

**SOCIAL CHANGE AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS  
WORLDVIEWS: A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF  
PUBERTY RITES FOR DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE  
LOGBA**



**THIS THESIS IS PRESENTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA  
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, this thesis is my original piece of research conducted between June 2009 and June 2013 under the close supervision of the late Rev. Dr. Abraham Akrong and Dr. Stephen Acheampong who are both Lecturers of the University of Ghana. The original research has been revised between 2012 and 2013 due to a change in focus of the study recommended by examiners.

In places where references of other works have been cited or their ideas adopted, full acknowledgement has been given. No part of this project has been presented either in whole or in part to any other institution for any award before.



Date.....

Signed.....

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Date.....

Signed.....

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the memory of Dr. Abraham Akrong who unfortunately passed away before he could sign the thesis he has supervised. May his soul rest in peace. It also goes to the countless silent victims of the devastating effects of tensions and clashes created by social change; those who suffer without even knowing it. It is my prayer that, awareness creation would finally smooth up the disagreeable elements in the process of social change to enhance development and happiness.



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I am also indebted to some of the staff of the George Padmore Library of Research into African Affairs, The Williamson Library of the Trinity Theological Institute and African Studies Library of the University of Ghana, where I spent much time during the research period.

Finally, I wish to thank the staff of the Carnegie Writing Center at the University of Ghana who also read the final work.

## ABSTRACT

Puberty rites were an essential part of the betrothal type of marriage practiced by the ethnic group of Logba of the Volta Region in the olden days. Ultimately, a girl who experienced her menses for the first time is confined to begin a week-long ritual involving instructions and tests of varied kinds. The climax is usually on a Thursday, when she is adorned and paraded through the village to announce her maturity. With many gifts from parents and well-wishers, she was sent to the husbands' house. Qualitative methods were to examine the reasons for the survival of puberty rites among the Logba and their developmental in the community.

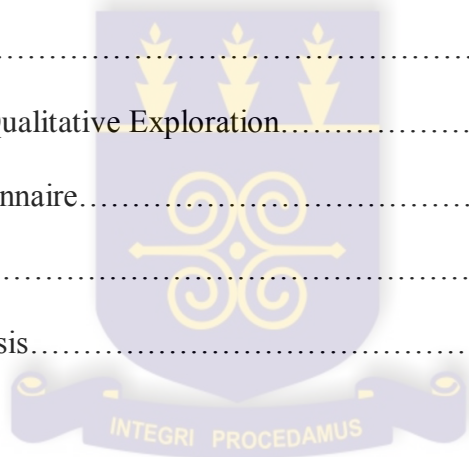
The rites were seen originally to be in conformity to the principles of liminality within which candidates were separated, left in a limbo to learn and then re-integrated into the society as adults. The new rites as the study has shown, retains the former ideals but social change has shifted the focus on adult women's hard work and prosperity. Survival of the rites in the society mainly surrounds a felt need of the people to maintain their identity and to harness traditional values to unite and develop the tribe. Though visible, the developmental impacts are greatly affected by the economic hardships and corruption affecting the whole nation. The institution of puberty rites indicates that great potentials exist in our cultural values in which women can assist in rapidly developing the nation as has been done in South East Asian countries like Japan. It means government must involve women in the, Scientific, Technological and Innovation (STI) policies which have been put in place for development. Women must also be assisted in giving sound moral training of children at home to reduce escalating indiscipline and corruption in society.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

Social change often greatly affects people's ideas and actions, rules, values and norms. The contact between Africans and Europeans in trade, colonialism and missionary work initiated great processes of social change that have affected Ghanaian traditional cultures.

Fundamental to social change is the manner in which external influences in the form of religion, socio-political systems and ideologies have affected the traditional worldviews. This situation often creates tensions and sometimes clashes between the traditional worldview, which still shapes and influences the choices that determine the peoples' actions and the incoming influences. Most Ghanaians, and indeed Africans generally, seem to be caught in this web of tensions between the traditional worldview, and the ideas and structures of modern science.

The focus of this study is to investigate the nature, origins and beliefs that create and shape the puberty rites of the Logba, an Ewe ethnic group in the Volta Region. To enable the researcher to understand the underlying values of the rites, it is important to determine how the people negotiate between the traditional worldview and the modern secular worldview in their puberty rite celebrations. Tensions generated from these negotiations raise important issues because the traditional worldview shapes the manner in which the Logba interpret the world. For Africans, reality seems to be essentially spiritual and fundamental to the way in which they view, interpret and understand events and this is very much at variance with the modern reality which relies on secular and

scientific interpretations. It produces a conflict of principles and interpretation in the domain of cultural, socio-economic and political discourses that tend to produce clashes and tensions in values and norms of the people. This thesis intends to study how women in Logba have dealt with the conflicts inherent in their puberty rites due to social change and the effect it has on their development

## 1.2 Problem

The Logba society just like many other societies in rural Africa is traditional in the Weberian sense, which according to Nukunya (1992:3), means ‘a society characterized by the type of domination based on the belief in the legitimacy of an authority that has always existed. Those who exercise authority do so by virtue of their inherited status. Commands are legitimate and based on personal loyalty.’ It also means that it has certain handed down essential ingredients like social institutions, values, norms, ideas, ethos and material cultural traits. These essentials in the case of the Logba are embodied in all their cultural institutions including celebrations such as puberty rites. However, just like in many places in rural Africa, the celebrations have been modified and many people have even lost interest in them as a result of the changing times. Nevertheless, there is an apparent upsurge in the modified puberty rites in contemporary Logba community.

In former times, the communal spirit of the Logba ensured that many people gathered in performing puberty rites. It was even performed posthumously for the dead who were not able to perform the rites when they were alive.<sup>1</sup> Nowadays only a few

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents reported that a brief symbolic ceremony representing puberty rites is performed for a woman who did not perform the rite in their life before they died. It is often overlooked today because people have varying views concerning thr rites.

relatives and friends of candidates of the rite participate in the ceremony. The seriousness accorded to the rites by some citizens of Logba in present days when many other Ewe speaking tribes have discarded them, makes it necessary to critically reassess the validity and relevance of these rites. A couple of issues in the rites seen within the contexts of social change become a bit unclear due to the variations in people's faith and values.

The first issue concerns the origins and religiosity of the puberty rite and how it relates to development. This is because it is generally noted that for Africans, reality is essentially spiritual and fundamental to the way in which they view, interpret and understand events. This is in agreement with Akrong who alludes this to the "principles of African metaphysics, in which reality in its fullness encompasses dimensions that are not immediately accessible to normal human experience. It is what can be considered as the spiritual dimension to life; it is also the source and power of reality and this spirituality is what embodies and shapes up the values, norms and the ethos of the traditional worldview." Akrong (2004:3),

A second issue concerns the changes of stipulated requirements for the celebrations. There used to be specific criteria in the timing, moral training, types of items and foods used in the celebrations. Additionally, the ceremony was for girls who had their first menstruation. Virginity was a severe demand as a test for chastity. All these have changed and therefore affect the values in the practice.

A third and a most important issue for this study is to determine whether the rites have become discriminatory against women or not. This is because; women in the community

actually struggle to meet the stipulated demands of the celebrations. Some get the requirements easily depending on their economic circumstances while the economic circumstances of others make it difficult to meet the requirements. Others never make the required monetary demands. Obviously, the insistence on posthumous celebrations for those who never make it underscores the important spiritual aspect of the religious worldview of the people. The motives for sustaining the rites are a not very well defined today. Modern trends demand that any gendered cultural institution such as the puberty rites must be re-assessed properly to avoid any disadvantages or imbalances occurring to women. Gender inequality as a negative social construction, is known to be highly detrimental to development. Tsikata (2000:1), in her introduction to an NGO evaluation report, stressed this concern by stating that, since the International Women's Year was declared in 1975, a number of measures aimed at strengthening efforts to address women's issues and gender inequality have been taking place all over the world. Women are often disadvantaged in resources allocation and opportunities for earning money. For that matter, the quest is to find out whether puberty rites are detrimental to women's development or not.

Casual observations into impacts of social change in societies often reveal that there are losses of some aspects of traditional practices to modernity. This can lead to people's inability to provide solutions to some serious problems existing in their lives. Mbiti (1969:219) terms such a loss "detrimentalization," a process he says, involved people who are uprooted but not transplanted. Such people live as individuals, floating like clouds and the tensions between the two points are neither harmonious nor creative. He

continues that, “the speed of casting off tradition at times is faster than putting on a new garment of the future.” The complexity of the situation is contained in the fact that, the traditional religious worldview is still dominant in the background, as an African adage says, ‘a leopard is never cleaned of its spots entirely.’ The traditional worldview still controls behavioral patterns, although the popular modernist worldview has taken away largely, the spiritual potency. Horton (1993:222) suggests that ‘a theoretical problem the traditional African faces is how to merge at both the supernatural and practical levels, two domains of contradictory discourse in the important area of development and social change.’ He explains that, in the modern cosmology of the secular imported worldview causality is governed by internal causes while in the African worldview; causality is governed by primary spiritual causes that act through secondary material causes. This inability to fuse easily the two contradictory cosmologies together successfully is the cause of tensions and the clashes in the value systems of traditional societies. The study therefore aims to also investigate how the people handle the challenges of these two contradictory domains in their puberty rite celebrations.

### **1.2.1 Proposition**

Modernity has modified and reshaped original values in traditional institutions like puberty rites. A re-evaluation of the underlying ideas of the original values can probably reveal deeply rooted principles, which can promote the cause of culture, gender equity and development of society in general.

### **1.3 Research Questions.**

What spiritual reality supports the puberty rites of the Logba.

What values do the people ascribe to the rites?

Do women take decisions concerning various activities that constitute the puberty rites?

Do the Logba consider the puberty rites development oriented?

### **1.4 Objectives**

The main objective is to study the nature, origins and beliefs that shape the values inherent in puberty rite celebrations of the Logba.

The second is to evaluate the values of both the former and present day performances of the puberty rites.

The last objective will be to determine whether the rites celebrations are development oriented to both candidates and the community.

#### **1.4.1. Relevance of the Study**

The Logba have only a sketchy documentation about their way of life and there is substantial evidence of their rapidly vanishing culture, which is the result of the influence exerted on them by the surrounding dominant Ewe speaking people. This work would therefore specifically focus on the Logba people's way of life and the measure that should be adopted as to preserve aspects of the culture.

A second significance is that the study will serve as a means of accessing the general

moral needs of the society and create awareness among policy makers as well as the general public of what these moral needs are.

Another relevance of this study is to highlight some of those often-neglected non-quantifiable aspects of cultural or traditional methods of bridging the gender gap that help in developing society.

### **1.5 Methodology.**

The researcher employed a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. These included in-depth and informal interviews with people chosen by the purposive sampling method. Questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions were also administered to some people by using the random sampling method for finding some specific opinions on some aspects of the study. Participant observations were also used during times of puberty rite celebrations in the Logba community. During those observations and interviews, information and scenes were recorded on audiovisual tapes and notepads. These were later transcribed to help in writing up the case studies and the investigations.

#### **1.5.1 Guidelines for the Qualitative Exploration**

Owing to the nature of puberty rites, specific efforts were made to involve women as much as possible to contribute in the entire information gathering and their interpretation. The study began in June 2009 with an initial meeting involving some

elders of the Logba community on a pilot basis during which advice peoples' and directions were sought on how best to meet the objectives set for the study.

The researcher first looked for documentations on the Logba, which was inadequate. He therefore relied greatly on a project work on the puberty rites of the Logba by a teacher, Madam Esi Agusah that she presented to her Training College. She also celebrated the rite some years back. She was therefore a most valuable informant in giving me insight into the historical forms of the celebrations and some of the modern aspects, which is presented as one case study below.

The researcher also employed participatory observation methods in the puberty rites celebrated for groups of women during the Easter of 2013 in the Logba community to observe at firsthand how rituals were performed and the significance attached to them. During these observations and interviews, the researcher recorded both on audiovisual tapes and on note pads, material that helped in writing up the necessary aspects of the study. By the help of these informants, the researcher put together two case studies of the modified type of puberty rites. One involved the single candidate Esi who celebrated the rite at an earlier time. The other case study involved the recent 1913 nine candidates together, to bring out the variations in the modifications. There were also focus group discussions involving five of the candidates who have taken part in the rites recently, their spouses and two parents.

For secondary materials, the researcher relied on the Balm Library of the University of Ghana, the library of the Institute of African Studies at the University of

Ghana, the George Padmore Library for Research into African affairs in Accra, The Williamson Library of the Trinity Theological Seminary at Legon and the internet.

### **1.5.2 The Survey with Questionnaires**

In the third section, I designed a survey, using open and close-ended questionnaires in a quantitative analysis to a broad spectrum of the community, to find out specifically how popular the celebrations are. The questionnaires were given to one hundred individuals.

The survey fieldwork was organized in three stages. The pilot stage was used in testing the appropriateness of the questionnaire. Based on the findings of that stage, suitable changes and adjustments were effected in both the language and general formulation. The second stage involved the real interviewing. By random selection, people of different backgrounds in the community were asked to answer open and closed structured questions. It enabled the subjects to give specific answers. The questionnaires had two main parts; the first part obtained personal information from respondents. The information included gender, marital status, educational background and general religious affiliations. The second part looked out for the manner in which social change has affected the people's attitudes towards their values. This was determined from choices they preferred in questions relating to their puberty rite of passage celebrations. The variations between their choices were tallied and used in the analysis for correlations of social change and the effects in the community being studied. The third stage involved the manner in which the interviews were administered. To achieve this, five assistants

helped to administer one hundred copies of the questionnaires to respondents in the towns of Logba - these respondents constitute the sample.

### **1.5.3 Analysis of Data Generated from Survey with Questionnaires**

The variables selected for analysis were put in three main sections. The first comprised of the exploration of the demographic structure of the respondents. This has a great bearing on the meaning of the choices and formed an important basis for the study. A sample of 100 respondents was chosen among whom were 29 teenagers made up of 17 girls and 12 boys from the Senior High School in the Logba community. Young and middle aged adults were 35 made up of 26 men and 27 women. Post middle-aged adults and pensioners numbered 18 made up of 13 men and 5 women. Among these 38 had basic education certificates and were made up of 22 males and 15 females, 46 also had second cycle education made up of 24 males and 22 females, 16 among them had tertiary level education. Those who had the tertiary level qualifications were made of 7 males and 9 females. It was assumed in the analysis that, the high rate of education of the sample group indicated the intensity and high levels of the effects of social change in the society. Education brings about a level of secularization in the society but this is however modified by the religious nature to some extent. Regarding the religious affiliations, all of them belonged to churches except one who belongs to the traditional religion. Forty-eight of them belonged to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church while 30 belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. The remaining 21 go to 10 other churches like Assemblies of God, Global Evangelical Church and Church of Pentecost. A close look shows that since traditional religious values and Christian values are similar in many ways. Old meanings

in puberty rites could easily be transformed into new ones. The belief in a Supreme Being for instance, is common to both religions. The 13 different churches to which the people attended indicated that there is religious pluralism in the society, which contributes to a lack of unity in rites performances in the community. The variables in the second section of the data were designed to determine the people's level of understanding and involvement in traditional religion in present times.

#### **. 1.5.4 The Organization of Thesis**

The study has three main sections. The first section tried to look at puberty rites in the era before social change and the second looked at the rites after social change. The third section consists of a questionnaire, which sought for peoples' opinions about the rites in the community.

To achieve the above aims, the study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which described the background, the research problem, objectives, the proposition, relevance and the methodology. Chapter two deals with the literature review. Chapter three consists of the traditional social structure of the Logba. The chapter further discusses how this structure fashioned the puberty rites, with an explanation of the exegetic symbolism to give what the rite meant to the people. Chapter four looks at the socio-economic transformation resulting from social change. This chapter also presents two case studies of modified puberty rites and gives the meaning of their operational symbolism. It also presents the effects on the puberty rites and their developmental implications. The chapter five contains the summary and the conclusion.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with relevant literature concerning concepts and theories of puberty rites. The rites make use of religious ritual and symbolism to initiate young girls into adulthood. The attempt therefore is to explain the conceptual nature of the religious involvement in the growth of a child, the social aspect of growth and cultural aspects of growth to understand their developmental implications. The study has been located within the tripartite theoretical structure of puberty rites invented by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner further developed the liminal stage (liminality) in 1967. The tripartite theoretical basis, which are preliminal, or the exegetical, liminal or positional and the post liminal or the operational were also used to explain the meaning of the rites in the study for their effectiveness and validity in the present days.

Overviews of literary investigations in the chapter show that a resurgence of the rites in any society can be proactive as it develops foundational values on which societies are situated. On the other hand, puberty rites must become development oriented for the ultimate in them to be realized. The researcher believes that conventional interpretations rather resemble methodologies fashioned to attain objectives that are not understood anymore. As a result, reasons given by respondents and authors for celebrating the rites are logically based on former ideals, which are no more realistic for present times. The propositional statement for the study therefore suggests the existence of objectives

beyond the conventional understanding of the rite. Further investigations in the study can bring them out.

## **2.2 The Conceptual Framework**

According to a distinguished East African anthropologist, Gehman (1989:36), a child grows into adulthood not only physically, but socially and religiously. It is therefore necessary to conceptualize the various processes involved in the growth of a child. This stages of growth also appeared in a related work by Ayisi (1988:2) who preferred to combine these three variables of growth mentioned by Gehman above into what he termed the cultural growth of a child. The underlying idea of growth progressively contains the potentials for the concept of development, which is a major objective of this study. Since physical growth is natural, easy to determine and understand, the researcher believes that in spite of its relevance it is not a necessary concept to be investigated. Instead, what are deemed relevant and good for achieving the stated objectives are;

- a) The concept of religious growth in relation to puberty rites.
- b) The concept of social growth of participants in puberty rites.
- c) The concept of cultural growth and development in relation to puberty rites.
- d) The concept of social change and its effect on puberty rites and development.

### **2.2.1 The Concept of Religious Growth in Puberty Rites**

The level of religious involvement in puberty rites is often questioned by observers. The onset of social change has made some people to conclude that the rites have traditional religious origins. This is what necessitates an investigation into the traditional

religious thought as the beginning of any conceptualization, which might seek to understand the worldview, which created and sustained puberty rites. Such investigations according to Gehman (1989:24) require strict adherence to objectivity because there is always the danger of reading into traditional religion what is not there. The reason for this problem as the author explained is that every person without any exceptions holds some preconceived ideas or biases on any topic being investigated. An illustration of this reality was seen in the work of P'Bitek (1970:46) who in pleading for objectivity had criticized all scholars, but he was also seen ironically to be biased in some ways. Concerning objectivity, Idowu (1973:17) also believed a person can approach African traditional religions (ATR) without preconceived ideas. This in the opinion of Gehman (1989: 24), is impossible and the researcher totally agrees with his view that, in such situations, there is rather the need of real effort to protect objectivity. The solution suggested by the author is that for the sake of honesty and personal integrity, researchers must be faithful to the facts.

A major apparent reason given by many authors for the strict adherence to the rites religiously is the wish to satisfy the spiritual guardians of a clan or tribe. Abotchie (1995:41.) explained that, “puberty rites originated with ancestors and custom requires that they must be carried out. If deliberately ignored, a chance to the life will be ignored, and the life endangered. Not only has the individual been denied inaugural blessings of household gods but they are also denied invitation to interact with the living which is bad.”

Secondly, inquiries reveal that a fundamental issue in understanding the traditional religious aspect of growth in a child is the conception of destiny. Destiny plays a central role in the traditional religious worldview. Opoku (1978: 100) in his work on the traditional religious thought said, there is a general belief among West African that a person's destiny *nkrabea* (*nkra* – bid farewell and *bea*, manner of doing something) is received from God and is also unchangeable. Corresponding to this idea in Logba and Ewe is '*dzogbese*,' from '*dzogbe*' which means the day of creation or birth, and '*se*,' meaning, law. The literal meaning is a creator's law or rule that controls a person's life. Though unchangeable in theory, a person may consult a divinity or a deity and based on that, good destiny can be prolonged or a bad one known as '*gbetsi*,' can be changed with sacrifices. Destiny can therefore be seen as having two sides. Opoku (1978:102) considers this as a paradox, which portrays the West African recognition of the limitation of human understanding. As a result, what happens to people cannot be explained with any degree of finality. People often blame their destiny instead of taking responsibility for failures or inactions. Sarpong (1974:38) commenting on this said, it is only the inexplicable habitual traits of a person, either towards evil or good which are explained through the appeal to destiny. The researcher considers the paradox rather a reality as only God is considered omniscient even among the most scientific oriented people today.. In his work on Nubility Rites among the Ashanti, Sarpong (1977:18) said consultations reveal that some of the girl's spirits hate the rite and can die when the rites are performed for them. A simple dedication called, '*anoka*' is performed for them instead of the elaborate ritual. The rite is never abandoned entirely.

So to sum up, the quest to understand destiny and protect one's life, to please ancestors by interacting with them, and to receive blessings are some of the religious factors for celebrating puberty rites. Obviously, the religious thought essentially has mystical or magical aspects, which eliminates the unforeseen but secures what is desired.

To further understand the religious reality that creates puberty rites, Assimeng (1989:68) explained that 'human beings find themselves in a universe that contains unexplainable events in which they appeal to the supernatural for explanation; though the activities are related to unseen forces, their effects have social consequences.' The elders therefore appeal to this supernatural for assistance in puberty rites for the welfare in the community. In support the appeal to the supernatural, Mbiti (1969:110-165) clarifies that, the cardinal beliefs by Africans are guided by a perception that time is cyclical as life moves from birth to death, through the ancestral world to reincarnating birth. This underlies the need to celebrate religiously, stages in a person's life that is not easily discarded as found among traditional communities in Africa. Puberty rite for that matter begins essentially with an appeal to spiritual elements. Rattray records in his work among the Ashanti that, the mother of a candidate begins the initial libation of the puberty rite to the Supreme Being:

“The Supreme Sky-God, who alone is great upon whom men

lean and not fall, receive this wine and drink.

Earth goddess, whose day of worship is Thursday, receive  
this wine and drink.

Spirit of our ancestors, receive this wine and drink. Rattray ( 1969:76)

Sarpong (1977:12) also emphasizes this in his work. He explained that, invariably the Ashanti when pressed to give reasons would give examples of many people who suffered from their having violated the puberty rite performances.

This religious element was what provided potency for sanctions which upheld high state of morality in puberty rites in the former days. Rattray (1969:74) indicates that, intercourse before puberty among the Ashanti was considered an offence for which the entire community must suffer. This according to him it was punishable by death or expulsion. Unchastity was considered a great disaster in the life of the candidate hence both parents and children take great care to protect virginity. The performers of the rites for that matter had devised of some means to test the virginity of the girls.

Even though many traditional Africans concerning puberty rites put this high premium on religion, they are also considered merely as social events in some traditions. Amedieme (1988:89-96) studied how the Nobi in Nigeria prepared their girls for adulthood without puberty rites. What they did without any celebration was that, in the attempt to prevent pre-marital pregnancy, there were various taboos and rituals surrounding a girl in her maidenhood. Apart from the waist beads, which increase in layers as she grew older, waist charm was added to the beads. Apparently, by choice, the Nobi did not celebrate the rite but contrived a means to bring up their girls up into responsible adulthood.

### **2.2.2 The Importance of Libation in Puberty Rites**

A key issue of contention arising from the religious involvement in puberty rites in

times of social change is the pouring of libation<sup>2</sup> during performances. Oduyoye (1986:9), Sarpong (1986:42) and Mbiti (1975:9) are all of the similar view that libation is only a deserved veneration as a memorial in honour of the departed great. Arguably, libation as explained in the sense of these authors implies that puberty rites still retain links with traditional religious elements because, libation in reality is the traditional prayer; since prayers venerate and worship spirit beings. The practice of the Nobi recounted above however shows that, contrary to general perception, religion is not necessarily the originator of puberty rites but is only invoked to sanctify and lend weight to the initiation ritual. It is therefore erroneous for people who take the view that the rites originate from traditional religion and therefore not good for Christians. In other words, the spiritual reality that created puberty rites is not the sky-god nor ancestors but the felt need of traditional individuals to religiously celebrate each rite of passage as noted by Mbiti above.

Since traditional worldviews are shaped by the type of elaborate social structures of the Logba shown in the next chapter, intrinsic aspects will forever remain in contention until full rationalization concerning the institution is achieved through motivated commitment and study. Nevertheless, according to Ganusah (1995:278) libation or any other perceived religious practice, which contradicts personal faith in present days in such communities, is easily discarded or modified in order to justify people's participation in the rites.

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<sup>2</sup> Libation is the traditional form of prayer.

Furthermore, the removals of perceived unsuitable religious procedures are very possible because the process of liminality (explained below) in the context of rituals according to Thomassen (2009:18) is an artificially created situation. He therefore cited similar liminal situations of college graduations, time between engagement and marriage and time between death and burial as good examples of artificial liminality comparable to the situation on puberty rites.

### **2.2.3 The Concept of Social Growth and Puberty Rites**

The second concept of social growth is shown as intricately linked with the first because some scholars assume that rituals are socially generated just like religion. The claim is based on the idea that, underlying a person's social growth is the reasoning similar to the functionalist sociological explanation for the origin of religion. Gehman (1989:36) said that Emile Durkheim and Robert Smith for instance assert that, action control beliefs. Ritual action is logically prior to ritual belief and they explain that religious belief is thus born out of social behavior. Since religion is a social phenomenon it is obvious that both belief and social action are interdependent.

This means that rituals are performed in response to certain social needs. According to Ayisi (1988:4) rituals are symbolic expressions of deeper feelings or transcendental ideas of members of a social group. In order to understand the symbolisms, of the various behavioral patterns, of any given society, it is mandatory and necessary to understand the social structure of that society. Puberty rites for instance begin with the first menstruation of some bewildered adolescent girl. Bewildered because 'menstruation is often uncomfortable, sometimes painful; it frequently has negative emotional correlates and in any case involves bothersome tasks of cleansing and waste disposal.

Tradition used puberty rites which were artistic communal festivities decorated in memorable ritual educational and entertaining activities to offset negative biological feelings of budding womanhood. There are strong indications in verified literature and interviews of an apparent achievement of a satisfactory balance in the gendered situation in such societies.

Puberty as an important initiation rite provided a platform for educating young girls in good virtues like comportment, hard work, chastity, and the art of becoming good housewives. The methodologies adopted by tradition were very distinctive. According to Ayisi (1988: 48), ‘much of what a child learns is acquired as opposed to artificial training.’ He explains that in the traditional method, training is a by-product of activity and the agents in the educational process consist primarily of kinsfolk, neighbours and older playmates. The process actually starts at the naming ceremony of a child. The effectiveness of the old method is indisputable but the author registered the effect of social change on the rites when he writes that, ‘foreign alternatives like baptism and confirmation and Muslim *aqiqa* have not resulted in the moral ethical and spiritual reawakening of the people. Such yearning for the use of initiation rites is positive but social change has introduced many significant elements as people are now considered to be in a global village.

Puberty rites can never be what they used to be. Present day initiation rites are known to have become very ostentatious due to technological advances and changes in

modes of material acquisition. The intended moral lessons can be lost on participants and viewers alike. The celebrations are however not totally useless; they serve as relics that showcase the cultural heritage. It would be impossible to recapture their former potency. The kente industry for instance benefits greatly from publicity provided in puberty rites. According to Fatou, an expert on beads, Ghana has become the world capital of beads that also derives a lot from the cultural heritage. Such appeals to culture for improvement is good but care must be taken to understand the values involved and how they relate to development.

It is evident that, initiation rites were used to provide some social needs. Puberty rites seen in the light of the discussions are a means by which society prepared women into responsible positions by;

- a) Celebrating and strengthening girls spiritually with rites instead of devaluing them because of their biological functions when they attain adulthood
- b) Supporting girls physically and emotionally against discomfort and pain rather than stigmatizing them when their femininity manifests in menstruation.
- c) Providing material and educational support for them prior to childbirth, during puberty rites instead of enslaving them.

One may then ask of what the benefits of puberty rites and their societies are and whether those benefits could be used to the advantage of society today as suggested by Ayisi (1988:48) above.

#### **2.2.4 Culture and Development in Relation to Puberty Rites**

Puberty rites remain one active aspect of the cultural heritage that has survived many alterations by social change while many practices of similar standing have become extinct. Understanding the conceptual implications of the rites raised within the contexts of culture can unveil latent values, which are useful. Ayisi (1988:49) seem to suggest earlier that the enactment of the process of puberty rites can improve morality and assist development in the society. Slightly different from that is the hypothesis of this study that it is rather the underlying principles and values and not the process of the rites that can enhance development in society. Ample evidence within the forces of social change has shown the inadequacy of the process of celebrations as having little effect on the people.

The idea however does not diminish the importance of culture to the developmental process among people. Affirming this observation Sackey (2003: 95) stated that ‘contrary to perceived notions, culture gives room to restructuring or a reformulation of antiquated practices in order to harness the potential of human resources towards progressive development.’ Her definition of culture as ‘to till, rear, produce or cultivate’ infers growth and development.

In her work, ‘Perspectives on the cultural dimensions of development,’ Sackey (: 94-95) explains that, ‘traditional culture is often seen to contrast development. This is because western concepts of development are viewed in economic terms in which economic growth is measured through aggregate data on Gross Nation Product (GNP) or per capita. Notably, the cultural dimension is what is often lacking in developmental

projects that fail. The author then makes two important contributions to the discourse on the cultural heritage and development.

Sackey refers to the Cultural Approach to Development as, ' a circulatory development which seeks communal mobility, and collective welfare rather than the upward social mobility of the individual.' In this sense, she considers the concept of the redistribution of wealth a form of developmental investment. She also terms it as the concept of *reciprocity* in that an individual who has acquired considerable wealth assists people who would also do the same for the benefactor or others in the society at a later time.

Puberty rites seem to agree very much with the counter argument of a positive outcome of the creation of a dependability mentality in the process of *traditionalism*. Within the contexts of cultural approach to development all the symbols fashioned for the rites give an informal type of education towards achieving personal development. Thus based on these clarifications, all the actions and symbolisms in puberty rites from the beginning to the end could be seen as tooled to achieve both communal and individual ends. Thus when it comes to material preparations for nubility rites among the Ashanti, Sarpong (1977:18) said, ' ....as many things not even the richest couple can be able to provide unaided, all it takes to celebrate the rites, necklaces, certain types of expensive beads, sufficient amounts of blankets, mats and pillows for the girl attendants. Most of the things are borrowed, sandals, stools, umbrellas and some of the things are to be used immediately and some to be used in the future.' The many items arrayed have their

cultural significance and role-play in the performance. One can also imagine how important some of the items used for the celebrations have become due to the demand for them. Kente clothes and beads in particular are used so lavishly in puberty rites that increasingly, many people continue to make their living in local industries providing them.

Secondly, Sackey (2003: 100) gives another characteristic to the cultural approach to development, which indicates that, women by their nature can be very honest when given positions of authority that can help deal with incessant mismanagement in a nation's economy. The basis of this assumption is on a widely accepted cultural belief that any bad behavior of women including dishonesty would adversely affect them in their labour during childbirth. These beliefs are however based on the peoples' belief in their ancestral gods and the natural maternal instincts. It is very important to point out at this stage that, the effectiveness of the cultural approach to development is very dependent on the level of spiritual consciousness of individuals. This is because spiritual consciousness or people's religion is very intertwined with their culture and the personal development of individuals, which is seen as the basis of all other forms of development. This close relation between culture and religion is seen in the work of Idowu (1973:3) who stated that, "A fair attempt at differentiation may be that while culture covers the whole of a people's scheme of life, religion gives direction and complexion to the scheme." Ancestors were seen to be at the core of the traditional religious system and this relation becomes clearer in this definition given by Sackey (2003:97) that "culture consists of

guidelines for a life instituted by peoples predecessors and monitored by living custodians of the cultural heritage for posterity with well-being as its objective.”

This second cultural approach to development outlines to a high extent the importance of puberty rites as an informal system of training girls who have the destiny of socializing all society as wives and mothers. The advent of social change has altered many institutions and it is necessary to study the concept of change and how it affects development.

#### **2.2.5 Social Change and Puberty Rites**

The next main component in the conceptual framework is social change, which is made up of the factors of new religions, formal education, trade, employment, communication, medical and technological sciences, and the general economy. This component is characterized by the modern secular worldview that consists of new values, created by social change like individualism, low morality, secularization and capitalism. The study involved how puberty rites are modified by all these influences. Assimeng (1989:366) regards social change as the significant alteration of social structures including the consequences and manifestations, which are embodied in norms, values, cultural products and symbols. There has been growth of individualism, interpersonal and intergroup conflict. Concerning issues of identity Assimeng (1989: 68) said that people often restructure their conception of psychological and cultural reality when shifts are discovered. The psychodynamic evaluation of such changes indicates a widespread and universal nature of man’s search for oneness, Africans undergoing the sort of change are said to be experiencing ‘alienation’ or ‘deracination.’ This is observable as the traditional

we-feeling in the Logba, for instance, is progressively giving way to competition and survival of the fittest. This is a very significant phenomenon that has considerable implications for religious complexity and dispute for traditional people and one can only agree that social change is multifaceted.

Observations into the puberty rite performances also have shown that competitiveness has effectively removed the 'we' feeling of the original rite from among the Logba. To maintain the psychological oneness of their identity, leaders in such communities seem to appeal to structures at the core of their worldview. Rather than worry about methodology of celebrations for instance, the organizers delight themselves in innovations which are considered as exciting and attractive. The idea is just to maintain the rite as a tribal identity. Borrowing of beads, native woven clothes or other necessities demanded for the rite, which was the practice in the past, is rendered obsolete by the alteration of social structures and values. In relation to these changes, Sarpong (1977:96) believes some of the transformations have all been destructive in the sense that, elements have been taken from the rites without replacing them with any obvious substitutes. This submission is often leveled mostly at morality where chastity and faithfulness are woefully depleted. Materialistic concerns appear more positive. The new value system for instance considers valuable antiquated items like beads which were essential in former times for celebrating puberty rites negatively; some regard them as repositories of witchcraft and not of wealth anymore. On the other hand, the new value structure prefers a capitalist minded abstinence and postponed consumption which discourages borrowing but stresses on creating wealth. Women as a result struggle to

save money to buy all the required items for their puberty rites in present times; in former times it would have been very convenient for relatives to borrow from others, things they could not buy readily for the initiation rites.

### **2.3 The Theoretical Framework**

A suitable guiding theory adopted for this study is that of *liminality* which appropriately supports the research among the Logba. Gennep (1908) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and later Turner (1967) developed the concept of liminality. Initiation rites are considered the most typical in illustrating the tripartite structure of the concept.

The first phase requires a separation of the candidate of the rite from the parents- a type of death to childhood.

The second phase considered the ‘liminal’ stage is derived from the Latin word *limen*, meaning “a threshold.” It is the quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage of rituals, when participants no longer hold their pre-ritual status but have not yet begun the transition to the status they will hold when the rituals complete.

The third stage is the moment of incorporation, which involves a celebration of the new birth. At this point, the participant is recognized as a part of the social order and is welcomed into the community with a new role.

The puberty rites of the Logba being studied corresponds in all aspects to the tripartite

structure just described. Working further on the concept, Victor Turner in his fieldwork among the Ndembu of Zambia however broadened the usage of the term to describe political and cultural change as well as rituals for whole communities. During liminal periods of all kinds, social hierarchies may be reversed or temporarily dissolved; continuity of tradition may become uncertain, and future outcomes once taken for granted may be thrown into doubt. The dissolution of order during liminality creates a fluid situation that enables new institutions to be established. Turner posits, that if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it potentially can be seen as a period of scrutiny for central values and axioms of the culture where it occurs; at such times, normal limits to thought, self-understanding are undone. In such situations, the very structure is temporarily suspended.

This claim is validated for this study when one considers the fact that various components of social change have created this type of liminality in traditional societies like Logba. According to Turner, such situations must eventually dissolve, for it is a state of great intensity that cannot exist for long without some sort of structure to stabilize it. He concluded that, either the individual returns to the surrounding social structure or else liminal communities develop their own internal social structure – a condition he calls ‘normative *comunitas*’.

Social change has put all traditional societies through a prolonged period of liminality and a few traditional communities like the Logba and the Krobo have modified forms of the puberty rites. Many other groups have also developed their own

internal social structures that work for them. It is however impossible to conclude with Turner that those who have discarded puberty rites entirely have developed the situation he termed “permanent liminality.” This situation is one in which the suspended character of social life takes on a more permanent character. Mbiti (1969:110-165) explained the African perception of time as cyclical and hence people cannot stagnate at a point. Rather modernization presents many options through values learnt from education and religion precisely. Importantly, the weakness of the completely traditional enterprise is to be seen at this point, both in the traditional ritual liminality of whole communities for long moments and in the short time for individuals during rituals. It is a time, which can be wasted in peoples’ lives considering the type of seriousness, which must accompany motivational commitment needed to bring innovational breakthroughs of various types. Historical evidence shows religious worldviews to be a vital innovative of breakthroughs as Weber (1967:46) stated in his theory of rationalization. He explains, “The priest functions as an agent of breakthrough to a higher cultural order when backed with serious motivational commitment.”

Even when looked at from the purely cyclical traditional African perspective posited by Mbiti (1969:110-165) and not from European psychological dimensions, the argument is that, children automatically must graduate into adulthood by learning during periods of liminality. In plain terms, times for individuals in liminal situations during puberty rites are more ceremonial than proper for committed learning; moments of disorientation and ambiguity cannot be the best for any seriousness. Any proactive use of the concept is given by Thomassen (2009:16) expressed the same view as Turner and

said; “liminality has both spatial and temporal dimensions and can be applied to modernity among other things which he considers as a permanent form of liminality. The implications are that during modernity induced liminal period in traditional communities, as mentioned above many new values and ideologies challenge old ones with severe intensity as noted. Puberty rites can therefore be seen as a microcosmic enactment of role-play of all life in a given society. Meanings are therefore more than what meets the eye when symbolisms are being considered.

Hess et al, (1993:398) in their work stated that, “a major characteristic of modernization is that kin-based production is replaced by cash agriculture or the assembly line. Traditional authority is challenged at all levels. People constantly bargain between different variables in the value systems. The accompanying secularization according to Berger (1967:107) ‘is the process by which sectors of a society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.’ It often leads to dysfunctions of belief systems. The Berger explains further that traditional systems prevail wherever human needs for meaning are expressed in beliefs and rituals that characterize a community of believers. Going by the above challenges traditional values face in moments of transition, one can only understand and interpret traditional symbols from the viewpoint of people’s need rather than the conventional meanings given to the rite that might be grossly obsolete. What the real felt needs of the people are must therefore be factored into interpretations to be relevant.

#### **2.4. Symbolic Interpretation of Puberty Rites**

According to Sarpong (1977:60), Turner called the three levels, the ‘exegetical,’ the ‘operational,’ and the ‘positional levels interpretation of the initiation rites. The exegetical level is explained as what the indigenous actors of the rites interpret symbols to mean. Turner posits that the operational level is the meanings resulting from the deductions of the investigator from noting what the actors do and not only what they say. In the positional level, which is the extension of the exegesis given by the actors, the investigator centers his work on symbols in relation to others belonging to the same complex.

With changing times however, the interpretation level begins to look more like methodologies adopted by traditionalists to achieve their goals. Ewanfo quoted Malcom X<sup>3</sup> as saying that people can take methods at times to be the objectives. This means that those paradigms of interpretations were conventional and relevant for years back but are not relevant enough currently. In interpreting puberty rites presently it is necessary to go beyond and look for the aspirations and goals of the people. To substantiate this point, Sarpong (1977:100) explained “The socioeconomic feature in the puberty celebrations however are mere asides dictated by status and prestige pressures.” The asides seem to have become the focus nowadays rather than the main idea espoused in the rites. Sarpong (1977: 43) provides a meaning by stating that “the attribution of the obligation to perform the rituals implies a prerequisite for the security of the individual and the group.” From the foregoing discussions, the validity of the statement must be questioned to verify whether security is the need of the people or not. Even if it is security, what manner of

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<sup>3</sup> E:\DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS And Local Development. mht.

security should be the focus? It could be physical or spiritual.

## **2.5. Puberty and Women's Development**

The significance and importance of puberty rites for traditional communities must be understood within the contexts of the modern concept of gender. This is because Synder, & Tadesse, (1995:16) defined gender as, 'a second generation concept of equity. 'Most common or frequent applications of the theory are to the household and to employment. A realistic analysis of the tenets and practice of puberty rites actually reveals it as a perfect way of removing the problem of gender imbalance in the past. The real importance of this role-play can be seen when the modern problem of gender imbalance to development is considered.

Puberty rites were used traditionally to improve women's performance as adults. Many authors record minimal provisions for boys' initiation as the norm. For Abotchie (1995), it was because of the dominance of the patriarchal system addressed within the traditional contexts, which was a great responsibly for men. Puberty rites seen in this light carries the idea of compensating the weak but the gender gap is more material than spiritual. Gender biases developed with the onset of modernity and it worked and still works unconstructively against women in an arena of competitiveness. An assessment rendered by the Synder, & Tadesse, (1995) indicates that, for women today, economic conditions are still threatening because they are the least educated. Even when women are educated, jobs are not guaranteed as the organizational structure of families and traditional communities still keep them at home. Women in general have high dropout

rates, lag behind boys in critical fields like science and technology, and eventually earn less than their male counterparts earn. They are affected by the myth of the male breadwinner and they are the first to be laid off when the need arises.

Additionally the importance of puberty rites can also be seen in the enhanced economic rating it gave women traditionally. This is because an obvious reason given for the poor rating of women economically is their engagement in social reproductive<sup>4</sup> and productive work. In the words Evers, (1995:15), 'before women are able to engage in production for wages, their unpaid domestic responsibilities must be fulfilled, whereas men do not face such constraints.' According to her, this continues to have profound consequences on their lives and yet no account is taken of the domestic work women engage in. It generates two types of insecurities for women. First of all women become more dependent on the wages of their men- husband, brother or fathers. Secondly, when they do enter the labour market, their wages are lower than those of their male counterparts are. Thus, women seem to do more and earn less. However, the author explained that, the origins of gender inequality historically lies outside capitalism and are embedded in the nature of male/female relations within the immediate household or extended family. The cultural approach to development, as proposed by Sackey (2003) can therefore be seen as a complete antithesis to problems created by gender imbalances in the discourse of development in society.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

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<sup>4</sup> The term is defined as the time and effort required to reproduce human beings (the future labour force) and to maintain the well-being of people in families and communities.

. The concept of liminality as portrayed in the literary investigation is very useful in understanding puberty rites. Since whole societies get involved in puberty rite celebrations, conceptual explanations and meanings of the group actions are equally important as that of the individual in the study. The study however reveals that there have been justified problems, which emerged with modernity to stifle out traditional way of life. Puberty rites in communities like Logba in former times constituted a traditional way of effectively removing any perceived gender imbalances. The re-emergence of puberty rites indicates the emergence of the community from their liminal uncertain state with their modified puberty rites. The following chapters will be used to determine what exactly the rites mean to participants beyond the classical archaic meanings.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Traditional Social Structure of the Logba**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The section begins with an exploration of the general traditional background of the Logba tribe and their religion. A detailed account of the puberty rite of the Logba constructed with the help of informants is presented and discussed. The exegetic symbolism of the rite is given with the values. This exploration fulfils the demands of the first and second objectives set for this study which is to evaluate the of both the former and present day performances of the puberty rites.

### **3.2 The Logba Tribe**

The Logba are to be found on the southwestern slopes of the Togo Akwapim Mountain Ranges in the Hohoe District of the Volta Region. The people are called '*Ikpanawo*' (pronounced '*Akpanawo*') and the language is called '*Ikpana*'. A linguistic peculiarity pertaining to Logba as mentioned briefly in the introduction is that they also speak the Ewe language of the Ewe tribes surrounding them. This peculiarity gives rise to two opinion .One is that they are Ewes who have developed their own dialect. The other is that they belong to a non-Ewe speaking group which resided in the land before the major Ewe speaking groups arrived from Notsie.

Their population according to 2002 census figures at the Hohoe District Assembly is 6,400, but a survey conducted by Dovlo ( 2004:39), using the help of students of the local Senior High School at Logba, put the population at 7,499. He suggested that, when reckoned with those in the diaspora, the total population could be estimated at 10,000. This figure could be far more now, considering the fact that it has been more than decade since that count. The people live in eight towns and villages, which are Vuinta, Akusame

Adiveme, Ogome, Klikpo, Tota, Adzakoe and Alakpeti. Abayeme, Dufi, Kpetegu and Dzado are suburbs of Tota, which are located atop the mountain while Hoglikofe and Andokofe lie below Adzokoe. Agbobakodzi and Dzodzekodzi are also new settlements of aliens forming the suburbs of Alakpeti, where a vibrant market is to be found. The inhabitants are peasant farmers who produce crops like oil palm, maize, cassava yams, bananas, plantains cocoa and coffee.

There are eight primary schools, three junior high schools and a senior high school while a couple of private schools established recently seem to provide the required educational needs of the area. Most of the towns and villages are located on the main trunk road from Hohoe to Accra with the exception of Tota and Klikpo, which are linked by access routes. All these places have been linked to the national electricity grid and therefore have been exposed to many products of social change like TVs, refrigerators, mobile phones and internet facilities. They also have easy access to other centers of modern influence via the busy trunk road that cuts through their land.

### **3.2.1 Origins and Social Organizations of the Logba**

Two theories exist about the origins of the Logba. The more popular is based on the evidence of the migration with the other groups of Ewes from the east to the area they presently occupy, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries AD, as recorded by Agbodeka (1997:14-15) and Obianim, (1990:2-5). Their journey commenced in the Middle East in Mesopotamia, Egypt or the legendary Babel, which is referred to as Belbele in the records. The Ewes including the Logba, according to this account then

settled at Ketu in Nigeria with the Yoruba, the Aja, the Fon and Ga Dangme. Expansion of the Yoruba pushed them westwards. After Ketu, they split into two groups and one group settled at Nostsie, a walled city in Togo. When one particular chief, Agokoli became excessively wicked, the tribes escaped by digging a hole in the parameter walls and managed to confuse those who pursued them by walking backwards out of the wall and thereby producing misleading footprints behind. Obianim (1990:3) mentions that, the people of Peki, Kpele, Alavanyo, Kpando, Leklebi and Logba were in a group that arrived at their current destination. This theory is the one accepted by the people themselves who claim that they are Ewes. Concerning their dialect, informants refer to oral tradition, which says that, some ancestors decided to create for the tribe, a distinct identity by inventing a language that developed over the times into '*Ikpana*.' Validating this theory in a way is the meaning of their name '*Logba*,' meaning literally, 'cut a path,' was allegedly derived from their role as scouts during the migration.<sup>5</sup>

The other view is held by language specialists who locate *Ikpana* among a group of fourteen dialects termed, the Ghana Togo Mountain languages (GTMs) among which are, Tafi, Nyabgo and the Avatime who are the immediate neighbors of the Logba. These languages are classified among the Kwa Sub-group of languages of the Niger-Congo. According to Dovlo, these people were supposed to be on the land before the Ewes arrived. A proof of this theory they give is that, the members of the group are all perched on top of the mountain range, possibly as a vantage position against invading armies in

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<sup>5</sup> This information was verified in an interview with Mr. Akum Kofi, 77 year old retired town crier and the *Amornutsiwoe* or the Chief Priest on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2007.

the rampant tribal wars of those times. All members of this group also are known to have retained the celebration of puberty rites while almost all of other Ewe speaking groups have stopped them. I believe that, this issue of the origins of the Logba is an area that calls for a deeper research beyond the scope of this study. This is because during the investigations among the Logba, informants readily accept the first theory but are not sure of the second one.

Among the Logba, like most Ewes, there are three levels of relationships. The first comprises the nuclear family and the extended family considered as (*'afa okpenuwo'*) or members of one house. The father's sister's children, the mother's brothers, sisters, and their children can also belong to the same extended family. Inheritance is patrilineal. The next level in the social organization is people of the same lineage known as '*odzatsume okp'e inawo*' literally meaning members from the same fire-place or hearth-hold.<sup>6</sup> These are persons who are able to trace their descent by a series of genealogical stages through males in the line to a known male ancestor who often bears the name of the group and its stool which is known as '*anasa-abia*' which literally means, 'ancestral stool'. In Logba it is not all the lineage heads that have stools but often one of the senior-most members becomes the head of the clan and acts as a father to the lineage and a representative counselor to the chief of the town.

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<sup>6</sup>'Hearthold' here does not hint of a matrilineal system in the normal sense of the word. It is a term used among some northern Ewe tribes for members who descend from one of the main ancestors in a clan. These may bear the same surname or may not due to the common practice of peoples' preference for using several surnames in the same extended family. The general idea is that they come from the same house and therefore can eat together.

The third level is the ‘*ogbb`o*’ or the village that comprises all the clans coming under one main ancestor who established the settlement and is supposed to be their main ancestor who also established the ancestral stool or the ‘*anassa abia*’ of the village. Their chiefs called ‘*onukpa*’ must of necessity be able to trace their lineage to that ancestor in order to be eligible for the office. With this well-defined structure of relationships living together, family trees are interwoven to such an extent that everyone is related in one way or the other to others in a clan. Marriage bonds with other families therefore bring the whole community together for performance of all rites.

### **3.2.2 Cosmology, Beliefs and Religion of the Logba**

Puberty rites are known to be performed to prepare girls for responsible adulthood among many tribes the world over. The Logba, according to informants, have some mythical aspects in the rites. Knowing the cosmological components involved in their belief system is therefore necessary to understand why they give great importance to puberty rites even today. Among the Northern Ewe (where Logba is to be found), the Supreme Being is known distinctly as *So*,<sup>7</sup> *Sogbo Lisa*, *Mawuga* or as *Omawu* ( in Logba). He is known to be omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. This Spirit of the High God has two components, a male and a female part. God Lisa is the male who controls and dispenses things like justice, steadfastness, pain, suffering and strength. The earth (*eti*) objectifies the female and she is responsible for things like giving care, peace, love and joy. Among the Northern Ewe beneath the High God exist other numerous

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<sup>7</sup> The name for an albino among the Northern Ewe is ‘*Gelesosi*’ meaning, ‘fallen from the hands of *So*’ implying that albinos are unfinished products, having fallen before work on them was finished.

deities. The Logba have their version of the name pronounced with slight variations but easily recognizable as translations of the same names in their dialect.

The Logba also differentiate between ancestral spirits '*etiwo*' and deities known as '*amor*' and other mystical entities which are harnessed by people either for beneficial or wicked ends. Since the Supreme Being created them, he alone has power over all of them. They also believe that the world will remain forever and that man was created with a soul, the '*luvo*' that turns to God in worship. The '*luvo*' comes from '*tsiefe*' or eternity, and has two components, the '*dzogbese*' which dialogues with God and determines a person's destiny on earth; it is also the part which must be received well as a visitor, thus when an out-dooring ceremony is not performed, the '*se*', or '*the soul*' of the child feels unwanted and such a child may grow into a fool. The other component is the '*gbogbo*' or the 'spirit', which enables a person to dream at night. Some have very good spirits in them but those inclined to evil, use this component for '*adze*' or witchcraft that is known as '*gbogbogbali*' or bad spirit. At death, this component becomes the '*aboti*' or the ghost which hangs around a person's house for forty days before going back to '*tsiefe*', the land of souls. If the '*aboti*' is not treated well, it comes back to haunt the living.<sup>8</sup>

The Logba believe that when a woman is formed in *tsiefe*, or the land of souls, her *dzogbese* makes some decisions which affects her life on earth. It is like an oath, referred to as '*gbetsi*.' Some individuals make positive pacts with their maker, like longevity and

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<sup>8</sup> This information was obtained during an interview with the '*Amornutsiwoe*' or the Chief Priest Suma Adamu and the '*Ogakaliwoe*' or the town crier who are two important authorities in issues concerning tradition in Logba in two sittings; 12<sup>th</sup> November, and the 21<sup>st</sup> December, respectively in 2007 at Logba Alakpeti.

prosperity, which unfolds during their lives. The negative manifestations of *gbetsi* are seen in maternal deaths at childbirth, stillbirths and early deaths for a child who reincarnates several times with the same parents. A ritual involving a gunshot over a woman at the end of the puberty rites liberates women from negative pacts of *gbetsi*. The puberty rite also protects those who have good *gbetsi* so that they may not fall prey to evil powers.

Just like most Africans, the Logba do not worship the Supreme Being or '*Omawu*' directly since there are no shrines dedicated to his worship. The strong belief in him is however seen or noticed in many expressions used by the people like '*Omawu okple*' meaning, because of God. '*Omawu onyunom*' also meaning, God has blessed me. The '*amor*' or deities are the entities that receive direct veneration from the Logba and this is of utmost important to them because, it is believed that when the Logba arrived in the land from *Notsie*, there was no leader but the priest known as '*amorwasa*' of an original deity known as '*Mankplotsofi*' who gave them the needed leadership. After they had settled in the land, the informants alleged that another deity called '*Gbedegbleme*'<sup>9</sup> came to reside as a guest to the first deity and decided to put his services which were of a more defensive nature at the disposal of the people.<sup>10</sup> The importance of the deity for them is seen in the fact that, the Supreme Being is invisible but '*amor*' is his visible

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<sup>9</sup> The deities according to the informants come to people on their own in most cases but people also on their own determination acquire them from those who already have them.

<sup>10</sup> These wars were often slave taking raids or spill over wars of the Ashanti and the Akwamu in which oral traditions asserts they were never overtaken as the deity protected them on the sides of the mountain, where the shrine was to be found.

representative who is able to respond swiftly to their needs. The role of these divinities was to save humankind, as they were messengers of ‘*Omwu*’. They help supernaturally in their tribal wars and eliminate those who engage in evil doing like murderers, thieves, sorcerers, those who bear false witness and those who make life unbearable for others in general. They are spirits and have to inhabit some objects like rocks, animals, rivers, mountains or even trees in order to be seen, and shrines are created for the purpose of their veneration. As noted by Abotchie (1997:18), ‘Those who serve them must be of clean heart and must not be in the habit of bearing false and malicious witness against others.’” In consonance with the work of deities among the southern Ewes, the deity of Logba also allegedly deals with a myriad of problems ranging from sickness, barrenness, providing success at work and protection from evil forces.

### **3.2.3 Specific Taboos that Shape Up the Traditional Religious Worldview of the Logba**

In the former times, a single annual ceremony at the shrine was believed to be very essential in shaping the philosophy of the religious worldview of the Logba, the *Amorwasa*. Allegedly, all wicked people who drunk from these water bodies die because of that ritual on Saturdays, which are sacred to the deity. This belief has survived as a traditional ideology in present days. There is also the belief that people do not die on Saturdays which is the sacred day for the deity. Such deaths create much upheaval as it is believed that the deity kills wicked people on the sacred day. Divination was used to identify what attracted such a death for the prescribed punitive and cleansing rituals to be performed before the internment of such disgraced victims.

In the same manner there are many other taboos relating to the deity, which the people recall but are not obliged to keep - adherence depends on peoples' religious orientations. A taboo forbids singing in the dialect except in the shrine and therefore no songs have been composed in the Logba dialect, which ensures that nobody sings in it. Nobody in the tribe is allowed to kill a female goat, which is sacred to the deity. Others include the prohibition of cooking three different kinds of tuber in the same pot, prohibition against the use of a particular type of hoe and broom made from a specific type of bush. Prohibitions were necessitated by the reason that the priests for the deity in the shrine used those items. The people acknowledge and hand down these beliefs as a source of tribal identity and heritage regardless of religious affiliation, to newer generations.

Some of the elderly in Logba like the '*ogakaliwoe*' or the town crier who provided the researcher with some of this information, still remember nostalgically the times of their youth when secularization were less in the land; they were times when evil acts like stealing was rare as the deity swiftly killed thieves when invoked by those robbed. The chief priest claimed that puberty rites is a wholly women affair but the ritual aspect of dealing with the *gbetsi* is for the deity. He therefore appoints the man who performs that aspect of the ritual.

The researcher who has lived for some considerable time in the Volta Region knows that the cosmological beliefs are common to all the Ewe tribes. Knowledge of the well-

defined system of taboos surrounding deities have almost vanished among the surrounding Ewe speakers around them. This detailed retention of tradition seen among the Logba might surely be a contributing factor in the survival of their puberty rite institution.

### **3.3 Puberty Rites among the Logba**

As hinted above, all the Ewe tribes used to celebrate puberty rites in past but the people of Logba and the Avatime are among a few who have retained the celebrations in to modern times. The celebration of the puberty rites by the Logba is similar to what is known among other tribes including the Ashantis and the Krobos. The tripartite liminal structure is well represented in their version, but as usual, there exist the variations, which differentiate theirs from others. It basically involves mostly women who celebrate colourfully the coming of age of a girl. The Queen mother of Logba Alakpeti, and Madam Esi Agusah, a key informant in this study, helped to reconstruct the puberty rites as celebrated in Logba in former times. The rites were an essential part of the practice of infant betrothal marriage preferred by the Logba in the past. When any girl reports of a first menstruation, a type of yam called '*klevu bambi*' is mashed up with palm oil and an egg. The meal is used to perform a ritual marking the beginning of the rite. In a room, an old woman touches the lips of the girl three times with the mashed yam and the egg respectively and offers a prayer in which the girl is addressed thus:

*Udze ye adu,*

*Etiwoe te nyunowu*

*Awu amenu ti yu*

*Taawo bi gblele’.*

*Meaning,*

*You are a woman,*

*The ancestors should bless you*

*Your womb should be peaceful,*

*So that you can have many children.*

The girl then eats the food and receives a lesson on how to take care of her body during menstruation and general duties of womanhood from the old woman. The husband-to-be then provides rice and fish or meat and friends of the girl help in preparing the rice into flour which is used in preparing a type of meal called, ‘*dabedabe*’ which is then shared among many people; the father however takes up that responsibility when a particular girl does not have a prospective husband. The mother provides her with a new loincloth, which she wraps around herself, down to the ankles, and with her exposed breasts she adopts a seductive manner of walking by wriggling her buttocks provocatively as she moves around to announce her sexual maturity. One of her friends is appointed as a special assistant called, ‘*kplefu*’, who never leaves her during the period of celebration. The celebration can often be prolonged depending on the financial ability of the parents. The girl is taught the virtues of chastity at this stage. The exposure of her body however attracts the proposal of love from many young men whom she must resist if she has a reliable character. This is because these young girls often already have

betrothed partners. It also relates to a strict test for virginity in which a failure leads to banishment or some other shameful form of punishments designed to discourage sex out of wedlock.

After this initial stage of announcement, a suitable date, often a Thursday, is set aside for beginning of the ritual adornment. This is supervised by the same old lady and other experienced assistants who take the girl through a prolonged period of elaborate preparations and bathing which often lasts for two days. She is then adorned for display, with lots of beads and golden trinkets just like the Krobos adorn their '*dipo*' girls, complete with a wide cedar scarf to hide her nakedness. The girls' neck is adorned with lots of beads. The whole lot is however authenticated by a bead called '*abile*',<sup>11</sup> and the beads around the knees must also contain a type called '*wedze*'; the leg beads must also contain a type known as '*gatoboe*' and a red tail feather of a parrot, while those around the wrists must have another two types considered to be twins called, '*simbia*' and '*anitsriwa*'. The head is adorned with a special hat known as '*tekua*' with its accompanying golden trinkets, which are stuck into the hair and the ears. She is given a chewing stick, which she keeps in the mouth as the ceremony goes on. She also walks on special wooden sandals prepared for the occasion and carries as a staff, the slim metal rod used in stoking gun powder and pellets into a musket. She is then led out on a tour by friends who also put on their shoulders one piece of cloth each, which is bought for the celebration while singing puberty songs like the following:

*De mekpoe de anyi*

*Nyonuvia de mekpoe de anyi.*

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<sup>11</sup> Another name for the rite among the Logba is '*abile*' because of this bead.

*Gbesigbe made*

*Logba dukowo lasee.*

*Meaning*

*I have already seen the girl,*

*This girl, I have seen already.*

*The day I will marry her,*

*All Logba will hear.<sup>12</sup>*

Before the tour, some items bought for the girl by the parents are put on display for all to inspect and admire. A brass basin filled with seven full pieces of different types of hand woven kente clothes which must contain a type called, ‘*ewedokpo*’, seven silk scarves, bracelets, gold earrings, household utensils, perfumes and other items considered useful to women in their homes. These are then given to a trusted relative who keeps them within the duration of the celebrations. The people who gather for the inspection are given a feast of the ‘*dabedabe*’ or the meal prepared with rice flour and meat as well as drinks during the merry making.

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<sup>12</sup> Most of the original puberty songs were suggestive of sexual relations and intercourse and could be considered profane. Due to this, most of the songs sung today are church hymns and popular gospel songs.

At a later time the girl goes to fetch water three times from the river and the process involves sitting on a large rock on the way, with ritual incantation of some words which are difficult to reproduce here. Informants were not able to give any meaning to the syllables believed to be an old form of the Logba language, which is not used anymore. She carries the water fetched on the three occasions to the centre of their house and ritually pours the water on her own feet on the ground. The significance of this aspect of the ritual is also evidently linked with the presence of the ancestors who are the unseen witnesses at the occasion.

At the next stage the girl involves herself in social work by going into people's homes in the company of her friends. They help her collect dirty clothes to wash in the river. She washes alone while her friends sing or chat with her to keep her from tiring fast. She later distributes the washed clothing to its owners who reward her with gifts, money, good commendations and praise about her character, especially if the washing was done well. The celebration then continues with tours into the other villages with the friends, accompanied by a man with a loaded gun as their guide. In the villages, they go first to the linguist, after which they go into other houses, entertaining and receiving gifts everywhere. The last place they visit is the market, after which the important aspect of dealing with the girl's *gbetsi* is carried out. At this stage or earlier in the ceremony, girls with *gbetsi* fall into trances. Assistants of the priest of the local deity appease the spirits involved with libation using water containing a herb called *afla*, which grows in the shrine of the deity. After touring the rest of the villages, a market tour becomes the last aspect of the ritual; the loaded gun pointing upwards, is shot over the girl's head

signifying the end of the celebration. It is believed that this severs the link between the girl and her spiritual oath, which might destroy her life. She is then led to her husband's home and the ceremony ends.

According to the classifications of Sarpong (1977), the exegetical significance in the rite is firstly to impart the value of chastity to the girls. They teach them about marriage and motherhood. They are also taught to obey authority, which enhances successful marital life. Donations of material goods and money are made to them, to start their lives with. They are then taught the importance of virtue that exists in hard work by making them work, hard for which they are praised and given gifts. Lastly, they are given spiritual deliverance from evil spiritual forces that might jeopardize their future lives.

The seriousness the community attaches to this process of socializing women who mother the whole society is seen in the fact that a woman who has not been initiated before her death has the rite performed within the funeral rites when she is laid in state. The rite is therefore considered one of the most prestigious and honorable in every girl's life and was held in very high esteem among the Logba. The greatest insult and shame to a girl and her family among the Logba was to be asked in a quarrel or a dispute in former times the question, '*akpi odunu dzee?*' meaning literally, 'have you ever fetched water in the river?' The real meaning of this alleged insult as one informant explained is that the uninitiated is not a mature or real woman, regardless of her age.

In an attempt to understand Sarpong's operational level of the puberty rites among the Logba, it is necessary to investigate the position of women in the society. The sexual division of labour that pertained in the land at the time significantly defined this position. It was largely determined by the people's relation to land and inheritance. The Logba have the patrilineal system of inheritance in which sons inherit their father's land and daughters do not. In the social process however, gaining access to land or the right to use it, may prove more important than the actual ownership. The palm tree was the most important tree before the advent of cocoa. Many staples like yams, cocoyam, cassava, plantain, banana, maize and avocados were grown abundantly in the land. According to informants, non-traditional crops like cotton and tobacco, which played vital roles in earning incomes were also added to the crops cultivated in the land. Wives were the ones who actually managed the produce from the farms. For instance, the palm tree which was the most important crop belonged to men in principle. The sap, which is palm wine, is strictly controlled by men who sold it to vendors who go for it in the bush. The fruits were however processed into palm oil and palm kernel oil only by wives. Oil obviously was important in the subsistent economy of the times. The oil was used primarily as food and used in lanterns (*ganato*) that were used in those times. Intermediaries then bought the surplus produce which was carried by foot to the coast for sale. So apart from cocoa and palm-wine, which men sell directly to the buyers, all other crops from the farm were carried and processed by women. This has not changed even in present times. A girl's position therefore changed drastically when they married and puberty rites were thus very important in the calendar of the people, as they were considered to be, marriage ceremonies.

Symbolically and as a result, important items donated to girls at puberty included things like flat grinding stones for making maize flour, spindles for spinning cotton, specially made long wooden sticks for making palm oil and big pots for making palm oil. This implied a powerful position for women in the Logba society when they marry because of their almost limitless access to resources of their husbands. Cotton yarn for instance had a ready market as it was bought for weaving clothes and that was the preserve of women.

The term used for puberty rite in the Logba language means, literally to carry a girl, denoted by the verb, *ezi udze*. Their translation of the term in the Ewe language is however rendered as, *nutata*, which also literally means clothing the girl. Relatively, the Ewe speaking tribes themselves use the word *gbotowowo*, which appropriately translates ‘puberty rites.’ This significance implied in the naming rightly gives Turner’s positional level explanation of the rite by the Logba. The opportunity for industrious resourcefulness available to women as seen above was however curtailed greatly in decision- making. Symbolically, it was only a paternal aunt representing the girl’s father, who presided over the puberty rite. The girl’s suitor, where applicable, was involved in providing some of the items for the ritual. The Logba in their puberty rites neatly and beautifully provide resource for their girls and ‘carry’ them to their husbands’ homes. Accordingly, the women never have to look back at their fathers’ property, as their male siblings would not tolerate them. Even properties used by women in the absence of males in any family are often taken over by other male relatives. The beauty is that, a woman is

carried off during puberty and welded in to the husbands' family forever. It promoted strong and long lasting relationships. The offspring from these relationships, especially the males are however given rare privileges in their maternal uncles' homes. This is termed, *uvui blogo* literally meaning, making uncles. They can have access to anything of their choice without any hindrance when they visit their uncles' homes. It is often a source of some discomfort to uncles during occasions like funerals when nephews at times make bizarre spectacles in appropriating items like domestic animals for themselves. It however strengthens bonds of relationships as uncles take pride in the cordiality of their nephews.

Puberty rites as celebrated by the Logba are therefore a means of redistributing wealth in the society. Solicitation for donations is an idea that goes with the celebrations. Apart from items borrowed to make up the demands for the celebrations, gifts and money were also given by relatives in the home to help establish the girl for whom the rite was being celebrated. The tours of all the villages and market also attract gifts including money. Such gift monies are used by the women to start or increase their trading activities. It is a means by which the gender inequality gap was closed in a sense. Traditional values of the time fully supported the rite and ensured its success..

One of the main objectives of this study is to observe the nature, values and norms inherent in the traditional puberty rite celebrations of the Logba. These were discussed in the earlier background information and the two main case studies in chapter four below. These involve a single candidate and the nine candidates together. The investigations in

this section validate the observations of the social structures in the Logba as deeply religious. Visible religious participation in the original rite is to be seen in the initial prayer to the ancestor at the beginning. This religious aspect for the Logba is however slight when compared to the Dipo of the Krobo in which the rite is related to Nana Kloweki, the Queen of the Gods who presides over the ceremonies. The girls are consequently led to the abode of this deity as an important aspect of the celebrations as observed by Ganusah (1995:36). This limited involvement of gods makes the transition into the newer religion very simple and could be one of the reasons why the Logba continue celebrating puberty rites. To strengthen this observation, Ganusah argues that there is a point of contact between the traditional puberty rite and Christian rite of confirmation. Both rites she says are for young adults or as in the case of the church, beginners of the faith; both are transitional rites; thirdly, in both rites the young adults are required to be chaste.

An informant said an important reason why the people retain the rite is to maintain their values and identity, which must not be swallowed up by the large majority of Ewe-speaking tribes they share borders with. It is true that the surrounding tribes with the exception of the Gbefe, Avatime, Tafi and Nyagbo,<sup>13</sup> have stopped celebrating the rites apparently because of pressures of social change and the lack of such a need to maintain their identities.

### **3.4 Values of the Puberty Rites.**

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<sup>13</sup> Most of these are also minority tribes who have their own languages and therefore may also have the need to maintain their identities and values just like the Logba.

The dominant values among the Logba are apparently shaped by the traditional worldview to a great extent. According to Barker (1981:120), together with other factors, values constitute the sum total of a peoples' system and widely shared basis of social action, transmitted from generation to generation. Either they are limitations on or motivations for behavior as they are contributing factors positively or negatively, in determining human actions according to the perceptions of the current situation as ought to be. The investigations for the salient traditional values among the Logba demonstrated some religiously induced behaviors among them. Hundred respondents used words like 'unity and love' 24 times while 'unity and peace' appeared 20 times; 'brotherliness' which has the same element of unity and love or peace appeared again 18 times while the rest; 'respect' 'kindness' and other similar words mixed with 'taboos', 'deity', 'festivals' and 'libation' appeared on the rest of the forms. All the words stand for what ranks high or is ideal to them as a people. The real significance or the meaning of these words could be translated to read, *'great togetherness fostered by tradition'* and they all seem to stress on the strong affirmation in the findings that their tradition supernaturally imposed on them the duty of love. The value seems to be the underlying factor that defines the Logba identity and creates the need for the puberty rite which has rather petered out among the surrounding tribes. This idea seems to be fully imprinted in the mindset of all people of Logba today and it is therefore qualified to be termed the dominant idea or value in their traditional religious worldview.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Puberty rites occupied a central position in communities before the onset of modernization and they were seen to conform to the Gennep's tripartite structure of liminality. The rites were essential to all marriages and were therefore common. Changing times have significantly reduced the central position of puberty rites. The next chapter will therefore examine the modified puberty rites in which the tripartite structure of the celebrations do not seem to be properly defended and are therefore not relevant anymore. Since the rites do not occupy the central position in the lives of the people as in olden times, the attempt will be made to find the underlying principles that retain the puberty rites in current times.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Socio-Cultural Transformations and the Effect on Puberty Rites in Logba**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the socio-economic transformations in the Logba society and the manner it affected their puberty rites. Two case studies are presented and examined: an earlier one in the 1980s involving one candidate and second recent case study with nine candidates recorded in March 2013 during the Easter celebrations. It is seen in this chapter that social change, particularly the new religion and education in combination with other factors have caused a breakdown in traditional society and what used to be. Modernization and secularization result as people migrate to work outside their communities. A modified puberty rite with emphasis on prosperity of womanhood as its main symbol replaces the former type seen in the last chapter. It is however interesting to note that the modifications have not changed the conceptual underpinnings of the rite. Just as the basic socio-biological needs of women regarding reproduction and childcare remain the same, modernity has only provided many alternative means of initiating girls into adulthood.

The aim pursued in the chapter is to clearly interpret the change and impact and the kind of development social change has had on puberty rites in the society being studied. A first attempt therefore is to measure and study the change and impact on the local community being studied. This is then followed by an assessment of the change on a national scale to determine real benefits of the retention of the cultural practice in a national context. By the second assumption, it would also be necessary to examine which global developmental trends affect women within the times under consideration. These global trends would then be seen as the best measure of women's situation even in the

local community where they reside since their aspirations and achievements are closely linked with the rest of the nation to which they belong.

From investigations by the researcher, a clash in value systems, which took a long time to be resolved, created a drastic decline of the celebration of puberty rite in the Logba community. The first case study for instance was celebrated in the 1980s at time when the rites were not popular anymore. Interestingly there is a remarkable sharp increase in the celebrations of the modified puberty rites in the Logba community in recent years. Characteristically, groups of elderly women, some even great grandmothers, from one patrilineage, mass up to celebrate the rites. To substantiate this fact for instance, in the recent Easter holidays of 2013, nine women celebrated the rite at Logba Alakpeti, four women celebrated it at Logba Adzokoe, and twenty-one celebrated it at Logba Akusame. It has also been reported that another group of women were preparing to celebrate it at Logba Tota within a short time after the Easter.

Understanding the manner in which the people have dealt with the tensions generated as a result of social change depends mostly on the choices the individuals make as a result of their social orientations which are very relevant to this study. Asafo (1999:146) states that, social orientations of people are the indicators of their worldview. During interviews to ascertain the extent of the alterations in the values and case studies in the Logba community, there was a clear demonstration of a shift in the people's orientations. The attempt here is to examine the reasons and nature of the apparent shift

on the people's social orientations and hence the social and developmental impact of the puberty rite celebrations.

#### **4.2 Historical Perspectives of Social Change in Logba.**

What much of Logba must have looked like at pre-colonial and colonial times can only be gleaned from historical interpretations of general events recorded about the rest of the country by various historians. According to Daryll Forde (1952:40), the Ewe among whom the Logba are to be found and are integrated into, have never been formed into a single political entity. The present strong politically unified organized pan-Ewe group under one administration originated with the Europeans in 1945.

Life before the arrival of the missionaries was lived in complete interdependence between the living, the ancestral, the material and the spiritual world and such was the psycho-religious milieu into which the Bremen Missionaries came. Agbeti (1986:82) writes that, the missionary organization, which began evangelization among the Ewes, called the North German Mission Society – which came to be known as the Bremen Mission, was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Pietist Movement and the Christian Awakening, which occurred in the 17th and 18th century in Europe and the United States of America and was mainly the result of the Reformation in the 16th century, inspired this society among others. The effort that reached Logba was initiated when Lorenz Wolf arrived at Peki in 1847 and amidst much struggle, managed to spread the mission into other areas of Eweland. In 1889, the author states that, pupils from Logba and other

nearby tribes enrolled in a school that was set up at Amedzofe, a neighbor to Logba, under Reverend Seerger and Mr. Paul Ntumitse.

It took a very long time for the Christian message to touch the lives of the people in those times because, the bigger problem, according to Agbeti, was that, although the people were cooperative on account of the missionaries' schools and health care facilities. The people were simply not inclined towards giving up their traditional religion. The powerful traditional priests were held in high esteem and people were whole-heartedly devoted to their gods. Local priests became antagonistic to the missionaries because they were usually medicine practitioners and their monetary gains were being adversely affected. As a result, the first church in Logba was established at Logba Tota in 1908, followed by Logba Alakpeti in 1920, Logba Klikpo in 1940, Logba Vuinta in 1944 and Logba Abayeme as late as 1990.<sup>14</sup> With the establishment of the churches came the schools and the increase of trade to the coast. Sundkler & Steed (2000:780-781) reported that the missionaries initiated various social and economic developments like the introduction of new crops of cocoa which had changed the face of Ghana by 1911. The lands of Logba, which form the southern lower extensions of the rich Buem lands notable for growing cocoa and coffee, enabled the people to establish a cash crop economy. A major trunk road that linked the area with the northern territories and the coast, especially Accra, was developed at the time. It speeded up economic activities, bringing in lots of modern ideas resulting in much social change. Informants said Logba became a stopover for the large slow and clumsy cocoa haulage trucks from

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<sup>14</sup> E P Church Calendar. 2004, Ho.

the major cocoa growing areas like Kadjebi and Jasikan on their way to the coast. The road also aided the development of a vibrant market and the establishment of a couple of foreign- owned departmental stores at Alakpeti. The implications of those developments are that, many strangers have converged on Logba and the pendulum of cultural influences has been swinging from one extreme to another extreme ever since. The evidence of the multiplicity of deities in the not too distant past in the area combined with multiplicity of churches of different shades and orientation in present times makes our study of values in the area very interesting.

The peoples' religious inclinations resembled what Shorter (1975:122-3) observed when he wrote that, 'all traditional Africans have a worldview which is sacred, surrounded with religious symbols and have a strong sense of community living. With highly cherished traditional values, the people of such societies have primary community loyalties which still exert their influence and hold on them even in these modern times. Due to this, they still keep their extended family ties, even in cities and urban centers where some of them live and work.' Most of the citizens return to Logba from time to time to for Yam festivals, funerals, initiations and the modern additions like Easter and Christmas. On such occasions, they often contribute substantial amounts in financial support to developmental projects such as the provision of potable water and electricity.

Just like all traditional cultures everywhere in Africa, the Logba also generally live together in communities that share networks of strong and intense relationships. The words 'family', 'sister', and 'brother', for instance, define far more to them than what it

means for non-Africans. This corresponds to the anthropocentric nature of Africans noted by Mbiti (1990: 106) in the maxim, 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am'. It proves that the nuclear family, which is undeniably present and mixed up with the traditional ideal, is a recent development. Consequently, harmonious living is a pivotal value of the traditional, African worldview and for the Logba in particular. Religion seems to be central to their realization of harmonious interrelationships. It is possible to observe from what has been discussed earlier that, there are avenues for achieving the harmonious ideal in traditional situations like Logba. These include the transmission of some key religious ideas like the belief in ancestors, dominant ritual symbols, important traditional institutions and normative standards of behaviour. Investigations to determine the current general structure of the religion in Logba community have shown that the two mainline churches; the Evangelical Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Churches, together had a 70% representation. This hints of a high extent of socialization they have achieved in the community. It was only expected that the choices of the members would be helpful indicators of how the contradictory views and values were managed by the majority of the people. The membership of a combination of 11 other churches amounting to 29% had a peculiarity in which most were former members of the mainline churches or have benefited from their educational socializing system. The baptism, confirmation and Children's Day celebrations have been the main rites of the mainline churches that socialized the youth who passed through the church schools, often regardless of their home orientation. The extent of the success of this total socialization of the Logba community was evidenced by the fact that, even the Chief Priest unlike the predecessors, has also benefited from all the rites maintained by the church schools in the earlier part of

his life. Most of the beneficiaries of these rites develop lasting affinity to the churches and it explains in part the greater number of membership despite steady outflow of members who get attracted to newer churches.

Only one respondent for this study claims to belong to the traditional religions and we can say it was also a rough indicator of the situation that obtains on the ground that there are always remnants of the people that do not belong to Christianity. The reality on the ground is that some of the people who attend the mainline churches also belong to what is known as the '*Togbui Society*' or the ancestor's society. This group is responsible for all traditional affairs including chieftaincy and the priesthood. It is therefore true that some who claim are Christians can equally claim to be traditionalists according to the roles they perform. This to some extent explains the existence of the unavoidable element of ambivalence in traditional societies like Logba.

#### **4.3 The Case Study 1:**

##### **An Initiate of the Puberty Rite of Logba**

Puberty rites were very infrequent in the Logba community and this case study was obtained from Esi Agusah. She is a female Teacher who is a citizen of Logba Alakpeti. There has been a noted change in the focus of the ceremony. According to her, 'the focus of the rite is now on hard work and no more on educating the adolescent girl on responsibilities of adulthood and marriage'. Thus I think the label of this celebration as a 'puberty rite' has become a misnomer since all present day candidates are often mature women who have been working, some having been married for some time. For this

reason, the preferred name could be, ‘*Womanhood rite*’ or something more appropriate as is evident in the investigations of social change among the Logba.

At the age of forty-five and having worked for some years, Esi celebrated the rite, which is a desire of all women in Logba. For the process, Esi by thrift and perseverance bought many of women’s personal possessions including a considerable number of wax prints for her initiation. She only informed the elders of the clan that she was prepared for the initiation. The highlights of the ceremony which lasted for two days comprised a wake keeping on a Saturday evening called, ‘*treza*’ meaning ‘spinsters’ night (which indicates the former strong link of the ceremony with marriage), in the family house, a church attendance and a tour of the town and the market.

The wake keeping which functioned as the time for announcing the occasion, involved a gathering of friends from both the Logba towns and an invited choral group from Kpedze, a place where she worked. A local Master of Ceremonies and his sound system that was hired for the purpose assisted them. The place came alive after a short prayer from the Catechist of the E P Church, with choral music alternating with popular music from blaring loudspeakers for half of the night. There was the usual complement of plentiful refreshment and dancing youths. A notable change in the celebration was the use, mostly of hymns from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and popular gospel music. On the following day, which was a Sunday, the officiating Minister of the local congregation of the E P Church where she belonged, prayed, giving thanks for her

success as a virtuous woman, and asked God to grant her continuous success and long life.

On the Sunday after the Church service, more people, most of whom were in church gathered again in the family house where the items bought for the celebration were displayed for all to admire. After a general prayer again, the celebration proceeded with speeches mostly from elderly female family members about the necessity for the rite and other relevant issues. The gathering which was engulfed in a festive mood was again treated to an assortment of food, drinks and music while those who had gifts made their donations. Esi had to change her clothes frequently during the duration of the ritual according to the custom, to show off their quality and variety in an elegant but modest manner. It was without the type of exposures and the special beads associated with the celebration in the former times. She explained that the beads were still popular but there is presently an inordinate fear for the use of the various varieties of '*ngyiba*' or beads, which many elderly women would willingly have given to initiates as a sign of goodwill in order to meet the specified requirements of beads at such celebrations. Many informants stressed their belief of old beads as a repository of witchcraft in families and those who use them often become witches. When asked for any proofs, no tangible reasons were given. For such reasons Esi Agusah did not get the exact specification of beads but made use of new models found in the market which are not as reputable as the traditional ones. The whole turnout was a beautiful creativity of African culture. On this account, peoples conceptions or misconceptions about old beads is a blessing to the bead

industry in the country; since beads remain an essential part of the celebrations therefore puberty rites must also be seen as very beneficial to the bead industry.

As to how the woman felt after the initiation, she stated emphatically, 'I felt very good and proud with a sense of relief that nobody was going to insult me for not performing the rite.' She then observed after a careful thought that, 'it is true the focus of the rite for the Logba has now changed from the former ideals as to portrayal of the virtue in hard work for women.' I also think that Esi is very right in her observation because the truth of the matter, as illustrated in her life, is that from those beginnings, she has gone ahead and succeeded already in putting up a nice, modern self-contained house on her own.

The merit of hard work being the focus is good, as it plants a desire for achievement in many young women who strive to come out successfully. Interestingly, when I asked Esi's young daughter, who is also now gainfully employed about what she thinks about the rite, she responded quickly: it is a useless, time wasting, self-exposure in my opinion; she was not interested because her father comes from another Ewe tribe, which does not celebrate the rite anymore. At the operational level, the single mother has demonstrated in a great way the benefits of modernization within traditional contexts. Having obtained an education to a reasonable level, she has succeeded as a good mother who has brought up a responsible offspring who is also highly disciplined, as a trained teacher at the time of the interview. The decision to go higher in education however resulted in conflicts that broke her marriage.

#### **4.4 The Case Study 2:**

##### **A Group of Initiates of Puberty Rites at Logba Alakpeti**

Eight of the nine women from the Otiem family of Logba Alakpeti in this case study are all daughters of two male siblings of one father. The last candidate is the younger sister of these male siblings and therefore an aunt to the other eight women. Six of the candidates are married while three are gainfully employed, but are yet to marry. Four candidates among them, all married, reside in the Logba, while five are in other places outside the community. Easter Friday marked the beginning of the celebrations. Relatives, well-wishers and the candidates met the elders of their clan under a tree in the middle of the town. Spokespersons from the elders demanded to know the candidates' mission. The visitors then announced their intention to celebrate the rite after which pleasantries were exchanged from both sides. Those with spouses were requested to make a token donation of money with a bottle of gin. The others donated only the specified amount of money without the gin. A further financial aspect carried out in preparation for the ceremony, in which candidates printed out invitation cards on envelopes soliciting funds and the presence of the recipients at the ceremony.

In the evening, much fanfare was heard from the candidates' homes. Though not properly organized, it continued deep into the night. Many people who had come home for the Easter festivities and that home already went to socialize with and pay homage to the candidates. That marked the 'treza' or 'spinster' night of the rite. This corresponds with the pre-liminal aspect, which apparently has become irrelevant in the current

celebration. Participants admitted that no provisions and attempts were made at any form of instruction of any kind, just like in the first case study.

The usual elegant dressing, tours and feasting amidst the accompaniment of brass band music was the feature on Saturday. Easter Sunday saw the candidates gorgeously and colourfully attired with rich *kente* in the chapel. The main symbolism exhibited at the beginning of the dressing up on Saturday was considered the highlight of the ceremony. A catechist of the E P Church prayed over the items of beads and clothing presented by the candidates in the family house. He also consecrated the items by sprinkling them with holy water. When one of them prayed, nine elderly women then began the real ceremony by tying up single identical beads on a white thread on the neck of each of the candidates. The candidates sat on small stools, clad only in a single piece of cloth wrapped high up under their armpits and covering their breasts. The name of the single bead according to an informant was, '*komedzedze*,' and that was considered to be very essential and was what authenticated the puberty rite for them. Other beads adorned the wrists and a whole lot of different types of beads were massed up on their necks. They were then dressed with expensive clothes for the first outing that day. On Sunday, brass band music led them to and from the service. During the service, one of the candidates exchanged rings with her husband of many years and had their marriage blessed by the officiating minister. A tour of the market on a market day ended the expensive and colourful ceremony. Assistants of the candidates sent many bowls of food to many homes that day, aside the quantities consumed in the houses of the participants.

Informants explained that any woman who had performed a wedding ceremony is exempted from puberty rites. Madam Comfort Otiem who is an elderly aunt of the nine women, who also presided over the celebrations, was questioned about the driving force behind puberty rites nowadays among the Logba. She explained that it was the death of a young woman in one of their communities, which was the result of her not performing the rite. Some dramatic revelations manifested showing that the soul could not rest due to the nonperformance of the puberty rite. The relatives had to perform the rite for the girl posthumously, to give her soul a resting place. Though difficult to verify, this is a typical credible explanation of why the rite must be performed. A clear point is however made that something is prompting the increase in celebrations. Furthering the idea of popularity of the rite at this time is the fact that, thirty-four women celebrated it at Logba on the Easter of 2013 and more are preparing to celebrate it at a later day. It was also noted that some participants among them do not have fathers of Logba descent but opted for the ceremony.

A candidate among the nine in the case study presented, explained to the researcher that she really did not see any need for the rite but she also did not want to be left out. She actually had to comply because it is believed that nonperformance of the rite for an elderly person impedes the chance for younger members' celebration of the rite in the same family.

#### **4.4.1. Effect of Social Change Noticed in the New Rites of Passage among the Logba**

Whether the case studies examined so far correspond to Turner's tripartite structure of liminality is of great importance in understanding the way in which social change has affected the rites. Thomassen (2009:16) in his view on liminal periods said that liminality has both spatial and temporal dimensions and can be applied to modernity among other things, which he considers a permanent form of liminality. During modern induced liminal periods, new values and ideologies challenge the old ones with severe intensity. Thus, none of the case studies examined for this study looked the same. While the original rites were very specific about the types of objects used, types of food, trinkets, personalities, number of days and even a gunshot over the candidate to finalize proceedings, currently, the choices of almost every aspect is apparently made by the candidates themselves. Some even consider weddings to be formal replacements of the rite while individuals who wished to be exempted are also being tolerated.

#### **4.5 Meanings of Symbols in the Case Studies and their Gendered Perspectives**

The Queen Mother, Mama Ashie IV of the Logba, Alakpeti, said that, 'Puberty rites belong to women, and men do not contribute much to the way we celebrate it.' Women administered most of the rituals at puberty ceremonies alongside priests. Just as her claim indicated, positional also, all symbols used mean that the ceremony prepared girls to overcome juvenile immorality. It instilled in them industriousness and secured capital for them to start life with. It also made them good wives and opened their wombs so they become fruitful mothers who must also bring up disciplined offspring. In the former days, the celebrations secured husbands for the girls and changed their status as adult women

who have access to their husbands' resources. Those ideals have not changed much but oversimplifications in the procedures have taken place.

When not properly analyzed, the modern gender lens would portray puberty rites as having some discriminatory elements against women in a modern society. For instance, in order to meet the demand of chastity, girls were coerced into keeping their virginity. Sarpong (1977: 81-82) reported that when violations occurred, (*kyiribra*), the sacrifice for the girls' cleansing was more horrific than what was meted out to the boy. It also resulted in their being banished or killed. Mythically, women were the ones who suffered from *gbetsi* and were delivered at puberty. Menstruation was also considered very destructive spiritually and women were hidden from sight when it occurred. These obviously were socially constructed problems, which may not identify with the spiritual realities of traditional people. These may not exist in societies with a different worldview where puberty rites are celebrated. The meanings are therefore of tremendous importance when one considers the amount of time and effort that goes into their staging. Obviously, the rites were primarily not for entertainment and neither were they purely staged for profit motives. Turner therefore suggests in his modes of explanation that beyond all what the people say about what they do, there is more than what meets the eye, in them.

The exegetical assumptions in these case studies are quite obvious. Though greatly rationalized, they are not new from the initial and earlier ideals of the traditional practices. It is because the ideas are elemental to understanding how puberty rites preserved marriage and hence the family, which is the basic unit of society. It is also

important to point out that, due to the essential, unique nature of puberty rites, all the case studies answer the questions set up for the study.

#### **4.5.1 The Operational Meaning of the Case Studies**

The theoretical basis for the operational meaning according to Sarpong (1977) depended on deductions from actions of the actors in the celebrations. From that, the overwhelming symbolism of prosperity displayed by the women could be chosen as the dominant expression in the case studies. A breakthrough for women is portrayed due to the elegant outlook they displayed. The temptation to interpret a purely traditional event like puberty rites as a cultural and artistic projection of the African personality that can attract tourism is not an intention of this study. That would be suitable for the Dipo of the Krobos. Their celebrations have attained the status of a classical relic with a widely acclaimed fame due to the size of the tribe and therefore has a great ability to attract tourists.

Slightly, the situation in Logba varies as it assumes a more economical elegance than the cultural and thus calls for an appropriate interpretation. For the Logba, the history of puberty rite celebrations followed roughly the trajectory of women's developmental situations in the nation. Social change equated puberty rites against modernization and modified them slowly. By the 1980s economic crisis, the rites have become almost unpopular because of economic hardships combined with the conflicts within the value system in a long liminal period within the whole Logba community. The increase in the celebrations might be a reflection of the general economic conditions that are far better

than before<sup>15</sup>. What is certain is that women admitted to having relied heavily on their husbands for meeting the demands for the puberty rites. Apart from the clothes and other items procured at a great expense, the women said the cost of food and entertainment was rather astronomical. It is however known from the responses that, people have donated graciously in cash, mostly through the printed envelopes that were given out. In agreement with Amedume (1987) and earlier findings in the nature of various rites of passage celebration, puberty rites serve as a mode of redistribution of wealth in traditional societies. It would therefore be right to conclude that, a reason for the increase in the puberty rites among the Logba is that even if temporarily, it reduced poverty to some extent. On the other hand, one may also suggest that the celebrations are in a way retrogressive due to the high costs involved.

Many new technological appliances like sewing machines, deep freezers, hair dryers, photocopiers, computers and vehicles have expanded employment opportunities even in rural communities like Logba, for women. Therefore, unlike former times, most of the women have specialized in trades based on these technologies that fetch them money. Two of the women who celebrated the puberty rites for instance have teamed up in operating a business in which they sell cooked food. Their husbands who also own small subsistent farms often assist them. Together, they have invested in a taxicab that works in the community. Another among them is a seamstress who also owns a boutique in which she sells women clothes, trinkets and cosmetics. The husband who is a teacher admitted having helped in procuring many items for the celebration. The fourth candidate

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<sup>15</sup> See Synder and Tadesse (1995:16) African Women and Development: A History These were the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) given as conditions by the IMF and the WB for financial assistance to nations.

of the rite who resides in the Logba community benefits immensely from the highly profitable trade in the principal fruits of bananas and avocados in the community. Farmers sell the fruits to the women who later retail them to motorists along the busy trunk road all year round. The husband, who teaches outside the community, is a very understanding partner who allowed the wife to remain in the community because of this trade. All these women are literate and have admitted to having had access to some type of credit facility in establishing their trades. If women in the case studies radiated prosperity due to bridging the gap of imbalance even, then it is necessary to explore the various things that actually reduce gender imbalances in such societies.

A World Bank report<sup>16</sup> shows that gender equality is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which was a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) put in place at the turn of the century to address the problem of poverty in third world countries. The World Bank goes on to show that: ‘Countries that invest in promoting the social and economic status of women tend to have lower poverty rates,’ The information continues that in 2007, the World Bank seeing the importance of this put in place the, Gender Action Plan (GAP) to focus on gender in land, labour, agriculture, finance and infrastructure services.

They also had this to say about how gender equality could be achieved: by educating girls, increasing literacy rates among women, increasing early childhood interventions, increasing women’s labour force participation and strengthening labour policies affecting women, improving women’s access to credit, land and other resources, promoting

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<sup>16</sup> [www.worldbank.org/mdgs/gender.html](http://www.worldbank.org/mdgs/gender.html)

women's political rights and participation and expanding reproductive health and family support policies.

An apparent improvement in living conditions in communities like Logba cannot be ruled out but there is much room for growth. By 2012, the report on Gender Equality from the World Bank for instance said that, there was, 'impressive progress in education enrollment and life expectancy – but this was not universal and the progress was too slow.' Global statistics also show that African States South of the Sahara are in challenging situations due to climatic change, and women in particular are getting poorer. This observation is a probable explanation for the increase in puberty rite celebrations despite the great cost to the participants.

#### **4.5.2 Positional Meanings of the Case Studies**

Sarpong (1977) explained the third level positional meaning of puberty rites as involving a further projection of the exegetical meanings given by the actors in the rite by the observer. This obviously necessitates a new appraisal of the initial reasons given for celebrating puberty rites by the people. The ideal was to train and establish women into responsible womanhood and marriages. This is important since the task of bearing and caring for offspring in marriages rests mostly on their shoulders. Some of the times allotted for the ritual in the olden days were therefore used to instruct the girls towards attaining responsible motherhood. The current maturity of women candidates who already have many children disallows that aspect in the celebrations. It is however discernible that religious and moral education classes in formal education, informal

lessons in places of worship and broadcasts on the radio for instance provide an overabundance of such instructions.

#### **4.6. The Developmental Impact of Puberty Rites Observed among the Logba in the Study**

A measure of the developmental impact of puberty can be assessed by looking at the fulfillment of the aspirations of the rites among the people.

The Logba community does not differ from other societies in terms of development and outlook. It is possible to see some definite implications of internal developments in the study that are relevant and can be said to correspond to some level of fulfillment of the peoples' felt needs. Initiation rites must however be seen as only the beginning; the process of having attained transition into a stage and therefore holds a potential impact more than the real impact. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify three main areas in which the society gains positively from the puberty rites which also fulfill the third objective set for this study; this is to determine whether rites are development oriented. The findings indicate that:

- a. A demystification of the concept of destiny by social change has almost reshaped puberty rite into an economic institution for development. Spiritually, social change has assisted in replacing the aura of fear in connection with destiny to the pursuit of material success. There is therefore no compulsion for candidates to celebrate the rite when they are not prepared enough for them. The liberty gained in this manner

gives people ample time to prepare more elaborate and colourful festivals which are increasingly also becoming more profitable. A question that comes up at this stage is what happened to the religious reality, which enables some women to choose not to celebrate the rites anymore. It is well-known facts now that with the advent of secularization, many opportunities come up for girls who are growing up in rural communities like Logba.

b. The Logba in former times used to celebrate grand yam festivals annually, which were greatly publicized and well attended events. These celebrations have ceased entirely as the people seem to see no relevance in them anymore. Reasons for this situation are varied and can safely be attributed to social change. It means generally that many living in the diaspora do not visit home as they used to do. Easter celebrations, just as in other places, seem to have replaced the yam festivals because it brings back many of the people living outside the community to gather and execute developmental projects. Noticeably, attendance at these Easter ceremonies has also waned mainly due to financial difficulties and lack of interest in them. The recent upsurge in puberty rites often planned to coincide with the Easter festivities is a major contributing factor in putting back the interest in the citizens and their friends coming back home for the festivities. Picnic celebrations by the whole community as a result, have also been revived after the community stopped them due to chieftaincy disputes, which long distraught litigations could not resolve. Family reunions and the general coming together of the chiefs, elders and those living outside the community once again are surely bringing about marked development in the community. The beauty of this development is further encouraging some more endowed members in some families to sponsor less endowed members so they also can celebrate the rite, which

is very positive.

c The capacity of the celebrations to be seen as a cultural identity by the people is another important developmental impact on the celebrations in the society. Most young women in the community become concerned about their ability to get enough resources to celebrate the rite which parents are not able to provide anymore. This creates much positive industriousness among them. Most take seriously to jobs like palm oil production and trading in local fruits and foodstuffs that they send to distant markets like Accra, Tema and Aflao. The most valuable impact is however, the moral values the celebrations symbolized is not emphasized anymore as observed by the researcher. Nevertheless the celebrations are a constant indicator of the potentialities of a cultural approach to development.

Since the focus of the rite has changed from the moral training of the candidates to assume an economic nature, a full developmental impact assessment on the society can only be got from analyzing the general economic trends of the nation, which also affects the Logba community. It would give the real idea of how successful the celebrations in the society are, while any developmental potentialities suggested in the proposition of this study can possibly be identified.

Puberty rites as practiced in Ghana have numerous moral values which ironically have become endangered in the society. It therefore lacks the consistence that goes with continuity that can create spectacular and noticeable developmental impact in communities that practice them. The argument being put forward is not for one nation to

follow the trends that have worked for other nations. Rather, people already have unique values pertinent to their situations, which already work for them. The Jews for example possess a cultural approach to development, which starts with an initiation that has a moral content which has tremendous impact because it is followed with continuity and consistency.

The primary objective of this thesis practically is to create an opportunity for civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate in the development of the national innovation and entrepreneurial culture in the country. NGOs for instance are to support the development of innovation and entrepreneurial culture in the country.

Hon. Sherry Aryetee<sup>17</sup> observed at the end of her preface to a policy document that, experience has shown that, without translating policies into implementable programs and projects, they will remain on paper. To this researcher, implementation is important because growth figures projected on paper have indicated that the country has become a Middle Income Country. This will also remain only a projection on paper if the developmental goals the policies have set are not realized.

This will call for a relentless integration of the cultural approach to development. Women especially those in rural areas are the poorest due to lack employment avenues and so the projects will go a long way to address the issue of poverty. The process of adopting the cultural approach will ensure the use of moral component or values in

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<sup>17</sup> Ghanian Minister of Ministry of Environment, Science and Tecnology (MEST) stated this in her preface to the ( STIDEP 1) Policy document

culture to for instance, to deal with the high levels of corruption and indiscipline in the system for development to be sustained. Again, giving high priority to women's empowerment by projects will yield higher dividends for families in society because; research by Loid and Young (2009: 3) has shown that, 'women reinvest 90 percent of their income in the household compared with 30-40 percent for men The families of the educated are less likely to be poor. Education therefore increases women's role in decision making and their control over family assets.' The authors also observed that, stemming girls' chronic poverty would catalyze developmental changes by building stronger and just social institutions.

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

It is increasingly obvious to many observers and even participants that, the reasons for the puberty celebrations are difficult to explain. This is because nobody insults or judges others based on the rites anymore. People actually forget about this rite until women come out to celebrate them. A woman from a different tribe in which the rites are not celebrated any more remarked that, 'with the ready availability of different types and quality of fabrics on the market nowadays, the rites seem frivolous and I am happy we have stopped them.' That seems to summarize many people's opinions about the rites anyway. It is also true as noted earlier that, many women who have migrated out from the community and have succeeded in their education and work deem it below their status to engage in such displays. They only see them as traditional and outmoded. Many also reject them on grounds of religion.

Nevertheless, the research has been able to establish that, puberty rites correspond in every way to women's perspectives of the cultural approach to development reviewed within conceptual framework of literature relevant for this study. The working of the dynamics of the combinations of concepts involved in the rites show that potentialities of development have been boosted and integrated by social change in particular into modern aspirations from women's perspectives.

It will forever remain a most wonderful idea to celebrate womanhood in present times. This is because even the best of approaches and interventions to better the lot of women are often woefully inadequate especially on issues of gender inequality. As an example, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is one of the latest in a long line of policy frameworks intended to place Africa on a path of sustainable growth and development. Despite the fact that one of its long-term objectives is to 'promote the role of women in all activities' critics have already pointed to the gender blindness of NEPAD. The main reason for this blindness concerns economic reforms in which private interests rather than public interests are served according to the critics. The implication of this trend calls for the type of self-determination, which can look within tradition for strength. If men are reputed to be the stronger sex, women are shown by research to be limitlessly resourceful when given the chance.

The cultural approach involvement in development as seen in this study can be examined in three stages. All these stages point to the wisdom embodied in puberty rites and the lessons contained in them. The first stage is that, puberty rites portrayed women

initially as having lots of potentials which must be discovered and polished to function in their societies. This potential can be overlooked and that has often become the plight of women the world over. Thus, a comparison of the untrained or undiscovered women against men always reveals inequality. *Therefore, for women the stage of planned discovery is very important.* Education or training in the modern sense is equipping them in present days and this effectively removes any perceived sexual differences. In the case of the Logba, by the vehicle of puberty rites the girls were married off into homes where they become managers and co-owners of resources with their husbands.

Secondly as wives, *women become useful in their households due to their preparedness as equal partners. Puberty rites were the traditional way of preparing them for marriage.* The rites enabled them to attain equal status with men; ‘where women are not seen as appendages to the household, but as active, often independent actors who shoulder responsibilities and take risks, make contingency plans, and strive to maximize their livelihood options and the positive impact of their efforts on their dependents,’ using the words of Ekejuba, (1984:60). That is not to claim the absence of conflicts in their marriages as Kabeer (1994:130) wrote that, ‘West Africa offers the most widely cited examples of household systems where conflictual forms of decision making are in evidence. It is abundantly clear that West African husbands and wives seldom form unified production units. Of course this is not to deny that there is much mutual dependence and complementarity within the household.’ This mutual interdependence often extends even into polygyneous marriages with their usual attendant insecurities and

yet the women survive due to their resourcefulness.

Thirdly, *children enter marriages and all the preparedness from puberty rites helps mothers to raise them up to maturity*. After observations and explanations in the study up to this point, the researcher is of the view that, this third stage contains the problem of the research. The whole event of puberty rites whenever staged seems to announce the importance of motherhood and their primary task of raising up children.

With the general observations made through the societal living of the Logba in all the case studies above, one thing that stands out clearly is that all values cherished by traditional Africans are subjected to convenience and usefulness pertaining to times. Most of the songs for instance have changed in the puberty rites while some even do not see the need for the rites anymore. Obviously, society has provided some alternative means of meeting the needs of the transition of girls into womanhood. The whole enterprise of puberty rites are seen in this chapter as portraying many things. Arguably, they also seem remotely removed from the most important task they perform in society- the socialization of future generations.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary and Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The chapter five presents the summary of all the findings in the study. Chapters are presented with their main structures. These are followed by the summary of the major findings, the recommendations and the conclusions.

#### **5.2 The Main Findings of the Study**

The various meanings of the puberty rites were achieved by looking at the social structures and the relationship with puberty rites of the Logba which all reflect their worldview and values. The major factors of social change were also examined to see how they have altered the values in the puberty rite celebrations. It was discovered that, like most of traditional Africa, contact with Europeans through trade and missionary work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, colonialism and missionary efforts resulted in the traditional people being converted to Christianity and schools established to educate them; trades, skills and new farming methods were introduced, the combination of which ushered in modernity into traditional African communities. The ensuing social change and its consequent value changes resulted in the modification of the puberty rite. While the former puberty rite was fashioned to train the youth in chastity and usher them into responsible womanhood and marriage, the new rite is focused on hard work reflecting the general shift in the values from morality to prosperity.

The general outlook of the survey affirms the claims of many scholars of the religiosity of Africans which social change has not reduced in any visible way. It is easy to see the nearly total conversion of the whole society to Christianity that acted as a strong vehicle of change and modernity. It is nevertheless impossible to ignore the existence of a significant number of people who remain faithful to the traditional gods. It is also seen from the investigations that the values inherent in the traditional beliefs, like love and unity are strongly etched in the mindset of the people. Further details in the fieldwork proved that, about two thirds of the people despite their conversion to a new religion still believe in the virility of the traditional gods and the practices related to them. They believe the ancestors protect and support the stool, and they believe in harmful supernatural forces. These same numbers of people wish those rites which are not objectionable such as puberty rites are retained at all costs.

One can infer from the facts presented in the fieldwork that the traditional religious worldview strongly underlies the modern secular and Christian worldview of the people that affect their value system in many ways. While the values in both systems obviously agree, some are antagonistic. The disagreements are the constant source of tensions and conflict in the lives of the people. When in the former times the people lived together and performed their rites within a unified religious worldview, social change has brought many influences that shattered the unity in communities like Logba.

### **5.3 Traditional Values Observed among the Logba before the Times of Social Change**

The summary of salient values revealed from the social structures including the puberty rites are made up of the following:

- i. There was a very strong sense of sharing which is exhibited through borrowing of items in the puberty rite celebrations.
- ii. Love and unity are the most desired values among the Logba and these were alleged to be supernaturally sanctioned by the deity.
- iii. Kindness and respect are also held in high esteem.
- iv. Moral education of the youth is taken seriously at the appropriate times.

Modernization and secularization has modified the values but not changed them entirely.

Following are some of the notable changes

- i. Most glaring of all the changes is a break-up in the closed society as a single unit. Many people take up job opportunities away from the traditional area and this brought about prosperity.
- ii. Many churches have sprung up which further divided the people and shifted their loyalty away from the deities to the Christian God. The effects are mostly seen in many transformations in their rites of passage celebrations. Religiosity of the society has increased as a result.
- iii. The development of monetary economy with modernization has shifted the focus of the pursuit of good morals to that of prosperity.

iv. The strong sense of sharing has diminished greatly as the values of love, kindness and respect which existed among the people are no more allegedly backed supernaturally by the deity.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

Exegetical significance of the symbols in the original rite was:

- i) To impart the value of chastity to the girls.
- ii) They teach them about marriage and motherhood.
- iii) They were also taught to be obedient to authority which enhanced successful marital life.
- iv) Donations of material goods and money were made to them, to start their lives with.
- v) They were taught about the importance of virtue that exists in hard work by making them work hard for which they were praised and given gifts.
- vi) They were also given spiritual deliverance from evil spiritual forces that might jeopardize their future lives.
- vii) Lastly but also the most important is that, puberty rites serves a testament of moral practice and values our ancestors who do not have any scriptures.

#### **5.4.1 Puberty Rites Underscores the Importance of Women's role in Socializing Children**

Good socialization can avert possible catastrophe from indiscipline, lawlessness, and other vices from society. It is very important to rebuild the human centeredness in which we have a comparative advantage rather than lose them to circumstances.

There is an apparent upsurge of indiscipline in all facets of our society. This is evidenced by the rise in corruption, armed robbery, spousal killing, rape, fraud, and recklessness on our roads. Solutions often given can be said to be for the short term. Creating or mounting up security could be termed as such because, it would not change the composition of the criminal; they only go underground to resurface when they think it is safe enough. Similarly, suspensions and dismissal in schools or imprisonment of offenders are also short-term measures. This is because in an attempt to destroy an evil tree for instance, work would be required on the very roots: cutting of the crown or stem would often bring up new stronger shoots after some time.

### **5.5 Recommendations**

i It is necessary for people in policy making positions in the church and in government to put emphasis on exploring traditional roots for the original values which are related to spirituality and good morals. Policies must fashion cultural performances in schools and churches to revive good traditional values as those in puberty rites.

ii Small poverty alleviating projects accompanied with moral educational campaigns can give far reaching benefits. Agencies, Churches and NGOs who work among women groups already, must be tasked to give moral education on the proper socialization of children. This is because poor women in rural societies are often the most prolific breeders. Without any interventions, difficulties often push such offspring into lots of temptations and lawlessness as they grow.

iii The Ministry of Gender and Social Protection could adopt measures which can target women groups empower them intellectually and spiritually build good moral foundations for the future development of the nation. A nationwide campaign for instance, encouraging women to take initiatives involving devotions at home with their husbands and children. This is because research has shown how maternal instincts give them that sentiment to seek the welfare of their dependents. Either at home in mornings or evenings instruction on discipline would then be given on regular basis to children as part of their socialization.

iv A most important lesson from the puberty rites studied shows that, women deserve to be appreciated and honoured for the crucial roles they play in society. Encouragement by serious advocacy must not be limited to mother's days alone but with material support. In Finland for instance, since 1938, the government by which a maternity box was given to every mother considered poor instituted a scheme. In 1945, this scheme was expanded to include every mother in the nation to the present day. The contents include clothes, perfumes, and anything considered necessary to help mothers at childbirth. The main aim was to reduce and eliminate infant mortality and the correspondents said there were both material and psychological benefits to the women.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> BBC World Report. July 26, 2013.

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*Appendix 1*

Institute of African Studies; University of Ghana

**(An M'Phil Research Project.)**

**Questionnaire to Ascertain the Traditional Religious Worldview and Changing Values Due to Modernity among the Logba.**

1 Gender:  male  female (tick the appropriate answer)

2 Age

3 Marital status  married  single

4 Educational background  Basic  Second cycle  Tertiary /University  
 Other.

5 What is your religious affiliation?  ATR  Christianity  Islam  other

6 Denominations

E.P, Roman Catholic, Assemblies of God etc

.....

7 Do you believe the major deity of Logba, (*Akpana amor*) protected the people in wars in the past and the taboos that relate to it were relevant to all the people?

yes, very much to all the people.  yes, but to some of the people..

not very sure  that was all superstition.

8 Do you think violating the taboos of the deity can still result in punishment ?  
 Yes, for everybody.       Yes, for only those who worship the deity  
 do not know.

9 Do you believe in the existence of some other smaller supernatural forces like witchcraft and sorcery commonly called 'juju' that can protect or harm some people?  
 Yes  No  Don't know.

10 Do you think the deity is still able to protect people against the forces mentioned above? .....

11 Do you think ancestors of the land in Logba still support the stool of the chiefs?  
 Yes they do.  No they do not.  I don't know

***Assessment of Changing Values among the Logba.***

1) Do you think there are any significant changes in the traditional values of the people of Logba due to modernity today?  Yes, a great change.  Yes, a little change.  
 No changes.

2) What do you think are the values supported by the old traditional religious beliefs of the Logba.....  
.....

3) Do people willingly participate in outdoor ceremonies in the community as tradition demands  Yes, very much.  Yes, but the numbers are few.  No, many do not bother.

4) Are you of the opinion that, puberty rites (*nutata/gbotowowo*) have any values for the people of Logba today?  Yes.  No.

5) Do you think puberty rites should be abolished?  Yes.  No

6) Would you prefer to select your own marriage as against the method of betrothal method that is linked with puberty rite ?  Yes,  No.

7) Are you of the view that the ceremony of '*luvotsotso*' which is performed for those who die in accidents to lead away their spirit from accident sites is still necessary today?

Yes, very much.  Not at all  Don't know

*Appendix ii*

*List of Abbreviations*

A.U.....African Union.

N.G.Os.....Non- Governmental Organizations.

M.D.Gs.....Millenium Developmental Goals.

P.R.S.....Poverty Reduction Strategies.

G.A.P.....Gender Action Plan.

I.M.F.....International Monetary Fund.

G.D.P.....Gross Domestic Product.

G.N.P.....Gross National Product.

S.A.P.....Structural Adjustment Policies.

P.R.S.P.....Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

G.K.....Greek.

M.E.S.T.....Ministry of Environment Science and Technology.

N.E.P.A.D.....New Partnership for Africa's Development.

S.T.I.D.E.P.....Science Technology and Innovation Development Program.

S.T.I.....Science Technological and Innovation.

C.S.O.....Civil Service Organization.

### **Appendix iii**

#### **Some Pictures of Puberty Rite Candidates at Logba**

**Figure i, A puberty rite candidate among the Logber in former times.**

**Figure ii, A single candidate performing the puberty rite at Logba.**

**Figure iii, A group of puberty candidates participating at a church service on Easter Sunday at Logba Alakpeti in 2013.**

**Figure iv A part of a 26 member group of candidates posing for a photograph after the Easter service at Logba Akusame in 2013.**

**Figure v, Another group of puberty candidates in a group picture with their Priest after the Easter Sunday service at Logba Adzokoe.**

**Figure vi. The elderly man is seen in this picture pouring libation for the puberty rite candidates of Logba Alakpeti before they embark on a ritual tour on a market day.**

**Figure vii. A procession of puberty candidates with their young assistants known as 'kplefu' through the main street of Logba Adzokoe as part of the rituals.**

**Figure viii. A puberty candidate in this picture is being adorned with beads to begin the puberty rituals at Logba Alakpeti.**

