

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

**The Practice Of “Trokosi” Shrine Girls Among The Ewes Of Ghana As A Violation Of
Women's Right: A Pastoral Concern.**

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

THE PRACTICE OF "TROKOSI" SHRINE GIRLS AMONG THE EWES OF GHANA AS
VIOLATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHT: A PASTORAL CONCERN.

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I the undersigned declared that this long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal readings, research and critical reflections. It has never been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit. All sources has been cited and acknowledged.

Signed..........

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DATE: 7TH FEBRUARY 2001.

This Long Essay has been submitted for Examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

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DATE: 7TH FEBRUARY 2001.

DEDICATION

This long Essay is dedicated to my Father, Mother, Brothers, Sisters and all my confreres in The Society Of The Divine Word Common Formation Center, Nairobi, Kenya.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all who helped me in one way or the other to bring this Long Essay to completion. In a special way, I would like to render my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Rev. Fr. Aylward Shorter, M. Afr., (Principal and Lecturer of Tangaza College) who agreed to supervise me in a scholarly and friendly manner. His suggestion and corrections bring this work to fruition. I am also grateful for the contributions of Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Professor Akwasi Twumasi and Torgbui Anagbo II, Chief of Dzodze- Ghana, in my research work towards this essay. Further, I thank Fr. Tom Leyden, SVD and Fr. Ireneo Barreto, SVD who read through this script and made some necessary corrections. I also thank Fr. Edmund Afagbegee, SVD, who sent me the required books for this work. Also, I thank Mr. Kenneth Sowah of National Archives of Ghana who supplied me with the majority of the articles on Trokosi. Finally, I want to thank all my confreres especially Benjamin who helped me to complete this essay. May God bless you.

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INTRODUCTION

In a real sense, it is peace and tranquillity, which every human being needs in order to survive in a society. Every society has its own way of promoting this peace and justice. It is noted that sin and sinful acts bring disharmony in a society. The *Ewe* of Ghana are not an exception to this notion. For them, sin and crime does not only violate or militate against the social order but also affects the gods and the divinities who, in order to protect the society inflicts deadly punishment on the sinners.

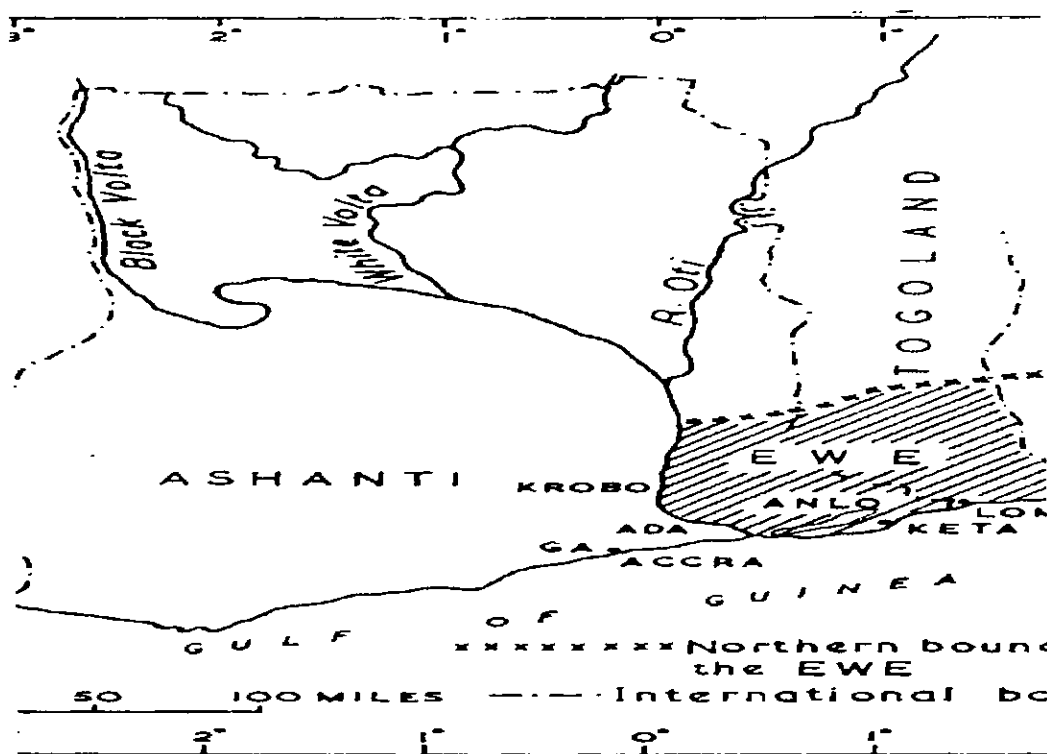
Chapter One of this Essay deals with Historical, Geographical, Cultural, Political and Economic situation of the *Ewe* with special reference to the areas affected by *Trokosi*. Chapter Two tries to find out if *Trokosi* is a Religion of the *Ewe*. It deals with the etymology of the term, origin of the practice, *Trokosi* rituals and Priesthood. Further, Chapter Three examines on the effects of *Trokosi* on the Society. It elaborates on how women's rights in general are violated with special reference to *Trokosi*. Chapter four deals with the aims and purpose of the practice, which is basically to eradicate crime. It also gives a vivid account of the *Ewe* Theology of Sin, which may have some resemblance to Old Testament view of sin. In this Chapter *Trokosi* also aims at giving birth to a new creation (devoid of sin), which would bring up a perfect society. Chapter Five deals with the movements towards abolition of the practice. The government through legislation makes this move. Other National bodies came in but no lasting solution is arrived at. Finally the Catholic Church declares it as a Pastoral issue since it is a matter of faith. The Church has taken over to find a lasting solution to the problem because it violates the right of the "vestal" virgins. This is followed by a Conclusion and the Bibliography.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE EWE OF GHANA

(1-1) GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

In general, the *Ewe* are located geographically around "River Volta on the West and Mono River on the East. The land stretches from the Gulf of Guinea to about lat 7° 50" north in the East and lat 7° 20" north in the West"¹.

The area covers Southeastern part of Ghana, part of Togo, Benin and Nigeria. This area is illustrated in the map below:

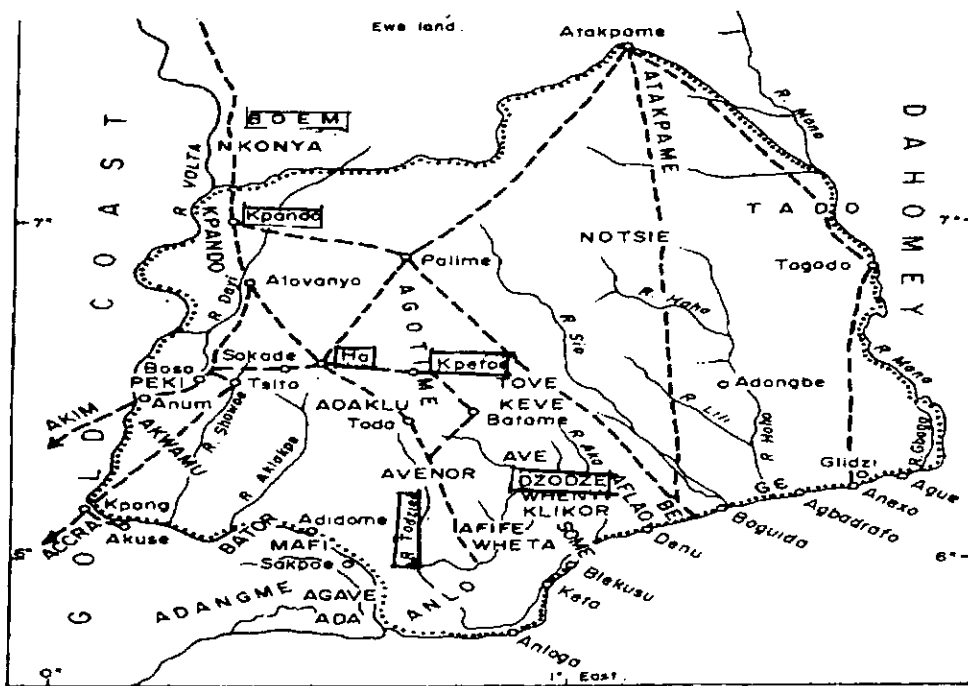


MAP 1. The location of the Ewe in Ghana and TOGO

Specifically, the *Ewe* of Ghana are found in the Volta Region, which is in the South Eastern Quarter of the area. The Non-*Ewe* area found in the whole of the Volta Region

¹ Chris, Aboche, Social Tradition in the Traditional Eweland of Ghana, Relevance for Modern Crime Revelation, Accra: Ghana University, Press, 1989, p.1.

formerly called Trans Volta Togoland, are Boem and Krachi in the Northern part of Volta Region. The map below shows this clearly:



Gulf of Guinea and several rivers surround the area. The coastal area of the Region is blessed with plain land and lagoons such as Keta and Avu lagoons. This gives rise to fishing and salt industry. From Dzodze onwards to the other part is a forest with some intermittent grassland. This part has only River Kplikpa, which is a perennial one. Wells are dug in this river during the dry season to supply water for the people. The grassland stretches to Kpetoe, which depends on River Tordzi for their water supply. Ho, the capital records a little amount of rainfall. Ahead of Ho is Hohoe, Peki, Kpando, to Boem areas, which is mostly a forest. This extends to Krachi and Northern Ghana. To be brief, these areas extending from Dzodze to the borders of Togo in the Southern Volta and Tongu suffer from inadequate rainfall.

(1.2) THE MIGRATION STORY

The *Ewe* are believed to have originated from North-eastern Africa. Through centuries, they migrated to Ife in Nigeria. This confirms what professor Nukunya said,

“the original home of the *Ewe* is traced traditionally to Oyo in Western Nigeria”². The life of Nigeria is regarded as a special settlement of the *Ewe* before they moved across to a present day Benin where they settled at Ketu. “The people have a tradition of migration from the East from Ketu a town in the modern republic of Benin”³. The name, *Ewe* is also applied to their language. They are organised in small kingdoms with the kings chosen from among the chiefs. On their migration from Ketu, to Notsie, they elected Torgui Agorkorli as their king. After his election as a king, Torgbui Agorkorli became a tyrant who even inflicted corporal punishments on his subordinates without any proper reason. His palace was a well-protected wall made from stones and mud. So high was the wall that nobody could even dare climb it. Due to constant torture, the subordinates devised a means of escape. Under the able leadership of Torgbui Wenya, they broke away silently walking backwards for number of months. The backward movement is to confuse the King in tracing them. This dramatic movement is still celebrated among the Anlo with dances, which portrays the migration movement. After the movement from Agorkorli, the *Ewe* did not form a single political union but rather divided into different paramouncies. Presently, there are 120 sub tribes among the *Ewe*. Some of the larger sub tribes are converged along “the Coast Eastward from River Volta- Anlo. Some, Be. Ge. inland immediately behind the coastal states are Peki, Adaklu, Ave. Tove, Ho, and in the country - Kpando, Watsi and part of Atakpame”⁴. This is illustrated in the map above.

(1.3) CULTURAL SITUATION

From the onset, the *Ewe* were against injustice. They are people who are historically conditioned to change their government due to their notion of justice. In the

² G.K., Nukunya, Kinship and Marriage Among the Anlo Ewe, London: The Athlone Press, 1969. p. 1.

³ D.E.K., Amenumey, The Ewe Unification Movement, A Political History, Accra: Ghana University Press, 1989. p. 1.

⁴ ibid., p. 1.

18th century, the *Ewe* fought one another in successive battles. The slave trade was the main cause of these wars. The Anlo constantly fought the other *Ewe* groups who aligned themselves with the slave dealers. Sometimes they aligned with the non-*Ewe* groups to fight the other *Ewe*. For instance, “Anlo aided Akwamu to try to subjugate Peki Kpando, Ho and their neighbours, and as late as 1864-1865, 1868, 1873-1874, Anlo and these states fought in opposing camps”⁵. All these caused instability and disintegration among the Ewes as one people. The *Ewe* are organised in a patrilineal system but the daughters inherit property from their mother. It is a shame for a man to crave for the mother’s property. Nevertheless, brothers are expected to care for their sisters since they are the beneficiaries of the family lands.

Among the *Ewe*, it is forbidden to marry within the family. Parents are to look for wives for their sons outside the clan. Even, the traditional *Ewe* would not marry outside the tribe. The reason is to maintain the pure *Ewe* blood with their rich culture and ability. Concerning religious matters, the *Ewe* like any other Africans worship the Supreme Being through several deities. Some of these are Earth gods like Nyigbla, the god of war and Yeweh, the god of thunder. There is an elaborate ancestral cult among the *Ewe*. For them, the dead are still alive among the living. The deities are the intermediaries between the people and the Supreme Being while the ancestors watch over the whole clan and protect it from unseen calamities that may befall anybody. The *Ewe* deities are in order of degrees. Some are believed to be more powerful than the others. The priests and elders are the mediums between the deities and the rest of the members in the society. Before and after any undertakings the gods are to be consulted through divination or pouring of libation. There is a strong notion of causality among the *Ewe*. In all the people are left to dance to the tunes of their deities.

The colonial powers changed the *Ewe* view of governing. Formerly, they lived under the rule of chiefs who were the custodians of the land and legislators. Through

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 3.

social and cultural obligations that lead to formation of their conscience, the Ewe managed to fight against crime and criminal acts of any sort. The death penalty was imposed on the betrayers of traditional values. This curbs the variety of crime since crime could bring punishment to the entire society. The colonial powers are blamed for encouraging criminal acts by bringing different laws. The powers that colonised Eweland were Germany, Britain and France.

(1.4) POLITICAL SITUATION

Formerly, the traditional political system of the *Ewe* was decentralised. Paramount chiefs and sub chiefs were the organisers of the society. The chiefs are mostly in contact with the fetish priests who serve as mediums between the society and the spirits.

The *Ewe* were firstly ruled by Britain in 1850. This rule was only centred on the Southern part of Volta Region. In 1884, the Germans arrived in Eweland. This prompted Britain to extend its rule over the whole of Eweland. There were some boundary confusions so Germany and Britain decided to sign an agreement. This agreement became the cause of splitting the entire Eweland. Due to this, "the states of Anlo, Some, Klikor, Peki and Tongu came to be recognised as part of the Gold Coast colony (Ghana) and the rest of the *Ewe* territory became part of the German protectorate of Togo"⁶. Since then, the *Ewe* were not happy about the division. The German rule was too heavy for the *Ewe* of Togo. Their counterparts in the then Gold Coast enjoyed a lot of freedom from the British. Since then, the *Ewe* wanted to unite. They fought vehemently through many organisations like the United Nations and League of Nations so as to be still one people able to preserve their culture. Unfortunately, their proposals were not taken up.

So during the First World War, the *Ewe* helped the British, together with the French to fight the Germans. The unification movement intensified even after the Second World War but the "European governments were less responsive to demands

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

from subject peoples and the request was cavalierly ignored.⁷ Despite all these proposals, the British and French wanted to maintain their relationship so there was no hearing given to the plea of the *Ewe*.

In the 1940s the *Ewe* schools and the *Ewe* Presbyterian Church still emphasized the oneness of the *Ewe* though their education was in English and French respectively. There was cultural awareness created in the students. The history of the migration of the *Ewe* and their ways of worship was traced to its origin. Songs and dances in a traditional way brought the awareness clearly to the students. The chief argument for the unification was commercial, social and religious.

Presently, the *Ewe* in Ghana are under one Regional Minister. They have separate members of parliament through whom they carry their messages to the government. The *Ewe* are ready to speak against and seek removal of any greedy Member of Parliament, or a Regional Minister who is not ready to unite them.

(1.5) SOCIO ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE AREAS AFFECTED BY THE PRACTICE OF SHRINE GIRLS (TROKOSI)

The Tongu area of the Eweland is neglected. So far, there is no development. The area around River Volta depends mainly on river fishing and raising of livestock. The land is not so fertile for farming. Due to this, the people struggle to find their own means of survival. Those who are educated among them are working in Accra and other parts of Ghana. Culturally, these areas suffer from the lack of medication. They depend mostly on traditional medicines and traditional healers. Diviners among them diagnose the cause of the sicknesses and calamities and prescribe the means for the restoration. Some of these are sacrifices to the gods and filial duties to the ancestral spirits. No doubt '*Trokosi*', shrine girls, are one of the prescriptions to alleviate the suffering of the family members due to sin or crime.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

The southern *Ewe* of Ghana are mostly affected by *Trokosi* practice. This includes the Anlo in a large sense and the Tongu. This is because the two tribes “share the same cultural values, knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and habits which warrant their categorization under a unique cultural preview for this study”⁸. The Anlo as well as the Tongu *Ewe* are predominantly agricultural mainly fishers, farmers and animal husbandmen. In Anlo area large-scale fishing takes place around the sea. Tongu, because of their geographical position specialised in river fishing. Farming in Tongu areas is more elaborated than in the Anlo areas because of the topology. Onion farming in a large scale is done around Avu and Ketu lagoons. “Animal husbandry, involving cattle, pigs, goats, sheep and poultry, also constitutes an important economic activity”⁹.

SUMMARY

The *Ewe* migrated through many centuries to Nigeria and finally moved to Ketu in Benin. They lived together but due to maltreatment of Torgbui Agorkorli. Some revolted and moved to the present day Volta Region of Ghana. This made them disintegrate into different subtribes and chiefdoms. They have that ability to fight against injustice from the onset. They believed that the Supreme Being could be reached through the divinities. The *Ewe* culture cannot be separated from religious matters. These traditional beliefs permeate throughout the areas affected by *Trokosi* practice. Due to the nature of the area, the social control is based on several devices, of which *Trokosi* is one in order to prevent the society from any disaster that the gods may bring against the inhabitants. Punishment is imposed on those who break the code of morals in order to avert the wrath of the gods hence the institution of *Trokosi*, where a young girl is sent to the shrine to atone for the crimes committed by her ancestors.

⁸Abotchie, *Op.Cit*, p. 9.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

TROKOSI, A RELIGION OF THE EWES?

(2.1) ETYMOLOGY OF TROKOSI

Trokosi is derived from two different Ewe words, “tro”, which means deity. It is a deity which has all kind of servants expected to engage in adoration always. “Kosi” is of two words, “ko”, meaning not having, “si” meaning female, who is a wife of ko. So in all, kosi means the holy one, the virgin one, the separated one. It is a woman consecrated to the gods. This means that kosi can only give birth if the gods permit her.

In relation to *Trokosi*, it means holy virgin of god. It is a virgin separated only for gods. It is a virgin set aside for a deity. In this sense, the girl is a wife to the deity. Initially this is the meaning of the word. But due to negative connotation of the term all over Ghana, as well as Togo Benin and Nigeria, the real meaning is somehow distorted. According to Santuah Niagia, “*Trokosi* is a combination of two Ewe words “tro” and “kosi”, “tro” means deity “kosi” means slave, therefore, *Trokosi* means slave of a deity”¹⁰. This understanding came in the modern times. Nevertheless, *Trokosi* was respected in the olden days as wife of the deity. The deities control the societies in which they are. So people revere the *Trokosi* and many would like to have one in their houses.

(2.2) ORIGIN OF THE PRACTICE

The practice of *Trokosi* “spread in Eweland stretching across Ghana, Togo, Benin and parts of Nigeria. It is one of the most ancient practices still found among the Ewe and its origin is shrouded in mystery”¹¹. However, according to oral tradition supported by priests and elders, the Ga, Krobo and Ada, who have the same migration process with the Ewe and finally disintegrated, also practice *Trokosi*. This gives us some

¹⁰, Santuah, Niagia “Children Atoning for the sins for others” In: Catholic Messenger Takoradi: St. Francis Press, April 2000, p.24.

¹¹ Quist-Awumee, Geoffrey, “Trokosi must die” In: Ghanaian Times, Accra: August 11, 1994, p. 11.

clue that this practice was formerly found among the heathens - the ancient times before our grandfathers came to settle in the present West Africa. No one doubts that it was there before Torgbui Wenya broke away from Torgbui Agorkorli to lead the *Ewe* to the present day Ghana. It was even practised before the emergence of Tongu *Ewe* subtribe through Atorgolo the son of Torgu Wenya.

The recent survey shows that there are at least 39 active *Trokosi* shrines in Volta and Dangme areas: 18 in Tongu North, Adidome), 8 in Tongu South (Sogakope), 5 in Ketu, 3 in Keta, 2 in Dangme west - a non *Ewe* speaking area, and one in Akatsi district.¹²

The largest numbers of the shrines are found in Tongu areas where most of the heinous crimes, which attract the compensation of *Trokosi*, are committed.

The origin of *Trokosi* could be traced to the Nyigbla, the ancient war god of the *Ewe*. This god was the first and the foremost. It was only when the Yeweh cult was inaugurated, that Nyigbla cult was relegated. Nyigbla cult is found in areas like Afife, Alakple, Dzobze, and Ada, while Adzima cult is found in Klikor and Dzodze.

Nyigbla cult is believed to protect the society in terms of war, healing, seeing the missing items of individuals, gives fertility to the soil and human beings.

According to the oral tradition, unnamed man, the first person ever to violate serious taboo pertaining to Nyigbla was required under the prescribed sanctions of the deity to redeem his life, his fortune, and also those of his entire lineage by surrendering into the perpetual servitude of the deity seven females to be recruited each for seven generations of his lineage beginning with his own daughter¹³.

The wrongdoer's daughter became the first *Trokosi*. According to the sanction, when the first *Trokosi* got married, the husband had to send her niece to the cult service. From there, the trend of *Trokosi* continues. At the end of the seventh, the crime is fully atoned for (seven among the *Ewe* signify totality). Also, some people violated the same taboo and this attracted the same punishment. Due to this, the number began to increase. It continues into an extent that all those who have sexual relations with these *Trokosi* need

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³ Abotchie, *Op. Cit.*, p. 28.

to send a young virgin for initiation in the cult. Huge number of people became members of this type of *Trokosi*. The *Trokosi* in this perspective, are allowed to go to school and work anywhere in the world. The only bond is to observe some kind of solitude life for seven days before the annual festivals, which each member is obliged to attend.

Another type of *Trokosi* is concentrated in the Tongu areas of Eweland. There are several shrines with large numbers of *Trokosi*. While the above discussed type of *Trokosi* is an active one, the Tongu type is that of a cloister or of a contemplatives. The origin of this is to appease the gods in a very strict sense. According to this tradition, families give virgin girls to serve in the shrine as a way of appeasing the gods for crimes committed by their relatives. For serious crimes, families gave girls for generations to atone perpetually. Despite that, *Trokosi* can serve 3 or 5 years and be released for the rest of their lives. Nevertheless, they constantly go to the shrines to serve because once married to the gods, they are therefore always married.

This practice has its origin in wars due to the intervention of the gods in victory. Before any war in the past, religious shrines were visited for fortification and vowed to give women to the shrines if they come back alive. Also, girls are sent to the shrines to solicit the help of the gods in having children. Another origin of *Trokosi* in some other shrines was that the *Ewe* believe in causality. Everything has a cause.

A family who has experienced a notable misfortune - deaths, illness or just a failing crop may well seek a soothsayer, a man or woman who can make contact with the spirit world, in order to divine for the family which has so displeased the gods. Once the cause has been divined, the soothsayer will communicate what the gods will accept as compensation.¹⁴

According to some of the elders, cattle, rolls of calico and local gin, "apeteshie" were formerly offered to appease the gods. About hundred years ago, some people who

¹⁴Brian, Edwards, "Girls in the lap of Ghanaian gods", In: East African Standard, Nairobi: August 9, 2000, p. 3.

offended the gods as well as the entire society couldn't pay the items because it was too expensive for them to bear. Instead, one virgin girl was demanded and was offered to atone the sin of the family. Because of this, a new tradition came into an existence; human beings replaced the cattle, goats and drinks.

While carrying out my research into this phenomenon of *Trokosi* at Dzodze, some families who registered frequent sudden or accidental deaths try to establish the cause. If it is a taboo, which a family member breaks, a young girl is quickly sent to the shrine to solicit the assistance of the gods. Some families I interviewed testified about their freedom from calamities after sending the girls to the shrine. "Called *Trokosi* in the *Ewe* language, they are in theory wives and servants of the gods. In practice, their role ranges from the purely ceremonials to working as the priest cooks, farm hands, cleaners and mistresses"¹⁵. This means that the girls serve the gods in the world of spirits yet they continue a normal life in the material world.

Despite the ancient prescription as a spiritual agent, there are some abuses in these days. *Trokosi* is regarded as a sexual object and a farm hand by some of the priests. In fact, those priests had a lot of issues with them and leave these children at the mercy of their poor mothers.

Furthermore the perpetual servitude depends on the gravity of their grandparents' offences. While in the shrine, their needs are to be supplied by their parents. When they die, another person is to replace them. In my interview, a 13-year-old girl told me that she couldn't understand why she was sent there. What she knew was that her late sister was *Trokosi*. This is a proof that children are sent to the shrine against their conscience. For Grace Dugah, a 26 years old lady, her "grandfather made a promise to a shrine that he would adequately reward if it assisted him to get bumper harvest during the farming season. I heard my grandfather achieved his aim but failed to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

honor his promise. Consequently, death started in the family. So I was sent to atone for the promise”¹⁶.

Some *Trokosi* are born in the shrine while others enter because their family members have a sexual relation with *Trokosi* women. Some also found themselves in the shrine because of land litigation in which the opposing family invoked the gods and death set in the families. In all, *Trokosi* is an attempt to win an atonement for ancestral sins which may be trivial as stealing a chicken or as serious as murder.

Trokosi is not a state religion of the *Ewe* since all do not practice it. Secondly, it was not pronounced a state religion despite the historical evidence we had about the Tongu people. This practice is found within sub-tribes, which is not shared by others. The concerned countries pronounce a state religion like the Roman Catholic Church in the medieval period and also Islam. In Ghana, this practice was not recognised as a religion. Religion is defined by many “as a link between the finite and infinite or as a grasping by man towards something beyond himself that gives him a reason for being”¹⁷. For Aylward Shorter, “religion is a social reality which powerfully affects human thought and behaviour”¹⁸. If this is the case, then we can call it a religion for those who practice it (in other words it could be called a cultic practice). Since they believed that the survival of the society depends on the unseen forces that must be appeased in case they are defiled. To look at it as a religion may be based on its facts of social dimension.

(2.3) WHAT IS A SHRINE?

A shrine is a place or abode of spirits, which is discovered or revealed to human beings. It is a place where worship takes place. It may be a grove with some special

¹⁶ Vince, Azu, “Ex *Trokosi* Women Talk About life outside shrine” In: The Mirror, Accra: December 12, 1988, p.8.

¹⁷ Gerald, Berry L., Religions of the World, New York: Barnes & Noble Inc. 1967.p.78.

¹⁸ Aylward, Shorter, African Culture: An Overview, Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa, 1998. p. 38.

features like trees, rivers or stones. The fetish priests could create shrines where a particular spirit manifests itself.

The cardinal divine principles of truth, justice and righteousness and values they maintained through their constant invocation of the ancestral gods and the spirits are embodied in the shrines. There is distinction between ancestral shrines and *voodoo* cults. In the Tongu areas, there was no dynasty of the chieftaincy before the 17th Century and at the same time: none was without a state fetish shrine. The people surrounding these shrines worshipped there until in the 18th century when most of the people became converted from fetish worship to Christianity. So the fetish priests became the administrators of the shrines as well as the communities. When the Chieftaincy dynasty was established, it reduced the burden of the priests on the shrines. The priest was then left with divine consultation and invocation of ancestral gods and spirits for protection, guidance and victory over tribal enemies.

The priests in the shrine invoke blessings for their communities. Their notion of justice is based on "the moral principle of absolute truth and righteousness, performance of rites to pacify and atone for evils committed by individuals within the community and making offerings for peace and stability"¹⁹.

(2.4) TROKOSI PRIESTHOOD

"The term priest may be applied to the functionaries of a regularly organised and permanent enterprise concerned with influencing the gods in contrast with the individuals and occasional efforts of magicians"²⁰. Priesthood is characterised by some kind of cultic practices. The priesthood as far as Trokosi practice is concerned is attached to social set up. It begins from one clan and extends to the others. The society and the gods are closely linked. So the immediate members recognise the position of a

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰ Max, Weber, The Sociology of Religion, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. p. 28.

priest in the *Ewe* society. In this sense, a priest is a ritual agent who officiates in religious worship on behalf of the community²¹. As far as *Trokosi* practice is concerned, priesthood was hereditary in the olden days. It happens whereby the person from the line of the cult exhibits several signs right from the childhood to adulthood. As Victor Ahadzie puts it, "the reality of priesthood is manifested in being spiritually possessed by the deity of the candidate, through exhibition of rare feats such as diving under water for enumerable hours or days, setting himself ablaze without harm and perform strange deeds"²². If these signs are found peculiar to someone, the gods are contacted through divination. The candidate is then ordained as priest by the elders of the cult.

Furthermore, in some of the shrines, the priests are kept there and are not allowed to have any sexual contacts. Violation of that may invoke the wrath of the gods of which the ultimate punishment is death. The priest in the shrine needs to have "professional equipment, and special knowledge of the fixed doctrine, and vocational qualifications, which bring him into contact with sorcerers prophets and other types of religious functionaries who assert their influence by virtue of personal gifts (Charism) made manifest in miracle and revelation"²³. They are also expected to be pure in heart. They should not bear a grudge for anybody. Before and after ordination into priesthood in the *Trokosi* Cult, one is obliged not to commit murder or do things, which may provoke that. He is also expected to live a life worthy of emulation. He must also obey the *Trokosi* cultic rules. He has a greater responsibility to preside over worship and healing rituals of the community in case there is an affliction.

Apart from the priest chosen by the deity himself, we have some other priests who are trained by the elders for this purpose. Some of these priests turn to suppress others. They subject the vestal virgins to some kind of harsh treatment and make them

²¹ Aylward, Shorter, *African Culture: An Overview*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998. p. 73

²² Victor, Acadia, "The Law cannot kill *Trokosi*" In: *Ghanaian Times*, Accra: August 2, 1994 p. 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

suffer psychologically and spiritually. The priests who are chosen by the gods through scions of landed priestly families keep pure virginity of the vestal virgins and help them spiritually to mature. The danger here is that they turn to forget about the physical aspect of the human being.

Individuals or group of people applied to these priests for assistance. Some of the *Trokosi* cults engaged in vocational trainings like weaving, while others take to farming. I can say that *Trokosi* is sometimes organized as a clear exclusive association. That is why one can see more than four thousand vestal “virgins” with their families in a particular shrine. The priest has the role as a spiritual and moral leader in the shrine: some priests educate the vestal virgins to maintain their virginity till their time of marriage. Some other virgins are not expected to have any sexual relation throughout their lives because they are set apart to be the medium of the spirits. These virgins are those who experience spirit possession regularly and become a channel of communication on behalf of others. “Spirit possession is basically a belief that a spirit is submerging someone’s personality, speaking and acting through that person”²⁴. The priest himself takes an active part in training them because he depends on them as prophetesses in the shrine.

The priest has no written documents to rely on apart from the oral teachings of the cult. The elders educate the young virgins about the origin of the gods and their expectations from the human beings. Further, there is a threat of danger since the gods cannot be deceived or their rules be disobeyed. Death sentence is what follows the violation of any teaching by the elders and the gods themselves will execute this. Nevertheless, the *Trokosi* priesthood has the juridical, cultic, pastoral and monastic models.

²⁴ Aylward, Shorter, *African Culture: An Overview*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, p. 70.

(2.5) TROKOSI RITUALS

As we have already heard, *Trokosi* is of two different kinds. The one practised by Klikor and Afife are those who are outside the shrine but visit the shrine yearly, or any emergence time. For them, at the age of puberty, they are expected to undergo rituals. They must be virgins before the rituals. Nevertheless all the *Trokosi* who are married also perform the rituals. In order to be holy, they are bound by vows of chastity for seven days before entering the shrine. Also, if there is any experience of menses just before or on the day of the rituals, the person is exempted. The initiation takes place in a pond full of snakes. Purity of heart and sinlessness is required from the initiates. If one enters the water without a clear heart towards anybody, the snake quickly bites her to death. Virginity is highly recommended in this area.

The rituals for the cloistered type of *Trokosi* in Tongu areas begin in the eve of the arrival of new “vestal” virgins. They are firstly introduced to the shrine by administering a concoction in order to make them faithful and dedicated devotees. Sanctions are then enumerated to them. Shaving of hair marks the servitude. Grey baft or calico is her new cloth. Nicely woven raffia leaves are used as necklaces. The *Trokosi* is forbidden to wear anything apart from those things prescribed by the priest. Some taboos such as eating of some particular fish, having sex outside the shrine, are punishable. They are expected to seek permission even before going to the farm. When they reach the age of marriage, the priest determines the bride price that deters suitors from marrying them. A punishment in the shrine includes denial of food, whipping and giving a plot of land to weed. Offences attracting the punishments are quarrelling with others, refusal to run errands disrespect to the elders and lateness for prayer services. *Trokosi* is not a religion of the *Ewe* in general sense but specifically, it is a religion of the affected areas. As a religion it has its own theology, tradition and dogmas.

Trokosi means a virgin set-aside for the gods. She becomes the wife of the gods. She depends on the priest in the shrine for her spiritual development. This practice is found among the Anlo and Tongu people in the Volta Region. Nevertheless, it is also found in neighbouring Togo, Benin and parts of Nigeria. It originated from disobedience to the gods through crimes and failure to fulfil ones promises made to the gods in time of needs. There was a gradual development from the initial stages concerning the compensations, which the crimes may attract. This compensation aimed at appeasing the gods to bring peace and prosperity instead of death and other punishments. From animals as a means of appeasement, develops the servitude of young virgins. These virgins are sent to the shrine to atone for the crimes committed by their ancestors.

Trokosi servitude could be temporary at least for three years or perpetual service depending on the gravity of the crimes committed by the elders. The priest in the cultic shrine is the sole director of the *Trokosi*. He is the spiritual guide and mediator between the two worlds. The gods themselves, through spirit possession and divination, select the priests. Most of them are expected to live a pure celibate life since this is one of the methods believed to increase their spiritual powers. *Trokosi* rituals are performed in the shrine under a very strict sense of purity of heart. Though this practice is geared towards eradication of crime in the society, it violates the “vestal” virgins rights. It brings division, conflicts sorrow and loss in the society. We shall elaborate on this in the next chapter. In a specific sense, we can say that *Trokosi* is a religion for those who practise it.

EFFECTS OF TROKOSI ON THE SOCIETY

3.1 WHAT IS WOMEN'S RIGHT?

Women like men have the same rights based on creation. Both women and men are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen1: 27); but the male domination violates this original right of women into an extent of disappearance. Without their right, they will remain under the dictates of men always. Women have a right to decision-making. In most cases, women are deprived of any decision-making. They are always forced to comply with the outcome of men's deliberation about their lives. In a family set up, (Patrilineal system) women are not involved in the affairs of running the house. They are grouped together with children. This sometimes brings a lapse in co-operation.

The *Akan* of Ghana practiced matrilineal systems of inheritance. This gives chance to women to be included in some aspects of decision-making but not in full. "The right of a woman to participate in domestic policy-making is guaranteed in these traditions outside the affinal relations"²⁵.

Furthermore, control of resources both in the public and private set up rests in the hand of men. It is on rare cases where a woman is given a chance to take care of her country or society's resources. Men as well as women themselves do not entrust this aspect into the hands of their fellow women. There is fear that they cannot do it. This creeps into the church. Many of the church establishments are given to men to manage. There is sometimes a feeling that if men cannot do it well why can't women be tried? This view is not correct because women have every right to be in charge of the society's resources.

Also, women have the right to modernization. But in most cases men distance them from that. In this sense, they are pushed behind in the same level with their

²⁵ M. A., Oduyoye, Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995. p. 90.

grandmothers. In development works, women have the right. They must be given the chance to mount all areas that need development. Programmes for development should be entrusted into their hands since they have that motherly love of knowing what is good for their children. Like mothers, they will take their respective countries as their children and really work towards development.

Another area, which needs attention, is the right to bodily security. Women, because of physical weakness become an object for men and treated as such. Many women undergo some kind of atrocities due to their bodily exposure. Rape is blamed on women's dress. Men seem to be always right in this matter. Fear is created in the heart of women due to social force. They need to be given freedom from fear. Women have the right to be covered by law. Abuse of women is freely done, either publicly or privately.

One of the areas where many problems of women's right lies is the right to literacy. The majority of the women in Ghana are not properly educated. Even up to the 1970's it was believed that the place for women was the kitchen. Most girls at the school going age at the time were maintained to help their mothers in cooking, selling their wares and also in farming. Boys are freely allowed to attend school up to any level they want. Even if girls are sent to school, they are expected to stop after knowing how to read and write so that they can use this knowledge to learn any trade. Due to that, most of the ladies who are bright and should become useful in the country become mothers in the kitchen. Presently, there is a challenge thrown to the whole humanity about the academic and professional achievements of women in the world at large.

Women's right to education in all sectors will help improve their condition and to enhance their rights which are violated in all angles. There should also be a legal education for women. This will enable them to fight against any injustice, meted on them by the dominance of male groups. Sometimes, women do not know their rights since the legal systems in the countries are mostly termed to be only for men. In Ghana,

these days, there are women lawyers and judges in the various courts. This is a step ahead as compared to the former times.

Politics is another area where women are out. Can a woman rule a country? This is a question, which is mostly asked by even women themselves when a woman steps in to stand in a position during election. In Africa, we have never had a woman president because they are termed to be weak and incapable of handling a country.

Some women interviewed blamed this on the fact that they are mothers and therefore cannot rule fully because of their motherly mercy, which will not allow them to depose a corrupt minister, or sentence a smuggler to death. In Kenya, Charity Ngilu stood as a presidential candidate in 1997 presidential election but was not elected. This is due to the fact that she is a woman. Education on politics especially citing the places where women were rulers, for instance, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo of Philippines, will be helpful for all, especially Africans to support women who want to do politics.

Further, every woman has the right to marry. Some women are deprived of choosing their own partners in marriage. Such are the *Trokosi* of Ghana. They are not only denied of choosing their partners but also, they are expected to remain virgins throughout their lives. This means that, the tradition of *Trokosi* determines their fate as far as marriage is concerned. Also, there are some children forced into child marriage. This violates the right of the children since there is no consent in the matter. The governments especially of Africa should set legal age for marriage, which violation will attract serious punishment. Again, every woman has a right to sex. This condemns perpetual virginity imposed on the *Trokosi* girls in Ghana. A woman has a right to appeal in case of violation of any of their rights. It is time when women should stop saying, 'they will not listen to me because I am just a woman'. Women also have the right to equal share of resources. Mostly, the society's resources are shared only among men. The *Ewe* of Ghana do not allow women to own any land within the society.

Rather, land is for men. In the sector of employment, women are given only minor jobs. Despite the fact of their qualifications, they are still discriminated against. In handing over application men are given more priority than women.

THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHT

The theological basis of women's right is grounded on scripture, tradition and Magisterium. Genesis gave us two creation stories, one of which has masculine superiority. Mostly Genesis 2: 4-24 interprets woman as subordinate to man because it is out of man that woman was created. Woman, in this sense is regarded as a helper for the man.

Nevertheless, the rib, taken out of man to create woman may also mean that woman is within man. She is a part of man. If this is the case, then woman and man share the same dignity. They are wholly in unity. This means that there is no case of superiority and inferiority. On the other hand, if woman is the helper, then man is inferior because it is the inferior who needs help from the superior. Mostly, the male dominance character dwells on the second creation account and subordinate women, forgetting the first creation story in Genesis 1:26-31, God said: "Let us make man in our image after our likeness (Genesis 1:26a) God created man in his image in the divine image, he created him. Male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27). This first creation story qualifies women to be at par with men. It removes all kinds of discrimination. In the first place, God created man and woman in his divine image and likeness. So there is equality here because both have a unifying factor, the creator himself whose image they have taken. Based on this creation story, women have freedom to exercise their rights. The power structures could be changed by this equality of sex even in the church structure that does not permit women to participate fully in it.

Seeing their rights constantly violated, women in the scripture fought against any kind of injustice meted on them. Judith was a remarkable character, which we cannot

forget as far as women's rights are concerned. She fought for his people many times till she overcame the king. She gave hope to all women not only to fight for their rights but also for the right of others, towards liberation.

In the New Testament, women followed Jesus Christ in his ministry of liberation and salvation. Later they still work as the disciples of Jesus Christ. When the scroll was given to Jesus in a Jubilee year, he opened a passage, which reads: "the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (Lk. 4: 16-20). This text unfolded the real mission of Jesus Christ. Jesus is sent to bring Good News to the poor.

The women in this sense are not excluded from the poor because they are the societies' poorest due to a culture of male domination. Women are the captives who need liberation from this captivity of culture. Furthermore, they are the oppressed that need freedom. Jesus ministry extends to everybody, the blacks, whites, Jews and Gentiles. Women have the right to continue the work of Jesus, which is to fight against oppression, slavery, captivity, violence as well as any other vice against humanity.

Again, women in Matthew 15: 21-28 felt to relate with Jesus Christ, the healer. She wanted to say what she felt within herself. This Syro-Phoenician woman was not only discriminated against as a woman but also as a Canaanite woman and for that matter, a gentile. As a Gentile, she is regarded as second-class citizen who violates the principles of the first creation story and also as a woman; she has no position in the social structure of the Jews. There is one thing, which she knew very well; that she has a right to take care of her sick daughter, to find means of healing for her. Jesus was silent after her first contact. For any woman at the time it could mean that Jesus is relating in a traditionally male manner. Even Jesus Disciples advised him to send her away, due to her noise. In this present world, we look at women with the same eye when they

continue to fight for their rights persistently. This Syro-phoenician woman continued the fight and won healing for her daughter through thorough debate. Theologically, this serves as a basis for women to challenge leaders, facilitators, and animators and so on and so forth as far as development works are concerned. Challenge of superiors, authorities and traditional structures, which violates women's right, is the present headache for women towards liberation.

In dealing with their rights, women become aware of their strengths and use them advantageously like this woman in the Gospel. Also, conflicts, which become protracted and oppressive, need to be handled with courage. She stood very firmly in the front of discrimination. This is a fact that they have a right and even if not recognized, they need to fight it out bearing in mind the example of this Syro-Phoenician woman. This woman made it clear to us that despite the fact that the Christian message is to be preached to the Jews, the Gentiles also have a share in it. Her attitude has changed the mind of Jesus towards the need of the Gentiles.

In Luke 1: 26-45, the natural order has been reversed. Mary, a young poor lady in the Jewish society, has been favoured by God and given the right to be called mother of God (Theotokos). The message of the angel sounds funny at the beginning. But the action of the Holy Spirit reverses the natural order. Mary obeyed and pondered all these within her heart and finally became the mother of Jesus Christ the saviour of all humankind. She is a model of all Christians and mother of all humanity. God's spirit has given her the ground to demand justice for humanity. She gave us hope to make decisions and face the consequences of that decision. Mary gives hope to all women to stand for their rights in order to liberate the poor rural women and to take risk. That a woman becomes a builder of solidarity within the society is something to realize in this passage. Surely, women have this right to build a good relationship between them and others in a society.

Another important personality on which the theological basis for women's right is grounded is Mary Magdalene. She was the first person to be commissioned by the risen Lord, to proclaim the message of His resurrection. This means that the first instruction of the risen Lord was given to a woman. With this in mind, we can say that Church History started when women were commissioned to proclaim the Good News to the people. It is a moment when women identified themselves with a national traitor. Mary Magdalene as a prostitute and sinner has scriptural foundation. She was also confused with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha (Jn 11:1-3, Lk 8:1-3). This may mean that there was a rivalry between the male and female disciples with a right to leadership role. Women in this context must be at par with men concerning leadership roles yet due to the social structure they are regarded as a second-class citizen.

The closing message of the Second Vatican Council reads: "The hour is coming in fact it has come when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence an effect and a power never hitherto achieved"²⁶.

Woman has extraordinary dignity, which consists in the supernatural elevation to union with God in Jesus Christ. This union determines the finality of every human person. Due to this women become the representative and the archetype of the whole human race. Mary in this sense represents all human beings.

If God is man how can the woman be created in his image? This points out that it is just a language matter where God is being given masculine features in the Scripture. Despite the male images we have in the Scripture we still have some female images. The choice of male imagery is due to patriarchal structures found in the Scriptures. God as father should be termed in omniscience rather; it is a symbol of divine fecundity and

²⁶ John Paul II, Dignitatem Mulieris, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1988, p. 3.

creativity. We can look at God with the eye of the triadic as a community. If this is the case, then monopoly played by one in the community may destroy the community.

Some churches for instance, Anglicans, realised the importance of equality and the role women played in the scripture. by ordaining women into priesthood. The Catholics and other churches give women special roles to play, which the men are aware of. But for some of the women, “the central question was not about the inclusion of women in ordained ministry of the church... nor getting women into positions of authority in the church. The central question to which others were and remained related is the theological question of our understanding of the being of God”²⁷. Like the Trinity, human beings need to live in a mutual agreement with one another. Trinity should be the ultimate pattern of our human living. Many women look at the Trinity as gender biased. Presently the Holy Spirit is spoken of as she (*ruah* in Hebrew, which is a feminine). Women and men need to work hand in hand for the building of the church. The church is called to be in solidarity with the oppressed, and those discriminated against. The church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. This means that the church is unity.

The church is “called to stand together with the poor, the marginalised, the victims of violence, who are part of our life in the church to give voice to the voiceless, and power to the powerless, in our midst”²⁸. It is on this hope that women have every right to exercise their services fully to the church and the world at large. Without solidarity for the poor and needy, the church cannot be termed One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. If the mission of the church is the mission of God, then women have every base to equally as men in the church.

About the anointing of the body of Jesus after the burial (Mk 16:1-11) women took the initiative because it is the men who do the anointing of men among the Jews while women, to their respective sex. We see women here as gifted in initiating new

²⁷ Gillian, Paterson, Still Flowing: Women, God and Church. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999, p. 34.

²⁸ Ibid., 35.

things hence they need to be given the due chance to do that. In this gospel, the women received a mission, a mandate to proclaim Jesus' resurrection to the world. Women internalise the message of proclamation and passed it on to the new generation especially through their children.

Women witness the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. In the resurrection they saw the empty tomb and the appearance (Jn 19:25-26). Mary, mother of Jesus was among those women consenting to the will of God. Mary played a role in our history of salvation by cancelling sin which comes into the world through woman. So Mary becomes the new Eve through whom our sins are forgiven. By doing this, she grounded us on the faith and love of God through her son, making it possible for us to reflect about God's love and concern for us.

(3.3) VIOLATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The practice of *Trokosi*, which is believed to be an instrument of preventing crimes, in the *Ewe* society has become a system, which violates the rights of the virgins involved. In the present day education has become a vital force for development both personally and communally. The *Trokosi* system is such that the girls are not given chance to go to school in Tongu areas where they have a confined type of shrine girls. This hampers the psychological and sociological advancement of the girls. The only place they know is the shrine, the priests and other virgins. In another sense their duties are to work long days, planting and harvesting crops in the land belonging to the priest. They also serve as handmaidens caring for the shrine as well as becoming wives of the priest. They become child-producing machinery and have no say concerning the number of children they want. Despite their work in the farm, they are not allowed to enjoy the fruits of their labour. Their parents supply them with all their needs. Further more, the vestal virgins are subjected to many forms of harsh treatment such as forced labour, and

punishments. They are denied access to proper medical care. They are prescribed the same attire and sandals, which are to be worn occasionally.

This traditional practice keeps the women in cultural subordination and puts them in such a low state. They have little control over decisions that may affect their bodily integrity. Polygamy, bride price- not determined by them, levirate and surrogate marriage, child marriage, also violate the right of women as persons.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman (CEDAW) realised that, there is an equal right for men and women to enjoy all social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights. CEDAW tries especially in Ghana to take appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of men and women's conduct which is based on the idea of inferiority and superiority of the sexes. Further, the African charter ensures to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women and also to protect the rights of women. The violation of women's rights includes abuse, injury, negligent treatment, exploitation, and sexual abuse. Violation of one women's rights leads to another. For instance women develop psychological and mental problems due to that. The rights such as right of sustainable standard of physical and mental health, right to life, liberty, security, right to freedom from all customs that discriminate against women are all infringed.

The government of Ghana has taken a giant step to do away with all forms of discrimination against women through legislation, administrative, social and educational measures. Despite this fact, Ghanaian women labour under the weight of discrimination. With men desire to control the female sexuality, there developed female genital mutilation. This practice is to keep women from having sexual feelings. There are three types of female genital mutilation, clitoridectomy, excision and infibulation or pharaonic circumcision. "Clitoridectomy is the removal of the clitoral prepuce or tip of the clitoris. Excision is the removal of the clitoris and the inner lips of the female external genitalia or labia minora. Infibulations or 'pharaonic' circumcision is the most

extreme of these operations, which involve the removal of the clitoris, labia minora and parts of the labia majora²⁹.

The reason for this practice is to fulfil religious requirements. "The Inter African Committee on traditional practices affecting the health of women and children has called female circumcision a violation of the basic human rights of health and life"³⁰. Women have the right to have a full control over their organs. Female genital mutilation does not only violate their rights to enjoyment of sex but also poses a health hazard to these women.

Rape is another area where female's rights are violated. Sexual organ for a woman is her pride. So for someone to have a forceful sex with women seriously violates her right. Even children under ten years in Ghana are sometimes raped. Sexual harassment is another form where women's rights are violated. These unwarranted sexual advances are meted on secretaries, typists and housekeepers, whose work place is the house. Several women face domestic violence in their homes. This could mean slapping, stabbing or forced sexual relation. In Ghana, rape within marriage is not considered as something bad. This is because the conceptual idea of raping a wife does not exist. Women themselves feel that their body is part of the man's property.

The criminal code of Ghana states that the consent given by the two parties at marriage cannot be revoked until the parties are separated or divorced by a judgment or decree by a competent court. With this, man is justified. The man has the right to have sexual intercourse with the wife and this cannot be revoked extra judicially. Due to this, forced sex does not constitute an offence either under customary or statutory law. But the marital rape exception creates, fosters and encourages not marital intimacy, harmony or reconciliation but separate state of sovereignty ungoverned by law and insulated by state interference. Also, wife beating is another form of violation of women's rights. Ghana

²⁹ Fitnat, Adjetey, & Rebecca, Osei- Boateng, "Forms of Violence against Women in the Ghanaian Setting" In: Ghanaian Times, 1994, p, 6.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

adopted British Common law, which recognised the husband as the ruler of the house. And in this capacity, he can beat the wife with a cane or stick. To beat a wife it is forbidden to use hands. For the African women, the most severe violation of her human rights are rooted deeply in the family system, bolstered by community norms of male privilege and frequently justified by religious doctrines or appeals to customary tradition. So the police also find it difficult to intervene in any domestic violence since the law has given the men authority.

Child marriage is another way women's rights are violated. Children are given in for marriages at an early stage. At the age of puberty, they are sent to live with their husbands. They end up having children at an early age and even some with complications. This is common in the Islamic predominant areas, for instance Northern Ghana and Northern Nigeria. Incest also violates the women's rights. In Ghana an occultist and policeman had a repeated sex with the policeman's daughter in order to use the discharge from the girl's vagina for some occult purpose. Widow rites, a method used in Ghana to seclude the woman from the community causes the women and land them on untimely death through mourning. Men often undergo only a weekly rite with much freedom.

The section 884 (1) of the Criminal Code of Ghana, 1960, amended by PNDCL 90, states that whoever compels a bereaved spouse or relative to undergo any custom or practice that is cruel in nature shall be guilty of misdemeanour. Despite this correction by the code, the widowhood is still in progress and continues to violate the right of women.

Men keep their wives from working in order to have financial control over them. Both bride price-purchase of the bride, and levirate marriage, that is a widow inheritance, do not only treat women as chattels but the later does not give right over marriage to the woman. Sometimes the death of a spouse may result to surrogate marriage. This reduces the woman to a thing, which could be bought by paying a price.

Female religious bondage is one of the crucial areas where women's right is violated. It is a practice by which young female virgins are given away as gifts to oracles or shrines to pacify gods for offences committed by members of their family. In Ghana, *Trokosi*, as discussed in Chapter Two, is a system where girls ranging from age of five are sent to the shrine to atone for the sins of others. Some of these girls are forced into the shrine in order to become consecrated medium of the divinities. They become the helpers of the fetish priests and are dictated what they have to do each day. In this sense, women become a sacrificial lamb for men in atonement for sins. This notion mentioned above violates women's rights.

(3.4) DIVISIONS AND CONFLICTS IN THE FAMILY

Another effect of *Trokosi* on the *Ewe* society is division and conflict. Sometimes, the idea of sending a girl child to the shrine is not welcomed by the entire family. Mostly it is very painful for a mother to allow her daughter to go away from the family and live a miserable life of perpetual atonement. The father may disagree but eventually yield to the appeal coming from the clan. Usually, the girl is taken to atone in a paternal line. Since the mother is from a different clan (*Ewe* do not marry in the same clan) she finds it difficult to accept the proposal with her clan members. This disagreement brings a conflict between the two clans as well as the husband and wife. The result of this conflict is separation or divorce. Also if the two parties agree, the girl still is separated from the family. She is not considered as a member of the family though they manage to provide her need under fear of the deities. The family or the entire clan has a financial obligation to constantly feed this girl. Sometimes, money is contributed in a large amount and sent to the girl in the shrine. The fetish priest needs to know how much and what things are given to the girl and this brings problems since the fetish priest becomes jealous of the fund. With much pain the girl is regarded as a lost family member.

Women, as well as men, have the same rights. But in the secular and religious spheres, women are discriminated against. The Church, through her long journey on earth, has sidelined women. This is based on Church Tradition that grew out of Scripture. But in the New Testament, Jesus did not discriminate against women but broke the social structure in order to liberate them from their yoke of male domination. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and even sent her to proclaim the message of His resurrection. All kinds of discriminative attitude against women in Ghana are condemned these days to the extent of legislation. For instance, the *Trokosi* practice brings division and conflicts in the family that is opposed to unity that we are all striving for. Interestingly, the practitioners asserted that the practice has aim and purpose, which is useful for the society.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AIM AND PURPOSE OF TROKOSI

(4.1) TO ATONE FOR THE SINS COMMITTED BY FAMILY MEMBERS

Trokosi aims at atoning for the sins committed by the forefathers as well as the sins of the parents or for the close family members. For *Ewe*, as soon as someone commits a crime, the gods are visited in the shrine and the oracles are opened against the perpetrator. Death sets in, starting from the prominent members of the family. The *Ewe* believe in causality, diviner is sought to find out the cause of the death. If the oracle reveals that someone has broken some taboo or has sinned against a particular person, the family members are expected to visit the shrine so as to pacify the gods, in order to avoid an occurrence of further deaths. Also, the victim against whom the crime has been committed must be compensated. The victim must be satisfied with the compensation before the purification by the priest. Purification takes various forms depending on the duration of onset of vengeance.

4:2 TO ERADICATE CRIME

Crime is highlighted among the *Ewe*. It involves any behaviour or practice, which violates the fundamental human rights. Crime could be a major or minor one. Major crimes include murder, robbery, coveting someone's wife, betrayals, and disrespect for parents and using spiritual powers to harm others secretly. The minor crimes include telling lies, and gossiping. All these crimes affect the society and bring death and disasters to the society.

(4.2.1) TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF CRIME

Crimes are any act, which militates against the societies values and laid down principles.

The consequence of crime is punishment. The *Ewe* see crimes as socially harmful and blame worthy. It is something anathema. The gods do not allow it. Among the *Ewe*, there are "benevolent, supernatural forces regarded as the source of justice and fair play, and who hold the power of life and death over men"³¹. To maintain justice and social order, the *Ewe* capitalised so much on anything that may disturb the social structure and the gods. The gods supervise the moral code, which embodies some of the Jewish Ten Commandments. One needs not to mention the name of the ancestors without a cause. Respect for father, mother and elders is held in high esteem. Murder, adultery, coveting somebody's wife or breaking the taboos are not recommended among the *Ewe* since these do not only disturb the human beings but also attract the punishment of the gods. The behavioural pattern of *Ewe* is built on this.

Apart from the benevolent spirits, there are also malevolent ones that possess people and make them act against the social structure. "Consequently, traditional society does not seek to determine criminality in certain cases by the modern principle of basing guilty on men *rea* or guilty intent. Once an offender was the instrument through which certain crimes were committed, he became anathema, a curse, a taboo, which must be expurgated"³². With this in mind, the person possessed is either exorcised or exiled or executed to prevent the devil from destroying the community. Nevertheless, there are some sins for instance: adultery and stealing which are believed to come from the free will of the person, and these attract punishment from the entire society.

The *Ewe* consider some of the moral codes to be sufficient enough to merit state intervention. Some of these codes are based on the degree of the gravity of the crimes committed. For instance, homicide, robbery, adultery and other venial sins are included. Those who commit these sins thrice are sold into slavery. Seeking redress for the offences meted on individuals could be done by reporting the matter to the chief or

³¹ Abotchie, *Op. Cit.*, p.10.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

through magic-religious mechanism whereby complaint is lodged at *Irokosi* shrine. This deters people from committing crimes since its repercussions are dangerous and affect the entire society.

In the case of murder, the sanctions required of persons are heavy amount of money to be paid. If the culprit's family refuses to pay, traditional method is sought whereby an oracle is opened and death will set in the culprit's family, sometimes leaving the culprit untouched. The family sensing danger may choose to execute or sell the culprit into slavery so as to prevent further deaths. The execution of the culprit prevents the anger of the gods. Each member of the lineage keeps his eyes on the society in case some of the members may commit a crime. Parents employ all kinds of methods to prevent their children from falling into sin. To sum up, "the traditional concept of crime is based on moral sense of injury to the individual, the group, the community and the gods"³³.

(4:3) TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CRIME PREVENTION

In the initial stage, the parents use variation of methods to prevent their children from criminal activities. A boy who practises domestic stealing is caught at early dawn by the parents. His hands tied backwards and legs too, pepper is put in his eyes and dragged to the scorching sun in the afternoon. The ropes are moistured to enable it cut into him due to contraction. This is punitive because it deters the boy from stealing in the future.

Another method used for crime prevention is "*Nyiko*" custom. It is a dreadful mode of inflicting capital punishment on hardened criminals. *Nyiko* reminds people of an awful, night heavy clubs and buried alive. When the talking drums sounds, 'we go by night and come by night', horror and fear is instilled in the heart of each person especially the criminals. *Nyiko* custom is of two fold. One is clubbing the person to death. The other is

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

burying the criminal alive in a standing position. It is only the neck, and face, which are exposed to the birds and beasts for prey. It is an artificial sanction to avert the wrath of the gods. The chief has the power to condemn the person to death through *Nyiko* custom nevertheless it must be approved by the parents of the criminal.

Though this death penalty is a secular sanction, it expresses the influence of the supernatural beings whose sanctions in the society is carrying on. The parents and victims kinsmen's approval shows the interest of the lineage to eradicate all kinds of crimes no matter how close the criminal is to them. Due to the intensity and horror in *Nyiko* custom, the society gradually reduced this to a different method where a virgin girl is sent to the shrine to atone for the sins of the members of the family. With this, the lawbreaker is saved to the detriment of a poor girl who is to atone for the clan perpetually. This practice, *Trokosi* becomes a pure supernatural matter since the gods control the society through the diviners and fetish priest and priestesses.

4:3:3 TO MAINTAIN EWE THEOLOGY OF SIN

“Sin is a notion that indicates most emphatically disruption of what is religiously sanctioned or required”³⁴. Sin is a deliberate free departure from God's will. It is egocentric self-willed. It is saying no to God and his commandments. Sin separates and puts a gulf between creature and creator. Sin is a moral transgression which ethical nature depends on a religious tradition of a community. Sin is a religious defilement, which needs expiation or purification of various forms to restore the sinner back to God. To be devoid of sin is to be pure, just, whole, and to relate with the sacred. Sin could be moral, or breaking of taboos or cultic rules.

Sin throughout History of Religions is based on the idea of life after death. For the *Ewe* life after death is experienced in the ancestral homes. They believe that sin, which is breaking of social structure, is a hindrance to ascents into an ancestral home.

³⁴, K.W., Bolle, “Sin” In : The New Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. 13, New York: Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, 1967, p. 234.

Further, the consequence of sin is not only felt in ancestral home but also here and now. The Ewes believed that the “moral transgression was simultaneously a fault against the gods and men. The offender was excluded from the community once and for all, and the gods punished him for the injury which has been done to them”³⁵. In addition to this, time is given to the sinner to stage a come back to the society.

The disobedient child must change his ways:
Truly, his behaviour must be acceptable!
The habitual debtor must curtail extravagance,
And the liar practice honesty.
But surely those who are thieves and wife seducers,
And those who secretly deserve death for others,
They will never become heirs of the treasures of *Ewe* land,
Unless they mend their ways³⁶.

The *Ewe* view that God created human beings, some without sin, and others with sin which comes as a result of an evil destiny which the creator gave them before their appearance into this world. In this sense the person becomes devil incarnate liable for spirit or demonic possessions. Those who are given an evil destiny can still become good provided they undergo some ritual purification to outlaw the evil. In other words those created unblemished could become sinners, which is an egocentric self-will that comes through the dictates of their hearts. Also they can acquire through inheritance from their parents or close relatives. In the aspect of sin within the heart, the *Ewe* believe that the man is given a free will to weigh the pros and cons before indulging in any sinful act. It is in rare cases where a demon may take a full control of the person liable, to spirit possession and use him / her for a sinful act. When this happens, it is believed that the person has not performed the action under a normal circumstance. The punishment is lessened for his act but in a normal circumstance once a sinful act is performed, the sinner is liable to face the full rigor of the law.

³⁵ Henri, Rodent, Themes of The Theology of Sin, Indiana: Fides Publishers Association, 1960, p. 6.

³⁶ Abotchie, Op. Cit, p.12.

Again, the *Ewe* look at the sin as not only destroying the social structure but also destroying the relationship between the society and the gods, the society and ancestors and also the living dead. It also disturbs the sinner within and prone him to more grievous sins. Sin further violates the moral codes set down by the ancestors. A breach of this code invites the wrath of the ancestors and the gods; hence a sinner is viewed as a danger in the society. Sin stands against the god's right of protecting the society. It is saying no to the gods and their rules. A sinner has two options, to pacify the gods or to be stricken down by the gods. For a grievous sin, which circumstances proved to be really grievous, a sinner faces an instant death by the "*Torkor Atorlia*" as discussed earlier on under the agreement of the gods.

In a nutshell, the *Ewe* believed strongly that sin or a sinner is not a friend since he breaks the law and principles of the society, which comes from the gods. The Catholic teaching of sin is based on the notion of the sin from scripture and tradition. This includes the theological speculation of the theologians of different centuries up to the present understanding of sin.

(4.4) A CONTRAST OF EWE THEOLOGY OF SIN AND CATHOLIC TEACHING OF SIN

We have already seen what *Ewe* Theology of Sin is. We shall now look at Catholic view of sin, which is traced from the Old, and New Testaments and Church Tradition to enable us have a clear contrast of *Ewe* Theology of Sin and Catholic Teaching of Sin.

(4.4.1) SIN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the most common word used is "*Hatta*" which means to Miss The Mark. Morally it means to be deceived or to fall short of a set goal. It is the violation of the bond that unites human beings to God and to one another. Also there is "less frequent but more theological word "*pesa*" which indicates defiance towards God. This denotes a transgression, the violation of the rights of others, setting the rebellious

sinner against God as it sets people one against another. It is a word reserved for Israel's sin"³⁷. Israel also looks at sin as a personal offence and revolt against God. David's sin is against Uriah and at the same time against God (2 Sam 12:13). His sin reaches God because it hurts man. The Jews view the whole of Israel as a sinner because they transgressed against God by breaking the covenant. Israel becomes friend and enemy of God at varied times. If an individual sins, for instance in the area of adultery, or idolatry, the typical sinner is Israel who shows infidelity to God who is united to them in mystical marriage (Ezekiel 16). With the matter of sin, "the foremost element in case of sin is God Himself, who is angry or irritated, who is saddened or who complains, who intervenes in order to revenge the injury done to his name, or on the contrary, to pity the creatures weakness and to promise reinstatement"³⁸. In Gen 3. Adam and Eve broke the covenant with God. They said no to God. In the Old Testament, sin is presented as ignorance but everyone's behaviour attracts either reward or punishment. Sin also comes through relation with other cultures. For instance, when the Hebrews entered Canaan, they took to prostitution, idolatry and human sacrifice. Sheol becomes a terrifying place for Hebrews as "*Tokor Atorlia*" is for the *Ewe*. Gradually, punishment is put at the end of ones life but this does not erase the punishment within this world for their own personal sins or sins of their ancestors.

(4.4.2) SIN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The word used for sin in New Testament is "*Hatta*" which mean deviation from the good. It could also be interpreted as "missing the mark". It is sin against neighbours, which is sin against God. In the synoptic, sin is spoken in forms of forgiveness. The story of the prodigal son, teaches that sin against father is sin against God. Sin is slavery and death as well as an offence against God. So Christ's salvific work outlaws sin and

³⁷ J., Lachowski, "Sin in the Bible" In: The New Catholic Encyclopaedia, Vol, XIII, New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1967, p.236.

³⁸ Rodent, Op.Cit, p. 13.

death. For Paul, sin is internal and stable in man. Paul's theology of sin is derived from his unique experience. To Paul sin is universal. Both Jews and Gentiles are sinners. For John, Christ has come to take away the sins of the whole world. He is a propitiation for sins of Israel as well as the whole world. John pictured sin in terms of light and darkness, life and death. Jesus spoke of sin as not an outward defilement but something within the heart. For Jesus, sin is universal. He knows we live in the world of sin and use some horrifying expressions towards the punishment after life. For instance, hell fire where the worms does not die and the fire does not quench (Mk 9:43). Some of the sins mentioned in New Testament are adultery, immorality, murders, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit etc. All these are regarded by the Ewe of Ghana as sins.

(4.4.3) SIN IN CHURCH TRADITION

In the Church Tradition, theology of sin tries to systematise all the findings in the Scripture related to sin. Sin is an evil act, which does not conform to the norms of a society. Sin originates from within the person but could also be prompted by the external activities (Gen3). Concupiscence is also another way man has taken a sinful nature. For instance, David was born in sin. A sinner was he conceived. This is related to the *Ewe* evil destiny as a source of sin.

Justin Martyr emphasized the judgment to come whereby the righteous will be rewarded and the sinners punished. In the 2nd Century, an idea of three types of Christians was developed. These are, those predestined for eternal life, eternal damnation, and those who could choose between good and evil. The Gnostics propounded this idea, which later on faced criticisms from St. Irenaeus and St. Clement of Alexandria. Fathers of the 4th and 5th Centuries distinguished sins between venial and mortal. "In the middle ages, all sins ought to be understood as a deliberate mortal sin by which man turns away from God, his last end. Mortal, Venial and Original sins are not

to be understood in a univocal sense but in analogical sense"³⁹. To oppose this, the Council of Trent brought in the idea of state of grace through which a sinner may be forgiven.

In contrast, the *Ewe* theology of sin does not give enough room for the sinners to undergo reparation. Rather, it tries to shun his company and eliminate him for the fear of the wrath of the gods. Unlike that, the catholic theology of sin aims at winning the sinner to the Christian community no matter how grievous the sins are. *Ewe* Theology of Sin has some equal characteristics of Old Testament view of sins, the Catholic Theology of Sin grows gradually while that of the *Ewe* is still static. Their aim of harsh treatment of sin is to preserve the society from corruption and to eradicate crimes but in doing that the human person is neglected especially in terms of material sin. For the *Ewe*, sin is sin. The circumstances leading to committing a sin is not so much highlighted. The sinner is only exempted from harsh punishment if he commits the offence due to self-defence. Nevertheless, the elders and the gods and ancestors who dictate what to do must approve this.

(4.5) TO GIVE BIRTH TO NEW CREATION

One of the most important and theological based purposes of *Trokosi* practice is to give birth to new creation. The old generation, the ancestors and fathers, the family members committed sin and this contaminated the clan. Sin defiles the entire clan. There is need for someone to redeem the society fully from sin. Despite the fact that the atonement of the *Trokosi* washes the sins of the clan away, it still has something left to be done, so a virgin girl who is undefiled, uncontaminated is pleasing in the eyes of the gods. And the gods accept anything coming from her virginity. The old generation is regarded as a sinful and perverse one. So the fruit of the virgin girl becomes a new hope for the clan. The virgin will give birth to new people who will be free from curse and

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

condemnation. Why a virgin girl? The fact is that, the *Ewe* regarded virginity and celibacy as the highest order of life especially in the spiritual sphere.

The question of how the virgin could give birth was answered on the basis of the *Trokosi* marriage. For a *Trokosi* virgin to get married, firstly she must reach that age of marriage. Secondly, she must be a temporal medium of the gods. Further the gods must free her for the marriage. The suitors need to wait on the approval of the gods. The bride must provide all the materials needed for the marriage. The priest is to receive the gifts on behalf of the gods. In this sense, the priest acts as a parent of the girl. The marriage is done through feasting for seven consecutive days.

When everything is over, the husband is expected to break the virginity of the girl on Friday. This becomes a seal to the marriage. The *Trokosi* could be taken out of the shrine to his house. She is not expected to enter her fathers' house anymore. She needs to report to the shrine after every 21 days. Her first-bom should neither shave nor comb his or her hair before the age of seven when special ritual is performed in the shrine. Also, the fetish priest expects her yearly contribution to the shrine. In this sense, *Trokosi* marriage differs from Christian marriage. Firstly, Christian marriage is not characterized by giving birth to new creation, but as continuity of procreation to fill the earth. It is sharing of fruitful love, which exists between Christ and the church. (Eph 5:32). Marriage is a covenant, which is expressed through mutual consent. Intimate union and the goods of the children impose total fidelity on each of the partners. Christian marriage is ordained for procreation and education of children. Christian children are free from all cultic activities but *Trokosi* child still has duties to perform for the gods.

SUMMARY

Trokosi, despite the fact that it violates the women's right, is still regarded by the traditional religious as a means of eradicating crime in the society. The sin or criminal

act of the living affect the supernatural powers and this forces them to bring curse and disaster upon the society. The traditional concept of crime, which ends with capital punishment at "*Torkor Atorlia*" has changed gradually to *Trokosi* practice as a means for crime prevention. The persistency of *Trokosi* for hundreds of years is also to maintain the *Ewe* Theology of Sin. The *Ewe* view of sin is mostly in line with Jewish view. Sin in the New Testament and for that matter, in the Christian sense is dealt with in a more lenient way than that of the *Ewe*. It invites the sinner for a change of life. *Trokosi* also aims at giving birth to new creation devoid of sin. It is only then that sin, crime and sinful acts will be overpowered. But the *Trokosi* marriage as well as its activities violates the rights of the "vestal" virgins. In order to liberate the virgins from their bondage, the Government of Ghana as well as NGO's and religious bodies made a move to outlaw the practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOVEMENT TOWARDS ABOLITION OF TROKOSI PRACTICE

(5.1) BY THE GHANA GOVERNMENT

The cries of numerous *Trokosi* girls reached the stage at which the Ghana government took an action to rule it out. In May 24th 1994, the parliament roundly condemned the *Trokosi* practice. Those members of parliament from the *Trokosi* affected areas called on tough legislation to outlaw the practice. They condemned the practice as an inhuman and degrading practice, which has no place in the contemporary Ghana. Some of the members of parliament said that the practice was in conflict with several provisions of the constitution and should duly be abolished. They agreed that the administration of justice in the shrine was not in conflict but the method was wrong because they violate the right of the innocent girls. For the young girls to atone the sins of the family members is not accepted. Even the Celtic church where monks are hired to do reparation for those who commit sins realized the injustice in this and hence abolished the penance by substitution.

There was a suggestion to reform the practice, to allow money and animals like sheep, goats, and cows to be substituted for human beings as items of penance. They concede that reforming the practice might be difficult since educated people including Christians go to the shrines in search of justice, which they may not get at courts⁴⁰.

The Ghana government together with non-governmental organizations appeal to the practitioners to renew the system so as to stop using young girls as means of atonement.

(5.2) APPEALS TO THE PRACTITIONERS TO RENEW THE SYSTEM

Regarded as a religion, Ghana government could not abolish the system straight away but rather asked the practitioners to update with regard to the present standard of civilisation where everyone has the right to worship.

⁴⁰ Francis, Gasu, & Harry, Reynolds, "They call for law banning Trokosi" In :Ghanaian Times, Accra: August 25,1994, p.10.

The main aim of the Government is to liberate girls trapped under the shackles of tradition. In 1995, there was a national conference on *Trokosi*, which called for more aggressive strategies such as education and dialogue as well as legal actions.

But there is a difficulty in the renewal due to the benefits, which the practitioners derived from the system. Socially, the system works on a power structure where the fetish priest and elders are at the top of the pyramid whereby the *Trokosi* are the subordinates. If this were traced from the sociological point of view, no dominant group would like to relinquish power due to the privileges received. At family level, parents are afraid to send their girls to the shrine, let alone to receive the *Trokosi* who are released due to the reprisals. The *Trokosi* practitioners also cling to the system with fear of punishment from the gods in case they let it go. It is an ancestral practice, which must be maintained, they said. The appeal to renew the system becomes impossible in some shrines but some of the shrines accepted animals and money instead of keeping the "vestal" virgins.

Some other factors hampering the renewal of *Trokosi* are viewed from the point of *Trokosi* practitioners and the NGO's. Economically, the practitioners derived their income from the practice through forced labours. Also, the economic factors affect the NGO's. They don't have sufficient money to rehabilitate the *Trokosi* who were released and also to satisfy the financial demands of the practitioners. The most disturbing issue on the renewal process is the apparent emerging battle between Christianity and traditional religion. Again, the fear on the part of both practitioners and the families, through whose omission or commissions no less contribute to the perpetuation of the practice. Other factors are sex role stereotyping and lack of coordination and collaboration among the organisations involved in the process. In a strict sense, those who hold on the tradition with fear and trembling could not accept since it is through this practice, the crimes will be eradicated and birth will be given to new creation.

Due to the failure of the appeal made by the Ghana government, legislation became the final procedure to end the practice. On January 16th 1998, a bill was introduced in parliament with the following provisions; whoever receives or sends at any place any person or participates in or is concerned with any ritual or customary activity in respect of any person with the purpose of subjecting that person to any form of ritual or customary servitude or any form of forced labour related to customary ritual shall be guilty of second degree felony and liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not less than three years" (Section 314 of criminal code). This is in line with Article 14 of the Ghanaian constitution, which stated that every person has a right to personal liberty. Article 16 provides that No person shall be held in servitude or slavery or be required to perform forced labour. This was concluded in the second national conference (on the move towards abolition of *Trokosi*) on education and institution of legal actions against recalcitrant shrines. The law in this sense will prosecute the perpetrators. We must recognise that the mere passage of bill is not likely to end the practice as envisaged. The practice is in flagrant violation of Article 14 on human rights and dignity from slavery, servitude and forced labour (Article 16). Article 17 and 25 deals with gender discrimination and right to education respectively. Article 26(2) expressly prohibits customary practices, which are dehumanising and degrading. Despite the provision of the law, the execution would be a big problem. Even, when the law was passed criminalising the practice, some of the shrines gave a death threat to those canvassing to outlaw the practice. The priests value martyrdom than to let go their ancestral practice, hence the failure of the law banning *Trokosi*.

(5:4) FAILURE OF THE LAW

The law or legislation could not help to stop the practice. *Trokosi* is a religious phenomenon. It is not a political issue. The law cannot really kill the practice because

the practitioners regard *Trokosi* as a religion. Due to this, the law as it happened in the early stages of Christianity, in Rome, will produce the martyrs as regarded to abolition of the practice.

Further, those who are in the shrine are indoctrinated and the fear of the gods is deeply rooted in their hearts. Also, the sending parties, the parents or families are not ready to accept their children back into the society since this may invoke curse and death on them. Again, to enable the *Trokosi* to give birth to new creations devoid of sin and crime would not be achieved. Due to all these, the practitioners and the subordinates as well as the society are not ready to abolish the practice. At the height of the war between the government and the priests, some priests yielded and accepted to take some amount of money and animals in order to free the girls. About thousand were freed but the more convinced shrines criticized the wayward shrines and are ready to face the government in anyway. Some of those girls freed could not enter their own houses. Their parents refused to accept them back into the family. The natives also refused to adopt them because of the fear of the gods. Government rehabilitation centres are created to train them to fit into the society hence the failure of the legislation (since law and faith are in conflict as regarded to the practice). The government asked the non-governmental organizations mostly Christians to deal with the matter.

(5.5) EFFORTS BY CHRISTIANS ORGANISATIONS

One of the leading Christian organisations in the process of abolition of *Trokosi* is Intemational Needs (local non-govemmental organization in Ghana). This organization tries to visit all the shrines and interviews the *Trokosi* and the priests. They tried to dialogue with the priests to find different means of atonement but the priests mostly rely on the gods and keep on telling them about their fate if they dare abolish the practice. The few *Trokosi* released are rehabilitated by Intemational Needs. They built vocational

schools for the girls. Their feeding is also provided by International Needs. Other NGO's are also playing their roles in the shrines and outside the shrines.

Usually, the Christian Organisations use scripture and sometimes carry Bibles to the shrines. Most of the dealings with the priests and the subordinates are preaching based on Jesus' redemptive work. Some of these Christianity dominated NGO's have pastors among them who turn the process to arguments and condemnations. This did not bear fruits since the *Trokosi* is regarded as religion just like Christianity.

Ghana Commission of Human Right and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) asked for an integrated approach to *Trokosi* menace to avoid religious wars, which may embrace all traditional religious.

(5.6) INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TROKOSI PRACTICE

The failure of the law banning *Trokosi* and the insufficient progress of the Christianity dominated NGO's call for the integrated approach to the practice. The most important call for the integrated approach is that the practice embraces the entire community. This makes the transformation rather complex. "It is imperative therefore, for all stakeholders of the *Trokosi* system to have a second look at the practice in relation to the socio-religious consideration of affected cultural groups, comprising Anlo, Tongu, Agave Ewe, the Ga-Adangbe and to a lesser extent the Krobo"⁴¹. There should be a committee of various religious bodies and non-governmental organisations as well as government agencies such as Social Welfare Department to find a lasting solution to the menace. The other Organisations include National House of Chiefs, The 31st December Women Movement, National Council on Women and Development, the parliamentary select committee on legislation Security Forces, and the Ghana National Council on Children (GNCC). For the integrated approach to succeed, similar committees need to be established in the districts also. The members should include traditional religions for

⁴¹ A.E., Amoah, "Trokosi Menace" In: Ghanaian Daily Graphic, Accra: May 27, 1998, p. 7.

instance, the shrine owners, and assembly members. Despite the involvement of the dominated Christian NGO's in the integrated approach, it would be necessary to tackle the issue of *Trokosi* in a secular point of view rather than religion. The *Trokosi* system has some harsh areas that must be identified and judiciously removed so that the system does not clash with human rights demands but the method adopted must be judicious so that a sort of religious quagmire is not created for the repercussions that may be more devastating than religious fundamentalism that is ruining Algeria and Afghanistan"⁴². To make the change functional, we need to involve the parties in this practice to effect a lasting change. *Trokosi* victims and practitioners are related and they should avoid spiking one in favour of the other. Awareness should be created in the practitioners and the families that, keeping young girls in the shrines infringes their rights and at the same time affects the image of the country as far as human right is concerned.

It may be prudent for known Christian groups to desist from entering shrines to negotiate or undertake any functions likely to be construed as religious and tantamount to provocation. Where possible, such an assignment needs to be taken up by religious rulers, priests and shrine owners who have liberated their victims and have adequately sensitised on the transformation programme⁴³.

The campaign against the *Trokosi* is not to condemn any religion or belief. The Christian view the discussion on *Trokosi* as inferior to other religions in order to secure freedom for the victims. Christians should desist from condemning the practice as obnoxious in a heathen culture. There is no proper means of coming into consensus with the fetish priests and shrine owners. Since the beginning, there has been an attempt for religious supremacy among human beings. Thomas Jefferson, an American president, said "on the dogmas of religion, as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarrelling, fighting, burning and torturing one another for abstractions and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴³ Norris, Edem, "Arrest Trokosi Priests" In: *The Mirror*, Accra: August 15, 1998, p.3.

human mind”⁴⁴. In the name of religion many people have been killed. Religions like Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc. have undergone all kind of turmoil. Transformation process should be devoid of the things, which may lead to another religious war. Those from developed areas should bear in mind that the areas affected by *Trokosi* are not developed. Health facilities and employment avenues as well as education should be at its corner. So to address the *Trokosi* problem, we need integrated approach to development where efforts of various ministries and departments should be coordinated. There should be a dialogue of action whereby Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people. There should be also a dialogue of theological exchange where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages and to appreciate each others spiritual values”⁴⁵. The Catholic Church spearheaded the process which may give a lasting solution to the problem.

(5.7) CATHOLIC VIEW OF TROKOSI AS A PASTORAL CONCERN

The areas affected by the *Trokosi* have got few Catholics and Presbyterians, as well as Pentecostal churches. The Presbyterians registers the majority of the Christian population. The traditional religion covers about 70% of the total population of the area. So, the Catholics view the practice of the *Trokosi* as a pastoral concern. The Catholics started evangelisation as at present.

Before Vatican II there was no sign of inculturation in the affected areas. This was not only in the Catholic Church but also in the Presbyterian Church. The late Dr. Ephraim Amu of Presbyterian Church was excommunicated because he wore cloth and carried drums to play for his choir. The drums in those days were regarded as evil. There was prohibition of local language in church. The entire culture was termed evil.

⁴⁴ Amoah, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Congregation For The Evangelisation Of People And The Pontifical Council For Interreligious Dialogue And Proclamation, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1996, p. 19.

The faith was carried with a foreign culture. Furthermore, the early Christian evangelists in the *Trokosi* affected areas attached themselves with the slave trade, which the natives would not forget up to this time. They view the church as slave dealers.

Though the Church tries to make the faith more and more African, the natives think that it will be another deceit. Even upon enough education, they still have their reservations. The question, which the traditional religious always ask the priests, especially, the expatriates are “why should you consider *Trokosi* as slavery? Has the *Trokosi* done more harm to us than the Trans-Atlantic slave trade? With this question, I feel that the Church has a long way to go as far as evangelisation of *Trokosi* affected areas is concerned. Catholic Missionaries’ respond to *Trokosi* affected areas actively.

(5.8) MISSIONARY INTERVENTION

“The ultimate goal of missionary endeavour, which should never be lost sight of is to establish the Church in a sound foundations among non-Christian people, and place it under its native hierarchy”⁴⁶. The missionaries are promoting vocation for diocesan priests since they are at a better position to understand their people more than the expatriates. Also, they tried to inculturate the faith among the people. As Aylward Shorter put it, “Inculturation is the ongoing dialogue between faith and culture or cultures. More fully it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian Message and culture or cultures”⁴⁷. The faith is to take root among the people through the use of their own cultural elements. This is because “the Church’s aim is not the domination of peoples or the gaining of temporal dominion: She is eager only to bring the supernatural light of faith to all peoples and to promote the interest of civilisation and culture and fraternal concord among the nations”⁴⁸. In an adherence to this, the Comboni Missionaries together with the Divine Word Missionaries took the matter as

⁴⁶ Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, Washington, D.C: Ransdell Inc, 1951, No. 22.

⁴⁷ Aylward, Shorter, *Towards Theology of Inculturation*, Great Britain: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Pius XII, *Op. Cit* No. 52.

very important, having in mind that the practice is not a political or emotional problem but a pastoral concern. Jointly, these two missionary congregations recall Evangelii Praecones and operate on the basis that:

the Church from the beginning down to our own time has always followed this practice: let not the Gospel, on being introduced into any new land, destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful. For the Church when she calls people to a higher culture and a better way of life under the inspiration of the Christian Religion, does not act like one who recklessly cuts down and uproots a thriving forest. No, she grafts a good scion on the wild stock that it may bear a crop of more delicious fruit⁴⁹.

This is in line with the ideas of Fr. Aylward Shorter when he said: “a universal or Catholic Church is one to which many cultures contribute. It is not the imposition of a worldwide culture”⁵⁰. The aim of these two missionary congregations is to find a lasting solution to *Trokosi* problems through a deeper level of cultural awareness. They drew a plan to graft their evangelisation on the culture of the people. In order to achieve their aim, they established two cultural education centres where new missionaries are introduced into the culture. Traditional leaders, priest, and well informed members of the society are involved in these centres as teachers.

For the missionary congregations the evangelisation of the area needs to be done in a holistic way thus “in the age of rapid material advancement, the Church cannot afford to stand aloof, but must show an interest in the whole human person including his or her bodily existence, guiding people in the right use of material things”⁵¹.

SUMMARY

Ghana government is making a restless attempt to abolish *Trokosi* practice but there is no sufficient breakthrough. This is due to the use of legal means to solve spiritual problems. Concerning matters of faith, experts in religion are required to dialogue especially with the tradition and culture. When all the attempts of integrated

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 46.

⁵⁰ Aylward, Shorter, *African Christian Spirituality*, New York: Orbis Books, 1978, p. 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

approach and Christian dominated NGO s was more a failure than success, the Catholic Church in Ghana declared the practice as a pastoral and missionary concern. In response to that the Divine Word Missionaries and the Comboni Missionaries are using a joint programme based on education in order to give a lasting solution to the problem.

CONCLUSION

The Practice of *Trokosi*, which is geared towards eradicating crime in society to avoid the wrath of the gods, has turned into violation of the rights of the young girls in the shrines. Crime kills, it is destructive. It disorganises the individuals as well as the society. Nevertheless, a total eradication of crime, which is the aim of the *Ewe* of Ghana, could only be achieved with the incidence of crime. This means that in order to eradicate crimes, the Tradition of *Trokosi* creates another crime in a different perspective. Keeping the young girls in the shrines, denying them of all human needs is a crime in the modern society. It is keeping hostages under the influence of fear of the gods. This practice deprives the girls of education and human development. Formal education is the key to self-development and everybody is to be given the chance to go to school. I give credit to the *Trokosi* Priests of Anlo traditional area who allowed the virgins to go to school. Everyone has the right of worship but the *Trokosi* have no right. Despite the practice, sin and crime still exist in the area. Over four thousand *Trokosi* found there could not deter the people from committing crime. Why should the practice continue? A *Trokosi* Priest answered that Christianity has not achieved all its goals so it is with *Trokosi*. Though they do not fully eradicate crime, yet they have the aim that one-day, crime would vanish if birth were given to new creation. Due to their theology of sin based on faith, the government legislation to outlaw the practice could not succeed because the law is not well equipped with the theologies needed to combat the practice. Even, some of the *Trokosi* who are freed still go to the shrine due to the fear of punishment from the gods. This is a proof that *Trokosi* is something rooted in the psyche of the people. The fact is that *Trokosi* are neither recruited nor captured. Rather, their respective families with the fear that something bad will happen to them if they refuse to make reparation to the gods send them to the shrine. So the problem of *Trokosi* is not a political or secular issue but a pure religious phenomenon, which needs a developed

theological redress. Christianity, which is a theologically developed religion, is helping the people to see the evil of the practice. Seeing it as a pastoral concern the Catholics engage in dialogue with this religion. They capitalised on the culture of the *Ewe* since culture and religion are interwoven.

Some of the *Trokosi* priests have given up the practice though evangelisation is not done in a vigorous way. The majority of the shrines are not happy with some of the Christians attitude because they feel looked down upon. The missionaries as well as the diocesan Priests need to use dialogue of action and theological exchange in order to make a fruitful apostolate to bring those girls to freedom.

Despite the negative elements of *Trokosi*, the fact remains that it preserves the sanctity of the young girls for spiritual purposes. But the condition of preservation is what could be condemned. This way of forced virginity could not be associated with the Catholic nuns or virgins since the latter is a voluntary choice. Further, *Trokosi* defeats the purpose of promoting unity and harmony in the society since it separates the young girls from their parents. Some of the priests also engage the girls in sex, even some raped. This is not even the aim of *Trokosi*. We may call it human elements but it is still evil to use these innocent girls in this way. The missionaries working tirelessly to eradicate this practice should point at the evil in the practice and educate the people on sin and reconciliation so as to eradicate the fear of the gods from the core of their hearts. This will make them feel that God is a loving father who is willing to accept and forgive all who turn to him.

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