

**RECONSTRUCTING SACRED SPACE: THE PLACE AND RELEVANCE
OF ABASUA PRAYER MOUNTAIN IN CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAN
CHRISTIANITY**

BY

PHILIP KWADWO OKYERE (REV.)



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

JULY, 2012.

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS**

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DECLARATION

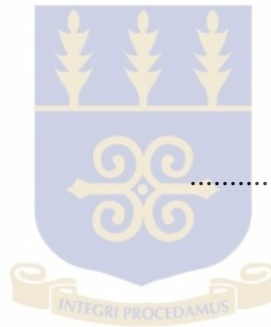
I hereby declare that this thesis is in no way a reproduction, in part or in whole, of any work ever submitted for the award of a degree. It is my own original research undertaken under supervision.

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my dear wife, Asafo Maame Martha Okyere, and my sons, Cyril Akwasi Ampofo-Okyere, John Osei-Kwaku Okyere and Philip Kwadwo-Badu Okyere.



ABSTRACT

Sacred spaces and their attendant pilgrimage attractions are prevalent in almost all religious traditions in the world. People's belief in the presence of the luminous or transcendent reality at places and the possibility of their interaction with the luminous through prayer rituals, do not only define those places as sacred, but are also some of the major reasons for pilgrimage to such places. Thus, the traditional notion of sacred places as spaces for prayer, worship and divine revelation is virtually ubiquitous in all discourses on sacred spaces.

In addition to the spiritual significance of sacred places is their potential in bringing about human development. This however has not attracted much scholarly attention. In this work, therefore, the researcher uses the Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghana as a contextual example to argue that the relevance of sacred spaces should not be limited only to their traditional functions as places for pilgrims' encounter with a transcendent reality. Rather, owing largely to the massive pilgrimage attractions to those places, they are also relevant in promoting development in four thematic areas: spiritual, mental, physical and social.

An eclectic methodology including historical, phenomenological and theological models were used to guide the data collected. On the research field, the researcher employed interviews and participant observation to gather the needed field data. The researcher has used Clifford Geertz's social-anthropological approach to ground the discussion.

It was found out, among others, that even though the Prayer Mountain promotes human development in the above - mentioned four thematic areas, it directly and sometimes indirectly stifles development. In this sense, the Abasua Prayer Mountain phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity has been described as a paradox in this study.

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I also owe tons of gratitude and appreciation to all the lecturers in the Department for the study of Religions, especially those who taught me during the course work. They include Rev. Prof. Elom Dovlo, Prof. Elizabeth Amoah (Grandma), Rev. Dr. Abamfo Atiemo and Dr. Willie Golo. Special thanks go to Dr. Afe Adogame for helping to shape my research topic.

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LIST OF RELEVANT ABBREVIATIONS

APM	Abasua Prayer Mountain
CMs	Christian Ministries
CT	Camp Three
MCG	Methodist Church Ghana
PCG	Presbyterian Church of Ghana
PCs	Prayer Camps
PM	Prayer Mountain

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The notion of sacred space is one of the more prominent dimensions of religious expression in the world. Almost all religions designate certain places as sacred or holy, and this designation often encourages believers or adherents to visit those places in pilgrimage.¹ Robert H. Dalton identifies and briefly describes almost all the sacred spaces that are prominent in all the historic or World Religions.² These World Religions include Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc³.

There seems to be a universal appreciation of the notion that much of the scholarly work on sacred space is built upon the foundation established by Mircea Eliade in his book on *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. In this work, Eliade explores how secular or profane space is converted into holy or sacred space, and suggests that this symbolic process reflects the spiritual characteristics associated with both the physical features and the deeper, abstract implications of delimiting a particular site as sacred. Designation of a site as sacred is generally a response to two types of events. Some events (which Eliade calls *hierophanic*)

¹ Chris Park, 'Religion and Geography' in Hinnells, J. (ed.) *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 19.

² Robert Dalton H. (ed.), *Sacred Places of the World: A religious Journey Across the Globe* (India: Abhishek Publications, 2010), Preface.

³ For a detailed discussion on these World Religions, see Dean C. Halverson, (Gen. ed.) *The Compact Guide to World Religions* (Minnesota, USA: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), pp.13-234. C.f. Michael Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge and Change* (second edition) (USA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2002), pp. 59-525.

involve a direct manifestation on earth of a deity, whereas in other (*theophanic*) events somebody receives a message from the deity and interprets it for others.⁴

In this background to the study, the researcher focuses more on Christian sacred spaces in the context of their antecedents in the Bible⁵. The contention is that the resurgence or current emphasis⁶ on sacred space in contemporary Christianity dates back to times immemorial.⁷ The Bible is, therefore, one of the ideal historical points of reference in this regard.

Since the notion of sacred space is not prevalent only in Christianity but also in the other World Religions⁸, an attempt is made to highlight some of the sacred spaces in some of the other World Religions and other social contexts. This is to underscore the idea of sacred space as one of the common characteristics of almost all religions. In Islam, for instance, Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, is noted as a major and popular sacred space for Muslims (believers of Islamic religion) all over the world.⁹ Other Islamic sacred spaces include Blue Mosque in Istanbul,¹⁰ Mashhad in Iran¹¹ and Shiraz also in Iran.¹² Moreover, Miyajima Island in Japan is a sacred site of both

⁴ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (United States of America: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 20 – 27.

⁵ Gen. 22:2, Ex. 19: 18 – 20; 24:9 – 18, Ps. 2:6; 48:1 – 2, 1 Kgs. 18: 19 – 39, Matt. 5:1-7:29; 17: 1-21., Mk. 9:2-13.; Lk. 9:28-36., II Pet. 1: 16-18.

⁶ Dalton (ed.), *Sacred Places of the World*, pp. 7- 207. C.f. Peter Jan Margry (ed.) *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to understanding the Medieval Cathedral* (California: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 147-170., Gideon Bar, 'Reconstructing the past: The Creation of Jewish Sacred Space in the State of Israel, 1948 – 1967' *Israel Studies*, 13(2008), pp. 1-21. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30245829>, [accessed: 10 October 2011].

⁷ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20-27.

⁸ Dalton (ed.), *Sacred Places of the World*, pp. 7- 207. C.f. Jean Holm and John Bowker (eds), *Sacred Place* (United Kingdom: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), pp. 8-203.

⁹ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, pp. 88-90.

¹⁰ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 155.

¹¹ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 95.

¹² Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 97.

Shinto and Buddhism and is believed to be one of the most enchantingly beautiful places on Earth.¹³

Mary W. Helms also underscores the following as some of the sacred landscapes that could be found in most regions of the world: the networks of earthen mounds characteristic of pre-Columbian eastern North America, the numerous temple complexes of the lowland Maya, the interrelated oracle sanctuaries of the Igbo of Nigeria, the sacred places where the mythic ancestors of Australian Aboriginal tribes first emerged from the earth during the Dreaming, and the distributions of Neolithic chambered monuments in southern Wales.¹⁴

It could be inferred from Helm's brief survey that a discourse on sacred space is not only limited to mountains. In addition to great mountains like Kilimanjaro in Africa, Michael Molloy points out that sacred space may also encompass a volcano, a valley, a lake, a forest, a single large tree or some other striking natural site.¹⁵ Molloy further asserts that sacred space could also be constructed in a symbolic shape such as a circle or square, and defined by a special building or by a boundary made of rope or of rocks, such as Stonehenge in England. It could even be an open area among trees or buildings, such as the great open space between the temples of Teotihuacan, near Mexico City.¹⁶

From the above, it is obvious that the phenomenon of sacred space is prevalent and integral in almost all religious and socio-cultural contexts. In the light of this apparent universality, the variations in the symbolic representation of these sacred spaces have not

¹³ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 44.

¹⁴ Mary W. Helms, *Sacred Landscape and the Early Medieval European Cloister: Unity, Paradise, and the Cosmic Mountain* (Anthropos Bd.: Anthropos Institute Stable, 2002), p. 435. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40466044>, [accessed: 10 October 2011].

¹⁵ Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions*, p. 36.

¹⁶ Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions*, p. 36.

escaped the intellectual gaze. Henryk Zimon, for instance, has found out ‘The sacredness of the Earth among the Konkomba of Northern Ghana’ and other parts of West Africa¹⁷. Researchers such as Clement Dorm–Adzobu, Okyeame Ampadu–Agyei and Peter G.Veit have also discussed ‘Religious Beliefs and Environmental Protection’ in the context of ‘The Malshegu Sacred Grove in Northern Ghana.’¹⁸ In these instances, the ‘Earth’ and the ‘Grove’ are the respective symbolic representations of the sacred spaces among the Konkomba and the Malshegu people.

The implication of this is that the notion of sacred space is not in any way alien to Ghana’s religious cosmology. In Traditional African Religion, for instance, John D.K. Ekem discusses priesthood in Akan Traditional Religions and makes mention of the following as some of the popular shrines in Ghana: Akonnedi at Larteh-Akuapem in the Eastern Region and Kwaku Fri at Nwoase-Wenchi in the Brong-Ahafo Region.¹⁹ Moreover, the present researcher is personally aware of other shrines in the Asante Region. These include Antoa Nyamaa at Antoa and Gadawu at Agona-Asamang. In his *Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity* Isaac Owusu-Ansah has also outlined and discussed some Christian sacred spaces in the context of Prayer Camps in Ghana: Grace Deliverance Centre for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), Kusa Camp for the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG), Edumfa Prayer Centre for the Church of Pentecost and Abasua Prayer Mountain (APM).²⁰ His research ‘sought to evaluate the use of

¹⁷ Henryk Zimoń, *The Sacredness of the Earth among the Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, (Anthropos: Anthropos Institute Stable, 2003), pp. 421-443. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40467332>, [accessed: 10/10/2011].

¹⁸ Clement Dorm – Adzobu, et al, *Religious Beliefs and Environmental Protection: The Malshegu Sacred Grove in Northern Ghana* (Kenya: World Resources Institute: 1991), pp. 421 – 443.

¹⁹ For details on Akonnedi and Kwaku Fri Shrines, see John D. K.. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context: A Study of Priesthood in some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana and its Relevance for Mother-Tongue Biblical Interpretation* (Accra, Ghana: SonLife Press, 2009), pp.43-57.

²⁰ Isaac Owusu-Ansah, ‘Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity’, Long Essay (Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon 2005), pp. 5-48.

[APM] in Ghanaian Christianity.’²¹ The traditional notion of APM as a place for worship, prayer and divine revelation was, thus, the crux of Owusu-Ansah’s study. In this present work, however, the researcher interrogates Owusu-Ansah’s focus and examines the extent to which APM has been reconstructed.

In this reconstruction, the researcher seeks to find out the extent to which APM also promotes or stifles human development. The phenomenon of APM in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity, to a large extent, implies that the notion of sacred space or sacred mountains is not a novel one or a recent phenomenon in Christianity.²² There are several biblical antecedents of sacred spaces.²³ Mountains in the Old Testament which Finely E. Harvey believes were often chosen as the place for worship or divine revelation include Moriah (Gen. 22:2), Sinai (Ex. 19: 18 – 20; 24:9 – 18), Zion (Ps. 2:6; 48:1 – 2) and Carmel (1 Kgs. 18: 19 – 39).²⁴

Mount Moriah is believed to be the place where God tested the faith of Abraham by commanding him to offer his only son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. Probably Abraham’s obedience and faith in God’s word to readily offer up Isaac as a burnt offering on the mountain may have resulted in God’s providential intervention. The Bible points out that Abraham was just about to slay his son when the angel of the Lord called him by name, ‘Abraham! Abraham!, do not lay a

²¹ Owusu-Ansah, ‘Abasua Prayer Mountain, p.49.

²² Finely E. Harvey, ‘Mountain’ in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 1157. C.f. Barnabe Assohoto and Samuel Engewa, ‘Genesis’ in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), pp. 42 - 43., Keith N. Schoville, ‘Jerusalem. The Name.’ in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996). P. 394., Abel Ndjerareou, ‘Exodus’ in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 90., Davison G. Vernon, ‘Carmel’ in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds.) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 315.

²³ Gen. 22:2, Ex. 19: 18 – 20; 24:9 – 18, Ps. 2:6; 48:1 – 2, 1 Kgs. 18: 19 – 39, Matt. 5:1-7:29; 17: 1-21., Mk. 9:2-13.; Lk. 9:28-36., II Pet. 1: 16-18.

²⁴ Harvey, ‘Mountain’, p. 1157.

hand on the boy' (Gen 22:10 – 12a). Barnabe Assohoto and Samuel Ngewa have described the words of the angel of God as 'the most comforting message.'²⁵ The Lord spared Isaac for Abraham through a miraculous provision of a ram. Abraham sacrificed it instead of Isaac (Gen 22:13). Abraham gave this place a name: '*The Lord will provide*'²⁶ or '*Yahweh – jireh*, "The Lord sees."²⁷ Mount Moriah was, thus, a sacred place where Abraham worshipped and offered sacrifice to God.

Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai is perceived to be another biblical antecedent of sacred spaces. In his commentary on 'God's call to Moses' in Exodus 3:1-10, Abel Ndjerareou rightly points out that

The place where God chose to reveal himself [to Moses] was Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai (3:1). Here God attracts Moses' attention by using a strange sight – a bush that burns without burning up (3: 2-3)... Because God is present, the ground where Moses is standing is declared to be *holy*. He is told not to come any closer and to take off his sandals as a sign of humility and worship.²⁸

It could be observed that in the context of Mount Moriah and Mount Horeb and, of course, other sacred spaces to be considered later, the sacredness of a place may be defined and informed by the belief of the presence of the supernatural in that space. This supernatural, in the case of Mount Moriah and Mount Horeb, was perceived to be God. Various signs or manifestations could represent God's presence at a place. In the case of Mount Moriah, the miraculous provision of a ram instead of Isaac as the object for the burnt offering was perceived to be a dramatic manifestation of God's presence there. This perception of the reality of

²⁵ Assohoto and Engewa, 'Genesis', p. 43.

²⁶ Assohoto and Engewa, 'Genesis', p. 43.

²⁷ Schoville, 'Jerusalem. The Name.' P.394. (Emphases original)

²⁸ Ndjerareou, 'Exodus' p. 90.

miraculous intervention may however be contested by skeptics who seem to banish the miraculous to the prescientific world of medieval superstition.²⁹

In the case of Mount Horeb or Sinai, one of the manifestations believed to depict God's presence there was a bush in flames without burning up. Ndjerareou is of the opinion that 'The fire is said to represent *the angel of the Lord*, that is, the angelic form in which God at times reveals himself to humans (3:4; see also Gen. 16: 19). In [Exodus] 19:18, fire will again symbolize the presence of God.'³⁰

In addition to the above sacred spaces is Zion. Keith N. Schoville thinks that Zion is a word probably derived from a Semitic root related to a fortified tower atop a mountain. It is believed that its earliest appearance in the Bible equates the stronghold of Zion with the City of David (2 Sam. 5:7). Zion, then, was the fortified hill of Jebus conquered by David.³¹ Schoville indicates that Zion was originally a geographic term for the City of David, but with the extension of the city to incorporate the Temple Mount, it came to signify the dwelling place of Yahweh (Ps. 9:11). The move of the Ark of the Covenant from the tent in the city to the temple proper may have prompted the shift of name.

In contemporary times, Zion is used as a synonym for all Jerusalem.³² As a synonym of Zion, Jerusalem is now believed to be the city or dwelling place of God. Perhaps it is against the backdrop of this perception that John Rea and George Turner describe Jerusalem as the "spiritual

²⁹ Ronald J. Sider, 'Miracles, Methodology and Modern Western Christology' in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.) *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Michigan, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), p. 238.

³⁰ Ndjerareou, 'Exodus', p. 90. (Emphasis original).

³¹ Schoville, 'Jerusalem. The Name.' p. 393.

³² Schoville, 'Jerusalem. The Name.' p. 393.

capital of the world.”³³ Their description corroborates the United Nations’ resolution of 1947 which designated Jerusalem an international holy city.³⁴

It could be observed that the connection of Zion or Jerusalem with the sacred mountain of God is implicit in many of the references to mountains in the Old Testament. Schoville traces the historical basis of this connection as follows:

The concept of a sacred mountain as the abode of deities was common in the ancient Near East. At Ugarit on the North Syrian coast, Mount Zaphon to the north was the sacred mountain. The most active of the gods of Ugarit was called Baal – Zaphon. Psalm 48: 3..., refers to Jerusalem as “the utmost height of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.” The poet has drawn on Canaanite imagery to enhance praise of the Lord.³⁵

The perception of Mount Zion or Jerusalem as a holy site indicates the possibility of reconstructing a secular space into a sacred space.³⁶ David’s military prowess, among others, may have enabled him to convert what was formerly called ‘the city of David’ or ‘Zion’ to ‘the dwelling place of God.’³⁷

The survey of Old Testament sacred mountains or spaces would be incomplete without Mount Carmel. It is believed to be the site where Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal in a contest (1 Kgs. 18). Davison G. Vernon points out that ancient sanctuaries to the weather deities were built on the heights of Mount Carmel; thus it was a fitting site for the contest between Elijah and the prophets of the Canaanite storm-god Baal. The Egyptians called Carmel a sacred cape.³⁸ Vernon thus corroborates Schoville’s description of sacred mountains as the abode of deities. The colonization of mountains or spaces by deities and the re-appropriation of those mountains

³³ John Rea and George Turner ‘Jerusalem’ in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 905.

³⁴ Rea and Turner ‘Jerusalem’, p. 905.

³⁵ Schoville, ‘Jerusalem. The Name.’ p.394.

³⁶ For details on ‘Creating sacred spaces’, see. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, pp. 153 – 164.

³⁷ Schoville, ‘Jerusalem. The Name.’ p. 393.

³⁸ Vernon, ‘Carmel’, p. 315.

as sacred spaces in different religio-cultural contexts are therefore research areas worth exploring.

The New Testament (especially the Synoptic Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark and Luke), is not without some references to Jesus' mountaintop experiences. Popular among these experiences include the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29) and the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-21.; Mk. 9:2ff.; Lk. 9:28-36.; II Pet. 1: 16-18).

The mountain plateau where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, according to Donald R. Sime, has often been referred to as the Mount of Beatitudes.³⁹ Many scholars have compared the Mount of Beatitudes to Mount Sinai, where God, through Moses, first taught his moral codes by the law (Ex. 19 – 20).⁴⁰ For instance, Delitzsch is cited by Sime as having called the Mount of Beatitudes the "Sinai of the New Testament."⁴¹ Delitzsch thus corroborates the view of Thomas Watson that the law was first given on Mount Sinai and on the Mount of Beatitudes Christ expounded it.⁴² The evidence of this, in the opinion of the present writer, is underscored in Grant R. Osborne's view about the inseparability between the Old and New Testaments, as far as biblical hermeneutics is concerned. Osborne points out that

it is impossible to separate the two testaments, and any truly biblical theology must begin with the recognition of unity and demonstrate such. The simple fact that there are at least 257 quotes and over 1,100 allusions ... of the Old Testament in the New shows the extent to which the latter built upon the former. In terms of vocabulary, themes, religious emphases and worship, the two depend upon one another. In terms of redemptive history, a clear typological relationship of promise-fulfillment exists between the testaments, and

³⁹ Donald R. Sime, 'Mount of Beatitudes' in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds.) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 1155.

⁴⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Sri Lanka: New Life Literature (Pvt) Ltd, 2000), p. 56.

⁴¹Sime, 'Mount of Beatitudes', p. 1155.

⁴² Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (USA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), p. 16.

any concept of the progress of revelation in history (the backbone of biblical theology) must build upon this deeper interdependence.⁴³

Apart from the perception of the Mount of Beatitudes as the location for the Sermon on the Mount, Watson agrees with Jerome⁴⁴ and other scholars that the specific site was Mount Tabor.⁴⁵

In his commentary on the experience of Jesus' transfiguration, Cole Victor Babajide's view is worth considering. He maintains that 'The transfiguration must have taken place somewhere in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, probably on Mount Hermon.'⁴⁶ This position is, however, contested by Allan R. Killen. Killen suggests four possible locations for the transfiguration. In addition to Mount Hermon, he suggests the Mount of Olives, Mount Tabor and Jebel Jermaq.⁴⁷ Killen's argument is that Mount Hermon seems to some to be the most likely because of its great height (9,232 feet) and its proximity to Caesarea Philippi. Besides, this place was mentioned immediately before Matt. 16:13 and Mk. 8:27.⁴⁸ He further maintains that the Mount of Olives and Mount Tabor appeared to have been too inhabited for an event that called for such privacy and quiet as the transfiguration.

Jebel Jermaq (3,962 feet), believed to be the highest mountain in Upper Galilee, is also suggested by W. Ewing as the location for the transfiguration. Ewing's contention is that Hermon lay outside Palestine and therefore was unlikely. Further, since Christ went up the

⁴³ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (United States of America: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p. 277.

⁴⁴ One of the greatest scholars of the early Christian Church (c. AD 420).

⁴⁵ Watson, *The Beatitudes*, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Cole Victor Babajide, 'Mark' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 1185.

⁴⁷ Allan R. Killen, 'Transfiguration of Christ' in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 1731.

⁴⁸ Killen, 'Transfiguration of Christ', p. 1731.

mountain to pray (Lk. 9:28) and came down next day to meet a multitude (Lk. 9:37), Hermon appeared to be too inaccessible.⁴⁹

One thing is however clear about the apparent controversy surrounding the location of the transfiguration. All the four suggested locations are mountains. In other words, the transfiguration of Jesus was believed to have occurred on a mountain. According to Robert H. Stein, the fact that all the Synoptic Gospel writers did not unanimously agree on one site for the transfiguration implies that they were not interested in locating exactly *where* this event took place; they were more concerned with *what* took place.⁵⁰

It has been said that Jesus Christ took His three closest disciples, Peter, James and John, with Him on this occasion. The transfiguration occurred as He was praying (Lk. 9:29). The disciples, who were asleep (Lk. 9:32), awakened to see Christ transformed or metamorphosed. His outward appearance, it has been said, was completely transformed, allowing the trio to catch a glimpse of his inner glory. Even his clothes reflected unsurpassed glory, for they appeared to be of a whiteness or purity unequalled on earth (Mk. 9:3).⁵¹ It is believed that his face shone with brightness like the sun, an event perceived to confirm Jesus' divine personality and status. The transfiguration experience directly relates to Eliade's *hierophanic* event in which the sacredness of a place is generally attributed to a direct manifestation of a deity at that place.

In addition to a discussion of these mountaintop religious experiences in chapter three of this work, it suffices to emphasise now that in the Bible, mountains occupied a considerable place and relevance with respect to sacred spaces. Some of them were places for

⁴⁹ Killen, 'Transfiguration of Christ', p. 1731.

⁵⁰ Robert H. Stein, 'Transfiguration' in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), P.782. (Emphases original).

⁵¹ Babajide, 'Mark', p. 1185.

worship and others, for divine revelations. Their importance could therefore not be disputed. The emphasis or resurgence of sacred space in contemporary Christianity may probably be described as return or revisit to a historical religious phenomenon.

Popular Christian sacred spaces in the world, according to Dalton, include Bethlehem (the birth place of Jesus Christ),⁵² the Church of the Nativity,⁵³ Capernaum (the city of Jesus Christ),⁵⁴ Vatican City,⁵⁵ Assisi (Italy),⁵⁶ Durham and York Cathedrals (England),⁵⁷ Canterbury Cathedral (England)⁵⁸ and St. Michael's Mount (Cornwall, England).⁵⁹

In the light of the works so far reviewed, the researcher's contention is that the significance of sacred spaces in contemporary discourses should not be limited to the traditional notions of prayer, worship and divine revelation. Instead, using APM as a contextual example, to argue that sacred spaces need to be included in the discourse of development, the potential of those sacred sites in promoting human development or stifling it, the researcher contends, is relevant but has not attracted much scholarly attention.⁶⁰

⁵² Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, pp. 7- 8.

⁵³ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁴ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p.11.

⁵⁵ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 112.

⁵⁷ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 127.

⁵⁸ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p. 131.

⁵⁹ Dalton, *Sacred Spaces of the World*, p.189.

⁶⁰ This idea is succinctly espoused by Elizabeth Amoah, 'African Traditional Religion and the Concept of Poverty' in Peter J. Paris (ed.) *Religion and Poverty: Pan African Perspectives* (U.S.A.: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 114-116.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Oral tradition⁶¹ indicates that *Krɔbo boɔ* (that is, *Krɔbo* rock) and *Atwea boɔ* are two of four mountains surrounding Abasua community. The other two mountains are *Yaase boɔ* and *Kompi boɔ*. According to my respondents, *Atwea boɔ* was a very powerful deity whose overarching influence and potency was perceived to attract many traditional religious devotees and clients from diverse backgrounds to Abasua community. Thus *Atwea boɔ* was believed to be the pivot of the community's traditional or indigenous spirituality. *Krɔbo boɔ* and the other two mountains were on the periphery, with respect to people's belief in their religious potency and influence.

A Christian Minister's discovery⁶² of *Krɔbo boɔ*, as a 'Mountain of God's presence'⁶³, is believed to have resulted in the current paradigm shift of the people's⁶⁴ religious focus from *Atwea boɔ* to *Krɔbo boɔ*. The people's belief in the potency of *Atwea boɔ* has drastically declined in favour of *Krɔbo boɔ*. The words of Madam Adwoa Apemasu, a native of Abasua community, confirmed this: Akan traditional religion, which used to characterise the religious life of Abasua community, has now given way to Christianity.⁶⁵ This metamorphosis of religious inclination, to a large extent, is due to the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as an ideal place for prayer, worship and

⁶¹ The following were some of the people interviewed about the history of APM: The Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, Superintendent Minister of Atonsua Circuit, Effiduasi Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana, 19 October 2010; Mr. Daniel Appiah-Aboraa, a retired educationist and a royal native of Abasua community, 13 August 2011; Mr. Kofi Boakye, a carpenter and a royal native of Abasua community, 13 August 2011; and Madam Adwoa Apemasu, a native of Abasua community, 13 August 2011.

⁶² Rev Abraham Osei-Asibey, a Methodist Minister, is believed to have discovered *Krɔbo boɔ* in February, 1965. See the details of this discovery in chapter three of this work.

⁶³ See Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea* (cover page).

⁶⁴ These people include the clients who used to consult *Atwea boɔ* for assistance.

⁶⁵ For a good discussion on Primal Religions as preparatory grounds for the spread of Christianity in Africa, see Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (U.K: Paternoster Press, 2000), pp. 20-33.

miracles.⁶⁶ The discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* and the subsequent re-appropriation of the site by Christian pilgrims are believed to be the basis for the shift of the site's name from *Krɔbo boɔ* to APM.⁶⁷

The subsequent influx of Christian pilgrims to the Prayer Mountain (PM)⁶⁸ is perceived to contribute not only to the enhancement of the pilgrims' spirituality, but also an improvement in the material condition of both the Abasua people⁶⁹ and the pilgrims. On the other hand, some respondents perceive the influx as a source of empowerment to both the pilgrims and Abasua people. In addition to prayer and renewal programmes that pilgrims patronise on the mountain, the place also serves as a hub of various lucrative business activities for both the natives of Abasua community and the pilgrims who patronise the PM.⁷⁰

It is against this backdrop that the researcher set out to examine the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* in the light of its place and relevance in contemporary Ghanaian Christian context.

The main research questions that the researcher tries to address are:

- a. How has *Krɔbo boɔ* been reconstructed to APM?
- b. To what extent has the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a PM engendered issues of encounter between Christianity and Traditional Akan Religion at Abasua community?
- c. How does the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* to APM empower or upset the pilgrims who patronise the PM and the Abasua people?

⁶⁶ Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 14 August 2011, Abasua community.

⁶⁷ 'Abasua', according to my respondents, is the corrupted form of *m'abesoε wo* (that is, I have come to you as a stranger or a sojourner). For details on how 'Abasua' became attached to the Prayer Mountain, see chapter two of this work.

⁶⁸ In this work, Prayer Mountain (PM) and Abasua Prayer Mountain (APM) are used interchangeably.

⁶⁹ These people include natives of Abasua and people in the other neighbouring communities. These neighbouring communities include Atwea, Krowi, Awanya, Adutwam and Banko.

⁷⁰ For a detailed discussion of the extent to which the PM empowers or upsets the people, see chapter four of this work.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

Generally, the aim of the study is to examine the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. To do this, the researcher seeks to:

- a. Examine the history of Abasua community and the development or discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space.
- b. Explore the dynamics of encounter between Traditional Akan Religion and Christianity in the Abasua community.
- c. Explore the extent to which the reconstruction of the sacred space empowers or upsets both the Abasua community and the people who patronise the site from outside Abasua.

1.4 Theoretical framework of the study

The researcher used the social-anthropological approach to ground the discussion of the study in a theoretical context. The social-anthropological approach to the study of religion, according to Max Assimeng, is the effort of modern-day sociologists and anthropologists to find out ‘How does religion function...’⁷¹ Assimeng cites the position of Evans-Pritchard, the noted late British social anthropologist, as follows: ‘This then is the task of the social anthropologist, to show the relation of religion to social life in general. It is not his task to “explain” religion.’⁷²

Evans-Pritchard’s position underscores the central position of functionalism as a theory and method in the study of religion. Functionalism originated principally from the work of French Sociologist Emile Durkheim as far as the study of religion is concerned. In principle,

⁷¹ Max Assimeng *Religion and Social Change in West Africa: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion* (2nd edition) (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2010), p. 10.

⁷² Assimeng *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, p. 10.

functionalism examines how social phenomena operate and are interrelated with other sets of social phenomena.⁷³ For example, APM where Christians go to pray for healing, deliverance, divine revelations, etc, is also a place for lucrative business activities such as sale of commodities, luggage-carrying, etc. In the context of functionalism, the PM, which religiously functions as the worship place for Christians, also has a socio-economic function as a place where some people also engage in business activities. Thus the social-anthropological approach and functionalism are synonymous in this work because they both seek to examine the function of religion in the society.

Clifford Geertz is one of the social-anthropologists whose works are relevant to this research. In his *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Geertz's analysis of ethos, worldviews and sacred symbols brings out the interrelationship between religion and social phenomena. In his view

Religion is never merely metaphysics. For all peoples the forms, vehicles, and objects of worship are suffused with an aura of deep moral seriousness. The holy bears within it everywhere a sense of intrinsic obligation: it not only encourages devotion, it demands it; it not only induces intellectual assent, it enforces emotional commitment ... that which is set apart as more than mundane is inevitably considered to have far-reaching implications for the direction of human conduct.⁷⁴

Geertz implies that religion scarcely deals with only the metaphysical aspects of life. It also deals with the issues of ethos and world views of people. 'A people's ethos', according to him, 'is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects.'⁷⁵ He further points out that 'Their worldview is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of

⁷³ Assimeng *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, p. 10.

⁷⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), p. 126.

⁷⁵ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.127.

nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order.’⁷⁶ Geertz uses the notion of the mutual non exclusiveness of religious belief and ritual to explicate the relationship between ethos and world view. ‘[T]he ethos is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the world view describes, and the world view is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression.’⁷⁷

Both ethos and worldview underscore the reality of a religious system which, according to Geertz, ‘is a cluster of sacred symbols, woven into some sort of ordered whole.’⁷⁸ Some of these sacred symbols in this work include the PM, the cross and the elements of Holy Communion (that is, the bread or wafers and the wine).⁷⁹ Geertz does not only assert the prevalence of the notion of sacred symbols in almost all religious traditions; he also points out that what all sacred symbols assert is that the good for man is to live realistically; where they differ is in the vision of reality they construct.⁸⁰

The relevance of this to the work is explained as follows. We said in the statement of the problem that prior to the discovery *Krɔbo boɔ* as a PM, *Atwea boɔ* was the focus of the community’s traditional religiosity. This implies that the adherents of *Atwea boɔ* lived realistically (that is, *found solutions to some of their existential concerns*⁸¹) through their devotion and loyalty to that deity. The discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a PM and the current paradigm shift in the people’s religious focus from *Atwea boɔ* to *Krɔbo boɔ*, however, implies that the

⁷⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.127.

⁷⁷ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.127.

⁷⁸ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.129.

⁷⁹ For details on these sacred symbols, see chapter three of this work.

⁸⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.130.

⁸¹ (Emphasis mine).

people who patronise the PM are believed to find solutions to some of their existential concerns through their devotion and loyalty to the transcendent reality on the PM and not the *Atwea boɔ*.

The implication is that both Christianity and Traditional Akan Religion have some things in common. One of the commonalities is that they all claim to empower their adherents to ‘live realistically.’ But the two religious traditions construct different visions of reality (that is, *they employ different religious symbols or prayer rituals*⁸²) to achieve their respective objectives. These different visions of reality that the religious traditions construct, in the opinion of the present researcher, are perceived to be conflictive.⁸³ Thus the notion of divergence inherent in the orientations of these two religious traditions is the theoretical context within which the researcher examines and discusses the encounter between Traditional Akan Religion and Christianity at Abasua community.

Geertz however maintains that ‘it is not only positive values that sacred symbols dramatise, but negative ones as well. They point not only toward the existence of good but also of evil, and toward the conflict between them.’⁸⁴ The idea of sacred symbols as epitome of positive values and /or negative values enables the researcher to explore the extent to which APM promotes or stifles life and human development within Abasua community and among those who patronise the site from outside Abasua.

1.5 Methodology and methods of data collection

In studying a sacred space such as APM, an eclectic or a multi-dimensional approach was deemed useful. Therefore, in this study, mainly historical, social-anthropological, phenomenological and theological models were employed.

⁸² (Emphasis mine).

⁸³ For a good discussion, see Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, pp. 58 – 100.

⁸⁴ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.130.

In chapter two of the study, the historical method was employed in the description and analysis of the history of Abasua and APM.⁸⁵

In chapter three of the study, the phenomenological method was employed to study the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. This method is basically an approach to the study of religion which requires the scholar of religion to suspend judgments about the phenomenon being studied, by bracketing out potentially distorting presuppositions stemming both from confessional Christian theology and from positivistic science in order that, by using empathetic methods, he or she could enter into the experiences of the believers or adherents to achieve understanding-in-depth.⁸⁶ Thus, by this method, the researcher tried to minimize his personal biases arising from his Christian religious inclinations, as far as his study of the prayer rituals on the mountain is concerned.

The social-anthropological approach was used to investigate the place and relevance of APM to the Abasua people and those who patronise the site from outside Abasua. We have already noted that the social-anthropological method explores how religion functions and the elements in social structures that make appeals to supernatural forces contingent.⁸⁷ This approach examines the social significance of a religious phenomenon. The extent to which the PM empowers or upsets the Abasua people and other users of the site, as discussed in chapter four of this work, is a social-anthropological study of the phenomenon.

Last but not least, the theological approach was used to study and discuss the significance of the PM to the people's mental, physical, spiritual and social development. This approach is

⁸⁵ For an example of the use of the historical and phenomenological methods, see Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 9

⁸⁶ James L. Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), p. 209.

⁸⁷ Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in Africa*, p. 10.

fundamentally rooted in Richard King's 'Religious studies as "broad church" model.' In this model, 'Theology is regarded as merely one among many methodologies in the study of religions.'⁸⁸ In this study, the theological method was used to augment the social-anthropological approach.⁸⁹ The social-anthropological method sought to find out the extent to which the PM empowers or upsets the people, but the theological method sought to classify the issue of empowerment or disempowerment under the four thematic categories: mental, physical, spiritual and social.

The methods used to collect the relevant data were participant observation and interview. Participant observation, according to Kumekpor, 'involves the idea of being both a spectator and an actor at the same time when observing and recording information. The observer must find a means of integrating himself into the group in one way or the other and attempt to observe and record from within the group.'⁹⁰ In addition to the researcher's several trips to APM, he went there again, specifically to Camp Three (CT), believed to be a Prayer Camp (PC) of The MCG, from 10th to 15th August, 2011. He had the opportunity to participate in some of the activities at the prayer site. These include church / divine services on Sunday mornings, all-night prayer sessions on Wednesdays, communal labor on Saturday mornings, and healing and deliverance services on Wednesday mornings. Other activities observed were luggage carrying and sale of items such as hot water, anointing oil, Christian literature and provisions.⁹¹

⁸⁸For details on Richard King's Models or Paradigms, see Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 217.

⁸⁹ For details, see Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 179 – 185.

⁹⁰ Tom K. B. Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research* (Ghana: SonLife Press and Services, 1999), p .72.

⁹¹ In Ghana, provisions is a word used to cover a wide range of items such as milo, milk, sugar, coffee, mackerel and soft drinks.

The researcher went to CT because of its perceived significance to this study. First, it is believed to be the place where Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey, the Methodist Minister who allegedly discovered the place as a sacred space, first stood and erected a pole to designate the place's spiritual significance. Second, it is believed to be the first PC to have resources for organised religious and social activities on the PM. Third, prior to this study, there were some reports about the booming and lucrative economic activities at Abasua community and on the entire PM. These economic activities, perceived to be the result of the massive influx of other people to CT, were also thought to be of importance to the researcher because they were perceived to empower the people economically.

It must however be pointed out that this work is not limited only to CT. The researcher also gathered pieces of information from other PCs on the PM. These PCs include Camp Eight (a PC of the PCG), Camp Seven (a PC of Word Faith Ministries International) and Camp Five (a PC of Precious Blood Ministry International).

Another data collection instrument employed was interview. As a face-to-face method in which a researcher elicits information from respondents, interview was useful in gathering the relevant pieces of information. This was because it made it possible not only for the researcher to meet the respondents face-to-face, but it also enabled the researcher to interrogate and seek further clarifications from them. With the permission of the respondents, relevant parts of the interview were recorded.

A purposive sampling technique was mainly employed to select the respondents for the study. 'In purposive sampling', according to Kumeckpor, 'the units of the sample are selected not by a random procedure, but they are intentionally picked for study because of their characteristics or because they satisfy certain qualities which are not randomly distributed in the

universe, but they are typical or they exhibit most of the characteristics of interest to the study.⁹² Related to purposive sampling is snowball sampling technique. By this method, new respondents were identified and selected for interview following the recommendations of people already interviewed.⁹³ The people interviewed through this method include the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah,⁹⁴ Prophetess Anita Frimpong Mensah,⁹⁵ Mr. Appiah Aboraa⁹⁶ and Nana Yaw Obogya II.⁹⁷

The respondents were drawn from these categories of people: the natives of Abasua community, especially the traditional leaders, the elderly, the youth / luggage-carriers, parents and guardians; Reverend Ministers, lay Christians / pilgrims who patronise the PM for prayer rituals, workers at the various PCs on the mountain, and commercial drivers who ply the community. The researcher purposively selected these groups of people because they were perceived to have pieces of information considered to be relevant to the study. Generally, the researcher sought to find out from them the place and relevance of the PM in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. Specifically, some of the natives of Abasua community, especially the elderly and the traditional leaders, were interviewed about the history of Abasua and the extent to which the PM empowers the members of the community. The researcher sought to find out the history of Abasua community from the elderly and the traditional leaders because by their age

⁹² Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, p. 135.

⁹³ For details on snowball sampling and other non probability sampling methods, see A.D. Jankowicz *Business Research Projects* (U.K: International Thompson Business Press, 1995), pp. 155-158. C.f. Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, pp. 132-138.

⁹⁴ A Methodist Minister, who allegedly went to Abasua Prayer Mountain with Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey, when the latter allegedly went there for the first time under divine direction. The researcher interviewed him about the history of APM on 19 October 2010 at the Conference Hall of the Effiduase Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana.

⁹⁵ Prophetess Anita Frimpong Mensah, Interview, 13 August 2011, Kumasi.

⁹⁶ Mr. Appiah Aboraa, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

⁹⁷ Nana Yaw Obogya II, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

and experience, they were believed to be in a better position to provide those pieces of information.

Some of the Reverend Ministers and lay Christians were interviewed about why they patronise the PM. Those who claimed to patronise the PM for prayer rituals were also interviewed about their experience of APM-related divine interventions; for example, healing, deliverance, fertility, etc. The researcher's justification in this regard is to examine the extent to which the *Krɔbo boɔ*, which was originally on the periphery of Abasua community's spirituality, has been reconstructed as a sacred space for Christian spirituality in Ghana.

1.6 Operational Definitions

Some of the words and phrases contextually defined in the study are as follows: Empowerment refers to development emanating from improvement in people's mental, physical, social and spiritual conditions. The opposite of empowerment is disempowerment or upset. Abasua community is used instead of Abasua village. Connexional is used in this context to refer to the administration of the MCG at the national level. Connexional Prayer Conference is therefore a renewal programme that involves the whole MCG. Rituals are activities that are intended to facilitate human's communication or interaction with transcendent realities. They are, thus, prayer-related activities that take place at APM. These include healing and deliverance programmes, all-night prayer sessions, morning devotions, divine services, etc. Productivity points to the resourcefulness, usefulness and creativity of a person as a result of improvement in his or her material and spiritual conditions.

1.7 Limitations of the study

Some of the Abasua citizens who were perceived to have relevant pieces of information for the study were reluctant to avail themselves to be interviewed. This was partly because according to them, some previous researchers who had come to interview them and had promised coming back ‘to see us in chambers’, meaning, ‘to give us cash’, had reneged on their promises. One of such people virtually insulted the researcher when she came to find her mother being interviewed by him.

The reluctance of some other people to provide the needed pieces of information was attributed to their erroneous perception about the precise identity of the researcher. Although the researcher first introduced himself to the people as a Master of Philosophy student of the University of Ghana, undertaking an academic research as a partial requirement of the programme of study, some of them scarcely believed in his identity as a student. Not even the wearing of one’s ‘GRASAG’ (that is, Graduate Students’ Association of Ghana) T- Shirt, the production of one’s students’ identity card and one’s status as a Reverend Minister could sufficiently convince them about the researcher’s true identity as a student. In fact, to such people, the researcher was a disguised media reporter or news monger who had come down to gather information about the community and the protracted chieftaincy dispute which had allegedly polarised the community. For instance, Nana Akosua Achiaa, a 60 year old Elderly Woman (*ɔbaapanin*) of Abasua to whom the researcher had been specifically directed for information, did not allow him to record the interview she granted him on 14th August, 2011 at her residence at Abasua. Her reason was that as one of the main antagonists of the prevailing chieftaincy dispute at the community, she did not want any news reporter or researcher to have

access to her recorded version of any issue pertaining to Abasua community, until the dispute which was pending at the court was finally ruled.

The continuous climbing and descending of the PM to gather the data were also cumbersome for the researcher. Sometimes, in order to meet a person believed to have vital pieces of information, the researcher had to wake up very early in the morning and descend the mountain to the community. Sometimes, after struggling to meet them, they rescheduled the interview appointment for another time in that same day or some other day. For instance, Nana Kwaku Kwarteng Ampem, the Chief of Atwea, near Abasua, to whom the researcher had been directed to go for some pieces of information rescheduled the interview appointment twice. He subsequently promised to call to furnish one with the needed information but he could not.

As a farming community, some of the people who were perceived to have vital pieces of information for the work were farmers who had very tight farming schedules. Some of them would go to their farms very early in the morning and come back late. The researcher therefore had to wait for several hours in order to meet with them for interviewing.

1.8 Relevance of the study

The main thesis that the researcher attempted to explore in the study is the extent to which a sacred space such as APM contributes to the empowerment or disempowerment of the Abasua people and those who patronise the PM from outside Abasua community. The implication is that the work, first, seeks to enable individuals, organisations and academic institutions appreciate the extent to which religion or spirituality and materiality interrelate. Second, the work attempts to provide some vital pieces of information about APM which, the researcher perceives, have not received much intellectual attention. This includes the

contemporary identity of APM as the reconstructed *Krɔbo boɔ*. Third, using APM as a contextual example, the researcher attempts to discuss the encounter between Traditional Akan Religion and Christianity in Ghana.

1.9 Organization of chapters

The work is organised into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introduction to the study. The introduction is sub-divided into nine components. These are background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study. The others are theoretical framework, methodology and methods of data collection, and operational definitions. The rest are limitations of the study, relevance of the study and the arrangement of chapters.

In chapter two, the researcher examines the history of Abasua community. Chapter three is devoted to a discussion of the reconstruction of sacred space in Ghana. In chapter four, the researcher examines and discusses the role of the PM in human development. Chapter five captures the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF ABASUA COMMUNITY

2.1 Introduction

A survey of the history of the Asante people of Ghana provides the context for a discussion of the history of Abasua community. This is because of the researcher's perception that the history of Abasua community is inextricably linked to the history of the entire Asante people. Thus the history of the people of Asante provides the framework within which the history of Abasua community can be examined and discussed.

2.2. A survey of the history of Asante people of Ghana

2.2.1. The Asante world before the formation of Asanteman (c.1600-1717)⁹⁸

Scholarly works on the history of the people of Asante abound.⁹⁹ Citing J.A. Anquandah's work, *Rediscovering Ghana's Past*, Robert Addo-Fening writes that '[Asante] forms part of the Akan¹⁰⁰ world which encompasses the tropical rain forest and the wooded transitional savannah around latitude 80° N. State formation in these parts was believed to have

⁹⁸ Robert Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante): 40th Anniversary Celebration Brochure*, 2011, pp. 8-10.

⁹⁹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 8-11., Ivor Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), pp. 91-120., W. Walton Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (Vol. one) (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1964), pp. 181-208., Peter Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan* (Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1971), pp. 29 -34., Ernest E. Obeng, *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy* (Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1988), pp.1-69.

¹⁰⁰ According to Ivor Wilks, the name 'Akan' is used to refer to the peoples of the forest country of what is now called Ghana. For details, see Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*, p. 91. C.f. Kwabena J. Darkwa Amanor, 'The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction: The Akan Contribution', *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XIV (2004), p. 57.

begun in the period 1000-1400 A.D.’¹⁰¹ Addo-Fening further points out that by early 15th century, several settlements existed in the area enclosed by the Pra and Ofin rivers, and generally groups were believed to have dispersed to form their present homelands during the 15th and 16th centuries.¹⁰²

In 1629, a Dutch trader on the coast, Hans Propheet, drew up a map at *Moure*, about twenty kilometers east of Cape Coast.¹⁰³ On that map he showed 29 native states that included *Akwamu, Akyem, Agona, Asebu, Ahanta, Bron, Gyaman, Kommenda, Kwawu, Nsoko, Wassa* and *Wankyi*.¹⁰⁴ It is said that Adansi and Denkyira were on the threshold of history; but Asante which became the most powerful Akan State in the 18th and 19th centuries was still in the womb of time.¹⁰⁵

The late emergence of *Asanteman* (Asante nation) and its subsequent rise to political lime light in the Akan world is underscored by Ivor Wilks. Writing in his *Forest of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*, Wilks maintains that ‘The *Asanteman* has often been regarded as exemplifying the highest form of the Akan State. It was certainly a latecomer to the scene, assuming its historic form only at the turn of the seventeenth century. The Akan State that it exemplifies (whether in its highest form or not) had evolved over the two preceding centuries and more.’¹⁰⁶ Both Addo-Fening and Wilks agree on the late emergence of *Asanteman* in the political space, but they seem to disagree on when the emergence actually took place. While Addo-Fening says that *Asanteman* became a powerful Akan State in the 18th and 19th centuries; Wilks believes that their emergence occurred at the turn of the 17th century. The apparent

¹⁰¹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 8.

¹⁰² Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II*, p. 8.

¹⁰³ Cape Coast is the capital city of the Central Region of Ghana.

¹⁰⁴ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 8. (Emphases original).

¹⁰⁵ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, p. 91.

controversy surrounding the exact period of the emergence of *Asanteman* in the political lime light, the researcher contends, is an indication of some of the difficulties scholars face in harmonising historical data and chronologically reporting historical events.

Addo-Fening points out that from the 1630s the Akan states were convulsed by a series of disruptive wars. The catalyst for these wars was the rivalry between Assin and the emergent state of Denkyira, whose foundation went back to the early 1600s. The rivalry accelerated the pace of centralisation of the Denkyira state. As a result, Denkyira gradually took over from Assin as the most important inland state trading in slaves and gold by the last decade of the seventeenth century. Around 1640 waves of refugees fled northward and settled in the area around Abadwinmu, to the north of Akrokyere.¹⁰⁷

2.2.2. The settlement at Asantemanso

By the last quarter of the 17th century, it was believed that a proto-Asante nation existed in an embryonic stage at Asantemanso settlement based at Kokofu, near modern Bekwai. The founder of the Asantemanso settlement was believed to be Kwabia Amanfi.¹⁰⁸ The settlement's area, secluded and strategic, gave the immigrants control over kola-growing lands. Besides, it provided access to the markets of Beo (Begho) in the north-west and Gonja in the north-east. From about the beginning of the 17th century, a steady stream of migrants moved northward from the Asumenya-Asantemanso area into the neighbourhood of Kumasi. There the migrants settled among aboriginal inhabitants at *Amakom, Suntreso, Tafo, Kaase and Fumesua*.¹⁰⁹ it is said that the last group to leave Asantemanso comprised related Oyoko groups, including Apeanyinase,

¹⁰⁷ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 10

¹⁰⁹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 9. (Emphases original).

Asomanya, Bomfa, Abuoso, Nsuoso and Ofoase. In the course of time, their settlements grew into mini-states.¹¹⁰

2.2.3. Dominion of Denkyira

Wars in the Pra and Ofin basin in the 17th century were perceived to have culminated in the overthrow of Adansi in 1659. Thereafter, Denkyira overshadowed Adanse, described in Akan Oral Traditions as ‘the first organized Akan state in the interior from which other states learnt the art of government’.¹¹¹ Between 1680 and 1700, Denkyira built an empire that extended over two hundred miles westwards from across the Pra River to Tano River. She defeated Sehwi, Wassa, Aowin and Assin in 1697 and took control of the westernmost trade routes that terminated on the coast between Kommenda and Assin. On the eastern coast, her frontier was contiguous with Akyem, her dependable ally. The result of these conquests was that Denkyira controlled the rich gold mines of western Gold Coast, having conquered Assin as the foremost exporter of gold and slaves. Denkyira’s enormous wealth in gold enabled her to stockpile firearms, a necessary condition for the power struggle and territorial expansion of the late 17th century. According to the Dutch trader, Willem Bosman, then resident on the coast, *Abankesieso*, the capital of the sixth *Denkyirahene* (that is, King of Denkyira) Boa Amponsem (1677-92), attracted European envoys who were anxiously seeking the favour of the King.¹¹²

Meanwhile, Addo-Fening corroborates Wilk’s view that the Asantemanso settlement based at Kokofu had passed from its founder, Kwabia Amanfi, to his younger brother Oti

¹¹⁰ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p 9. C.f. Siriboe Otuo *Silver Jubilee Celebration Brochure*, 1996, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 9.

¹¹² Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 10. (Emphasis original).

Akenten (1631-1662). The new ruler moved his nascent kingdom northward to Kwaman, the site of modern Kumasi.¹¹³ Denkyira soon extended her hegemony or powerful dominion over the Kwaman settlement and turned it into a tributary.¹¹⁴ According to Wilks, the Denkyira ruler, Boamponsem, required Oti Akenten to pay him an annual tribute in palm oil and to send one of his families to reside at the Denkyira court. Oti Akenten chose a nephew, Osei Tutu.¹¹⁵

The view that Oti Akenten chose Osei Tutu to serve in the court of the King of Denkyira is contested by Addo-Fening. In his (Addo-Fening's) opinion, it was Obiri Yeboah (c.1662-97), successor to Oti Akenten, who 'sent his nephew, Osei Tutu, to the Denkyira court to learn the art of traditional governance and protocol.'¹¹⁶ Addo-Fening and Wilks do not only disagree on whose time of service as *Kumasihene*, (that is, the King of Kumasi), Osei Tutu went to the court of Denkyira ruler; the two scholars also disagree on the rationale behind his (Osei Tutu's) staying at the King's court. Whiles Addo-Fening points out that Osei-Tutu went to the King's court at Denkyira to learn the art of traditional governance and protocol, a relatively honourable and dignified task; Wilks describes his staying at the court as a result of 'Hostage and Exile'¹¹⁷, a relatively derisory and demeaning label to the Asante people.¹¹⁸ We can infer from these apparent controversies that the history of Asante, like other historical records, is characterised by several vague traditions.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, pp. 100-102. C.f. Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, p.101.

¹¹⁵ For details, see Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, p. 103.

¹¹⁶ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*, pp. 103-104.

¹¹⁸ For details, see Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (vol. one) pp. 195-196.

¹¹⁹ Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (vol. one), p. 192.

Wilks, citing from *The History of Asante Kings*, points out that Osei Tutu did not travel to Denkyira alone. He was accompanied by seven servants. The principal of these was Amankwatia, whose mother, Doku, was a “chair bearer” to Osei Tutu’s mother, Manu. Manu therefore gave Amankwatia to Osei Tutu to serve him in the same capacity. According to Wilks, “Chair bearer” translated the Akan *akonwasoafɔɔ*, a term more usually rendered “stool carrier.”¹²⁰

If it is true that Osei Tutu had seven servants whilst in hostage and exile at Denkyira, then it was probably possible at that time for a royal held in hostage to be treated with dignity and respect. What then was the rationale for holding the person in hostage any way? On the other hand, if it was not possible for a royal in captivity to have servants to serve him or her, then Wilks’ assertions, that Osei Tutu was taken hostage at Denkyira and still had servants to serve him there, are utterly contradictory. In that case, Addo-Fening’s earlier assertion that Osei Tutu went to the King’s court to learn the noble art of traditional governance and protocol might be more plausible, since that might afford him the services of servants at the court.

Osei Tutu’s stay at the Denkyira court was cut short by the discovery of his love affair with the *Denkyirahene’s* sister. Conscious of the danger to which his indecent act had exposed him, Osei Tutu took refuge in Akwamu where he met and formed a lasting friendship with the legendary *ɔkɔmfo* Anokye (Priest Anokye). Osei Tutu later returned home to succeed to the stool when news reached him of the death of his uncle, Obiri Yeboah.¹²¹ According to Peter Akwasi Sarpong, Catholic Bishop of Kumasi Archdiocese and one of Ghana’s most celebrated Anthropologists, Twum and Antwi were the first chiefs of what is now the district of Kumasi

¹²⁰ Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, p. 103. (Emphasis original).

¹²¹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 10. (Emphasis original).

whose capital was called Kwaman.¹²² The fifth successor to Twum and Antwi was Nana¹²³ Osei Tutu who acceded to the Kumasi stool about the year 1697.¹²⁴

2.2.4. Formation of Asante Union

On his return home, Osei Tutu (1697-1717) discovered, to his amazement, that the settlement at Asantesmanso had broken up into several smaller tribes or states. Kwaman had become the northernmost outpost from which his uncle, Obiri Yeboah, had waged a protracted war against the Domaa state¹²⁵ to the north-west; Bekwai and Asumenya situated 15 miles to the south, kept watch over Denkyira; Kumawu, Nsuta and Juaben lay to the east; while Kokofu and Kuntanase lay to the south-east. These states were in loose alliance with the Bretuo state of Mampong.¹²⁶

We have already indicated that before the period of Nana Osei Tutu, Kwaman, as well as the other tribes or states, was subject to the Denkyira nation and had to pay annual tribute to its King, Boa Amponsem. According to Sarpong, the annual tribute included gold dust and wives.¹²⁷ Nana Osei Tutu, determined to put an end to this practice, first set about forming a loose confederation with the chiefs of the other tribes, through conquests, persuasion and treaties.¹²⁸ Eventually, this loose confederation became the Asante Union which was formed under Nana

¹²² Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 29.

¹²³ Among the Asante people and other traditional Akan communities in Ghana, 'Nana' is the title used for chiefs, kings and queens. The title may also be used for the very elderly people in the community.

¹²⁴ Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 29. C.f. 'The Kings of Asante Kingdom', *A Daily Graphic Souvenir*, March 24, 1999, 24.

¹²⁵ Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, p. 105.

¹²⁶ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 10. C.f. Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 29., Obeng, *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy*, p. 16.

¹²⁷ Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 29.

¹²⁸ Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 29.

Osei Tutu towards the end of the 17th century (that is, about 1699),¹²⁹ with himself as the overall leader.¹³⁰

According to Ernest Obeng, ‘Busia sees in the [Asante] Union a “segmentary political system in which segments of states possessed similar political institutions, a common language, a religion and ties of clanship welded together into a union by the *Asantehene* (the King of the Asante) whose capital was at [Kumase].’¹³¹ On the basis of the combined military strength of the Union, Nana Osei Tutu declared war against Denkyira by mutilating¹³² the tribute collectors and sending them back with stones. In the course of the war, the people of Denkyira were utterly defeated at the famous Battle of Feyiase, near Kumasi, in 1701. The King of Denkyira, Ntim Gyakari, was captured and beheaded.¹³³ The Asantes thus dealt heavy military blows to the Denkyira superiority and subdued them to ‘slave status’ subjects. It is said that the Denkyiras never recovered their former position since then.¹³⁴ This rebel group which defeated the Denkyiras was known as ‘Ashanti’, corrupted form of *asa nti*, meaning those who were brought together ‘because of war.’¹³⁵

It is worth noting that the aim of the rebel coalition of states was to throw off the heavy yoke of the people of Denkyira. Having realised this objective, they went further and defeated other chiefs.¹³⁶ The task that lay ahead was how to sustain the life and spirit of the Union. In

¹²⁹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otu Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 11.

¹³⁰ Obeng, *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy*, p. 16.

¹³¹ Obeng, *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy*, pp 16-17.

¹³² Mutilation, according to Sarpong, is said to have been one of the ways of declaring war on the chief of the victim. Usually, the fingers, the nose or the ears were chopped off. See Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p.77.

¹³³ Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 29.

¹³⁴ Emmanuel Doe Ziorklui, *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, Kufuor & Beyond: A Historical Sketch of some major Political events in Ghana from 1949 – 2004 (Vol. one, part one 1949 – 1960)* (Ghana: Em-zed Books Centre, 2005), p. 14.

¹³⁵ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p. 3.

¹³⁶ Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 30.

order to keep the Union going, religious sanctions were instituted and expressed largely through sentiments of loyalty to the Golden Stool which had, meanwhile, been *invoked from heaven* (or the skies) by *Okomfo Anokye*¹³⁷ and which was (and still is) believed to embody the spiritual personality of the Asante Kingdom. Those sentiments were kept alive by constant periodic festivals / rituals in Kumasi, the capital city of Asante Kingdom.¹³⁸

It was believed that in the course of time the superiority of the Asante Kingdom was terribly challenged by the Akyems or Akims who were first cousins of the Asantes.¹³⁹ The Akyems, famous for their military prowess, defeated and humiliated the Asantes by drowning their legendary King, Osei Tutu, in the River Pra.¹⁴⁰ If it is true that Nana Osei Tutu reigned in Kumasei and later the Asante Kingdom, for about thirty-four (34) years¹⁴¹, then the period for the invasion of the people of Asante by the Akyems might be somewhere in 1731. These intertribal wars and conquests and their associated migrations are perceived to have eventually resulted in peoples' quest for new settlements. One of such settlements is believed to be Abasua community, the place where the PM is located.

¹³⁷ For details on Okomfo Anokye, see Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, pp. 29 & 30. (emphasis original)

¹³⁸ Obeng, *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy*, p. 17.

¹³⁹ Ziorklui, *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, Kufuor & Beyond*, p.14.

¹⁴⁰ Ziorklui, *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, Kufuor & Beyond*, p.14.

¹⁴¹ 'The Kings of Asante Kingdom', *A Daily Graphic Souvenir*, March 24, 1999, 24.

2.3 History of Abasua community

2.3.1 The Arrival of the initial settlers at Nsuta

According to oral tradition, the first settler came to settle at Abasua in about 1692, long before Nana Osei Tutu acceded the Kumasi stool in 1697.¹⁴² The first settler, according to Mr. Daniel Aboraa and Mr. Kofi Boakye, was Nana Yaw Obogya. It is said that prior to his settlement, Nana Yaw Obogya and his sister, Nana Gyaaben were migrating from Akyem-Ahwenease to Asante Mampong. Several factors are believed to have precipitated their migration to Mampong; the desire to break family ties, outbreak of epidemics and the upsurge of other natural disasters. Their migration, according to Ampaw-Asiedu, was as a result of inter-tribal wars in the Akyem-Abuakwa area at that time.¹⁴³ This is believed to be in the 17th century when the hegemony of Denkyira had culminated in wars and conquests at the Pra and Ofin basin and the overthrow of Adansi.¹⁴⁴

On their way to Mampong, Nana Obogya and her sister Nana Gyaaben allegedly reached Nsuta where, probably out of exhaustion, they decided to rest a little while under a certain tree. They meant to continue their journey afterwards. News about the arrival of these ‘strangers’ at the vicinity of Nsuta got to the then *omanhene* (that is, the Paramount Chief) of Nsuta, Nana Danso Abeam. Owing to the prevalence of wars and conquests at that time and the possibility of invasion by other assailants, the *omanhene* allegedly dispatched some of his subjects to inquire about the mission of the strangers. Customarily, the strangers ought to have first reported themselves to the *omanhene* and his elders who would then inquire of their mission. They did not

¹⁴² The people interviewed on the history of Abasua community included Mr. Daniel Aboraa and Mr. Kofi Boakye. These people were interviewed on 12 August 2011 at Abasua.

¹⁴³ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.4.

¹⁴⁴ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 9.

do that perhaps because they did not intend any longer stay at Nsuta which, at that time, was their transit point to Mampong.

2.3.2 Strangers in the Palace of the *omanhene*

When it was ascertained that Nana Obogya and her sister, Nana Gyaaben, did not mean any mischief at Nsuta but were innocent migrants to Mampong, Nana Danso Abeam, the *omanhene* of Nsuta, out of hospitality, invited them to his palace. Among Africans, it was common in those days for stranded strangers to be invited home and acts of hospitality shown to them. Gyekye's comments on the hospitality of Africans justify the above claim:

Africans recognize the dignity of the human being and, in consequence, hold a deep and unrelenting concern for human welfare and happiness. ... the powers and attributes of the supernatural agents are [therefore] to be tapped and utilized for the welfare of humans in *this* world. ... The thoughts, actions, art, and institutions of the African people are replete with expressions of concern for human welfare and the importance of the human being. Recognition of the value of humanity is intrinsically linked with recognition of the unity of all people, whether or not they are biologically related. This deep appreciation for humanity is reflected in such communal structures as the clan, the extended family, and complex networks of social relationships and the African custom of opening one's door to strangers and showing them acts of generosity and hospitality.¹⁴⁵

Gyekye's opinion is a reflection of the African's normal positive response or attitude towards a person whose behaviour is right and socially acceptable. The implication is that the African will oftentimes be hospitable to a person believed to be harmless. The opposite will be true for a stranger thought or perceived by the African to be wicked or harbouring some mischievous intentions. To such miscreants, doors would quickly be shut and acts of generosity and hospitality completely denied. Even though Gyekye is commended for his brilliant overview of the hospitality of the African, he is silent on the African's likely negative attitude towards strangers perceived to be miscreants or social misfits.

¹⁴⁵ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1998), p. 23.

2.3.3 Some exceptional qualities of Nana Yaw Obogya and Nana Gyaaben

When they were at the palace of the *omanhene*, it was said that Nana Obogya and her sister, Nana Gyaaben, were not found to be miscreants; rather they endeared themselves to the admiration of the Paramount Chief. Nana Gyaaben was said to be an exceptionally beautiful and attractive young lady while her brother, Nana Obogya was physically healthy, industrious warrior and an experienced hunter. Because of these appreciable attributes of the ‘strangers’, the *omanhene* allegedly decided to retain them in his palace with the intention of permanently settling them in his traditional area. By this decision, the Paramount Chief indirectly diverted the course of the ‘strangers’.

It was said that after sometime the *omanhene* fell in love with Nana Gyaaben and subsequently married her. The *Dwumakwaahene* of Nana Danso Abeam (the Paramount Chief), was allegedly mandated to have oversight responsibility of Nana Gyaaben, the wife of the Paramount Chief. The *Dwumakwaahene* had the duty of ensuring the security or safety of the King’s wife. Thus, he sought to prevent her from being usurped or snatched out from the King.

2.3.4 Nana Yaw Obogya’s settlement and the institution of chieftaincy at *Yaase*

It is said that Nana Gyaaben’s brother, Nana Obogya, undertook some of his hunting expeditions in some of the nearby forests in the Nsuta traditional area. One of the forests in which he is said to have carried out these hunting expeditions was *Yaase*. This is the place where *Yaase boɔ*, one of the mountains of Abasua community, is situated. It is said that Nana Obogya admired the serenity of the place and wanted it for a new settlement. As a result, he was believed to have asked Nana Danso Abeam, to allow him to use that forest area as a place for his new

settlement. The *ɔmanhene* allegedly gave in to his request and Nana Obogya left the King's palace at Nsuta to settle at *Yaase*.

It is said that when the first settler came to *Yaase* to settle there, he found a river which took its source from the Atwea Mountains.¹⁴⁶ He is said to have prayed and solicited spiritual assistance from the river in the following Twi prayers: *Nana, m'abesoε wo oo, enti boa me na deε mεye wɔ aha biara nyε yie*, meaning 'Nana (referring to the river), I have come to you as a settler, therefore help me to be prosperous in all my undertakings here'¹⁴⁷. If the sacredness of a space is defined by the belief in the presence of a supernatural reality in that space and the possibility of human interaction with that reality through rituals, then by the presence of the river and Nana Obogya's prayer to it for assistance, the sacredness of the place was implied.

This prayer underscored the traditional religious orientation of Nana Obogya. He believed that the river was a deity in whom supernatural power resided. It could also be inferred from the prayer that he believed in the magnanimity of deities, as far as their ability to provide material and spiritual blessings were concerned. This view is sustained by R.I.J Hackett as follows: 'In traditional pre-colonial societies, it was common for people to associate the deities with prosperity [because it] was believed that a harmonious relationship with the spiritual forces was necessary to ensure good health, long life and prosperity and to ensure that one's destiny was not altered for the worse.'¹⁴⁸

As the first settler of the place, Nana Yaw Obogya customarily became the first traditional ruler (that is, the Chief) of *Yaase*. It is said that the *ɔmanhene* of Nsuta allowed his

¹⁴⁶ Mr. Daniel Aboraa and Mr. Kofi Boakye, Interview, 12 August 2011, Abasua. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.3.

¹⁴⁷ Mr. Daniel Aboraa, Interview, 12 August 2011.

¹⁴⁸ R. I. J. Hackett, 'The Gospel of Prosperity in West Africa', Roberts, R. (ed.). *Religion and the Transformation of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 208. C.f. Emmanuel Anim, 'The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination', *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, XVII (2009), P. 34., Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, p. 162.

wife, Nana Gyaaben, to assist her brother, Nana Obogya, in his administration as the traditional leader of the place. She was, thus, to be the *ɔbaapanin* (that is, the Eldest Woman) of the place. It is believed that the *ɔmanhene* formed a stool for his wife and named it Gyaaben *akonwa* (that is, Gyaaben's stool). The stool was the symbol of Nana Gyaaben's authority and recognition as the *ɔbaapanin* of the place.¹⁴⁹

The order of succession of some of the Chiefs who came after Nana Yaw Obogya is as follows:

1. Nana Yaw Boakye. He was a nephew to Nana Obogya.
2. Nana Gyan Hwedie. He was also Nana Obogya's nephew. About five other chiefs came after Nana Gyan Hwedie.
3. Nana Yaw Aboraa (the ninth chief)
4. Nana Kwasi Bresa (the tenth chief)
5. Nana Boakyere (the eleventh chief)
6. Nana Kwasi Marfo (the twelfth chief)
7. Nana Kwame Owusu (the thirteenth chief)
8. Nana Wiredu, also known as Nana Obogya II (the fourteenth chief at the time of this research). He was installed in 2010. The *ɔbaapanin* at Abasua at the time of this work was Nana Akosua Achiaa.¹⁵⁰

The relative scanty information on the order of succession of the Elderly Women (*mmaampanimfoɔ*, plural of *ɔbaapanin*) at Abasua is due to the inaccessibility of the people from whom the current researcher could elicit those pieces of information. This limitation could,

¹⁴⁹ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p. 4. C.f. Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 26., and Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, p. 91.

¹⁵⁰ Mr. Daniel Aboraa, Interview, 12 August 2011, Abasua community.

however, engage the attention of future researchers who may investigate in relative detail the history of the institution of chieftaincy at Abasua.

2.3.5 Abasua: corruption of *m'abesoε wo*

With the passage of time, it is said that the river to whom Nana Yaw Obogya allegedly prayed for assistance became known as *m'abesoε wo* (that is, I have come to you as a settler). This *m'abesoε wo*, it is believed, later became corrupted as Abasua river. The corruption eventually affected *Yaase*, which was the name of Nana Obogya's new settlement. The result was Abasua community.

The implication is that *Yaase* forest area has also been reconstructed. It has been reconstructed from its former identities as hunting and farming areas into a new area for human settlement (that is, Abasua community), just as *Krɔbo boɔ* is also believed to have been reconstructed from its former identities as a place for hunting expedition and merry-making into a sacred space or a PM for prayer, healing and deliverance rituals.

2.3.6 Religion of Abasua Community

Religiously, Abasua was dominated by Traditional Akan Religion.¹⁵¹ Most of the people interviewed disclosed that the centre of traditional religious expression at Abasua, before the introduction of Christianity there, was *Atwea boɔ*. *Atwea boɔ*, one of the four mountains in the vicinity of Abasua, was believed to be a very powerful deity or *ɔbosom*, whose overarching influence and power had resulted in the influx of many people to the place. Most of these people

¹⁵¹ Madam Adwoa Apemasu and Mr. Daniel Aboraa disclosed this during an interview they separately granted the researcher on 13 August 2011 at Abasua community. C.f. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, pp.3-19., Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, PP.27- 42.

came there to consult the deity, through the deity's *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* (Traditional Priest)¹⁵², for answers to their existential needs and challenges. According to Mr. Aboraa, most of the people who came for consultation and received answers to their questions did not go back to their towns again; they relocated and stayed there. The natives were also kind and hospitable to the new settlers.

One major influence of the *Atwea boɔ* is in the belief in its ability to provide protection to the natives of Abasua and other people, especially, the rich cocoa farmers who, because of their wealth, were afraid of being destroyed by witches and wizards.¹⁵³ The reality of *Abosom* (plural form of *ɔbosom*) and some people's ardent belief in their potency has been observed by Omenyo as follows:

Generally, they are perceived to provide solutions to many social problems, personal problems and mishaps as well as to reveal witches and to witness to the truth of an event. They are also believed to have powers that can destroy. The popularity of a deity depends largely on its reputed ability to perform by way of providing material and spiritual prosperity. Such deities attract devotees from far and near. However, they are abandoned if they fail to meet specific needs of groups or individuals.¹⁵⁴

Related to the above is the Akans' belief in the malevolence of witches and wizards. Omenyo further notes that 'There is a strong belief among Akans in witches and wizards (*abayifo* and *abayibonsam*), who are perceived as enemies of the Akan society. They are believed to possess evil psychic powers that could, among other things, destroy life and property; cause sickness, barrenness or impotence, material poverty, drunkenness and death.'¹⁵⁵ This belief may have influenced the people who trouped to Abasua, specifically, *Atwea boɔ*, for security.

¹⁵² For a good discussion on the functions of Akan Traditional Priests/Priestesses and their impact on society, see Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, PP. 52-57.

¹⁵³ Madam Adwoa Apemasu and Mr. Daniel Aboraa, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community. (Separate interviews).

¹⁵⁴ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁵ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 28.

Traditional Akan Religious expression at Abasua was also seen in the influence of *Atwea boɔ* on the moral and religio-cultural lives of the natives and ‘clients’ who came there for resettlement or for consultation purposes. The belief in the *ɔbosom*’s ability to expose and punish wrongdoers, such as thieves, witches and wizards; according to Madam Apemasu, put fear in the people. Consequently, the people became terribly afraid of flouting any of the numerous taboos of the place. It is a taboo, for instance, to work on any of the sacred days¹⁵⁶ such as Wednesday. It is also a taboo to work in or around *ɔnwam Yaa*¹⁵⁷ on Thursdays. It is, however, not a taboo to merely cross the river on Thursdays.¹⁵⁸

A story narrated by one of the people interviewed underscores the belief in the *Atwea boɔ*’s overarching influence and power over the people’s moral lives.

There was a deity called *ɔbosom Fofie* who resided at Nsuta. It was believed that *ɔbosom Fofie* so detested wrongdoers that such culprits suffered instant death, immediately the deity got to know of their evil deeds. One day, over seventy people at Nsuta believed to be wrongdoers were killed by the deity. The unpleasant smell, which their dead bodies exuded in the community, forced the *ɔmanhene* at that time to move out of his traditional area to a place where he hoped to find a lasting antidote to that mass killing of people in his community. Upon hearing of the presence of another powerful deity at Duroman in the Nkoranza area, the *ɔmanhene* went there for consultation and assistance.

When he reached Duroman and narrated his ordeal and mission to the Traditional Priest of the deity, the *ɔmanhene* was told to come back to *Atwea boɔ*, located at the Nsuta area. The deity at Duroman was believed to have revealed to its Traditional Priest that the *ɔmanhene*’s problem could best be handled by *Atwea boɔ* since *ɔbosom Fofie* (who was believed to be responsible for the mass killing of the people at Nsuta) was the son of *Atwea boɔ*.

The *ɔmanhene* hurriedly came back and performed the necessary rituals for the consultation of the deity to be possible. He took a bottle of locally-brewed dry gin (popularly called *akpeteshie* in Ghana) and went to *Atwea boɔ*. Immediately he reached there, a stool and a calabash which were not brought out by any human being suddenly appeared. The *ɔmanhene* was instructed to sit down on the stool. He could hear human voice but could not see any human being there. He was then asked to tell his mission for

¹⁵⁶ Among the Akan people of Ghana, sacred days are days on which certain activities such as farming or fishing are strictly forbidden by the traditional authorities.

¹⁵⁷ Name of the river crossed just before climbing APM. Fishing in the river on Thursdays is strictly forbidden. Mr. Bismark Adu-Gyamfi, Interview, 14 August 2011, Abasua community.

¹⁵⁸ Mr. Bismark Adu-Gyamfi, Interview, 14 August 2011, Abasua community.

coming there. When he finished telling what had brought him there, he heard nothing except a very loud laughter by a group of people he could not physically see. He was then told to go and organise his people for them to come and weed the surroundings of *Atwea boɔ*, since that would pacify the angry *ɔbosom Fofie* and put an end to the mass killing of the people. When the *ɔmanhene* went and carried out the directive given him, the serial killing of the people ceased.¹⁵⁹

By killing people suspected to be wrongdoers at Nsuta traditional area (which include Abasua), *ɔbosom Fofie* thus functioned as a custodian of morality and ethical behaviour. The people's awareness of the deadly consequences that follow their wrongful acts or misdeeds serves as a deterrent to potential or would-be miscreants in the traditional area. The people's moral and ethical consciousness thus became heightened by the presence of the deity. This affirms Geertz's assertion that

Religion is never merely metaphysics. For all peoples the forms, vehicles, and objects of worship are suffused with an aura of deep moral seriousness. The holy bears within it everywhere a sense of intrinsic obligation: it not only encourages devotion, it demands it; it not only induces intellectual assent, it enforces emotional commitment ... that which is set apart as more than mundane is inevitably considered to have far-reaching implications for the direction of human conduct.¹⁶⁰

Thus, in a traditional Akan community, Kwesi A. Dickson corroborates Geertz's opinion when he (Dickson) observes that

There is a traditional pattern of life, itself, the *summum bonum*, sanctioned by spirit-ancestors and gods expressing itself in Akan institutions and behaviour patterns. Evil may be atoned for, and wrong-doing may be set right within a framework of traditionally sanctioned rites and practices. The appropriate appeasement, the necessary arbitration restores the *status quo*, itself the perfect pattern for Akan life.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

¹⁶⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.126.

¹⁶¹ Kwesi A. Dickson (ed.), *Akan Religion and the Christian: A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1965), p. 141. (Emphases original).

The son-father relationship between *ɔbosom Fofie* and *Atwea boɔ* and the belief that the *ɔmanhene*'s problem could best be addressed by *Atwea boɔ*, as the deity at Duroman had revealed, reinforced the popularity of *Atwea boɔ* and people's belief in it.¹⁶²

The researcher however wonders why the *ɔmanhene* at Nsuta decided to bypass a very powerful deity, *Atwea boɔ*, within his own traditional area, and travel so far to Duroman in the Nkoranza area to consult another deity. Had he not heard of the power and influence of *Atwea boɔ*? Was he skeptical about the ability of the deity to mitigate the mass killing of the people in his community? These questions can engage the attention of future researchers who would carry out a detailed study on the Traditional Akan Religious expression at Abasua.

It is worth noting that the power and influence of *Atwea boɔ*, as far as traditional Akan religiosity at Abasua is concerned, was partly through the presence and effectiveness of its *asɔfoɔ* (devotees) and *akɔmfɔɔ* (Traditional Priests).¹⁶³ The regular rituals and sacrifices offered to the deity by these traditional Akan religious functionaries, according to most of the people interviewed, were believed to be the live wire of the deity.¹⁶⁴ It is said that on some of the sacred days, when rituals and sacrifices were performed to the deity (*Atwea boɔ*), it manifested its presence and power through some mysterious occurrences such as sudden appearance of many big and flapping state umbrellas on top of the mountain. These umbrellas, however, immediately vanished after the sacred day's rituals and sacrifices were completed.¹⁶⁵

The demise of some of the traditional religious functionaries and the reluctance of the subsequent Paramount Chiefs at Nsuta to assist in replacing dead devotees and Traditional

¹⁶² Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

¹⁶³ For a good discussion, see Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, pp.46-7.

¹⁶⁴ Madam Adwoa Apemasu and Mr. Daniel Aboraa, 13 August 2011, Abasua community (Separate interviews). Mr. Emmanuel Oduro, Mobile Phone Interview, 19 February 2012.

¹⁶⁵ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

Priests/Priestesses, according to some of the people interviewed, contributed greatly to the waning and loss of power and influence of *Atwea boɔ* and *ɔbosom Fofie* in the area. The death of *akɔmfɔɔ* Ama Animwaa (Traditional Priestess of *ɔbosom Fofie*) and Akua Pomaa (Traditional Priestess of *Atwea boɔ*), for instance, was a heavy blow to their respective deities. This is because no replacements were found for them.¹⁶⁶ According to some of the respondents, the reluctance of the people¹⁶⁷ to avail themselves of the traditional religious vocation (that is, to replace the demised religious functionaries), was as a result of the influence of Christianity at the community. This confirms the previous assertion that the presence and effectiveness of the traditional religious functionaries were believed to be the live wire of the deities. It can therefore be argued that the deities' power and influence derived significantly from the rituals and sacrifices given to them regularly by their devotees and Traditional Priests / Priestesses.

Owing to the demise of the deities' traditional religious functionaries and the decline in their (deities') power and influence, the many 'clients' who used to come to Abasua for consultation also stopped coming. The natives of Abasua, who, hitherto, paid allegiance to the deities also stopped doing so. They did not see why they should express loyalty and allegiance to deities which were perceived to be powerless. As Omenyo noted, 'The popularity of a deity depends largely on its reputed ability to perform by way of providing material and spiritual prosperity. Such deities attract devotees from far and near. However, they are abandoned if they fail to meet specific needs of groups or individuals.'¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community. Mr. Emmanuel Oduro, Mobile Phone Interview, 19 February 2012.

¹⁶⁷ These people, according to some of the respondents, were the family members of the deceased traditional religious functionaries. By custom, replacements or successors for the deceased devotees were often selected from among the living family members of the deceased.

¹⁶⁸ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 27.

2.3.7 Advent of Christianity at Abasua community: an encounter between Traditional Akan Religion and Christianity

A paradigm shift in the community's religiosity occurred in about 1958. In that year, the first church at Abasua, the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), was introduced by Madam Comfort Boadiwaa and her brother, Mr. Joseph K. Tutu. These people were believed to have 'brought' the church from Asante Agona and Adutwam to Abasua.¹⁶⁹ The introduction of the church at Abasua was a major paradigm shift in the community's religiosity because Traditional Akan Religion had been the dominant religious expression in the area. According to Emmanuel Oduro, a retired teacher and SDA member at Abasua, some of the pioneers in the church were people who had previously been very active devotees and Traditional Priests/Priestesses of *Atwea boɔ* and *ɔbosom Fofie*. They joined the church because for a long time, they had stopped being devotees and Traditional Priests/Priestesses to the deities. It is also worth noting that some of the pioneer SDA members were functional Traditional Priests/Priestesses who converted from Traditional Akan Religion to Christianity. Examples were Kwadwo Gare and Kwadwo Nkrumah who, after becoming SDA members, were renamed Thomas Amoabeng and Thomas Nkrumah respectively.¹⁷⁰

At the time of this research, there were three churches at Abasua community. The other two churches introduced after the SDA were the Church of God and Christ Apostolic Church. The introduction and growth of Christianity at Abasua community, which was formerly dominated by Traditional Akan Religion, corroborates the findings of Kwame Bediako with respect to the relationship between Christianity and Primal Religions. According to Bediako,

¹⁶⁹ Mr. Emmanuel Oduro, Mobile Phone Interview, 19 February 2012.

¹⁷⁰ Mr. Emmanuel Oduro, Mobile Phone Interview, 19 February 2012.

‘...in more recent years, it has been shown that Christianity has spread most rapidly in societies with primal religious systems, that is religious systems akin to African Traditional Religion.... This fact of history has led to the question whether there might be affinities between the Christian and primal traditions.’¹⁷¹ Again, Bediako, citing John Mbiti, maintains that ‘Africa’s ‘old’ religions have been a crucial factor in the rapid spread of Christianity among African people. They were a vital preparation for the Gospel.’¹⁷²

2.4 Conclusion

The survey of the history of the people of Asante and the history of Abasua community epitomises the reality of the notion of reconstruction in the worldview of humanity. It also shows the inseparability of religion/sacred symbols from the reconstruction of identities in the Ghanaian context. The Asante people who came late in the political limelight eventually rose to be a mighty stalwart and a force to reckon with, as far as their relationship with the Denkyiras was concerned. Their (the Asantes’) former peripheral position in the Akan world metamorphosed greatly. Through the coalition of states and the tenacity of purpose of Nana Osei Tutu, the Asante people were able to defeat their vilest oppressor, the Denkyiras. The Asante people also appropriated Traditional Akan Religion in their bid to sustaining their reconstructed identity from independent cities to a unified coalition of states; that is, *Asanteman*. This was mainly expressed through the ‘bringing down’ of the Golden Stool by the legendary *ɔkɔmfɔ* Anokye. According to Sarpong,

The day was Friday. Anokye had summoned all the chiefs of the Union to a great gathering at Kumasi. At that gathering, he “brought from the sky, with darkness and

¹⁷¹ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (UK: Regnum Africa, 2000), p. 21.

¹⁷² Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 21.

thunder, and in a thick cloud of white dust, a wooden stool, adorned with gold which floated to earth and landed gently on Osei Tutu's knee." Anokye made a solemn announcement that the spirit of the whole nation, and all its strength and bravery depended on the safety of the stool. To impress this on their minds, he caused the king and the leading chiefs and queen-mothers present to give him clippings from their nails and from their hair. These were mixed into a medicine and smeared on the stool. The remainder was drunk by the contributors as a sacramental drink. Thus the *sunsum* (soul) of each was provided a resting or anchored place in the stool.

Okomfo Anokye succeeded in bringing about the national consciousness that "henceforth Ashanti was a nation linked by a common religious bond of which the Golden Stool was the visible symbol..."¹⁷³

The appropriation of Traditional Akan Religion by the people of Asante to concretize their reconstructed identity as a united nation, underscores Evans-Pritchard's notion of 'functionalism as a theory and method in the study of religion.'¹⁷⁴

The history of Abasua community does not only epitomise the reality of sacred symbol (sacred space), but also the possibility of reconstruction of that space through the religiosity of Nana Obogya, the man believed to be the first settler at Abasua. It took the traditional religious inclinations of the settler to perceive the spiritual potency of the river (deity) to whom he (Nana Obogya) prayed for spiritual guidance and prosperity. Though the sacred river was already there before the settler went to the site for settlement, the sacredness of the river was identified and appropriated by the religiously inclined Nana Obogya. The sacredness of the space was reinforced by the subsequent discovery of *Atwea boɔ* and *ɔbosom Fofie* deities. This direct manifestation on earth of deities, referred to as *hierophanic* events by Eliade,¹⁷⁵ resulted in the production of traditional religious functionaries. The presence of the deities also brought about influx of people, who came to Abasua community for consultation purposes.

¹⁷³ Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, pp. 30-1.

¹⁷⁴ Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, p. 10.

¹⁷⁵ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20 – 27.

A paradigm shift in Abasua's traditional religiosity occurred as a result of the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* (now APM) as a sacred space by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey, who was a Minister of the Methodist Church Ghana. Because of the PM and the establishment of churches, Christianity is believed to be a dominant religious tradition at Abasua, and not Traditional Akan Religion.¹⁷⁶

The next chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.

¹⁷⁶ Almost all the people interviewed affirmed that the dominant religious tradition at Abasua, before the introduction of Christianity there was Traditional Akan Religion. However, upon the discovery of the *Krɔbo boɔ* as a PM, and the establishment of churches at Abasua, Christianity is the dominant religious tradition there.

CHAPTER THREE

RECONSTRUCTING *Krɔbo boɔ* AS A SACRED SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAN CHRISTIANITY

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two of this work, the researcher indicated that the *Krɔbo boɔ* was one of the four mountains in the Abasua community. However, from the periphery of the community's traditional religiosity, as compared to the overarching power and influence of *Atwea boɔ*, the then deity at the centre of Abasua's traditional religious expression before the introduction of Christianity there, *Krɔbo boɔ*, as a result of a Christian Minister's discovery, has brought about a paradigm shift to the people's traditional religious worldview.

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. In this reconstruction, we will focus on the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space and Christians' re-appropriation of the site for prayer rituals. But in order to situate the discussion in a conceptual framework, the researcher briefly provides the phenomenological approaches to the concepts of sacred space and prayer rituals. In the methodology and methods of data collection discussed in chapter one, we said that the researcher employed the phenomenological approach because he wanted to suspend personal biases about the phenomena being studied. The researcher tries to suspend his personal prejudices by bracketing out potentially distorting presuppositions emanating from his Christian inclinations, in order that, by using empathetic methods, he can enter into the experiences of the believers or

adherents to have a detailed understanding.¹⁷⁷ Because the researcher's focus is on Christian sacred spaces, he also sees the need to highlight some views about prayer rituals in a Christian sacred space context.

3.2 Phenomenological approaches to sacred space and prayer rituals

We said in the background to the study (in chapter one of this work) that the idea of sacred space is ubiquitous in all religious traditions in the world, since almost all religions have special places designated as sacred or holy, and this designation often encourages believers to visit those places in pilgrimage.¹⁷⁸ The bulk of the discussion in the background to the study focuses on the antecedents of sacred spaces in Christianity and other religio-cultural settings. In the background to the study, we did not consciously establish the inseparable link between sacred spaces and prayer rituals, albeit some inferences of the inextricable nature of the two could be made in some of the discussions. In this present context, however, the researcher argues¹⁷⁹, although only briefly, that sacred spaces and prayer rituals are not mutually exclusive. Hence it provides the conceptual framework within which the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space and Christians' re-appropriation of the site for prayer rituals can be discussed.

In his assertion that seems to corroborate Park's observation about the ubiquitous nature of sacred spaces in all religious traditions, Veikko Anttonen writes as follows:

Setting specific times and places apart as sacred is a fundamental structure in human cultures, without which no religion, nation-state or political ideology can insure the continuity of its power, hierarchy and authority. Such universal forms of religious behavior as fasting, pilgrimage, asceticism, celibacy, religiously motivated forms of seclusion and reclusion and various forms of meditation can also be comprehended in terms of the category of the sacred. These forms of religious behavior are culturally

¹⁷⁷ Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 209.

¹⁷⁸ Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 19.

¹⁷⁹ For a good discussion on aims of arguments, see Timothy W. Crusius and Carolyn E. Channell, *The Aims of Argument: A Brief Guide* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2003), pp. 15-19.

constituted on the idea of marking one's physical and mental self as separate from the routines of everyday social life.¹⁸⁰

Central in Anttonen's observation is the notion of sacredness, believed to be an integral component of all religious traditions. Historians and phenomenologists of religion such as Nathan Soderblom, Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade, according to Anttonen, hold sacrality to be not only a hall mark of religion but its very essence.¹⁸¹ These theorists assert that cultural systems of belief and practice cannot be given the title 'religion' if there is nothing which is deemed sacred by their adherents.¹⁸² In the methodological approach of these scholars, the sacred is treated as an ontological category, culturally schematised in human experience in the form of subjective feelings of the presence of what scholars refer to as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*,¹⁸³ that is, a mysterious something that both frightens and fascinates.¹⁸⁴ This position reinforces Geertz's notion of sacred symbols as some of the major characteristics of religious traditions.¹⁸⁵

A sacred space, therefore, is a place where people encounter the sacred, understood as something truly extraordinary and overwhelming. It is a place where people feel gripped by a reality that is 'wholly other' than themselves – something mysterious, awesome, powerful and beautiful.¹⁸⁶ The conception of a sacred space also implies the reality of a profane or secular space. In the scheme of Eliade, the profane space is 'the realm of the everyday business – of

¹⁸⁰ Veikko Anttonen, 'Sacred', in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.) *Guide to the Study of Religion* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 272.

¹⁸¹ Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272.

¹⁸² Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272.

¹⁸³ Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272.

¹⁸⁴ Daniel L. Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.164.

¹⁸⁵ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 129.

¹⁸⁶ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 164.

things ordinary, random and largely unimportant.’¹⁸⁷ In short, profane space is ‘the worldly Universe or historical situation of people.’¹⁸⁸ The role of religion, according to Daniel L. Pal, is to promote encounters with the sacred, to bring a person “out of his worldly Universe or historical situation, and project him into a Universe different in quality, an entirely different world, transcendent and holy.”¹⁸⁹

According to Scott, [prayer] rituals are required to effect the transition from worldly Universe to the realms of transcendence, also referred to in this work as sacred space.¹⁹⁰ The researcher’s operational definition of prayer rituals is humans’ activities or actions (visible or invisible) perceived to symbolize their belief in and communication with God or a deity. In his definition of ‘ritual’, Ronald L. Grimes points out that ritual refers to ‘traditional, prescribed communication with the sacred.’¹⁹¹ By this definition, ritual is identified ‘with actions predicated on a theistic, mysterious or animistic premise, or performances by religious functionaries in sacred places.’¹⁹² In that sense, prayer rituals are believed to be the nexus of the two divergent worlds (that is, sacred space and profane space). In other words, prayer rituals can be conceptualised as humans’ activities or actions by which the gulf between sacred space and profane space can be bridged.

If the sacredness of a place is determined by the belief in the presence of a supernatural force or a deity in that space and the possibility of human’s interaction with that deity through

¹⁸⁷ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, pp.163-164.

¹⁸⁸ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 165.

¹⁸⁹ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 165.

¹⁹⁰ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p.150.

¹⁹¹ Ronald L. Grimes, ‘Ritual’ in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.) *Guide to the Study of Religion* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 261.

¹⁹² Grimes, ‘Ritual’, p. 261.

rituals¹⁹³, then a discourse on the sacredness of a space, in the opinion of the present writer, cannot be adequately handled without reference to prayer rituals. Prayer rituals, in the opinion of the researcher, are perceived to be some of the main activities or actions that inform and define the sacredness of almost all sacred spaces.¹⁹⁴ Thus sacredness of a place and prayer rituals, in this context, are not mutually exclusive.

3.3 Prayer rituals in a Christian sacred space context

We have said that the role of religion is to promote an encounter between the sacred and secular or profane realms of existence. Prayer rituals are believed to be the means by which the sacred – profane encounters can be realised. The thrust of the following discussions is on the dimensions and centrality of prayer or prayer rituals¹⁹⁵ in a Christian sacred space context.

Dick Eastman underscores prayer as the ‘Slender nerve of power’ and ‘that marvelous mystery hidden behind the cloud of God’s omnipotence.’¹⁹⁶ To him (Eastman), ‘Nothing is beyond the reach of prayer because God Himself is the focus of prayer.’¹⁹⁷ Defining prayer as ‘divine communion with our heavenly Father’,¹⁹⁸ Eastman adds that ‘Prayer does not require advanced education’ and that ‘Knowledge is not a prerequisite to engage in it. Only an act of the will is required to pray.’¹⁹⁹ The implication of this is that prayer is not the preserve of a few selected individuals. Whoever has ‘an act of the will’ could pray. David Cook corroborates

¹⁹³ Randall Studstill, ‘Eliade, Phenomenology, and the Sacred’ *Religious Studies*, 36 (2000), pp. 177-194. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20008280> .Accessed: 17/03/2012.

¹⁹⁴ Dalton, *Sacred Places of the World*, pp7-11, 13 and 112.

¹⁹⁵ Prayer and prayer rituals are used interchangeably in this work.

¹⁹⁶ Dick Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House,1985), p. 11.

¹⁹⁷ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁸ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁹ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 11.

Eastman's view by underscoring prayer to be 'an interactive communication with God.'²⁰⁰ Thus in prayer, Cook maintains, 'The believer assumes God's existence and prayer is the expression of a relationship with that God, not a means of establishing his existence.'²⁰¹

Eastman conceptualises prayer in a formulaic fashion by prescribing a twelve-step prayer model to 'be applied with spiritual liberty rather than regimented legality.'²⁰² He enumerates and briefly defines the items or 'steps' in the model as follows:

Praise: The act of divine adoration; *Waiting*: The act of soul surrender; *Confession*: The act of declared admission; *Scripture Praying*: The act of faith appropriation; *Watching*: The act of mental awareness; *Intercession*: The act of earnest appeal; *Petition*: The act of personal supplication; *Thanksgiving*: The act of expressed appreciation; *Singing*: The act of melodic worship; *Meditation*: The act of spiritual evaluation; *Listening*: The act of mental absorption; *Praise*: The act of divine magnification.²⁰³

The implication here is that in the context of Christianity, prayer rituals are broad. They encapsulate several actions or practices believed to symbolise a Christian's interaction with God.

Cook again corroborates Eastman's formulaic perspective of prayer but he categorises prayer into four distinct components expressed by the initials ACTS. He says that 'Prayer is *adoration, confession, thanksgiving* and *supplication* (also called petition). When people are involved in prayer, they may be engaged in any or all of these activities.'²⁰⁴ The views of Eastman and Cook, in the opinion of the researcher, are perceived to indicate the overarching importance of prayer in a Christian believer's life.

²⁰⁰ David Cook, *Thinking About Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p. 95.

²⁰¹ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, pp. 94 -95.

²⁰² Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 10.

²⁰³ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, pp. 11-137.

²⁰⁴ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, p. 95. (Emphasis original).

The centrality of prayer in a person's religious life also finds expression in the introduction to *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, edited by Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba.

How could there be a vibrant religious life without the practice of prayer? In both theistic and non theistic traditions, religious followers are generally counseled to steadfast prayer—to pray “without ceasing.” Without prayer, religious sensibility would likely atrophy and perhaps die. Yet what makes prayer so essential to a life of faith? Perhaps the most important answer is that prayer connects us to the divine, to something beyond ourselves and beyond immediate reality.²⁰⁵

On the basis of the perception that human life comprises both the material /secular and spiritual /sacred dimensions, prayer, according to Benson and Wirzba, may be understood as ‘the moral and spiritual discipline that introduces and directs us to the sacred dimension that infuses and undergirds all that is.’²⁰⁶ This gives credence to the perception that there are some things in prayer that give it such a formative role in religious life, a role that informs and transforms believers. One of such things, according to the editors, is the understanding that prayer is an “experience at the limit.”²⁰⁷ What this means, according to Benson and Wirzba, is that

Prayer effectively strips the soul of its pretense and makes it available before an inscrutable God. At its extreme, prayer leads to a breakdown of language as the believer enters a “dark night” or “blinding light” like those described by the great mystics. Prayer is reduced to mute, amorous praise, for the believer is now bathed in a transcendence that both exceeds and also sustains one's being.²⁰⁸

The other striking motivation and essence of prayer is its perception as the “intensification of experience.”²⁰⁹ This means that in prayer, ‘we have revealed to us the depth and breadth of what we otherwise overlook or take for granted—life's gratuity, fragility, terror, blessing, and interdependence. Such a revelation calls us to a more honest and authentic accounting of our

²⁰⁵ Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (eds.), *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (United States of America: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 1.

²⁰⁶ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.1.

²⁰⁷ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.1.

²⁰⁸ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.2.

²⁰⁹ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.2.

lives.’²¹⁰ The view of prayer as an ‘intensification of experience’ is expressed somewhat clearly in Cook’s five-fold functional description of prayer: ‘Prayer as dependence’, ‘Prayer as performance’, ‘Prayer as living’, ‘Prayer as contemplation’ and ‘Prayer as relationship.’²¹¹

The above discussion provides the conceptual framework within which the researcher discusses the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space in Ghanaian Christianity.

3.4 *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space

The reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred site and Christians’ re-appropriation of the space for prayer rituals is discussed in the context of the following themes: the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a PM by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey, the first visit to *Krɔbo boɔ* and the experience of a supernatural phenomenon, *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* (Joy in Christ Group) as the pioneers of pilgrimage to the PM and the establishment of other Prayer Camps (PCs) on the mountain. The rest of the themes are the prevalence of relics and prayer accessories, sacredness through miracles and other related prayer rituals. They include sacred writings, preaching/Bible studies and Holy Communion. The justification for doing this is to examine the reconstruction of the place from its former peripheral position in the Abasua community’s traditional religiosity to its contemporary status as the centre of sacredness for prayer rituals in Ghanaian Christianity.

3.4.1 The discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a PM by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey.

As already noted, the *Krɔbo boɔ* was one of the four mountains surrounding Abasua community. Abasua is a small community near Atwea in the Nsuta Municipality in the Asante

²¹⁰ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.2.

²¹¹ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, pp. 100 – 101.

Region of Ghana. Abasua is one of the communities in the Effiduasi Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. The PM is located at Abasua under the Nsuta Traditional Council.

The site was discovered as a sacred space in 1965 by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey.²¹² Ampaw-Asiedu maintains that the late Osei Asibey had been posted from the Sunyani Circuit to the Asante Effiduasi Circuit of the MCG as the Superintendent Minister in 1963.²¹³ The then Effiduasi Circuit was a vast area since it extended to the Northern Region of Ghana.²¹⁴ The Circuit included Konongo, Achinakrom (around the Lake Bosomtwe), Asante Mampong, Atebubu, Wioso, Yeji, Ejura-Sekyeredumase, Asokore and Dwaben.²¹⁵

Oral accounts about the late Rev. Osei Asibey's discovery of the site as a sacred space differ. For example, Owusu-Ansah, citing The Rt. Rev. Samuel Agyemang Kwakye (former Bishop of Effiduasi Diocese of the MCG), maintains that the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey was returning from a pastoral trip to the Afram Plains. When he reached Atwea, the car with which they were travelling suddenly stopped when they got to the Abasua junction. It is said that when the car was put into reverse gear, it went backwards but when it was in the forward gear, the car would not move. At that moment, something dawned on late Rev. Asibey to go to *Krɔbo boɔ*, one of the four mountains in front of him.²¹⁶

This account sharply differs from what the present writer gleaned from the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, who claimed he was with the late Rev. Osei Asibey at the time of the PM's discovery. According to the Very Rev. Boamah, in 1965, the Asante Effiduasi District Education

²¹²Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain*, p. 11., Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.4.

²¹³ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p. 4.

²¹⁴ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain*, p 11.

²¹⁵ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.4

²¹⁶ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain*, p 11.

Office was located at Asante Mampong. Late Rev. Osei Asibbey was travelling to Mampong to attend an official assignment in his capacity as the Local Manager of Methodist Schools. Mr. Yao Boamah (now the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah whom the present writer interviewed) claimed that he was the driver of the Effiduasi Circuit car with which the late Rev. Osei Asibbey was travelling. Upon reaching Banko, one of the towns in the Effiduasi Circuit, the late Rev. Osei Asibbey allegedly saw the *Krɔbo boɔ* and asked whether people could go there. When they reached the Atwea community which was on their way to Mampong, the late clergyman (the Very Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey) was believed to have been moved by an unusual urge to tell the driver to stop. According to the Very Rev. Boamah, the late clergyman felt drawn to the top of the mountain. It was said that ‘Later in a chat with him, he (Rev. Osei Asibbey), confessed, “My heart was strangely warmed when I encountered the mountain.”’²¹⁷

Based on this strange warmth and the inner urge of Rev. Osei Asibbey, they decided to go to Abasua community to inquire from the traditional leaders about the possibility of going to the top of the mountain. They decided to do this before continuing their journey to Mampong. When they reached Abasua community, it is said that they contacted the then chief, Nana Kwasi Marfo, about the possibility of going to the top of the mountain. The chief’s response was that it was possible since some European tourists had been using the site for relaxation and merry-making. On the basis of this response and the fact that Rev. Osei Asibbey was on official assignment, they continued their journey to Mampong, and rescheduled to come back to Abasua after two weeks.²¹⁸ One of the people interviewed disclosed that Rev. Osei Asibbey and his

²¹⁷ Very Rev. Isaac Yaw Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.5.

²¹⁸ Very Rev. Isaac Yaw Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

driver reached Mampong at about 3.00 pm, but the meeting which he was attending had not started until he got there.²¹⁹

The differences between these two accounts basically lie in two major issues: the direction of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey and the presence of what Benjamin W. Warfield referred to as '*the supernatural act*'.²²⁰ In the first account, the direction of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey was that of a journey from Afram Plains in the Eastern Region of Ghana to Effiduasi, where he had been posted. In the second account, however, his direction was that of a journey from Effiduasi to Asante Mampong. Given the vastness of the Effiduasi Circuit at that time, and the Minister's duties (which included frequent pastoral visitation),²²¹ the present writer's argument is that the late Rev. Minister's alleged pastoral trip to Afram Plains (in the first account) looks quite plausible.

On the other hand, by virtue of his office as the Superintendent Minister of the Effiduasi Circuit, the late Rev. Osei Asibbey necessarily became the Manager of Methodist Schools within his Circuit. Moreover, the Effiduasi Circuit at that time extended even beyond Asante Mampong, where the District Education Office was located. The implication is that the late Rev. Osei Asibbey's alleged travelling to Mampong to attend an educational meeting looks more plausible to the present writer. In fact, the more plausibility of the late Rev. Minister's direction, as found in the second account, lies in the perception that the Very Isaac Yao Boamah, who gave this information, claimed to be an eye-witness to the journey of the late clergyman, the Rev.

²¹⁹ Taller, a native of Abasua community disclosed this during an interview he granted the researcher at Abasua on 14 August 2011.

²²⁰ The supernatural in this context referred to matters and experiences connected with forces that could not be explained by science. For a good discussion on 'Christian Supernaturalism', see Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology* (USA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), pp. 25-46. (Emphasis original).

²²¹ *The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana (2000 Revised Edition)* (Accra: The Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana, 2001), pp. 75-76.

Abraham Osei Asibbey. The Rt. Rev. Agyemang Kwakye, from whom the information about the journey of the late Rev. Osei Asibbey was gleaned (in the first account), was not an eye-witness to the events. As a result, his account could not be more authentic and plausible than that of the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, who claimed to be an eye-witness to the events.

The second difference lies in the presence of the supernatural reality that characterised the Rev. Minister's encounter with the mountain. In the first account, The Rt. Rev. Samuel Agyemang Kwakye was cited by Owusu-Ansah as having said that the Rev. Osei Asibbey was returning from a pastoral trip at Afram Plains. The car with which they were travelling suddenly stopped when they got to Atwea junction. When the car was put in the reverse gear, it moved backwards, but when put in the forward gear, the car would not move when the late clergyman discovered the *Krɔbo boɔ* at Atwea junction.

In the second account, the late clergyman allegedly saw the mountain when they reached Banko while on their way to Asante Mampong. The irresistible sensation and inner urge of the late clergyman to go to the *Krɔbo boɔ* allegedly became heightened when they got to Atwea community. When they reached Atwea community which was on their way to Mampong, the Very Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey was believed to have been moved by an unusual urge to tell the driver of the car to stop. According to the Very Rev. Boamah, the late clergyman unusually felt drawn to the top of the mountain. This unusual sensation and inner urge might have culminated in the late clergyman's latter confession that 'My heart was strangely warmed when I encountered the mountain from a distance.'

Given the above nuances of the presence of the supernatural reality in the two accounts, the present writer's contention is that the eye-witness account of the Very Rev. Isaac Yao

Boamah is more plausible and relatively more authentic to the account of the Rt. Rev. Samuel Agyemang Kwakye.

The researcher is, however, not oblivious of the potential difficulty the alleged supernatural realities may pose to skeptics of the supernatural phenomena or those whose judgments of experiences are scientifically motivated. The supernatural realities in the two accounts, in the opinion of such skeptics, may easily be relegated to the backdrop of natural occurrences or experiences without any link at all to the metaphysics. For instance, the sudden stoppage of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey's car, the backward movement of the car when the gear lever was in the reverse position and the car's stationary position when the gear lever was in the forward position, may be scientifically explained in the context of a mechanical or electrical fault in the car. Moreover, the claim that the late clergyman was driven to the mountain through an irresistible inner urge may have no allusion whatsoever to the supernatural, but perhaps a manifestation of the psychological definition of religion as 'a universal obsessive neurosis' or 'some kind of profound inner experience.'²²² Thus the allusion to the supernatural reality as a major source of the *Krɔbo boɔ*'s discovery and sacredness can be rationally contested.

Despite these contentions, the present researcher maintains that the alleged supernatural occurrences that characterized the late clergyman's discovery of the *Krɔbo boɔ* cannot be completely relegated to the background. The alleged supernatural occurrences are plausible because they have biblical antecedents. They are therefore not new. One of these biblical antecedents of a supernatural attraction to a sacred space was Moses' encounter with the burning

²²² James L. Cox, *Expressing the Sacred: An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion* (Zimbabwe: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1996), p. 4.

bush.²²³ In Exodus 3:2 -3, it is said: ‘And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, “I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.”’

From the above biblical antecedent, one can argue that both Moses and Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey *felt* drawn to their respective sacred sites because of what they **saw**. Moses saw a burning bush that was not consumed and the late clergyman **saw** *Krɔbo boɔ*, believed to be a mountain of God’s presence.²²⁴

3.4.2 The first visit to *Krɔbo boɔ* and the experience of a supernatural phenomenon

It must be recalled that when the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey and his driver first visited the chief and other elders of Abasua, the late clergyman promised to go back two weeks later in order to be led to the top of the mountain for religious purposes. When the time was due, the late clergyman, the Catechist J.M. Quartey who hailed from Akuapem Mampong but was in charge of the Sekyere Methodist Society of the MCG, Mr. Isaac Yao Boamah who was the driver and also the Circuit Steward and Mr. Brefo, the Caretaker of Banko Society of the MCG set off to meet the chief and elders of Abasua on the possibility of visiting the top of the mountain.

Following their meeting with the chief, Nana Kwasi Marfo, and some elders of Abasua (some of whom were Kwasi Boɔ, Yaw Denteh and Kwame Kwayie), the late pastor and his men were advised by the chief of the community to go back to Effiduase to adequately prepare and

²²³ For details, see Exodus 3:1 – 10.

²²⁴ (Emphases mine).

come back to be taken to the top of the mountain another time.²²⁵ Among the Akan or Asante people of Ghana, a chief's instruction to a client²²⁶ to go back and adequately prepare and come back later can have several implications. First, it can imply that the client should go and come back with either money or alcoholic beverage (wine) or, sometimes both. The money or the wine would be given to the chief and his elders as a motivation or as a customary requirement. It can also imply that the client should go back and rethink about the ramifications of his or her decision to engage the services of the chief or his elders. Here, the chief would want to find out the client's preparedness to be responsible for the outcome of his or her decision.

It is said that the late pastor agreed and so in February 1965, the first visit was scheduled. Two hunters from the community were delegated by the chief to lead the Rev. Minister and his team to the top of the mountain. It is said that before they departed, two bottles of schnapps were presented to the chief by the Effiduasi party and a farewell libation prayer²²⁷ was said to dispatch them. When the *okyamee* (linguist) finished the libation prayer, the walking to the top of the mountain started around 10:30am. They were believed to have gone with a pot of water and the pastor was given a walking stick, whilst the hunters had their guns loaded. The others followed closely. The journey is said to have taken them about one hour, forty- five minutes to complete.

When they got to the top of the mountain, the two hunters waited at the outskirts of the forest reserve, whilst the late pastor and his three friends continued to the flat top of the mountain. It is said that when they got to the top of the mountain, the pastor immediately stepped forward and began to pray. In the course of his prayer, the Very Rev. Boamah indicates that the

²²⁵ Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, pp.7-8.

²²⁶ A client in this context is anyone who approaches a chief or queen to solicit his or her assistance.

²²⁷ For a good discussion on 'the pouring of libation' and its related problem for the African Christian, see Joseph Osei-Bonsu, *The Inculturation of Christianity in Africa: Antecedents and Guidelines from the New Testament and the Early Church* (Germany: Peter Lang, 2005), pp.10-12.

weather suddenly changed into a violet colour and the pastor was enveloped in a very thick cloud, reminiscent of the story of Jesus' transfiguration in the Bible. The other three members of the team who were looking on were frightened but kept this to themselves. When he finished praying, he asked his three friends about what had happened but none could answer him. Later on, when the issue of the cloud was revealed to him by the other three friends, the pastor confirmed that he had also heard a voice from the clouds assuring him of God's presence on the mountain. From that day onwards, that spot became an important point on the top of the mountain.²²⁸ The pastor is said to have erected a wooden cross at that place to designate its special importance.



The late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey and Mr. (now Very Rev.) Isaac Yao Boamah

²²⁸ Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.8.

It could be observed that the phenomenon of the clouds, which enveloped the late pastor in the presence of his three friends on the mountain, is reminiscent of Jesus' transfiguration experience in the New Testament (Matt. 17:1ff.; Mk. 9:2ff.; Lk. 9:28ff.; II Pet.1:16-18). On the day of his transfiguration, Jesus Christ took his three closest disciples, Peter, James and John with him to a high mountain to pray.

And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" – not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.²²⁹

Thus, on the basis of Eliade's sacred space model (that is, *hierophanic* and *theophanic* events²³⁰), the sacredness of *Krɔbo boɔ* and the mountain of Jesus' transfiguration are underscored. The *hierophanic* event involves a direct manifestation on earth of a deity or a supernatural reality. The *hierophanic* event on the two mountaintop experiences can, among others, be the sudden appearance of the clouds. Commenting on the significance of the clouds in Jesus' transfiguration experience, Babajide maintains that 'In the [Old Testament], clouds often reveal or conceal God's glory.'²³¹ He further points out that the cloud that enveloped Jesus and his disciples on the mountain of Jesus' transfiguration served to conceal the glory that had been momentarily revealed.²³² However, the cloud that appeared on the *Krɔbo boɔ*, in the opinion of the present writer, served to reveal God's glory on the mountain. This is because the late Rev. Asibbey

²²⁹ Luke 9:29 – 36 (Revised Standard Version)

²³⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20-27.

²³¹ Babajide, 'Mark', p.1185.

²³² Babajide, 'Mark', p.1185.

claimed that the cloud was accompanied by what was perceived to be a heavenly attestation of God's presence on the mountain. In that sense, the cloud could be a visible manifestation of the invisible God, just as fire symbolised the presence of God in Exodus 19:18.

The *theophanic* event, on the other hand, is when somebody receives a message from a deity and interprets it for others. In the context of Jesus' transfiguration and the late Rev. Asibbey's prayer on the *Krɔbo boɔ*, the *theophanic* event could also be the supernatural voice they heard from the clouds which enveloped them. In the case of Jesus' transfiguration experience, a voice believed to be God's confirmation of Jesus' divine personality was heard. In that voice, according to Babajide, the Father (God) corroborated Jesus' words and deeds and announced the only appropriate response from humans: *Listen to him!*²³³ In the case of the late pastor's experience, it must be recalled that he claimed to have heard a voice assuring him of God's presence on the mountain.

If interpretation of a message received from a deity formed a major component of Eliade's *theophanic* event, then the present writer's contention is that the interpreters of the message (or voice) believed to have come from God could be some of the eye-witnesses to the two supernatural scenes. Given that the vision of the transfiguration had been revealed only to the trio, Jesus told them to keep it a secret until after his resurrection (Mark 9:9). But as they descended the mountain, the three kept discussing the subject (Mark 9:10). In the case of Rev. Asibbey's experience, it is logical for us to assume that the eye-witnesses themselves could interpret what they had seen to other people. Their interpretation of what they had witnessed on the mountain, which indicates the sacredness of the place, is perceived to be some of the reasons

²³³ Babajide, 'Mark', p.1185. (Emphasis original).

why some of them sustained their regular visits to the mountain as pilgrims through the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* (Joy in Christ Group).

3.4.3 *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* : the pioneers of pilgrim movements to *Krɔbo boɔ*

Oral tradition indicates that *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* (Joy in Christ Group) was the first organised group of people to go to *Krɔbo boɔ* as pilgrims, after the discovery of the place as a sacred space.²³⁴ This group, according to the Very Rev. Boamah, was formed by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey. Available oral and written records seem to indicate that the Rev. Asibbey formed the group wherever he was posted to serve the Church. Omenyo, in his *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: a Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana*, for instance, identifies *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* as having been formed by the late Rev. Osei Asibbey when he (Rev. Asibbey) was the Minister-in-charge at Tafo Methodist Church in Kumasi.²³⁵ Other records indicate that he had started a prayer group (probably, *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*) at Sunyani before he was posted to Effiduase Circuit in 1963.²³⁶ If these are true, then it is not a surprise that upon his transfer to Effiduase Circuit in 1963, the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey decided to introduce his *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* to that place also.

It was a group of Christians that sought to renew the spiritual fervour of the Church through Bible studies, prayer, singing of hymns and lyric. The group also sought to empower the church for evangelism and church planting. It consisted of male and female Christians who felt called by God to use Bible studies, prayer, hymns and lyric as instruments of renewing the

²³⁴ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

²³⁵ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 158.

²³⁶ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

church. He therefore assembled all lyric singers in the Circuit. Among them were Mr. Edward Mensah from Effiduase, Mr. Seth Akromah and Madam Comfort Akromah from Bodwease. Others included Madam Elizabeth Amankwa and Madam Afua Ataa who were natives of Asekyerewa. He also included Local Preachers in the group. Among them were Mr. Isaac Yao Boamah, Mr. Brenya, Mr. J. A. Achampong, Mr. M. A. Agyei-Boadi, Mr. Samuel Gyebi Ababio, Mr. Kwabena Ameyaw Boateng (Now the late Very Rev. Kwabena Ameyaw Boateng) and Mr. Amankwa Bofo.²³⁷ Other interested people later joined the group. They included the Very Rev Abayie Sarpong and the late Very Rev. Dr. Sarpong Danquah.

The maiden meeting of the group was held at Effiduase. The group met once every month at one of the societies for fellowship. It met again at another society in the following month. This practice was rotated from society to society. The group visited places where there were no Methodist Churches. Through the instruments of lyric singing, prayer, dawn broadcast and other evangelistic activities, many Methodist Churches were established. It is said that by this routine rotational programme, about eleven (11) Societies²³⁸ were established by Rev. Osei-Asibey and the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*, between 1963 and 1969. These Societies included Nsuta, Adumakwae, Bomeng, Akrofonso, Asamang, Agona –Akrofonso, Odumase and Jamase.²³⁹

It is worth noting that the group attributed its laurels in evangelism and other spiritual renewal activities to its regular pilgrimage to *Krɔbo boɔ*.²⁴⁰ This is because whenever the group embarked on a pilgrimage to the mountain, its activities over there had always been characterised

²³⁷ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

²³⁸ The Society is the Local organisation of the Methodist Church, meeting as one congregation for public worship, and organised into Classes under the supervision of the Leaders' Meeting. The Society consists of the Junior Members and Full Members, who are members of the Methodist Church. C.f. *The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*. p.86.

²³⁹ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.14.

²⁴⁰ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

by miracles, healing and deliverance and other supernatural manifestations.²⁴¹ Thus the mountain, which was originally on the periphery of indigenous religiosity had become the centre of the new religion. The site's present name, APM, is believed to have emerged as a result of the group's regular pilgrimage to the mountain for prayer rituals.

When the Rev. Osei-Asibey was transferred to Wenchi in 1969, the late Rev. Solomon Kwasi Debrah replaced him. The group was meeting occasionally. However, in 1970, Mr. Isaac Yao Boamah, the secretary of the group, left the Circuit work to work with the State Transport Corporation. He was also replaced by one Mr. Brenya who was the Caretaker of Sekyere Society of the MCG. Unfortunately, the group grew weaker and weaker and eventually died off by the late 1980s. The implication is that the group utilised APM as a pilgrimage site for more than twenty years before its dissolution. In all these pilgrimage activities, it is said that other non-Methodists who had heard of the place's spiritual significance also utilised the PM for religious activities.

The present writer was an eye-witness to the influx of pilgrims from other parts of the world to the PM. From 27th to 30th June, 2009, the researcher met people who claimed to have come from Italy, Senegal and America to the PM as pilgrims. These foreign pilgrims might have heard of the PM through the media²⁴² or their Ghanaian friends / relatives who might have ever visited the place. Moreover, since 2010 the PM has been the venue for the biannual Connexional Prayer Convention of the MCG. The first part of the 2012 segment of the Prayer Convention

²⁴¹ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. Some of the miraculous deeds would be considered when discussing 'Miracles on the PM.'

²⁴²The present researcher is aware that the biannual Connexional Prayer Conference of the MCG is sometimes reported or advertised in the print and electronic media in Ghana. The print media include posters, flyers and the MCG's quarterly magazine, *The Christian Sentinel*. For an example of a report on the Connexional Prayer Conference at the PM, see *The Christian Sentinel* 19 (2010), p. 20. The electronic media include radio and television. The popular ones the MCG uses to announce its Prayer Conference are Peace FM and TV3, private radio and television stations respectively, both based in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

under the theme: “Fan into Flame the Gift of God in You” (2Timothy 1:6), held from February 28 to March 3 on the PM, for example, attracted more than four thousand pilgrims.²⁴³ The second part of the Prayer Convention is in August each year. Similarly, the PCG has its site (i.e., Camp Eight) as the venue for its biannual Prayer Retreat. The second segment of their 2011 Prayer Retreat under the theme: “Breaking the Protocol of Satan”, held in August, attracted about five thousand pilgrims.²⁴⁴

The pilgrimage to the PM, in the opinion of the present writer, is due to the pilgrims’ perception of the site’s sacredness. This confirms the assertion of Park that ‘Pilgrimage represents the main physical manifestation of the abiding pull of such sacred places, sometimes involving vast numbers of people travelling by various means from around the world.’²⁴⁵

3.4.4 Other Prayer Camps and Christian Ministries on the mountain

One of the justifications for the sacredness of *Krɔbo boɔ* is the upsurge of other Prayer Camps (PCs) and Christian Ministries (CMs) on the mountain. In addition to CT believed to be the site where the late Rev. Osei Asibbey was engulfed in a cloud when he was praying, the present writer could count about nine other established PCs and CMs or churches on the mountain. It was observed that almost all the founders of the Camps or Ministries were men who had, for quite a long time, patronised or utilized CT, the PC of the MCG. CT, the premier PC on the mountain, is believed to have been ‘the spiritual power house’ for those who have established

²⁴³ The researcher was a participant observer at the Prayer Conference. The Director of Evangelism, Mission and Renewal of the Methodist Church Ghana, the Very Rev. Adu Boateng, on 2 March 2012, disclosed the number of pilgrims who attended the February 2012 Prayer Conference on the Mountain.

²⁴⁴ The researcher was a participant observer at the Prayer Conference. Revs. Asare Amoah and Kofi Antwi, Ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, disclosed the number of pilgrims during an interview they granted the researcher on 12 August 2011 at Abasua Prayer Mountain (Camp Eight).

²⁴⁵ Park, *Religion and geography*, p. 22.

their PCs and CMs. For instance, Pastor Joseph Boaheng, the founder of Camp Seven (Word Faith Ministries International), was once one of the Caretakers of CT. He is said to have served as a Caretaker from 1997 to 2001.

According to Mr. Boateng Fordjour,²⁴⁶ the founder of Camp Eight (the PC of the PCG), the late Rev. Antwi Boasiako, utilised CT for more than ten years before leading the Presbyterians to establish Camp Eight.²⁴⁷ The establishment of this Camp is believed to have been preceded by some rituals which one considers to be of immense phenomenological significance. For instance it is alleged that some of the Presbyterians went to fetch ordinary sand from CT and spread it on the ground before they erected the physical structures at their prayer camp. This practice is perceived to have emanated from their belief in the potency and sacredness of CT, including the sand found there.²⁴⁸ If it is true that the Presbyterians went to fetch ordinary sand from CT, then its phenomenological significance to the present writer is that the practice implies an unconscious reinvention of relics in contemporary protestant church, the PCG.

It was noted that the numerical designations of some of the prayer camps did not correspond with the chronological order of the camps' establishment. Instead, the numerical designations were symbols of some historical events that were believed to have informed the establishment of those camps. The Methodist camp, believed to be the first camp on the mountain, is also referred to as CT. If it was the first prayer to be established on the mountain, why is it not Camp One? The name 'CT', according to Mr. Fordjour Boateng, is as a result of the number of 'prayer stops' Rev. Asibbey made on his way to the top of the APM. The 'prayer

²⁴⁶ At the time of this work, Mr. Boateng Fordjour was the Secretary of Camp Three.

²⁴⁷ Mr. Boateng Fordjour, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

²⁴⁸ Mr. Boateng Fordjour, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

stops' were the number of times the late pastor stopped to pray while climbing the mountain to the top. According to Mr. Boateng, Rev. Asibbey made three 'prayer stops' on his way. The first 'prayer stop' is where a PC has been established as Camp One. The second 'prayer stop' is where Camp Two has been built. The third 'prayer stop' is the place where the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey is believed to have been engulfed in the clouds when he was praying. This is CT, the premier PC on the mountain. Thus, contrary to popular thinking, neither Camp One nor Two was built before CT. In that sense, the numerical designations of these Camps did not necessarily correspond with the chronological order of their establishment, rather they were symbols of historical reality. The numerical designations of the PCs also imply the possibility of identity formation from the beliefs and practices of religious leaders.²⁴⁹

3.4.5 Prevalence of religious, moral, health and environmental sanitation rules

The sacredness of *Krɔbo boɔ* is also observed from the strict religious, moral/ethical, health and sanitation rules and programmes at the various PCs and CMs. In all the PCs, attendance to religious programmes is compulsory for all campers. These programmes include morning devotions, all-night prayer sessions and divine services. Besides, strict moral/ethical rules feature prominently in all the PCs and CMs. At CT, for instance, it is not allowed for males and females who were not married to sleep in the same room. Owusu-Ansah, citing Evangelist Asiamah,²⁵⁰ maintains that opposite sexes [who are not married couple] are forbidden to sleep in

²⁴⁹ The identity of the followers of revealed religious traditions, for example, Christianity and Islam, are believed to be significantly shaped by the beliefs and practices of the founders of those religions. For a detailed study on this, see James Fieser and John Powers (eds.), *Scriptures of the World's Religions* United States of America: McGraw – Hill, 1998. C.f. George E. Saint-Laurent, *Spirituality and World Religions: A Comparative Introduction* California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2000.

²⁵⁰ Evangelist Asiamah was the Caretaker of Camp Three from the year 2004 to date (the time of this work).

one room because there have been some incidence of sexual affair at CT.²⁵¹ Moreover, wearing of indecent clothes or sexually provocative dressing anywhere on the PM is seriously frowned at. The wearing of such clothes is believed to have the propensity of sexually luring or enticing people into some misconduct, thereby truncating and defeating the very essence of the pilgrimage²⁵² at the site.

Again, as a sacred space, stringent rules and programmes of sanitation permeate the entire activities of all the PCs and CMs. In all the Camps, littering, spitting, urinating and defecating in the open spaces are deemed serious offences by the culprits. All campers are required to fully participate in the regular clean up exercises. These include weeding, sweeping, scrubbing and disposal of refuse. In some of the PCs, waste disposal bins are placed at vantage points to augment cleanliness and awareness of environmental sanitation. Lavatory facilities for males and females as well as designated places for refuse dumping are perceived to augment sanitation activities at the various PCs.

The rules and programmes of sanitation at the various PCs and CMs, in the opinion of the present writer, are not novel. Rather, they are reflections and appropriations of biblical antecedents of cleanliness at military camps. In Deuteronomy 23:9-14, for instance, the instructions on environmental sanitation at the military camp were unambiguous:

When you go forth against your enemies and are in camp, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of what chances to him by night, then he shall go outside the camp, he shall not come within the camp; but when evening comes on, he shall bathe himself in water, and when the sun is down, he may come within the camp. You shall have a place outside the camp and you shall go out to it; and you shall have a stick with your weapons; and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it, and turn back and cover up your excrement. Because

²⁵¹ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity*, p. 23.

²⁵² In Islam, for example, Muslims who embarked on pilgrimage to Mecca were required to abstain from sexual intercourse, obscene language and acrimonious disputes. For details, see Fieser and Powers, *Scriptures of the World's Religions*, p. 401.

the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, that he may not see anything indecent among you, and turn away from you.²⁵³

In their commentary on this text, Luciano C. Chianeque and Samuel Ngewa indicate that a nocturnal emission at the camp made a man ritually unclean. He was required to remain outside the camp till evening, when he could wash himself and return to camp. The legislation also laid down rules relating to hygiene. A specific area outside the camp ought to be set apart to be used as a toilet and needed to be kept clean by burying excrement. Such cleanliness was necessary to avoid offending the Lord God who moved about inside the camp. The camp was to be kept holy in his honor and to prevent him from leaving. This regulation was perceived to contribute to the health of the campers (or soldiers) by removing one possible source of infection.²⁵⁴

Thus the notion of the sacredness of a space such as *Krɔbo boɔ*, in the opinion of the present writer, is not a mere metaphysical or abstract apprehension. Rather, it is perceived to be an empirically verifiable religio-social reality which impacts on or conditions human behaviour. In that sense, the researcher agrees with Geertz in his assertion that ‘The holy [sacred symbol] bears within it everywhere a sense of intrinsic obligation ... [which also] enforces emotional commitment.... That which is set apart as more than mundane is inevitably considered to have far-reaching implications for the direction of human conduct.’²⁵⁵

3.4.6 Appropriation of relics and prayer accessories on the mountain

The Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines a relic as ‘an object, tradition or system from the past which has survived and continues to exist.’ It is also ‘a part of the body

²⁵³ The biblical quotation was from the Revised Standard Version.

²⁵⁴ Luciano C. Chianeque and Samuel Ngewa, ‘Deuteronomy’ in *Africa Bible Commentary* (Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 240.

²⁵⁵ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 127.

or clothing or one of the belongings of a saint.’ In this context, one’s operational definition of a relic is any object or belonging, experience and tradition of a dead Christian, which the living Christians endeavored to utilise or appropriate because of their belief in the spiritual potency of those objects, experiences and traditions. The prevalence of relics at a place is believed to be some the indicators of the place’s sacredness. Douglas Davies points out that relics make those sites sacred because they

were often treasured as the central possession of a church and marked, in some way, the continuity of the faithful with those who had given their lives for their faith in Christ. At the level of popular religion these relics were often reckoned to possess special powers, which could, for example, heal people.... The relics not only reckoned to include pieces of the bodies of martyrs, but embraced an extremely wide variety of things, including, for example, ‘ Our Lord’s shoe, his swaddling clothes, blood and water from his side, bread from the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper ... the rods of Moses and Aaron, relics of St. John the Baptist.’²⁵⁶

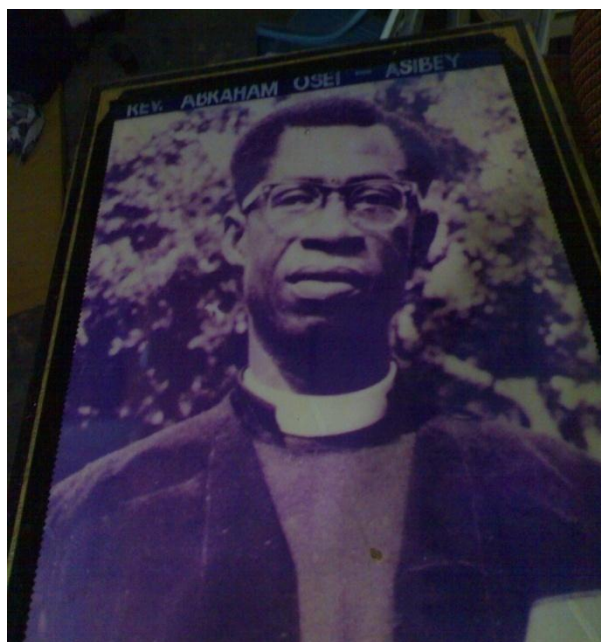
In his summary of Emile Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of Religion*, Scott indicates that a sacred force is thought to have a radiating quality; that is, its power is believed to diffuse and radiate out, in the process occupying objects and spaces adjacent to it. The power is believed to diminish with distance, so that the farther one is from the source, the weaker its effects. This idea permeates beliefs about saints’ relics. Such objects are thought to have a quality similar to radioactivity that affects anything they touch. The belief is that the farther one stands from the object, the weaker is the effect. Thus a person who hopes for a miraculous cure needs to have direct or near-direct physical contact with the relic.²⁵⁷

The items believed to be relics and which were observed as vigorously patronised by some pilgrims at CT of APM included the portraits of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey and the first chapel which was built at CT by the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* and later demolished. Below

²⁵⁶ Douglas Davies, ‘Christianity’ in Jean Holm with John Bowker (eds), *Sacred Place* (United Kingdom: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 41.

²⁵⁷ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p. 151.

are the portraits of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey and the first chapel believed to have been built at CT by the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*.



The late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey

This portrait was placed at the topmost part of the chancel (sanctuary) of the new chapel at CT. It was observed that anytime preachers preached on themes such as ‘Christian sacrifice’ or ‘Christian commitment’, they were seen to be highly animated or inspired, as they gazed on the late Rev. Asibbey’s portrait in the chapel or as they made reference to him as one of the people believed to have lived a committed Christian life in his generation.



The first chapel believed to have been built by the Kristomu Anigye Kuo

Many copies of the portrait of the first chapel in which the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey presumably worshiped were offered for sale and many people, including the present writer, rushed to patronise them. Apart from the economic dimensions of these quasi-business activities, the sellers of these relics made buyers believe in their miraculous potency and historical significance. The significance the sellers attached to the relics corroborates the view of Davies with respect to the relevance of relics among believers. According to him, relics can serve as a concrete expression of the faith of past believers and as a focus for the faith of the living.²⁵⁸

Another relic which symbolises the sacredness of the *Krobo boɔ* is the metal cross at CT. The cross has been erected at the very spot where the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey stood to pray and was said to have been engulfed in the clouds. It is recalled that on the first visit to the PM when the late Rev. Asibbey was allegedly engulfed in a cloud, it is said that he erected a wooden cross at the site to designate the site's spiritual significance. That wooden cross has been

²⁵⁸ Davies, 'Christianity', p.42.

replaced by a metal one. The metal cross is thought to be more durable than the wooden cross. Owing to some pilgrims' belief in the spiritual potency of the cross, the very site where the cross has been erected is the space where most pilgrims keep items such as anointing oil, water, food, clothing etc. It is also a common practice to see many people kneeling down below the cross and praying. For some people, sleeping under the cross at night is preferred to sleeping in any of the rooms, even when unfavourable weather conditions at night demand their relocation to some of the rooms. This is because such people believe that the clouds which enveloped the late Rev. Minister made the place *exceptionally supernatural*.²⁵⁹ Their sleeping there or keeping of items under the cross is therefore believed to be some of the means by which such pilgrims hope to have answers to their prayer requests.

The issue of relics is not limited only to the PM but to the entire Abasua community. One of the relics which are perceived to be of immense importance to the entire Abasua community is the special walking staff of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey. It is said that when the late clergyman came down after his second visit to the PM in April 1965, he made a special walking staff. It is a brown wooden stick of about five feet ten inches tall, with a metal pointed stand at the bottom. On top of the staff is a spherical silver knob on which a star-like brass is situated.

²⁵⁹ (Emphasis mine).



The special walking staff used by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey.

This staff was initially kept at the palace of the then chief of Abasua, Nana Kwasi Marfo. The arrangement was that anytime he (Rev. Asibbey) climbed the mountain he used it and upon his return, it was kept in custody of the chief.²⁶⁰

When the late clergyman was transferred to Wenchi in the Brong Ahafo Region, he made an arrangement that any time a Chairman of a District (now Bishop of a Diocese of the MCG) or the President of Conference (now Presiding Bishop of the MCG) embarks on a trip to the top of the mountain, the staff should be given to that officer for the journey to the center. It is said that since 1985, no one has ever used the walking staff for climbing.

When Nana Marfo died, it was transferred to the palace of Nana Owusu Ababio, the next chief. When he also died in 2009, it is now in the custody of the Abusuapayin Kwasi Bo. It is

²⁶⁰ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

said that the staff should not be carried away from Abasua community, since it is believed to have some protective powers or functions for the entire Abasua community.²⁶¹

One of the phenomenological significance of the late clergyman's walking staff is its reminiscence of the use of staff by some biblical characters. Arthur Mercer points out that 'Various ... words in many passages of the Bible refer to the staff in a literal sense. These include association with or use by shepherds, travelers, warriors and soldiers.'²⁶² But the staff is not used only in a literal sense. According to Mercer, the predominant biblical uses, however, are figurative. Moses' rod, for example, symbolised the presence of God and His covenant concern for His people (Ex. 14:16; 17:5, 9). Aaron's rod was God's miracle-working instrument (Ex. 7:9 f.). Elisha's staff conveyed his healing power (II Kgs. 4:29, 31).²⁶³

The Abasua people's belief in the protective powers or functions of the late clergyman's walking staff, in the opinion of the researcher, underscores the biblical notion of the shepherd's staff as a symbol of security, protection and perhaps, the nearness of God.²⁶⁴ In that sense, the staff is a visible expression of God's total sovereignty over the Abasua community.

Furthermore, the people's belief in the protective power of the walking staff is a reflection of some of the biblical intimations of the power of relics as detected in stories about Elisha's bones (2 Kgs. 13:21) and cloths which Paul had touched (Acts 19:12).²⁶⁵ In these biblical instances, a dead person came back to life upon his encounter with the bones of Elisha and sick people who encountered the handkerchiefs and aprons which Paul had presumably

²⁶¹ *obaapanin* Akosua Acha, Interview, 14 August 2011, Abasua community. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, pp. 20 - 21.

²⁶² Arthur Mercer, 'Staff', in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds.) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), p. 1620.

²⁶³ Mercer, 'Staff', pp. 1620-1621.

²⁶⁴ See Psalm 23:4. C.f. Mercer, 'Staff', p.1621.

²⁶⁵ Paul D. Steeves, 'Relics', in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Second Edition) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 1006.

touched, also received their healing. In that sense, the Abasua people's reluctance to exit the staff from the community may be a partial expression of their belief in the relic (that is, the walking staff) as a symbol of the community's health and vitality.

Besides, the clergyman's alleged instruction that the walking staff be given to a Diocesan Bishop or a Presiding Bishop of the MCG who decides to visit the top of the mountain, implies that the walking staff is also a symbol of servant leadership. The researcher is aware that in the MCG's Episcopacy, for instance, the Presiding Bishop and the Diocesan Bishops are the people whose offices are, among other things, identified by the shepherd's staff. They use the shepherd's staff in their respective capacities as servant leaders of the church.

In the light of the perception of the walking staff as a symbol of servant leadership, it is plausible that the late clergyman might have envisaged Abasua community as playing a leading role in Ghanaian Christianity, as far as spirituality and human development are concerned. The researcher's suggestion, however, is that a detailed study of Absaua people's perception about the walking staff and other relics associated with the late clergyman is an area worth exploring.

There are, however, some criticisms about the perception of relics as some of the sources of power and sacredness of a place. For instance, Davies indicates that 'The Protestant Reformation, involving many political and economic reasons alongside religion, sought to remove these external sources of religious power and merit and to replace them with a doctrine of faith that lay in a personal and interior attitude towards God.'²⁶⁶ In the light of this, John Calvin, one of the Protestant Reformers, is said to have contested the use of the relics of the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. In a letter to the five martyrs of Chambery, dated 5th September 1555, Calvin wrote, among others, that 'Now, those who know anything about this

²⁶⁶ Davies, 'Christianity', p.48.

subject [referring to the use of the relics of the Virgin Mary] know that it was not the practice of the early Church to collect shoes and stockings (*etc.*) for relics, and that for five hundred years after the Virgin Mary's death there was never any talk of such things. These well-known facts should have been sufficient to prove the silliness of all these relics of the Virgin.²⁶⁷ But, despite these criticisms, the human attraction to relics still remains. The resilience of relics in contemporary Ghanaian sacred spaces is, therefore, perceived to be a research area which can engage the attention of interested researchers or scholars.

Related to the issue of relics is pilgrims' appropriation of prayer accessories on the mountain. Prayer accessories are symbols or aids to a person's interaction with a transcendent reality or a deity.²⁶⁸ They include water, sand, leaves and anointing oil believed to be potent as a result of their encounter with a supernatural reality. The researcher observed the practice of pilgrims' fetching of water that had been accumulated on the floor of the rock and gathering of sand and leaves from trees and shrubs on the mountain. The water, sand and the leaves were believed to be efficacious to the users, once they (the prayer aids) had been gathered from the PM.²⁶⁹ These observations corroborate those made by J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, when he studied the St. Mary's Sanctuary (SMS) at Buoho in Kumasi. He maintains that:

Pilgrims to SMS also collect some of the sand and leaves of trees at the place, which they claim have demonstrated miraculous powers for users. Underneath a huge stone edifice of the Madonna, at my visit in December 2003, were several gallons of water that had been placed there by pilgrims and supplicants. The gallons of water had been placed at the foot of the Madonna to attract her blessings unto the water. The blessed water will then be used either as drinking or bathing water to effect religious healing. In a combination of traditional healing practices and Christian healing, pilgrims had also

²⁶⁷ Nick R. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power* (England: Grace Publications Trust, 2004), p. 252.

²⁶⁸ For a good discussion on prayer accessories, see Virginia Greene, "Accessories of Holiness": Defining Jewish Sacred Objects' *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, 31 (1992), pp. 31-39. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3179610>, [accessed 04 June 2012].

²⁶⁹ Mr. Fordjour Boateng and Nana Kwame, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

placed herbs collected from the grotto under the statue of the Madonna, presumably to let her presence infuse the herbs with miraculous effect when they are applied.²⁷⁰ The gallons of water which had been placed under the foot of the Madonna to attract her blessings unto the water and the pilgrims' perception that the blessed water could bring about religious healing, in the opinion of the researcher, are all in the context of the appropriation of prayer accessories. The perception that the blessed water can bring about religious healing is believed to be Christianity's unconscious reenactment of some of the practices of Traditional Akan Religion. In this religious tradition, adherents sometimes use physical objects such as talisman, amulets and concoctions believed to be spiritually potent in bringing about religious healing or protection. The appropriation of physical items such as blessed water at Christian sacred spaces, in the opinion of the researcher, can be a typology of traditional Akan religious practice in Ghanaian Christianity. In that sense, the affinity between Christianity and Traditional Akan Religion is highlighted.

3.4.7 Sacredness through miracles

According to Davies, some places became sacred because it is believed that something miraculous took place there, as with the Holy Land, given that name because Jesus was born and lived there.²⁷¹ Several miracles²⁷² are believed to have taken place on APM which, on the basis of Davies' scheme, warrants its designation as a sacred space. Some of these claims of miraculous occurrences on the PM are examined and discussed.

²⁷⁰ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Born of the Virgin Mary": Mary, Marian Apparitions and the Catholic Heritage in Ghanaian Christianity. Paper presented at the Conference on 'Sensational Heritage: Fashioning Culture, Styling the Past, Stimulating the Senses'. Conference Organized by the NOW Research Program, Heritage Dynamics: Politics of Authentication and Aesthetics of Persuasion in Ghana, South Africa, Brazil and the Netherlands (n.d), pp. 6-7.

²⁷¹ Davies, 'Christianity', p.44.

²⁷² Miracles in this context refer to 'extraordinary events caused by supernatural agency.' For detailed discussion on 'Miracles', see Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, pp. 103-115.

First, during the field work of this research at Abasua, Madam Apemasu, one of the natives of Abasua who was interviewed by the researcher, shared what she considered to be her miraculous experience on the mountain. According to her, she was one of the people with whom the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey was going to the mountain to pray. She said that this was after the late Asibbey had discovered the site as a place for prayer rituals in 1965. In one of the usual prayer visits to the mountain, the woman said that the late Rev. Asibbey asked them to pray and ask God for one of these two concerns; children or money. She said that at that time she had assumed her menopausal stage for some years, therefore, to ask God for a child was perceived to be impossible. She rather resolved to pray to God for money to be able to take care of the children she had already given birth to. But according to her, she immediately had a change of mind and rather prayed to God for children because she believed that human beings were more valuable to her than money. Moreover, according to her, nothing was impossible with God.

She said that after the prayer when they were coming home, she experienced the resumption of her menstrual period. A few months afterwards, she became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a beautiful girl. About two years afterwards, she gave birth again to another beautiful girl. At the time of the field work of this research, each of the girls had grown and also given birth to seven children each.²⁷³

Related to the above is the miraculous experience of Madam Felicia Kyere of Yonso, near Jamasi in the Effiduasi Diocese of the MCG. According to her, she came with a group of people to pray on the mountain one day. During one of the prayer sessions, the leader requested people who needed children to come forward so that they would be assisted in prayer. Madam

²⁷³ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

Kyere said she willingly stood in for her niece who needed children and they were prayed for. She claimed she was fifty-two years and was in her menopause. Within a few months after the prayer retreat, she herself became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a baby boy. The boy was called *aberewa ba* (Old Lady's son), since the mother gave birth to him in her old age. Subsequently, the niece also gave birth.²⁷⁴

Moreover, some of the respondents affirmed the sacredness of the prayer mountain by referring to it as 'a place where impossibilities become possibilities.' One of such respondents is Mr. Lawrence Asare Dankwa.²⁷⁵ According to him, in February 2005, he proposed to marry a certain lady. He said the lady accepted the proposal, but she in turn disclosed to him what she referred to as 'the unfortunate aspect of my life.' That unfortunate aspect of the lady's life, according to Mr. Asare-Dankwa, had to do with the notion that some Medical Doctors had allegedly diagnosed and declared her to be sterile owing to some biological complications they claimed is associated with her reproductive system. Mr. Asare-Dankwa said that he was not perturbed in anyway by that apparently discouraging and hopeless response of the lady. Instead, he said he determined to marry her since he hoped that he could have children with her 'through prayer or divine intervention.'

Mr. Asare-Dankwah said that he went to APM to pray to God for her would-be wife's reproductive system to be restored. He said he spent about a week on the mountain. In July 2005, he said that they got married, and barely a year after their wedding ceremony, his wife gave birth

²⁷⁴ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p. 40.

²⁷⁵ Mr. Lawrence Asare-Dankwah was an Economics teacher at Aburi Girls' Senior High School and also a member of Wesley Methodist Church Choir, Aburi. He made this affirmation during a discussion with the researcher on the sacredness of APM on 16 March 2012, at the Wesley Methodist Chapel, Aburi.

to a bouncing baby girl. He attributes her wife's successful delivery to a miraculous restoration of her reproductive system, made possible through his prayer and fasting session on APM.

The above claims of miraculous occurrences were all on issues of fertility or child bearing. The pilgrims' ardent desire to have children through divine intervention partly underscores the importance of children among the Akan people and Africans in general. Emmanuel Anim notes the overarching importance of fertility or procreation among Africans by referring to it as that which 'occupies the prime locus in the African concept of prosperity.'²⁷⁶ Anim, citing K.A Opoku, further points out that 'children are highly valued by the Akan. In spite of all the changes introduced into Akan society by modernity, procreation remains the aim of marriage, for without offspring, marriage is incomplete.'²⁷⁷ Opoku's assertion was sustained by John Pobee, an eminent Ghanaian theologian, who maintains that 'childlessness is a disaster in so far as it means the dying out of family and incompleteness.'²⁷⁸

The implication is that childlessness, among the Akan people, is considered as a curse and humiliation. To mitigate this humiliation, people, especially married couples, resort to several means. One of the means, in the opinion of the present writer, is religion. Asamoah-Gyadu points out that 'in the African context solutions to problems are often sought within the ambience of religion.'²⁷⁹ Their pilgrimage to APM, therefore, indicates their appropriation of a religious resource to realise their material desires. Victor Turner and Edith L.B. Turner note the importance of pilgrimage to ordinary people: 'At the heart of pilgrimage is the folk, the ordinary people who choose a 'materialistic' expression of their religion. In other words, pilgrimage as a

²⁷⁶ Emmanuel Anim, 'The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination' *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XVII (2009), p. 38.

²⁷⁷ Anim, 'The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination', p. 38.

²⁷⁸ Anim, 'The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination', p. 38.

²⁷⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, "Born of the Virgin Mary", p. 7.

religious act is a kinetic ritual, replete with actual objects, ‘sacra’, and is often said to have materialistic results, such as healing *and child bearing*.²⁸⁰

Thus, the sacredness of APM lies in the perception that, it is a site where the religious practitioners or the pilgrims (i.e., the people who pray on the mountain) are believed to have experienced the presence and power of the transcendental, as Birgit Meyer described it,²⁸¹ as far as the realisation of their prayer requests²⁸² is concerned. We have already indicated that the sacredness of APM is defined and informed by the belief in the presence and power of a deity at that place, and the possibility of human interaction with the deity through prayer rituals. The alleged miraculous occurrences on the mountain, in the opinion of the researcher, are reinforcements of the claims of God’s presence on the mountain.

This view, however, presupposes the existence of God who is believed to be the orchestrator of miraculous events or signs on the APM. In his interrogation of the presupposition of God’s existence and the belief that he is the orchestrator of miraculous signs, Cook raises the following questions and concerns:

What sense of ‘event’ and ‘cause’ is there which can be applied to divine agency? How can the transcendent God intervene in the world without destroying that transcendence and becoming merely another part of creation itself? How can we be sure what the [miraculous] sign is meant to signify? It may and does often mean different things to different people. We would require some independent verification and identification that the [miraculous] sign was genuine.... How is it possible to justify a claim that a miracle has occurred?²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Victor Turner and Edith L.B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. xiii. (Emphasis mine). C.f. Amoah, *Religion and Poverty*, p. 111.

²⁸¹ Birgit Meyer, *Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2006), p.8.

²⁸² These prayer requests, in the opinion of the researcher, were believed to be humanly impossible that was why the people resorted to the power of the transcendental.

²⁸³ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, p.106.

The above questions and concerns partly show the difficulty with which scholars have to grapple with phenomena which defy scientific explication and empirical verification. Cook's response to the above questions and concerns are worth noting.

The problem with a miracle, if there really are such things, is that, by definition, no one will be able to tell you how it is done. If they can, it ranks the same as other explicable events. To say that God did it, is not to reveal *how* the event happened, but to point to the fact that there was some divine purpose and agency behind it. Neither of these can be exhaustively described without making man God or reducing the divine to the human. Accordingly, there can be no naturalistic description or explanation of how a miracle has happened, and that, by definition. If there could be, it would no longer be a miracle. That leaves open the possibility of a supernatural explanation.²⁸⁴

3.4.8 Other related prayer rituals

The sacredness of APM could be observed from the prevalence of other prayer rituals such as sacred writings, Bible studies / preaching and the administration of the Lord's Supper (that is, Holy Eucharist). It must be pointed out that these practices are not new in Christianity, neither are their sacral orientations. They are however examined and discussed in this context because of what the researcher observed as the special importance the camp workers and the pilgrims place on those practices. Almost all the religious functionaries²⁸⁵ at the various PCs on the mountain recognised all or some of these prayer rituals.

Sacred writings in Christianity, according to Douglas Davies, primarily refer to the Bible and its centrality in Christian thought and practice.²⁸⁶ In his emphasis on the centrality of the Bible in Christian worship, Davies further maintains that:

Christian worship is so closely linked with sacred scriptures that it is almost impossible to think of any formal Christian service taking place without some use of the Bible. This centrality of the Bible is due to the fact that Christianity stresses its past through the

²⁸⁴ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, p.107. (Emphasis original)

²⁸⁵ The religious functionaries refer to pastors, evangelists, caretakers, camp overseers.

²⁸⁶ Douglas Davies, 'Christianity' in Jean Holm with John Bowker (eds.), *Sacred Writings* (United Kingdom: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 44.

belief that God's self-revelation has occurred within history at particular times and places, through religious leaders such as prophets, but most especially, through Jesus of Nazareth. The Bible is the central deposit of witness to this divine revelation.²⁸⁷

The researcher could observe the centrality of sacred scriptures or excerpts of them on the PM in several ways; on sign boards, charts etc. For example, the sign board at the Abasua community which directs visitors or strangers to the PM has this inscription, among others: 'On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that folds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nation. Isaiah 25:7.' It was insightful to observe two drawn opened Bibles just below the inscription. The inscription and the two opened Bibles are perceived to inform readers or prospective pilgrims on the mountain that people and nations can find deliverance on the PM through the God who has revealed himself in the Bible.

Some of the excerpts of the Bible as found on charts in some of the PCs were words of prayer (petition) and those considered to indicate the identity of Jesus Christ. Some of the words too were not direct excerpts of the Bible, but were perceived to have scriptural implications or underpinnings. For instance, in one of the rooms at CT, these sets of sacred writings were read:

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.
Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God,
For unto thee will I pray.
My voice shalt thou hear in the morning,
O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee,
And will I look up. Psalm 5:1-3.²⁸⁸

The above were perceived to be petition prayer, which Eastman describes as 'the act of personal supplication.'²⁸⁹ The identity of the God in this petition prayer seems to have been briefly described on another chart in the same room. The chart had as its title: 'Jesus the bread of life.' The content was: 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger and he who

²⁸⁷ Davies, 'Christianity', p.45.

²⁸⁸ The researcher read these words on 13 August 2011 during one of his field works for this study.

²⁸⁹ Eastman, *The Hour that Changes the World*, p.87.

believes in me shall not thirst. John 6: 35.’ From a hermeneutical point of view, Jesus, in this text, claims to be the embodiment of peoples’ basic needs. Hence the need for their encounter with him, probably, through prayer.

In addition to these words were those perceived to urge the pilgrims to persist in prayer even in the midst of inevitable challenges and adversities in life. On one of the charts with the portrait of an eagle and a caption: ‘Don’t give up’, the content was:

Be focused,
Watch and pray,
Even when friends and relatives forsake you.
The LORD will surely take care of you.
Your miracle is on the way.²⁹⁰

These writings found in some of the rooms on the PM reinforce the sacredness of the site because they are generally perceived to be sacred scriptures of prayer, understood by Cook as ‘an interactive communication with God.’²⁹¹

The presence of several PCs or CMs and religious functionaries on the PM, to some extent, implies the religious practice of Bible studies or preaching, among others. On the PM, Bible studies are sometimes held in groups, usually under trees. The number of people in each group varies. One person normally functions as the facilitator of the group. As the facilitator, he or she reads the scripture for the studies or appoints one of the members to read. The facilitator raises questions and the other group members respond. Bible studies always begin and end with prayer. In the course of the studies, the people almost always become glued to their Bibles, an impression of serious and diligent study of God’s Word. Serious study of God’s Word also implies that during Bible studies, pilgrims scarcely have time for frivolous behaviours such as

²⁹⁰ The researcher read these words at the ‘Miracle House’ at Camp Three, during a field trip to Abasua on 13 August 2011.

²⁹¹ Cook, *Thinking about Faith*, p. 95.

excessive laughter, unnecessary chatting and late attendance. The implication of this is that the sacredness of the place conditions the behavior of the pilgrims.

Related to Bible studies is preaching. Preaching normally takes place in chapels but sometimes, under trees in the forest on the PM. For instance, the morning and afternoon sessions of the seventh biannual Connexional Prayer Convention (CPC) of the MCG, held at CT from 28th February to 3rd March, 2012, were held under trees in the forest. Preaching and other related activities take place there.²⁹² Sermons are usually in Akan language, except a few occasional flashes of English language by preachers who had some level of formal education.

The relationship between preaching and sacredness of a place has been identified by Davies. According to him, ‘preaching is also seen by some ... as providing a moment of communication between God and the congregation. When the preacher addresses the people it is God, they say, who addresses them through the words of the sermon. So the sacred place is the place where the divine word is spoken.’²⁹³ The implication is that market places, hospitals/clinics, buses and lorry stations where God’s word is preached are all regarded as sacred places. This position justifies the validity of Pal’s assertion that the role of religion is to promote encounters with the sacred, to bring a person “out of his worldly Universe or historical situation, and project him into a Universe different in quality, an entirely different world, transcendent and holy.”²⁹⁴

In addition to the above, one of the factors perceived to be responsible for the sacredness of the PM is the celebration of Holy Communion. The perception of Holy Communion as a determinant of the sacredness APM lies in the opinion that:

²⁹² The researcher was a participant observer in this Connexional Prayer Convention.

²⁹³ Davies, ‘Christianity’, p. 56. This was cited from the book titled *Sacred Place*.

²⁹⁴ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 165.

In the rite [referring to the Holy Communion], the central history of the faith is recalled and focused in the life and earthly ministry of Jesus. Then in the prayer of consecration the priest asks that by the power of God's Holy Spirit the bread [wafers] and wine may be to the worshippers the body and blood of Christ....Although this ritual normally takes place in a consecrated church, it can be carried out any where by a suitably ordained priest, whether in someone's home or in a field or factory.... The significant point is that in this service believers are drawn both into the presence of God and into the history of the life of Jesus. The group celebrating the eucharist comprises the sacred community of believers without having to be in any church building. In other words, it is the community of believers that marks off a sacred territory rather than the other way round.²⁹⁵

When churches embark on a pilgrimage or hold prayer conventions on the mountain, one of the rituals that usually mark the end of their pilgrimage is the Holy Communion. The special importance some of the pilgrims attach to the Holy Communion is that whenever it is celebrated on the mountain, it is believed to be an indelible seal on the participants or communicants against evil and demonic machinations.²⁹⁶ The researcher's contention is Why is the efficacy of the ritual seems to be limited only to the mountain? Doesn't the ritual have the same degree of potency when it is celebrated outside the PM? These questions notwithstanding do not in any way relegate the plausibility of such a claim to the backdrop, considering the fact that it is perceived to be the communicants' own experience about the ritual. The plausibility of such a claim is augmented by the perception that by their participation in the Holy Communion, the communicants are also assured of total security in Jesus Christ.²⁹⁷

If the people who celebrate the Holy Communion comprise the sacred community of believers whose presence at the place of the ritual marks off that site as a sacred space, and if the same communicants are urged to go out and proclaim Christ in the world,²⁹⁸ then the present

²⁹⁵ Davies, 'Christianity', p. 56.

²⁹⁶ A PCG member, who took part in the second segment of the biannual Prayer Retreat on the PM, in August 2011, said it to buttress a testimony he shared on the PM.

²⁹⁷ For a good discussion on the Eucharistic Offering or the efficacy of the Holy Communion, see Donald M. Baillie, *Theology of the Sacraments & Other Papers* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, n.d.), pp. 108- 124.

²⁹⁸ Proclaiming Christ in the world is understood as one of the ways by which the communicants help to promote an encounter between the sacred and profane spaces.

writer is of the view that the ritual of Holy Communion celebrated on the mountain has a multiple role of bringing about sacredness. This multiple role is referred to in this work as the ripple effect of sacrality.

3.5. Conclusion

We have examined and discussed the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* from its former peripheral position in Abasua community's traditional religiosity to its contemporary status as a centre for prayer rituals in Ghanaian Christianity. We have provided, albeit briefly, the phenomenological approaches to sacred space and prayer rituals as a conceptual framework for the discussion. We have argued that sacred spaces and prayer rituals are not mutually exclusive. That is, the presence of one implies the presence of the other. This thinking is grounded on the understanding that the sacredness of a space is perceived to be determined by the belief in the presence of the supernatural or a transcendent reality, and the possibility of human interaction with that reality through prayer rituals. Against this backdrop, the researcher discussed the themes believed to depict the sacredness of the prayer mountain by examining the notions of the supernatural reality on the mountain and human interaction with that reality or deity.

In the next chapter we will examine and discuss the role of the PM in the development of Abasua citizens and the pilgrims who patronise the site.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF THE PRAYER MOUNTAIN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABASUA CITIZENS AND THE PILGRIMS

4.1 Introduction

Generally, human development implies some positive progress in the condition of people in a country.²⁹⁹ In the opinion of Elom Dovlo, [human] development also refers to ‘a sequence of positive and systematic changes that lead to the growth and progress of people and their community.’³⁰⁰ According to the ‘Human Development Report 1990’ of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), human development can be defined as ‘a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self respect - what Adam Smith called the ability to mix with others without being "ashamed to appear in publick"’³⁰¹ (sic). People, according to this report, are described as the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is, therefore, to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.³⁰²

For a very long time, the concept of human development has been understood in socio-economic terms and their associated technological and infrastructural improvement. In the light of this, improvement in the material conditions of life, through improvement in economic infrastructure and increase in annual *per capita* income are deemed the main indicators of human

²⁹⁹Mike O'Donnel, *Introduction to Sociology* (United Kingdom: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1997), p. 576.

³⁰⁰Elom Dovlo, ‘Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana’ in Thomas W. Scheidtweiler (ed.) *Human and Economic Development – The Importance of Civil Society and Subsidiarity* (Kumasi, Ghana: Africa Publications, 1998), p. 65.

³⁰¹United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p. 9.

³⁰² UNDP, *Human Development Report 1990*, p. 9.

development.³⁰³ Human development, understood this way, has become synonymous with economic growth. Noting the negative connotation the term human development has assumed when understood economically, Paul K. Bekye notes as follows:

It [Human development] sprang into use in opposition to the term under-development, which expressed the condition and the anguish of poor countries compared with rich ones. Hence the term for a long time was seen from a purely economic point of view and was synonymous to economic growth. In a contrasting manner, nations with growing economies were considered 'developed', as against nations with economies that tended to stagnate; these were underdeveloped countries.³⁰⁴

As a result of the above understanding of human development, solutions to the problems of Africa and Ghana in particular are conceived in purely economic terms. Bekye further maintains that

This approach to [human] development was no doubt at the center of the neo-liberal economists' endeavor to transfer the 'economic miracle' of North America to underdeveloped countries, particularly Africa, in decades following the war. The obstinate conviction was that the factors which had produced economic growth in the already developed world, constituted an adequate model for economic development in underdeveloped nations. The assumption was that the various economic factors for instance abundant raw materials etc., were already present in the underdeveloped countries. What was needed then was to add or pump in a bit more capital, encourage or provide technological innovations, improve the training of the labor, and economic growth and development were automatic outcomes. The economic approach to development has been by far the most widespread and most enduring.³⁰⁵

The crux of Bekye's analysis is that development in economic terms is a western ideology. Therefore it cannot be wholly replicated in other contexts without recourse to reasonable modification and thoughtful considerations. His analysis corroborates Tom Sine's opinion on the western orientation of the concept of development. According to Sine,

Western development is a child of the European and American Enlightenment. It is based on the implicit belief that human society is inevitably progressing toward the attainment of a temporal, materialistic kingdom. In fact, the certain belief that unending economic and social progress is a natural condition of free persons has become the secular religion of the west. Somehow, the millennial expectation of the in breaking of a new transcendent kingdom was temporalized and secularized into the expectation of a future

³⁰³ Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', pp. 65

³⁰⁴ Paul K. Bekye, *Peasant Development: The Case of Northern Ghana* (Leuven: acco, 1998), p. 28.

³⁰⁵ Bekye, *Peasant Development*, p. 29.

of unlimited economic and technological growth. ... Implicit in this progressive view of the future was the firm conviction that economic progress would automatically result in social and moral progress. This view of the better future is primarily economic, focusing largely on human activities of production and consumption. The “good life” became synonymous with self-seeking and the ability to produce and consume ever-increasing quantities of goods and services.³⁰⁶

Ghana’s human development strategies from the pre-independence period to the present time have been modeled along western or secular ideology of human development. Consequently, the pre and post-independence socio-economic interventions³⁰⁷ which aimed at improving the standard of living of Ghanaians did not fully realize the intended objectives. It is claimed that whereas some Ghanaians must have immensely benefitted from these interventions, paradoxically, such interventions increased the poverty of a majority of citizens and sapped their very existence.³⁰⁸ The implication is that the western ideology of development understood purely in socio-economic terms is a mixed-blessing, at least, in the Ghanaian context. John G. Sommer argues that “the measuring of development on the materialistic basis of *per capita* gross national product is inadequate and often misleading.”³⁰⁹ He therefore advocates that development should be defined in spiritual and cultural terms as well as economic. By this argument, Sommer

³⁰⁶ Tom Sine, ‘Development: Its Secular Past and Its Uncertain Future’ in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds) *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 2&3.

³⁰⁷ The pre and post-independence development strategies of Ghana include the 10-Year Development Plan of Governor Guggisberg (1920-1930), the 10-Year Accelerated Development Plan (1951-1961), the 7-Year Development Plan of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (1961-1968), the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) (1983), the Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) (1987), Ghana Vision 2020 (1993) and Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) (2002). For details on these development strategies, see Joseph Kimos Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction: The Experience of Ghana* (Ghana: **BOLD** Communications Limited, 2010), pp. 6-14., Kwadwo Asenso-Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention* (Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 2001), pp. 1-4., Republic of Ghana, *Towards a New Dynamism*, report prepared by the government of Government for the Fifth Meeting of the Consultative Group for Ghana, Paris, February 28-March 1, 1989 (Accra: Government Printer, 1989), p. 2., Republic of Ghana, *Program of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment* (Accra: Government Printer, 1987), n.p.

³⁰⁸ Dovlo, ‘Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana’, p. 66.

³⁰⁹ John G. Sommer, *Beyond Charity: U.S. Voluntary Aid for a Changing Third World* (Washington, D. C.: Overseas Development Council, 1977), p.3.

indicates the inclusion of religion if the equation of human development is to be complete. This implies its holistic human development paradigm which is thought to be defined and informed in the context of religion.³¹⁰

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the role of the APM in the human development of Abasua citizens and the pilgrims who patronise the PM. But the discussion is preceded by a cursory examination of the resurgence of religion's place in human development discourse in Ghana. The justification for this is the researcher's perception that an appreciation or acknowledgment of religion's resurgence in contemporary human development discourse, is an ideal conceptual framework within which the PM's role in human development can be examined and discussed.

4.2 Resurgence of Religion's place in human development discourse in Ghana: A paradigm shift in human development models

The conceptualisation of human development in only socio-economic terms is believed to be an inadequate yardstick in determining human well-being because it excludes other vital components such as the spiritual and mental dimensions. This inadequacy or limitation is perceived to have necessitated the need for a comprehensive human development ideology which does not deal only with the socio-economic aspects of life, but also spiritual and mental aspects as well.

This underscores the need for a paradigm shift in models of human development from their western / secular economic orientations to a more humane approach which advocates a

³¹⁰ Molefe Tsele, 'The Role of the Christian Faith in Development' in Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi and Chris Sugden (eds) *Faith in Development: Partnership Between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa* (U.K.: Regnum Books International, 2001), p. 205.

holistic emphasis of development. The humane approach affects the totality of man's existence: social, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, moral, etc.³¹¹ It is, thus, the approach to development which is driven by the need to achieve significant impact on the overall quality of life of the people. John Pobee affirmed that '*economics is about life and not only about money and wealth. It is therefore stressed that economics must enter on how life can be sustained and made to flourish.*'³¹²

The humane approach to human development is perceived to be grounded or defined in the context of religion. In its general sense, religion, according to Gyekye, is 'the awareness of the existence of some ultimate, supreme being who is the origin and sustainer of this universe and the establishment of constant ties with this being.'³¹³ The humane approach to human development also referred to in this context as the religious or faith-based approach to development, interrogates the purely western or secular economic orientation of development which grossly relegates religious phenomena to the background.³¹⁴ The faith-based approach underscores what Gerrie ter Haar implies as the indispensability of people's religious or spiritual resources in contemporary development discourse.³¹⁵ It is couched on the premise that without religion and its related religious phenomena as its base, human development is bound to be reduced to an appendage of capitalist ideology and, therefore, would not offer much to the poor in Africa and Ghana in particular.³¹⁶

³¹¹ Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', p. 66.

³¹² Cited in Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', p.66. (Emphasis original).

³¹³ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, p. 3.

³¹⁴ Sine, 'Development: Its Secular Past and Its Uncertain Future', pp.8-9.

³¹⁵ Gerrie ter Haar, 'Religion and Development: Introducing a New Debate' in Gerrie ter Haar (ed.) *Religion and Development: Ways of Transforming the World* (United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2011), p. 8.

³¹⁶ Tsele, 'The Role of the Christian Faith in Development', p. 205.

The researcher agrees with Abraham Akrong, Paul Gifford and Cephas N. Omenyo that one of the stark realities of post-independent Ghana is the perception that governments have failed to deliver on their promises of development.³¹⁷ The disappointing experience with human development has prompted alternative views of development which relies less on state institutions and more on the creativity and resourcefulness of private and non-governmental organizations.³¹⁸ Part of this reliance has been an intellectual and productive engagement with religious organizations to promote human development in Ghana.

Ghana is a religiously pluralistic country. The preliminary figures from 2000 Housing and Population Census conducted by Ghana Statistical Service reveal that Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion are the major faiths practised in Ghana with the following representation: Christianity (69.0%), Islam (15.6%) and Traditional Religion (8.5%).³¹⁹ There are also some New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Ghana. Elom Dovlo's classification of such NRMs is as follows: New African Traditional Religious Movements, Oriental New Religious Movements, New Religious Movements from the African Diaspora, Islamic New Religious Movements and Christian New Religious Movements.³²⁰ These religious bodies and their related religious traditions are believed to be vital agents or partners with governments to promote Ghana's human development.³²¹

³¹⁷ Abraham Akrong, 'African Traditional Religion and Development: Clash of two Worlds of Discourse and Values', *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XVIII (2003), p.37. C.f. Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2004), pp.1-19., Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (The Netherlands: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), pp. 20 – 23.

³¹⁸ Akrong, 'African Traditional Religion and Development', p. 36.

³¹⁹ From 'Selected Social Characteristics of Population by Religion', preliminary figures from the 2000 Housing and Population Census conducted by Ghana Statistical Service. C.f. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 25.

³²⁰ Elom Dovlo, 'The Church in Africa and Religious Pluralism' *Exchange*, 27 (1998), p. 53.

³²¹ Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', pp. 68 - 70.

The resurgence of religion in contemporary human development discourse, in the opinion of the researcher, is an interrogation of the previously-held notion of the negative correlation between religion and human development, as was loudly espoused in various theoretical schools of development.³²² These anti-religion theoretical schools of development ‘predicted that religion as a phenomenon would disappear as the development of national societies on the basis of modern economy, rationality and western science accelerate.’³²³ However, we agree with Abamfo Atiemo that the surprising resurgence of religious phenomena (such as sacred space) in local and international affairs in the 21st Century challenged the validity of such conclusions.³²⁴

4.3 The role of sacred space in human development: the case of APM

Robert Moffitt, in his work ‘The Local Church and Development’, unravels the meaning of human development in the context of Luke 2:52. In this text, it is said, ‘And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.’³²⁵ Moffitt has three pronged justifications for situating a biblical view of human development in Luke 2:52. First, it talks about the development of a model person – the person Jesus; how he grew and how he developed. Second, the verse reveals that God had a purpose for Jesus to fulfill. Here, Moffitt claims that there is an obvious connection between the development of Jesus as a person and his fulfilling the purpose for which God sent him into the world. The implication of this is that if Jesus was a model for Christians, certainly his development set a model for them as well. Third,

³²² Akrong, ‘African Traditional Religion and Development’, p.37.

³²³ Akrong, ‘African Traditional Religion and Development’, p.37.

³²⁴ Abamfo O. Atiemo, ‘International Human Rights, Religious Pluralism and the Future of Chieftaincy in Ghana’, *Exchange*, 35 (2006), p. 365.

³²⁵ Robert Moffitt, ‘The Local Church and Development’ in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds) *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), p. 234. C.f. John & Agnes Sturt, *Created to be Whole* (United Kingdom: Eagle, 1998), pp. 87- 186.

a discourse on the development of communities and societies cannot be possible without considering the development of their primary units – individual persons. Moffitt argues that Jesus was an individual. He lived in a family, in a community and in a society. God’s plan for Jesus’ development, as an individual, would therefore not be inconsistent with his plans for the development of Jesus’ family, community or society.³²⁶

Moffitt further argues that Luke mentions four areas in which Jesus developed; wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with man. Translating these four areas into contemporary equivalents, Moffitt says that Christ showed mental development, physical development, spiritual development, and social development. It is perceived that these four categories cover almost every human need. On this point, Moffitt notes as follows:

The need to observe, remember, integrate, analyze and make wise decisions is covered under mental development – wisdom. Physical needs such as food, shelter, exercise, and a healthy physical environment are covered by physical development – stature. The need to develop, nurture, and maintain a vertical relationship with our Creator, is covered under spiritual development – favor with God. And the need to develop, nurture, and maintain horizontal relationships with other individuals and groups is covered under social development – favor with man.³²⁷

Development understood in the context of these four categories is holistic, for the material and spiritual domains are brought together at a level befitting the dignity of people. This fusion of the material and the spiritual dimensions of people results in their quality of life.³²⁸ Thus, in the context of this theological framework, the researcher examines and discusses the PM’s contribution to the people’s development in these four thematic areas: spiritual, mental, physical, and social. These themes are, in fact, not mutually exclusive. The researcher recognises their close interrelationships and inevitable overlaps. The examination of the extent to which the

³²⁶ Moffitt, ‘The Local Church and Development’, p. 234.

³²⁷ Moffitt, ‘The Local Church and Development’, p. 235.

³²⁸ E. H. Brew Riverson, ‘The Ghanaian Situation: Prospects and Challenges’ in *The Role of the Church Towards Ghana’s Development* (Accra: The Christian Council of Ghana, 1997), p. 41.

PM enhances or stifles human development in these four thematic areas, is in keeping with the Geertzian thesis that, sacred symbols do not epitome only positive values but also negative ones.³²⁹

4.3.1 The place and relevance of APM in promoting spiritual development

We have already indicated that the sacredness of a space is defined by the belief in the presence of a god or a supernatural deity in that space, and the possibility of human interaction with that deity through prayer rituals.³³⁰ On this conceptual basis, sacred spaces are believed to be places of power where individuals or a group of people can be connected to the transcendence realms through prayer rituals and religious symbols. Spiritual development is, thus, generally conceptualized as the vertical relationship between an individual or a group of people and the realms of transcendence. In this work, spiritual development refers to pilgrims' or people's relationship with God expressed through their appropriation of prayer rituals at the PM.³³¹ In this context, the researcher focuses on the extent to which APM promotes or stifles the spirituality of pilgrims and other people who patronise the sacred space.

The significance of sacred spaces as places where pilgrims' spirituality can be enhanced is underscored in part of chapter one of this work. In both Old and New Testaments, some mountains were often chosen as places of worship or divine revelations.³³² It was argued that a sacred space in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity (such as APM) is not a novel phenomenon since it has several biblical antecedents. The implication is that just as some mountains in the

³²⁹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*, p. 130.

³³⁰ Joe Edward Watkins, *Contemporary Native American Issues: Sacred Sites and Repatriation* (United States of America: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006), pp. 88 - 89.

³³¹ In chapter three of this work, we discussed some of these prayer rituals.

³³² For details, see chapter one of this work.

Bible were often used as places of worship or divine revelations, so is APM, though the researcher is not oblivious of some of the contextual variations³³³ between the biblical antecedents and APM.

Because the role of APM in promoting spiritual development of the people is perceived to be broad in scope, the researcher limited himself to a discussion of the number of pilgrims who patronise the PM (from 2002 to 2011). The researcher limited himself to this time frame because that was the period statistics on pilgrims' annual visits to APM, specifically, CT, could be made available.

Writing on 'Islamic Pilgrimage to Mecca' and 'Roman Catholic Pilgrimage in Europe' in his 'Geography and Religion', Park seems to indicate that 'number of pilgrims at a sacred space within a period of time' is one of the variables or indicators of pilgrims' perception about the spirituality of sacred spaces.³³⁴ The present researcher's contention, therefore, is that the greater the number³³⁵ of pilgrims who patronise APM in a period of time, the higher the pilgrims' perception about the spiritual relevance of the place.

Pilgrims' visits to CT, from 2002 to 2011, are summarised below.

³³³ These refer to differences in the divine revelations, geographical location, religio-cultural and socio-economic milieu of the people in these sacred spaces.

³³⁴ Park, 'Geography and Religion', p. 25.

³³⁵ Five thousand and above pilgrims who visit the PM per year is believed to be a great number.

A table showing the statistics of pilgrims' visits to APM (CT) (2002 – 2011)³³⁶

Year	Methodists and Non-Methodists			Non-Methodists			Methodists		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
2002	11666	10355	22021	-	-	-	-	-	-
2003	9906	10550	20456	-	-	-	-	-	-
2004	8469	10023	18492	6940	7647	14578	1629	2376	4005
2005	8914	9643	18557	7221	7421	14642	1693	2222	3915
2006	9487	10618	20105	7680	8153	15833	1807	2465	4272
2007	9366	9504	18870	6174	5477	11651	3192	4027	7219
2008	8457	10566	19023	5550	4872	10422	2907	5694	8601
2009	14275	11979	26254	7857	8276	16133	4122	5999	10121
2010	12342	15829	28171	7262	7169	14431	5080	8660	13740
2011	14338	18554	32892	7723	9127	16850	6615	9427	16042
Grand									
Total	107220	117621	224841	56407	58142	114549	27045	40870	67915

The data on the above table indicate that generally, the spiritual significance of the PM in the life of the pilgrims cannot be disputed. The PM serves as a platform for the enhancement of the pilgrims' spirituality; understood as their awareness or belief in the existence of a transcendent reality (God) and the possibility of personal interaction with this reality through prayer rituals. The PM, in that sense, facilitates the bridging of the gap between the pilgrims and the supernatural realms; an index of the pilgrims' spiritual empowerment. Scott points out that the closer a person is to a relic, the more likely she or he would be empowered. The same logic can be adduced here to establish the empowering effect of a pilgrim's proximity to a transcendent reality.³³⁷

The data also reveal that pilgrims who are not Methodists really patronise the site more than the Methodists who claim to have ownership of CT (the part of the PM where the data were

³³⁶ Source: From Pilgrims' Records Note Book kept at the office of the Secretary to CT. He gave these data to the researcher on 3 March 2012 at CT, APM. Because CT is believed to be the premier and the most patronised PC, the researcher thinks that the statistics are a fair representation of the PM's role in people's spiritual development.

³³⁷ See 'Appropriation of relics and prayer accessories on the prayer mountain' on pages 76-77. C.f. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p. 151.

gathered). From 2004, when the statistics on pilgrims' visit to the PC are categorised under Methodists and non-Methodists, to 2011, non-Methodist pilgrims total 114,549. This number comprises 56,407 males and 58,142 females. The Methodist pilgrims, on the other hand, total 67,915. This number comprises 40,870 females and 27,045 males. The implication is that the non-Methodist pilgrims appropriate the spiritual benefits of the mountain more than the Methodists.

From the data, we can also discern that generally, the female pilgrims to the PC outnumber the males. Out of the grand total of 224,841 pilgrims who visited the site from 2002 to 2011, males totaled 107,220 whilst females were 117,621. Does this imply that many females in general prefer to pray on PMs to other sacred sites? Or does it have any allusion to the popular perception that females in general are more 'spiritual' than their male counterparts? Because a detailed comparative study of the patronage of the PM by gender is outside the scope of this work, the researcher is of the opinion that these questions may engage the attention of future researchers.

The perception of the spiritual significance of the PM to the pilgrims, however, does not mean that the massive influx of the pilgrims to Abasua community does not upset the citizens of the place in some other ways. One way by which the influx of pilgrims is believed to stifle the health of the natives of Abasua community is noise-making. Three categories of noise-making were discovered. The first is believed to be the noise made by pilgrims who are entering the community from outside Abasua. These are the people who can allegedly come to the community at any time with the intention of going to the PM for religious reasons. The pilgrims who arrive at the community in the night when the natives are already asleep are believed to disturb the peace of the community through their usually loud conversations, songs, etc.

The second category of noise-making is believed to be made by the returning pilgrims. The returning pilgrims are those who have visited the PM and are returning to their destinations. The researcher observed that almost all the returning pilgrims descend the PM at dawn. One of the reasons for their departure at that time is to enable them to reach their various destinations on time, especially, those who come from far away. By the time they get to the community, most of the natives may not be awake. Some of the people interviewed disclosed that some times, the returning pilgrims are noisier than the ascending pilgrims. To some of them (the returning pilgrims), the joy of having been able to go to the PM to wait on the Lord for renewal and empowerment, gives them cause to give thanks to God amidst shouts, singing, clapping. Because these actions usually take place at dawn and in a relatively small Abasua community, the pilgrims who do them are perceived to be people who unconsciously make nuisance of themselves.

The third category of noise-making is believed to come from the PM during worship or revival programs. Almost all the PCs on the mountain have days for all night prayer meetings.³³⁸ If all the PCs have different days for all night prayer meetings and the sound are believed to literally descend on the community to cause involuntary insomnia to the natives, then one can argue that the pilgrims' pursuit of spirituality on the PM is, to some extent, at the expense of the natives' comfort and health. This paradox can be made quite explicit as follows: The pilgrims' pursuit of spiritual health and vitality through renewal programmes on the PM is also perceived to result in the deterioration of other people's physical health and comfort.

³³⁸ Camp Five (Precious Blood Ministry International) and Camp Seven (Word Faith Ministries International), for instance had all night prayer meetings on Fridays (11pm to 5am and 10pm to 4.30am respectively).

4.3.2 The place and relevance of APM in promoting mental development

In accordance with Moffitt's scheme, mental development relates to the ability 'to observe, remember, integrate, analyze and make wise decisions.' These categories of mental development, in this context, imply the perception of the PM's role in broadening the horizon or promoting proper cognitive functioning of the pilgrims who patronise the site and the people of Abasua community. The case below, in the opinion of some interviewees, indicates one of the incidents attesting to the PM's role in promoting the pilgrims' mental development. Mr. Boateng, the Secretary of CT maintains as follows:

a certain male Ghanaian who was staying in Germany had only one brother together with four sisters and their old mother in Ghana. This brother in Ghana took to hard drugs until he eventually became mad. His madness became a nuisance to the peace and security of the immediate family members, especially, his old mother, and the entire community in which he was living. For instance, it was said that he could draw daggers and threaten the life of his old mother, if she refused to give him the amount of money he would request from her. This bad behavior continued for many years. It was said that there came a time when the brother in Germany needed to 'pick' his only brother from Ghana to be with him in Germany, but he could not do that because of his madness. One day a certain Ghanaian pastor called the brother in Germany and suggested to him to be allowed to send his mad brother to APM because he (the Ghanaian pastor) hoped that the mental condition of the mad person would be restored. The pastor was allowed and he managed to bring the mad man to the PM. He (the mad man) stayed at the site for about nine months. He came to the site with a lot of provisions (tins of milo, milk, sugar, loaves of bread, etc). Because he could not have access to drugs on the PM, he mainly depended on his provisions as food. He also took active part in all the activities of the site – worship services and clean-up exercises. Subsequently, his mental condition tremendously improved. He abhorred taking drugs. He eschewed rowdiness, debauchery and other forms of lawlessness. He loved to serve God and humanity. He became useful, admired and respected.

News about the man's transformation got to his brother in Germany. The brother came down to Ghana, specifically to APM, to ascertain the reality of his brother's transformation. He was highly amazed when he came and found him in a very sound and mentally restored condition at the PM. The 'Burger'³³⁹ promised to come back to the PM three months after his flight back to Germany. The intention was to 'pick' his brother along with him to Germany. The 'Burger' came back from Germany barely two months afterwards to fulfill the promise made to his brother. Both of them went to Germany three days after the 'Burger's' arrival at the PM. Barely two years after their arrival in Germany, the mentally-restored brother came back to APM to redeem a pledge he made

³³⁹ A Ghanaian term for anyone who has travelled abroad, especially Europe and America, and has returned home.

to God before travelling to Germany. His transformation was undoubtedly as a result of his coming to APM to pray and to work.³⁴⁰

On the perception of the role of a sacred space in broadening pilgrims' horizon or promoting their cognitive functioning, as the above information depicts, the views of Park, Yi Fu Tuan and others are worth noting. According to Park, 'The word pilgrim comes from the Latin *peregrinus*, which literally means foreign, travelling or migratory.'³⁴¹ Yi Fu Tuan, on his part, 'sees religious pilgrimage as a ritual by which we break up "the drowsiness of routine" that dictates the pattern of our daily life.'³⁴² Tuan contrasts being 'in place' and 'out of place', and suggests that 'we spend most of our lives *in* place (surrounded by the security of familiar relationships, habits and routines), but we have a periodic need as individuals and as society to transcend place (and then be *out* of place). These rituals that break up our routines expand our horizons ... to embrace the cosmos.'³⁴³ Thus, for Tuan,

Pilgrimage represents a particular religious rite of passage, which involves separation (leaving home), transition (travel to the sacred place) and incorporation (arrival). The very act of engaging in the pilgrimage changes many pilgrims. They begin in a Familiar Place (at home), journey to a Far Place (the pilgrimage shrines, which are usually distant and peripheral to the rest of their lives), then return - ideally changed - to the Familiar Place. The journey itself is as important as the destination.³⁴⁴

In the opinion of Tuan, pilgrimage experience has the effect of transforming the pilgrims and widening or increasing their knowledge. This is consistent with his view of a sacred space where pilgrimage takes place. According to him, sacred places are characterised by qualities such as apartness, otherworldliness, orderliness and wholeness.³⁴⁵ The implication is that sacred places, like all religious symbols, are suffused with the notion of the luminous, the mysterious or the

³⁴⁰ Mr. Fordjour Boateng, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

³⁴¹ Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 23.

³⁴² Yi Fu Tuan, cited in Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 23.

³⁴³ Tuan, cited in Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 23. (Emphasis original).

³⁴⁴ Tuan, cited in Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 23.

³⁴⁵ Tuan, cited in Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 20.

transcendent. This notion, according to Geertz, does not only induce [pilgrims'] intellectual assent, but it also enforces emotional commitment which has far-reaching implications for the direction of [pilgrims'] conduct.³⁴⁶ Thus the transformative effect of pilgrimage (for example, in the life of the restored man in the case above) is believed to be one of the outcomes of pilgrims' encounter with emotion-oriented-transcendent reality at the sacred space; a reality believed to be 'suffused with an aura of deep moral seriousness.'³⁴⁷ Under normal circumstances, therefore, pilgrims' encounter with this transcendent reality results in them the activation of emotions and development of virtues which also result in their proper cognitive functioning, and hence, their mental development. This view is accentuated by W. Jay Wood in his discussion on 'The Role of Emotions & Virtues in Proper Cognitive Functioning'.³⁴⁸ He defines emotions as 'special modes of cognition whereby we perceive the world in the light of our concerns. They are a way of seeing or construing the things in our world (people, places, states of affairs and so on) beyond their surface appearances, as saturated by or conditioned by our concerns and values.'³⁴⁹ Expatiating on the meaning of emotions, Wood cites Antonio D'Amasio, who argues in his book, *Descartes' Error*, that

emotions assist reason in at least three ways: they preselect options for reasoning, focus our attention on the items we reason about, and aid the memory in holding onto the things we're reasoning about. Fear, for example, keeps us alert to the tiger's whereabouts and prevents our thoughts from fixing on the jungle fauna. Emotions not only fix our attention but also serve as a catalyst for redirecting our thinking from one subject to another. Whereas deeply apathetic persons may sit listlessly for hours in front of a television set, persons with normal concerns of self-regard, self-love, will direct their thinking from one subject to another as befits their long term goals of self-improvement.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.126.

³⁴⁷ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.126.

³⁴⁸ W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998), pp. 175-179.

³⁴⁹ Wood, *Epistemology*, p. 177.

³⁵⁰ Antonio D'Amasio, *Descartes' Error* cited in Wood, *Epistemology*, pp. 178 -179.

D'Amasio's argument implies that proper cognitive functioning (that is normal way of thinking and behaving), expressed in self-regard, self-love and desire for self-improvement, is a product of emotions. If it is believed that the mentally-handicapped man's encounter with a transcendent reality at the sacred space resulted in him the activation of his emotions and subsequently, his transformed life, then one could argue that the emotion-oriented-transcendent reality that the pilgrim presumably encountered at the sacred space was the source of his transformed life or his proper cognitive functioning. This argument, in the opinion of the researcher, is theologically sustainable especially, in a Christian context where the luminous or the mysterious reality at Christian sacred spaces is believed to be God or Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit (that is, the Holy Trinity or the Godhead). As a being believed to 'be suffused with an aura of deep moral seriousness', an encounter with the Godhead at a sacred space is believed to result in the pilgrims' proper cognitive functioning or generally, a positive change in their behaviour. The implication is that the mentally-handicapped man who allegedly got his senses restored at the APM might have had a conscious or an unconscious encounter with the Godhead at the site. The same theological principle can be adduced to attempt an explanation of the outcome of Jesus' encounter with people such as the Gerasene demoniac,³⁵¹ Zacchaeus,³⁵² the apostle Paul.³⁵³ The biblical accounts of these characters indicate that their encounter with Jesus Christ resulted in their transformed lives or cognitive restructuring and subsequently, the heightening of their usefulness or productivity.

³⁵¹ See Mark 5:1-20 for details.

³⁵² See Luke 19:1-10 for details.

³⁵³ See Acts 9:1-22 for details.

Also the influx of pilgrims and other people from the Abasua community to the PM, in the opinion of the researcher, is perceived to be a form of aerobic exercise which has positive impact on the people's mental development. Shelley E. Taylor observes that 'In recent years health psychologists have turned their attention to the role of aerobic exercise in maintaining physical and mental health.'³⁵⁴ 'Aerobic exercise', according to Taylor, 'is sustained exercise that stimulates and strengthens the heart and lungs, improving the body's utilization of oxygen. All aerobic exercise is marked by its high intensity, long duration and need for high endurance.'³⁵⁵ Among the forms of exercise that meet these criteria are jogging, bicycling, rope jumping, running, swimming and [ascending /descending a mountain].³⁵⁶ Other scholars further maintain that

For a long time, we've thought of exercise as a way of keeping our bodies well. But recent breakthroughs in brain science suggest that exercise can do much more than keep our blood vessels clear and our posture proud. It can help manage our moods as well. There is powerful evidence that exercise alters our brain chemistry in such a way that it helps with dozens of common emotional problems – anxiety, low self-esteem, shyness, job burnout, midlife crisis, boredom, ...Exercise can also ease you through times of stress, which helps all of your relationships. It's no exaggeration that exercise can make you a better spouse, parent, worker and friend. When your body is working at its best, your spirit often is, too.³⁵⁷

The above reinforces Paul's advice to Timothy about the significance of bodily exercise.³⁵⁸ According to Paul, bodily training is valuable for those who engaged in it. The people who patronised the PM include pilgrims, tourists and traders. Mr. Boateng disclosed to the researcher that since 2002, the PM has recorded over ten thousand (10,000) pilgrims annually. This number excludes the many traders and other service providers who frequently ascend and descend the

³⁵⁴ Shelley E. Taylor, *Health Psychology* (Fifth Edition) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), p. 98.

³⁵⁵ Taylor, *Health Psychology*, p. 98.

³⁵⁶ Taylor, *Health Psychology*, p. 98.

³⁵⁷ The Editors, *Prevention's Healing with Emotion* (United States of America: Rodale Press, Inc., 1999), p. xxii.

³⁵⁸ 1Timothy 4: 8a.

PM to engage in various business-related activities.³⁵⁹ This implies that many people have access to aerobic exercise, and therefore mental development, through their patronage of the PM.

Some developments on the PM however challenge or critique the popular perception of the place as where the sick (such as the mentally deranged) generally get healed or restored. For example, it was said that

on the 13th of August, 2004, a middle-aged man came to the PM to pray with the Presbyterian group. It was said that the man had a slight emotional and psychological problem, and came for a divine intervention at the camp. It was said that in the early hours of one morning, he was found dressed and seated on the raised platform that housed the metal cross at CT. An eye-witness account indicated that the man removed his wrist-watch, wedding ring and put his mobile phone on the platform. He then walked slowly towards the cliff. Those who saw him felt that he was going to urinate or ease himself. Getting to the end of the cliff, he sped off and jumped himself down the cliff. It was said that he was later found dead on one of the layers down the cliff, but it was a place nobody could go to pick the remains for proper burial. The body therefore decomposed there.³⁶⁰

This incidence indicates that there was no wall on the periphery of the PM to control the wanton movement of mentally-deranged individuals and others who come to the site to pray for healing and deliverance. The implication is that even though the PM is believed to be a place of unsurpassed mental development /healing and deliverance records in Ghanaian sacred spaces,³⁶¹ the place can equally be a very disastrous site for some pilgrims owing largely to its bereft of wall and human security /monitoring system. The need for physical security system at the site indicates that the PM's role in promoting people's mental development can scarcely be complete without recourse to physical development.

³⁵⁹ Mr.Fordjour Boateng, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

³⁶⁰ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.35.

³⁶¹ Apostle Richard Kwame Owusu-Ansah, Interview, 15 August 2011, APM. He is the Founder and Leader of Jesus the Light Evangelistic Ministry,

4.3.3 The place and relevance of APM in promoting physical development

Closely related to the role of the PM in promoting mental development is its perception in enhancing the people's physical development. Moffitt relates physical development to physical needs such as food, shelter, exercise and a healthy physical environment. These can be designated in this work as the economic significance of the PM. By economic significance, the researcher refers to the extent to which the PM also functions to promote human development through poverty reduction activities (such as buying and selling of goods and services) and development of infrastructural facilities at Abasua community or on the PM. The researcher observed that the PM substantially contributes to the economic development (that is, improvement in the material well-being) of the people, especially, those from Abasua community and other adjoining or neighbouring communities. Economic activities observed on the PM include people carrying luggage to and from the PM, sale of water, provisions, anointing oil, other food items, herbal medicines, mobile phone accessories and Christian literature.

Each of these activities is believed to contribute to the economic well-being of the people by serving as means of employment to them. The luggage carriers, for example, come from Abasua community and other neighbouring communities such as Adutwam, Awanya, Krowi, Atwea, Banko, Sekyere, Effiduasi, Nsuta, etc. to carry luggage of pilgrims or tourists to and from the PM. The luggage carriers gather themselves at Abasua community, especially during February and August, the peak seasons for pilgrimage to the PM by the MCG and the PCG. Upon the arrival of any vehicle with pilgrims, the luggage carriers rush to the vehicle with their baskets and head pans, to struggle for the luggage of the pilgrims. Usually, the size of the luggage determines how much the carriers charge. During the peak seasons for pilgrimage

movements to the PM, some of the luggage carriers³⁶² said they could have about eight to ten times a day of luggage carriage to and from the PM. This enables some of them to mobilise income to complete their basic education or to start a trade such as fitting, masonry, carpentry, driving and dressmaking. The example below further explained the above point.

Yaw Mensah, a twenty-one (21) year old young man from Abasua community said that he started carrying luggage to and from the PM at age ten (10). Through the income he generated from this business activity, he funded for himself from primary four to Junior High School (JHS) form three - he bought his own school uniforms, fed himself and registered the Basic Education Certificate Examination in 2006. When he finished writing the examination, he went to learn driving at Asante Effiduasi at the cost of one hundred and fifty Ghana cedis (GHC 150.00) which he paid from his accumulated income from luggage carriage.³⁶³

Considering the age at which Yaw Mensah started carrying luggage to the PM, one can infer that the business is probably dominated by a group of people Esther L. Megill classifies as early adolescents (ages 12-14 or 15), middle adolescents (ages 14-15) and late adolescents (ages 16-18 or 20-21).³⁶⁴ It implies that the luggage-carrying business activity is dominated by young people who are generally perceived to be adventurous, exuberant and sometimes, delinquent. Thus, in the researcher's opinion, the PM is also a form of natural economic intervention that engages the youth who, out of frustration emanating from unemployment, might have engaged themselves in all sorts of miscreant practices in their communities. As a result of the youths' engagement in the lucrative luggage-carrying activity to and from the PM, Nana Obogyia II, the Chief of Abasua, told the researcher that the people in his community, especially the youth, frown at social vices such as pilfering or stealing. Therefore pilgrims who come to spend several days on the PM are

³⁶² These luggage carriers include the following natives of Abasua: Mr. Yaw Menash (a driver and JHS graduate), Mr. Kwame Owusu (No schooling) and Mr. Abass (schooled up to class 4).

³⁶³ Mr. Yaw Mensah, Interview, 12 August 2011, Abasua community.

³⁶⁴ For details, see Esther L. Megill, *Education in the African Church* (Ghana: Safeway Printing Works, 1998), pp. 108-110.

not afraid to leave their cars, vehicles and other property in the custody of the youth and other people in the community.³⁶⁵

This defence of the Chief, in the opinion of the researcher, cannot be sustained without interrogation. If it is true that the young people at Abasua community have aversion to miscreant practices as maintained by the Chief, the present researcher contends that such aversion may also be attributed to some prevailing old taboos in the community, which, to a large extent, condition the behaviour of the citizens. According to Peter K. Sarpong, 'A taboo is something that must not be eaten or touched or seen or smelt or said.'³⁶⁶ He further maintains that it is a taboo to have sex in the bush even with your own wife. It is also a taboo to insult the king.³⁶⁷ It is believed that taboos form a great part of traditional religion.³⁶⁸ If this is true, then it is no wonder that Abasua community, which was previously dominated by Traditional Akan Religion, has some old taboos.³⁶⁹

The economic significance of the PM to the local people of Abasua community, to some extent, corroborates Park's observation about the economic relevance of Hajj³⁷⁰ to the economy of Saudi Arabia. Park maintains that 'The Hajj is a major source of income for Saudi Arabia (the third largest earner after oil exports and spending by oil companies). Indeed, before oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia in 1938, spending by pilgrims was the country's largest source of foreign exchange earnings.'³⁷¹

³⁶⁵ Nana Yaw Obogya II, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

³⁶⁶ Peter Sarpong, *Peoples Differ: An Approach to Inculturation in Evangelisation* (Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002), p. 104.

³⁶⁷ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, p. 104.

³⁶⁸ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, p. 104.

³⁶⁹ See chapter two (page 43 of this work) for some of the taboos of Abasua community.

³⁷⁰ Muslims' annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

³⁷¹ Park, 'Geography and Religion', p. 29.

It was also observed that the influx of pilgrims to the PM provide employment for many commercial drivers, especially those who ply Abasua to Kumasi or Kumasi to Abasua. In February and August, the peak seasons for pilgrimage to the PM by the MCG and the PCG, other drivers from the length and breadth of Ghana get temporary employment as they convey the pilgrims to the PM and back to their destinations. For example, some of the drivers who ply Abasua whom the researcher interviewed at Asafo Market in Kumasi disclosed that apart from the employment opportunities which their plying Abasua and Kumasi offer them, some of them have been able to own their own buses or vehicles, through the business of conveying pilgrims and other people to and from Abasua.³⁷²

The PM also contributes to the development of infrastructural facilities both at Abasua community and on the PM. At Abasua community, it was discovered that the tolls collected from pilgrims and others who patronise the PM was the main source of revenue for the construction of a new classroom block and procurement of light poles for the community's electrification project. Mr. Kofi Boakye, one of the royal citizens of Abasua community disclosed that the road linking Atwea and Abasua was constructed in the early 1990s by the government of Ghana because of the massive influx of pilgrims to the PM.³⁷³ According to Mr. Boakye, before the construction of the road, vehicles could not come to Abasua community. The drivers only stopped at Atwea and the passengers walked from there to Abasua. The construction of the road, according to him, has not only facilitated the movement of vehicles to the place, but the stress,

³⁷² The following were some of the drivers the researcher interviewed at Asafo Market (Abasua station in Kumasi) on 13 August 2011: Appiah Kwasi (Urvan Bus driver), Kwasi Badu (Hyundai Grace driver), Kofi Abunua (207 Benz Bus driver) and Sampson Adu (207 Benz Bus driver).

³⁷³ Mr. Kofi Boakye, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

exhaustion and ordeal which sometimes characterized the people who walked from Atwea to Abasua and Abasua to Atwea have been considerably minimized.

Furthermore, almost all the PCs on the PM have various infrastructural facilities. These include chapel buildings, separate accommodation facilities for male and female pilgrims, power plants for provision of light in the evening (especially, at PCs Three and eight) and lavatory facilities. Labour force for the construction of almost all these projects was provided by the local people from Abasua and other neighboring communities.³⁷⁴ All these facilities are thus believed to contribute to the well-being and welfare of the local people, pilgrims and others who patronise the PM. One therefore agrees with Park with respect to the role of pilgrimage in infrastructural development at sacred spaces. According to him, '[pilgrimage] can have a major effect on local economies, by encouraging the development of infrastructure such as shrines, shops selling devotional articles, and facilities for overnight accommodation (including dormitories and camp sites).'³⁷⁵

The upsurge of physical developments at sacred spaces and their contribution to human development have engaged the attention of some scholars of religion. Afe Adogame, for example, writes about the emergence of infrastructural facilities at the Redemption Camp (a.k.a Redemption City) believed to be the most important sacred space of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in Nigeria. Adogame maintains that

The Camp now physically occupies over ten square kilometres of land acquired within two decades of its inauguration. The most expansive facility at the site is a large auditorium believed to host over half a million people at a single religious event. The geography of the Camp is diversified with physical structures hosting a conference centre, guesthouse and chalets, and a presidential villa set aside for government functionaries and politicians who visit the Camp. Also situated at the site are a maternity centre, an orphanage, a post office, a gas station, bookstores, supermarkets, bakery, and

³⁷⁴ Mr. Kofi Boakye, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

³⁷⁵ Park, 'Geography and Religion', p. 22.

canteen. Other significant facilities include two banks, a secondary school, and a bible school. An estate consisting of residential buildings have come to characterise its topography. Interested members are allotted space to erect private residential homes. Thus the significance of the Redemption Camp lies not only in the religious and spiritual functions it serves for members and non-members alike. It also has come to represent an avenue where social, economic, cultural, ecological, and political functions meet at a crossroads.³⁷⁶

Generally, the economic activities and the infrastructural facilities on the APM and Abasua community are thought to be of immense theological significance because they are perceived to variously promote the dignity of the local people of Abasua and the pilgrims who patronise the PM. The local people are believed to be economically empowered through their engagement in luggage carrying, sale of water, food items and other economic activities on the PM and at the Abasua community. Those activities therefore serve as poverty reduction interventions by which the local people do not only have their dignity enhanced, but also become economically empowered to effectively contribute to their own development and that of their dependants.³⁷⁷ The infrastructural facilities on the other hand are believed to promote what Samuel N. Boapeah refers to as ‘sustainable development’ on the PM and at Abasua community.³⁷⁸ Those facilities are believed to be development projects that meet the needs of the pilgrims and the local people.

Despite these laudable contributions of the PM to the economic well-being of the people, it was observed that the massive influx of pilgrims (an average of over ten thousand pilgrims a year) to the PM poses several environmental challenges to the pilgrims and the local people of Abasua community. These challenges include deforestation, congestion and sanitation problems. It is said elsewhere in the work that APM is located in a thick forest area. Deforestation therefore

³⁷⁶ Afe Adogame, ‘Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, North America’, *Studies in World Christianity* 1 (2004), 9-10.

³⁷⁷ Samuel N. Boapeah, *Christian Approach to Development: A Guide for Practical Christian Ministry in Development* (Ghana: Challenge Enterprises of Ghana, n.d.), p. 65.

³⁷⁸ Boapeah, *Christian Approach to Development*, p. 67.

results from the wanton felling of trees from the forest by camp owners who embark on building projects such as accommodation facilities and chapel buildings. Whether those deforesters had the approval of the traditional authorities of Abasua or not, the contention of the researcher is that paradoxically, the upsurge of development projects on the PM also means the deterioration of the environment through deforestation.

Another environmental challenge posed by the pilgrimage movements to the PM is congestion. During the peak seasons for pilgrimage activities by the MCG and the PCG, for instance, the small Abasua community gets choked up with vehicles, buses, cars and human beings. Human traffic and intermittent downfall of pilgrims on the rugged path to the PM are almost always inevitable. Human congestion also characterises camps three and eight, during the seasons for pilgrimage movement. Many pilgrims therefore sleep on the bare rocky floor (especially at CT), while others also resort to makeshift tents (especially, at camp eight). This implies that the accommodation facilities on camps eight and three are woefully inadequate to accommodate all the pilgrims / campers during pilgrimage seasons. Human congestion is believed to be one of the causes of infectious respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis, common cold, influenza, strep throat and pneumonia.³⁷⁹

Related to the issue of congestion are sanitation problems, especially, on the PM. In spite of many information boards (with notices in both Twi and English languages) on the various PCs which, among other things, seek to inform pilgrims about the need for them to ensure environmental cleanliness, sanitation problems (indiscriminate littering, irresponsible refuse dumping and unpleasant smell exuded from the lavatories, etc.) were observed at and

³⁷⁹ For details on these diseases, see Linda Meeks, Philip Heit and Randy Page, *Comprehensive School Health Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2003), pp. 413-417.

experienced at several PCs on the mountain. But information gathered from some of the camp workers at CT, for example, seemed to counteract the researcher's perception of littering and irresponsible refuse dumping as sanitation-related problems. Nana Kwame, one of the worshippers at CT, disclosed to the present writer that the more the PC become dirty and camp workers sanitise the place (by sweeping, scrubbing, weeding, etc.), the more blessings they claim to receive. As a result, Nana Kwame claimed that the Camp workers are sometimes delighted by the insanitary conditions at the camp because it provides them the opportunity to tidy up the place and receive more blessings. The story of a woman believed to be poor who allegedly came to work at CT was worth noting. It was disclosed to the researcher that a single woman believed to be poor who also had more than five children allegedly came to CT purposely to help tidy up the place. It was said that her belief was that through her sanitation work on the mountain, the Lord would be merciful and gracious to her. In the course of working, it is said that some unknown philanthropists came and picked five of the woman's children abroad³⁸⁰ (Europe and America) on humanitarian grounds.³⁸¹ The case of this woman, in the opinion of the researcher, is believed to be exceptional. Like all other faith-related issues, it is also perceived to transcend empirical verification. Nonetheless, the researcher contends that the plausibility of such exceptionalities can engage the attention of future researchers.

³⁸⁰ Gerrie ter Haar pointed out that African Christians who travelled to Europe were perceived to be 'Halfway to Paradise.' For details, see Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Great Britain: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), pp. 128-146.

³⁸¹ Nana Kwame and Mr. Fordjour Boateng, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

4.3.4 The place and relevance of APM in promoting social development

According to Moffitt, social development finds expression in the need for people or individuals to develop, nurture and maintain horizontal relationships with other people and groups. In this study, the researcher focuses on the extent to which some of the symbols and rituals on the PM promote or stifle social interaction, cohesion and solidarity among pilgrims and the people from Abasua community.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), one of the founding fathers of Sociology, argued that religion functions to reinforce the collective unity or social solidarity of a group: ‘There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideals which make its unity and its personality.’³⁸² Durkheim maintained that one way in which a society could express its shared identity and unity was through symbols and rituals.³⁸³ Thus, symbols and rituals were crucial to Durkheim’s analysis of the social function of religion, just as they are perceived to be central in promoting social interaction on the PM. In the opinion of Mike O’Donnell, symbols such as the ancient totem or Christian cross provide a focus of emotion and belief. Rituals such as sacrifice or Catholic mass or Holy Communion bring people together and bind them in shared experience.³⁸⁴

In the context of APM, the symbols believed to attract pilgrims to the PM include the mountain itself, the cross at CT and other prayer accessories (for example, water, anointing oil, sand, leaves believed to be of medicinal value and pictures of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey, etc.). These religious symbols are believed to be potent in mitigating the predicaments

³⁸² O’Donnell, *Sociology*, p. 530.

³⁸³ O’Donnell, *Sociology*, p. 530.

³⁸⁴ O’Donnell, *Sociology*, p. 530.

of the religious practitioner or the Christian pilgrim.³⁸⁵ At the Methodist PC for instance, some pilgrims fetch the rain water that is accumulated on the bare rocky floor. The belief is that the water is ‘holy and powerful’ in bringing about healing, business expansion, prosperity, restoration of broken marriages, etc. The sand on the floor of CT is even believed to be potent in bringing about improvement in people’s businesses or occupations. The case of a certain Akan woman who allegedly came to fetch some of the sand at CT was worth noting. According to Mr. Boateng and Nana Kwame (both were workers at CT), one day a woman believed to be an Akan came to the PC as a pilgrim and among other things, fetched about a sack full of the sand at the PC. According to these informants, the woman claimed that her cocoa farm was being attacked by what she described as ‘some evil forces.’ Therefore, she believed that the mere application of the sand on the cocoa farm would restore it by warding off the evil forces. According to the informants, the woman came back to the PC, after she had allegedly applied the sand on her farm, and testified about the spiritual potency of the PC, including the sand on the floor. According to the informants, the woman claimed that the yield from the farm tremendously increased and the insects which, hitherto, attacked the cocoa trees (but were not responding to the application of insecticides) vanished from the farm.³⁸⁶ This corroborates Omenyo’s observation that among the Akan, causality was understood in the context of the inseparability between the empirical and the meta-empirical.³⁸⁷ ‘Besides purely organic causation ... no interpretation of causality that does not include elements like preordained destiny, punishment by

³⁸⁵ This does not mean that pilgrims patronise the PM only to find solutions to problems. There are several reasons for pilgrims’ appropriation of sacred spaces, one of which is to find solutions to suffering or predicament. The researcher agrees with John Bowker that suffering or predicament is one of the central *causes* of religion. For details, see John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 1.

³⁸⁶ Mr. Fordjour Boateng and Nana Kwame, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

³⁸⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 30.

angered ancestors and witchcraft can be fully acceptable. The phrase, ‘it is not an ordinary occurrence’ (*enyɛ kwa*) is invariably, the thought of the Akan in any life crises.’³⁸⁸ The orientation of pilgrims such as this Akan woman makes the role of religious symbols at sacred spaces very crucial.

In a religiously pluralistic Ghana where a multiplicity of predicaments is perceived to be spiritually caused, many religious people do not hesitate having recourse to religious resources as some of the means of ameliorating their predicaments.³⁸⁹ If these religious symbols on APM are believed to be spiritually potent, then in a context such as Akan in Ghana, where suffering and other forms of predicaments are perceived to be spiritually connected, one contends that those religious symbols would naturally be attractive to many people and pull them there. In this sense, the interaction of the pilgrims is perceived to be the result of the attractive and integrative functions of those religious symbols on the PM.

In chapter three of the work, the researcher dealt with some of the prayer rituals which bring pilgrims and other people together and bind them in a shared experience on the PM. These include the biannual Connexional Prayer Convention of the MCG, the biannual Prayer Retreat of the PCG, healing and deliverance programmes, Communion Services, etc. According to Owusu-Ansah, pilgrims appropriate these prayer rituals on the PM for several reasons: healing/deliverance, spiritual empowerment, divine favor, spiritual protection, etc.³⁹⁰ The implication is that the main preoccupation for pilgrims’ appropriation of APM is what J.

³⁸⁸ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 30.

³⁸⁹ Elsewhere in the work, the point was made that in Africa, solutions to problems are often sought for within the ambience of religion. See chapter three (page 88) of this work.

³⁹⁰ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity*, pp. 15-21.

Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu refers to as ‘empowerment’, understood variously as a redemptive uplift, anointing and the restoration of spiritual gifts.³⁹¹

But the researcher is of the opinion that the fact that pilgrims are believed to patronise the PM for spiritual reasons does not mean that their influx to the PM does not also have any social dimension. In fact, one of the social functions of the PM, according to Owusu-Ansah, is that it serves as a place for excursion.³⁹² If Richard T. Schaefer and Robert P. Lamm’s description of religion as ‘a social institution’³⁹³ is anything to go by, then the researcher argues that to divorce religion from its social orientation is to deprive it of its very essence. The implication is that almost all the human-related activities on the PM: worship, anointing, healing/deliverance, Communion Services, weeding, sweeping, scrubbing, chatting /gossiping, buying/selling, etc. can be regarded as various forms of social interactions. Thus, the PM, in addition to its role as a sacred space, also promotes social solidarity, interaction and cohesion among the pilgrims and of course, among the people of Abasua community.³⁹⁴ The integrative function of the PM is perceived to be very important in the African context because it reinforces what Pobee called *sensus communis*.³⁹⁵ In contradistinction to Descartes’ ‘*ergo sum*’, that is ‘I think, therefore I am,’ the PM, by its integrative function, promotes the African principle of existence which tends

³⁹¹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2005), pp. 152-163.

³⁹² Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity*, p. 18.

³⁹³ Richard T. Schaefer and Robert P. Lamm, *Sociology* (5th Edition) (United States of America: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995), p. 396.

³⁹⁴ Nana Yaw Obogya II, the Chief of Abasua, informed the researcher on 13 August 2011 at Abasua that his people’s hospitable attitude, kindness and strong aversion to miscreant practices are partly due to the PM which, among other things, attracts many pilgrims and other people to the community. The researcher’s opinion is that in a context where people are believed to be hospitable, kind and have aversion to miscreant practices, social cohesion and solidarity become pronounced.

³⁹⁵ John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1979), p. 49. C.f. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, ‘Reconciliation: An African Perspective’ *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XIV (2004), p. 3.

to follow the Akan philosophy of ‘*cognatus ergo sum*,’ that is, ‘I am because I belong.’³⁹⁶ In Africa, Asamoah-Gyadu corroborates Pobee’s opinion that the individual can only say, ‘I am because we are.’ Because of this philosophical notion there is a complete repudiation of ethical egoism in Africa’s theory of existence.³⁹⁷

The implication of this is in John Donne’s view of human’s social orientation: ‘No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main.’³⁹⁸ Thus, the integrative function of the PM is believed to be theologically appropriate and relevant given the view of John and Agnes Sturt about the theological perspective of social interaction. According to them, ‘Human beings are gregarious and do not like to be isolated from others. This desire to socialise is a direct consequence of the fact that God has created us in his image to live in community as he does: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We were not designed to live in isolation.’³⁹⁹ The communal nature of God is believed to be the theological basis for the proliferation of many PCs on the PM. Thus, APM, in the thought of the researcher, refers to a community of PCs, and not just one PC.

Moreover, the fact that the PM is now a community of PCs or different Christian denominations (Ministries) implies that it indirectly fosters ecumenism. T. P Weber defines ecumenism as ‘The organized attempt to bring about the cooperation and unity of all believers in Christ.’⁴⁰⁰ But the present writer did not focus on a detailed study of the relationships among the various PCs on the PM. This can, however, engage the attention of future researchers.

³⁹⁶ Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, p. 49. C.f. Asamoah-Gyadu, ‘Reconciliation’, p. 3.

³⁹⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, ‘Reconciliation’, p. 3.

³⁹⁸ Cited in John & Agnes Sturt, *Created to be Whole*, p. 162.

³⁹⁹ John & Agnes Sturt, *Created to be Whole*, p.162. C.f. Boapeah, *Christian Approach to Development*, pp. 34-41.

⁴⁰⁰ T. P. Weber, ‘Ecumenism’ in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2nd edition) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 363.

The crux of the discussion of the place and relevance of APM in promoting social development is that the PM, in the opinion of the researcher, has an integrative function of bringing pilgrims and other people together to engage in various forms of social interactions which promotes social cohesion and social solidarity. This integrative function of the PM is also thought to be aptly theological in orientation, given the view that the God whom the pilgrims seek to interact with, through various prayer rituals, is believed to be a communal God.

A cross-examination of some of the responses, however, revealed that the PM sometimes upsets the people with respect to their social development. The researcher found out that even though the luggage-carrying business in the community economically empowers the youth in one way or the other, the same activity paradoxically contributes to various forms of juvenile delinquency in the community. Almost all the youth the researcher interviewed⁴⁰¹ said that the luggage-carrying business economically and socially empower them. By ‘social empowerment’, the researcher means the youths’ claim to have aversion to health-impairing practices and being in good relationship with themselves and their elderly folks. The elderly people (some of whom were parents and guardians of some of the luggage-carriers), whom the researcher interviewed,⁴⁰² however disclosed, among other things, that the luggage-carrying activity economically empowers the youth but socially estranges them. Owing to what the elderly people called ‘the youths’ easy access to money through luggage-carrying and other forms of business activities’, the elderly people claimed that some of the youth were not disciplined. Miscreant practices such as smoking, truancy, drunkenness, etc. were not only reported by the elderly respondents as prevalent among some of the youth, but the researcher also observed those

⁴⁰¹ The luggage –carriers interviewed at Abasua on 13 August 2011 include Mr. Yaw Mensah, Mr. Abass (Asante ‘Kramo’) and Mr. Kwame Owusu.

⁴⁰² The elderly people interviewed at Abasua from 12-14 August 2011, include Elder Addo (Leader in the Church of God), Mr. Bismark Adu Gyamfi and Nana Akosua Achiaa (*ɔbaapanin* of Abasua).

practices among them, especially among the male luggage-carriers. The implication is that because the youth who engage in the luggage-carrying activity perceived themselves as financially independent, capable of fending for themselves, some of them had become incorrigible, stubborn and wayward to their parents and guardians. In this sense, the PM's role in promoting social development at Abasua community is a mixed-blessing. On the one hand it promotes social integration and solidarity among the pilgrims and among the people from Abasua community who work there; on the other hand, it indirectly impairs the relationship between parents/guardians and their children at Abasua community.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have argued that sacred spaces like the APM play several functions in the lives of the people who live around and patronise them. The functions of the PM to the Abasua people and the pilgrims who patronise it have been examined and discussed in the context of four thematic areas of human development: spiritual, mental, physical and social. The discussion is generally couched on the resurgence of religion's place in human development discourse, but specifically, on Robert Moffitt's human development paradigm. Even though the PM empowers the people, it also upsets them in one way or another. In that sense, the researcher believes that the whole 'Abasua phenomenon' is a paradox in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this work, we have attempted to point out that despite the significant place that sacred spaces occupy in global religious cosmology, their relevance has been largely expressed in the context of the traditional notions of prayer, worship and divine revelations. Using APM in Ghana as a contextual example, however, the researcher has argued that the place and relevance of sacred spaces can scarcely be defined in the context of only these traditional notions.

Methodologically, mainly historical, social-anthropological, phenomenological and theological models were employed to guide the data collected. The methods of data collection for the study were participant observation and interview. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study.

Geertz's social-anthropological approach is the theoretical pivot around which the discussion generally revolves. In his *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Geertz's analysis of ethos, worldviews and sacred symbols clearly brings out the interrelationship between religion and social phenomena.

The researcher has endeavoured to examine and discuss the reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. We have, first, examined and discussed the history of Abasua community and the development or discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space.⁴⁰³ Secondly, we have briefly explored the dynamics of encounter between Traditional Akan Religion and Christianity in the Abasua community.⁴⁰⁴ Last but not least, we have

⁴⁰³ See pages 36-50 and 58-95 for details.

⁴⁰⁴ See pages 13-14 and 47-50 for details.

attempted to explore the extent to which the reconstruction of the sacred space empowers or upsets both the Abasua community and the people who patronise the site from outside Abasua.⁴⁰⁵

The overview of the history of the people of Asante and the history of Abasua community indicates the reality of the notion of construction in the worldview of humanity. It also shows the inextricable link between Religion and the construction of identities in the Ghanaian context. Even though the Asante people came late to the political limelight, they eventually emerged as a mighty stalwart and a force to reckon with, as far as their relationship with the Denkyiras was concerned. The Asante people's initial peripheral position in the Akan world metamorphosed greatly. Through the coalition of states and the military prowess of Nana Osei Tutu, the Asantes were able to vanquish their vilest oppressor, the Denkyiras. The Asantes appropriated Traditional Akan Religion in their bid to sustaining their reconstructed identity from independent cities to a unified coalition of states; that is, *Asanteman*. This was mainly expressed through the 'bringing down' of the Golden Stool by the legendary *ɔkɔmfo* Anokye. This implies that the Asante people appropriated Traditional Akan Religion (that is, they made use of the Golden Stool as a sacred symbol) to express their reconstructed identity as *Asanteman*. It also underscores Geertz's notion of the mutual non-exclusiveness of religion and sacred symbols.

The history of Abasua community is inextricably linked with that of Asante. The first settler to Abasua community, Nana Yaw Obogya, came to settle there in about 1692, long before Nana Osei Tutu became the King of Kumasi. Nana Yaw Obogya was believed to be a native of Akyem-Ahwenease. One of the factors perceived to have precipitated his settlement was the then inter-tribal wars in the Akyem-Abuakwa area at that time. These wars might have caused the

⁴⁰⁵ See pages 104-129 details.

settler and his sister, Nana Ogyaaben to migrate from their native land to Nsuta, and then, ultimately, to Abasua. The history of Abasua community indicates, among other things, the sacredness of the *Yaase* forest area, owing to the presence of the river deity *m'abesoε wo*. But the history also shows that through the religiosity of Nana Obogya, the man believed to be the first settler at Abasua, *Yaase* was reconstructed as *m'abesoε wo*. The implication is that *Yaase* forest area was reconstructed from its former identities as hunting and farming areas into a new area for human settlement (that is, *m'abesoε wo*, and subsequently, to Abasua community).

The name 'Abasua', is thus the corruption of the expression *m'abesoε wo* (I have come to you as a settler, stranger or a sojourner). Traditional Akan Religion was the dominant religious expression in the Abasua community before the advent of Christianity there. *Atwea boɔ*, a mountain deity perceived to be very powerful and influential, was believed to be the pivot and embodiment of the community's traditional Akan religiosity. In the days of *Atwea boɔ*, the other three mountains in the community; *Krɔbo boɔ*, *Yaase boɔ* and *Kompi boɔ*, were on the periphery of the community's traditional Akan religious expression. *Krɔbo boɔ* was a forest area for hunting expeditions and a place for tourist activities whiles *Yaase boɔ* and *Kompi boɔ* were places for crop farming.

A paradigm shift in the community's religiosity occurred in about 1958, when the first church at Abasua, the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), was introduced by Madam Comfort Boadiwaa and her brother, Mr. Joseph K. Tutu. These people were believed to have 'brought' the church from Asante Agona and Adutwam to Abasua. The other two churches introduced after the SDA were the Church of God and Christ Apostolic Church. The introduction of Christianity at the community was a major paradigm shift because for a long time in the history of the community, Traditional Akan Religion was the dominant religious expression there.

A Christian Minister's discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ*, as a 'Mountain of God's presence' in 1965, contributed to Abasua's fledgling Christian religious identity. This is because the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space has resulted in the current paradigm shift of the people's religious focus from *Atwea boɔ* to *Krɔbo boɔ*. The people's belief in the potency, influence and significance of *Atwea boɔ* has significantly waned in favour of *Krɔbo boɔ*, where hunting expeditions and tourism formerly occurred. Thus, *Krɔbo boɔ* has been reconstructed from its former identities as a place for hunting expedition and merry-making into a sacred space or a PM for prayer, healing and deliverance rituals.

From the foregone discussion we can identify three key characters whose various religious experiences and encounters in different religio-cultural contexts resulted in the reconstruction of identities or paradigm shifts. They are Nana Obogya, *ɔkɔmfo* Anokye and the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey. One of the implications of this is that the religious experience and encounters of people (referred to in this work as religious characters) is, to some extent, the pivot around which a discourse on reconstruction of identities revolves.

Phenomenologically, the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* and the subsequent re-appropriation of the site by Christian pilgrims are believed to be the basis for the shift of the site's name from *Krɔbo boɔ* to APM. The reconstruction of *Krɔbo boɔ* to APM is defined and informed by some Christians' belief in the existence of a transcendent reality (God) on the PM and the possibility of human interaction with that deity through prayer rituals.

One of the indicators of the sacredness of APM is people's belief in the alleged supernatural occurrences that characterised Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey's discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space. Other themes attesting to the sacredness of the place are the realities of pilgrimage movements to the site, establishment of PCs and CMs, prevalence of religious, moral,

health and environmental sanitation rules on the PM. The rest of the themes are the appropriation of prayer accessories and relics on the PM and prevalence of other religious phenomena like miracles, sacred writings, Bible studies / preaching and the administration of the Lord's Supper.

It can be discerned that APM is a kind of religious phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity because it is believed to offer Christians the opportunity to encounter the sacred or transcendent realm through the ritual of pilgrimage. Thus, APM is a place where the gap between the pilgrim and the transcendent realm becomes bridged or narrowed. It is a place where people seek after spiritual nourishment, empowerment or renewal.

In the contexts of social anthropological and theological approaches, it has been argued that the PM promotes people's spiritual, mental, physical and social development. But Geertz maintains that 'it is not only positive values that sacred symbols dramatize, but negative ones as well. They point not only toward the existence of good but also of evil, and toward the conflict between them.'⁴⁰⁶ The implication is that the PM as a religious symbol does not only promote development in the aforementioned thematic areas, but it also stifles the development of the people in one way or the other. For instance, it has been found out that socially, the PM promotes integration, cohesion and solidarity among the pilgrims and the people of Abasua. On the other hand, it impairs social interaction in the community. It is in the light of this that we have described the whole APM phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity as a paradox.

The study is relevant because we have seen, among other things, the extent to which religion or spirituality and materiality interrelate. In addition to the popular notion of sacred places as spaces for prayer, worship and divine revelations, using APM as a contextual example, we have seen that sacred places also promote material development.

⁴⁰⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.130.

Moreover, the study has attempted to provide some vital pieces of information about APM which, hitherto, had not received much intellectual attention. This includes the contemporary identity of APM as the reconstructed *Krɔbo boɔ*.

Last but not least, we have attempted to discuss the encounter between Traditional Akan Religion and Christianity in Ghana. It has been established in the study that the paradigm shift in the religiosity of Abasua was as a result of Christianity's encounter with the community's traditional religiosity. This encounter did not only result in some people's conversion from the Traditional Akan Religion to Christianity, but has also brought about a radical reconstruction of the entire community's religious expression and identity. Traditional Akan Religion at Abasua community has now given way to Christianity.

The following are some of the areas in the study which are recommended for further research:

- The colonisation of mountains or spaces by deities and the re-appropriation of those sacred spaces in different religio-cultural contexts.⁴⁰⁷
- Abasua people's perception about the walking staff and other relics associated with the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey.⁴⁰⁸
- A comparative study of gender patronage of the PM within a specified period of time.⁴⁰⁹
- The perceived paradoxical orientation of Christian sacred spaces in Ghana.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ See pages 8-9.

⁴⁰⁸ See page 83.

⁴⁰⁹ See page 107.

⁴¹⁰ See page 129.

APPENDICES

A. Interview schedule for traditional leaders, parents /guardians and elders of Abasua community

1. Please what is your full name?
2. Please kindly tell me the history of this community.
3. Please tell me the nature of Religion in the community before Christianity was introduced here.
4. Please how did Christianity come to Abasua community?
5. Please kindly tell me the impact of Christianity on the community's traditional religiosity.
6. Please kindly tell me about the history of Abasua Prayer Mountain.
7. Please is the Prayer Mountain beneficial to the community (the Abasua people)? Please explain if yes or no.

B. Interview schedule for pastors, camp workers and other pilgrims who patronise the Prayer Mountain

1. Please what is your full name?
2. Please are you a pastor, a worker at the Camp or an ordinary pilgrim?
3. Please how did you hear about Abasua Prayer Mountain?
4. Please why do you come to Abasua Prayer Mountain?
5. Please have you personally experienced any miracle or divine revelation on this Prayer Mountain before? If yes, please tell me.
6. Please is the Prayer Mountain relevant to Abasua community? If yes, in what specific ways is it relevant to the community? If no why?

C. Interview schedule for the youth / luggage-carriers at Abasua community

1. Please what is your name?
2. Please how old are you?
3. What is your level of education?
4. Please what is your occupation?
5. Are you a citizen of Abasua community? If no, please tell me where you come from.
6. Please in your opinion, how relevant is the Prayer Mountain to you or the youth in the community?
7. Does the Prayer Mountain upset you or Abasua community in any way? If yes, please explain.

D. Interview schedule for drivers who ply Abasua community

1. Please what is your name?
2. Please what are some of the advantages and disadvantages in your work as a driver who plies Abasua community?
3. Please do you own the bus/vehicle that you drive? If yes, would you say that your work as a driver at Abasua community helped you in buying the bus /vehicle?
4. Please, in addition to your work as a driver, what other occupation do you have?

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Mr. Sampson Adu (207 Benz Bus driver), 13 August 2011, Asafo Market (Abasua Bus Station)-Kumasi.

Nana Yaw Obogya II, (Chief of Abasua), 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

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