



Eulogising God in Christian Worship through Akan Traditional Appellations: A Case of Kumasi

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ABSTRACT

Although Christianity has existed within the Kumasi Metropolis for over 100 years, Church worship has not been fully influenced by the rich indigenous cultural elements of the Akan. This is a result of the failure of the early white missionaries to fully appreciate and adapt Akan cultural elements like appellations in the liturgy of the Church. This paper therefore sought to look at the worship life of Christians of Kumasi with the view to discuss how some appellations in the Akan culture could be carefully integrated into Christianity in Kumasi. Since the study primarily focused on the description of the appellations in the ritual celebrations of Christian worship, the research problem was answered by adopting the qualitative research approach. Analysis was made to justify that Akan eulogy could also be adapted and used in Christian worship.

Key Words: *Appellations, Christianity, Eulogy, Proverbs, Traditional Worship.*

INTRODUCTION.

One thing which is common to all forms of religion is worship. In worship, the devotees of the particular religion seek to adore the object of their worship; ascribing some titles which best help the worshippers to identify with their deity while they also seek to embellish the name(s) of the deity. Appellation could simply be described as the name or title by which someone is known. One major component of Akan and for that matter African Traditional Religion is the use of appellations. In Akan Traditional Religion, in all forms of prayer, recognition is first given to *Asaase Yaa*, Mother Earth, because the existence of the people is believed to be partially attributed to her. The next to be acknowledged are *Nananom Nsamanfo*, the Ancestors, through whose benevolence the community continues to exist.

Although God is widely known and fully acknowledged throughout Africa, His worship, in the true sense of the word, is very limited. According to the Akan people, *Se wokom Onyame a, wobekom nkamtrɔ*, meaning if you try to divine for, and on behalf of God you will fail. As such nowhere in Africa would one find a shrine or temple solely dedicated to the worship of *Onyame* (God). However, the Supreme Being, God, is always called upon in times of existential crisis or great need as well as during the celebrations of the rites of passage (Gehman, 1987: 202-208). Again, during the Akan *adae* festivals, although the main objects of worship seem to be the Akan black stools and the ancestors, it is during this period that the Supreme Being is given prominence, (Sarpong, 2011: 40). For in times of existential crisis, rites of passage and the *adae* festivals, the focus of the prayers is always the Mighty God. However, the Akans believe that God, being the creator, gave man some principles which have always been the yard stick of their behaviour over the years (Parrinder, 1969: 44).

It is all the same, reassuring and of great interest to know that the *Akans* of the Kumasi Metropolis have had a genuine knowledge of God and that they have had their own ways of

communicating with this deity, ways which meant that they were able to speak authentically as themselves and not as pale imitators of others when it came to the worship of God (Tutu, 1978: 336). Principally, *Onyankopɔn Twieduampɔn Kwame* is seen or acknowledged as the Creator and Sustainer of all creation, and for that matter life. He is therefore given a myriad of accolades to show His magnanimity, power, greatness and compassion. To the Akan people, He is a very personal God with attributes and honorific names (Sarpong: 2011). This strong conviction is showcased in their religion which has a central place in the life of the African (Gyekye, 1996: 18). This belief is daily demonstrated in the life of the Akan people through their 'worship' of the Supreme Being, God.

Additionally, He, God, is variously described by different African groups as, Excavator, Hearer, Carver, Originator, Inventor or Architect (Opoku 1978: 14-18). All these titles emphasize God's position as the originator of all things (Mbiti: 1970). The most important thing is that, the people, in this case the Akan people of Kumasi, always look for a symbol(s) in their society that stand(s) for what is being expressed (Sarpong: 2002: 21).

The appellations used for God seek to embellish or give a very clear "picture" as far as humanly possible, how the people, "see" or apprehend the Supreme Being. Appellations are created or formed based on things which are unique to the Supreme Being or with things or idioms common to the people in their environment. These appellations for God are coined out of human names, human titles, natural objects like trees and animals, idioms and proverbs. These idioms and proverbs are major components of Akan culture. Culture, in this case, can be described as the total life experiences of a people. Culture is made up of values. Furthermore, the idioms and proverb form part of the smaller segments of the cultural values which are known as cultural elements. These cultural elements are used extensively in Akan traditional worship in reference to the Supreme Being. Some of these elements of appellation have been successfully carried over into Christian worship in the Kumasi Metropolitan area.

METHODOLOGY

To help solicit data, the researchers adopted the random and purposive sampling methods in selecting the population for the study. In this way the researchers randomly picked churches based on congregations, societies, parishes and assemblies of the various denominations. Kumekpor (2002) asserts that although the population or universe remains at a particular time, the same number of samples which can be deduced from that population may vary. Having randomly picked these churches, the researchers then purposively looked out for the right people who would offer the necessary information that helped in arriving at the needed information. For example agents of the churches were picked since they are involved in the daily administration of the various places of worship and therefore were in the position to give the correct picture as to what happens in the churches. The agents group consist of both the clergy and lay leaders called catechists, deacons or presiding elders.

From the larger church community, selections were made from men, women and youth of the general membership. The ages of the people selected ranged from 18 years to 80 years. The age groups were selected to help collect information from a wider range of people who have been involved in church worship over a considerable period of time. In addition to the groups of people mentioned above, some traditional Akan rulers were also interviewed as they are the custodians of Akan culture and cultural elements in the Kumasi area.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE AKAN SUPREME BEING

From the names, appellations, proverbs and idioms ascribed to the Akan Supreme Being, one cannot help but accept that in the Akan worldview, this Divine Reality is very unique and distinct from all other deities. He is said to be *ɔte ananka nnuro*, meaning the one who picks the

anti-snake/path adder bite herbs. Only very powerful traditional herbalists are capable of finding the best herbs used in treating snake bites, especially that of the path adder. In the Akan worldview only people who are under a grave curses are bitten by the path adder. If the Supreme Being is said to be the one to pick the *ananka nnuro*, anti-path adder herbs, then he is capable of averting every curse. The Supreme Being in the Akan thought is said to be *brakyiri a hu ade*, to wit the one who sees from behind whilst looking forward. This clearly indicates the Akan belief that God is everywhere at every moment, he is omnipresent and therefore sees everything that goes on around the world.

SOME NATURAL ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUPREME BEING

In addition to the Akan names given to the Supreme Deity by the Akan people of Kumasi, there are other natural items which in the Akan language, have the prefix '*nyanko*' which comes out of the Akan name for the Supreme Being, *Nyankopɔn*. One of such is rain water which is called '*nyankonsuo*' which translates into the Supreme Being's water. The rainbow is known by the Akan, including those of Kumasi as '*nyankontɔn*', God's bow. As seen from the Bible, in Noah's story, it was YHWH, the Creator who set the rainbow in the skies as a reminder of his unfailing love and protection to humankind (Gen. 9: 13-15). Here too, instead of associating the rainbow to any other source, or turning the rainbow into a deity, the Akan associate it with the Creator Himself.

There is also a local tree in the Kumasi Metropolis which, in the Akan traditional set-up, is associated with the Divine Reality. It is grown in front of traditional shrines and herbalists' homes. It normally grows into a three-fork branch pattern at the top of the stem. In Akan traditional religion, an earthenware pot is placed in the tree's fork to collect rain water, *Nyankonsuo*, whenever it rains. The water, thus collected, is used in preparing traditional medicines or concoctions. It is believed that when a child gets convulsions, and some of the rain water thus collected in the pot is sprinkled on the child it would receive instant healing. The Akan name for this tree is *Onyame dua*, God's tree. The *Onyame Dua*, (*Alstonia gongensis*) was used as a shrine of the Supreme Being (Rattray 1927).

All these are indications that the Akan people of Kumasi have for all the time believed in the existence of the Divine Reality. The God of the *Akanfoɔ* of Kumasi is not a remote and an indifferent personality, who does not seem to care about people and His other creations. The Akan God, therefore cannot be equated with 'the unknown God' or any of the tutelary spirits or the other divinities.

AKAN TRADITIONAL NAMES OF GOD

Since the idea of this research is to try and incorporate Akan cultural elements into Christian worship. What is needed is to find out how these Akan Christians of Kumasi have related with the worship of God whose name is always honoured during church services. One area where this relationship is noticed is how these Akan people of Kumasi address God, the Supreme Being. For in the worldview of the Akan people of Kumasi, at no one time can a person dispense with the Supreme Being. So far as the Akan people of Kumasi are concerned, God, *Onyankopɔn*, is everywhere, He is the one the people resort to when everything else has failed. However, the God the Akan believe in is a spirit, he is eternal, he is very benevolent, he is also a holy God who is unique in everything, (Gehman, 1987: 190-191).

What is important here is the fact that in Akan traditional worship of the people of the Kumasi Metropolis, there are the names and appellations used to worship the Supreme Being. These Akan words are used in both human and drum languages in Akan worship. The *akyeremma*, (drummers) always, when they play in public, through the drum language, seek God's

permission as well as support during the entire period of drumming. Likewise, as the drums peel off their praises of God, the first steps any Akan traditional dancer takes, being a royal or ordinary person, are to recognize the fact that God is above and then seek his permission before dancing in public for protection against "any evil eye" that will watch him while dancing.

The Akan names of God, with their accompanying interpretations show how the *Akanfo* of Kumasi acknowledge and worship the Supreme Being. He is placed above all creatures and given the highest adoration in all things and at all times. These Akan Christians have carried right into the Church the same concepts they have had about the Supreme Being. In their prayers they appeal to *Awurade Nyankopɔn Twieduampɔn* to intervene in all aspects of life.

A look at some of the appellations of God by the Akan people of the Kumasi area gives us an idea as to how this Supreme Being is acknowledged, adored and worshipped by the *Akanfo* of Kumasi. Many Akan traditional worshippers of the Kumasi area, just like the Jews, use more of the appellations rather than the real names of God in addressing Him. Although the Supreme Being is known as *Onyame*, *Onyankoropɔn* or *Onyankopɔn*, the *Akanfo* of Kumasi prefer using such appellations as *Ɔdeɛfoɔ*; *Adom Wura*; *Ɔkatakylie*, *Barimayi!* when talking about God. The Akan God is the Supreme Being, just as He is depicted in the Bible (Gen. 17: 1, Ex. 15: 2-3, NKJV). He is not any ordinary god but the Omnipotent One, whom they call '*Onyame*' or '*Onyankopɔn*'.

The name *Onyame* denotes quite a lot. When that name is compartmentalised, what comes out are '*wo*', '*nya*' and '*me*'. That in full, in Akan, comes out as '*nea wonya no a, na wamee*' which translates literary as "The One whom when you own, makes you completely satisfied". That means that the Akan Supreme God is the one who completely satisfies all those who come to him. Also found in that name, *Onyame* is the word '*nyam*' which means respect or honour. So the Akan Divine Reality is the Respectable One. In return, He is the one who is able to impart some *anumuonyam*, "glory" and "honour" to all those who know and love Him.

Equally important is the name *Onyankopɔn*. This divine name is made up of the words *Onyame-ko-pɔn* or *Onyame-kro-pɔn*. The name *Onyame* has just been explained and defined as the all providing, gracious and satisfying One. The Akan *Onyame* is *ko* or *kro* meaning He is One. Thus to the Akan of the Kumasi Metropolis, his *Onyame* is just One and above all. He is unique in the Akan worldview and mind set. He literary has no equal. Again the Akan *Onyame* is *pɔn*. The word *pɔn* in Akan is a suffix signifying greatness or hugeness. For example, a very huge and tall tree is said to be an *odupɔn*, while a strong, powerful animal, like the bush cow or rhino, is described as *ɔbɔpɔn*. In effect, the Akan *Onyame* who is the one and only God is also the strong, mighty, unique and great One.

ATTRIBUTES MEANT SOLELY FOR THE AKAN SUPREME BEING

The Kumasi Akan people do associate the Supreme Being with the provision of good health so that man could work; He is associated with rains to help in man's farming activities and daily needs. He is involved in good yields from man's toil so that man could live well, as well as in procreation so as to preserve man's future generations. He is therefore known as *Twereduampɔn*, '*dua a wotwere no a, wompɔn*', which literary means the tree one leans on and does not fall. So the Akan Divine Reality is the One a person can lean on as a strong tree for support and never fall. He is the dependable One, the Lord God Almighty.

The appellation *Twereduampɔn* could be expanded as the *Twī-ādu-āmpɔn*. This name is believed to be a corrupted form of a North African terminology. There was supposed to be a Sumerian god known as Anu. It is also believed that the Akan people many years ago, migrated with other peoples from Mesopotamia. As a result the people of North Africa used to talk about

the *Adu* or the *Anu* of the *Twi* people. This again gives some credence to the probable religious links between the people of North and West Africa in ancient times in the days of old (Danquah, 1944: 49).

The Akan God is known again as *Awurade*, Lord, by the *Akanfoɔ* of Kumasi. When He is addressed as *Awurade Nyankopɔn*, it translates into the Lord God. He is again called *Nyansaboakwa Nyame*, to wit, the Lord God who is the citadel of all wisdom. He is *Teteboakwa Nyame*, meaning the One who has existed in eternity past who exists now and will continue to exist as the Eternal God. He is therefore given the appellation *Berebere* that is to say the God who has no beginning, who existed in eternity past and has no end. He is further addressed as *botantim Nyame*, the Rock of Ages.

He is also said to be *ɔdomankoma*, that is to say, the One who takes care of the whole earth. But *domankoma* could be separated as *ɔdom Ankoma*. *Ankoma* is an Akan name for a male. *ɔdom Ankoma* then means the helper or raiser up of the ordinary man to become somebody or a hero. The Akan God is also addressed as *Nana*. *Nana* means grandparent or ancestor. God is acknowledged by the Akan as the Great Grandfather or Great Ancestor. He is an ancestor far beyond the level of the ordinary human ancestor. *Onyankopɔn then*, is the Ancestor *par excellence* of the Akan people.

HUMAN ATTRIBUTES WHICH ARE ALSO ASCRIBED TO THE SUPREME BEING

In their desire to acknowledge and worship God in a more realistic and practical manner, the Akan of Kumasi have associated the Supreme Being with some human attributes. In that sense a feeling of divine-human relationship has been developed, thus making the divine-human encounter more realistic. This divine-human encounter is akin to what is found in the Bible. In the Bible, God is seen then as either, Father, Shepherd, Husband, Master, Guide, Defender, Friend or one of such human relationships that makes Him real to the worshipper.

Basically, the Akan Supreme Being, known to the people of Kumasi is first and foremost acknowledged as a parent. He is therefore addressed as *ɔbaatanpa Nyame*. *ɔbaatan* in Akan means a benevolent parent, especially used for a woman who is a parent. To say *ɔbaatanpa* then means a good parent. The Akan Supreme Being is therefore the good parent who constantly provides all the needs of his children. The *Akanfoɔ* of Kumasi believe that the Divine Reality they know of is the Father of all humanity. As such the Akan say that *Onyame na ɔhwɛ nnipa*, that is to say, it is God who takes care of all (sick) people.

In the worldview of the Akan of Kumasi then, humanity extends beyond the Akan territory into the whole world. The Akan God is the *Ankonam boafɔɔ Agya*, to wit, the father of the lonely, the helpless and the needy. The Akan Supreme Deity is further acknowledged as *Kɔmfɔ Adu*. *Kɔmfɔɔ* means a priest or diviner. The title *kɔmfɔɔ Adu* is given to a dependable and reliable friend or a reliable diviner whose predictions always come true. The God of the Akan is known as a reliable friend, a dependable and truthful person.

This God is also addressed as *ɔbrɛmpɔn* or *ɔkatakylie*, meaning the great, powerful and brave warlord. In Akan history only very brave and powerful warriors were given the accolade, *katakylie*. The title was given by an overlord to his brave and strong warriors who successfully undertook military campaigns. In the view of the Kumasi *Akanfoɔ* therefore, the Supreme Being is the strong, valiant one. He is the *ɔnwanwanin*, the wonder working person. Again He is addressed as *Okurakwaban*, the one with the hefty strong shoulders, who is capable of defending and protecting his people (Kuma, 1980:7).

Furthermore, He is given the accolade *Omintinmmimin*. The usage of this word for God is quite interesting. The word is used for very strong, stubborn, unshakable and powerful, and at times

very difficult people. When used for God, the impression is about the fact that He is impregnable and 'a no push-over' person. He is the one no person can take for a ride.

Again, He is said to be *Otibrekesedu*, the strong one who is capable of divining all secrets. The Akan see the Creator as an all knowing person, from whom nothing can be hidden. The Akan Deity is again said to be *Kumamperibie*, for He does not in any way discriminate among people. To the Akan people of Kumasi, the Supreme Being is in all matters impartial as he deals with all people on equal basis (Kuma, 1980: 9).

Another interesting appellation given to God is '*Ogyam*'. *Ogyam* means friend. *Ogyam* however, seems to be the shortened form of '*ogyama*', a common tree plant in Akan forest areas. *Ogyama* is an all-round purposeful plant. It is a fruit bearing plant. The fruit is food for different types of birds while its leaves are used to prepare a concoction which is used in treating wounds and especially ulcers on the skin. The leaves, mixed with other herbs, are used in preparing other traditional medicines for treating some health hazards among the Akan people, while the stem is also used as a chewing stick among the traditional people. As seen here, every part of *ogyama* is useful to the people. When the Supreme Being is addressed as *Ogyam*, according to, Emeritus Archbishop Sarpong, an Akan anthropologist, in a personal interview, the impression being created is that of an all-round faithful, reliable and all-supplying father figure or friend.

If the Christian form of worship within the Kumasi Metropolis is celebrated through the use of some of these appellations, it would be very easy for the Kumasi *Akanfoɔ* to understand them. Again, it will be easy for the worshippers to associate themselves with these values, thus enriching the Christian worship in Kumasi. Although Akan chiefs and kings are lauded through the use of some of these forms of appellations some people in the orthodox churches feel very uncomfortable when some of these praise items are used for God in the church.

AKAN PROVERBS, IDIOMS AND OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT GOD

Proverbs, idioms and other wise sayings form a major component of the Akan language of the people. Through proverbs and idioms the Akan people of Kumasi pass on the wisdom of the land to the younger generations. The whole philosophy of life of the Akan people of Kumasi is also embedded in these proverbs, idioms and sayings. But most importantly, the religious life of the Akan people is more or less enshrined in the proverbs and idiom.

So proverbs and idioms play a major role in the traditional worship of the Akan of Kumasi. The proverbs are used in the form of appellations for kings, chiefs, ancestors and other dignitaries. In the same way the Akan laud 'Divine Reality' through these rich proverbs and idioms. From Akan proverbs and idioms, there is every indication that the *Akanfoɔ* of Kumasi have always believed in a God who is the Creator God. '*Gye Nyame*', Except God, is an Akan wise saying indicating the Akan people of Kumasi's dependability on the Supreme Being. This proverb, *Gye Nyame*, has been graphically represented into a motif and widely applied in the visual art forms of the Akans.

It is also a common Akan idiom or expression, showing that in times of distress and trial the Akan people of Kumasi believe that it is only God who can save the situation or intervene on behalf of the needy. Some churches have used this symbol in decorating their chapels. A similar idiom like the one above goes like: *enso Nyame ye*; meaning it is not difficult for God to handle (a matter). In a critical situation when man becomes powerless, his only source of hope and support then comes from God. If man therefore puts his trust in this God, he then leaves his destiny in the hands of the capable God.

Sarpong (2002), describes the period when he first entered the seminary to start with his theological education. It was fashionable in those days to quote from the works of theologians like St. Aquinas and Calvin, with purely European philosophical ideas to support issues being

discussed on the African continent. According to Sarpong, almost all examples cited in academic discussions were foreign to the students. It is just like saying that through the mercies of God sinners will be cleansed and will be as white as snow. Meanwhile most educated Akan of Kumasi who have gone through the corridors of academia have never seen snow in their life time.

The liturgies being used in the worship services of the churches in the Kumasi Metropolis were developed through the use of the philosophies of people like St. Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin and Martin Luther. Likewise, theological expositions are mainly based on these same European philosophers and their philosophical ideas. The *Akanfo* of Kumasi have through their long history developed their own unique philosophy for themselves. The philosophies that they have known and used as part of their worship as well as their everyday activities are equally good and more relevant to the Akan situation than the European philosophies.

AKAN APPELLATIONS OF GOD

As stated earlier on, one of the rich components of the cultural elements of the Akan people of Kumasi is that of appellations. In both human, as well as drum languages, the Supreme Being, great and famous people, as well as kings, queens and chiefs are lauded through both oral and drum appellations. In all traditional prayers, the appellations ascribed to the God the Akan of Kumasi know are simply amazing. Going through some of the appellations which the Akan of Kumasi ascribe to the Akan Deity, one realises how the Akan people of Kumasi see the Creator God and how highly He is placed in the Akan thought and how He is worshipped.

Here is an example of an appellation to the Creator, as given by Pastor Boahen of the African Faith Tabernacle Church, during a personal interview,

Efiritefe	From time immemorial
<i>Woyedomankoma Nyame</i>	The dependable God
<i>Se yedi w'asem so a,</i>	if we all abide by your injunctions
<i>Deeye hia nyinaa,</i>	Then shall we get whatever we want,
<i>Seye fufuo, seye kək</i>	Be it white or red.
<i>Ey Ɔbɔdɛɛ mmɔbrɔhunufɔɔ</i>	It is the Creator, the Gracious one.
<i>Yema wakye a akudonto</i>	Good morning to you, dear One.
<i>Onyame! Yema wakye!</i>	God, we say good morning to you
<i>Neamesuayi ma me nhunu no yiye</i>	what I am learning, help me to be successful

The Supreme Being is said to *be ato-ko-a-frɛ...* or *to apenten a na yɛfr no*, the protector and defender whose support is sought for in times of war or emergency situations. He is *ɔkofroboɔ*, to wit the one who fights till he climbs mountainous regions to overcome his enemy, or in other words the one who fights and follows the enemy into difficult terrains. The Supreme Deity is also given the title *Ɔserɛmu Osei* that is the lion, which is the ruler of the savannah regions. In this sense God is compared to the powerful lion, which is the master of all that it surveys. The Divine Reality is the *ahunu-a-bɔbrim*, the one whose mere presence creates shivers or fear in the opponent (Kuma: 27).

This Deity is the *Ɔwesekramo*, the reliable and dependable diviner or fortune teller, whose predictions cannot be challenged. He is the *'bunukeseɛ a ɔwɔnsuo'*, "the deep part of a stream which contains much water", showing that God always has enough and always oversupplies the needs of his people. The Akan God is *'Ɔdɔtɔkeseɛ a, w'ase wɔnwini'*, meaning the thick overgrown forest which provides shade for the way faring man, indicating that this God provides care and protection for all who rely upon him. He is the *Ɔma dodoɔr ma-nfonoe*, the one who gives more than requested, more or less the one who always over-supplies (Kuma: 1980: 5-10).

To the Akan people of Kumasi, God is *Ɔdɔkɔto bɔnware*. *Bɔnware* is a sharp, thorny creeping undergrowth plant. It is very difficult to weed in an area covered by this plant. Many farmers

would wish that that plant never grew on their farm lands. But the Akan God is always ready to work in such areas, indicating his ability to undertake very difficult tasks on behalf of His people. He is *fentefrem a omene osono*. *Fentefrem* is a marshy area while the elephant is a huge animal that can move through all kinds of places with ease (Kuma: 9-10).

The crab is also known as *fentefrem* in Akan. One of the greatest enemies or tormentors of the elephant is the crab. As an elephant drinks water from a stream, since it cannot sieve the water, it may mistakenly pick up a crab with its trunk. Such a crab then begins to scratch and irritate the elephant inside its mouth. To get rid of the crab the elephant is said to hit its head many times against any big tree it finds in an attempt to force the crab out. The result is that the elephant eventually may wound itself and die. The Divine Reality is unseen but like a crab inside an elephant's head, He is capable of humbling all His enemies.

Furthermore, the Divine Reality is addressed as '*krotwiamansa a, ne din ne ne honam se*'. *Krotwiamansa* is the title for the leopard, which is powerful and is able to control the territory under its survey. So to the Akan, God is seen as the *krotwiamansa* whose colours correspond to his qualities. This Supreme Being is again said to be the *onwamkesebrekuo Atta a, oma ne ho so a...* *onwam* is the horn bill. When the horn bill flaps its wings and crows some winged animals in the forest get worried or get scared. God then is seen as the horn bill who, when he flaps his wings creates fear among his enemies. God is also addressed as '*daase a, ensa Nyame*', the one you cannot adequately and fully express your gratitude to. For before a person finishes saying 'thank you', God would have added more things for which the person needs to give thanks.

All the listed names, attributes and appellations clearly show that the Akan people of Kumasi have a great view of the Creator God, just as the Jews did. The Kumasi *Akanfo* then ascribe to Him all that he is supposed to be. Unfortunately, the Church in the Kumasi Metropolis has failed to use these aspects of Akan language in describing the Supreme Being, simply because these idioms and proverbs have become part of the drum language which is associated with traditional Akan worship and liturgy.

APPELLATIONS IN AKAN HYMNS (*EBIBINNWOM*)

Another format in which the appellations of God are clearly brought out are *Ebibinnwom*, African hymns, of the Methodist Church, Ghana. The *Ebibinnwom* lyrics are a 'Fanti cultural form' that have found 'an honoured place within the life of the Church' (Williamson: 1955). There are two types of *Ebibinnwom* lyrics. There are the written ones which are found in the *Christian Asore Nnwom*, the Akan hymn book of the Methodist Church, Ghana. There are also the 'improvised' or 'spontaneous' *Ebibinnwom*, which come up on the spur of the moment during a programme (Adubofour: 1987).

Whilst the written lyrics are used in a regular order of worship, the improvised ones are used as a commentary on the sermons and serve as a punctuation. Such a commentary gives the preacher a clear feedback from the congregation. This commentary makes the preacher aware of the effects of the way he is communicating with the worshippers from the pulpit. If there is no such "interruption" then the chances are that the preacher's message was not appealing. As such, instead of saying that such lyrics interrupt the sermons, these improvised lyrics rather season sermons (Adubofour, 1987: 87).

The use of these improvised lyrics in seasoning sermons can be traced to the Akan folktales, *Anansesem*. The Akan *Anansesem* are narrated with songs (*mmoguo*) interspersed as commentary on the tale, at times to ridicule the falsehood described in the tale or to praise its hero, usually the spider, *Ananse* (Williamson 1955). The *mmoguo*, serves as a feedback, communicating to the tale teller, how exciting his tale is or how boring and absurd it is. The written lyrics, can be traced to the '*Asafo* songs of the traditional *Asafo* Companies and also the

Mmobobe (war songs), and *Asrayere* songs which are sung in praise of tribal heroes and valiant, the *Akatakylie* (Williamson, 1955: 103).

Both the *mmobobe* and *asrayere* songs represent a special female tradition and denote the ceremonies connected with times of war. In the days of old, *mmobobe* and *asrayere* were performed by women on behalf of the men who were at the war front (Williamson, 1955: 103). These *Ebibinnwom* also have a very close relationship with the Mfantasi *Adenkum* music.

This is a clear indication that the Akan, by becoming Christians, have not ceased to be Africans. The Akan will therefore, adapt the expression of their new life to the genius of their race and to the institutions which their past existence has produced, in so far as they are not incompatible with the Christian way of living (Westermann, 1937: 103, Adubofour, 1987, 177). It is essential then, that the Akan of Kumasi Metropolis find good ways and means of expressing themselves as Akans in their worship in the churches. This is best done through the "institutions which their past existence has produced, in other words their culture and worldview.

By using the word *Donkunyi*, the Brave General, the Akan Christians are expressing Yahweh's praise name Sabaoth. This demonstrates that the Akan Christians' faith in the saving power of God is very firm. One can then see faith expressed in God, who transforms the experience of 'hell' as the Christian had known into 'heaven'. This, then becomes a clear demonstration of the experience of the transformation of their primal innate faith in God (Oduyoye: 1986: 45).

The popularity of the *Ebibinnwom* in churches in the Kumasi Metropolis is a clear manifestation of the concept of the animation of worthwhile Akan cultural elements for the use of Christian Churches. Music forms a major component of Akan religious life and worship. Here, the Mfantse Akan, and now the *Asantefofo* of Kumasi have tapped on the rich Akan musical heritage for the benefit of the whole Akan Christian community in general and the Kumasi Metropolitan area in particular. It is clear from these *Ebibinnwom* that Akan music has a unique place in the worship life of the Church in the Kumasi Area. *Ebibinnwom*, as a cultural element, has stood the test of time as well as change. *Ebibinnwom* have nourished and will continue to nourish the faith of the Akan Christians of the Kumasi area. The *Ebibinnwom* lyric has persisted throughout the years, because the traditional worldview and cosmology of the *Akanfofo* of Kumasi still persists in Akan Christian thought. The existential battles of Akan life have not yet ended. In other words, the continuous use of the *Ebibinnwom* lyric points to its relevance for Akan Christian thought (Adubofour, 1987:178).

Other forms of Akan traditional music or orchestras, which are similar to the *mmobobe* and *asrayere* are *nnwomkorɔ*, *adowa*, *kete*, *akapoma*, and *dansuomu*. Up till now none of the orthodox churches, apart from the Roman Catholic Church, uses any of these forms of music in its worship.

The popularity of the *Ebibinnwom* in churches in the Kumasi Metropolis clearly shows that it is possible and very necessary that the Akan Christians of the Kumasi Metropolis take cognisance of their cultural heritage. They then have to explore ways and means whereby their rich cultural musical heritage, which involves drumming and dancing, could be incorporated into their worship. From what is happening within the Methodist Church, Ghana, Evangelical Presbyterian, Global Evangelical and The African Faith Tabernacle Churches, it is possible to incorporate more Akan musical concepts into the worship of Christian churches without, in any way, undermining the Christian faith.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the Akan have a very rich culture. Streaming out of that, it has clearly come out that some cultural elements, out of that culture, could be incorporated into

Christian eulogy of God. This also shows clearly, that a person does not need to behave and talk like a foreigner before effectively worshipping God but rather, God can be worshipped in different cultural modes such as the appellations used by the Akan of Kumasi in their traditional festivities.

Today, a lot of the Christian groups in Kumasi offer different forms of appellations to God in their liturgy and these are usually culled from the traditional ones. Fortunately these attributes, appellations, idiomatic expressions about the divine reality, as well as natural elements associated with God are being used effectively in the worship services of many churches in the Kumasi Metropolis. Sermons of all types are spiced up with Akan proverbs in order to draw home the points being raised by the preachers. This has helped to enrich Christian worship of God in churches within the Kumasi Metropolis, while helping the ordinary Christian to appreciate his God.

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