

ASPECTS OF CONTINUITY IN THE RELIGIOUS ROLES
OF WOMEN IN 'SPIRITUAL CHURCHES' OF GHANA

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There is ample evidence of continuities in the indigenous religious roles of women in The Spiritual Churches of Ghana. These have been reasserted into new forms in the wave of the process of religious change that has resulted from encounter with foreign cultures. This new development has had a major influence on the position of women who predominate in the religious sphere, and has given rise to a considerable reawakening in the religious status and roles of women.

Numerous and varied institutions have been responsible for this new process. In Ghana, one such agent is the popular Spiritual Churches, widely known as African Independent Churches, and more recently as African Indigenous Christian Churches.¹ These are religious movements which have been founded in Africa, for Africans by Africans² in quest of a Christianity based on African culture, so that the message of Christ may have a greater and more meaningful impact.

Women do not only constitute the overwhelming percentage of the population of spiritual church members, but they have actually been the real or implied progenetrix and instigators of these new religious movements as well as their financial backbone.³ As propagators of a new religious phenomenon which is syncretic, in the sense that it combines elements of both African Traditional Religion and Christianity, women tend to play a twofold role: they seek to project and perpetuate the African traditional heritage by incorporating their cultural values in their church activities. To this effect women represent a medium linking the new religious movements or Spiritual Churches to that of the traditional past. On the other side of syncretism, women in spiritual churches echo the christian enjoinder on their members to resist from what they term idolatory and recourse to every activity related to the cult of the ancestors.

This paper intends to examine two traditional religious functions of Akan women which have been incorporated into the new religious movements in a new context, namely the offices of priesthood and Queenmotherhood. It attempts to analyse the elements that are 'still recognisably african' in these roles and also seeks to make society aware of the contribution of women to contemporary development in Ghanaian religions.

Religious Roles of the Traditional Priestesses

The office of priesthood is a very important aspect of any religious enterprise in Ghanaian societies. Among the Akan the greatest significance of this office is expressed in worship and healing. Traditional priesthood is open to both male and female but women are in the majority. Priests or priestesses, among the Akan are first and foremost intermediaries between divinity and man, transmitting divine revelations to mankind on the one hand, and submitting men's supplications to the deity on the other hand. They practice divination, make predictions of both impending successes and dangers, interpret dreams and heal various sicknesses.

The preponderance of priestesses should not lead to the preconception that the office is a mean one as the wider society usually tends to denigrate the capabilities of women. The functions performed by priestesses are no mean roles; they demand persons with high spiritual abilities to engage in a rapport with the numen or supernatural being, through whom they derive their powers. Priesthood is a prestigious and privileged role which is not meant for every human being but for people chosen and set apart of whom the greater percentage is women. The primary qualification to enter the indigenous priesthood is possession by a deity, or the little people of the forest, *mbotsia*.⁴ This possession constitutes the "call" to the priestly vocation. The phenomenon of possession is an important attribute of the priesthood and the Akan term for priest, *Komfo* is a combination of *Kom* (possession) and *fo* (people).⁵ A possessed candidate goes through a series of mental and physical crises expressed in paranoid behaviour and sudden illness "which at least for the time being may defy therapeutic treatment".⁶ In effect the person behaves strangely but to the Akan traditionalists these symptoms are regarded as normal because they are evidence of the call to priesthood. A priestess does not usually marry since she is believed to be the wife of the god she serves.⁷

Traditional Religious Roles of the Queenmother

The queenmother is actually a female monarch⁸ whose duties complement those of the king or chief. The position of the Queenmother is determined by consanguinity and she is usually the sister or mother or any classificatory mother of the chief. Apart from her numerous social and judicial responsibilities over the affairs of the female members of her community she exercises various religious duties especially in puberty rites ceremonies. She is the one who examines and pronounces a candidate qualified and safe for the ceremony because should a girl undergo this ceremony when pregnant, or having disabused her virginity, the whole community would experience the wrath of

the ancestors for having violated a religious taboo.

However, the most prominent religious function of the Queen-mother gains significance within the highly religious ceremony of enstoolment of a king or chief. She it is who possesses the ultimate prerogative and responsibility of introducing the new chief officially to his ancestors by lowering him thrice on his predecessor's stool. Chiefship among the Akan is a sacred office and the sanctity of the chief begins the moment the Queenmother introduces him to his ancestral stool in the ancestral stool room which is also a sacred place and is infact debarred to all women except the Queenmother. By this ceremony the new chief also becomes sacred and attains the status of the highest priest and custodian of the whole cultural and religious heritage of his people. The Queenmother being a monarch herself, endowed with the ultimate duty of making and unmaking a chief could be considered to be the most superior religious functionary among her people.

Similarities and Differences Between Priestesses and Prophetesses

Women priestesses in Spiritual Churches are generally referred to as prophetesses to correlate with their spiritual abilities of faith healing, prophecy, diagnosing ailments, interpreting dreams, foretelling impending dangers and successes of their members and clients. These pneumatic abilities of women in Spiritual Churches are not new to the priestesses of African Traditional Religion (ATR).⁹ The traditional priestesses were, as has been discussed above, and are still performing these same activities which are described as *awawade* (wonders) in spiritual churches. Perhaps the mode of operation employed in connection with these activities of spiritual churches - which involve only faith in the Supreme God and the use of sanctified water render their achievements miraculous. In achieving the same purposes ATR priests may manipulate nature, use herbs, organic matter and water. In addition the African concept of healing which sets the harmonization in human relationship as an indispensable prerequisite to spiritual healing is made use of by the priestess.

The decisive factor differentiating the activities of priestess and prophetess is the source of directorship, the source from which they derive their vocation as priestess or prophetess. The preliminary qualification to enter both institutions, which embraces both male and female, is by divine call. In ATR the primary requirement to become a priestess is possession by a diety or other supernatural beings manifested in abnormal behaviour as has already been mentioned. In spiritual churches the call takes usually an auditory nature, where the person is possessed by a voice, *ndze*, supposed to be that of the

Holy Spirit of God that pressurizes her unabatedly to do God's work (*Nyame edwuma*) until she succumbs. The pressure the Holy Spirit exercises on the candidate being called to prophethood is demonstrated with similar 'abnormalities' just like that which accompany a diety's call to priesthood in ATR. It is therefore very difficult to differentiate whether a call is by the Holy Spirit or by a diety. For example the Musama Disco Christo Spiritual Church (MDCC) appreciates this difficulty but however claims the ability to distinguish between the Holy Spirit's call and that of the "Evil Spirit" of the "shrine priest".

"If the evil spirit can inspire someone, then it should not surprise anyone - that the Holy Spirit [can] also inspire [] another person". Firstly the coming of the Holy Spirit upon anyone depends upon his faith, fasting and fervent prayers." The MDCC has indicated some of the signs symbolising the presence of the Holy Spirit in its doctrines: "To begin with a brilliant light may surround the inspired person, then he may start calling the name of Jesus". Others tremble and fall down, speak in tongues, prophesy, work miracles and do several other things that the Holy Spirit may direct them to. On the other hand indications of the call of the Evil Spirits is detected by the inspired person doing certain acts like "drinking alcohol, eating raw eggs - discovering medicinal herbs". They may also tremble and fall, shout but talk with roaring voice.¹⁰ The priestess is the channel of the deities and other spiritual beings (e.g. *mboatsia*, ancestral spirits) who manifest themselves by possessing them. Similarly the Holy Spirit invokes possession in the prophetess who is an intermediary between God and her adherents. Possession is invariably the main method through which communication between the priestess or prophetess and the divinity is established. It is an action whereby the divinity speaks through his priestess sometimes by displacing the personality of the priestess so that she becomes a mere medium or prophetess behaving and speaking as compelled by the divinity possessing her.¹¹ The diagnostic and healing powers of these two religious specialists are also divinely inspired. The dieties and other supernatural beings are responsible in all the undertakings of the priestess. They inspire them on which herbs should be used for certain sicknesses, the methods to be used and modes of application. The Holy Spirit on the other hand is the source of healing powers and methods of the prophetesses. Hence their popular designation: 'Spiritual Church'.¹² Unlike ATR priestesses, prophetesses are free to marry though some voluntarily forgo their conjugal duties in order to do *Nyame edwuma*.

One main difference between the two as evidenced by this research is that while a spiritual church prophetess is actual founder of her church, a priestess is not usually a founder of

the shrine where she serves. African Traditional Religion has been in existence for ages. It has no founders or reformers,¹³ neither can it be propagated in other areas. It is ethnically and locally bounded. Personal field research observation also revealed that a spiritual call by God's Holy Spirit presupposes the formation of a new church. Hence the proliferation of spiritual churches. Furthermore a spiritual call by a deity usually seeks to revitalise the customary activities of a particular shrine god. In so doing ATR ensures the continuum of the same time honoured traditional beliefs and practices, but new spiritual churches do deviate in certain aspects of their African Christianity from existing ones especially in regulations, practices and doctrines. Some spiritual churches allow polygyny, others abhor it, some permit members to participate in traditional celebrations, others prohibit them. In some spiritual churches faith-healing and the application of Western medicine - co-exist side by side, while others advocate only faith-healing. In the spiritual church of *Nyameasa Pa (Ekwan)* healing is by means of "silent meditation and telepathy" which simply means the ability to diagnose and heal instantaneously by the prophetess just staring straight into the eyes of the supplicant, and by the use of cold water.¹⁴

Although the office of priesthood and prophethood in ATR and Spiritual Churches respectively are highly esteemed by their adherents, that of ATR is by virtue of a laid down traditional order which is an integral part of the long established system. The priestess is therefore bound by traditional precepts which have been formulated by her ancestors, whose ever present surveillance help in the enforcement and observance of inherited religious values. Thus she is obliged to conform to certain regulations e.g. confinement to the precincts of a particular deity, in a specific locality and a systematic training of initiates with various accompanying taboos into the priesthood. A Spiritual Church is almost entirely a new order - though built on cultural and social structures of the people, where the women prophetesses serve in a new capacity.

Owing to the intransitive nature of divine revelation the recipient of a revelation is thus the sole recorder of divine dictates. Founding a church is usually consequential to such a personal rapport with the divinity, and here a woman, as the case may be, may choose to give a peculiar name herself to her new group, determine where to locate the church or where to wander with her followers from time to time. She is usually not confined or obliged to stay at a particular location as pertains in ATR, except of course the 'voice' instructs her to. This new independence of women in spiritual churches constitute perhaps the most significant new development in the old religious roles of women in Africa.

Innovation in the Religious Roles of Women

Spiritual churches could be conceived as religious innovations which have had almost the same effect on the established mission christianity, just as the latter did to indigenous ATR on its advent. They have inadvertently become widespread religious movements and seem to have shaken the foundations of mission christianity by causing a drift of the latter's members, especially the female population into the Spiritual Churches. This development has been achieved not through any overt, contemptuous condemnation of mission churches nor by means of crusades and jihads. It has been the result of simple recognition of their familiar african culture, where the mood of joy is expressed in worship and people's spiritual anxieties and fears concerning african beliefs, especially witchcraft which is believed to be the root cause of all their problems, are taken as real and are controlled.

This impact of spiritual churches on mission churches indicates that the former represent a challenge to mission christianity. Thus the fact that the first ever spiritual church in Ghana, the Church of the Twelve Apostles was founded by a woman,¹⁵ infers that the first challenge against mission christianity was therefore initiated by a woman. This woman was called Grace Tani. She was a former adept traditional priestess in the services of the river god Tano in Nzema, who conceived and brought forth the new religious syncretism in Ghana. Through conversion by the wandering Liberian Prophet, William Wade Harris, she was baptised.¹⁶ Except for two female companions, later to be joined by Grace Tani, the prophet Harris did not have any apostles and he apparently did not also have a church, therefore whenever he made converts, he advised them to join the nearby mission churches, notably the Methodist and Roman Catholic "to await further instruction".¹⁷ Madam Grace Tani, instead of joining a Mission Church accordingly, set a precedent by establishing a new religion altogether.¹⁸ Using her prerogative as one of the only three women followers of the Prophet Harris, she mobilised her immense knowledge of traditional religion and giving it a new look by fusing it with certain elements of christianity, the Church of the Twelve Apostles was created in 1914.¹⁹

Traditional Foundations in the New Religious Roles of Women

That the woman is the foundation rock of the first spiritual church is seen in the church's spiritual work, *sunsum edwuma* which is reflected in Grace Tani's own pre-conversion religious activities, the most outstanding of which is 'water-carrying', that forms the core in the healing ritual of the Church of the Twelve Apostles.²⁰ However the progenitorship of Madam Grace is

not coherently portrayed. Walker and Breidenbach are convinced that Grace was the original founder of the church. Baeta on the other hand, explicitly describes her as a co-founder of the church with two men then later implicitly acknowledges that "although Grace Tani was really the moving spirit, Nackabah was more prominently in the public eye".²¹ This somewhat cautious stand taken by Baeta may well be appreciated if we consider the position of women in the wider secular society. Though women play significant and respectable roles in Akan traditional society, their roles are regulated by tradition to complement those of men to such an extent that even "when a woman rears a sheep, it is the man who sells it", as the Akan adage prescribes. With the invention of a new religious phenomenon the *sitz im leben* regarding gender roles in society has been maintained. The innovation did not become an indicator of their emancipation. Thus although the members are convinced that "Madam Tani ... owned the church" they also chorused in concord that "she being a woman, did not wish to be a leader on her own".²² Spiritual Churches then in keeping with tradition deem it unethical to acknowledge the woman publicly as the founder and perhaps further still as an innovator. Hence the coalition with Nackabah whose name is sometimes synonymously used for the Church of the Twelve Apostles which the woman had brought into being.

The primary function of the church was to heal through faith in God and through the use of sanctified water.²³ With the emphasis on God, the church sought the elevation of the belief in one supreme God, to the exclusion of all other gods and spiritual beings.²⁴ Secondly, the new religion of Grace Tani was to concern itself with women's issues with the avowed intention of protecting women from the hazards of evil witchcraft which is the causative agent in all sickness especially in the ailment of barrenness. Barrenness in African traditional societies has been conceived as the greatest 'stumbling block' in the path of the highest fulfilment of life. Maria Kente visualizes barrenness as a form of "oppression" since barren women, "have to undergo the disgrace of having no children." She believes some women cannot conceive because the "devil sucks the babies" in their wombs.²⁵

In her endeavour to remodel religious practices Madam Grace Tani sought succour within the context of her familiar social background. She relied on her knowledge of her former religion and focused on the problems of her own gender in order to make the impact of her efforts more meaningful and beneficial. In this way she conforms to the general view that all major events of change take place within the cultural setting in which one lives. Prior to her conversion one major aspect of Madam Tani's profession as a priestess of Tano had been the preoccupation with sickness relating to the reproductive capacities and

disorders of females:

"In a trance, achieved while dancing in a brass pan, which was seen as the dwelling place of the ~~bosom~~ she spoke with the voice of the river god Tano. Achieving this state she then administered herbs and advice in order to make child-bearing possible [and also] that women might bring forth safely."²⁶

As a prophetess Grace Tani still concerned herself with the treatment of women's problems involving infertility and other works of witches especially misfortunes in trading activities, a major domain of women, in her ~~sunsum~~ ~~edwuma~~. In this spiritual activity possession is also achieved but through the machination of the Holy Spirit, with water as the chief medicament. The ritual takes place in the sanctum of the church called the 'garden'. Here the prophetess takes a white enamel cup, "fills it with water and raises it to the sky, pointing to the direction of the sun. She does it in order that the ~~sunsum~~ (spirit) she is working with may hit and bless the water within. After her arm gives a convulsive jerk, indicating that the ~~sunsum~~ is working with her, she pours some of this water into the pans that each of the patients have brought with them".²⁷

Thus prophetess Grace Tani's new religion reaffirms the existence and persistent nature of the age old phenomenon of witchcraft as a main factor in the afflictions of women and seeks to address this issue as one of the basic motives of her church. Her objective seems parallel to Prophet Harris' unrealized aspiration to combat various customary beliefs, taboos and practices that he thought had adverse effects on the development of women. One such taboo which Prophet Harris managed to abolish was the ritual prohibition on menstruating women.²⁸ Ironically the adherence to this taboo which is resolutely observed by many other Spiritual Churches has resurged in the Church of the Twelve Apostles. The practice has been given a biblical rather than traditional, justification (see Leviticus). Many women in these churches hold steadfast to the observance of this ritual of isolation because they feel menstrual blood is unclean in the sight of God and to quote one of them: "during menstruation I don't even see my husband, how much more then could I appear in the presence of God in this unclean state?"

Perhaps it was not satisfactory enough for Harris just to have abolished this prohibition. Rather it would have been more meaningful to have removed the whole insipid aura surrounding menstruation through constructive education. Tackling it from the perspective that everything God created is good and the fact that menstruation is an involuntary process, it cannot be evil, but on the contrary, it is the very foundation on which human life stands. Menstruation has procreation as its main purpose

and in my opinion there are two main reasons for the seclusion of women during their menstruation period:

1. The loss of blood during the process could be profuse and very painful and this can weaken the woman. Therefore the need for rest.
2. The blood concept of the Akan which elevates the woman as an indispensable medium in procreation and lineage identification is built upon the menstrual blood. In order to build up the contention that menstrual blood is clean and sacred, I will refer to a hypothesis concerning this issue which I have elaborated elsewhere.²⁹ The main difference between the living and the dead is that the dead lack blood. During her menstrual period and at child delivery the blood the woman loses gets to the earth, the official abode of the dead, through washing. Through the blood of the woman the ancestors are symbolically revived, and direct contact with the ancestral spirits, who are believed to be the source from which new babies are sent, is established. By inference, a menstruating woman enters a sacred relationship with the ancestors. Perhaps that is the more reason why sexual relations are prohibited during such times so that the communion between the woman, and for that matter mankind, and the ancestors should not be interrupted. Menstruation should therefore be regarded as a sacred rather than a profane process.

As much as rest during menstruation is desirable for the reasons given above, it should however not be plagued by indigenous traditional or biblical apologies in an attempt to denigrate the capabilities and significance of women, and thus retard their innovative resources and contribution to human welfare. According to Rattray an Asante woman would easily eclipse any male in importance had it not been for menstruation with its resultant avoidances.³⁰ By introducing the phenomenon of ritual uncleanness also into the Spiritual Churches, women's position as progenitrix and leaders of this new institution is similarly being encroached upon, just like their ancient roles as Queens and leaders of their nations were usurped through the same excuse.

Position of the Queenmother in Spiritual Churches

The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) is an example of religious syncretism in Ghana. Though founded by a man Joseph William Appiah (later Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah), it owes its growth from its "humble beginnings" as Faith Society in 1919 to Musama Disco Christo Church through the powerful and dynamic spiritual endowment of the woman behind the man called Abena Baawa.³¹ She was baptised into the Faith Society as Hannah Barnes and later became the wife and the first Queenmother,

Akatitibi I to the Prophet Jemisimham Juhu-Appiah, the Akaboha I (King) of MDCC. The distinguished accomplishments of this woman can be based on certain phenomenological sequences. Barely two years after Hannah's admission into the Faith Society, the latter developed rapidly into a distinct spiritual church with the new name Musama Disco Christo.³² She managed to attract many adherents by impressing the people with her visions and prophecies that came true. The most outstanding being the vision relating to the birth of her male child with the Prophet Appiah precisely on August 24th 1924 at Twelve noon.³³ This vision had apparently been revealed to her by God when she was yet a young girl. The miraculous, sweet scented, thick water, Mkwansu (holy water) is also God's special gift to Hannah. She came to possess this sacred water already when she was a child, that is, even before the Prophet Appiah, the Akaboha I, came in contact with it. According to Goodwin and later confirmed by Rev. Baah, this Mkwansu was brought and placed in Hannah's chest by angels from above, and to taste of this water "she would hit her chest and it would come on her tongue and you would kiss her to get it. But as her realization was growing she prayed to God because this did not seem nice. She asked God to bring it openly so that people would not think she had put sugar on her tongue. So now it comes in a special basin that is put down in the Holy place. She makes a special prayer and we all pray seven times outside the Holy Place, we go back at Twelve midnight. She comes out of the Holy Place when the water is brought. She will tell the people and when you go there the basin is full of this water".³⁴ This means Hannah the Akatitibi was solely responsible for the replenishing of this holy water. This is given credulity by the fact that, the Mkwansu seems to have ceased coming ever since the death of Hannah, the Akatitibi I, about six years ago, but Rev. Baah hopes that "it will still come because the grace of God that used to grant the Akatitibi I this gift, will also be given to her representative".³⁵

Just as Prophetess Grace Tani's "Water-carrying" has gained a great ritual significance in healing in the Church of the Twelve Apostles, so has Prophetess Hannah Barnes Mkwansu earned ritual esteem in the installation of a new Akaboha, who is king and General Head Prophet of the Musama Disco Christo Church. Rev. Baah gives an account of his experience of the miraculous Mkwansu during the installation of the Akaboha II Prophet Matapoly Moses Juhu-Appiah: "I was then ten years old when the Prophet Matapoly became Akaboha II. When he had been seated in the Kromkrombaa (Sanctum) a fragrant thick water from no where suddenly poured on the Akaboha, wetted all his ceremonial garments and sprinkled on many of the people present".³⁶ It was the same Mkwansu that made its maiden appearance in public during the baptism of Prophet Jemisimham Juhu-Appiah and

anointed him the first Akaboha. This holy water therefore finds a great significance as the visible symbol anointing the king and affirming the legitimacy and source of his kingship. The Prophet Jemisimham's baptism can analogically be reconstrued as his enstoolment as king by the Queenmother through supernatural directives. At her signal "a strange liquid poured down straight from heaven onto Appiah's head", then God spoke through Hannah that "he would make Appiah a great king of men".³⁷

The whole procedure of election and installation of the Akaboha with few modification is a replica of the kingship system in the Akan tradition though the role of the Queenmother has been taken over by the Senior Prophet.³⁸ The elevation of the Prophet Jemisimham's wife Hannah as Queenmother demonstrated another great breakthrough with reference to the relationship of the Queenmother to the king in Akan traditional society. In contradistinction the Queenmother, in Akan tradition as we have discussed earlier, is always a blood relation of the king, usually either the sister or mother or any other classificatory mother but never the wife. This innovation in the role of the Queenmother of the MDCC originated from the fact that she is a co-founder of the church. Therefore the new order seemed to be temporal and prevailed only as long as the first Akaboha and the first Akatitibi, the founders of the church lived together. The Akatitibi surviving the Akaboha I retained her position as Queenmother and co-ruler, though her status as wife of the Akaboha changed to that of the real mother since the Akaboha II Prophet Matapoly Moses Juhu-Appiah, was her son. This was in accordance with the succession regulation in the MDCC which as opposed to Akan matrilineal system, is succession by primogeniture and entitles the Prince "to hold this line of succession as a divine right, as ordered by the Holy Spirit".³⁹ The Akatitibi I having survived also the Akaboha II reigned with the son of Akaboha II, who was her grandson. This means the Queenmother has reigned with all the Akabohas, firstly with her husband, then with her son and finally with her grandson. With her status as the mother and grandmother of the second and third Akabohas respectively the position of the Queenmother of the MDCC involuntarily reverted to that which prevails in traditional Akan Society.

However on the demise of the Akatitibi I, one would have presumed that the office reverts, as a precedent, to the wife of the reigning Akaboha III, but rather it went to the wife of the former Akaboha i.e. Akaboha II who is the real mother of the present Akaboha III, Prophet Mirithaiah Jonah Juhu-Appiah. Rev. Baah explained this situation by referring to the gerontocratic tendencies of the church. According to him since the wife of the Akaboha II is alive and senior to the wife of Akaboha III it is only deemed respectful for her to precede the younger woman.⁴⁰

To this effect the Akan traditional regulation concerning the position of the Queenmother seems to have been restored and the customary preference for seniority has prevailed in the indigenized Musama Disco Christo Church. Even though there are few modifications in the role of the Queenmother of MDCC, her continuing presence shows the strong tenacity of Akan matrilineal system.

Conclusion

It seems evident that the strong wind of the wave of transformation that has evolved in Africa has managed to shake the traditional foundations of the African Traditional Religious System to some extent, albeit it has been unable to uproot its 'ice-berg-like' nature. In the aspiration for innovation or modernization a recourse to the converse seems to have taken place and aspects of tradition have been retained through their very rejection.⁴¹ This demonstrates the indisputable fact that traditional foundations are crucial factors in determining, directing and moulding the life or activity of a people.

The two women focused in this paper have demonstrated that the enterprising capabilities of Ghanaian women, and I think African women in general, extend beyond the acknowledged physical boundaries of reproduction, home management, manual labour and trade. They penetrate profoundly into the Spiritual domain. They have challenged the traditional prejudices and testified that there lies an inert, inherent dynamism in women which when given the appropriate recognition would rekindle and be employed for the benefit of mankind in other dimensions.

The accomplishments of the two women, Grace Tani and Hannah Barnes as progenitress and premier Queenmother of New Religious Movements in Ghana respectively, should be lauded. They should be honoured as having preserved valuable Ghanaian traditional heritage.

Notes

1. In his article, "The Church in Africa and Contemporary Social Changes" in *Ecumenical Review*, Vol.40, No.2, p.242. April 1988, K.A. Opoku explains that the term 'indigenous' is preferred to 'independent' since the latter has external reference.
2. See H.W. Turner: "A Typology for African Religious Movements", in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol.1 1968, p.17.
3. See Brigid Sackey: *Neue Kirchen Unter de Fante - Akan Beboelkerung in Sud-Ghana*", an M.A. Thesis in German, which looks into the role of Women in Spiritual Churches among the Fante-Akan in Ghana; 1979, pp. 76-77. See also

"Healing and the Special Position of the Women of the Church of Nyamesom Pa" in *Research Review*, Vol.3, No.2. 1987, pp. 84-108.

4. J.B. Christensen, 1959: "The Adaptive Functions of Fanti Priesthood" in *Continuity and Change in African Societies*. p.257. Boscom and Herskovits (eds.).
5. Christensen op. cit.: p.258.
6. J. Brookman-Amisshah: *The Traditional Education of the Indigenous Priesthood in Ghana*. Faculty of Education Occasional Paper, Cape Coast: University of Cape Coast. June 1975, p.7.
7. This is true especially of priestesses who serve the forest spirits called *mboatsia* or dwarfs. These spirits are conceived to be very jealous, and rivalry with an unseen creature must be a most dangerous and distressing affair. As a friend puts it "if the dwarf gives you a blow you feel it well, but if you should return the blow you hit your fist against the wall".
Men shirk from marrying a priestess because it is an expensive affair. The would-be husband is bound to refund to her family all the expenses it incurred on her during her training period as priestess in addition to the customary marriage prestations. Also because the priestess is under taboo at certain periods she is unable to perform her conjugal duties fully. Because of this the husband may be unfaithful which is also not only a grievous offence but costly. He must go through pacificatory and purificatory rituals.
Thus it is not prohibited for priestesses to marry but these reasons, among others, are deemed costly and cumbersome for the ordinary man. Usually priestesses get married to *Esuriafo* (Medicine men) so that they can pull their healing resources together. However, a priestess is free to have children with any man of her choice. (I am indebted to Mr. F.C. Essandoh of the Institute of African Studies, Legon, who supplied most of the reasons given above).
8. Busia, K.A. *The Position of the Chief in Modern Political System of Ashanti*. 1951, p.19.
9. In this paper the term priestess and prophetess refer to religious specialists in ATR and spiritual churches respectively.
10. Myles, K.: *Musama Disco Christo Church*. 1987, p.5.
11. Busia, K.A.: "The Ashanti of the Gold Coast" in *African Worlds*. 1954, p.194.
12. Baeta, C.C.: *Prophetism in Ghana*. 1962, p.1.
13. Mbiti, J.S. 1969: *African Religions and Philosophy* pp. 2-4. The Afrikania Church of Ghana claims to be the first reformer of Traditional African Religions and Philosophy.

Notes (contd.)

14. Sackey 1987: 97. The use of water in healing is traceable to AFR. There is a belief in Ghanaian societies that water comes directly from the Supreme God as rain. The Ga name for God means rain and therefore water is already blessed. In Akan Traditional Religion some rivers are believed to be the sons of Nyame (God) and therefore their water has potent power for healing.
15. Walker, Shiela 1979, p. 87. "Women in the Harrist Movement" in *The New Religions of Africa* edited by B. Jules-Rosette. However, there is a tendency to credit the Akonomsu, a secessionist group of the Methodist Church of Anomabu in 1862, under the leadership of R.J. Gharthey as the first spiritual church in Ghana. This group does not satisfy the classification of spiritual church because the basic features of healing and prophecy were absent in their activities though it was a teetotaler group, as many spiritual churches are. Having been the first to introduce the observance of certain African elements into its worship, the Akonomsu could well be credited as being the first group to begin the process of indigenisation of Christianity, but it cannot be said to be a spiritual church (see Bartels 1965: 82).
16. Breidenbach, P.: "The Woman on the Beach and the Man in the Bush" in *The New Religions of Africa* edited by B. Jules-Rosette.
17. Breidenbach *op. cit.* p.100.
18. Debrunner, Hans W.: *A History of Christianity in Ghana.* 1967: p.273.
19. Baeta, C.G. *op. cit.* p.9.
20. Breidenbach *op. cit.* pp. 106-108.
21. Baeta, C.G. *ibid.*
22. Breidenbach: 102 and 105.
23. Walker *op. cit.*: 89.
24. Some children are named after gods in appreciation of the latter's role in their life. Often a childless woman may solicit the help of a god and undertake a votive offering of the child to the god, should she conceive and give birth safely. The name Tani, being derived from Tano implies that Grace was born through the intervention of Tano. Hence by founding a religion which eliminates the gods is tantamount to apostasy on the part of Madam Grace Tani.
25. Maria Kente: "Is Recourse to Religious Fundamentalism An Answer to Socio-Economic Crises? The Case of Tanzania". Paper presented to AANORD.
26. Breidenbach: 102.
27. Breidenbach: 107.

28. Walker: 90.
29. Sackey, B. *op. cit.* 1979, p. 13.
30. Rattray, R.S.: *Ashanti*. 1923, pp. 81-2.
31. Opoku, K.A. 1978, pp.112. "Changes within Christianity" in *Christianity in Independent Africa* edited by Luke et. al. See also Myles, K. *op. cit.* (preface).
32. Baeta: 36.
33. Goodwin, Mary Ellen: *A Pilgrimage to Musama Disco Christo Church* (n.d) p.24.
34. Goodwin, and Rev. H.K. Baah, personal interview, June 1989.
35. Rev. H.K. Baah, personal interview, June 1989. This miraculous water also seems to replenish itself; see Baeta *op. cit.*, p.43.
36. See also Baeta: 42.
37. Baeta: 32-33.
38. Opoku 1978: p.119.
39. Opoku, K.A. 1978: p. 117.
40. Rev. H.K. Baah, Personal Interview, June 1989.
41. Jules-Rossette, B.: *New Religions of Africa*. 1979, p.9.

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