini which literally means 'God's gift' for male children.

1.49 The baga is a very important personality so far as Dagbon society is concerned. It is he who understands the language as well as the needs of all the spirits. He is consulted on every conceivable occasion such as in cases of death to ascertain its cause and the sacrificial remedy; at birth to ascertain which ancestor is returning and whether the child has a bright future; at marriage to make sure that both man and woman can make good partners; after dreams to make sure that one is not bewitched or haunted by evil spells; in undertaking a new enterprise to make sure that the venture will yield fruitful dividends and many more. The baga commands respect in the traditional system and he is considered a powerful person who cannot be intimidated under any circumstance. In order to become a baga one has to undergo a night long rite involving the slaughter of a goat and chicken numbering over two dozens in honour of the deity and also for

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[1] This is the plural form of wuni in Dagbani.

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feasting. The face of the baga under training is rubbed with pepper so as to keep him awake because if he sleeps he will not be potent enough. In each village or area there is a bag-na[1] who is the chief soothsayer and when he is about to die, he nominates one of his men to succeed him. If the bag-na dies without nominating a successor, a meeting of all the bagsi[2] is convened for the elders among them to divine and come out with a successor.

1.50 Normally women are not allowed to consult a baga because of her subordinate status in the traditional system. The man is the head of the house and if there is any problem it rests on him to find solutions. A woman who consults a baga is considered one with wicked intentions and is watched closely. A man might divorce his wife if she is found to have consulted a baga. Women in traditional Dagbon therefore stayed away from bagsi and even if they strongly felt the need for one, they sent their male relatives to consult the bagsi on their behalf. However, women in Dagbon today consult bagsi as a result of the gradual changing process of the traditional system. This does not mean that they do so openly and get away with it. Many husbands will not countenance such attitudes.

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1 This word consists of two Dagbani words, baga (diviner) and na (chief). The leader of all bagsi in a locality is given the title of bag-na.

2 This word is the plural form of baga (diviner).

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ANCESTOR VENERATION

1.51 The veneration of ancestors form the dominant theme of the traditional religion of the Dagbamba. The ancestors are considered their closest spiritual beings. One normally conceives of ones deceased grand parents as ancestors and it is believed that they participate actively in the daily life of the Dagbamba despite the fact that they are dead. Ancestors are generally referred to as tiyaa-nema.

1.52 The Dagbamba do not consider every dead grandparent as an ancestor. Specific conditions have been laid down and it is on the basis of these conditions that one qualifies as an ancestor. These conditions are that one must have been buried properly according to custom, one should have descendants and one must have been a person with good character. It is the general belief that abundant life and prosperity are signs that the ancestors are pleased with the people, but when calamities such as drought set in which tries to diminish life and prosperity, then it means that the ancestors are intervening to restore order and prosperity in the society. Thus, by nature the ancestors are good.

1.53 The ancestors are venerated in each family and the various family heads are concious of their responsibilities to them. No special day is set aside for the veneration of ancestors in Dagbon. The rites that are due to ancestors are done at will and very often after consultations with sooth-sayers. Note should be taken of the fact that it is not always

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that soothsayers should be contacted before sacrifices are made to the ancestors. For example if a family member commits a taboo such as incest or adultery, the family head knows that the ancestors would naturally be angered and so he has to appease them in order to forestall any disaster in the family. However, if the family has been experiencing setbacks in almost all that it does and the cause is not readily identified, then the family head has to seek the services of a soothsayer.

1.54 There are no specific shrines in Dagbon homes where ancestor veneration is conducted and one is free to choose any spot within the compound of the house for sacrificial purposes. Even though every consanguinnal relative can sacrifice to the ancestors, the privilege is given to the family head called the dogri kpema which literally means 'senior relative'. It is therefore my contention that what is venerated is not the ancestor per se but the jural authority of the father or grandparent. This is the more reason why in Dagbon society, the jural parental authority takes precedence over personal disposition. The ancestors were the elders of the society therefore they demand respect, and as elders their customs and traditions must be obeyed. These are held to be valid because they were the founders of society and by virtue of the fact that they had trodden the paths of mortals, they know the hazards of life and out of their experience and wisdom, they have laid down rules and regulations to guide the affairs of the living. Therefore, they keep an eye on how people obey these customs and traditions.

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1.55 The functions of the ancestors in Dagbon are basically that of guidance, protection and even sustenance i.e. providing abundant life, fertility and sanctions aimed at maintaining the status quo. In terms of morality, it is believed that the ancestors had laid down the rules of the society which govern the life of the community. They therefore intervene to punish people whose acts threaten the stability of the society. In effect the ancestors act as 'policemen' of the living and they do not only punish, they also provide for life what is worth living.

1.56 In cases of drought, epidemics and such related calamities, the chief instructs the tindana to consult the soothsayers to find out what has gone wrong. Many a time, the tindana is informed by the soothsayers that the ancestors are displeased for some reasons or the other and they must be appeased without delay. To this end sacrifices of animals such as cows, sheep, goats and chicken are made in order to appease them otherwise the calamity will persist. When the animals have been sacrificed to pacify the ancestors, the sacrificial animals are not eaten because of the calamity behind the sacrifice. However, sacrificial animals are only eaten when the sacrifice so made is in the quest for good health and increased prosperity.

1.57 At each sacrifice the ancestors are informed of the purpose for which the offering is being made. Libation is then poured and during this process the tindana or dogri kpema

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as the case may be, inform the ancestors of the needs and aspirations of their living members, asks for forgiveness where they have erred and asks for guidance without which life will not be worth living. Then the animals are slaughtered and made to struggle to die. Their movements are watched and when they finally die resting on their backs or breasts, then it is a sign that the ancestors have accepted their plea. Their plea is considered rejected if the sacrificial animals rest on either of their sides. In this circumstances the whole process has to be repeated. However, almost invariably, the ancestors accept the sacrifices made.

1.58 Whatever people do in Dagbon they do not lose sight of the fact that the ancestors are watching them and that is why crimes such as stealing, murder, incest, adultery, insubordination, insulting an elder etc. were not common. However, today, with the polution of the traditional system with alien cultures, such strict adherence to these strict principles have lost their values. Parents kept constant watch over their children so that they might not do such things that would incur the displeasure of the ancestors. Children were normally taught to refrain from habits that the ancestors hate such as eating and talking at the same time, whistling while having a bath, sweeping at night, jumping or just walking over a person who is asleep, disrespect for elders etc. The rationale behind refraining from these habits cannot be easily discerned because the Dagbamba believe that such principles are dogmas that have

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been passed on from generation to generation and they should be observed as such.

1.59 Considering the place or status of the ancestors in Dagbon society, it cannot be overemphasised the vital role they play in the life of the Dagbamba. It is believed that the moral laws that govern society that can best be categorised under taboos were laid down by them. They therefore punish anyone who breaks the moral law such as incest, having sex in the bush, pre-marital sex, adultery, stealing and cheating. To break the law laid down by the ancestors amounts to disrespect for them. It is, however, important to note that the sphere of influence of the ancestors is limited to the clan or family and that is the more reason why one who breaks the law is usually a worried person because one's life is in danger, and unless there is some sacrifice to appease them, the dangerous contagion of taboo would linger on. As a result of the devastating consequences that await one who breaks a laid down rule, people in Dagbon try as much as possible to stay away from breaking one. People who normally break these laws do so inadvertently and the feeling of remorse becomes their lot. However, it cannot be ruled out the possibility of some sceptics who break these laws the consequences notwithstanding. Such people might be described as insane. It is worth noting that the importance of the ancestors in the family and the clan makes the attempt to devaluate their role in life very difficult, because Dagbon society cannot conceive of a family

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or clan without ancestor. The mere fact that the consequence of a serious transgression will be passed on to family, clan or even the whole Dagbon society make people tremble at breaking a law.

WITCHCRAFT

1.60 The Dagbamba have a strong belief in witchcraft and it is believed both men and women practise it, but generally it is associated more with women than men. In Dagbon a witch is referred to as sonya and its plural form is sonnema. The Dagbani word pagkurugu[1] which means 'old woman' is synonemous with witches and so people are usually very cautious in the use of the word in reference to old women. Whereas the word Dokumgu[2] (oldman) if used in reference to a man is not considered an offence, the word pagkurugu, if arbitrarily used can generate tension between the user and the affected woman. To be on the safer side it is always advisable, when referring to an old woman to use the word mpriba (auntie) and for a man nhabba (uncle).

1.61 Witches (sonnema) are believed to be wicked women whose activities are nocturnal. They travel at night harming the soul of their enemies in the form of a red light that glows

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1 Pagkurugu consists of two Dagbani words, paga for woman and kurugu for old.

2 Dokurugu also consists of two Dagbani words, do for man and kurugu for old. Some people are named Dokurugu and others have it as nicknames.

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as they move along. It is also believed that witches are able to turn themselves into owls, bats or black cats at night to do evil. When any such animal is killed it is believed that the real body of the witch dies at the same time. It is also believed that these witches meet in groups on top of giant trees such as baobab and kapock, and there are other times when they operate individually. I think that, witchcraft, no matter what the sceptics say, is a reality in Dagbon. It is one phenomenon that seriously frightens people as a result of the unexplained manner witches operate. The belief that witches attack the spirits of living human beings which seems impossible is enough to frighten even the strong hearted man.

1.62 The Dagbamba believe that witchcraft can be acquired in two ways. Firstly, it is inherited, and normally the witch passes on her witchcraft prowess inadvertently to her niece. As a result of the close family ties in Dagbon society, young girls from the age of six are taken to live with their aunts who bring them up into womanhood and also see to it that they get married. Such girls become so attached to their aunts as a result of the long period of living together, and the intimacy between aunts and nieces become tighter than their real parents. Therefore, a witch who is about to die sees the niece as the best person who should inherit her and thus she passes her prowess onto her. In most cases these young nieces are unaware of what has befallen them until later in life. Secondly, it is acquired by buying it from witchcraft

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practioners who take the customer through several rites. It is believed that before a woman is finally fully accepted into the 'league of witches', she should have presented the spirit of a close family relation for devouring. This presentation is a clear manifestation of the fact that if one is fully commissioned into the 'league', one would be prepared to take active part in all activities of witches notwithstanding the degree of harm to be inflicted.

1.63 People in Dagbon are so conscious of the activities of witches so much so that they do not want to engage themselves in the exchange of harsh words with old women especially, because if such women feel seriously hurt by the exchanges, they could cause harm such as sickness or even death to the affected people. However, in this contemporary world of ours, some people succeed in exchanging words with old women and get away with it by saying, "Aflo ndang-a, Akuto nwubma" which literally means, "May God forbid. I am ahead of you. You cannot eat[1] me." These statements signify that one is on ones guard and that if the old woman is a witch, she cannot cause any harm. Normally when such statements are made to an old woman who is actually a witch, she gets scared because in the first place she is suspected of being a witch and secondly if

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1 In Dagbon society when one dies out of witchcraft, one is considered to have been eaten. It is held that the witches actually eat up the soul of the victim and that is why the word 'kill' is inappropriate in describing death by witchcraft.

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she decides to cause harm in whatever form, it will be easily attributed to her. Witchcraft and all its attendant havocs are shrouded in secrecy and so there is no witch who would openly, without cause, admit that she is a witch. They usually do not want to be found out.

1.64 When the need for a witch to strike arises, but the timing not appropriate or to the interest of the witch, she decides to exercise restraint and gives it up at least for the time being. This means that when there has been some confrontation between a witch and another person and the witch feels hurt and wants to cause harm, she has to think seriously as to whether she could save herself the agony of being found out as a witch and having to go through stringent ordeals, especially when the confrontation took place in the full glare of spectators. If she feels strongly that a case will be made against her if she went on to harm her victim, that means the timing is inappropriate and in order to save herself from any embarrassment, she gives up the whole idea of havoc. However, there are some daring witches who would damn the consequences and go on to harm their victims, but of course such daring ones are not easily found.

1.65 Witchcraft is so much detested in Dagbon society such that whatever a person does that is likely to cause death is associated with it. It seems, from this attitude that witchcraft is not always psychic because poisoning, hitting someone so hard that injury or pain is caused or even mere

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unfriendly attitude are all associated with it. People are therefore cautioned against such practices by elders in every Dagbon society. Since no Dagbana enjoys being labelled a witch, one tries as much as possible to refrain from acts such as biting another person in a fight, hitting hard an opponent, inflicting cuts on another person or any other attitude that is associated with sadism. These are all pointers to the fact that the Dagbamba abhor witchcraft in all its ramifications.

1.66 When a person dies in mysterious circumstances, it is often traced to witchcraft and almost immediately suspects are sought by members of the deceased's family. When a woman is strongly suspected of having 'eaten up' the deceased, she is quickly rounded up by people in the community and taken to the chief's house. If the suspect is rounded up late in the evening, the chief hands her over to one of his elders considered very powerful and who can render ineffective any witchcraft powers. This powerful elder keeps the suspect overnight and under strict vigilance so as to counteract any diabolical move by her.[1] Early the next morning the powerful elder presents her at the chief's house to be tried. On the other hand if the suspect is rounded up during the day time she is taken to the

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1 I have been informed of an incident at chogo, a suburb of Tamale where a suspected witch was kept in an elders home for the night. At midnight this elder rushed to the chiefs house to inform him that the witch was too powerful for him and the suspect was transferred to another elder's home who was able to contain her.

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chief's house amidst booing and cat calls and even demonstrations calling for the death of the suspect. Sometimes the suspect confesses having caused the death of the deceased and even mention accomplices who are also rounded up. At Certain times too the suspect denies the accusation and goes through some kind of trial by ordeal where she is made to drink concoctions. If she vomits after drinking the cococtions then she is guilty but if she does not vomit, she is not found guilty and thus acquitted. Invariably, all such suspects are found guilty through the trial by ordeal. If the suspect confesses that she actually 'ate up' her victim or the trial by ordeal exposes her guilt, she is exiled from the community, town or village.

1.67 Banishment as a means of ridding the society of witches is used in Dagbon and it continues up to this day. The witch is normally escorted to her house and made to pack her clothing and carry them while people, mostly children hoot at her. She is then led all the way to the outskirts of the town or village and asked to go wherever she wants but dares not return. Elders and many other people I interviewed all over Dagbon share the view that banishment is good enough because in the first place if a witch is found out in the community where she lives, she suffers a lot of disgrace. Secondly by banishment, she severs relationship with her roots which can be painful. Normally relatives of the witch can do nothing to prevent such an ordeal but have to accept it by joining the

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larger community in expressing relief at the banishment of a wicked resident.

1.68 In the Yendi district there is a village called Ngaani where all suspected witches are exiled to. The establishment of this village dates back to the pre-colonial period and it was established by the Eastern Dagbon Traditional Authority for women ostracised by their communities and families on suspicion of witchcraft. The home is supported partially by the Department of Social Welfare and donations from charitable organisations, but the outcasts are engaged in various collective activities to take care of themselves. Under the guidance of a wardress employed by the Department of Social Welfare the outcasts farm, make soap, process shea butter, gather firewood and pick sheanuts to earn money. Some people wonder whether intimate interaction with these outcasts would not cause one some harm or even death. It has been explained that before the witch gets to Ngaani, she goes through certain rites that remove the witchcraft powers from her thus rendering her virtually ineffective. The chief of Ngaani is a witch doctor who renders the witches ineffective with his powers. About 90% of the population of Ngaani is made up of women and the very old ones are allowed to bring along their grand children or nieces to take care of them. Over the years these children have inter-married and the size of the village has grown. There are presently about two thousand seven hundred people in the village. There is no school at Ngaani and so

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some of the children walk two miles to another village to attend school but the humiliation that they suffer anytime they go to school is so great that they prefer to go without formal education.[1]

1.69 An aura of communality, solidarity and togetherness pervades Ngaani village. When a new exile arrives the residents, who may be termed "veterans" assist in her rehabilitation. They construct a new hut for her and find her some income generating activity to do. It is noted that these women are allowed visitors but invariably relatives prefer to stay away. There is no doubt that Ngaani village is associated with exiled witches but ironically a few women have voluntarily come to stay there. One of such women complained that she gave birth to only girls who got married and she was left alone. Since she detested the idea of living in a son-in-law's home, she decided to come over to Ngaani. Another woman said she gave birth to ten children who kept on dying one after the other and people started accusing her of having caused their death and in order to avert any hostility, she came to Ngaani.

1.70 Some Dagbamba today, especially the literates, are of the opinion that trial by ordeal and banishment are obsolete

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1 The sort of humiliation that the children of Ngaani go through in school is the fact that they come from a village associated with witches. Not until a school is built for them, most of the children of Ngaani would go without formal education, a situation which is no fault of theirs.

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practices that are not in keeping with modern day trends and therefore resist any attempt to banish suspected witches in their families. Sometimes they resort to the law courts for an injunction restraining the chief and his elders from carrying out any threat of banishment. So far as the law courts are concerned, there is no proof of action since the whole phenomenon of witchcraft has no scientific basis. The chiefs argue that sometimes the suspects themselves confess an accusation, to having "eaten up" their victims. As to whether such confessions are made under duress or not is another matter, but it is believed that many a time the suspect is surrounded by people who issue threats and pour insults on her and the atmosphere is so charged that denial would cause her harm. The only alternative open to her in such a situation is to admit her guilt. That is why Geoffrey Parrinder asks, "But is a confession proof of action?"[1]

1.71 In certain cases if the suspected witch is in the process of devouring her victim who is seriously ill, she is forced by the use of threats, to provide the necessary medicine to terminate the process thereby making the victim well again. In some other cases by the time that the suspect is identified it is too late to do something about the victim. However, when the victim finally regains health or dies, the witch is

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1 Geoffrey Parrinder: West African Religion, with forward by the Rev. Dr. Edwin Smith, London, Epworth Press, 1973.

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exiled. In typical Dagbon communities no resident can make an appeal against the verdict because to do so will invite the anger and wrath of the members of the community. Those who may have sympathy with the accused can only do so in secret. However, in the urban areas as discussed in the preceding paragraph, such appeals are possible.

1.72 In July, 1985 there was an incident where three women were accused of having made a young man impotent at Sakasaka, a suburb of Tamale. One of the accused women is related to the victim and the two others were accomplices in the act. As a result of the young man's impotency, his wife ran away from her marital home. This young man consulted medical doctors and herbalists but found no cure and so he resigned himself to fate. One afternoon an elder in his family entered the room of the women who initiated the act and saw a tripod of stones with a bowl on it and an object in the bowl. He saw vapour coming out of the bowl but there was no fire underneath. He then confronted the woman and threatened her with death if she did not explain what was going on. She had to confess that the youngman's impotency was of her making and that it was a continuous process and what he saw was part of the process. She then named her accomplices. Within a short time hundreds of people had gathered in the house to listen to the confessions by the three women and also see the exhibits relating to their brand of witchcraft. The other two women explained that the initiator of the act told them her brother

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(the youngman) used to cater for her needs but once he got married, whatever he got went to his wife to the exclusion of the initiator. They therefore conspired to make the youngman impotent so that if his wife cannot obtain any sexual satisfaction from him, she will be compelled to leave the matrimonial home and that was what happened.

1.73 The people who had gathered in the house demanded that the youngman's potency should be restored and so the three women together with some elders in the community went into one of the rooms for about an hour and when they all came out of the room, one of the family elders announced that the youngman would regain his manhood. Meanwhile the three women were exiled from the community and three days later the youngman regained his manhood. His wife who left the marital home unceremoniously, returned.[1]

1.74 To protect oneself from the activities of witches, one acquires magical powers that enables one to vanish in face of danger. This power of vanishing is called lilqu. It can also enable its user to detect wicked attempts by witches. There is another magical power known as chilo which is a special type of kohl used on the eyes to enable its user to detect a witch. It is believed that ordinary people cannot identify witches just

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[1] I understand the youngman has complained to elders of his family that the ejaculation that he experiences is not as active as before.

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by the use of the eyes, but with the special chilo, one sees the witch upside down. However, with the ordinary eye, one sees a witch in the normal walking posture. Such powers are common in Dagbon especially among elders and such powers can be passed on from father to son but very intimate friends of its users could have access to it.

1.75 Generally witchcraft is abhored in Dagbon and whenever a witch is discovered, many people, both young and old come round to find out who she is. Most of the time people are surprised when witches are discovered because before their discovery they were considered innocent and good looking people in the society and not suspecting that they could be dangerous. That is why Dagbon society does not hesitate to institute drastic measures against them. Besides, the Dagbamba are very conscious of their existence and the harm they can cause and that is why most of them are armed with the statement, "Aflo ndang-a, Akuto nwubma" (see 1.61) and this statement is even made to the whirlwind which is associated with witches.

MAGIC

1.76 The Dagbamba refer to magic as tim and it is also used for any form of medicine be it orthodox or traditional. The Arabs refer to medicine as tib and so some people tend to see some relation between the two as a result of the Islamic influence that Dagbon had. It is mere coincidence that the two

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words look alike but definitely one is not derived from the other.

1.77 Magic endows its enthusiasts with superhuman qualities or powers which are used for protective as well as destructive purposes. There is hardly any typical Dagbon family that does not indulge in magic in one way or the other. To the typical Dagbana, magic is essential because without it one cannot go through a very successful life. Therefore to be a man in the real sense, one must go in for some form of magic in order to keep body and soul together.

1.78 There are several types of magic in Dagbon society but it will be worthwhile discussing the very important ones. One of the most important ones is the lilgu, the vanishing power magic already discussed in 1.72. Lilgu is used to protect oneself from accidents and sudden attacks. The major activity of the Dagbamba is farming and since farms are quite removed from settled communities, it is possible for one to be attacked by a wild animal or an enemy. With powers of lilgu one can vanish from the scene of attack and reappear elsewhere. It can also make one disappear far inland when one is involved in a motor accident.

1.79 There is also the "bullet proof" magic known as Kosalgu. This type of magic is sewn into a special type of smock called gbagno which repel any bullets that are shot at

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its user. It can also repel arrows and other dangerous weapons. There is yet another form of Kosalgu which consists of a potion of herbs and some pellets of a bullet which are eaten. It is believed that when such concoctions are eaten, it goes to toughen the skin and the bones such that no amount of bullets from a gun can penetrate it. This type of magic is not easily obtainable, but if one is lucky to come into contact with the medicinemen who control it, one has to go through certain rites involving the sacrifice of cats and fowls to the deity responsible for such powers.

1.80 Lilgu and Kosalgu are protective types of magic used in Dagbon but there are also some types used mainly to harm other people. This type of magic has been described by Geoffrey Parrinder as "bad medicine" or "black magic".[1] The most popular of this type is called Sambo. It is a collection of poisonous herbs which is buried in places where an enemy walks or sits. Before burying the herbs the name of the enemy one intends harming is mentioned and when he tramples over the concealed Sambo, he falls sick and dies. It is also believed that walking bare-footed is dangerous because ones enemy could collect the foot prints on the ground in sand form and use it to cause harm. Sambo can also be administered in food, water and pito. It is believed that when this has been done by ones

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1 Geoffrey Parrinder: West African Religion, A study of the beliefs and practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo and Kindered Peoples, London Epworth Press, 1973, pp.162.

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enemy, insects or even snakes grow in the stomach of the enemy and eventually eat up the intestines. This harmful magic is poisoning. As a result of the great fear of poisoning people do not leave their nails, hair, washing sponges, towels and clothing about. These are intimately connected with the body and any wicked person who lays hand on any of these can use it to harm his enemy. That is why in Dagbon society people are not encouraged to walk bare footed and also not to eat food and drink water in houses of strange and unfriendly people.

1.81 There are some medicine men who claim to possess the power of curing poisoned people or counteracting the effects of harmful magic. Normally such medicine men use local herbs which are either drunk or rubbed on the skin to remove worms or hidden charms. These medicine men keep items such as needles, pieces of smock material, pieces of charcoal, thread and even insects which they have been able to remove from the stomachs of poisoned people.[1] Most people in Dagbon live up to the saying that "prevention is better than cure" by protecting themselves with charms against all possible harmful magic. This is so because invariably people who are poisoned do not survive and even where they survive, they deteriorate seriously because the effects of poisoning are still visible.

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1 I contacted a medicineman at Nyankpala who showed me a needle and a small piece of smock material which a victim vomitted out of his stomach.

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1.82 The Dagbamba also have a type of charm known as yurilim tim, literally meaning 'love medicine'. There are several forms of it and they could be obtained in liquid form with a little of it poured into water, food or drink for the victim. Sometimes it is in the form of a concoction made up of several herbs mixed with shea butter and honey. Kolanut is dipped into this concoction and given to the victim. When a girl takes any of these she falls in love and it is believed nothing can stop her from experiencing the effect of the charm. It can, on the other hand be administered by women to men to keep them hypnotised and fanatically fall in love with the women who charm them. The men who suffer under the effect of this charm do all that the women command and especially with regard to the release of money to them, and in effect their power as men wielding authority in the home are sacrificed on the alter of love. In order not to fall easy prey or victim to such dangerous machinations of women, the men try as much as possible to be on their guard for the Dagbamba believe that to fall a victim to such wicked machinations of a woman is musiiba (disaster).

RITES OF PASSAGE IN DAGBON

BIRTH

1.83 Traditional Dagbamba perform elaborate religious rites on the occasion of a woman's first pregnancy. This stage is considered an anxious moment in the life of the woman because it marks a transformation or mode of existence from one stage to the other. That is why this stage is marked by religious

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rites. This rite is called pirigibu which literally means 'undressing'. This ceremony is the official declaration of a pregnancy. Before the performance of this ceremony no one is permitted to refer to the pregnancy of a woman.

1.84 When a woman is pregnant for about three or four months, her husband informs his in-laws of their daughter's conception and a date is fixed for the ceremony. A sister of the husband is normally invited to officiate in the ceremony. Where there is no sister, any female affine of the husband is eligible to perform the ceremony. She comes to the house with a calabash in her hand and opens the ceremony in the pregnant woman's room by giving her a knock on the head or shoulder saying, "You were a child, but now you are an adult'. This knock is supposed to transform her from a girl into a brave woman ready to bear all the impending pains of puerperium. The cloth that is tied to her waist is then untied and she stands naked with the sign of pregnancy visible as a result of the protrusion of the belly. A special meal is then prepared with chicken presented by the husband for the ceremony. This meal is prepared by the officiating woman or under her supervision. Then the ancestral spirits are invoked to protect the woman throughout her labouring period and also to ensure a smooth delivery. To round off the ceremony, a soothsayer is contacted to determine the ancestor after whom the child should be named when it is born and usually a fowl is slaughtered in memory of such ancestor. From then on the woman can be referred to as pagapuulana which means pregnant woman.

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1.85 At child birth, there is always a traditional birth attendant, usually an old lady who is experienced in assisting young women to accomplish a safe delivery.[1] The umbilical cord is cut and buried within the house or just outside it. The disposal of this cord shows that the child has died from the world of pregnancy and is alive in the new state of birth. Meanwhile the safe delivery of the child is heralded by loud ululation by the women present during the process. When it is a baby boy the women ululate thrice and if a girl, four times. It appears that no special reason is given for the use of the numbers three (3) and four (4) for men and women respectively. It has been an old practice which the Dagbamba have not paused to find its significance. People who are usually around when the women ululate pay particular attention to the number of times it is done at one time because parents who wish to have a girl from that family betrothed to a son in theirs would want to take that opportunity with minimum delay. Any delay can bring about disappointment as another interested party would have taken the lead.

1.86 The child is usually bathed with warm water twice daily during the mornings and evenings either by the birth

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[1] The Government of Ghana has noted the immense role these traditional birth attendants play in rural areas. To this end the Ministry of Health has been charged with the responsibility of running courses for them. Such courses are usually run to update the participant's knowledge in family planning methods, immunisation, child delivery methods and general first aid practices.

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attendant or any other experienced woman in the family. A nursing mother is referred to as pagadogso.[1] This is to indicate to the public that she has recently given birth to a child. A woman could continue bearing such a name up to over three months after giving birth. A newly born baby boy is usually called Sandow (male visitor) and a baby girl Sanpaga (female visitor). These names are given to the babies immediately they are born and they last until the eight day when the naming ceremony is held and new names given. However, some people still maintain these 'temporary' names as proper names.

1.87 Naming is an important ceremony in Dagbon traditional society. It is normally held on the eight day after the child is born. A sheep or goat is usually slaughtered and food prepared for the ceremony. Traditional names are given to the children depending on the circumstances of their birth. Names such as Neena, Neendow and Neenpaga denote the return of an ancestor and all these names are for girls. If the children are male twins they are called Danaa and Dawuni. If they are female twins, Pagnaa and Pagwuni. Sometimes day names are given such as Sibidow for a male born on Saturday and Sibpaga for a female. Children are also given proverbial names such as

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[1] This name is derived from three Dagbani words, Paga, dogu, and so. The three words mean: Woman, delivers, someone respectively and when put together it reads Pagadogusn. It is however pronounced Pagdogso.

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Suhuyini (one heart), Wunpini (God's gift) and Chentiwuni (Leave it to God). Others are given names in honour of deities such as Bugli, Azindow, Napari etc. for boys. Some other names that are common are Amama and Fulera for girls and Nkabo and Sheini for boys.

1.88 Another important feature during the naming ceremony is the shaving of the baby's head. This might look like an Islamic practice but shaving of the baby's head was in vogue before the advent of Islam in Dagbon. It is also noted that in traditional Dagbon society when an elderly person dies, very close relatives must have their heads shaved. This custom has been with the Dagbamba for a very long time and it has never been one of the traditions of Muslims. The rationale behind the shaving of the head during naming ceremonies is that as indicated in 1.83,* the child has died from the world of pregnancy and is alive in the new state of birth and so on the eight day when the child is to be given a new name, the first hair is cut to make room for fresh hairs to grow. Normally such hairs are buried but in the Islamic tradition the hairs are weighed and the weight calculated in terms of cash which is given away as charity. In Islamic custom, the shaving of the head and circumcision in the case of baby boys are done but in typical Dagbon society, circumcision was not known until the Muslims arrived.

1.89 During naming ceremonies, there is a lot of drumming, dancing and feasting. The soothsayer may order some sacrifice

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to request the ancestral spirits to protect the child from harm and to make it survive for the continuity of the lineage. If the child dies the soothsayer is consulted to find out the cause of the death and as usual sacrifices of fowls are made to appease whoever is responsible and to prevent further deaths.

MARRIAGE

1.90 Marriage as an institution has both social and religious dimensions and especially in Dagbon society these aspects are highly emphasised. Marriage is not considered as just two people coming together as man and wife but to the contrary, it is a union between two families rather than individuals, and more so an occasion for the coming together of the departed, the living and the yet to be born. Therefore, to a large extent marriage is regarded as an important state of the life of man.

1.91 Any young man or woman who attains the age of maturity which according to estimation is pegged at twenty (20) years for men and sixteen (16) years for the women, who does not marry is looked upon with some sort of contempt. By refusing to get married, the individual is thwarting the growth of the society and by so doing prevent the incarnation of the ancestor. Since ancestral veneration forms the dominant theme of the traditional religion of the Dagbamba, it will be considered an insult to the ancestors to completely stay away from marriage. For example, some departed great grandfather or

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grandmother might wish to return into the world through a particular marriage, but if that marriage is not made possible, this ancestor cannot return and so displeasure is incured. According to popular belief, the ancestor can cause havoc not only to this individual but to his family and clan as well. That is why the institution of marriage in Dagbon is held high and that is also why parents do not hesitate to betroth their female children to men.

1.92 Since marriage is natural it is held that it confers a kind of status on an individual in the sense that it marks the break of ones former state from adolescent to that of a young man or woman. In every Dagbon society it is the parents, especially the father who chooses the bride for the son. Under normal circumstances a son has no right whatsoever to choose a bride and to do so will amount to challenging the father's authority. That strict adherence to subserviency by a son to his parents is what Dagbon society demands and cherishes. Parents feel that it is their bounding duty to bring up children who would grow up to respect them and work hard for them. It is also their duty to get good wives for their children so that good grandchildren would be born. These parents went through that system and it is their firm conviction that the system should continue that way. Parents consider marriage as a very important aspect of a man's life and so if a son is not properly guided, total disgrace could be brought to the family and disgrace is what every family hates.

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Where sons and daughters have been insubordinate, parents do not hesitate to send them out of the home.

1.93 Baby girls are normally betrothed to men soon after birth. In the purely traditional system, when a woman gives birth to a baby girl, a prospective father in-law may send some money to be given to the pagdogso, the mother of the baby.[1] The significance of this gift is the indication of the giver's intention to have the baby girl betrothed to his son. Sometimes the prospective father in-law does not send the gift himself but through a representative. After this gift has been given, supplies of firewood and other food items such as corn, millet or guinea corn are presented to the baby's mother. Firewood supplies are normally made daily and it lasts for a month or more because the baby has to be bathed with warm water twice daily. During planting and harvesting, the son in-law to be has to work hard on the farms of his in-laws, help them to construct local silos for storing cereals and also help them to put up and roof new huts.

1.94 The young man and woman are given the opportunity to meet and talk to each other but it must be noted that Dagbon society abhors pre-marital sex and so parents try as much as possible to discourage it. When the girl has attained the

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1 The amount of money that is normally given to the pagdogso is kobsinahi which is equivalent to 40 pesewas. Today this amount could be any amount from two hundred cedis and above.

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marriageable age the young man meets her often either at the market place or drumming and dancing sessions on moon lit nights. During one of such meetings the young man arranges with his friends to take the girl to his house. This practice cannot be described as elopment because the young man's parents are aware. Secondly when the girl does not return home from wherever she went, her parents do not panic because they know too well that their daughter has attained womanhood and at any moment she will have to be taken to her husband's home. This practice cannot also be described as kidnapping because both the man and the woman know themselves well and they are aware that they would be man and wife. Apart from this fact parents of both man and woman have given their blessing to the affair and so when the woman is carried home to her husband, the man's parents understand it and on the other hand if the girl does not return home her parents draw conclusions easily. A day or two after the young woman has been taken to her husband's home, a "fee of apology" known as sandaani is sent by representatives of the young man to the woman's parents. This fee includes kolanuts and money ranging between one cedi and six cedis. With modern times and its exaggerations and urbanisation, this fee ranges in thousands of cedis. However, the fee is still lower in the rural areas.

1.95 When the young man's representatives arrive in his wife's home, the spokesman of the group informs the woman's father of its mission. Then the woman's parents also invite

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some elders and they sit together with the representatives to accept the fee. After a few days, the woman's mother gets together some items including cooking utensils, a basket containing the young woman's clothing, a locally made mat and a few other items that the woman will need. All these are sent to the young woman in her husband's home. It is important to note the significance of the "fee of apology" or sandanni. In the first place it is a sign of respect for ones in-laws. Secondly and most important of all is that the young man acknowledges he owes his in-laws an apology for taking their daughter away without permission. In its wider context it is a lesson that there is always the need to apologise when one offends to ones elders, parents or friends. Thirdly, it is an occasion for other people in the community to witness a simple marriage ceremony.

1.96 It is not in all cases that both the young man and the woman come from the same village or town. Sometimes a girl in one village can be betrothed to a man in another village far away, but the procedures are always the same. It is also important to note that it is not always the case that when a young woman attains maturity she should be carried away to her husbands home when she is found in the market place or at drumming and dancing sessions at night. Some parents who have already arranged for a girl to be betrothed to their son, similarly arrange a meeting in their in-laws home where each group and its representatives or elders meet. At this meeting

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kolanuts and money are presented to the in-laws and short prayers invoking the spirit of the ancestors to bless the marriage are made. After this ceremony, the young woman is taken at night to her husband's home.

1.97 On the other hand there are some men whose parents did not succeed in getting baby girls betrothed to their sons. Sometimes it is deliberate and with others it is inadvertent depending on the circumstances. Some of these parents are not too sure whether these baby girls would survive or whether they would be acceptable to the family ancestors hence their desire to wait until later on in life. When a young girl who is gradually attaining the age of maturity is spotted by a parent he might request to know the girl's parents. He then sends a delegation to find out from her parents whether she is betrothed to someone or not. If she is not, then marriage arrangements are set in motion. It must however be noted that before marriage arrangements begin, both parents consult soothsayers to find out whether such a marriage will be a successful one, whether there will be benefits in the form of children and whether their children are not going into a family characterised by aweful diseases which are hidden. When the soothsayer's findings are positive in both cases, then marriage is certain between the two of them.

1.98 When the young man is ready to get married, he sends a pot of pito, an empty gourd and a fowl to the girl's parents.

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This ceremony is a clear indicator that the woman will leave the family soon. Then the young man buys a mukuru which is a kind of skirt made from smock material which the woman wears when she is taken to the man's home. The woman gets to her husbands home either by the arrangement that requires sandaani as discussed in 1.94 or the arrangement discussed in 1.97.

1.99 Polygamy is an accepted practice in Dagbon and to this end men can marry as many women as they wish. Normally a man with one wife is still considered a bachelor because when his wife gives birth it is the custom that she goes to stay with her parents after the naming ceremony. Weaning the child takes up to a little over a year and so the man will be without a woman during this long period of separation, and is considered as having reverted to his bachelor status. However, if the man has more than one wife, and one is away, the other or others should be with him. Polygamy is encouraged because of the many children that are likely to be produced from it to work on the farms and it is a prestige to be identified with the title 'father of many children'. Having many children, most importantly, enhances the growth of society which pleases the ancestors.

DEATH

1.100 The Dagbamba believe in death as a fact of life. Like many other Africans the Dagbamba do not readily accept the finality of death. They look at death as the most dreaded

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aspect of man even though they see it as inevitable. Nevertheless, the Dagbamba try to resist the idea of ceasing to exist and this resistance is expressed in almost an heroic struggle for immortality. For this reason there is always an attempt to show that though man ceases to exist physically at death, he continues to live in one form or the other in the spiritual world.

1.101 It is generally believed that death does not happen by chance for there must always be an external agent such as spirits, witches, wizards etc. For this reason when a man dies in Dagbon society, a necromancer (baga) is consulted to enquire about the cause of the death, and ceremonies marking the separation of the deceased from the physical world to the world of spirits commences.

1.102 When a man dies, the dogrikpema (family head) sends other members of the family to places far and near to inform other relatives and sympathisers. It is normally expected that all members of the family would assemble before burial takes place. Those who are sent to break the news of the death to others are expected to tell them, "I have been sent to inform you that so and so is absent". Dagbon custom does not permit announcing the death of a person bluntly because it might be construed to mean hatred for the dead. On arrival at the Kuyili (funeral home), mourners go to see the dogrikpema because it is he who presides over the burial and any other funeral

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rites. It is to him that mourners express their condolences. Women do not mix with men at the funeral home and so they group themselves either in the widows hut or just sit in the compound of the house. No reason is assigned to this sort of separation except that it is connected with the subordinate position of woman to man in the traditional system. No mourning cloths are prescribed for such occasions and so people wear anything to a funeral home.

1.103 Immediately a man dies, the old women in the house provide some warm water in an old large calabash for use in giving the dead its first bath. It is the dogrikpema with the assistance of other family members who do the bathing. After this first bath the dogrikpema consults a soothsayer to divine choosing a suitable site for the grave to be dug. No special place is exclusively reserved as a cemetry because some people are buried in their rooms, others in the compound of their homes and others too just behind their homes. Special grave diggers known as Kasigriba do the digging of graves and when this is over they are rewarded. The deceased is given a second bath after which the corpse is carried shoulder high to the grave for burial. Before the introduction of cloth in Dagbon, corpses were buried with large leaves such as those of teak trees. These leaves are known as Kornamgbandi. Such leaves are large and so were found suitable for burial purposes. When weaving was later introduced into Dagbon, smock material replaced the use of leaves.

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1.104 Women and children are not allowed to watch burial ceremonies. They are considered as people with weak hearts and might break down or get frightened for a long time after seeing the dead. Before the corpse is lowered into the grave, the dogrikpema addresses it saying, "In your life time some uncle, brother or sister might have offended you. Today is the day to forgive them all. If any grand child said some offensive word to you, this is the time to forgive them." It is believed that it is very disastrous for a deceased to go and join the ancestors with ill-will towards a living member because the anger of the deceased will retard progress of the society. After the burial mourners reassemble at the Kuyili where the dogrikpema thanks all those who in diverse ways mourned with them. He also announces the date for the Kubagri[1] and the dabaata.[2] After this announcement mourners retire to their various homes leaving those who come from far places because they would have to say back until after the third day funeral rites.

1.105 Very early on the Kubagri day which is normally the third day after burial of the deceased, the dogrikpema consults a soothsayer under a tree just around the vicinity. Before the

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1 This Dagbani term refers to the consultation of the soothsayer on the third day after burial of a deceased person to find out the cause of the death.

2 Dabaata literally means three days, but in this context it refers to the funeral celebrations (rites) of the dead three days after burial.

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process starts the dogrikpema offers the soothsayer three kola-nuts if the deceased is male and four kolanuts if female. The numbers 3 and 4 feature here also as already noted in 1.85. After the divination the soothsayer informs the dogrikpema the cause of the death and what should be done to avert future occurences of such death. He further may precribe sacrifice of sheep, goat or fowl to the ancestors and this is done with minimum delay. Drumming and dancing also features prominently this day in honour of the dead. Food is also prepared for mourners who come round.[1] This third day ceremony ends the service for the dead in traditional Dagbon society. When this is accomplished, the dogrikpema and the other elders of the family congratulate themselves for having given the deceased a fitting burial and funeral rites thus paving the way for it to join the ancestors and guide the living. They also go round to thank well wishers who mourned with them during their period of grief.

1.106 Children who die without attaining the age of maturity are not given such burial rites as indicated in the preceeding paragraph. This is so because children cannot join the realm of ancestors as they have not attained maturity. They also have not married in order to produce children for the growth of

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1 In traditional Dagbon society when a family loses one of its members, mourners send food items and animals to the bereaved family to prepare food for the large number of mourners who would normally come for the third day funeral rites.

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society and generally they have not contributed anything beneficial to society.

VALUES

1.107 In traditional Dagbon society acts such as stealing, adultery, disrespect for elders, lying, cheating, murder, rape, incest, witchcraft, arrogance, neglect of ageing parents and socery are regarded ethically wrong. All these prohibitions are acts connected with human relations in society. In effect it can be said that the values behind these prohibitions are values which will work for stability in the society, that is to say the rules are basically meant to produce harmony in society.

1.108 It is believed that there is a thunder god known as Sapani who exposes thieves by striking them dead with the stolen articles on them. The vigilance of this god may be responsible for the absence of thieves in traditional Dagbon because it is common place to find farm produce stored safely in farms far away in the bush. If one needs food, one has just to ask for it and it will be supplied so why go to steal and be exposed? This augurs well for the well being of society. This emphasis on the well being of society brings into focus the importance attached to co-operative life. In this sense, therefore, it can be said that the idea of communality plays a prominent role in determining what is right and wrong. Even where these codes as enumerated in 1.107 are obeyed because of sanctions of the spiritual beings, one can conveniently say

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that the spiritual beings intervene to punish people in order that the equilibrium in society will not be disturbed.

1.109 Underlying this passionate concern of the well being of society is a great respect for the life of the individual. Individual life is regarded as something sacred and it is a serious crime against society, the gods and the ancestors of Dagbon for life to be destroyed. In a sense, anything that serves to diminish life is regarded as evil. That is why witchcraft and socery are regarded as evil acts against ethical life.

1.110 Respect for elders is highly cherished in Dagbon. When a child or even a young man meets an elder he has to greet him by squatting or by bowing. A woman answering to the call of her husband or an elderly person should kneel before them. Every person is required to observe it so that some day one will also be accorded similar respect. Dagbon society cannot imagine a child either arguing with an elder or even insulting him. It will indeed be sacrilegious to do that.

1.111 There are many values that the Dagbamba cherish but they cannot all be enumerated here. However, the few discussed above are very important because any Dagbana, male or female who considers himself or herself "Dagban-yanga (grandchild of a Dagbana) must of necessity respect and practise these values.

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SUMMARY

The Dagbamba are located in Northern Ghana and they form the most populous single ethnic group in the area. The area inhabited by the Dagbamba is known as Dagbon and the language they speak is Dagbani. This language is related to Nanumba, Mamprusi and Moshi. The traditional capital is Yendi where the Ya-na, the paramount chief of the Dagbon traditional area resides. The state of Dagbon is divided into six districts and other important towns and villages located in Dagbon are: Tamale, Savelugu, Tolon, Kumbungu, Gushegu, Karaga, Diare and Nyankpala.

The origin of the Dagbamba is a bit abscure but the most common origin is centred on a legendary leader known as Toha-Zie (Red hunter) who emerged from Zamfara in the Sokoto state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The earliest writer on Dagbon, Tamakloe and Ibrahim Mahamah, a Tamale based lawyer and politician believe that the Dagbamba originated from some Arab tribe. They based their arguments on some similarities between the Arabs and the Dagbamba relating to culture and language which are considered far fetched. The history of Dagbon has been preserved through the medium of drum chant and it is through this medium that Toha-Zie (Red hunter) is mentioned as a progenitor of the Dagbamba. Toha-Zie is believed to have saved the inhabitants of a village in the Mali empire from dying of thirst by killing a bush cow that prevented them from drawing water from a pool which was their

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only source of water. He assisted the Chief of Mali in his wars against his enemies and as a result of Toha-Zie's wonderful feats, the chief offered him one of his daughters as a wife. This woman, according to the drum draut is Paqwobiqa which means lame woman.

Toha-zie is said to have left Mali but his son fought for the chief of Mali after his death. This son was known as Kpugnumbu who settled at Biung and married Sisabigi, the maiden daughter of the Tindana. Kpugnumbu succeeded in becoming Tindana but lost Sisabigi after she had given birth to Nyarigili which means "the melting". Kpugnumbu also fought for Abdul-Rahman, the chief of Grumah and subdued all his enemies. In admiration of this feat, Abdul-Rahman offered him his daughter known as Suhuyini which means "one heart". It is this woman who gave birth to Na-Gbewa, the most revered chief of Dagbon. He is also the great ancestor of the Moshi, Nanumba, Mamprusi and Kusasi's. After Na-Gbewa's death there was confusion among his children as to the succession to the nam (chiefship) and this caused a split in the family. Sitobu moved out and founded the state of Dagbon, the only daughter of Na-Gbewa, Katchiogo or Yantaure founded the state of Moshi and Tohugu established the Mamprusi state. That is why all these tribes speak related languages and share common jokes.

The Dagbamba later settled at Yan-Dabari, a village now in ruins. During the reign of Na-Luoro, the twelfth chief

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of Dagbon, the Dagbamba had to move out of this place as a result of the setbacks they experienced in their wars against the Gonjas who were led by their great chief Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa. They settled at Yendi which is the capital of the state of Dagbon today.

The Dagbamba believe in the existence of a Supreme Being referred to as Nawuni which means 'chief God'. Sacred groves and spots dotted all over Dagbon have been dedicated to the Supreme Being, and they also represent places of worship for the benefit of the traditional area known as bugli. Every village has a place of worship called Tingbani and so also is every house with a spot or object referred to as Wunbei. The individual too has a deity referred to as Wuni. The Dagbamba believe that all these deities are subordinate to Nawuni because they obtain their power from him. Their belief in the existence of a Supreme Being is manifested in the saying, "Nawun be ni" which means "God exists".

The Dagbamba believe that God is good and that he punishes the evil and rewards all good people. With good people he blesses them with good children, good farm yields and prosperity; but with the evil ones he punishes them with disease such as leprosy, madness and blindness. It is also believed that it is he who brings rain, wind and sustenance to man and that he lives up in the skies.

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Ancestor veneration forms the dominant theme of the traditional religion of the Dagbamba. Dead parents or grand-parents are considered as ancestors and it is the belief that even though they are dead, they participate actively in the daily life of the people. The Dagbamba sometimes attribute some events to the activities of the ancestors, especially in areas of misfortune. They are very concious of the activities of the ancestors and so they constantly offer sacrifices especially to appease them when soothsayers or diviners inform them that the ancestors are angry. They also offer sacrifices of cows, sheep, goats and fowls when they are happy with the rains, farm yields and years that are free from calamities.

Belief in witchcraft is strong among the Dagbamba. Both men and women practise it but genrally, witchcraft is associated with women more than men. A witch is referred to as Sonya but the Dagbani word Pagakurugu (old woman) is also used in reference to a witch. Their activities are dangerous and clandestine and are almost always involved in psychic killings. Witchcraft can either be bought or inheritted. With cases of inheriting witchcraft, witches are believed to pass on their witchcraft prowess to their nieces because in Dagbon society, nieces normally live with their aunties, and they are very much attached to them. When a witch is identified, she is exiled to another place. In the Yendi district of Dagbon, there is a village called Ngaani where all exiled witches are sent. There is also a witch doctor in the village who removes all traces of witchcraft on the exiled witches.

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Some Dagbamba practise magic which is referred to as tim. There are both protective and harmful types of magic. Those that come under protective magic are lilgu and Kosalgu; and for harmful magic, Sambo is quite popular. Lilgu is the vanishing power magic which enables one to vanish from the scene of an attack or motor accident to reappear elsewhere familiar to its user. Kosalgu on the other hand is sewn into a special type of smock called gbagno which repels any bullet that is shot from a gun. Sambo is used in harming others either by killing or maiming and even by causing sickness.

The life of a Dagbana is characterised by rites of passage as in many other traditions in Africa. Rites of passage relate to birth, marriage and death. The Dagbamba do not have puberty rites for women. When a woman is pregnant for the first three or four months it is considered taboo to refer to the pregnancy. A ceremony known as prigibu is organised to officially declare the woman pregnant. When the woman finally gives birth and the child is a male, he is referred to as Sandow (male visitor) and if a female, she is referred to as Sanpaga (female visitor). These names last until the official naming ceremony on the eighth day. The nursing mother also carries a new name as Pagadogso which literally mean "woman who delivers someone". On the eighth day the naming ceremony called bii pinbu dali meaning "the day of shaving the child" is held. Local names such as Azindow, Napodow, Neindow, Bugli etc. are given to males and names such as Neena, Neenpaga, Jinwarpaga, Amama, Sanka etc. are given to females.

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Marriage is considered a very important phenomenon in Dagbon society. Every young man and woman who attains the age of maturity is expected to get married, and to this end parents make every effort to see that their sons and daughters get married. It is believed that by refusing to marry, the individual thwarts the growth of society. Since the Dagbamba believe in reincarnation using ancestors as an example, it is considered an offence to the ancestors to remain either a bachelor or a spinster all ones life. Baby girls are sometimes betrothed to young men, but parents could still look for wives for their sons when they are matured.

Marriage in traditional Dagbon society is quite a simple matter depending on the trust of both parties. Some parents easily give their daughters away in marriage to sons of friends as a means of strengthening the bonds of friendship between them. Sometimes marriage is carried on between family members in order to keep the family unit together. However, not very close relations are involved in this form of marriage. Sons do not normally contribute money to the dowry because the father does everything. However, they have to work on farms of their in-laws during planting and harvesting. Besides, if their in-laws are engaged in any activity that demand outside assistance, they have to go and assist them.

Polygamy is an accepted phenomenon in Dagbon. A man with one wife is still referred to as a bachelor. The rationale

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behind such a ridicule is that when the woman gives birth she has to leave her matrimonial home after the naming ceremony to go and live with her parents. She is expected to wean the child in her parents home for one year or more. Therefore, if one has one wife, one reverts to ones former status as a bachelor.

The Dagbamba believe in death as a fact of life but invariably, it is not accepted as final. It is considered a transition to the realm of ancestors. It is also considered a dreaded fact and that there is hardly any death without a cause. Therefore, when a person dies, the head of the deceased's family (dogrikpema) consults a soothsayer (baga) to know the cause of the death. This is normally done on the third day after burial. The soothsayer may prescribe annual sacrifice to the ancestors in order to prevent such deaths in the family.

There are quite many values that the Dagbamba cherish. The elders demand absolute respect from the younger ones and women are expected to respect their husbands and should be submissive to them. These, according to popular belief augurs well for a harmonious living in the society. Acts such as stealing, adultery, pre-marital sex, murder, lying, cheating, rape, incest are considered anti-social activities and are abhored in Dagbon society. These anti-social activities are virtually non existent in traditional

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Dagbon societies because to indulge in them has wide and serious repercussions. Generally the foregoing may be said to be a brief summary of the traditions, religious and social life of the people of Dagbon prior to the advent of Islam.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE ADVENT OF ISLAM IN DAGBON

THE COMING OF THE TRADERS

2.01 There were two main waves of the Islamisation of Dagbon. Firstly Islam was introduced into Dagbon by Wangara Muslims of Mande origin through the north-west and secondly by the Hausas of present day Northern Nigeria through the north-east. The interaction of these two is well illustrated from the history of Dagbon at the time of Muhammad Zanjina, in the parts played in the consolidation of Islam with the state by the Wangara Community of Sabari, headed by Yamusa al-Wangari, and by the Hausa community of Kamshegu, headed by Muhammad al-Kashnawi.

2.02 As a result of the trans-Saharan trade, Muslims of North Africa interacted with Sudanese traders of Mande stock who brought gold from the interior. Under the influence of these North Africans, the Mande speaking people adopted Islam which paved the way for their acceptance into Islamic communities which developed along the trade routes. Therefore, a new social group, distinguished by trade and Islam emerged throughout the Sudan. These Mande speaking traders operated within a vast area stretching from the Sahel to the fringes of the forest in the south and from the Atlantic ocean in the west to Hausaland in the east. They constituted without any doubt, the most influential elements in the Western Sudan. Among them are such large tribes as the Dyula, Kasonke, Bambara, Jallonke, Malinke, Soninke and Vei. Generally in West Africa

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today and in Arabic sources, these people are referred to as the Wangara, and the best known among them is the Dyula, a name which became a synonym for 'a trader'.[1]

2.03 Wangara is the generic name of the contempotary Arabic and Portuguese sources for all the Mande-speaking traders, but as these traders dispersed and became associated with trade in distinct sections of the Sudan, living among different peoples, each group became known under its own particular name. According to Mahmud Kati's Tarikh al-Fattash (1913), 'If you ask what difference there is between Malinke and Wangara', he wrote:

> 'Know that the Wangara and the Malinke are of the same origin, but that Malinke is used to mean the warriors, whereas Wangara serves to describe the merchants who trade from country to country.'[2]

2.04 The Wangara traders, enterprising as they were, carried both their trade and Islam into the interior as they searched for new and richer sources of gold and marketing centres. They were particularly interested in the gold trade because there was a growing demand for African gold both in the Muslim world and in Europe[3] and determined as they were, they

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Ancient Ghana and Mali, 1973, p.167.

2 Mahmud Kati: Tarikh al-Fattash, ed. Houdas and Delafose, 1913, p.65.

3 Wilks Ivor: The Northern Factor in Ashanti History, Legon, 1961, p.56.

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got to these gold mining areas in the forest zone. In the fourteenth century they reached the Akan forest to bring its gold northward; they opened routes to Worodugu (the land of Kola) in La Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast); they made contact with the peoples of the Western Atlantic Coast, and more significantly, they built up trade with Hausaland to the east.[1]

2.05 As the Wangara had always ventured beyond the political frontiers of empires, it is noted that the security of the trade routes which were guaranteed by organised states contributed immensely to the successes of their trade. Two of such organised states are, the Mole-Dagbani[2] and the Bono-Manso.[3] As indicated in paragraph 2.04, the demand for gold in Europe and the Muslim world increased in the 14th and 15th centuries and the enterprising Wangara responded to this challenge and opened routes to the gold fields on the fringes of the Akan forest. Bono-Manso and Be'o developed as a result of this trade. The journey from Jenne to Be'o which was the southern outpost of the Wangara traders, passed through Moshi-land in Burkina Faso and Northern Ghana. There is some

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Ancient Ghana and Mali, London 1973, p.166.

2 Three tribes form the Mole-Dagbani group. These are the Moshi who live in Burkina Faso with their traditional capital as Ouagadougou, the Dagbamba who live in Northern Ghana with Yendi as their traditional capital, and the Mamprusi who also live in Northern Ghana with Naleriqu as their traditional capital. They all come from one ancestor and they have a common culture.

3 It is the earliest Akan State.

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evidence that these Wangara traders passed through Dagbon and even made settlements among the Dagbamba. Excavations at the site of the old capital of Dagbon. Yan-Dabari, which was abandoned about 1700, revealed a kind of caravanserai which indicates that a busy trade route passed through this town. Also archaeology revealed "a large rectangular, and possibly two-storied building, and a walled and carefully floored enclosure" which is a description quite different from the Dagbon compound building where circular mud huts are built round a central courtyard. The excavated section of Yan- Dabari can best be described as the traders settlement. This is a good example which corroborates the quarantine stage showing the first stage of the advent of Islam into West Africa as suggested by Humphrey J. Fisher.[1] He explained that this was a stage where the faith is represented by traders, perhaps from North Africa, or refugees or clerics employed in providing religious services such as prayer and divination for their pagan patrons.[2] According to Professor Adu Boahen, such traders' settlements have become the present day Zongos where Muslims live.[3]

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1 J. Spencer Trimingham, writing on the process of religious and culture change in his book, 'The Influence of Islam Upon Africa', also held that view.

2 Humphrey J. Fisher: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa, in Journal of the International African Institute, Oxford, Vol. XLIII, 1973, p.27.

3 Adu Boahen A. : Topics in West African History, Schools Edition, 1966, p.10.

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2.06 These Wangara Muslim traders frequented Dagbon and as a result they established their own quarters in whatever trading centre they found suitable. They had some social interaction with the Dagbamba but especially with the ruling class. The main concern of the Wangara traders was the economic aspect of their interaction with the Dagbamba and they used the chiefs to satisfy this quest. They were aware of the fact that the chiefs were very strong and whatever emanated from the chiefs was easily accepted. Therefore, the Wangara traders felt that a strong alliance with the chiefs would give them the freedom to engage in their business. That is why the Wangaras did not make any serious impact on the people of Dagbon so far as Islam was concerned. It could be said that as the Wangaras were not geared toward proselytising, the Hausas took advantage of this laxity on their part with their activeness to overshadow the Wangaras.

2.07 The interaction between the Wangara traders and the people in Northern Ghana became intense as a result of the abundant resources of gold and kolanuts which the local people obtained from the forest zone. Also as a result of big marketting centres south of Dagbon such as Salaga, Buine, Mnaha and Kafaba, the Wangaras preferred to transact their business in these centres in order to avoid the long and arduous journey southward into the forest zone. Many more Wangaras, both traders and clerics were attracted to Northern Ghana as a result of the lucrative trade. There were others who combined

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both trading and clerical duties and with time throughout Dagbon and in West Africa generally, both were closely allied. It was common to find a Wangara trader selling talismans and amulets alongside other commodities. Gradually the Wangara traders established themselves in numerous centres along the trade paths leading from the greater markets of the Niger termini of the trans-Saharan caravan trails, southwards to the fringes of the high forest.

2.08 As the Wangara established themselves firmly among the Dagbamba through their trading concerns, they also tried to make some Islamic imprint on the people. They served as soothsayers and provided amulets and talismans to ward off danger. Today in Dagbon society, this sort of divination is called '<u>tibbu</u>' which is a corruption of the Arabic word '<u>t</u>ib' meaning medicine. As stated in paragraph 2.06, the Wangaras were not active propagandists within the traditional Dagbon communities among whom they lived but their settlements were potential centres of diffusion. This was so because they were principally concerned with the economic activity in the area and even the clerics were more interested in selling amulets, talismans and other cococtions to the Dagbamba as stated above rather than engaging in full time proselytisation. Most of the people interviewed with regard to the attitude of Wangara proselytisation were of the opinion that probably the Wangara did not wish to precipitate a crisis because they were aware that any intergrated society resist pressures towards cultural

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change and assimilation. So they left things to time and to individual Dagbamba. This reason is however conjectural because there is no hard evidence to prove that this was the case.

2.09 However, the Wangara still left some Islamic influence on the Dagbamba. They are credited with the manner of burying the dead which is now prevalent in Dagbon. Before the arrival of the Wangara, the Dagbamba buried their dead either naked or with leaves called Kornamgbandi. It was only the chiefs who were buried in the skin of animals. With the arrival of the Wangara, they introduced burial with cloth, especially white material which is an Islamic tradition and up to this day people who die, be they Muslims or traditionalists, are buried with white material.[1]

2.10 As already stated in paragraph 2.06, the Wangara Muslims did not concern themselves so much with conversion but rather they concentrated so much on trade. This accounts for the inability of the drum chants to mention their contribution

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1 According to my interviews in Tamale and Yendi, the Dagbamba stressed that there is no doubt that the Wangara Muslims arrived in Dagbon first. That the Wangara expressed disatisfaction with the way the Dagbamba buried their dead explaining that on Judgement Day, each person would be required to write down his/her deeds in the world using the finger as pen, saliva as ink and the white material as paper. So burying the dead naked or with leaves was undesirable, hence the widespread use of white material throughout Dagbon. This manner of burying the dead is not attributed to the Hausas.

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so far as Islam is concerned.[1] There is no doubt that the Wangaras had their admirers but the number of people who professed Islam as a result of their influence was rather insignificant during the early stages. The Wangara Muslims interacted so much with the chiefs because they were aware that the chiefs needed their assistance. For example, the prayers and the miracles the Wangara could perform were admired by the chiefs, and particularly, the chiefs were inclined to seek the aid of Muslims in recruiting Supernatural support. This was so because the chiefs were under greater strain than the common people whose way of life harmonised with the rhythm of the traditional religion. The role of chiefs as early recipients of Islamic influence underlines the importance of chiefdoms in the process of Islamisation of which Dagbon is a good example.

2.11 Gradually as more Wangara Muslims arrived in Dagbon an Islamic settlement grew up at Sabali, a town twenty three miles east of Yendi. Later in Yendi, a Wangara group known as the Kambara[2] set up their quarters and had its leader as Yidan Kambara which exists up to date.

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1 The significance of the drum chant is that the history of Dagbon has been preserved through its medium. The drummers are gifted with retentive memories and they are indeed the repository of the history of Dagbon.

2 It is a corruption of the Wangara group known as Kamara.

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THE COMING OF THE HAUSA MUSLIMS

2.12 Hausaland which lies between Gao in the west and Kanem in the east did not receive any Islamic influence directly from North Africa because for a long time, Hausaland was not linked by direct routes to North Africa. Islamic influence therefore reached Hausaland from other parts of the Sudan especially Borno and Gao. Professor Greenberg has contended that the Hausa, on linguistic evidence, received Islamic influence from the Kanuri of Borno.[1] However there are other traditions which indicate that the introduction of Islam into Hausaland is associated with the arrival of Wangara traders from the west. According to the Kano Chronicle, the Wangarawa[2] came from Mele (Mali) bringing with them the 'Mohammedan religion' during the reign of the King of Kano, Yeji during the later part of the fourteenth century.[3]

2.13 As a result of the collapse of the Songhai empire in 1595 and the insecurity of the trade routes, serious commercial activity shifted from Timbuktu and Gao in the west to Bornu and Hausaland in the east and therefore the main stream of trade

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1 Greenberg, J.H.: Linguistic Evidence for the influence of the Kanuri on the Hausa, in Journal of African History, i 205-12, 1960.

2 This word is the plural form for Wangara in the Hausa language.

3 Palmer H.R. The Kano Chronicle, 1908, in Journal of the Anthropological Institute, xxxviii p.58-98.

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from the Middle Volta Basin shifted to the north-east.[1] This accounts for the emergence of Katsina, the northern gate to Hausaland, as one of the most important commercial centres of the Sudan in the 18th century.

2.14 Kola which is chewed as a stimulant and is believed to have minimising effect on thirst was a very important commodity in the inter-regional trade and this commodity was obtained mainly from the Ashanti forest by Bornu and Hausaland traders. This kola trade reached its peak in the 19th century when, with the abolition of the slave trade all transactions between the Ashantis and the Coast were done in gold which affected the Ashantis. Therefore, they could only exchange kolanuts with goods from the north where it was acceptable to the Hausa traders.[2] The Hausa traders on the other hand obtained European goods from North Africa through the trans-Saharan trade and from Nigerian and Dahomean[3] Coasts. Some of the goods brought by the Hausa traders included oriental clothing, beads, leather work, slaves and natron.[4] The latter commodity

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1 Boahen, A.A.: Britain, the Sahara and the Western Sudan, 1964, Oxford.

2 Bowdich, T.E.: A Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, 1819, London.

3 Dahomey was formerly a territory of French West Africa, but now an independent republic with the new name, Benin.

4 It is a hydrated native sodium carbonate $Na_2 CO_3 IOH_2O$ used in ancient times in embalming, ceramic pastes, and a cleansing agent.

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was in great demand as a result of the many uses to which it was put.

2.15 The Hausa traders travelled from Hausaland to Salaga and back home in caravans. It was an arduous task because the journey was a long one. Some of them rode camels, others on horses and even donkeys. When they got tired of riding, they walked alongside the animals. There was normally a leader of each caravan called madugu who chose the route and the halting places, settled disputes, negotiated with local chiefs about tolls the caravan had to pay and distributed the burden of toll payment amongst members of the caravan. Normally the madugu had his assistants such as the jagaba who was the guide and the uban-dawaki[1] or madaki who was responsible for collecting contributions from members of the caravan for toll payments. There was also at least one mallam[2] in every caravan because he chose a propitious day for setting out on a journey, led the other members of the caravan in the five daily prayers and as a literate, he kept the records of the caravan. It was mainly through these mallams that Islam left traces along the trade routes. There were some mallams who combined trading with clerical duties. A majority of them, however, had no direct

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1 It literally means 'father of horses' but generally he is known as the guide.

2 This word comes from the Arabic word mu'allim for teacher. In all Hausa communities in West Africa, any person who is well versed in the Islamic religion is referred to as 'mallam'.

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interest in the trade itself. It is noted that when a caravan was ready some of the mallams who were not traders, joined it for the sake of adventure. Many of them never returned to Hausaland because they were easily absorbed in the very systems they found themselves. Some who were patronised by local chiefs to whom they could render religious or spiritual services, abandoned the caravan to settle with such chiefs. Such mallams were then properly housed and given a wife, often a daughter of the chief. A family then begins which becomes purely Islamic and gradually a Muslim community springs up.

2.16 When the mallam marries the chief's daughter and they have children, he teaches them how to recite verses of the Qur'an and how to observe the five daily prayers. Other children belonging to the chief and his elders join the class. These children, under the influence of the mallam, learn to despise the old system and now become Muslims in name. Gradually more children and even older folks are involved in a gradual process by which Islam changes the life of the community.[1]

2.17 The caravans were not limited to a particular route because there were three of such routes out of which the madugu chose one. Certain factors were taken into consideration before the route is chosen, for example the safety of the route

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1 This view is also shared by J. Spencer Trimingham in his book, Islam in West Africa, Oxford, 1976, p.34.

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from attacks, easy accessibility to water, the availability of market centres and resting spots etc. One route over Kebbi and Dendi, across the Niger at Gaya, past the sparsely populated region of Gurmah to Pama and Sansanne-Mango, and then to Yendi and Salaga. Another route crossed the Niger near Say, over Fadan-Gurma to Kugpela in Moshi territory and then to Ouagadougo, both in Burkina Faso or past Tenkodugu and Bawku to Gambaga and Salaga. Yet another route went through Nupe and then to Borgu, Djougou, Kotokoli and Dagbon to Salaga.[1] It is to be noted that all these routes described above passed through Dagbon territory until the caravans reached Salaga which was the southern entrepot for this caravan trade. (See map on page xviii).

2.18 The frequency of caravans coming into Dagbon from Hausaland enabled many more Hausas of diverse professions who sought adventure to come to Dagbon. Apart from the mallams the others who came along comprised groups of weavers, butchers, blacksmiths and well diggers. Weaving was not common in Dagbon and with the introduction of Islam into the area, the wearing of gowns became common and here, the weavers played an important role. In Dagbon in those days selling of meat was also not common because the keeping of cows, goats, sheep and fowls was widespread and owners could fall on these whenever the need arose. However, with the presence of many Hausas in Dagbon who are noted for their love for meat, butchers had to

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. Oxford 1968, p.24.

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come round to serve their interests. The butchers bought the animals from the Dagbamba, slaughtered them and sold the meat to their fellow Hausas. Gradually others including the Dagbamba themselves patronised this sale of meat and it became a permanent job for the butchers. The Dagbamba bought knives, swords, spears and daggers from the Hausa traders and it was found quite a lucrative trade. Blacksmiths who found their way into Dagbon easily found ready markets for their products. It was not only the Dagbamba who patronised their products but the Hausa butchers as well. The well diggers played very important roles where water was not easily obtained. They could determine where to dig for water and this expertise helped many communities to solve their water problems.

2.19 With the arrival of many more people from Hausaland especially the mallams, Islam in Dagbon changed its orientation with the Hausa Muslims replacing the early Wangara Muslims as representatives of Islam in the area. The vitality of the Hausa Islam contributed to the progress of Islam in the region during the pre-colonial period and the Dagbamba assimilated almost wholesale what the Hausas introduced. Another point worthy of note is the fact that resident Hausa mallams along the termini of the caravans served as hosts to foreign traders and arriving Hausa mallams. The ready hospitality accorded the new arrivals as a result of the Islamic brotherhood, coupled with the lack of resistance from the indigenous people, easily facilitated the increase of Hausa mallams in Dagbon. These

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hosts were referred to as mai-gida which literally means 'house owner'. Levtzion translates it as 'housemaster' but for convenience I think that landlord would be most appropriate.

ISLAM AND CHIEFS IN DAGBON

2.20 There is no doubt that the Wangara were the first group of Muslims to have arrived in Dagbon. They were unable to make any serious impact on the Dagbamba with regard to Islam as a result of their deep concern for trade. There were some kind of social and religious interactions between the Wangara Muslims and some chiefs. This resulted in the chiefs, together with their descendants and the nobles, becoming attached to Islam while the common people remained sincere traditionalists. There were many Wangara Muslims who found favour with the chiefs of Dagbon as a result of the so called supernatural powers that they had. Also they taught the chiefs how to recite some easy verses of the Qur'an and instructed them on those religious obligations and practices which one ought to know. This is indicative of the rudimentary islamisation of the chiefs. Dagbon traditions indicate that the ancestors of the Dagbamba were typical traditionalists until the time of Na-Zanjina about 1700. It was during his reign that Islam actually made serious inroads into the Dagbon system. Therefore not much is known about the interaction of Muslims and chiefs of Dagbon before Na-Zanjina's accession to the nam of Yendi.

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2.21 According to popular tradition, Islam made great impact on Dagbon when Na-Zanjina, the sixteenth ruler accended the throne as a Muslim, thus becoming the first Muslim to become Ya-na. It is generally believed that Na-Zanjina was named Wumbei which is a name associated with traditional religious practices as already indicated in Chapter one. On conversion Na-Zanjina was given the name Muhammad Zanjina[1]. The drum chanters headed by the Namo-na[2] have it that he was the first Muslim to become Ya-na and not as the first Ya-na to become Muslim. However, whereas the drum chants credit Na-Zanjinas conversion to the Sabali Yar-na of Wangara origin, another tradition credits it to the Kamshe-na of Hausa origin.[3] It is already noted in paragraph 2.01 that there were two Muslim communities in Dagbon, one at Sabali which was the Wangara Community headed by Yamusa Saghyardu al-Wangari, and the other at Kamshegu representing the Hausa Community headed by Muhammad al-Kashnawi. It is also generally agreed that the Wangara community existed in Dagbon before the Hausa's arrived. To ascertain the real group that converted Na-Zanjina, we may have to go into the facts that are available to us.

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1 The name Zanjina seems to be a Hausa nickname of doubtful etymology. One view is that it is a corruption of Dangana which means 'he who resigns himself to God'.

2 The Namo-na and his drummers who reside in Yendi are the leading authorities in the state upon historical matters. With the chieftaincy disputes in Dagbon, each faction has its Namo-na.

3 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and chiefs in West Africa, Oxford, 1968, p.92.

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2.22 The Tarikh Dagbhun[1] (History of Dagbon), an Arabic work of unknown authorship states that Muhammad al-Kashnawi introduced Zanjina, King of Daghbun, to Islam and that he named him Muhammad Zanjina. It further states that Yamusa Sughyardu al-Wangari was made imam of the mosque. There is yet another work, the Tarikh Daghabawi (History of the Dagbamba) compiled by Khalid ibn Yaqub the imam of Yendi between 1915 and 1935 which states that Zanjina was the first (King) to be circumcised, the first to become Muslim, and it was he who built a mosque at Sabali. The name of the imam was Yamusa".[2] A second tradition is quoted below as follows:

> "A tradition recorded from yarna Qasim at Sabali tells that Yamusa's father, Sulayman, came to Dagomba during the reign of Na Tutughri, father of Na-Zangina. Na Tutughri asked Sulayman to find out who would succeed him among his sons. Sulayman could not point to anyone, but showed the Na the woman who would give birth to a future Na. This woman was Zanjina's mother. As a reward Sulayman was given the title yarna. Later the young Zanjina was sent to Sabali to study Koran. An echo of this tradition may be heard in the words of Na-Zanjina to Yamusa, the Sabali yarna, as given by the Drum History: 'My mother's home is in this town Sabali, and from you I have learnt the Koran."[3]

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1 This work was shown to Ivor Wilks by a Dagbana from the Akwatia Diamond mines in 1962. No copy has yet been obtained.

2 Ivor Wilks: A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in Dagomba. in Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Legon Vol. VIII, 1965, p.88.

3 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. Oxford. 1968, p. 91.

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Na-Zanjina, according to the drum chants, is reported to have addressed his elders saying:

> 'As I have got this chiefdom, I desire to go to the mosque of Yamusa, yarna of Sabali, in order to ask God to help the land, that the land may remain good.'

It is noted that the drum chants make no reference to the conversion of Na-Zanjina but do give lengthy accounts of events immediately following his accession to the throne.

2.23 Another tradition, this time ascribing Na-Zanjina's conversion to the Hausa indicate that as a youth, Zanjina travelled to Hausaland where he made friends with many Hausas and when he became Ya-na, he requested his Hausa friends to come and settle in Dagbon. As a result of this request Mallam Mahamah who is described as Muhammad al-Kashnawi in the "Tarikh Daghbun"[1] arrived in Dagbon with numerous followers made up of mallams, weavers, butchers, blacksmiths, tanners of hides and well diggers. The tradition goes on to show that it was this Mallam Mahamah who converted Wumbei to Islam, teaching him how to pray, having him shaved and circumcised and then after washing him, gave him a hat, gown and pantaloons to wear and then naming him Muhammad Zanjina.

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1 This is an Arabic work of unknown authorship. According to Ivor Wilks he was shown this work in 1962 by a Dagbana from the Akwatia Diamond mines.

2 This is a tradition of the Kamshegu skin which might be an attempt to credit the Hausa with the conversion of Na-Zanjina.

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As a result of this gesture, Na-Zanjina confered on him the title of Kamshe-Na which means 'Chief of Kamshegu'. Following this tradition, it has become custom that during the installation of a Ya-na, the Kamshe-Na presents him with a new gown specially woven to suit the status of the Ya-na.

2.24 With regard to this last tradition, some Muslims and elders in Yendi I interviewed agreed that Na-Zanjina in his youth travelled to Hausaland in the group of traders and when he became Ya-Na, he invited these Hausa associates to come and settle in Yendi.2 On the arrival of these Hausas at the outskirts of Yendi, they were met amidst drumming and dancing and when they finally got to Yendi, Na-Zanjina ordered that every landlord should set aside a room to accommodate a Hausa

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2 In my interviews at Yendi, the following people confirmed that Na-Zanjina travelled to Hausaland in his youth.
(a) Alhaji Alhassan Abdulai Fatogma (65), a transport owner and son of Alhaji Abdulai (Gomda) late chief Imam of Yendi between 1955 and 1978; Alhaji Yussuf Abdulai, a translator of Arabic into English and vice versa (45), also a son of the late chief Imam. They got their information from their father. Yidan Kambara of Andani gate (55), a farmer and a Muslim elder said he got this information from his father; Mr. Mahami (62), a former politician told me he heard it from elders and he read it from the Constitution of Dagbon; Mr. Hussein Abdul-Majeed (62), an ex-District Commissioner for Yendi and now Co-ordinator of English/Arabic Schools said he heard it from the elders. Yahayah 'Chairman' (60), an opinion leader of the Abdudu gate told me it is no secret. Ivor Wilks also noted it in his article on the early spread of Islam in Dagbon, in the Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Legon, Vol. VIII, 1965, p.89. It is also noted in the minutes of the Conference of Dagbon Chiefs held at Yendi in 1930 to enquire into and record the Constitution of the State of Dagbon.

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visitor which was done. In Dagbon today it is the practice for landlords to keep a room solely meant for visitors. These rooms are called Saamba-duu, meaning 'visitors room'. The Hausas, according to the tradition, were not too happy with the way they were scattered in different homes all over Yendi. They therefore requested that the Ya-Na should give them a piece of land on which they could settle together as a community. Na-Zanjina acceded to the request and settled them at Kamshegu, about six miles east of Yendi on the old caravan route to Hausaland by way of the Sabali crossing of the Oti river. This settlement is therefore regarded as the premier Hausa foundation within Dagbon.

2.25 The request for a settlement for the Hausa community might have been necessitated by the inability of the group to easily assemble for the five daily prayers. Secondly there was the desire by some of the Hausas who belonged to a common family to live together but the way they were accommodated in Yendi put them apart. Whatever might have been the reasons for seeking a new settlement, the request is a clear manifestation of the views held by Professor Fisher, Professor Adu Boahen, Spencer Trimingham and other writers on Islam in West Africa, that Muslims who arrived in a town, chose their own settlement quite removed from the quarters of the local people. These settlements are what Professor Adu Boahen refers to as Zongos as indicated in paragraph 2.05.

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2.26 From the above traditions some conclusions can be drawn. Since it is generally agreed that the Wangara Muslims arrived in Dagbon first and that Na-Zanjina became a Muslim before his accession to the nam of Yendi, we can safely conclude that the conversion of Na-Zanjina to Islam is attributable to the Wangara Muslims. The drum chants mention Kamshe-na of the Hausa group as a follower of Sabali Yar-na because the latter was considered as the Chief of the Muslims with the title of Yar-na. As to whether Yar-na refers to the Wangaras or to the Hausas, I wish to quote Levtzion who has done some work on Muslims and chiefs. He wrote, "The Mande-speaking readers who settled in the Moshi-Dagomba group of states - in the country between Jenne and the Ashanti forest are known as Yarse".[1] In another area he wrote. "The title Yar-na, which occurs also in Wa and Moshi (Yar-naba) is typical of Muslim communities of Mande origin. It was created when Wangara, to whom the term Yarse applies, were prominent in Dagbon."[2] Then writing on Wa - a stronghold of Islam under the topic Islam in the country of stateless Peoples, he again wrote, "... while the Yar-na at Wa is still regarded as the head of the community, and he is known also as shaykh al-Wangara".[3] These quotations are therefore pointers to the fact that the Yar-na has always been associated with the Wangaras.

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1 Nehemia Levtzim: Ancient Ghana and Mali, Oxford, 1973, p.167.

2 " " : Muslims and Chiefs in West AFrica, Oxford, 1968, p.91-2.

3 This is an Arabic term meaning, 'Chief of the Wangara'.

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2.27 On the question of the circumcision of Na-Zanjina, it is agreed that it was the Sabali Yar-na who introduced circumcision into Dagbon and a member of his family was charged with the responsibility of performing this rite with the title of Yidan-kafa. It is noted that the Wangara Muslims married some Dagbamba women and the male children who were born had to be circumcised as Islamic tradition demands. Adult Dagbamba who got converted to Islam were required to be circumcised as one of the prerequisites for becoming a Muslim. Circumcision was by then not common among the Dagbamba.

2.28 The drum chants clearly regard Na-Zanjina as the first Muslim to become king, and not as the first King to become a Muslim. This has been supported by Khalid ibn Yaqub's Tarikh Daghabawi (History of the Dagbamba). The author was the imam of Yendi between 1915 and 1935. In this book he wrote: "Zanjina was the firt (King) to be curcumcised, the first to become Muslim, and it was he who built a mosque in Sabari. The name of the imam was Yamusa." However, traditions of the Kamshegu skin indicate that as a youth Zanjina had spent sometime in Hausaland and that subsequently he encouraged Hausa mallams and artisans to settle in Dagbon. It further indicates that Mallam Mahamah accompanied by numerous followers arrived in Dagbon and that it was he who converted Wumbei to Islam, teaching him to pray in Arabic, having him shaved and circumcised by the barbers; washing him and giving him a hat, a gown and pantaloons to wear; and naming him Muhammad Zanjina.

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2.29 It is generally accepted that the Wangaras were in Dagbon before the Hausas and the drum chants are emphatic on the fact that Na-Zanjina was converted to Islam before he became Ya-Na. It is also noted that it was only after Na-Zanjina's accession to the nam that he was able to invite large numbers of Hausas into Dagbon, when he had already become a Muslim. However, the Kamshegu tradition credits the conversion, circumcision, teaching him how to pray, washing him and naming him to the Hausas. This tradition presupposes that Na-Zanjina became a Muslim only when he became Ya-Na which is a contradiction of the drum chant and thus unacceptable to the Dagbamba. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that Na-Zanjina's conversion and circumcision is attributable to the Wangara. Since the Kamshegu tradition originated from the Hausa community and considering the fact that Na-Zanjina was the greatest and the most progressive of the Ya-Na's, it is possible that the Hausa's wanted to credit themselves with all these achievements so that succeeding generations would accord them respect and honour at the expense of the Wangara.

2.30 It is, however noted that Hausa Muslims have contributed more than the Wangara Muslims to the propagation of Islam because many more Hausa clerics, traders and those who combined both were found all over Dagbon. Kamshegu, the premier Hausa settlement is just six miles away from Yendi and each day the Hausa Muslims walked or rode horses to Yendi to transact their business and back at the close of the day. Gradually some

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Hausa Muslims settled permanently in Yendi and they got absorbed into the Dagbon system. Therefore, their activities overshadowed that of the Wangara Muslims who lived at Sabali, twenty three miles away from Yendi. Moreover, the Hausa Muslims lived closer to the Ya-Na than their Wangara counterparts. As a result of the intensity of the Hausa Islam, some writers might be tempted to credit them with the introduction and establishment of Islam in Dagbon to the exclusion of the Wangara Muslims.

NA-ZANJINA AND ISLAM

2.31 It is noted in paragraph 2.24 that Na-Zanjina travelled as far as Hausaland when he was a youth and it is believed that these travels expanded his world view. Some Dagbamba hold the view that his experiences as a youth increased his wisdom which contributed to his selection as Ya-Na. The following portion of the history of the Dagbamba as narrated by the drum chant gives credence to this view.

2.32 Na-Zokuli had two sons, the chief of Galwe and the chief of Yamo-Karaga, the former being the elder. When their father Na-Zokoli died, Galwe-na called his younger brother, Yamo-Karaga-na and told him, 'If you will help me to become Ya-Na, you will be chief of Galwe', but his brother replied, 'I have no horse, no wife and no money, so how can I become a big chief?' Thereupon Galwe-na gave him a horse, a wife and some money and then they decided to consult soothsayers to find out

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their chances. The first soothsayer consulted the oracle and announced that Yamo-Karaga-na would be successor to their father. This did not please Galwe-na and they had to go to another soothsayer near Tamale who also said the oracle favoured his younger brother. Not satisfied with this finding, Galwe-na asked his brother to go with him to Dabova for yet another consultation which also went against him. They consulted soothsayer after soothsayer but the results were the same. When finally the chiefs had gathered for the selection of a Ya-Na, Yamo-Karaga-na's selection was announced but the other chiefs considered it a 'left handed decision of the oracle'[1] (gun-gobli), so they said they would never again agree to submit the choice of a Ya-Na to soothsayers. Thus the new Ya-Na was known from that day as Na-Gungobli literarily meaning 'the left-handed chief' and considered a fake Ya-Na.[2]

2.33 As was expected, at the death of Na-Gungobli there was confusion all over Dagbon because all the Nabihi[3] wanted succession to the nam of Yendi. No other method of reducing the

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1 It is noted in the minutes of the Conference of Dagbamba chiefs held at Yendi from 21st to the 29th of November, 1930 to enquire into and record the Constitution of the State of Dagbon.

2 Yamo-Karaga-na's selection was considered 'a left handed' decision because the others felt that he was younger and did not possess the heart to rule the 'world'.

3 Nabihi is in Dagbani and has two words, Na and bihi. Na means chief and bihi means children. Therefore the two together mean 'children of chiefs' - children of former Ya-Na's.

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number of aspirants had been devised to replace consultations with the oracles through soothsaying. Gushie-na and Kug-na who were elderly statesmen of Dagbon were powerless in making a satisfactory choice and so they all decided to take the matter before the Na of Mamprusi at Nalerigu for arbitration and for him to choose a successor.[1] There was then a big gathering of chiefs of Dagbon at Tundi for Tundi-na is the spokesman of Nalerigu-Na.[2] Muhammad Zanjina, being the son of a Ya-Na and the youngest of the Nabihi as he was only a youth, requested that he should be given a hearing alongside all the other contestants which was upheld. Then the drummers of each chief were called upon one after the other to beat forth their respective proverbs but none of them pleased Nalerigu-Na. At last Zanjina was called upon to say his proverb and the first one was: 'Nyogo din yelma ni dee bobri', which literally means that 'the chest which is broad can take more robes'. The philosophy behind this proverb is that the broader ones outlook the more accommodating one is. The second proverb was: 'Bileri tigsi doya Kumbang Kpema', which means, 'When babies lie together, none can tell who is the eldest'. The elders of Dagbon say that both proverbs have the same meaning. The philosophy behind these two proverbs is that all contestants

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1 The founder of the State of Dagbon was Na-Gbewa who had two sons, Zirli and Fogo. Zirli succeeded his father and left two sons Tohugu and Sitobu. The former eventually settled at Nalerigu and founded the Mamprusi Royal house, hence the decision to allow the Na of Mamprusi to choose a successor.

2 The Nalerigu-Na during that time was Na-Atabia.

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whether big or small had equal chances and that whoever felt he was big and had a better chance was engaged in wishful thinking.

2.34 There was great acclamation at the wisdom of Na-Zanjina and he was appointed Ya-Na[1]. Bangumanga, a son of Na-Zagali, was called upon to say another proverb because his first one had been less foolish than the rest, and he was appointed Na-Zanjina's right hand man. The selection of Na-Zanjina as Ya-Na greatly incured the displeasure of many of the chiefs who contested the nam. Yelzori-lana, Nantong-na and Sunson-na were reported to have said, 'We should have been chiefs of Yendi instead of this boy. We are therefore greater chiefs than Yendi; our successors shall never be chiefs of Yendi, for a great man will never leave his great place to become a small chief.' To add insult to injury to some of these chiefs, Nalerigu-Na appointed three places from which the chiefs should be chosen as Ya-Na's. These places are Karaga, Savelgu and Mion and so the other chiefs could never aspire to go further than their own chieftainships to this day. These disgruntled chiefs decided not to co-operate with Na-Zanjina and so his reign was characterised by isolation and antagonism from his own chiefs.

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1 It is sometimes alleged that Na-Zanjina and his supporters had bribed the Nalerigu-Na, taking into consideration how the youngest of them all should be preferred to the rest.

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2.35 During the early stages of the struggle between the Dagbamba and Gonja for superiority, the Dagbamba suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of the Gonja under the able leadership of Ndewura Jakpa. These early defeats surprised the Dagbamba because they least expected it. Eyre-Smith[1] contends that the Gonja won the war because they might have had guns which seems unlikely because the Gonjas left the Middle Niger before the introduction of guns following the Moroccan invasion in 1593. With the Gonja defeat of the Dagbamba, it was believed that it was the use of charms, amulets and talismans which contributed to the defeat of the Dagbamba. This belief attracted Dagbamba chiefs to Muslims. Apart from this, it seems the manner through which Na-Zanjina came to the throne left him with some of the chiefs not supporting or co-operating with him. That was why he turned his attention to the Muslims who could support him physically and spiritually. It was this alliance which intensified the influence of Islam, and that is why written chronicles such as Tarikh Daghbun, Tarikh Daghabawi etc. suggest that far reaching changes in the position of Islam within the state occured during the reign of Na-Zanjina.[2]

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1 Eyre-Smith St. J. A Brief Review of the History and Social Organisation of the Peoples of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Accra, 1933, p.12.

2 This suggestion can also be found in page 9 of the minutes of the Conference of Dagbamba chiefs held at Yendi from the 21st to the 29th of November, 1930, to enquire into and record the Constitution of the State of Dagbon. It was also confirmed in my interviews by people such as Yahayah, Chairman, Yidan Kambara, Mr. Mahami, Namo-na, Alhaji Shani Mahamah etc, all elders resident in Yendi.

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2.36 As stated in paragraph 2.22, Na-Zanjina interacted with Wangara Muslims at Sabali led by Yamusa Saghyardu al-Wangari. Na-Zanjina, it is noted, went to Sabali and the drum chanters narrated the episode as follows: "Yamusa summoned to Sabali the various Muslim elders,[1] Mahamah, chief of Kamshegu, Zanjina, chief of Laabansi, Iddi, chief of Solikom and Alaagi Puusamli. They all assembled before Yamusa, Yar-na of Sabali, then Yamusa went and opened the door of the mosque and asked Na-Zanjina to enter and he did so. Yamusa then took a Qur'an and put it in the hands of Na-Zanjina who held it and worshipped towards Hausaland, and worshipped towards the land of Ashanti, and worshipped towards Moshiland. At that time people used the roads very much. Then no wild animals caught any traveller on the roads anymore. Then many travellers journeyed from the different roads to Dagbon, because he worshipped that the roads might remain safe for all travellers. That is why people say that he had sought God's assistance in his activities. Then the mallams read the Qur'an. There were no traders on the main roads to Dagbon. Na-Zanjina prayed to God and the roads opened and many travelled by them and that is why the drummers say that Na-Zanjina made the world wise."

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1 It is noted here that Yamusa al Wangari summoned various Muslim elders to Sabali for this function. It presupposes that Yamusa was the eldest of all the Muslim elders, because no junior or subordinate can summon his elders to a function of this nature. This goes to confirm that Kamshe-na was surbordinate to Sabali-Yar-na.

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2.37 When the drummers say that Na-Zanjina made the world wise, the word world is used in a metaphorical sense. It refers only to Dagbon. The significance of Na-Zanjina's wisdom is seen in the fact that it was during his reign that serious Quranic teaching began, the weaving of clothes and the art of weaving were introduced. Trade was associated with Muslims but during his reign some individual Dagbamba went into trading and trade bloomed.

2.38 Another Muslim group that settled in and around Yendi during Na-Zanjina's reign was the La'bansi. Their chief holds the title of La'ban-Na which means 'chief of the La'bansi. This group it is believed came from Larabanga,[1] an important Muslim town about ten miles west of Damongo. Levtzion[2] translates La'ban-Na as 'chief of the Arabs' because of the belief that the La'bansi claimed descent of Abu Ayub Ansari, the man who hosted Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, when he arrived in Madinah during the hijra[3] in 622AD. In Dagbon both the Hausa and the Dagbamba refer to the Arabs as 'Larabawa' and

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1 Larabanga today is a very big Muslim town. Its mosque with its medieval architecture is of tourist attraction. It is the only town in the Northern Region of Ghana where no alcoholic drink is sold.

2 Nehemia Letvzion: Muslims and Chiefs of West Africa, A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period, 1968, Oxford, p.93.

3 Hijra is an Arabic word which refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah in 622AD.

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there seem to be no connection between this word and La'bansi. However, the Walas[1] refer to the Muslims of Larabanga as Lansari, a patronymic which has a connection with Ansari, the man the La'bansi claim was their ancestor. From the present custodian of the Larabanga mosque which is of tourist attraction, an Arab arrived in Larabanga and it was he who converted a lot of people into Islam and taught them the Qur'an. He married a woman from the town and the children who were born out of this marriage travelled to other areas in the north.

2.39 It is a common practice especially of some Arabs and Berbers from North Africa to travel southwards to areas where Muslims abound. They usually claim descent of the Prophet Muhammad's family in order to gain favours and be accorded great respect and reverence. It is possible that the Arab who came to settle at Larabanga belonged to this group hence the reference to their Arab origin. It is however believed in Dagbon that the La'bansi belonged to a Mande group of Muslims referred to as Kamara which the Dagbamba corrupted to read Kambara. They were the originators of the Kambra-yili in Yendi as stated in paragraph 2.11. This group, apart from the Wangara community at Sabali and the Hausa community at Kamshegu, continued in the proselytisation of Islam in Dagbon.

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1 The Walas are a tribe that is predominantly Muslim. Their capital is Wa which is also the administrative capital of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

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2.40 According to the Tarikh al-Muslimin fil zaman (History of Muslims in this period), an Arabic work taken down from the narrative of Abdullah ibn Mustafa, a late 18th century Yidan-Moli[1], following a request made by Na-Zanjina to the Mohgo-Naba[2] of Ouagadougou, a group of Muslims also of the Mande stock arrived in Dagbon and stayed at Sabali. They arrived under the leadership of Buba, a name that may refer to Abu Bakr and they were said to have come from Salmatenga[3] or Kaya in the Busumah territory of Burkina Faso. The title given to this leader is Moli by the Dagbamba because the Moshi refer to a Muslim as Mo-re and this has been corrupted to read Moli. Ivor Wilks has suggested that the arrival of these Muslims occured not long before the Dagbamba-Gonja war of 1713 in which many of them lost their lives. According to Levtzion[4] this has been corroborated by an informant of the Yidan-Moli. The informant, according to Levtzion, stressed that their relations with the chiefs of Dagbon were not restricted merely to offering religious or spiritual services as rendered by other Muslim elders, but that they took part as horsemen in the wars

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1 Ivor Wilks: A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in Dagomba, in Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Legon, Vol. VIII, 1965, p.94.

2 The Paramount Chief of the Moshi Tribe in Burkina Faso is called Mohgo-Naba.

3 These are two Moshi words which mean 'land of gold'.

4 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa, A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period, 1968, Oxford, p.97.

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of Dagbon. This means that whereas other Muslim groups who came to Dagbon were prominent as a result of the spiritual services they rendered to the chiefs, the Yidan-Moli and his group combined both spiritual and physical services.

2.41 While Buba stayed at Sabali his son Nafau lived at Demon where he died and his son, Babi, moved to a place two miles from Yendi where he established a village called Moli-yiri which literally means "Muslims house". This village is now abandoned and has become farmland. However, the title of Yidan-Moli exists in Yendi up to this day and his most important function is that he presides over the Damba festival because he is credited with its introduction in Dagbon. Levtzion holds the view that since the Damba festival commemorating the Prophet's birthday is known as gane in Moshi and it is not celebrated there in the way it is done in Dagbon, Yidan-Moli did not introduce the Damba but that he is closely associated with the festival. I hold a contrary view and credit the introduction of the Damba festival to the Yidan-Moli. It is clear that groups of Muslims such as the Sabali Yar-na, the Kamshe-na, the Kambara-na, the La'ban-na and then the Yidan-Moli and all their followers settled in Dagbon and each group tried to make an impact on the chiefs in particular and the people in general. It is also noted that each group wanted popularity and wanted to be associated with something prominent in Dagbon. In the light of this fact, if any of these groups had introduced Damba which is a very

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important festival for the chiefs of Dagbon, the group would feature prominently and maintain the status quo considering the benefits that normally accrue to the group. That is exactly what the Yidan-Moli and his group do in this festival. It is, therefore, not plausible in these circumstances for one group to introduce the Damba and relegate itself to the background and let another take the credit. It is also known that the Damba festival is celebrated in Moshiland therefore it is possible that it was the Yidan-Moli who introduced it in Dagbon.

2.42 Levtzion's assertion that since Damba is celebrated in a different way in Dagbon from the way it is celebrated in Moshiland, its introduction into Dagbon cannot be attributed to the Yidan-Moli is immaterial. Damba is also celebrated by the Walas, Mamprusis and the Nanumba and it is noted that the festival is celebrated differently from tribe to tribe. The present Yidan-Moli in Yendi maintains that the introduction of DAmba into Dagbon is ascribed to them.

2.43 Despite the isolation, intimidation and general indifference of some Dagbon chiefs to Na-Zanjina's rule, the drum chants consider him the greatest and the most progressive of the Dagbamba chiefs. This is so because under him the Kingdom expanded and the Gonja were driven out of Gulkpegu[1],

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1 Gulkpegu refers to Tamale area consisting of towns such as Savelugu, Tolon, Kumbungu, Pong-Tamale, Diare etc.

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trade expanded and many more Dagbamba were beginning to wear clothes and to travel outside Dagbon. It is the concensus of the Dagbamba that his successes are attributable to his closeness to the Muslims. Na-Zanjina seemed to have benefited from his close association with the Muslims and this gave room for his successors to do same. However, it is he whose name is highlighted concerning Islam in Dagbon.

MUSLIM LEADERS AND THEIR TITLES

2.44 Leaders of groups of Muslims and some of their followers who settled in Eastern Dagbon were conferred with titles some of which exist today while others have lost their significance. The titles that exist today are limited to Yendi and its immediate environs because it is the seat of the Dagbon traditional area and all the Muslim groups that arrived in Dagbon settled in and around Yendi. Table III indicate the role of the titles and the structure they represent.

2.45 It was noted earlier in this chapter that the Wangara Muslims who first arrived in Dagbon settled at Sabali and when Na-Zanjina went to Sabali, he confered on the leader the title of Sabali Yar-Na (chief of the Muslims), and he was Yamusa Saghyardu al-Wangari. It was noted also that a member of his family was charged with the responsibility of circumcision and the title confered on him was Yidan-kafa. Today in Dagbon Yidan-Kafa has remained only as a symbol of circumcision because the actual performance of circumcision is vested in the

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TABLE III

MUSLIM LEADERS AND THEIR TITLES

WANGARA COMMUNITY

TITLE	
Tsheli Yar-na	Muslim elder who moved from Western Dagbon to settle in Yendi.
Sabali Yar-na	Chief of the Wangara Muslims who was regarded as the Senior Muslim in Dagbon.
Yidan-Kafa	A member of Sabali Yar-na's family who was selected to be in charge of circumcision.
La'ban-Na	A follower of Sabali Yar-na and chief of La'banga near Nakpali.
Yidan Kambara	A Wangara of the Kamara family. He washes the body of dead chiefs in Yendi.

HAUSA COMMUNITY

TITLE	
Kamshe-Na	The Muslim chief of Kamshegu. When the Hausa Muslims became prominent in Dagbon, he became the most senior Muslim thus taking over from Sabali Yar-na. He is regarded as a village chief with his wives having their heads shaved, like the wives of other chiefs. He sits on a leopard skin and has drummers to praise him.

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HAUSA COMMUNITY (continued)

TITLE	
Walgu-Na	He is one of the sons of Kamshe-na who was sent to stay with the Ya-na.
Nayili-limam	The imam of the Ya-na's house who leads them in prayer and offers other spiritual services.
Yidan-Asache	Kamshe-na's representative with the Nayili-limam. During idul-Adha festival, it is he who sends the Nayili-li-imam's meat of the sacrificial animal to Kamshe-na.
Madaha-na	He recites poems in praise of the prophet and even the chiefs.
Yidan-Baba	He is the chief Butcher. Elsewhere in Dagbon the chief Butcher is called Nakoh-na and Baba as his deputy.

MOSHI COMMUNITY

TITLE	
Yidan-Moli	The leader of the Moshi community that arrived in Dagbon during Na-Zanjina's rule. He established Moli-yiri two miles away from Yendi. He opens the floor for the Damba dance followed by the Ya-Na and other chiefs. He is credited with the introduction of Damba and is responsible for the rice cooked at Damba.

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TITLE	
Kor-moli	He grows the Damba rice at a village near Savelugu in Western Dagbon.
Taha-moli	He is responsible for carrying the rice to Yendi to be given to Yidan-Moli.
Zee-moli	He was Yidan-Moli's representative at the Ya-Na's court, but today he is the deputy of the Nayili-limam. It's the Ya-Na who appoints the Nayili-limam and the Zee-moli from distinguished Muslims.
Yidan-chim	He is responsible for roasting the sacrificial meat of Idul-Adha for the Ya-Na. He accompanies Walgu-na when he goes to pray for the Ya-Na.
Yidan-Kama	He is an attendant of the Nayili-limam who keeps all presents or gifts given to the limam.
Yidan-Gunu	Since the Yidan-Kafa who was responsible for circumcision lived at Sabali which was quite far from the Ya-Na, another person had to take his place with the former becoming only a symbol of the introduction of circumcision. The rite is now carried out by Yidan-Gunu.

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leader of the Wanzamnema[1] called Yidan-Gunu who resides in Yendi. When the Hausa Muslims arrived and Na-Zanjina settled them at Kamshegu, he confered on Muhammad al-Kashnawi, the leader of the Hausa Muslims, the title of Kamshe-Na. The chief of the La'bansi was also given the title La'ban-Na.

2.46 The Sabali Yar-na used to be the head of the Muslim Community in Dagbon and the Ya-Na relied mostly on him for spiritual services, but later when the Hausas became prominent in Dagbon as a result of the intensity of their Islamic activities, the leader of the Hausa community at Kamshegu took over. The Ya-Na also relied on him for spiritual services. However, later on he also gradually gave way to other Muslim leaders in Yendi probably because he was not resident in Yendi. It appears that the nearer one was to the Ya-Na, the better one stood in maintaining ones relations with him.
This observance is seen in the light of the gradual shifting of the Muslim leadership from Sabali to Kamshegu and then to Yendi. Sabali and Kamshegu are twenty three and six miles away from Yendi respectively.

2.47 When Na-Zanjina visited Kamshe-na and went back to Yendi, the Kamshe-na sent his son to Yendi to stay with the Ya-Na and offer him spiritual services. The advice given by

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1 Wanzamnema is a Dagbani word that is plural for Wanzam. The word wanzam refers to a barber in Dagbani. The Wanzam is responsible for shaving and the circumcision of male children. He also does blood letting.

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Kamshe-na to his son was 'Dewalge Na' which means 'Do not get separated from the chief'. The rationale beind this advice is that the son should always be by the chief and offer him whatever spiritual services he needed, or whatever the son felt was necessary for the well being of the chief. As a result of this advice by Kamshe-na to his son, the latter and his descendants have come to be known as Walgu-na and they reside very close to the Ya-Na's palace. With regard to the circumstances surrounding Kamshe-na's release of one of his sons to live with the Ya-Na, tradition has it that the Ya-Na trusted the spiritual powers of the Muslims and sometimes he sent a messenger with a gourd to the Kamshe-na to pray into the gourd, cork it tightly and the messenger would send it back to the Ya-Na. It was believed that when the Ya-Na opened the gourd blessings came to him. However, the Ya-Na would at certain times need the services of a trusted Muslim for an urgent assignment and since Sabali and Kamshegu were far from Yendi, and if he were to send a messenger, the urgency of the exercise would be defeated, hence the posting of Kamshe-na's representative to the Ya-Na's palace.

2.48 As Muslim traders and clerics continued to come to Dagbon, one Mallam Muhammad who was a learned man arrived in Kamshegu.[1] Kamshe-na introduced him to the Ya-Na and suggested

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[1] Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa, A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period, 1968, Oxford, p.94.

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that he should be made the imam of the Ya-Na which the Na accepted. Mallam Muhammad was therefore appointed the Nayili-limam which means 'imam of the chief's house'. He was not housed in the Ya-Na's palace but around the palace known as Nayili-fong.[1] His duties were and continue to be leading the Ya-Na, members of his household and some of his close aides in the five daily prayers and to offer spiritual powers to the Na which was considered most important. The Kamshe-na also sent one of his followers to assist the Nayili-limam in the performance of his duties and this assistant was given the title of Yidan-Asachee. Levtzion writes this title as Yidan-Asakiya which is an error. During Idul-Adha festivals when rams are sacrificed to Allah[2] commemorating Abraham's sacrifice of the ram to God, the Nayili-limam's share of the meat is sent to Kamshe-na by Yidan-Asachee. This has become custom which prevails in Yendi today. This custom signifies the respect and honour accorded the Kamshe-na by the Nayili-limam, even though the latter is now more closer to the Ya-Na than the former. It also reminds the Nayili-limam his post was created by the Kamshe-na and that whether in enjoyment or sorrow the Kamshe-na has a stake in it.

2.49 As noted in paragraph 2.11 there arrived in Dagbon a group of Wangara Muslims known as the Kamara but which the

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1 This is a Dagbani term for the chief's quarters or area.

2 This is an Arabic word for God.

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Dagbamba corrupted to read Kambara. This group of Muslims, it is believed, arrived in Dagbon during the reign of Na-Bimbiogo. He was the father of Na-Zanjina. The Kambara group also infiltrated the elders of the Ya-Na with the view to receiving favours as did the other Muslim groups and by their efforts, their leader was rewarded with the title of Yidan-Kambara. His major duty is to wash the bodies of dead chiefs in Yendi. This duty is considered very important hence the immense respect accorded the Yidan-Kambara by the chiefs. Today in other parts of Dagbon, it is the Yar-na who washes the dead body of a chief. The title Yar-na which was limited only to the Sabali Yar-na lost its original meaning. In Western Dagbon for example, the title is confered on any person who becomes chief of the Muslims. Apart from washing the bodies of dead chiefs in Yendi, the Yidan-Kambara also accompanies the Navili-limam to functions such as funerals, outdoorings, festivals etc. At such functions it is the Navili-limam who officiates but as a Muslim leader, the Yidan-Kambara is given the opportunity to offer some short prayer. Another Muslim leader and of Hausa origin is the Madaba-na. One who recites poems in praise of Prophet Muhammad or even Muslim leaders and elders is called Madaba and their chief is called the Madaba-na. The poems or eulogies they recite are known as Ishiriniyya.[1] The Madaba-na is normally very prominent during functions for he is the

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1 This name comes from al-Fazazi's poems written in honour of the Prophet of Islam. He titled the poems Ishriniyyat. Generally in West Africa poems that are recited in honour of the Prophet are termed Ishriniyyat.

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loudest of all because of the praises he showers on Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim leaders and even chiefs. He normally moves in the company of the Nayili-limam and the Yidan-Kambara. Normally the Madaha-na and his followers are gifted with sweet voices and when they sing the praises of people, they are rewarded with money.

2.50 As noted in paragraph 2.40 another Muslim group arrived in Dagbon from Burkina Faso. They settled at Moli-yiri which is now abandoned but the title of Yidan-Moli given to their leader still exists in Yendi. It was he who introduced the Damba festival into Dagbon as was noted in paragraph 2.41. The Yidan-moli gets the rice for the Damba festival ready and on the 9th of the month of Damba (Rabiyul-Awwal) which is the day preceeding the real Damba festival,[1] he brings out the rice which is spread on a mat for the Muslims to pick out stones and other foreign bodies. This exercise is done to get the rice ready for the preparation of the evening meal the next day. It is the Yidan-moli who opens the floor for the Damba dance, followed by the Ya-Na and then other chiefs. Apart from the part he plays in the Damba festival, the Yidan-moli also features prominently during the final funeral rites of a Ya-Na as master of ceremonies. Traditions also have it that Yidan-moli sent his younger brother to stay with the Ya-Na in the

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[1] The Damba festival starts on the 10th of the month of Damba with the first part known as Soma-Damba. The second part known as Naa Damba follows on the 17th of the same month.

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same way as Kamshe-na sent Walgu-na to the Ya-Na. Yidan-moli's brother was housed in the Ya-Na's Zee hut in the chief's compound and honoured with the title of Zee-moli. Today he acts as na'ib (deputy) to the Nayili-limam. Other Muslim elders associated with Yidan-moli are Kor-moli and Taha-moli. The former grows the Damba rice near Savelugu and the latter carries it from Savelugu to Yidan-moli in Yendi.

2.51 Another Muslim title is that of Yidan-chim whose duty is to roast the sacrificial meat of idul-Adha for the Ya-Na. The word 'chim' in Dagbani means to fry and most probably as a result of the practice by Muslims of frying the sacrificial meat, it was found appropriate to honour him with this title. The Yidan-chim also accompanies the Walgu-na whenever he goes to pray for the Ya-Na.

2.52 As a result of the Quranic injunction forbidding Muslims from eating slaughtered animals over which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, Muslims are always particular about eating halal[1] meat and hence the presence of many Muslim butchers in Dagbon to satisfy this demand. The chief butcher in Yendi is known as Yidan-Baba. Elsewhere in Dagbon he is known as Nakoha-na and his deputy is the Yidan-Baba. Traditions say that a Hausa Muslim butcher called Baba arrived in Yendi

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1 The word halal is Arabic which means lawful. Literally it means 'that which is loosed', and its opposite is haram (illegal).

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and assisted the butchers in the chief's house. He later married into the chiefly family and subsequently the office of the chief butcher was given to his descendants with the title Yidan-Baba. They are to ensure that meat that is publicly sold is fit for the consumption of Muslims.

2.53 Lastly there is the title of Yidan-kama who can best be described as an attendant to the imam. His duty is to accompany the imam wherever he goes but especially to functions. Whatever presents that are given to the imam such as foodstuffs, chicken, gown, sheep or goat etc. are handed to the Yidan-kama who in turn sends them to the imam at home. The Yidan-kama normally gets a share in the presents.

2.54 It is noted in paragraph 2.46 that there was a gradual shift of Muslim leadership in Dagbon from Sabali to Kamshegu and then to Yendi, thus relegating the Sabali Yar-na and the Kamshe-na to the background. However, on rare ceremonial occasions such as the installation of a new Ya-Na, they call at the Ya-Na's court, moreso when custom demands that at the installation ceremony, the Kamshe-na presents the new Ya-Na with a gown. In Yendi today the Muslim leadership in order of seniority is as follows: Navili-limam, Walgu-na, Yidan-Kambara, Yidan-moli, Zee-moli, Yidan-Asachee, Yidan-chim, Madaha-na and Yidan-Kama. These posts are very important to every Ya-Na because each Muslim Chief has a part to play in the

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spiritual realm of the Ya-Na.[1]

WHY THE DAGBAMBA ACCPETED ISLAM

2.55 Whatever process was used by Muslims to gain converts and sympathisers, there is no doubt that Islam had made a great impact on the life of the Dagbamba. It is observed that this achievement was made possible because there are some similarities between the Islamic world view and that of the Dagbamba.

2.56 There is every indication that Islam had not been carried by force, but by peaceful traders. This unobtrusive manner Islam was introduced to the Dagbamba was seen as a friendly people introducing a friendly religion. Islam did not force their converts to lose their cherished customs and values

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[1] The importance of the Muslim Chiefs to the Ya-Na is manifested in the existence in Yendi today of two each of the posts given to Muslims. This has come about as a result of the chieftaincy dispute that engulfed Dagbon between the Andani and Abudu gates since the late 19th Century. The recognised Ya-Na today is Yakubu Andani II of the Andani gate, but members and supporters of the Abudu gate also claim that the rightful Ya-Na was the late Mahamadu Abdulai IV who was Ya-Na between 1969 and 1974. He was deskinned in 1974 because the procedure adopted in declaring him Ya-Na was not in conformity with Dagbon custom, and that the purported deskinment of his predecessor Ya-Na Andani was unjustified. He died on 15th October, 1988. The present Ya-Na lives in the palace of the Ya-Na's but the deskinned Mahamadu Abdulai lived in a different house recognised by his supporters as the chief's palace. Both chiefs have their mUslim elders and very interestingly enough the chieftaincy dispute has also divided the various Muslim families into Andani and Abudu gates. Before 1969 the Muslim chiefs were not divided but when the chieftaincy dispute assumed very alarming proportions, and a settlement far from sight, division set in, but it is hoped that with the death of Ya-Na Mahammadu Abdulai IV some peace will prevail.

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and as a result Islam was able to accommodate the Dagbamba way of life without any attempt to change it.[1] The Wangara and Hausa Muslims felt it was enough for one to embrace Islam and go back to traditional practices. Inspite of the monolithic nature of Islam it tolerated differences and this fact made it possible for Islam to tolerate a lot of traditional practices in West Africa.[2] Furthermore Islam was taught to the Dagbamba as something that should be lived with rather than something that should be conceptualised. What attracted the Dagbamba most were Islamic myths because this sought to explain and give justification to rituals and social practices.

2.57 Before the advent of Islam into Dagbon the Dagbamba sacrificed animals such as cows, sheep, goats and fowls to their gods and ancestors. When the Muslims came to settle in Dagbon the Dagbamba observed that they sacrificed rams during the Idul-Adha festival, and the Dagbamba easily equated it to their sacrifices. As the Muslims engaged in divination and

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1 This point is supported by Spencer Trimingham when writing under, The Process of Religious Change he stated: 'Islam does no violent uprooting but offers immediate value without displacing the old' in his book Islam in West Africa, Oxford, 1976, p.33-4.

2 This tolerance, laxity on the part of Muslims and Corruption led to the rise of jihadist movements such as that of Uthman dan Fodio, Hajj Umar, Sheku Ahmadu, Amadu Alfa Musa etc. in West Africa.

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claimed they could fortell the future of their customers, they associated it with the soothsaying that is done by the baga. The Muslim diviners also prepared amulets, talismans and charms for chiefs and other people who patronised them and these the Dagbamba did not hesitate to equate to the activities of the traditional medicineman. It is also observed that Muslims believe in a host of spirits called jinns both good and evil and these are believed to be intermediaries between man and God. On the other hand the evil ones are unbelieving jinns who belong to Satan or Iblis. The Dagbamba found this belief a familiar category that corresponds to their own belief that jinns are extraordinary creatures that could harm people who stay away late at night or those who go into the thick bush alone. When the Muslims indicated that God had forbidden them from eating carrion and pork, the Dagbamba found it realistic to accept that indulgence in certain food items would result in the wrath of God. Actually some Dagbamba ate carrion but there were others such as medicinemen, chiefs and some elders who were not allowed to eat carrion because it was believed it could diminish the powers of the medicinemen if taken, and in the case of a chief, he might fall easy prey to his enemies. The pig was not common in Dagbon society but it was known and was not eaten. The Muslims, however, concocted a story that had no basis in either the Quran or the Hadith to explain why Muslims are forbidden from eating pork.

2.58 According to the story, Muhammad, during his prophethood went on an expedition with his Companions and on their way back

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home, they felt thirsty and got tired too. Suddenly, continued the story, they saw a wet guinea fowl which was an indication that water was around. The Prophet then asked the guinea fowl to show them where water could be found but it snobbed them and ran fast into the bush. Muhammad and his companions continued their journey back home and suddenly they came across a wet pig and when Muhammad asked it to show them where they could find water, it led them to a pool where they drank to their full. Therefore as a mark of respect for the pig, it should not be eaten and as for the guinea fowl the Dagbamba created a festival known as Kpini[1] during which guinea fowls are caught, whipped and slaughtered for eating. The story of the pig and the guinea fowl is so widespread in West Africa.

2.59 The Dagbamba practice polygany and considered it the duty of every responsible man. Even where a man has one wife he is still considered a bachelor for the simple reason that when the wife gives birth she moves to stay with her parents after the naming ceremony for almost a year or more before returning to her matrimonial home. During the woman's absence, the young man goes back to his bachelor life and this life, the Dagbamba consider, is not good enough for a responsible man and so polygamy was upheld as a status symbol. When Islam came and

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1 Kpini is the plural form of Kpang which is the guinea fowl. Ironically enough Muslims in Dagbon do not celebrate this festival but the traditionalists do. There are also some Muslims in the rural areas who still believe this story and observe it. The month in which Kpini is celebrated is the seventh month of the lunar calendar.

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its adherents were told that God allows Muslims to marry up to four wives, they easily associated it with their stand on polygamy and also that God acknowledges that status symbol. The other thing that attracted the Dagbamba to Islam is the paternal inheritance which they cherish so much. Since the Islamic mode of inheritance is paternal, the Dagbamba did not have any quarrel with it and so it was most welcome. Lastly, when drought threatens Dagbon society, traditional 'rain callers'[1] are called upon to use their powers to make rain fall. Sometimes when they go into action the desired effect is realised but in most cases rain never falls and when this happens, it is traced to some mishap and that if the gods or ancestors are not appeased, the desired effect would not be realised. When the Dagbamba observed that the Muslims have a way of calling for rain when drought threatens by observing the Salat al-Istisqa,[2] they quickly associated it with the activities of the traditional 'rain callers'. The Dagbamba having noted all these similarities between Islam and traditionalism were satisfied that they could become Muslims without breaking with their past.

2.60 This does not suggest that all Dagbamba easily accepted Islam or even accepted Islam at all. There were others who remained committed traditionalists and would have nothing to do

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1 These traditional rain callers are known as 'sa-boriba'.

2 It is a special prayer for rain when there is drought.

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with Islam. Such people, I should state, were very few and were not prominent in Dagbon society. People who mattered in Dagbon society during the early days of Islam had something to do with Muslims because the chiefs and elders even though custodians of the culture and values of Dagbon had to accept Islam nominally in order not to allienate themselves from their cherished customs. Perhaps it will not be out of place to state that those who remained committed to traditionalism were people who lived in the very rural areas and did not easily come into contact with Muslims. When Islam came, it began as a religion for chiefs, then it became that of the urban populace, and when the Hausa intensified proselytisation the result was that a majority of Dagbamba in the towns and a sizeable minority in the villages professed Islam. With the coming of learned Muslims referred to as Ulama, Islam in Dagbon was constantly renewed and reinvigorated.

THE INTRODUCTION OF ARABIC SCHOOLS

2.61 When all the Muslim groups had settled in their various areas in Dagbon, it became necessary to establish Quranic Schools to teach Muslim children how to read and write Arabic, at least as much as would enable them to read the Qur'an. The basic aim of such Qur'anic education was to compel the child to learn off by heart some chapters of the Qur'an for use in offering the five daily prayers and to bring up the child to appreciate the Muslim way of life. People who were converted to Islam had, therefore, to send their children to these Qur'anic schools for Muslim education. Most of these schools

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were established by the Hausa mallams and they were popularly called makaranta, a term that is still popular today.

2.62 The mallams used the entrance-huts to their compounds called Zaure in hausa and Zong in Dagbani as classrooms where they taught these children. On very hot days the children had their lessons under trees or where there was enough shade. The children did not use tables and chairs but sat on mats made of guinea corn stalks or on the skin of animals such as cows and sheep. The first thing that the children were taught were the thirty Arabic alphabets which they were expected to identify and learn off by heart in their proper order. The children did not use exercise books but slates hence such schools were called makarantar-allo meaning 'slate-school'. The mallams used the whipping method to get the children to learn faster. The whip used is termed bulala in Hausa and baranzum in Dagbani. Hausa was used as the medium of instruction.

2.63 When the children have memorised all the letters of the Arabic alphabet in their proper order and have mastered all the vowel signs, they were then taught the first chapter of the Qur'an which is very important to every practising Muslim. The significance of this aspect of Islamic education was to prepare the children for higher studies in Islam because learning the Qur'an off by heart was not an end in itself but a means to an end. The children were expected to continue in the makarantar-ilmi which is a 'law school' or a school for higher

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studies which embraces the teaching of details about the five pillars of Islam, hadith[1] and figh[2] and sometimes the study of a book of law such as the Risala of Ibn Abi Zaid or al-Akhdari.[3] Since teaching was not a profession exclusive of other occupations, the mallams handed the beginners over to older pupils and retired into their chambers to engage in amulet or talisman making and divination. This divination is termed duba in Hausa and tibbu in Dagbani. The latter has already been noted in paragraph 2.08.

2.64 The unfortunate aspect of the Qur'anic Schools was that they never encouraged girls to be brought to their schools. The mallams argued that Islam does not allow girls to be mixed up with boys because this sort of interaction generates promiscuity. They argued further that a boy or girl who casts a lewd glance at the other and allows himself or herself to be attracted likewise, they both meet the displeasure of God. To diminish this temptation, therefore, they discouraged the unsupervised meetings between the young people of the opposite sex if they are not close relatives. This teaching has influenced the people of Dagbon so much that it has accounted for the low rate of female literates in the area. However,

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1 Hadith is the second source of Islamic law. They are the sayings, actions and silent approvals of the Prophet.

2 Figh is an aspect of Islam that deals with Islamic doctrine and jurisprudence.

3 Al-Akhdari has been corrupted to read Lahlori in Dagbon.

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this situation did not continue throughout because some mallams gradually allowed girls in their makaranta with strict and effective supervision when they were mixed with the boys. Some other mallams separated them from the boys.

2.65 Children who attended these Quranic schools spent many years with the mallams before completing their studies of the Qur'an. They were expected to learn the one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Qur'an but the process was slow because the mallam was alone and the children were many. Writing the chapters of the Qur'an on slates took a long time and since the children were learning each according to his talent, not much attention was given to them. Furthermore, Islamic magic which the Dagbamba appreciated often made the mallams much in demand at the court of chiefs and in the area generally. Consequently,
the mallams sometimes left the children to learn on their own while they took trips to several places in Dagbon. Other mallams give the children long holidays and on their return, fix a date for the commencement of classes. On the average children had to spend ten years at school.

2.66 The mallams did not receive any remuneration from parents for the services rendered to the children, but occasionally parents sent gifts in the form of food items and even cash. Teaching at that time was regarded as a voluntary pious work which the mallams termed 'Fi Sabili Allah', an Arabic term meaning 'For the sake of God'. The mallams were

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greatly satisfied with the respect and honour accorded them in Dagbon. At the end of the Arabic school course the mallams retain one or two good ones to assist in teaching the beginners while the rest go on to do further studies if they so desired. However, while those retained by the mallams were engaged in teaching, they received special lessons on higher studies from their various mallams. A graduation ceremony known as walima was usually held for the children at the end of their Qur'anic studies. At this ceremony the graduants dress in white gowns with white turbans and are made to recite in unison the second chapter of the Quran, Surat al-Bagarah (the chapter of the Cow) which has 286 verses and the longest of all the chapters. After this the mallam concerned preaches to the gathering and exhorts the graduands to put their talent at the service of God. The ceremony ends with feasting with well wishers, parents and guadians showering praises on the graduands while some women ululate to show their appreciation for the children's performance.

2.67 In the Quar'anic school system, the school week began on Saturday and ended on Wednesday. The children were expected to rest on Thursday and Friday. As a matter of fact there was normally no rest for them because they had to go round villages begging for alms. These young children are called al-Majiri which comes from the Arabic al-muhajir meaning an itinerant Qur'anic student. It is observed that people who go to consult mallams for spiritual services are usually requested to make

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sadaga[1] which is also known as sara in Dagbani. This sadaga is given in the form of food items, money, clothing and especially chicken. The diviners specifically ask their customers to make the sadaga to the al-majiri and so when these young children go round begging they are heavily patronised. When the al-majiris return from these begging trips whatever was obtained are shown to the mallam who takes a share and the rest taken to their various homes. When the children are many the mallam gets sufficient food for his household. In some cases the children farm for the mallam and do a host of domestic duties such as washing and cleaning, fetching water from the riverside, going to the bush for firewood, grinding corn etc. It does not seem an exaggeration to suggest that these children were made to work like slaves.[2] No child could dare complain and no parent had the guts to oppose this system and so it lingered on for a long time.

2.68 In 1901 Northern Ghana became a protectorate of the British and in 1909, the Chief Commissioner Ltd. Colonel A.E. Watherson inaugurated formal education in Tamale. The Yendi

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1 This is an Arabic term for voluntary alms giving.

2 This assertion is corroborated by a Hausaman's experience with his mallam in J. Spencer Trimingham's Islam in West Africa, Oxford 1976 p.160. He stated that besides learning they were forced to perform hard tasks which were so burdensome that it made them stupid with tiredness. The mallam made them spin his wife's cotton, grind corn, fetch water etc. I also suffered the same fate while studying under one Mallam Mahamah in Tamale betwween 1957 and 1962.

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Junior Trade School was established in 1922. Parents in Dagbon were reluctant in sending their children to these English Schools because the Muslims did not approve of what they considered as essentially Christian institutions. Additionally, they considered that Western education corrupts the child and since there were Qur'anic schools to cater for the educational needs of their children, they did not want the white man's school. Most of all they feared that if the children were allowed to attend these English schools, there was the liklihood of the children recanting their faith in Islam and following the white man's religion.

2.69 Some parents however sent their children or wards to these English Schools. They were reluctantly compelled or persuaded by the colonial administrators because of their unique role as chiefs and elders. This attitude notwithstanding both government and missions fought relentlessly to promote secular education such that by 1935 there were only eight schools in the whole of the Northern Territories whereas there were over fifty Qur'anic schools scattered all over areas such as Tamale, Yendi, Salaga and Savelugu.

ISLAM IN OTHER TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN DAGBON

2.70 Tamale is the largest of all the towns in Dagbon and it is situated sixty miles west of Yendi. When the Muslims arrived in Tamale it was a small village with the Dakpema as the owner of the land. Levtzion translates Dakpema as 'the old

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man of the market'[1] which is a wrong translation. Its literal translation is 'the head of the market', and he functions as a Tindana (earth priest) rather than as a Na (chief). That is why the title Na is not attached to his title. The Chief of Tamale is known as the Gulkpe-Na. The Muslims who settled in Tamale were Hausas and they established their quarters at the outskirts of the town which up to this day is called Zongo. Most of them did not take proselytisation seriously as a result of their trade and the tanning of animal skins that was peculiar to them. Up to this day tanning is their main job, but a few of them started Qur'anic Schools.

2.71 Savelugu, a village 12 miles north of Tamale is directly on the route followed by the Wangara Muslims. It is reported that when the first Hausa Muslim[2] arrived there, he met a Wangara Muslim who was the Yar-na. Later a Hausa was appointed imam of Savelugu may be because he was more learned than the Wangara Muslim.

2.72 Other places such as Kumbungu, Tolon and Nyankpala were areas where Muslims settled. The first mosque at Kumbungu was built by a Wangara Muslim called Alhaji Ishaq. When he arrived

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period, Oxford, 1968, p.120.

2 The first Hausa imam of Savelugu was one Shu'aib Ture.

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at Kumbungu he saw a large number of Muslims without a mosque[1], and through his initiative, one was built. Tolon on the other hand served as a resting place for Wangara traders who went to Daboya to buy salt. As a result of these periodic rests, a small Muslim Community sprang there and today majority of the people are Muslims. The chief who reigned longest in Tolon went on pilgrimage to Makkah and he was Alhaji Yakubu Tolon-Na. He died in 1986. Nyakpala which is ten miles west of Tamale has a large Muslim community as a result of their long interaction with Wangara traders.

2.73 Gushegu is another town that had Islamic influence not long after Yendi had. It is situated about forty miles north of Yendi. In this town a Muslim holds the title of Yidan-fati. He lives with the chief of the town, prays for him and slaughters his animals. The imam of Gushegu has a messenger called Yidan-Sannu who washes the dead bodies of chiefs and other Muslims. Karaga, sixty miles north of Yendi is another town where Muslims abound. It is reported that the first Muslim to arrive there was one Tahir Sisse, a Wangara Muslim. His son was appointed the first Yar-na. Zabzugu and Kpabia which were on the trade routes from Salaga to Hausaland were also resting points for caravans and gradually they grew into big Muslim communities as Dupuis noted, 'Wabia, a capital

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1 There was actually a mosque but not in the form of a building. Alhaji Ishaq only noticed that the Muslims had arranged stones in an open area where they gathered for prayers.

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city, as large as Coomassy, and a territory purely Muslim.'[1]

MIXING AS AN ASPECT OF ISLAM IN DAGBON

2.74 Between paragraphs 2.55 and 2.60, an attempt was made to show why the Dagbamba accepted Islam. It was noted that the Dagbamba saw so many similarities between their traditional system and Islam. They therefore concluded that Islam and their traditional system were one. It should be pointed out that as a result of the desire by the early Muslims to convert the Dagbamba and get themselves infused into the socio-political system of Dagbon, they tolerated many things which later gave rise to the emergence of jihadist movements such as that of Uthman dan Fodio. It is noted that when Christianity came into Dagbon and even other places in West Africa, its adherents were discouraged from indulging in some traditional practices and this made the Africans to resist evangelisation from the Christian missionaries for a long time.

2.75 The Wangaras who arrived in Dagbon first interacted with the Dagbamba on purely trading lines, but gradually they exhibited some spiritual powers which the people appreciated. Some of them indulged in soothsaying by which they informed their customers what the future held for them. They also prepared all sorts of concoctions for their customers either to drink or bath with. Then came the Hausas with similar ideas. They allowed their

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa. A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period. Oxford, 1968, p.119.

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converts to sacrifice to their gods and ancestors. The Dagbamba ate animals slaughtered in honour of their gods and ancestors, they bought amulets, talismans and charms from the Hausa Muslims and trusted that such things had power to save them from evil and the wicked machinations of their enemies. The Hausas also wrote Quranic verses on slates, and sometimes what they wrote on slates were taken from other sources. These writings were then washed into bowls and kept in bottles for their customers. They introduced the seventh and fortieth day funeral celebrations, and they found Islamic explanations to a host of practices that were prevalent in Dagbon society. In summary it is noted that Islam showed a lot of flexibility in practice with regard to the customs of the Dagbamba which led to its immobility and rigid opposition to change when subjected to pressures of reform from outside. The early Muslim evangelists had indeed made grievious mistakes for allowing unorthodox practices of Islam in Dagbon which some Muslims find difficult to stop. However, it is noted that there are some villages in Dagbon where Islam in its orthodox form prevails as a result of their frequent contacts with the Munchire.[1] Such villages are Mbana-yili which is eight miles north of Tamale, Ngarin which is six miles also north of Tamale, Kogni, eleven miles north of Tamale, Kpabya forty-five miles east of Tamale and twenty-four miles from Yendi and lastly Nasambu which is forty-three miles south of Yendi.

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1 This is the name given to Afa Ajura and his followers in Dagbon who belong to the Ahlul-Sunnah group by the Tijaniyya.

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INTERACTION BETWEEN MUSLIMS IN DAGBON AND THE ASANTE KINGDOM

2.76 From correspondence between Professor Ivor Wilks formerly of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana and Nehemia Levtzion[1], it is noted that between 1744-5 when Ashanti forces were said to have invaded Dagbon, a number of Arabic works were taken away and these subsequently passed into the hands of the Danes of the Guinea Coast who also sent them to the Royal Library in Copenhagen, Code Arab cccii, labelled on the wrappings, 'Arabic manuscripts from the Guinea Coast'. According to Levtzion who visited the Royal Library in Copenhagen, internal evidence show that the manuscripts were taken from Kumasi and had been written mainly during the first two decades of the 19th century and they must have arrived in Copenhagen sometime between 1820 and 1850.

2.77 In 1817 and 1820[2], two British missions visited Kumasi namely T.E. Bowdich and W. Hutchison of the first mission, and J. Dupuis of the second, which paid special attention to the Muslim community in Kumasi and were in close touch with its leaders. Both missions obtained Arabic manuscripts from the Muslims as well as oral information about Ashanti and the interior. With this interaction it came to light that the

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Early 19th Century Arabic Manuscripts from Kumasi in Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol. VIII, 1965, p.99.

2 Ibid, p.100.

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Muslims in Kumasi sold amulets to anybody who paid for them, but significantly, their most important duty was to help the King of Ashanti. In this regard apart from producing items such as amulets, talismans, charms and praying for the Ashanti Kingdom in their wars against their foes, they had to be in communication with the Muslim leaders in the hinterland to get their blessings for the Ashanti King. It is noted that the Muslims in Kumasi contacted those in Gonjaland, Mamprusi area and Dagbon but my main concern here is the communication between Ashanti and Dagbon.

2.78 The most important Muslim in Kumasi during this period was one Muhammad al-Ghamba, commonly referred to as Baba and was the son of a Gambaga imam. As both Gonja and Dagbon were tributaries to Ashanti, Muslims were regarded as representatives of the two as described by Dupuis when he wrote, 'The Moslems of Dagomba and Ghanja, headed by the Bashaw, Abu-Becr, Cantoma and Shoumo, came in a body to return thanks in the name of their sovereign, the King of Yandy ...'[1]. Baba therefore served as a representative of Dagbon in Ashanti hence his membership of the King's Council. He received instructions for charms to be made for the King of Ashanti as well as assurance that he prayed for the Kings health and that of his Kingdom. The following letter illustrates an aspect of

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1 Nehemia Levtzion: Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa, A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period, Oxford, 1968, p.182.

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Baba's duties in the Ashanti court:

> From Abu-Bakr, Sultan Kamshegu to Baba, son of Imam Gambaga. Extend our greetings to the Sultan of Ashanti. Take five trees; plant one of them in the middle of the house, together with four scraps of paper in a cow's clutch. As for the other four trees, plant them in the east, west, south and north of your town. As a medicine for headache, take three small scraps of paper and hang them on your arm. Wash your body at sunset and rub it with a small quantity of powder in the morning, then at evening time wash the body in water, without medicine. Do all these everyday. Baba tell the Sultan that I pray to Allah, but he has to give as present: a male slave, dressed in a red gown with a mithgal[1] in his pocket, three guns, seven golden riyals.[2] Sultan Yendi Andani thanks Allah, and thanks the Sultan of Ashanti. The Sultan of Kamshegu prays for you, Baba, that you will come back to your land in good health.[3]

This letter was written by Kamshe-na, the Senior Muslim elder in Dagbon to the King of Ashanti through Baba, and it is noted that as an elder Muslim of the Ya-Na, he extended his religious services to the King of Ashanti. Bowdich has yet another example of the interaction between Dagbon and Ashanti as follows:

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1 Mithqal is a measure of weight used for gold dust, representing 1/8th ounce or 4 to 5 grammes.

2 Riyal is a silver coin but today it is the name of the currency of the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

3 Nehemia Levtzion" Early 19th Century Arabic Manuscripts from Kumasi in Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol.VIII 1965, p.102-3.

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> The King (of Ashanti) gave the King of Dagwumba, for the fetish or war coat of Apokoo, the value of thirty slaves; for Odumata's twenty; for Akimpontea's nine; and for those of greater captains in proportion.[1]

The influence that the Muslims wielded in the court of the Ashanti King was due mainly to the religious services they rendered the King who believed in the power of the Muslims. Literate as they were, the Muslims became important in the Ashanti bureaucracy for they took part in negotiations with outsiders such as the British in 1820 and they were found more articulate hence their easy friendliness with people who come into contact with them.

SUMMARY

When Islam first came into Dagbon, it was a religion solely for the chiefs who were in dire need of spiritual power from the Muslims. Gradually the influence of this spiritual power got to the grassroots of Dagbon society and many more people looked at Islam as a link between peoples who formerly had little to prepare them to live harmoniously together as evidenced through the sharing of common religious practices such as the five daily prayers and the festivals. With the acceptance of the new faith, a new form of sanctions and changed behaviour characterised the life of the Dagbamba. On the whole practical ethics was influenced by legal Islamic maxims but it should be noted that in the real life of the

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1 Ibid, p.103.

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individual, he was ruled by a combination of Islamic and local rules.

Islam had no doubt influenced the life of the Dagbamba and the credit goes to Na-Zanjina for making the Muslims his clossest associates, a tradition which chiefs who came after him maintained. Some of the Muslims who arrived later to find that their counterparts had got themselves firmly entrenched in the court of the chiefs found consolation in moving out of Yendi to live with other chiefs in smaller villages where they also made their mark. In time the whole Dagbon society became closely intertwined with communal life but without disintegrating its basic structure. However, there were many villages which were far from big towns and neither were they on the main caravan routes. Residents of such places only heard of Islam when they had the opportunity to come to the big towns. People in such areas were completely isolated from the activities of Muslims and they considered Islam as a class religion because of the high esteem accorded the Muslims. These people stayed in their villages and prided themselves in their traditions, but as a result of the interaction between the chiefs whom they respected and the Muslims, they had to see Islam as a force that should not be underestimated. The Hausa Muslims particularly introduced into Dagbon some aspects of their culture which have gained grounds and the Hausa language gradually became a second language to the people of Dagbon.

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It is however sad to note that even though the Hausa Muslims are credited with their efforts at proselytisation, this effort was tainted with economic pursuits. They travelled to villages nearer the big towns with the view to bringing the message of Islam to the people, but in the long run, under the guise of doing God's work, they succeeded in exploiting the ignorant villagers. Instead of teaching the people the real values of Islam, they allowed them to have their own way which has given rise to the poor performance of Muslims in the villages in Dagbon. To these early Muslims, identifying oneself with Islam and observing the five daily prayers was sufficient to gain ones salvation. This attitude of the Hausas has strongly convinced me to believe that these groups of Hausas belonged to the community that did not find favour with the jihadist moves of Uthman dan Fodio and so had to move out of Hausaland into areas where they could continue practising Islam in its unorthodox form. However, it is noted that some villages in Dagbon have associated themselves with the Muchire and have consequently adopted Islam in its orthodox form. It is hoped that more villages would follow suit and gradually the mixing attitudes of the Dagbamba would be reduced considerably.

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CHAPTER THREE

ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES IN DAGBON TODAY
THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

3.01 Islam is built on five pillars and every Muslim in Dagbon is aware of these pillars and tries to observe them as far as he can. Children who attend Arabic schools are taught these pillars and adults who embrace Islam do not only have to know them but also to practise them. Laxity in the observance of these pillars is tolerated on the part of children who have not attained the age of maturity but not with adults. Apart from the first pillar which is the Shahadah (confession of faith), the others which are: Salat (ritual prayer); Zakat (compulsory almsgiving); Saum or Siyam (the fast of Ramadan); and Hajj (pilgrimage to the holy places in Saudi Arabia), are observed practically and their periods are known because even the traditionalists base their lunar calendar on some of these pillars.

3.02 The bases for observing these pillars of Islam are firstly from the Prophet Muhammad's own practices and secondly, from an hadith recorded as follows: On the authority of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab (with whom may Allah be pleased) who said: "While we were one day sitting with the Apostle of Allah (on whom be Allah's blessing and peace) there appeared before us a man with a very white garment and very black hair. No traces of journeying were visible on him, and none of us knew him. He sat down close by the Prophet (upon whom be Allah's blessings and peace) rested his knees against his, put his palms on his thighs, and said: 'O Muhammad! inform me about Islam.' Said

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the Apostle of Allah (upon whom be Allah's blessing and peace): 'Islam is that you should testify that there is no deity save Allah and that Muhammad is His Apostle, that you should say the prayers, pay the legal alms, fast during Ramadan, and go on pilgrimage to the House (i.e. the Kaba at Makkah) if you can find a way to do so.' Said he: 'You have spoken truly' ..."[1]

3.03 THE SHAHADA (confession of faith)

The Shahadah (confession of faith) is the first pillar of Islam. It involves the declaration by tongue and affirmation by heart the belief by the individual that, "There is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his Messenger." (Ash-hadu an-la ilaha ill-lahu wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadar rasul lul-lah). Once the individual makes this declaration, he enters the fold of Islam and is called a Muslim. In Dagbon anyone who makes this declaration on embracing Islam, takes a bath in order to purify the body symbolically of the dirt of ignorance and disbelief. If a convert has a name which has any un-Islamic trait such as Tia (tree god), Wunbei (house god), Dawuni (market god) or Bugli (god), the officiating Afa changes it and gives him a new and more Islamic name.

3.04 It has been noted that in Dagbon when a child is born into a Muslim home, the father pronounces the adhan (call to

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1 Arthur Jeffery: A Reader on Islam, Mouton & Co., 1962. 'S-Gravenhage. The Forty Traditions of An-Nawawi, Second Tradition, p.145.
It is also related that the questioner was Angel Jibril (Gabriel) who had come to teach the Muslims their religion.

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prayer) into the right ear of the child, and the igamah (call to the commencement of prayer) in the left one, so that the first thing the child hears is the attestation of the faith and the call to worship of his creator. The child grows up as a Muslim and is required to observe all its practices. It is not an over simplification to indicate that one is almost always born into Islam in Dagbon and so the need for the declaration of the shahadah does not arise in most cases. There is usually no special occasion where children or even young men are called upon to recite it. Sometimes children from purely traditional homes make friends with those from Muslim homes and almost invariably the children from the traditional homes go to their friends in Muslim homes. They play and eat together and also they join their friends in prayer and fasting and gradually they become fully fledged Muslims. As a result of the widespread nature of Islam in Dagbon, traditionalists do not prevent their children from becoming Muslims but they ensure that such children take part in traditional activities whether Islam sanctions it or not. However, as a result of the widespread nature of Islam in Dagbon, some children from purely traditional homes are free to embrace Islam.

3.05 There are many occasions during which the Shahadah is recited but not in connection with conversion to Islam. Such occasions are: after the Maudhdhin calls worshippers to prayer; after the performance of ablution; after the igamah is read by

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the muadhdhin for prayer to commence; when a Muslim shows surprise about something; when a corpse is being lowered into the grave; when there is a calamity or even a disaster and also it is used in expressing disapproval of someone's behaviour. Generally the attestation to the Shahadah strengthens the belief in God that the Dagbamba have. This idea of God correlates itself to previous conceptions. It has already been noted that the Dagbamba believe in the existence of God and they call him Nawuni. When they swear by God they say Nawun zugu and sometimes when they want to stress on the truth of a matter they simply say Anabi meaning the Prophet. At times they swear by the five daily prayers they observe by saying "Jingli zugu". When a quarrel ensues between two people and one wants to threaten the other, one may swear by ones dead father saying "Mpo mba".[1]

3.06 Some of the Afanema have criticised those who swear by the Prophet of Islam and by their dead fathers explaining that in the case of the former, the Prophet Muhammad was only a messenger of God and to swear by him is tantamount to equating him to God. In the case of the latter the Afanema explain that it is the custom of the traditionalists to swear by their dead fathers with the hope of invoking their spirits as ancestors to come to their aid against their adversaries. This act,

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1 Swearing by ones dead father is popular with the traditionalists, but some Muslims also go by it. However, one cannot swear by ones father who is alive according to Dagbon custom.

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according to the Afanema is unislamic. The recitation of the Shahadah is not an end in itself but a means to an end because it is required that the Muslim must put the faith into action which involves ritual prayers, fasting, alms giving with pilgrimage as an ideal goal.

3.07 The Islamic concept of the Shahadah disapproves of any action that hinges on polytheism, because the whole concept is based on tawhid (Unity of God). Muslims are therefore supposed to put their trust in God and look up to Him in times of need and not to set up partners with Him. Associating partners with God is a grievous sin in Islam known as shirk and in this regard God has said the following in the Qur'an:

> "Surely Allah forgives not that a partner should be set up with Him, and forgives all besides that to whom He pleases." 4:48[1]

However, it is not uncommon to see Muslims in Dagbon contacting the bagsi and Afatibrisi with the hope of knowing the cause of the death of a relative, what the future holds in store for them, what setbacks they are likely to face in their endeavours and what to do to avert them. Some Dagbamba Muslims seek the assistance of medicinemen to keep their enemies in subordinate levels or even to kill them. Others too go through certain rituals that fortify them against the use of knives, daggers,

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1 Maulana Muhammad Ali: The Holy Quran, Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary, Sixth Edition, Specially Promotions Co.Inc. Chicago, Illinois, 1973, p.204.

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arrows or guns on them and also the power to be able to vanish in times of danger such as in cases of lorry accidents or sudden attacks by enemies. This art of vanishing is known as lilgu which has already been discussed in 1.76.

3.08 It has been observed by some of the Afanema that it is not the art of vanishing or fortifying oneself per se that Islam rejects, but the processes through which one goes in order to acquire such prowess. However, some other Afanema who are usually followers of Afa Ajura hold the view that the mere thought of acquiring the art of vanishing or fortification of oneself is Kufr (unbelief). It is believed that people who wish to acquire such prowess go through some rituals that are unislamic. Such rituals involve the slaughtering of fowls at a shrine, eating the slaughtered fowl with some concoctions, going through some ritual baths and sometimes going through a period of seclusion. All these procedures that people find themselves going through are not in consonance with the tenets of Islam. However, there are still many Muslims who rely on God because when two people are vying for something and one of them resorts to the bagsi and Afa tibrisi, the other one consoles himself with a popular saying, "Nawun gari Afa mini baga" which means that God is greater than the Afa and the baga. The concept of tawhid is grossly abused by many Muslims throughout West Africa as a result of their inability to alienate themselves from their cultural practices whether they are unislamic or not, Dagbon is no exception.

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3.09 SALAT (Ritual Prayer)

In all the Muslim communities in Dagbon, ritual action is the standard of differentiation between believer and unbeliever. In this connection the ritual action used as the standard for determining who is a believer or not is that of the observance of the five daily prayers which are: Subhi (dawn prayer); Zuhr (afternoon prayer); Asr (late afternoon prayer); Maghrib (evening prayer); and Ishai (night prayer). This attitude of Muslims in Dagbon concerning prayer rests on the Command of God in the Quran which says: "And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should worship (serve) Me."[1] It is not common for Muslims in Dagbon to ask a stranger or any other person whether he is a Muslim. All that they want to know is whether the stranger observes the ritual prayers; and this is so because prayer is the basic feature of Islam and they are very conscious of the fact that non observance of prayer constitutes the difference between belief and unbelief. Spencer Trimingham has noted that among the Hausa they also say, "Kai masallachine?" (Do you perform ritual prayer?) for "Are you a Muslim?"[2] The attitude of the Dagbamba on this issue is a clear case of the influence of Hausas on Dagbon. Any person who interacts with the Dagbamba but does not offer the ritual prayers is not accorded any serious

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1 Maulana Muhammad Ali: The Holy Quran, Arabic text, English Translation and Commentary, Sixth Edition, Specially Promotions Co. Inc. Chicago, Illinois, 1973, p.992, 51:56.

2 J. Spencer Trimingham: Islam in West Africa, Oxford University Press, 1976, p.50.

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respect. If they have to accord a non-Muslim respect at all, it may be either superficial or out of courtesy. If they have to complain about a good man, then it is because he does not pray. In this connection the Dagbamba often say, "So and so is a good man but his mistake is his inability to pray."

3.10 Prayer is so important to Muslims in Dagbon such that parents insist that their children about the ages of six and seven observe it, and older children between the ages of ten and fifteen who omit prayers are beaten. Muslims who live in the same room or quarters with their wives see to it that their wives observe the prayers at the right times which is in line with a Qur'anic directive (20:132) [1]. Majority of wives live in separate apartments from their husbands but still these husbands enquire from time to time whether they have observed their prayers. This attitude might sound chauvinist to the outsider but it is a recommendation by the Afanema that husbands should always remind women about prayers because they are prone to forgetfulness. Some of the Afanema stress, especially at wazu sessions that to remind ones wife of prayer seeks the pleasure of God. Spencer Trimingham notes that the sex division in religion which made men Muslims and women pagans has resulted in a situation where men are more deeply involved in Islam whereas women's participation is marginal because Islam provided women with little scope for ritual participation.[2] This cannot be said of Muslim women in present

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1 "And enjoin prayer on thy people, and steadily adhere to it..."
2 J. Spencer Trimingham: The Influence of Islam Upon Africa.

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day Dagbon because women participate actively in Islamic activities. Besides many more women attend wazu sessions and more younger girls attend Arabic schools to acquire Islamic learning. Muslim women are usually seen praying at market places, when they travel and there is a stop over and prayer time is due, they observe it. Most of the women who normally travel from Dagbon to Kumasi or Accra or even within Dagbon carry with them plastic containers with water so that they could observe prayer with ease. Housewives who cannot read the time normally ask passers by who wear watches the time just to be sure of prayer time. Those who live in the urban centres do not usually have a problem with knowing prayer times because quite a number of mosques call Muslims to prayer by the use of microphones. Generally women in Dagbon today are quite alive to their religious obligations than was the case two decades ago.

3.11 Considering the significance of prayer in Islam and how high it is held in Dagbon, married women are always conscious of this ritual and they observe it without hesitation when the prayer time is up. However, the young girls, especially those who do not have any Islamic education tend to falter in observing prayers. The adhan (call to prayer) which is made five times daily to signify that prayer time is due, helps many people to observe prayer at the right times. It is also noted that congregational prayer is very much encouraged as a result of the hadith which states that, "The jama'a prayer is better

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than individual prayer twenty-seven fold."[1] There are very many mosques dotted all over Dagbon at market places, lorry stations, various sections in the urban centres, offices and even on farms. In these mosques worshippers congregate for the ritual prayers, and there is no doubt that the number of Muslims who congregate to pray outnumber those who do so individually. Young women and girls are not encouraged to worship in congregation at the mosques but many old women do so.[2]

3.12 In Dagbon Muslims refer to prayer as jingli and the same word is used for mosque. The five daily prayers are known by corruptions of their Arabic names as indicated in Table IV.

The Friday prayer is known as Jumaa and the large number of worshippers who participate in it signify its importance to Muslims in Dagbon. Muslims who live in villages where the Jumaa prayer is not observed converge in the nearest village or

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1 Ibrahim el-Shoura: The Five Pillars of Islam, Dar al-Asfahani & Co. Press Jedda, 1965, p.88.

2 Young ladies are not encouraged to go to the mosque but to pray at home in order to avoid sexual appeal and attraction to men. In this regard the Prophet said: "Your prayer in your room is better than that in your people's mosque, and prayer in your people's mosque is better than that in a common mosque."

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TABLE IV

NAMES OF THE FIVE DAILY PRAYERS IN ARABIC AND DAGBANI AND THE TIMES THEY ARE OBSERVED

ARABIC	DAGBANI	TIME
Salat al-Subh	Subaahi	4.30 - 5.30 a.m.
Salat al-Zuhr	Azafari	1 - 2.45 p.m.
Salat al-'Asr	Lahasari	3 - 5.30 p.m.
Salat al-Maghrib	Magarubi	6 - 6.30 p.m.
Salat al-'Isha	Leisha	7pm till dawn

town where it is observed.[1] Some Muslims in the rural areas delight in moving to the urban centres for the Friday prayer because of the Khutbah (sermon) they wish to listen to and convey its message to the other Muslims who are unable to attend. Besides, they wish to be abreast with current events in town because they only come into town once a week. I know some Muslims in Savelugu, about thirty kilometres north of Tamale, who come to Tamale on Fridays to stay in the mosque and only return after the Jumaa and Asr prayers. It is not uncommon to find some Muslims looking sad on Friday afteroon because they missed the Jumaa prayer. It is a common belief in Dagbon, especially in the urban centres that if you

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1 Some of the villages are so small such that the Jumaa prayer cannot be observed there and besides, there may be no competent imam to lead them in observing it.

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cannot find your friend on Friday morning, you will definitely find him during the Jumaa prayer.

3.13 The Khutbah (sermon) of the Friday prayer is usually read in Arabic and after the service it is translated into Dagbani and Hausa, the two languages understood by the majority of the congregation especially in the urban centres. In the rural areas the Khutbah is translated into Dagbani alone because Hausa is not popular there. For the past ten years there have been much controversy about whether the Khutbah should be continuously read in Arabic or in the language understood by the majority of the congregation. This controversy has been necessitated by the fact that the majority of the congregation in all mosques in Dagbon where Friday services are held are illiterates and therefore do not understand Arabic. Besides, there are other Muslims who can read and write English but not Arabic. These people criticised the mode of delivering the Khutbah in Arabic and suggested to the Afanema the need to use Dagbani. In reply to this criticism, the Afanema ruled out that possibility saying that the Khutbah is not merely a sermon but that it conotes dhikr (remembrance of God) which makes it an act of worship and besides, it is the tradition of the Prophet of Islam and so they do not find their way clear to break that tradition.

3.14 Some of the critics of the Afanema on this matter are of the view that the Prophet of Islam read Arabic during his

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sermons because the congregation to whom he delivered his sermons were Arabs, and that since they were Dagbamba, it stood to reason that the Afanema should address them in Dagbani. The Afanema have refused to bow to the demands of their critics and they continue to read their sermons in Arabic. It is only after the Friday service that the sermon is translated into Dagbani and Hausa, but quite unfortunately only a few people stay back to listen to the translations because some of them who are unskilled workers would have to rush back to their work places on time for fear of losing their jobs. There are others too who are traders and they have to rush back to their shops and wares. In effect the sermon which is an important integral part of the Jumaa prayer is normally not understood by many people.[1]

3.15 The celebration of the two Islamic festivals which are, Idul-Fitr and Idul-Adha, are two important occasions in Dagbon. Two rak'as[2] of prayer are normally observed by Muslims to mark these occasions. Throughout Dagbon these prayers are

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1 This problem is not limited to Dagbon alone but it is a general problem throughout West Africa and other parts of the world. This problem came up for discussion at a one-month course organised for selected imams all over Ghana, held at the University of Ghana, Legon in 1986 under the auspices of the Royal Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The imams were told there was no harm in delivering their sermons in the local languages.

2 A rak'a consists of standing, reciting the Fatiha and another chapter or verse, bowing, prostrating, sitting and prostrating the second time.

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observed two or three hours after sunrise in congregation either in the mosque or an open space. It has, however, not been the practice of Muslims in Dagbon to observe these prayers in the mosque, rather they are observed in open spaces especially in the outskirts of the town and villages. The Ahmadis (followers of Ghulam Ahmad) who are mainly based in Tamale do observe their Id prayers in their small mosque because they do not have many followers. These prayers which are held in congregation are much greater than that usually held in mosques on Fridays, and so they are normally held in an open area in order to handle the large multitude of people, men, women and children. Women who are in their menstrual periods may attend the festival prayer only as observers without participating in the prayer ceremonies. One important feature about these festival prayers is that it is an occasion where worshippers wear their best attires for the ceremony. Children are particularly happy on these occasions not because there is plenty to eat but mainly because they are gorgeously dressed up by their parents. Parents who cannot afford to buy new dresses for the whole family prefer to buy new dresses for the children while they wear old ones.

3.16 Idul-Fitr is observed on the first day of Shawwal (10th month of the Islamic lunar calendar) which is known in Dagbon as Koyuri-chugu (the month of drinking of water) at the conclusion of the fast of Ramadan. A day or two prior to this festival the poor, the needy and the destitute are given plenty

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of food items especially grains such as rice, corn, millet, guinea corn, beans or any other grains available. The most popular grain used in Dagbon is corn. This offer of gifts is what is known in Islam as Zakat al-Fitr, which is charity payable at the end of Ramadan following the breaking of the fast. It is prescribed for Muslims as a kind of charity which purifies men and supports fasting as well as redressing wrong deeds committed during Ramadan. It also serves as a relief aid to the poor and needy on the day of the feast to enable them to share the happiness of the people on this festive occasion.[1]

3.17 The Afanema have been able to impress on the Muslim public the importance of Zakat al-Fitr by preaching that an individual's fast for either twenty nine or thirty days keeps hanging in the air for a period of three days within which the Zakat al-Fitr should be given. If the Zakat is not given within the three days, ones fast is considered as null and void.[2] This very teaching by the Afanema has made Muslims in Dagbon to pay this Zakat without delay. Many Muslims in Dagbon buy the cereals for Zakat al-Fitr soon after Ramadan has begun. Normally the head of every family pays for himself and all his dependents. Most Muslims do not have the measure and so the

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1 With regard to Zakat al-Fitr, the Prophet said: "Relieve them (the poor) of the necessity of going around (looking for alms) on that day".

2 In this connection the Prophet said: "Fasting in the month of Ramadan lies suspended between the earth and Heaven. It is only raised (to Heaven) by the Zakat al-Fitr".

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Afanema advise that Muslims offering Zakat al-Fitr should use four mudds[1] for each person. In 1983 when Ghana experienced considerable food shortage as a result of bush fires and drought, it was virtually impossible for Muslims all over Ghana to offer Zakat al-Fitr with grains because it was not easy to come by them. The Afanema in Dagbon in this circumstances advised Muslims to offer Zakat al-Fitr in cash so that the beneficiaries could buy whatever food they could lay hands on.

3.19 Idul-Adha takes place on the 10th of the month of Dhul-Hijja, the 12th lunar month which is also the month of pilgrimage. This month is known as Chimsi in Dagbon and Idul-Adha as Chimsi-chugu. This festival is observed by Muslims all over the world to commemorate the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son in obedience to God, but just at the point of sacrificing his son, God sent an angel with a ram as a substitute. That is why this festival is known as the feast of the sacrifice. During this festival animals such as cows rams and goats are slaughtered and part of the meat distributed among the poor. On the question of distribution of meat some families in Dagbon do it on reciprocal basis, that is if the head of a family does not get meat from the head of another, he does not give meat to such a head. For the past decade the Afanema have been stressing on

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1 A mudd is a measure of one-handful of the two hands together or half a bushel.

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the fact that the distribution of meat during Idul-Adha festivities is purely a charitable act and should not be done on the basis of reciprocity. This innovation has reduced considerably and it is envisaged that it will die out in due course.

3.19 After Asr prayers on these two festival days, Muslims go round visiting friends, relatives to wish them happy id celebrations, good health and praying that they should live long to see many id celebrations. Children dress up nicely and also go visiting relatives and friends of their parents. Such visits are known as Baraka da Sallah (blessings of the prayers)[1] and they last for three days. These children are usually given money when they visit people. Muslims in Dagbon are concious of such visits by children and so they arrange to keep some money for such purposes. It is also an occasion when husbands visit their fathers and mothers in-law to wish them well. When a father-in-law has not seen his son-in-law during these festivities, he sends someone to find out why. Drumming and dancing sessions are also organised especially in front of the palace of the chiefs. Some chiefs in Dagbon observe these festivals in their own way. After the id prayers in the morning, the Na-Limam goes to the chief's house where the chief

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1 Baraka da Sallah is a Hausa term introduced into Dagbon by the Hausa Muslims. The word 'baraka' even though Arabic has virtually become a Dagbon word meaning 'blessing' as in Arabic.

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and his elders assemble. They then move to a special prayer ground to observe the id prayers. This special prayer is led by the Na-Limam and it is noted that some chiefs do not take part in the ritual prayers but participate as observers. Others join the congregation and observe all the rituals of prayer. This form of prayer is known as Na-jingli (chief's prayer), but it is gradually dying out as a result of severe criticism from the Muslim public. Afa Ajura in particular has described such prayers as unislamic because it has no basis in Islam. Chiefs in Dagbon see themselves as occupants of special positions and also as priveleged people and should be treated as such in all spheres of activity. Afa Ajura has persistently reminded chiefs of the fact that in prayer all people are equal before God.

3.20 One important special prayer which Muslims in Dagbon observe is Salat al-Istisqua (prayer for rain). For a period of two years between 1985 and 1987 Muslims in Dagbon have been offering this special prayer as a result of the drought that threatened the area. Usually Muslims come out in their numbers to offer two rakas of prayer after a period of drought as prescribed by Islam. In April, 1987 Muslims, irrespective of their differences came out to offer this prayer at the Police parade grounds in Tamale after a long period of drought. It was also observed in Yendi, Gushegu, Karaga, Kumbungu, Tolon, Savelugu and many other villages. Most of the Muslims in these areas are subsistent farmers and so when prayer for rain is to be observed they take part with lots of hope.

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3.21 Salat al-Kusufain (prayer of the eclipse of the sun or moon)[1] is a special prayer in Islam which is not observed in Dagbon even though its purpose occurs. The Afanema explain that when an eclipse occurs, the imam of a community is expected to gather worshippers in an open space where he leads them in prayer, but by the time the imam assembles worshippers, the eclipse would have elapsed. It is quite true that many Muslims go to their work places such as governent offices, markets and farms but there are some Muslim communities in Dagbon, especially in the urban centres where Muslims can easily be mobilised to offer such a prayer. Muslims in Dagbon are not used to this kind of prayer and so when an eclipse occurs, they just look on without doing what is expected of them. Under normal circumstances every Muslim community should offer two rakas of prayer.[2] However, the traditionalists in Dagbon do not sit down unconcerned when there is an eclipse. As soon as an eclipse occurs, the chief quickly assembles drummers, young men and children and they take to the streets shouting "Zom Nawuni zang o bahi" which literally means, "Fear God and free it". They drum round the

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1 There are two types of eclipses and Islam describes them as follows:
Khusuf - Eclipse of the moon;
Kusuf - Eclipse of the sun.

2 This special prayer begins without Adhan and ikama. There is also no khutba. There are also two rukus (bowings) in this prayer instead of one in normal prayer. The bowings, prostrations and the readings from the Quran are to be lengthened so that the service does not cease till the sun has gained its full light.

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village or town and as they move along, many more people join them. The drumming and shouting ceases as soon as the eclipse ends. As many of the Muslims in Dagbon do not know exactly what to do in this circumstance, they join the traditionalists in their mode of praying for the end of an eclipse. The general belief in Dagbon concerning an eclipse is that the sun normally swallows the moon and not the other way round.[1]

SIYAM OR SAUM (Fasting)

3.22 Fasting is observed by Muslims all over the world in the month of Ramadan, which is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It marks a very important period of the Muslim year. Muslims in Dagbon consider this month very important and they try to observe it as prescribed by Islam. Before the month of Ramadan, Muslims purchase food items and other provisions that would last them throughout the fasting period. Some of these provisions are given out as gifts to fathers in-law and the poor. It has become a tradition in Dagbon whereby Muslims send food gifts especially sugar, milk, tea or chocolate beverages and some money to their fathers in-law at the beginning of the fasting. Some Muslims send these gifts a day or two before Ramadan sets in. The idea of sending food gifts to fathers in-law in Ramadam has no basis in Islam but in Dagbon it is done to signify the honour and respect people have for fathers in-law. The giving of gifts to the poor is a form

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1 The Hausas also say "Rana ta hadia wata" which means "the sun has swallowed the moon".

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of charity which Islam sanctions especially in the month of Ramadan. This gift-giving has been so much institutionalised such that a Muslim who has a father in-law feels guilty if he is unable to present something to him, but almost invariably Muslims strive to satisfy this traditional demand.

3.23 Ramadan is reckoned as having begun when at least two reliable witness sights the new moon. If its appearance is not confirmed, the previous month of Shaban should be continued for thirty days. What this means is that as soon as the crescent of Shaban appears Muslims should start counting the days until the 29th day when they look out for the Ramadan crescent. If on this day the crescent is not sighted then the following day which is the 30th of Shaban should be considered the last day of the month because so far as the Islamic lunar calendar is concerned, no month is more than thirty days and less than twenty nine days. Whether the crescent is sighted on the 30th day of Shaban or not, the following day is acknowledged as the beginning of Ramadan.[1]

3.24 Some Muslims in Dagbon have resorted to tuning in their radios to stations in the Arab world and Nigeria to find out when fasting begins. It is the belief of such people that these countries can never go wrong in their determination of when fasting begins. This attitude has given rise to situations where in a town or village some Muslims start fasting a day or two earlier than others who stick to the principle of sighting the Ramadan crescent. Afa Ajura and his followers have always

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1. Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan: Sahih Al - Bukliari vol.3

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stuck to the principle of sighting the Ramadan crescent and have always criticised Muslims who tune in their radios to stations in the Arab world for information as to when Ramadan begins. Afa Ajura's opponents in this matter hold the view that if the Ramadan crescent is sighted in any part of the world, it becomes wajib (obligatory) for all Muslims all over the world to start the fast on the same day. They further strengthened their view with a tradition of the Prophet which indicates that while the Prophet and his companions did not sight the Ramadan crescent in Madinah, it was sighted in another town and when one of its inhabitants arrived in Madinah, he informed the Prophet that the crescent was sighted in his town. Thereupon, the Prophet commanded that all Muslims in Madinah should keep the fast.[1] Afa Ajura does not dispute this tradition but his stand is that the Prophet gave the order for Muslims in Madinah to fast because the visitor's town was not far away from Madinah as he reached Madinah on camel back. It is his contention that since we live in different time zones, it will not be possible for all Muslims all over the world to fast the same day.[2]

3.25 As a result of differences that occur with regard to the commencement of Ramadan, Idul-Fitr is celebrated on different

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1 Before the Prophet accepted the man's claim that the Ramadam Crescent had been sighted in his town, he asked him whether he believed that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is his Messenger. The man answered positively and thereupon the Prophet ordered the Muslims to observe the fast.

2 Abdul Hamid Siddiqi ; Sahih Muslim vol.2, Dar Al-Arabia, Beirut, Lebanon, Haditu 2391, p.529.

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days in one locality which is a threat to the unity and progress of the Islamic community. Sometimes too the Chief Imam of Muslims in Accra, the nation's capital, causes an announcement to be made on Radio Ghana urging Muslims to fast on a certain day and this is upheld by some Muslims in Dagbon. However, Afa Ajura and his followers normally ignore such announcements. A few other Muslims in Dagbon resort to the use of the Islamic calendar but the problem with the use of the calendar is that there are many types and some of their dates do not tally with each other and so the question as to which one is more accurate is never determined and has always been a problem.

3.26 Since there is always conflict about the beginning of each Ramadan month, there is also conflict with its ending, and this unfortunate situation has been with Muslims in Dagbon for the past two decades. It used not to be a problem in Dagbon in the early 1960's because Muslims adhered strictly to sighting the Ramadan crescent before starting the fast and breaking it with the sighting of the Shawal crescent. This problem has arisen mainly due to the sectarian tendencies that engulfed Dagbon during the late 1960's with no sect ready to succumb to the whims of another. However, 1988 has been a different year because for the first time in over a quarter of a century, sectarian tendencies were relegated to the background and a committee made up of Muslims from all groups except the Ahmadiyya Muslims, was set up to sight the Shaban crescent and count up to its end and when the Ramadan crescent is sighted it

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becomes wajib (obligatory) for all Muslims to start the fast on the same day. On Friday 15th April, 1988 a mammoth Wazu session was organised by leaders of the Muslim groups in Tamale from 9pm to 4am to discuss fasting. Most Muslims in Dagbon fasted the same day but there were, no doubt, some dissentions.

3.27 As soon as the month of Ramadan begins in Dagbon, chiefs, some traditionalists and other nominal Muslims who do not offer regular prayers, resume praying vigorously. Some Muslims who indulge in alcoholism give it up at least for the period of fasting, those who keep concubines send them away until after fasting and generally vice reduces considerably in Dagbon. Women who operate bars where food are sold close them up until the end of the fasting. However, there are some women who still prepare food for sale but on a smaller scale just for non-Muslims and children to buy. There are some chiefs who fast for only three days to represent the twenty nine or thirty days of fasting required of Muslims. The Hausa mallams used this method to encourage chiefs to fast but it has come to stay with some chiefs as something acceptable in Islam. Some chiefs have done away with such practices because the Afanema have advised against it.

3.28 The 27th night of the month of fasting is known as tukuli-dali (Lailat al-Qadr). This is the night on which the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet. On this night young men, children and beggars go round from house to house singing Islamic songs, especially in praise of the Prophet. Landlords

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and heads of family or household give them money and food as sadagah. This activity lasts until midnight when groups of Muslims offer nafilah (supererogatory) prayers and read the Qur'an until dawn. These activities are considered highly meritorious and so Muslims do not want to miss them. There are many Muslims in Dagbon and other parts of West Africa who believe that the Lailat al-Qadr (night of Destiny) falls on the 27th of the month of fasting and so they exert their energies to seek the pleasures of God on that night.[1] During the last ten days of Ramadan some Muslims move from their homes and their families to the mosque where they observe 'Itikaf which involves praying and reciting the Quran.[2]

3.29 Muslims in Dagbon do not sleep much during this month because throughout the fasting period they are engaged in midnight prayers and the recitation of the Quran all in the hope of seeking the pleasures of God. Apart from the madahas, individuals, groups of Muslims and beggars move from one end of the town to the other. In some villages it is the muadhdhin who moves round to wake up Muslims to prepare and eat their Suhour.

In other villages where there is no one to wake them up, they eat heavily before they go to bed and they consider that as

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1 The exact night of Power (Destiny) is not known but the Prophet says as related by Aisha that: "Wait for the night of Qadr (Power) in the last ten days of the month of Ramadan. This handith is found in Sahih Al - Bukhari vol.3, Dar al-Arabia, 1985, Hadita 234 p.131.

2 Ibid: Hadith 235, p.131.

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having eaten Suhour. Those who go round to wake up people during Ramadan nights usually sing Islamic songs or beat drums. Muslim women do a lot of hard work during this month of fasting because they have to wake up early to prepare Suhour meals for the whole family, they have to do household chores while fasting and they have to get food ready for iftar (breaking of the fast). Usually at the end of the fast of Ramadan, husbands show appreciation to their wives for their tireless services by buying them cloth and other items which they require. Husbands who do not have the means to buy gifts for their wives immediately after fasting do so later. It is not obligatory that husbands should buy gifts for their wives after Ramadan, but considering the domestic duties of women during the month of Ramadan, it is deemed an obligation of good conscience to show gratitude to them.

ZAKAT (Almsgiving)

3.30 Zakat (almsgiving) is a social obligation and a kind of worship observed for the welfare of the Muslim community. It is a charity that make Muslims feel the noble aims of Islam towards amity, mercy, assistance and co-operation. It is observed in many Qur'anic directives that the payment of Zakat is mentioned closely with the practice of prayers to give it its significance. However, it is a fiscal worship by which Islam requires the well to do to care for the needs of the poor. Therefore, God has threatened those who are capable of paying the Zakat but fail to do so with a most grievous

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punishment in the Quran as follows:

> "And there are those who bury gold and silver And spend it not in the Way of Allah: announce onto them a most grievous penalty on the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs: This is the treasure which ye buried for yourselves! Taste ye, then what you used to hoard." (9: 34-35)[1]

3.31 In Dagbon, it is only people who are capable such as the businessmen and business women, big time rice farmers and transport owners who are in this category. Zakat is one pillar of Islam which only few people in Dagbon observe because it is limited to those who are rich and quite unfortunately, the area is poverty stricken. However, there are quite a few who pay Zakat but in some circumstances the mode of payment leaves much to be desired. The Zakat on property amounts to $2^1/_2$ per cent after the elapse of one year on the wealth possessed. It was made on four kinds of property; livestock like camels, cattle and sheep; agricultural produce, silver and gold; and money coming from trade and commerce. Zakat is paid once a year and not once in a lifetime, for that will be in the interest of the rich and to the disdvantage of the poor. The same thing would have happened if Zakat is to be paid more than once in a year and in this case it is the poor that is going to be the

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1 Maulana Muhammad Ali: The Holy Quran, Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary, Speciality Promotions Co. Inc., Chicago, Illinois, p.393.

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beneficiary and the rich the loser.

3.32 Some Muslims who want to give out Zakat in cash just invite many people to their homes and distribute hundred or two hundred cedis each to them and they are satisfied that they have observed Zakat. Some others decide to give to a single poor man between twenty and fifty thousand cedis as Zakat so that it could relieve the receipient partially or even fully of his financial woes. There are others who change the monies to be given out as Zakat to smaller denominations, especially coins, carry them in bags and stand along the main streets where many people can be located. They then dip their hands into the bags and collect any amount at all and throw them at the gathering who also struggle among themselves to pick up something. This mode of offering Zakat is irregular in Islam because the beneficiaries have to struggle before they are able to get something and even in some cases the poor people get injured in the struggle to pick up some money. Secondly those who resort to this mode do not seem to be aware of the Quranic prescription of eight categories of people who should be beneficiaries of Zakat.[1] In effect what they do amounts to giving out Sadaga and not Zakat.

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1 Quran 9:60:- "(Zakat) charity is only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer it, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth), and (to free) the captives, and those in debt, and in the way of Allah and for the way farer - an ordinance from Allah. And Allah is knowing, wise."

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3.33 Muslims who grow rice, corn, millet and guinea-corn give out their produce as Zakat. This Zakat of produce is normally given during the season of its harvest. Many farmers do not know the exact quantities they should give out as Zakat because they do not use weights and measures. After harvesting whatever cereal they produce, they use their discretion in determining the number of bags to be given out as Zakat. With the big time farmers, the high cost of mechanised farming which is now popular in Dagbon has contributed to their inability to give out these cereals as Zakat in their accurate quantities[1]. Those who have cows, sheep and goats are expected to give out some of their livestock as Zakat if only it reaches the nisab,[2] but it appears owners of these livestock are unable to give out an animal as Zakat instead, they price the animal and then give out the cash as Zakat. Even though many people rear sheep and goats in Dagbon, only a few of them have up to thirty of each kind.

3.34 Most of the Zakat paid by capable Muslims in Dagbon go to the Afanema. All over Dagbon mosque and Arabic school projects have sprung up because almost every Afa wants to be identified with a mosque or school. They always appeal to their followers to contribute generously to such projects and

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1 Sometimes farmers consider the number of bags of whatever cereal they produce too many for Zakat because if that is done they will not be able to pay bank loans and other debts, and so they try to reduce them.

2 It is the total amount of wealth out of which Zakat is paid.

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besides they request that all capable Muslims should contribute their Zakat into these mosque and school funds so that the projects could be completed on schedule. The Afanema have also been able to impress upon the Muslim public that the building of mosques and Arabic schools are meritorious deeds and that whoever contributes towards their completion by payment of Zakat would be abundantly rewarded on the Day of Judgement. However, one Alhaji Aliu who used to be a follower and companion of Afa Ajura also based in Sakasaka, seriously criticised the Afanema for collecting Zakat money for mosque and school projects during his tafsir (Quranic commentary) sessions in front of his house. He told the Afanema that they had no right whatsoever to collect Zakat money for mosque and school projects while there were thousands of poor worshippers around. The basis for his criticism is the fact that the Quran does not mention that Zakat should be collected for such projects.

3.35 In reply to Alhaji Aliu's criticism, the Afanema, especially Afa Ajura stated that their action is based on one of the eight categories of people who should benefit from Zakat which is "Wa fi sabilil-lah" (and those in the way of Allah). The critics led by Alhaji Aliu still insist that even though the building of mosques and schools are necessary, such projects should not be embarked upon at the expense of the majority of poor people around. This problem has been with Muslims in Dagbon for about a decade now and no solutions have

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been found yet. However, the criticism of Alhaji Aliu has affected the rate of flow of Zakat money to the Afanema because most of these projects are still uncompleted.

3.36 There is no doubt that the payment of Zakat by capable Muslims in Dagbon leaves much to be desired. This is so because the Afanema have not done much to teach the people the exact manner of paying Zakat. There are very many people who are supposed to pay Zakat but they do not do so because they do not know what it entails. As for the rural dwellers they do not know the difference between Sadagah and Zakat. Generally, Zakat has not been given its proper place in Dagbon because both urban and rural dwellers have not been sufficiently educated on their duties as Muslims in this regard. What Zakat means to many Muslims in this area is to give cash to the Afanema as contributions towards mosque and school projects, but to all intents and purposes, Zakat means more than that.

3.37 HAJJ (Pilgrimage)

Pilgrimage to Makkah which is known as hajj in Islam is the fifth and last pillar of Islam. It is the ambition of every Muslim to accomplish this religious rite in order to make the faith complete. It is a religious rite which can be accomplished by the rich because one needs not less than three hundred thousand cedis (¢300,000.00) to make the trip to Makkah and other holy areas in Saudi Arabia which only few people in Dagbon can afford. The poor can decide to make the trip by walking which is quite a tedious thing to do. Besides one would be subjected to

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very many immigration[1] checks such that one might get frustrated on the way. In this circumstance the only way a poor man can make the trip to Makkah is sponsorship by a wealthy man.

3.38 It has been noted in the history of the Sudanese States that newly converted chiefs affirmed their adherence to the Islamic faith by embarking on pilgrimage to Makkah and its environs. Some of such chiefs were: Yahaya ibn Ibrahim of the Sanhaja, Mansa Musa of Mali and Askia Muhammad of Songhay. However, this cannot be said of chiefs who embraced Islam in Dagbon. The chiefs of Dagbon were quite aware of the importance of the haji but they did not see how they could make that arduous journey to Makkah leaving the comfort of their homes. Secondly the journey was so long that they could not imagine leaving home for about a year or more. Besides they could not think of relinquishing power to another person for that long period because such a person could firmly entrench himself on the skin[2] and this was quite disturbing to them. These factors accounted for the inability of chiefs in Dagbon to make the trip to

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1 In 1986 Adam Imoro (Ayarna) decided to make the trip to Makkah on foot but when he got to the Libyan border he run into trouble with the immigration officers. He got frustrated and decided to return home. However the Guardian Newspaper of Nigeria reported that Adam had finally made it to Makkah on foot (See Appendix 'A'). When I interviewed Adam he confessed to me that he got to Makkah by air but when the Guardian Newspaper men saw him in Makkah, they concluded that he made it on foot.

2 The chiefs of Dagbon sit on skins and therein lies their authority.

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the holy land. Generally the Dagbamba do not like travelling or leaving home for long periods. It has also been noted that the Dagbamba who work in Government Departments in Dagbon do not easily accept transfers outside Dagbon, and it is also noted that they prefer resignation to going on transfer. However, this attitude is more with the illiterate Dagbamba than with the literates.

3.39 There were some poor Dagbamba who embraced Islam as a result of the activities of the Hausa clerics who visited them from time to time. The zeal of these poor Muslims primarily from the desire to earn reward in the next world urged them to visit the holy land. From Dagbon they went through Northern Nigeria especially through Maiduguri, Fort Lamy[1], Abeshe, Ginena, Fasher, Nahud to El-Obeyd from where the train carries them to the Red Sea.[2]

3.40 Today air travel has made pilgrimage to Makkah easier for those who have the means. In 1977, under the auspices of Bestworld Travel Agency set up by Alhaji Ibrahim Mahamah and Mr. Cann Tamakloe, and with the consent of the Government, pilgrims in Dagbon had the opportunity of flying directly from the Tamale airport to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.[3] This exercise

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1 The new name of Fort Lamy is Ndjamena, capital of Chad.

2 J. Spencer Trimingham: Islam in West Africa, Oxford University Press, 1976, p.86.

3 The Bestworld Travel Agency charttered a Yugoslavian plane for this exercise.

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was hailed by Muslims all over the northern regions made up of Northern, Upper East and Upper West. People who travelled to Tamale from other regions and did not have relations in Tamale were accommodated in Afa Ajura's Arabic School (Anbariyya English/Arabic Institute). The direct flight of Muslims from Tamale to Jeddah alleviated the hardships of pilgrims who hitherto had to travel all the way from Dagbon to Accra, which is over 700 kilometres away to get a flight. They normally fell into the hands of agents who cheated them out of huge sums of money and besides they were easy targets of pick pockets and dupes. However this laudable exercise did not last long primarily as a result of the change of government in 1979. The Acheampong government supported the exercise because people in the north supported all this programmes fully, but when it fell, intending pilgrims in Dagbon have not enjoyed that facility any more.

3.41 Since the P.N.D.C. government came into power in December 1981, it has supported organised trips to Makkah for the annual pilgrimage. The government normally sets up a haji committee which is shouldered with the responsibility of allocating seats on the Ghana Airways flight on regional basis, the acquisition of visas for pilgrims, seeking the welfare of pilgrims in the holy lands and generally they are to liaise with all agencies concerned with haji operations with the view to organising successful trips. The government also provides foreign exchange to cover pilgrim's expenses on

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accommodation, food, entry fees, pilgrim dues, guides and sacrificial sheep.

3.42 Each year when a Hajj Committee is set up by the Government, the Northern Region of which Dagbon is a part is allocated thirty-three (33) seats. Out of this number Dagbon takes twenty five (25) seats as a result of the concentration of Muslims in the area. The allocation of twenty five (25) seats for pilgrims in Dagbon is by no means adequate because the intending pilgrims are normally quite many. The Government is unable to increase the number because of the scarce foreign exchange problems it faces. As a result of the limited number of seats available to Muslims in Dagbon, those who are unable to obtain seats on the Government's organised trips go on their own with foreign airlines such as Ethiopian Airlines and Air Egypt. Such category of Muslims provide their own foreign exchange requirements. Apart from individual efforts the embassies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah and the Islamic Republic of Iran have provided twelve (12), six (6) and five (5) Muslims respectively with the opportunity of going on pilgrimage. Since 1986 these embassies have been sponsoring some pilgrims for the annual hajj. As a result of the harships that pilgrims who go on foreign airlines face, the Hajj Committee for the 1987 year organised three additional flights by Ghana Airways which gave many more pilgrims in Dagbon the opportunity of performing the hajj. They were also provided with some foreign exchange. Whereas

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the first batch of pilgrims granted seats on regional basis were entitled to one thousand United States Dollars ($1,000.00), those who went on the extra flights were given four hundred United States Dollars ($400.00) and they were expected to supplement it with their own.

3.43 Despite the high cost of the trip to Makkah, year in year out Muslims in Dagbon yearn to go on the trip. As for the rich men and women in Dagbon they are able to pay in full for all expenses. Some others have to start saving towards it and others, especially the small scale farmers wait to harvest their crops or sell sheanuts and accruals out of such sales are used in paying for the trip to the holy lands. Ghana Airways advertised in the Ghanaian dailies for intending pilgrims for 1988 to pay by instalments to it the cost of pilgrimage to the holy lands which was fixed at one hundred and forty seven thousand cedis (¢147,000.00). Muslims in Dagbon welcomed this laudable idea from Ghana Airways and the intending pilgrims made deposits at the Ghana Airways booking office in Tamale. Ghana Airways also intends to have a schedule flight from Tamale directly to Jeddah if the number of intending pilgrims is encouraging.

3.44 The title of Alhaji or Hajia for men and women respectively which are normally conferred on pilgrims on their return from Makkah is so dignifying that it has urged Muslims in Dagbon to save whatever money they get in order to make the

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trip. The poor ones who manage to go on such trips do so on purely religious motives, but there are a few who use the trips to promote some business connections. Muslims in Dagbon attach a lot of importance to welcoming relatives, friends and loved ones who return from pilgrimage at the Tamale airport. Women who wish to welcome people sew new dresses that are white and the men wear white gowns and white caps as signs of happiness. When the pilgrims land at the airport, they are mobbed, hugged and greeted with lots of cheers. Muslims travel all the way from Yendi, Gushegu, Tolon, Kumbungu and other places in Dagbon to welcome pilgrims from Makkah at the Tamale airport.

3.45 Most of the pilgrims return home with white gowns which they distribute to relatives and friends and for the women, they are given veils and headgears. The pilgrims buy for themselves gowns especially those worn in the Arab countries on special occasions such as id days and for Friday prayers. From the day of their arrival up to about a month, visitors come and go in their numbers. They normally go to welcome the pilgrims, ask questions about the trip and drink some Zamzam[1] water if it is available. It is always expected of Muslims living in the same community in Dagbon to visit pilgrims who have returned from Makkah and are residents of the same community. Going on

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1 After performing tawaf (circumambulation of the Kabah) the pilgrim moves to the station of Abraham to offer two rakas of prayers and after that move to drink from the well of Zamzam which is a cure from serious ailments.

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pilgrimage is by no means an easy task but almost all pilgrims who return home do not talk of the hardships they encountered but they talk of the pleasures they experienced, the beauty of the holy lands and the multitude of people they saw. However, the younger ones tell their stories like it is because they stress the fact that very old people should be discouraged from making the trip as they stood the chance of dying easily. On the first Friday after their arrival, the pilgrims dress in their very best for Friday prayers where prayers are said for them and thanks given to Allah for their safe arrival back home.

3.46 Before the last quarter of this century most of the pilgrims from Dagbon were elderly people ranging between the ages of fifty (50) and sixty-five (65). In those days if a young man wanted to go on pilgrimage to Makkah and made his intention known, it was common to hear remarks such as "He is too young to go", "How can he go while his father and mother have not yet gone on the hajj?" This attitude was the result of the large number of elderly people who made the trip which gave the Dagbamba the impression that pilgrimage was the exclusive preserve of the elderly people. One other factor that contributed to this attitude in Dagbon was that it was not common to find a young man with wealth because no young man lived and took decisions on his own. Those who had attained the ages between forty (40) and forty five (45) could not go on pilgrimage without first ensuring that both their fathers and mothers had gone on the trip.

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3.47 Today in Dagbon, the reverse of what happened as regards the ages of pilgrims is the case. Most of the pilgrims are young men and women between the ages of twenty five (25) and forty (40). However, there are still a few older people who go on the trip but when this happens, there is either a son, daughter or close relative to go with him or her. This is to ensure that there is someone to take good care of him or her. It has however been noted that it is not common to find young girls going on pilgrimage. This is so because a spinster is not normally encouraged to make the trip. Young women who are married and have the means could make the trip. Secondly young girls do not have the resources to go on the trip. The young girls save money only to use them in buying basic necessities especially kitchen wares which they hope to take along to their husband's homes when they get married. For the past six years over eight hundred (800)[1] Muslims have made the pilgrimage to Makkah from Dagbon, and out of this number more than half are women. About 80% of the pilgrims from Dagbon for the past six years have been young men and women between the ages of twenty five (25) and forty (40).[2] The realities of pilgrimage have been explained to Muslims in Dagbon and so those who are over sixty (60) years and look old and infirm do not stand the chance of making the trip.

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1 This figure includes those who go on hajj on the Government sponsored trips and those who go on their own.

2 These figures were released to me by Alhaji Musa, the Chairman of the Hajj Committee for the Northern Region in Tamale.

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3.48 Umrah (lesser pilgrimage) is hardly performed by Muslims in Dagbon before the months of Dhul-Qidah and Dhul-Hijjah.[1] Umrah is optional and it is not limited to any definite time of the year and so Muslims all over the world who find themselves in Saudi Arabia at any time of the year go to perform it. It is not common for Muslims in Dagbon to make trips to Saudi Arabia solely for the purpose of Umrah because it is very expensive. Umrah can be performed before pilgrimage rites begin and so Muslims in Dagbon only have to wait to get to Makkah during the month of Dhul-Qidah to perform it as Qarin pilgrims which means the combination of Hajj and Umrah.[2] Muslims in Dagbon who are able to perform it are those who are invited to Islamic conferences in Saudi Arabia, Islamic students who travel there to seek admission into Saudi Universities, and some proprietors of Arabic schools who travel there to make arrangements for scholarships for their students and teachers of their schools. There are however a few businessmen and women who travel to Saudi Arabia on business trips and such people also perform Umrah. Generally it is not considered very important because there is no title attached to it as in the case of hajj. Besides, the usual grandeur welcome accorded pilgrims returning from the hajj is missing because no one takes notice of people arriving from Umrah trips.

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1 Pilgrims normally leave for Saudi Arabia in Dhul-Qidah and so they are able to perform Umrah in that same month or in the next which is Dhul-Hijja.

2 The combination of Hajj and Umrah is Qiran and the pilgrim is Qarin.

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SUMMARY

Muslims in Dagbon are aware of the five pillars of Islam which are: Kalimat al-shahadah (the confession of faith), Salat, (prayer), Zakat (almsgiving) Saum (the fast of Ramadan) and haji (pilgrimage). They all try as much as possible to observe these pillars which are almost invariably practical.

It is noted that in Dagbon almost all Dagbamba inherit Islam and so the question of reciting the confession of faith on becoming a Muslim does not arise. A child born into a Muslim family grows up to become an adult Muslim without having to recite the confession of faith as a prerequisite for embracing Islam. However, those who embrace Islam in their adulthood, majority of whom are non-Dagbamba, recite the confession of faith as a prerequisite. The confession of faith is recited on very many occasions such as after the muadhdhin calls worshippers to prayer, after the performance of ablution, in expressing surprise about something, when a corpse is being lowered into its grave etc.

The observance of the five daily prayers which are subhi, zuhr, Asr, magrib and isha are considered very important in Dagbon. Whenever a visitor arrives, the people are anxious to know whether he/she prays which is another way of asking whether the visitor is a Muslim. Parents are harsh on their children who fail to observe prayer and husbands do not hesitate to ask their wives about prayer on the least suspicion

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that a particular prayer was not observed. It is noted that in Dagbon the five daily prayers have been given names which are quite close to the Arabic names. These are Subaahi for subhi, azafari for zuhr, lahasari for asr, magrubi for magrib and leisha for isha. Special prayers such as jum'uah, idul-fitr, idul-Adha, and Salat al-Istisgua are also observed. However, Salat al-Kusufain (prayer of the eclipse of the sun or moon) is not normally observed even though eclipses occur. Instead the Muslims join the traditionalists to drum round the town praying for the end of the eclipse.

The month of Ramadan during which Muslims throughout the world observe 29 or 30 days of fasting is usually approached in Dagbon with a lot of preparations. During the month of Shaban which is the month preceeding Ramadan known in Dagbon as Nolori-bla, many Muslims get married waiting for the fasting period when women do a lot of work. Food items are purchased and some given to fathers in-law and the poor.

Majority of Muslims in Dagbon depend on the sighting of the crescent for both the commencement and termination of the fast, while others depend on what the radio says on Radio Nigeria and other Arab countries. However, during the month of Ramadan for 1988, the various Muslim groups decided to bury their differences so that all Muslims in Dagbon could start and end the fasting in unison. All adult Muslims normally observe the fast and even some children aged between 10 and 15 are

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encouraged to fast. Some traditionalists who would normally not observe prayer, do so in the month of Ramadan and stop when it ends. It is also noted that Muslims who drink alcohol and those who keep concubines give up such practices during this month.

During this month in Dagbon, the Quran is read over and over several times. Local preachers and those well versed in Quranic studies organise Quranic commentary sessions in the evenings. These sessions are popularly known in Dagbon and other West African countries as tafsiri.

Generally Muslims in Dagbon are poor and so the payment of Zakat is not incumbent on most of them. Those who pay the Zakat are the contractors, businessmen and big time market women, rice farmers and transport owners. The manner some of these rich Dagbamba distribute the Zakat leaves much to be desired because they do not know the exact amounts to be given out and also their distribution do not take cognisance of the eight categories of people who are specifically named in Quran 9:60 who should be beneficiaries of Zakat. Most of the rich people contribute large sums of their earnings as Zakat for the construction of Arabic schools and mosques. Some Muslims in Dagbon have criticised this act as illegal in Islam as there are several poor Muslims living in abject poverty.

The performance of hajj (pilgrimage) is the aspiration of most Dagbamba. This pillar of Islam completes ones faith

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when one is able to perform the hajj. The title that goes with pilgrimage, Alhaji for the men and Hajia for the women is very much cherished by Muslims in Dagbon. Normally the arrangements made to welcome pilgrims from the holy lands at the Tamale airport is quite elating to the pilgrims because they normally feel on top of the world.

The high cost of air fares has been a barrier to the desire by most Muslims in Dagbon to go on the hajj. However, those who are ever determined to go on the trip save towards it. Others are sponsored by the rich men in Dagbon and some of the Arab embassies in Ghana.

Formerly it was thought that it was only older people who go on the pilgrimage, but today more younger people perform the hajj. It is also noted that since 1983, women who have gone on the hajj have outnumbered their male counterparts. Many more women have entered big business and have become wealthy while most men concentrate on peasant farming.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF ISLAM IN DAGBON TODAY: THE GENERAL LIFE CYCLE OF MUSLIMS IN DAGBON (RITES OF PASSAGE)

BIRTH AND NAMING CEREMONIES

4.01 When a child is born in Dagbon society it is a joy to both the family and people around. Women usually ululate thrice when a boy is born and four times when it is a girl as done by the traditionalists. However, in strict orthodox areas such ululation have been stopped because according to them Islam does not encourage women to shout on top of their voices hence the permission granted them to recite verses of the Quran in low tones when in prayer. Women normally go in groups to congratulate the mother of the baby by saying, "Na zugu sung, Nawuni ni su ko sung" which means, "Good luck, May God bath the child with good water." This statement is significant in Dagbon society in cases of birth because it is the accepted norm which is used to wish mother and baby well. It is usually the duty of every Muslim woman in the community to go and wish the mother of the baby well and help do a few household chores. The understanding here is that every woman is capable of producing children and so Dagbon society demands that women should go to congratulate other women who give birth so that when it comes to their turn, they would also receive such kind gestures. To disassociate oneself from this joy therefore presupposes ill-feeling for the woman who has given birth, cases of which are rare.

4.02 Between the first day of the child's birth and the naming ceremony on the eight day, the child's father has to find

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time to call the adhan[1] into the right ear of the child, and the iqamah[2] into the left one. This practice is considered a tradition of the Prophet of Islam which is highly recommended to Muslims. This practice is popular with people in the urban centres in Dagbon as a result of the frequent wazus they attend. A greater population of the Muslims in the rural areas have no idea about this practice because of the lack of effective Islamic education in those areas.

4.03 Before the second half of the 20th century, it was not common for husband and wife to come together to choose a suitable name for their child. It was mostly the duty of the husband's father and in some cases the limam of the area to choose the name. This is so because once a young man gets married and continues to live in the same compound with his father, the father still has authority over him and takes crucial decisions for him. This is a traditional practice which some Muslims maintain because it is the belief of such parents that so far as they continue to live, they should offer useful guidance to their children. The name that is chosen for

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1 The adhan is the Muslim call to prayer which is as follows: Allah is Great (2); I testify that there is no god but Allah (2); I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah (2); Come to prayer (2); Come to Prosperity (2); Allah is great (2); There is no god but Allah.

2 Iqamah means the call for the commencement of prayer. It's wording is more or less the same as that of adhan. One more statement is added to the iqamah which is, "Prayer has started" after "Come to Prosperity" in adhan.

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the child is kept secret until the eighth day when the naming ceremony takes place. However, in the course of time some learned Muslims such as Afa Ajura, Mallam Basha, the late Alhaji Issa Bello and Alhaji Umar of Nyohini, all in different surburbs of Tamale municipality, preached against the practice whereby parents chose names for their grand children. Today in Dagbon the responsibility of choosing a name for a child is that of the father and mother. However, there are still many young men who find it appropriate to discuss with their fathers the names they choose for their children either as a sign of respect for them or that they desire the blessings of parents for the names they choose.

4.04 As a result of the intensity of Islam in the urban centres, parents choose purely Arab names for their children. Some of such names which are termed 'modern' Islamic names especially by women in the urban centres, are difficult to pronounce by people in the rural areas and so they contend themselves with the very simple ones. Popular names that Muslims give to male children in the urban centres are, Abdul-Gafar, Abdul-Basit, Abdul-Hanan, Abdul-Qudus, Abdul-Aziz, Abdul-Razak, Abdul-Samad, Abdul-Hai etc. For the female children the following names are popular: Aisha, Umul-Kulthum, Hikmatu, Zenira, Sakeena, Ikrimatu, Khadija, Laila, Naila, Zinat etc. As for the Muslims in the rural areas they prefer giving their children local names such as Azindow, Napari, Sumani, Sandow, Andani, Danaa, Dasana etc. for boys and names

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such as Sanpaga, Tani, Sibpaga, Neina etc for girls. Some of the rural dwellers who do not like the local names give their children corrupted Muslim names as indicated in the table below.

TABLE V

NAMES GIVEN TO MUSLIM CHILDREN IN DAGBON - REAL AND LOCAL MUSLIM NAMES

BOYS		GIRLS	
LOCAL MUSLIM NAME	REAL MUSLIM NAME	LOCAL MUSLIM NAME	REAL MUSLIM NAME
Bukari	Abu-Bakr	Asiya	Aisha
Allasani	Hassan	Mariamah	Maryam
Mumuni	Abdul-Mumin	Abiba	Habiba
Abudulai	Abdallah	Zenabu	Zeinab
Alidu	Khalid	Adisa	Khadijah
Moro/Imoro	Umar	Memuna	Maimunah
Fusheini/Sheini	Hussein	Kusumi	Umul-Kulthum
Daura	Daud	Hawa	Hawawu
Dahamani	Abdul-Rahman	Alima	Alimatu-Sardia
Issahaku/Saka	Ishaq	Fati	Fatimah

4.05 Gradually as Islam progressed in Dagbon during the second half of this century, the elderly citizens began to complain about the very long Islamic names given to children and stressed particularly on their inability to pronounce them. Grandparents were disturbed because they could not easily call the names of their grand children whom they are fond of and

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called for a reversion to the common Muslim names. The concern of the elderly citizens was further buttressed by the experience of pilgrims from Dagbon who went on the annual pilgrimage to Makkah and its environs and also that of Arabic students who went to study in the Arab world. Both the pilgrims and students talk about how they come into contact with Arabs which leads to the desire of both groups to know themselves better by names. When they give the Arab names such as Abdul-Qahar, Abdul-Hai and Abdul-Mujib, they find the Arabs bewildered because these Arabs tell them that those names are Arab names and demand to know their traditional names for which Muslims in Dagbon were unable to supply because they had no other names except the Arab ones. These experiences in the Arab world gave some of the Dagbamba the notion that the practice whereby traditional names were relegated to the background and Arab names cherished is unfortunate. These pilgrims who returned to Dagbon complained to their Muslim leaders about this experience and so the Afanema began to preach at Wazus and in their various mosques that it is never haram (forbidden) to give a traditional name to a Muslim child in so far as the name is not associated with a god, shrine or anything that hinges on polytheism.

4.06 The traditional and local Muslim names which were being gradually phased out resurfaced as a result of the explanation given by the Afanema on naming. The elderly citizens were quite happy about it and some young men have added some old

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family or clan names to their Muslim names. However, a majority of the young women in Dagbon prefer the Arab names to the traditional or local Muslim names because, according to them, it was in tune with current Islamic trends in Dagbon. It is also the opinion of these women that if their children bear traditional names other children who have purely Arab names would laugh at them and also make fun of them in both secular and Arabic schools, hence their insistence on giving purely Arab names to their children. Some parents on the other hand have decided to give traditional names in addition to Arab ones so that they would not be ridiculed.

4.07 One of the key rites of birth in Islam is circumcision and in Dagbon today, it is a very important rite to Muslims and traditionalists alike. Up to about two decades ago the trend whereby babies were circumcised on the eighth day was changed to any day between the third day after birth and the day prior to the naming ceremony. The naming ceremony is known as Suuna.[1] As a result of the pain the baby boy goes through after circumcision, the flow of blood and the general uneasiness caused to parents on the Sunna day, it was felt that if circumcision is done much earlier, these problems would not arise, hence the change in the day of circumcision. Female

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[1] This is a Hausa word meaning name. It is a term used especially in the urban centres in Dagbon as a result of the Hausa influence. In the rural areas they prefer to use the term Bii zugu pinbu dali which literally means 'the day of the shaving of the baby's head'.

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circumcision is not however part of Islamic or Dagbon culture and so it is not pracised by the Dagbamba.

4.08 Circumcision is regarded a highly recommended rite in Islam but it is not mentioned in the Quran. However, the Risala written by Ibn Abi Zaid, which is a book on figh[1] says that circumcision is obligatory (Wajiba) and excision commendable (Khifad)[2]. The Risala is a book which is widely used in West Africa and in Dagbon in particular, pupils who complete studying the Qur'an are introduced to it. The Afanema relate stories to indicate that circumcision is obligatory and one such story that has gained much popularity is that the Prophet of Islam was born circumcised. There seem to be no proof about this but many Muslims in Dagbon strongly believe it. That is why when even old people embrace Islam, they are compelled to go through the pain of circumcision if they had not been already circumcised. The Islamic teaching on this subject is that for adult converts, circumcision is not obligatory[3] but Muslims in Dagbon have made a lot of fuss about people who are not circumcised, so that people in such category feel very uncomfortable. When it is known that a particular

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1 This word is an Islamic term for jurisprudence.

2 J. Spencer Trimingham: Islam in West Africa, Oxford University Press, 1976, p.162.

3 Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah: Introduction to Islam, Ernest Klett Printers, Stuttgart, West Germany, 1977, p.218.

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person is not circumcised, he is subjected to ridicule and taunts to the effect that his Islam is not perfect, that he cannot lead a congregational prayer and generally such a person loses respect in the society which he lives. Generally it appears circumcision has been given a prominent place in a Muslim's life in Dagbon so that one who is not circumcised is considered a second rate Muslim.

4.09 On the seventh day after a child is born, invitations are sent out to relatives, friends and well wishers to attend the naming ceremony the next day. The invitation takes the form of presenting would be guests with kolanuts especially when they are elderly, toffee for the illiterate young men and invitation cards for the literate ones. Most of the illiterate Muslims in the urban centres and those in the rural areas restrict themselves to the use of kolanuts. These people hold the view that the use of invitation cards and toffee are modern trends which are expensive and besides the use of invitation cards can only be meaningful when invited guests are literate and in their circumstance most of their guests are illiterates.

4.10 The Suuna ceremony takes place in the compound of the house or the Zong or even in the mosque if it is close by. Very early in the morning the place for the ceremony is tidied up and mats or skins of cows and sheep spread for guests to sit on. The ceremony starts as early as 7a.m. On the arrival of the limam or Afa who is to preside over the ceremony, the child's

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father places a plate full of kolanuts and another with maha[1] and some money ranging between one hundred and two hundred cedis before him and hands over a piece of paper on which the child's name is written in Arabic to him. Meanwhile the madaha recites poems in praise of the Prophet of Islam and those who appreciate it give him money. Sometimes the madaha's praises go to affluent individuals present at the ceremony all in the hope of obtaining monetary gifts from them. Normally these madahas are not invited to such functions but they always get to know about such functions because they move around enquiring about such functions each day. They make their living out of the monies given to them at such functions. When all is set, the madaha stops his recitations because they are quite loud.[2]

4.11 The presiding limam starts the ceremony by reciting the basmala[3] which is believed in Islam to be words of such power that he who knows how to use it rightly possesses a great gift, for he who recites it may attain his highest wish, and he who is assiduous in repeating it will be robed with the robe of auspiciousness. Then he goes on to recite the Shahada which is

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1 It is a popular type or doughnut prepared from corn for ceremonies such as Suuna, Amariya and for sadaqa. As a result of the influence of Hausa on Dagbon, some people call it masa.

2 Some madahas have been able to acquire microphones for their activities.

3 This is the recitation of 'Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim' (In the name of Allah the Gracious,.the Merciful).

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the confession of faith, the Suratu l-Fatihah which is the first chapter of the Quran and any other supplication he deems fit. He also prays in Dagbani and then calls out the name of the child. As soon as the child's name is read to the public women ululate thrice for a baby boy and four times for a baby girl. As stated in 4.01 this ululation has been continuously condemned by Orthodox Muslims spearheaded by Afa Ajura but some defiant Muslims and traditionalists see nothing wrong with it. Ululation in such circumstance is a traditional practice which some Muslims in Dagbon have maintained even though it has been criticised. If drummers are around they also beat their drums loudly and the madaha recites a short poem in praise of the child.[1] It is also noted that some Orthodox Muslims in Dagbon do not entertain drummers in their homes during such functions because they see it as unislamic.[2]

4.12 When the noise has finally died down, the limam prays for long life for the parents of the child and the child itself, the grandparents, those who have problems, those present at the ceremony, those who have been unable to come to the ceremony for one reason or another, for bachelors to get

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1 Sometimes a child is named after one of the Prophets mentioned in the Quran, and the madaha puts the child in the position of that Prophet and praises him according to what he (the Prophet) did during his lifetime.

2 Most of the people who abhor drumming and dancing at such ceremonies are the Ahlul Sunnah and they are mostly supporters of Afa Ajura.

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good wives, for pregnant women to have safe deliveries and finally that Allah should afford them the opportunity of witnessing yet another suuna ceremony for the same family. When the limam has finished with the ceremony he shares the money, kolanuts and maha with his entourage. However, some of the kolanuts are passed around for members present to eat. This ceremony can therefore be described as a kind of social occasion whereby the community enjoys the extension of good wishes.

4.13 After this naming ceremony, the child's father presents a ram for slaughtering in accordance with the tradition of the Prophet.[1] Before the advent of the last quarter of this century limams used to slaughter the rams presented by the child's father but today in Dagbon, that responsibility is handled by any person especially from the child's family. The use of rams on this occasion is very common and even poor people who cannot afford a ram have to borrow money in order to satisfy this social demand of the community. In reality it is not a hard and fast rule that a ram must of necessity be slaughtered. Dagbamba Muslims have even been reminded at wazus that where one cannot afford a ram, a fowl could be slaughtered for the same purpose but some Muslims feel that if they do that others would laugh at them and consider their action unheard of. There are however some Muslims who slaughter goats or guinea fowls on such occasions but their number is so infinitesimal. It is quite an Islamic teaching that an animal should be slaughtered and it is left to the individual to choose what he deems appropriate.[1]

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4.14 The naming ceremony is usually a short one but when it is organised by the well to do Dagbamba, many Afanema attend. Each Afa tries to get himself fixed on the programme so that he can offer prayers which are called aduwa[2] and by so doing the session is prolonged unnecessarily. A lot of money is usually collected as a result of the long session and at the end of it all, the money is shared among the Afanema present. Sometimes some of the Afanema become disgruntled because the money was not equally shared among them. That is why Afa Ajura and his followers believe that any monies collected should be given to the mother of the child who had suffered throughout the pregnancy period.

4.15 One other important rite of the naming ceremony is the shaving of the child's head by the wanzam. This shaving of the child's head used to be a very short process because it took the wanzam between ten and fifteen minutes to finish his work. The child's father then pays him and he leaves for his base where customers might be waiting for him. However, today in Dagbon, the wanzam-nema[3] have adopted a very slow attitude to

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1 Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah: Introduction to Islam, Ernst Klett Printers, Stuttgart, West Germany, 1977, p.218.

2 This local word is a corruption of the Arabic word du'a meaning supplication, invocation or spontaneous extempore prayer.

3 This is a Dagbani word which is the plural form of wanzam.

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the shaving process. This is so because if the wanzam hurriedly completes the shaving, the money that accrues to him during that short period is not much. On the other hand if he deliberately delays, every early visitor to the compound is ushered to his place of activity to witness the shaving process. By witnessing the process, one is expected to make a humble donation to the wanzam. This donation is not obligatory neither is it an Islamic teaching but it has come to stay in Islamic communities in Dagbon. By the time the wanzam finishes shaving the child's head, he would have accumulated about a thousand or more cedis. This is quite possible in the urban centres but in the villages the wanzam-nema do not get much. Whoever intends going to a Suuna ceremony to make cash donation these days in Dagbon has to make available some extra money for the wanzam.

4.16 The shaving of the child's head is an Islamic teaching based on the Sunnah[1] of the Prophet. It is highly recommended to all Muslims hence its popularity among Muslims in Dagbon. The Islamic rule on shaving has it that when the head is shaved, the hair is collected for weighing, and the weight of the hair determines the amount of money to be given away as Sadagah[2] to the poor. In the urban centres some parents do not

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1 This term refers to the traditions or practices of the Prophet of Islam.

2 Sadagah is an Islamic term for voluntary alms given to the poor and the needy.

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like shaving their children's head because they claim it could damage their head. Instead, they examine the childs hair and determine the weight by themselves and give out some money as sadagah. This practice is considered an innovation and is seriously condemned by the Afanema.

4.17 In some Dagbon societies drumming and dancing sessions are organised and there is general merry making. Parents who wish to make the ceremony grand invite various groups of musicians made up of the lunsi, gonje and simpa. Some Muslim families do not entertain drumming and dancing during such ceremonies and so they observe it quietly. The drumming and dancing aspect of the ceremony where women feature prominently has been condemned by some Afanema as unislamic while others are indifferent about it. To all intents and purposes, the drumming and dancing sessions organised during such ceremonies are traditions that some Muslims find appropriate to maintain. Strangers to Dagbon usually find it difficult to determine where traditional practices begin and end and where Islam takes off. They are therefore tempted to mix both traditions and consider them Islamic. Guests who honour invitations to these ceremonies usually give presents like baby dresses, soap and money. The money is given with the idea that it will help defray part of the cost involved in organising the ceremony which lasts until sunset.

4.18 On the night of the naming ceremony, the young woman's parents send a representative of the family to request the

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husband to release the wife to come and live with them so that they can help wean the child. This request is normally done during the young woman's first and second experiences at birth. Out of courtesy and respect for tradition the husband releases the wife to join the parents. The woman returns to her matrimonial home after weaning the child for one or two years, but others go back as soon as the child starts walking. If during the weaning period a woman is seen visiting her husband, she is taunted by other women because it is felt that she cannot live in her parent's home without seeing her husband. However, while the woman lives with her parents the father sends either monthly or periodic provisions and money for the upkeep of the mother and child. This practice which is a typical Dagbon custom has also come under severe criticism from the Afanema who condemn it saying that it promotes promiscuity and most important of all it has no place in Islam. As a result of these criticisms from the Afanema, the practice is gradually losing its significance. Some husbands defy the demands of the culture and refuse to allow their wives to leave the matrimonial home after the Suuna, explaining to their fathers in-law that weaning a child is the responsibility of both husband and wife. The youth of Dagbon strongly support the condemnation of the practice because the system whereby a young man lives a married life for sometime and for another time a bachelor leaves much to be desired. Supporters of this traditional

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practice say that the solution to this problem lies in polygamy[1] but the youth are of the view that polygamy can only be meaningful in this 20th century when the husband is well-to-do.

4.19 After child birth, the woman is said to be virtually impure. She is therefore expected to abstain from the ritual prayers for forty days as prescribed by Islam. Before she resumes performing the ritual prayers she should have to perform ghusl l-nifas which is a major ablution. Some women perform it immediately after the flow of blood ceases, but this varies from woman to woman. This state of impurity is known as nifas in Islam.[2]

MARRIAGE

4.20 Marriage in Islamic communities in Dagbon is known as amariya which is a Hausa word meaning a bride. This same word is used for weddings and the younger or youngest wife of a man.[3] According to Islamic teaching marriage is considered a very important aspect of a man's life because it is believed that God created men and women so that they can provide company to

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1 It is a common belief in Dagbon especially among the traditionalists that if a man has only one wife he is still a bachelor because if she gives birth and leaves for her parent's home, the man is left as a bachelor.

2 Y.A Quadrik 1.O Oloyede : Al - Izziyyah, For the English audience, Translation with notes, Shebiotimo Publications, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria 1990; p. 42-43.

3 The words younger and youngest used in this circumstance do not refer to ages, but rather to a man's newly wedded wife. It is possible that a man's newly wedded wife might be older than the first, or second or third, but she still goes by the term amariya.

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one another, love one another, procreate children and live in peace and tranquility to his commandments and the directions of Prophet Muhammad.[1] That is why in Dagbon marriage is considered very important. Any young man or woman who is not married is not accorded any respect and therefore marriage is considered obligatory. Two traditions of the Prophet have always been cited by the Afanema to strengthen the obligatory nature of marriage in Islam. Firstly there is a tradition which says: "Marriage is my tradition, whosoever keeps away from it, is not from amongst me",[2] and secondly, "When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half."[3]

4.21 When a young man sees a young girl and wishes to marry her, he first gets used to the girl and then proposes to her. If the girl accepts it, he then consults his father or guardian about it. This proposal and acceptance which is known is Islam as ijab and qubul is very important because marriage can only be contracted with the free consent of the two parties. In some of the Muslim homes where traditional practices go side by side with Islam, when a young man informs his parents about a girl he has seen and wants to marry, the parents would have to consult a baga (traditional soothsayer) or an Afa tibirigu

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1 Holy Quran chapter 30:21.

2 'Abdul-Rahman Doi: Shariah: The Islamic Law, 1984, p.115.

3 Ibid.

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(Muslim diviner) or both, to find out whether if the marriage is contracted it would have a future. If their findings are positive they might go ahead and plan the marriage but if they are negative, an outright dismissal of the intention is sanctioned. The practice whereby Muslims consult soothsayers is not Islamic but a traditional system which some Muslims in Dagbon maintain. According to the Afanema, it is contrary to the concept of the Islamic belief in the Unity of God (tawhid).[1]

4.22 For a greater part of this century choosing a wife for a son was the exclusive preserve of the father. It was what the father desired that the son endorsed without question. However, around the early 1970's some of the Afanema like Afa Ajura of the Sakasaka mosque, Hajj Umar of Nyohini and Mallam Basha of the Nuriya Education Unit, started to draw the attention of Muslims in Dagbon to the principle of offer and acceptance in marriage. It is noted however that some families were already aware of this principle and stuck to it but a majority of the Dagbamba were deep rooted in the traditional system of choosing wives for their sons. One of the main reasons why the traditional system did not recognise the principle of offer and acceptance in Islam is the fact that most of the marriages are considered family matters where the need for a man to reject a woman and vice versa does not arise. As for the Afanema they felt that it was their duty to draw the attention of Muslims to Islamic principles in whatever sphere of activity they are engaged. Most of all the alarming rate at which the principle

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1. Holy Qur'an : 15:16-18; 18:22; 37:6-10; 51:38 and 72:26-27.

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of offer and acceptance were being flouted gave rise to this concern by the Afanema.[1]

4.23 The choice of a partner by a Muslim girl is subject to the overriding power of ijbar granted to her father or guardian under the Maliki School of Law which is prevalent in West Africa.[2] According to this school of thought ijbar is a safety measure which is in the interest of the girl. If the father or guardian of the girl finds that in her immaturity or over zealousness the girl is going to marry a man with a bad character or a man who lacks the means to cater for her, he may restrain her from marrying the man. Parents do acknowledge the importance of marriage but they believe that if the right choice of a partner is not made, disastrous consequences are bound to occur. Parents, therefore, use this ijbar method under the Maliki School of Law to continue to choose partners for their daughters. This Maliki School of Law is applied in various spheres of activity in Dagbon and it was introduced into Dagbon by the Hausa Muslims. The Risala of Ibn Abi Zaid which has already been referred to in 4.08 is based on the Maliki School of Law which is used by all the Afanema in Dagbon.

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1 Abdul-Rahman Doi: Shariah: The Islamic Law, 1984 p.122-123.

2 The only person given the power to make proposals upon the proposal of a suitor is the guardian, who has been vested with the power of ijbar where he forsees some detrimental effects resulting from the marriage. The use of this privilege to satisfy an interest makes the marriage void.

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4.24 In some cases young girls refuse to accept the choice of their parents while such parents also insist on their choice. When a girl refuses to give in to the demands of her parents, an ultimatum is issued to the effect that either she accepts the choice or leave the house and be considered an outcast. This attitude by some parents is a gross violation of the principle of offer and acceptance in contracting marriage between two people. One might argue that such parents use the ijbar method which might be to the advantage of the girl, but the question is how sure are we that the father's choice is not a means of satisfying his whims and caprices? There are some parents in Dagbon who do not wish to force their daughters to marry men of their choice instead, they allow them to make their choice. However, when the girl attains the age of eighteen and above and she does not introduce a man of her choice to her parents, such parents get disturbed. Sometimes the father issues an ultimatum that he wants to see the girl come forward with a man she wishes to marry within a certain period ranging between three and six months. If this is not done either the girl leaves the house or be forced to marry a man of their choice. One conception in Dagbon concerning unmarried matured girls who still live with their parents is that, it is a sin that a father commits each day an unmarried matured girl continues to live with her parents. Additionally, if such a father dies while the girl continues to live as a spinster, then the girl's unmarried life will have to be

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accounted for by the father on the Day of Judgement.[1] This accounts for the desire of parents to rush young girls into marriage when they experience their first menstrual flow.

4.25 Before the advent of Islam in Dagbon it was the duty of a father to look for a wife for his son. It was considered sacrilegious for a son to wish to choose a wife for himself. With the advent of Islam this practice still continued and the main reason for this continuity is the desire by some Muslims to maintain certain traditional trends even though they are at variance with Islam. The other reason is ignorance because many people inherited Islam without knowing its details and others too got converted because it was the order of the day. Today in Dagbon the practice of choosing a wife for a son has reduced considerably but some rural dwellers still cherish it. In the urban centres, the situation has been aggravated by the emergence of sectarian and chieftaincy disputes during the second half of this century. Parents do not want their sons to marry women who belong to different sects and chieftaincy gates and vice versa. These conflicts would be discussed in chapter five under the emergence of sects and political life of Muslims in Dagbon.

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1 This view which is being constantly echoed by the Afanema to the Muslim public is not found in the Quran but I think it is a way of getting Muslims to let their daughters get married in good time in order to check promiscuity.

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4.26 When parents agree to the choice of their son or their son agrees to marry a woman of their choice, the father contacts a respectable Afa or prominent figure in the community to lead a delegation to see the girl's parents. The delegation is normally made up of between three and five men, but when the woman comes from a very prominent home, the delegation is larger. Women do not normally go on such delegations. Traditionally it is the men who initiate all activities connected with marriage and from the point of view of Islam, women are not allowed to mix freely with men. These reasons might have contributed to limiting members of such delegation to men alone. A day is also fixed for visiting the girl's father but without prior notice.

4.27 On the fixed day the delegation goes to see the girl's father and inform him of its mission. The leader of the delegation then presents him with hundred pieces of kolanuts and some money. There is no fixed amount for this "first greeting" and so it depends on what the delegation deems fit depending mostly on the popularity of the girl's family. On the other hand the delegation has to make a very good impression on the girl's family which could urge them to accept the proposal. In its bid to make a very good impression, not less than one thousand cedis is given to the girl's father. There is also a short prayer by the Afa in the delegation which normally centres on the success of its mission. Before the delegation leaves, the girl's father informs them that whatever

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decision that is arrived at by the family would be communicated to the leader. When the delegation leaves, the father calls his wife[1] to discuss the mission of the delegation. The girl is then invited by the parents and questioned as to who their would be son-in-law is and whether she accepts the offer. If she is positive on this issue, word is sent to the leader of the delegation to come for the "second greeting". If the girl does not accept the offer, which is quite rare, the delegation is still invited for a second meeting where it is informed that the girl has turned down the offer. Before the delegation comes for the "second greeting" after the girl has accepted the offer, the parents would have consulted all other members of their extended family.

4.28 In some homes in Dagbon when a delegation of this nature has come and gone, the girl's father consults either a baga or Afa tibrigu to find out whether the marriage, if contracted, will be a successful one. When the findings are positive it is quite pleasing to the parents, but sometimes these soothsayers inform the girl's father that there would be a mishap in the marriage but that if some sadagah is made, it will avert that mishap. It is the soothsayer who shows what form of sadagah

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1 A man may have two, or three or four wives and when a delegation of this nature comes and goes, the man consults the woman whose daughter's hand is being sought in marriage. It is when a decision has been taken that the other wives are formally informed.

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should be made and it is done without hesitation. This form of consultation with a baga or Afa tibrigu is considered unislamic and is gradually being discouraged among Muslims in Dagbon. Its total eradication could be fulfilled if the Afanema in Dagbon continue to subject the practice to severe criticism.

4.29 Before the last quarter of this century, it was quite possible for a delegation during its "first greeting" to be informed that the girl had been betrothed to another man either in infancy or when she was in her early teens without her knowledge. This sort of embarrassment has gradually been eradicated because before a girl asks a young man to see her parents, she makes sure that her parents have no intention of forcing her to marry another man. Sometimes it happens that a girl is aware that she is being forced to marry a man she does not like. She cannot openly disagree with her father on this issue and so she talks to a prominent person in the community or an Afa or one who is very close to her father to intercede on her behalf. If the girl is lucky, the father gives up his decision but if she is not, he does not just budge on his stand.

4.30 During the "second greeting" kolanuts and some more money are sent to the girl's father. This time the father will not be alone but with some other members of the extended family system who are usually introduced to members of the delegation. Somtimes the girl's father requests the delegation to visit the girl's uncle, or aunt or grandmother or grandfather or to all

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of them and this has to be done. Some parents do not see the need for such visits and so they centre all activities in connection with the marriage procedure in their home and then communicate with the other members of the family on its progress. The reason why uncles, aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers are visited is that sometime in the life of the girl these relatives might have taken care of her or might have shown some interest in the girl or one of them might have indicated interest in giving her out in marriage when she is of age.[1] Therefore, to give the girl away in marriage without consulting them can cause serious family misunderstanding. There is also the general notion in Dagbon society that a father who brings a child on to this earth is only a father and not the only one who owns him or her. It is therefore common to hear fathers making statements like, "I brought her into this world but I do not own her."

4.31 There are no fixed number of "greetings" that a delegation should undertake to conclude the marriage procedure. The least number of visits that a delegation could make is three, but some delegations could make as many as eight or even ten including visits to other relations of the girl. It is to be

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1 In Dagbon it is not surprising to note that due to the extended family system, certain relatives are given certain responsibilities over some children even though these children might not be their own. An auntie or uncle may be given the authority to give a relatives daughter away in marriage without any misunderstanding.

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noted that it is only in the case of marriages involving young girls that people are fussy about several visits. Where a woman is a widow or a divorcee the vists range between one and three.

4.32 When the girl's parents are satisfied with the number of visits made and the amount of money[1] so far given by the delegation in respect to the girl, a day is fixed for the formal handing over of the girl to the delegation to be given to the youngman. This ceremony does not involve the presence of the girl but it is a symbolic procedure. On this day all family members of the girl assemble together with the delegation in the girl's fathers house. When greetings and felicitations have passed between the two groups, the Afa prays indicating that the meeting is the wish of God and is in line with the traditions of the Prophet of Islam and asks God to bless the ceremony. As usual kolanuts and money are presented to the girl's parents and some other invited Afanema offer supplications. The dogri kpema (head of family) announces to all present that the girl has been formally handed over in marriage to her suiter. In reality this occasion is a betrothal ceremony akin to the engagement ceremony organised in Christian communities. Both parties are usually happy when this ceremony takes place.

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1 The monies given to the girl's father at various stages of "greetings" are kept to the last day.

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4.33 The betrothal ceremony is an indication that the green-light is given for other marriage processes to commence. The next stage of the process is for the man's family to assemble the lefe.[1] It forms one of the most important aspect of the process of marriage in Islamic Communities in Dabon. The lefe consists of four or more half pieces of coth, veils and headgears to match the number of cloths provided, a mat, a pillow, a pair of sandals, a mirror, comb, talcum powder, a bucket, pomade, some toiletries and a beautiful large pan to contain the items with the exception of the pillow, bucket and mat. Some of the very rich bridegrooms provide expensive items which are imported into the country. Some of such rich bridegrooms buy twelve half pieces of real Java wax prints and the same number of veils and headgears to match the cloths. In matters concerning the lefe, it is the women who play an important role because they are responsible for buying and assemblying them for presentation. It is sometimes very difficult for some young men to assemble the lefe for lack of funds in good time and so their marriages are delayed. When the lefe is finally assembled, relatives and women who live around the bridegroom's house are invited to come round and inspect the lefe and give their blessings.

Sometimes some women make unfavourable comments to the effect that the items to be presented to the bride are of inferior

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1 Lefe is a common word in Muslim Communities in Ghana and it is connected with marriage. The word represents the items or gifts that a bridegroom presents to his bride before the final marriage ceremony.

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quality. Such comments have forced young men to borrow huge sums of money to buy expensive items, especially the cloths for the lefe.

4.34 In 1979, the Muslim youth of Tamale convened series of meetings at the Victory Cinema Hall to discuss the high cost of lefe and its effects on bachelors. There were also discussions on women's attitude to wax prints manufactured in Ghana. After several weekly meetings the consensus reached was that only four made in Ghana wax prints should be provided by bachelors as part of the lefe in every marriage ceremony in Dagbon and this was endorsed by the Afanema in town. The Muslim youth warned that any violation of the consensus was not to be taken lightly and that no Afa should officiate in any of the marriage ceremonies where the cloths number more than four and are imported wax prints. The young men were particularly incensed by the manner young girls and middle aged women were fussy about wax prints manufactureed in Ghana. The Muslim youth further reiterated that they would not sit down unconcerned while women dictated what they desire in matters relating to the lefe. This was a welcome news to the young men of Dagbon who blamed women as getting out of hands. The women on the other hand were not too happy about the decision taken by the Muslim youth and daring as they were, the consensus proved to be a dead letter. The consensus failed largely because no effective machinery was set up to check its abuse. Additionally, there were some young men who wanted to please their

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would-be wives and so they bought imported wax prints as part of the lefe. In the initial stages the threat worked well because some form of monitoring was done by volunteers of the Muslim youth who visited homes where lefe were assembled for inspection before being presented. Some of the tricks played by women in this matter were to substitute wax prints manufactured in Ghana with imported ones, and also they reduced the number if they were more than four. After inspection, the imported ones were presented. Many others copied these tricks and gradually the whole decision was defeated.

4/35 It should be pointed out that the issue of lefe has been a problem in Dagbon for quite a long time now. Many a time young men are heard making statements such as, "I have been given a woman but the problem now is how to assemble the lefe." It is also noted that the assemblying of lefe is a problem to the urban dweller and not to the rural dweller. In the rural areas it is possible for a man to bring a wife home with only one wax print manufactured in Ghana and during the course of the year, especially after harvesting of crops, he might buy one or two more for her. However, in the urban centres, it appears the rich always want to exhibit their wealth during such ceremonies to the detriment of the poor majority. The rich have always set standards for such ceremonies and all others who wish to organise similar ceremonies have either to beat such standards or measure up to some appreciable standard.

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4.36 There are cases where the issue of lefe led to the collapse of marriages but I wish to cite one. At Worjehe, a suburb of Tamale, four out of six cloths presented as part of the lefe by a young man's family were rejected by the brides mother. The mother requested that the four cloths which were wax prints manufactured in Ghana should be replaced with four imported wax prints. This annoyed the delegation that sent the lefe and so its leader politely requested that permission be granted the delegation to take the lefe back home to prepare to satisfy the woman's demand. Permission was given and the lefe was sent back home. The same lefe was used in marrying another girl because the demand by the first girl's mother was considered an insult. Notwithstanding the expenses the young man incured during the preliminaries of contracting the first marriage, he had to look for another wife. It took the first girl a period of five years before she got a husband and ironically too, her lefe consisted of four cloths out of which three were wax prints manufactured in Ghana. Such incidents go to show that the simplicity of marriage that Islam advocates is not adhered to but rather things that satisfy people's whims and caprices matter most.

4.37 The lefe is usually sent to the brides home by a delegation made up of only women representing the man's family. When it is presented there is a lot of excitement as women in and around that community rush to see the lefe. The young girl whose lefe has been presented becomes very excited

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because her friends and well wishers would surround her and congratulate her amidst giggles and jokes. Sometimes she is teased that she would soon leave her father's home to become a stranger somewhere. Among her friends would be others who would be expecting their lefe to be presented and such occasion urges them to worry their would be husbands to hurry up with their lefe.

4.38 When the lefe has been presented, a date is fixed for the actual marriage ceremony. During the night of the eve of the marriage ceremony, two or three women from the bridegroom's home go to the brides home in secret but this is known to the mother and a few other women. These secret visitors are made to hide in a room and the girl is lured into it where she is smeared with Zabla (henna)[1]. The girl is actually taken unawares and it signifies a transition from spinsterhood to married life. As soon as the Zabla is smeared on the girl she starts wailing as though death has occured. When people ask to know what is happening, they are simply told "she has been smeared with henna" and this statement is understood by every adult in Dagbon. The young girl wails because the time has come for her to get separated from her parents in order to start a new life in another family. Before the last quarter of

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1 Henna (Lawsonia inermis) is a reddish brown dye obtained from leaves of the henna plant. It is used mostly by women for occasions such as marriage, outdooring, festivals etc. The Dagbani word for it is Zabla but in some communities the Hausa word "lalle" is used.

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this century most of the girls who were betrothed to men did not know the exact date their wedding would take place but these days it is known and the girls prepare for it. The use of henna is also fast dying out especially in the urban centres on the eve of the wedding.

4.39 On the amaliya lob dali (wedding day), relatives, friends and well wishers assemble in the homes of the bride and bridegroom. Invitations are normally sent out to people to come and witness the ceremony. Before the last quarter of this century only kolanuts were sent out as a form of invitation to such ceremonies, but these days sweets and invitation cards are given. However, the older generation and a majority of the rural dwellers still use kolanuts as indicated in the case of naming ceremonies in 4.09. The marriage ceremony is usually held in the bride's home or in a mosque nearby. A number of Afanema assemble for the ceremony but one of them will be the officiating Afa who is normally invited by the bridegroom. The officiating Afa begins the ceremony with Salat alan Nabi (short prayer in honour of the Prophet) which all Muslims present join in reciting. After this he reads the Surat al-Fatihah (first chapter of the Quran) and some other verses of the Quran, especially those that deal with marriage.[1] The Afa then continues with a short sermon on the significance of marriage

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in Islam and quotes ahadith on marriage. Then he asks the bride's father or his representative whether he wholeheartedly agrees to give his daughter (name of daughter supplied) in marriage to the bridegroom in accordance with the traditions of the Prophet thrice. If the answer is positive which is always the case,[1] the ceremony continues. At this juncture the officiating Afa informs all those present that the bride's father has wholeheartedly agreed to his daughter's marriage to the bridegroom. It should be noted that this aspect of marriage has already been concluded but it is done on the wedding day to publicise what had been done quietly between the two families.

4.40 The officiating Afa asks the bride's father how much he demands as mahr (dowry)[2]. The bride's father might give a price which the bridegroom's father or his representative will feel too high and as a result could ask for a reduction.[3] Many a time the mahr is already agreed upon and it only needs the endorsement of the officiating Afa and the witnesses. When the mahr is paid, the amount is announced to the public to bear

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1 There has actually been no case of a situation where the brides father or his representative answers negatively to the officiating Afa's questions.

2 Mahr is a marriage gift from the bridegroom to his bride which is her exclusive property. It is usually a sum of money or other property promised by the husband to be paid or delivered to the wife in consideration of the marriage. Marriage is not considered valid in Islam without mahr. In Dagbon the word 'Asadaqi' is used instead of mahr or sadaq.

3 In some cases there is serious bargaining before an agreement on the mahr is reached.

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that whatever is done during the ceremony affects them hence the need for their presence and that in most Islamic countries that is what is done. However, the literate Muslims in Dagbon ensure that both the bride and bridegroom are present at such ceremonies. Ideally, it is the practice of Muslims throughout the world for both bride and bridegroom to be present at the wedding ceremony but some Muslims in Dagbon who are mostly illiterates, exclude the bride at the wedding ceremony which is more traditional than Islamic.

4.42 After the wedding ceremony both parties are usually satisfied that they have adhered to the factors that go to make an Islamic marriage valid. These are: Proposal by the man and acceptance by the woman (ijab wa qubul); giving of bridal gift (mahr or sadugat) in cash or in kind; obtaining parental or guardian's consent; and presence of witnesses.

4.43 On the evening of the wedding day, the bride is brought outside her family house or in the compound of the house, if it is spacious, to be bathed. During this ceremony the bride is seated on a big mortar turned upside down with only a piece of cloth tied round her waist and baring her breasts. There is usually drumming and singing and while this goes on the bride weeps and money is placed on her forehead by wellwishers, friends and relatives. Some of the songs the young girls sing are just to tease the bride not to shed crocodile tears and that marriage is what she cherishes most. The woman who is

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witness that so much has been paid as dowry in respect to the bride. Some families are of the view that the monies given to the bride's father during the preliminary greetings should form the mahr, but others prefer separate money which makes marriage more expensive. About two decades ago amounts ranging between five and ten cedis were indicated to the public as the dowry which was actually not the case. Today amounts ranging between five and twenty thousand cedis are announced to the public as the dowry which is a true reflection of the money spending processes the bridegroom goes through in getting the girl betrothed to him.

4.41 The officiating Afa allows some other Afanema present to offer short supplications and pray for long life, prosperity and happiness for the newly wedded. One important prayer during this ceremony is for bachelors to secure good wives. After this ceremony there is feasting in the homes of both the bride and the bridegroom. Usually drumming and dancing sessions are organised especially by the women, but followers of Afa Ajura and many other Muslims do not tolerate drumming and dancing during such ceremonies. As indicated in 4:17 in connection with naming ceremonies, the practice of drumming and dancing is considered traditional by the Ahlul-Sunnah and should therefore not be entertained in Islamic circles. It is noted that during the marriage ceremony in some cases, both the bride and the bridegroom are absent which the Muslim youth condemn. In their condemnation of the practice they stressed

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that whatever is done during the ceremony affects them hence the need for their presence and that in most Islamic countries that is what is done. However, the literate Muslims in Dagbon ensure that both the bride and bridegroom are present at such ceremonies. Ideally, it is the practice of Muslims throughout the world for both bride and bridegroom to be present at the wedding ceremony but some Muslims in Dagbon who are mostly illiterates, exclude the bride at the wedding ceremony which is more traditional than Islamic.

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usually responsible for bathing the bride is old and is called Alluwanka. After this ceremony which lasts about an hour, the bride is clad in two white sheets and taken to the bridegroom's house for the consumation of the marriage. In Dagbon the bride is referred to as Amariya and the bridegroom Ango. These are Hausa words which have been used by the Dagbamba for quite a long time and are examples of the Hausa influence on Dagbon.

4.44 Early the next morning the bride is brought back to her home and the Alluwanka examines the two sheets thoroughly with the hope of locating blood stains. When these are located then it presupposes that the bride was a virgin until the night before and there is jubilation. Sometimes family members tie pieces of white material round their wrist to indicate that the bride has "passed the test". If blood stains are not located then it means that the bride involved herself in pre-marital sex which Islam does not allow. When a bride's virginity is proved by this method the Dagbamba say, 'O paliya' which literally means "she is full", and this brings honour and respect to her parents for having brought up their daughter well. In appreciation of not letting the family down, the bride is showered with gifts but significantly, a white fowl is slaughtered for her. On the other hand if the bride is found to have broken her virginity sometime in her maturity, she is described as "O bi pali" which literally means that "she is not full". In such situation the bride is insulted by her parents for having brought disgrace and dishonour to the family.

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However, before the cessation of this practice about a decade ago, most of the brides who went through this exercise were found to have been virgins before their marriage.

4.45 The mode of determining who involved herself in pre-marital sex or not in Dagbon marriage ceremonies leaves much to be desired because it is quite alien to Islam. Many Afanema have condemned it and during the last quarter of this century, it is almost non-existent. The other practice that has not found favour with the Afanema is the way the bride is bathed in public by the Alluwanka. This practice has also ceased throughout Dagbon. These practices were introduced into Dagbon by the Hausa Muslims and they became part of Islamic customs in Dagbon but today they belong to history as a result of the intense campaign against them. However, some parents are of the view that the Hausa Muslims introduced the mode of determining who was a virgin and who was not because they wanted the young girls to maintain their chastity and thus bring honour to their families and that was why promiscuity and premarital sex were not common, but because such practice has been stopped, pre-marital sex is rampant. Whether pre-marital sex or promiscuity is rampant in Dagbon or not, the question at stake is whether the practice is Islamic. There is no provision in the Quran or the Hadith to suggest that such practice ever existed.

4.46 On the last day of the marriage ceremony which is about the third or fourth day, depending on when all the possessions

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of the bride are assembled, the possessions are carried by women in broad daylight for the public to see what the girl possesses. These possessions are carried to the bridegroom's house where they are kept in the bride's room. If the bride has no room to herself the things are kept in her husband's room. Normally in Dagbon, women do not live in the same room with their husbands. If there is no sepearate room for the bride, she lives with the bridegroom's mother or some other relation in the house. The act of carrying and parading the streets of towns and villages of the bride's possessions have also come under severe criticism from Afa Ajura and his Ahlul Sunnah (People of the traditions of the Prophet) supporters. In their criticism, they stressed that such exhibition of the bride's possessions discourage the poor who cannot afford to buy many things and above all it has no basis in Islam. Besides, people make a lot of comments about the bride's possessions which are not pleasant. As a result of the intensity of criticism on this issue, there has been some considerable change. Those who wish to convey the bride's possessions to the bridegroom's house use a vehicle to do so. Those who cannot afford to hire a vehicle allow women to carry them at night. However, there are others who wish to maintain the status quo and these are opponents of Afa Ajura. It is noted that there are some of his opponents who admire him and his courage but they either wish to show off or fear castigation

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from their own camp for supporting him.[1]

4.47 It should be noted that it is only in the case of young girls who are getting married the first time that all these ceremonies are organised. If the bride is a widow or a divorcee, the ceremonies are made simple but all the factors that go to make marriage valid in Islam are adhereed to as indicated in 5.42. However there are cases of such marriages that assumed greater fun fair than in the case of marriage involving young girls. Nevertheless, most of the marriages involving widows and divorcees are simply organised. It is generally agreed that such marriages last while quite a number of those involving young girls end up on the rocks. It is believed that women who go into marriage the second time especially when they are divorcees, humble themselves so that they do not experience another divorce.

4.48 One other form of marriage im Muslim communities in Dagbon which is however fast dying out is the case where a man wishing to honour a respectable man in the society, or an Afa or even some intimate friend, gives his daughter out in

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1 Afa Ajura informed me that in his bid to interact with his opponents he decided to pay a visit to one of them. When this man saw Afa Ajura through his window coming towards his house, he asked his wives to tell him he was not at home if he called. When he actually called he was told his host was not at home. When I asked him how he came by this informmation, he told me a close friend of the man he was visiting informed him.

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marriage as a form of sadaga (almsgiving). In such cases the girls father provides the dowry and other expenses connected with the marriage. Examining this practice critically at the Islamic point of view, it is illegal to do so without the consent of the girl. The idea of ijab and gubul (offer and acceptance) which is a cardinal principle in an Islamic marriage is missing, and once this happens it means that the girl is being forced into marriage against her will which is invalid. In almost all such marriages, the girl's consent is not sought but she is just called and informed that she is to be given out in marriage and all that is expected of her is to agree. Some of the Afanema know too well that this form of marriage is illegal but they officiate at such weddings because of the money and other gifts that they stand to gain. In Dagbon custom, the father wields a lot of authority in the home and whatever he desires must be done. In such circumstance if a girl dares to reject the father's wish, she stands the chance of being driven out of the home and disowned by the father. Such fathers easily forget that once they have embraced Islam, they should lead complete Islamic lives but instead they blend it with customary practices and invariably the customary practices take the better part of them. However, this form of marriage is not common with the turn of the last quarter of this century. Nevertheless, some parents manage to convince their daughters to agree to marry men of their choice without necessarily bringing pressure to bear on them. Mothers also play important roles in such circumstance by convincing their daughters to agree and when that happens, the marriage becomes

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legal when contracted. Temporary marriage known as mut'a is not contracted in Dagbon.[1]

4.49 In Dagbon a greater number of marriages are contracted in the month of Shaban (8th month of the Islamic calendar) which corresponds to Noloribla of the Dagbon calendar. The month of Shaban precedes that of Ramadan which is the month of fasting. The Afanema preach that it is always better to contract marriages in the month of Shaban so that the bride will be able to serve the husband well in the month of fasting thereby seeking reward and the pleasures of Allah. Since it is the duty of the woman to serve her husband and it is in the month of Ramadan that the woman's services are needed most, it will give the woman a good start at serving the husband well so that she will continue it even after fasting. Marriage is not contracted during the month of Ramadan in Muslim communities in Dagbon, even the traditionalists would not do it for fear of castigation. As a result of the type of food Muslims in Dagbon eat for Suhour (dawn meal) and at iftar (time for breaking the fast at sunset), women do a lot of cooking and hard work. Therefore bachelors always desire to marry in the month of Shaban. This practice is common throughout West Africa but

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1 Mut'a was a kind of marriage that was allowed in the early stages of Islam, but afterwards the Prophet prohibited and abolished it. However, the Shi'ahs still consider such a temporary marriage perfectly legal, and establish its legality not only from Traditions but also from declarations of the Quran 4:29; Dictionary of Islam, 424.

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ironically that is not the practice in Saudi Arabia. Marriages are mostly contracted after Ramadan in the Arab world. It is worth stating that some of the marriages contracted in Shaban do not last long. It is noted that some of these marriages last until the end of Ramadan.

4.50 It has been noted with concern in Dagbon, especially in the urban centres that bachelors in their haste to get married before Ramadam easily fall into the trap of making wrong choices and when Ramadan ends, they do not wish to have their women again.

DIVORCE

4.51 In Islam divorce is termed talaq[1] and it is two sided which means that both husband and wife can seek divorce. However, in Dagbon society divorce is almost always associated with husbands leaving their wives. There are times in a man's life when it becomes virtually impossible for him to continue living with his wife and vice versa. When such a situation occurs it is better for a divorce to take place rather than drag on indefinitely, thus making the home an unpleasant place to live in. Although Islam allows divorce if there are sufficient grounds for it, yet the right is to be exercised only under exceptional circumstances. The Prophet of Islam is

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1 Talaq literally means to set an animal free. It is used in the Shariah to denote the legal method whereby a marriage is brought to an end.

2 The Holy Qur'am : 2:228

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quoted to have said, "Of all things which have been permitted divorce is the most hated by Allah".[1] These words are supposed to serve as a strong check on the hasty recourse to and wanton abuse of the permissibility of divorce. In yet another hadith, the Prophet has said, "Marry and do not divorce; undboutedly the throne of the Beneficient Lord shakes due to divorce."[2]

4.52 If a man has to divorce his wife, he has to do so bearing in mind laid down stipulations by Sunnah which state that three successive pronouncements of divorce be made; the pronouncements should be made when the woman is in her state of purity which means that she should not be in her menstrual period; there should be no intercourse during any of the three periods of purity; and finally that the divorce remains revocable until the third and final pronouncement is made. On pronouncement of the final formula the divorce becomes irrevocable. Additionally, the woman should go through a period of waiting termed 'iddah. The Quran[3] prescribed three months of waiting after divorce has been pronounced so that a spell of temporary separation and suspension of conjugal relations may give the spouses time for rethinking and

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1 Abu Daud, 13:13; also Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol.1, 318.

2 Kashf al-Khafa, Vol.II, 302; also Tafsir al-Qurtabi, Vol.18, 149.

3 Quran, (Surat al-Baqarah) 2: 228.

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reconsideration in the interests of family and children, if any, of the question whether divorce should be revoked or made final and irrevocable. Besides, the 'iddah seeks to reveal whether the woman is pregnant so that there may be no confusion about the paternity of such a child if the women seek to remarry.

4.53 A new form of divorce that the Afanema refer to as talaq al-bidah (innovated divorce) has emerged in Dagbon society. This form of divorce is not perculiar to Dagbon alone but to many areas in West Africa. This innovated divorce becomes irrevocable as soon as it is pronounced. The man just says he no longer wants the woman and she has to pack her things and leave the man's house. Sometimes the man utters the formula, "I divorce you, I divorce you; I divorce you" in one sitting and he himself throws the woman's belongings out of the house. At other times the man gives an ultimatum that by a certain time he does not want to see the woman in his house and the woman will have to leave before that time. This form of divorce does not make room for reconsideration leading to reconciliation because the period of waiting prescribed by the Quran is not adhered to. This is usually done by ignorant Muslims in Dagbon because they do not know that they commit a henious sin against the precepts of the Shariah as indicated in the preceeding paragraph.

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4.54 Women who, for one reason or the other, find it difficult to continue living with their husbands find ways of running away from their husbands to their parents. Women who fear castigation from their parents might run to other relations such as aunties, uncles or grandparents. Normally when a woman runs away from her husband to her parent's home, the parents listen to her case and asks her to wait for the man to either come himself or send a delegation. When the man or his representative shows up, his side of the story is heard and a settlement is sought. However, if the girl's parents are fed up with some persistent unfavourable character by the man, they might be forced to close their ears to all pleas and seek a divorce on behalf of their daughter. When this happens the man does not even ask for the dowry which is his right because he did not ask for a divorce. Some other men may not bother to go after their run-away wives but instead issue an ultimatum through a messenger to the woman that if by a certain day she does not return to her matrimonial home, then she should consider herself divorced. Some parents too may be harsh on their daughters for running away from their husband's home, and they will have to send them back without delay. If their daughter arrived late in the night, they are forced to keep her until the next morning when a family representative takes the woman back to her husband with apologies.[1]

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[1] The act of going to an in-law's home to ask for a run away wife or to a husband's home to seek a settlement is known as Sandaani in Dagbon.

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4.55 It is noted that ignorance and the desire to blend culture and Islam have accounted for the inability of a majority of the Dagbamba Muslims to practise divorce as sanctioned by Islam. It is therefore not surprising that some people are unable to differentiate between the culture of the Dagbamba and the Islamic life they are supposed to lead as already indicated in 4.17. The basic problem is ignorance which is even worse in the rural areas. Muslims in Dagbon need a lot of education on how a husband should divorce a wife and vice versa otherwise they would continue with traditional forms of divorce because no one ever tells them it is unislamic. It is my view that if some of the Afanema could go round Dagbon to educate Muslims on marriage and divorce and inform them that it is a sin to divorce ones wife the way they do, many of them may change for the better because of the way they cherish Islam.

DEATH AND MOURNING RITES

4.56 As soon as a Muslim dies in Dagbon society the corpse is given a ritual bath that corresponds to the ordinary ablutions that are performed for ritual prayers. This ritual washing is done by the elderly members of the family or even by the deceased's own children if there are any. There is no specific official for this ritual as it is the case in the traditional system where the Yar-Na is the official who baths dead chiefs. After the ritual bath, messengers are sent far and near to inform other relatives and friends. Generally in Dagbon, whoever is informed of the death of a brother Muslim recites a

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verse from the Quran as follows, "Qalu inna lillahi wa ina ilaihi rajiun"[1] which means, "Say surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall return". Those who are unable to recite this short verse say the following in Dagbani, "Nawun mali ting ozuga" which means, "May he rest in peace". However, both are recited by many Muslims throughout Dagbon. The meaning of the Arabic word "Qalu" in the verse is "say" which is a Quranic command. Therefore if a Muslim dies and any other Muslim is to express his heartfeld condolences, the recitation starts from "inna" but because many Muslims in Dagbon do not understand Arabic, they recite both the command and what is to be said.

4.57 In all the Muslim communities the death of a Muslim is the concern of the entire community because almost everyone comes round not only to sympathise with the bereaved family but also to give a lending hand where necessary. Both men and women have a part to play in making the bereaved family feel that they are not left alone in their hour of grief. It is a popular belief among Muslims in Dagbon that to visit and sympathise with a bereaved family, to assist in digging the deceased's grave, to assist in stitching the burial cloth, to take part in the funeral prayer and to accompany the corpse to the cemetry are all meritorious deeds for which God rewards their adherents.[2] The Afanema have stressed on these points on countless occasions hence the presence of many Muslims in

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1 Quran: Surat al-Baqarah, 2:156.

2 Maulana Muhammad Ali : The Religion of Islam
Taj Company, 1986 p. 445.

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funeral homes in Islamic communities. Some Muslims even leave their homes and go to live with the bereaved family for some few days.

4.58 When a Muslim dies in the hospital in Tamale or Yendi,[1] a post-mortem examination is required to determine the cause of death or the character and extent of changes produced by the disease that caused the death. This process of post-mortern has come under severe criticism from the Muslim public because it is their belief that death is destined by God and that post-morterm does not offer any solution to it. The following verse is normally quoted from the Quran by the Afanemä to support their contention: "And no soul can die but with Allah's permission - the term is fixed."[3] The Muslims further argued that Islam abhores the mutilation of dead bodies and so to subject a dead body to post-mortem which actually involves cutting of the body, is against Islamic precepts. Sometimes Muslims are forced to see the doctor in charge even if it means bribing him to release the corpse without post-mortem on it. The Ministry of Health authorities in Dagbon have ordered that people who die in their homes should be sent to the mortuary in the hospital for post-mortem before burial can take place, but this order is almost always flouted with impunity.

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1 These are the only two towns with hospitals in Dagbon.

2 Quran: Surat al-Imran; 3:144.

3 Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad : Introduction to the study of the Holy Qur'an, The oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation Ltd, 1909 p. 144.

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4.59 Sympathisers who arrive in a funeral home normally go to express their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. During such occasions men and women do not mix together. The men are found together seated on mats and benches in front of the house and the women gather in the compound of the house. Islam does not encourage the mixing of both sexes as it tends to promote promiscuity. Meanwhile as the grave is being dug other Muslims are also busy sewing the burial cloth which is usually white. It could be white calico, white smock material or any other material proviued it is white.[1] Some sympathisers come along with some white material to present to the bereaved family. The burial cloth consists of five pieces made up of a cap, shirt, pant, a pair of trousers and a large sheet that is used in wrapping round the corpse. When the sewing is completed, the corpse is well shrouded, incensed and put into a coffin without a lid and brought outside the house. While the coffin is moved out of the house, all persons around are expected to stand up as a sign of respect for the dead. As soon as the corpse is brought outside the house, the officiating Afa gets ready to lead a congregation to offer the funeral prayer after which the corpse is placed on a bier and taken to the cemetry. All people who notice the passing of the bier stand up until it passes them. Those with caps and hats on remove them until the bier has passed.[2]

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1 It is the teaching in Dagbon that each individual will write down his deeds on earth using the foreginger as a pen, the saliva as ink and the white burial cloth as paper hence the use of white material in burying the dead.

2 Maulana Muhammad Ali : The Religion of Islam
Taj Company, 1986, p. 445

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4.60 On reaching the cemetry the coffin is taken from the bier and carried to the grave side. It is always expected that those who lift or carry the coffin should recite the basmallah which is, "Bismillahir - Rahmanir - Rahim" (In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful). Those who carry the dead are always careful not to have the corpse jolted or shaken about, and since this act of carrying is meritorious, as many people as possible are given the opportunity of helping to carry the corpse to the graveside. No group of persons are given the monopoly of carrying the dead. It is considered a community affair and even those who are closely related to the dead might not have the opportunity of carrying the corpse. When the corpse arrives by the grave, it is removed from the coffin and lowered into the grave and placed gently in the burial chamber.[1] While the corpse is lowered into the grave, all the Muslims around recite the Kalimat al-Shahada (Lailaha illallah Muhammad Rasul-llah) which means "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger".[2] The grave is then covered up and made in the form of a mound. The the officiating Afa again prays to God to forgive the dead Muslim and

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1 In a normal Muslim burial care is taken to leave room for some freedom of movement in the tomb. This is generally a deeper trench or niche in the grave, and is covered with boards, leaves or slabs before the earth is filled into the grave. It is here that corpose must sit up for the questioning by Munkar and Nakir.

2 The Shahāda is recited to remind the dead how to reply to questions to be asked by Munkar and Nakir based on his beliefs.

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reminds all those present that the same fate will befall each one. He finally reminds the gathering that when a man dies he takes either his good works or his bad deeds along with him and that salvation will always depend on good deeds and with "Nawun bahinti bah sung" which is a popular Dagbani supplication for salvation, he ends the prayer.[1] The coffin is put back on the bier and sent away and all the Muslims go back to the funeral home.

4.61 Women are not normally allowed at grave sides in Dagbon as practised by non-Muslims in other parts of West Africa. However, they are allowed to come up to the cemetry but not to the grave of the deceased. They are sometimes made to carry water to the cemetry to be used by the grave diggers. It is known all over West Africa and other parts of the world that women easily break down in cases such as death and that is why they are prevented from going to grave sides during burial.[2]

4.62 One important practice of Muslims in Dagbon just before the funeral prayer is offered to the dead is that the officiating Afa asks all those present to say if anyone of them owes the deceased or vice versa. When no one comes forward to complain that the deceased owes him or confesses that he owes the deceased, the funeral prayer commences. However, there are

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1 Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan : Sahih Al-Bukhari vol.2 Arabic English, Dar al-Arabia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1985 Hadoth 81, p. 250

2 Weeping or wailing is not normally encouraged when a Muslim dies because Islam teaches that such acts increase the suffering of the dead.

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some occasions where people have come forward to say that the deceased owed them and vice versa. In cases where the deceased owes a person, such people forgive the deceased and consider it as Sadaqah (almsgiving). On the other hand some of those who owe the deceased either pay the debt instantly or promise to pay later. It is a common belief among Muslims in Dagbon that whoever dies without settling his debts will be held liable on the Day of Judgement hence this practice before burial.

4.63 In Muslim communities all over Dagbon today, there is controversy as to what happens next after burial. To the Ahlul Sunnah and the Ahmadiyya, there is no other religious rite after burial but the Tijaniyya Muslims and others who strongly believe that Islam cannot be divorced from the culture of a people organise religious rites for the dead on the third, seventh and fortieth days after a Muslim dies. Some Muslims even organise ceremonies for the dead on their first anniversaries. With the Ahlul Sunnah particularly, when a Muslim brother dies and is buried, they converge at the funeral home and announce that 'Adua Kani' which means that there will not be any funeral rites for the departed Muslim. Instead, an appeal is made by the Afa for contributions for the upkeep of the widow and her children. Contributions are collected, counted and the total amount announced to the people present and then the Afa hands over the money to the widow or her representative. A further appeal is made to the Muslim public to come to the aid of the family either in cash or in kind from

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time to time. If the deceased is a woman money is still collected and given to the family to defray some funeral expenses made.

4.64 The widow or widows of the dead Muslim are required to go into a period of seclusion known in Dagbon as takaba[1] which is a period of four months and ten days as prescribed by the Quran which states that:

> If any one of you die and leave widows behind him they shall wait concerning themselves for four months and ten days..."[2]

However, if the widow is pregnant the period of waiting lasts up to the time she gives birth.[3] The relatives of the deceased have to take care of the pregnant widow until she delivers. Sometimes some Muslims organise themselves and go to visit such widows and make presentations of food items and money, and when they deliver, they assist the family to organise an outdooring ceremony. After the iddah period, which is the period of waiting for the widows, it is expected that these widows would move out of their late husband's homes in order to remarry, especially when they are still young. The very old ones choose

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1 This is a Hausa word for seclusion which is also used in Dagbon. It is an aspect of the influence of Hausa on Dagbani. The Islamic term for this period of wailing or seclusion is 'iddah.

2 Qur'an: Surat al-Baqarah; 2:234.

3 Qur'an: Surat al-Talaq; 65:4.

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to stay back in their late husband's homes to enable them look after their children well or vice versa. All over Dagbon the Ahlul Sunnah and the Ahmadiyya condemn the Tijaniyya and other Muslims for organising ceremonies for the dead that have no basis in Islam, but despite these condemnations the practice persists.

4.65 As a result of the quick manner Muslims bury the dead, some relatives and well wishers of the bereaved family are not able to meet the burial ceremony. When such people arrive at the funeral home, they request those in the funeral home to join them in offering a short prayer for the deceased. However, those who are not well versed in Islam are not able to offer such prayers and so they do that in Dagbani. The Afanema preach that mourners should not stay in funeral homes for more than three days because quite a number of people go to such homes with the hope of obtaining free food to eat. The Afanema, especially of the Afa Ajura faction, also advise that the bereaved family should not involve itself with the preparation of food for mourners and that it is the mourners who should offer them food.[1] People who travel from distant places to funeral homes should be fed by the bereaved family but as a result of the mourning mood in which their hosts are thrown, it is expected that Muslim families around should send food to the funeral home for the feeding of visitors.

4.66 The Afanema in Dagbon who officiate during funeral celebrations on the third, seventh and fortieth days gain a lot

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1 Maulana Muhammad Ali : The Religion of Islam
Taj Company, 1986 p. 448.

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by way of money and food. These category of Afanema are either Afa tibrisi or of the Tijaniyya Order. On such funeral celebrations the Afanema come in their numbers to offer prayers for the soul of the departed. There is usually a leader of the group but each one of them is expected to make a form of dua (prayers). While the prayer goes on, mourners and relatives of the deceased provide money which is put in a tray and placed before the officiating Afa. Several mourners come round to give the officiating Afa money to pray for the dead and by the end of the function, a lot of money is collected which is shared among the Afanema. Apart from presenting money, the bereaved family has to present kolanuts, maha and gumba.[1] With the turn of the last quarter of this century, other food items are provided by the bereaved family for the function, and these include bread, doughnuts and kose.[2] Besides, the bereaved family has to prepare food to serve mourners who have come to sympathise with them. Afa Ajura and his followers see the demands of the Afanema during funeral celebrations as crimes against Islam. They, therefore, refer to this group of Afanema as Afa Korenema, which means "glutonous Afanema".

4.67 There are also drumming and dancing sessions during such funeral celebrations with music provided by the lunsi

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1 This is a Hausa word but used community in Dagbon for a type of food made of pounded millet used at naming and funeral celebrations.

2 It is a type of cake that is fried and eaten with porridge. It is made from bean flour.

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(drummers), the gonje (fiddlers) and the simpa (musical group that uses modern instruments). The food that is prepared for feasting during these celebrations and the drumming and dancing that are characteristic of such funeral celebrations are quite alarming because it gives the impression that when a Muslim dies, it is time for merry making. The rich people in Dagbon organise such celebrations in grand style where many fowls, sheep, goats and even cows are slaughtered for food. The poor stand to gain if this practice is abated because some of them resort to borrowing huge sums of money in order to organise such funeral celebrations. On the other hand the Afa Korenema will lose the benefits and privileges that they derive during such functions. Chiefs who are the custodians of the customs of Dagbon maintain that funeral celebrations are necessary and that if such celebrations are not observed, the ancestors would be angry. They therefore appoint Afanema to officiate at such ceremonies. The irony of it is that the participation of Muslims in funeral celebrations has not been part of the original custom of Dagbon, but because of the intense interaction between the chiefs and Muslims, especially during the reign of Na-Zangina this practice has become part of Dagbon custom.

4.67 It is ridiculous to note that some of the Afanema know too well that such funeral celebrations are illegal so far as Islam is concerned but they do not have the guts and the will to condemn it, and so many other Muslims, especially those in rural Dagbon, who look up to Muslims in the urban centres for

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religious inspiration, do not see anything wrong with organising funeral celebrations. So much money is pumped in to such celebrations to the detriment of widows and children of the deceased. Many a time children of the deceased are seen in tattered clothes and others suffer from want of food and yet large sums of money are wasted on funerals. Muslims who condemn these celebrations spearheaded by Afa Ajura are referred to by opponents on this issue as poor Muslims who envy the way the rich take care of their departed relatives.

4.68 The marking or decoration of graves by either cementing it or by polishing it with terazzo chippings is not common in Dagbon. However, about two decades ago some of the Tijaniyya Muslims started marking the graves of their mugaddams.[1] According to Spencer Trimingham the clergy differ as to whether the grave should be marked or not.[2] There is no question of difference on this issue because many Muslims have stressed that it has never been the practice or tradition of Islam to mark a grave and that it is an alien idea.[3] Since the Quran states in chapter 33:21 that "Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example" and he never practised the marking of graves, then as Muslims we do not have a basis for doing so. A visit to any Muslim cemetry in Dagbon

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1 These are sufi leaders of the Tijaniyya Order who are highly venerated by its adherents.

2 J. Spencer Trimingham: Islam in West Africa, Oxford, 1976, p.180.

3 Abdul Hamid Siddiqi : Sahih Muslim (vol.2) Dar al-Arabia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1985, 9.459.

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reveals that all the graves are indicated by mounds and in the urban centres they are numbered by organisations in charge of cemetries whereas in the rural areas only the mounds are visible. No grave in Dagbon is a place of worship as is done in other parts of the Muslim world.[1]

"MIXING" IN DAGBON

4.69 There is no doubt about the fact that Dagbon is predominantly Muslim and the Dagbamba are very concious of their Muslim identity. However, a closer review of the contemporary evidence reveals the survival of pre-Islamic customs which sustained elements of the traditional religion. For more than a century after the advent of Islam in Dagbon, the outcome was not syncretism, nor the moulding of Islamic and traditional elements, but rather a dualism, in which the two existed side by side. What is happening in Dagbon today is a case of syncretism because of the fusion of the two systems by the chiefs and the majority of the rural dwellers. These two cultural systems do not exist in abstraction, but are represented by social groups within Dagbon. Whereas Islam gained ground in the urban centres, trading communities and among the chiefs, it had little impact on the rural communities, which remained closely attached to the traditional religion. That is why the rural dwellers are referred to as nominal

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1 Muslims, especially those of the Tijaniyya, Qadiriyya, Shiah and other sects venerate the graves of their leaders but no such grave is venerated in Dagbon.

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Muslims. The chief who is at the centre communicates with both the Muslims and traditionalists and tries to keep their allegiance. His position between the two poles of Islam and traditionalism is conditioned to a large extent by the relative strength of the opposing social groups in a given historical context.[1]

4.70 The system whereby Muslims practise traditional customs unacceptable to puritan Muslims may be described as "mixing".[2] As observed in the rites of passage in Dagbon, this system has generated a lot of conflict between Muslim groups. The chiefs, majority of rural dwellers and some Muslims in the urban centres cannot divorce Islam from traditional practices. The puritan Muslims led by Afa Ajura and his followers are of the view that Islam is a complete culture by itself and once one embrances Islam, one has to do away with traditional practices that are not in consonance with Islam. As for the chiefs, there is no way they can do away with traditional practices because they are considered the custodians of the culture of Dagbon. Besides, there are some rites that they have to

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1 Instances of similar characteristics have been noted in the Sudanese states of Ghana, Mali and Songhay as recorded by Nehemia Levtzion in his book, Ancient Ghana and Mali. J. Spencer Trimingham also recorded similar characteristics in West African States in his book on Islam in West Africa.

2 Humphrey, J. Fisher: Some Historical Aspects of Religions Conversion in Black Africa, in Africa Journal of the International African Institute, Oxford, Vol.XLIII, 1973, p.27.

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observe which Islam prohibits but they cannot shirk this responsibility for the sake of Islam. In the case of rural dwellers, it is sheer ignorance because they believe that the most important thing is to identify oneself with Islam and observe the five daily prayers. They also perceive Islam as a replica of Customs of Dagbon. They have not actually been exposed to the real teachings of Islam and so whatever comes to them in the name of Islam is accepted. There are still some Muslims in the urban areas who practise "mixing" and they do so mainly to satisfy, the demands of their culture.

4.71 It has been observed that Muslims in the rural areas have interacted with intenerant clerics for quite a long time. These clerics come as diviners and sellers of talismans, amulets, guruns[1] and other concoctions, all in the name of Islam. These activities which featured prominently in the life of the clerics, were considered Islamic and since such practices were similar to traditional ones they easily patronised the sales by the clerics. The clerics were expected to educate these rural dwellers on the principles of Islam but that was not their primary concern and so these rural dwellers were left to linger on in ignorance. Besides, if the clerics educated these rural dwellers on the principles of Islam, they would be subjecting their own practices to ridicule thereby

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1 This is a type of talisman that is made for tying round the waist like a belt. People who use it do not want to make it visibile.

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depriving themselves of the honour and financial gain that accrues to them. This lamentable situation is aggravated by the absence of the desire to know the doctrines of Islam and their duties and obligations. This is probably due to the fact that those who are born Muslims commit the error of contenting themselves with the mere name they acquire on their birth as Muslims and that this name per se is enough to make them good Muslims. There are however, some villages in Dagbon where the Muslims are gradually changing their mixing attitudes to orthodox Islam.

4.72 Some Muslims in Dagbon have a vague idea of the concept of tawhid[1] which is the focal point of the Islamic faith. This concept teaches the Muslim to put all his trust in God whether in happiness or in sorrow, and to depend on him alone for solutions to ones problems. However, the desire for quick results has given rise to the persistent attitude of the Dagbamba to consult the baga or Afa tibrigu on almost every aspect of their lives to the detriment of the concept of tawhid. For example it is still the practice of some fathers to consult a baga when a child is born to find out which ancestor is coming, whether the child's future is bright and what name should be given to the child. When a man is about getting married he consults a soothsayer with the hope of finding out

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1 This is an Arabic word derived from the verb wahada, meaning to proclaim the Oness of God. The word tawhid commonly means proclamation of, or faith in the 'one and only God.'

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what the future holds in store for him if he marries a particular girl. When a woman has infertility problems and is unable to get pregnant, both husband and wife on one hand and their parents on the other are alarmed. In order to alleviate their fears, the baga or Afa tibrigu is consulted to find out what is wrong. It is always hoped that such cases would be referred to a gynaecologist in the hospital but almost invariably, it is either the baga or the Afa tibrigu they look up to for remedies because they always feel that there is someone behind every mishap.

4.73 When these soothsayers are consulted they recommend that some sadagah be made such as cooking food and inviting many children to eat which is popularly known as "yara yera"[1]; or slaughtering a fowl to appease the ancestors or even giving out money, kolanuts and a piece of white cloth to the poor. Sometimes too it could mean giving out the woman's clothing or part of it to the poor. It is also noted that these soothsayers name specific receipients of the sadagah such as indicating that it should be given to a blindman, the mother of twins, one-eyed man, a lepper or a very old and needy man. There are quite numerous ways by which the sadagah should be made and when this is done, it is hoped that the solution to the problem is found.

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1 'Yara' is a Hausa word meaning children. When people want to invite children to come to their homes to eat they just shout "Yara, Yara" and children move from all corners to the place of call because they know that there will definitely be something to eat.

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4.74 When someone dies, whether mysteriously or otherwise, the soothsayers are consulted to determine the cause of death. These soothsayers have all adopted a funny way by which they inform their customers about their enemies who wish to harm them. They do not mention names of these so called enemies but give descriptions of people that the customer quickly connects in the family or in the community. Such attitudes generate enmity, tension and general misunderstanding within families and communities. During funeral celebrations, the shaving of the head of some relatives, especially the children of the deceased still persists. A married woman whose father dies has to present herself for shaving in line with custom, but Afa Ajura and his followers have always kicked against this rite and are prepared to lose their wives rather than have them shaved. The pirigibu system whereby a young woman is officially informed of her pregnancy in the third month of her pregnancy also persists in some Muslim homes. The undesirable thing about this practice is the manner the young woman is made to stand naked before other women. The puritan Muslims believe that once a woman is married her nakedness is the preroqative of her husband and so to subject someones wife to such a rite in the name of culture is unacceptable.

4.75 Festivals form an important aspect of the social and religious life of the Dagbamba. Some of the important festivals celebrated in Dagbon are: Bugum, Kpini and Damba.

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1 Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan : Sahih Al-Bukhari (vol.2) Arabic - English, Dar al-Arabia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1985, p. 215.

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All these festivals are celebrated by both Muslims and traditionalists because they have both Islamic and traditional traits in them.

4.76 BUGUM FESTIVAL (Fire Festival)

This festival existed in Dagbon before the arrival of the Muslims. Bugum marks the beginning of the year during which all idols, shrines and gods are cleansed. This festival is not limited to Dagbon alone but to other tribal groupings such as Mamprusis, Nanumba's and Moshi's of Burkina Faso.[1] During this festival the Dagbamba make new resolutions and appeal to the ancestors to guard and guide them throughout the new year. They cut bits and pieces of cooked food and place them on their gooni (short wall that divides one hut from another). These pieces of food are the share of the ancestors and they are supposed to come round and eat them.

4.77 Tradition has it that a chief's favourite son was missing and a search party was organised to find him. As it was dark torches were lit to make the search effective and the child was found sitting under a tree. The child was taken home to his father and the torches thrown on the tree which burnt it down. During the celebration of this festival which is done at night, torches are lit and people dress as if they are going to

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1 The Dagbamba, Mamprusis, Nanumbas and Moshis come from one ancestor even though they belong to different states. They speak and understand each other.

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the battlefield because they are usually armed with cudjels, bows and arrows, guns, cutlasses and spears. There is also drumming and dancing which takes them to the outskirts of the town or village where the torches are thrown on a tree to commemorate the finding of the chiefs lost son and the burning of the tree under which the child was found.

4.78 When the Muslims arrived in Dagbon and saw the celebration of Bugum, they quickly found a similar incident in Islam and associated it with Bungum. The Muslims told the Dagbamba that when Noah's ark landed safely on earth after the floods, one of his sons could not be found[1] and so torches were lit to locate him and also find their way out on the land and so Muslims have from that time taken part in celebrating this festival. When the traditionalists are busy cleaning their idols, shrines and slaughtering fowls to the glory of the ancestors, the Muslims also busy themselves with the preparation of talismans for sale to the public and also to determine which Prophet's era is the world going through for that year.[2] It is also said that this is the only day in the

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1 This story which indicates that one of Noah's sons could not be traced is not recorded in any of the Islamic sources.

2 The Muslims have divided certain periods among the Prophets especially the 'ulul - 'Azm (Resolute Prophets) and during Bugum, the name of the Prophet for that year or period is written on a piece of paper and made into a talisman. Chiefs and traditionalists are invited to the "opening of the talisman" ceremony which is performed by the chief's Imam. The talisman is then opened and the Prophet's name read out to the public and a short history of the Prophet told.

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year when some traditionalists have a complete bath as a result of the general cleaning that is done.

DAMBA

4.79 The Damba festival is celebrated in the third month of the Dagbon lunar calendar. It is celebrated to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Damba is the equivalent of Moulid al-Nabiyy (birthday of the Prophet) which is celebrated by Muslims in some parts of the world.[1] Whereas a greater number of Muslims celebrate this festival by organising symposia, plays and sermons on the life of Prophet Muhhammad, others join hands with the traditionalists to celebrate it in a way that suits them.

4.80 There are actually two types of Damba in Dagbon. The first which starts on the tenth day of the month of Damba (10th Rabiyul-Awwal) commemorates the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, and it is known as Soma Damba. The second which starts on the seventeenth of the same month, known as Naa-Damba, commemorates the naming of the Prophet. The Soma-Damba involves drumming and dancing at nights throughout the week but chiefs do not participate fully in it. The Naa-Damba on the other hand is characterised by great pageantry in which colour and

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1 There are some Muslim fundamentalists who do not believe in the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet and that it is unislamic. Some other Muslims also see it as an attempt at copying Christian traditions.

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melody are displayed at their best, and it is during this celebration that chiefs take active part.[1] On this festive day, there is a ceremony where the chief is led by Muslims who read some verses from the Quran as they dance three times round a tethered cow before it is slaughtered and its meat used in preparing the festive meal. The act of dancing round the cow thrice amidst recitations from the Quran is the aspect of the festival which Afa Ajura and his followers and other puritan Muslims question. They see it as a *jahiliyyah*[2] practice and thus condemn it but it seems the practice is so strong among chiefs and their *imams* such that it is virtually impossible to stop it altogether. The severity of criticism could force the chiefs and their *imams* to adopt a more suitable practice.

4.81 There are quite many aspects of mixing in Dagbon. Traditionalists and some medicinemen do not allow their wives to cook for them while they are in their menstrual periods. Some Muslims too have adopted this practice. These traditionalists and medicinemen claim that if they eat food prepared by a menstruating woman, the potency of their powers either diminish or vanish altogether, and so whatever be the case there is a reason for their action. The question posed here is why the Muslim should adopt such a practice? The Quran

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1 See Appendices 'B(1)' and 'B(2)'.

2 Jahiliyyah refers to the pre-Islamic era in Arabia when the Arabs were deep rooted in idol worship and other backward tendencies.

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admonishes Muslims not to have sexual relations with their wives when they are in their menstrual periods in the verse which states,

> "And they ask thee about menstruating. Say: It is harmful; so keep aloof from women during menstrual discharge and go not near them until they are clean ...".[1]

Some Muslims have given a wrong interpretation of this verse by saying that it is in line with the attitude of traditionalists and medicinemen to their menstruating wives. However, it is not the menstrual discharge as stated in the verse that is harmful but having sexual relations. In Islam, it is limited to the cessation of sexual intercourse.

4.82 Mixing is an aspect of Islam in Dagbon which will persist for sometime so long as chiefs will continue to play leading roles in the affairs of Dagbon and the Afanema will also continue to serve these chiefs as did their counterparts in the era of Na-Zanjina. The problem is that most rural dwellers and some urban inhabitants who are Muslims are not properly educated on the tenets of Islam. There are some Muslims who can easily do away with some of these mixing practices if they are told such practices are not sanctioned by Islam. The biggest unanswered question is how many learned Muslims venture into the rural areas to teach Islam to the people? The Afanema are satisfied that any child born into a Muslim family will

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[1] Quran: 2:222.

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grow up and eventually become a Muslim because it is the accepted norm. The fact still remains that these people will grow up and become Muslims and they would continue to practise whatever their parents did in the name of Islam. By so doing, mixing is perpetrated and the rural dwellers would still remain where they are as ignorant Muslims. The campaign spearheaded by Afa Ajura on the return of the Dagbamba to strict orthodoxy will continue to suffer setbacks as a result of some people's desire to maintain the status quo. On the other hand it has been noted that some villages in Dagbon have gradually discarded mixing practices and have adopted Islam in its orthodox form. With this wind of change it is hoped that Dagbon will return to orthodoxy before the end of the 20th Century.

KPINI (Guinea fowl festival)

4.83 This festival is celebrated in the seventh month of the Dagbon lunar calendar. It is considered an Islamic festival but it has no basis in any of the sources of Islam. Kpini is celebrated to commemorate the so called incident where a guinea fowl refused to show the Prophet of Islam where to obtain water.

4.84 As a result of the refusal of a wet guinea fowl to show the Prophet where water could be obtained when he and his weary companions were thirsty, this festival was introduced by Muslims so that guinea fowls would be punished for their arrogance and

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disobedience to the Prophet. Normally guinea fowls are obtained and children remove their feathers leaving them bare but alive. They are then whipped to show the people's disgust at the arrogance displayed before the Prophet. After whipping these birds, they are then slaughtered for food. In some homes in Dagbon, the guinea fowls are hit against the earth to kill them but this type of killing is prohibited in Islam and the meat is prohibited to Muslims. The irony of the whole affair is that even though Islam prohibits this type of killing, it is done in the name of Islam. However, this festival is gradually losing its significance because not many Muslims observe it and even the younger ones do not know that such a festival exists. The traditionalists and the rural dwellers still observe it and even though it was introduced by Muslims, it has virtually become a festival for the traditionalists.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IMAMS AND AFANEMA

4.85 The *imams* are those who lead worshippers in the ritual prayer in all the mosques. In Islamic communities the *imam* is considered the political head. The *Afanema* are the clerics or those who are lettered in Arabic and Islamic learning. However, there are many *Afanema* whose knowledge of Arabic cannot be considered as good enough but once they can read and write they are qualified to assume that title. An *imam* can also be referred to as *Afa* but not all the *Afanema* are *imams*. Sometimes one might not be very lettered in Islamic learning but as a result of ones ability to heal the sick, make talismans and

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claim to know the future as the Afa tibrisi do, one is conferred with the title of Afa. Generally in Dagbon society the imam is known as Limam which is a corruption of the Arabic form of imam.

4.86 In Dagbon society the imams and Afanema come next in importance after the chiefs. They are held in high esteem and wherever they go in Dagbon they are accorded respect. In almost all functions in Dagbon they are invited either to give the opening and closing prayers or to grace the occasion with a short speech or advice. There are quite a number of functions they perform in the society. Apart from leading the five daily prayers they teach young children how to read the Quran and the rudiments of Islam. In some cases their lessons are not limited to children but to older ones as well as those who need further studies in Islam. They are very busy people because apart from teaching they conduct services during outdooring and marriage ceremonies; they wash the bodies of dead Muslims and offer the funeral prayer; they serve as arbitrators in cases of disputes between people, families and man and wife; and very many people consult them on diverse issues. The Dagbamba usually appreciate the roles they play in the society and mostly the appreciation come in the form of gifts such as food items, clothing and especially money. Some of them are quite lucky to be sponsored by rich Muslims to perform the yearly pilgrimage. That is why there is a saying in Dagbon that, "Nku Karim Alguarani ka gbe Kum", meaning, "I will not read the Quran and go hungry". The rationale behind this saying is that

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there is no reason why one who knows the Quran should go hungry because with this ability, there are many things that one can do to earn a living such as the making of talismans, amulets, soothsaying and healing even though these practices are not acceptable to orthodox Islam.

4.87 Indeed the Afanema perform various functions in the society. The most important are the leading of prayers, tibbu and organising wazu. One function that has attracted much attention is what is popularly known as tibbu.[1] When the Dagbamba Muslims took over from the Wangara and Hausa clerics, they had to continue with the system of tibbu because it was one of the rites that gave them a place in Dagbon society. Additionally, it was an income earning venture for those who practised it. By the tibbu system, amulets and talismans are made for people who either hang them round their necks or tie them round their waists. The one hung round the neck is called sabli and the other for the waist is gurun. These amulets and talismans are believed to possess the potency of warding off evil, scaring witches and wizards, urging one on to sucess and many others. These Afa tibrisi also write Arabic[2] on slates, wash the writing with water into a bowl and later pour it into

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1 It should be noted that not all the Afanema in Dagbon practice tibbu.

2 It is just not mere Arabic that is written on the slates. These writings are either taken from the Quran or some other Islamic books meant for supplication. Some of them contain diagrams, the names of the Prophet and the Orthodox Khalifas.

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bottles for customers. People who patronise tibbu are supposed to drink such concoctions in order to achieve the desired effect. Older boys who study under some of these Afa tibrisi are called upon to do the writing on slates and within a short time they are used to such exercises. After their studies they also take to such practices in order to earn a living. Generally the Afanema are consulted on every conceivable problem for solution and they almost always have the panacea to these problems.

4.88 The majority of Muslims in Dagbon are illiterate both in secular and Islamic learning. This illiteracy coupled with ignorance have made Muslims quite gullible. The Islamic teaching on tawhid disapproves of tibbu yet the Afanema explain to their gullible public that it is not illegal in Islam. For example, they explain that whatever is contained in the amulet or talisman came from the Quran which is undoubtedly, the words of God. Therefore, to carry the words of God along round ones neck or tied round ones waist is a meritorious deed and that apart from God's protection one stands to be rewarded on the Day of Judgement. The problem here is that people who use all forms of talismans tend to overlook the so called God element in them and see them as saviours or preventives in themselves. By so doing God is eventually relegated to the background and the talisman is seen as the force behind its user. Generally women form the majority of people who patronise tibbu. This is so because it appears women have more social problems than men

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in Dagbon society probably as a result of the cultural practices of the area. Some of the reasons why women go to see the Afa tibrisi are: infertility problems, the quest for unalloyed love from husbands and would be husbands, the elimination of rival wives or keeping them constantly in subordinate positions, the desire for wealth and the wish that other rival wives go barren.

4.89 Women who go to consult Afa tibirisi do so secretly because people who see them and know their husbands might wish to report them. Some husbands are known to have divorced their wives because of their frequent visits to Afa tibrisi. It is a general belief in Dagbon that a woman who visits an Afa tibrigu has wicked intentions and the earlier something is done about her, the better. It is also embarrassing for two people who know each other to meet in an Afa tibrigu's house and so others prefer visiting at night. Since customers go in to see the Afa tibrigu one after the other such embarrassing situations are bound to occur. These Afa tibrisi know too well that the requests from women run contrary to Islamic principles, yet they go ahead to try some process towards the achievement of such goals, but whether they are effective or not is another matter.

4.90 Another function of the Afanema is the preaching which they organise from time to time at popular spots in Dagbon to educate the public on Islamic principles. These preachings fall in line with the demands of da'wa (missionary activity)

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that is imposed on every learned Muslim all over the world by Islam. In Dagbon such preaching exercise is popularly known as wazu.[1] Muslims both men and women like attending such preaching sessions because they get to learn a lot about Islam especially about the exposition of scripture, moral conduct, innovated practices, Islamic history, life after death and many other Islamic subjects. They are normally organised in the nights at about 8 p.m. after the last prayer of the day has been observed and when dinner has been taken.

4.90 The man who popularised wazu in Dagbon was Hajj Umar of Kete Krachi. After his death some of his pupils continued with wazu sessions in Dagbon and these included Alhaji Alhassan of Salaga, Kumbung-Limam Tahir, Alhaji Abdulai Gomda of Yendi, Afa Aliu of Sabali, Mallam Kankani and Afa Wazulana[2] of Kumbungu. All these preachers are dead but they would forever be remembered for the part they played in propagating Islam in Dagbon.

4.91 There are popular spots especially in the urban centres in Dagbon where various types of activities are held and it is

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1 It comes from the Arabic word wa'z meaning homily. They are normally held in the urban areas in Dagbon.

2 Afa Wazulana was so popular that his real name was almost forgotten and everybody referred to him as Wazulana which means 'the preacher man'. His house today at Kumbungu is referred to as Wazulan-yili (preachers house). His sons and daughters have also taken Wazu as their surname e.g. Abukari Wazu and Abiba Wazu.

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here that wazus are organised for the public. In Tamale the Omnibus Services Authority bus terminus, the Taxi rank and an open area behind the Agricultural Development Bank are the places best suited for wazu activities. In other towns and villages it is either the market place or the open space in front of the chief's house. Most of the time the topic for discussion is not known to the audience until the Afa who is to deliver the sermon starts. Sometimes too the topic is known because certain incidents give rise to such preaching sessions. When wazu is to be organised on a particular night, Arabic school pupils are made to convey chairs and benches from their school to the wazu spot after school at 2p.m. These seats are collected from schools controlled by the organisers of the wazu. In the rural areas Muslims who come round to listen to wazu come along with their own benches and chairs.

4.92 After observing the last prayer for the day and having eaten their dinner, people converge at the popular spot. The normal practice is that before the principal preacher commences with the discussion for the night, other preachers are given the opportunity to preach for sometime. Normally a public address system is used because many people attend such sessions. Sometimes when an individual in Tamale municipality does something that goes contrary to Islamic teachings, such a person is taken on and his action condemned and the audience advised not to adopt such attitudes. In the rural areas such attacks on individuals are not common because Muslims in these

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areas are ignorant about some Islamic principles and so they are normally given the benefit of the doubt. Such attacks on urban dwellers are severe because it is usually felt that they violate Islamic teachings deliberately. After the sermon, there is usually sometime for questions from the public. These wazu sessions last until after midnight and sometimes up to the early hours of the morning. Wazu sessions are also held in homes where people are bereaved and the sermon here is always based on the concept of death in Islam, life after death, and admonitions to Muslims to abstain from actions that incur the displeasure of God. It is also noted that sometimes when a sermon is a direct attack on an individual, his supporters or sympathisers attend the session. During question time they might wish to contribute to the discussion by trying to legitimise the affected person's action. This attitude unfortunately results into nasty and regrettable incidents. In 1965 one of the pupils of Afa Ajura questioned the basis for the Tijaniyya wird[1] and he was beaten up which caused serious problems between Afa Ajura's group and the Tijaniyya.

4.93 Wazus are beneficial to the Muslim public in Dagbon because they help them to learn more about Islam and how its principles affect them. As a result of the question time allowed during the session, people ask questions in order to

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1 Wird is a litany task, generally recited at the end of certain ritual prayers. It is very common with the sufi orders.

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clear their minds of certain doubts which enhances their faith. Besides, wazus have a social significance as it serves as a check on Muslims to refrain from violating Islamic tenets with impunity. Some Muslims who have violated Islamic tenets have had to be embarrassed by severe condemnation by the Afanema and this has caused some affected people the bitter experience of having to go on self imposed exile from their hometown. Therefore, people are very careful about how they behave in Dagbon. It is therefore common to find Muslims counsulting the Afanema on some ventures they wish to undertake. They wish to find out whether Islam sanctions it or not and if they are informed that it is an abomination in Islam, they give up the idea. Since the introduction of wazus in the 1950's many Dagbamba have learnt more about Islam and many more have embraced Islam at such sessions. The post of imam is a respectable institution in Dagbon. Once the title of imam is conferred on an individual he continues to hold the post until his death. Not until the imam dies no other person goes by the title at least within the area of his jurisdiction. In cases where the imam travels or he is sick, it is the nayimi[1] who takes over. When the imam is too old to exercise his functions, it is the nayimi who officiates on his behalf. There is a case of an imam at Nanton, about fifteen miles north of Tamale where he had to relinquish his post because he claimed he had become impotent. It was reported that he announced to

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[1] The title of nayimi is a corruption of the Arabic word naib meaning deputy.

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the congregation just before the commencement of '*Isha*' prayer that he had not experienced ejaculation for sometime and so he did not deem it fit to continue exercising his functions.[1] There is also a case of a young man who wanted to lead a small congregation of worshippers in prayer when the *imam*, who is his father, had travelled outside Tamale, but he was stopped by a member of the congregation from doing so because he was not qualified since he was impotent.[2]

4.94 Once an *imam* is elected, he cannot be displaced or removed from office because that institution is held as sacred. Most of the *imams* in Dagbon are elderly and command respect. However, there are some young ones who have occupied such posts as a result of their knowledge in Islamic learning. Sometimes the post of *imam* becomes hereditary in one family especially when it is learned, but this practice is dying out because many more knowledgeable Muslims are springing up in other families. Since the post of *imam* is not the exclusive preserve of one family, Muslims now want to see that the post goes to the most qualified in terms of knowledge, moral standards, respect in the society and participation in Islamic affairs in the community. The post of *imam* goes with quite a number of

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1 It is a teaching in Islam that a man who is impotent cannot lead Muslims in prayer.

2 Apparently the young man's wife run away from his home because she complained that since their wedding the man had not consumated the marriage.

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priveleges such as respect, honour, and benefits such as food, clothing and money that come to him in the form of sadagah and zakat. The imams claim that as a result of their devotedness to Islam and because they do not work to earn money, they are entitled to zakat. Some other Muslims think that the imams are not beneficiaries of zakat as the Quran did not mention them. As a result of the benefits that accrues to the imams, there is always a struggle among Muslims to get themselves elected on the death of an imam. Since the importance of the imam cannot be overemphasised, various tribal groupings both local and foreign who live in Dagbon have a chief and an imam. Some of the identified groups with their imams are: Zabagsi-limam, Mamprisi-limam, Walsi-limam for the local tribes and then Yoruba-limam, Mohe-limam, Gbengberi-limam, Fulan-limam and Zanbalsi-limam for the foreigners.[1]

4.95 In every town or village in Dagbon where there is a chief, there must of necessity be an imam to serve him. It is the chief who appoints the imam and normally a date is fixed for the robing of the imam where he is presented with a gown, trousers and cap. This ceremony of robing is to formally declare the cleric the chief's imam (Na-Limam). On Monday and Friday mornings, the Na-Limam goes to the chief's house with his entourage which includes the nayimi, landan, madaha if there

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1 The Dagbamba refer to the Gonja as Zabagsi, Moshis as Mohe, Fulanis as Fulan-nema, Zabramah as Zanbalsi and Hausa as Gbengberi.

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is one and other Muslims. According to popular belief in Dagbon Mondays and Fridays are holy days because the Prophet was born on Monday and Friday is the official holiday in Islam. Therefore prayers on these two days are readily accepted by God. The purpose of this visit is to offer prayers for the chief and the success of his 'nation'.[1] The chief normally receives the Na-Limam in either his Sampaa which is a raised shed for the purpose of receiving guests or Zong which is the entrance hall to the chief's compound. The Zong is usually a very large one that has a capacity of about one hundred guests. If a stranger wants to locate the chief's house in a village or town in Dagbon, he looks out for the house with the largest Zong. If there are two large Zongs, which is quite rare, he has to look for the Zong with a Sampaa directly opposite it.

4.96 On Mondays and Fridays the chief sits in state surrounded by his elders made up of the Wu-lana, Lun-na, Akarma, Kambo-na, Yamba-na and Kambara-na or Yar-na[2] to receive the Na-limam and his entourage. Sitting in state and waiting for the limam is one of the signs of respect chiefs in Dagbon have for Muslims. Under normal circumstances people come to wait for the chief to

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1 Nation is used here to mean the area that comes under the jurisdiction of a chief. The Dagbani word used in this circumstance is Tingbani.

2 The Wulana is the chiefs deputy; Lun-na is the chief tom-tom beater; Akarma is the chief of the talking drummers; Kambo-na is the chief warrior, Yamba-na is the chief of the gonje musical group (fiddlers) and Kambara-na or Yar-na is the man responsible for washing the bodies of dead chiefs.

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come out and meet them, but with the Muslims it is the other way round because of the spiritual significance attached to such meetings. When the Na-limam arrives he is ushered to his seat followed by the exchange of greetings between the limam and the chief on one hand and then the limam and elders on the other. After this the Na-Limam offers prayers for the well being of his domain, that of his family and all present. After the prayers have been said, the chief offers kolanuts to the Na-Limam and his entourage. It is to be noted that whoever visits the chief should offer him kolanuts except the Na-Limam who is offered kolanuts by the chief. This is a sign of respect that the chief has for the limam. Apart from kolanuts, the Na-Limam gets money and maha from the chief. Sometimes the chief sends food items and guinea fowls to the Na-Limam through his messengers or the Na-Limam's landan.

SUMMARY

The birth of a child in every Dagbon society is a welcome news to the family into which the child is born as well as the community at large. If the child is a male, he is circumcised on any day between the third and the seventh after birth. The eighth day is normally fixed for the naming ceremony. On this day the child is given a Muslim name or any name that is not associated with an idol or shrine. It is the officiating Afa who normally calls out the child's name and prays that the child should have long life and prosperity. Women play very important roles when a child is born because

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they all come together in assisting the family in their domestic chores. In some of these homes, drumming and dancing sessions are held but in homes of supporters of Afa Ajura where outdooring ceremonies are held, drumming and dancing are prohibited. On this day also the child's head is shaved, the hair collected and weighed to determine the amount of money the child's father should give away as sadagah to the needy.

Marriage is considered a very important phenomenon in every society in Dagbon, be it traditional or Islamic. Any adult who is not married is not accorded any respect because such a person is not considered a responsible person. In most cases the laid down procedures for contracting an Islamic marriage are followed such as proposal by the man and acceptance by the woman (ijab wa gubul); the giving of bridal gift (mahr or sadugat); obtaining parental or guardian's consent; and presence of witnesses. In some other cases, parents choose husbands for their daughters which the Afanema have condemned and as a result, it is gradually losing its significance.

Apart from the dowry which the bridegroom pays, which is the exclusive right of the bride, he has to present lefe which consists of a number of cloths, veils, headgears, a pillow, bucket, a mat, a pair of sandals and toiletries. When a woman is finally betrothed to a man the lefe is normally presented before the wedding takes place. As a result of the expensive

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nature of lefe some husbands cannot afford it and so they organise their weddings quietly without the usual fun fair. The provision of lefe is not an Islamic demand and at best it could be described as an innovation. However, it has come to be accepted as the norm in marriage affairs in Dagbon.

The Afanema officiate during the wedding ceremony which is normally held in the bride's home or in a mosque near her home. Whereas the bridegroom is present at the wedding, in most cases the bride is absent and people have begun questioning the rationale behind this attitude which is not in line with Islamic tenets. However, literates who organise weddings make sure that both bridegroom and bride are present. As usual drumming and dancing sessions feature prominently at such occasions but to the Ahlul-Sunnah this is an unacceptable innovation.

The Islamic term for divorce is talag. Islam allows both man and woman to seek divorce even though it is the most hated by Allah. As a means of restraining both man and woman from recourse to divorce, Islam has laid down certain procedures to be followed before a divorce becomes irrevocable. However, the Dagbamba in most cases do not follow these laid down procedures. When a man wishes to divorce his wife, the woman is expected to go through a period of waiting called 'iddah which lasts three months. The rationale behind this 'iddah period is to give the man the opportunity of reconciling

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with his wife. Besides, it is to make sure whether the woman is pregnant or not so that there may be no confusion as to the parentage of a child if the woman seeks to remarry. It is unfortunate to note that some Muslims who divorce their wives in Dagbon do not consider the 'iddah period. Once their minds are made up about divorce, they carry it out instantly requesting the woman to pack her belongings and leave the matrimonial home. This form of divorce is termed as talag al-bidah (innovated divorce).

Women who do not wish to continue matrimonial ties with their husbands for various reasons run away from their husbands' homes to their parents. Some husbands may send a delegation to plead with the woman's parents to get the woman to return to her husband, but others may not care. Some of the pre-Islamic attitudes of keeping women constantly at subordinate levels exists especially in the rural areas and that is why a majority of divorce cases are initiated by men.

With the birth of a child, the whole community is thrown into a joyous mood. Similarly when a person dies, the community is thrown into a state of mourning because it is considered everybody's problem and not limited to the bereaved family. As Islam demands, a ritual bath is given to the corpse which is then shrouded in white material. The imam of the community leads a congregation to offer the funeral prayer after which it is taken to the cemetry for burial. No Muslim is buried with a

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coffin in Dagbon. After the burial the imam gives a short sermon on the Islamic concept of death and offers supplications for the departed soul.

After burying the dead and returning to the funeral house, some Muslims especially those of the Tijaniyya Order in Dagbon and most rural dwellers organise adua (supplications) for the dead. They do it again on the third, seventh and fortieth days on a large scale. To the Ahlul Sunnah led by Afa Ajura, there is nothing like adua (supplications) for the dead after burial in Islam. If the deceased left widows and children their concern is to contribute money for the bereaved family. The Tijaniyya on the other hand organise drumming and dancing sessions especially on the seventh and fortieth days and prepare plenty of food for sympathisers to eat. It is observed that much money and food are wasted during these funeral celebrations. A large number of the Afanema benefit from these funeral celebrations and so they take active part in it. Whereas the Ahlul Sunnah seek the demise of funeral celebrations, some of these Afanema wish to see it persist as a result of their selfish motives.

One other attitude that is common to both sides is the wazu sessions that are organised in the deceased's home especially at nights. Such wazu sessions could go on for about a week and all the sermons are centred on the Islamic concept of death.

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Festivals form a very important aspect of traditional life in Dagbon. Three festivals are considered very important in Dagbon and these are Bagum (Fire), Damba (Birthday of the Prophet), and Kpini (Guinea fowl). They are celebrated in the first, third and seventh months of the Dagbon lunar calendar respectively.

The Bugum (fire) festival existed in Dagbon before the arrival of Muslims because it was a period where the idols, shrines and gods are cleansed and resolutions made for the new year. The celebration of this festival is attributed to a legend concerning how a chief's favourite son got missing and how he was found at night. Torches are normally lit and most participants dress like warriors. When the Muslims arrived in Dagbon and observed this festival among the Dagbamba, they associated it with Prophet Noah. Today in Dagbon Muslims take active part in it.

Kpini (Guinea fowl) festival was introduced by Muslims. There is a general belief among West African Muslims that the Prophet of Islam was disobeyed by a wet guinea fowl to show him where he could obtain water when he asked for help. The story further states that it was a pig which showed the Prophet where to obtain water hence the prohibition of the eating of pork by Muslims. This story has no basis in any of the sources of Islam. On the other hand the guinea fowl has to suffer for its action and towards this end, during this festival, guinea fowls

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are obtained, their feathers removed and whipped before they are killed and cooked for food. This festival has lost its significance in the urban centres because they are no longer celebrated but one of the Dagbon lunar months go by its name.

Damba (birthday of the Prophet) festival is celebrated widely in Dagbon. It is a festival that is celebrated in two parts. The first is known as Soma Damba which is celebrated on the 10th day of Rabiyul Awwal to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet and Na-Damba on the 17th of the same month to commemorate the naming of the Prophet. The main feature of this celebration is the active drumming and dancing that are held. Additionally all participants dress in their very best traditional attires for the occasion.

The Afanema perform many functions which have contributed in placing them in a position next to the chiefs in Dagbon. Chiefs hold the Afanema in high esteem and it has been a tradition since the reign of Na-Zangina who used the Muslims to make Dagbon a powerful 'nation'. Every chief therefore has to have an imam to serve him. One attitude of chiefs to the Afanema which shows that they are highly placed is the fact that whoever visits the chief must offer him kolanuts except the Afa who rather receives gifts of kolanuts and money from the chief.

The Afanema lead Muslims in prayer, officiate at naming, marriage and funeral ceremonies. They serve as arbitrators in

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cases of misunderstanding between two people, families and even communities. They are also consulted for advice on diverse issues because they are considered the people of God. The most controversial aspect of their functions is that of tibbu which orthodox Islam rejects. Since they make a lot of money out of it and there are many more younger ones who work under them, the practice will continue to linger on for some time. It is observed that women form the majority of people who patronise tibbu perhaps as a result of the perculiar problems that women face such as infertility, the presence of rival wives, the desire for wealth, the desire to keep enemies at bay and many others.

However, one function of the Afanema which the Muslims in Dagbon admire is the wazu sessions they organise from time to time. Even though such sessions are not very regular, they have made some significant impact on the Muslims of Dagbon.

Mixing is described as the attitude whereby Muslims practise traditional customs alongside their Islamic beliefs. Some Muslims in the urban centres are guilty of such practices but the worst offenders are the Muslims in the rural areas. It is the belief of most Muslims in Dagbon that Islam is a bedfellow of traditional Dagbon customs because they see similarities rather than parallels between the two. Some of such similarities are polygamy, marriage, divorce, tibbu and sacrifice of animals.

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The Ahlul Sunnah say Islam is a complete culture by itself and so once a person embraces Islam, he has to relegate all other cultures to the background and limit himself to that of Islam. The cosmopolitan nature of urban centres has reduced the intensity of some of the traditional Dagbon cultures. However, the rural areas are still deep rooted in traditional activities hence the intensity of mixing in such areas. They consult both the baga and Afa tibrigu, they wear talismans, amulets and gurma and also wear gbagno (bullet proof gown).

The attitude of mixing will continue to persist among the Dagbamba for some time because many Muslims cannot divorce traditional customs from Islamic practices. That is why it is quite difficult for people to easily determine where traditional practices begin and end and where Islam takes off. However, there are some villages in Dagbon such as Mbana-yili, Kogni, Kpabya, and Ngarin where mixing is gradually losing its significance among the Muslims. This wind of change, it is believed, will blow all over Dagbon leading to a change of attitude and thus make room for orthodox Islam to prevail in all places in Dagbon.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE EMERGENCE OF SECTS AND THE POLITICAL LIFE OF MUSLIMS IN DAGBON

SECTS IN DAGBON

5.01 There are four main Muslim sects in Dagbon today and these are, Tijaniyya which is a Sufi[1] confraternity that was founded in 1781 by an Algerian Berber called Ahmad b. Muhammad at-Tijani; Ahlul Sunnah (People of the traditions of the Prophet) who are popularly known in Dagbon as Munchire and sometimes called Wahabiyya which has its roots in Saudi Arabia; Ahmadiyya which is a modern Islamic sect founded in 1889 by Ghulam Ahmad in India, and lastly Shiah who are followers of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the cousin of Prophet Muhammad. This sect came into being as a result of the Battle of Siffin in 661A.D. between Ali and Muawiyah and it is strongly based in Iran.

5.02 The Wangara and Hausa Muslims who introduced Islam into Dagbon did not come with any sectarian tendencies. The only identifiable difference was that there were two groups of Muslims, the Wangara and the Hausa and each group practised its Islam without interfering with the other's practices. A unifying factor between the two groups was the fact that both observed the Maliki School of Law which was prevalent

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1 A Sufi is a follower of the mystics' way in Islam. There are various opinions as to the derivation of this word. Some say it is derived from wool, because the people adhering to this system (sufism) are said to have worn the humble dress of wool. Others derive it from purity or wisdom.

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throughout West Africa.[1] However, with the coming of more Hausa clerics into Dagbon, sectarian tendencies gradually set in among Muslims and by the second half of the 20th century Dagbon experienced the emergence of sects which have contributed immensely in undermining the Islamic brotherhood, amity, peace and love that the religion of Islam cherishes. The doctrinal differences that exists among these sects have caused a lot of social and political problems in Dagbon.

THE TIJANIYYA

5.03 The first sect that emerged in Dagbon is the Tijaniyya Order. It was introduced by Hausa clerics and in the beginning its practices were limited to the clerics alone because it was a class sect whereby people who were knowledgeable in Islam could practice it. However, with time pockets of Muslims in and around Tamale and Yendi got converted into the Order. It was in 1950 that the Order became popular when at the invitation of the Hausa community and some Dagbamba adherents, the late Shaykh Ibrahim Nyass, the then leader of the Order in West Africa based in Kaolack.Senegal, visited Tamale. The Shaykh was apparently on a visit to Accra and his followers in Tamale seized that opportunity in inviting him to Tamale. His photographs were sold all over Tamale and generally there was a rush to obtain them. His followers portrayed him as a Saint

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1 The Maliki School of Law was named after Malik bin Anas who was born and lived in Madinah. He was a great Muhaddith who was a scholar and authority of the Science of hadith.

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who was full of superhuman powers and wherever he went Muslims and non-Muslims struggled to catch a glimpse of him. Women had to spread their cloths on the ground for him to walk on; wherever he sat he was fanned like a King of the medieval Sudanese states and generally Muslims wanted to get nearer him so that they could either touch him or his gown with the hope of receiving blessings. When people were informed that to sip water from the buta (kettle) or ablution jug he uses in performing ablution was enough to earn one blessings, there was a struggle for his buta wherever he went.

5.04 It was popular belief among Tijanis that whoever held his buta would be saturated with blessings. These beliefs are contained in Sufi teachings which are aimed not merely at guiding members in mystical practice, but in binding them in allegiance to a master and developed into a cult of saints as mediators with the spiritual world. Shaykh Ibrahim Nyass was considered a possessor of baraka (blessings) who acts as a mediator bridging the gap which separates God and man. These Sufi leaders are highly venerated by their followers. Under the Shaykh are local agents called muqaddams (a leader in a tariqa) who enroll, train and initiate new members, collect dues and organise the collective dhikrs (remembrance of God). Centres of Sufi religious activities are known as Zawiya (retreat or convent) and they are generally a compound enclosing a group of buildings with sections for the religious leader, his family, disciples and pilgrims who come to venerate the tombs of their dead Shaykhs.

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5.05 The Sufi ritual is centred on dhikr which is performed alone or in congregation. At initiation, the murid (aspirant) swears an oath of allegiance, receives a rosary and is allocated litanies to be recited with its aid. At the congregational hadra (seance) under the leadership of the leader, litanies and invocations are chanted in rhythm. While these are chanted, it is the duty of each participant to concentrate thought, feeling and action on God.

5.06 The Tijaniyya Order enjoins on its adherents two ritual obligations daily. The first ritual is the wird (litany) which is either observed in a group or individually and it requires the recitations of the following:

(a) the 'Astaghfiru Allah' (the formula of penitence) which is recited one hundred times; and

(b) Salat al-Fatih (a controversial special prayer in praise of Prophet Muhammad) one hundred times.

The second ritual which is known as the wazifa (a Tijaniyya litany task) is observed anytime in the evenings after Salat al-Maghrib is offered, but on Fridays it is observed immediately after Asr prayers. This second ritual involves the recitations of the following:

(a) Astaghfiru Allah (the formula of penitence) this time thirty times;

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(b) Salat al-Fatih (a controversial prayer in praise of the Prophet Muhammad) fifty times;

(c) La ilaha ilal Allah (there is no god but Allah) one hundred times; and

(d) Jawharat al-Kamal which is the most important prayer of the Order is recited twelve times.

The Jawharat al-Kamal is said to have been received by Shaykh Ahmad Tijani, the founder of the Order from the Prophet Muhammad. It is only when one has performed ablution with water that one can take part in the wazifa which is observed collectively.[1] This means that tayammum (dry ablution), which can be used in observing any of the five daily prayers when there is scarcity of water, cannot be used for the wazifa. This presupposes that the wazifa is a higher Muslim ritual than the five daily prayers. These rituals are usually held in the mosque where the adherents sit around a white sheet called izar. Women adherents sit some distance away from the men but they take part in all the processes of the rituals with their men counterparts. Joining the Order and participating in all its rituals are believed to be highly rewarding and that such people would enter Paradise. Consequently, an initiated member feels that he belongs to a religious elite.

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1 J.N. ABUN-NASR: The Tijaniyya, Oxford, 1965 p.52.

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5.07 The significance of spreadig the izar and sitting around it is that when the adherents reach the seventh recitation of the Jawharat al-Kamal in the wazifa, the Prophet and all the four Orthodox Khalifahs attend the circle of the wazifa and remain there as long as it is being recited.[1] As the Prophet and the four Orthodox Khalifahs are held in high esteem, it is found appropirate to prepare special reservation for their unseen guests.[2] However, in Dagbon, those who subject this Order to ridicule say that the Tijanis claim that it is God who comes to join them seated on the white sheet and so they have been referred to as Nawun nyeriba (those who see God). When the Order was first established in Dagbon, interested people had to pay a registration fee of one pound one shilling (a guinea) but today the registration fee has gone up to five hundred cedis (¢500.00). One of the Tijaniyya teachings that has attracted many people is the claim that whoever participates in its rituals would be able to save seventy members of his family from the torment of Hell fire on the Day of Judgement. Some other Muslims see this claim as contrary to the teachings of the Quran and they quote the verse, "And no bearer of a burden can bear the burden of

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1 The four Orthodox Khalifahs are: Abu Bakr ibn Abu Quhafah, Umaribn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali ibn Abi Talib.

2 I think that the izar which is reserved for the unseen guests is only a symbolical representation of the guests and not a true presence as some of the adherents are made to believe.

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another"[1] to challenge the Tijaniyya assertion. The critics say that the verse in the Quran means that the burden of the sins of one man cannot be taken away by another, and that the effect of each man's actions cling to himself. This criticism notwithstanding, the Tijanis continue with their practices all over Dagbon. The book that contains all its teachings is entitled Jawahir al-maani wa bulugh al-amani fi faid sidi Abi al-'Abbas al-Tijani. This book is simply called Jawahir al-maani and its authorship is accredited to'Ali Harazim b al-'Arabi Barada.

5.08 It has been noted that some of the Hausa clerics who found themselves in Dagbon belonged to the Quadiriyya Order which is also a Sufi Order named after 'Abdul-Kadir Jillani.[2] As a result of the large following of the Tijaniyya Order, members of the Qadiriyya had to join the Tijaniyya. Those who joined the Tijaniyya were required to give up their membership of the Qadiriyya, assuring them that they would be safe from any form of vindictiveness of the walis (proteges of God, Saints) whom they would thus repudiate. The Qadiriyya Order did not therefore make an impact in Dagbon. Tijanis have been

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1 Quran 17:15, 35: 18 etc.

2 He was the head of a School of Hanbalite Law and a ribat (Sufi centre) in Baghdad. His reputation grew as a Hanbali preacher but not as a Sufi. There is no evidence that he ever claimed to have a path or guided anyone or initiated anybody. After his death in 1166 and with the passage of time, Shaykhs began to initiate their pupils into his name because his fame as intercessor was spreading.

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warned against leaving the Order and it is widely believed that a Muslim who leaves it would have an adverse termination of his life (yamutu 'ala sual-khatima). Ahmad al-Tijani has himself warned that he who execrates him and does not repent dies an infidel. Tijanis have been forbidden to visit living walis and the shrines of dead ones. In this connection they quote Ibn al-Arabis' saying in al-Futuhat al-Makiyya that just as the world does not belong to more than one God, and the believer to more than one Prophet, and a woman cannot be at the same time the wife of more than one man, so also a murid may not attach himself to more than one shaykh.

5.09 Some of the Tijaniyya teachings that brought about serious clashes between them and especially the Munchire are as follows:

(i) the belief that the recitation of Salat al-Fatih once is equivalent in merit to reading the whole Quran six thousand times. The Munchire criticised this teaching as kufr (unbelief) and pointed out that since the Quran is God's own speech and Salat al-Fatih is just a speech of one of his creatures, he who believes that the speech of the creature is superior in its essence to that of the Creator has recanted his faith in Islam;

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(ii) the belief that Prophet Muhammad taught only Ahmad al-Tijani Salat al-Fatih. In criticism, the Munchire stated that if this Tijaniyya gospel was taught by Prophet Muhammad to Ahmad al-Tijani only without having previously taught it during his life time to his companion, then it presupposes that Muhammad died without delivering completely his prophetic mission and this is contrary to the verse of the Quran which states, "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion;"[1]

(iii) the belief that adherents of the Tijaniyya Order will enter Paradise without submitting themselves to any account or punished for their actions on the Day of Judgement. The Munchire are of the opinion that such a teaching constitutes unbelief because the doctrine of judgement and compensation for good actions is a basic teaching as enshrined in the Articles of faith. Therefore he who believes that he will be admitted into Paradise without first being brought to account for his actions is an act of infedility;

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1. Quran: 5:4.

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(iv) the belief that the recitation of Salat al-Fatih once is equivalent to thousands of pilgrimages and hundreds of prayers. The Munchire see this as a great annulment of the Quran because if the Quran has imposed pilgrimage as part of the required acts of devotion with all the difficulty, fatigue and cost involved, the recitation of this Tijani gospel is equated to thousands of such pilgrimages and prayers, then the Tijaniyya Order is false and must be rejected by all well meaning Muslims.[1]

Despite all these criticisms by the Munchire, the Tijanis were steadfast in the observance of Tijani rituals to manifest their unalloyed faith in the Tijaniyya Order. The Munchire on the other hand were bent on ridding Dagbon of the Tijaniyya Order and its "innovated practices" and how far they have succeeded will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

5.10 A majority of the adherents of the Tijaniyya Order practise mixing and their clerics are the worst offenders in the making and selling of amulets and talismans. They also operate as soothsayers and claim to have the power to treat cases such as infertility in women, impotence and mental

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1 The Tijaniyya Order has many beliefs that cannot be enumerated here. These criticisms are similar all over the areas where Tijanis are located.

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problems. They are mostly seen at outdooring and funeral celebrations as officiating clerics. Tijaniyya adherents who organise outdooring, marriage, funeral and maulid[1] celebrations do so in grand style. Their women consider these occasions as time to exhibit wealth and the Order encourages it. To those who criticise them as not being modest, they say that people who criticise them are poor people who have nothing to exhibit on such occasions and that if their critics had the opportunity, they would act in like manner.

5.11 It has been noted that there are quite a number of learned Afanema who belong to this Order, but it is unfortunate that none of them has come forward to assume its leadership in Dagbon. These Tijani clerics are located in Tamale, Yendi, Savelugu, Kumbungu, Gushegu and in other smaller villages. Each of them organises its activities and Tijani rituals within the communities they are located. Therefore, individualism has contributed as a factor towards the apathy to leadership. It is also believed that none of the Tijani clerics in Dagbon has the courage and charisma to face Afa Ajura in an open confrontation on the validity of the Order. Sometimes the Tijaniyya adherents are forced to invite one of its popular leaders in Ghana known as Shaykh Maikano who lives in Frang in the Brong Ahafo region to come to Tamale to address them. A

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1 Maulid is a term generally used throughout West Africa meaning the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet of Islam.

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majority of the Tijanis consider him as virtually the leader of the Order in Ghana.

5.12 During Shaykh Maikano's first few visits to Dagbon in the early 1970's, there was no serious clash between the Tijaniyya and the Munchire. Whenever Shaykh Maikano arrived in Dagbon, he stayed in Tamale and adherents located all over Dagbon came to pay homage to him. These Tijani's so much identified themselves with the order and its rituals and also held Shaykh Maikano in such high esteem which suggested that he was venerated. The way and manner they were so attached to the Order gave the impression that they had relegated their obligatory religious duties to the background. At any time that Shaykh Maikano visited Dagbon, he succeeded in 'converting' some Muslims into the Tijaniyya Order. The Munchire felt that Shaykh Maikano's visits were a threat to the very existence of Islam in its Orthodox form in Dagbon and that if something was not done to prevent him from coming to Dagbon, he could influence thousands of innocent Muslims. Consequently, the Munchire decided to debar him from coming to Dagbon describing it as a jihad.[1] In March, 1977, Shaykh Maikano defied all threats of attack from the Munchire and travelled by air to Tamale. Apparently the Tijanis in Tamale had assured him of maximum security and of his safety. However, while he

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1 Jihad is holy fighting in the cause of Allah or any kind of effort to make Islam superior. It is regarded as one of the principle of Islam. Striving to rid oneself of sins is considered a jihad against ones desires.

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was being driven in a car from the airport into the centre of Tamale, the Munchire ambushed and attacked the car in which he was. It resulted in violent clashes between the two groups in which some people were seriously injured and many cars belonging to the Tijani's were badly damaged. A combined team of the Police and the army in Tamale were brought in to quell the clash. When the Munchire were accused by the Tijanis of being the aggressor in the conflict, they replied that they considered their action as that of an Islamic jihad against the introduction of alien ideas into Islam and that they were determined to rid Islam of Tijani influences in Dagbon. .It has been noted that supporters and sympathisers of both religious groups are found everywhere in Dagbon but the main centre of clashes between them is in Tamale where followers of both groups are concentrated.

THE AHLUL-SUNNAH (MUNCHIRE)

5.13 The second sect to emerge in Dagbon is the Ahlul-Sunnah. They are sometimes referred to as Wahabiyya but their most popular Dagbani name is Munchire which means 'the rejecters'. The name Wahabiyya is an Islamic community founded by Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahab (1703-1787) in the middle of the 18th century in Saudi Arabia and essentially based on the teeachings of the theologians, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (9th century) and Ahmad ibn Taymiyah (15th century) who both stood for literal adherence to the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet as the sole valid source of religious and moral law. The name was given to the

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community by its oponents in the founder's lifetime. It is not used by its members but they prefer the name '*Muwahhidun*' (Unitarians). They regard themselves as *Sunnis* adhering strictly to the Quran and the Hadith apart from which there is no binding authority in religion. They base their argument on a Prophetic statement during the 'Farewell pilgrimage'[1] that, "O ye people, for I have delivered my message and have left among you that which, if you lay hold upon it, will keep you from ever going astray, a clear command, a book of Allah, and the custom (Sunna) of His Prophet".[2] This sect is prevalent in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its Royal family are descendants of the founder of *Wahabiyya*.[3]

5.14 Some of the *Wahabi* teachings are summarised as follows:

(i) all objects of worship other than Allah are false, and all who worship such are deserving of death;

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1 The 'Farewell Pilgrimage' took place in 631A.D. It was the last pilgrimage that the Prophet took part during which he delivered a memorable sermon.

2 Arthur Jeffery: *A Reader on Islam* - Passages from standard Arabic writings illustrative of the beliefs and practices of Muslims, Mouton & Co. 1962. 's-Gravenhage p.308.

3 Some other countries associated with Wahabiyya are: Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Malaysia, Pakistan etc.

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(ii) the bulk of mankind are not monotheists, since they endeavour to win God's favour by visiting the tomb of Saints, their practice therefore resembles what is recorded in the Quran of the Makkan Mushrikin (idolators);

(iii) It is polytheism (shirk) to introduce the name of a Prophet, Saint or angel into a prayer;

(iv) it is polytheism to seek intercession from any but Allah;

(v) it is polytheism to make vows to any other being;

(vi) it involves unbelief (Kufr) to profess knowledge not based on the Quran the Sunna or the necessary inference of reason;

(vii) it involves unbelief and heresy to deny Qadar (predestination) in all acts.

Besides, they encourage its adherents to wear beard and forbid the use of the rosary and count the names of God and their prayers on the knuckles of the hand instead. Anything that borders on innovation is never left to pass without criticism. According to them the Prophet in his lifetime felt greatly disgusted by acts of bid-a (innovation) and the reason is that bid-a presupposes that Islam was incomplete in some respect and

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that bid-a has supplied the gap. This presupposition, they explain, is blasphemous and tantamount to heresy hence the jihad against the teachings of the Tijaniyya Order.

5.15 The Munchire are very modest in all their activities. Their naming ceremonies, weddings and funerals are organised simply; their clerics abhor the making and selling of talismans and they do not involve themselves in divination or writing on slates and washing the writings for customers to drink. With regard to funerals, they do not celebrate the third, seventh and fortieth day funeral rites. When one of them dies, they help wash the corpse, offer the janaza (funeral prayer) and then go to bury him. After burial the officiating cleric gives a short sermon by the grave reminding everyone that surely death is a certainty and for that matter everyone shall taste it. They then pray for the mercy of Allah on their departed colleague after which they reassemble at the deceased's home where contributions are made for the bereaved family. Their naming ceremonies are organised without much fun fare such as drumming and dancing. Weddings are also organised along the same lines. Their opponents describe them as a poverty stricken group who have constituted themselves into a sect to undermine the affluent in society.[1] The leader of the Munchire

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1 This statement is attributed to Tijanis. It is noted, however, that there are many Tijanis who are as poor as the Munchires but because such statements come from opinion leaders in the sect who are rich, they easily forget that there are poor ones among them.

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is called Alhaji Yussuf Ajura but he is popularly known as Afa Ajura. Some of his opponents refer to him as Ayatollah.[1] He has been able to rally round him thousands of supporters who are ready to fight and defend Islam in its puritan form.

5.16 The Munchire worship at the Sakasaka mosque which they built through communal labour by men alone. They also have a big school called Anbariyya English/Arabic Institute with enrollent of over one thousand pupils. This school compares favourably with any big secondary school in Ghana with quarters and bungalows for tutors. The bungalows are exclusively reserved for foreign tutors especially those from Arab countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. There is also a one storey building attached to the Sakasaka mosque which serves as a guest house and residents for some senior members of staff of the Anbariyya School. The achievement of the Munchire is a good example of what an Islamic community can do with its own resources without foreign or governmental assistance. Presently, only Islamic subjects are taught in the school.

AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

5.17 The third sect is the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. This sect was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who claimed to be a messiah. It originated in India in 1889 but today its strength

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1 Even though other religious leaders in the Islamic Republic of Iran carry the title of Ayatollah, the title as used in reference to Afa Ajura is to the spiritual leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, the brain behind the Iranian revolution.

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is in Pakistan where they have been declared non-Muslims by the Government of the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then Prime Minister. This Movement teaches that the spiritual universe will continue to be ruled by the Quran and the Holy Prophet till the end of days, but man is liable to forget, is apt to fall into error and is prone to rebel. In order to maintain the dominion of the Quran it was necessary to provide a remedy for all these ills. Provision was necessary that the forgetful may be reminded, the erring set right and the rebellious brought to submission. To this end men will continue to appear who will obtain spiritual light from the Holy Prophet and will continue to illumine the spiritual universe. These men, in accordance with the degree of the need which they are designed to fulfil, will appear in the shape of reformers, but in the case of widespread disorder and mischief in the spiritual realm men would be appointed as Prophets subordinate, and in strict obedience to the Holy Prophet. The Ahmadis claim that the Quran indicates at various places[1] the appearance of one such Prophet who would be the spiritual image of the Holy Prophet and whose advent would be regarded as the advent of the Holy Prophet himself. They also claim that in the Traditions this image of the Holy Prophet has been given the name of Messiah. Another name mentioned in the Traditions for this Prophet is Mahdi and that both names are applicable to the same individual though they express different capacities. This Messiah or Mahdi is

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1 Some of these verses are: 61:6, 4:69.

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therefore Ghulam Ahmad.

5.18 Ghulam Ahmad explained that God had raised him for the purpose of re-establishing the dominion of Islam and to shed light upon the teachings of the Quran. He claimed that he was informed through Divine revelation that he had been appointed to serve Islam and the Holy Prophet and to work for the exaltation of God's name in the universe. He was told that God had conferred upon him the dignity of Prophethood with the provision that he would continue to be a perfect follower of the Holy Prophet and of the Quran and that the revelation which was vouchsafed to him would be subordinate to the Quran and would contain no new law. One of his revelations was, 'Every blessing is from Muhammad and blessed is he who has taught', i.e., the Holy Prophet, 'and blessed is he who has learnt', i.e. Ahmad, who was the recipient of this revelation.[1]

5.19 The Ahmadiyya Movement was introduced in Dagbon in 1950. The infiltration of Ahmadiyya literature into West Africa began in 1916, and its first missionary to West Africa was Alhaji Maulvi Abdul-Rahim Nayyar, who organised the Gold Coast (Ghana) Ahmadiyya Mission in 1921. The second missionary was Alhaji Maulvi Rahman Hakeem who stayed from 1922-1929 and also from 1933-1935. He was a controversial Ahmadi missionary because

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1 Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad: Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qua'ran, The Oreintal and Religious Publishing Corporation Ltd. Rabwah - Pakistan, 1969, p.259.

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during his stay, he had many religious debates with the local mallams and he was so well known that his name was used to refer to Ahmadis, Hakeemawa (Hakeems adherents).[1]

5.20 Before the advent of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Dagbon, there was virtually no conflict among Muslims. However, when Mallam Salifu introduced it and the question of the finality of Prophethood cropped up, Orthodox Islam and the hitherto unity of the Muslims in Dagbon felt threatened. The main bone of contention between Orthodox Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement is the question of the finality of Prophethood. During debates between Mallam Salifu and the Orthodox Muslims in Tamale, the latter pointed out to the Ahmadis that Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam is the seal of all Prophets and substantiated it by quoting the following verse from the Quran:

> "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of Allah, And the seal of the Prophets, And Allah has full knowledge of all things."[2]

The Orthodox Muslims explained that this seal indicates that many Prophets have come and gone and that of all these Prophets, Muhammad is the last of them. They further explained that the seal is just like a sealed document to be sent to another place.

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1 The word 'Hakeemawa' is Hausa referring to Hakeem's adherents. It has been corrupted by the Dagbamba to read 'Achimawa'.

2 Quran: 33:40.

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If it goes to its destination opened, then there is room for suspicion of foul play. So that any Prophet who comes after Muhammad can only be described as false. Therefore, the Orthodox Muslims rejected the claim of Ghulam Ahmad and denounced him and his followers as heretics. The Orthodox Muslims also quoted an authentic hadith transmitted by both Bukhari and Muslim,[1] on the authority of Aisha, the wife of the Prophet that Muhammad said: "If any of you introduces into this affair of ours anything which does not belong to it, it is rejected".[2] Additionally, the Orthodox Muslims explained that since God has explicitly stated in the Quran that Muhammad is the seal of all the Prophets, then any attempt to suggest the coming of another Prophet must be seen as contradicting God's statement, and that since contradiction is not part of God's essence, the beliefs of the Ahmadis can be described as the hand work of Satan.

5.21 In another development the Ahmadis led by Mallam Salifu quoted the following verse which signify's the coming of Ghulam Ahmad:

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1 Both Bukhari and Muslim were compilers of ahadith and their work referred to as Sahih (sound); but Muslim's work is considered next to Bukhari's in accuracy and authenticity.

2 5th hadith of An-Nawawi in - A Reader on Islam, passages from standard Arabic writings illustrative of the beliefs and practices of Muslims, edited by Arthur Jeffery, Mouton & Co, 1962. 's-Gravenhage, p.146.

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> "And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, they are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the Prophets and the truthful and the faithful and the righteous, and a goodly company are they."[1]

In reaction to the quotation of this verse, the Orthodox Muslims argued that there is no single verse in the Quran which can be twisted to usher into the world another Prophet after Muhammad. They further argued that at any rate none can become a Prophet by obeying the Prophet and doing righteous deeds or by being pious in life, and that if that were so, not only would all the truthful and the faithful and the righteous be prophets because they perfectly obeyed God and the Prophet, but even all those who tried to follow them would have been raised to the dignity of prophethood which to them is absurd on the face of it. Finally the Orthodox Muslims stated that what they expect after the death of the Prophet are thinkers, reformers, Muslims of good repute, pious and devoted to Islam but not Prophets. Therefore whoever seeks to deceive the Muslim world that he is a Prophet can only be seen as a replica of Satan.

5.22 These arguments continued between Mallam Salifu and Orthodox Muslims in Tamale for almost one year and even though mallam Salifu did not succeed in converting any of the Dagbamba, he was undaunted in his conviction about the Prophethood of Ghulam Ahmad and thus continued to preach but

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[1] Holy Quran - 4:69.

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his audience were made up of mostly children and a few adults. The campaign against the Ahmadiyya Movement by the Orthodox Muslims was so effective that it took them more than a decade to get a few Dagbamba to join them. The Ahmadis built a mosque and a mission house attached to it at Moshi-Zongo. They were able to convert some people around the mission house but these converts were not Dagbamba but Walas and Sisalas[1] who come from the Upper West Region but resident in Tamale. Since the Ahmadis were unable to get converts from the local mallams, they turned their attention to the secondary schools where they were allowed to preach to Muslim students. Gradually they managed to get a few literates to join their fold. Their main centre of activity is Tamale and with the setting up of the Ahmadiyya Educational Unit, they built a school each in Tamale, Datoyili and Woribogu.

5.23 The survival of the Ahmadis in Dagbon can be attributed to the fact that at the peak of the conflict between the Ahmadis and the Orthodox Muslims, there emerged differences among the Orthodox Muslims because the Tijaniyya and Munchire among them opposed each other. Consequently, the united and concerted effort against the Ahmadis was weakened and the Ahmadis, for the first time, had a period of peace to go about their activities at their convenience and this has persisted up

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1 Walas and Sisalas come from the Upper West Region. Incidentally the strong hold of the Ahmadis in the north is Wa, the capital of the Upper West Region.

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to today. It is also observed that some of the few literate Dagbamba who joined the Ahmadis, saw the movement as a well organised one and without the petty squabbles reminiscent of the Orthodox Muslims.

THE SHIAH

5.24 The latest sect to have emerged in Dagbon is the Shiah and its members are known as Shiahs. This sect was formally inaugurated on 10th December, 1987 at the Zamigu mosque (central mosque) in Tamale in the presence of the Iranian Ambassador to Ghana Mr. S.S. Khareghani, his embassy officials and some Afanema in Tamale. The leader of this sect is Alhaji Ibrahim Basha and also the proprietor of the Nuriya Arabic School. The Shiahs are supporters or followers of 'Ali, the cousin of Muhammad and husband of his daughter Fatimah.

5.25 The Shiah consider 'Ali to be the lawful Khalifah (successor) and Imam after Muhammad and that Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman were all usurpers.[1] They also believe that the imamate belonged by divine declaration and the command of the Prophet to Ali and his descendants. The sect formally emerged in Islam

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1 When the Prophet died in 632AD Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali succeeded him not as Prophets but as leaders of the Islamic community.

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when during the battle of Siffin in 661A.D. the Khawarij[1] revolted from Ali after they had fought under him. They took offence at Ali submitting the decision of his right to the Khalifah to the arbitration of men, when in their opinion it ought to have been submitted to God. Besides, the Khawarij felt that Ali had lost all prestige because by submitting himself to the arbitration of men, he thus accepted Muawiyah as his equal, although Muawiyah was his subordinate and a rebel, as he had risen against the Khalifah. Those who opposed this view and stood by Ali during this time of confusion have come to be known as the Shiahs. The Persians and many of the Muslims of India are Shiahs.

5.26 Since the inauguration of the Shiah sect in Dagbon in December, 1987 only a few Muslims have shown interest in it. Both the Munchire and majority of the Tijani's have not been happy about the Shiah sect because in the first place they do not share the beliefs of this sect and secondly they condemned the Shiah's attempted attack on the Kabah[2] during the annual pilgrimage in July 1987 in which many Muslims died most of whom

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1 The Khawarij are those who broke away from Ali's army during the battle of Siffin when Ali submitted to the call for arbitration between him and Muawiyah. They are also referred to as Kharijites in other books.

2 The Kabah is the House of God in Makkah which is the oldest house of worship built by Abraham and his son Ismail. Muslims throughout the world pray facing the Kabah which is referred to as the Qibla.

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were Shiahs from Iran. One other factor that has contributed to the poor response in obtaining support for Iran and also to get Muslims in Dagbon to embrace the sect is the fact that Muslims in this area acknowledge Saudi Arabia as the craddle of Islam and thus see any attempt by any group of people to undermine Saudi Arabia as a threat to all Muslims. Taking into consideration the strong support for Saudi Arabia in Dagbon which has the largest Muslim population in Ghana, and the attempt by the Shiah to make an impact in the area, a National Islamic delegates conference organised by the Islamic Centre for Education and Development based in Accra was held between February 20th and 21st 1988 in Tamale. This conference was organised under the auspices of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Ghana. In order to grace the occasion and also make a lasting impact on the Muslims of Dagbon, the Imam of Makkah, Sheikh Muhammad bin Subail was invited. At the end of the conference a resolution was adopted to the effect that Muslims in Ghana stand solidly behind the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its efforts at taking measures to ensure the safety of pilgrims at the annual pilgrimage. Additionally, they condemned Iran for its attempted attack on the Kabah by its pilgrims during the 1987 annual pilgrimage. By so doing the Shiahs were discredited and made to look evil to people in

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Dagbon.

5.27 The Munchire and the Tijaniyya are the two main sects that are found in almost all sections of Dagbon today. Every Dagbana identifies himself with one of the two groups and thus it will be sheer hyprocrisy for one to say that one does not belong to either of the groups. At least ones sympathies will favour one of the groups. These two groups are so diametrically opposed to each other such that attempts at settling their disputes have failed for more than two decades. The Ahmadis and the Shiahs have limited their activities to places in and around Tamale. On Fridays in Tamale, all the followers of the Munchire, Tijaniyya and the Ahmadiyya attend Friday prayer service at their various mosques. The Munchire have their mosque at Sakasaka, the Tijaniyya use the central mosque popularly known as Zamigu[1] which is under the control of the Gulkpe-Na (Chief of Tamale).[2] The Ahmadiyya organise their service in the Ahmadiyya mosque at Moshie Zongo. The Shiahs do not have a mosque of their own and so they worship at the Zamigu mosque. Before becoming members of the Shiah sect they worshipped at the Zamigu mosque and they have continued to do

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1 Zamigu is a corruption of the Arabic word jami for the great mosque where Friday prayer is celebrated.

2 Every central mosque in Dagbon under the control of the chief is called Zamigu jingli.

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so after becoming Shiahs.[1] There are other smaller mosques in Tamale where Friday prayers are held such as the Nyohini, Sanerigu, Kaladan and Kamina mosques. The last two mosques are attached to military barracks and so they are controlled by the Ghana Army. Worshippers who go to these smaller mosques do so for the sake of convenience because they are quite removed from town centre. However, if they are given the chance, they would choose to go to either the Zamigu or the Sakasaka mosque. As to the group that has the largest following in Tamale and its environs, it appears the Munchire have the edge over the others[2] followed by the Tijaniyya, the Ahmadiyya and then the Shiah.

5.28 During the early stages of the conflict between the Munchire and the Tijaniyya, it was virtually impossible to find a Munchire praying in a mosque behind the Tijaniyya imam and vice versa. This attitude gave rise to the movement of all Munchire worshippers who live around the Zamigu mosque to the Sakasaka mosque on Fridays and vice versa.[3] In Yendi too the

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1 Members of the Shiah sect who worship at the Zamigu mosque have, however been debarred from standing in the front row for prayers.

2 Taking into consideration parliamentary elections held in 1969 and 1979 which were won by candidates supported by the Muchire for the Tamale constituency, there is no doubt that they are in the majority.

3 Some Munchire I talked to in Tamale and Yendi say they cannot imagine themselves standing in prayer behind a Tijaniyya Imam. According to them if that ever happens (and that may God forbid), that particular prayer should be repeated because the Tijanis are heretics.

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same divisions exist with each group having its own mosque. In Savelugu, twelve miles north of Tamale, there is a central mosque but because the imam is Tijaniyya, some Munchire travel that distance to Tamale either by bus or by riding bicycles to worship at the Sakasaka mosque while those tho cannot afford to make the trip stay away from Friday prayers.[1] At Kumbungu, fifteen miles north-west of Tamake, there used to be two mosques, one for the Tijanis and the other for the Munchire. However, the Kubun-Na (Chief of Kumbungu) realising the dangers that the existence of two mosques could create, ordered the closure of the Munchire mosque because it was the latest between the two. However, during the closure of the Munchire mosque there was confusion in the central mosque (Zamigu) which is controlled by the Chief. Apparently, the imam of the central mosque had died and there was confusion as to who was to succeed him. Since the people could not nominate a successor, the chief called upon the imam of the closed Munchire mosque to take up the imamship of the central mosque which he did. In other towns and villages such as Tolon, Nyankpala, Nanton, Ziong, Tanpion, Karaga and Sangkpagla only one central mosque is located. These places are in the rural areas and it is possible to have Munchires and Tijanis or just sympathisers of these two groups praying in the same mosque. It is in Tamale and Yendi where the division is so sharp. Some of the Muslims

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[1] It is not advisable to stay away from Friday prayers because it is compulsory.

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in the villages do not understand the conflict between the two groups and so at their own level they see all Muslims as one.

5.29 One contributary factor that worsened relations between the Munchire and the Tijanis was the Chieftaincy dispute that engulfed Dagbon for about three decades now. Before November, 1968 there had been some sort of cold war between the Andani and Abudu families, the two contesting gates to the Yendi skin. Not much attention was paid to the growing conflict in the Dagbon traditional area and so gradually it assumed alarming proportions. The Yendi crisis did not begin in November, 1968 nor did the disputing factions over the Yendi skin emerge in 1968. It is noted in the second chapter that disputes over vacant skins in Dagbon are not a new phenomenon. It will not be an exaggeration to assert that the death of a Ya-Na always occasioned a crisis but this crisis always died when a new Ya-Na was chosen because all the defeated candidates would rally round the New Ya-Na in assisting him to rule effectively. Sometimes, the succession struggle could take the form of alliances where various village chiefs would throw their support behind a partiular candidate for the Yendi skin with the hope that if their candidate becomes successful, he would promote them to higher skins. These alliances were usually temporary and died when a Ya-Na was chosen because in that circumstance all the contestants to the nam (Chiefship) would rally round the new Ya-Na and accept him as the "King of

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the world".[1]

5.30 Today in Dagbon there exists two clearly defined families or gates, Andani and Abudu gates. These gates, unlike the earlier alliances, seem to have come to stay and a Ya-Na must necessarily come from one of these two families. One disturbing feature of the present system is that a Ya-Na chosen from one gate is not recognised by the other family. Consequently, the Ya-Na does not get the co-operation of the opposing family. By a Legislative Instrument known as L.1.59 of 1960, which was passed by the Nkrumah government, succession to the nam of Yendi was to alternate between the Andani and Abudu gates in order not to eliminate one of them. However, as a result of the overthrow of the Nkrumah government in 1966, the Abudu[2] family in early 1967 petitioned the National Liberation Council in which it described L.1.59 as one of the obnoxious measures devised by the Nkrumah regime designed to subvert the custom of Dagbon. While moves to revoke L.1.59 were going on, the Ya-Na Abdulai III died and this brought Dagbon face to face with the thorny issue of choosing a new Ya-Na. Four princes applied for the vacant skin and they were Karaga-Na Adam, Yo-Na (Chief of Savelugu) Abudulai, Mion-Lana Andani and the regent of the late chief who was then a twenty

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1 "King of the world" is used here to mean the State of Dagbon. Traditionally every Ya-Na is referred as such because of the greatness of Dagbon.

2 The Abudulai family is the same as the Abudu gate or family.

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year old student of the Tamale Secondary School called Mahamadu Abudulai. According to the 1960 settlement which took the form of L.1.59, the state of Dagbon should have no problem in choosing a successor to the late Ya-Na Abudulai III because the L.1.59 named Mion-Lana Andani as the next Ya-Na. As it turned out, Mahamadu Abudulai represented the Abudulai family in the race for the vacant nam and Mion-Lana Andani represented the Andani family. While preparation for the funeral of Ya-Na Abudulai III was going on, the Abudulai gate intensified its efforts at getting L.1.59 revoked. At the same time the two families began to look for 'friends' in the government to champion their causes. While the Abudu gate won over the support of the late Lt. General A.A. Afrifa and B.A. Yakubu who were both members of the National Liberation Council, the Andani gate won over Lt. General Ankrah who was then Chairman of the National Liberation Council and Mr. Ibrahim Mahamah who was then Commissioner for Information in the NLC regime.[1]

5.31 Lt. General Afrifa was the ceremonially-adopted son of the late Abudulai III of the Abudulai family and when he

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[1] 5.30 shows how Afrifa and Ankrah supported the Abudulai and Andani gates respectively. In the case of B.A. Yakubu, when Mahamadu Abudulai because Ya-Na he enskinned him chief of Gushiegu in appreciation of the good work he did for the Abudulai family when he was in government. Ibrahim Mahamah on the other hand is by birth a member of the Andani family, being the maternal grandson of Mion-Lana Andani of the Andani family. Secondly, as a lawyer he represented the Andani family on the two committees of enquiry into the Yendi skin affairs.

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attended the funeral of Ya-Na Abudulai at the head of traditional drummers and dancers from Mampong/Ashanti,[1] he is reported to have said that he came to "my father's funeral". Therefore it seemed natural that Afrifa supported his "brother" Mahamadu Abudulai in his struggle for the nam. It is alleged that Lt. General Ankrah supported the Andani family because he was gathering followers in the hope of obtaining high office in future civilian government.[2]

5.32 While the Chairman of the N.L.C. Lt. General Ankrah and the Commissioner for Information, Ibrahim Mahamah were away in La Cote D'Ivoire on a state visit between 3rd and 9th September, 1968, the L.1.59 was revoked by L.1.596 (Declaration of customary Law) Dagbon State (Revocation Order) 1968. On the return of the Chairman of the NLC and Mr. Ibrahim Mahamah, who were considered Andani allies, L.1.59 was re-instated by NLCD 281.[3] However, L.1.59 was finally revoked by NLCD 296 on the recommendation of a committee which was set up under Justice J.B. Siriboe to advice the Government on the advisability or

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1 Recorded in District Administrative Officer's Report to the R.A.O. dated 15th October, 1968 which appeared as exhibit X in the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Yendi skin affairs, 1968.

2 This allegation was made by Alhaji Shani Mahamah M.P. for Yendi in Parliament. See Parliamentary Debates: Vol.2 of 10th December, 1969 Col.557.

3 L.I.596 does not appear in the Statute book as Declaration of Customary Law but as State Cocoa Marketing Board (Amendment) Act.

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otherwise of the retention of L.1.59. With the revocation of L.1.59, the candidate of the Abudulai family now qualified to contest the nam of Yendi. Consequently, the fight for the nam was between Mion-Lana Andani and Mahamadu Abudulai the regent. The funeral of Ya-Na Abudulai III was performed on 7th November, 1968 and the following day tension began to mount in Yendi as both the Mion-Lana and Mahamadu Abudulai were selected by two different bodies to fill the vacant nam.[1] On 21st November, 1968, after careful examination of presentations from both sides, the Northern Regional Committee of Administration decided in favour of Mion-Lana Andani much to the chagrin of the Abudu gate and so they protested vehemently to the government against the installation of Mion-Lana Andani. As a result of the protest, the government decided to set up a committee under the chairmanship of Nene Azu Mate Kole to look into the Yendi crisis. This committee took eight months, that is from January to August, to publish its findings.

5.33 During the eight months, four important events occured. Firstly, in March, 1968, Na-Andani died and his son Yakubu Andani was installed regent to act as Ya-Na. Secondly, in April, 1969, General Ankrah was removed from office as Chairman and member of the NLC and was replaced by Lt. Gen. A.A. Afrifa. Thirdly, in May, 1969, Ibrahim Mahamah was dropped from the

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1 Mion-Lana Andani was selected by Kuga-Na and some elders after consultation with soothsayers while Mahamadu Abudulai was selected by a committee set up in 1948 to be responsible for the selection of the Ya-Na.

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Executive Council[1] and fourthly, in May, 1969, the NLC announced its plans to return the country to civilian rule and consequently, the ban on political activities was lifted. With the Yendi crisis still unresolved, it was felt that the side which supports the winner would automatically win the nam of Yendi. General elections were held on 29th August, 1969 with the Andani gate supporting K.A. Gbedemah's National Alliance of Liberals while the Abudu gate supported Professor K.A. Busia's Progress Party. The Progress Party won the election with 104 seats as against 33 by N.A.L. Three days after the elections, the new government which was only three days in office announced the acceptance of the Azu Mate Kole Committee report which gave the Abudu family victory over the Andani. The government's acceptance of the committee's report provoked serious clashes between supporters of the two gates in Yendi. On 9th September, 1969 the army and the Police opened fire on a group of supporters of the Andani gate killing 23 of them. This was the official government report but the actual number of those who were shot was 33.[2] Ibrahim Mahamah who was then Member of Parliament for Tamale tabled a motion in parliament for an inquiry into the shooting incident in Yendi as was done in the case of miners who were shot by the Police at Obuasi,

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1 S.M. Sibidow contends that Ibrahim Mahamah was dropped from the Executive Council because he disagreed with B.A. Yakubu on the Yendi skin affairs.

2 S.M. Sibidow - Background to the Yendi Skin Crisis (Accra Yensow) 1969, p.19.

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but the motion was defeated.

5.34 In January, 1972 the Busia government was overthrown by a military coup d'etat led by the late I.K. Acheampong who formed the government of the National Redemption Council. In August, 1972, the NRC set up a committee under the late Nii Amaa Ollenu on the Yendi skin affairs. Its report was published in April, 1974 in favour of the Andani family who were supporters of the N.R.C. In July 1978 General Acheampong was removed from office and Lt. General Akuffo assumed the Chairmanship of the Supreme Military Concil, appropriately referred to as SMC II. In the same year (1978) the SMC II government published SMCD 238 which gave the right of appeal to any agrieved person but on 4th June, 1979 the government of the SMC II was overthrown and its place came the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The Andani family made representations to it asserting that SMCD 238 was not in the interest of the Dagbon state and it was subsequently repealled.

5.35 From 1979 to 1985 the Yendi skin crisis seemed to have subsided considerably but in 1985 the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government published a decree (P.N.D.L. 124) which gave the right of appeal to any agrieved person in the Yendi skin affairs and the Abudulai family filed an appeal at the Appeals Court in Accra against the findings of the late Nii Amaa Ollenu. This appeal was upheld but the Andani gate subsequently appealed against the ruling of the Appeals Court at the Supreme Court and on 17th December, 1986, the Supreme

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Court ruled that Ya-Na Yakubu Andani, the incumbent Ya-Na is the rightful heir to the nam of Yendi. Since the promulgation of the Yendi Skin Affairs (Matters Consequential to the Supreme Court Judgement of December 17, 1986) Law 1987, the state of Dagbon was once again thrown into chaos. The Northern Regional Administration identified certain individuals in Dagbon as perpetrators of confusion and so the then Northern Regional Secretary, Alhaji Hudu Yahaya ordered the arrest and detention of some leaders of both the Andani and Abudu gates. Some of those detained from the Andani gate were: Afa Ajura, Ibrahim Mahamah, Salifu Tea and Sumani Zakari. Those from the Abudu gate were Lawyer Alhassan, Alhaji Yahaya Iddi and Amadu Sana. All these people were later released except Ibrahim Mahamah and Amadu Sana who belong to the Andani and Abudu gates respectively. However both men were finally released on 25th July, 1988 which was Idul-Adha day in Tamale.

5.36 Both the Munchire and Tijanis have identified themselves with these two chieftaincy gates. The Munchire support the Andani gate while the Tijanis support the Abudu gate. People who are not Dagbamba and support or sympathise with the Munchire are identified as supporters of the Andani gate, and likewise non-Dagbamba of the Tijanis. During the 1969 General elections while the Munchire supported the National Alliance of Liberals (N.A.L.), the Tijanis supported the Progress Party (P.P.). When the Progress Party government was overthrow in 1972, the Munchire jubilated and ridiculed the Tijanis. In

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July, 1978 when the government of the NRC which was later changed to SMC announced its plan to return the country to civilian rule and favoured a Union form of Government, the Munchire supported it while the Tijanis opposed it. In July, 1978, the reconsistuted SMC announced its plans to hand over power to a popularly elected government on July 1st, 1979. Consequently, the ban on political activity was lifted and parties sprung up to contest the elections. Two of the five political parties in the 1979 electioning campaign dominated the political scene in Dagbon the Popular Front Part (PFP) which was an ofshoot of the proscribed Progress Party, and the Social Democratic Front (SDF) which was sponsored by the Trades Union Congress. The Munchire threw its.weight behind the SDF and the Tijani's supported the PFP. Even though the parties supported by these two religious groups did not win the election, the fact still remains that they never supported the same party. Perhaps it should be stated that it is not the case that all Munchires and all Tijanis support one party. There is evidence to show that some Munchires have supported parties that Tijanis support and vice versa but taking into consideration the majority situation, it will not be out of place to suggest that the Munchires and the Tijanis never support the same party.

5.37 As people who claim to love Islam and always want to be identified as true Muslims, it is expected that both sides would make the attempt at resolving their differences so that sanity and tranquility would prevail in Dagbon. It has been

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noted that for any meaningful reconciliation to succeed, then one of these two groups should be prepared to renounce its beliefs which, to all intents and purposes, none of them is ever prepared to do. However the first ever attempt at reconciliation was initiated by Gulkpe-Na Alhassan, the chief of Tamale in April, 1969. The Gulkpe-Na felt that as chief of Tamale where the differences between the two Muslim factions was too intense, he could not sit down unconcerned and so he had to do something to bring about a lasting solution to the conflict. Consequently, he assembled leaders of both groups at the Tamale Police Park so that they could argue out their cases with the view to reaching a compromise that would lead to peace in Tamale in particular and Dagbon at large. Afa Ajura represented the Munchire and Maikano, the leader of the Tijanis in Ghana came down to Tamale to represent the Tijanis. The Gulkpe-Na as arbitrator asked Maikano to prove to the gathering by using the Quran, or Hadith that the rituals that are associated with the Tijaniyya Order are sanctioned in Islam, and also to show how valid Salat al-Fatih is to Muslims. Maikano tried to use analogical reasoning to prove his case which Afa Ajura rejected. At the end of it all no side could claim victory over the other and the large crowd that assembled had to go home disappointed.

5.38 In March, 1972 another reconciliation attempt was made, this time by the Saudi Arabian Ambassador accredited to Ghana, His Excellency Mr. Fuad Alfiy who was resident in Accra. He

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also assembled leaders of both groups at the residence of the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region and appealed to them to bury their differences and live as brothers and sisters which the religion of Islam cherishes. Afa Ajura was at the head of the Munchire delegation but this time Maikano was absent but Tijanis such as Alhaji Adam the imam of the Tamale central mosque and Alhaji Tahiru Issah of Zogbeli were present. Both sides agreed that there was the need for them to come together in order to give islam a good image in Dagbon but Afa Ajura reiterated his earlier stand that there could be no lasting solution to the problem until the following conditions were met:

(i) leaders of both groups should be assembled and the causes of the conflict spelt out;

(ii) the Holy Quran and the Hadith should be used in judging them; and

(iii) the group that is guilty should be made to accept its guilt and to stop all unislamic activities.

Muslims in Dagbon were of the hope that such a meeting would be convened so that the differences between the two groups could be thrashed to make room for peace to prevail among Muslims. The Munchire were quite eager about such a meeting because they held the view that they were on the right path. On the other

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hand the Tijanis were not curious for such a meeting because Maikano was not readily available to represent them and none of the Dagbamba Tijanis had the courage and charisma to face Afa Ajura in religious arguments.

5.39 A decade after the emergence of this cancerous conflict, the youth of Dagbon realised that the conflict between the two groups which has been exacerbated by the chieftaincy dispute, is a great stumbling block to the progress of Dagbon. Indegenes of Dagbon in the three universities of Ghana established the Dagbon Students Union and even though they were associated in one way or the other with the divisions back home, they interacted with each other and discussed their problems as though there was no conflict. The youth back at home literate and illiterate also began interacting with each other irrespective of the differences. It became possible to find Munchires and Tijanis at each others wedding, naming, funeral and other ceremonies. It is the contention of the youth in Dagbon that the flame of the conflict is always fanned by the elders, the opinion leaders and generally people of the older generation and that in due course when the older generation pass away, it would be possible to have Islam devoid of conflicts in Dagbon. It has also been noted that most of the elders remain committed to whatever faction they stick to and they openly exhibit their hatred for their adversaries and are never willing to make any compromise. However, it will not be fair to blame only the elders for the perpetration of the

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conflict but also some members of the youth who have never wavered from the line of the leders. This hard line attitude notwithstanding, the youth of Dagbon were determined to forge ahead in their search for a lasting solution to the problem. It is highly believed that once the religious problem is solved, the others would take their turn as a matter of course.

5.40 When the general elections was held on 18th June, 1979, none of the two parties which dominated the politics in Dagbon won it. It was won by the Peoples National Party which appointed Alhaji Harunah, a Gonja as the Regional Commissioner for the Northern Region. So far as Dagbon was concerned, a minority party had won the elections. Tamale municipality and its immediate environs have for over four decades suffered acute water problems but during Alhaji Harunah's term of office, the water problem reached very alarming dimensions. The regional administration was quite helpless as both the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation and the Electricity Corporation of Ghana kept on blaming each other for the perenial water shortage. The youth of Tamale felt that the Regional Commissioner was insensitive to the plight of the inhabitants of Tamale and identified him as an enemy of Dagbon. The stand taken by the youth of Tamale can be deduced from the fact that the Regional Commissioner's party, the Peoples National Party (P.N.P.), was not supported by any majority group in Dagbon and secondly as he was a Gonja, a tribe that has had conflicts with Dagbon since the 18th century, it was felt that there was a deliberate attempt to

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punish them. The youth of Tamale, therefore, held a massive demonstration participated actively by both Munchire and Tijanis. During the demonstration excesses were committed at the Regional Commissioner's residence where the looting of food items and other valuables from the stores of the Regional Administration occured.

5.41 As a result of the disturbances, the Regional Commissioner imposed a curfew on Tamale from 6am to 6pm. During one of such nights, Ibrahim Mahamah, the leader of the Social Democratic Front and also a Munchire and belonged to the Andani family was attacked and seriously wounded by unidentified assailants. He was briefly admitted at the Tamale Central hospital and later flown to the Police hospital in Accra where he underwent operations. The attack came as a surprise to the people of Dagbon because it had never happened in the area before. However, it was rumoured all over Dagbon that he was attacked because he incited the youth of Tamale to embark on the demonstrations. The people of Dagbon therefore felt that the attack on Alhaji Ibrahim Mahamah was an attack on Dagbon. It was a turning point in the history of Dagbon because the disunity that had engulfed Dagbon at that time was such that the opponents of Ibrahim Mahamah should have rejoiced over this incident, yet the Dagbamba did not consider that he was a Munchire, a member of the Andani family and the leader of the SDF. All these considerations were relegated to the background and for the first time in over three decades, the

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Dagbamba had come together to fight a common cause. The day Alhaji Ibrahim Mahamah arrived back in Tamale by air after recovering from the brutal attack on him, he was given a tumultuous welcome by both the Munchire and the Tijanis. It was a welcome never given to any single personality in Dagbon.

5.42 The youth of Dagbon decided at this time to capitalise on this sudden unity in Dagbon to forge ahead towards the achievement of a more lasting one. To this end meetings were convened at R.I. Alhassan*s residence in Tamale. R.I. Alhassan is a lawyer by profession, a supporter of the Abudu gate who represented the Abudu family on the two committees of enquiry into the Yendi skin affairs and a sympathiser of the Tijanis.[1] The unity that the youth of Dagbon desired would have been sustained but P.N.D.C. Law 124 of 20th November, 1985 allowing appeal by people not satisfied with the Yendi skin affair gradually split Dagbon and shattered the hopes of well meaning Dagbamba who had hoped that the ground had been paved for the total achievement of unity in Dagbon. With the enactment of this law, Dagbon was once again thrown into confusion as the Munchire/Andani group and the Tijani/Abudu group engaged themselves in war of words.

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1 For quite a long time Mr. Alhassan had not identified himself seriously with Islam may be because he was influenced greatly by European life. He studied law in Britain and married a British woman. However, he realised by 1984 that to seriously make an impact among the Dagbamba, he needed to be serious with Islam. He therefore went on the hajj in 1985.

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5.43 Another reconciliation attempt was made during the National Islamic delegates conference organised by the Islamic Centre for Education and Development held at the Tamale Police Park between 20th and 21st February, 1988. Prominent personalities at this conference were Sheikh Muhammad Bin Subail, the Chief Imam of Makkah, Alhaji Hudu Yahayah former PNDC Regional Secretary for Northern Region, Mr. B.A.R. Braimah, Head of the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana; Dr. Abdallah Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Missilih, Dean of the Faculty of Divine Law (Shariah) and Religious Affairs of the Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Makkah; His Excellency Mr. Anwar A. Abdrabuh, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia accredited to Ghana, His Excellency Muhammad Shelbaya, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt; His Excellency Mr. Iftikhar Ali Sheikh, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Alhaji U.M. Iya, Second Secretary of the Nigerian High Commission.[1] On the second day of the conference the Chief Imam of Makkah appealed to Muslims in Dagbon to bury their differences and live as brothers and sisters which is in conformity with the tenets of Islam. He spoke at length on the significance of unity in Islam. Apparently, the conference was organised with the full participation of both the Munchire and the Tijaniyya.[2] The Imam of Makkah and his entourage had

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1 There were several dignitaries from Accra and other regions who attended this conference but their names cannot be included here.

2 Both groups agreed to come together to organise the conference so that together they could effectively show that Islam is dominant in Dagbon and also press for aid.

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earlier on been given a rousing welcome at the Tamale airport by both groups. Both Munchire and Tijanis who possessed luxurious cars released them for use by the guests. The Imam's advice to both groups came at a time when they were gradually coming closer each other.

5.44 One important thing which should be noted is the fact that at the time of the conference Afa Ajura and Ibrahim Mahamah, both Munchires and Alhaji Amadu Sana, a Tijaniyya were in detention on the orders of the Northern Regional Security Council[1] after clashes between supporters of the Andani and Abudu families in some villages near Savelugu in which some people lost their lives.[2] Some other Munchire and Tijanis who were earlier on detained, had been released and bonded to be of good behaviour. Therefore, quite a number of elders who matter on both sides did not take part in the organisation of the conference. Accommodation, transport and logistics were arranged and organised by the youth from both groups. On Friday February 19th, the day the Imam of Makkah and his entourage arrived in Tamale, there was confusion between the two groups with regard to the mosque where the Imam was to observe the Friday prayer. In order not to mar the growing confidence that both groups were gradually reposing in each

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1 There were also rumours that these detentions were ordered by the Northern Regional Secretary, Alhaji Hudu Yahayah.

2 Those involved in the killings were tried at the national tribunal in Accra and sentenced to death, but were later pardoned by the Head of State.

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other, the Munchire group led by Afa Seidu and Afa Isaah, agreed that the Imam should observe the Friday prayer at the Zamigu mosque where the Tijanis normally pray so that at the time of Asr prayers, the Imam would lead the congregation at the Sakasaka mosque where the Munchires pray. On this day several Munchires observed prayers at the Zamigu mosque and likewise Tijanis at the Sakasaka mosque. It has therefore been observed that if the elders on both sides had taken part in organising the conference, the success that was achieved as a result of the compromise that was reached between the youth from both sides would not have come about because these elders never yield to the demands of each other. This observation also goes to buttress the assertion in 5.39 that the conflict between the two groups is always fanned by the elders from both sides.

5.45 The conference was well organised, well attended and fully participated by both groups. During the period of preparation towards the conference and the period it lasted, leaders from both groups interacted so much so that it came as a surprise to some of the foreign delegates when they learnt that both the Munchire and the Tijaniyya were diametrically opposed to each other. They therefore encouraged both groups to keep up that spirit so that relations between them could be further strengthened. The stage was therefore set for closer co-operation between them. The detention of some elders from both sides by the Regional Security Council is seen as a

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blessing in disguise to Muslims in Dagbon especially as a result of the successful organisation of the conference. The only unfortunate situation during the conference was the distribution of leaflets by the Shiah in Tamale at the venue reminding Muslims of the 'barbaric' murder of hundreds of Iranian pilgrims during the annual pilgrimage in 1987. However, the leaflets did not make any meaningful impact on the people because it was written in Arabic which over 95% of the Muslims who had gathered at the venue could not understand. Those who collected these leaflets had to tear them to pieces when they were informed it was distributed by the Shiah.

5.46 The Imam of Makkah and his entourage had the opportunity of visiting the major Arabic schools such as Anbariyya, Nuriyya, Nur-Islam and Nahudat. He also paid a courtesy call on the then Northern Regional Secretary, Alhaji Hudu Yahayah during which he appealed for the release of Afa Ajura from detention. Consequently, Afa Ajura was released on 12th April, 1988. The only two people left in detention then, Alhaji Abrahim Mahamah and Alhaji Amadu Sana were released on 25th July, 1988 the day Idul-Adha was observed in Tamale.

5.47 Today in Dagbon, the Munchire and Tijani conflict has subsided considerably. The frequent wazu sessions that were organised condemning each other has stopped and instead, co-operation between them has improved. Since the emergence of this conflict the Munchire and Tijanis commenced fasting in the

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month of Ramadan on different days and sometimes they observed Idul-Fitr prayers on different days. With the co-operation that had started between them, a mamoth wazu session was organised by both groups in Tamale on Friday, 15th April, 1988 behind the Agricultural Development Bank to discuss fasting in Islam. Learned Muslims from both sides spoke at the wazu session and on Tuesday 19th April, 1988 all Muslims in Tamale, for the first time in over a decade commenced fasting. Tijaniyya activities have also reduced and perhaps it is worth stating that since 1975, Arabic students in Tamale and Yendi particularly, gained admission into Universities and other higher institutions in Saudi Arabia. While there, they questioned their lecturers on the legitimacy of Tijaniyya rituals and they were condemned as serious innovations. On their return home these students kept away from Tijani activities and informed their people about their experiences in Saudi Arabia. Gradually, many people have withdrawn from the Order and this has threatened its popularity. These students studying in Saudi Arabia have actually contributed immensly in disabusing the minds of some Tijan adherents of its legitimacy. It should be noted however that the Wahabiyya which is prevalent in Saudi Arabia opposes all Sufi orders. Therefore, it is not surprising to find them criticising the Tijaniyya and asking its adherents to recant their faith in it. It is even held that the scholarships awarded by Saudi Arabia to Arabic students is to indoctrinate them against Sufi orders. The small number of people seen in the performance of the wazifa

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these days is a clear manifestation of the impact of Wahabism on Muslims in Dagbon. Those who continue to observe this Tijani ritual are the elders who have been involved in the Tijaniyya Order for a long time. Young men who belong to Tijani parents but do not wish to practice Tijani rituals are now free to abstain, a situation that could not have been entertained a decade ago.

5.48 The co-operation and understanding that is currently pravalent between the Munchire and the Tijanis is a laudable experience. This achievement is a turning point in the history of Islam in Dagbon and the youth from both sides should be commended for it. Castigations, insinuations and the general war of words between them now belong to the past and the year 1988 will continue to be a memorable year to generations yet unborn. A new form of Islam in Dagbon has been set in motion and what the future holds for it, according to the youth is a bright one. It is also noted that some degree of reconcilliation has been attained between the Andani and Abudu gates.

MUSLIM OFFICES IN YENDI

5.49 As already discussed in chapter two, the Wangara, Hausa and Moshi Muslims who arrived in Dagbon, particularly in Yendi were conferred with various Muslim titles which their descendants have maintained over the years. For more than a century these Muslim leaders had authority over all other Muslims in Dagbon but gradually their power was limited to

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Yendi and its environs as a result of the emergence of indegene Islamic scholars in Tamale. The authority, dignity and respect for these Muslim leaders in Yendi were further threatened with the emergence of the Andani and Abudu chieftaincy dispute. This conflict has resulted in the duplication of the Muslim titles in Yendi.

5.50 Ya-Na Abudulai III who ruled Dagbon between 1953 and 1967 elected Alhaji Abudulai Gomda, a learned Muslim as the Ya-Limam or the chief imam of Yendi. The Ya-Limam is the same as the Nayil-Limam. In 1967 Na Abudulai III died and there was serious confusion between the Andani and Abudu families as to who was to succeed the late chief. Apparently the Nkrumah government had promulgated the L.1.59 in 1960 which sanctioned succession by rotation between the two disputing families. As Na Abudulai III was from the Abudu gate, the next chief to succeed him should come from the Andani gate. During this period the Abudu family sent a petition to the N.L.C. government describing L.1.59 as essentially a political settlement designed to suit the whims of Nkrumah and his Convention Peoples Party to the detriment of the customs of the Dagbamba. Eventually, the Mion-Lana was enskinned as Ya-Na Andani III from the Andani family. Alhaji Abudulai Gomda paid homagage to the new Ya-Na and pledged to serve him as he did his predecessor. Alhaji Gomda's action provoked members of the Abudu family because they did not expect him as an imam who had been elected by and served the late Na Abudulai III to swear

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allegiance to another chief who was an opponent.[1]

5.51 During this confusion in Dagbon, Ya-Na Andani III died in 1969 and was succeeded by Ya-Na Mahammadu Abudulai IV who removed Alhaji Abudulai Gomda as Ya-Limam for swearing allegiance to the late Ya-Na Andani III. All other Muslims leaders such as the Yidan-Moli, Yidan Kambara, Zee-Moli, Yidan chim, Wolugu-Na etc who accompanied Alhaji Gomda lost their posts. They were considered unrealiable and unsympathetic to the Abudu family's cause. In 1974 when Ya-Na abudulai IV was deskinned and Ya-Na Yakubu Andani IV was enskinned, he also elected his own Muslim leaders. The Abudu family maintain that Mahammadu Abudulai is the rightful heir to the nam of Yendi and so to them he is still the Ya-Na and therefore surrounds himself with all the Muslim leaders whom he elected. Therefore, presently in Yendi each of the two gates has a Ya-Limam, Yidan-Moli, Yidan Kambara, Zee-Moli, Yidan-Gunu, Yidan-chim, Yidan-Asakiya etc. This development in the history of Muslim offices in Yendi has been a complete departure from the status quo. Nehemia Levtzion in his book, Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa in which he featured Islam in Dagomba, showed how Muslim offices were created and those who occupied these positions served the Ya-Na. On the death of a Ya-Na the Muslim leaders

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1 It was rather unfortunate that the Abudu family should think this way because all along Ya-Limams lived to serve all incoming Ya-Nas irrespective of the gate they belong to. This new trend frustrated Alhaji Gomda who stayed away from any Muslim Office until his death on 13-10-78.

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maintained their posts in order to serve the new Ya-Na. However, this system has changed since 1969 as a result of the conflict between the Andani and Abudu families. Therefore, in the event of the death of the present Ya-Na Yakubu Andani IV, the next Ya-Na who is to succeed him is to come from the Abudu family. The new Ya-Na assumes office with a complete set of Muslim leaders. The continuity of service that should have been rendered by the Muslim leaders has to be broken because the trust that Na-Zanjina and his successors from 1700-1969 reposed in the Muslims has now been seriously undermined. However, with the death of the former Ya-Na Mahamadu Abdulai IV on 15th October, 1988, it is hoped that when his final funeral rites are held, the Muslim chiefs who served him would be declared redundant because there would be no chief to require their services. The duplication of Muslim offices in Yendi will therefore cease.

5.52 Consequently, the occupation of one post with two people, one for the Andani family and the other for the Abudu family in Yendi has not augured well for peace and harmony among Muslims. This situation leaves much to be desired and not until Muslims in Dagbon refuse to accept Muslim posts that others have already occupied, the problem will persist. However, the co-operation that has started in Tamale between the Munchire and the Tijanis is likely to make an impact on the Muslims in Yendi because presently Muslims in Yendi look up to their brothers in Tamale for inspiration and guidance.

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Whatever change that takes place in Tamale, be it religious or traditional must of necessity affect other areas in Dagbon. It is in the light of the foregoing that well meaning Muslims in Dagbon hold the view that there will be a halt to the duplication of Muslim offices in Yendi. To this end Muslims in Dagbon are anxiously waiting for the Ya-Na who on his enskinment will dare maintain the Muslim leaders who served his opponent.

SUMMARY

When Islam was introduced into Dagbon before the end of the 17th century, Muslims have lived and co-operated with each other. Muslims who travelled within Dagbon did not need to care about accommodation and food because ready hospitality awaited them. Even though Islamic learning was not widespread and a majority of Muslims could only be considered as nominal Muslims during the early stages of Islam in Dagbon, the Muslims considered themselves as people belonging to one family. However, the emergence of sects during the second half of the 20th century, has seriously undermined peace, tranquility and the harmony that existed among Muslims.

Four sects have been identified in Dagbon and these, in order of their emergence are, Tijaniyya, Munchire, Ahmadiyya and Shiah. The Tijaniyya is a Sufi order founded by Ahmad at-Tijani in Algeria in 1781. The Munchire which is the popular name in Dagbon is closely associated with the Wahabiyya

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and they are diametrically opposed to the Tijaniyya. The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded by Ghulam Ahmad in 1889 in India but its strong—hold is in Pakistan. The last sect to have emerged in Dagbon in December 1987 is the Shiah which is a sect that is strongly based in Iran.

The Tijaniyya and the Munchire have dominated the history of Islam in Dagbon for the past thirty years. There have been serious clashes between them in which lives were lost, property damaged or destroyed and huge sums of money wasted. Whereas the Tijaniyya adherents believe that they belong to a religious elite which puts them on a higher plane than ordinary Muslims, the Munchire condemn them as heretics who wish to pollute Islam with alien ideas. The main problem between these two sects is the validity of Tijani rituals and especially the Salat al-Fatih. The doctrinal differences between the Munchire and the Tijanis had caused a lot of social and political problems in Dagbon. As for the Ahmadiyya Movement it does not involve itself in confrontations with the other sects. The movement concentrates on the propagation of Islam in the higher institutions and has set up quite a few schools in Dagbon to educate children. The Shiah has just emerged in Dagbon but the campaign mounted by both the Munchire and the Tijaniyya against it indicates that it has no future in Dagbon.

The leader of the Munchire known as Afa Ajura has always called on Muslims in Dagbon to adhere strictly to orthodox Islam and practise the simplicity that Islam teaches. On the other

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hand the Tijanis consider the Munchire as a poverty stricken group who envy the rich. The differences between them are so sharp that they have permeated all spheres of activity in Dagbon. For example it was very difficult for a Munchire to marry a Tijani and vice versa. Social gatherings organised by one group is solely patronised by members of that particular group. Therefore, cohesion and interaction between them was just impossible during the early stages of the conflict. One Tijani leader was reported to have said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a Munchire to marry a Tijani girl. These two sects are the only two who are located all over Dagbon but Tamale is the centre of clashes and serious confrontations.

One factor that has seriously torn Dagbon apart is the chieftaincy dispute between the Andani and Abudu families. The Munchire and Tijanis have identified their groups with the Andani and Abudu families respectively. This situation has succeeded in keeping them far apart so far as reconcilliation is concerned. Three attempts at reconciling these two major sects in 1969, 1972 and 1988 have taken place with the latest one yielding fruitful results. All along the youths of Dagbon have been putting the blame on the elders on both sides for the never-ending crisis. Then in 1987 those who matter on both sides were arrested and detained for the part they were alleged to have played in creating crisis at Zokuga, a village near Savelugu. While some of the elders were still in detention

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and others released but bonded to be of good behaviour, the youths on both sides came together to assist in organising a National Islamic Delegates Conference in Tamale with the Imam of Makkah attending. This conference has helped to bring the two opposing groups closer together and the youth from both groups need be commended for this feat.

Today in Dagbon the conflict between the Munchire and the Tijanis has subsided considerably. There is much co-operation between them and they have teamed up to fight against the infiltration of Shiah activities in Dagbon. They also come together to preach during wazu sessions. The youths from both sides are quite confident that total unity will be attained between them. It is hoped that with this welcome co-operation between them all other differences would be identified and ironed out.

The other major problem that is likely to subside as a result of this co-operation is the chieftaincy dispute that has created serious differences in Dagbon between father and son, husband and wife and between two intimate friends. For over a century Ya-Nas assumed office and met Muslims who occupied certain positions created by the Ya-Na. These Muslim officers maintained their posts and served any Ya-Na that came to rule. However, with the chieftaincy dispute, this status quo suffered a set back in 1969. Ya-Nas now occupy the skin coming along with their Muslim leaders and those already there have to move

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out and wait until another Ya-Na who belongs to their group is enskinned. The reversal of this practice, it is believed, will help keep Muslims in Dagbon together. However, with the death of the former Ya-Na Mahammadu Abdulai IV, the Muslim Chiefs who served him have their positions in jeopardy since the Abudu gate cannot and will not dare elect another Ya-Na in Yendi.

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CHAPTER SIX

ISLAM, EDUCATION AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN DAGBON

ISLAMIC EDUCATION (MAKARANTA) IN THE EARLY DAYS

6.01 When the Wangaras and the Hausas unobtrusively entered Dagbon in the 18th century as traders and clerics, settled and established trading centres, they also set up schools to teach Muslim children how to read and write Arabic, at least as much as would enable them read the Quran. The basic aim of such Quranic education was to get the children to learn off by heart some chapters of the Quran for use in offering the five daily prayers and to bring them up to appreciate the Muslim way of life. Classes were organised in the homes of these clerics who are popularly known as mallams.[1] Initially Quranic education was limited to the mallam's family then gradually the landlord or host's children were admitted and finally the facility was made open to children of all Muslims. However, only boys were allowed into such schools but as time went on girls were also admitted and the need for expansion arose because the girls had to sit in a separate class for their lessons. Consequently sheds were erected with Zana mats[2] outside the mallam's home to serve as a school.

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1 This is a corruption of the Arabic 'Mu'allim' meaning teacher.

2 Zana-mat is made from a kind of tall grass known as Giant Star Grass (Andropogon Guyanus). It is woven beautifully and used as fence in many homes in the north. Some mallams rely on the Zana-mat in erecting sheds for use as classrooms.

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6.02 The first thing that the mallam teaches these children are the thirty Arabic alphabets which they are expected to identify and learn off by heart in their proper order. The children are all required to have slates polished with white clay and dried. The mallam writes the Arabic alphabets carefully on each of the slates with a pointed wooden stick called alkalami which is dipped into a specially prepared black ink called tadabo. The medium of instruction in these Quranic schools was the Hausa language because the mallams were Hausas. Children of Hausa parentage had no problem with understanding what was taught but the Dagbamba children had problems initially because they found it difficult to comprehend easily what was taught. However, in course of time, the Dagbamba children got used to the Hausa language which helped to facilitate easy learning. The most unfortunate aspect of this course of study is that, the children do not understand what they read. Arabic should have been taught alongside the study of the chapters of the Quran. It is only when the children have studied the whole Quran that a few of them, normally those that the mallams retain in their schools, get the opportunity to learn Arabic. Another unfortunate aspect of the Quranic schools is the attitude whereby the pupils are made to go begging from home to home on Thursdays and Fridays thus making it seem as if begging is part of the Islamic educational system. This system has eaten deep into the fabric of all Islamic communities not only in Dagbon but throughout West Africa hence the majority of beggars in this region are Muslims.

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6.03 It has been noted, however that, the mallams instilled a lot of discipline in the children. The mallams used special leather whips called baranzum to whip the children when they misbehave, and it is so painful that the children fear to misbehave. When a child is punished by whipping, his parents do not complain because they sent the child to the Quranic school voluntarily and besides they do not pay the mallam for the services he renders to the children. More importantly, the parents of these children are aware of the fact that the services rendered by the mallam is for the sake of Allah. However, parents show appreciation of the mallams services to their children by sending gifts of foodstuffs, money and clothing to him. There is this understanding between parents and mallams in Dagbon that once a child is sent to a Quranic school, the mallam becomes his guardian and can do what he likes to the child. This is acceptable to parents because they want their children to follow their footsteps as Muslims. That is why it is not easy to find a parent going to a Quranic school to ask why some form of punishment was meted out to his child. Children who complain to their parents at home that they have been punished are told that so far as they are desirous in acquiring Islamic knowledge, they would have to go through several of such punishments.

ENGLISH SCHOOLS

6.04 In 1901 Northern Ghana became a protectorate of the British. On arrival in Dagbon, the British noticed the

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existence of Quranic Schools that gave Muslim children Islamic education. In 1909, the Chief Commissioner of the Protectorate, Lt. Colonel A.E. Watherson inaugurated formal education in Tamale and then a Trade school in Yendi in 1922. Although these schools and other similar ones were set up in various parts of Dagbon, parents were very reluctant to send their children to school for fear of losing their labour, and secondly the Muslims did not approve of what they considered as essentially Christian institutions. The Dagban-daba or the traditionalists on the other hand viewed schooling as a lazy man's job as it drew children away from domestic and farm work. Consequently the response to send children to school was not encouraging. However, some parents were compelled to send their children to school in view of their positions in the community. The colonial administrators had to compel chiefs and some elders to present children for the English Schools which they reluctantly succumbed to. The nonchallant attitude of Muslim parents to send their children to these English schools was worsened when mission schools were set up in Dagbon by the Catholics in 1946 when they arrived. The first school they set up was the St. Joseph's Primary School at Changni in Tamale.

THE EDUCATION ACT OF 1961

6.05 On the eve of Ghana's independence on the night of 5th March, 1957, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah addressed the old Legislative Assembly for the last time and declared.

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> "We are very proud that today in a country of five million inhabitants there should be nearly half a million children enjoying primary education. We must, however, provide further outlets for these children and give them an opportunity to learn something of engineering, tropical agriculture and the problems of tropical medicine and hygiene. Only with a population so educated can we hope to face the tremendous problems which confront any country attempting to raise the standard of life in a tropical zone."[1]

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's administration was committed to giving Ghanaians sound education because the leadership was convinced that development and literacy go hand in hand and that the more advanced a country is, the greater the literacy and vice versa. This conviction purports to bring out the dependency of development on education and education on development. The advanced countries are more developed because they are more educated and therefore possess the adequate skills, manpower and attitudes to produce more. Similarly, because they are more advanced, they are able to improve upon the state of their nations by introducing new techniques, ideas and skills through education. The basic reason why some countries are poor is because they lack knowledge for development. Education has, therefore, come to be accepted by all nations as the key to development.

6.06 It is in the light of the above conviction that the Government of Ghana, in 1961, passed the Education Act. The

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1 H.O.A. McWilliam: The Development of Education in Ghana, Longmans, 1959, p.99.

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promulgation of this Act made education free and compulsory to every Ghanaian child of school going age from primary to middle school level. Consequently, many schools were set up throughout the country and in almost every village in Ghana a school is located. Where a single village is too small to feed a school with the required number of pupils and there are other villages around, one school is set up at a central point convenient to each village so that its children of school going age could attend. Many new schools got started and many pupil teachers were appointed to teach under trained teachers throughout Ghana.[1]

6.07 Despite the establishment of English schools, the Arabic schools in Dagbon continued to draw large numbers of children of school going age into their system so much so that the need for further expansion arose. Some of the mallams were forced to use mosques attached to their homes as classrooms, others acquired plots of land to put up school buildings and others erected more sheds outside their homes to serve as classrooms. Gradually the Arabic schools introduced into their system the use of tables and chairs, exercise books instead of slates and also prescribed school uniforms. However, the use of prescribed school uniforms was not rigidly enforced because there were many pupils who came from poor homes and they could

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1 I was one of the pupil teachers recruited in 1963 for this exercise. I was posted to Nahari, a village 151 miles west of Tamale, near the Ghana Cote d'Ivoire border.

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not afford to buy these school uniforms taking into consideration that even in some of the English schools, the government provided the pupils with school uniforms. Girls who attend these Arabic schools are expected to wear dresses that cover most parts of their body and through which the contours of their body are not open to other people's gaze.

6.08 It has been noted that the Nkrumah regime was quite concerned about education in the Northern Region which was lagging behind in literacy. The 1951 Consititution on Accelerated Development Plan for Education which was approved in parliament led to the increase in the award of scholarships and position of schools in the Northern Region. Unfortunately, however, despite the special attention to northern needs with regard to education, apathy towards secular education was still rampant. The Muslim communities in Dagbon never patronised the English schools and it was in these communities that thousands of children of school-going age were located. Eventually as the years went by, many English schools had to be closed down for lack of pupils. The government did not have any effective machinery of enforcing the Compulsory Education Act of 1961 and so it relied on the conscience of the people. As the Muslim communities in Dagbon saw the English schools as essentially Christian institutions and therefore not places where they would readily want their children to go for fear of indoctrination, they kept their children away from them. The Regional Director of Education during this period was Mr. J.S. Kaleem

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who is himself a Dagbana and a Muslim as well. In order to convince the Muslim population in Dagbon that secular education is not synonymous with Christianity, he introduced part time Islamic Religious instructions into the government schools. This system gave rise to the appointment of mallams to teach Islamic religion to Muslim children for thirty minutes each day of the school week and they were given special allowances. Whereas one of the Christian teachers on the staff of a particular school teaches the children Christianity in English, the mallams use Dagbani, but there were others who taught in Hausa.

6.09 The attitude of the Dagbamba to secular education is a clear manifestation of the impact of Islam on the people. On the other hand it can be argued out that the mallams saw the introduction of secular education in Dagbon as a threat to their Arabic schools and so they did all that they could, as opinion leaders, to discourage parents from sending their children to school. Even though the mallams had genuine fears, it was tainted with jealousy. The introduction of Islamic religious knowledge on the time table of government schools was a welcome innovation to some Muslim parents because it dispelled from their minds the equation of secular education with Christianity. In order to allay their fears, some parents had to go to the schools to see for themselves how the Islamic religion was taught. They saw large numbers of Muslim children grouped into one classroom and taught how to recite some simple

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to listen to him and had to understand his point of view. Consequently, Alhaji Yussuf Ajura, Alhaji Jibril Zakari, Alhaji Umar Muhammad and Alhaji Ibrahim Basha agreed to start the new system by converting their schools into English/Arabic schools.[1] By so doing the literacy rate in Dagbon will improve and their products apart from becoming Islamic scholars, they would be able to contribute effectively their maximum quota to the development of Ghana. Besides, on completion of secular education they would be able to secure jobs that would enable them fend for themselves confidently. To all intents and purposes this new system aims at removing the general apathy to formal and secular education among the predominantly Muslim and rural areas.

6.11 It has been noted with concern that pupils of the Arabic schools who pass out are well versed in Quranic studies which satisfies their spiritual well being, but when it comes to reading and writing English which is our official language, they are always at a loss. Politicians, Educationists and the mass media in Ghana have over the years been emphasising on very many occasions the need for the Arabic schools to introduce innovations into their system which will give the

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1 These four Afanema are opinion leaders in Tamale and since they agreed to start the English/Arabic school system, it was hoped that all the others would follow suit. Besides, Afa Ajura and Alhaji Umar are both Munchire and Alhaji Jibril and Alhaji Basha are Tijanis. However, Alhaji Basha became a Shiah later on.

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pupils a varied form of education instead of the hitherto one way Arabic system. Though educational goals vary from country to country, there is a shared determination to provide each individual, as far as possible, with the benefit of the states' system of education to enable him participate in his own changing society as a citizen, a worker, and as a human being in harmony with his environment. Countries share, too, a common aim in training people to the fullest so that they meet all possible challenges and a common concern in attempting to reduce inequalities in educational opportunities among regions. These calls and policy changes in the country have made it quite evident that there is a need for a modern approach to the Arabic school system so that it can meet the socio-economic needs of the nation.

6.12 It was rather unfortunate but not unexpected that some Afanema did not give in to this new system and on their part were not ready to compromise on the scheme with diverse reasons. Some of the fears they expressed were:

(i) the government wanted to take over their schools and the new system was the first ploy;

(ii) western education corrupts the child;

(iii) the Islamic religion will be relegated to the background; and

(iv) Arabic teachers will not be able to teach on Fridays.

Some of these Afanema were convinced that the scheme was a

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subtle ploy by the government to take over the Arabic schools from them and by so doing retard the progress of Islamic education in Dagbon. They also felt that Western education introduces the child to certain vices which the hitherto ignorant child is not aware of. However, the acceptance of the scheme by the opinion leaders in Dagbon paved the way for those who had misgivings to join.

THE ENGLISH/ARABIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

6.13 The English/Arabic school system began in earnest with the beginning of the 1972/73 academic year. The following agreement was concluded with the Ministry of Education with the approval of the then Commissioner of Education, Mr. Owusu Fordwuo in 1972. The agreement states inter alia that:

(i) Arabic schools would be private and remain the properties of individual mallams;

(ii) Mallams should provide Arabic teachers and furniture;

(iii) Government will provide secular teachers and pay them;

(iv) Arabic/Islamic teachers should be recruited exclusively by the mallams;

(v) a time table should be jointly drawn by the Ghana Education Service and the mallams; and

(vi) Syllabuses for secular education will from time to time be supplied by the Ghana Education Service and studies in Arabic and Islam will be under the uninterupted direction of the mallams.

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At the time of implementation of the English/Arabic School system, proposals for the scheme was put before the Northern Regional House of Chiefs Standing Committee jointly with some prominent intellectuals from the region. Some members had very strong reservations regarding the involvement of the Afanema in secular educational matters. They felt that the Afanema are almost always conservatively minded and resist change and progress vehemently without convincing reasons. However, the consensus reached at the end of their deliberations was that the scheme should be endorsed and considered an experiment worth pursuing.

6.14 The four Arabic schools which started the new system were previously named after the Afanema who set them up, but as time went by, these schools were given Arabic names and the Ghana Education Service has referred to the Afanema in charge as proprietors. The four schools started very well and all over Dagbon Muslims discussed it and the youth were happy about it but there were quite a few others who were sceptical about its success because they felt that since the system is controlled by the Ghana Education Service and whose staff are mostly non-Muslims, there could be a sabotage of the whole system. The four schools which started are shown in Table VI:

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TABLE VI

ARABIC SCHOOLS WHICH STARTED THE ENGLISH/ARABIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

	SCHOOL	PROPRIETOR	REGISTERED NUMBER
1.	Anbariyya E/A Primary	Alhaji Yusuf Ajura	MC/P.30
2.	Nuriyya E/A Primary	Alhaji Ibrahim Basha	MC/P.31
3.	Nuri Islam E/A Primary	Alhaji Jibril Zakari	MC/P.32
4.	Nahudat E/A Primary	Alhaji Umar Muhammad	MC/P.33

In order to allay the fears of the sceptics and also to give the scheme a meaningful impact on the Muslims, a full-time Schedule Officer for these schools who is a Muslim was appointed and based at the Regional Education Office. His duty is to supervise and oversee the overall orderly development of the English/Arabic schools. He is Alhaji Hussein Majeed, a former District Commissioner for Yendi and a retired teacher. His untiring efforts enabled many more Arabic schools to apply for consideration for absorbtion into the secular school system.

6.15 English schools which were closed down as a result of poor enrolment were reopened as English/Arabic schools and this time parents were prepared to send their children to school.

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Some parents in Tamale, Yendi and Savelugu had to remove their children from English schools to the English/Arabic schools because of the dual nature of instructions in them. The number of English/Arabic schools increased at a fast rate and as the years rolled by, town and village youth associations applied to the Regional Director of Education to change the Local Authority Primary Schools to English/Arabic Schools.[1] When an Arabic school is absorbed into the English/ Arabic school system, the Ghana Education Service posts teachers to the school and at least the headteacher should be a trained teacher. These teachers are responsible for the teaching of the secular subjects in the school and they are paid by the Government. The proprietor in charge of the school sends a list of Arabic teachers on his staff to the Regional Education Office and each month these Arabic teachers are paid some allowances. Hitherto, the Arabic teachers taught in these schools without any form of remuneration because their work is considered a purely sacrificial one with the hope of gaining reward in the hereafter.

6.16 Mr. J.W. Abruquah succeeded Mr. R.M. Yakubu as Regional Director of Education in 1973. Even though a Christian, he showed great interest in the new scheme and worked relentlessly towards its success. He was convinced that Islam can do for

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1 See Appendix 'C' for a copy of a letter to this effect from the Sang Youth Association.

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Dagbon and the whole of the north what Christianity had done for Southern Ghana educationally and he gave impetus to the organisation of the system by introducing new measures to advance it. He was very instrumental in getting the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service to approve the following:

(i) payment of monthly allowances to Arabic/Islamic instructors in the English/Arabic schools;

(ii) conversion of underpopulated English schools into the system to win the patronage of local Muslims;

(iii) the appointment of District Organisers who must be professional teachers to streamline the schools and to supervise the secular aspects pertaining to them, as well as to mediate in administrative problems among proprietors, English teachers and Arabic teachers; and

(iv) the appointment of District Advisers who must be popular and knowledgeable local Muslims, to facilitate conversion of Arabic schools into the new system.

6.17 When Mr. J.S. Kaleem and Mr. R.N. Yakubu were Regional Education Officers at different periods and were making franctic efforts to establish the new system, they were branded agents of Christianity who were trying to impose Christian ideals on the people of Dagbon. These two educationists tried to explain to the Afanema and their followers that it is only through secular education that their children can attain their

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positions as Regional Education Officers, and that Arabic and Islamic studies alone can at best secure a person a labourer's job in the civil and public service. In 1973 when Mr. Abruquah took over as Regional Director of Education, he worked tirelessly for the smooth implementation of the new system. The proprietors were surprised that a Christian should show such concern for them and even arranged certain benefits for them. Some of these proprietors then began to realise that indeed the incorporation of the Arabic school system into the public school system is not aimed at discrediting Islam by agents of Christianity as they earlier on envisaged. They therefore co-operated with Mr. Abruquah who frequently held discussions with them on how best the new system could work to benefit all those concerned. However, Mr. Abruquah did not stay long enough in Tamale to see how the system has progressed to its present stage.

6.18 With the inception of this new scheme, there was the need to staff all the English/Arabic schools with trained teachers who hold either the Teachers' Certificate 'A' (2-Yr) Post-Secondary or Certificate 'A' (4-Yr). However, since these trained teachers were woefully in short supply, pupil teachers were recruited to staff these schools. These category of teachers hold General Certificate of Education 'A' level, General Certificate of Education 'O' level and Middle School Leaving Certificate. With regard to the Islamic teachers, a special proficiency examination is conducted biennially by the

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Regional Education Office with the assistance of a group of graduates of Arabic and Islamic Studies, to up-grade serving Islamic teachers into certificated teachers who are paid the salary scale of pupil teachers with the Middle School Leaving Certificate. Islamic teachers on recruitment receive a flat monthly allowance of two thousand cedis (¢2,000.00). Those who write the special proficiency examination but are not succcessful continue to receive this allowance until such time that they pass the examination. The Islamic teachers who pass the examination are awarded Recognition Certificates by the Regional Education Service. However, with the beginning of the 1987/88 academic year, no new Islamic teachers were considered for allowances.

6.19 Mr. E.I. Benyarku took over from Mr. Abruquah as the Northern Regional Director of Education and in his attempt to streamline the school week for the English/Arabic school system, he incured the displeasure of the Afanema which nearly resulted in the collapse of the system. Mr. Benyarku had to leave the Northern Region for reposting in 1979 and Alhaji R. Gbadamosi, who was one time headmaster of Tamale Secondary School was appointed Director to succeed him. He is one of the enlightened Muslims who encouraged and played a leading role in getting the English/Arabic school system started, and so there was every indication that he was going to give the new scheme a further push towards progress. The various proprietors had confidence in him because he was quite a popular figure in Dagbon.

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6.20 Between 1973 and 1981 many English/Arabic schools were established throughout Dagbon and children who had hitherto been playing around their homes or looking after cattle and not dreaming of ever attending English Schools, found themselves in these English/Arabic schools. These new schools were not limited to any particular area, but they are spread all over Dagbon because the campaign launched by the Afanema encouraging secular education was quite effective. Any proprietor of an Arabic school who has thirty or more pupils, a good environment and furniture for the pupils, can apply to the Regional Director of Education for consideration to be absorbed into the English/Arabic school system, and his request will be granted after the school has been inspected and the authorities are satisfied that all the conditions have been met. It cannot, therefore, be overemphasised how much this new system has brought formal education to thousands of children who would have either received Arabic education or none at all. Table VII is the statistics of schools, teachers and enrolment for Tamale and Yendi districts for the period under review.

6.21 All schools within the English/Arabic school system share with other public or English schools the free supply of sationery, textbooks and other materials from the available stocks throughout the year from the Ghana Education Service. However, sometimes exercise books are in short supply and parents are called upon to sacrifice by buying exercise books

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TABLE VII: STATISTICS OF ENGLISH/ARABIC SCHOOLS TEACHERS AND ENROLMENT BETWEEN 1973 AND 1981

EDUCATION DISTRICT	NO. OF SCHOOLS		SECULAR TEACHERS		ARABIC TEACHERS		ENROLMENT		TOTAL
	PRI-MARY	MIDDLE	TRAINED TRS.	PUPIL TRS.	CERTI-FICATED	UN-CERTI-FICA-TED	BOYS	GIRLS	
Tamale	39	5	58	239	108	28	3730	1226	4956
Yendi	19	1	26	102	52	14	1832	508	2340
TOTAL	58	6	84	341	160	42	5562	1734	7296

for their children to supplement the Government's effort. Parents, it is noted, willingly accept this challenge and buy these exercise books for their children because they have come to realise the importance of education. If parents were asked about two decades ago to supplement Government's effort by buying exercise books for their children, then the children must as well forget about schooling. The English/Arabic school system has encouraged many Dagbamba to show concern about education. The enthusiasm that has been generated in parents about this new system is due to the dual nature of the system. Parents hold the view that their children have everything to gain by the new system because if a child is not good in Islamic Studies, he would be good in the secular aspect and vice versa.

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6.22 During the month of Ramadan which is the nineth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, Muslims throughout the world engage in fasting for either twenty nine or thirty days. Pupils in the English/Arabic schools do not attend school during this spiritual exercise until about a week or two after the fasting is over. However, during the Muslim festivals of Idul-Fitr and Idul-Adha, both pupils in the English/Arabic and regular English schools enjoy them as holidays. Proprietors of the English/Arabic schools have insisted that lady teachers posted to their schools should be decently dressed to conform with the tenets of the Islamic religion. They do not agree to lady teachers wearing dresses that expose their thighs and legs and so they want these teachers to wear cloths. It is their conviction that if the lady teachers dress decently in cloth, they would be setting good examples for the girls in the school to emulate. The school girls are also made to wear dresses that cover the upper part of the body and then a pair of trousers. In the classroom itself girls are not mixed with boys for they believe that such a mixture promotes indencency or acts that are unbecoming of Muslim institutions.

6.23 Before the inception of the English/Arabic school system and eight years after it had taken off, the Arabic schools operated their own school week. The school week started on Saturday and ended on Wednesday leaving the children to rest on Thursday and Friday. Normally Muslims observe Friday as a holiday as a result of the Friday afternoon congregational

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prayer which is compulsory on every adult Muslim. As this school week is at variance with what obtains in the public school system, it created problems for the Regional Education office and it gave rise to numerous problems which threatened the success of the new scheme. The greatest problem that the new system has posed is the conflict that arose between the Ghana Education Service and the proprietors of the English/ Arabic schools on the question of schooling on Thursdays and Fridays in conformity with the normal Ghanaian school week. The Education Service argued that experience over the years showed that the arrangement whereby the English/Arabic schools operated from Saturday to Wednesday, breaking off on Thursday and Friday was not working satisfactorily and was fraught with difficulties. It was realised that for the period of eight years that the new system was operating, that is from 1972 to early 1980, the academic standards, contrary to expectation was very disappointingly low. In most of the schools teachers were irregular at class-attendance on Saturdays and Sundays.

6.24 The Ghana Education Service identified the following as contributory factors to the poor class-attendance by secular teachers on Saturdays and Sundays:

(i) all workers in the public and private sectors observe Saturdays and Sundays as holidays. This fact creates an atmosphere of relaxation in most of the cities, towns and villages in the country. This atmosphere definitely has an extrenuating influence on teachers who have to

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work on Saturdays and Sundays. In fairness to such teachers one should expect that they would, naturally, try to find excuses not to work on Saturdays and Sundays;

(ii) in Tamale and Yendi especially, most social functions and entertainments are organised on Saturdays and Sundays. These include Muslim weddings, funeral ceremonies and receptions. Also all sort of entertainments are organised on these particular days because the organisers of these numerous functions know too well that these are the days on which people would be free to patronise such functions. Teachers are therefore provided with genuine and ready-made imaginary excuses to absent themselves from classes on Saturdays and Sundays; and

(iii) many of the English/Arabic schools have non-Muslim teachers posted to them. For all such teachers including some Muslim teachers, Saturdays and Sundays are statutory holidays and by right, they should not be expected or forced to attend classes on such days.

Against this background of ineffective secular education on Saturdays and Sundays was the fact that English/Arabic schools do not operate on Thursdays and Fridays. Consequently pupils in these schools have effective secular education for only three days in the week, and thus the pupils were not receiving

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the usual attention necessary for purposeful education which is their inalienable right. It was also noted that teachers in these schools taught for only three days in the week for full salary and such a situation was considered unacceptable to the Ghana Education Service. Apart from this fact, the three days school time was divided between secular and Arabic teachers and so secular education was bound to suffer under such a system.

6.25 This problem cropped up in 1979 when Mr. Benyarku was the Regional Director of Education. He convened series of meetings with the proprietors of the English/Arabic schools on the English/Arabic school week pointing out that the week days which they operated will make it impossible for their schools to achieve optimum performance within the Ghanaian context. He therefore requested the proprietors to change to the regular Ghanaian working week. It was also hoped that such a change if implemented, would make it possible for the effective inspection and supervision of the schools throughout the week. Mr. Benyarku stressed the fact that this move was in no way a calculated attempt at taking over their schools as it was being misconstrued by some of them. However, he made them to understand that in order not to interfere with the Muslim religious worship, all English/Arabic schools would close at 11.30a.m. on Fridays to enable both teachers and pupils have enough time off for worship. He suggested, on the other hand that if Arabic teachers find it sacrilegious to teach on Thursdays and Fridays, then they could have those days free,

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but then the teachers for secular subjects would continue to teach up to Friday.

6.26 As was expected, there was fierce resistance from the proprietors to this change in the initial stage. The Regional Director of Education was compelled to issue an ultimatum to the effect that those Arabic schools which were ready to accept the change would continue to receive sponsorship and support from the Ghana Education Service, and those which would stay out would lose that support. This decision received the approval of the Regional Administration and was subsequently approved by the Director-General of the Education Service.[1]

6.27 The proprietors on the other hand argued that the change of the Arabic school week to the secular school week is a calculated attempt at undermining the Islamic religion and besides it constituted a violation of the agreement reached with Mr. R.N. Yakubu, the then Regional Director of Education at the time of the inception of the Arabic/English school system. At that time Mr. Yakubu assured the Afanema they would be allowed to run their schools as they were without interference. The proprietors stressed in no uncertain terms their vow to resist the change anywhere because they were not prepared to sacrifice their Islamic beliefs to the advantage of

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1 See letter from Ghana Education Service, headquarters, Accra marked Appendix 'D'.

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Christian ideas. They therefore organised fora of proprietors of English/Arabic schools to explain to the general mass of the people of Dagbon why it is unislamic to accept the change. In their explanation to the public the proprietors stressed that secular schools are run along Christian lines and so to accept the change meant submitting to Christian ideals, and also that schooling on Fridays is wrong in Islam because it is a Muslim holiday. Some of the proprietors, especially those who are imams and lead the Friday Congregational prayer such as Alhaji Yussuf Ajura, Alhaji Umar Muhammad and the late Alhaji Issa Bello, attacked the Ghana Education Service and their Muslim collaborators in their Friday sermons in their mosques. It should be noted that the fight to resist the change was mounted by all the proprietors who had numbered over one hundred irrespective of their differences. However, those English/Arabic schools in Yendi, Savelugu, Kumbungu, Tolon, Nyankpala, Karaga, Gushiegu, Sang etc. looked up to the proprietors in Tamale so that whatever decision they take, would be endorsed by them. It is also noted that some of the English/Arabic schools in the rural areas are affiliated to those in Tamale so that whatever decision a major proprietor takes, is binding on those in the rural areas.

6.28 The proprietors made a representation to the Provisional National Defence Council Secretary for the Northern Region during this period Mr. John Ndebugri, who convened a meeting which was attended by the Regional Director of Education, the

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Regional and Tamale district organisers of the English/Arabic schools and the Secretary to the Association of proprietors of the English/Arabic schools in his office on the 26th of May, 1982. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss representations made by the proprietors for a possible redress. After deliberating on the issue at length, the Regional Secretary advised the Secretary to the association to convey to his members his inability to accept their request for redress. He further advised that the proprietors should reconsider their stand on the issue seriously if they really want purposeful secular education for the children of Dagbon. Gradually, however, some of the proprietors led by Alhaji Ibrahim Basha realised that they were fighting a losing battle and so they had to accede to the change. Their action shocked the other proprietors who thought that they were fighting a cause on a united front. Alhaji Basha and his group were therefore branded messiahs of mischief and traitors who had stabbed the others on the back. The acceptance of the change to the secular school week by some proprietors caused serious division in the ranks of the generality of the proprietors.

6.29 As the dissenting proprietors kept on insisting that the change is an infringement on Islamic principles, the Regional Director of Education had to write to Islamic institutions of higher studies centred in the Al-Azhar University in Cairo and the Islamic University in Madinah in Saudi Arabia requesting their opinion on the issue of Muslims schooling on Thursdays

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and Fridays. The opinion came in the form of a fatwa[1] and both sources declared that there is nothing wrong with working or studying on any particular day of the week so far as Islam is concerned. However, the exposition ruled that during the special mid-day prayers referred to as Jum'a prayers on Fridays, all Muslims are expected to stop whatever they do in order to observe it.[2] This fatwa notwithstanding, some of the proprietors still refused to go with the public school week. They claimed that the fatwa was not authentic. Alhaji Ibrahim Basha and Mallam Shaltoot who both acceded to the change sought the opinion of Shaykh bin Bazz, a very learned and respected man of Islam learning in Saudi Arabia on this thorny issue. In his reply which also came in the form of a fatwa, he stated that there is nothing wrong with schooling on Thursdays and Fridays but that on Fridays schooling should not continue up to the time of the special Friday prayers. They showed this fatwa to their other proprietor colleagues and prominent ones among them such as Alhaji Yussuf Ajura, Alhaji Umar Muhammad and the late Alhaji Issah Bello who all hold Shaykh bin Bazz in high esteem, but these leaders refused to accept the fatwa. In

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1 Fatwa is a formal legal opinion given by a Mufti or canon lawyer of standing, in answer to a question submitted to him either by a judge or by a private individual. The person who aks for a fatwa is known as a Mustafti.

2 The Quranic verse on Friday worship states: "O ye who believe, when the call to prayer is sounded on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave your trading. That is better for you if you knew. Then when the prayers are ended, disperse and go in quest of Allah's bounty Remember Allah often, so that ye may prosper." (62: 9-10).

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rejecting the fatwa they emphasised that its acceptance was tantamount to undermining Islam and they condemned the fatwa enthusiasts as stooges of Christianity.

6.30 Out of the one hundred and six (106) English/Arabic schools in the whole of the Northern Region in 1982, seventy two (72) were located in Dagbon and only sixteen (16) of the schools opted out of the English/Arabic school system because their proprietors were not ready to go with the public school week. Today in Dagbon there are over one hundred and fifty (150) English/Arabic schools registered with the Ghana Education Service, but the schools which are under the management of Alhaji Yusuf Ajura have stayed out of the system maintaining their stand against the change. Afa Ajura has openly castigated all the other proprietors for showing too much interest in secular education and also for letting Islam down. There is no doubt that the English/Arabic school system has caught on well with the people of Dagbon but it is very unfortunate that schools under the management of Afa Ajura have stayed out of the system. This unfortunate situation stems from the fact that Afa Ajura's Anbariyya main school is the largest and most populous of all the Arabic schools not only in Dagbon but nation wide. It is noted that Afa Ajura appreciates the value of secular education because he later on appealed to literates among his followers to come to the school and offer voluntary teaching services to the pupils. The response at the beginning was very encouraging but later on most of the

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teachers were irregular at school and so the scheme was abandoned. The aim of the English/Arabic school system is to improve the literacy rate of the people in the north and so if thousands of children in this area are prevented from availing themselves with the opportunity of being capable of reading and writing English through no fault of theirs, it is a problem for which a solution must be found.[1]

6.31 It cannot be over emphasised how apathy to secular education has been drastically reduced in Dagbon as a result of the introduction of the English/Arabic school system. Children in these schools are very happy that they have access to both secular and Islamic education. Currently there are quite a large number of students in secondary schools at various stages who have passed through the English/Arabic school system. It is envisaged that within the next five years the Universities would turn out some of these students. As a result of the success of the English/Arabic school system in Dagbon in particular and in the Northern Region in general, the two Upper regions (Upper East and Upper West) understudied that of the Northern Region for two years after which the English/Arabic school system was set up in 1976. The Volta Region, with particular reference to the Kete Krachi Education District, adopted the system in 1980 and in 1981 the Brong Ahafo Region

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1 Iam reliably informed that arrangements are afoot by organisations both in and outside Dagbon to get Afa Ajura to compromise with the Ghana Education Service.

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also established the English/Arabic school system. Today in Ghana all the ten regions have established the English/Arabic school system.

6.32 In 1987 the Government announced the establishment of an Islamic Education Unit under the auspices of the Ghana Education Service. To this end, a National Council of the Islamic Education Unit was formed with Alhaji Ibrahim Basha, proprietor of Nuriya Islamic Schools in Tamale as Chairman. All the ten regions have two representatives on the Council. The other member from the Northern Region is Zohe Limam (Imam of Zohe, a surburb of Yendi), Alhaji Ahmad Hussein. The Headquarters of this National Council of the Islamic Education Unit is in Tamale. The Council's secretariat is headed by Alhaji Abdul-Majeed Hussein who serves as the Acting General Manager.[1] The primary role of the Council is to advise the government on all matters relating to Islamic education in the country.

6.33 With the beginning of the 1987/88 school academic year, there have been some changes in the processes of absorbing purely Arabic Schools into the public school system. As indicated in 6.20, any Arabic school that is interested in getting absorbed into the public school system need apply and

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1 Alhaji Abdul-Majeed Hussein was the first man to be appointed co-ordinator of the English/Arabic school system in the north. Even though he is now retired, the Islamic Education Unit needs his services in view of his vast experience in this field.

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meet some conditions and it is absorbed and registered with the Ghana Education Service. It is also supplied with inputs to get the school to run effectively. However, the new scheme aims at making such schools community based whereby the community is expected to provide the school building and furniture for both pupils and teachers. Then the Ghana Education Service will supply textbooks and other inputs. The Arabic teachers who do not pass the special proficiency examination conducted by the Ghana Education Service do not enjoy the flat allowance given to them as indicated in 6.18. However, all those who used to enjoy it before the beginning of the 1987/88 academic year continue to draw the allowance while new ones are exempted until they have passed the examinations.

PROBLEMS OF THE ENGLISH/ARABIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

6.34 The year 1989 marks the sevententh year since the inception of the English/Arabic system of schooling in Dagbon. Like any other organisation set up on experimental basis, especially in developing countries, there are bound to be problems affecting the system. Therefore it is quite appropriate to discuss the problems that beset the smooth running of the English/Arabic school system. The first problem is in the area of school buildings. There are seventy two (72) English/Arabic schools in Dagbon and out of this number only eighteen (18) are properly housed. Many of these properly housed English/Arabic schools are the Local Authority schools that were converted into the new system. However, there are

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also a few proprietors who have managed to put up decent school buildings to house the ever increasing number of pupils attending school. Most of these English/Arabic schools are temporarily housed with structures ranging from zana mat sheds to mud huts. During the rainy and harmattan seasons, no effective teaching is done in the schools. One can therefore imagine how pupils in such schools lose academically during the rainy and long harmattan seasons. This problem is a contributory factor to the low academic standards in some of such schools. Some proprietors and the parent-teacher associations have accumulated funds to put up permanent school buildings but the problem lies in the high cost of building materials in Dagbon.

6.35 The school environment counts a lot in the education of the child but it appears most of these schools do not take this into consideration. The pupils in some of these schools are limited to a small area and in some cases to a small corner in the centre of the town amidst the hustle and bustle. As a result of the small space available to the school, physical education and games that form essential parts of the school curriculum are neglected. Pupils who are potential athletes or sportsmen and women generally, get their interests killed at this early stage because of the absence of the right environment for them to develop their talents. Very ironically too, some of the schools that are properly housed and have very good environments do not allow pupils to go for physical education

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and games. The proprietors of such schools argue that since their schools are basically Islamic, they have to observe Islamic teachings for the pupils to emulate. To this end they are not prepared to allow pupils to expose certain parts of their body. Normally when children go out for games or physical education, they wear singlets and pants in the case of the boys and vests and pants in the case of the girls. Some Muslims argue that there is nothing obscene about these forms of dressing for games since the children are very young. The proprietors concerned also argued that such manner of dressing especially with the girls is against purdah.[1]

6.36 The provision of writing tables and chairs for the pupils is also a problem to almost all the schools and this problem has arisen due mainly to the rising cost of timber. While some proprietors jointly with their parent/teacher associations make serious attempts to solve the furniture problem, others exhort parents to provide their wards with tables and chairs on enrolling them at the beginning of the

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1 It is a system of dressing enjoined in the Quran. Muslim women are not to display their beauty except what must ordinarily appear such as face and hand. It is noted concerning the dressing of girls for physical education and games that in 1983, the Sokoto State (purely Islamic State in the Federal Republic of Nigeria) House of Assembly unanimously carried a motion calling on the Sokoto State Ministry of Education to ban inter-school and inter-state sports competitions involving girls in post-primary institutions throughout the state. The motion mover Alhaji Sule Mada declared that sports contests involving female students were "immoral and of no benefit as the girls were half dressed" during such events.

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school academic year. In some of the schools long benches are provided for the pupils because they are cheaper to make and it accommodates many pupils. However, it is sad to note that in some of the schools, few though, pupils sit on the bare floor to learn. It is observed that apart from the inability of such children to learn effectively, they get their school uniforms dirty at the close of the day.

6.37 The proprietors have full control of their schools and so they organise them their own way. They have not made any meaningful suggestions for the improvement of their schools regarding syllabuses, time table and general administration. There seem to be no uniform for all the English/Arabic schools. Each school adopts its own except in cases where a proprietor has several schools under him. However, the Chairman of the National Council of the Islamic Education Unit, Alhaji Ibrahim Basha has indicated that the Government will soon make available the necessary syllabus for the unit up to secondary level.[1] This is a laudable idea and the sonner it comes the better. The non-availability of a syllabus for the English/Arabic schools with regard to the teaching of Islamic subjects has given rise to each school teaching its pupils what it deems fit. One school may be imparting very difficult ideas to its pupils while in another the basics of Islamic studies are taught.

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1 See Appendix 'E'.

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6.38 Generally there is a diversity of opinion among the various proprietors regarding the teaching of Arabic and Islamic subjects as well as workable time tables in order to make lessons effective. One of the observations in some of these schools is the lack of qualified Arabic/Islamic teachers to handle the subjects. The proprietors take it for granted that the pupils are small children and so they could be handled by anybody at all and that as they progress they would be handled by more qualified persons. Sometimes there are qualified Arabic scholars to appoint but almost all of the proprietors prefer to appoint their children and relatives because of the remuneration attached to that appointment. On the other hand some of the English/Arabic schools located in the rural areas of Dagbon do not have the qualified Arabic/ Islamic teachers not as a result of nepotism on the part of the proprietor, but due mainly to the fact that the qualified ones do not like residing in the rural areas.

6.39 Talking about lack of qualified Arabic/Islamic teachers brings into focus the problem which hinges on the difficulties the Ghana Education Service is facing in getting trained teachers posted to the English/Arabic schools in adequate numbers. However, the posting of trained teachers to schools in the urban centres is encouraging but to the rural areas is the problem. As a result of the poor conditions of the schools in the rural areas, trained teachers do not normally wish to be posted there. They may even prefer to be posted to English

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schools in the rural areas because some of the English schools there are well housed.

6.40 Some trained teachers refuse to be posted to the English/ Arabic schools even in urban centres because of the attitude of some of the proprietors. There have been cases of humiliation of secular teachers by some proprietors and interference in the delivery of lessons. Some proprietors centralise decision making in themselves and when they issue directives, they should be carried out without question. In fact they do not tolerate teachers who would challenge their authority. Some secular teachers have tried to exercise a lot of restraint in dealing with such proprietors but it must be noted that tolerance has its limits. However, the National Council of the Islamic education unit has taken note of these problems for appropriate action.

6.42 The English/Arabic school system has created job opportunities for hundreds of people who have studied Arabic and Islamic Religion in the local Arabic schools. Hitherto people with such qualifications could not be officially employed by the Government to use their knowledge to the benefit of the nation. However, since the inception of this new scheme the Government has found it quite expedient to employ them for the success of the English/Arabic school system. The new scheme did not create job opportunities for only the local Arabic schools but also for Middle and Secondary

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school leavers who were without jobs. It has therefore contributed in no small way in reducing the rate of unemployment among these school leavers in Dagbon.

6.43 As a result of the non-availability of adequate Muslim teachers for posting to all the English/Arabic schools, the Ghana Education Service had no other alternative but to post Christian teachers to these schools. By so doing, it has provided a good opportunity for closer interaction between Christian and Muslim teachers at the work place thus creating better understanding between them. Besides, some of these Christian teachers have learnt some aspects of Islam and have picked up some common Arabic words.

6.44 A development worthy of note within the English/Arabic school system is the establishment of day nurseries in some of them especially in Tamale, Yendi, Savelugu, Nyankpala, Tolon and Kumbungu. Parents have been very happy with this development because the scheme has provided training for their very young ones without much cost. Besides, mothers can have ample time to do household chores and other duties before their children return from school.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ENGLISH/ARABIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

6.45 It must be emphasised that since the inception of this new system in 1972 many children have benefited from secular education. Before the Government adopted the purely Arabic

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schools into the public school system, the literacy rate in Dagbon was woefully low and the apathy towards secular education was rife. However, with this new system the literacy rate has improved and apathy towards secular education is gradually waning. The pupils in these English/Arabic schools are happy that they are learning both English and Arabic. If this scheme had not come into being, many of these children would have been illiterate today so far as English is concerned and all the abandoned local authority schools now run on the lines of the English/Arabic system would have been without pupils. In about a decade from now, it will be possible to find doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, administrators etc. who passed through this system. The suspicions held by the Afanema about the intentions of the Ghana Education Service in the implementation of this scheme concerning the take-over of their schools and the introduction of Christian ideals have not been proved right. The Chairman of the National Council of the Islamic Education Unit, Alhaji Ibrahim Basha has reiterated in several addresses to Muslim communities that it is not the intention of the Government to take over the Arabic schools.[1]

6.46 This new system that is operating throughout Ghana but especially in Muslim communities, has had the support of some of the Arab and Islamic countries that have embassies in the country. As a result of the growing desire by Muslims in

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1 See Appendix 'E'.

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Dagbon, especially the youth, to learn more about Islam, Scholarships have been awarded to deserving pupils and teachers by some of these Islamic countries to enable them further their education. There are presently over twenty Dagbamba students studying in the Islamic University in Madinah, Saudi Arabia. There are others in Ummul Qura University in Makkah, King Abdul-Aziz University in Riyadh and the Petrolleum University in Dhahran. Other countries where students from Dagbon are studying are: Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Algeria, Qatar, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Sudan.

MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN ORGANISATIONS IN DAGBON

6.47 It has been noted over and over again that Muslim resistance to Western/English education was due mainly to the fact that they viewed it as linked with Christianity. I would therefore like to complete the chapter by looking at Christian influence in Dagbon and Muslim attitudes towards the faith and Christians.

6.48 There is no doubt that Islam came into Dagbon long before Christianity arrived. It is noted that when the Chrstians arrived, Islam had already made some significant impact on the Dagbamba, but this did not stop the Christians from setting up their own camps and trying to propagate the gospel to the people. The first Christian group to have arrived in Dagbon were the Assemblies of God Mission which set up its camp in Yendi in 1931. Their target in this area was

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aimed at Christianising the Konkonba which is a tribe that was not seriously influenced by Islam. Even though the Assemblies of God started propagating the gospel in 1931, it was not until 1960 that the first Dagbana, Rev. T.Y. Dokurugu was ordained as priest of the church.

6.49 The Catholics arrived in Dagbon in 1946. They had already established strong links in Navrongo in the Upper-East and Nandom in the Upper-West regions. On arrival in Tamale they established the St. Josephs Primary School at Changni, a suburb of Tamale where most of the inhabitants were typical traditionalists. (Dagban-daba) and were thus not seriously influenced by Islam. One Father Tryers went round this suburb and talked to parents to enroll their children in the school and gradually most of the children in the area were sent to this school and some of them eventually became Catholics. It was not easy converting the Dagban-daba (traditionalists) in the area because the people were deep rooted in their traditional values. Many pupils have passed through this Catholic School and have become Catholics but quite a number of them have been influenced by the larger Islamic community which has led them to become Muslims. To this end, the Catholic Mission having taken cognisance of this fact decided to establish the St. Charles Catholic Secondary School near the St. Joseph's Primary School in 1954 to give the pupils continuity of Catholic teachings so that they could not be

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easily influenced by the larger Islamic community.[1] Since it was not easy getting Dagbamba students into this school which was mission controlled, the Catholic Mission had to go all the way to the Upper east and west regions to get students to fill the classes. Even though the Catholics started preaching in Dagbon as far back as 1946, it was only in July 1983 that George Abu Alhassan was ordained the first Dagbana Catholic priest. Father Tryers still lives and works for the Catholic mission in Tamale. He was deported out of Ghana by the Nkrumah regime for his anti Nkrumah and anti-communist stand. He returned to Ghana and specifically to Tamale after the overthrow of the Nkrumah regime in 1966.

6.50 Churches that arrived in Tamale in the early 1950's are, the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans, and Pentecosts. Some of the spiritual churches that are located in Dagbon are, the Musama Disco Christo, Cherubim and Seraphim, African Faith Tabernacle and Christ Apostolic. It is noted that these churches served the Christians from Southern Ghana who were posted to Dagbon to work in the North. As a result of the low literacy rate in Dagbon and the late arrival of formal education, the government had to post officers from the south to man the various departments in Dagbon and these churches served the spiritual needs of these new arrivals. Also there

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1 St. Charles Secondary School was first opened at Wiega in the Upper East Region in 1953 but was removed to Tamale in 1954.

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were some people from the Upper East and West Regions who had embaraced Christianity and were working in Dagbon and so these churches served them as well.

6.51 As a result of the inability of some of these Christian churches to make any meaningful impact on the Dagbamba in the urban centres in Dagbon, they directed their attention to the rural areas where they are gradually establishing themselves. On the Tamale-Pong-Tamale route, the Baptist Church has established very small churches at Kanvili, Tunayili, Sugashee, Janjon-Kukuo, Kogni and Nyuglo. On the same route the Assemblies of God Church has establish churches at Zagyuri and Pong-Tamale. On the Tamale-Kumbungu route, the Catholic and the Assembies of God churches have smaller churches dotted in the villages. It is on this route that the Catholic Church has established a seminary known as the St. Victors Seminary at Malshegu. These Christian groups too are working fast on some of the villages on the Tamale-Yapei road. It has been observed that once the churches operate in the rural areas, they are bound to succeed in their attempt at proselytisation because in the first place the Afanema in the urban centres do not venture into the rural areas to preach to the people. They are all concentrated in the urban centres. Secondly, these missionaries go to these rural dwellers with essential drugs, second-hand clothing and food items such as cooking oil, sorghum and non-fat dry milk. In some villages these churches have installed grinding machines for the people to grind their

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cereals. Women in such villages used to walk long distances to grind their cereals and so with the installation of these grinding mills, they are saved the agony of having to walk these long distances. The people pay for whatver they grind and the money used in servicing the machines.

6.52 It has also been noted that some of the churches go to the extent of assisting Muslim communities in Dagbon. The Catholic church has assisted these communities in areas of education and health and it is well known in Tamale that the Archbishop of Tamale, Peter Dery has sponsored Muslim children from poor homes to further their education. The agricultural wing of the Presbyterian church has assisted farmers in Dagbon irrespective of ones religious faith to improve on their farming techniques. The Evangelical Presbyterian church has also assisted farmers in and around Yendi to set up kraals and assisted them with extension services on their farms and supplied them with bullock ploughs. The educational units of some of these churches have also contributed immensely towards the education of children in Dagbon. The A.M.E. Zion church which has also set up its educational unit has assisted in the education of children at Wamale, Chanzen, Zuo and Pagaza on the Tamale-Yendi road.

6.53 There has been a lot of religious tolerance between Christians and Muslims in Dagbon. No occasion has ever occured where Muslims have risen against Christians and vice versa and

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neither is there an indication that in future Muslims would clash with Christians. None of these groups has given cause for such a clash to occur because people of both faiths go about their religious activities without interference from the other. Christian groups have held conventions, symposia and healing sessions especially in Tamale without any interference. In September, 1988, the chiefs and people of Dagbon held a durbar in Tamale to welcome the world leader of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Mr. Neil Wilson and his wife. During Idul-Fitr and Idul-Adha Muslim festivities, Muslims invite Christian friends to their homes to enjoy with them in the festivities. During Christmas Muslims who have Christian friends send them gifts ranging from sheep and goats to foodstuffs such as rice and yams. The mere fact that some Muslims are aware of Christmas and even send gifts to friends as is done in other parts of the Christian world is a manifestation of the freedom that Christians enjoy in a Muslim dominated area.

6.54 The table below shows the distribution of churches in Dagbon.

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TABLE VIII

DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCHES IN DAGBON

TOWNS	CATHO-LIC	PRESBY-TERIAN	METHO-DIST	ASSEM-LIES OF GOD	BAPTIST	SEVENTH DAY ADVEN-TIST	EVANGE-LICAL PRESBY-TERIAN	OTHERS
Tamale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yendi	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Savelugu				✓	✓			
Kumbungu				✓				
Tolon								
Nyankpala	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Karaga*[1]								
Gushegu	✓							
Nanton								
Tampion								
Zabzugu								
Pong-Tamale	✓			✓		✓		

1 There used to be a Baptist church at Karaga but due to poor patronage, it had to be closed down.

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SUMMARY

The Wangara or Dyula and Hausa Muslims who penetrated Dagbon around the 17th century from their various homelands, came as traders and clerics. They gradually Islamised the Dagbamba and were the first to set up schools to teach children of Muslim parents how to read, write and memorise verses from the Quran. On completion of their Quranic studies these children were left to fend for themselves. Whereas this form of education strengthened the child in his Islamic faith, it did not give him the opportunity of fitting himself effectively in the public system because so far as English is concerned, he is considered illiterate. Therefore such people could not gain any meaningful job in both the civil and public sectors of the national economy.

From 1909 up to the present day English schools have been set up in various parts of Dagbon by the Government, churches and the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, but parents in Dagbon, especially Muslims, were not prepared to send their children to these schools. These parents considered English schools as essentially Christian institutions set up to convert their children to Christianity. Besides, they felt that English schools corrupt the children because apart from making them lazy, they learn all manner of tricks that help them to cheat, smoke and drink alcohol. The Government has on several occasions appealed to parents in this area to send their children to school and despite the numerous incentives since

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independence in 1957, majority of parents still showed apathy to secular education due mainly to the influence of Islam on them.

In 1972 the Ghana Education Service decided to incorporate the purely Arabic schools into the public school system where secular subjects are taught vis-a-vis Arabic and Quranic studies. The owners of the Arabic schools known as proprietors protested vehemently to the Ghana Education Service stating that it was a ploy by the Government to take over their schools. However, series of meetings were held between various Regional Directors of Education for the Northern Region and the proprietors of the Arabic schools on the need for the English/Arabic school system. The proprietors later agreed to start with the scheme but they still had their misgivings. Four schools started with the scheme in Dagbon and these were: Afa Ajura's Anbariyya School, Mallam Basha's Nuriyya, Alhaji Jibril Zakari's Nuri Islam and Alhaji Umar Muhammad's Nahudat. Later on many more Arabic schools joined the scheme.

As a result of the setting up of these English/Arabic schools throughout Dagbon, many more children are attending school. The apathy towards secular education is generally on the downward trend and parents readily send their children to school without any form of compulsion. However, this is only the true reflection in the urban areas of Dagbon. Some Dagbamba in the rural areas still cling to their apathetic

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stand. In some villages where English schools were abandoned because of lack of pupils to attend them, these schools have been reinvigorated into English/Arabic schools and by so doing, parents have readily filled such schools with their children. Also in local authority schools which did not register adequate pupils because they were English biased, youth associations in these areas have appealed to the Regional Director of Education to change such schools into English/Arabic schools and such appeals have received favourable considerations. All schools incorporated into the English/Arabic school system are supplied with teachers and inputs. The secular teachers are paid by the Ghana Education Service and the Arabic teachers are given some allowance. However, Arabic teachers who pass a special examination conducted by the Service are graded as Pupil teachers and paid salaries.

From 1972 to 1979 the English/Arabic schools operated from Saturday to Wednesday and broke off on Thursday and Friday. The Ghana Education Service decided to review that arrangement because it was not working satisfactorily to the benefit of both the pupils and the nation. To this end, the Education Service requested all English/Arabic schools to revert to the normal public school week which runs from Monday to Friday and breaking off on Saturday and Sunday. All the proprietors of the English/Arabic schools decided to disregard the order because it was a violation of Islamic principles. Besides, they reminded the Ghana Education Service of the fears

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they expressed at the beginning of the Scheme to the effect that the Government was devising a means of taking over their schools from them. This order generated rancour and bitterness between the Ghana Education Service and the proprietors. Gradually however, some of the proprietors saw nothing wrong with the order and gave in and this brought disunity among the ranks of the proprietors. Today in Dagbon, only the schools run by Afa Ajura have disagreed with the Education Service on the school week saying that it is illegal to do so in Islam. The Ghana Education Service sought the views of Islamic scholars in Saudi Arabia and Egypt and their answers came in the form of a fatwa but Afa Ajura refused to take that and has still maintained his stand. Presently there are over one hundred and fifty English/Arabic schools in Dagbon.

In 1987 the Government announced the establishment of an Islamic Education Unit under the auspices of the Ghana Education Service. To this end a National Council of the Islamic Education Unit was formed with Alhaji Ibrahim Basha as its Chairman. The Islamic Education Unit has its headquarters in Tamale with Alhaji Abdul-Majeed Hussein as its acting General Manager. The National Council of the Islamic Education Unit also has its headquarters in Tamale. With the emergence of this Islamic Education Unit, all English/Arabic schools are referred to as Islamic schools.

It cannot be overemphasised how the emergence of the Islamic Schools have contributed immensely in increasing the

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literacy rate of the Dagbamba. Many children who would have remained illiterate throughout their lives so far as secular subjects are concerned, have found themselves now reading and writing both English and Arabic. This is therefore, an indication that many more literates would be turned out of these Islamic schools in the next decade. Such children would now be able to fit into the Ghanaian system properly because they have been equiped with the basics for progress. However, there are still thousands of pupiils in Afa Ajura's schools who have been denied secular education through no fault of theirs. These children are bound to lose so far as secular education is concerned. They need secular education which is their inalienable right, but they cannot decide for themselves. The Ghana Education Service seems not bothered about these helpless children and so also are the authorities of these schools, therefore posterity deserves the right to condemn those involved in not allowing these children to have access to secular education.

Since 1931, churches have tried to make their mark among the Dagbamba who are mostly Muslims. It has not been quite easy for them in view of the fact that Islam has made a lot of impact on almost every sphere of activity in Dagbon. The Assemblies of God churches was the first Christian church to have arrived in Dagbon but it was not until 1960 that the first Dagbana was ordained priest of the church. It took the Catholic church thirty seven years before a Dagbana was

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ordained a priest of the church. Even though these churches hoped to convert the Dagbamba to Christianity, they ended up serving the Chrisians who had come from southern parts of Ghana to work in Dagbon. They also served the Christians from the Upper East and West regions who had been introduced to Christianity long ago.

It is noted that the Churches used the schools that they set up to propagate Christianity to the children. Father Tryers of the Catholic Mission in Tamale is remembered as the missionary who has helped many children to acquire secular education in Dagbon. It is also noted that the Archbishop of Tamale, Peter Dery has sponsored quite a number of Muslim children to further their education some of whom are medical doctors.

There are several churches in Dagbon today both orthodox and spiritual. They co-exist with Muslims and each group carries on with its activities without any interference. Most of these churches have gradually moved into the rural areas where Islam has not made serious impact on the people. They are gradually succeeding as a result of the various forms of assistance they offer the people ranging from the supplies of food items and medicines to the installation of grinding mills, especially corn mills in the villages where they operate. It is noted that Muslims cannot catch up with such standards because they do not have the means to do so.

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Generally Muslims and Christians live in peace in Dagbon. They make friends with each other and each group carries on with its religious activities without any form of interference from each other. It is hoped that they would continue to live as such so long as none of them tries to undermine the other.

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CONCLUSION

The origin of the Dagbamba is a bit obscure because whereas the drum chant which is a reliable repository of the history of Dagbon indicate that the Dagbamba emerged from Zamfara in the present day Sokoto State of Nigeria, both Tamakloe and Ibrahim Mahamah hold the view that the Dagbamba are progenitors of some Arab tribe. However, the common traditions of origin centre on a legendary leader known as Toha-Zie, the Red Hunter who is said to have emerged from Zamfara in Northern Nigeria. Today, the Zamfara people, whatever their origin, speak Hausa but their tribal marking is identical with that of the Dagbamba hence the reference to each other as "abokin wasa" which literally means playmates, that is the two groups having good relationship. Whatever be the cause, the ancestors of the present Dagbamba were forced to move from Zamfara to the Kingdom of Mali then to Pusiga, Yan-Dabari and finally to Yendi. In spite of the fact that the history of Dagbon begins with the name of Toha-Zie, his great grandson Na-Gbewa is considered the first chief and the most revered from whom sprung Dagbon, Mamprugu, Moshi and Nanung.

Before the advent of Islam in Dagbon, the Dagbamba were deep rooted in their traditional practices. Even though they believed in the existence of a Supreme Being referred to as Nawuni, they still kept idols such as wuni, wunbei, tingbani and bugli as intermediaries between the living and the Supreme

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Being. Their belief in ancestor veneration is very strong because of the belief that both fortunes and misfortunes are caused by them. Even though these ancestors are dead, they are feared because they keep constant watch on the living to ensure that the status quo is strictly adhered to. When the living violate any of the cultural practices of Dagbon, punishment in the form of epidemics, drought and poor harvests are inflicted by them.

The Dagbamba believe in the existence of witches and wizards. Generally, old women are associated with witchcraft. The Dagbani word for an old woman is pagkurugu but invariably no woman likes to be referred as such because it is associated with witches. Witches are feared because their activities are psychic. Since witches are considered dangerous, they are normally exiled from their area of residence if found out. In the Yendi district, witches who are exiled are sent to Ngaani to live and die there. The Department of Social Welfare assists such women in finding some income generating activity. Some people outside Dagbon are of the view that these women at Ngaani are victims of circumstances beyond their control because there is usually no proof that they ever killed their so called victims. Whatever be the reaction of people towards the attitude whereby witches are exiled, the Dagbamba believe it is the best way to keep dangerous elements away from communities.

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As a result of the belief in witches, wizards and evil generally, people in Dagbon try to fortify themselves against eventualities. To this end they seek magic such as lilgu which helps them to vanish in the case of danger. Other forms of magic are gbagno (bullet-proof gown) and chilo which is a kind of Kohl which enables its user to detect witches. However, there are other forms of magic that are destructive such as Sambo which is used to either destroy life or disfigure it. Generally the Dagbamba are very much interested in magical powers which are manifested in their day to day activities. Soothsaying is also an important feature in Dagbon because the soothsayer is consulted on every conceivable occasion. It is noted that women highly patronise this ritual because they are bothered with so many imaginary problems. Women who consult soothsayers do so in secret because if they are found out, it could cause a break up of their marriages. Polygamy was highly accepted and to have many wives and children was a status symbol. A man who had only one wife was still considered a bachelor because the wife had to join her parents after she gives birth for a period ranging between one and one and half years. As for the chiefs they married several women such that they were even at times not able to say how many they had. It is noted that Muslims in Dagbon indulge in all these practices because they find it difficult to divorce Islam from traditional practices. Therefore, a visitor to Dagbon is saddled with the problem of identifying where tradition begins and end and where Islam takes off.

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Dagbon has the largest Muslim population today in Ghana and this credit goes particularly to the Hausa mallams who ventured into this area. Even though it is noted that the Wangara arrived in Dagbon before the Hausas, they were easily overshadowed by the Hausas as a result of the sluggish manner they operated in Dagbon in the early stages of the advent of Islam. This attitude of the Wangara is easily attributable to the fact that they were traders and their business concerns were of top priority. In the case of the Hausas some came into Dagbon as traders and artisans while others came solely as mallams (preachers). There is no doubt that the process of the Islamisation of Dagbon had been a long and peaceful one; but gradually Islam was integrated into various Dagbon communities, and even though foreign in origin, it gradually became part and parcel of the culture of Dagbon.

The centre of Islam in the early stages was Yendi firstly because it is the seat of the paramount chief of Dagbon and secondly it was a commercial centre situated on the route from Northern Nigeria to Salaga. It was from this point that the influence of the mallams radiated. Muslims who lived in Yendi and other villages rendered religious services to Islamised chiefs and even though some of them were pious, they had to tolerate the more diluted forms of Islam practised by the chiefs and the people. The mallams themselves had to take part in the ceremonies in which pre-Islamic rites were performed. The inability of the mallams to criticise these

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pre-Islamic activities and rites enabled the Dagbamba to conclude that it is possible to become a Muslim without breaking with the past. The Dagbamba easily found similarities between Islamic practices and their cultural practices and thus they found Islam readily acceptable to them. This attitude has given rise to the practise of mixing Islam with traditional practices. Most Dagbamba today put the blame on the Hausa mallams for allowing people to embrace Islam and continue to do acts that are contrary to the principles and ideals of Islam. On the other hand it is noted that these Hausas who arrived in Dagbon formed a part of the group of Hausas who did not find favour with Uthman dan Fodio's Sokoto jihad (holy war). They therefore ventured out of the influence of the jihad into areas they found congenial to the continuation of their mixed Islam.

Additionally, since they were immigrants and for that matter they did not want to incur the displeasure of the chiefs, they had to succumb to the traditional needs of these chiefs. By satisfying the demands of these chiefs they gradually made Islam in Dagbon traditional in outlook. Some Muslims in Dagbon today see mixture as acceptable because their forefathers accepted it and since they were great men they were better placed to detect flaws in mixing. When one is called Afa in Dagbon society today it does not necessarily mean that one is well versed in Islamics but that one is good in magical works such as soothsaying, the ability to provide medicine for protection, the making of talismans and amulets, assisting ones

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customers with success in their endeavours and with the power to defeat their enemies. All these practices are common because the Dagbana is always ready to exhibit power if he has it.

It is noted that of all the paramount chiefs of Dagbon, it was Na-Zanjina who popularised Islam as a result of his close interaction with the Muslims. This close relationship is seen in the light of the fact that Na-Zanjina was a Muslim before his enskinment as Ya-Na and also of the fact that some of his own sub and divisional chiefs showed apathy to his rule. Since the reign of Na-Zanjina all the Ya-Na's identified themselves with Islam even if nominally because certain Islamic structures had been created and infused into the Dagbon political system. There was, therefore, no way a Ya-Na could do away with Muslims and their services. Chiefs have continued to exercise tremendous power in Dagbon and so whatever order they give must be obeyed. Therefore if chiefs have identified themselves with Islam it is just a matter for subjects to follow suit. This does not however suggest that force was used in getting people to embrace Islam but that the system was such that it was more convenient to accept Islam at least nominally than to remain completely an idolator. Today in Dagbon every chief has an imam who prays for him every Monday and Friday and on other occasions. Chiefs have great respect for Muslims in Dagbon and that is why every visitor to the palace of a chief should offer him kolanuts exccept the imam who rather is offered Kolanuts by the chief.

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From the era of Na-Zanjina about 1700 to 1969, some Muslim elders were conferred with titles in Yendi such as Yar-na, Yidan-kafa, Kamshe-na, Yidan-Moli, Yidan-Baba, Yidan-chim etc. and they served the Ya-Na's so long as they continued to live. However, with the inception of the Yendi chieftaincy dispute between the Andani and Abudu gates, these Muslim titles began to lose their significance. Whereas before the dispute Ya-Na's retained the Muslim elders who served their predecessors, Ya-Na's who were enskinned after the dispute dispensed with the services of the Muslims who served their predecessors and chose new ones whom they believed would serve their cause better. Therefore, in Yendi today two people with the same Muslim title are found representing each of the gates in the Yendi skin affairs.

The Yendi skin affair has seriously threatened the unity of Muslims in Dagbon. This is so because all the Muslim groups except the Ahmadiyya have identified themselves with the two gates. At the moment it is not possible for a new Ya-Na to appoint a Muslim who does not support him into an office in his administration. The Dagbamba believe that this amounts to making an enemy a body guard. However, Muslims in Dagbon are looking forward to the day when a Ya-Na will muster courage to do that. It is also felt that with the death of the former Ya-Na Mahamadu Abdulai IV, one of the contestants to the nam, peace will virtually return to Dagbon. Others believe that once the litigants are still around, the problem will still linger on.

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Over 90% of the people of Dagbon today identify themselves with Islam as a result of its overwhelming appeal and it appears as if a Dagbana who does not identify himself with Islam alienates himself from Dagbon society. Whenever a visitor arrives in any Dagbon society, the people are always interested in finding out whether the visitor prays. A positive answer to this question makes the visitor a very welcome one. Children who grow up in Muslim homes must necessarily become Muslims even if they are not sent to Quranic schools. They are expected to follow the footsteps of their parents. Consequently, parents do not take kindly to any attempt by their children to forsake Islam. Parents in Dagbon will not hesitate to drive their own children from their homes if they refuse to become Muslims. This attitude has accounted for the inability of parents in Dagbon to send their children to secular schools because they hold the view that such schools are essentially Christian institutions where children end up being indoctrinated against Islam.

With regard to personal rituals and social life, Islamic influence is stronger than ever in this century. The eighth day after birth is normally observed as the outdooring day but within 1988, people from Dagbon who have studied in Saudi Arabian Universities have been organising their outdoorings on the seventh day after birth as it is practised in Saudi Arabia. This innovation has for the last quarter of 1988 generated arguments on the issue. However, a majority of the Dagbamba maintain the status quo.

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The Afanema are prominent personalities in Dagbon. When a child is born and it is to be outdoored, it is the Afa who calls the name and prays for the child, the family and all well wishers. Normally when a delegation is going to ask a girls hand in marriage from her parents, it is the Afa who leads it. This is so because they wield a lot of influence in Dagbon society. When a Muslim dies, they help wash the corpse, pray for it and help in burrying it. One of their most important functions is that they serve as arbitrators in cases such as divorce, disputes, agreements and many other social matters. Their intercession in cases of divorce have saved several marriages. It is however regrettable to note that a larger number of the Afanema use these social functions as sources of their livelihood for they collect quite a lot of money for offering such services.

The Dagbamba consider Dagbon as an Islamic entity but a close observation reveals that what is practised in Dagbon can best be described as mixed Islam. Muslims continue to seek the services of bagsi (soothsayers) in cases of birth, marriage, death and many other social matters. They still wear amulets, talismans and gurma. They also go in for all sorts of traditional magic to fortify them against dangers. Islam rejects all such practices but day in day out as people face new challenges in their day to day activities, they resort to the acquisition of these powers to enable them overcome their problems or subdue their opponents. When there is a problem in

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a home and the cause is not easily discernible, the head of the family has to slaughter a fowl and call on the ancestors to present a solution. Admittedly, this practice has waned considerably in the urban centres but persists on a large scale in the rural areas. This is so because most rural dwellers have accepted Islam firstly because it is the order of the day and secondly because they are unaware Islam prohibits such practices. The other problem is that the Afanema have concentrated their activities more in the urban centres than the rural areas.

All the chiefs in Dagbon are Muslims and by their status as custodians of the culture of Dagbon, they have to sacrifice animals to gods and ancestors, they have to call on their ancestors in the time of need and they themselves have to be fortified against their enemies and the process of fortification takes them through several unislamic practices. So long as chiefs would continue to be part and parcel of Dagbon society, people would seek quick solutions to their problems and the challenges of this era are quite demanding, the practice of mixing will persist for sometime.

With regard to Islamic observances, it is noted that almost all Dagbamba inherit Islam, the Kalimat al-Shahadab (confession of faith) is a foregone conclusion. Those who recite the confession of faith are generally the typical traditionalists and non-Dagbamba who embrace Islam.

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The observance of the five daily prayers is considered very important in Dagbon. One is considered a very good Muslim if one strictly observes the five daily prayers. Parents are always eager to find out whether their children have observed their prayers and husbands too do not hesitate to ask their wives about prayer on the least suspicion that it was not observed.

The month of Ramadan during which Muslims throughout the world observe 29 or 30 days of fasting is usually approached in Dagbon with a lot of preparations. Food items are stored in preparation for the fast and husbands send provisions to their fathers in-law while others send theirs to the Afanema who take care of their children at school. Most Muslims in Dagbon depend on the sighting of the crescent for both the commcement and termination of the fast of Ramadan. Other Muslims depend on the radio, especially those of Northern Nigeria and Islamic countries. These differences have been ironed out between the two Muslim groups in Dagbon, the Tijaniyya and the Munchire. With the beginning of the fast of Ramadan for the year 1988, it was agreed to sight the crescent first before Muslims in Dagbon could fast.

During the month of fasting in Dagbon beggars, destitutes, orphans and generally the poor are catered for by the rich because it is believed to be highly ravarding. Children from the ages of ten are encouraged to fast for a few

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days, some traditionalists fast for three days and other people who would normally not observe the five daily prayers would do so in Ramadan. It is also noted that some Dagbamba who are drunkards and others who keep concubines temporarily suspend drinking alcohol and do away with their concubines during this period. It is also a period during which women are kept busy both day and night and as a sign of gratitude to them, husbands shower their wives with gifts at the end of Ramadam. The gift that women cherish most in this regard is cloth.

Generally Muslims in Dagbon are poor and so the payment of Zakat (almsgiving) is not incumbent on most of them. Those who give out Zakat are the rich rice farmers, contractors, the transport owners, the businessmen and big-time market women and those in lucrative ventures. Some Muslims who belong to these categories of the well to do assemble the poor and dish out few cedis to each of them. The farmers carry their produce to the homes of the Afanema and the businessmen and market women contribute huge sums of money towards the construction of mosques and schools. Currently in Dagbon a serious debate is going on as to whether Zakat funds should be channelled into the construction of mosques and schools while many Muslims are constantly or permanently kept in abject poverty. Alhaji Aliu of Sakasaka in Tamale has criticised all the Afanema in Dagbon for urging their followers to offer Zakat in cash for the construction of mosques and schools to the detriment of the poor majority.

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The performance of the hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) is the aspiration of most Dagbamba primarily because it affords the Muslim the opportunity of knowing the holy land of Islam and completes one's faith. Secondly, the prestige and the title of Alhaji that goes with the trip puts the individual on a higher pedestal. Generally non-Muslims in Ghana have a vague conception about Alhaji's. They see every Alhaji as a rich man and even those Muslims who have not yet gone on the hajj but show some glimpse of affluence are honoured with this title. It appears as though only rich people can afford the trip to Makkah because of the ever increasing air fares to and from Saudi Arabia each year. However some rich men in Dagbon sponsor some poor ones and the Afanema. It is also noted that young men who are rich prefer paying the passage for their fathers and mothers first before they themselves go on the hajj. It is also noted that more younger men and women perform the hajj as hitherto being the case a decade ago. Between 1983 and 1988, 269 seats were allocated to the whole of the Northern Region for pilgrims wishing to go on the hajj, and out of this number 191 seats went to Muslims in Dagbon. Out of this number 76 were men and 115 were women. Therefore women in Dagbon go on the hajj more than the men since 1983.

The emergence of sects in Dagbon have seriously threatened the peace and tranquility of Dagbon. The Islamic brotherhood that Islam cherishes so much has been totally discredited as a result of sectarian tendencies. The major

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sects identified in Dagbon are four, the Tijaniyya, the Ahlul-Sunnah (Munchire), the Ahmadiyya and the Shiah. For about two decades, that is between 1967 and 1987, the first two groups were seriously diametrically opposed to each other, the third virtually lives in oblivion in Dagbon while the fourth which emerged in Dagbon in late 1987 seem to have no future. The emergence of the Shiah in Dagbon may be considered a blessing in disguise because the Tijaniyya and the Munchire who were bitter enemies decided to come together to fight against the Shiah. This step by the two sects marked a turning point in the history of Islam in Dagbon for it paved the way for peace to prevail among Muslims. Between 1967 and 1987 there had been clashes between the Tijaniyya and the Munchire in which lives were lost and others maimed for life. Whereas the Tijaniyya see themselves as Muslim elites and for that matter superior to all others, the Munchire see superiority of one Muslim over the other in piety. Despite peace moves between the two groups, they each hold fast to their principles but this time devoid of clashes, the casting of insinuations and bitter rivalry. Both groups have been able to use wazu sessions to campaign for peace among Muslims and it is noted that they have held joint wazu sessions to the admiration of lovers of peace in Dagbon. Wazu, it is noted, is a powerful medium through which Muslims in Dagbon are educated on Islamic principles. Besides, it is also used to castigate people in Dagbon who are found wanting in their religious obligations. Therefore it has come to stay as a check against Muslims who commit excesses in the name of Islam.

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It is noted that with the emergence of the Yendi chieftaincy dispute between 1953 and 1954 and also of party political activities in 1969 and 1979, Dagbon was thrown into confusion because while chiefs were engaged in bitter struggles and political parties were bent on capturing the votes of the Dagbamba, the Tijaniyya and Munchire identified themselves with various parties to the nam of Yendi and also of the political parties. The rivalry was so intense that people from different groups do not talk to each other neither was it possible for any form of interaction between them. Social functions in communities that were considered a communal affair degenerated into sectional matters and it was very difficult for a man from one group to get a girl from the other group to marry. However, the youth of Dagbon, especially the young Muslim preachers in Tamale, resolute in their search for lasting solutions to these devisive tendencies have been able to bring the two sides together. It is hoped that once the Muslims have agreed to co-operate with each other, the chieftaincy dispute that has lingered on in Dagbon for quite a long time now, will also be fully resolved. With the death of the former Ya-Na Mahammadu Abdulai IV on 15th October, 1988, who was a contestant to the nam of Yendi, it is hoped that the Dagbamba would bury the hatchet and live together once more as brothers and sisters.

Dagbon has for a very long time been afflicted with ignorance, illiteracy and apathy as a result of the inability

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of the Dagbamba to patronise English Schools which were set up in the area from 1909 onwards. The influence of Islam has contributed immensely towards this attitude because the Quranic schools popularly known as makaranta which were set up by the Hausa clerics catered for their needs. In such schools children are taught how to read and memorise the chapters of the Quran and also how to pray. Therefore, when English schools were set up in Dagbon, parents did not see their way clear to patronise them because they felt they were satisfied with the Islamic education that their children were receiving. They also felt that English schools were essentially Christianity based and so to allow their children to attend such schools meant collaborating with Christianity to gain converts. Besides, the Dagbamba felt that English schools promoted laziness. Where the Colonial Administration had to resort to the use of force to get chiefs and their elders to patronise the English schools, children of distant relations and of the chief's court attendants were selected to go to school. Therefore, for over half a century the Dagbamba shunned the English schools and continuously registered their children in the Quranic schools.

Gradually the Dagbamba had to come face to face with realities of modern times by acknowledging the importance of secular education since at best Quranic school education earns one a labourer's job in the civil and public services. To this end the Afanema agreed to incorporate the Quranic school system

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into the public school system so that secular subjects are taught vis-a-vis Arabic and Quranic studies. Admittedly, the introduction of the Arabic/English school system was not easily achieved. The education authorities in the Northern Region and the headquarters in Accra had to go through various impediments before its realisation. Even when the system took of, many Muslims in Dagbon were sceptical about its success. However, the contributions of J.S. Kaleem, R.N. Yakubu and J.W. Abruquah who were all Regional Directors of Education for the Northern Region towards the establishment of the Arabic/English schools would for a long time be remembered by the people of Dagbon. With the emergence of the Arabic/English schools in Dagbon at the beginning of the 1972/73 academic year, many more children are now attending school. The apathy towards schooling generally is on the downward trend especially in the urban centres but some rural dwellers continue to show signs of apathy.

It is noted that the new school system in Dagbon has raised the literacy rate in Dagbon considerably because thousands of children who would have remained illiterate throughout their lives so far as secular subjects or English for that matter are concerned, have now been able to read and write both Arabic and English and a few of them have entered university during the 1987/88 academic year. Even though Muslim parents had genuine fears of their children and wards being indoctrinated with alien ideas and also gradually being

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converted to Christianity, there are many people who enjoyed secular education but have not wavered in their belief in Islam. Among them are prominent lawyers such as Alhaji Ibrahim Mahamah who served as Civilian Commissioner during the National Liberation Council regime and led the Trade Union Congress sponsored party, Social Democratic Front in the 1979 general elections; Alhaji Roland Alhassan, a one time leader of the opposition Popular Front Party in parliament after the 1979 general elections; Muhammed Mumuni a Tamale based legal practitioner and Muhammed Alhassan also a Tamale based lawyer as well as an examiner in Islamic studies with the West African Examination's Council. There are also medical practitioners such as Dr. Alhaji Awudu Tinorgah of Tamale hospital, Dr. Alhaji Muhammed Fuseini of the Korle-bu Teaching hospital, Dr. Alhaji Mutawakil also of the Korle-bu Teaching hospital, and Dr. Alhaji Shani of the Efia Nkwanta hospital in Sekondi. There are also educationists such as Alhaji B.A. Fuseini, Seini Seidu, Musah Sugri and Alhaji Abdul-Majeed Hussein. There are architects, engineers, administrators, University lecturers and bankers who are scattered all over Ghana. All these men enumerated above are sons of Muslims holding responsible positions in various instutions in Ghana and despite the English schools each of them passed through both at home and abroad, they have consistently maintained their stand as believers in Islam.

With the beginning of the 1987/88 academic year, all the Arabic/English schools have been re-designed as Islamic schools.

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Alhaji Ibrahim Basha is the Chairman of the National Council of the Islamic Education Unit which has its headquarters in Tamale. The incorporation of the Arabic school system into the public school system has been a great achievment for education in Dagbon, but the most unfortunate thing is that all schools under the control of Afa Ajura have opted out of the new system as a result of a directive from the Ghana Education Service that the Quranic school week should fall in line with that of the public schools in order that effective teaching and supervision from the service could be meaningful. All the Quranic schools protested vehemently against this directive at first, because they all felt that schooling on Friday is not appropriate in Islam. However, with time all the Quranic schools accepted the new directive except the Afa Ajura schools. The most unfortunate thing about Afa Ajura's boycott of the new system is that he has the largest Quranic school in Ghana and the largest number of pupils. These children are going to end up without secular education through no fault of theirs.

As a result of the desire by the Afanema to get good students sent to Arab countries for further studies, there have been some relationships between Dagbon and some Arab countries. Presently there are some Egyptians teaching in some of the Quranic schools under the auspices of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. There are also over fifty students from Dagbon currently studying in various universities in Saudi Arabia. Students in Dagbon have also benefitted from

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scholarships awarded by the governments of Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar and of late Malaysia. Other countries such as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Iran, Algeria and Sudan have assisted Quranic schools in Dagbon with funds and scholarships.

There is no doubt that Dagbon is predominantly Muslim but there are Christian churches and organisations operating in the area. All the orthodox churches and some of the spiritual ones are represented in Dagbon and mostly, they serve the spiritual needs of the Christians from Southern Ghana and the Upper Regions who live and work in Dagbon. All the leaders of these churches, except the Catholic church are people from Southern Ghana. The leader of the Catholic church in Dagbon is Archbishop Peter Dery, a Dagaaba from the Upper West Region. Despite the fact that Christianity has been in Dagbon for over seventy (70) years, the number or Dagbamba who haave embranced it is so negligible and the reason can easily be traced to the intensity of the influence of Islam on the Dagbamba. However, the Catholic, Baptist and Assemblies of God churches have now concentrated their effort in evangelism in the rural areas of Dagbon where they are gradually making an impact on the people. This achievement by the churches in the rural areas has been possible firstly because the impact of Islam in some of these rural areas has not been intense and secondly, these churches distribute free items such as wheat, non-fat dry milk, drugs, second-hand clothing and in some cases they have installed grinding mills in the villages so that they no longer

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have to walk long distances to grind their corn, millet or guinea-corn. It therefore appears that some of these rural dewllers accept Christianity for the sake of convenience rather than of conviction.

The relationship between Muslims and Christians has been cordial because there has never been any cause for confusion or clashes between them. This atmosphere of cordiality will continue to persist so long as one group does not undermine the other.

The main factors that have influenced Islam in Dagbon in this 20th century and has made the area to be aware of its Islamic values are as follows:

Islamic education in and contact with Islamic countries in the Middle East is an important factor in this regard. Arabic and Islamic students who were awarded scholarships by Islamic countries especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt have come back to Dagbon with new ideas both reformative and have introduced certain attitudes pertaining to social life in these areas such as the naming of the child on the seventh day instead of the eighth day after birth, the use of long dresses by women and inviting friends to tea parties while discussing Islamic issues affecting Dagbon. On reformative matters pertaining to the religion, these scholars come together to organise wazu sessions to educate the Muslim public

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about what obtains in the Arab world, especially in Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam. These scholars have helped to create a lot of religious awareness of the orthodox form among the Muslim populace in Dagbon and the people on the other hand have reposed confidence in them.

There is a strong hajj tradition in Dagbon. It has been observed that it is an accepted fact in Islam in West Africa that hajj has always influenced the growth of Islam. Rulers of the Sudanese states such as Mansa Musah of Mali and Askia Muhammad of Songhay are remembered for their colourful trips to the holy land of Islam. It did not only influence people of the Sudanese States but it helped to put these states on the world map. Even though in Dagbon no chief has taken the stand by some of these ancient rulers, yet the individual pilgrims after their return from hajj due to their affirmation of faith, envigorate the whole Islmic community. They actually give the whole community the feeling of the viability of Islam due to the international nature of the hajj. Moreover, even though most people in Dagbon would not have made the pilgrimage, the hajj with its international flavour and media coverage more or less gives prominence to Islam especially in a country with strong Christian influences. This prominence, it is believed, affirms the faith of the people.

The establishment of the English/Arabic schools by Mallam proprietors of prominence in learning is considered a

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great achievement in the history of Islam in Dagbon. The events surrounding the emergence of these schools in the early 1970's in particular, whatever be their setbacks at that time, fostered a strong affirmation of Islam for the people in the sense that since it was seen as a conflict between Christian tradition or secular and immoral tradition, they gave the reaffirmation of the people's faith. The setting up of the English/Arabic schools was a signal to the effect that although Islam was prepared to accept secular education, it was prepared to do so only on its own terms, which in effect means the acceptance of secular education guarded by the Islamic religion.

Nevertheless, one factor that has contributed to the growth of Islam and its reaffirmation in the country has been that Muslims who, despite traditional objections, have gone in for secular education have not apostasised. They rather have shown the value of the faith and have shown levels of deep understanding which is appreciated by the less educated in Dagbon as well as countrymen of other religious persuations. Since Dagbon is the most populated single Islamic ethnic group in Ghana, and has produced many of such scholars of standing in different spheres in the country such as in education, medicine, law, engineering and administration, the position is encouraging the young and up-coming to follow their example. Even the Arabic school does not end with the makaranta, but its pupils still pursue further studies in Islamic countries. Generally, that enables the growth of Islam in Dagbon hand in hand with modernity without any sense of the lost of Islam.

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Even though chieftaincy still has traditional elements in it, yet as discussed in the thesis, the recent skin disputes is not simply traditional. The problem did generate into a religious conflict between the Tijaniyya and the Munchire. Religious leaders on both sides became litigants in the dispute which seriously divided Muslims in Dagbon. This shows how strong the influence of Islam is in Dagbon and it would continue to stand the test of time.

One other factor that has contributed to the influence of Islam in Dagbon is the dawa (missionary) activity that is being carried out by some of the Afanema and the scholars who have graduated from Saudi Arabian universities. They organise sermons for secondary school students and the general Muslim public. On such occasions people ask questions in order to broaden their outlook on certain thorny issues and by so doing the people get to know more about their religious responsibilities.

For the projections for the future, there is no doubt that Dagbon is regarded as a crucial factor in Islamic influence in Ghana. Proof can be found in the fact that sectarian issues (apart from the Ahmadiyya and other Muslim problems) are raised more in Dagbon than anywhere else. A good example is the case where the Gulkpe-na, the chief of Tamale, assembled the leader of the Munchire and that of the Tijaniyya to discuss doctrinal positions between them. When the Shites

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wanted a fertile place to plant their doctrines and establish a base, Tamale was found most suitable. When the Saudis also wanted the majority of Muslims in Ghana to acknowledge orthodox Islam, they found it suitable to come to Tamale. Tamale has hosted many Muslim conferences because people realise how important Dagbon is to Islam. The attention that foreign Islamic nations pay to the area gives credence to it. This means that Dagbon has presented itself as a strong Islamic factor in this country and a strong pivot of Islam. When peace returns to the skin of Yendi and there are no conflicts as it is hoped from now onwards, there would be much peace and tranquility.

With the sort of Islamic learning that the indegenes of Dagbon are acquiring, gradually mixing will be removed from the society. This does not mean that the people of Dagbon will lose their culture because some of the cultural practices are not in conflict with Islam. It is hoped that higher institutions sponsored by Islamic states would be estabished in Dagbon. This would help change the face of Islam not only in Dagbon but throughout the country. It is true that Muslims in Dagbon are disadvantaged because they lacked secular education but with the establishment of these institutions, light would be thrown into the minds of the people so that the janitorial types of work that has for so long been associated with Muslims would be a thing of the past, at least in Dagbon.

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For Adamu Yakubu, Mecca is a walking distance

• Yakubu

THIS is a story of doggedness; of resoluteness and, above all, of human endurance. In January Adamu 'Ayarna' Yakubu had publicly declared he was going to trek to Mecca. Nobody took him seriously. Even his wife wasn't amused.

Seven months later, the petite, loosely sinewy Ghanaian sporting a brown cap and a golden tooth trekked from the Ghanaian High Commission in Lagos to *The Guardian* — about 16 kilometres away — to announce "it's been done".

Barely betraying any excitement, 28-year-old Yakubu says: "I have done it and I want people to know that the seemingly impossible task has been accomplished by the grace of Allah.

"Neither rain nor sun could stop me. Not even the fear of wild animals could... if you're not thinking bad about anybody nothing bad would happen to you. As I walk I pray to Allah".

Yakubu, who hails from Tamale, in Ghana, has been at different times a butcher, driver and sprayer. But Yakubu's odyssey and the attendant perils of trekking about 6,000 kilometres was informed by a noble, selfless ambition. Disturbed by the incessant wars and sufferings in the continent, he had embarked on his lonesome journey to seek Allah's assistance in uniting Africans

Yakubu had other requests to take to Mecca. Unflatteringly, he says, he also prayed that "Allah, the Almighty, the Mereciful change the minds of Africans especially Ghanians and Nigerians.

"People are doing all sorts of things to get money. Imagine people mixing all sorts of chemical solutions to sell either as petrol or kerosine. This is not fair."

Yakubu's conquest of Mecca trail is at the moment the climax of a deep passion for trekking. Last December, armed with an introductory note from Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Ghana's deputy secretary, Foreign Affairs, he journeyed from northern Ghana, across the Sahara to Burkina Faso and Algeria. His attempt to enter Libya was abortive when border guards accusing him of being a spy, turned him back. He braved his way back to Ghana. On December 26, he set out on a eastward mission from Ghana, Lome, Cotonou and Lagos. From Lagos he moved on to Abeokuta, Ife Ondo and Benin.

He moved on to Port Harcourt, where he crossed to Cameroun and then on to Khartoum through the Central African Republic. In Sudan, he stowed away in a ship to Mecca.

Dispelling rumours that he uses charms, he remarks: "As a matter of fact I have three speed-gears. I moved nine kilometres per hour; 10 kilometres per hour and eight miles per hour. At some place people follow me up to a kilometre and when they cannot keep pace they turn back". The journey to Mecca lasted 90 days. He used five pairs of shoes for the journey.

Yakubu's constant companion is a large straw bag which contains a gallon of water, a few clothing and some shoes. Yakubu, who speaks nine languages and has a daughter, reveals that his wife is not happy. She feels Yakubu is making a 'nuisance' of himself.

But the trekker who claims he can ride a bicycle for 200 kilometres, reveals an innate identity with this arduous past time. He says almost helplessly: "If I don't walk for a day I will fall sick. It is now a habit I can't easily do away with'.

— *Emeka Nwuka*

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The Mirror

Ghana's Most Popular Weekly

Saturday, November 5, 1988.
No. 1773. PRICE: ¢20.00

DAGBON MARKS DAMBA IN UNITY AND PEACE

From Ransford Tetteh & Naa Adei Duhtema Dsani, Yendi

ALL over the country, festivals have become very important in recent times because they create the atmosphere for peace and tranquillity.

For the people of Dagbon Traditional Area in the Northern Region which until recently had its peace punctuated with bloody clashes, this year's Damba festival marked the beginning of a new era — an era of reconciliation and brotherhood.

The manner in which people of all ages danced with glee to the throbbing of drums showed how they enjoyed the festival and a cross-section of people interviewed did not hesitate but like Oliver Twist, asked for more wisdom for the Ya-Na in his attempt at eliminating all traces of division in the Dagbon state.

Damba is a festival celebrated on a modest scale by all moslems in Ghana to commemorate the birth of Prophet Muhammed (SAW). But for Dagombas all over the country, this festival holds a special significance, it is one festival that dignifies the traditional authority of the Ya-Na and his various chiefs over their people.

Last weekend at Yendi, the traditional capital of the Dagombas, the theme was expressed in a most colourful and captivating manner that will remain a memorable landmark for years to come.

Activities marking the festival were sufficiently laced with valuable cultural fiesta in such a way that it generated so much excitement and comment.

The history of the festival has it that sometime in the history of the Dagombas (1700), the Ya-Na, Naa Zangina, embraced Islam and consequently filled his court with moslem intellectuals. The Damba festival thus came to be adopted by the royal family and later made part of the most important festival of the people.

What actually happened defies description. Thus one needs to see it rather than be told for it, there is one traditional festival in Ghana which the south eagerly look forward to and actively participate in, then it is Damba.

The crowd which witnessed the activities marking the festival was unprecedented. Yendi, 60 miles east of Tamale, was virtually under siege. Around the Ya-Na's palace there was traditional drumming and dancing, the firing of musketry and the making of new friends.

This year's festival started two weeks before the climax. While the people awaited the appearance of the new moon, visitors thronged the town and families were reunited. During this period, a nightly drumming and dancing session was held at the palace grounds. All over the town, feverish preparations were made to usher in the festival.

Then on Wednesday night last week, the moon finally appeared. It was greeted with wild jubilation all over the town. After that began a series of durbars each with a special ritual and significance.

On Sunday morning, a grand durbar was attended by hundreds of divisional, sub and village chiefs to pay homage to the Ya-Na. The chief's chief Imam and some elders of the state performed the traditional rice picking ritual which symbolises the elimination of all evil and people with evil intentions from the society. The ceremony was witnessed by a large crowd including some tourists.

After this, the Ya-Na, Yakubu Andani II, with his elders, danced around a cow which was later slaughtered for the ancestors to seek their blessing and goodwill for the coming year.

The climax of the festival was an all-night vigil attended by virtually the whole town. The chief in full regalia, graced the occasion with his presence. His 28 wives, all beautifully decorated with jewels and spotting clean shaven heads (for identification) led a session of singing and dancing in honour of the chief. The lyrics of their song narrated historical events, the achievements and problems of the Dagbon state. They also sang the adulation of the

(Contd. on Pg. 8/9)

• *The Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II in his usual flashy and entertaining self, treating the teeming and overflowing crowd to the best of the great 'Damba' dance at Yendi. Picture by* **Asare Anoquah.**

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FORUM FORUM FORUM FORUM FORUM FORUM

Interview: A. B. A. Fuseini
Pictures: ASARE ANOQUAH

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DAMBA

Views from YENDI

YIDAN ZEMOLI-ZAKARI ABDULAI, 82, MALLAM, YENDI

DAMBA is celebrated by other tribes as well as by Dagombas and is basically a birthday anniversary celebration of the prophet of Islam.

Damba emerged with the conversion to Islam of the chiefs and people of these areas. With the lapse of time, the Islamic practices and the traditional Dagomba ones became merged with political, religious and cultural dimensions standing out clearly.

Damba affords the people the opportunity to pay respect to the Ya-Na and his chiefs and elders as well as reflect on all matters that hinder the sound development of the area.

MR MOHAMMADU NASSAM, 40, SOCIAL WORKER

DAMBA is one of the many festivals of Dagbon. It, however, has no equal. Even though it is basically to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muhammed, Damba has gone beyond mere merry-making.

It is now an instrument for unifying the people of Dagbon and strengthening the traditional basis of chieftaincy in the Dagomba Traditional Area.

The portrayal of pure, unadulterated Dagomba culture through dress, dance and the drum, show that Dagombas remain among only a few African tribes to maintain intact, their culture from the dominance of other cultures.

The opportunity to plan and foster development, especially by the youth during this period, is remarkable. Damba on the whole, unites and strengthens Dagbon.

MADAM SANKA IMORO, 48, HOUSEWIFE.

DAMBA is the greatest festival for the people of Dagbon in particular and the northern part of Ghana in general. It is to celebrate the birth of prophet Muhammed (S.A.W) and also the embracing of Islam by the Ya-Na and his people.

Apart from strengthening the power and authority of the chief, Damba affords women especially, the opportunity to assert themselves in a predominantly male society by enabling them to demonstrate great deeds chalked by women in the past. Damba also offers women the opportunity to meet and plan on issues that affect women and to openly advocate for action to attain those goals.

DR ANDANI ANDAN, 64, CHIEF OF SAGNERIGU

Damba marks the anniversary of the birth of prophet Muhammed (SAW).

Though it started as a largely Islamic festival, it assumed a greater political dimension and significance with the conversion to Islam of Ya-Na Zangina, one of the most progressive Dagomba chiefs.

The acceptance of Islam by Na Zangina principally meant that Islamic festivals, names and practices increasingly interacted and eventually merged with Dagbon cultural practices. Thus, religion and politics all became one and came under the influence of the Ya-Na and his chiefs. This explains why the Damba festival, apart from celebrating the anniversary of the prophet of Islam, is also an occasion to glorify and dignify the Ya-Na and his chiefs.

Damba serves as a rallying instrument for all Dagombas. During this festival, Dagombas of all shades and colour, converge at their towns and villages and especially at the traditional capital of Yendi, to offer their thanks to God, their gods and ancestors for living through the year and to ask for longer life.

It is also an opportunity to plan and implement development projects, appraise the successes and failures of the different areas of Dagbon and to strengthen the policital basis of chieftaincy in Dagbon.

Damba's most significant point, therefore, lies in its ability to unify all Dagombas as a homogenous entity and to proceed from there to mobilise them to undertake socio-economic ventures to improve upon their lives.

MR ISSAHAKU SIBIDOW 38, DISTRICT SECRETARY FOR YENDI

DAMBA as a festival for Dagombas both celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muhammed (SAW) and the embracing by the traditional Dagomba authority (the Ya-Na) of Islam some hundreds of years ago. Damba has thus with the passage of time come to mean an occasion to rejoice and make merry on the remembrance of the prophet and also to elevate, dignify and give reverence to the institution of chieftaincy in Dagbon centred around the Ya-Na. This largely explains why it is difficult to separate religion from traditional political authority of the chief in Dagbon.

Damba is one festival in which the active participation of the masses is very clear. It affords the people the opportunity among others, to participate in the taking and implementation of decisions especially related to development projects that promote the interests and welfare of the people. Towards this end, Damba is a period very conducive to the mobilisation of the people for the implementation of projects like dams, schools, clinics etc. This is very important in our current socio-economic and political transformation process in which the active participation of the masses is foremost. The fact that Dagombas who stay outside their areas return home to contribute in cash and kind and to participate directly in these development activities is testimony of the relevance of Damba to the lives of the people. This period also affords the chiefs and people of other areas the opportunity to meet, discuss and exchange ideas on the coming district assembly election and other issues that directly have a bearing in shaping their destinies.

Damba, it must also not be forgotten, is an excellent opportunity for the exhibition of the pure and unadulterated Dagomba culture. This is very important considering our drive to emphasise and strengthen our Ghanaian culture against alien, bankrupt cultures that can alienate and enslave our people. Damba is indeed the greatest festival in the northern part of this country.

ALHAJI A ABDUL-SAMED, 68, CONTRACTOR, YENDI

DAMBA, as an occasion for joy and merry-making, marks the birth day of Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W.). Again, it marks the merging of Islamic cultural practices with those of Dagbon, centred around the Ya-Na and his chiefs.

By its ability to blend the Islamic culture with the traditional Dagomba cultural practices, the Damba festival has not only succeeded in providing political unity and cohesion to the people of Dagbon, but has enabled Dagombas to maintain and hold fast to their roots and thus preserve them as a dynamic and proud group.

The added significance of Damba is that many of the abled bodied youth outside Dagbon return home during this period to join those at home in the planning and implementation of development projects like dams, schools, clinics, etc. to improve upon the lives of the people. Thus, Damba also acts as a true democratic instrument through which the people including those absentee Dagombas, take direct part in decisions affecting their area.

MIIA ABDULAI IMORO, 78, SAMPAHI-NA

DAMBA is an occasion to remember the birth of the prophet of Islam. On the twelth day of the month of Damba, the first part of Damba called sumo, is celebrated.

This is a rehearsal to usher in the real Damba, called Na Damba, which lasts two days, one week later. On the first day of Na Damba, a symbolic ceremony involving the picking of stones mixed with rice and the dancing around a cow by mallams and some elders take place. The final Damba then begins.

Damba's significance lies in the fact that it brings many of the chiefs and people together to jointly appraise the common problems of the area and find suitable answers to them.

Again, by ensuring that the people pay allegiance to the Ya-Na and his chiefs, Damba becomes an instrument for ensuring political order and stability. This contributes to promote and sustain development.

MRS FATI MUNKAILA, 48, TEACHER.

DAMBA is an occasion for merry-making and sober reflection of the birth of the prophet of Islam.

Damba stands out as the most important festival in Dagbon principally because of its political, religious and cultural dimensions that add up to strengthen Dagbon culture.

It also affords women through the central role they play during the festival, to assert themselves. The main significance is that it binds all Dagombas together as one people with a common destiny.

YENNAA-ADAM ABDULAI, 86, IMAM TO THE CHIEF OF SAGNERIGU

DAGBON has many festivals but Damba is the most important of them all. Apart from serving as a commemorative birthday ceremony, Damba serves, through the medium of the drum, dance and regalia of the Ya-Na and his chiefs, to remind the present generation of the greatness of Dagbon in the past.

It is also to instil in the youth the spirit of sacrifice and hard work and to always strive to hold Dagbon in the highest esteem. Damba unifies and strengthens Dagombas of all ranks and background.

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APPENDIX "C"

/C O P Y

Sang Youth Association,
C/o Mr. E.A. Mahamah,
District Education Office,
P.O. Box 7,
Yendi.

4th August, 1982.

Sir,

APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF SCHOOL TO AN
ARABIC-ENGLISH SCHOOL

We of the above association would be very grateful if you could change our village's Local Authority Primary School, which is at present strictly English bias, to an Arabic-English one.

2. We have observed that the poor enrolment of the school over the years is due to the fact that the local population, predominantly Muslim, is too apathetic about sending their children to the school because Islamic education is absent there.

3. Sir, it is clear therefore that the change we are advocating is necessary to improve enrolment in the school, and education in its entirety in the locality.

4. We end here hoping for your kind consideratin and immediate action.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) A.I. Abukari
(ASSISTANT SECRETARY)

THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE,
P.O. BOX 7,
YENDI.

cc: The Chairman,
P.D.C., Sang.

The Chairman,
S.A.Y.A., Sang.

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APPENDIX "D"

/C O P Y

National Headquarters,
Ghana Education Service,
P.O. Box M.45,
Accra.

Ref. EF.2731/7

22nd February, 1983.

ENGLISH/ARABIC SCHOOLS WORKING ON MONDAY - FRIDAY
AS THE SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN AND UPPER REGIONS

The above mentioned issue has been the subject of series of discussions and consultations with interested groups and school authorities in the Northern Region for sometime now. In addition, we have also had the advantage of ascertaining the views of Muslim professors outside this country on the same matter.

2. The following observations are therefore made on the issue for the guidance of English/Arabic schools.

(a) The statutory working days for this country are Monday - Friday. School visits/inspections are carried out conveniently on these days. Public schools observing different working days are likely to create problems for our supervising staff and the Government.

(b) Private and public functions, celebration of local festivals, funerals, soccer matches, political rallies, to mention a few, are observed on Saturdays and Sundays. This is in the interest of productivity whch is a priority area for the Government. Teachers employed in schools working on Saturdays and Sundays are bound to pay less attention to their work on these days. Some may not attend school at all. The effect on pupils in these schools cannot be favourable and the Northern and Upper Regions stand to lose by this practice.

(c) The views of Muslim professors in Muslim Universities outside this country indicate that students, workers and businessmen could attend to their legitimate duties on Friday after discharging their prayer obligation. They claim that this does not contradict Koranic teaching. In fact, this is the practice with many Muslims in this country.

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Appendix "D" (continued)

3. We would therefore take this opportunity to request all concerned - school proprietors, parents and Muslim leaders - to ensure that English/Arabic schools which would like to avail themselves of Government aid operate from Monday to Friday as all other public schools.

4. The Regional Director (Northern) is by copy of this letter requested to ensure that this decision as contained in paragraph 3 is carried out, and it is hoped that the Gbewaa Study Group will assist in getting the decision implemented in the interest of the children of this area.

(Sgd.) D.V. Owiredu
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

THE CHAIRMAN,
COMMITTEE, ENGLISH/ARABIC SCHOOLS,
GBEWAA STUDY GROUP,
TAMALE.

cc: Regional Director,
Ghana Education Service.
Northern Region.

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APPENDIX "E"

Islamic Education

By Mike Atiadevey

ALHAJI Ibrahim Basha, Chairman of the National Council of the Islamic Education Unit, has assured proprietors of Islamic Schools in the country that the adoption of their schools into public system by the government does not mean a take-over.

Rather, he explained, the measure is to get rid of illiteracy in the muslim communities in the country and to help them to adopt modern techniques of teaching.

Alhaji Basha said this when he met proprietors of Islamic Schools at Nima in Accra at the weekend as part of his two-week educational tour of all the regions.

He said the government has made available the necessary syliabus for the unit up to secondary and university levels, and advised the proprietors to follow the government's syllabi.

The chairman, who expressed concern over the lack of educational training in the muslim community, stressed that the Islamic Education Unit is not an individual property but for the benefit of all muslims in the country.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Who are the Dagomba people?

2. Which of the following do Dagombas trace their origin: Arabs; Wangara or Dyula; Hausas and give your reasons for your answer. Any other?

3. How did Dagombas come to settle in their present home? And when?

4. Before the advent of Islam into Dagbon, what was the religious life of the people - Did they believe in the Supreme Being?

5. How did Islam come into Dagbon? Was it through wars or it was a peaceful movement?

6. When the Muslims arrived what was

   (a) their attitude to the people?

   (b) the peoples attitude to them?

7. Why did chiefs tolerate Muslims in their courts?

8. You are quite aware of the fact that Islam does not compromise on associating partners with Allah but certain rites performed by chiefs go contrary to this significant Islamic dogma, but the Muslims did not criticise it. Why do you think it was so?

9. Why is it that there are many Muslims in Dagbon?

10. What is "Yara Yara" and why is it organised on Mondays and Fridays?

11. Is "Yara Yara" a Dagbani or Hausa word?

12. When a man dies in Dagbon, the third, seventh and fortieth day burial rites are performed. Some Muslims observe it but mostly the non-Muslim Dagombas observe it. Was it introduced by Muslims or they came to meet this practice?

13. What other practices of the 'Dagbandaba' have found their way into Islam and vice versa.

14. Muslims do not eat carrion, blood and pork and some "Dagbandaba' do not eat such things. Is it an influence of Islam?

15. Why is it that outdoorings are termed 'suuna' and weddings 'amariya'?

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16. Why is it that the 'Dagbandaba' have adopted the practice of naming their babies as is done in Islam?

17. Why is it that there are many more Islamic Scholars in the urban areas of Dagbon but not in the rural areas?

18. Do you think that this has affected conversion in the rural areas?

19. Why is it that Christianity has not made any serious impact among Dagombas?

20 For the past five years the Catholics and Baptists have been making headways in their conversions in Dagomba villages. Why do you think that they are succeeding in the rural areas?

21. Have you any idea as to whether the people in a particular village or area clashing with Muslims or Christians?

22. If yes, name the village and why the clash.

23. Have you heard or seen any clash between two Muslim groups?

24. If yes, name the place and explain why.

25. It is believed that Muslims are not united in Dagbon. What accounts for this unfortunate problem?

26. What can bring about unity among Muslims in Dagbon?

27. Why are 'Damba', 'Kpini', and 'Bugum' festivals associated with Islam?

28. Dagbon is predominantly Muslim. Will you as a result advocate that Islamic law should be practiced in Dagbon? Whether yes or no, give reasons for your answer.

29. Do you think that Islamic education needs a serious change?

30. What change or changes would you advocate.

31. Do you think that Dagbon will still be predominantly Muslim in the next fifty (50) years? Whether Yes or No, give reasons for your answer.

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APPENDIX "F" (2)

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. When and how did you become a Muslim?

   (a) Conversion (b) Inheritance

2. Did you ever prefer to follow some other religion?

3. Do you believe that Dagbon is predominantly Muslim? If yes give your reasons.

4. Which areas of Dagbon are not Islamised and why?

5. Are all members of your family Muslims? If yes, why?

6. Why do you think all your people should be Muslims?

7. If one of your children tells you he wants to follow a different faith, what will be your reaction?

8. Do you think that there are very prominent and learned Muslims in Dagbon? If yes, name them.

9. How did such people acquire their prominence and learning?

10. What has given rise to disunity among Dagbon Muslims?

11. What are your suggestions towards bringing Dagbon Muslims together.

12. Have you taken sides in the conflict? Give reasons for your answer.

13. Do you think that 'mixing' is common in Dagbon? Give reasons for your answer.

14. If your answer is 'yes' to question thirteen (13), what is its root course?

15. What is the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Dagbon?

16. What contributions has Islam made to the people in Dagbon?

17. What is the relation between the people of Dagbon and Arab countries?

18. What is your observation about Muslims in Dagbon vis-a-vis Salaat, Siyaam, Zakaat and Hajj?