

Charisma and Community in a Ghanaian Independent Church

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Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

In 1919, J. W. Appiah, a Methodist catechist in the Gold Coast, sought the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and began to prophesy and pray for the sick. He and his followers were expelled from the Church, and formed both a new community and a denomination known as the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC). It has often been argued that African Independent Churches result as a reaction to Western domination of land or people, but it is shown that this was not the primary issue with the MDCC. The initial quest was for spiritual empowerment, which resulted in prophetic revelation and the formation of a church with distinctively African characteristics.

Following Appiah's death, his son (Akaboha II) became the head of the growing church, which was affected by two contemporary developments. The first was the nationalist movement led by Nkrumah, which stimulated the MDCC to a mission of the spiritual liberation of Christianity from remaining Western elements. This was achieved through the innovation of rituals and practices based upon traditional African forms. The second was revivalist teaching brought to Ghana by Pentecostal evangelists, which the MDCC adopted as "instantaneous healing". Although the church continued to grow after the fall of Nkrumah and the death of Akaboha II, in the late 1980s it started to decline.

This thesis argues that the innovation of African traditions resulted in a form of contextualization that was inflexible, so the church was unable to adapt to social change and has become less relevant. Former members are now seeking a more relevant charisma of the Holy Spirit in other churches. The illiterate members prefer the Pentecostal churches, and the educated younger generation are attracted to the newer Charismatic churches.

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David G. Burnett

Chapter 1

Introduction

Although it was past midnight, the air was still warm as I left the temple with many others, each carrying a candle that lit up the darkness of the town. As I started to move the flame flickered, and I quickly cupped the light to stop it going out. Several thousand people were at the meeting tonight, and all pushed towards the entrance to parade along the main street to the end of the town. In the darkness I struggled to keep up with the pace, dressed as I was in a long white gown down to my ankles, and holding the lighted candle. On reaching the monument at the edge of the town, I was able to look back at the column of people stretching half a mile and about ten persons wide, each carrying their candle. I did not have the opportunity to admire the sight as the pace began to increase as everyone hurried to follow the Akaboha back towards the temple. The crush became intense as we reached the open prayer ground next to the temple. In this sacred area seven white crosses had been erected and a red cloth draped between them. People quickly lined up before each of the crosses, bowed and made their confessions before giving their place to another. I was pushed to the front of one of the queues where I found myself standing before the Queen-mother of the Church. As I stood looking up into her face illuminated by the surrounding candles, she quickly marked my forehead with a cross with some dark coloured liquid, and I was gently pushed to one side to allow another to come forward.

I first came in contact with the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) in 1984 while on a survey trip of the churches of the Central Region of Ghana.¹ During the trip, the Ghanaian Christians with whom I was travelling started talking about an unusual church that had its headquarters in the town of Mozano near Gomoa Swedru. I encouraged the driver to take a detour to visit the town where I had my first

¹ Throughout this dissertation, reference will be made to the results of the two nation-wide Church Survey's that were made during the periods 1984-9 and 1989-1992. These have been reported in the *National Church Survey* (Accra: GEC, 1989) and *National Church Survey Update* (Accra: GEC, 1993). A summary of the philosophy and methodology of the survey is reported in Appendix 1.

opportunity to meet the head of the church - Akaboha III. This is essentially the story of the growth and development of this one African independent church amidst the rapid changes that have affected the nation of Ghana in the twentieth century. Yet it raises questions concerning the whole process of the Africanization of Christianity brought by European missionaries and the future of Christianity in that continent. It shows that religious change requires not only an understanding of the local social institutions, but also the external forces that have continually influenced the process.

The Ghana National Church Survey of 1984-89 was the most exhaustive study undertaken anywhere in the continent, and provided a unique overview of the state of the church in Ghana. The survey involved a head count by trained workers of every congregation in the country, so providing accurate attendance figures for every denomination. For the first time it was possible to make realistic comparisons of various denominations by number of congregations and attendance. The year in which every congregation started was also obtained from the local church leaders. Thus, although it was not possible to obtain accurate membership figures for any length of time, it was possible to determine the growth in the number of congregations belonging to every denomination. A second nation-wide survey was conducted in the same manner five years later, and this for the first time allowed direct comparison between sets of data.

The results showed three main historical Christian movements among the Fante of southern Ghana. The first was the entry of the English Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in the nineteenth century who saw steady growth in the number of converts until by the end of the century the Methodist Church was the dominant denomination. The second movement was the emergence of the African Independent Churches (AICs) stimulated by the sudden appearance of Prophet Harris in the West of the region in 1914.² The third movement revealed by the National Survey was the sudden growth of the Pentecostal churches in the second half of the twentieth century,

² Recently there has been discussion concerning the term African Independent Church (AIC). The problem surrounds the "I" in AIC, and various words have been employed, such as "initiated", "instituted", or "indigenous". The term "independent" is most frequently used in academic circles, and will be used here, but it is not popular within AIC circles who tend to prefer "initiated". Tobias Masuku, "African Initiated Churches: Christian Partners or Antagonists", *Missionalia* 24 (1996), 441-455.

and the emergence of the so-called “Born-again”, “Neo-Pentecostal”, or, as the members themselves prefer “Charismatic” churches. The survey also revealed a sudden and marked decline in the AICs in the latter years of the 1980s, which contrasts with the scenario of most writers that the AICs will be the predominant movement among Africans in the coming decade.³

Early missionary writings on conversion to Christianity in Africa treated it as a transition from error to truth with a simple acceptance of the missionary message. More recently anthropologists have focused on the local social institutions that provide the foundation for the acceptance of Christianity, while historians have tended to study the outside forces that have initiated the process of conversion. Through the study of the history and growth of the MDCC, I want to investigate how the Fante not only accepted the religion of the missionaries, but adapted it to make it their own. This continuing internal process of adaptation is not closed to external influences, but is selectively open to movements within the wider Christian community.

Christianity in context

From the time of Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn in the middle of the nineteenth century missionaries have discussed the nature of the church within the African context. Venn contended that the aim of the Church Missionary Society should be “the development of native churches, with a view to their ultimate settlement upon a self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending system”.⁴ Although the farsightedness of the so-called “three-self” concept was appreciated, in practice African church leaders took over the Western rituals and patterns of church government. The churches were still modelled upon European traditions, and the leaders educated in European languages.

The term *Africanization* was first used in the political arena when in the mid-1920s Governor Guggisberg adopted the term for the policy of placing Africans in key positions in the civil service in the Gold Coast. This transference of leadership began

³ G. C. Ooshuizen, M. C. Kitshoff & S. W. D. Dube, *Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. ix.

⁴ Max Warren, *To Apply the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).

to affect every area of European presence including the church. Writing with Rev. A. G. Fraser in 1929, Guggisberg remarked: "In our anxiety to Christianise, we have tended far too much to destroy, with little thought of adaptation."⁵ The reaction of many educated Africans was to defensively extol the virtues of their own religion and culture.

The issue of culture and the church took on a new dimension in the 1950s when the historic churches saw their people struggle to establish new independent nation states. In 1954 the Rev. Peter Dagadu of Ghana addressed the World Council of Churches' Second Assembly at Evanston on the urgent need to Africanize the church on the continent. He declared:

It is becoming increasingly necessary for the missionaries to hasten their Africanization policy so as to overtake the political advancement in certain areas where African leadership is an acceptable feature of life. The training of Christian leadership must now be a peculiar duty of the Church so as to capture the initiative from the secular forces.⁶

A Roman Catholic survey in the late 1960s showed a similar concern among African priests that the church "must adapt herself to African conditions".⁷ The two major problems were seen as the need for trained priests and laity as leaders of a new Christian Africa, and "an African re-interpretation of the faith".⁸ The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) supported the new thinking of African Catholic theologians. At the 1974 Synod of Bishops in Rome, African Catholics rejected the expression "theology of adaptation" in preference for "theology of incarnation".⁹ *Incarnation* was considered preferable because it involved "immersing Christianity in African culture (so that) just as Jesus became man, so must Christianity become African."¹⁰ African Catholic theologians felt that they had devised a Christologically orientated term to describe the nature of their theological task, but Pope Paul VI did not approve of the

⁵ F. G. Guggisberg & A. G. Fraser, *The Future of the Negro* (London, 1929), Ch. v.

⁶ Cited in *Africa in Transition* (Geneva: WCC, 1962), p. 12.

⁷ E. Gallina, *Africa Present: A Catholic Survey of Facts and Figures* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), pp. 12-13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁹ A. Shorter, *African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation?* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1977), p. 150.

¹⁰ J. S. Ukpong, *African Theologies Now* (Eldoret: Gaba Pub, 1984), p. 27.

term *incarnation*.¹¹ The Pope was concerned at the danger of local churches cutting themselves away from the Universal Church, and he stressed the need of continual attention to both the universal and the particular.

For Protestants, the problem of Africanization came to the fore with the formation of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in 1963. At its inaugural assembly in Kampala, the AACC rejected North Atlantic theology as prefabricated and bankrupt. Meanwhile, individual Protestant theologians, such as John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu and John Pobee, began to call for an "indigenized" African theology, which sought an authentically relevant African perspective for Christianity.^{12 13} In an attempt to re-express the Christian message many African idioms were used and terms such as translation, incarnation, localisation, adaptation, accommodation and indigenization were used widely and often interchangeably.

The Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians was held in Accra in 1977, and for the first time it brought together not only Roman Catholic and Protestants, but also French-speaking and English-speaking theologians. The conference found theological unity expressed in the term *inculturation*, which was popularised in 1978 by the Jesuit Superior General, Father Pedro Arrupe. The term *inculturation* is adapted from the term enculturation, which is the cultural learning process of an individual. Fr. Pedro Arrupe S. J. defined it as:

The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adoption) but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a 'new creation'.¹⁴

By the mid-1980s inculturation was accepted by the Ecumenical Movement of African Theologians (EMAT), which includes Protestants, as a general expression for the task of African theologians to pursue. Shorter emphasises three points regarding the definition of the term *inculturation*. First, inculturation does not merely refer to the

¹¹ *L'Osservatore Romano* n. 45, 7 November 1974, 9, cited in Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), p. 214.

¹² Idowu Bolaji, *Towards an Indigenous Church* (London: OUP, 1965).

¹³ John S. Pobee, *Towards an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

¹⁴ *Catechesi Tradendea*, 53, cited in Shorter, *African Christian Theology*, p. 11.

initial introduction of Christianity into a culture, but the on-going process of dialogue between Faith and culture. Inculturation is “as relevant to the countries of Europe and North America, for example, which have been Christianised and now de-Christianised, as it is to the cultures of the Third World in which the Gospel has only recently been proclaimed for the first time... As long as faith is presented to a culture, the dialogue must take place. It is a process that never comes to an end.”¹⁵ The second point is that the Christian Faith cannot exist except in a cultural form. Finally, inculturation is a phenomenon beyond acculturation. “It is the stage when a human culture is enlivened by the Gospel from within, a stage which presupposes a measure of reformulation or, more accurately, reinterpretation.”¹⁶ The interaction between the Christian Faith and culture is therefore a historical process.

Among Protestants the term *indigenization* had been used to express a form of Christianity that was natural to the local social environment.¹⁷ This was an attempt to move beyond the “Three-Self” formula with its concern with external adjustments of the church to its local environment. Writing in 1958, Smalley asked the question,

What, then, is an indigenous church? It is a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialised Christian activity, in the patterns of the local society, and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures.¹⁸

Smalley sought to apply contemporary anthropological insights to missionary work. The development of the argument leads him to conclude that indigenous churches cannot be “founded” or “established”, but must be “planted”. The change of metaphor is very significant. By “established” he means the importation of American or European church traditions, which the local people are encouraged to accept as good Christian practice. On the other hand, indigenous churches are the result of seeds that have been sown in the local social “soil” and grow in natural profusion.

The term “contextualization” first emerged in discussions held by the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the WCC in 1957, which saw contextualization as going

¹⁵ Shorter, *African Christian Theology*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷ M. Hodges, *Build my Church* (Springfield: Assemblies of God, 1957).

¹⁸ W. A. Smalley, “Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church”, *Missionary Anthropology* 5 (1958), 55.

beyond indigenization:

Contextualization means all that is implied in the familiar term “indigenization” and yet seeks to press beyond. Contextualization has to do with how we assess the peculiarity of Third World contexts. Indigenization tends to be used in the sense of responding to the Gospel in terms of a traditional culture. Contextualization, while not ignoring this, takes into account the process of secularism, technology and the struggle for human justice, which characterises the historical movement of nations in the Third World.¹⁹

The concept of contextualization was widely accepted at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974, which consisted mainly of evangelical Christians. The congress adopted the following definition:

Contextualization means the translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the kingdom into verbal forms meaningful to people in their separate cultures and within their particular existential situations.

Contextualization involves the reinterpretation of a given phenomenon, whether the Bible, church structure, ritual, or symbol in a new context where the meaning and impact of the elicited response are equivalent to those felt by the first Christian community. The Catholic term *inculturation* and the Protestant term *contextualization* are both attempts to deal with the expression of Christianity in particular cultural forms. Although discussions continue concerning agreed definitions, there is broad appreciation of the general principles of the process.

Walls expressed the concept in another way when he said that Christianity may be regarded as “culturally infinitely translatable”, and elsewhere “incarnation is translation”.^{20 21} Lamin Sanneh took the argument further by proposing that from its origins Christianity identified itself with “the need to translate out of Aramaic and Hebrew, and from that position came to exert a dual force in its historical development. One was the resolve to relativise its Judaic roots, with the consequence that it promoted significant aspects of those roots. The other was to destigmatize Gentile culture and adopt that culture as a natural extension of the life of the new

¹⁹ *Mission in Context - The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund (1970-1977)* (Geneva: TEF, 1972), p. 20.

²⁰ Andrew F. Walls, “The Gospel as prisoner and liberator of culture”, *Missionalia* 10 (1982), 93-105.

²¹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 27.

religion.”²² According to Sanneh this process has continued throughout the history of Christianity, so in Africa one can see a simultaneous effort to relativise the European missionary roots and the destigmatizing of African culture. Mission seen in this way distinguishes between the message and its surrogate context, so allowing the expression of Christianity within all cultures. “Ultimately this gives the gospel a pluralist character without imposing on it a uniformizing destiny.”²³ Sanneh, however, recognises that this distinction between message and context must contain a critical stance towards cultures by putting the message of God above issues of culture. This distinction was formerly discussed by H. Richard Niebuhr in his classic “Christ and Culture” where he eloquently expressed the nature of these tensions throughout the history of the Church.²⁴ As Sanneh continues, “Christians are in the world, but not of it. The claims of God, however successfully mediated and embodied in earthly structures, must ultimately be seen to be in radical tension with them, for obedience to God overthrows other rival sovereignties that make their home in cultures.”²⁵

Sanneh concludes that Protestant missions through translation made the mother tongue the centrepiece of mission, which caused a shift from Western languages. He argues that there was a “schizoid” approach by missions, which on one hand sought to impose culture and Western civilisation, and on the other hand, cultivated indigenous languages. Thus, there was “a real divergence between the logic of colonial overlordship and the interest of the emerging African church where vernacular translation often converged with steps to encourage indigenous ascendancy... The dramatic effects of vernacular translation thus prejudiced the colonial cause as much by historical coincidence as by ideological justification. For that reason, vernacular translation outdistanced and outlasted the fortunes of colonialism.”²⁶ In a study of the historical consequences of vernacular translation in the Niger Delta, Sanneh identifies two stages in response. The first was an institutional challenge, and the other was the popular outburst of feeling under the charismatic prophet Garrick Braide, which Sanneh considered “coalesced with the Aladura revival of 1928-30.”²⁷

²² Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), p. 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

²⁴ Niebuhr H. Richard, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

²⁵ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, pp. 32-33.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Revivals of religion have often been overlooked by historians of African Christianity, but they have made important contributions both through the sending of new missionary recruits and the propagation of new ideas of religious experience. Sanneh recognised this when he wrote, “‘Renewal’ and ‘revival’ became a two-sided phenomenon of indigenous change. ‘Renewal’ reappropriated the new teaching and ideas of Christianity within vernacular self-understanding, while ‘revival’ spurred converts with the promptings of the Spirit, making the life of the believers the subject of intense spiritual concentration, with the rewards of charismatic gifts. Ordinary men and women, who were otherwise denied a role in religious and social life, found in ‘revival’ a vocation and an affirmation.”²⁸ I want to propose that the experience of revival has been significant in popular forms of African Christianity, and from the earliest period of Protestant mission in the Gold Coast has had an important influence for renewal and change.

Revivals of religion

Riss in his study of twentieth century Christian revivals writes:

During times of revival people usually develop a sudden intense enthusiasm for Christianity. People have often become so preoccupied with the things of God that they had little desire to talk about anything else..... In a revival, people receive an immediate revelation of God’s glory and of their own sinfulness and inadequacy before him. Many become deeply distressed over their own wickedness, and an awesome fear of God and his judgement comes upon them.²⁹

Revivals emerge against the backdrop of what is perceived as serious spiritual and moral decline in society. Committed Christians begin to pray, preach and evangelise. There is a marked infusion of new converts into the church, and many “backsliders” return to an active faith. Those involved feel refreshed and eagerly pray and sing praises to God. Manifestations of spiritual gifts are common, and sometimes under the anointing of the Holy Spirit people fall to the ground as in a faint. These manifestations are often viewed as indications of the imminent return of Christ and the end of the world.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²⁹ Richard M. Riss, *A Survey of Twentieth Century Revival Movements in North America* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), pp. 3-4.

Major revivals tend to emerge simultaneously in different locations with little organisation. News of the event spreads quickly, and Christians and sceptics travel miles to see what is happening. Those who visit an awakening often go home and share what they have seen, and this sparks similar experiences.³⁰ Revival can therefore spread rapidly throughout a country, and with the improved communications of the twentieth century it can have a global influence. Revivals, however, also tend to generate criticism because of excesses in ecstatic behaviour, critical reports and genuine scepticism even by some church leaders. For this reason a revival reaches a crest and then declines. Even so, revivals are generally recognised as having a positive social influence, and often give birth to new institutions and denominations.

There is nothing uniquely new about the phenomenon of revival, but a useful starting point for this study is the “Great Awakening” with the ministry of Wesley and Whitefield in England and Jonathan Edwards in North America. This revival was at its height during the period 1739 to 1743, but continued in local areas to a lesser degree for almost 40 years. In Britain, Wesley travelled the country establishing many groups known as Methodists, which eventually became the Methodist Church. A major division within this awakening was due to Wesley’s rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. This resulted in two distinct views concerning revival: the Calvinists considered revival as purely a sovereign act of God, while the Arminians believed revival came through the fervent prayers of the people of God.

The “Second Great Awakening” began in the United States during the turbulent period of social change following the War of Independence (1775-1783). Carwardine in his study of this awakening writes: “The accelerating development of a national market economy and the geographical mobility of a rapidly growing population, both aided by a revolution in transportation networks and technology, inevitably eroded traditional social relationships. Families broke up, servants ceased to live in the households of their masters, systems of patronage were eroded, and established routes of social progress were closed as new ones opened up.... For thousands of Americans

³⁰ The so-called Toronto Blessing of 1994 was a recent example, when many from around the world visited the Airport Church Toronto to receive the blessing and return with it to their home churches.

evangelical religion provided the answer.”³¹ In Britain the revivals began in the northern industrial cities of Yorkshire, and spread throughout the country. The Methodists showed remarkable growth in Britain from 72,000 in 1791 to almost a quarter of a million within a generation.³² The revival stimulated the formation of the modern Protestant missionary society with the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, the London Missionary Society in 1795, the Methodist Missionary Society in 1796, and the Church Missionary Society in 1799.

During the first few years of the nineteenth century, revival continued to occur in local areas in Scotland and in the United States. The revival movement sprang into fresh life in the 1820s and 1830s under the ministry of the Arminian revivalist Charles Finney whose book *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* influenced many.³³ On 10 October 1857 the New York stock market crashed making many bankrupt; the resulting panic stimulated many to pray and soon 10,000 were meeting daily at prayer meetings throughout New York.³⁴ This was essentially a lay movement for prayer, so became known as the “prayer revival”.³⁵ What impressed observers was the absence of hysteria as in previous revivals with only the presence of a deep sense of conviction of sin, repentance and joy of forgiveness. This revival quickly spread to Britain with notable revivals in Wales, Ulster and Ireland.³⁶ In April of 1860, at a conference of the Dutch Reformed Church in Worcester, South Africa, Dr James Adamson gave an account of the rise and progress of the revival in the USA. The result was that many in the region experienced the revival in a similar form.³⁷ During the later nineteenth century, there were local revivals in South Wales in 1871, and in Scotland and Ireland in 1873 under the preaching of D. L. Moody. These local revivals continued until

³¹ Richard Carwardine, “The Second Great Awakening in Comparative Perspective: Revivals and Culture in the United States and Britain”, Edith L. Blumhofer & Randell Balmer (eds.), *Modern Christian Revivals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 84-5.

³² Ron Davies, “The Second Evangelical Awakening”, *Reformation Today* Nov-Dec (1992), 23-27.

³³ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (Manchester: Simpkin, 1840).

³⁴ Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), pp. 331-353.

³⁵ Samuel Prime, *The Power of Prayer: The New York Revival of 1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991).

³⁶ W. Gibson, *The Year of Grace: A History of the Ulster Revival of 1859* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1860).

³⁷ Edwin J. Orr, *The Fervent Prayer: The Worldwide Impact of the Great Awakening of 1858* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974).

1875 when Moody returned to America, but in its wake there was a renewed interest in missionary work especially among students.

In 1904, the famous "Welsh Revival" commenced in South Wales through a young theology student Evan Roberts, who abandoned his studies to give all his time to Christian ministry. Stead visited one of Robert's meetings and commented specifically on the lack of human leadership:

The most extraordinary thing about the meetings which I attended was the extent to which they were absolutely without any human direction or leadership. "We must obey the Spirit", is the watchword of Evan Roberts and he is as obedient as the humblest of his followers ... You can watch what they call the influence of the power of the Spirit playing over the crowded congregation as an eddying wind plays over the surface of a pond."³⁸

The influence of the movement quickly touched churches in England, and news of the revival spread around the world. On 8 April 1905, F. B. Meyer visited Los Angeles and described the great revival that was in progress in Wales. Immediately local revivals began to arise in various parts of the city.³⁹

Few events have affected the church in the twentieth century as greatly as the famous Azusa Street revival of 1906-9 in Los Angeles, which ushered in the Pentecostal renewal. Charles Parham was a former Methodist minister from Kansas who in 1898 began to hold healing meetings in his home in Topeka where people were invited to study in his small Bible school. In January 1901, one of Parham's students, an eighteen-year old girl named Agnes Ozman, was baptised in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues (glossolalia).⁴⁰ From this experience Parham constructed his thesis that tongues was the biblical evidence of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. In 1905 Parham moved his school to Houston, Texas where as a result of these manifestations he gained a significant following. Among these people was the black holiness preacher William J. Seymour, who inspite of being required to listen to the teaching from outside the room readily accepted Parham's teaching. In 1906 Seymour was invited to preach in a black Nazarene church in Los Angeles, but his teaching was

³⁸ W. T. Stead, "The Story of the Awakening" in *The Story of the Welsh Revival* (New York: Fleming H. Revell: 1905) pp. 64-5.

³⁹ Riss, *A Survey of Twentieth Century Revivals*, p. 49.

⁴⁰ James Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and The Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), p. 68.

not accepted. Seymour therefore established his own meeting, which initially consisted largely of black domestic servants and washerwomen.⁴¹

Los Angeles was however facing economic problems with jobs hard to find. An increasing number of "non-whites" were now moving into the city, such that they made up a significant proportion of the population. Seymour's preaching began to attract both black and white from many denominations. Then, on 9 April 1906 several members of a prayer meeting began to speak in tongues.⁴² News of the event brought crowds to the meetings, and the building was soon filled to capacity. The group quickly moved to an abandoned building at 312 Azusa Street. The *Los Angeles Times* carried sceptical reports about the meetings, which only encouraged more curious people to come to the meetings.⁴³ On the morning of 18 April 1906 there was a violent earthquake in San Francisco, and for many of the preachers this was a clear sign of the judgement about to come. In October 1906 Parham visited Los Angeles and was warmly welcomed by Seymour, but Parham did not like what he saw with black and white kneeling together. Parham seized the occasion to lambast the Azusa street congregation telling them that they were involved in "animism". Cox writes that the very things that Parham condemned at Azusa Street - "the trance and ecstasy of the 'coloured camp meeting', the interracial fellowship - were precisely what enabled Pentecostalism to speak with such power to the twentieth century."⁴⁴ The fact that the early Pentecostal movement was rooted in a black urban ghetto in Los Angeles means that Pentecostalism was associated not only with the poor and the oppressed, but also with black leadership. Lovett writes:

It may be categorically stated that black Pentecostalism emerged out of the context of the brokenness of black existence.... Their holistic view of religion had its roots in African religion. One cannot meaningfully discuss the origins of contemporary pentecostalism unless the role of blacks is clearly defined and acknowledged.⁴⁵

The revival movement grew rapidly throughout America, but so did the controversy over speaking in tongues. The teaching was generally rejected by the main-line

⁴¹ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1995), p. 55.

⁴² Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1980), p. 43.

⁴³ Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, p. 59.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

⁴⁵ Leonard Lovett, "Black Origins of the Pentecostal movement", in V. Synan (ed.), *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic origins* (Plainfield: Logos, 1975), p. 138.

churches, so the movement formed into several Pentecostal associations that eventually became denominations. Unfortunately, these denominations were unable to retain the unity of black and white, and two streams emerged. As early as 1908 the American missionary John G. Lake, who is known to have visited Azusa Street on several occasions, arrived in South Africa. His teaching caused much interest, and as in the USA there was a movement amongst the poor of both black and white.⁴⁶ In Britain, the Pentecostal movement likewise found response among the urban poor, but the small size of the black community at that time did not make race an issue. Two main denominations emerged in Britain, the Elim Pentecostal Church and the Apostolic Church. It was not until 1935 that an Apostolic pastor visited the Gold Coast, which resulted in the sending of James McKeown as the first Pentecostal missionary to the Gold Coast.^{47 48}

Several movements have followed Pentecostalism. One was the "Latter Rain" which emerged in North America in the late 1940s and as I will show, had a significant effect on the church in Ghana in the 1950s.⁴⁹ What was to have an even greater effect was the so-called "Charismatic movement", which affected many congregations within the historic denominations as well as producing new churches. A notable contrast is that while the Pentecostal churches grew among the poorer sections of society, the Charismatic movement emerged among the historic churches that mainly consisted of the middle-classes.

Religious movements were not unknown in Africa.⁵⁰ During the mid 1950s and 1960s many publications stressed the political significance of religious movements in Africa.⁵¹ Lanternari, for example, supposed that independent churches arose particularly in zones of intensive and direct colonial exploitation and as a consequence of land alienation and forced labour.⁵² However, in his more recent study on religious

⁴⁶ John G. Lake, *Adventures in God* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1981), p. 19.

⁴⁷ G. B. McGee, "The Azusa Street Revival and Twentieth-Century Missions", *Int. Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18 (1988), pp. 58-61.

⁴⁸ I. J. Vaughan, *Nigeria: The Origins of Apostolic Church Pentecostalism in Nigeria* (Ipswich Books: 1991).

⁴⁹ Riss, *A Survey of Twentieth Century Revivals*, pp. 105-124.

⁵⁰ Terence Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa", *African Studies Review* 29 (1986), 1-69.

⁵¹ G. Balandier, *Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire* (Paris: French Universities Press, 1955).

⁵² Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed* (New York: Knopf, 1963).

movements in Ghana he has abandoned this view, and now "asserts that neither the 'land problem' nor that of oppressive exploitation, but rather the threat of 'cultural dispossession', constitutes the background and the prime condition for the development of these churches."⁵³ Similar evidence comes from the study of the Harris movement, which far from representing a reaction away from mission Christianity constituted a preparation for it. For Walker, the Harris movement was essentially a repudiation of a multitude of local cults.⁵⁴ Ranger now argues that religious movements occurred in Africa prior to colonisation: witchcraft eradication, hunters cults and territorial cults.⁵⁵ During the twentieth century these movements have increased drawing upon Christianity for new symbols of power. In many parts of Africa there were periods of rapid grass-roots church growth that not only resulted in the emergence of independent churches, but the revival of the mission churches. A notable example of a revival movement was that which occurred from the late 1960s until the 1980s among many university students who were members of the Scripture Union.⁵⁶

Within this complex and ambiguous range of movements in the African continent the phenomenon of revival has a significant part. Christianity in Africa must therefore be perceived as a continuing interaction between three major streams: missionary Christianity, local traditional religious and social movements, and revivals within the wider Christian community.

Research and plan of work

In recent years there has been a great deal of critical work illustrating the problems of representing "the Other", in which ethnographic accounts are products of an encounter between anthropologists and the people they study. As such the bias and concepts of

⁵³ Vittorio Lanternari, "Revolution and/or Integration in African Socio-Religious movements", in B. Lincoln (ed.), *Religion, Rebellion, Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 147.

⁵⁴ S. S. Walker, "The Message as the Medium: The Harris Churches of the Ivory Coast and Ghana", in G. Bond, W. Johnson & S. Walker (eds.), *African Christianity: Patterns of Religious Continuity* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

⁵⁵ Terence Ranger, "The Local and the Global in Southern African Religious History", in R. W. Hefner (ed.), *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 65-98.

⁵⁶ Samuel Adubofuor, "Evangelical Parachurch Movements in Ghanaian Christianity: C. 1950-Early 1990s" (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 1994).

the anthropologist permeate the account, and this is equally true of my encounter with the people of the MDCC. Ethnographic research is subjective both in the sense that the ethnographer reports selectively on what he, or she, is predisposed to record from the wealth of sense data, and in that the quality of information to a large extent, depends on the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the local people. In my experience, the people were as interested to find out about the researcher as the fieldworker about them. How they locate the researcher in their own social world, and the nature of the rapport they feel profoundly influences the kind of data produced. Some ethnographers who have studied African Christianity have done so from the position of an informed agnostic, but this role was not possible for me as I was already known by many Christians in Ghana. I therefore decided to continue with my known role as a Charismatic Christian leader from the British Church.

This status of a Christian leader had several advantages. First, it allowed me to relate to the local people in a way that was genuine and proactive. Second, the Christians were quickly able to assign me into the well-known role of "missionary" and "Bible teacher", and they therefore accepted me as a Christian "insider" rather than an "outsider" who needed converting. Third, the status allowed me to participate in significant ways within the life of the churches. I therefore not only attended the services, but was often asked to preach, pray and take part in the healing rituals. All the church members were delighted to see a "white person" in this role, and this brought forth a wealth of information as they wanted to share with a "white Bible teacher".

This role, however, also had its difficulties. Although most of my informants were simply delighted to accept me as a church leader, some explored ways in which I could be of assistance to them. These were anything from whether I could find a bursary for them to study at a British theological college to involving me in a national television broadcast to give the appearance of international recognition. The second difficulty with this role was to keep an objective disposition concerning the very activities and ideas with which I was relating. Neither of these difficulties are unusual to the fieldworker. The central problem of the research is, as Middleton writes, having to "live as a human being among other human beings yet also having to act as an

objective observer".⁵⁷ The important issue is to recognise the nature of one's role and the particular perspective that it gives to the study.

Before returning to Ghana for a ninth visit I wanted to establish my identity and role within the MDCC in Britain. There are three congregations in Britain that have their origins from the MDCC, but only one is now recognised by the church headquarters in Ghana. I made contact with the minister of this church the Rev. Jeri Jehu-Appiah who is a grandson of the founder Prophet Appiah. He warmly welcomed me to his congregation, which I first visited in February 1991. I was introduced to the congregation and offered the seat on the right-hand side of the minister, which is for visiting church leaders. I was also given the honour of leading the closing prayers at the conclusion of the service. During 1991 and 1992 I made friends with the minister and the small congregation, such that I was accepted as an associate member. Occasionally I was asked to preach and participate in other ways in the church service, and gradually the members felt able to share their personal concerns. I also invited the minister and some of the church leaders to visit my own congregation, of which they approved and enjoyed the Charismatic style of worship and preaching. In this way I became accepted as a Christian leader and not merely as a researcher. On two occasions when I was attending the service of the MDCC a camera crew or visiting researcher also attended, but there was a perceptible change among the congregation and a sense of relief when they had gone. After about a year I felt that the members accepted me as what they called "a man of God" who was knowledgeable of the Bible and aware of spiritual matters.

Two people especially provided much assistance, the pastor Rev. Jeri Jehu-Appiah and Prophetess Comfort Jehu-Appiah who was a younger wife of the second head of the MDCC. Rev. J. Jehu-Appiah first came to Britain in 1979 when he was sent by the MDCC to establish a congregation among former members of the MDCC who were now resident in London. From 15 or so, the attendance grew to about 80 in 1982, which included many from the West Indies. It was soon after this time that the congregation divided into three groups, and these have struggled during the later part of the 1980s. In 1991, about 105 people were associated with the main MDCC in

⁵⁷ John Middleton, *The Study of the Lugbara: Expectation and Paradox in Anthropological Research* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970), p. 9.

Brixton of which about 25 attend regularly. Quite quickly Rev. Jeri Jehu-Appiah felt able to share many of his problems with me as a fellow church leader and friend.

Prophetess Comfort often travelled between Ghana and the UK, and only attended the main congregations when specifically asked for a special service. In both countries she was regarded as a notable counsellor by Ghanaians, and in Britain many West Indians too would visit her for advice. I remember our first meeting when we spoke for two hours about spiritual issues, during which time I would share with her experiences that I had known as a way of ensuring that I had correctly understood what she was telling me. This not only allowed us to develop a good relationship, but helped her feel more confident in sharing spiritual matters with me. I had asked if I could record our conversation, but she refused as we were going to speak about spiritual matters. However, she had no difficulty about me taking notes. At the end of this first interview she asked if she could look into my eyes, which she considered to be a means of reading a person's soul. She looked deeply into my eyes for a full minute before announcing that I was a person of integrity and free of any evil influences. I murmured some embarrassed platitudes before leaving, and looked forward to meeting her again.

These contacts allowed me to gain an understanding of the basic history and practices of the MDCC, but more important to make friends and be acknowledged in the status of a leader in a British Charismatic church. When I finally stated my interest in joining some of the congregation in a pilgrimage to Mozano in August 1992, all were delighted, and letters of introduction were sent to the headquarters. At the end of my visit I was told by the leaders of the church that although many researchers come from Legon University they come for a day and quickly leave. I was the only person who had stayed and taken part in their worship, and this clearly impressed everyone.

The role of British church leader was equally acceptable within the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, although I had to be circumspect about which denominations I visited. On several occasions I was invited to preach, and to pray for the people. At one Church of Pentecost congregation the pastor invited all the women who were barren to come forward, and then asked me to pray for them that they may have many children. On another occasion the Pentecostal evangelist called to all the people in a congregation numbering several thousand to come forward if they wanted to receive

the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. He then invited me to pray for them, and he was pleased that several of them fell down "slain in the Spirit".

Although this status provided unexpected challenges, it offered a unique perspective of being at the centre of the action. This study is therefore the product of an intercultural encounter between myself as a foreign researcher in the legitimate role of a Christian, and the various Pentecostal denominations in Ghana. I did not find this a matter of conflict as many may assume, but it provided me with a well-defined perspective from which to interact with the community which was both understandable to them and allowed me acceptance in a way that a secular role would not permit.

I arrived in Accra in July 1992 and soon contacted the head of the MDCC in the Accra region. He warmly welcomed me and personally drove me the 40 miles to Mozano where I was welcomed with all the ceremonial of a traditional Fante court, and offered hospitality with the head of the church, Akaboha III. Jonah Jehu-Appiah had been the head of the MDCC since the death of his father in 1979. We had previously met in London, and he offered to provide me with all the assistance I needed and gave me permission to speak to anyone in the town. For this reason it took some time before anyone was willing to express any criticism of the church or its leaders. Akaboha III immediately arranged that his personal secretary and younger step-brother, the Rev. Suma Kupa Jehu-Appiah, would be my guide and helper. The day after my arrival Suma Kupa was showing me around the town and providing much useful information and provided me with every assistance. Jimiru Fuah was the oldest person in the town, and was an early follower of the founder of the church, and had been the Senior Prophet in the church for many years.⁵⁸ In 1992, the old man was very frail and unable to walk more than a few steps, but he was greatly respected within the church. Although he spoke only Fante, and even then in a whisper, I was able to record some of our conversations that were later transcribed for me. His memory was still sharp and he was able to span the years from the foundation of the church in the 1920s.

During the actual Peace Festival several thousand people came to the small town of Mozano, and this festival provided an excellent opportunity to talk to members from all across West Africa. During the festival I was provided with a white gown

⁵⁸ Hans Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville, 1961), p. 146.

characteristic of a priest, and quickly gained the name "Brune Musama".⁵⁹ As such I was free to move into the fore of the ceremonial, and actively participate in the services. I was also invited to preach not only at a healing meeting, but to address the final gathering of the Peace Festival, being the first white man ever to do so. However, by being accepted as a church worker, I was excluded from much of the lives of the ordinary members, and especially those who were critical of the leadership.

Early in my visit to Mozano, Suma-Kupa mentioned that Akaboha II had had a great library and kept records of his teaching as well as current affairs. Unfortunately, most of these documents had been lost in a fire that had destroyed the palace in 1984, but there were some papers still surviving. These were stacked in a temporary shelter at the back of the palace of Akaboha III, and they consisted mainly of programmes of the Peace Festivals that provided an annual record of the church. They usually provided a message of introduction from the Akaboha, timetable of the festival, information concerning the various stations, and what may be called spiritual wisdom. The A5 printed booklets also contain occasional photographs and poems. In addition, Suma-Kupa kept copies of various newspaper articles about the MDCC. An important document was "The History of the MDCC" published in 1943, and attributed to the founder of the church Prophet Appiah. Only the leaders of the church were aware of the existence of the booklet, which surprisingly was neglected and only a few copies existed. The booklet was originally published in Fante, and had never been translated into English. On my return to Britain I arranged for the text to be translated by Rev. J. H. Jehu-Appiah with a view to publication, and this will subsequently be referred to as the *History*.

Various reports of the MDCC have been given by both missionaries and academics, and provided an invaluable starting point for this research. Some of the earliest comments are those of Hans Debrunner who visited Mozano in 1952, and spoke with Akaboha II, the head of the church, as part of his research into witchcraft in Ghana. Prof. Debrunner kindly made available to me his research notes and photographs of that visit. The most extensive description was written by Baëta in his classic study of

⁵⁹ Literally "white man - Musama member".

nine “Spiritual” Churches in Ghana first published in 1962.⁶⁰ This is regarded by the current leaders of the MDCC to be a good summary of the history and practice of the MDCC of that time, but they thought that he over-simplified many issues, and confused some practices. More recently studies on various pastoral issues within the MDCC have been written by Opoku, Lartey and Ekem.^{61 62 63}

The SOAS archives contain many documents of the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS), the journals of Dunwell, Wrigley and Freeman, and the Gold Coast Synod Minutes. These allowed a deeper insight into the views of the early Wesleyan missionaries to the Gold Coast. Another useful source of information was the early newspapers published in the Gold Coast now held at the Newspaper Department of the British Museum, which provided many useful obituaries of first generation ministers. Similarly the Ghana National Archives in Accra provided much supportive information.

This study is not merely one of personal encounter, but an attempt to explore the historical changes within the Christian community in the light of the wider social issues. As Peel has noted, historical anthropology may be seen as dealing with a triangle of relationships. The first is between history as representation and the past; the second is between this past and the social forms of the present that are its outcome; and the third is between the present social forms and the representations of “the real past” for whose production the present forms provide the context.⁶⁴ Narrative is the most spontaneous form of historical representation and plays a central role in this complex of relationships. As such, narrative is a major element of this account because I make use of the many stories recorded by missionaries and early church members of the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast, but most of all by the many narratives I recorded from MDCC members both young and old.

⁶⁰ C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some “Spiritual” Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 28-67.

⁶¹ Kofi A. Opoku, “Changes within Christianity: the case of the Musama Disco Christo Church”, Fashole-Luke, Gray, Hastings & Tasié (eds.), *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1978), pp. 111 - 121.

⁶² Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspective* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987).

⁶³ John D. Kwamena Ekeni, “Priesthood in Context: A Study of Akan traditional priesthood in dialogical relation to the priest-christology of the epistle of the Hebrews, and its implications for a relevant functional priesthood in selected churches among the Akan of Ghana” (PhD thesis, University of Hamburg, 1994).

⁶⁴ J. D. Y. Peel, “For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things? Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (1995), 581-607.

Chapter two examines the Christianisation of the Fante following the arrival of the first Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in 1835. It seeks to explore the nature of the initial response to the message of the Methodist missionaries, and the reasons for that response. Chapter 3 considers the growth of the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast from its centenary in 1885 by which time it was the major Christian denomination among the Fante. Two emerging elements characterise the period: nationalism that was later to express itself in political independence, and the quest for new sources of power that Christianity appeared to offer in the Bible. It is from this background that a number of important prophetic figures emerged including the famous Prophet Harris, and Prophet Appiah the founder of the MDCC, who all sought direct revelations from God.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the formation of the new community that grew up around the teaching and person of Prophet Appiah. They show how the new community separated from the Methodist Church and developed its position focused upon the belief that it is a true African Church founded by an African. Chapter 6 considers how revelations resulted both in a new appraisal of African culture and the power of God to heal without Western or traditional medicine. After the death of the founder, his son Mathapoly Moses was installed as head of the church, and the one who continued the prophetic ministry. In Chapter 7 I will show how he was influenced by the growing mood of independence common in the Gold Coast in the 1940s, and how he introduced many changes within the MDCC that made the church explicitly more African in style. Chapter 8 examines in greater depth the relationship of the MDCC in its presentation as an African Church with the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), and the ambiguous relationship between Akaboha II and Nkrumah. In Chapter 9, I want to show how the changes within the MDCC cannot be explained in terms of the political situation alone, but requires an understanding of a deeper quest for spiritual power within Fante Christianity. This is especially shown with the growth of the Pentecostal Churches in 1970s and 1980s.

The final Chapters 10 and 11 consider the issues that faced the MDCC after the death of Akaboha II, who was undoubtedly an outstanding personality. I aim to show how the church has struggled to retain its distinctive identity in a population that has

become increasing disillusioned with African ways, and is looking to the wider world for a cultural lead. In the midst of social and economic problems that Ghana has faced in the 1980s, the Charismatic churches have joined the Pentecostals as the most rapidly growing in the country.

The account may be divided into three periods associated with the reigns of the three heads of the church. With Prophet Appiah the prayer group emerged into a distinct denomination seeking its own identity. Akaboha II brought about some significant changes in the life of the church that resulted in rapid growth in the membership and number of congregations. Under Akaboha III the MDCC has faced many difficulties, and has now began to lose members to the new Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.

The translatability of the Christian religion will continue to provide a significant frame of reference in the study of Christianity in Africa. Lamin Sanneh writing about Christianity in Africa asks: "The question with which we are faced fundamentally is this: Of the two processes at work, the historical transmission and the indigenous assimilation, which one is more significant?"⁶⁵ Sanneh has no doubt that it is the latter, because it is within that context that the historical process itself becomes meaningful. Kwame Bediako responds, "The reception of the Christian message among the ill-rated Africans was consequently to be more far-reaching than the missionary movement had anticipated: it was to be a surprise story."⁶⁶ The case of the MDCC is an illustration of the character of that surprise.

⁶⁵ Lamin Sanneh, "The horizontal and the vertical in mission: an African perspective" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7 (1983), 165-171.

⁶⁶ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 206.

Chapter 2

The Fante and Methodist Missionary Christianity

(1700-1885)

*In his first year on the Gold Coast, Freeman wrote to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary committee in London: "I verily believe that you have not one mission in the world to which more importance attaches, from every point of view, than Cape Coast and its dependencies. For hundreds of miles an open door is set before us."*¹

The Wesleyan Methodist Mission began working in the Gold Coast in 1835, and by the end of the century the Methodist Church had become a significant social institution among the Fante. This chapter examines the social and political factors affecting the Fante prior to the arrival of the missionaries, and considers how these were influential in the adoption and spread of Methodist Christianity. Anne Hugon has recently presented a detailed study of the introduction of Methodism into the Gold Coast during the period 1835-1874.² In this chapter I want to focus on two particular questions. First, what were the reasons why many Fante converted to Wesleyan Methodist Christianity during the nineteenth century? Secondly, what were the experiential elements of their Christianity and how did this relate to the revivalism known in Britain and North America at that time?

The Fante before 1835

Legend has it that the Fante arrived in the coastal area in the tenth century after a series of migrations.³ The location of an original Akan homeland has given rise to many speculations with such diverse areas as Libya, Ethiopia and the region of Lake Chad being suggested. Portuguese sources confirm Fante states along the coast as

¹ F. D. Walker, *Thomas Birch Freeman: The Son of an African* (London: SCM, 1929), p. 215.

² Anne Hugon, "L'implantation du methodisme en Cote de l'Or au XIXe siecle: Strategies d'evangelisation et modalites de diffusion (1835-1874)" (Ph.D. thesis, Sorbonne, 1995).

³ Eva L. R. Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions of Origin* (London: Faber & Faber, 1950).

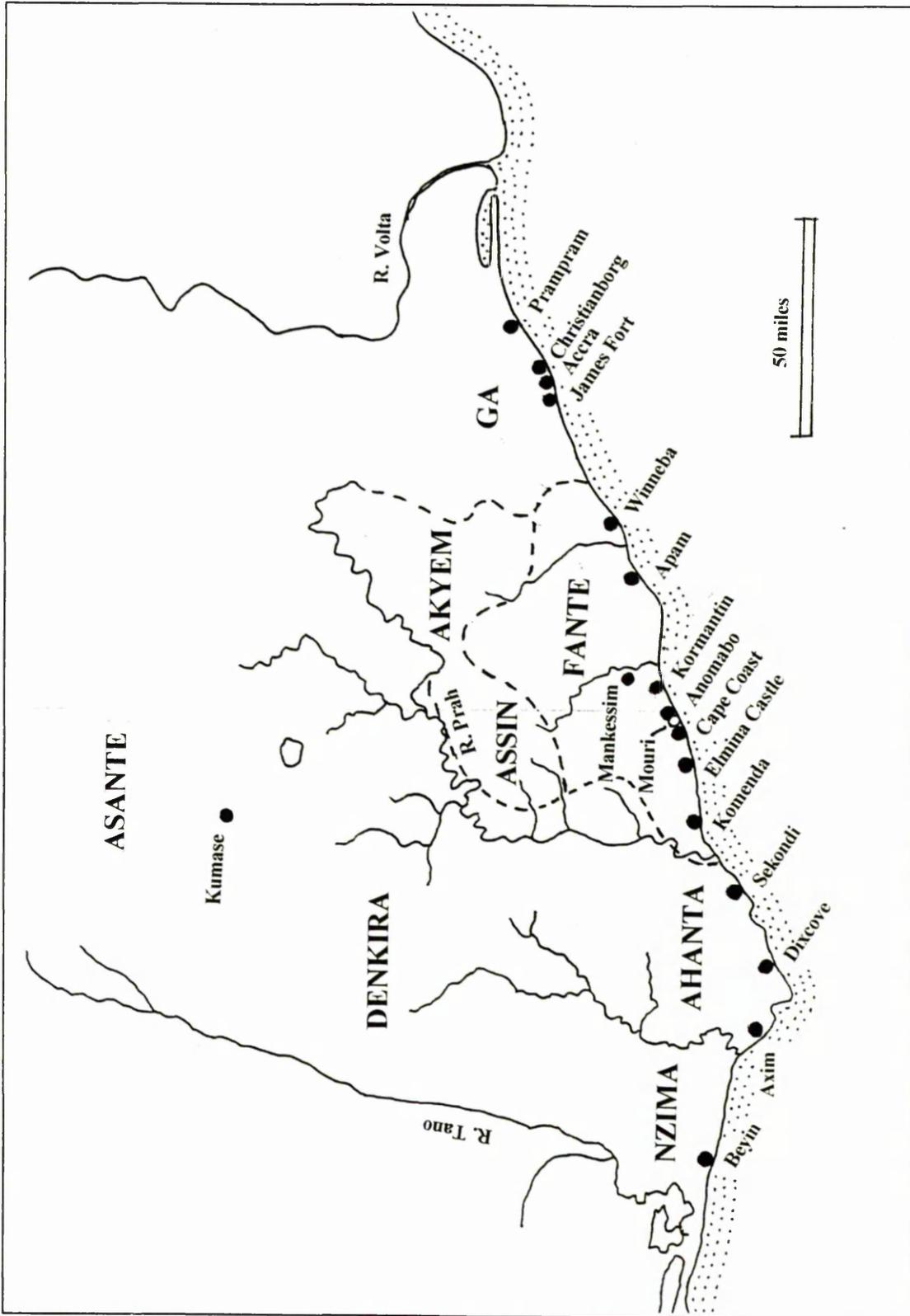
early as the end of the fifteenth century, so they probably began to migrate southward some time between 1000 and 1300 AD.⁴ According to Fante traditions, they had proceeded southwards under the leadership of three old priests, Obunumakoma, Odapagyan, and Osun, and they initially settled in the areas of Mankessim a few miles from the coast (Figure 2.1). After the death of the three priests they were buried at Mankessim. The site became a sacred grove known as *Nanaanom Mpow* that became not only a spiritual centre, but a focus of Fante identity. Oral tradition tells of how they then sought a new leader, but the people demanded that he must consent to have his left hand removed as a sign of his commitment to the service of the people. On this demand the man who had been chosen hesitated, but quickly his cane-bearer stepped forward and indicated that he would be willing to lose a hand. The man's hand was chopped off and he was constituted leader, or *braffo*.

The Fante gradually spread westwards from Mankessim along the coast, absorbing some local people and forming several small states. When the Portuguese Admiral, Don Diego d'Azambuja stepped ashore at Elmina in 1482, his mission was to establish a trading centre and to provide a base for missionary work. D'Azambuja and his party of one hundred builders and five hundred soldiers, all European, built the fort of São Jorge de la Mina. For years, the fort remained a trading post where European goods were exchanged for gold, and religious education had little place. In 1572 a small group of Augustinian canons arrived at Elmina, and a priory was built for them by the castle authorities. The canons first began to work in the castle establishing a school for the mulatto children of the European residents and their African wives. Gradually the canons extended their work beyond the fort, but this was brought to an abrupt halt when most of the canons were killed by the people of Komenda and Efutu. In 1637 the fort was captured by the Dutch from the Portuguese, and the trade taken over by the Dutch West India Company. The company restarted the school in the castle in 1643 with the view that Western education would assist the conversion of the children to Christianity. The school suffered from lack of continuity. Muller, a Danish chaplain who was in the region in the 1660s reported that wars and raids were part of the daily life of the people.⁵

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵ Quoted in D. Birmingham, "A Note on the Kingdom of Fetu", *Ghana Notes and Queries* 9 (1966), pp. 30-33.

Figure 2:1 Gold Coast in early nineteenth century showing approximate boundary of the Fante area.



The Akan political structure was based on the *oman*, which was not so much a district or territory, but a community of people with a common allegiance. Physically, an *oman* (pl. *aman*) consisted of a capital town with several subsidiary villages and hamlets. The capital was the seat, or “stool” of the chief, *omanhene* who rules directly over the inhabitants of the capital and indirectly over the outlying villages and towns that each relate to one of the elders residing in the capital. Together the *omanhene* and his council of elders administer the affairs of the *oman* essentially by forming a confederation of stools.⁶ During the latter part of the seventeenth century the Fante *aman* seemed almost continually in conflict with each other in order to gain control of the trade routes. However, in 1701 the Asante gained control over the Denkyira state, and by 1707 Asante traders began travelling to the coast. The Fante then realised that to secure their own future, they must control the trading centres by dominating the smaller states about them. The Fante *aman* came together under the leadership of the wealthy state of Abora and dominated the coastal area for much of the eighteenth century.⁷

The British constructed a fort at Cape Coast in 1720 to act as a trading centre under the control of the Royal Africa Company (RAC). The RAC appointed James Philps as captain-general and chief merchant at Cape Coast, and in his instructions he was required to ensure that morning and evening prayers were regularly read by a minister of the Church of England. Owing to the frequent deaths and sickness among the chaplain-schoolmasters, the position was often vacant and the school closed. Rev. Philip Quaque was the first African chaplain and he served for fifty years (1766-1816).

It was mainly through his endeavours that it became a tradition for children to be baptised and work as clerks in the administration. By 1772, the British Governor of Cape Coast castle reported that the Fante were once again “divided into so many petty Republicks, and always at war among themselves...”⁸ The fear of attack from the Asante brought the small Fante states together, but in the absence of such a concern

⁶ M. J. Field, *Akim-Kotoku: An Oman of the Gold Coast* (Westport: Negro University Press, 1970).

⁷ Ray Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics in the seventeenth-century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

⁸ Public Records Treasury Office, T70/31, Mill to Committee, Cape Coast Castle, 22 June 1772 quoted in Mary McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast: The Fante States 1807-1874* (New York: Lanham, 1983), p. 7.

the confederacy disintegrated and this seems to have been complete by 1791. By the beginning of the nineteenth century there were more than twenty distinct Fante *aman* along the Coast (Figure 2:2). The history of the Fante during the nineteenth century was essentially the impact of two powerful political states attempting to develop their trading networks. From the north the Asante invaded on two occasions with devastating effect, such that the invasions of 1807 and 1873, became significant markers in the history of the Fante. From the sea came the Europeans and especially the British upon whom the Fante became increasingly dependent.

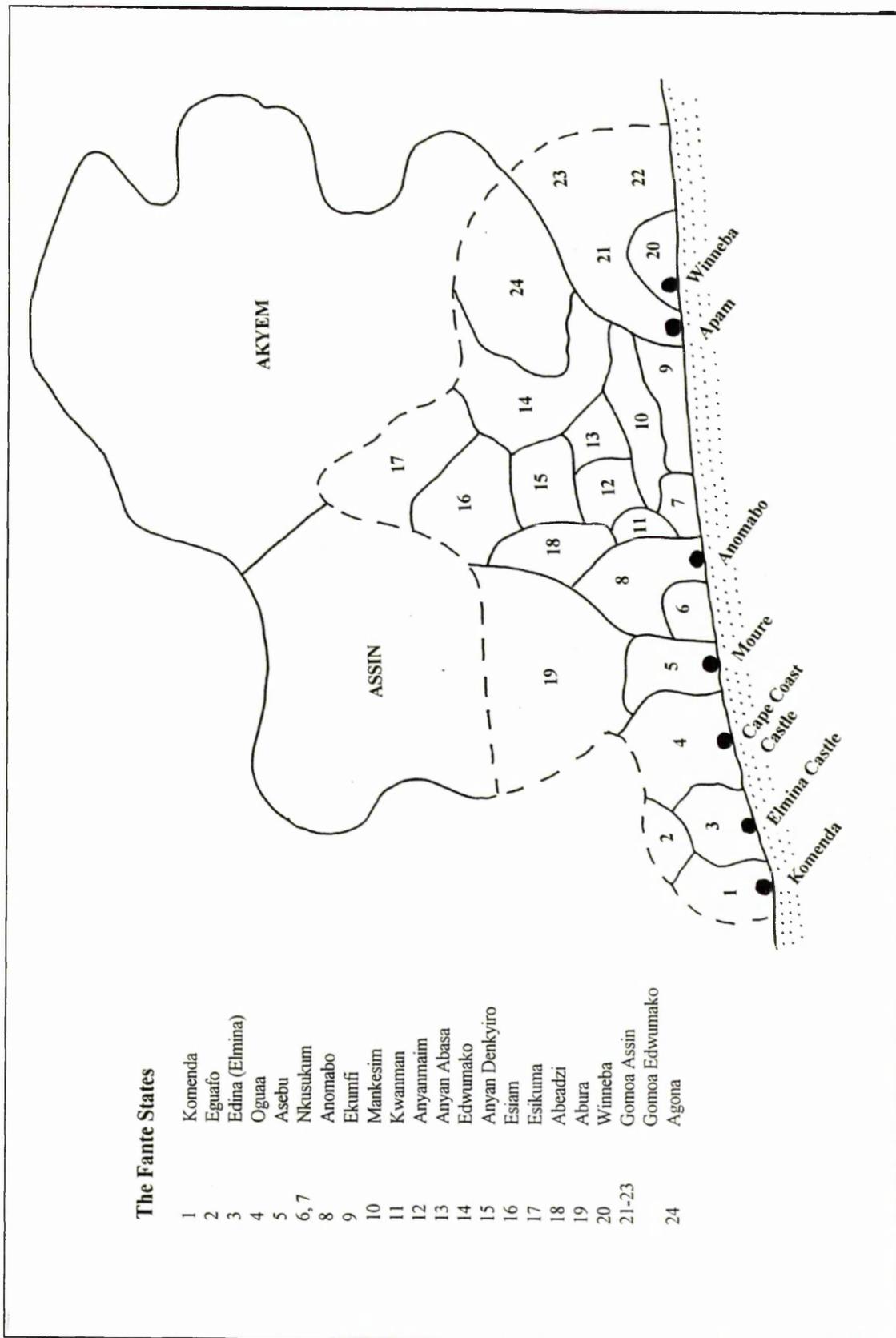
The year 1807 was significant for the Fante due to two important developments outside of their control, which were to have great effects on the history of the Coast. The first was the major incursion of the Asante southwards to the coast to protect their own trade with the Europeans, and especially the Dutch with whom they had close relations. They pressed their influence further in 1811 and 1814 causing extensive depopulation of the interior and the destruction of many Fante villages. As McCaskie writes, "Fante society was traumatised in the sense that civil society all but disintegrated, and in this anomic process of atomisation abiding verities were called into question and old certainties crumbled and collapsed."⁹ These invasions disrupted trade and threatened the security of the forts. The European merchants sought a treaty of friendship with Asante that was eventually signed in 1817, which recognised Asante claims to large areas of the coastal region. For the Fante states this meant that they were substantially weakened, and had no recourse but to become more dependent upon the British administration based at the coastal forts.

The second factor occurring in 1807 was the abolition of the slave-trade by the British Parliament. This caused a rapid decline in trade along the coast, and many of the adventurers of the earlier years departed. In 1810, the Governor estimated the population of Cape Coast and its surrounding area to be about 11,000, but 40 years later Cruickshank gave the number as only 6,000.¹⁰ By 1826 only nine European

⁹ T. C. McCaskie, "Nananom Mpow of Mankessim: An Essay in Fante History", in D. Henige & T. C. McCaskie (eds.), *West African Economic and Social History: Essays in Memory of Marion Johnson* (Madison: African Studies Program, 1990), p. 143.

¹⁰ S. Kaplow, "African Merchants of the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast", (Ph.D. thesis: Columbia, 1971), p. 10.

Figure 2:2 Fante States in Early Nineteenth Century



merchants were resident on the coast.¹¹ Kaplow concludes that the size of the group must have varied somewhat over the period 1800-1850, but seems to have averaged about fifteen.¹² Most British traders lived a lonely existence, isolated from the community around them by virtue of their colour and culture. Daily life was generally uneventful, illness was common, and as a result many drank heavily. There were few European women on the Coast, and those who came quickly succumbed to illness with a result that most of the men took African wives, and some even contracted polygamous unions as was common among the Fante. By contracting these marriages, Englishmen were drawn into the network of Fante kinship relations, and invaluable commercial enterprises¹³. The wives were frequently left in charge of their husband's businesses during periods of leave in Britain. As McCarthy concludes, "The women who were associated with Europeans were often the principal means by which these men were able to survive and prosper in an alien and sometimes hostile environment."¹⁴ Akan society was matrilineal, so the children of these marriages were readily located into Fante social structures. It was the mulatto children of these marriages who eventually came to act as agents in the growing trade and began to prosper as merchants. The two most prominent African merchants before 1850 were the brothers-in-law James Bannerman and J. W. Hansen.¹⁵ The mulattos generally adopted their fathers' religion and became, at least nominally, members of the Church of England, but as for much of the time there was no chaplain at Cape Coast, they had little Christian teaching.

The 1826 invasion of the coastal region by Asante was finally defeated by a combined force of British, Fante and Ga, but the repercussions were immense. The invasion destroyed two of the most powerful Fante stools at Mankessim and Abura. People fled from the inland states and sought the protection of the Coastal chiefs, and great numbers became dependent servants. A new treaty was signed in 1831 that resulted in increased British rule over the coastal peoples with the gradual extension of British

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹³ Margaret Priestley has traced the emergence of the Brew family from an Irish merchant, Richard Brew, who spent thirty years slave-trading during the second half of the eighteenth century. "The Emergence of an elite: a case study of a West African family" in P. C. Lloyd (ed.), *The New Elite's of Tropical Africa* (Oxford: OUP, 1966), pp. 87-104.

¹⁴ McCarthy, *Social Change*, p. 46.

¹⁵ Kaplow, "African Merchants".

justice, and the assumption of territorial sovereignty outside the forts. In 1843, the British government selected Commander Hill as the new governor for the Gold Coast, and he immediately sought to clarify the conditions and responsibilities of his jurisdiction over the coastal region. The Fante realised that their future lay in their association with the European powers, and agreed to the so-called "Fante Bond" in 1844 in which the chiefs voluntarily repudiated various customs the British found particularly abhorrent.

With the defeat of the Asante the Fante were once again free to travel about the country, but migration was slow through the 1830s and 1840s because people preferred to stay near the coast. Even by 1850 there were still large uninhabited regions inland, and some of the previously populous towns were never reoccupied. Freeman reported that most people were concentrated within an eighteen mile belt along the coast.¹⁶ Wealth slowly increased as trade revived, but economic growth was hard-won by the African merchants during the period 1830-1850.¹⁷ The tremendous upheavals that had been caused by the war with Asante challenged the traditional institutions of the Fante, and especially their religious beliefs. The local deities had failed to provide protection during the Asante invasions, and even the sacred site at Mankessim had been overrun.

During the nineteenth century several strata existed in Fante society. The chiefs and their families made up an influential class. Although wealth varied considerably and was significant, it was the number of people one could command that primarily determined one's status and this was dependent on heredity rather than wealth. Below the chiefs were the ordinary people, most of whom were involved in subsistence agriculture, some in craft activity, and many were involved in trade in one form or another. The men dominated the long distance trading, while the women controlled much of the local production and trade. Through successful trading some people become more wealthy even than the chiefs, and some historians have viewed these people as a "new class".¹⁸

¹⁶ Quoted by McCarthy, *Social Change*, p. 107.

¹⁷ E. Reynolds, "The Rise and Fall of an African Merchant Class on the Gold Coast 1830-1874" *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 14 (1974), 253-264.

¹⁸ Kwame Arhin, "Rank and Class among the Asante and Fante in the Nineteenth Century" *Africa* 53 (1983), 2-22.

At the bottom of the scale were the poor who sometimes were compelled to surrender their freedom or that of a dependent. The complex practice known as *mwowa* (pl. *mwowa*) connoted pawning or pledging, and was applied to land or native-born people.¹⁹ The situation was complicated by the fact that rights in *mwowa*, or “pawns” as they were called by Europeans, were transferable and could be passed on to a new lender. People became *mwowa* usually as a result of debts, and in some cases whole families made themselves dependants of a wealthy person, which occurred on a wide scale during the Asante wars of 1807-1826. There were few distinctions between *mwowa* and free persons in Fante society, and masters and *mwowa* worked and spent much of their time together. However, the British considered the system to be “inequitable and oppressive”.²⁰ The lowest status in Fante society was that of foreign-born slaves, but even their status rose in the second and third generations. There appeared to have been a steady flow of foreign-born slaves into Fante society from at least the beginning of the eighteenth century, but this flow increased notably after the end of the Asante war.

The Europeans generally considered Fante women to be badly oppressed by their husbands and required to work hard to support themselves.²¹ McCarthy did not consider this to be the total picture, and argued that the women had considerable economic independence from men because of the work in which they were engaged.²² Fante marriages were virilocal, but in practice the system was very flexible, and husbands and wives often lived with their own relatives. A man was free to have as many wives as he could support, but a woman could have only one husband at a time. Fante society tended to be inclusive rather than exclusive in character, and easily incorporated new members by adoption, intermarriage, and acquisition of servants. It was common for a lineage to adopt a Guan child for example, and to arrange marriage with Guan. As the Fante migrated from Mankessim, they readily adapted their institutions to meet the local situation. In the coastal towns they continued the development of the patrilineally-organised *asafo*, and borrowed various European

¹⁹ Gareth Austin, “Human Pawning in Asante, 1800-1950: Markets and Coercion, Gender and Cocoa” in T. Falola & P. E. Lovejoy, *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder, Westview Press: 1994), pp. 119-159.

²⁰ T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 41.

²¹ Sir Charles McCarthy, *Parliamentary Papers* (1842) H551, 16 May 1822.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

elements to suit their interests. It was into this social context that the Wesleyan missionaries arrived on the Gold Coast.

First encounters with the Methodist missionaries (1835-1852)

The sole minister along the Fante Coast had for years been the chaplain at Cape Coast sent to minister to the Europeans and their families at the forts. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) was responsible for the Cape Coast chaplaincy till 1843, but there was no chaplain between the period 1826 and 1843. There was, however, an active school at Cape Coast Castle, and in the 1820s there was one in Prampram, in 1828 in Dixcove, and from 1822 to 1826 a school existed in English Accra. All these schools were probably founded by pupils of the Cape Coast school. In 1830, George Maclean (1801-1847) became President of the Council of Merchants on the Gold Coast, and with great vigour he revived the school and conducted services in the castle. The Castle school he put under the charge of an African, Joseph Smith, a former pupil of Quaque, and in a report of 1833 he tells of several mulatto teachers who catered for 150 boys.²³ Many of these boys began reading the Bible, and similar Bible study groups emerged at Anomabo, and Dixcove. It was these people who initially were the most responsive to the teaching of the missionaries soon to arrive.

Christian mission to the Fante is often dated from the arrival of the Wesleyan Methodist missionary Rev. Joseph Rhodes Dunwell in 1 January 1835. He was met by George Maclean who introduced him to the resident European merchants who numbered fourteen men and one woman.²⁴ It was not Maclean who was responsible for bringing Dunwell to Cape Coast, but a group of African Christians in Cape Coast who had written to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society asking for a missionary.²⁵ Maclean would not let Dunwell preach in the castle until his appointment was confirmed by the castle committee, but Dunwell took the initiative and on his

²³ Hans Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967) p. 94.

²⁴ G. E. Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast* (London: OUP, 1962).

²⁵ G. K. Blankson's (1809-1898) obituary in the *Gold Coast Aborigine* (3 Sept. 1898) tells of how he was one of the sons of the chiefs sent to the Colonial School at Anomabo where he joined one of the Bible Reading Clubs. He managed the mission station at Anomabo in 1850 where he became a successful trader, and left the Church. He was captured by the Asante in 1873, and returned to the Methodist Church in 1876 where he became a close friend of T. B. Freeman.

second Sunday ashore he preached in the town. His congregation was mainly members of Cape Coast society who were already meeting for prayer and Bible reading. The following week he had a hundred and fifty people to hear him, but not one was European. When later the Europeans did appear they were often drunk. Dunwell was diffident towards European social life in the Gold Coast, and was not at ease at their many parties.²⁶ Dunwell also had difficulty with the African Christians, and he rigorously denounced the accepted practice of polygamy. He wrote, "I am happy to say that all those who have come under my care put away all their women except the one who is considered their lawful wife and have consented to be married in the Christian mode."²⁷ The result was that Methodist Christianity was to become closely associated with monogamy. On 24 June 1835, Dunwell died, leaving a congregation of 150 at Cape Coast and 60 at Anomabo.

The Rev. George Wrigley was Dunwell's successor, and he arrived with his wife on 15 September 1836. The meeting in Cape Coast had not only continued, but had grown during the intervening fifteen months.²⁸ Wrigley began work with enthusiasm to establish a church that was, in his own words, "as in England"²⁹. Young people were a great concern to Wrigley, and although there was a flourishing school for boys in the castle, he established a second, but it soon failed. In contrast, Mrs Wrigley started a school for girls that proved an immediate success because there was no equivalent. The class of 25 girls dressed in European frocks and bonnets were schooled in an English manner. Sadly Mrs Wrigley died five months after the opening of the school. Mrs Elizabeth Waldron, the daughter of an Irish employee of the Company and an African woman, took over the running of the school, which prospered and later emerged into Wesley Girls High School, Cape Coast. Wrigley saw the need to be able to speak in Fante, and set to the task.³⁰ Encouraged by Joe Aggrey, chief of Cape Coast, he translated the Ten Commandments and portions of the New Testament, and

²⁶ Dunwell wrote in his Journal 23 March 1835, "I retired, almost deafened by the revelling of my countrymen." WMMS Archives, SOAS, University of London, West Africa Correspondence Gold Coast, Box 9, microfiche 1108.

²⁷ Dunwell, Cape Coast, 1 April 1835, WMMS, Box 9, microfiche 1109.

²⁸ Wrigley reports that there are 110 members with 40 on trial, of whom 20 have commenced since his arrival. Wrigley, Cape Coast, 17 October 1836, WMMS, Box 9, microfiche 1110.

²⁹ F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965) p. 20.

³⁰ Wrigley, Cape Coast, 30 November 1836, WMMS, Box 9, microfiche 1110.

initiated a Fante meeting. Although these meetings were an immediate success, Wrigley was still eager to conduct a service wholly in English in order to attract the Europeans and mulattos. This was one of the most influential sections of the Gold Coast community and a leading force for change. The Anglican service that was conducted in English had become a symbol of their distinct social position, and young people joined the church because of the Castle school. To reach them Wrigley instituted an English service at the same time as the Anglican service, but this only resulted in greater prejudice with the mulattos considering the Methodist meeting noisy and extreme.

Except for Philip Quaake, there had been no effort to make converts, and there was minimal Christian influence on the community outside the castle. Wrigley, however, started travelling beyond Cape Coast into the surrounding area where he met English-speaking Fante who had some previous contact with Christianity. Many of these Fante expressed an interest in Christianity, and Wrigley was able to form Methodist groups that began to meet regularly at Elmina, Dixcove, Anomabo, and Abura Dunkwa. The Methodist circuit system with its emphasis upon lay preachers was ideally suited to the situation, and it encouraged keen Africans to continue the work in the absence of the European missionary that often happened due to the high mortality rate in the Gold Coast.

Initially these small communities caused little comment, and the first Christians of the coastal towns endeavoured to avoid potential conflicts with traditional customs. For example, out of a sensitivity for the local customs the first group in Cape Coast in 1831 decided to hold their weekly meetings on Tuesdays, a day held sacred when neither fishing nor farming was performed along the coast. However, conflict could not be avoided. Although the chiefs were friendly towards the missionaries, they were hesitant to identify themselves with the Christian community and its distinctive lifestyle. A common problem was polygamy on which the Methodist missionaries took a strong stand requiring Christians to have only one wife married in a Christian way. A second issue was funeral rituals which was an occasion when all members of the clan were required to assist with funeral expenses. Wrigley perceived the practice as funding pagan rituals, and forbade Christians to participate in it. He did not appreciate

its function as a way of spreading the cost of the expenses involved. A third issue was slavery, which Wrigley regarded as not only an “abomination in every land”, but an actual obstacle to the evangelisation of the people. He writes:

To give an instance among many: a good proportion of our members are either slaves themselves or their wives are slaves. Their masters in many cases are utterly opposed either to their coming to the house of God or being married..... Some few amongst our Society are masters of slaves....”³¹

This report indicates that the initial congregations were from the lower social classes, but not exclusively so.

Wrigley died on 16 November 1837, and was replaced by the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman (1809-1890) in 1838. Between 1835 and 1839 the Methodists had sent out four missionaries and three wives of missionaries, but by 1839 the only survivor was Thomas Freeman. President Maclean continued to encourage missionary work even with the diffidence of the missionaries towards the social life of the Europeans, but the situation changed with the arrival of Freeman. He was a well-educated son of an African freeman and an English woman, and he and Maclean became close friends.³² He was willing to take advice from the older residents and bought a larger, more suitable mission house, and took greater care of his health. Soon after his arrival, the emerging church was encouraged by the completion of a large chapel at Cape Coast, which was dedicated on 10 June 1838. On 3 September of the same year a missionary meeting was held at which Maclean presided over a meeting of an estimated fourteen hundred people.³³ These events attracted supporters from various parts of the coast, and encouraged all Christians. One direct result was the founding of the Methodist Church in James Town, Accra, which Freeman soon visited and found twenty people already meeting regularly. Children were also eager to be enrolled in the first Methodist school in the east of the region.

Due to the high mortality rate of missionaries, the Wesleyan Methodist Committee encouraged Freeman to train “native missionaries” as soon as possible. In 1838 he chose Mr De Graft and Mr John Martin for training, and in the following years several

³¹ Wrigley, Cape Coast, 20 February 1937, WMMS, Box 9, microfiche 1111.

³² Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast*, p. 237.

³³ Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, p. 34.

other young men were educated and sent to established schools and churches.^{34 35} These men were organised following the English Methodist circuit model, and by 1841 there were circuits around Cape Coast, Anomabo, Dominasi and Accra.³⁶ The use of Fante workers was undoubtedly one of the most important reasons for the growth of the Methodist Church during this period.³⁷ This was in marked contrast with the Basel Mission, working to the East, who had a large number of European missionaries. Their strategy was also different in that they preferred to draw their converts into new Christian communities.

The Methodist Fante church workers included many devoted individuals who were eager evangelists. James Ahoomah Solomon (1818-1898), son of the chief of James Town, Accra, was baptised by Wrigley in 1837, and spent a short time in England where the writer of his obituary says he was converted.^{38 39} Solomon could well have attended one of the many revival meetings held in Britain by the American Rev. James Caughey who had a major influence upon the Wesleyan Methodists in Britain.⁴⁰ The depth of Solomon's religious experience is revealed in a testimony of an event that occurred on the evening of 19 March 1845 after an evening church meeting in Akra.

Now I was lying down, O! For a tongue to express that blessed change I then felt, I was all at once overwhelmed with the influence of God's Holy Spirit, and I fell down upon my knees with prayers and loud cries; I felt "the arrows of the Almighty" were "within me and the terrors of God" did "set themselves in array against me". His hand did press "me sore". But thanks be to God he did not leave me there but he delivered me and gave me "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for" my soul. I was enabled that same night to "draw water out of the wells of salvation" and to declare before my fellow students what the Lord has done for my soul. My conversion excited many of them to seek the Lord; and in a short time they also found peace with God.⁴¹

³⁴ See appendix 2 for a list of Methodist workers in the Gold Coast and their year of ordination.

³⁵ Freeman, annual report 1838, WMMS, Box 9, microfiche 1114.

³⁶ Hugon, "L'implantation du methodisme", p. 145.

³⁷ Even the neutral Census document for the Year 1901 comments, "After the establishment of the native ministry in 1852, the Society spread very rapidly, especially among the Fantis on the Coast, its popularity being no doubt due, in some measure, to the democratic nature of its institutions and system of government." (London, 1902).

³⁸ T. B. Freeman, Obituary for Rev. James A. Solomon, *The Gold Coast Aborigine* 10 Sept. 1898, 3.

³⁹ The period 1813-46 knew many revivalists in Britain and America, the most notable being the Methodist James Caughey, Walter Palmer and Charles G. Finney.

⁴⁰ W. R. Ward, *Early Victorian Methodism* (Oxford: OUP, 1976).

⁴¹ J. A. Solomon, Anomabo, 25 June 1857, WMMS, Box 11, microfiche 1210.

This short testimony has many of the characteristics of the early Wesleyan revivals where the individual was first smitten with an intense conviction of sin before finding "peace" and the joy of salvation. By the nineteenth century British Wesleyan Methodists had become more restrained, and such emotional experiences continued to occur mainly during periods of revival. Among the small groups of African Methodists in the Gold Coast similar manifestations of revival are recorded to have occasionally occurred. For example in 1851 Freeman writes:

Another striking feature of the work in Cape Coast is that of small parties of the Band Members, on the Sabbath morning, after the early prayer-meeting, dividing themselves into small groups and going to some secluded spot in the dense thicket in the immediate neighbourhood of Cape Coast and holding short prayer-meetings. Although this custom has existed among them for some months past, I was not aware of it until a few Sabbaths back.⁴²

An insight into the way in which Methodism spread in the Gold Coast is from the village of Abasa where a member from another congregation returned to his home area and began to gather a group of interested people, teaching them the little that he had learnt. When Freeman heard of the group in Abasa he sent a teacher, and visited them himself. The Christians had faced persecution from the chief who suspected that they would harm the unity of the *oman*. Freeman was able to direct the thinking of the chiefs from the temporary disunity to the ultimate benefits that the church and school would give to the community. Through his conciliatory style, he was able to pacify the chiefs.

A further example was the small village of Beulah some eight miles north-west of Cape Coast where in 1844, 38 of the 39 adult inhabitants were members of the Methodist society, and all 23 children attended the school.⁴³ There was no drumming, fetish-making, nor worship of idols. This was a new Christian community most likely made up of converts who were rejected by their own communities. A similar Christian community emerged at Assafa near Mankessim, and it was this group who clashed with fetish priests of Nananom Mpow over the sacred grove.^{44 45} The exposure of the

⁴² Freeman, Cape Coast, 19 July 1851, WMMS, Box 10, microfiche 1185.

⁴³ Allen, Cape Coast, 1 October 1844, WMMS, Box 9, microfiche 1150.

⁴⁴ T. C. McCaskie, "Nananom Mpow of Mankessim: An Essay in Fante History" in D. Henige & T. C. McCaskie (eds.), *West African Economic and Social History* (Madison: African Studies Program, 1990), 133-150.

⁴⁵ Freeman, A report of the affair at Nanaam, October 1851, WMMS, Box 10, microfiche 1186.

practices of this cult resulted in “hundreds and perhaps thousands who are now at this time casting away their idols.”⁴⁶ After a visit to Mankessim in the following year Browne writes: “Since the exposure and the break up of the great Fetish, and more particularly the head fetishman being a Christian himself, and Mankessim the stronghold of Satan is now become a Mission station, my own past experience and present feelings I am more than ever convinced that Methodism is better adapted than any other system to convert the world.”⁴⁷

The Asante invasion and the first revivals (1852-1873)

The middle of the nineteenth century saw a significant transformation in the nature of the trade of the Gold Coast. The introduction of a direct steamer link between England and West Africa in 1852 drew the attention of many British trading companies to the region. The dominant role of the merchants Bannerman and Hansen was over, and a new group of Africans entered into the bilateral trade with Europe with varying success. This group was concentrated at Cape Coast and Accra, and was educated at the mission schools. They showed signs of being influenced by both local and European practice. For example, in their marriage arrangements, monogamy was usually acknowledged and often sanctified by a Christian wedding, but some had several wives. Kaplow summarises their way of life in the following words: “The African merchants formed a small, insular community on the coast. Largely cut off from outside influences by the geographical situation, their lives had the flavour of provincialism and their amusements resembled those of contemporary, small-town Britain.”⁴⁸ This new emerging class was later to be referred to as the *intelligentsia*, and were to become an important social force.

The Fante had conceded, through the 1844 Bond, some of their judicial powers to the British, but during the following years the power of traditional law was gradually eroded so that by the 1850s the British even wanted to abolish African courts altogether. This was achieved through the payment of regular stipends to the chiefs and village dignitaries. They did not greatly object at the British encroachment on their

⁴⁶ Freeman, Cape Coast, 26 December 1851, WMMS, Box 10, microfiche 1187.

⁴⁷ Browne, Dominasi, 29 December 1852, WMMS, Box 10, microfiche 1189.

⁴⁸ Kaplow, “African Merchants”, p. 158.

rights nor the introduction of a Poll Tax in 1852. However, opposition to the Poll Tax did increase, and by 1860 British officials were facing financial shortage, and were unable to pay the stipends regularly.⁴⁹ The chiefs therefore took back the juridical role and asserted that no criminal or civil cases were beyond the traditional courts. At the same time the defence and security of the Protectorate become an increasing concern as a result of the Asante incursion of 1853. The Asante had been friendly with the Dutch, but were alarmed at the possibility of losing their trade-links to the coast. The Fante considered that they had to respond to the impending situation, and seized and detained a large number of Asante in the coastal towns, which drew Asante forces against the Protectorate. Freeman wrote at this time:

There is a general pause in all business and Pagans and Christians of all ranks and classes are seizing their arms and hastening to the camp. Many of our societies are temporarily broken up, none hardly but the female members being left behind. I feel for the hundreds, the many hundreds of our members now exposed to all the temptations of a camp.⁵⁰

The social tensions caused by the Asante invasion resulted in a greater responsiveness to the Christian Gospel, and a deeper commitment of the Christians. In 1853 Rev. J A Solomon was stationed at Abakrampa, and after two years in the area he witnessed a major revival movement among the local Christians.

His stirring preaching, pastoral visitations and earnest expostulations not only roused the indifferent and backsliders, but attracted members of heathens into the Church. An instance of his abandonment of self and undeviating devotion to duty is demonstrated in the prolongation of a watchnight service (1855) from 12 p.m. to 8 am followed by another service which did not break up till noon, the people hanging on the burning words of the eloquent preacher delivered with such fervour, pathos and earnestness, which moved many to tears and extorted the cry "What shall we do to be saved," the ingathering of 320 souls being the result of this awakening in that sub-circuit at the time, and the spreading into other societies.

It was in connection with these pentecostal scenes that Father Solomon recorded as most remarkable, the fact of a lame man, one of the leaders, being so perfectly healed, and without medical treatment too that he ever afterwards walked without halting. At Akurudu the great centre of Fetishism he was so successful that the Chief Priest was himself converted and was, like Cornelius of old, received into the Church with his household by the rite of baptism.⁵¹

⁴⁹ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 187 tables the decline of the Poll Tax receipts.

⁵⁰ Freeman, Cape Coast, 9 April 1853, WMMS, Box 10, microfiche 1191.

⁵¹ T. B. Freeman, *The Gold Coast Aborigine* 10 Sept. 1898, p. 3.

In 1855, Solomon writes stating that “several revivals took place in the different parts of the Cape Coast and Anomabo Districts in the year 1855”.⁵² Freeman writes of the Good Friday prayer meeting in Cape Coast, “On that occasion the whole congregation was in tears at an early prayer meeting at 4.30 am (on Good Friday) so that the ordinary course of the Prayer meeting was suspended and deep and heartfelt sobbing and prayer was heard aloud in all parts of the Chapel.”⁵³ Although the expectation of revival was high among the Wesleyan Methodists in Britain, it was not until 1859 that the most important revival of the nineteenth century occurred.⁵⁴ This suggests that the revival was not imported into the Gold Coast by missionaries, but the product of the earlier experiences of Solomon.

Another development at this time emerged under the Methodist trader R. J. Gharthey (1822-1898) who was later to become chief of Winneba and leader of the Fante Confederation.⁵⁵ In 1861 he visited England and was so impressed by the temperance movement, then at its height, that on his return to the Gold Coast he started a Temperance Society at Anomabo. He built a large water tank to provide a source of clean water, and the society became known as the *Akonomnsu* (water-drinkers). He organised a vernacular singing group for the chapel, which was to be a fore-runner of the singing-band movement common in the twentieth century. Gharthey also introduced the English blouse to provide modest covering for poorer women. The blouse quickly became a fashion item and spread throughout the region. With the spread of the movement, Church members and missionaries were criticised for not taking a stand against the sale of alcohol. The sacraments of baptism, marriage and communion were denounced as unnecessary impositions.⁵⁶ The movement was brought back into the Methodist church in 1870 through the intervention of the English missionary Rev. T. R. Picot.

⁵² Solomon, Anomabo, 25 June 1857, WMMS, Box 11, microfiche 1210.

⁵³ Freeman, Cape Coast, 22 July 1855, WMMS, Box 10, microfiche 1201.

⁵⁴ T. Phillips, *The Welsh Revival: Its Origins and Developments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989). During the period 1859-64 British Methodists gained approximately 200,000 accessions to membership, according to Edwin Orr, *Good News in Bad Times* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), p. 27.

⁵⁵ Obituary, *Gold Coast Aborigine* 15 Sept. 1898, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, p. 82.

The increasing fear of attack from the Asante caused many of the educated Fante merchants of the Coast to form a united army for the defence of the land, and in 1863, Mr Hutchinson, a wealthy trader, started the Gold Coast Rifle Volunteer Corps. The Asante invaded the Protectorate in 1863 inflicting a heavy loss on the Fante, which severely shook the people's confidence in British protection. The Fante therefore began to organise themselves into a new confederacy, and in 1868 the chiefs adopted a constitution at Mankessim. The constitution provided for a king as President supported by councillors and then a National Assembly made up of representatives of various *aman*. A Confederate army was founded in February 1868 by King Otoo of Abura, who was eventually appointed its chief commander in 1871. The early recruits were mainly volunteers, but even so by April 1869, the Fante army numbered 15,000. Many Fante now began to speak of independence.

In 1867 the British and Dutch agreed to rationalise their interests on the Gold Coast, which involved the exchange of some forts. As a result the Dutch relinquished to the British all interests to the East of the Sweet River (between Cape Coast and Elmina), and the British to the Dutch all interests to the West.⁵⁷ The Dutch posts at Moure, Kromantin, Apam and Accra were exchanged for the British posts at Beyin, Dixcove, Sekondi and Komenda. Although the exchange was technically a simple matter for the Fante to the West of the Sweet River, who had for several decades considered themselves under British protection, the treaty appeared a gross betrayal. The Komenda people were the first to resist their new masters, and a major skirmish against the Dutch began at Elmina. The resistance spread along the coast as the people refused to accept Dutch authority due to their long-standing trade with the Asante. The Fante drew up plans to take control of Elmina from the Dutch, and won over the support of the Fante living in Elmina. Although the Fante fought with zeal they could not take Elmina, and the war turned into a series of minor skirmishes that came to an end in 1872.

The withdrawal of the British from Sekondi and Dixcove also made it possible for the Ahanta people to settle old scores. As the Methodist school taught in English and the services were conducted in English, the Methodists were disliked by the pro-Dutch

⁵⁷ Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 224-235.

Ahantas. They destroyed Dixcove, sacking the town, burning the Methodist chapel, and all the Christians had to flee to the bush for safety. The chapel at Sekondi was also burnt. More serious was the drain on the leadership of the Church as many local preachers, teachers and members were drawn to the Fante war camp. Rev. Solomon records the effects of the war on the members:

At Abuadzi, we have had many backsliders; this is the result of the war against the Elminas. Some of the brethren being gone to the camp conducted themselves in such a way that we cannot keep them as Members. Still I am glad to say the services are well attended, both by Christians, backsliders, and heathen on the Lord's days.⁵⁸

A. W. Parker and Joseph deGraft Hayford, for example, were both candidates for the ministry, and asked to be excused from attending the Synod of March 1870, at which they were to be examined for ordination because they felt compelled to join the Fante force to repel the Asante. Many Methodist laymen played an important part in the Fante Confederacy, and had helped draft the Constitution. The chiefs of the confederated states were evidently impressed by the educated young people passing through the Methodist schools, and affirmed that they should have an important role to play within the executive council. The first president was the Methodist lay-person and business man, R. J. Ghartey, who succeeded to the Winneba stool as King Ghartey IV on 11 June 1872.⁵⁹

The Confederacy came to an end in 1873 for several reasons. First was the failure of the military force to take Elmina. Another was financial, in that the people were unable to trade during wartime, and were therefore unable to pay taxes to the Confederacy. When the last Dutch fort at Elmina was handed over to the British in 1872, the Asante effectively lost their last link to the sea, and they realised that the strengthened British position was a direct threat to them. The Asante invaded the coast in 1873 and swept forward to the outskirts of Cape Coast where thousands of Fante sought refuge. States that were formerly associated with the Dutch joined forces with the Asante. By the time General Wolseley arrived in October 1873 more than 20,000 Asante were within easy march of Elmina and Cape Coast, and the Fante were fearful of an imminent attack. Within two weeks Wolseley made his own attack upon

⁵⁸ Solomon, Dominasi, 4 December 1868, WMMS, Box 11, microfiche 1244.

⁵⁹ Obituary, *Gold Coast Methodist Times* 15 Sept. 1897.



the Asante forces and they returned to Kumase. To finally settle the Asante problem the British decided in 1874 to invade Kumase with a sizeable military force, and although the Asante fought well they were defeated and their capital was occupied and burned. The Asante eventually signed a peace treaty and were required to renounce claims to many southern territories, to keep the road to Kumase open for trade, and to abolish human sacrifice.⁶⁰ The British announced the Protectorate of the Coastal area in July 1874, and there was little objection from the Fante due most likely to the continuing trauma of the Asante invasion.

The condition that the road from the River Prah to Kumase should always be kept open for trade between Asante and British forts of the coast provided a new opportunity for the Church. The Rev. Thomas Picot saw it as a means of evangelising the Asante, and challenged the Church to train evangelists for the new opportunity. In 1876 a Methodist secondary school for boys was opened at Cape Coast, and two of its first students were J. Mensah Sarbah and J. E. Casely-Hayford who were to have a major influence on the history of the region. Apart from Freeman, most missionaries lived only a short time in the Gold Coast, and the continuance of the congregations was mostly through the activities of leading African churchmen like J. A. Solomon, Frederick France, John Plange and Timothy Laing, and many keen lay members.⁶¹ However, in 1868 Taylor was complaining about the native ministers, some of whom like William de Graft had left the ministry.⁶² During this period of uncertainty, there were no Methodist ministers ordained between 1857 and 1873, but despite the disruption the Church had made significant growth.

Colonialism, revival and church growth (1874-1885)

In 1874, the British Dependencies along the Coast became a colony that later expanded inland up to the boundaries of Asante. For the first time, the Coastal states were united under one Government, and the British became the major factor in social

⁶⁰ F. Agbodeka, "The Fanti Confederacy, 1865-69. An Enquiry into the Origins, Nature and Extent of an early African Protest Movement" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 7 (1964), 55-56.

⁶¹ The obituary of Rev. John Plange says, "... the last of the batch of the old native missionaries, who bore the heat and brunt of the early days of the Wesleyan Mission work amongst us..." *Gold Coast Aborigine* 26 August 1899, p. 2.

⁶² Taylor, Anomabo, 6 January 1868, WMMS, Box 11, microfiche 1242.

change in the region. Cape Coast went into decline as the centre of social and political power along the coast since the British made Accra their capital.^{63 64} In 1872, Governor Hennessey wrote that he “found the town of Cape Coast ... to be the most filthy and apparently neglected place he had ever seen under anything like civilised government.”⁶⁵ Accra was a little better, and the people appeared not to suffer from sickness as much as in Cape Coast. The Christians initially welcomed these developments because they meant the end of tribal wars and the possibility of the expansion of Christianity. The Methodists had suffered much from the Asante wars as the district report for Cape Coast illustrates:

The beginning of the year was a season of great trial for all our societies in the circuit. In all, the excitement of the expedition to Kumasi prevailed. Our people were all dispersed, and our stations, with the chapels and mission houses, for the most part destroyed. We had reason to believe that our people would become demoralised, that large numbers of the weak would fall and that our members would be greatly lessened by deaths. Although our fears were to some extent realised, yet we had great cause for thankfulness ... it was seen that large numbers had remained faithful ... they rebuilt and repaired the chapels, schools and mission houses.⁶⁶

Beginning in 1874 there was a new sense of expectancy among the Methodist leaders with talk of revival. The “Prayer Revival” that had begun in New York in 1858 had a similar effect in many parts of the British Isles in 1859-60 partly through the second visit of Rev. C G Finney. The evangelistic phase of the movement reached a climax in 1863 when many converts were made in Britain. News of the Revival reached British Wesleyan missionaries in Natal in 1859, and many were influenced through the ministry of Andrew Murray (1828-1917) who was then a minister in the country. The visit to South Africa in 1866 of the American revivalist William (“California”) Taylor produced a new movement beginning among the Xhosa making many thousands of converts.⁶⁷ Little is documented about how the revival began in the Gold Coast, apart from a brief note in a letter written by Rev. J A Picot. Writing of the revival he

⁶³ Augustus L. Casely-Hayford, “A Genealogical History of Cape Coast Stool Families” (Ph.D. thesis, SOAS London, 1992).

⁶⁴ John Parker, “Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra, 1860s-1920s”, (Ph.D. thesis: SOAS London, 1995).

⁶⁵ Hennessey to Kimberley, 29 Oct. 1872, CO 96/94.

⁶⁶ *Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Reports*, 1875, p 128.

⁶⁷ Wallace G. Mills, “The Taylor Revival of 1866 and the Roots of African nationalism in the Cape Colony” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 8 (1976), 108-122.

comments: "This is marvellous and commenced in the following manner. When Mr Milum was in England two years ago, he sent to each of the native ministers as a present, Dr Mahan's *Baptism of the Holy Ghost*.⁶⁸ Many of the leaders then procured the book, and all began to seek for the Baptism until the revival broke out."⁶⁹ Rev. Asa Mahan had been closely associated with the revivalist Rev. C. G. Finney, and this book was published bound together with Finney's book *Revivals of Religion*.^{70 71}

On 1 September 1873, when Freeman was sixty-four, he was reinstated as a minister and began his second period of ministry in the Gold Coast.⁷² One day in 1875 while he was taking special services at Cape Coast, his wife had to send a message to him that a revival movement had suddenly started at Anomabo. People came in hundreds to the prayer meetings and communion, and the chapels were crowded with people crying out in ecstasy.⁷³ The crowded chapels caused Freeman to introduce "camp-meetings", which were held in the open air under roughly constructed shades from the sun. The term "camp-meeting" first appears in Ashbury's journals in 1802, and quickly became a characteristic of the Methodist revivals in North America.⁷⁴ By 1812, it was estimated that at least four hundred Methodist camp meetings were held annually in the United States.⁷⁵ The English Wesleyan Methodists, however, ruled: "It is our judgement, that, even supposing such meetings to be allowed in America, they are highly improper in England, and likely to be productive of considerable mischief; and we disclaim all connection with them."⁷⁶ Freeman's meeting drew hundreds who gathered to sing, pray, hear the preaching, and the meetings ended with communion. These meetings

⁶⁸ Rev. John Milum was a Methodist missionary who visited the Gold Coast on his way home from the Lagos District, of what is now Nigeria. He was deeply impressed by the life and ministry of Thomas Birch Freeman and wrote his biography published in the 1890s.

⁶⁹ Rev. J. A. Picot, 4 November 1876, WMMS, Box 12, microfiche 1271.

⁷⁰ Rev. Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (London: Elliot Stock, 1876).

⁷¹ M. E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1980), p. 61.

⁷² In 1857, Freeman had been rebuked by the mission committee in London for overspending and had to resign as a minister and took an administrative post of civil commandant of the Accra district. See Birtwhistle, N. Allen "Methodist Missions" in Davies, George & Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (Epworth: London, 1983), Vol. 3, pp. 67-69, and Paul Ellingworth, "Mr Freeman's Case", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 27 (1997), pp. 50-58.

⁷³ Freeman, Cape Coast, 8 October 1875, WMMS, Box 12, microfiche 1267.

⁷⁴ C. A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting*, (Dallas: South Methodist University Press, 1995).

⁷⁵ W. W. Sweet, *Methodism in America History*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 160.

⁷⁶ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, (London, n.d.) Vol. 1, 77.

resulted in the formation of 50 new out-stations, and 3,000 converts for the Methodist Church during the period 1876 and 1877.⁷⁷

Freeman in a letter writes of a visit to Anomabo, the area in which Rev. J A Solomon had recorded revivals twenty-years before in 1855:

A crowded congregation and a blessed influence. I preached from 1 Kings xx.39, 40.⁷⁸ At midnight a mighty influence rested on the congregation. Stifled sobs soon rose into loud cries all over the chapel. Oh, what a scene! At length I succeeded in giving out and raising the hymn, 'Sing to the great Jehovah's praise.' We sang it through, but in the midst of cries and tears strangely mingled with the harmony. At 12.30 the meeting closed, but the people would not leave the chapel. They had a special prayer-meeting conducted by the leaders, kept up till 3.30 am.⁷⁹

Similarly, in September 1875, Rev. Joshua Hayford held special meetings in Ekroful where he called for a real experience of repentance.⁸⁰ His record tells of the remarkable experience:

There was at first a pause, a momentary stillness, and then a rush, as by the force of some mighty influence-the place at the front does not suffice ... a shy woman prayed in the spirit solemn but vehement addresses heavenward, intermingled with sobs and cries of 'Saviour have mercy upon me and forgive me my sins', followed by profound responses of 'Amen' ... Then a violent wrestling-all impatient and eager for the common object of the meeting-ran through the company. Now was there abundance of weeping and bitter cries of distress, with long struggles as the pangs of death, and ending generally in apprehensions of emphatic trust in Christ, of conscious pardon, of praise and thanksgiving. Seventy members were admitted on trial, and the movement spread.⁸¹

Rev. John Milum realised the possibility of criticism and compared the events to those recorded in John Wesley's journals, and recounts Freeman's reflections on the events:

In these cases of extraordinary excitement I see nothing acted and unreal on the part of any who seem thus to suffer. I look upon such experiences as purely physico-mental, and as arising out of the intensity of religious feeling acting upon the brain, and upon the entire physical system.⁸²

⁷⁷ A. Birtwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman, West African Pioneer* (London: Corgate Press, 1950), p. 69.

⁷⁸ "I got busy with other things and the man escaped." The story of a prophet who got busy with other activities so failed to fulfil the will of the Lord.

⁷⁹ John Milum, *Thomas Birch Freeman: Missionary Pioneer to Ashanti, Dahomey and Egba*, (London, Partridge, n.d.), p. 146.

⁸⁰ Hayford, Ekroful, 15 November 1875, WMMS, Box 12, microfiche 1267.

⁸¹ Hayford, Ekroful, 29 Sept. 1875, WMMS, Box 12, microfiche 1266-7.

⁸² Milum, *Thomas Birch Freeman*, p. 146.

Another remarkable event occurred at Mankessim, near the site of the sacred grove, where the congregation was so great that Freeman had to leave the chapel to the shade of some trees for the baptismal service. "This was upon the whole, the most extraordinary and affecting baptismal service I have ever witnessed. It cannot fail to make a deep impression on the pagans of the town, many of whom were gathered in observant groups near at hand."⁸³ Camp meetings became a regular feature of the period 1875-78, and became the fore-runners of many similar meetings to be held in the future.

Freeman was also concerned about the growth of any sectarian trend. When some women members "announced that they were the Apostles of the Lord come again in the flesh" he summoned all the ringleaders before a court of African Christians.⁸⁴ After making full investigations the leaders were expelled or suspended from the Church. All the accused accepted their punishment, and no division occurred. There was however a separatist movement in Mankessim and Anomabo districts, but this was mainly due to the financial policy of the Church.

The Methodist Church began to expand into new areas that had become open as a result of the defeat of Asante. Rev. Timothy Laing travelled west to Axim and Nzima in 1874, and held an open-air service. The chief and the people agreed to the setting up of a mission station, and to send their children to school. The rival chiefs of East and West Nzima also asked for Methodist agents. The new trade opportunities with the development of the mines and timber produced a growing demand for English education. In the east Methodists began to spread out from Accra to Akwapim, which was the very heart of Basel Mission influence. The Basel Mission resented the intrusion assuming a strict adherence to geographical limits, but it was not possible to avoid the intermingling of the two churches. Some people were attached to their particular denominational tradition, but others saw the advantages of Methodism. The major attractions of Methodism were the opportunity to have an English education, and the greater local responsibility of lay participation. The Basel Mission was still much under the control of the German missionaries, and this contrasted with the Methodists where there had never been sufficient European missionaries to establish a

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁸⁴ Walker, F. D. *T. B. Freeman*, (London: Student Christian Movement, 1927), pp. 209-211.

restrictive domination.⁸⁵ Another attraction must have been the revivals experienced during the period 1875-7. In contrast, Meyer writes of Basel missionaries, "I have not found any documents in which the missionaries or their assistants discussed the Holy Spirit. This is not a mere accidental omission, but rather a reflection of the fact that the missionaries shrank from talking about the Holy Spirit because they might not have been able to judge whether a person was possessed by either the divine Spirit, or an agent of the Devil."⁸⁶

* * * * *

It is now possible to address the question raised at the beginning of this chapter concerning the reasons for the response of the Fante to Methodist Christianity. The first significant reason lay not merely in the attractions of Christianity, but rather the disillusionment with the traditional ways. Fante society was traumatised by the Asante invasions, and disaffected with their old gods and customs that had failed to preserve them. As Hugon writes, "...conversion was due to a loss of confidence in traditional religion... and particularly the episode at Nananom Mpow..."⁸⁷ The Methodist missionaries came at an opportune time when the people were seeking new options and the Bible provided many new symbols of power.

A second reason was the existence of a dispersed community of African traders who not only spoke some English, but had acquired knowledge of European ways. Many were mulattos who had been baptised in the Church of England, and had some understanding of the rudiments of Christianity. They were interested to learn more about the Bible, even though some prefer to be associated with the Anglican community. Mission stations employed many people as traders and teachers, and this undoubtedly attracted people for the material benefits at this time when the Fante were beginning to re-establish themselves after the devastation of the Asante wars. The local chiefs realised the significance, and their dependence upon the British especially after the Asante war when the economy had been hard hit. However, the chiefs also

⁸⁵ In 1885, the Methodists had 3 missionaries compared with 53 belonging to the Basel Mission, 15 African Ministers compared to 17, with 6855 full members compared to 6800. (Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* p. 119).

⁸⁶ B. Meyer, "Translating the Devil: An African Appropriation of Pietist Protestantism. The Case of the Ewe in S. E. Ghana 1847-1992", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1995), p. 122.

⁸⁷ Hugon, "L'implantation du methodisme", p. 288.

realised the danger of the new religion dividing the community, and undermining their traditional role. This did at times lead to disagreements, but the chiefs realised that their future lay with the British and the extensive trade associations that had emerged.

A third reason was the Western schools that had an immediate appeal to those Africans involved in trade with the Europeans, and they eagerly placed their children in the schools established by the Methodists. The missionaries saw schools as essential for their members to be able to read the Bible, so making sound converts following Christian ways and values expounded by the Western missionaries. Freeman had quickly realised the importance of an African ministry, and in 1841 established a school for training ministers. Within three years it had produced fifty workers, and these African preachers were a key factor in the Wesleyan Church making converts, because few of the European missionaries bothered to learn the Fante language.⁸⁸ The fourth factor appears to have been the Methodist circuit system with its use of native ministers, which ideally suited the situation where there were few missionaries. Associated with this was the Christian dedication of the first African ministers such as John Ahomah Solomon, Frederick France, John Plange, Edward J. Flynn and Timothy Laing.

The second question concerned the experiential aspect of the Fante Methodist Christianity. It has been shown that Rev. J A Solomon spoke of a significant religious experience early in his life, and he was eager to preach about the Holy Spirit and revival. The two major periods of revival in 1855 and 1875-6 both had physical manifestations, but the essential teaching was that the Holy Spirit had come to enable Christians to live holy lives. This was the teaching of the Wesleyan movement, which continued through the revival preaching of Finney, Moody and many other revivalists. Many of the Fante ministers and leaders were affected by the holiness revivalism, as illustrated by the account of George Dyer of one meeting in which a leader gave testimony with "humility and power":

It was not long since he thought to be made holy was impossible for him, but lately his eyes had been opened to see his high calling in Christ Jesus, and that now all his

⁸⁸ Freeman arrived on the coast in 1838 and lived there until his death in 1890, and never preached a single sermon in Fante.

scruples and doubts were removed and the impossibility had become an abiding reality and a daily life.⁸⁹

Within the limits of the available documentation the manifestations of revival appear similar to those in America and Britain. As with all descriptions of ecstatic experiences the individual is limited by the language available, and at this time this was that of the holiness revivalists. There was some concern about the nature of the intense emotion, which was similar to that of the *akomfo* (traditional priests). Some people even claimed miraculous healing and visions. For example, Rev. J. A. Solomon records the account of a member who on the point of death called out to her sister, "Do you not see two angels standing by me and I am in the midst of them?"⁹⁰ On another occasion a woman was said to have been dead for a period of two hours, and when she came alive again she told of a vision of "seven shining ones, singing the praises of God. They came and knelt down by my side, praying in English, and as I do not understand the English language, I only heard some of the praises offered to God, but did not understand all. An elderly man wearing a garment came with the little shining ones having something in his hands like a golden crown and three golden twisted cords fixed to it."⁹¹ As will be shown later visions of angels and crowns become most significant in the history of the MDCC.

Beyond the issue of the nature of personal experiences of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, is that of the reasons for the two distinct periods of revival among the Fante Christians in 1855 and in 1875-6. Both occasions of revival in the Gold Coast were associated with wider revivalist movements in North America and Europe, but they are not simply a direct result of revivals elsewhere. The Gold Coast revival of 1855 commenced before the major revival in Britain which occurred in 1859-60. Although the 1875 revival was initiated by copies of the book "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" sent by John Milum to all the leaders of the Church in the Gold Coast, it cannot be concluded that revival behaviour was simply imported and accepted by all Christians.

The Asante invaded Fanteland in 1853 and 1873 and although they were soon repulsed on both occasions the events caused much hardship. The revivals of 1855 and 1875-6

⁸⁹ George Dyer, Cape Coast 21 Sept. 1877, WMMS, Box 12, microfiche 1274.

⁹⁰ Solomon, James Town, Accra, 12 May 1862, WMMS, Box 11, microfiche 1224.

⁹¹ Solomon, Dominasi, 4 December 1868, WMMS, Box 11, microfiche 1244.

occurred immediately following these invasions, and must therefore be associated with the local social trauma of war as suggested by Debrunner.⁹² This was a similar social situation as occurred in the USA following the civil war in which American revivalism originated and grew.⁹³ However, no revival experiences are reported as occurring among the Basel Mission churches, which must be attributed to additional factors such as the hesitation of the German missionaries to teach about the Holy Spirit in direct contrast to the Methodist missionaries. One possible reason for this was that the revivalists of Europe and America were Arminian in their doctrine, which was unacceptable to the reformed teaching of the Basel missionaries. Finney in particular was strong in his view that revivals occurred through the faith and prayer, and argued that Christians were to be blamed if there was no revival.⁹⁴ This differed markedly from the Reformed view of Revival, and continues as a division of opinion even until the present.⁹⁵ Finney's view that revival comes through believing prayer seems to have caught the imagination of many of the African pastors, and it became a major feature of later movements in Africa.

Revival experiences therefore seem to occur as a result of a complex series of factors that include social trauma within society, and approved patterns of individual religious experience such as that taught by Wesley and the revivalists. Disapproval of prayer for revival by the Church leaders would quickly marginalize a group from a Church, with the possibility of formation of a new independent Church that would allow such practice. News of revivals in other areas can also stimulate similar experiences provided that the previous two factors already exist. The openness of Solomon and Freeman to revival was undoubtedly an encouragement to the local movements.

⁹² Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, p. 176.

⁹³ Dieter, *The Holiness Revival*, pp. 59-65.

⁹⁴ C. G. Finney, *Lectures on Revival* (Cambridge, Mass.: McLoughlin, 1960).

⁹⁵ Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The making and marring of American Evangelicalism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994).

Chapter 3

African Pentecost (1885-1920)

This is not revival. It is Pentecost. Its orbit is world wide ... Men, women and children are drawn as by irresistible power. And when he has done with them, they find their way to the churches of their own accord and remain there. It fills one with awe to hear some of these converts pray.¹

J. E. Casely Hayford writing of the occasion Prophet Harris came to Axim in 1914.

The fiftieth anniversary of Methodism in the Gold Coast was celebrated in 1885 with major meetings throughout the Gold Coast. The first generation of Methodist Fante pastors were now old men, and a new generation of well-educated men were taking their place.² The Synod of 27 January 1885 was therefore a historic occasion at which were present the veteran missionary Thomas Birch Freeman, and four of his leading African pastors - J. A. Solomon, F. France, J. Plange and E. J. Flynn - all of whom were soon to retire. The Jubilee celebrations began at Cape Coast on Sunday, 15 February 1885 with a morning prayer meeting that began at 3 am. The open-air service which took place later in the afternoon was one of the largest gatherings held in Cape Coast with crowds of more than 2,500 people lined on both sides of the main street. Three of the younger ministers addressed the crowds with such passion that when the missionary Terry Coppin came to speak at the conclusion of the service, he asked the people "Who is on the Lord's side?" "Scores of non-Christians, well knowing what they were doing, joined Christians and, by the sign of lifting up the hand, testified that the Lord should be their God."³ In 1885 the Methodist missionaries in the Gold Coast felt that the Methodist Church was established as a major social institution among the Fante people.

¹ J. E. Casely Hayford, *William Waddy Harris: The West African Reformer* (London: Phillips, 1915), p. 8.

² Appendix 2 lists Methodist Ministers 1843-1925.

³ F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (London: CUP, 1965), p. 106.

The 1880s also marked an important transition in the history of the Fante. The defeat of the Asante removed the threat of invasion, but resulted in greater British control with the annexation of Asante in 1901 as a British Colony. The period of British administration initiated the construction of a railway, new roads, telephone, postal services, and steam ships linked the country with the rest of the world. Cocoa was first introduced into the region by the Basel missionaries in 1857 who used seed from Surinam, but the crop did not succeed.⁴ In 1888, Governor Sir William Griffith reintroduced cocoa, which was grown in the area of Akwapim with marked success. By 1920, the country was exporting more than half the world's entire cocoa supply, and bringing considerable wealth into the Colony. New wealth brought social changes and tensions between the young entrepreneurs and traditional systems of land ownership. Missionaries complained of the "cocoa fever", which stirred up the laziest person to cultivate cocoa for the profits that could be made.⁵ "He who has money is respected and can afford all his heart desires - women, beautiful things, alcoholic drinks. Many build fine houses and live loose lives."⁶ On the other hand, cocoa money helped the African Christians to pay school fees and church taxes and so helped the continuing growth of the Church.

This chapter first considers the nature of the discontent within the Methodist Church and the growing feelings of nationalism throughout the region. The second issue for discussion is the various religious expressions of these new aspirations and especially the African Methodist Episcopalian Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion). Finally, into this situation came Prophet Harris who was one of the most remarkable figures of West African religious history, and became an important model for other prophet-healers of this time.

Impact of colonial policy

Recent studies of the impact of the colonial policy of indirect rule on the "traditional" institutions of the native states show a range of opinions. Many have tended to agree in principle with the Western educated elite's criticism of the disruptive nature of

⁴ Polly Hill, *The Migrant Cocoa-Farmers of Southern Ghana* (Cambridge: CUP, 1963), p. 171.

⁵ Hans Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), p. 254.

⁶ Heidenbote, quoted in *ibid.* p. 254.

indirect rule on the institutions of the native state. Kimble in his detailed study of the rise of Ghanaian nationalism, sees the policy of indirect rule as having contributed to the upset in the relations between the chief and subjects, but at the same time mentions the tensions caused by the changing economic conditions.⁷ Others, and particularly Henige, have challenged the assumption of a fundamental difference between the pre-colonial and colonial past. Henige maintains "that while there was a change in some of the ground rules and a more formal atmosphere prevailed, there was a more important and fundamental strain of continuity between the pre-colonial past and the colonial period."⁸ More recently scholars have tended to look at the transforming nature of colonial rule, and especially upon what Ranger has characterised as "the invention of tradition" [as part of] a conscious determination on the part of the colonial authorities to 're-establish' order and security and a sense of community by means of defining and enforcing 'tradition'⁹. Ranger also points out that colonial officials could not have done this "without a great deal of African participation".¹⁰

Unlike other areas of Africa, colonial rule came more gradually to the Gold Coast, and the long history of interaction with Europeans gave rise to a class that Kwame Daaku called "Afro-European".¹¹ They were able to take advantage of their links to African society, and at the same time to manipulate and to modify its institutions to suit their own purposes. Gocking writes: "Western education and an understanding of the emerging colonial order replaced traditional links with Europeans as the new criteria for political success, but this meant that in the southern Gold Coast Colony, when indirect rule became the government's official policy, neither colonial administrators nor chiefs were in a position to monopolise the invention of 'tradition'."¹² No one really knew what had existed in the past, and those who sought to benefit from the change in colonial policy could take advantage of the situation to convince officials of their legitimacy and manipulate institutions to suit their own purposes.

⁷ D. Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

⁸ D. Henige, "Akan Stool Succession Under Colonial Rule - Continuity or Change?", *Journal of African History* 14 (1975), 298.

⁹ E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 249-250.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 252.

¹¹ Kwame Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720* (London: Clarendon Press, 1970).

¹² Roger S. Gocking, "Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast: Competition for Office and the Invention of Tradition", *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28 (1994), 421-446.

Initially, the best opportunities for such advancement in the traditional order lay in the *asafo*, or companies. These were institutions that provided for the defence of the community, and later under British rule continued to have an important role in recruiting porters. There is still some uncertainty about the origins of the *asafo*, one possibility being that they were indigenous companies of the young fighting men, and the other that they were in some way connected with the European presence from the fifteenth century onwards. Datta and Porter propose that both views are partially correct, "It is concluded that the *asafo* system is probably indigenous in its origins, but that its development, particularly on the coast and among the Fante especially, has been much influenced by situations resulting from contact with Europeans."¹³ In Chapter 7, reference will be made to how the MDCC adopted the *asafo* system within its Church structure in the attempt to find a genuinely Fante social structure.

During the 1890s, there were new opportunities for *asafo* leaders, especially the commander-in-chief (*tufuhen*), as colonial officials came increasingly to depend on native leaders in the coastal towns. Those with some Western education benefited most, as they could communicate far better with the British officials and carry out their wishes. The outstanding example was William Coker in Cape Coast who became *tufuhen* there in 1886, and again later in 1894, when he took advantage of the 1895-6 Asante War to gain favour with the government by supplying the military with porters. By the turn of the century, he was one of the wealthy educated elite of Cape Coast, and during the first two decades of the twentieth century was able to dominate African affairs in Cape Coast.¹⁴ During the first decade of the twentieth century, the government's policy of indirect rule was primarily non-interventionist, and officials were primarily concerned with regulating and supporting indigenous rulers and their judicial activities rather than attempting to restructure local institutions. The Native Jurisdiction Amendment Bill of 1910 sought to extend the chiefly court to the entire colony, and to establish the fines that could be charged with the machinery for enforcing the judgements. Governor Sir Hugh Clifford (1912-19) was a keen advocate of indirect rule and in 1916 gave three of the colony's chiefs seats on his expanded Legislative Council. As the legal role expanded chiefly positions all over the colony

¹³ A. K. Datta & R. Porter, "The Asafo System in Historical Perspective", *Journal of African History* 12 (1971), 279-297.

¹⁴ Gocking, "Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast".

became increasingly attractive, and bitter struggles often erupted like that in Elmina in 1918. In 1919, the editor of *The Gold Coast Leader* remarked on the number of “new self-made chiefs” who were appearing in the region.¹⁵ Many of these newcomers for traditional office were educated men who proposed new “traditional” positions and interpretations of legitimacy. As Gocking concludes, “Gold Coast political life thus developed an extremely permeable quality, as success in the political world of the Crown Colony government came to depend on success in the parochial world of the traditional state as well. In this way, a new cast of players came to exploit the traditionally loose and flexible rules of the traditional state and, with new skills and stratagems pursued new spoils.”¹⁶

The stronger British rule resulted in the Government taking control of the schools, appointing teachers, awarding certificates with almost all instruction in English. Schools had been an important part in the missionary strategy of both the Methodist and Basel missions, but the latter were far more organised. Rev. Metcalfe Sunter, Her Majesty’s Inspector, was highly critical of the poor standards within the Methodist schools in his report of 1884. The Synod accepted the criticism, but struggled with a lack of finance to institute major improvements. They eventually planned to improve certain central schools which would be open for inspection and entitled to government grants, and for which they would endeavour to provide well-qualified teachers. They also sought to implement Sunter’s suggestion of appointing a qualified educationalist as school inspector. The Synod had no person with this qualification in the Colony, so turned to two young Fante ministers, William F. Penny and S. R. B. Solomon (the son of J. A. Solomon), who were then studying at Richmond College, England. They had been sent there for training in 1886, and they returned in 1888.

Soon after they returned they initiated a change, the significance of which was not appreciated until much later. They planned to drop their anglicised names and adopt their vernacular names of Attoh Ahuma and Egyir Asaam.¹⁷ They sought the advice of Rev. A. W. Parker, a senior Methodist minister, who suggested that, “on national and

¹⁵ *The Gold Coast Leader* 24-31 July 1919.

¹⁶ Gocking, “Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast”, p. 442.

¹⁷ For many years converts among the Fante had either at baptism, or on the first day at school, adopted or been given an Anglicised form of their African name together with a first name which was a “Christian name”.

racial grounds", all anglicised native surnames and "English names fanciful adopted" should be dropped.¹⁸ This step taken by these ministers was one expression of a subtle change taking place in the minds of the people illustrating the emerging influence towards nationalism.

Stimulating these changes was a new Reference Group which had emerged in succession to those for whom the English Sunday morning service had been developed by Wrigley. This group of African Christian intellectuals had all been educated in the Methodist or Castle schools and some had even studied in England. The Reference Group members were convinced that it was necessary to give the Gospel to the people in their own language and were actively engaged in translating portions of the Bible into Fante. They were however uncompromisingly opposed to African dance and the ancestral cult. They were mainly merchants, employees or commercial firms, or agents of the Methodist Church, which set them apart from the rest of the Fante community. Although their political loyalty was with the African people, they were eager for any opportunity to take responsibility and were becoming intolerant of continued white supremacy. Attoh Ahuma and Egyir Asaam readily joined this group on their return. Soon comments began to be made that one of these two men should be appointed as Headmaster of Mfantshipim School, Cape Coast.

By this time many of the older missionaries had retired and returned to England leaving the district in the hands of Rev. Dennis Kemp, who was only twenty-eight and had been in the Colony for little under two years. The intensified colonial approach was evident in the attitude of many of the new missionaries like Kemp, who on his return to Britain in 1897 wrote of his experiences. The book shows both his attitude of sympathy towards the African people and a sharp criticism of many of their customs.¹⁹ For example, he was appalled at what he considered grovelling humility towards the old and senior, and the class distinction between literate and illiterate. He made his views clearly known to the Africans, which generated much antagonism towards him. Concerning Mfantshipim School, Kemp and the other missionaries decided that it should not continue because of the expense, and their preference was to set up more practical training in schools. Eventually, Egyir Asaam was appointed headmaster of Mfantshipim

¹⁸ Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, p. 123.

¹⁹ Rev. Dennis Kemp, *Nine Years at the Gold Coast* (London: MacMillan, 1898).

School, and although the report of the Director of Education was full of praise for the school, Kemp was not pleased. He disliked the picture of African boys and girls wearing European dress and donning mortar-boards, and the general elitist attitude portrayed. Kemp entered into a prolonged dispute with Rev. F. Egyir Asaam which was eventually to result in an open disagreement in the Synod. The fact that Egyir Asaam wanted European dress for his students and yet rejected his European name shows that the underlying issue was not merely the use of African elements, but freedom to choose what was retained or rejected from indigenous culture.

The Synod of 1885 had been bold to say that no member of the Methodist Church was to marry a "heathen", and no polygamist should be admitted into membership. The Synod of 1893, under the chairmanship of Kemp, went a stage further and insisted on Christian marriage as a condition of membership. Parker wrote:

At our last district Synod, because of the lax conditions of native law of divorce which gives either party the rights to separation for reasons other than adultery, we decided not to receive into church fellowship any who will not enter into holy wedlock according to the ordinance. This decision has aroused a strong national feeling; and there was a widespread dissatisfaction and excitement prevailing when I left the Coast for England.²⁰

The African ministers left the Synod fully realising the difficulty of the implementation of the rule in a polygamous society, and the church soon lost many members. There was a growing hostility towards Kemp and what the African ministers considered his one-man rule. The African ministers even protested to the home board in London, but they endorsed Kemp and required Egyir Asaam to resign as Principal of the school. Asaam was also required to resign as editor of *The Gold Coast Methodist Times*, and his colleague Attoh Ahuma was appointed as the new editor. The whole episode fuelled the antagonism against white control within the Methodist Church.

The Government Lands Bill further provoked nationalist feelings among the Methodist leaders. This law proposed placing all the so-called "waste-land" under the authority of the Crown to avoid wrong exploitation. Many Africans saw this as a major threat to Fante society, and chiefs and intelligentsia in both Cape Coast and Accra united to

²⁰ Parker, 10 August 1893, Cape Coast, WMMS Archives, SOAS, University of London, West Africa Correspondence Gold Coast, Box 13, microfiche 1322.

found the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) in 1897. Even the Gold Coast Methodist Times fought the matter constitutionally, but the new political tone was of great concern to the missionaries. Finally, a libel case was introduced against the paper, Attoh Ahuma was forced to resign from the Methodist Church and the paper was discontinued. Attoh Ahuma and others, however, founded a new paper, *The Gold Coast Aborigine*.

A.M.E. Zion

The dissatisfaction within the Methodist Church opened the door for other denominations, and in particular the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion). This denomination had developed out of a Methodist congregation of black people in New York in 1796. The 1790s had witnessed a number of local revivals along the Eastern states of America especially among the Methodists, and this had resulted in various divisions.²¹ The formation of the A.M.E. Zion allowed the members to exercise spiritual gifts, and drew many blacks until it was one of the largest of the Methodist denominations in the U.S.A. Egyir Asaam had been in correspondence with A.M.E. Zion, and after his resignation from the Methodist Church he was appointed elder and representative of A.M.E. Zion Church in Gold Coast. Rev. T. B. Freeman junior was the second promoter of the church in Gold Coast, and he received authority from the American headquarters to organise an A.M.E. Zion Church at Keta in 1898.²²

The A.M.E. Zion appealed to the awakening black consciousness and the revivalism of earlier years. Egyir Asaam reported in the newly formed *Gold Coast Aborigine* newspaper:

It is indeed, an entirely Negro Church; organised by Negroes for Negroes, manned, governed, controlled and supported by Negro energy, intellect, liberality and contributions. In fact, it is the sentiment of the church, that however great may be the friendship, intellect or interest of any white man, in the well-being, Christianisation and enlightenment of the Negro race be he European, American or

²¹ Ron Davies, *I Will Pour out my Spirit* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), pp. 112-5.

²² *Gold Coast Aborigine*, 19 Nov. 1898 carries a two page article on the inauguration of the Church on 3 Nov. 1898.

Asiatic, he cannot successfully reach the emotional feelings of the masses of our people.²³

Egyir Asaam began to send intelligent boys to the USA to be trained as A.M.E. Zion pastors for the Gold Coast. One of the first was Emmanuel Kwegyir Aggrey who was later to help with the establishment of Achimota College. Later Frank Arthur, a teacher at Asaam's Collegiate School was sent to the USA, and after graduation he changed his name to Frank Ata Osam Pinanko. It was when Rev. F A Osam Pinanko returned to the Gold Coast in 1903 that an A.M.E. Zion school and church was opened in Cape Coast.²⁴ Other centres were soon opened in Twifu (1906), Winneba (1908), Accra (1908) and Kumasi (1912). The A.M.E. Zion was very similar to the Methodist Church that it split away from in the matter of doctrine and organisation, the major difference being its Afro-American leadership.

Many of the missionaries were apprehensive of the new denomination, and some of the Basel missionaries openly criticised them for their emotionalism and emphasis upon faith healing:

..... the Zion people celebrated a church anniversary at Omaso (in Kotoku). After parading the town in excitement, their pastor asked those who had been converted to approach. Twenty people came and were baptised on the spot. After the celebrations, the pastor said: "Now we go to the bush to look for the Lord Jesus." In a wild chase they hurried there; a woman "received the Holy Spirit" and behaved "like a raving fetish priestess".²⁵

In America, the A.M.E. Zion Church had brought together both Black Christianity and revivalism, and as such attracted many when it commenced in the Gold Coast. Even so, it was still an imported religion, and although it took on an African dimension its doctrine was Methodist in character, and the origin of the church was from the USA.

Anti-witchcraft movements

The period 1880-1920 was one of great change within the Gold Coast that resulted in social tensions. Christianity, commerce and government action had discredited many of

²³ Egyir Asaam *Gold Coast Aborigine*, 26 Nov. 1898.

²⁴ Walter L. Yates, "The History of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in West Africa, Liberia, Gold Coast (Ghana) and Nigeria, 1900-1939" (Ph.D. thesis, Hartford U.S.A., 1967).

²⁵ *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission*, 1913, quoted in Debrunner *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (1967) p. 237.

the traditional Fante pagan shrines. Everywhere charms and medicines were sold, and a series of anti-witchcraft movements spread through the region.²⁶ One such movement in the Gold Coast was the Dente cult from Kete Kratchi which gained fame after the defeat of the Asante. This cult spread southwards in the 1880s, and the conical shrines became a common feature of many villages along the coast. In 1892, the British government finally banned the cult, and the German authorities executed the chief priest of Dente in what is now Togo.

From the Ivory Coast, a cult called *Aberewa* ("The Old Woman") spread rapidly through Asante in 1907 and then south to the coast. The movement offered long life and prosperity once the initiate drank the *Aberewa* medicine and vowed to follow the *Aberewa* commandments.²⁷ Unlike the Methodist Church *Aberewa* was willing to accept polygamists, and those who had been excluded. The movement therefore rapidly grew among the Fante, until it was banned by the Colonial Government in 1908, and by 1910 had lost its importance.²⁸ It is surprising that the movement ended so quickly, and it is unlikely that the reason was merely the ban by the British authorities. McCaskie sees these movements to be like a stream which occasionally floods and then passes under ground before emerging again. He argues that, "the flow of the river responds to the fluctuating intensity of communal dreams and anxieties, themselves fuelled or diminished by innumerable factors - social, political, economy, and all the rest."²⁹

Margaret Field records that the oldest of these shrines were imported during the influenza pandemic of 1918.³⁰ However, healing was not the only, or even main reason that people would make the pilgrimage to these shrines, because many went for protection. Field explains: "Financially successful men are full of fear lest envious kinsmen should, by means of bad magic or witchcraft, bring about their ruin. Unsuccessful men are convinced that envious malice is the cause of their failure. Thus,

²⁶ Terence Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa" *African Studies Review* 29 (1986), 1-69.

²⁷ "Aberewa", *The Foreign Field of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* 4 February 1908

²⁸ N. Gray, "Aberewa: Utopianism and Opportunity" (MA thesis: Columbia, 1993).

²⁹ T. C. McCaskie, "Anti-witchcraft cults in Asante: An Essay in the Social History of an African People", *History in Africa* 8 (1981), 125-154.

³⁰ M. J. Field, *Search for Security* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 90.

a striking 'paranoid' attitude is normal."³¹ The typical pilgrim would go to the shrine annually, and ask the deity for protection for the coming year. People would have one problem such as, "My lorry ran into a ditch", "I am a hunter and when I fire my gun I always miss". Often the pilgrim would bring a series of misfortunes, and cry "I have never been happy in my life."³² The deity's protection and blessing is granted on the condition that the person follows certain prescribed rules, and makes an offering. The priest of the shrine would enter into a trance and the deity would communicate with the supplicant.

McCaskie has shown that there are two explanations for the emergence of the anti-witchcraft movements.³³ The first, and most popular, is that the cults were a "new" creation in response to social disorientation. The second considers the cults to have their origin within the pre-colonial period and to have emerged with new vigour in the twentieth century. McCaskie does not come to a definite conclusion, but he does raise the danger of making broad generalisations. The anti-witchcraft shrines were a major social phenomenon of the period, and addressed the issue of rapid social change in which some people appear to be succeeding in adapting to the new order, whilst others failed. Both the mainline denominations and the later spiritual churches responded vigorously against these movements.

In addition to the anti-witchcraft movements, the new opportunities given by the economic boom of the cocoa-trade also found expression in the so-called "dances" of *Asiko* and *Sibisaba*. These were actually new forms of association for young people, both Christian and non-Christian, which can be likened to the *asafo* organisations. Brass bands, dancing and singing gave the young people new opportunities to socialise and have fun. The girls eagerly participated in the dances as expressions of their emancipation, and they dressed in fine clothes and jewellery with splashings of lavender water. The holiness missionaries saw these dances as a major danger to the morals of the young people as excessive drinking led to immorality. The chiefs were also worried by *Asiko*, since it weakened tribal authority. The government finally prohibited *Asiko* and similar movements in 1909.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³³ McCaskie, "Anti-witchcraft cults in Asante", p. 125.

A response to these “dances” was the formation of various associations and temperance groups often introduced into the Gold Coast by Europeans. The Good Templars Lodge began as a Wesleyan Methodist temperance society in 1877 of which Coker was the Grand Master from 1907 to 1919.³⁴ Another temperance association was the Blue Cross Society formed in 1907 by the Basel missionary Dr R. Fisch at Aburi with the slogan “Gin and Rum, the soldiers of King Death”. The Free Gardeners, who like the better known Freemasons, were probably established in the 1880s. These associations were popular with the young people as they felt themselves freed from allegiance to their chiefs, and more specifically, from the authority of the traditional courts.

Prophet Harris

Into this confused social situation with new and changing institutions, sudden economic wealth and the fear of witchcraft, there suddenly appeared the remarkable figure of William Wade Harris. He followed the coastline from Liberia, through the Ivory Coast into the Gold Coast, a distance of more than 500 kilometres, before returning to the French colony. Everywhere he went there was a massive response to his message for the people to burn their fetishes and repent. Harris was accompanied by two women, Helen Valentine and Mary Pioka, who helped him with the singing using calabashes for the rhythm. They all wore white, the women in Western-style dresses and Harris in a cassock robe with a white turban. Harris carried a cross-topped staff in his right hand and a Bible in the other, and they all went barefoot. The two women were often referred to as his “wives”, which was for some a focus of criticism and for others an endorsement of polygamy.

The pattern of evangelism of the prophetic band was that they would enter a village playing their calabash rattles and singing, and immediately they would go to the chief to explain their mission. Harris would then preach to the whole village, usually through an interpreter, and he would invite them to abandon their “fetishes” and worship the one true God. Those who destroyed their fetishes were baptised, and were taught the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer. The converts were

³⁴ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 147.

encouraged to pray in their own language, and to keep Sunday for worship. If there were missions in the area the people were told to go to those churches whatever the denomination. If there was no mission, Harris often chose leaders, sometimes naming them "twelve apostles", who were to supervise the building of places of worship from local materials. Often they were told to wait for the coming of the white men who would come with the Bible and teach them more. Sometimes there was opposition from the local religious leaders, who often confronted Harris in a contest of spiritual power. It was frequently as a result of the prophet's triumph in these contests that individuals were convinced, and a mass destruction of religious items occurred. The reputation of the prophet seemed to go before him almost like a bow wave of heightened expectation with exaggerated stories of his power.

By May 1914, the prophetic group was going from village to village in the Nzima region of the Gold Coast which the missionaries had generally considered resistant.³⁵ Both Methodists and Roman Catholics had some presence in the region, and the leaders of both churches initially appeared antagonistic to the prophetic group. Father George Fischer of the Roman Catholic Church at Half Assinie is reported to have blamed Harris for the collapse of a church building and to have cursed him.³⁶ The African Methodist catechist, A. P. Organ, warned his congregation that Harris was of the Devil. The effects on the local community were obvious and noted by many European observers. The District Commissioner commented in 1916:

Apollonia before Harris's visit was steeped in fetishism and the towns and villages were in a most unsatisfactory condition. All this has now been changed, places of worship and schools are to be found in every village and the villages and towns are being remodelled on sanitary lines.³⁷

Axim was the largest town in the region with a more mixed population than other areas. It was here that the group had some of their greatest successes, partly because Harris could now preach in English without an interpreter, and some of his most spectacular signs were reported.

³⁵ The whole region now called Nzima was then frequently called Apollonia, and the Nzimas, were known as Apollonians, especially those in Ivory Coast.

³⁶ David A. Shank, *Prophet Harris: The "Black Elijah" of West Africa* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 10.

³⁷ Cited in G. M. Haliburton, *The Prophet Harris* (Longman: London, 1971), p 90, (Letter dated 29 May 1916).

The African minister, the Rev. Elias Butler, was in charge of the Methodist circuit of the Nzima region, based at Axim, and he warned his members to have nothing to do with the "false prophet". He was replaced a few weeks later by the Rev. Ernest Bruce who was friendly towards Harris, and is reported to have told his congregation that "whoever believes in Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God and as the only Saviour of the world is my brother and fellow Christian".³⁸ It was on a visit to an out-station that Bruce met Harris for the first time:

When he came to greet me, I demanded to see his Bible. I saw that the book he placed in my hands was the Authorised Version of the Bible, so I warmly welcomed him... Later we again met at Axim. Prophet Harris arrived one day and asked to inspect our chapel. I asked one of our people to guide him. Some of our members were angry with me for this.³⁹

The Roman Catholic missionary, Father Stauffer, was initially suspicious of Harris probably as a result of the alleged dispute between Harris and Father Fischer in Half Assinie. At the service on the first Sunday after his arrival in town, nearly a thousand people tried to crowd into the Catholic chapel, but Harris was not allowed to preach.

In Axim, as elsewhere, Harris preached against working on Sunday, which brought him into conflict with the civil authorities. The majority of the labourers were Krus, and Harris spent much time talking to them. There are varied accounts of his success with them, and some are said to have given up working on Sundays for some years. Another object of Harris's zeal was smoking, and he would often snatch cigarettes from people's mouths and throw them on the ground. He was also opposed to wake-keeping, which he considered to be wasteful and degrading to women.

Harris's visit to the Gold Coast was not long, but he made an immense impact. Bruce reported that there was "a general religious awakening throughout the length and breadth of the Apollonia (Nzima) district... Everywhere, bamboo chapels and churches were built. Their thirst for the Word of God and for the songs of Zion is insatiable."⁴⁰ Sixteen months later the Wesleyan Methodists reported 160 new chapels with more than 32,000 people on their church registers. The Rev. Charles Armstrong, a Methodist Missionary, visited Axim less than a week after Harris left, and reported:

³⁸ Ernest Bruce, "I grew up with history", *African Challenge* 7 (1957), 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Hundreds of people are seeking admission to the church. They want to serve the living God and learn more of Christ their Saviour. They crowd in at our services, weekdays and Sundays, and attend Sunday School where they are learning the creeds etc. This is now the normal state of affairs and has been for three months. Whole villages have given up fetish and are asking for the gospel, chiefs are offering land for buildings and everywhere there is an awakening that we have prayed for, but scarcely expected, perhaps.⁴¹

The impact of Prophet Harris cannot be gauged without reference to the well-known Fante politician, Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford. He was one of several sons of Rev. Joseph DeGraft Hayford who was prominent in the formation of the Fante Confederation after 1867. Casely Hayford was a leading Methodist layman, and although he had been educated in the Methodist schools, he was deeply critical of the form of Christianity brought by the missionaries. In 1911, he published *Ethiopia Unbound* which was a collection of philosophical and religious speculations held together by a thin plot.⁴² The hero is Kwamankra, a descendent of James Hayford described as "a good missionary", who determines to bring his people back to their primitive simplicity and faith. Kwamankra appears to be an idealised projection of Casely Hayford himself. He went to Harris in Axim and the experience had a profound effect upon him as quoted in the introduction of this chapter.

It was just three years since *Ethiopia Unbound* had been published and it seems as though Casely Hayford saw an ally in the person of Prophet Harris. The diary he published in 1915 of his observation of Harris reveals the admiration Casely Hayford had for the Prophet. In *Ethiopia Unbound* he had written of his hope of an African leading the world to regeneration, and this person would not be an African imitation of European Christianity. He would be "the unspoiled son of the tropics, nursed in a tropical atmosphere, favourable to the growth of national life, he it is who may show us the way."⁴³ In Harris, Casely Hayford considered that he had found such a person who had married the spiritual heritage of Africa with European Christianity in a new exciting synthesis.

⁴¹ Armstrong to Griffin, 2 August 1914, WMMS, Box 14, microfiche 1386.

⁴² J. E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: studies in race emancipation* (London: Phillips, 1911).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

The writings of Casely Hayford tend to give the impression of a sophisticated scholar sitting at the feet of a charismatic African whose holy simplicity was demonstrated in godly power. However, the actual situation appears to have been more complex, and Casely Hayford not only learned from the Prophet, but probably stimulated Harris in his thinking. Father Stauffer, who disliked Casely Hayford, reported in his journal, "The prophet, left to himself, would have done a lot of good. He did some good but would have done a lot more if some people had not been taking upon themselves the role of the Angel towards him."⁴⁴ Stauffer gives the example that a couple of weeks after Harris arrived in Axim, Casely Hayford told him that people could not understand why the Roman Catholic priest and Methodist minister had not come to pay their respects to the Prophet. Harris replied, "You have nothing to tell me. It is the Angel Gabriel alone who does command me." That night the angel is said to have spoken to Harris, and Father Stauffer says that Harris acted "according to the suggestions of those black angels."⁴⁵

Stauffer's black angels are considered by Haliburton to refer to the group of young Fantes and mulattoes with some schooling, who lived in Axim and worked for the various trading companies. Initially they had kept their distance from Harris, but possibly through the influence of Casely Hayford they met and discussed issues with him. Another example given by Stauffer is their influence concerning polygamy. Following their discussions, Harris claimed to have had a revelation in which an angel spoke to him saying that God did not intend to make the same law for black and white people. The Prophet then took other women as his wives including Grace Thannie who is today honoured as the founder of the church of the Twelve Apostles.

However one regards the details of the story, clearly Stauffer felt that Harris's attitude was influenced by the elite of Axim which would include Casely Hayford.⁴⁶ The refusal by Stauffer to allow Harris to preach in the Roman Catholic church caused a marked reaction and Harris is reported to have said, "Send away all the people I brought you. I am going to make my own church." These attempts of the Methodist

⁴⁴ Quoted in Haliburton, *The Prophet Harris*, p. 86. Father Stauffer's Journal can be seen at the Catholic Mission House, Axim; a copy is kept at the Archbishop's House, Cape Coast.

⁴⁵ Haliburton gives a detailed discussion of the situation. Haliburton, *The Prophet Harris*, pp. 84-89.

⁴⁶ Shank, *Prophet Harris*, p. 247.

elite to use Harris to form his own church eventually caused Harris to turn away from them. "He said he did not come to found a church; he belonged to no church."⁴⁷

Although Harris did not go as far as the main Fante region, news of his presence and activity spread quickly throughout the whole of the Gold Coast. Within three months Harris was retracing his steps back to Liberia, but as he came to Half Assinie he was met by many people from Ivory Coast who had come to be baptised. There he also met a Methodist agent named John Swatson, who followed him and became his fellow-worker. Swatson was originally from Beyin (the site of Fort Apollonia) and his father appears to have been a European. After being educated at Cape Coast Swatson spent most of his working life in Nigeria, and was appointed an official Methodist agent in 1912. Harris and Swatson quickly appreciated each other, and Harris saw Swatson as one who could carry on his work. Swatson then travelled with Harris to Bingerville in the Ivory Coast to get official approval from the French authorities for his work as itinerant preacher. By December 1914, Swatson had returned to the western region of the Gold Coast, and in January 1915, the *Gold Coast Leader* reported that he "who was ordained by Mr. Harris as a prophet has taken up the work of casting out devils, idols, etc."⁴⁸

On 4 August 1914 war broke out in Europe, which had an immediate effect on the economic situation of the region. In Ivory Coast many of the immigrant clerks from Ghana and Sierra Leone lost their jobs, but soon found a new role as leaders and teachers of the large numbers of people seeking religious guidance. Father Moly, a Roman Catholic missionary in Jacquville, complained about the "cloud of other prophets" who exploited the people after Harris had left.⁴⁹ Similarly, the commandant at Abidjan was concerned about some of Harris's so-called "apostles", and finally in the last quarter of 1914 gave orders for Harris to be repatriated. The prophetic group was arrested and roughly treated before being deported to Liberia. It has been

⁴⁷ J. E. Casely Hayford, *William Waddy Harris: The West African Reformer* (London: Phillips, 1915), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁸ *Gold Coast Leader* January 1915.

⁴⁹ L. Moly, "Les Aladians" in *Echo* December 1922, 179.

estimated that some 200,000 people were converted through the two year ministry of Prophet Harris and his group.⁵⁰

In the Gold Coast, the Methodists were not the only ones to benefit from the ministry of Prophet Harris. In Apollonia there were 5,240 members of the Roman Catholic Church in 1920 whereas there were no baptised members in 1914.⁵¹ The Seventh Day Adventists started work in Asantaah to try and benefit from the religious movement. Many of the Harris converts continued to wait for the coming of the missionaries, sometimes for several years, but eventually the religious enthusiasm began to die down or was channelled into one of a number of faith-healing churches. A former fetish priestess had been converted by Harris, and instead of joining the Methodist Church she set up her own church known as the "Grace Tanne's Faith-Healing Church". She took white clay as a sign of purity, and also had a well with holy water.⁵² Converted with her was another fetish priest known as John Nackabah, who became more prominent than Tani, and eventually merged with her movement and became "The Church of the Twelve Apostles". Yet another movement that emerged from the Harris converts was the "Karirfeh Divine Healing Society" founded by Kojo Monnor. This was another faith-healing organisation with water being one of the central elements of the church. In addition to these larger movements there were many people in the Nzima region who acted as "prophet-healers". Such a prophet was Paul Acquaye, at Esiam, who claimed to heal the blind, and to have "the sword of Gideon" and "the rod of Moses". Similar prophet-healers occurred in Ivory Coast.⁵³

John Swatson continued with a number of evangelistic tours of the frontier region, and clashed with the local *omanhene* over the destruction of fetishes. During the later half of 1915, Swatson decided that he could carry out his work more successfully if connected with the Church of England, and was licensed by the Anglican Bishop of Accra. From this time he called his new movement "Church Christ Mission - Beyin". Beyin remained Swatson's headquarters, and from here dressed in his white robes and

⁵⁰ David A. Shank has given an important account as to how the life and ministry of Prophet Harris was reconstructed to make him more acceptable within the Wesleyan mission. "The Taming of the Prophet Harris", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 27 (1997), pp. 59-95.

⁵¹ Shank, *Prophet Harris*, p. 19.

⁵² Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, p. 273.

⁵³ B. Holas, *Le Separatisme Religieux en Afrique Noire* (Paris, 1965)

carrying his white cross he carried out his preaching ministry among the Nzima.⁵⁴ Within the Methodist church, Prophet Samuel Nyankson from the Dunkwa area emerged as a renowned healer. The result was a religious ferment throughout the Fante area, and a general eagerness of many to know more about Christianity and the Bible. It was within this religious climate that Master Appiah was appointed as Teacher-Catechist as will be discussed in the following chapters.

Beginning of a new century

By the end of the nineteenth century the Methodist Church dominated the western provinces, such that Debrunner describes it as like a "national Church of the Gold Coast".⁵⁵ In 1913 there were 15 European Methodist missionaries in the country, 27 African ministers, 16,330 full members, and a baptised community of 62,983.⁵⁶ The missionaries had more or less successfully imposed what they considered to be Christian moral standards on the first generation of converts with the forbidding of drumming and drinking at funerals, polygamy, divorce and sexual infidelity before marriage. The first generation of converts had been stimulated by the benefits of the new way of life and the experience of the Spirit of God in the Holiness revivals. The Methodist experience of revival had placed the emphasis upon holy living, but for the second and third generations this was often only burdensome law. The records of the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast no longer speak of revivals, but matters of administration and resulting disputes. Many members were excluded from the church for sins such as polygamy, immorality, drunkenness and wife-beating. They settled into what Debrunner describes as "a partly disillusioned world as semi-sophisticated bands of people, searching for new ideals and new forms of religion, remaining Christian at heart, whilst at the same time vigorously pursuing material advantages and succumbing to crude superstition."⁵⁷

Influenza was known in the Gold Coast, because there had been a previous outbreak in 1891 that had caused a number of deaths and a few cases were recorded annually after

⁵⁴ G. M. Haliburton, "The Anglican Church in Ghana and the Harris Movement in 1914" *Bulletin of the Society of African Church History* 1 (1964), 101-6.

⁵⁵ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, p. 242.

⁵⁶ *Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Reports*, 1913, 165.

⁵⁷ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, p. 257.

that, but the outbreak in 1918 was of a different magnitude. The disease was carried by sailors who arrived at Cape Coast on 31 August 1918, and within a few days cases were being reported among the people in the area of the port.⁵⁸ During September the epidemic spread inland along the trade routes such that the disease had reached the farthest corner of the country by early December. By January 1919 almost every village, clan and extended family in the Gold Coast had been affected by influenza. Patterson concludes, "Influenza did have one lasting effect on the Gold Coast, tens of thousand died. No accurate mortality statistics were kept, but the official estimate was that about 60,000 people died in the entire country, or about 4% of the 1,504,000 enumerated in the 1911 census."⁵⁹ He adds that this percentage is almost certainly too small. On 15 October 1919, the Methodists held a well-attended open-air meeting of thanksgiving for the end of the epidemic. However, some deaths were reported to have occurred in the following month.

Two demands continued to emerge throughout this period: a quest for a new social identity and the power to succeed in a changing world. The growing nationalist aspirations began from the educated minority of the Methodist Church, but slowly spread to the wider community. Traditional leadership roles had changed, and Fante people were looking for new associations with which they could identify in a meaningful way. The *asafo* groups, temperance associations, and religious movements continued to emerge in order to meet this demand, but they quickly disappeared. The emergence of the A.M.E. Zion Church with its expressions of revival must be set in this context, but even so this was still not a genuinely African Christianity. Prophet Harris personified the aspirations of both the educated intelligentsia and the ordinary people, and as such was seen as an African expression of Christianity.

Before turning to examine more specifically the life of Prophet Appiah within this social context, it is necessary to address the issue of revival. As shown in the previous chapter, the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast had been influenced by two revivals in 1855 and 1875-6. Why did the Welsh revival or the California Pentecostal revival not have any significant influence upon the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast as had

⁵⁸ David K. Patterson, "The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-1919 in the Gold Coast" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* New series 16 (1995).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 212-3.

the previous two? Pentecostal revivals were recorded in some parts of Africa, such as among the Anglican Church in Uganda and also in South Africa in 1906.⁶⁰

One reason for the lack of response to revivals in Wales and California must have been the internal tensions within the Methodist Church at the time of Kemp. Nationalist aspirations demanded African leadership, and this explains why the A.M.E. Zion Church was welcomed by many in the Gold Coast. Others showed interest in the Christian magazine, *The Sword of the Spirit*, sent to many places in West Africa by a fundamentalist American organisation, Faith Tabernacle, at Philadelphia, U.S.A. Pastor Clark was the leader and advocated personal holiness with strong millennial expectations. He was probably antagonistic to the emerging Pentecostal movement and wrote that "the Pentecostal tongues delusion" was "satanic".⁶¹ Even so, Peter Anim who received copies of the Faith Tabernacle literature, later welcomed the first Elim Pentecostal missionaries in the 1930s as will be described in Chapter 9.

Secondly, although the Pentecostal revival had its origins in the Holiness movement it had a different teaching concerning the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which may be considered as power for service rather than for Christian holiness. The operation of spiritual gifts, and especially "tongues", were regarded as a sign that a person had been duly baptised with the Spirit. Many of the established denominations including the Methodists in North America and Britain regarded this teaching to be erroneous with the result that the movement eventually formed its own Pentecostal denominations. Methodists were therefore not likely to be advocates of the Pentecostal movement, although this would not have applied to the Welsh Revival, which affected most denominations.

Thirdly, most revivals in North America and Britain had been encouraged by mass meetings with emotional teaching for repentance. T. B. Freeman had made great use of "camp meetings" during the 1875-6 revival in the Gold Coast, but later missionaries tended to leave the preaching to African pastors while they concerned themselves with administration and especially the running of the schools. Fourthly, the outbreak of

⁶⁰ Allan Anderson, *Bazalwane: African Pentecostals in South Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992), pp. 20-27.

⁶¹ J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba* (Oxford: International African Institute, 1968), p. 65.

World War I effectively isolated the Gold Coast from much of what was going on in North America, and by 1914 West Africa had its own "African Pentecost" with the arrival of Prophet Harris. It is notable that neither David Shank nor Sheila Walker make any reference to either the Welsh or California Pentecostal revivals having any effect in stimulating Harris's ministry.^{62 63} Harris was to be the fore-runner of many such prophet-healers along the West Coast of Africa of which Prophet Appiah was one.

⁶² Shank, *Prophet Harris*.

⁶³ Sheila Walker, *The Religious Revolution in the Ivory Coast: The Prophet Harris and the Harris Church* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

Chapter 4

The Call of a Prophet

(1919-1924)

In the year 1919, God revealed Himself to Mr. J. W. E. Appiah, who was at the time a catechist in the Methodist Church at Gomoa Dunkwa. This man loved to read and study the Bible and engage in scriptural investigation, so it happened that on May 14, 1919, he and his friend Mr. J E. Morgan, who came from Abura Abakrampa discussed the work of Prophet Samuel Nyankson. Prophet Nyankson lived at Oryaawonsu; there God worked miracles and great deeds through him. Mr Appiah expressed his own desire to grow and mature in the spirit, and to do similar spiritual works. He felt inspired by the words contained in Matthew 7:7; "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." This led him to begin periods of fasting to ask for the Holy Spirit.

It so happened that on August 8, 1919, while he was at his private retreat observing a fast, he heard in the skies a great multitude praising God in song. As he listened, an angel of God bearing a Bible in his hands revealed himself to him. He opened for him to read the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Immediately, the Spirit of the Lord fell on him, and he began speaking in strange tongues, and performing many signs. When he came to himself, he felt like a new person as the scriptures show: "Then the spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man." (I Sam. 10:6).¹

In the previous chapter it was shown that following the remarkable ministry of Prophet Harris some 200,000 people were converted to Christianity. Many of these people joined existing churches, but others formed their own small congregations. For these people Christianity was not the religion of schools and teachers, but one of experience of the power of God that was relevant to their African cosmology. Many prophet-

¹ *History*, p. 10.

healers emerged along the West coast of Africa to proclaim a similar message in which the power of God directly addressed the common issues of sickness, misfortune and witchcraft. In this chapter I want to draw upon the written and oral tradition to describe the call of Prophet Appiah, and explain how he came to establish an African Church.

Appiah the catechist

Little is known about the early years of Prophet Appiah apart from a few comments made by Rev. Junamoe E. Botwe in the forward of the *History*:

Prophet Jemisemiham Jehu Appiah (Akaboha), the founder of the Musama Disco Christo Church, was born at Abura Edumfa in 1893, about two years before Prempeh was taken into exile.² On the fifth day following his birth, a man came to his parents and prophesied as follows: "Your child is a Messenger of God; therefore, take good care of him, and when he grows up let him be educated, so that he may learn about the ways of God." Because his parents were Christians in the Methodist Church, they kept these words in their hearts, and when he was of age he was sent to school at Abura Dunkwa, and continued at Cape Coast. He was known at that time as J. W. E. Appiah. When he left the school, he worked for the Lord in the Methodist Church at Abura Abakrampa. He served there for about three years before he left.

The official Church position is that Appiah was born in 1892 to Abena Esuon and her husband Kwa Dum. The child was called Joseph William Appiah, a name that confirms that the parents were members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.³ The birth of the new baby meant that the couple then had four sons and three daughters. At that time, they were living in Abura Edumfa, a small Fante village some 30 miles from the coast in what is now the Central Region of Ghana. It probably had some trade links with the European forts although it was not on any major trade route. Kwa Dum was a member of the Twidan clan and his wife from the Adwenadze clan.

The first commonly known story about the prophet is an event mentioned by Botwe, and said to have occurred just five days after his birth. An unknown stranger passed through the village, stopped and to the amazement of all, prophesied that the boy

² The British invaded Asante in 1896, and arrested the Asantehene Nana Prempeh I who was exiled to the Seychelles Islands and did not return to the Gold Coast until 1924.

³ The name Egyanka, meaning orphan, was probably added after his mother's death, so giving his name as J. W. E. Appiah.

would one day become a great messenger of God. He therefore advised that he should be sent to school when he grew up. Oral accounts say that his father was not convinced of the necessity of schooling and took no interest in the matter, and it was Appiah's older brother Kobina Gyan who sent Appiah to school when the boy was eight years of age. Appiah went to the Methodist village school in the small town of Abura Dunkwa where he was very popular with the other children because of his jovial nature. He is said to have especially enjoyed Sunday School and joined the local church choir. His commitment to the activities of the church meant that he was liked by all the ministers who successively took charge of the congregation in Abura Dunkwa. Later he transferred to Cape Coast school where he finished his elementary education in 1910 when he was eighteen years of age.

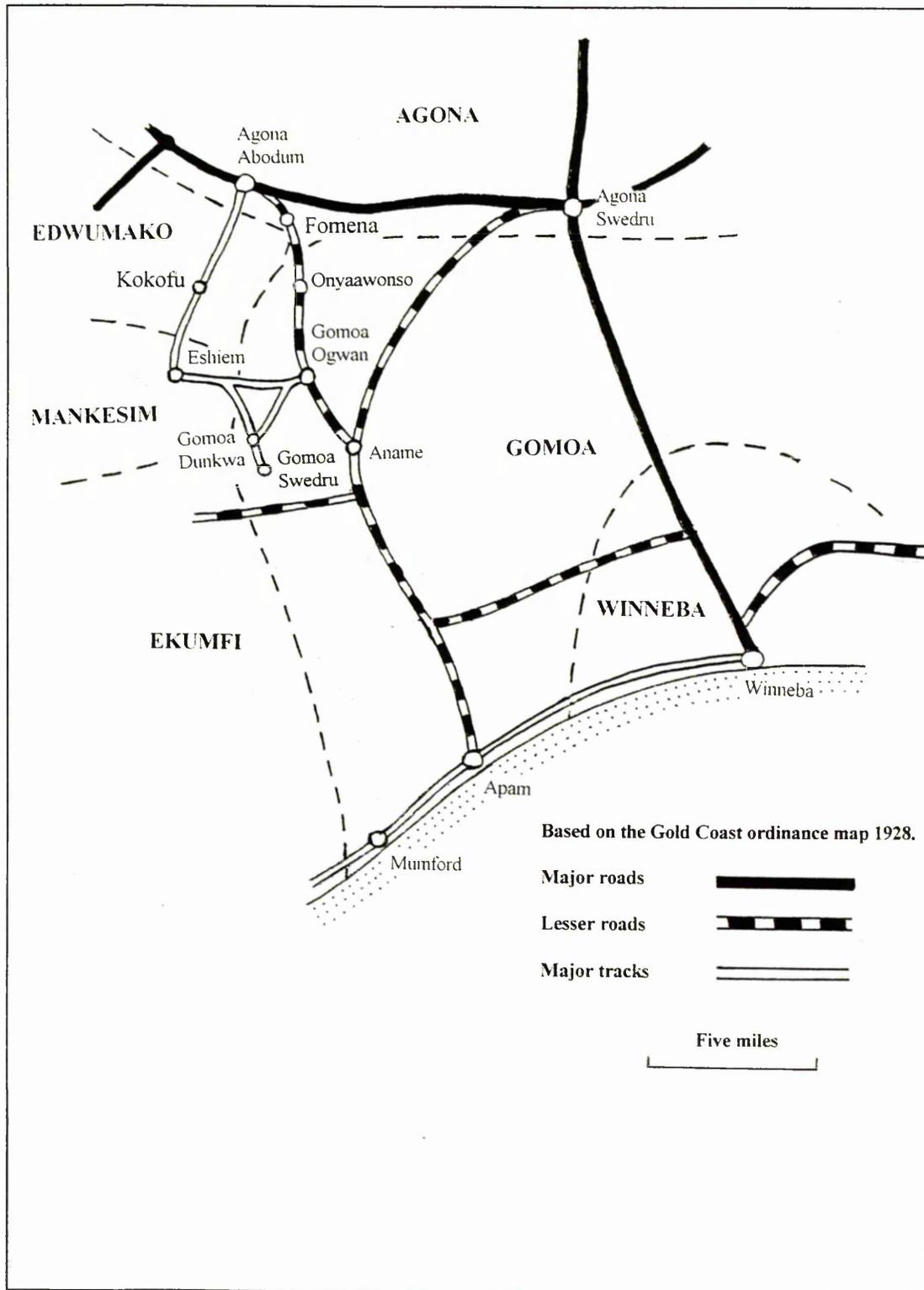
At that time, the Rev. A. W. Stanhope was the Methodist superintendent for Appiah's home district with his base in the coastal town of Apam (Figure 4:1). Stanhope was eager to find a place for this keen young man, and on 20 April 1914 appointed him as a catechist in the village school of Abura Abakrampa.⁴ Soon after his arrival the headmaster died, and Appiah was promoted to the position of head. It was at this time that Prophet Harris arrived in the Gold Coast with repercussions that were to have a marked effect on the life of Master Appiah.

Appiah married Abena Nomaa on 29 April 1915, and during the next few years they had three children.⁵ Although there was an eagerness for Christianity among many of the local people, a teacher-catechist was paid little, and Appiah was tempted to exploit the opportunities of growing cocoa as a cash crop. Appiah therefore resigned from his post in August 1916 and moved to Osino town in Akim Abuakwa District, which was a centre for cocoa farming. Little is known about the six months he spent in the area, but for Appiah it proved a complete failure. The Great War in Europe had a major effect on the Gold Coast, because cocoa could no longer be shipped and prices dropped drastically as did the lucrative profits that once had been made. Appiah finally returned to his home district early in 1917, where he tried his hand at several different

⁴ A list of African ministers in the Gold Coast states that J. E. Appiah began his work in 1914, Appendix 2.

⁵ They were married according to traditional custom and their marriage blessed in Apam Methodist Church on 27 June 1921. No reference to this marriage is made in the text, and like most of the events prior to his first vision are considered of little importance by the Church.

Figure 4:1 Area of Apam circuit in 1920s.



jobs one after the other, but with an equal lack of success. Appiah later ascribed this failure as due to the fact that he had left the will of God.

It was then that the new Methodist circuit superintendent, the Rev. Ernest Bruce, heard of Appiah, and offered to re-employ him as teacher-catechist at Gomoa Dunkwa.⁶ This was the same Rev. E. Bruce who had been in Axim during the visit of Harris, and had sought to embrace many of the converts of Harris into the Methodist church. On 25 July 1917, Appiah reported to the church in the town and commenced his ministry. Later in that same year the Richmond College and Mfantshipim School were re-opened in Cape Coast by the Gold Coast Methodist District for the training of ministers. Only two students were enrolled on 3 November, S. P. Q. Ghartey and J. E. Appiah, but a third student joined the class later.⁷ It is most likely that this was Master J. W. E. Appiah, but there is no corroborative evidence from the MDCC. However, the College was closed early in 1918, and ministerial training joined with that of the CMS in Freetown. There is no mention of a J. E. Appiah being transferred to the College in Freetown, which would have meant that Appiah spent only three or four months in the College at Cape Coast, and probably ended his time in disappointment.

In contrast, it was while he was at Gomoa Dunkwa that Appiah met Samuel Nyankson who was by then quite elderly and well respected within the Methodist Church.⁸ Many stories were told of the miracles that he had performed. For example, on one occasion, it is said, a great tree was about to fall on the huts in a village so Nyankson placed his staff against the tree, and this held the tree until the people had opportunity of emptying the huts. When the tree finally fell it did so in a different direction avoiding the huts altogether. Appiah is said to have been greatly impressed by Nyankson, and often said that he wished that God would give to him the power of the Holy Spirit as he had to Nyankson.

⁶ The Rev. Ernest Bruce was a zealous evangelist and lived to be over ninety (1866-1956). He was accepted as a minister on probation in 1894 and continued preaching almost to the day he died. F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (London: CUP, 1965), p. 158.

⁷ Kofi J. Agbeti, *West African Church History II*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), p. 31.

⁸ Hans Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), p. 329.

In his desire for the empowering of the Holy Spirit, Appiah began to keep fasts and spend long times in prayer. According to the traditions of the MDCC, it was during one of these fasts that Appiah was resting in a chair meditating about spiritual matters when he fell into a trance. The vision that Appiah claimed to have seen is well known by members of the Church, and has crucial significance for future events. In the trance he saw three angels descending from heaven and holding a crown that they placed on his head. They removed the crown, and repeated the action three times before returning to heaven taking the crown with them. The vision perplexed Appiah, and while he was wondering what it meant, Job Cartey is said to have arrived. Cartey was a disciple of Nyankson, and Appiah considered him a "spiritual man". On his way to Gomoa Dunkwa, Cartey had had a vision in which he saw Appiah dressed as a king with a crown on his head being escorted by angels down to earth from heaven. Cartey considered his mission was to tell Appiah that God was going to make him a king. As will be shown later, this was to become a most significant theme in the history of the emerging Church. Cartey asked Appiah if he had a special place in the open to pray. As he did not, Cartey sent for some of the members of Appiah's congregation and showed them how to clear the area and prepare the place as holy ground. He told them to take good care of their catechist as he was a man full of the Holy Spirit. That very day the people worked on the chosen site, and in the evening the group of people assembled there to pray at the "prayer camp". At this time, it is also said that Cartey laid his hands upon the people and blessed them, so many of them received the Holy Spirit.

Appiah is said to have often fasted for several days while praying at the camp, and it was on the 8 August 1919 that he had a second significant vision. He went to the camp to pray as usual, and claimed to have heard the noise of a great company of people singing praises to God. As he was listening, an angel handed him a copy of the Bible open at the book of Acts, and the angel pointed to the tenth chapter. This is the account of how the gospel came to the Gentiles through the Apostle Peter visiting the house of the Roman Cornelius. While Peter was preaching, "the Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening to his message."⁹ As the angel was showing Appiah this passage the Spirit of God is widely believed to have come upon him, and

⁹ Acts 10:44.

he began to speak in tongues and perform miracles. The old prophet Jimiru Fuah said to me about this experience, "he felt a new person at that time, completely taken over by the Holy Spirit. He was in very close relationship with the Holy Spirit".¹⁰ In the early history of the Church this incident is set at the very beginning of the narrative and illustrated with a pen and ink drawing of the founder receiving his call (Figure 4:2.).¹¹

Appiah did not seem to have the usual characteristics of a mystic in that he was jovial and sociable, but he spent long times in prayer and fasting. He began to experience trances in which he claimed divine revelation after the pattern described in the Bible, and similar to those known during the nineteenth century revivals in the Gold Coast.¹² Appiah presents himself as a passive spokesman of the Spirit of God that dominates him, and for whom he becomes a mediator. Although Appiah associated this experience as stemming totally from a Christian influence, similar experiences were known among the traditional Fante priests. However, there is no suggestion of a break from the Methodist teaching, but only a desire for a deeper Christian experience. Appiah appears to consider such trance experiences to be available for all who seek God in continued prayer.

The first miracle attributed to Master Appiah occurred in the village of Gomoa Swedru less than a mile away from Gomoa Dunkwa.¹³ A man was on the point of death when Master Appiah came and prayed for him and laid hands on him. Immediately the man was healed such that he was able to walk part of the way back to Gomoa Dunkwa with Appiah. Most of the miracles told of Appiah relate to healings, but some relate to his use of his walking staff. A well-known story is that when he was returning from the prayer camp one night, a group of people saw a poisonous snake in the grass. Appiah pointed to it with his staff and it stopped moving. When the men approached the snake with sticks intending to kill it, they found it already dead. Such stories not only caused great local interest, but many of the members of his church began to criticise him and accused him of performing strange magical rites. They even denounced Appiah to the circuit superintendent for supposedly using secret drugs obtained from

¹⁰ Interview with Prophet Jimiru Fuah, August 1992.

¹¹ *History*, section 2, p. 10

¹² In Chapter 2 reference was made of a vision of a lady who saw angels and was given a crown. Solomon, Dominasi, 4 December 1868.

¹³ Gomoa Swedru is now deserted and has gone back to bush.

Figure 4:2 “Call of the Founder”

Pen and ink drawing of the call of Prophet Appiah printed in the original Fante version of *The History of the Musama Disco Christo Church* (1943).



India and America. The Rev. I. A. Assan who was then the superintendent studied the accusations, but could not find any reason for disciplinary action.¹⁴ However, this was to be the beginning of a series of accusations that eventually resulted in Appiah's dismissal from the Methodist Church. Even today the harsh criticism of Appiah by the Methodists who accepted Nyankson is a puzzle to the leaders of the MDCC. One possible reason was because Appiah was a local man of a junior rank within the Church while Nyankson was an established evangelist within the Methodist Church.

While some Church members criticised what Appiah was doing, others joined him in his prayer meetings. By October 1919, a small group of people had committed themselves to seek God during extensive periods of prayer within the orb of the Methodist Church. The formation of this organisation resulted in renewed criticism with Appiah accused of taking people away from the Methodist Church to form his own. The superintendent decided to move Appiah to Gomoa Ogwan which was the residence of the paramount chief. Apparently the superintendent hoped that in this new location Appiah would not be able to continue with his prayer group, and so avoid undue criticism. Master Appiah moved to Gomoa Ogwan on 9 May 1920 (Figure 4:1).¹⁵ This was a town only about two miles north of Gomoa Dunkwa on the same circuit, and the church members must have certainly heard of the criticisms of Appiah. The people asked questions concerning his teaching and especially about the Holy Spirit, but initially, Appiah was cautious and made no answer because he was fearful of their reactions. However, there were some elders and an overseer who encouraged him, and a group began to meet for prayer. They chose an area for prayer about half of a mile from the village and close to a quiet stream, which even today is a lovely quiet grove with a sandy river bed shaded by tall trees.

Three weeks after he had moved to Gomoa Ogwan, Appiah was at the church praying with some of the prayer group, when the Holy Spirit is said to have told them through prophecy about a young woman called Abena Kuma, living in a place named *Aberewa Annko Ho* ("Barred to old women"). The name of the village is mentioned in the

¹⁴ A Rev. I. A. Assan was ordained to the ministry within the Methodist Church in 1905. (Appendix 2).

¹⁵ *History*, section 3, p. 11.

History and is usually mentioned in the stories, but the significance of the name has been lost. One suggestion results from the fact that in 1907 the *Aberewa* cult, meaning "Old Woman" entered the region of Winneba, and gained a following.¹⁶ As mentioned in the previous chapter the movement offered long life and prosperity once the initiate drank the *Aberewa* medicine and vowed to follow the *Aberewa* commandments.¹⁷ The movement was banned by the Colonial Government in 1908, and lost its importance by about 1910.¹⁸ The name of the village suggests that it was a refuge from this anti-witchcraft cult, but there is no evidence that it was a Christian community.

Abena Kuma was born in Gomoa Ogwan in 1902 and was therefore well known to the church members. During a prayer meeting a prophecy was given to Master Appiah that they should go and enrol Abena Kuma in the prayer group. Oral accounts tell that the members took Appiah to meet her, and told her that the Holy Spirit had instructed them to enrol her in the church. She said that no one in her household went to church, and that she did not want to be enrolled. Finally she suggested that they should enrol her elder sister Ama Tse. The members therefore asked her to hold the pen so that Ama Tse's name would be registered. Although she had never been to school and could neither read nor write, she held the pen and wrote a name. She was told that she had in fact written her own name, which made her angry and determined to show them that this was all a waste of time. She knew that the church forbade its members to work on the farms on Sundays, and in defiance she went to farm on the following Sunday. With her friends she worked in the fields and deliberately returned passing in front of Master Appiah's house. It is said that she even asked her friends to draw Appiah's attention to the fact that she had been farming. However, this did not concern Appiah, and he merely said that he had only done what the Holy Spirit had instructed him to do. Abena Kuma continued to go farming on the Sundays following, until on one Sunday she told her friends that she would like to go and watch the people at prayer. Appiah was told about this, and he said that she should be brought closer. She was rather apprehensive as she did not know what to expect or how to pray, but

¹⁶ Lorena, "The New Fetish 'Aberewa'", *Basel Mission Archives* Series D-1, Vol. 90 (Winneba, 8 July 1908) p. 1.

¹⁷ "Aberewa" *The Foreign Field of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* 4 February 1908

¹⁸ N. Gray, "Aberewa: Utopianism and Opportunity", (MA thesis, Columbia University, 1993).

the people told her just to watch and try to do what others did. At the prayer camp Appiah told her the same, and encouraged her to keep her eyes closed, and seek God. It was at this time that she is said to have had her first and perhaps most well known vision. It is recounted in the *History* as follows:

On 30 May 1920, as she was watching what was happening in the bush camp she was filled with the Holy Spirit and fell into a trance. She remained in that state for five hours. When she regained consciousness, she recounted her experience. She saw a ladder that stood between the Earth and Heaven and seven angels descended. The first angel gave her a Bible and told her that she was being sent with Jemisimham to the world to proclaim the Word of God. The angel then asked her not to be afraid.¹⁹

In the vision it is said that she was also told that if the people held on firmly with the prayer group it would grow into a large movement. At this time Abena Kuma was only 18 years of age, and this was to be the first of many visions that she would experience. In the prayer group she soon distinguished herself second only to Appiah himself, and he re-named her Hannah Barnes.²⁰

Sometime in 1921, oral accounts tell of how Hannah fasted for seven days, and through the whole period the Holy Spirit was said to be mightily upon her. At night an angel gave her some unusual white food to eat that strengthened her. After this fast the Holy Spirit especially gifted her with discernment, prophecy and the ability to foretell any misfortune that was to come. In one of her prophecies she told the prayer group that God was going to give Appiah a special baptism, and five members of the group were selected to be witnesses. On the appointed day, 31 October 1921, the selected group began to pray at about nine in the evening. Towards midnight Hannah suddenly shouted that seven angels were coming, and at that very moment a strange liquid poured straight down onto the head of Appiah wetting his clothes. The liquid is said to have filled the night air with its fragrance. Hannah then prophesied that this was a holy baptism which God would give him three times as a sign that he was specially consecrated for the work of God. God said that he should not be afraid because he had made him and Hannah for a special purpose. When Master Appiah heard these words he spoke in tongues, and the group praised God. Hannah then

¹⁹ From the notes that Sammy Jelu-Appiah wrote about his father and have remained unpublished.

²⁰ As she was called Abena Baawa, Prophet Appiah continued the Methodist practice and gave her a name of the nearest English equivalent - Hannah Barnes.

prophesied that God would take Appiah up into heaven for three months, but this caused great concern among the group because his sudden absence would be noticed and the paramount chief would make enquiries. The group therefore prayed fervently asking God to let Appiah remain with them, and God granted their request.

The second baptism occurred on 20 March 1922, about six months after the first. The members of the prayer group had been commanded to prepare themselves by fasting and prayer. Once again God spoke to Appiah through Hannah saying, "Today I have given you power over evil spirits. You will heal many possessed of evil spirits, and do many other wonders which will surprise even yourself."²¹ The members of the group continued to worship God throughout the night rejoicing in His goodness. Master Appiah's third baptism was not to happen for a further two years, on the 21 March 1924 in the village of Onyaawonso. By this time the prayer group had faced many changes, and Hannah Barnes became established as one of the leaders. It is notable that the accounts of the baptisms of Prophet Appiah are omitted from the *History*, and this fact is a puzzle to the present leadership. One explanation would be that the *History* did not want to raise unnecessary controversial issues, but a more likely explanation would be that it was regarded as a particularly precious story that should not be broadcast to those who would merely ridicule the account.²²

Founding of the faith society

The local Methodist congregation was divided in their loyalty to Appiah especially when on Thursday 19 October 1923 he formally constituted the "Faith Society" (*Egyedzifo Kuw*).²³ The original "Faith Society" consisted of eleven people who saw themselves as a group of Christians within the Methodist Church who met to seek the Holy Spirit as had the Apostles in the Bible. All my informants are adamant that Prophet Appiah was not attempting to split from the Methodist church and form his own denomination.

²¹ C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 33.

²² The Church does admit to friends of having *kusumadze*, which is translated "secrets". By this they mean precious stories that would not be respected and appreciated by unbelievers.

²³ *History*, p. 12. *Egyedzifo Kuw* is Fante for "The Society of Believers"

The prayer group agreed to meet on the first Thursday of every month. It was at their first meeting that the Holy Spirit is said to have commissioned Hannah Barnes to work with Mr Appiah. The *History* records the words of the prophecy:

“It is not by anybody’s thoughts or plan that you have started this society. It is I, your God, who have called you together to be with this man and this woman that you may commune with me, because they are indeed my messengers. It is they that I have sent to declare my will to all nations concerning the second coming of Christ. They are “*Ayemidi-Kusidi*”, a Double-pointed Sword, or the uniting of two powerful persons for one mission.” Then the Lord performed many signs through this woman, which surprised the whole group. The Lord said, “look, you are witnesses of this man and this woman regarding this mission. Because of that, stand firm in faith; do not forget the signs that I have performed before you here today. It is a testimony for you.” After this, the group joyfully sang praises to God.

Before long many people heard about the Society and came to join them from many places, increasing their numbers significantly. Three more prophets were therefore appointed: Samuel Dankwa, David Ankuma, and Joana Ankuma, who all came from Ogwan, making five prophets and prophetesses in total. Then, on Friday, 15 September 1922, as the prophets and prophetesses were praying at the camp, the Lord called Hannah Barnes and told her, “I have made you a queen among women; therefore from today you will not be called Hannah Barnes again; you will be called Queen Nathalomoa.”²⁴ The role of Queen-mother was important within Akan society, but there was no equivalent role within the Methodist Church. The creation of the role of Queen-mother within the new community was therefore a remarkable innovation, which was to have an important influence on the future development of the emerging Church. Today, the Queen-mother is the senior woman in the MDCC who sits on the right of the King (Akaboha) in the audience chamber, and is influential with the death of the Akaboha in appointing a new head of the Church.

It is said that many people used to come to meetings of the Faith Society to watch what was going on, and suddenly the Holy Spirit would fall on them. There are clear parallels here both with the Methodist revivals of 1855 and 1875, and during the Harris movement. Other people were shocked at these spontaneous reactions and rejected the phenomenon as ungodly and accused them of using spells.²⁵ Near the middle of

²⁴ "Queen" is used for the Fante title *Ohimbaa*.

²⁵ *History*, p. 13.

1923 Rev. Gaddiel Acquah, the new circuit superintendent, firmly ordered Appiah to stop these practices that he considered to be occult. Rumours were circulating in the district that Appiah's walking stick had fetish power, such that on one occasion some local Methodists took the stick from him and broke it. Appiah refused to stop his prayer meetings, so the local Methodist Church expelled him and the other members of the Faith Society. Appiah was also required to vacate the Church house, but fortunately he was invited by the paramount chief to remain in the village. The paramount chief is said to have been favourable to Appiah because he had previously healed the chief's senior wife, who had been paralysed for a long time.

The disagreement between Appiah and the local Methodist congregation became increasingly acute. On Christmas Eve in 1923, while the paramount chief was on a visit to Winneba, some of the church members used the opportunity to attack the Faith Society. The *History* says:

On Monday, December 24, 1923, they raised battle cries and songs, and accompanied by war drumming, they marched on the Society as they were praying at their camp. They demanded that the Society leave the place as they did not own the land on which they were holding their meetings. When the society saw the growing disturbance, they calmly left the camp and went home. The mob pulled down their shed and set fire to it. Then they came to Mr. Appiah at his home and told him that he was not wanted in the town any more, and ordered him and his companions to leave the town. During this time, Nana Kodwo Nkum who liked the society and a God-fearing man, had gone to Winneba on some state business. Mr Appiah reassured his companions and they all left there the following Wednesday evening at 8 o'clock and went to Gomoa Onyaawonsu.²⁶

The story has taken on a greater significance in the life of the Church, and the associated persecution seems to have grown in its severity in the minds of the people. One story I was told by a grandson of the Prophet was of a girl who saw the mob drag her father out of the house. Although he was a big strong man, he did not resist, and he was dragged around the streets such that the skin on his back peeled off to his shoulders. Even in such great pain, the man is said not to have uttered a word. When I asked why the events were so infrequently mentioned, I was told that many of the early members suffered much and it had left them with many painful memories.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Prophet Appiah and his little band of followers decided to leave Gomoa Ogwan and walked to the village of Onyaawonso some five miles to the north²⁷. This was to be the first of three "Exodus" migrations of the community. Exodus was to become an important motif in the history of the Church, which has given the members a distinct identity and sense of destiny.

News of what had happened at Ogwan soon spread all over the area, and as the Society passed through any town on their way to Onyaawonsu, they were followed by crowds of people who hooted and jeered at them. When they left Ogwan, the members of the Society who hailed from Ogwan all left with them. The most amazing thing was that in the midst of all this persecution they rejoiced in Christ because they all understood that those sufferings were due to their worship of God. There at Onyaawonsu the Lord brought such repentance upon them that they resisted from doing any evil. The Lord instilled such love in them that even though they had all come from different places, they did everything as if they were from the same town, or better still, from one family.²⁸

The MDCC now has various views as regards the expulsion of Appiah from the Methodist Church, but all stress that Appiah was reluctant to leave. Today, members make the following comments. "If one of the missionaries had been in Apam district, we would still have been in the Methodist Church today." "Osofu Acquaaah (the circuit superintendent) confessed many things at his death including that he was a witch." "When they came to Ogwan the Holy Spirit wanted to take them out of the Methodist Church so he hardened the superintendent's heart as he did Pharaoh's."

The evidence seems to confirm that in the early years Prophet Appiah did not envisage the formation of a new denomination, but merely a prayer meeting of like-minded people who were seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was the opposition of the Methodists to his practices, and his expulsion from the Church that caused Appiah to found a new Church. Persecution also caused Appiah and his followers to move to a new area, and as such a new social identity was to develop through their common experience of migration. The continuing persecution of the Church has been a problem to the Church members who still do not see why they are not accepted. But, the very act of persecution is now seen as authenticating them as a true Church, just as the Christians in the book of Acts were persecuted.

²⁷ Onyaawonso is now deserted, and only a few fields mark the place of the village.
²⁸ *History*, p. 15.

It was on Sunday, 9 September 1924 that Prophet Appiah first administered the Holy Communion for the members of the Society, and this marked another step towards the formation of a new denomination. During the service, the Holy Spirit is said to have fallen on those gathered and some of them saw visions and others performed many other signs. Then the Lord commanded that on the first Sunday of every month the Society should share in the Holy Communion. To a great extent Prophet Appiah could not have foreseen or intended most of the consequences that flowed from his visions, but the result was to be the formation of The Musama Disco Christo Church.

In 1923, Appiah believed that it "pleased God for him to marry Miss Hannah Barnes, so he went to her family and asked to marry her. The family consented with love, and she became his helper."²⁹ He did not marry her immediately, but undertook a fast lasting three months and seven full days so that he and Hannah Barnes would be strengthened for their coming work. The fast is said in the *History* to have ended on 31 August 1924, but this is probably a scribal error and it was probably in the previous year. Nothing is mentioned about Appiah's first wife Abena Nomaa.

Among the many prophecies that were made by Prophet Appiah and Hannah Barnes was the remarkable prophecy concerning the birth of a child who would be the head of the new church. Not only had it been prophesied that a boy child would be born, but also the date and time of birth, which was to be Sunday 24 August 1924 at noon. It is also said that during her pregnancy Hannah Barnes sometimes felt full with the child, and then sometimes empty as if the baby was coming and going from her womb. As the time prophesied drew near, the members prepared a camp of palm branches in the open where everyone could see if the prophecy was fulfilled. A simple cotton cloth was hung across the temporary shelter to give the mother some privacy and shade. According to the testimony of those who were present, the child was born at noon on the appointed day as the people were praying at the camp, and immediately the baby was shown to the people before it was washed and cared for.³⁰ In all accounts of the story, it is mentioned that the child was bald as promised in the vision. The birth

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁰ The fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the day and time of the birth is of essential significance to the oral tradition, and has become an indisputable tenet of the MDCC. It is notable that the *History* attributed to the Prophet himself does not mention the prophecy concerning the birth, only the day, Sunday, 24 August 1924, p. 15.

caused great excitement among the members. Because the child was believed to have been born "in the Spirit" even the water used to wash the new born baby was regarded as having miraculous powers. It is said that some of the water was rubbed on the eyes of the blind who immediately regained their sight, and some rubbed on the limbs of the lame and they walked. Older members eagerly tell stories of how the moon turned the colour of blood, and cocoa pods were found hanging on cornstalks. Today, some educated members of the Church find these accounts an embarrassment, but recognise that they still have a great appeal for the illiterate members and heighten the sense of charisma related to the prophet and his son.

On the eighth day after his birth, as was the Fante custom, the boy was brought out for all to see and was given his name. His earthly name was Kwesi Nyamekye meaning "Sunday-born God-sent", but God is said to have given him a heavenly name by direct inspiration - Mathapoly Moses. This is the first of many heavenly names that were given to members of the Church as will be discussed in Chapter 5. On the following day, 1 September 1924, Nathalomoa was given the following prophecy: "Bless the Reverend Funamafudu Adoo Eshun and his wife Kupabinaia Eshun and say to them that, because of their good services to God, they would become the parents of a wife of Mathapoly Moses. You should all be united in everything and pray steadfastly for this to happen."³¹ Adoo Eshun was a founding member of the Faith Society. The members agreed to offer animal thanksgiving sacrifices for this child every quarter. While the members were at the prayer camp offering the quarterly sacrifice, on 1 September 1925, a daughter was born to Kupabinaia Eshun. The child Mathapoly was immediately bathed, and the bath water used to wash the new-born girl. Miracles were also said to have occurred when people were bathed with the water. The little girl was given the heavenly name Matabinaia, and the people rejoiced that God had fulfilled his promises to them.

The first birthday of Mathapoly Moses was celebrated with great rejoicing. It was at this time that the people rang their own bell for the first time, which for the members signified that they had finally formed their own Church distinct from the Methodists. Prophet Appiah declared that the days of unpopularity and persecution had passed, and

³¹ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 38.

they now no longer needed to meet in some secluded place to avoid hostility. The command was given that this time was to be celebrated annually with a great festival to be called *Asomdwee Afi*, "Peaceful Year", in which all the members should come together to celebrate what God had done in the same way that the people of Israel had done.³² They should come to sing and dance, and exchange gifts among themselves as was the custom of some Christians at Christmas. The *History* recounts:

He also ordered that on the same day every year the Society should all meet in one place to celebrate the anniversary. They should play drums and praise Him as the Israelites had done. They should praise the Name of the Lord with music and dance. Everyone who was on suspension or any other form of sanction should be released from such punishment. Everyone should give "gifts of love" to one another. They should all perform such activities as are pleasing to the Lord and right in the land, commemorating the occasion for seventeen consecutive days. The Lord also assured them that at that time he would let His angels move freely among them and bless them doing many things.³³

The festival has developed over the years, and is a major feature of the religious calendar of the Church. A description of a recent "Peace Festival" will be given in Chapter 9.

A new covenant

In May 1925, some 18 months after the handful of families moved with Prophet Appiah to Onyaawonso, a seven-day conference was held during which the leadership of Prophet Appiah and Nathalomoa was recognised and the people agreed to a new covenant. On 13 May 1925, the Lord is said to have spoken through the Prophet J. Jehu Appiah to the elders of the Society to confine themselves for seven days and prepare "to meet Him". During the subsequent days a number of significant prophecies were given that were later recorded by the leaders in the text of the *History*. These prophecies provided an important theological foundation for the future Church, and gave divine authority for some most significant doctrines.

The first principle related to the nature of the Church itself, and it is usually explained by the following story.

³² In 1970, Akaboha II changed the name to *Asomdwe Afehye* ("Peace Festival").
³³ *History*, p. 16.

“By my own will I am going to establish a church that will be for all nations.³⁴ Yet as you have come from different churches, I am asking you, which way do you want me to take you? The Devil has filled people with worldly wisdom and knowledge so that all people’s minds have turned from God, who is the Creator.”³⁵

To this request the elders answered, “Lord, let your will be done for us. Please do as you have purposed in your power, and found whatever church you wish. May God forbid that we, because of opposition and ridicule, should reject what you have planned to happen for us among the people. Eternal God, declare the purposes for which you called this man and this woman for all nations, so that the world may know that you have sent them.” To this appeal the Lord is said to have responded, through prophecy:

“Peace be unto you. Look, as I have told you, I repeat that I am going to use you to establish a church by my own power. Therefore do not be frightened by any disturbances that will come in your way. The end of all these is coming. Look, I have sent this man and this woman that they may teach my will to all people, not just any new friendly teachings about my worship, and the ancient religion which will proclaim my will forever. It is thereby that those who wait for the Lord Jesus Christ’s second coming can stand. It is not a new thing. It is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; all these three together make one.”

Three issues emerge from this dialogue. First, the members are convinced that God used the founders to establish a totally new denomination different from those brought by the Western missionaries. It is to be a unique organisation not based upon any current practices, but those to be revealed to them by God. Second, the new denomination is to be a continuation of what God has been doing in the past. This implies that God is going to take the people back to an original form of religion that predates that of the Western churches. Third, the people are told that the way will not cause them to be popular, but to be the source of ridicule. This not only provides an explanation of the persecution that the members have previously faced and will experience in the future, but makes persecution the legitimisation of the Church as being truly of God.

During the same seven-day conference, a series of rules was given by prophecy, to provide guidelines for the Church about its life and discipline. The rules do not seek to provide a total way of life for the community, but deals with some relevant issues

³⁴ The word translated as “nations” is the Fante *aman*, which more correctly refers to a local Akan state. The English word “nation” gives a more international connotation, which the contemporary Church likes to emphasise.

³⁵ *History*, p. 16.

found within the Old Testament Scriptures. The significance of these rules is important for later development of the Church, so will be presented here in full as stated in the text of the *History*.

Peace be unto you. I am giving you this command, that it becomes a foundation for the mission I am setting my prophet and prophetess, this man and this woman, Jemisimiham Jehu Appiah and Nathalomoa Jehu Appiah, that:

- 1 Let not any of the church's pastors or teachers charge fees for teaching; Let not prophets or prophetesses charge any fees for prophesying, or any healer for healing.
- 2 Let all the members of the Church give their offerings out of free will, and give tithes at its time; and let that money become a fund out of which the workers shall be supported; be it small or large. Let them be satisfied with it.
- 3 Let the temple of God be holy from all filth; that is, let not the members enter it with footwear; let them not spit in it; let them not enter it with dead bodies, but let them perform all rites for the body at the entrance of the church.
- 4 Each church should have an offering box, and let a cross be placed inside the church and at its entrance.
- 5 Let no one forsake divine healing in the use of medicines for treatment.
- 6 Let no one perform any magical or fetish rituals; let no one consult a shrine, a diviner or sorcerer.
- 7 Let no one drink any intoxicating liquor; let no one smoke a pipe or chew tobacco.
- 8 Let no one use any charms or spells, or pledge themselves to any fetish.
- 9 Let no one put away his wife whom he has married in church.
- 10 Polygamy should not be banned in the church, as some churches have made into rules for themselves. (a) Let everybody marry according to the will of God. (b) Let every woman call her husband Papa. (c) Let every woman curtsey to her husband and other men.
- 11 Let every woman cover her head when she is praying.
- 12 Let every married woman cover her head when she goes out.
- 13 Let not the members shave off the back of their heads.³⁶

³⁶ This rule is something of a mystery to the present Church leaders, who suggest that it probably refers to a particular way of cutting the hair that was considered a display of vanity in the 1920s. A more

- 14 Let no one eat the flesh of a dog, a pig, a horse, or any animal that has hands and feet like a human being.
- 15 Let no one eat a strangled animal or eat blood.
- 16 Let no one engage in sexual immorality, or commit adultery.
- 17 Let every Friday be marked as holy with fasting and prayer.
- 18 Let them all meet every Thursday midnight to commemorate Christ's anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- 19 Let everybody bathe themselves before they say the *Yinaabi*, at six in the morning, at noon, and at six in the evening.
- 20 Let everybody wear a cross around their neck.
- 21 Let those of you who have dedicated yourselves to work with this man and this woman, my Prophet/Prophetess, in the Musama Church, not do any other work, so that you will have time for my work, because I am going to build you up spiritually so that you shall be perfect in me. Therefore, you should not worry about what you will eat, drink, or wear, as the Lord has said.

The rules may be arranged into five categories relating to: money, purity and taboo, healing and magic, marriage and meetings. First with regards to money, pastors, prophets and healers were not to expect a salary from the Church, nor for the spiritual ministry that they perform. At this time the historic churches continually encouraged their members to make payment for the expenses of the church especially with the increasing costs of schools and clinics. In the previous chapter it was mentioned that Prophet Harris seemed little concerned with money and tended to discount it as "the root of all evil". In the same way the church workers of the MDCC were to trust God for all their needs. Today, as will be discussed later, these rules cause major problems for church workers, and some are suffering financially as they struggle to pay school fees for their children.

The second category consists of those regulations which relate to purity and the familiar notion of taboo. This is especially important concerning the "temple", which is considered to be holy ground and subject to taboos.³⁷ The restriction about wearing

likely reference is to the hair style worn by the traditional priests (*akomfo*), which should therefore be avoided by members of the new Society.

³⁷ The MDCC often call their church buildings "temples" following a pattern of the Old Testament.

shoes is given biblical authority by church leaders through reference to passages such Exodus 3:5 and Joshua 5:15. This literalist reading of the Bible is an important feature of the life of the church, and distinguishes them from the missionaries.

Healing and magic are the third category, which were particularly important for the early members of the Church. The fifth rule categorically rejects the use of all medicines with the demand that members should depend upon God alone for healing. There is here a marked difference with the views of Harris who told people that if they are sick they could gather traditional herbs and make medicines, but they must do the whole process with prayer.³⁸ The use of medicines has continued to be a major issue within the church, and as will be mentioned later is currently subject to some reinterpretation.

The fourth category relates to marriage, which was a contentious issue within the historic churches since Dunwell's arrival in 1835. Polygamy was an accepted part of Fante society, and the historic churches had taken a strong stand against its practice. Harris, in contrast, was considered to have had at least two "wives" and he took others while at Axim. Rule 10 implies that the Europeans have added to the rules given by God, and have made monogamy particularly for themselves. This interpretation therefore does not condemn monogamy, but excludes the African from following it. They would go on to argue that what is important is that Christians should marry according to the will of God. Polygamy is therefore acceptable if it is done honourably before God, and it is considered far better than "secret concubinage", which they say is common in many of the historic churches. Support for polygamy came from many Old Testament examples. The *History* comments:

If faith is the reason for there being so many doubters, we say, no one showed more faith than our ancestor Abraham who was an example for all believers and a friend of God. This man married three women. Jacob, who is also the father of all Israel married four women. Moses, who was the leader of Israel, married two women. David, the King of Israel, married many women; it was later when he sinned by taking Uriah's wife that God said to him, "I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have

³⁸ David A. Shank, *Prophet Harris, The Black Elijah of West Africa* (Leiden: E J Brill, 1994), p. 180.

smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites.” (II Samuel 12:8,9) What the Lord said to David shows that having many wives was no offence to Him; but killing Uriah and marrying his wife was the sin against His will; because God’s commandments say, “You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery.”³⁹

What was condemned by the young church was divorce as stated in rule 9. It should be noted that by this time Prophet Appiah had married Hannah Barnes who was his second wife. Many of the earlier converts to the movement already had more than one wife, and polygamy has remained a feature of the Church even until the present.

Category five contains additional meetings that the Church should follow relating to Thursday evenings, and Fridays. As such, they provided divine sanction for the innovation of new patterns of worship within the Church.

The initial Faith Society continued to pray and worship in the manner of the Methodist Church, but early in the history of the movement it began to adopt indigenous elements. The use of drums and dancing in worship was adopted, and quickly became another issue for which the movement was criticised by the local Methodists. The story is told of a day when a person described as a “crazy man” came into the worship meeting of the Society and started making a drumming sound. The people were about to throw him out when the Akaboha told the people to pray as God wanted to show them something. In the midst of the prayers, a member rushed out and brought a drum and put it on the lap of the Prophet. He began to play the drum and the people started to dance and worship the Lord. When the story is told to an outsider, the explanation is usually added, that “at that time Christians generally considered the drum as being of the Devil, as taught by the missionaries.”

Even when the *History* of the MDCC was produced in 1943, the writer included drumming as one of the continuing reasons for criticism by other Christians. The argument for drumming includes not only quotations from the Bible, but an appeal to logic.

We hope that no one will doubt the place of music-playing and dancing because it is not an offence for a worshipper of God to play them or to dance. Even when we look at band music, it is used for worldly entertainment by worldly people (idol-worshippers and pagans); it is used to play military music by European soldiers

³⁹ *History*, section 21, p. 48.

when they go to war. Yet when the words sang to its accompaniment are changed and directed towards God's praise and worship, it is acceptable. For this reason, people who worship God use it for entertainment and also for the praise of God's name. In that case, we can see that if for the sake of praising God one carves out a drum, any drum, that it may be used to praise God, it is exceedingly pleasing before God.⁴⁰

The leaders of the MDCC find it perplexing that the early members of the Church were subject to such criticism especially as these very churches now use drums and dancing in their worship. The story of the madman and the drum may be regarded in Malinowski's terms of a "mythical charter" to provide divine sanction for indigenous forms in Christian worship. Although the group adopted drumming in their worship this was not without discrimination. It was accepted practice among the Fante that at the funerals of members of the same *asafo* company the men would play the drums. The Faith Society took a stand against this practice even though it led them into conflict with the local people of Onyaawonso. In the *History* the writer states, "Indeed, idol-worshippers have many practices of drumming which are not acceptable to the worship of God, which worshippers of God should not go anywhere near."

Another addition to the religious life of the members of the community was the introduction of the *Yinaabi*, or rosary.⁴¹ This was not used in the Methodist Church, and could have had its origins from either the Roman Catholics or Muslims. It is still used daily as an aid to prayer by devout members of the Church.

The *History* tells an account of the endorsement of the two leaders of the Church. "On July 3, 1925, the Lord performed a special sign about the Prophet J. Jehu Appiah and his wife the Prophetess Nathaloma Jehu Appiah before the whole church such that great fear fell on them because of the miracle that God had performed. As they were still thinking about it, the Holy Spirit showed them the meaning, which "by my authority I have made this man 'Akaboha' and this woman 'Akatitibi', meaning supreme king and supreme queen over my church."⁴² From that time they assumed these titles Akaboha and Akatitibi." The account gives little information concerning the nature of the special sign or the miracles. However, it confirmed the position of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21, p. 52.

⁴¹ *Yinaabi* is a heavenly name given by revelation.

⁴² Could be translated "paramount king and paramount queen".

the two leaders, and authenticated the acts that the prophet and prophetess were doing came not from their own power, but from God.

One explanation of this “special sign” was the heavenly baptism said to have been experienced by Prophet Appiah. Oral tradition tells of three such heavenly baptisms as discussed previously. The first occurred on 31 October 1921 and was witnessed by Hannah Barnes and five others, and the second occurred about six months later on 20 March 1922. The third baptism is said to have occurred two years later, on 21 March 1924 in the village of Onyaawonso. Little is known of what happened at this time, but it acted as a further confirmation of the leadership roles of both Prophet Appiah and Hannah Barnes. The parallel with the traditional Fante *omanhene* and “queen-mother” is obvious, but in establishing these positions the way was open to the emergence of a distinct indigenous pattern of leadership that was to characterise the MDCC.

This chapter has drawn much upon the *History* of the MDCC together with some corroborative information from the oral tradition to identify the main events of the growth of the Church in the 1920s. The accuracy of the *History* is discussed in Appendix 5 where it is concluded that the account is inherently plausible. The desire of Master Appiah for the revival of the Holy Spirit resulted in visions and dreams, which drew to him like-minded individuals. This group spent much time in prayer together, and they became the seed of a growing movement regulated by behavioural norms for rituals and morals given by revelation. As Lanternari has shown, this was a pattern common to many movements in West Africa.⁴³ What makes the MDCC unique is the way that prophetic revelation gave the community a distinct African character expressed in the social structure of the Fante *oman*.

⁴³ Vittorio Lanternari, “Dreams and Visions from the Spiritual Churches of Ghana”, *Paideuma* 24 (1978), 89.

Chapter 5

A Christian Oman

(1924-35)

On the third day, on October 20, the Lord, through the Akaboha, called the place Mozano, meaning "My Own Town". He also called the Society "Jehunano", meaning "companions of Jehu". He also named the church He was going to found, Musama Disco Christo Church, meaning "The Church of the Army of the Cross of Christ". It was here that God began to make rules concerning the welfare of the Society. He divided the society into three, the Group of Sevens, the Group of Fives, and the soldiers, and appointed leaders for each. Later, He made regulations concerning the positions of the Akaboha and Akatitibi as King and Queen of the Church. Then He consecrated a Senior Pastor and Senior Prophet, ordained supervising Pastors and Prophets and Prophetesses, and appointed a General Secretary, Chief Treasurer, Senior Healers, and other positions. The Lord did this to show His kingship, how in the early days He walked with the people of Israel, and the way in which He was going to organise the Church.¹

The covenant at Onyaawonso gave the outlines of a new way of life that could only be fully expressed through the establishment of a new Christian community. New villages were a common feature in Akan society as people migrated to new areas to farm. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, during the nineteenth century several cases are known where "salems" were formed by Christian converts who had left, or were expelled from their home villages. What was distinctive about the MDCC was that they adopted patterns of organisation and leadership they considered as given by direct revelation from God, and which were particularly relevant for their African society. The process was not without its difficulties, and the social tensions quickly resulted in division. The small remnant struggled to survive, but eventually began to grow through active evangelism among the neighbouring *aman*. The organisational

¹ *History*, p. 25.

progression can be seen as moving from that of a society within the Methodist Church (“Faith Society”), to a sect of ambiguous affiliation to the Methodists (“Jehunano Family”), and finally to a denomination in its own right (“Musama Disco Christo Church”).

Followers of Jehu

Even after their migration to Onyaawonso the community continued to face criticism both from Christians and non-Christians. The Christians seemed to be especially concerned about their exercise of prophecy and their avoidance of any sort of medicine. This is illustrated in the names they were called by local Christians:

<i>Mbebareefo</i>	(People of rules).
<i>Odofoase Asor</i>	(The Church of the thickets).
<i>Kyirbentoa</i>	(Syringe-haters).
<i>Mbonsamsor</i>	(Devil worshippers).
<i>Nkonhyefotorfo</i>	(False Prophets). ²

One immediate disagreement with the local people concerned the use of Friday, which was the traditional day for communal work in Onyaawonso. This clashed with the 17th rule given to the Faith Society that they were to keep Friday as a holy day with prayer and fasting. The Society requested that they may be allowed to do their share of the communal work on another day, but this was rejected. The tension between the two communities became so intense that it was soon obvious that the members would have to move once more. They finally approached the chief, R. H. Adams (Nana Esaah III, *Obaatan*), of the nearby town of Gomoa Fomena, and asked him for a plot of land to buy and settle. Nana Esaah is said to have received them gladly and offered them a choice between two pieces of land, one nearer Abodom or one nearer Gyaaman. Prophet J. Jehu Appiah said that he preferred the land on the Abodom road, to which the chief told of a dream. Chief Adams then revealed, “God has spoken to me in a dream that some people will come to me for a piece of land and if they come I should grant their request. God had showed me only these two places, so I know that your request is a request from God.”

² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

The members were surprised and delighted by this and agreed the cost of £36, plus administrative charges of £1.17s, making a total of £37.17s.0d. The area was one of dense forest and the people worked hard to clear the land, and erected sheds and booths. The actual move to the new site had all the significance of the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt. Prophet J. Jehu Appiah selected seven people and with them he appeared before the Lord to ask His will concerning their departure. The Lord said to them, "These days before you go to the new land, let everyone wash all their clothes. You should also clean all household objects that you have. If there is any dispute between any of you let the elders sit and resolve them. Make sure that no two brothers or sisters or husband and wife go to the new land with any disputes. On the day before you go, let everybody bath, wear nice clothes, eat drink and rejoice the whole day to show that I, God, am taking you to the new land in peace."³ When this was reported to the Society, they all did as ordered.

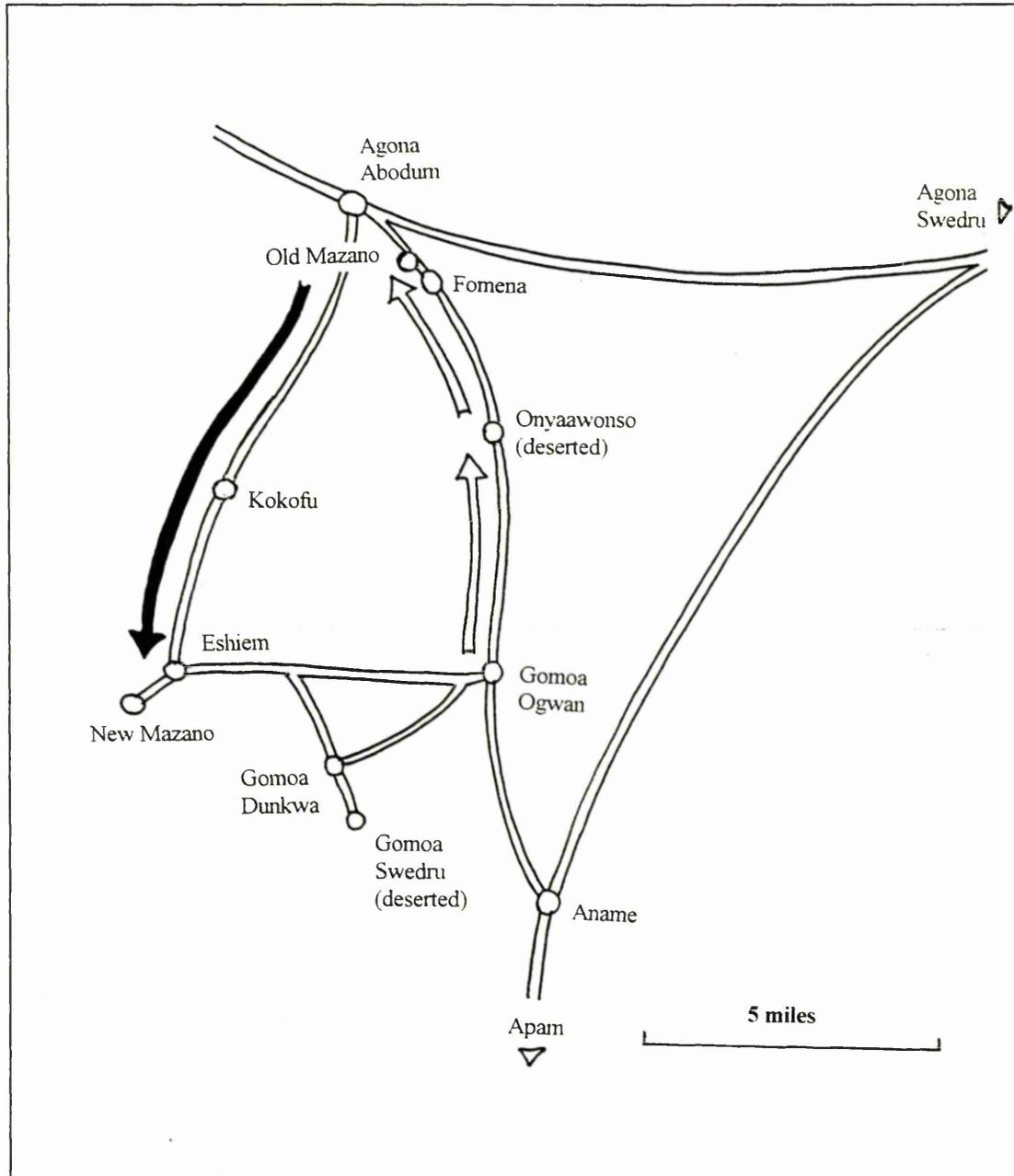
On Saturday, 17 October 1925, the whole society, which at this time numbered nine men with their wives and children, left Onyaawonso and went to the land to live in their booths and sheds. (Figure 5:1). When they reached the outskirts of Fomena, the whole town came out to welcome them.

The people who followed Prophet Appiah on this second exodus became known as the "Jehunano", which means followers of Jehu. Today these followers of the prophet are held in great respect by the Church and are known as the "Jehunano Family". In this act of moving to Mazano they showed themselves committed to the leadership of the Prophet and the promises made by God. Nine men were part of the original Jehunano: Samuel Dankwa (or Danquah), David Ankuma, Johanian Ankima, J. B. Eshun, S. D. Bruce, John Edu, Obed Eyson, Joab Otabil and Daniel Afran. Today the MDCC is keen to emphasise that not all these early members were Methodists, and that the movement should not be seen merely as a reaction from the Methodist Church. Even so, most of the group appears to have been in some way associated with the Methodist Church, and the others, such as Hannah Barnes, were within the orb of its influence. Joab Otabil was a former follower of the Methodist evangelist Nyankson. Daniel Afran was Master Appiah's landlord when he was catechist in Ogwan, and it is

³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Figure 5:1 The path of the three migrations.

The first migration was to Onyaawonso, then Old Mazano, and then to New Mazano.



therefore most likely that he was a church member. S. D. Bruce was a teacher from Brong Ahafo, but his European name suggests his connection with the Methodist Church among the Fante. Samuel Danquah was a member of the Methodist church in Gomoa Dunkwa when Appiah was the catechist. Little is known of the background of J. B. Eshun apart from the fact that he was the father of the baby girl promised as the future wife of Mathapoly Moses.

S. D. Bruce, Samuel Danquah and Appiah had all acquired some education, and were literate, but none were associated with the educated elite who were based around Cape Coast some 25 miles away. The Gomoa area, in which most of the events relating to Prophet Appiah occurred, was outside the main road network, and even today the area has little public transport. As was mentioned earlier Appiah failed in his attempt at cocoa farming, and was not granted the opportunity to continue his studies to train as a Methodist minister. It appears that the "Followers of Jehu" were from the same marginalized group struggling to adapt to changing times. In following the Prophet they were to make a commitment not only to a new charismatic leader, but to a new social identity. Even though some of the men had more than one wife, the hamlet probably consisted of no more than 50 persons.

The new community

The community arrived at Gomoa Fomena on Saturday, 17 October 1925, and quickly marked out the area and built their own houses. Just three days after arriving at the site they began to formulate their own rules and leadership. The older members of the Church say that in these early days all decisions were made by prophecies with many being uttered by the Akaboha and Akatitibi themselves. The prophecies therefore carried with them the authority of God, which was obviously beyond dispute for the little community.

An early prophecy related to the name for the town and the Church. "Mazano" is one of many heavenly names that were given at this time, and it is interpreted as meaning "My Own Town".⁴ The word "My" is related specifically to God himself, who

⁴ The name of the town changed its transliteration in 1958 from Mazano to Mozano.

therefore proclaims a special relationship to the town. The prophecy also said that they were to form a new Church called the Musama Disco Christo Church, meaning "The Church of the Army of the Cross of Christ". To this growing list of revealed names were added phrases, and greetings having recognised meanings. It would appear that this was the beginning of an emerging language, which strengthened the sense of group identity for the community as will be shown in the following chapter.

When it is remembered that there were only nine men and their wives, this list contains a surprisingly large number of offices. The reason for this can be understood in the context of the Akan view of a village (*okuraa*) that is differentiated by size, importance and history from a larger town (*nkro*). An *okuraa* may be no more than a tiny farm settlement, inhabited by a few family members to which a variety of other people could be attracted, and the original head (*odekuro*) answerable to a more senior office holder.

There were many such *akuraa* throughout the Akan region especially with the development of the cocoa production, and some of these grew into new *nkro*, while some existing *nkro* declined. This illustrated the fluid nature of social change within the whole region. In jural-political terms, the distinction between an *okuraa* and a *nkro* resided in the fact that a *nkro* was headed by a range of titled office holders including *ahene*.⁵ Thus, Mazano needed to have a range of office holders if it was to achieve its own identity, but even so the small community remained under the general authority of the *omanhene* of Gomoa Fomena as will be shown later in times of crises.

God is said to have divided the community into three groups who were given the names *Beesunfo*, *Beenumfo*, *Akofodom*. The first name means "the Group of Seven" and was led by the Akaboha himself. The second was the *Beenumfo*, the "Group of Five", led by Samuel Dankwa, and the third was the *Akofodom*, "Warriors" or "Fighters", led by Jimiru Fuah.⁶ According to Jimiru Fuah, who was the only one of this original community alive when I was doing my research in Ghana, all three societies were essentially secret groups that would not divulge their activities to non-members. It was known that the "Warriors" worked for the protection of the "Group

⁵ T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 294.

⁶ Jimiru Fuah was still alive in 1992 and provided much personal information.

of Seven”, but Jimiru Fuah had no knowledge about what the “Group of Five” used to do. The groups all met separately to pray and “seek the mind of the Lord” about specific issues, and would then come together under the leadership of the Akaboha to share what they thought God was saying to them. If they were not united in their opinions, Appiah would send them back to pray more. Because God has only one will and purpose the people of God should be unanimous and united in their knowledge of his will. The three groups worked in different ways for their common aim of the development of the Church, believing that God would direct each of them so that there would be total co-ordination. However, this theocratic approach to government has the potential for disagreement and division, which soon occurred.

Little is said of this early split in the community, and few members are even aware that such a division took place. The *History* speaks of this incident as “The Period of Satan’s Temptations”:

During that time Satan, the Enemy, started fierce battles with the church in many ways. He brought weaknesses and dissension into the Society. So, one of the three prophets, Samuel Dankwa, also known as Mafasilalehu, broke away with some of the members, leaving only a few. We should stop here and praise God for the mighty deeds he performed in the Society, at the time when Satan, the Enemy, sought in various ways to scatter them.⁷

Personal information that is not generally known by most members today tells a story in which Samuel Dankwa, the leader of the “Group of Five”, claimed that the Holy Spirit ordered him to leave Mazano. It had been revealed to him that the power in which the church was to work had been given to Mathapoly Moses, the son of Prophet Appiah, and that Dankwa had to take him and his mother away. The prophecy asserted that the real leader of the church was Mathapoly Moses, and he would take over when he was old enough, and his father would die. Nathalomoa was informed about the new revelation, but was unhappy to comply or go anywhere without her husband’s permission. However, at the request of Samuel Dankwa and his group she did not tell her husband, and waited to see what would happen. On the night before the agreed day for departing, it is said that the Holy Spirit revealed the plot to Prophet Appiah. He quickly summoned Samuel Dankwa and his group to appear before the chief of Fomena, and told all that the Spirit had revealed to him. Dankwa could not

⁷ *History*, p. 26.

deny the plot, and in shame the group left the community without Nathalomoa or her son. This group first went to Abetifi to settle, and later moved north to Brong Ahafo where they formed their own Church that came to be known as the "Ossamadils" Church (The Church of Light).

As would be expected the current leaders of the Ossamadils Church have a slightly different version of the incident. According to them, Samuel Dankwa had a vision from God that he should leave Prophet Appiah, following the reorganisation of the Faith Society in Mazano. Samuel Dankwa had been a member of the Methodist Church in Gomoa Dunkwa, and felt that he had a good knowledge of the Bible and the teachings of Christianity. Together with his family and a few friends he moved to Kumase, and after five years moved to Brong Ahafo. His ability to heal is said to have gained him a few converts from the Methodist Church in that area. In 1931, the group returned to the Fante region where they registered as a church, and built their own central town known as "Chapess", a few miles north of Winneba. Dankwa himself died in 1958 leaving seven wives and 38 children. The Ossamadils Church holds to the view that Dankwa was merely being obedient to his own vision and possibly reacting to the authoritarianism of Prophet Appiah. Some of the older members of the MDCC have a story that Samuel Dankwa actually repented and wanted to return to Prophet Appiah. He is even said to have sent some people to ask if he came to apologise would he be forgiven and re-admitted. Prophet Appiah agreed in principle to accept him back, and told the emissaries to invite Dankwa to come to him. Unfortunately, the story concludes, Samuel Dankwa was involved in a fatal road accident on the journey, and no reconciliation was achieved.⁸ His followers subsequently could not come, and they have remained a separate Church.

The Ossamadils Church has many similar characteristics to the MDCC with a General Head (*asahassadam*), Queen-Mother (*mukunoponya*), and Chief Elder (*dedema*).⁹ This division provides some insights into the common practices of the original community, and how the two Churches have developed since the division. For

⁸ It is difficult to reconcile this story with the fact that Appiah died in 1948, ten years before Dankwa. It could be that the head of the church at that time was Akaboha II, and not Prophet Appiah.

⁹ In March 1994, I had a long conversation with the current head of the Ossamadils Church, who is the grandson of Samuel Dankwa. The Church has been in decline since about 1989, and then had 44 congregations in the north that use Twi, and 23 in the south that use Fante.

example, the *asafo* structure that characterises the present MDCC is not found in the Ossamadils Church, confirming that this was actually a later development within the MDCC as will be described in Chapter 7.

Although the division was a shock to the small community in that it lost about one third of its members, the remainder is said to have held firm in their support of Prophet Appiah. The remnant prayed to God as to what they should do so that the Society might resume its form and position. The Lord spoke to them by prophecy again through Queen Nathalomoa:

“Peace be unto you. I am God; I am not human, that I would give my word and take it back. Therefore, do not be afraid, stand firm, because it is I who have brought you to this land. Look, I am going to make you victorious over Satan, the Enemy, in all these disturbances, in my name. You must realise that all that has come upon you is Satan’s temptation, not that I have abandoned you.”¹⁰

After this, all the remaining members of the Jehunano Fellowship met again, and the Holy Spirit through the Prophet Jehu spoke to them:

“I know the sadness and sorrow that has come upon you on account of the leaving of some of the people. Yet, I still say, stand firm in faith, because the time has come for me to send you to nations to go and proclaim me. Therefore, you must diligently ask for spiritual strength to enable you to go on that mission.”¹¹

The remaining members started again with the building of their village and a “Holy Place” (*Kronkron Bea*), which was to be unique to the Church. Little today is remembered about this original Holy Place apart from the fact that it was constructed in three parts loosely following the pattern of the temple in the Old Testament: an outer court, a “holy place” and “the holy of holies”. The Akaboha used to pray in the outer court if he was seeking some special revelation from God. Within the innermost sanctuary was placed a cross, a candlestick and an ark.¹² The ark contained the Ten Commandments, the history of the church, and the rules of the church listed in the previous chapter. Leaders today consider the design of the ark to have been given by direct revelation, and was not meant to be a copy of the ark of the Israelites although it is very similar to that described in Exodus 37 (Figure 7-5). The old pattern of the Holy

¹⁰ *History*, p. 26.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹² This list is similar to that given by C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (SCM Press: London, 1962), p. 49.

Place was given a new expression when the community later moved to New Mazano and built a new temple.

The organisational structure of the remnant was also changed as a result of revelation from God. The original Group of Seven (*Beesuofo*), which had been under the leadership of the Akaboha, was later modified to become an association currently known as "The Nahatim Band", which is now the main prayer group of the church. The members of the *Akofodom*, or soldiers, were formed into the "Seenim Band", which is the main evangelistic group of the church. There is no remnant of the "Group of Five" (*Beenumfo*), presumably because they left with Samuel Dankwa.

Evangelism and church growth

On 29 August 1929, about four years after the company had moved to Mazano, Prophet Jehu-Appiah summoned all the members to the prayer camp in Mazano.¹³ He told the people that God was going to do a new thing in their midst and they were to prepare themselves by withdrawing from all contact with non-members for a period of seven days. They were then to fast and pray for a further three weeks, by which was meant that they would only eat in the evenings and then only sparingly. After this period they were to return to normal living for another three days which would give them opportunity for rest. The whole cycle would last about a calendar month, and this was to continue throughout one entire year until the next Peace Festival. At the end of the year (9 September 1930), God promised to reveal the new church to the world. The words used of this occasion are significant. From being *odotoase asor* ("a church under a thicket") they would be *Nyame rebeda asor no edzi* ("God is going to declare the church to everyone"). God promised to make the church spread all over the world beginning in the Gold Coast, and they should warn all nations. The word used for "nation" was actually *oman*, which suggests that the aim was to establish a congregation in each *oman*. Today this promise remains a key element in the belief of the church, and explains why the church has expended so much time and effort in forming congregations in Europe and America.

¹³ This was near the end of the 1929 Peace Festival, which would have celebrated the fifth birthday of Mathapoly Moses on 24 August. The congregation would probably have included supporters from the surrounding area in addition to residents of Mazano.

Immediately following this promise, Prophet Jehu Appiah and his followers set out to preach to the people in the surrounding area. The sermons of the Prophet are said to have been mainly about the nearness of the Day of Judgement. The core element of his messages has been preserved in one frequently quoted prophecy:

A day is coming when the whole world will be greatly alarmed by these phenomena. On one sunset the whole atmosphere will turn red till midnight. This will be followed by a dew which will drizzle like the rain till six o'clock in the morning. Then a great flashing light will appear in the skies in the form of a circle, and this will last for twelve hours. Seven days after these signs, there will be a stormy and thunderous rain and earthquake which will last for three days, day and night. Then there will come a piercing cold which will kill many sinners-especially murderers, witches, thieves, robbers, sorcerers, drunkards, fornicators, litigants, idolaters and others. When the first three signs are observed, the Chief or the Ruler of every town or village should order all kinds of talismans, fetishes and occult shrines to be gathered at the outskirts of the town or village and be burnt. Then the whole town folks should gather at an open space and pray for forgiveness of sins and deliverance. There are no medicine or any precautions to this ravaging cold other than prayers to God.¹⁴

This segment of the prophet's preaching is a concise statement of a slightly fuller rendering given in the *History*. The importance of this version is that it has become standardised and is frequently published as a statement of the beliefs of the church. The text shows the same importance placed upon imminent judgement and the coming millennium as found in the teaching of Prophet Harris.¹⁵

Prophet Appiah told the people that when the great day comes they should flee to Mazano where they would be told what to do. For those living away from Mazano they should assemble themselves in the middle of the town in which they find themselves and pray fervently to God that they might be saved. The chief of the town was instructed to destroy all the "fetishes" and invite the whole town to gather and pray for forgiveness of sins. The fuller rendering of the message adds, "The chief should also explain to them that there is no medicine or cure for what is going to follow, therefore no one should think of warming themselves near a fire, drinking hot

¹⁴ A divine message of Prophet Jimisimiham Jehu-Appiah (Akaboha I) to all nations - 9th September 1930, as recorded in *The Musama Book of Rituals*, 1981, p. 27. The essence of the preaching is also given in Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 39.

¹⁵ David A. Shenk, *Prophet Harris, The Black Elijah of West Africa*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 224-235.

water, or taking any medicine. What everyone ought to do is to cry out to God to free them from His punishment.”¹⁶

The message appears to specifically relate to the new anti-witchcraft shrines. Debrunner suggests that there were three main crests in the waves of such shrines: before 1912, between 1924 and 1932, and in and after World War II.¹⁷ The first wave included those such as the *Aberewa* (“old woman”) mentioned in Chapter 3, and again in Chapter 4 concerning the residence of Hannah Barnes. The second wave is at the crisis period when cocoa prices were falling, and many were facing economic difficulties. A common shrine at this time was the Tigare cult, which was believed to originate from the Northern Territories. These shrines provided a quick and easy way by which a person could put themselves in the care of the deity. Usually a person would confess their sins, and then decapitate a fowl whose body would flap to the ground. If the body came to rest with the breast-upwards, the deity was assumed to have accepted the supplications. The person then “drank” the deity’s medicine to seal the pact.¹⁸

One may have expected an eager response to such an apocalyptic message, and many did join the new church. However, many Christians did not believe the message considering the members to be “false prophets”, which is a criticism that has continued until today. The author of the *History* says, “This accusation does not sadden us; rather it amuses us.”¹⁹ He answers the criticism by first stating that such criticism is just what Our Lord warned his disciples would happen to them, and in this way used the very persecution to reinforce the claim to be a true church.²⁰ Second, the writer provides a definition of “false prophets” as being “those who teach without example in the church: cheats, bullies, scoundrels, wicked people, witches, lovers of money, the proud and arrogant, the sexually immoral, murderers, and others like these of whom

¹⁶ *History*, p. 28.

¹⁷ Hans Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana*, (Accra: Waterville Pub., 1978), p. 107.

¹⁸ Margaret J. Field, *Search for Security* (London: Faber, 1960), p. 89.

¹⁹ *History*, p. 40.

²⁰ This method of using the criticism as evidence that the sect is the true Church is common to most new religious movements emerging from a Christian context, and they often use some of the same verses as used by the MDCC, e.g., Matt 5:11,12

the Scriptures speak in II Timothy 3:1-6.”²¹ The list of vices would be readily agreed by all people as being evil, and follows many similar lists found in the New Testament.

Some of the first places where the message is said to have been preached were: “Gomoa Anyanful, Edwumako, Enyan, Ekumfi, Breman, Abura, Assin, Akim Kotoku, Akim Abuakwa, Adansi, Agona, and Asante.” These *aman* are all Fante apart from Asante, which was added onto the list almost as if to show the widening scope of the evangelism.²² (Figure 2:2). Details are given of one journey that took them to Abura Edumfa, the home town of Prophet Appiah. The town is said to have received them with joy with about thirty-six people joining the Church, and the chief gave them permission to construct a building in which to meet. Similarly when they went to Edwumako Afransi, over fifty-three people are said to have responded including the chief himself.²³

Before 1930, the church had been located solely at Mazano, but then new congregations were formed in Afransi, Abura Edumfa and elsewhere in the region.

Throughout the journeys, those people who converted and joined the Jehunano Fellowship were also enrolled as members of the Musama Disco Christo Church as the Lord had prophesied. They were allowed to remain in their own towns and worship there, so that thereby branches of the church would be opened in all places.²⁴

Until this time the MDCC was a religious community living in Mazano, but now it was becoming a denomination with many local congregations. This expansion from Mazano required a new organisational pattern and new leaders, which was provided by the Ministerial Council in 1930.

Ministerial organisation

On Wednesday, 13 August 1930, the Akaboha invited all elders of the Musama Disco Christo Church to a conference in Mazano. It was at this conference that they instituted: a Leaders' Meeting; bands and societies' meeting; a choir; Sunday Schools; quarterly meetings, and an annual conference of priests. All such groups

²¹ *History*, p. 41.

²² The list does not suggest any ordered progress that would imply a missionary journey, but are random giving the geographical breadth of the evangelism.

²³ *History*, p. 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

and meetings started in the church from that date.²⁵

At this time the MDCC instituted much of the familiar organisations of the Methodist Church with its Sunday Schools, choirs, societies and conferences. It is significant to note that the new church deliberately adopted many patterns characteristic of the Methodist Church, while claiming to be authentically African. The claim for authenticity is based on the fact that the church was not an extension of one from overseas, but has arisen through God's revelation to an African. This is the main argument of the *History*, which says, "Is it not time for the African to see for himself as a person? Is it not time for there to come an African leader? The time has come for us to know that Jerusalem is here..... As we have shown from the beginning of this book this church did not come from overseas. And yet all doubters must believe that God, to whom all belongs, has the power to found a church through an African. Therefore we are here declaring it that the Musama Disco Christo Church started here in Africa."²⁶ The claim is that God had formed a church through an African, and not that He has founded an African "contextualized" Church. The leaders were therefore quite willing to use the structures of the Methodist Church, but undoubtedly they adapted them to their particular needs.

On Saturday, 16 January 1932, members of the MDCC were taking an evangelistic meeting at Breman Essiam. Following the meetings, the leaders of the Church went to Nkwantanum enjoying the hospitality of the *Omanhene* Nana Odum Asuantsi III. The priests and prophets in the church at that time were said to be as follows:

	Priests		Prophets
Senior	Sululahu Bresi-Andoh	Senior	Machaliliel Michael Ankumah
	Junamoe Ehuntem Botwe Yumatu Ekuba Dadzie Joseph Aminidi Myles		Boasnanu Okuta Acquah Jimiru Fuah
Junior	Adamahu Okantan Ankeah	Prophetess	Kupabinaia Eshun ²⁷

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

²⁷ The *History* says that she was appointed to replace sister Kapadosia, who had been called to eternal rest on August 23, 1927.

This first ministerial council considered the practical issues of how to hold future conferences and how to appoint workers for the new branches.

The Chief of Edwumako Afransi had offered the Church land on which to have a settlement in August 1930. The members had built a small camp on the land, and Prophet Jehu Appiah enjoyed going to Afransi as a place to rest and pray. It became known as *Shidmok* meaning "the king's privacy". This was one of the first areas in which a congregation of the new Church was established. It was while the Akaboha was at Afransi that the Holy Spirit is said to have told him that it was time to establish a new administrative organisation for the Church. He therefore called all the elders to come for a conference on 27 October 1932. It was at this time that two more junior pastors were appointed through the laying on of hands of the Akaboha and Akatitibi. These were Jaimikatoe Esson Kwansa and Jibimipa Thompson both who came from Apam.

An additional organisational tier was formed when Prophet Appiah instructed the leaders of each congregation to select two representatives for a new association to be called the "First Committee". Similarly, they should also select three lay people from each congregation to form the "Second Committee". This committee was to meet annually with the priests and prophets to plan the future development of the church at a convocation to be called *Zimadey*, which is a heavenly name meaning "First Pastoral Council". Neither the Akaboha nor the Akatitibi would attend the *Zimadey* to allow the company freedom to discuss any issues. However, any recommendations from the *Zimadey* were later brought to the Synod of the Church, known as the *I'Odomey*, or the "Second Pastoral Council". The *I'Odomey* Conference consisted of the elders of the Jehunano Fellowship, currently eight representatives, all priests, prophets and healers, all members of the First and Second Committees, and may also include certain special delegates from various congregations. It is surprising that such a complex structure was set up when the church probably consisted of only a dozen congregations and a few hundred persons.

Pastors, prophets and healers were appointed to lead each of the new congregations. The role of the pastor was comparable to that found within the Methodist Church, but the role of prophet was a new institution more akin to the role of charismatic

personalities such as Prophet Harris. A third class of "church workers" was that of "healer", but as will be shown later this role merged into that of prophet, and the elders became more important. In comparison, the Ossamadils Church still has the three classes of Church workers: priest, prophets and healers.

The main activity of the pastor within the new church was to give pastoral care to the members of the congregation, and especially lead them in worship. Besides managing the local church's daily affairs the pastor would administer baptism and the sacraments.

The term *osofo* was the title for the officiating priest at a shrine, and was adopted by the Methodist Church because unlike the terms *obosomfo* and *akomfo* it did not imply possession by the *obosom*.²⁸ In Sunday worship, the pastor would often give a sermon based upon some Bible text, but the major part of the service is given to singing and praying. Most pastors are now literate, but this has not always been the case. Many early leaders were illiterate, and learned passages from the Bible such that they would quote them frequently in their sermons that were delivered with enthusiasm and vigour.

One reason for the lack of emphasis upon the Bible was that the entire Fante Bible was not printed until January 1949, although the New Testament was completed as early as 1895.

Ordination of pastors was conferred personally by Prophet Appiah who would lay hands upon the individual and pray for God's blessing to come upon them. Later Prophet Jehu Appiah formed the recognised pastors and prophets into an organisation called the *Fimusifim* - another revealed name. The *Fimusifim* met together twice a year, in May and October, for a week of prayer and fasting and some Bible teaching. This gathering has therefore become known as the Workers' Refresher Course. Over the years the administrative organisation has become increasingly hierarchical, and every pastor and prophet has a place within the structure. The apex of the organisation is the General Head Prophet, the Akaboha. The grades have become more elaborate; Baëta speaks of three grades in 1962, Opoku lists 11, in 1990 I was informed of 20 grades.²⁹

²⁸ McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*, p. 290.

²⁹ Kofi A. Opoku, "Changes within Christianity: the case of the Musama Disco Christo Church", in O. U. Kalu (ed.), *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 315.

Writing in the 1950s, Baëta described the ministry of a prophet in the MDCC in the following way:

They are the specialists in such activities (called 'spiritual') as speaking in 'tongues', invoking 'spirits', detecting witches and other evil persons, exorcising devils, having and interpreting dreams and visions, predicting the future, foreseeing future misfortunes and prescribing measures to avert them and, more especially, discerning the 'spiritual' causes of illness.³⁰

Prophets (*nkonhyefo*) of the MDCC function mainly as spiritual healers in close touch with the spirit world through the practice of prayer, fasting and experience of visions. *Nkom* according to Christaller is an "oracle, communication, revelation, or message delivered by God or a fetish to a prophet or a fetish-man."³¹ *Hye* is the act of fixing, putting upon, or even compulsion. Thus, the word *nkonhye* implies a compelling communication from a deity in speech or behaviour. Like *akomfo* the term *nkonhyefo* implies possession, but within the MDCC the prophets are considered as possessed by the Spirit of God. Similar to the Fante traditional priests (*akomfo*) they minister to those afflicted with physical and spiritual ailments, alleviating their fears of witchcraft and other misfortunes. The *nkonhyefo* of the MDCC are therefore engaged in combat against evil spiritual forces, recognising their existence, but affirming clearly that Jesus Christ has won victory over them. This close contact with the spirit world allows them to function as spiritual healers.

John Ekem has made a theological study of the contemporary roles of pastors and prophets in the MDCC as they compare to the epistle of the Hebrews.³² His results agree with the observations of this current research in that the difference between the practical roles of priest and prophet are not distinct, and there are examples of pastors who also function as prophets. Both ministries are in their own respects committed to the task of representing the laity before God and of being channels of divine revelation. As with the pastor, ordination of prophets is in two stages. Those aspiring to be prophets are first ordained as Apostle Healers, and serve on probation before being

³⁰ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 46.

³¹ J. G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language* (Basel Mission Society, 1933), p. 247.

³² John D. K. Ekem, "Priesthood in Context: A Study of Akan traditional priesthood in dialogical relation to the priest-christology of the epistle of the Hebrews, and its implications for a relevant functional priesthood in selected churches among the Akan of Ghana" (Ph.D. thesis, Hamburg, 1994), pp. 112-121.

ordained as junior prophets. Would-be prophets must have their spirit authenticated by the Akaboha, and then they work in the Church for some years before they are ordained as Supervising Prophets. Today, prophets need not be literate as is the expectation for pastors, and most prophets depend upon their spiritual gifting rather than reading of the Bible.

The MDCC has more women in its full-time ministry than men, when the prophetic and pastoral ministries are taken as a whole. The Church leadership currently reckons the ratio of total Church workers to be three to two in favour of women.³³ The wide acceptance of women as Church workers would appear a logical extension to the tradition that the *akomfo* may be of either sex. However, it is when one examines the roles of pastors and prophets separately that the disparity is more obvious. There are considerably more male pastors than female, and consequently a much greater number of prophetesses than prophets. In addition, the higher administrative ranks are dominated by men, apart from the role of Queen-mother (Akatitibi).

Why did the Church come to develop such a complex organisational structure at a time when it had a membership of only a few hundred?³⁴ In addition to the structure just described there already existed two voluntary associations: the Nahatim Band and the Seenim Band. Hastings argues that such complex structures create more room for participation at all levels:

But it should not be lightly concluded that this African tendency towards the refinement of hierarchy relating largely to ritual and vestment is necessarily counter-democratic; on the contrary, it could well be argued that the ecclesia can best be realised across the multiplication of roles even for fairly insignificant people whereby all are brought into the organic processes of the Church, whereas an apparently democratic emanation of the church structure in fact leaves the church in the grips of a faceless bureaucracy. Hierarchy in an African Church can be fully compatible with much discussion in council."³⁵

The hierarchical structure implemented by the MDCC illustrates the centralised nature of the emerging denomination. Priests, prophets and healers were all appointed by the Akaboha usually after the candidates had spent a period in Mazano, and "posted" to an emerging congregation. Within their local congregations the local church leaders were

³³ Ekem, "Priesthood in Context", p. 118, gives the same ratio from the same source.

³⁴ The earliest record of membership is given for 1939 with a figure of only 753.

³⁵ Adrian Hastings, *African Christianity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1976), pp. 28-9.

given considerable freedom, probably following the circuit system of the Methodist Church. Church workers were not allowed to work, and had to depend on free-will offerings from supporters. This policy would have encouraged commitment and dedication from the church workers, which was evidently the case in the early years of the church. The role of the Akaboha and the holy town of Mazano provided the focus and centre of identity for the members of the church not found within the Methodist church. All members were encouraged to come to Mazano for the Peace Festival, which was held around the 24 August, in addition to their congregational meetings held in their own towns every Sunday. The parallel with the traditional *Odwira* that is held during the second rains (August-October) would have been evident to most participants. The Peace Festival came to fill a similar social function as the *Odwira* festival, which McCaskie said “came to serve as an annual forum for the mandatory affirmation and renewal of personal allegiance by subjugated or otherwise constituent office holders.”³⁶

The new church therefore had two aspects to its structure. On the one hand, the administration was similar to the traditional *oman*, with a central *oman* to which smaller towns showed allegiance. Likewise, the Akaboha was the central figure like that of an *omanhene* with a supporting queen-mother. On the other hand, the MDCC retained many Methodist practises such as infant baptism, sacraments, and church circuits.

The Bensu crisis and persecutions

The period was not without its difficulties. In November 1932, a Prophet also named Appiah, but from the town of Bensu, led his followers to rebel against the police in Agona Swedru and some people were killed. *West Africa* magazine records the event:

A serious clash occurred recently in Agona Swedru between the police and the followers of “Prophet” Appiah, who established the “Goliath Church” in the neighbourhood. It appears that Appiah’s religious mania led to an obsession that the world was coming to an end in December, and that he was responsible for the freeing of prisoners at Accra.

³⁶ McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*, p. 146.

Appiah and his men, who were armed with spears, became violent when they were stopped by the Assistant District Commissioner and twenty policemen. Supt. Okko, who was protecting the Assistant Commissioner, was stabbed in the throat, and died, saluting as he fell. The police then took the offensive and soon put Appiah's followers to flight, killing several and capturing the "Prophet".³⁷

This Prophet Appiah later died of his injuries in prison. However, the similarity of name caused the police to come to Mazano and arrest Prophet Jehu Appiah and the elders and took them to Agona Swedru Police Station. After thorough investigation they realised that the other Appiah was not part of the MDCC, so the Commissioner released them and they returned home.³⁸

During this period many people used the opportunity to attack the MDCC, which was growing in influence. Members of the church at Edumfa were rounded up and taken to the Abura Paramount Chief. When this was reported in Mazano three elders together with Prophet Jehu Appiah went to Cape Coast. When they reached the city they twice sent couriers to hand a protest to Nana Otu III who was at Abura Abakrampa, to ask the grounds for the arrest and detention of the church members, since they had no connection with the Bensu troubles. The *Omanhene* did not reply to either of the two letters, so a lawyer was engaged who took the matter to the High Court at Cape Coast.³⁹ The *History* records: "There Prophet J. Jehu Appiah swore to an affidavit to the effect that the members of the church at Abura Edumfa had no part in the clash between the Bensu group and the police at Agona Swedru, and that the Musama Disco Christo Church was different from that group. The judge, St John Yates, caused the members of the Edumfa Church to appear before him at the castle. The judge investigated and found no fault with them and freed them to go and worship unhindered."⁴⁰

Five days before the conclusion of the trial, on Tuesday 27 December 1932, another group of members including Prophet Appiah's father Mr Kwah Odoom (*Amukwaafo*) and three other church-workers, who had also been imprisoned by the government at Cape Coast were also released. After their release Prophet J. Jehu Appiah, his father,

³⁷ *West Africa*, 5 January 1933, p. 147.

³⁸ *History*, 18, p. 33

³⁹ The lawyer was Mr. W. Essuman Gwira Sekyi.

⁴⁰ *History*, 18, p. 33.

and the elders who were with him went to Abura Edumfa and began to rebuild the church.

The problem was only finally resolved by a petition to the government through the Commissioner of the Central Province, Mr. Shenton Thomas, in Accra. On January, 17, 1934, he sent the following reply through the District Commissioner, G.P.H. Bewes, who was stationed at Winneba as follows:⁴¹

District Commissioner's Office
Winneba
17th January 1934.

Ref. No. 61/W.D. 219/33

Sir,

Musama Disco Christo Church or
The Army of the Cross of Christ:

With reference to your letter dated the 28th November 1933, addressed to the Honourable Commissioner Central Province, in connection with the above named subject, I am directed by him to inform you that so long as your Mission makes earnest endeavour to promote the welfare of its members, you need not expect any opposition from the Government,

I have the honour to be Sir,
Your obedient servant,
(SGD) G.P.H. Bewes.
District Commissioner,

The outcome of the prosecution was that the government had not only recognised the existence of the church, but accepted its legal position as a viable denomination. For the MDCC the document showed that although they had been misunderstood and had faced persecution, they were finally exonerated and approved by the government. The letter is actually reproduced within the *History*, and it is followed by the comment: "At the Conference in 1934, the elders, now satisfied that the government had recognised the Church in the Gold Coast, began to make regulations governing the operations of the Church."⁴² The last event recorded within the *History* was a reference to the Conference in 1935 which would suggest that the text was actually completed

⁴¹ G. P. H. Bewes, Winneba, Letter 61/W.D. 219/33.

⁴² *History*, p. 35.

sometime soon after 1935 to clarify the history and teachings of the MDCC, although it was not actually printed until 1943.

At the 1935 conference the *History* tells that “three more pastors were posted: Rev. J. E. Eshun was posted to Abura Edumfa; Rev. J. A. Quainoo was posted to Agona Swedru and Rev. K. A. Imbeah was posted to Winneba. At that time Rev. Y. A. Dadzie was in charge of the church at Mazano. Since ministers were posted to man the churches in these various places, up to now, no more needs to be said about the MDCC because it has now become a church for all nations. At the present time the states that have embraced the MDCC are: Gomoa, Abura, Edwumaku, Breman, Aguna, Anyan, Ekumfi, Nkusukum, Numabu, Oguaa, Odina, Ahanta, Denkyire, Suhum, Numabu, Assin, Sehwi, Asuansti, Akim, Akuapim and Awutu.”⁴³ All these are Fante *oman* and show the growing attraction of the MDCC during the 1930s and early 1940s.

* * * * *

Why did the MDCC appeal to people in contrast to the existing Methodist Church? One reason must have been the opportunities for participation in the life and worship of the church. Even as late as 1944, the Methodist Synod reported on the problems of two types of education within the country. Vernacular education went on in every home, while only a few were fortunate enough to have education in English. Bartels in his history of the Methodist Church in Ghana describes the situation as follows:

The result of the two-fold education was a division which went through every aspect of the life of the people. The division was in the Church too, particularly in the big towns. Behind and around, certainly nearest the preacher, was the robed “English” choir which led the singing of hymns and responses in English and was busily occupied during the whole service. Separated from the preacher by the congregation, the singing band silently looked on until the offertory when they sang in the vernacular a hymn or an anthem which they had laboriously committed to memory in the previous week. The literates were found in the transepts of the church, the illiterates in the naves, silent spectators for the best part of the service except on the first Sunday of the month when the whole service would be in the vernacular, which they could not read.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁴ Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, p. 214.

In contrast, the MDCC provided the opportunity for all to participate through the use of Fante songs using familiar local instruments, dance and ritual. The church structure also allowed illiterates and non-English speakers to lead congregations.

A second reason was that the MDCC provided a social identity that was familiar and welcoming to illiterates and those excluded by the Methodist Church. The church structure met many of the practical problems faced by those trying to live as Christians within the African context. Through the difficulties the community faced with both Methodists and non-Christians they were only able to express their new life-style by establishing their own village. The community succeeded in achieving this identity by adopting the traditional political Fante structure of the *oman*, which it modified to form the basis of its church structure. This could be compared with the manner in which the early Roman church adopted and adapted the political model of the Roman Empire, and established the Pope as head of the Church. A significant element in the adoption of this *oman* model by the MDCC was the prophecies that affirmed Hannah Barnes as the Queen-mother. Once this role was recognised by the community other innovations of the *oman* could easily follow.

The third reason for the appeal of the MDCC was the quest for an immanent religious experience of God. This was known occasionally during the revivals within the Methodist community especially in 1875-6, but these were not repeated until the coming of Prophet Harris. The initial vision of Prophet Appiah is a key to understanding the felt-needs of the adherents. The angel is holding the Bible open at Acts 10, which tells the story of the Spirit of God coming directly upon a Gentile even before the Apostle Peter had finished his message. To Appiah this was a Biblical example of an immediate empowering by the Holy Spirit without the need for literacy, education or accepting the missionaries' code of conduct. Appiah experienced a personal revival following which he both spoke in tongues and prophesied as did many of his followers.

This led to the final reason which was the availability of spiritual power that Africans wanted, but the historic churches tended not to give them. The *History* states: "Many people, because of unbelief, have created the impression that God has appointed certain special people to whom He imparts His Holy Spirit. It is not like that. The

Holy Spirit is a promise of the Lord to all people.”⁴⁵ The MDCC was a church founded by an African and now recognised by the Colonial government. What was more significant during these early years was that Prophet Appiah had rediscovered the empowering of God, which he believed was an inherent part of Biblical teaching that had been lost to many in the historic churches. The following chapter will examine more fully the nature of the power of the Spirit, and its manifestations within the life of the early Church.

⁴⁵ *History*, p. 44.

Chapter 6

Church of the Spirit (1929-48)

This is the sign that comes on a person when the Spirit of God comes: a cold chill, yawning, laughing, crying, trembling, feeling of awe, screaming, rejoicing, happy feelings. Some people cannot stand on their feet when the Spirit comes upon them, and they fall down. Some speak in tongues. Some prophesy. Some perform miracles. There are many other signs.¹

In the study of any religious community it is easy to consider the members merely as a social organisation, and ignore what they consider the most important feature, which is their religious commitment. The embryo church of Prophet Appiah professed an experience that distinguished them from other Christians, and which gave them the empowering of God that manifest itself in tangible ways. Any study of such experiences must consider the interplay between symbolic and physical processes, and this is the main subject of this chapter.

In an attempt to understand the nature of the experience, I want to consider both that which was claimed by the members of the church and the criticisms made by other denominations. For many Methodists Prophet Appiah and his followers were “false prophets” as foretold in the Bible, and were severely criticised as heretics. The members of the MDCC, on the other hand, saw themselves as in a continuous line of succession with those Biblical characters who had experienced the Holy Spirit. As was shown earlier, the initial vision of Prophet Appiah was of an angel who approached him with a copy of the Bible open at the Book of Acts, Chapter 10 - a passage often known in Bible Commentaries as “The Gentile Pentecost”. To understand the experiential nature of this teaching, one must therefore look towards, firstly, Appiah’s particular understanding of the Bible and, secondly, the Fante perspective of the supernatural world.

¹ *History*, p. 43.

Invoking the Spirit (*sunsum fre*)

Prophet Appiah's first experience was in August 1919 when the Spirit of the Lord fell on him and he began to speak in tongues.² The expression, "when he came to himself" is used in the *History* and gives the impression that he experienced some form of trance, which would be in agreement with the general understanding of the church today. For Appiah it was this experience that changed his character and future ministry, but it was also that about which he was most criticised. The author of the *History* comments: "the main reason for the sceptics objecting to the Musama Disco Christo Church is the experience by its members of the baptism of the Holy Spirit." The term used for this experience was *sunsum fre*, which literally meant "spirit invocation" or "spirit calling". Today, educated pastors would prefer to translate the expression as "inviting the Holy Spirit". The main criticism of the experience was the similarity between *sunsum fre* and that experienced by the *akomfo*. The *okomfo* was considered to be mounted by the *obosom* that he served, and the spirit then communicated using him as its mouthpiece.³ The writer of the *History* answered this criticism by stating that they are concerned with two distinct spiritual realms: that of God and that of the devil.

There are two kinds of spirit in the world, the Spirit of God, and the spirit of the devil. Both these spirits fall on people. The spirit of the devil operates through idols, trees, creeping plants, rocks, and rivers, in possessing people. Any person who is possessed of these spirits is called *akomfo*. What they do when they are in a state of possession is that they drink alcohol and eat raw eggs, teach people about charms and do many filthy things to show that what has come upon them is the spirit of the devil. Possession is a term used only of spirits. We can therefore say of a person, they are possessed of a spirit; they are possessed of a charm; they are possessed of a ghost; they are possessed of a fetish; they are possessed of a god. Any one who is possessed has a sign that they are known by. When one is possessed of the devil's spirit, some of the many signs by which they can be recognised are physical trembling or shaking; some make gurgling noises in the throat. Some scream and shout. Some are thrown down by the spirit, and so on. If we know about all of these, how can we fail to see the way in which the Spirit of God makes Himself manifest?

The Spirit of God also comes upon people. But there is a huge difference between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the devil. The descent of the Holy Spirit comes through faith, especially, upon one who draws near to God through fasting and

² *History*, p. 10

³ T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 290.

earnest prayer. When the Spirit of God comes upon anyone, He does a special sign which shows that He is of God. When the Holy Spirit is descending, a bright light shines around the person. Then the person begins to call aloud the name of Christ Jesus. This is the sign that comes upon the one upon whom the Spirit of God comes: a cold chill, yawning, laughing, crying, trembling, feeling of awe, screaming, rejoicing, happy feelings. Some people cannot stand on their feet when the Spirit comes upon them, and they fall down. Some speak in tongues. Some prophesy. Some perform miracles. There are many other signs.⁴

The writer describes the activities of the *akomfo* as “filthy” while the work of God’s Spirit is “holy”, and the believers are fearful of doing evil. The fruit of God’s Spirit is righteousness: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, charity, faith, humility and forbearance. This dichotomy is developed with the association of many Fante terms for possession phenomena with the category of “spirit of the devil”, which is contrasted with that of “Spirit of God” (*sunsum kronkron*). For example:

Yeka de sunsum esi nu du.

A spirit has come upon them.

Edur esi nu du.

A medicine (charm) has come upon them.

Osaman esi nu du.

Ghost (ancestral spirit of the dead) has come upon them.

Obusum esi nu du.

Fetish (gods, spirits) has come upon them.

Nyia adzi esi nu du.

“God” has come upon them.

The MDCC used the same concept of the “devil” to define the boundary between Christianity and “heathendom”, but they criticised the Methodists for failing to have the empowering of God to deal with these evil forces. The Methodist Church gave the impression that God’s anointing with the Holy Spirit was for a select few. Appiah in contrast argues that the Holy Spirit is for all Christians and the spiritual gifts are given to all according to the will of God through faith, and are for a spiritual ministry in their daily experience. This experience is equated to those described in the New Testament, and often reinforced with the Bible quotation: “For the promise is for you and your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him.”⁵

⁴ *History*, pp. 42-3.

⁵ Acts 2:39.

Concerning the specific criticism that some people fall down under the spirit's anointing, the writer refers to similar accounts in the Bible and especially King Saul, and Paul on the road to Damascus.⁶ He also argued that if this can happen when a person is possessed by the "devil's spirit" surely it would be expected when the Spirit of God came upon a person. Although there is no reference in the *History*, this falling in the spirit was recorded by Freeman in 1873 as noted in Chapter 2.

The old Senior Prophet Jimiru Fuah said that he considered *sunsum fire* to be one of the special qualities of the church from its foundation.⁷ He then went on to recount how the initial group had been given *nkwa nsu* ("water of life") first in Gomoa Ogwan.

This is how it happened: at prayer one day, the Holy Spirit lighted on Prophetess Nathalomoa. She became very wild and frantic, going here and there. Then she went round everyone and kissed them on the lips, and they could taste this sweet tasting water from her mouth. It was explained as the *nkwa nsu*. When we were evicted and came to Onyaawonsu, and later to Fomena⁸, the Akaboha told the Akatitibi, "We believe this water which comes through you, but in future people will join us who may be more discerning and inquisitive and who will not believe or accept it the way it comes. Can't you ask God to take it from you and give it openly?" When they inquired of the Lord, he directed them to fast for seven days.

I did it for three days. I kept the keys to the Holy Place in those days⁹. I was asked to go on the evening of my fast to the Holy Place and clean the place and tidy it up. God would then show them what to do. I told them I had also fasted for three days to support them but the Akaboha collected the keys from me. We had placed a basin there behind the curtain. The following day I was ordered to get dressed and go and see if our prayer had been answered. I stood behind the curtain and saw that it was wet. I went and told the Akatitibi that the Lord had granted our prayer. The *nkwa nsu* had come into the basin. She said I was permitted to go inside. I went inside and saw that the basin was full. This is how God then gave the *nkwa nsu* to us.

Surprisingly the story does not appear to be widely known by the ordinary members, and no mention is made of it within the *History*. For the old prophet, the story associated the experience of the *sunsum fire* with the physical nature of the water. Hannah Barnes was perceived in this way to be passing on the blessing of the Spirit. Today's leaders consider the event unique, and coming directly from God. However,

⁶ I Samuel 19:23,24 and Acts 9:3-9.

⁷ Personal comments to author August 1992.

⁸ The village of Old Mazano was on the outskirts of Gomoa Fomena.

⁹ This was the original Holy Place constructed in Old Mazano, and the description given by the old prophet reveals that it had many features similar to those found in the temple later constructed in New Mazano.

there are parallels within Akan society with a ritual known as *ohyira no ano* or “blessing the mouth” (with water). This was a cleansing ritual usually performed on the observance day of the person’s *ntoro*, and it consisted of the ejection of water from the mouth in a spray often signifying the invoking of a blessing.¹⁰

Prophecy

For the MDCC two spiritual gifts were of particular importance in the early years of the church: prophecy and healing. By prophecy was meant the proclamation of some special revelation given directly by God through the Holy Spirit. Hannah Barnes was especially prone to entering into a trance and receiving quite detailed messages, which she told her husband and he would make the pronouncements. According to the old members only a few of her visions have been remembered, and it is difficult to place these in any chronological order.¹¹ One of her early visions was when she fell into a trance and saw seven angels coming to take her to heaven where she was crowned a queen-mother. She was named Nathalomoa, which was said to be the heavenly word for “queen-mother” (*ohenemaa*), and her task was to aid Appiah in his spiritual work.

According to Jimiru Fuah, it was only the spirit (*sunsum*) of Nathalomoa that was taken to heaven. In other words, she had entered a trace associated with drumming, music, and other sensory stimuli. However, on one occasion, Jimiru Fuah said that she told the people that God was going to take her bodily from them, and this caused much excitement as well as arousing the people’s curiosity as to how this would happen. It was Easter 1922, and as they started to pray, the Holy Spirit came upon Nathalomoa. She cried out that the angels were coming to take her away:

“When she said that the angels were coming two people were made to hold her arms at the elbow and at the wrist, another two did the other arm. Then two people grabbed hold of her knees and another two her ankles, and another person embraced her from the back, to see that she would not be taken away. Then she cried out to them to hold firm because the angels were coming. She said, “The angels are coming, they are coming! The angels are coming! The angels are coming, they are coming!” No one saw the angels, but when they did arrive she disappeared from among them. No one saw how. Everyone was left standing.”¹²

¹⁰ McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*, p. 287.

¹¹ Rev. Jeri Jehu-Appiah, grandson of Hannah Barnes, personal conversation 20 August 1992.

¹² Prophet Jimiru Fuah, August 1992.

This is said to have occurred on a Saturday night, and the people continued in prayer until four in the morning when the meeting had to end because there was to be a Sunday morning worship service a little later. Appiah told everyone present not to mention what had happened to anyone, and that they should all come back to the church later. Appiah preached as normally at the Sunday morning service, and then he asked the people to pray. The Holy Spirit was then said to have come upon him, and he led the whole congregation out of the church. They circled the building seven times singing, before returning into the building. When they entered they saw Nathalomoa was lying at the front of the altar.¹³ Prophet Appiah immediately lifted her up, and she began to tell the congregation some of the many things that the angels had shown her in heaven. She said that heaven had an atmosphere of holiness about the whole place. The houses were made of glass and it was easy to see the interiors of the houses even from a great distance. All the houses were surrounded by lovely smelling flowers. The angels had conducted her around the important places in heaven. At the end of the sight-seeing a great procession of angels passed them and she saw a man was being carried shoulder high. The angels asked her if she knew the man, but she did not recognise him. They said that this man would become king over the new church that was being established, and if the members received him whole-heartedly they would be free from all ills and lack nothing. He would be born on earth through the prophet Appiah and herself. It may have been at the same time, or in another vision close to this one, that Hannah had a vision of a child. First she saw a cave in a rock, and inside there was a baby lying on a stone manger. She saw that the baby's head was bald, and heard a voice saying that the baby was going to lead the church that she and her husband would found.

These examples illustrate the character of prophecy, but do not give a clear understanding of the phenomena of that time. Additional information can be obtained from the experiences of contemporary prophets and prophetesses who claim similar, if less notable experiences. A prophetess who had been the wife of Akaboha II drew a distinction between two forms of spiritual experience. On the one hand, any person may come under the influence of the Spirit when worshipping God during a service

¹³ This account is based on the story told by Prophet Jimiru Fuaah which differs in details from that recounted by Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p 34.

when the music is playing and they are singing and dancing to the Lord. The person feels the Spirit “fall upon them” (*sunsum fre*), and the person then dances and jumps as the Spirit moves them. With eyes closed they shudder violently, and shout out, or even fall to the ground in a faint:

As the music is playing and you are worshipping God, the Spirit comes upon you. Soon you find yourself doing actions involuntarily. The person must be willing to give themselves over to the will and direction of the Spirit. If the person starts to think too much about what they are actually doing the Spirit will leave them.¹⁴

The Senior Prophet noted the change in behaviour of Nathalomoa. “She was calm and very soft, respectful and respectable, but when she was spiritually revived she became very bold and active.”¹⁵

In contrast, the prophetess spoke of a meditative state when a person is quietly praying, as was the case when Prophet Appiah received his call. During the trance the *sunsum* is said to leave the body, so is able to see the vision. Akaboha II was said to have said to Prophetess Comfort, “when you enter a trance your spirit leaves your body. While you are in such a trance no-one should enter the room, and there should be no sudden noise. If a person is suddenly disturbed from a trance they may become sick with something like a bad headache, or even worse. This is because the spirit rushes back to the body.”¹⁶ Today, trance tends to be perceived as the prerogative of the prophet who meditates in quietness, while any member of the church may know *sunsum fre* during a service when they are worshipping God.

Systems for healing (*ntormuadze*)

Prophet Appiah was interested in divine healing from the time of Prophet Harris’ visit to the Gold Coast, but this was re-enforced in May 1925 when during a seven day fast he asked God as to the future of the Faith Society. God is said to have told him that the community should take divine healing seriously.

Mma obiara nkwatsir yarsa kronkron mfa edur nsa yar.

No one should sidestep divine healing and heal.¹⁷

¹⁴ Prophetess Comfort, interview 3 July 1991.

¹⁵ Jimiru Fualh, interview August 1992.

¹⁶ Prophetess Comfort, interview 3 July 1991.

¹⁷ Jehu-Appiah, Suma Kupa. *Our Practice as Divine Healers* (Mozano: MDCC, 1992), p. 6.

After his anointing Appiah began to pray for people to be healed, but even in this early period he faced opposition. Nyankson, a Christian worker in the Methodist Church, not to be confused with the Samuel Nyankson, wanted to take Prophet Appiah to court for the use of unorthodox methods of healing, following cases when Appiah's patients had subsequently died.¹⁸ Even so, the practice of healing was, and still remains one of the main reasons that people join the church.

Not only did Appiah advocate divine healing, but he forbade the use of *edur*. In Fante, this word has a variety of meanings including charms, herbal medicines and Western medicine. Appiah appeared to have rejected herbal remedies because the herbalists (*ninsifo*) were believed to be associated with the shrines of the *abosom*. Similarly people were advised not to consult traditional priests (*akomfo*), and diviners (*kramofo*). Most of the early believers took this command to include all forms of medication including Western medicine. The reason given was not any association of the traditional healing methods with evil spirits, but with the example of Jesus Christ who did not himself use medicines. When Christ sent out his disciples he told them "to heal the sick" (Mark 16:15-18), but he did not send them with medicines. Appiah argues that "if God intended us to heal by means of medicines, who would He have made herbalists?..... Would it be that the idol-worshippers would be the ones to teach about medicines as happens today?"¹⁹ The writer continues as follows:

Truly, we all know that it is God who created trees, climbing plants, and everything in the world, but it was not for healing that he created them. We say that as we are inspired by the Holy Spirit. When the Apostles walked with the Lord, a sick person was brought to them to heal, and when the Apostles were not able to heal him, He rebuked them. And the Lord commanded the evil spirit and it left the boy, and immediately he was healed. Because of the astounding nature of this event, when they were by themselves, the Apostles asked him the reason why they could not heal the body. Jesus replied to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there', and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting." Read Matthew 17:14-21, and you will gradually come to understand.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁹ *History*, pp. 46-47.

In his condemnation of traditional medicines Appiah went further than had Prophet Harris, who told his converts to pray while gathering, preparing and administering *edur*.²⁰ Appiah believed that prayer made in faith was sufficient to heal, and condemned those who returned to the herbalists for treatment as being “still in doubt”.²¹ Even today some of the older members take no medication, and restrict themselves to prayer for healing.

To help the people to pray, Prophet Appiah taught a number of prayer rituals, called in Fante *ntormuadze*. Suma Kupa Jehu-Appiah writes, “systems or *ntormuadze* are prayer performances for some spiritual result or help; a rite that has a goal it needs to achieve. The goal may be to assuage a difficult or bad omen; and it is pleasing to the Lord.”²² A system may be performed for a variety of reasons beyond that of healing the sick, such as asking God’s blessing on a business venture, or to avert accidents. As will be shown in Chapter 10 systems are today performed for many reasons, and they continue to develop in the nature of their ritual performance. It is difficult to know which were the first systems taught by Prophet Appiah, but the actual form of the ritual is said to come from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Although such systems have an element of uniqueness, nearly all involve prayer, fasting and bathing with blessed water. One early system that is still highly recommended is as follows:

Get a spotless white skin of a sheep and on the smooth side write the following names: SARUTIEL, MAHANIEL, MASSANIEL, HAYENSU and your HEAVENLY (OR ORDINARY) NAME. Wear a white gown without any underwear and sit on the skin, facing the East with 3 candles in front, 2 at the back and 1 on either side. Hold a small wooden cross while sitting on the skin and say your prayers (requests). This system must be done on Friday night from 12 midnight to 3.00 am. Note: Perform this system very often for fruitful results.²³

The example illustrates the conscious manipulation of symbols within a dramatic healing ritual similar to those advocated by traditional healers. Little specific detail is available for these early systems, but three notable features are common to most systems: the formation of sacred space, the use of special words, and the use of various materials usually of significant colours.

²⁰ David A. Shank, *Prophet Harris, The “Black Elijah” of West Africa* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 180.

²¹ *History*, p. 48.

²² Jehu-Appiah, *Our Practice as Divine Healers*, p 16.

²³ *Programme of the 1989 Peace Festival Celebration* (Mozano: MDCC, 1989).

Concerning space, a system could be performed either in the open or secret, alone or with others. Frequently, the systems were performed at night giving them an esoteric quality, and this has led to some criticism of the church from those outside the movement. Shrines or buildings are an important feature of the systems by providing a "holy ground" in which to pray. Special words were also a common part of a "special system". These were often derived from a Bible passage, or some of the "heavenly words" that had been revealed to the church leaders. Usually they consisted of a simple phrase, which is repeated again and again.

Several special objects are commonly used with the systems: sheepskin, cross, clothing, and candles. Shank has shown that these items were also commonly used by Prophet Harris, and there appears to be many areas of similarity. The lamb, for example, is not only a common symbol within the Bible, but the Akan traditionally offered a white sheep for deliverance from epidemics. Prophet Harris often carried a staff in the form of a cross, which was regarded as a symbol of power and self-surrender. In the *History* of the MDCC, the cross became an important symbol of the church, and one of the commands given at the seven-day meeting in May 1925 was "let everybody wear a cross around their neck".²⁴ A large white cross with the letters M - D - C - C on each limb became an important symbol of the church throughout the region.

White clothing was a particular characteristic of Prophet Harris, who claimed that it was prescribed to him in a trance in 1910. Shank argues that the change of dress "was a rejection of the Western model, which, up to that time, had been so important to Harris, striving to become a member of the Episcopalian elite."²⁵ The loose dress and turban he wore were Muslim in form, but the significance was that it proclaimed him as a prophet who dressed like Moses. For Harris, it was the white which was important, because it was the colour of heaven and the world to come. This was to be copied by many West African prophets who wished to make the same statement of being a prophet of God. Within the MDCC coloured robes were gradually introduced for some of the church workers. Although the Nahatim healers continue to wear white,

²⁴ *History*, p. 21.

²⁵ Shank, *Prophet Harris*, p. 191.

the Seenim band wear red probably illustrating their role as “warriors”, as will be described in more detail in Chapter 9.

The Akan colour classification consisted of three primary colours: white (*fufu*), red (*koko*) and black (*tuntum*). White was held to be auspicious, and linked with spiritual purity, victory and joy. *Koko* embraced that part of the spectrum ranging from red through purple and orange to violet and pink. Symbolically red was ambiguous and associated with blood (*mogya*) in both life and death. When an Akan put on a red cloth and smeared himself with red ochre, it denoted angry defiance.²⁶ It was therefore worn at both funerals and in war. *Tuntum* included that part of the spectrum from black to blue and included dark browns. It had the connotation of death and loss. The colour symbolism within the MDCC is similar to that found in the Twelve Apostles Church and described by Breidenbach.²⁷ This is particularly illustrated at the time of the healing rite during the Peace Festival, when the central white cross is completely wrapped in red cloth.

Another symbol of Harris was fire, that was often associated with the repentance in his preaching. The Prophet Elijah called down fire as an act of judgement, but this does not appear to be the meaning with the use of candles in the MDCC. Candles are a source of light, and the church member is required to walk in the light of God. Stones also have a significance within the MDCC, and even today one can find a bowl of water in which is placed a smooth stone. A stone or rock was a common symbol of the powers of the wild, and was associated with healing.²⁸

The use of the Bible was significant in the ministry of Harris as with the MDCC. When Harris wanted to communicate power and authority he made use of his Bible. Shank states that “Harris came from a society where literacy was a comparatively new phenomenon, and was seen as a form of ‘white power’”.²⁹ Harris was never known to read the Bible in public, so that Walker, almost certainly incorrectly, says that he was “probably illiterate”.³⁰ He tended to carry the Bible, quote particular verses, waved it

²⁶ McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*, p. 290.

²⁷ Breidenbach, P.S. "Colour Symbolism and Ideology in a Ghanaian Healing Movement," *Africa* 46 (1976), 137-145.

²⁸ McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*, p. 275.

²⁹ Shank, *Prophet Harris*, p. 213.

³⁰ F. D. Walker, *Story of the Ivory Coast* (London: Cargate Press, 1926), p. 14.

in the air before the crowds, and when praying for people's healing placed it upon the heads of the sick. The practice of placing a Bible on the heads of the sick became a common practice among the prophet-healers, and was used in the MDCC as seen in the photograph of the Senior Prophet taken in 1959 (Figure 6:1).

This highlights the distinction between the mission churches and the spiritual churches concerning the use of the Bible. The historic churches followed the missionary approach, which focused upon the meaning of the words of the Biblical text. This meant that it was essential to be able to read the Scriptures, then in English, as the whole Bible was not translated into Fante until 1948. It was also necessary to receive teaching from the ministers who had been trained at the schools. This meant that the Bible was closed to illiterates, and must have appeared as a symbol of power beyond their use. The MDCC, on the other hand, took the whole Bible as an important symbol of the power of God, which was released by prayer. Any division of the text, or refined exegesis was rejected. The whole Bible was regarded as the Word of God, and was to be understood in its literal meaning. This is clearly stated in an important prophecy made when the new covenant was given in May 1925.

Why do some of my worshippers accept the Old Testament, and do not believe in the New Testament? Why do some accept the New Testament, but not the Old? I am declaring it to you that the God of whom is spoken in the Old Testament is the self-same God who is proclaimed in the New Testament. Therefore, let the Church that I am going to found act according to all the commands that are contained in the whole Bible..... They say that the Old Testament is past, and yet they are not able to live by the New.³¹

Heavenly names (Sor Dzin)

According to Shank, Prophet Harris said that he spoke in tongues in accordance with I Corinthians 13.³² Harris claimed that he could only exercise this gift as the spirit allowed, and he exclusively used it when he was preaching, implying that the message came in "unknown tongues", which he then interpreted as he preached. Although the practice of speaking in "tongues" was initially common among the members of the MDCC community there is no suggestion of its use in this way. It appeared more to

³¹ *History*, p. 17.

³² Shank, *Prophet Harris*, p. 181-2.

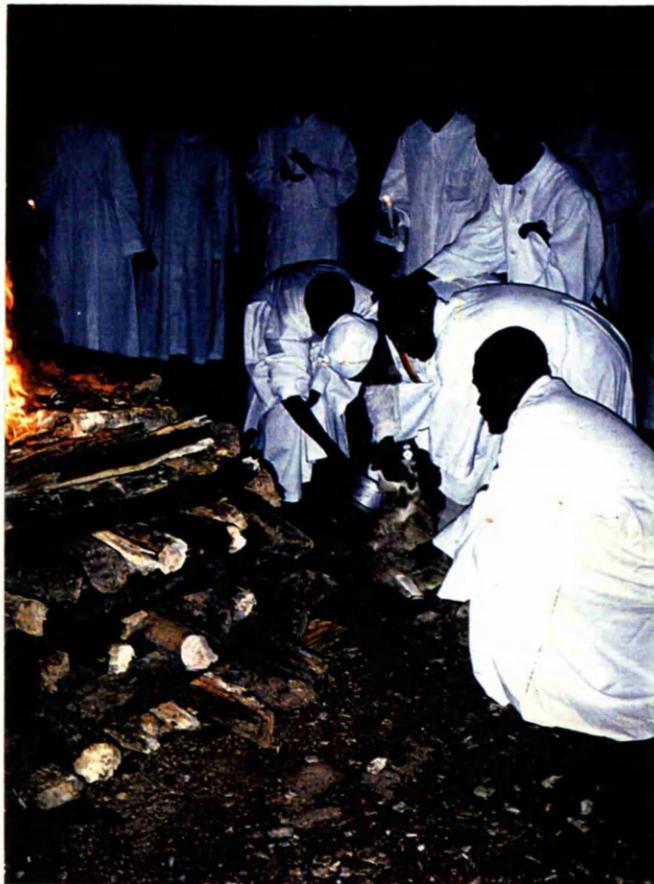
Figure 6:1**Healing at Mazano**

The Senior Prophet Jimiru Fuah places a Bible on the head of a man about to be baptised. He is assisted by a priest on the right, and the Church Secretary on the left holding cup of water.

Photograph taken by
Hans Debrunner 1952.

**Figure 6:2 Sacrifice during
the I'Odomey Conference**

Photograph taken by
Suma Kupa Jehu-Appiah
1987.



be an expression of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, an allied experience which was a particular innovation within the early years of the church was that of "Heavenly Names" (*sor dzin*).

The story is told that after the birth of Mathapoly Moses, his mother went into a trance in which she had a vision of a great tree with many leaves. As she looked closer at the tree she saw that on each leaf there was a face and on the forehead was written the person's "heavenly name". From that time when anyone joined the community she was able to recognise them and therefore know their heavenly name which was unique to that person. After a time the task became so stressful for the Akatitibi that she and the Akaboha prayed and fasted for seven days asking that this special gift would be transferred to the Akaboha. God is said to have granted their prayers, and from that time it has been the ability of the Akaboha to tell a new member their heavenly name.

The general practice for a new member wanting to know their heavenly name is as follows. After their baptism they are required to fast during daylight hours for three days, and avoid eating any salt or meat. The people then came to the Akaboha usually during the Peace Festival, and line up before him. Akaboha II told Baëta in 1962 that he goes to the naming ceremony without any preparation other than prayer.³³ When he sees the person's face he is able to read their heavenly name, which is said to be written on the forehead. He then writes this down and gives it to the individual. After this the person is encouraged to fast for a further day and give thanks to God. The person is then officially known within the church by his, or her, heavenly name, though the former names are retained for other purposes.

Not only have such names been given to people, but from the early years of the church "heavenly names" have been given to rituals, places and even greetings within the life of the church. *Sor dzin* is in fact the heavenly name for heavenly names. Appendix 4 gives a list of some of the common greetings and prayers used by members of the church. A common salutation is "*Malamito*", which according to the church members means "May joy be with you". The reply is "*Me yaw dasu*", meaning "May God bless you". It appears that this could have been the beginnings of a new language for the

³³ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 50.

community, but it did not develop beyond a series of names and phrases. The only particular word that I could identify from the phrases was “*Obeko*”, which is consistently used for “Lord”.

Whether or not, these names and phrases are the beginnings of a distinct language they do engender a distinct sense of community. The cry “Malamito” is commonly heard as day-light awakens the people of Mazano, and this is met with the familiar reply before people begin to chat about the affairs of the day in Fante. The greetings clearly identify a person as a member of the community, and I found that learning the appropriate responses brought about a greater acceptance.

Rituals

Many new rituals emerged during the early years such as the use of the *Yinaabi* prayers that are said with the aid of a rosary. The covenant of May 1925 required everybody to bathe themselves before they say the *Yinaabi* at six in the morning, at noon, and at six in the evening.³⁴ Women were required to cover their heads while praying. The Prophet Jehu-Appiah wrote orders of service for Sunday morning worship, marriage, funerals, and sacraments. These have recently been translated and printed in various languages.

The MDCC recognises two forms of animal sacrifice. The first relates to sacrifice that is occasionally offered within a local context. The second is the Feast of Peace Offering (*Eguadoto*) performed only once a year at the headquarters of the church in Mozano. The Fante word *egvadoto* signifies the re-dedication of the stool for the peace and prosperity of all its members.

The book of rituals for the MDCC gives definitive guidelines for the performance of ordinary sacrifice. This practice would be followed even if the animal is only going to be eaten for food.

(Hold the knife in your right hand, raise it up to face the East and pray thus:-)

³⁴ *History*, p 20.

O Lord, Thy servant has drawn this knife to slaughter this animal and eat the whole flesh thereof. Therefore, I beseech Thee, as Thou entered into covenant with Thy servant Noah, so do I leave the blood of this animal into Thine Hands, Amen.

(Then face the West and slaughter the animal; after that wash your hands with water and say the Lord's Prayer).³⁵

The reference to Noah in the prayer gives the ritual a specific Biblical context which is the period before the Levitical sacrifices. At that time, the MDCC would argue, sacrifices are primarily offerings to God in appreciation of his goodness, and in hope of his continued blessing.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma.... (Gen 8:20-21)

As we shall discuss later, the church leaders argue that such offerings to God had nothing to do with pardon from sins. They were gifts to God and preceded the Mosaic sacrifices with the priesthood, established ritual and emphasis upon atonement.

Although members of the MDCC are allowed to eat the meat of the offering, they are forbidden to eat the meat of an unbled animal or the heart of an animal.³⁶ The blood of any slaughtered animal is committed to God. This is following the Biblical injunction in Genesis 9:4. "But you must not eat meat that has lifeblood still in it." The church also makes reference to the New Testament passages of Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25 about this command. The Bible lists bullocks, goats, sheep, pigeons and turtle doves as animals that may be used for sacrifice and offerings. The MDCC, however, makes use only of sheep and pigeons. The sheep must be male and unblemished, but the bird could be either male or female. The pigeon is never used in a ritual where the meat would be eaten. In the offering of the blood to God, members are encouraged to acknowledge God as the giver of all life.

The second form of sacrifice practised within the MDCC is the Feast of Peace Offering (*Eguadoto*), which is held once a year by leaders of the church. This offering is made by the Jehunano Family during the I'Odomey Conference that used to take place in

³⁵ *The MDCC Book of Rituals* (Mozano: MDCC, 1981), p. 10.

³⁶ *The Constitution of the Musama Disco Christo Church* (Mozano: MDCC), p. 36.

Mozano at the beginning of August, but now occurs in July.³⁷ The festival commences on a Tuesday and continues through the whole week, but the main rituals are performed late on Friday night till the early hours of Saturday. On the Tuesday, participants arrive, and the ram to be used for the offering is presented to the congregation. The period from Wednesday to Friday is a time for fasting and prayers. Then on the Friday evening, the festival begins with songs and intercessory prayers are then performed three times for the sanctification of the meeting. Petitions are read from the various districts and areas of the church. Individual requests, vows and payment of vows are then made, and prayers are offered for the requests. This is usually repeated seven times. The congregation then present themselves before the Holy Place with prayers. The animal is killed, and the people present are anointed with the blood by the Akaboha. The participants led by the Akaboha and Akatitibi then walk along the main street of the town, and as they go from house to house they anoint the door-posts with the blood. During this time there is much singing and drumming and people ask for God's blessing for the coming year.

The participants then return to the Holy Place where prayers are said for the church, the Peace Festival that follows in about three weeks, and for peace in the nation and world. The sacrifice is then burnt on the special hearth immediately to the west of the entrance to the *Kronkronbea*. The altar consists of a flat platform made from red clay, and the animal is laid on an assembly of 49 logs set in 7 rows of 7 (Figure 6:2). Finally prayers of thanksgiving and intercession are made before the meeting closes a little before dawn. On Saturday afternoon, there is a public assembly during which gifts are received by Akaboha and Akatitibi. Times of prayer are held morning and evening for the following seven days with a thanksgiving service on the final Sunday.

Casting of lots (*Tonto twe*)

Baëta makes a passing comment to a little known practice of the MDCC which he calls the "casting of lots":

³⁷ The Feast of Peace Offering is made 5-6 weeks before the Peace Festival. Originally it was 3 weeks before the Peace Festival, but this was changed to make travel arrangements more convenient for the church workers who come from great distances.

In the custom, peculiar to this Church, which is known by this name, the prophet lays hands on the head of each of those members who come forward for this purpose, and 'describes' (his or her) spiritual condition'. This consists in telling if the spirit is in a healthy condition and a happy mood, or whether it is being assailed, or about to be assailed by some spirit of evil or misfortune.³⁸

The Fante expression used by the MDCC is *tonto twe*, which is a term used for the work of the traditional diviner (*kramofo*).³⁹ The diviner would usually cast stones, shells or even throw dust into the air. Because there is no equivalent word for what the prophets do, the church has retained the original term and changed the meaning. The leaders of the church would refer to Biblical accounts such as that in the book of Jonah when the sailors said: "Let's draw lots and find out who is to blame for getting us into this danger" (Jonah 1:7).

There is considerable flexibility in the way that a prophet may perform *tonto twe*, but usually the members stand in a circle or a line, so that the prophet can look each person in the face. The prophet, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, then moves to the first person and looks deeply into their eyes to discern their spiritual condition. Most prophets speak of something that looks like an aura around the individual, and from this they are able to tell whether the spirit is in a healthy and happy condition, or whether they have been assailed by some evil or misfortune often in English called "a dark spirit". The prophet will usually tell the person what is about to happen and mention any precautionary measures that they must take.

The prophets say that normally they do not remember what they say to people as they are in a trance state. Occasionally, they can recollect what advice was given, but this is when only one person was involved in the session. All the Prophets are adamant that their powers were completely different from spiritualists and other mediums because their powers are a specific gift from God. The process of *tonto twe* is not limited to a local context, but may reach great distances. Today members in Ghana will visit a prophet, or prophetess for information of a family member in Europe who has not written for some time. The old Senior Prophet said: "In this area, it is possible

³⁸ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 58.

³⁹ *Tonto twe* according to Christenson in his *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language* (p. 528) is "to draw lots (cast lots or raffle) for (or upon)."

that even when people are overseas, God does reveal things about them and directs precisely and clearly what we or they should do.”⁴⁰

The victorious journey

There is little recorded information concerning the MDCC from about 1936 till 1945. The older members believe this was due to a preoccupation with the rapid growth of the church and the many new congregations. What does occur during this period was the invitation of Prophet Appiah onto the executive committee of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (ARPS), and according to older members he was very active in this role. Although the ARPS was no longer the influential body that it had been in previous decades, this fact shows the degree of acceptance the MDCC had by the Cape Coast establishment. It also illustrates Prophet Appiah's interest both in Fante culture and the developing movement for independence.

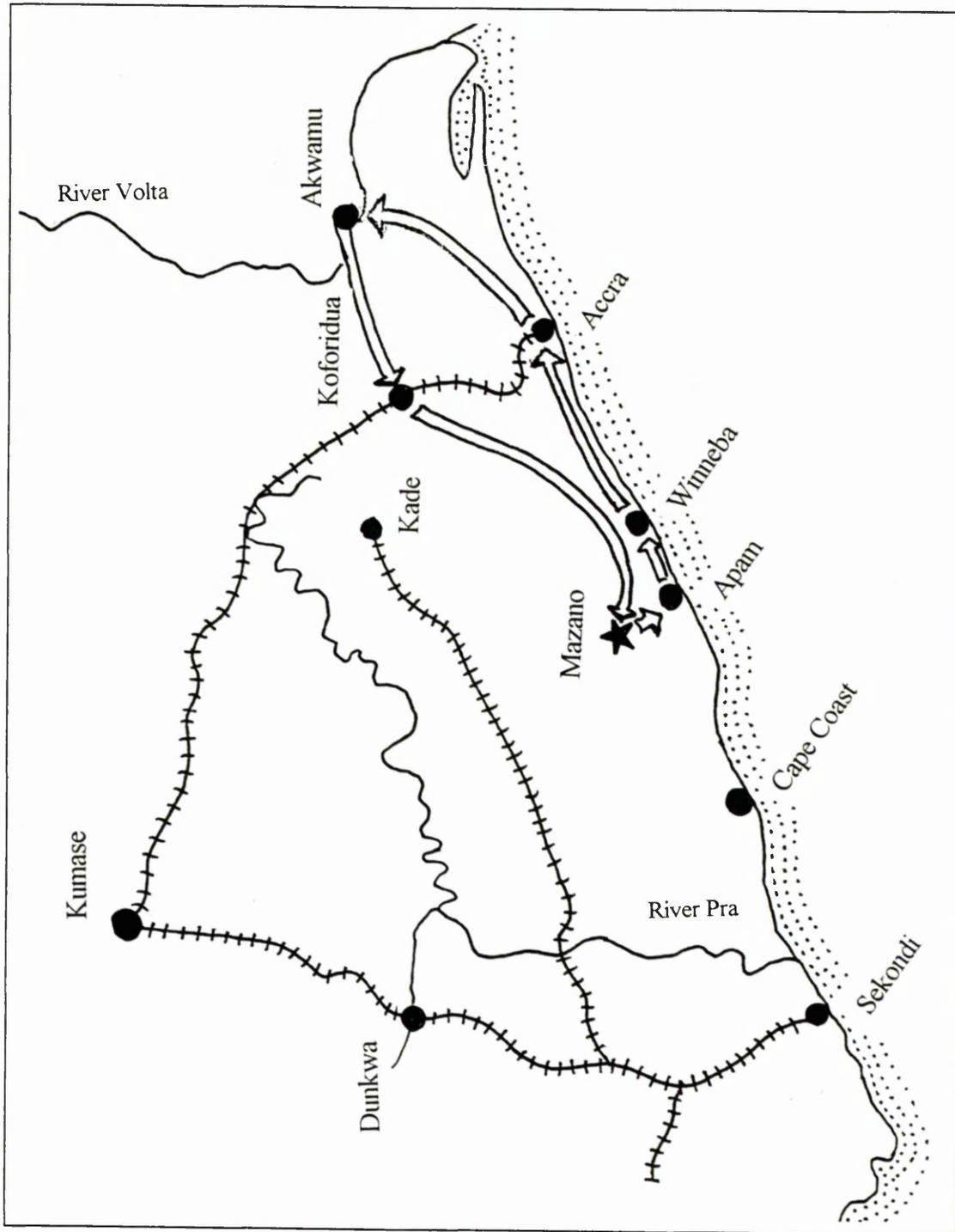
In 1945 Prophet Appiah is said to have informed his friends that God had told him that he had only two more years to live, and it was now time for him to set his house in order. He therefore began to plan the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the church that would happen in 1947. The celebrations were to include a Journey of Victory through the region of southern Gold Coast. Prophet Jehu Appiah was accompanied by a choir of singers and seven horn-blowers who heralded his arrival in every town.⁴¹ The party first travelled to Apam on the coast, then eastwards to Winneba and then to Accra (Figure 6:3). From there they continued farther east finally crossing the Volta river to Akwamu, and the party returned passing through Koforidua. Everywhere he went, Prophet Jehu Appiah was cordially welcomed, and the message he brought was always the same. He had done the work that God had given him to do, and now he was leaving a sound growing church in the hands of the elders. The journey took almost two and a half months, and he arrived home exhausted.⁴²

⁴⁰ Senior Prophet Jimiru Fuah, September 1992.

⁴¹ The presence of the horn-blowers would imply that the person they were accompanying was an important omanhene.

⁴² Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 40.

Figure 6:3 Victorious Journey of Prophet Jehu Appiah



The Aborigines' Rights Protection Society called an emergency meeting at Cape Coast for the 19 March 1948. Baëta tells the story that while the Prophet was at Saltpond on his way to Cape Coast, he received an urgent call from a woman to come to her daughter who was in labour, and the hospital had said her condition was hopeless.⁴³ Though the Prophet was in a hurry he went to the young woman, placed his hands upon her head and prayed. To the surprise of everyone the baby was safely born. This is a typical form of story recounted by member's of the MDCC to show the personal care of the founders even in the midst of national issues.

During his stay at Saltpond, Prophet Appiah is said to have had a consultation with Kwame Nkrumah about the restoration of peace after the boycott on foreign goods, and the British assumption of emergency powers. Nkrumah was imprisoned soon after this meeting. As will be discussed in chapter 8, it is widely affirmed by the older members of the church that Prophet Appiah and Nkrumah were very friendly, but it is difficult to determine the nature of the relationship in the light of the recasting of the story due to the changing political situation.

After the Cape Coast meeting of the ARPS, Prophet Appiah returned home, and to the surprise of many, he made farewell speeches at the subsequent church meetings, urging the members to unite and remain loyal to the Church. In his preparation for the forthcoming synod he is said to have fasted for seven days, during which time many secrets were revealed to him. In these visions he is said to have seen many of the people who in the past had tried to do away with him, and those who were still plotting the ruin of the Church. He called his twelve children together in the presence of the Church leaders, and exhorted them to remain united as a family. Baëta writes that to his second son, Mathapoly Moses (who was to become Akaboha II) he said:

You, my son, are quite different from the rest; I gave you the training befitting your rank, and now that this period of preparation is over, put away childish things and become a man. Take good and proper care of all my affairs.⁴⁴

The Peace Festival of August 1948 had a subdued atmosphere. As usual the Prophet welcomed the assembled company and blessed all who were present. In his address he

⁴³ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

told the people of the victory that was his because God had fulfilled all his promises to him. However, the Prophet looked thin and ill, and his voice was weak. From the third day of the festival he was too weak to even attend any of the sessions, but at his request the festival continued. The festival finally ended with the reading of Phil 4:9. "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

On 23 September 1948, at ten in the morning, Prophet Appiah died. The cause of death was diagnosed as diabetes. Some people associated his death with the work of the devil, but the elders reminded the members that God had told him that he would die soon. People came from all over the country and even Nkrumah went later to Mazano to greet Mathapoly Moses.

* * * * *

The teaching and practice of Prophet Appiah was that the Spirit of God may come upon any person who earnestly seeks God with prayer and fasting irrespective of whether they were European or African. The experience of *sunsum fre* has all the characteristics of revivals in North America, Britain and other parts of the world. People would often fall into a light trance, shake, and occasionally fall onto the ground. The meetings in which these experiences were manifested provided the social means whereby many complex and hitherto internalised and sublimated desires and aspirations became legitimised. Illiterate women could now speak with authority in the MDCC, which they did not have in the Methodist Church of the Gold Coast.

The experience of revival provided the opportunity for religious innovation, and contributions from people outside the intelligentsia. The emerging structures would therefore be of a more popular nature rather than those brought by the British missionaries and taught in their ministerial colleges. It has been shown that prophecy was an important function within the early community, and helped shape the very character of the church. Prophecy gave to the community a higher source of authority

that came directly from God, which provided the basis for the acceptance of these innovations. As shown by Katz, the mystic experience "is shaped by concepts which the mystic brings to, and which shapes, his experience."⁴⁵ Familiar cultural symbols would therefore be expected within the trances and visions of the early community.

The death of Prophet Appiah came as a shock to the young church, but there was little doubt among the members about who was to be the next leader of the church.

⁴⁵ Steven Katz, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), p. 4.

Chapter 7

An African Christianity

(1948-62)

Now before I conclude let me seize the opportunity to state that the MDCC is never a carbon copy of any imported Church. It is purely an African Church. If some of our neighbours have not yet come to appreciate it we Musama members know what we are doing. We love our African Church for we are Africans.¹

These words were spoken by the son of Prophet Appiah forty years after the founding of the MDCC. They illustrate that Akaboha II, the second head of the church, was clearly aware that the essential character of the Musama Disco Christo Church was African. While Prophet Appiah saw the MDCC as God creating a new church through an African, he was not concerned about the various Methodist elements that had continued within the life of the new church. In this chapter, I want to consider the various influences upon the life and thinking of Akaboha II, and examine how the African character developed within the church. Apart from the reminiscences of the older members of the church, I was assisted in my study by the records of two scholars who visited Mazano during this period. Hans Debrunner visited Mazano in 1952, and kindly made available to me his fieldnotes and photographs taken at that time. Baëta wrote his important description of the MDCC in 1962 after a visit to Mozano when he discussed the nature of the church with Akaboha II.²

The promised king

Mathapoly Moses Jehu-Appiah was not only born into the community of the MDCC, but the promises regarding his birth meant that he embodied the very tradition of the church. He was born on 24 August 1924, on the exact day and time promised in the vision given to his mother Nathalomoa. The members therefore considered him a special person with a mission in his own right, and not merely the son of the founder.

¹ Akaboha II, *Peaceful Year Celebration Programme 1965*, (Mozano: MDCC), p. 5.

² C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 28-67.

His unique role was illustrated in the division that occurred in 1926, when Samuel Dankwa believed that the power in which the church was to work was given to "Nana Moses", and Dankwa wanted to take him and his mother, Nathalomoa, away.³ Mathapoly lived all his early life in the town of Mazano near Gomoa Fomena. From the age of six, Mathapoly was kept in seclusion from other children and received elementary education by private tutors. This is said to have protected him against being distracted from his appointed task. Little is recorded about his life during this period, but he was certainly an eager scholar with a quick mind.

When Mathapoly was eighteen years old, he was allowed to choose whether he would mix with others or not. He decided in 1944 to leave Mazano and continue his education in Cape Coast. On the small hills around the coastal town had developed a number of important educational centres. To the West of the town was the Roman Catholic St Augustine's College for boys, opened in 1935. Inland was the Anglican Adisadel College for boys, and on the next hill stood the Wesley Girl's High School. On the other side of town, near the castle, was the oldest school Mfantsipim located on Kwabotwe Hill. At a little distance was the Aggrey Memorial Zion Secondary School established by the A.M.E. Zion foundation in memory of Dr James Emmanuel Kwegyir Aggrey, a minister of the Black American A.M.E. Zion and headmaster of Achimota College. It was to Aggrey Memorial College that Mathapoly Moses went to study showing both his own and his father's support of the views of Dr Aggrey. From all accounts, Mathapoly was a popular student, and like his father was concerned about the emancipation of the African mind, and the growing nationalist movement. While at Aggrey Mathapoly read widely and, according to his brother, he became a ring-leader in the student movement for independence that was growing in Cape Coast.⁴

As will be discussed in the next chapter it was during this time Mathapoly Moses is also said to have come to know Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah is said to have asked Prophet Appiah to allow Mathapoly to head the newly established Ghana National College in Cape Coast, but Appiah refused the invitation because Mathapoly had been

³ *History*, p. 26.

⁴ In 1992, Akaboha's surviving brothers affirmed this account. My impression was that such comments were not to establish any link with the CPP as such, but a note of concern that Mathapoly may have been distracted from the greater task of leading the church after the death of his father.

appointed by God as head of the MDCC.⁵ It is difficult to see how Nkrumah could have made a serious offer at this time, but it could have been a plan for when he became Prime Minister.

Mathapoly sat his London Matriculation examinations in June 1948, and obtained his results in July. Unexpectedly he was called to return home in August as his father was ill and possibly dying. As usual the Prophet welcomed the pilgrims to the Peace Festival and blessed all who were present. In his address he told the people of the victory that was his because God had fulfilled all his promises to him. Three weeks later, on 23 September 1948, at ten in the morning, Prophet Jehu Appiah died. People came from all over the country for the funeral.

Although Mathapoly Moses was aware of the many prophecies that confirmed him as the aspiring leader of the MDCC, he did not eagerly accept the position. The Holy Spirit through prophecy directed the leaders of the church to fast for three days before installing the new Akaboha, and this was kept from 5 until 7 December 1948.⁶ On the first day Mathapoly Moses joined the elders in the prayers, but on the second day he refused to attend, staying in his quarters. On the third and final day, he was to be installed on the raised platform (*ayompo*) in Mazano where the Akaboha used to sit in state during official functions. The anointing was to be at midnight exactly, but Mathapoly delayed in coming. The elders finally persuaded him and at 23.45 hours he sat on the *ayompo*. At exactly midnight, the members tell of how a crystal ball the size of a football descended slowly from heaven, and it broke on Mathapoly's head wetting him completely from head to toe. The spray is said to have even splashed some people standing near the *ayompo*.⁷ The crowd let out a great shout of joy. People rushed to gather some of the celestial water that filled the whole atmosphere with a sweet aroma. Many stories are told of how even one drop of the liquid healed many sick people. In fact, when the clothes of the new Akaboha were washed, the wash-water was itself powerful in healing.

⁵ This story was told me by the brother of Akaboha II who had close relations with the CPP. Although Nkrumah had little actual political influence in 1948, his ambitions were clear.

⁶ Baëta records the date of the enstoolment as Saturday 9 November 1948, whilst other records give the date as 7 December 1948.

⁷ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 42.

When he was later asked why he had initially refused to be installed as the General Head Prophet, he is said to have replied with a question: "Why did Jesus Christ pray for the cup to be removed from him?" He explained that he did not feel sufficiently mature to assume the high office, and he wanted to continue his education. He quickly added that he did not realise that God had already prepared him sufficiently well for the task before him. For two or three years after the anointing, Mathapoly continued to be called *Akasibeena* (Prince).⁸ It was not until 1953 that he assumed the title Akaboha II, and the title *Akasibeena* became temporarily vacant.⁹

The story of the crystal ball descending to anoint the new Akaboha has become an important element in the oral tradition of the MDCC. To the members it provided indisputable evidence of the divine approval of Mathapoly Moses as head of the MDCC, and recipient of charisma. He was a tall man with a fair complexion, but it was not his looks that impressed people, but the quality of his personality.¹⁰ All accounts recognise him as an astute leader, articulate speaker, interested not only in religious matters, but in political and social issues.

One of his early aims was to remove the remnants of Methodist Christianity from the MDCC, but even for the indisputable charismatic leader of the church this was not an easy task. Religious traditions quickly take hold and become the accepted patterns of a community. Some of the older members were unwilling to see too many changes, but Mathapoly Moses was assisted by problems that occurred in Mazano town.

A new exodus

Prophet J. Jehu Appiah had moved to Mazano, near Gomoa Fomena in 1925, and although the relationship between the two communities had initially been good, it began to deteriorate and finally came to conflict over the matter of pigs. The people of Gomoa Fomena had begun to breed pigs, but instead of keeping them penned they allowed them to wander freely. They drank the water, spoilt the gardens, and caused the church members much inconvenience. To further aggravate the situation, the

⁸ Debrunner writing in 1952 notes that Mathapoly was commonly known as "Baby Prophet".

⁹ *Programme of the Fourth Peaceful Year Celebration* (Mazano: MDCC, 1954), p. 9.

¹⁰ Hans Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), p. 331.

MDCC literally accepted the Old Testament injunction that pigs were impure animals, and in the original covenant made in May 1925 the members were forbidden to eat the meat of a pig.^{11 12} The church considered that they and their town were defiled by the pigs, and some people were saying this was the reason why more people were ill and fewer healed. The leaders of the church therefore approached the local chief concerning the problem, but he refused to do anything about the animals. The people of Mazano therefore decided that they would have to move to another locality. Although the issue of the pigs is the usual reason given for the exodus from Old Mazano, there were clearly other reasons. In the short account of the history of the MDCC in the programme of the Peace Festival in 1963, after mention of the problem with the pigs, the following comment is added. "This, coupled with other reasons both political and economical, and also spiritual, made them acquire some land at Gomoa Eshiem."¹³ I shall return to this issue after describing the actual migration.

At that time the chief of Eshiem, a town eight miles to the South, offered the church a portion of land. The leaders of the MDCC believed that this was a gift from God and guidance that they should move to the new location. When the chief of Gomoa Fomena heard of this proposal he regretted his earlier decision and wanted the people to stay, and he even threatened them legally if they attempted to move. The church members were however determined that they must obey the command of God, and started preparations for the move. The chief therefore ordered some of his men to molest the community, but the members waited patiently and took the rebuffs. Quietly they continued with their preparations, preparing the new area of land, and moving some of their belongings. They finally transported their roofing sheets, which meant that for some nights they had no protection from the rains. As this was a time of the year for the rains, the members risked all their possessions being drenched and spoiled. The days passed, they say, but no rain came, and it was only after the move was completed that heavy rain came to the old town.

The church also wanted to take the body of Akaboha I with them to New Mazano. The chief of Gomoa Fomena opposed this, and Mathapoly Moses was required to go

¹¹ Deuteronomy 14:8 and Leviticus 5:2.

¹² *History*, p. 20.

¹³ *Programme of the Peace Festival* (Mozano: MDCC, 1963).

to the government to get permission for the exhumation.¹⁴ A chief medical officer came to ensure that all was done decently and in order, and according to regulations two police officers were to journey with the corpse. As with the first migration, the event took on all the symbolism of a biblical Exodus, the transportation of the body of Akaboha I was seen in the same way that Israel took the body of Jacob with them as they left Egypt.¹⁵ Such an important event for the church required careful spiritual preparations, and the prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit, gave clear directives. First, all the people were to make themselves ceremonially clean by washing their clothes, avoiding sexual relations, and continuing to pray and fast. Each household was to offer a burnt offering, and when the fires were burnt down at midnight the people were to make the sign of the cross on their foreheads with the ash. Further, as the people moved out of the town, no one was to look back as had Lot's wife who for her disobedience had been turned into a pillar of salt.¹⁶

The older members remember the events of that night quite clearly, and enjoy telling the story. To avoid walking past the town of Gomoa Fomena, the people first walked a half mile in the opposite direction towards Abodom until they met the main road. Everyone carried a candle cupped in their hand, but the moon shone so brightly that the path was marked out clearly before them. When they reached the main road they then turned south, and walked quietly past the outskirts of Gomoa Fomena. No one in the town stirred for everyone was sound asleep. They continued walking on through Kokofu to Eshiem (Figure 5:1). When they reached Eshiem a policeman blew a trumpet, and the people entered the town singing the praises of God. Once again, they said that it was God who brought them safely on their Exodus into the promised land and to New Mazano. The parallel with the biblical Exodus is widely applied by the members who consider that their own leader was aptly named Moses.

According to those who took part in the migration there were about 200 men, women and children who journeyed from "Old Mazano" to Eshiem in January 1951.¹⁷ The estimated total church membership at that time was no more than 5,000, with fifteen

¹⁴ Exhumation order granted for 26 January 1951.

¹⁵ Exodus 13:19.

¹⁶ Genesis 19:26.

¹⁷ This was a general consensus figure obtained by speaking to several of the second generation members. No one had an accurate figure, and this number would consist of about 30 households.

congregations scattered around the region. As the area for the new settlement was essentially bush the people first lived in temporary accommodation in Eshiem and moved into their own houses in New Mazano in March 1951.¹⁸

When the church members first came to the area they considered the residents of Eshiem to be quite a wicked community holding to many taboos. The church members therefore sought to keep separate from them, but there were matters on which they were required to compromise. For example, when the people of Eshiem started to keep pigs, the church objected for the same reason as when at Gomoa Fomena. The residents of Eshiem agreed not to keep pigs if the people of Mazano would in turn stop keeping dogs which were taboo for them. The church members had many dogs for hunting and protection, but to establish good relations they disposed of all their dogs. Today there are no pigs or dogs in the area, and the two communities have a generally good relationship.

New Mazano

Members of the church initially built only temporary houses for themselves because for some this was their third move and they questioned the wisdom of building a permanent dwelling. The first permanent building was a two-storied building near the top of the hill rising from the central cross-roads of the town, which was especially built for Akaboha II (Figure 7:1). He later moved into a new palace at the top of the hill, and the Akatitibi took up residence in this house.¹⁹ The members then began to build various sacred places, and only after this did they build permanent houses for themselves.

¹⁸ MDCC Constitution gives the date of the founding of New Mazano as January 1951 as does the MDCC Almanacs of 1978, 1979, 1980.

¹⁹ This house soon became recognized as the residence of the Akatitibi as it is even today.

Figure 7:1 New Mazano as photographed by H Debrunner in 1952.



(a) The circular building of the *Kronkronbea* protected by a hedge. The residence of Akabohe II is in the background.



(b) View from near the *Kronkronbea* looking away from the palace across the town towards Eshiem on the horizon.

An Akan town (*kro*) was a visual expression of traditional cosmology in spatial terms, and this would have raised some important practical questions for the first Akan Christians in the construction of a new town. Traditional Fante towns and villages were built along a broad main street (*abonten*, pl. *abontsen*) intersected by other narrower roads that divided the settlement into quarters inhabited by various extended families. The main street of even a small village could be as much as 50 metres wide with a ditch on each side to help drain the heavy rains. Beyond these ditches on each side faced the first row of houses that usually belong to the important families of the town. The main street provided the principal area for parades and rituals involving the whole village, so was swept clean each morning.

The houses in the village were grouped into "quarters" (*abrono*), and as the populations grew, new quarters would be established. The fringe areas of a traditional town were of particular importance as the boundary between the town and the forest. It is here that the huts occupied by menstruating women were constructed, the rubbish dumps and latrines. Temples to the gods were also situated towards the edge of the village, but some were built away from human habitation and alongside rivers. A simple shrine was a rectangular building entered by a few steps, and outer walls decorated with red and white clay. Priests (*akomfo*) would periodically carry the god's shrine on their heads during which they would become possessed. Such shrines are still found in Eshiem, and the *abosom* continue to possess the *akomfo* during the festivals. At the very edge of the intermediary zone between the town and the forest were two sites connected with death. The first was the cemetery (*asiei*) usually set to the left of a main path leaving from the village in a small area cleared of trees and set back from the road. The second area is that of the grove for the ancestors where pots used in funeral rites were placed. It is commonly regarded as the place inhabited by ghosts who linger for 42 days before departing the world of the living.

Some Akan villages grew up around the shrine of a particular god, and the houses provided shelter for the priests and helpers of the shrine. As McLeod comments: "The social make-up of such villages was unusual for they contained men and women from different areas who had come, perhaps with one or two kinsfolk, to seek the aid of the god. Such villages probably provided long-term refuges for people afraid that

their relatives were causing them mystical harm.”²⁰ The existence of such villages has a clear relevance to the formation of Mazano especially in the 1950s when witchcraft-fear had reached another peak. Around the original core of about 200 inhabitants of Mazano, church members came from various regions to settle in the town.

New Mazano provided the opportunity of designing an African Christian town. Among the early settlers was Rev. Acquaye who, although he was illiterate, had previously worked with the government city planning department, and had some knowledge of town planning. Acquaye was given the responsibility of laying out the street plan which gave rise to a grid pattern that characterises the town. Mazano has a typical main street that is the centre for many religious celebrations, such as those held during the Peace festival when processions are made to the edge of the town and back to the centre. The basic houses were rectangular, and would accommodate the close family. Additional huts were constructed next to each other as the family increased, so that an enclosed central courtyard was formed with a single door providing entrance into the courtyard where food is cooked and much of the family activity occurs. Figure 7:2 is a sketch diagram of Mazano in 1952 based upon the notes and photographs of Debrunner and accounts of older members, and Figure 7:3 a map of the town as it was in 1992.

Although there are some similarities with a traditional Fante village, Mazano has some notable omissions. There are no menstruation huts, or ancestral groves, and all shrines to any *obosom* are banned. More surprising is that the town does not have a market. All forms of commerce in the town have been discouraged as it is considered a holy place, and residents shop in the neighbouring town of Eshiem. In practice, there are a few small stalls near the main cross-roads of Mozano, and during the Peace Festival these multiply to meet the demands of the many visitors. Mozano is not a distinct town in its own right, but is dependent upon Eshiem for postal services, police, and local authorities. Although the centres of the towns are about a kilometre apart, houses of the two communities are now being built close together.

²⁰ M. D. McLeod, *The Asante* (London: British Museum, 1981), p. 38.

Figure 7:2 Sketch map of Mazano 1952

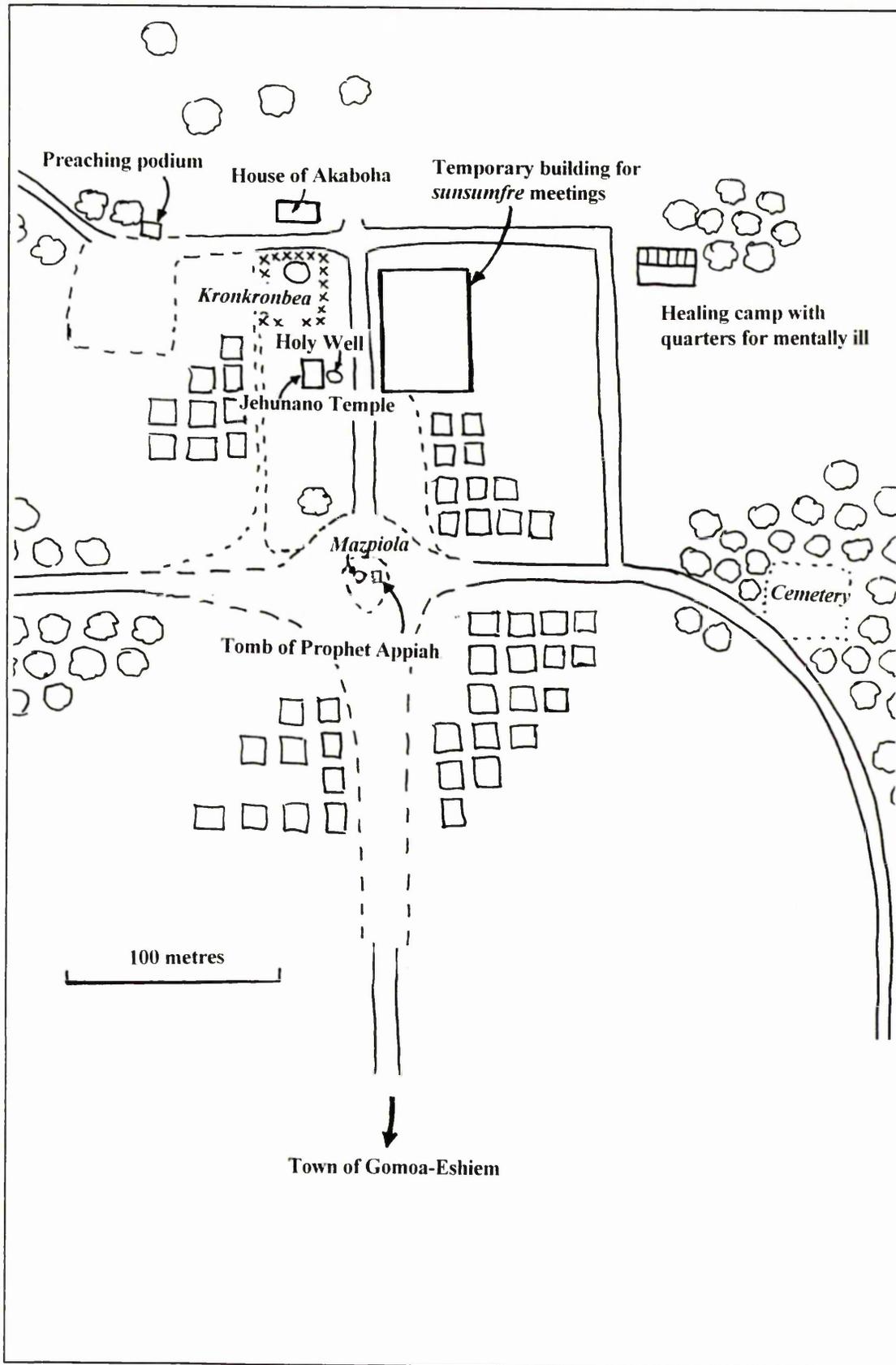
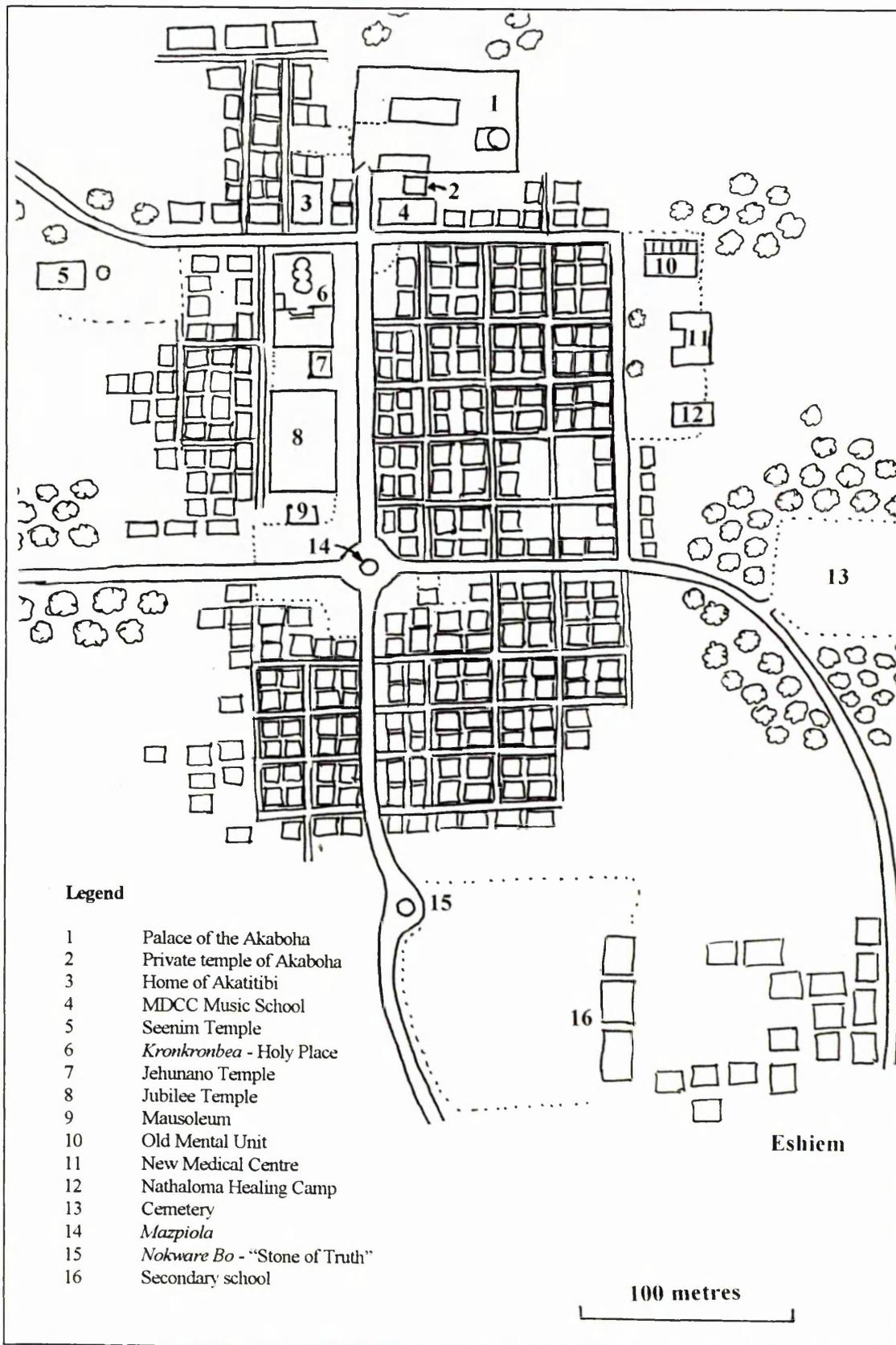


Figure 7:3 Sketch map of Mozano 1992



The social distinction between the two communities was visible even in 1958, seven years after the migration. Odotei Thompson, a reporter with the Ghanaian newspaper wrote:

Gomua-Eshiem is a town of comparatively recent origin lying within tranquil surroundings and open vegetation. The town has been partitioned into two discernible sections: Pagan Eshiem and Christian Eshiem.

To the unwary traveller this partition is not easily discernible at first, because the car from Abodom lands you at the old and unchristian quarter of the town and you have no idea of what the yonder settlement of Eshiem looks like. Here you are introduced immediately to the diehard "roughs" of Eshiem who are being gradually wooed to the side of the Lord by the Christian Community "just beyond the border."

Pagan Eshiem portrays all the characteristics of a primitive civilisation. First to welcome you at the approaches to the town are the dilapidated houses with their filthy compounds.....

Slowly the car sped through the old quarter towards the new. In just under two seconds, and only ten yards away from the last building of the old quarter, we faced the first cement tablet which welcomed us to MAZANO-the home of the faithful.....

Mazano occupies a sloping hill with building of a better architectural design.²¹

The Akan believed that the land belongs to the ancestors and as such the chiefs were the custodians of the land. A Fante villager would say that "The land belongs to the stool". The custodianship of the chief therefore meant that he had certain rights and responsibilities, and to enable him to perform his responsibilities the people would provide him with a house and give him servants. The chief would designate portions of land and each citizen was able to ask for a plot on which to farm.²² Even today in Mozano nobody buys land, instead members ask the Akaboha for a plot of land which would be given. Only members of the church are allowed to live in Mozano, which enhances the feeling that the town is a Christian *oman*.

²¹ D. Odotei Thompson, *Mazano - "Home of the Faithful"* The Ghanaian (1958) October [4]

²⁰

²² K. A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Asanti* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1968).

Temples of Mozano

As a holy town Mozano possesses several temples. One of the first to be constructed was a mausoleum built around the new grave of the Akaboha I which was originally at the centre of the town (Figure 7:2). As with many of the sacred places a wall was built around the site to keep domestic animals from straying into the place. Over the years the mausoleum was moved away from the centre of the road junction and now also provides the resting place for both Akaboha II and Akatitibi I. The white stones of the graves are now covered by a simple archway set in a small rectangular courtyard. The main ceremony involving the mausoleum occurs during the Peace Festival when the current Akaboha leads the people to the site in veneration to the former leaders. A concrete image of Akaboha I used to stand in the main town square near to the mausoleum, but this was demolished in 1990 as it was considered of too poor a quality.

The second shrine to be constructed in 1951 was the *Mazpiola* set up at the very centre of the town. The story is told that when the members first came to the locality all the people came to the centre of the site and lifted a stone high into the air as a reminder to God of his promises. A stone is a common symbol in Akan culture for the faithfulness of God, and has become a frequent symbol within the MDCC. Initially the stones were arranged in a circle, but as the town grew larger a slim tower was built upon the site with a copper cross fixed at the top. Church members today compare the pillar to the memorial stones constructed at Gilgal following Israel's successful entry into the promised land.²³ Today the church leaders generally consider the monument to represent the unified purposes of the members of the church. "In times of difficulty, the Holy Spirit further directed that members were to go there, lift a stone from the area and remind God of His Covenants with them."²⁴ The members do not enter the walled area, but circle around it carrying a candle while saying prayers.

In the following year the *Kronkronbea*-the Holy Place-was constructed (Figure 7:1a).²⁵ This is the most important sanctuary in Mozano, and consists of a small flat-roofed

²³ Joshua Chapter 4.

²⁴ Suma Kupa Jehu-Appiah, correspondence, 28 July 1994.

²⁵ *Kronkron* means holy.

building reached by climbing a flight of seven steps from the prayer ground. According to Akaboha III, the *Kronkronbea* was built by Rev. Acquaye who designed the building from a dream given him by God. The *Kronkronbea* was initially constructed immediately in front of the Akaboha's residence and over-looking the open area used by the community for prayer. The *Kronkronbea* was circular with no windows and a locked door. A few years later the building was extended to become a structure consisting in its plan of three overlapping circles with an entrance porch, through which the highest priests enter the holy of holies. The building still does not have windows, and the only ventilation is through the curtains on the porch (Figure 7:4). The Akaboha enters the Holy Place at least twice a year. Once is during the Feast of Peace Offering when vows are made to God, and an animal is sacrificed as a thanks offering. The second time is during the annual synod in February when the Akaboha asks God as to what he has for the church in the coming year. It is at this time that the Akaboha writes down the prophecies given to him, which are published as an almanac. There is a spot near the entrance of the *Kronkronbea*, said to have been revealed to Akaboha II by an angel, where in an emergency the Akaboha can stand to pray, and God would unfailingly hear and send the Holy Spirit to help.²⁶

The Holy of Holies contains the Ark. This is a wooden box about 4 feet, by 2 feet, by 2 feet upon which are set two angels praying towards a small cross set at the very centre of the lid. The Ark is said to contain the Ten Commandments, the promises made by God to the MDCC through the first Akaboha, and the vows taken by the latter on behalf of the church in respect of these promises, all of which are written on parchment. The ark may be carried around the town in times of triumph, usually at night. This last occurred in August 1987 when the long running litigation concerning the right of place of the Akatitibi was settled (Figure 7:5). Baëta comments that only the Akaboha is allowed to enter the *Kronkronbea*, but this is not correct: the Akatitibi, the Senior Prophet and some attendants are also allowed entry in order to clean the sanctuary.²⁷ All are required to undergo a period of abstinence and special rituals of purification before they enter.²⁸

²⁶ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, pp. 48-49.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁸ The church leaders claim that several leading churchmen and researchers have tried to enter the Holy Place, but all have failed.

Figure 7:4 Sketch of Kronkronbea

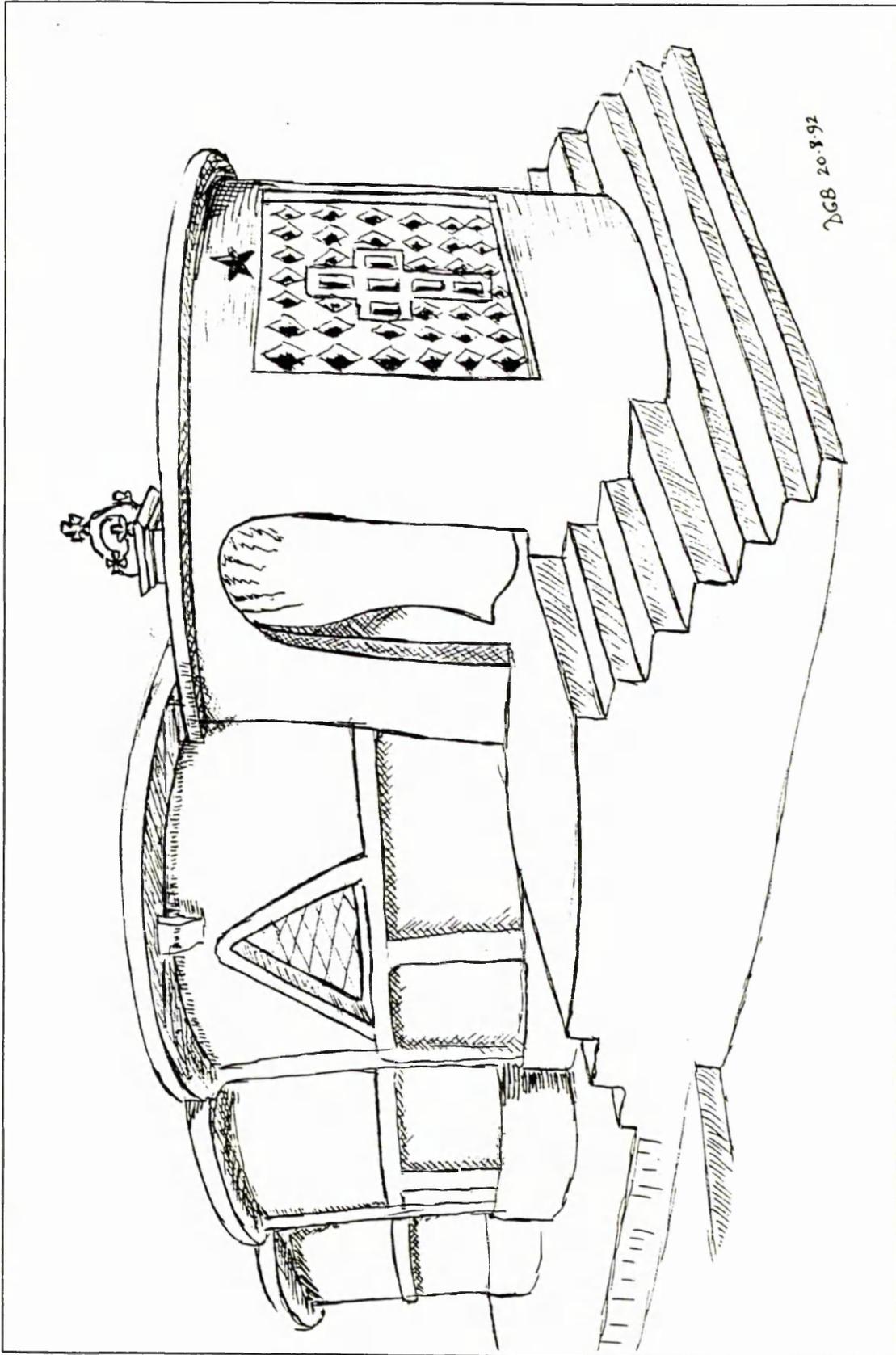


Figure 7:5 *Kronkronbea* and Ark of the Covenant



Members praying in the prayer ground in front of the *Kronkronbea*. During the Peace Festival a red cloth is draped over the three crosses that stand in front of the archway to the Holy Place.



The Ark of the Covenant being carried out of the Holy Place during the thanksgiving service of 1987.

Another temple constructed in 1952 was the *Jehunano Temple*. This building was sited in front of the Holy Place, and next to the holy well. The temple was constructed for the Jehunano members who meet daily to pray for the church, and was the first building for worship constructed in New Mazano.²⁹ The original building was replaced in 1989 with one that is newer and larger. The holy well is a water tank that collects the rain from the roof of an adjacent house, and was used for rubbing patients as part of the healing process as well as for baptisms and certain special systems. Today the holy well is of less importance than when Debrunner and Baëta visited Mazano, and is now virtually neglected.³⁰

In August 1957, the *Nokware Bo* ("The Stone of Truth") was constructed at the edge of the town at the boundary with Eshiem. It is said that the monument resulted from a special prophecy given in 1957, and is regarded as a symbol of God's faithfulness during the move to New Mazano:

All the members should place a stone as a sign of your gratefulness that I, the Lord, have never lied to you before. This stone should be known as the Stone of Courtesy of God's truth to the MDC Church. It will be known in Fante as NOKWAR BO (literally Stone of truth or faithfulness). It should be arranged to have this occasion during any high Anniversary when many MDC Church members have assembled. I will instruct the Akaboha fully about this as to the time and place where this stone will be laid. The stone should be the size of about five times the fist of a man's hand. The Akaboha will anoint this stone and be covered by a wall of about two to three feet in length, breadth and height. Through this stone, I shall add more spiritual gifts to the church.³¹

When Baëta was writing about the MDCC in 1962, the monument had not been completed.³² Today, the monument is a notable feature of the town, and one can see a large stone "the size of about five times the size of a man's hand". Among the Akan a stone is traditionally given to a person if what he, or she, has said has happened. The church is here giving a stone to God, as a testimony of his faithfulness. The monument marks the limits within which only members of the church can have houses, so

²⁹ Jehunano is not Fante, but based on a revealed name. To the MDCC it means, "companions of Jehu", and originally consisted of the group who moved with the founder to the first Mazano. A minimum of eight members of the Jehunano Family must always be present at Mazano to make regular prayers.

³⁰ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 48.

³¹ *Special Programme of the 7th Peaceful Year Celebration at the New Mazano*, (Mazano: MDCC, 1957), pp. 13-14.

³² Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 48.

providing a boundary marker for the holy town which is especially important as the settlements grow closer together.

In 1958, *The Nathaloma Healing Temple* was constructed to the north-east of the town close to the old mental unit. The Nathaloma Temple was named in honour of the first Akatitibi, and reflected the growing importance of healing within the MDCC. The mental unit was a walled courtyard with ten small sleeping chambers for the patients, who were kept chained for most of the time. The courtyard is strongly reminiscent of the compounds of the traditional healers.

During the 1950s and early 1960s Mozano grew steadily until it had a resident population of over 1,000 individuals, and temporary accommodation for many more.³³ The inhabitants provided their food by cultivation, but few, if any, are involved in petty trading as is common in most Ghanaian towns. Mozano was built to be a spiritual centre dominated by temples and prayer grounds to which people could come from all regions. In 1966, the great Jubilee Temple was constructed to seat over 4,000 people, and at that time it was the largest religious centre in West Africa.

Mozano is not merely a religious headquarters, but is the town of the *oman*, and residence (or "seat") of the *omanhene*. It was explicitly seen as the centre for major *oman* festivals, and many of these rituals were modelled on traditional Fante customs.

In 1971, the editor of the Mycan magazine wrote:³⁴

The Head of the Musama Church and his mother are also "Paramount Chief" and Queen Mother respectively of the Mazano town to which every Musama member belongs. Being a truly indigenous spiritual institution, the Musama Church does everything in the traditional Ghanaian way. And so like any chief, Akaboha II and Akatitibi must have their "stools" dedicated when a major festival is to take place. This is what happens at "Mercy Seat Meditations" each year. The difference here is that instead of sacrificing to the ancestral gods and the ancestors, prayers are said to God to guide and guard whoever comes to the Peace Festival from all mishaps and make the Celebrations a success.

Nana being the "paramount chief" of Mazano, and like any paramount chief in Ghana, has to welcome his sub-chiefs to Mozano and also receive homage from them. This takes place at the "Piodama Meetings". Everything is done in the

³³ In 1958-9 the transliteration was changed from Mazano to Mozano.

³⁴ MYCAN from Musama Youth Crusaders Association discussed in Chapter 10.

Ghanaian way but where in traditional Ghanaian life the ancestral gods have to be invoked, the Christian God is substituted.³⁵

Adaptation and change

Why did the MDCC move from "Old Mazano" to "New Mazano"? As was mentioned earlier the story of the pigs provides a convenient and meaningful explanation, but the underlying reason would appear to allow the radical redevelopment of the life and practice of the church. Akaboha II was now able to construct a new town and lifestyle based upon patterns that were integrally Christian, African and modern. The new Akaboha took the process of Africanization further by removing many Methodist Church practices that had remained as part of church life. The changes went beyond mere contextualization, and sought to revitalise Fante traditions to serve Christian purposes. One notable example was the introduction of an *asafo* system to the Church. As explained in Chapter 5, the initial leadership patterns acknowledge the roles of pastors, prophets and healers. Gradually the role of healer became that of junior prophet, and the role of the lay-leaders became more significant through the Zimaday and I'Odamey conferences. Akaboha II introduced the idea of *asafo* companies into the church with an elder as a lay-leader of each company.

Within Fante society the most important social organisation of the paternal line is that of the *asafo*. The word comes from the roots "sa" meaning war and "fo" for people indicating that the original purpose of the *asafo* was military, but later they assumed civil and religious functions. Every Fante state, depending upon size had from two to ten independent companies, and as the membership was patrilineal, members need not be localised in one geographical area. Patrilineal membership was due to the notion that a son inherits his military powers and bravery from his father, not his mother. Formerly when a young man had reached about the age of eighteen, his father would give him a gun, and the son would make an oath of allegiance to an officer in his father's *asafo*. After this he would be regarded as a full member of the *asafo* company. The *asafo* is divided into companies called *etsikuw*, meaning "a group of heads", each of which has local significance, either in terms of their function in war, their location in

³⁵ Editor, *The Mycan* (August 1971), 10.

the state, or the history of the members.³⁶ Today the *etsikuw* are known by number as well as name. Although there are some variations, the general pattern is as follows:

Name	Meaning	Role
1 <i>Twafu</i>	Those who cut	Scouts
2 <i>Obaatan</i>	Mother	Supplies
3 <i>Adonten</i>	Leader	Vanguard
4 <i>Nifa</i>	Right	Right wing
5 <i>Benkum</i>	Left	Left wing
6 <i>Kyidom</i>	Back	Rear Guard
7 <i>Akomfo</i>	Priests	

The senior officer of each company is the *supi*, who besides his duty as company commander, acts as its quartermaster. The *supi* as the name implies in Fante, is like "the big water-pot", who figuratively speaking, acts as a reservoir for the waters of the *asafu*.³⁷ He is known as the *Obaatan* (mother) since his duty is also to settle disputes within the company. The office traditionally descends from father to son, but a nephew may be selected if he succeeds to his uncle's property. Junior to the *supi* there are several *asafohene* who are in charge of a group of men numbering between ten and forty. The positions of the *supi* and *asafohene* are inherited in the paternal line, going either to brother or son. Primogeniture is a factor in succession to these positions, but like all leadership positions among the Fante, the qualifications of the candidates nominated are carefully scrutinised, and must be accepted by the company.

Another important position in the *etsikuw* is the *frankakitsanyi* who carries the company flag into battle. He is guarded at all times by the scouts (*Twafu*). The *okyerema* (drummer) of the company is important for the group assembles when the drum is beaten. Every company has a priest (*osofo*) whose duty is to propitiate the gods of the company and provide protective medicine (*edur*) for the warriors. Each company also has a group of elders, the *asafu akyerekwan* ("teachers of custom") nominated because of their seniority and wisdom, and their duty is to settle disputes,

³⁶ Derives from "etsire" meaning heads, and "ekuw", groups of people.

³⁷ J. C. De Graft Johnson, "The Fante Asafu", *Africa* 5 (1932), 307-322.

and give advice on custom and ritual. Women are members of their fathers' companies, and some larger towns have a woman's wing.³⁸ In time of war some would accompany the men to the front where they act as cooks and nurses, give moral support to the men, and abuse cowards. A woman may succeed her father or brother on a temporary basis to the position of *asafohen* until a suitable male is recognised.

Among the Fante today, the *asafo* companies are less important than they once were, and if their function had been solely military they might have disappeared. However, they have important social functions, and it is for these reasons they have retained importance among the Fante although at a given time only a minority of members would participate. The attitude of Christians has been ambivalent. Some have completely banned participation in the *asafo* companies regarding them as "pagan" while others have continued to take an active part. As was noted in Chapter 3 many of the officers were literate Christians, barristers and prominent merchants.³⁹

As the *asafo* played such an important role within nineteenth century Fante society it is not surprising that Akaboha II adopted this pattern for the church. The Akaboha arranged to have his divisional chiefs who are all lay men, and each chief has sub-chiefs under him in the Fante *asafo* pattern each responsible for a geographical area. Thus, for example, Winneba circuit was known as Benkum, and Effiduasa as Kyidom. In this sense the *asafo* in the MDCC were like the circuits characteristic of the Methodist Church, and are sometimes referred to as such in English.

Name	Meaning	Area
1 <i>Obaatan</i>	Mother	Abura, Eguafo, Cape Coast
2 <i>Nifa</i>	Right wing	Ajumako
3 <i>Twafu</i>	Scouts	Breman, Ekumfi, Saltpond, Enyan
4 <i>Adonten</i>	Advance guard	Agona
5 <i>Benkum</i>	Left Wing	Awutu, East Gomoa
6 <i>Kyidom</i>	Rear Guard	New Juaben, Nsawam, Kibi.
7 <i>Ekamfo</i> ⁴⁰	Priest	Akwamu, Krobo, Adidome, Hohoe, Ho, Accra, Tema.

³⁸ Ansu Datta, "The Fante *Asafo*: A re-examination", *Africa* 42 (1972), 305-315.

³⁹ J. Christensen, *Double Descent Among the Fanti* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1954), p. 123.

⁴⁰ This disagrees with Opoku who names 6 and 7 as Kyidom No 1 and No 2.

When a person becomes a Christian they may lose their place within the *asafo* structure, but they are now able to join the equivalent *asafo* of the church that will take on the same social responsibilities as did the original *asafo*. The church *asafo*, for example, buy the coffin or shroud for the deceased, organise the appropriate festival on Saturday, and attend church on Sunday to give thanks for the life of the person. In about 1978, the *asafo* were associated with particular geographical areas to meet local needs, but this had difficulties in receiving non-Akan people as they had no *asafo*. More recently, the areas have been extended, and the initial seven companies have increased to eleven as the church has grown. The four additional companies are:

8	<i>Nkosuo</i>	Progress
9	<i>Sanaa</i>	Treasury
10	<i>Dwantua</i>	Mediator
11	<i>Mankrado</i>	Protector

These eleven companies come to the fore during the great "Piodama" festival, which takes place during the annual Peace Festival. This is the time that the church assembles as an *oman*. The members of the church walk in procession behind the elder of their region wearing traditional Fante costume, and assemble in companies in a huge circle around the sports-field of the town.⁴¹ The prophets and priests put on ordinary dress and follow their elder who takes the role of the head of the company. Linguists (*okyeame*) came before the Akaboha on the behalf of their *asafo* leader to acknowledge their commitment to the king.

It is important to note that not all the changes were attempts to implement Fante traditions. In 1962, for example, Akaboha II changed his views on baptism (*esubo*) and prophesied that all members should be baptised by immersion.⁴² People do not seem to know the reason for this change, but for most people the theological reason did not matter since the instruction was said to have been given by direct revelation to the Akaboha. Until this time both adults and infants were baptised by pouring water over their heads as practised in the Methodist Church in Ghana. Many of the older

⁴¹ Generally men wear their *kenke* cloth, and the women their best African dress. Even I was given a *kenke* cloth to wear almost as if the aim was to remove all trace of Western clothing at least for one day.

⁴² The Fante word *esubo* is the word translated "baptism", but it overlaps with the word *enuma*. *Esubo* has various uses within the church, such as for ritual cleansing. A person may be anointed to announce them clean from a sickness, or after having given birth

members still remember the day when all the people from the town were taken by trucks down to the river where they were all baptised. The MDCC is not anabaptist as suggested by Baëta, but does baptise by immersion those who have not previously been baptised as adults⁴³. The pastor's conference of 1962 made the decision:

All membership baptism shall henceforth be by immersion only, and once (not thrice) in the Name of Jesus. "As brother _____ I baptize you in the name of Jesus. Amen."⁴⁴

It is interesting that baptism was in the Name of Jesus, and not the triune formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. None of the members are aware of any significance in this point.

The Apostles' Creed was also adapted to make it more relevant to the members of the church by the insertion of the name of the MDCC. Thus, the Creed now reads, "... I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Musama Disco Christo Church and all true Christian churches everywhere in the world, the communion of saints..." The change is significant in that it shows the church was conscious of an international Christian community of which it wanted to be a part. Although the MDCC wanted to be African it also wanted to be recognised on the world scene.

Mathapoly Moses rejected some practices that had become part of the church life. It was a common fear among the Fante that the ghost of a man might return and attempt to have sexual intercourse with the living partner causing barrenness or sterility. Various rituals were performed to pacify the ghosts, and it was therefore a common practice for the old women of the village to sleep in the room with the widow for companionship and protection. This must have been practised in the MDCC because at the l'Odomey conference of 1953 the following directive was made:

There must be no performance of widowhood in the Church. The old women in church should sleep in the room of the deceased during the seven days system of prayers only, and the bed of the deceased must be removed and not to be refixed during the final obsequies.⁴⁵

⁴³ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 50.

⁴⁴ *Programme for the Peace Festival 1962*, (Mozano: MDCC, 1962).

⁴⁵ *Programme of the Peace festival 1954*, (Mazano: MDCC, 1954), p. 8.

Death was not to be considered as something to be mourned, but a victory over death. Thus, against popular practice, white cloth was preferred to red and black at a funeral to reflect the victory.

The Akaboha also introduced pastoral training for the prophets and priests of the church. The Musama Pastoral Seminary was founded 6 October 1960 to give practical training in English language, Arithmetic, Typewriting, as well as Church History in Ghana, Church Ritual, Music & Lyrics. The Akaboha was eager to train young people and these times are still remembered with much appreciation by those involved. The college produced a whole generation of educated Musamans most of whom became pastors in the church or teachers. However, within three or four years it was closed because of lack of funds, and few pastors have since received much formal instruction.

Akaboha II recognised the importance of schools, and was eager to co-operate with Nkrumah's Accelerated Development Plan. This plan sought to make education free and compulsory up to University level. For secondary education it was however, often necessary for the child to go to boarding school as these schools were few and far between. To enable members of the church to benefit from higher education, Akaboha II set up the Jehu-Appiah Memorial College at Agona Swedru.⁴⁶ This was a secondary and business school open to all, but for pastors and their dependants it gave full scholarships, and a pay-as-you-can system of fees for members.

* * * * *

The movement for national independence greatly affected the young Mathapoly Moses, and inspired him in the hope for African political liberation. Mathapoly was also very conscious of the promises that had been made concerning his birth and future role. These two aspirations of African liberation and leadership of the MDCC often pulled in the same direction, but on occasions they pulled opposite ways. As the anointed Head of the church he sought to implement the radical nature of African

⁴⁶ Agona Swedru was the chief town of the district, and would therefore serve the wider community.

identity popularised during the Nkrumah period. One can identify four aspects of the development.

First was the removal of remaining elements of Methodist practice that were by that time considered as “foreign”. Just as Nkrumah believed in the total liberation of the whole continent of Africa, so Mathapoly Moses wanted a genuine expression of Christianity in African forms rather than a copy of an imported Western church. He followed a deliberate policy of changing the practices within the MDCC that had come from the Methodist Church and finding an African alternative. These included infant baptism and church circuits.

Second, he saw the MDCC as the African expression of Christian spirituality containing new patterns given by prophecy. Some aspects were more easy to change than others. Even here tensions emerged as to which rituals could be adopted. As I have shown the *asafo* system was accepted, while widowhood customs were condemned.

Third, although Akaboha II wanted to implement an African expression of Christianity he was eager for modern development, and wanted Mazano to reflect this in its building and practice. Even in 1958 Thompson wrote: “Education of the children is a cardinal concern of Prophet M. Jehu-Appiah and the first School built by the church in the town is flourishing satisfactorily.”⁴⁷ Akaboha II wanted the church to be an African church for the new independent African, and not merely a museum of the past.

Finally, the Akaboha wanted the MDCC to be part of the Church universal, but with its own distinct quality of being a genuinely African church. The MDCC had not been accepted by the major historic churches within Ghana, but their belief in the power of the Holy Spirit with regard to prophecy and healing meant that the MDCC found affinity with the emerging Pentecostal denominations as will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Innovations are never easy, and even a charismatic personality such as Akaboha II found resistance among his people. Many of the leaders were deeply shocked when he proposed to set up a small clinic in Mozano, which seemed to go totally against the

⁴⁷ Thompson, “Mazano - Home of the Faithful”, p. 20.

teaching of the founder rejecting all medicines. He had to back down from such a proposal, but many other ideas were instituted in the church. Most of the members saw the new innovations as coming, not from Biblical teaching, but from the pronouncements of an anointed prophet of God. Akaboha II was a man very much aware of the times, seeking a form of Christianity that would express African independence. For his father the formation of the church was more a response to the criticisms of his search for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Akaboha II sought to express the life of the new church in terms of a new African pride that was part of the movement for African independence in every area of life.

Chapter 8

The Akaboha and the Osagyefo (1948-1966)

*So Nkrumah is really the hero of Africa
And who designed the cover of the C.P.P. manifesto
His heart on the South with his starry eyes
Gazing over the four West African colonies his motherland?
Alas! Only the Gold Coast on the map is inserted
But already, "I am the monarch of all I survey",
he has whispered in his mind.
A Soliloquy by Jehu Appiah II¹*

The period from 1948-51 was a watershed in Ghanaian politics when the "model colony" run by the officials, chiefs and intelligentsia was transformed into a national parliamentary system under the control of the Convention Peoples Party (CPP). The rate of change was astonishing even for those who were active participants in the events. Under colonial administration the historic churches were the largest and most influential organisations outside the Colonial authorities. They were involved in social services, linguistics, education and medical programmes meaning that their influence was far greater than the number of their adherents would suggest.² The four major historic denominations (Presbyterians, Methodists, Roman Catholics and Anglicans) made up 90% of the Christian community, while the remainder consisted of a variety of many small independent churches of which the MDCC was one.

¹ John S. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana 1949-1966* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1988), p. 59. Pobee attributes this soliloquy to "Jehu Appiah II", and gives reference to Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946-1960* (London: OUP, 1964), p. 214. Austin quotes the soliloquy from page 19 of the CPP manifesto *Operation 104*, which was published in 1954 prior to the elections. Austin notes that the soliloquy was written by "Jehu Appiah", but makes no reference to the MDCC. Pobee, however, identifies the writer with Jehu Appiah II of the MDCC, which is probably correct as Pobee personally met the Akaboha.

² In 1949 the population of the Gold Coast was 4,501,218 and the religious composition as adherents was as follows: African Traditional Religions 66%, Christianity 30%, and Islam 4%. *Colonial Reports, Gold Coast* (1951) London, (1952) p. 75.

Balandier's proposition that "in Black Africa religious innovations constitute the pre-history of modern nationalism" has long been subject to criticism.³ Ranger comments that in many African countries nationalism and religious independence were more or less simultaneous rather than sequential, and no nationalist movement has sprung directly out of an independent church.⁴ However, one cannot study these movements without being aware that even though they were not expressly anti-colonial they constituted a form of politics. As Beinart and Bundy wrote, it "is not so much *whether* they were 'political' but what *form* their religious and political activity took."⁵

This chapter explores the relationship between the MDCC and the CPP government reflected in their leaders Mathapoly Moses Jehu-Appiah and Kwame Nkrumah respectively. Both men had a distinctive charismatic quality, and a common desire for African independence. How much was the MDCC merely a product of its time drawing upon the philosophical ideas of Nkrumah to enhance its social position? How much were the aspirations of Nkrumah and Jehu-Appiah dual aspects of a common hope, one in the political realm and the other in the religious?

Kwame Nkrumah

Kwame Nkrumah was born, by his own reckoning, in 1909 at Nkroful, a tiny village in the south-west of the Gold Coast, now Western Region of Ghana.⁶ His father was probably a goldsmith, although nothing is known of him. His mother was a Roman Catholic, and Nkrumah also joined the church and attended the church school in Half Assini on the border with the Ivory Coast. As a small boy he must have witnessed the coming of Prophet Harris to the region in 1914, and heard the stories recounted of his visit. Later, Nkrumah attended Achimota College which had been established to prepare leadership for an independent state. In 1935 he went to the USA to read Theology, Sociology and Education at Lincoln University. He also engaged in

³ G. Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa: Dynamics in Central Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970).

⁴ Terence Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa", *African Studies Review* 29 (1986), 1-69.

⁵ W. Beinart, & C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles. Rural Politics and Popular Consciousness in South Africa* (London: James Currey, 1986), p. 43.

⁶ Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad 1935-1947* (Legon: Freedom Publication, 1966), p. 17.

journalism and undertook the organisation of politically-oriented African student groups. He went to London in 1945 and for two years participated in student anti-colonial politics and the pan-African movement.

The United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) was founded on 4 August 1947 under the directions of a working committee. It was advertised as a nation-wide movement, dedicated to restoring leadership into the hands of the "chiefs and people", and prepared for the time when the country would be self-governing. The initial members of the UGCC were the intelligentsia, usually children of chiefs and wealthy traders, and active members of the historic denominations. They were characterised by literacy, fluency in the English language, and Christianity. Even within the intelligentsia De Graft-Johnson has identified two divisions, the lower-middle class and the upper-middle class.⁷ The former group consisted of clerks, school teachers and shopkeepers, and the latter lawyers, doctors and senior civil servants. Although the upper-middle class was small they were rapidly gaining status and looking for the opportunity of taking over from their colonial rulers. In contrast, most of the people had little or no education. They included the peasant-farmers, petty-traders, and labourers recognised by their ragged vests, known as the "verandah boys" from their practice of sleeping on verandahs. As far as the intelligentsia were concerned, these were of little significance especially in the political process.

Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast in December 1947, and was appointed secretary of the UGCC. Early in their association it was clear that Nkrumah was a different type of man than the intelligentsia of the working committee. Although Dr J. B. Danquah campaigned together with Nkrumah, the working committee never overcame its initial unease. The UGCC began to look for support from the local youth societies that now existed in most towns, and they eagerly responded to the nationalist ideas spurred on by growing discontent. There were two particular grievances that affected many of the southern population - cocoa farmers were affected by swollen-root disease of their crops, and the urban population were affected by the increase in the price of imported goods. This eventually led to a boycott on the sale of cotton prints, tinned meat, flour,

⁷ K. E. De Graft-Johnson, "The Evolution of Élites in Ghana", in P.C. Lloyd (ed.), *The New Élites of Tropical Africa* (London: International African Institute, 1966), pp. 104-115.

biscuits, and a wide range of imported goods as from 24 January 1948. Another discontented group was the ex-servicemen who on Saturday 28 February 1948 organised a march in Accra. They were checked by a small detachment of police. Stones were hurled and in the disorder several people were shot. Rioting began in various areas of the city, and offices and shops were looted and set on fire. News of the disturbances spread to other towns where rioting also occurred. The Governor declared a state of emergency. The leaders of the UGCC were imprisoned, which immediately increased their popularity. The council of paramount chiefs, in contrast, sent messages of loyalty to the Governor and welcomed the measures taken to restore order. This resulted in a growing division between the chiefs, and the "young men" with the leaders of the boycott. After their release from detention most of the UGCC leaders moved to the defence of law and order. By mid-1948 a new path of reform was opened to them by the British government when it accepted the recommendations of the Watson Commission to formulate proposals for a new constitution.⁸

Nkrumah, however, wanted rapid change, and after careful planning, on 12 June 1949, he broke away from the UGCC to form the Convention Peoples Party (CPP). Active members of the CPP were clerks, teachers, small traders, cocoa farmers, and local contractors. Austin writes: "It was from this broad social group of elementary-school-leavers that the leaders of the radical wing of the nationalist movement were drawn in 1949 - locally rooted in the village, yet beneficiaries also of an educational system which, for all its short-comings, endowed them with a common language - English - and an awareness of common interests which cut across tribal boundaries."⁹ This was the same class from which the leaders of the MDCC had emerged. Nkrumah demanded immediate self-government and called for a campaign of civil disobedience. He was imprisoned on 20 January 1950, but from his cell continued to lead the CPP to victory in the election of February 1951. The British Government had no option but to allow the country to move to independence.

Nkrumah's ideology was a mixture of emotive words and ideas interpreted by his followers in various ways. Although it lacked clarity and coherence, certain significant themes may be identified. First, Nkrumah held socialist views that were readily

⁸ Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946-1960* (London: OUP, 1964), p. 77.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

followed by the CPP. At the second annual conference of the CPP in August 1951, the objective was set "to establish a Socialist State in which all men and women shall have equal opportunity and where there shall be no capitalist exploitation."¹⁰ Nkrumah's own views on imperialism were much influenced by Lenin as shown by the title of his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, a title deliberately reminiscent of Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stages of Capitalism*.¹¹ Nkrumah begins the book with a quotation from Lenin, and starts with the argument that imperialism is the consequence of the capitalist organisation of production. The Soviet Union was for him a revolutionary model from which he accepted a Marxist interpretation of history and the theory of scientific socialism. However, the CPP was an independence movement, and did not merely adopt the Leninist model but sought to express it in African terms.

A second aspect of Nkrumah's ideology was the quest for African authenticity called "African Personality", which was an expression first used by Edward Blyden. The aim was to erase the tendency to treat the African as inferior to other races. He contrasted his ideas with Negritude, which he considered merely literary affectation, not a brotherhood based on a criterion of colour.

By the African genius, I mean something positive, our socialist conception of society, the efficiency and validity of our traditional statecraft, our highly developed code of morals, our hospitality and our purposeful energy..... The concept of the African Personality seeks to inculcate black awareness; being proud of the black race, black heritage, and black history.¹²

Nkrumah therefore sought to accommodate African culture, and was antagonistic to the obsession of many intellectuals with European ways and values - *aborofosem*. On the other hand, he understood that traditional culture had two tendencies militating against African progress: resistance to change, and tendency to disunity. Nkrumah's cultural policy therefore was essentially an attempt to cope with three tendencies: chieftaincy, tribalism and *aborofosem*.¹³ Nkrumah knew that chieftaincy was a central

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹¹ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London, 1965).

¹² Quoted in John S. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana 1949-1966* (Accra: Asempa Pub., 1988), p. 31.

¹³ G. P. Hagan, "Nkrumah's Cultural Policy", *The Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah* (New Jersey: African World Press, 1993), pp. 3-26.

institution of the Ghanaian cultural identity, and that the people were committed to the institution. Although Nkrumah could accommodate chieftaincy, he could never tolerate "tribalism". He was therefore faced with the question: If Africa was to unite so must Ghana, but how could tribalism be removed without losing African cultural identity?

Nkrumah and the CPP endeavoured to create in Ghana a socialist state encompassing every aspect of human life. His philosophy therefore had an immediate bearing upon the church in Ghana. Nkrumah's Marxist Socialism appeared to contrast with his claim to be a Christian, but his views about religion were complex and somewhat contradictory. In his autobiography he writes: "Today I am a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist and I have not found any contradiction between the two."¹⁴ Nkrumah was not militant in his opposition to Christianity, unlike the European Communists. He had been influenced by Christianity and appreciated the benefits of the schools and hospitals that the church had brought. The major points of conflict related to the methods of achieving common aims.

Attitude of the historic churches to Nkrumah

The growth of the CPP provided a serious challenge to the historic churches that were essentially still modelled on patterns brought from Europe. Four issues became points of major contention: church leadership, African tradition, personal glorification of the political leader, and the formation of the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement. Until 1959 the historic churches, except the Presbyterians, all had expatriate heads. The continued presence of white leadership at the highest level merely confirmed the impression of the churches as another front for European domination. These denominations were generally slow to change, although the Presbyterians had appointed Rev. Peter Hall, a black West Indian as moderator in 1918, and Rev. A. Asare a Gold Coaster in 1923. Finally, John Kodwo Amisshah was appointed the first Archbishop of Accra, and head of the Roman Catholic Church in Ghana in 1960. Rev. Francis Ferguson Grant, a native of Anomabo was elected chairman of the Methodist Conference in 1960. Only the Anglicans continued with an expatriate head of Church, and this, in part, explains

¹⁴ Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: the Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (Edinburgh, 1957).

why Bishop Roseveare was so castigated by the State as a “national enemy” and “saboteur”.¹⁵ The Independent African Churches, on the other hand, were themselves a protest movement against the historic churches and their Western leadership. A major theme in the message of Prophet Appiah was that the MDCC had been founded by an African, showing that God was able to speak through an African to form a church run and organised by Africans for Africans.

The second issue related to the foreignness of Christianity, and the generally negative attitude of the missionary related churches to African culture. One example of the clash between the Christian Council of Ghana and the CPP occurred concerning the pouring of libation. The Duchess of Kent came to Ghana to represent the Queen at the independence celebration on 6 March 1957. At the official reception of welcome libation was poured in the traditional way to thank the spirits for a safe journey. The Christian Council was outraged and expressed its opinion. The event raised important questions. Can libation be regarded as an independent rite separate from its traditional religious significance? Is libation merely an African custom? The CPP replied to the Christian Council that they were performing libation as an expression of their African identity. The Christian Council, however, saw it as an act of idolatry because for the Christian, supplication was only to be made to the Supreme Being. Church and State were arguing at cross purposes. For the former the issue was one of idolatry, and for the latter it was one of projecting the African Personality. The matter was raised in such a manner that the Church could not avoid making a protest, and yet this merely highlighted the unafrikan character of the institution.

A second example was that of marriage ordinance and especially polygamy. Under colonial rule the churches were the agents of the State in ordering marriage, but in practice few people married in church and many church attenders had concubines. In 1960, the government of Kwame Nkrumah put forward an amendment to the Criminal Code that became a White Paper in 1961.¹⁶ The white paper called for the recognition of “those of our customs and practices which are not repugnant to natural justice and morality”. Polygamy, for example, “should be developed in a manner in keeping with the progress of the country”. The white paper advocated that a polygamist should

¹⁵ *Ghanaian Times* in 7 August 1962.

¹⁶ *White Paper on Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance*, White Paper No. 3/61 Accra (1961).

register one wife, and divorce was only to be granted after the failure of mediation by the heads of the two families. The historic churches were strong in their condemnation, and the Government finally had to shelve the bill. However, the White Paper illustrated how the CPP presented an arrangement close to that advocated and indeed practised by the MDCC.

The State apparatus may use institutional religion to reinforce its own position and power, but it may also develop its own quasi-religious practices. Nkrumah adapted the traditional role of the *omanhene* to the contemporary situation to enhance his own prestige among the people. The near deification of the Head of State came as a surprise for the Church in Ghana and presented major challenges. Religious language was used by the CPP as an expression of devotion from its earliest days. For example, on the eve of the 1951 elections the *Evening News* (the CPP paper) contained the lines: "Chameleon organisations shall pass away but the Political Holy Ghost, CPP shall stay for evermore." This is clearly analogous to the Biblical passage, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall never pass away" (Mt. 24:35).

In 1950, the creed of the CPP was based upon the Apostles Creed. "I believe in the Convention People's Party, the Dynamic Political Party, the Liberty of the Masses, The Progress of the Nation, The Resurrection of Ghana, And Freedom Everlasting."¹⁷ Similarly Christian hymns were adapted and regularly used at CPP rallies. The use of clear Christian symbolism illustrates the widespread influence of Christian ideas among the people of the Gold Coast, and Nkrumah, as an astute politician, realised the value of biblical imitations for slogans in his political campaigns. The biblical imagery provided ready-made metaphors to communicate his message to people who had at least heard the preaching of the Christian evangelists even if only a minority were Christian. Although the historic churches were not happy with such usage, it was not until 1958 that the Church made a major protest. In this year a large statue of Nkrumah was erected in front of Parliament House, and on the pedestal was written the inscription, "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added to you." This was a clear parody of Matthew 6:33, and the Christian Council wrote a letter of protest to the Minister of Works. The Minister came to the conclusion that

¹⁷ Quoted by Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, p. 127.

the protest amounted to the churches becoming a political party, and as a result they were severely censored.

The third area of disagreement between the Christian Council, which brought together the mainline Protestant churches, and the state concerned the application of honorific titles to Nkrumah. Honorific titles were a frequent element of traditional Akan chieftaincy, and Nkrumah was not averse to using such imagery. He was willing to be carried shoulder high under a chief's umbrella to shouts of praise from his followers. This was the very type of ritual accepted by the MDCC as an honourable way of recognising a leader. There are two titles that give an appreciation of the problems faced by the Church. The first title is *Osagyefo* which literally means, "one who saves in the battle", or deliverer. It was first used of Osei Tutu I (1697-1731) of Asante when he delivered them from the domination of Denkyira. The African praise name had come to be applied, particularly in the Fante Methodist hymnology, to God. Now the CPP were using the term in a political context to state that it was Nkrumah who had led the people to independence from colonial powers. A second title was *Asomdwehene* that literally means "Prince of Peace". This term does not have any traditional meaning, and was used specifically by Christians of Jesus Christ. By use of the term *Asomdwehene* the clear implication was that Nkrumah was being portrayed as Messiah after the fashion of Jesus Christ. Pobee says that the Church is not recorded as having made any protest against the use of this title.¹⁸ The Christ-typology continued to develop. The editorial of the *Evening News* of February 1960 made a clear link between Nkrumah and Jesus Christ. On 21 March 1960, the same newspaper told of Nkrumah's "seven days in the wilderness", and a week later of his "Transfiguration". The fact that Nkrumah accepted these honorifics shows that he was aware that in the minds of the people he was taking to himself the sacred aspect of Akan chieftaincy with the charismatic qualities of the Messiah. By invoking the institution of kingship he sought to give continuity with traditional ideas.

The fourth area of friction between the churches and the CPP, was over the formation of the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement. The young people of the schools and colleges had always been the main supporters of the CPP. The new youth movement

¹⁸ Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 143.

was established in June 1960 with the objective "to inculcate in the children of Ghana a feeling of pride for the country." They were to be "Apostles of the New Social Order".¹⁹ The movement grew rapidly and by April 1962 there were 5,000 branches all over the country with a membership of half a million.²⁰ In order to allay some of the criticism of the Young Pioneer Movement as atheistic, Nkrumah wanted to appoint a minister for the movement. Nkrumah therefore asked the Methodist Church to second Rev. J. S. A. Stephens to be National Chaplain of the movement. However, many church leaders criticised the movement as godless, and disagreed with the Pioneer pledge.²¹ The criticism expressed by Bishop Roseveare resulted in a strong reaction from the Press, and finally his deportation.

A further development of the CPP was the decision made on 16 October 1961 that branches of the CPP should be formed in all government establishments, workshops, farms and churches. The aim was to propagate the new doctrine throughout the whole of Ghanaian society. The historic churches were disinclined to implement this law because they considered that it identified them exclusively with one political party - the CPP. In contrast the MDCC quickly implemented the new policy, and eagerly addressed the new President as *Osagyefo*. The members of the MDCC had little difficulty with the praise titles given to Nkrumah, because they already used horn-blowing and praise titles for their Akaboha.²² These were regarded as the proper Ghanaian way of addressing a leader.

Behind these outward aspects of dispute was the greater issue of the new independent state seeking to gain control over schools and hospitals that remained within the domain of the mission churches. This had provided a useful mechanism for the colonial rulers, but contradicted the basic principles of a socialist government. Similar issues were to reappear in many other countries throughout Africa.²³ In contrast, because neither the independent churches, nor any of the newly emerging Pentecostal

¹⁹ *Evening News*, 17 June 1961.

²⁰ Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 129

²¹ The first line reads: "I sincerely promise to live by the ideals of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Founder of the State of Ghana and Initiator of the African Personality."

²² Debrunner comments in his field notes of his visit to Mazano in 1952 of the practice of horn-blowing as common for traditional chiefs.

²³ Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), p. 151.

and mission churches had established schools and hospitals, there was far less tension between them and the new government.

Attitude of the MDCC to Nkrumah

The attitude of the independent churches was far more positive towards the new government than that of the historic churches, at least in the earlier years of Nkrumah's rule. It is widely affirmed by the older members of the church that Prophet Appiah and Nkrumah were very friendly, but it is difficult to determine the nature of the relationship in the light of the recasting of the story due to the changing political situation. However, the Church constitution that was originally drafted in 1959, and rewritten in 1974 says:

He (Jemisimiham Jehu Appiah) was a great friend of Kwame Nkrumah who became the First Prime Minister and also the First President of Ghana.²⁴

Today, some of the old members of the MDCC are quick to say that even in the 1950s they had hesitations about the methods used by the Party although they were in agreement with the aims.

As was mentioned in Chapter 7, Prophet Appiah had for many years been a member of the ARPS, and had been on its Executive Committee.²⁵ After the social unrest along the Coast, the ARPS called an emergency meeting to be held at Cape Coast on 19 March 1948. Baëta tells that on his journey to the meeting, Appiah "held a consultation with Nkrumah at Saltpond with regard to the restoration of peace."²⁶ Appiah is said to have prophecied that independence would eventually come to the country, but not through the ARPS. Akaboha II recounted that after this pronouncement his father received many enquiries from his followers as to whether Nkrumah was the person whom the prophecy had envisaged because Nkrumah had just started to canvass for support.²⁷ Baëta also writes: "after the political disturbances of 1948, the founder himself welcomed Dr Kwame Nkrumah to Mazano for purification

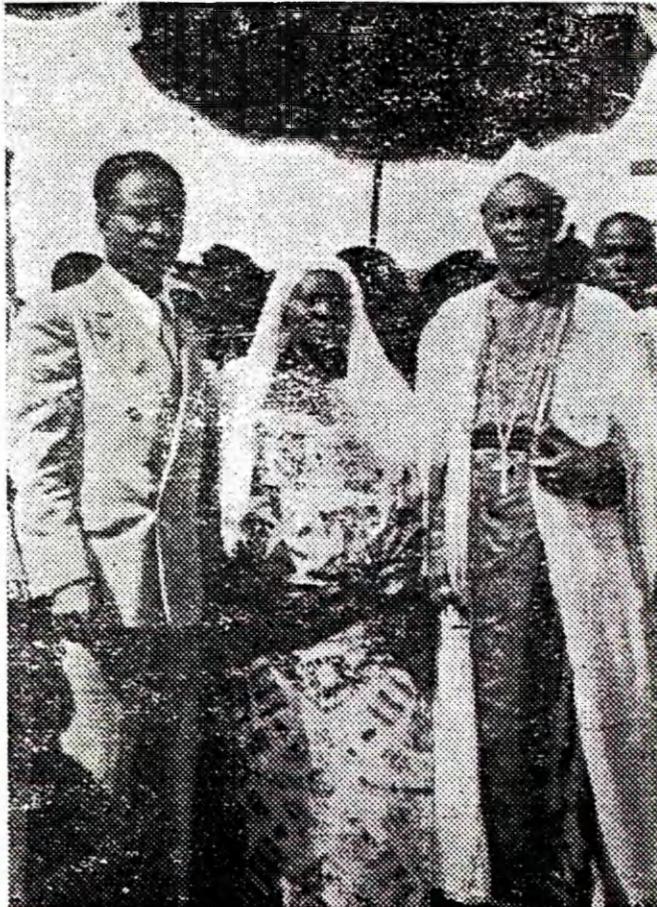
²⁴ MDCC Church Constitution, 1974, 6.

²⁵ Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad 1935-1947*, p. 120 tells that in September 1945 Nkrumah wrote to the president of the ARPS, Kobina Sekyi, to introduce himself.

²⁶ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 41. This meeting is also reported by John Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 58

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Figure 8:1 Visit of Dr Kwame Nkrumah to the first Peaceful Year Festival at New Mazano in 1951.



Photograph from *Programme of 4th Peaceful Year Celebration 1954*.

from his arrest and brief deportation.”^{28 29} While at school in Cape Coast Mathapoly is said by his family to have become involved with the nationalist movement, and eagerly endorsed the more radical policies of Nkrumah.³⁰ After the death of his father Mathapoly accepted the responsibilities as head of the MDCC, and Nkrumah is said to have visited him in Mazano on two occasions in 1951 and 1953.³¹ The photograph in Figure 8:1 closely matches a similar photograph given to Debrunner by Akaboha II in 1952, so confirming the 1951 visit. However, there is no external evidence for a second visit, but the amount of oral tradition would suggest a second, or more, especially during the period 1951-54 when Nkrumah was Leader of Government Business and seeking to canvas for votes before the 1954 elections.

The reason for Nkrumah’s association with Akaboha II was clearly complex and is now almost impossible to fully unravel. Both men had common aspirations: Nkrumah believed in the total political liberation of the whole continent of Africa, while Akaboha II sought for a genuinely African Christian spirituality. Akaboha II was an influential person with many followers, and Nkrumah was canvassing for support the CPP. Another area of association is said by the MDCC to have been that Nkrumah sought consultations with the Akaboha especially with regards to the interpretation of dreams. Although there is no external evidence to confirm these reports, this appears possible from the strength of oral tradition. Nkrumah was a complex individual, and his beliefs in the African Personality would have allowed him to take dreams and occult powers seriously.

In the early years the MDCC would certainly like to give the impression that Akaboha II was a spiritual advisor to Nkrumah, but by 1961 the value of any relationship seems to have waned. In a letter written 13 December 1961, the Akaboha wrote publicly to express the support of the MDCC for the President.³² He claims that the historic churches were speaking of the MDCC “as the religious wing of the CPP”, and was nicknamed by them “cockerel worshippers” after the symbol of the CPP. However,

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁹ John Pobee writes that this was verified to him by Akaboha II, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 71.

³⁰ In July 1948 Nkrumah opened the first Ghana College in the Oddfellows Hall in Cape Coast to try and meet the plight of the Cape Coast secondary schoolboys who had gone on strike in February. Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946-1960*, p. 81.

³¹ *The Mycan* 1 (1971), p. 19, says that he “paid two visits in Mozano in 1951 and 1953”.

³² A copy of the original letter is retained by the MDCC in their central office files in Mozano.

the letter also contains a note of disappointment at the failure of the Osagyefo to fulfil his promises.

 Dated: 13 December 1961

“My cause of interview with the Osagyefo, the President”.

1 Our Secret Service to the Osagyefo

- 1 Prayers for the protection from enemies.
- 2 Success in all his political plans, i.e. Socialism and African Unity.

2 Our Sufferings and Torture for the Sake of CPP

- 1 We are sometimes nicknamed “cockerel worshippers”.
- 2 Our pastors are hated by the pastors of other churches because of our political affiliation.
- 3 One of our prophets was severely beaten in Ashanti by the N.L.M. who died soon after the incident. He was the Prophet S. Buadi in charge of the MDC Church, Nkenkasu, Ashanti. I was obliged to run to Kumasi to bring the resident pastor of our branch of the Church late in the night as the N.L.M. had plotted to kill him. Myself, I was chased by some ‘bandits’ believed to be members of the N.L.M. from Effiduasi to Kumasi at 10 p.m. a day previous to the mass CPP rally prior to the last election for Independence.

3 Our Social Stand in Ghana

- 1 We always suffer the monopoly of the Historic (imported) Churches.
- 2 We did not have the access of open schools and as such our children are forced to belong to the Churches to which the schools are attached.
- 3 There is always a propaganda going on by the Historical Churches that the Government will close all the small Churches and for that many prominent persons who used to be active members seem to have been inactive and backslidden.
- 4 We are denied of all social and public amenities by the so-called Christian Council such as Radio Broadcasting, the Press favour and other public functions.

4 Our Political Stand

- 1 Always the Holy Spirit prophesies through our Prophets about the future greatness of the Osagyefo and the CPP not only in Africa, but in the whole world.
- 2 The Church is therefore known by us to be the Religious Wing of the CPP.

3 We opened a branch of the Party (CPP) in our headquarters in 1951, the same year the Osagyefo then the Leader of Government business paid his official visit to our headquarters.

4 We have allowed one of our Pastors, young Jehu-Appiah to be a trained District organiser of the Young Pioneers. We have further appointed one Pastor in person of Rev. J. C. Selby to be a Political Representative of the Church in all CPP Mass Rallies.

5 Our Request to the Osagyefo

1 We pray that the Osagyefo becomes the defender of African faith, i.e. Father of all African Religious Faiths.

2 We further pray that the Osagyefo's Government considers to appoint some members of the Church to serve Ghana in anyway the Osagyefo chooses.

3 We humbly ask that the Government set up some industry near our Headquarters, (Mozano near Gomoa Eshiem) whereby we can get our youngsters and those in the neighbourhood employed.

4 Finally, we humbly ask that our Church be restored to the social life of this country.

Our Pledge

I, the Prophet M. Moses Jehu-Appiah and all the members of the Musama Disco Christo Church (The Army of Christ Church) totalling 25,000 do pledge our unflinching support to the Osagyefo the President and wish him long life and prosperity and the success of the dynamic Convention Peoples Party.

Floreat Ghana

Prophet M. Moses Jehu-Appiah

General Head Prophet

Musama Disco Christo Church

Ghana

Mozano³³

The letter has the tone of a plea for recognition and assistance based upon the continuing support of the church for the CPP. Mention is made of the visit of Nkrumah in 1951, but there is no mention of a second visit.

³³ Letter from Akaboha II requesting an interview with the President, dated 13 December 1961.

The MDCC readily became involved with the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement. According to the MDCC, Nkrumah initially wanted the Akaboha to take the role of chaplain of the Pioneer Movement, but the Akaboha suggested his younger brother Rev. Jere Offa Jehu-Appiah. He was seconded to the Movement from 1962 until 1965 when he was recalled to the church. When I spoke to Rev. Jere Offa himself, he recounted with some relief that he returned just three months before the coup occurred in February 1966.³⁴ If he had remained within the movement he was convinced that he would have been killed following the coup.

The Dark Days

It appears that most Ghanaians supported Nkrumah until about 1962. He not only led the movement towards independence but initially generated new employment and a new vision of the future. Overseas he made Ghana a country to be respected and a voice to which people listened. The borrowing of foreign funds enabled huge amounts to be spent on the construction of roads, hospitals and government services. But corruption and mismanagement were common in public and private life. Then, in 1963-4 the world price of cocoa fell, and the nation was thrown into major financial difficulties. Excessive expenditure on social plans and Leninist economic programmes were unsustainable, and resulted in massive national debt.

On 8 April 1961, Nkrumah made his famous "Dawn Broadcast" in which he accused his own party members of bribery and corruption. The Christian Council wrote to the President associating itself with the sentiments expressed in the Dawn Broadcast, and deploring the corruption in society. Many individual ministers preached sermons against corruption, but the truth was that many Christians were also seeking to exploit the new wealth. Pobee confesses that many pastors and priests had girl friends, and practised double-dealing just like the politicians.³⁵ The Church therefore lacked the moral high ground to question the growing corruption in society, and they seemed overwhelmed by the ruthlessness and strength of the CPP. Apart from a few brave voices such as those of Bishop R. R. Roseveare, Fr. Damoah the Roman Catholic

³⁴ The Akaboha had three brothers the youngest of whom was Jere Offa Jehu-Appiah. He now has the position of "Church Father" within the MDCC, and resides at Mozano.

³⁵ Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 183.

priest of Saltpond who was imprisoned, and W. E. Ofori Atta ("Pa Willie"), the voice of the church was quiet. Similarly, within the MDCC a more negative attitude developed, but no real criticism. In his welcome address of the 1961 Peace Festival, Akaboha II said, "The world seems to have come to the cross roads this year! Everyone is asking himself: "Am I to abandon things spiritual and pursue those that are material?"..... Brethren, would you not agree with me if I say the world is declining from her Edenic state."³⁶

The Head of State had become increasingly fearful for his own safety since the abortive attempt on his life in August 1962. Many of the older members of the MDCC say that some important people were jealous of the influence of Akaboha II, and sought to stop him seeing the President. "The Akaboha would have given him wise advice, and told him of how the people were feeling."³⁷ It is now difficult to discern how much of this story is the back-writing of history, but clearly the older members are convinced of this interpretation. There was one incident that has been documented that shows something of the attitude of the Akaboha at this crucial time. Every year the head of the MDCC had produced an almanac of events for the coming year, and Akaboha Mathapoly Moses had continued this practice. In 1964, he prophesied that the world would be plunged into darkness for three days, and this event would occur in October of the coming year:

Woe to the earth dwellers for the heavy hand of the Lord shall be firm on them in the month of October. Again there shall be Three Black Days as the sun shall be concealed from over view and there shall be floods everywhere. Then shall this be a period when mankind shall be weighed in the balance of life and death, spirituality and humanity, prosperity and poverty, joy and sorrow, grace and disgrace.³⁸

The country's leading newspaper gave the story front page headlines with a photograph of Akaboha II. The account fired increased speculation as to what the prediction might mean, and some believed that it foretold the fall of Nkrumah.³⁹ As October approached people stockpiled food in preparation for the coming days, and some parents refused to allow their children to attend school. On 4 October 1964, the

³⁶ Akaboha II, *Programme of Peaceful Year Celebration*, (Mozano: MDCC, 1961).

³⁷ Rev. Jere Offa Jehu-Appiah, now regarded as the Church Father.

³⁸ Prophet M Moses Jehu-Appiah, *Programme of Peaceful Year Celebration* (Mozano: MDCC, 1965), p. 4.

³⁹ This is a common belief among the MDCC in which they apply the prophecy to the coup.

Sunday Mirror reported a further prediction from the Akaboha, "The sign may either be slight with greater results, or great with slight results."⁴⁰ The whole month was filled with apprehension. As October ended, and the prediction had not been fulfilled, the Akaboha was subject to a vigorous attack led by the Press. He was accused of causing distress to the gullible and promoting social unrest, and criticised by leaders of the historic churches:

With the Cross and the Bible they succeed in enticing married women to leave their homes to attend "spiritual sessions" at times when their services, attention and care are most needed by their families... Today, there is a whole series of events to suspect that many of these so-called revivalists are nothing but cheats....Hence we are not prepared to allow ourselves to be bamboozled by these never-to-be-true predictions, forecasts and dark dealings which are at variance with our socialistic progress and present-day scientific advancement.⁴¹

The Akaboha told his congregations, "I saw the vision. I heard the voice. I am sure that it will come to pass. God's time is best."⁴² On Sunday, 21 February 1965, the Akaboha distributed a copy of his prophecies for the coming year. In this he repeated that the dark days would certainly come in the pursuing year. He further added that unless the days were shortened even the children of promise would be affected.⁴³ When Nkrumah saw a copy of the hand-out he immediately drafted security men to Mozano. In the morning Nkrumah's chief aid, Ambrose Yankey, arrived with a command that Akaboha II should appear immediately at Flagstaff House.

An account of the meeting was told by the Akaboha II in *The Herald* newspaper six months after the coup that deposed Nkrumah.

When he arrived, he was shown into Nkrumah's office. He sat in a bullet-proof, high-necked Chinese jacket. He looked very serious.

"Jehu", he snapped with his bloodshot eyes looking tense, "I have known you since I returned from America. You have said certain things about me which I finally found out to be true. But I must confess, you are now getting on my nerves with these frightfully ridiculous prophecies. What are they all about? And what are you up to?" Nkrumah said this before he even asked me to sit down. After I sat down to speak, he shouted at me. "You are frightening everyone with this thing you call Prophecy. Don't abuse the freedom of worship I have guaranteed in my constitution. I have a good mind to remove you altogether from the public eye.

⁴⁰ *Sunday Mirror*, October 4, 1964.

⁴¹ Editorial *Sunday Mirror*, 6 December 1964.

⁴² *The Herald*, September 1966.

⁴³ *Programme of Peaceful Year Celebration*, (Mozano: MDCC, 1965), p. 4.

But, I find it difficult to do this. I thought you were a man of God. Now, Jehu, go back to your village and shut up, understand?"

I told Nkrumah that I was doing the work of God and that I couldn't have misled my people. Then he charged: "Where is the darkness you predicted a year ago?"..... Before leaving the Akaboha said to him, "It will definitely come to pass...definitely..."⁴⁴

At the Peaceful Year Celebration in August 1965, Akaboha II gave further prophecies relating to the "Dark Days".

You remember, when these signs come on, it means I have redeemed My last Promise to you; at a time when people shall beg to be enrolled as members of your Church. Was My Hand not firm on you in the month of October when nobody could escape from under My Hand? Why then are you not sure of the rest of My Promise of Darkness, flood and weighting of mankind. If I say mankind shall be weighed it means there is going to be a period when some people shall prefer death to life. When people shall desire too late to have been spiritualists and beg to be enrolled as members of the Musama Disco Christo Church. Many that are rich shall run from their riches and live with the poor - a time when many that do weep shall start to rejoice and evil-doers shall be exposed to a public disgrace.

The controversy over the prophecy not only made the MDCC known throughout the whole of Ghana, but it made it the centre of ridicule. The prophecy of August 1965 goes on to make reference to this last point, and provide something of an answer for the members of the church. The insults were said to actually protect the church from attracting unspiritual people into membership which could certainly have been the case with the political acceptability of the MDCC in previous years.

And to you members of the MDC Church, you remember I told you last year that I shall unveil the Church this year and I have done it. I did so to scare the goats away from the Church. The devils began to use many spiritual Churches and organizations as their place of asylum. But to Musama I have unveiled the Church, in this wonderful way to scare all goats away and had it fenced with public insult and hatred and when you overcome all insults and hatred I assure you it will be too late for any devils or evil persons or the goat to enter the Church.⁴⁵ The *Ayemidi Kusidi* or the Two Pointed Single Sword shall then be unsheathed. May Peace Be Unto You. Amen.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Francis Gass-Porsoo, "I am the prophet of the coup", *The Herald*, September (1966), pp. 6-11. Gass-Porsoo was a freelance reporter who was associated with the MDCC.

⁴⁵ Among the Fante the goat is considered to be animal relating to witchcraft and the Devil.

⁴⁶ Jehu-Appiah, *Programme 1965*, p. 4.

The last time that Nkrumah and Akaboha II are reported to have met was at the beginning of January 1966 when one evening Nkrumah summoned Akaboha to Flagstaff House. An account of the interview was later published in *The Herald*.

This time he looked more jovial, but he still seemed a worried man. "Jehu, you see, I carried the whole thing in a dream—a thing I hated doing. I dreamed there had been heavy rain while I was away to Dodowa. On my return to Flagstaff, the whole palace was in floods. Everything including my bed was afloat. Later, I transported my family and the cabinet plus some very close friends into space. Believe me, Jehu, I was ruling Ghana from there."⁴⁷

The newspaper report tells that on his way back to Mozano, Akaboha II reported to his friends that he knew that Nkrumah would soon be deposed. What Nkrumah had seen in his dream was not his exalted rule, but his isolation from the people of Ghana.⁴⁸ On 18 January 1966, Akaboha II said that he heard an audible voice telling him to summon the members of the church to fast and pray for seven days. On 22 February, Nkrumah flew to China on his attempted peace mission to Hanoi. Before his plane landed in China the coup occurred.⁴⁹ Akaboha II commented, "The Cross had led the way! It had cleared the way for the gun to topple Nkrumah. The three dark days had been shortened to protect the children of promise who were involved."⁵⁰

The well-publicised "Dark Days" Prophecy suggests that the Akaboha was aware of the imminent end of the rule of the CPP, and attempted to walk a difficult line in the face of any retaliation from Nkrumah. Prophecy often provides a medium of communication whose metaphors offer veiled meanings that can be applied with hindsight. Although the Akaboha himself related the prophecy of the "Dark Days" to the coup, the physical phenomena did not occur. However, the association with the coup preserved the integrity of the church and saved them from possible retaliation. Thirty years later, the interpretation of the Dark Days Prophecy still perplexes the leaders of the church, and some believe that it has a wider application possibly to the end of the age. They say that the Dark Days may still be to come!

⁴⁷ Gass-Porsoo, "I am the prophet of the coup".

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Peter Barker, *Operation Cold Chop* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1969).

⁵⁰ Gass-Porsoo, "I am the prophet of the coup".

The overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966 was seen by many Christians as an act of God. It is therefore not surprising that some ceremony of rededication was performed to express the renewed freedom of worship. On Sunday, 22 May 1966, the National Liberation Council interim government convened a ceremony of dedication at Christiansborg Castle, in Accra. The Council was returning the seat of Government to the castle from Flagstaff House which had been the residence of Nkrumah during his last years as President. The ceremony was to be an affirmation of a new order, and ministers of all the main denominations were present. What came as a surprise to the historic churches was the prominent role played by Prophet Wovenu of the Apostles Revelation Society (ARS).⁵¹ Such official sanction of an independent African church fuelled controversy in religious circles. The ARS was founded by Prophet Wovenu, an Ewe from Volta region. He first established a church and a school in his home village, and for the first six years was under the supervision of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EP). When his supervisors told him to charge fees rather than let the children come to the school free, he withdrew in 1945 and formed the ARS. The doctrinal statement of the movement is close to that of the EP Church, but places greater emphasis upon spiritual gifts.⁵² In addition to the emphasis upon religion, the ARS had considerable success in initiating many viable self-improvement associations throughout the Volta Region. An article in *African World* in July 1957 states that the active membership totalled more than 60,000, with 150 congregations having primary schools attached and supervised by 52 pastors.

Although the historic churches were surprised at the involvement of an independent church, it is equally notable that the church that took the lead was not the MDCC. Following the coup, the CPP was banned and allied associations were subject to scrutiny. The Akaboha had tried to distance the church from the CPP during the preceding months, and after the coup wanted to avoid unnecessary discrimination. Perhaps this explains the reason for the article in *The Herald* a few weeks later saying of Akaboha II, "I am the prophet of the coup".⁵³ The event illustrates the changing political scene in which the MDCC became increasingly marginalised. The MDCC had

⁵¹ James W. Fernandez, "Rededication and Prophetism in Ghana", *Cahiers d'etudes africaines* 10 (1970), 229-305.

⁵² C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SPCK, 1962), pp. 76-93.

⁵³ Gass-Porsoo, "I am the prophet of the coup".

faced on-going criticism from the historic denominations for its support of Nkrumah almost to the end. Now the ideas of Nkrumah were no longer acceptable, and politicians were looking for new paths of economic progress in Ghana. Nevertheless, several future political leaders did visit Akaboha II for counsel.

Religion and politics

As was shown in Chapter 5, many of the early members of the MDCC were the marginalised who were not acceptable to the Methodist Church. People who for various reasons failed to join the western educated elite suffered the frustration of falling between the Fante traditional way of life, with its old problems, and the Westernised Christian culture with new problems. When Nkrumah appealed over the heads of the elite for the support of the “verandah boys”, he was addressing himself to the same social group. The MDCC could therefore easily relate to, and support the new political initiative manifest in the CPP. Nkrumah’s break from the UGCC in 1949 appeared to parallel that of their own break from the Methodist Church in 1924.

It would be unfair to consider that Akaboha II was merely an opportunist in his support for the CPP, his time at school showed a genuine concern for issues of nationalism and African identity. Nkrumah’s philosophy was a complex mixture of various themes, and although few would respond to all, there were issues with which most could agree. Nkrumah’s teaching about the African Personality closely related to the aspirations of the MDCC, and stimulated Akaboha II to implement further indigenous elements as an attempt to express the church as genuinely African. Like most of the people in the former colony, Akaboha II believed the promises of rapid economic development with all its material benefits. Maxwell Owusu made a study of the local politics of the Swedru-Nyakrom-Nkum constituency, which is the very area in which Mozano was located. He concludes: “...the electorate in the Swedru-Nyakrom-Nkum constituency wanted tangible things. They wanted a hospital in the constituency ... They wanted the dusty, rugged road from Swedru to Nyakrom and on to Nkum, a

fifteen mile stretch, to be re-built and tarred... Above all, they wanted some form of industry in the constituency to absorb the unemployed youth...”⁵⁴

The open letter from the Akaboha dated 13 December 1961 requesting that the Government set up some industry in the area near Mozano had no success, and by 1964 it was clear that none would occur. The failure to supply the promised economic prosperity led to growing disappointment throughout the country, and it was only a matter of time before Nkrumah would be deposed. The story of high level jealousy and intrigue against the Akaboha to stop him speaking to Nkrumah is well known within the MDCC. Although there is no corroborative evidence, it provided a convenient explanation that retained the integrity of the Akaboha while explaining the former support. It was the prophecy of the “Dark Days” that effectively distanced the MDCC from the CPP, and according to its leaders today saved the church from reprisals after the coup. This was a path fraught with dangers, but the nature of the actual prophecy allowed various interpretations of the coming crises.

Surprisingly after the coup even though the MDCC was marginalised politically, it continued to grow. In the following chapter, I want to show that the primary reason for this growth was the introduction in 1954 by the Akaboha of “instantaneous healing” through prayer and faith in God. Nkrumah and Akaboha II were two men able to hold in tension complex systems of beliefs. Within the philosophy of Nkrumah what was rejected by the people was the failed socialist economic policies, and not nationalistic Africanization. Thus, although the MDCC held to Africanization, it was also able to offer the people healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If there had only been the element of a new African identity, the MDCC may have failed alongside Nkrumah’s philosophy, but it also offered spiritual power to cope with the social crises of the difficult times.

⁵⁴ Maxwell Owusu, “Politics in Swedru” in D. Austin & R. Luckham, (eds.), *Politicians and Soldiers in Ghana* (London: Cass, 1965) p. 260.

Chapter 9

Christianity with Power (1954-72)

The stockily-built, bearded man in white flowing robes fixes a firm but compassionately bewildering gaze on the bony-looking cripple seated in front of him. Slowly, he raises his arm and spreads his palms over the cripple. He begins to chant away incantations. Moments later, his voice is engulfed by the chiming of cymbals, the rumbling of drums and singing of God's praises ... Then there is grave silence. With sweat dotted along his forehead and his eyes bloodshot, the bearded man's deep and powerful voice rises repeatedly in prayer and command: "In the name of the Lord, rise and walk." The man in the wheel chair rises in a dead-slow fashion. He throws his crutches into the crowds amidst shouts of "Halleluia, Halleluia", and vanishes into the crowds in a rather shuffling gait..."¹

The mission churches had long been involved in medical programmes making great use of western scientific medicine, and essentially performing the task associated with the state in western societies. In his 1950 election manifesto Nkrumah included a note about "a free national health service", but in practice this proved inoperable because of the lack of hospitals, doctors and the prohibitive cost. The major denominations were therefore allowed to continue medical work even after independence in 1957. In contrast, the MDCC had rejected the use of both traditional and western medicine (*edur*) arguing that they were not methods used by Jesus. Although healings and miracles were part of the life of the MDCC they had become less frequent. The old members say that this was because they were busy forming themselves as a new church and community in Old Mazano. Suddenly in 1954 Mathapoly Moses Jehu-Appiah introduced a new practice in healing called *Etwapar Yarsa*, which in Fante literally means "the chopping sound healing" with the implication of instantaneous healing.² This significant innovation shows that factors other than the independence movement were influencing the young leader in the 1950s.

¹ Francis Gass-Porsoo, *Sunday Mirror*, 30 August 1964, p. 3.

² *Programme of the Fourth Peaceful Year Celebration*, (Mazano: MDCC, 1954), pp. 8-11.

During the twentieth century many African Christians became dissatisfied with the historic mission churches and sought for spiritual empowerment from others who claimed to have the power of God. This was variously expressed as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the full Gospel or divine healing. In this chapter I first want to examine some of the religious ideas that influenced many Christians in West Africa, which came from beyond the established churches. Although the Pentecostal movement was the major development it was not alone. Improved means of international communications meant that new ideas could now spread quickly around the globe. Second, I want to show how these ideas were reworked by the church leaders, such as Akaboha II, into distinctively African expressions to meet local needs of healing and empowerment.

Quest for spiritual power

One of the early influences in West Africa was the magazine *The Sword of the Spirit* produced by the Faith Tabernacle Congregation of Philadelphia. The magazine claimed to be “a full Gospel publication, emphasising the vital truths of Bible Christianity, pardon and salvation from sin, divine healing, consecration, fullness of the Holy Spirit, God’s financial plan, and the pre-millennial coming of Jesus Christ.”³ Pastor A. Clark, the leader of the Faith Tabernacle, entered into correspondence with several African young men, and encouraged their ministry. In Nigeria the Precious Stone (or Diamond) Society in a search for sponsorship became associated with the Faith Tabernacle in 1923.⁴ As early as 1917 Peter Anim, a member of the Basel Presbyterian Church in the Gold Coast, started receiving literature from Faith Tabernacle.⁵ In 1923 Pastor Clark recognised him as a preacher, and Anim soon established a number of small congregations around Asamankese. Problems with the Faith Tabernacle meant that Anim, like the Nigerian churches, separated from them and requested a missionary from the British Apostolic Church.

³ Hans Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), p. 324.

⁴ Idris J. Vaughan, *Nigeria: The Origins of Apostolic Church Pentecostalism 1931-52* (Ipswich: Ipswich Book Company, 1991), p. 8.

⁵ Robert W. Wyllie, “Pioneers of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. Peter Anim and James McKeown”, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 6 (1973), 109-122.

The Apostolic Church sent James McKeown who arrived in 1937, and settled in Asamankese. He was impressed by the energy of the local people, and they appreciated his willingness to work alongside them. It became apparent that McKeown did not agree with Anim on all things especially the fact that he rejected the use of medicine by Christians for healing. Even the wearing of glasses was regarded as sin because it suggested that the person was trusting in "the god of sand" to meet this need.⁶ Two months after his arrival, McKeown contracted malaria and became seriously ill. Anim was away from Asamankese at that time, and quickly returned when he heard of McKeown's sickness. Members of the assembly were fervently praying for his recovery. It was at this time that it was realised that McKeown had only been introduced to the local chief of Asamankese, and not to the District Commissioner. News of McKeown's presence in the region and his illness was quickly communicated to the District Commissioner in Kibi who arrived the following day, and after a heated dispute insisted on taking the sick man to the European Hospital in Accra.

After his recovery McKeown concentrated his efforts on founding a church in Winneba, and by June 1939 the membership reached about 200 persons. McKeown organised conventions that drew people from various near-by groups, and appointed his first elders. The church grew slowly in the early years. McKeown would trek through the forest for many days visiting villages, and preaching the Gospel. He would often take his wife Sophia with him, and she also started to preach. The strange sight of a white woman preaching was a sufficient curiosity to draw a crowd. The McKeowns found that it was the women who were most committed to their message, and as early as 1938 a Women's Movement was started modelled upon the UK Apostolic Church Women's group.

Up to 1944, the church consisted of no more than a few small assemblies scattered throughout Central and Western Region, but in that year an African radio repairer called A. S. Mallet travelled to Cape Coast to listen to McKeown. He asked him to visit the little group of nine believers Mallet led in Accra. Within a year the group had grown to 100, and they asked for a permanent pastor. In 1945, the Easter Convention

⁶ Christine Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana* (Chichester: New Wine Press, 1989), p. 31.

was held in Accra, and this is considered a turning point in the history of the church. During the convention many people were healed and the press reported the news across the country, and suddenly, the church took on a higher profile which drew more people. McKeown wanted the new church to be “indigenous, with African culture, ministry and finance”.⁷ These congregations therefore allowed drumming, clapping, dancing and speaking in tongues, unlike the mainline churches that still regarded these as unacceptable. In 1948, the McKeowns moved their base from Cape Coast to Accra. The Apostolic Church was not wealthy, and was unable to send many additional missionaries to help the McKeowns. The first came to replace them in 1939 when they were on furlough, but he had a nervous breakdown and had to return to England. A second came in 1943, but the arrangement only seemed to cause problems. The most successful missionary was James’ brother Adam who returned with them in 1945, and after a six-month stay with them in Cape Coast he moved to Sekondi to superintend the work in Western Region. After two and a half years Adam returned to UK, where the Apostolic Mission Board directed him to go to Canada. Here Adam was introduced to Dr Thomas Wyatt, a revival preacher from Portland, Oregon, who was to play a significant role in the Latter Rain Movement.

The Latter Rain movement had its origins in the 1940s through Franklin Hall and William M. Branham. Hall was an ex-Methodist who began with an independent travelling and healing ministry in which he preached a message of an imminent great new world-wide revival. He taught that the restoration of the church would involve the immortality of believers by means of stages of spiritual growth through various psycho-spiritual encounters including experiences with UFOs (unidentified flying objects) and UHOs (unidentified heavenly objects).⁸ Despite his aberrant beliefs Hall’s book “Atomic Power with God through Fasting and Prayer” sold many copies.⁹ Branham, like Hall, was convinced that the church was on the edge of a great revival, which he interpreted as the “latter rain” of Joel Chapter 2.¹⁰ Branham differed from the other healing evangelists of his time in that he linked healing with the casting out of

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁸ Franklin Hall, *The Return of Immortality* (Phoenix: Hall Deliverance Foundation, 1976), p. 60.

⁹ Franklin Hall, *Atomic Power with God Through Fasting and Prayer* (Phoenix: Hall Deliverance Foundation, 1975).

¹⁰ Branham based much of his teaching upon Joel 2:23 and Revelation 1:20-3:22.

demons, and one of his ministry methods was the laying on of hands as part of the healing ministry.¹¹

A small Bible College in Sharon, Saskatchewan, decided to put the teaching of Hall and Branham into practice, and on 12 February 1947 some of the students began to prophesy. News of the revival quickly spread throughout North America, and gained many followers.¹² In October 1950 a large convention was held in Toronto, where the leaders were encouraged to take the "Latter Rain" message throughout the world. In North America, the Latter Rain Movement came under increasing criticism by the major Pentecostal denominations for their beliefs that "the gifts of the Spirit were to be conveyed only through the laying on of hands, and this by certain men who alone could call forth and confer upon the believers these blessings."¹³ After this decision many people were expelled for their involvement with the Latter Rain in the USA.

In 1953, the McKeowns returned to Ghana with their fare paid by the Latter Rain Association. Despite the talk of immediate national independence McKeown went ahead with major revival meetings to which he invited a team from the Latter Rain Movement under the leadership of Dr Thomas Wyatt. In Accra, a large canopy was erected to accommodate several thousand people, and an extensive PA system. The meetings were overflowing, and many people came forward and were healed. "Dr Wyatt preached and a well-known Methodist businessman, who had been practically paralysed by a stroke, applying the words to himself, rushed up to the platform and nearly knocked Fred Poole over with an arm which had been lifeless before. A crippled beggar, a familiar figure in the city, was so overcome by what he saw, he too rushed onto the platform and the two of them were dancing and leaping and praising God."¹⁴ Similar meetings were held in Kumasi and Cape Coast with thousands of people attending each night, and after every meeting prayer was made for the sick. Speaking to an old apostle of the Church of Pentecost he mentioned the coming of the Latter Rain as being one of the most significant events in the history of the church.¹⁵

¹¹ Richard M. Riss, *Latter Rain* (Ontario: Honeycomb Visual Productions Ltd., 1987).

¹² Richard M. Riss *A Survey of Twentieth Century Revival Movements in North America* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1988).

¹³ Carl Bumback, quoted in Riss, *A Survey of Twentieth Century Revival Movements.*

¹⁴ Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana*, p. 135.

¹⁵ Personal conversation with Apostle Hushie 17 Sept. 1985.

The Latter Rain had introduced the Holy Spirit to vast numbers of people in the Gold Coast. They were added to the Church, including some leaders from other churches. Later, however, some of the pastors who had joined because they were attracted by the work of the Holy Spirit split off to form works of their own. These included churches like the Divine Healers, or the Apostolic Reformed, which still have a vigorous existence in Ghana today.¹⁶

In May 1953 the Apostolic Church in Britain spent several days discussing the Latter Rain movement, and what had happened in Canada and the Gold Coast. In order to ensure that no one from outside the Apostolics would ever again visit their missionary work without their approval a new constitution was drafted and all pastors asked to sign the document. James McKeown and Cecil Cousen were the only people to refuse, so they were expelled from the Apostolic Church.¹⁷ In the Gold Coast, the church was dismayed by McKeown's dismissal because they had greatly appreciated the visit of the Latter Rain. They therefore asked McKeown to return as their superintendent. He reorganised the church and the name was changed to "Gold Coast Apostolic Church". However, some people wanted to stay with the British church, and they formed "The Apostolic Church of the Gold Coast", which at independence became the "Ghana Apostolic Church".

The influence of the Latter Rain generated much discussion throughout the churches in the Gold Coast, and Mathapoly Moses could not have been ignorant of this development. This style of revival meeting probably encouraged him to introduce "Instantaneous Healing" as part of the Peace Festival just a few months after the visit of the Latter Rain team.¹⁸ This revivalist practice gave a new expression and dynamic to the church's understanding of divine healing, and became an important feature of the future evangelism of the MDCC.

The Latter Rain movement was not the only external spiritual influence upon West Africa in the 1950s. The Akaboha corresponded with many people from Europe and North America. Two of his greatest correspondents were Bill Wray from Hull in Yorkshire and Rev. Enid Smith of St Petersburg, Florida. Both had links with Spiritist groups and shared esoteric insights with Mathapoly Moses. The Akaboha was a

¹⁶ Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana*, p. 140.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁸ The Senior Prophet Jimiru Fual told me that Akaboha II was impressed by the teaching of some American Christians about this time.

reported member of "The Universal Spiritual Agency", "Fellowship of the House of Knowledge", a prince of the "Cosmopolitan Community Church of Chicago", and an executive member of the "World Spiritual Union".¹⁹ Letters from some of these correspondents were occasionally printed in the annual programme of the Peaceful Year Celebration, which suggests that these ideas were not merely being explored, but positively endorsed. One example is the letter from Rev. Dr Enid S. Smith of the Universal Spiritual Brotherhood, Inc., San Francisco, who on 18 July 1969, wrote to the Akaboha inspired by her "Spiritual Guide" Dr. Barton Elton:

The Space People from other planets are the reaping angels of the Bible that were present to deliver both Lot and Noah and the eight just persons in all saved from the Flood. We have in our Holy Bible 350 references to our Space Brothers, and the work God gives them to do for our down-going planet - in history they have always come when a planet is about to destroy itself.²⁰

Following the first reports of UFOs in 1947 some spiritualists argued that the hypothesis supported their views of the existence of superior life forms.²¹ Franklin Hall of the Latter Rain interpreted these as angelic beings.

Akaboha II undertook research on many spiritual subjects from witchcraft to UFOs.²² When I asked church leaders why the Akaboha was interested in these things they were surprised at the question, and thought that it was obvious that a "spiritual man", as they called him, would want to study these things. One of his sons said that he was seeking to answer the question, "What does it mean to be a spiritual person?"²³ However, the publication of such letters in the Programme of the Peace Festival explains why Christians of the historic churches condemned the MDCC as Spiritist rather than spiritual. Baëta records that he discussed the distinction between "spiritualist" and "occultist" with Akaboha II, and concluded "the matter remains

¹⁹ Often, in West Africa, the term "spiritualist" is used as equivalent to "spiritual man". This inter-changeability explains some of the confusion that has occurred.

²⁰ Dr Barton Elton through Rev. Dr Enid S Smith, The Universal Spiritual Brotherhood, Inc., San Francisco, 17 July 1969, published in *Programme for Peaceful Year Celebration 1969*, p. 16.

²¹ The UFO phenomenon is usually traced to Washington in 1947 when the deputy sheriff Kenneth Arnold reported seeing nine metallic-looking objects looking like saucers. The history of similar sightings can be traced back to as early as 1896-7. Jennifer E. Porter, "Spiritualists, Aliens and UFOs: Extraterrestrials as Spirit Guides", *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996), pp. 337-353.

²² One of his sons told me that he once found a letter in the compound from a correspondent in the United States in which the man described seeing a UFO.

²³ Rev. Jeri Jehu-Appiah, 20 August 1992.

difficult".²⁴ For members of the MDCC the line between these was merely theoretical, and a detraction from the on-going spiritual war between powers of evil and the power of God. They were convinced that they were on the side of the angels. As Akaboha II wrote in 1954: "Some spiritualists and diviners join the church with the view to developing in the 'arts' but are often disappointed and therefore resign We strongly DETEST superstition, idolatry, occultism, fetishism, astrology, spiritualism, physic science, etc. etc. The M.D.C. Church is a pure Christian Church."²⁵

Instant Healing

At the Friday service of the Peace Festival of 1954, the Akaboha invited those who were sick to come forward for healing, and the sick were anointed with oil and prayed for by the leaders of the Church. A supporter of the MDCC who was also a part-time reporter with the *Sunday Mirror* wrote a report of the service quoted at the beginning of the chapter. From this time, the Friday meeting during the Peace Festival has become the major healing service where "instantaneous healing" was practised on a grand scale.²⁶ The old prophet Jimiru Fuah said:

The Akaboha II started many new things, for example, instantaneous divine healing. It was through him that God gave healing to us. We had been doing some healing, but not instantaneous healing like you see at Peace Festivals and Camp Meetings and other major gatherings. It was God who taught him what to do. We fasted for three days completely without food. The blind could see, deaf hear, and others healed. God told him to institute that.²⁷

Akaboha II not only practised healing, but gave specific teaching to the church on what he considered the important principles of spiritual healing.²⁸ He wrote:

There are many other forms of healing: Medical, Hypnotic, Herbal, Psychological, Spiritual or Psychical and Divine Healing. Of these only Divine Healing is recommended for Christians. The rest are generally inventions by non-Christians.²⁹

²⁴ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 65, note 4.

²⁵ *Programme of 1954 Peaceful Year Celebration*, p. 14

²⁶ The term Peaceful Year was later changed to the Peace Festival by which it is now generally known.

²⁷ Personal interview August 1992.

²⁸ Mathapoly Moses Jehu-Appiah, "Lecture: My Practice as a Divine Healer", *Programme: Peaceful Year Celebration 1959* (Mozano: MDCC, 1959), pp. 10-13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Although he was aware of issues of hygiene and diet, he taught that all illness is ultimately demonic in origin, and therefore medicines of any form are of little value in themselves.

Though sickness comes through uncleanness in diet and poor living, "there is death in the pot" (I Kings 4:40), yet, all diseases are caused by devils. All diseases have some spiritual significance, and no able healer can succeed if he has not acquired this knowledge.³⁰

According to the Akaboha, if a person wants to heal or be healed, he must follow three stages each of which he validated by biblical references. First, they should create the close presence of Jesus. "For where two or three are gathered in My Name, there I am in the midst of them." (Matt 18:20). Second, as sinners they should ask for forgiveness and for His Grace, "and if he has committed sins they shall be forgiven" (James 5:15). Finally, they should make their "supplications and be satisfied that He has almost granted the requests. Also to believe in the existence of the devils and powers and other principalities in the darkness and feel our complete defeat over them. 'Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night...nor the pestilence that walketh in darkness.' (Ps 91:5,6)."³¹

Akaboha II taught that divine healing could be seen to operate under four categories: by prayer, by a point of contact, by command, and by anointing with oil. He continually taught the church leaders that the last method was the most effective and mentioned Bible verses such as Mark 6:13, "and they cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." The use of oil was already a common feature of the special systems practised within the church, and it has remained an aspect of most healing rituals. Even today healers within the church have their own particular views about what is the best method, but, to the question, "How would you normally undertake healing?" healers would commonly mention three aspects.

First, the person must be right with God, which would require prayer, faith, and often fasting. The emphasis on prayer is usually on the length of the prayer time, the vigour of the prayers, and the place and time. Second, depending on the type of sickness, a bath may be needed to remove impurity. To the bath water are often added *kasatu*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12

(Copper Sulphate), Florida Water and a mild disinfectant usually known as *Sanitas Fluid*.³² Prayer is first made over this solution before the person washes themselves with it, and dries themselves with a towel. Many healers believe that the nature of the mixture was specially revealed to Akaboha I. Third, olive oil is applied according to the instruction given in James Chapter 5. This is sometimes just on the head, hands or feet, but most patients like the oil to be applied by hand on the afflicted part of the body.

Akaboha II stated categorically that nobody could become a healer by reading books, because it was a special gift given to all Christians who live their life under the authority of Jesus Christ. The Christian needs faith to receive healing based on the power of Jesus, and those who have believed know the special healing sensation within their bodies. This teaching that healing is a God given gift agrees with the Pentecostal teaching, and meant for the MDCC that any "spiritual" person could heal, including illiterates. The prayer groups within the church therefore began to have an important role in healing especially at the Peace Festival as will be described later.

Healers are always eager to tell stories about their successes, and even in a short discussion with a healer one will hear many stories such as the following:

Last month a neighbour of mine died in her house. By the time I arrived, there was no pulse and the people had turned the head to the wall. (In our society that means that she is considered dead.) I felt for a pulse, but I could feel none. I sat her up in her chair, and called the people to start praying and singing. We had to do this seven times before she suddenly came to. "What are you all doing here?", she asked. She could remember nothing. I asked her if she wanted something to drink. She had a drink of water and we all praised God together.³³

Conflict with the Tigare Cult

In the Gold Coast in the 1950s sickness and misfortune were often considered to be the effects of witches. These fears gave rise to various anti-witchcraft cults loosely called "Tigare cult". Field ascribed these movements to a heightened belief in witchcraft activity due to a period of rapid social readjustment.³⁴ The response of

³² Sanitas Fluid is the trade mark of a mild household disinfectant. Today other brands are available in West Africa and are being used such as Izal and Gresil.

³³ Reported to me while I was visiting the Peace Festival in 1992.

³⁴ Margaret Field, *Search for Security* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960).

many Christians to the Revival teaching of the Latter Rain in 1953-4 must be placed within the same social context. The historic churches had an ambivalent view of the Tigare cults, and some leading lay members of these churches even wrote in newspapers about the social value of the Tigare cults.³⁵

In contrast, Akaboha II, like most of the Pentecostal churches, strongly criticised the mainline churches for failing to deal with the problem practically. He believed that Christians should challenge the Tigare "in the Name of the Lord". Baëta reported in his description of the MDCC that the Akaboha believed that Tigare was really an impure spirit whose true name was Subusu.³⁶ This concurs with the report of Debrunner: "Adherents to a certain church say that Tigare is 'an evil spirit - called in the angel language, Subusu - who has stolen his power from God'. When former members of the Tigare cult joined this church, they were said to regurgitate the "medicine" of Tigare."³⁷ Families often set up a Tigare shrine to provide protection and assistance, but when they became members of the MDCC they were required to destroy the shrine. This was considered to be a very dangerous task requiring a spiritually powerful person such as a leading prophet or priest. The practice of Akaboha II was that he would ask the family about the nature of the shrine, and the promise that they had made. After praying he would enter the shrine, and taking his staff he would knock over the image calling out the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would then sprinkle Florida Water on the shrine and set fire to it even if the shrine image was made of stone, because this was believed to be the only way the powers of the shrine could be destroyed.

Many personal reminiscences are told of this period. A typical story is of the occasion when the Akaboha went on such an assignment in the company of his linguist Tupamanica Eburey and the Senior Prophet Jimiru Fuah. He stayed in the house of the person who had invited him. After prayers he asked Prophet Jimiru to go to the shrine with a friend and knock it down and set fire to it. The Akaboha stayed behind to pray. Prophet Jimiru returned to report that every time he hit the stone with his staff he felt something like an electric shock. The Akaboha therefore went to the shrine himself.

³⁵ Rev. O. M. Renner, "Tigare", *Golden Shores* 11 (1947), 195-9.

³⁶ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 44.

³⁷ Hans Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Pub., 1978), p. 154.

On their way a very small old woman suddenly appeared in front of the Akaboha warning him of the danger of his mission, and saying that if he did not return home immediately he would die. The person vanished after giving the warning. Nevertheless, he continued and successfully broke down the shrine and set it on fire. He then went back to the house to join his team. Suddenly while they were resting some of the local people carrying machetes, cudgels and guns, burst into the house. They were angry that their shrine had been destroyed because they profited from it. They broke into the living room, but could not find the Akaboha and his men. The gang therefore surrounded the house and waited. God, it is said, made them invisible, so the Akaboha and his team were able to walk through the cordon and drive away while still invisible to their enemies.³⁸

The notion of spiritual warfare with evil powers is familiar to the leaders of the church. They believe that there are both good and bad angels, which are usually only seen with spiritual eyes. On occasions the angels do materialise when they can be seen with normal physical eyes. The seven good angels are named: Michael and Gabriel, both of whom are named in the Bible, and Raphael, Zaphiel, Zadkiel, Madmiel and Harniel. The origin of the five additional names is usually said to have been given by revelation, but they are identical to the angels of the seven planets found in the mystical text of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, which is generally condemned by the church as "occultist".³⁹ According to the MDCC book of rituals the functions of the seven angels are:⁴⁰

Michael	Defence
Gabriel	Intercession
Raphael	Healing
Madmiel	Maternal Care
Zadkiel	Prosperity
Zaphiel	Guidance
Harniel	Delivery in travail

Even today, during a particularly difficult healing meeting, the healers would often cry out, "Raphael, come down and help us!"

³⁸ This provides a lovely example of the touch of wonder, characteristic of many charismatic leaders.

³⁹ *The New Revised Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses and the Magical Use of the Psalms* (Bronx, N.J.: Original Publications, 1982), p. 160.

⁴⁰ *The Musama Book of Rituals* (Mozano: MDCC, 1981), p. 12.

Apart from these named angels there are believed to be Guardian angels. Members of the church are encouraged to pray for their continued protection by these angels at six o'clock in the morning, noon, and six in the evening.

Glory be to God in the highest, may praise and adoration be unto His Name for His protection and good guidance. O Holy Father may the Guardian Angel daily guard me till the end of my life. Amen. Then say the Lord's Prayer.⁴¹

Evil spirits, known in Twi as *sunsum fi*, are associated with the Biblical designation of Satan. Witches (*Bayie* in Asante Twi, *Ayen* in Fante Twi) are considered to be agents of *sunsum fi*, and do their work. Debrunner gives a description of ministry to the afflicted in his book *Witchcraft in Ghana*:

The senior prophet surveyed the meeting place with a hypnotizing stare, while the congregation gradually worked itself up into a trance by singing hymns and lyrics. The prophet was said to be warding off devils, witches and *mmusu* (mischief) from the congregation, and looking out to welcome the angels and the Holy Spirit. After a time, some women fell into strange fits, and were held under control by supervising personnel.⁴²

The old prophet photographed by Debrunner was my informant the Senior Prophet Jimiru Fuah, who remembered the occasion with mild amusement.

Healing during the Peace Festival

Since its introduction in 1954 the healing ritual in the Peace Festival has developed the distinctive pattern that is in use today. When I attended the Peace Festival in 1992, hundreds of sick people had come from a wide area, and included both members and non-members. Many members had been praying all night in preparation for the ministry, and this engendered an air of anticipation that pervaded the whole town. A significant role in the service was played by the Nahatim and Seenim bands which consist mainly of lay-people who feel an anointing by God for a ministry of prayer and healing, but also includes some healers and prophets.⁴³ The most obvious difference between the bands is the colour of their garments: the Nahatim band dress in white while the Seenim band dress in red. The Seenim band also tends to more vigorous and symbolic in their ritual. These bands resulted from the split in 1925 that was described

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴² Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1978), p. 152.

⁴³ Not all healers are members of the Seenim or Nahatim Bands

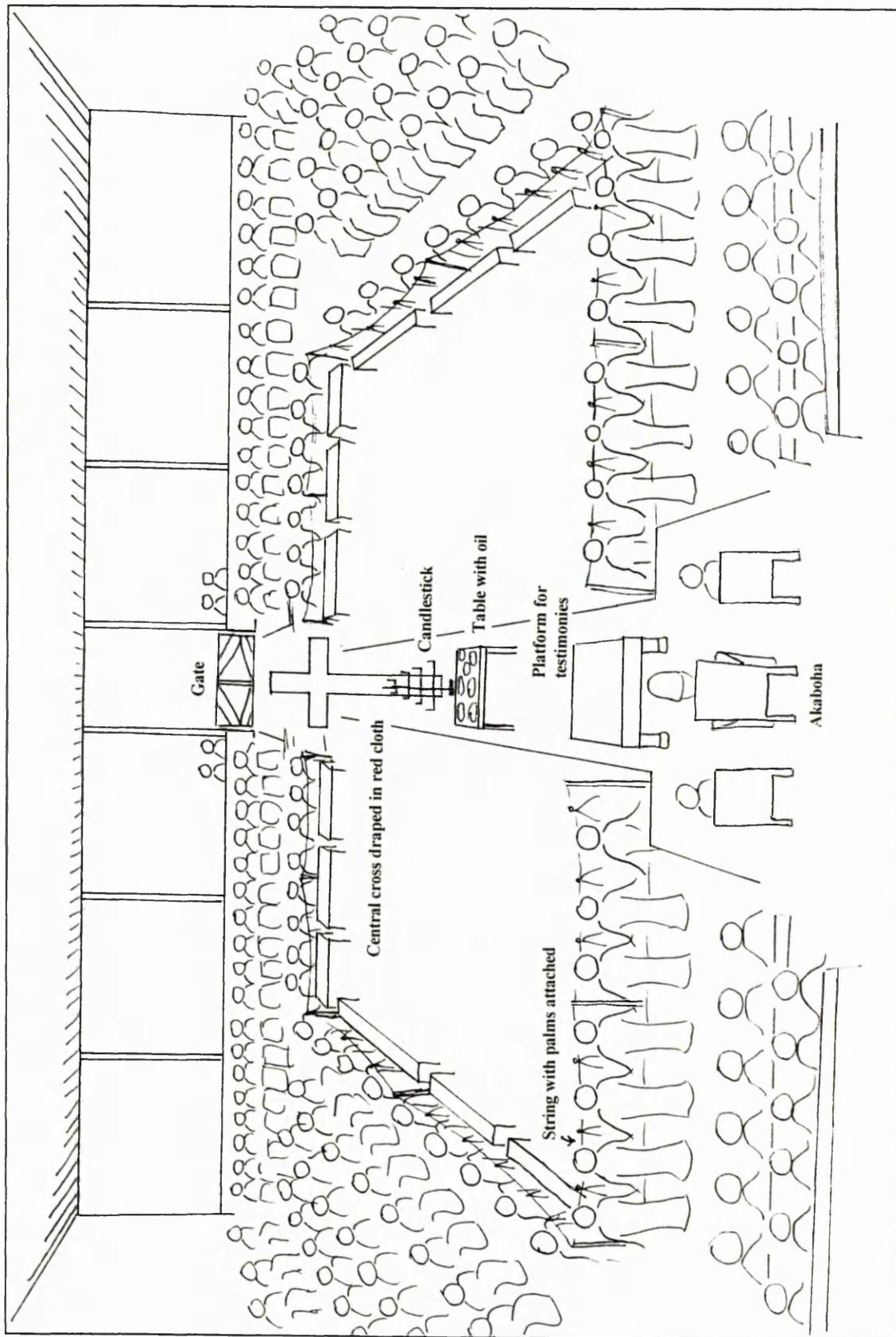
in Chapter 4 when the "Group of Sevens" became the Nahatim Band and the "Soldiers" the Seenim Band.

The sick gather at the Nathalomoa Healing Camp where church workers carefully classify them according to the categories of their ailments. Each person is given a slip of paper on which is written their name and the nature of the illness before being taken to the Jubilee temple where the main service takes place. Well before the meeting is due to begin, the entrance of the Jubilee Temple is closed and controlled by stewards. The temple itself is laid out according to a well-defined plan in which the whole area is arranged into a sacred space with the cross at the very centre (Figure 9:1). The cross, which is usually painted white, is, on this day, draped with red cloth. In the central area of the temple a rectangular area is marked out by a string from which palm fronds are hung. The Nahatim healers then enter the temple with a great sense of confidence, and march around the sacred area to the sound of loud music. An impression is given of warriors who have come in the Name of the Lord to do battle with an enemy. The idea of a warrior is a common metaphor in the MDCC, and traditionally the shout of a pastor in a meeting would be "*akofo*" meaning warrior.⁴⁴ Everyone carries with them a small wooden cross which is later used to link the healers standing around the rectangle. As the first group of patients are brought into the area, the sense of anticipation increases. After more singing, the preacher comes forward with a message that focuses upon God's power to heal, and the need to receive this by faith. "Satan has spoilt everything made by God. Today, God has come to fight for you, and some strong spiritual people are here to fight for you. Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, but God sent Moses to deliver them. 'Let my people go!' 'Let my people go into the wilderness to serve me!'"⁴⁵

As the sermon comes to an end the Akaboha enters the temple dressed totally in red, having walked in a procession from the palace, covered by his parasol. The Akaboha immediately begins walking in front of the sick sprinkling them with water scattered by a palm frond such that the smell of Florida Water fills the air. No sooner does the Akaboha sit at the front of the temple than the first group of the Seenim Band enter. They run with shouts of victory to those of the sick who have now been seated around

⁴⁴ To the shout "*Akofo!*" the people respond "*Yevo Ha!*" meaning "we are here with you."
⁴⁵ Climax of the message by the preacher 28 August 1992.

Figure 9:1 Schematic diagram of Friday healing service during the Peace Festival



inside the rectangle. Quickly, the sick remove their clothing exposing the afflicted part. (Figure 9:2b). The Nahatim members stand around the area holding vessels of oil (with a little Florida Water added), and this is vigorously applied to the afflicted part by the Seenim healers. There is no time for counselling and long discussions, but vigorous massage and physical contact between healer and patient. Soon all round the area lame people are being encouraged to walk, and many struggle to take their first few steps. More oil is applied with vigorous rubbing to heal stiff and damaged limbs. The lame are encouraged to stand to their feet and walk. Those with arm and shoulder problems are encouraged to move them. Shouts of Hallelujah burst forth at the first few faltering steps, or the raised arm.

The air of urgency one senses about the healers is as if they had only a certain amount of spiritual power that is being discharged. Amid all the noise and movement, I said to one healer that it was as if a car battery was discharged, or an army becoming tired. His face beamed a broad smile at me, as if I was beginning to understand. "Precisely!" he said. Trumpets sound again as the second half of the Seenim band enter like reinforcements coming to relieve a tiring first group who quietly withdraw. More of the sick are quickly moved into the front seats as people are declared healed. The healed are despatched to the table set before the cross, and soon there is a long line spreading across the temple queuing to give testimony. The healed are anointed with more oil and a cross made on their foreheads. During my visit, a young man who was blind was the first to come forward to testify that he could now see. The second was a young man who had been lame and could now walk. Then came a young woman confessing that she was a witch, but God had now delivered her. More and more people came forward to testify after being ministered to by the healers.

After several hours the meeting came to an end, and the sick were divided into three classes. First, were those who were totally cured (instantaneous healing), and they were sent home. Second were those who had known partial healing, but still needed further ministry. These were encouraged to stay at Mozano and receive further prayer.

Figure 9:2 Healing Service during the Peace Festival (1992)



(a) Members of the Nahatim and Seenim Bands walking around the area in which the healings will take place.



(b) The sick are rubbed with oil during a hubbub of prayer and music.

Finally, there are those confessing to be witches. Today the church workers not only pray for such people, but prefer to give some counselling before they leave Mozano as they believe that there are often personal and family problems in which the patient needs some help.

The healers finally retire to the Seenim temple. After their vigorous exercise they believe that they need to pray for their own protection as Satan can counter-attack. Cases are recounted of healers who after ministry have become ill themselves and some have even been known to die. The Seenim band recognises the danger of their work, and uses the illustration that like all warriors there will be some casualties. The Akaboha goes to the Seenim temple to pray for the healers, before he too retires.

The ceremony is rich in symbolism and deliberately so as the church realises that the people like ritual, and use it to express their cognisance of healing. The spatial imagery is immediately relevant within the Akan traditional dichotomy between town and bush. The sacred space is delineated by the healers at prayer, the wooden crosses, and palm fronds, all of which provide a spiritual wall of protection around the sick. Within this area the prayers of the members are believed to have greater effect, and deal with wider categories of affliction than are dealt with by the medical clinics. The other major symbolic element is the application of colour. The white cross that dominates the centre of the temple is draped with red cloth throughout the healing ritual. The symbolic significance of red and white has been widely recorded in studies of African Independent Churches. Thompson after his visit to the Peace Festival in 1958 explains that "the red symbolises melancholy and the suffering of Jesus Christ and the white signifies purity, joy and victory."⁴⁶ This was the view of a Ghanaian correspondent of the time who, writing of the Akan concept of colour says: "During war, fighters on the battle front wear shades of red to signify the fiery and deadly nature of the situation".⁴⁷ For the MDCC, red is the colour of danger and stands as witness that the battle for healing is being fought by the spiritual warriors of the church.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ D. Odotei Thompson, "Mazano - Home of the Faithful", *The Ghanaian* 4 (1958), p. 20.

⁴⁷ *The Ghanaian*, "Ghana's concepts of colour", 4 (1958), p. 48.

⁴⁸ P. S. Breidenbach, "Colour Symbolism and Ideology in a Ghanaian Healing Movement," *Africa* 46 (1976), 137-145.

The form of the healing service has changed somewhat according to the older members. They consider that the celebration now contains more ritual rather than waiting upon the Lord for instruction. "We have lost some of the directions of the Holy Spirit" said the old Senior Prophet.⁴⁹ This suggests the ritualisation of what was initially a very spontaneous and charismatic meeting.

Revival meetings

One of the greatest factors in the rapid growth of the church under Akaboha II was the three-day evangelistic "Camp Meetings" held from a Thursday to the Sunday. The use of the English name "Camp Meetings" carries connotations of the Revival meetings of Wesley, Finney and the Latter Rain. They usually commenced with the Akaboha parading the main streets of the town, usually in an open car surrounded by church members and onlookers. This was immediately a great attraction and announced the presence of Prophet Moses Jehu-Appiah in town. The Thursday evening meeting was for prayer and intercession. Friday was the day for the healing service when the sick were invited, and testimonies are recorded of many people who were instantly cured. On Saturday new converts were baptised, and preparation was made for the Sunday service which was the main time for preaching and prophecy.

Most Thursdays a special *Owerdam* Service (Redemption Night Vigil) was held at Mozano from nine till past midnight. People came to Mozano from all over Ghana to receive counsel, prayer and healing. Later the Akaboha spread this to every station of the church so that people would not need to make the long journey to Mozano. The publicity given by these *Owerdam* Services meant that it was often the first contact people had with the MDCC. According to the leaders of the MDCC the pattern of the Camp Meetings and the *Owerdam* services were to be the fore-runners of those used by the Pentecostal evangelists, but as shown already this form of revival meetings has been practised in the Gold Coast from the time of Thomas Birch Freeman in 1875.

Throughout most of its short history the MDCC had faced hostility from the established denominations, but it now found a new relationship with the emerging Pentecostal churches who were themselves the focus of suspicion by the mainline

⁴⁹ Personal conversation Prophet Jimiru Fuah August 1992.

churches. Akaboha II helped draw these new denominations together and on 16 November 1969 he was elected the first President of the newly formed Pentecostal Association of Ghana. The initial members of the Pentecostal Association consisted of the heads of a variety of small Pentecostal churches that had emerged through the missionary work of Pentecostal missionaries and leaders of various African Independent Churches. According to the older members of the MDCC, some leaders and representatives of these denominations would come to the Peace Festival to learn more about divine healing and worship. Many of today's members believe that this was how the Pentecostal churches learnt about healing and spiritual power, but this view is too simplistic.

Death of Akaboha II

In 1970, Akaboha II commenced a seven and a half month retreat and fast.⁵⁰ The Peace Festival in that year was held without the presence of the Akaboha, and his annual welcome address was read for him by Rev. Ellis. He finally emerged from the 201-day seclusion on 22 October 1970 when a big festival was arranged.⁵¹ His stated reason for this extended period of seclusion was to seek new spiritual insights, and revival for the church in Africa. Even today there is an air of mystery about the actual reason for him taking such a long seclusion, and members and non-members often have their own speculations. "He was praying for the Church because he saw the future problems"; "He was repenting for his sin of polygamy." Whatever the reason, it enhanced his reputation as a "spiritual man".

Akaboha II continued his studies in "spiritism", and was eager to talk with academics and scholars of every background. He had a pleasant manner that made every visitor feel special, and he made many friends from different communities. In 1971, Akaboha II held a symposium with Dr Max Assimeng and Dr Oku Ampofu on "Tradition and Healing". The following year, he played host to fifty-five Afro-Americans visiting Ghana under the auspices of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial programme in Black Church Studies. During their last Sunday in West Africa, Akaboha II arranged a major

⁵⁰ He would eat no food during the day, but a little in the evenings.

⁵¹ *Programme of Akaboha's "Outing" Ceremony, 15-22 October 1970.*

programme to express African Christianity. The speech he gave at that time illustrates his continuing concern for this issue.

...much as Kwegyir Aggrey once restored the lost Black Man's intelligence on the academic map of the world, much as Marcus Garvey once more repaired the shattered economy of the Black Man on the trade map of the world, much as Kwame Nkrumah once more constructed the sleeping Black Man's Empire on the political map of the world; so Jehu-Appiah rediscovered an Old Time Religious Life for the Black Man as you see today. In the domain of human intellect, there is no colour line.⁵²

The death of Akaboha II came suddenly even though he had made reference to the event. After his death, as the leaders thought about their conversations with him the more they realised that he had tried to prepare them for this occurrence. For example, after the *I'Odomey* Conference he had all the people present come to shake his hand and say in Fante the greeting, "The Lord will go before." He then sent for the Senior Prophet, and in the presence of other leaders, asked him, "Can you look after this Church?" He also asked him and the other leaders what plans they had for carrying on in the event of his departure. They thought that this referred to a long journey because they knew that he had been invited by the Afro-Americans to visit America. More likely is the suggestion that the people interpreted the events in a way that insinuated the Akaboha's previous knowledge of his death. A charismatic leader cannot die like an ordinary person!

The last public appearance of the Akaboha was on the closing Sunday of the Peace Festival in 1972. His message was about the leavings of David and Moses, and the listeners were all struck by the passion with which he spoke. He said that he was not going to advise them any more, and people should listen to his teachings. He had done the seven-month confinement not to get power for himself, but for the church. They should therefore no longer look to him for miracles, but ask God to perform them in their own lives. He then made the pronouncement that the Akaboha's Birthday Party, which took place during the Peace Festival, would be discontinued immediately. In its place there would be a Peace Festival Dinner, in honour of the Peace Festival itself and not for him as a person.

⁵² Quoted by Kofi A. Opoku in "Changes within Christianity: the case of the Musama Disco Christo Church", in E. Fashole-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings & Godwin Tasié (eds.), *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1978), p. 314.

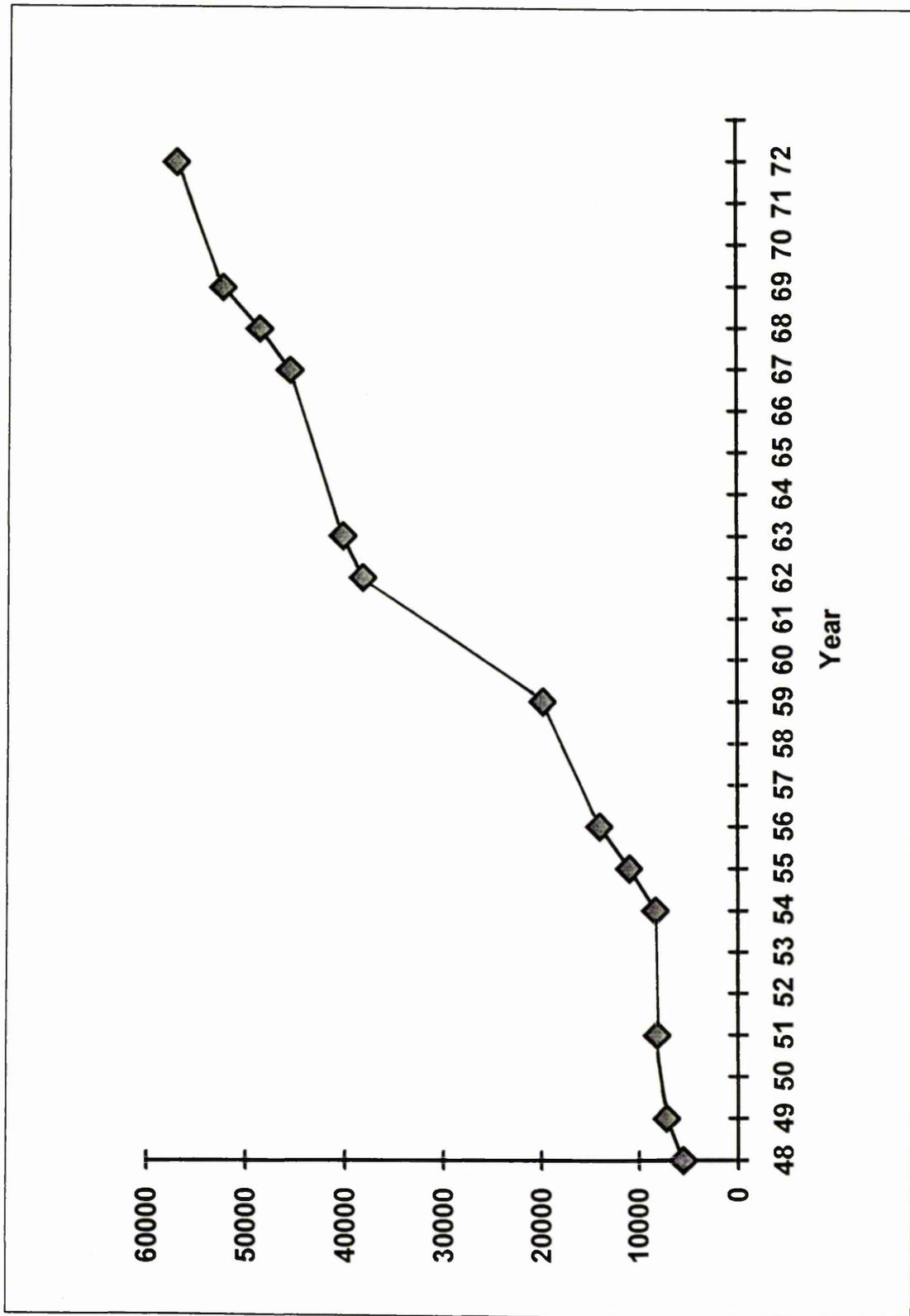
Akaboha II had called all the members of the church to attend the Peace Festival, and prophesied that if they did not come that they would hear news that would cause them to run to Mozano. People came from various parts of the country for the Peace Festival, but the Akaboha did not address the assembled gathering. It soon became evident that the Akaboha was not well, and the Peace Festival had an air of sadness and disappointment. The Akaboha was eventually moved to hospital in Accra and died on the 28 August 1972. Within minutes the news was broadcast on Ghana television. Many people from all over the country stopped what they were doing and rushed to Mozano just as had been prophesied. The birth of Akaboha II had marked the beginning of the Peace festival, and he had died in the midst of the Peace Festival. The Akatitibi insisted that the healing service should continue and that it should be done with the usual joy. Those present at the Festival remember one Pentecostal leader who came to offer his condolences, but when he saw what was happening said in a loud voice, "These people are mad!" The leaders reminded the people that they were not to grieve because the Akaboha had gone to a better place.

* * * * *

Before his birth the promise had been given to the early members of the MDCC that it would be Mathapoly Moses who would lead the church, and this he did. Amidst all the turmoil that occurred in Ghana after independence the membership of the MDCC continued to increase. When he was installed as head of the church in 1948 the membership was 5,540, but by 1972 it could claim 56,692 members (Figure 9:3)⁵³ The church also grew in the geographical area in which it was sited. In 1960, Akaboha II made a world tour visiting Israel, Italy, Britain, USA, Canada, Switzerland and Spain. In 1962-3 celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the church were held in many parts of southern Ghana, and a branch office was established in Accra to enable closer contact with Government authorities. Akaboha II sent a few priests to evangelise and open branches of the church in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Togo and Liberia. During the period 1965-66, the huge Jubilee Temple was constructed at Mozano large enough to seat over 4,000 people, and when it was completed it was the largest building of its kind in the whole of West Africa.

⁵³ *Programme for the Final Obsequies* (Mozano: MDCC, 1972), p. 4.

Figure 9:3 Reported membership of the MDCC during the period of Akaboha II
(Data from Programmes of Peace Festival)



As I have shown the reign of Akaboha was not without its difficulties. The church survived its association with the CPP, and continued to retain a conviction that it was a true African church. Although socialist rhetoric claimed to meet their needs, most, if not all people realised that there was a need for spiritual power if they were to know success in this life. Missionary Christianity had failed to relate the power of God to the issues faced in Fante society, and had in general denied the existence of spirit ancestors, dwarfs and witches. Yet through the experience of revival the Methodists had provided means by which people could know a direct encounter of the Holy Spirit. While with the Methodists this had mainly been power to live a holy life, with the coming of the Pentecostals it was power to prophesy and heal.

Mathapoly Moses was an intelligent man able to hold many divergent, and sometimes contradictory views. He was continually exploring new trends and ideas and related them to the needs of his church, and it is no wonder that he was sometimes misunderstood by the established churches. By the time of his death at the early age of 48 the MDCC had become one of the largest and best organised of the African independent churches in West Africa. Yet, the last months of his life have an element of mystery concerning his long seclusion.

Chapter 10

A Spiritual Church in a Changing World

(1972 onwards)

Prophetess Siliciana greeted me warmly as I arrived at her prayer camp at Gomoa Dunkwa. After the initial greetings she eagerly escorted me along the tree lined path that ran from the road down to a broad site that had been cleared of scrub. This area she declared was holy ground, so I respectfully took off my shoes, and we made our way to the entrance of the new temple. With enthusiasm the prophetess pointed out the three white crosses before which people come to pray prostrating themselves on the clean sand provided at the base. She explained that this was the actual place that Prophet Appiah used to come to pray, and where the Holy Spirit showed him how to form a church. She led me behind the crosses to point out a small pit, which she said was the place that Prophet Appiah found an antelope caught in a trap that God gave to him as a sign. Prophetess Siliciana then turned to another cross mounted on a large hemisphere standing next to the pit. The globe, she explained, represents the world, and she pointed out the various countries marked out on the concrete. God had told her that people will come from all over the world to this place and stand in front of their country to pray.¹

The second half of the twentieth century has been one of great change for the people of Ghana as they have taken their place as a nation state among the international community. Likewise, the indigenous African churches have struggled to come to terms with their position in the wider Christian community, and find meaning for their distinct experience and history. The MDCC began as a small community that followed the religious aspirations of Prophet Appiah, but by the death of his son, Akaboha II, the church numbered its followers in thousands. As I have shown two core themes had emerged during the reign of Akaboha II: a distinctly African character, and the

¹ Visit to Gomoa Dunkwa 19 August 1992.

Pentecostal empowering of the Holy Spirit. The church however was faced with the question of how it could keep its own distinct identity resulting from its specific history and tradition while relating to the international Christian community. In her prayer camp at Gomoa Dunkwa Prophetess Siliciana was trying to make the bridge between the local and specific, and the universal and general.

In his classic study Weber describes how all religious movements lose their initial charismatic quality to be replaced by an emphasis upon tradition and ritual.² This pattern is illustrated within the MDCC where the third generation of leaders lack the charisma of their parents and grand-parents. Today, the younger members of the church openly criticise the leadership concerning the beliefs and practices of the church, and their failure to address contemporary issues. This chapter describes the personal history of Akaboha III and the social and political events that have affected the MDCC during his reign beginning in 1972. During this period the church has faced problems that are both internal and external, and it has sought to adjust to the needs of its members in a changing world.

Making of Akaboha III

Akaboha II was regarded by all as a very special person. When talking about him with both church members and outsiders one hears phrases such as, "His gifts were many", or "He was very different from anyone before or after him." It was therefore not going to be easy to find a successor as head of the church. As was described in Chapter 4, Akaboha II had from birth been considered a unique individual, and his parents had brought him up convinced of his future role. The widely told story of his anointing with the golden ball at his inauguration gave divine confirmation of his future role and made him the undisputed leader of the MDCC. Akaboha II had several wives and had children by them all, but it was from the sons of his first wife that people looked for a successor. His first wife, like Mathapoly Moses, was considered a child of prophecy, and she had been given the heavenly name Matabinaia. She had four sons among her children, Jonah, Jeri, Mord, Tokia Bona (T.B.), Jaika, Noah and Slomeena. In official circles, it is said, there was never any doubt that it would be the eldest son who would

² Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

succeed as Akaboha, but even so, the leaders of the Church prayed fervently over the important choice. This time there was no miraculous sign, but after many days in prayer the high priest had a prophecy that revealed that Jonah was to be the successor.

Miritaiah Jonah Jehu-Appiah was born on 26 May 1945 at old Mozano before the "Exodus" in 1951.³ Akaboha II was an educated man and was eager to ensure that his children had the benefits of Western education. He therefore encouraged the building of a small primary school in the town of New Mozano and later a middle school. Jonah attended these schools during the period 1951-59 with his brothers and sisters and many other children of church members. He then moved to Apam where he could continue with his secondary education at the Government school which he did from 1960 until 1965. After leaving school Jonah was employed as a Revenue Officer at the Central Revenue Department, but after a few months he resigned and entered the teaching profession in January 1966. He went on to teach at the Christian Methodist Secondary School at Annexa (now Trinity Secondary School) for nearly two years and then at the Ghana High School for two years.⁴ He developed a great interest in teaching and entered the Teacher Training College at Assin Foso for a two-year Post-Secondary Course (1969-71). On the completion of the course he was posted to Koforidua in Eastern Region, where he enjoyed his job as a teacher. During this period Jonah was also much involved with various Christian activities both inside and outside the MDCC. He was a staunch member of the Scripture Union, he often preached in local churches, and he organised the MDCC choir at Koforidua. One of his most obvious ceremonial roles within the MDCC was to carry the *Ayemidi Kusidi* (the two-pointed sword) before the Akaboha at official functions.

Even at this time the educated young people were critical of the church, which they considered to be led by illiterate pastors unwilling to adapt to the modern aspirations of the country. The story is told that on an evening in November 1966, three sons of Akaboha II were discussing the state of the church when they were suddenly struck

³ By this time it had become common practice in the MDCC to have three names: the first was a heavenly name, the middle a Bible name, and the last the family name. The direct descendants of Prophet Jehu Appiah had decided to use the hyphenated name Jehu-Appiah.

⁴ *Programme: Installation Ceremony of Akaboha III*, (Mozano: MDCC, 1972).

with the idea of forming a youth section of the MDCC.⁵ They initially called the proposed movement the “Musama Youth Development Association”, but on the advice of Akaboha II it was eventually changed to “Musama Young Crusaders Association”, or MYCA. The aim of the organisation would be to channel the criticisms of the young people into constructive development projects within the church. On 3 September 1967 the first general meeting of the association was held and various people elected to offices in the new organisation, but this first set of officials was unable to enthuse the young people and the initiative failed. Temporary officers took over until another conference was held on 12 February 1969 when Miritaiah Jonah Jehu-Appiah was appointed as president of the youth movement. The organisation mobilised many of the young people in various building and educational projects which were combined with evangelism and Christian teaching. The new organisation even produced its own magazine called *The Mycan* with Miritaiah Jonah as editor.⁶ Today, members of the movement consider this one of the most profitable times in the history of the Church, and look back at the period with pleasure.

At the 1971 I’Odomey conference an incident occurred that appeared to commend the succession of Miritaiah Jonah as far as many of the members are concerned. As the President of MYCA, Jonah presented his report to the conference in which he made several observations and proposed certain changes to be made to the Church. In commending the report for its breadth and detail, it is reported that the Akaboha said to him, “You will bring about those changes when you become Akaboha. Wait, because you are still growing.”

The installation ceremony for Miritaiah Jonah lasted from Wednesday 18 until Sunday 22 October 1972. Thursday consisted of a day of prayer and fasting, and Friday was set aside as a day for healing and miracles. At midnight on Saturday 21 October the leaders met at the Holy Place when a burnt offering was made. The ordination of the new Akaboha was made on Sunday morning, and he was then carried in a palanquin through the main streets to Gomoa Eshiem and back (Figure 10:1). The following day

⁵ These were Jotameena Kingsford Sannie, Joenimashie Louise Ankumah and Miritaiah Jonah Jehu-Appiah.

⁶ *The MYCAN*, August 1971 Vol. 1, No. 1. This was the one and only publication of this journal.

Figure 10:1 Prophet Miritaiah Jonah Jehu-Appiah being installed as Akaboha III and Head of the Church by Senior Prophet Jimiru Fuah.



“Assisting the Senior Prophet is the Senior Priest Rev. B. C. Sannie standing close to him. Behind the Akaboha III is the Queenmother Pros. Nathaloma Jehu-Appiah, Akatitibi, Co-Founder of the Church, and other Prophets of the Church.”⁷

⁷

Souvenir Programme: Peace Festival Celebration 1973 (Mozano: MDCC, 1973), p. 13.

was a memorial day for the late Akaboha II. As the new Akaboha was to imply, this was the opening of the third chapter of the history of the Church.

Today, we close the second Chapter of the history of this Church with the passing away of our FATHER, BROTHER, FRIEND, COUNSELLOR, and EVERYTHING, the Prophet Mathapoly Moses Jehu-Appiah (of blessed memory).⁸

In an unusually short sermon, Akaboha III suddenly shifted from the praises of Akaboha II to challenge the Church for its failings.

How many of us ever thought, for one moment, that Akaboha II would leave us so soon? Did we allow all his policies on the administration of this Church to materialise? ... In his name, we went about telling lies. In his name, we went about duping and cheating people. In his name, we went about victimising, gossiping about, and slandering people. WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF ALL THIS AND IT IS MY EARNEST HOPE THAT IT WILL ALL END UP HERE.⁹

The early 1960s had been difficult times for Ghana, and many people had turned to the Akaboha for help and guidance. The older church workers had benefited in various ways from the status of the church, and some had married second and even third wives. The new Akaboha called all the members of the church to repent and turn to a new path.

And what is the new path? It is the path of divinity, unity, love, repentance, reformation, kindness, understanding, painstakingness in whatever we do, purity in mind and body, and refraining from all things Unchristian. Let us all, from today, repent, reform, do what is right, and walk in the way of the Lord.¹⁰

The challenge emphasised the tension that existed between the younger generation of the MYCA and the older leaders. The younger generation had benefited from the education encouraged by Akaboha II, while many older leaders were hardly literate and were opposed to change. People had not expected the sudden death of Akaboha II, and there were concerns about the future of the church. Although the installation of the new Akaboha began with a strong warning, he had to gain the confidence and support of all the members of the church in order to retain unity. The early years of his reign were therefore essentially times of consolidation of the teaching and projects of

⁸ *Peace Festival Celebration 1973*, maiden sermon, p. 14. Capitals are in the original text.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

his father. The outstanding debts for the construction of the Jubilee Temple were paid, the Mozano Middle School was completed, and many important temples in Mozano were improved. The golden jubilee celebrations took place in all the southern regional centres - Accra, Kumasi, Cape Coast, Koforidua, Sekondi, Berekum and Ho. Many new converts were made, and the church began to reach out beyond the Central Region.

Revolutionary times

In 1969, Busia was elected Prime Minister of a new government. He was a Wesleyan Methodist lay preacher as well as a University professor, and he and his ministers with their families were committed church attenders. His government was therefore warmly supported by the Christian Council, and represented the educated elite of the new nation rather than the "verandah boys" of the CPP. While chairman of the Centre for Civic Education, Busia visited Mozano in 1968 and was warmly greeted by Akaboha II, and treated with all the ceremonial of a visiting *omanhene*.¹¹ The MDCC largely supported the Busia government for most of its period in office although they regretted the worsening economic situation.

Busia was a man with two sides. The first was that of an international statesman - reasonable, articulate and responsible, while the second was that of a Twi-speaking politician with a trenchant Ghanaian political style, strident and tough.¹² The Busia government enacted legislation that exiled many non-nationals, mostly Nigerians, who had traditionally worked and lived in Ghana. Over 500 civil servants were dismissed in 1970 on the grounds of inefficiency, and asked to leave the country. This caused much ill feeling in other West African states. When one of the dismissed civil servants challenged the decision in the courts, and won his case for unfair dismissal, Busia reacted with a bitter, even hysterical, speech on the Ghana Broadcasting Service that denounced the judiciary. The Progress Party government was intolerant of opposition, and was ruthless in suppressing rural discontent. In 1971, the problems of the

¹¹ *The Mycan*, 1971 contains a photograph of the visit.

¹² Richard Rathbone, "Ghana", in J. Dunn (ed.), *West African States: failure and promise* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978), pp. 22-35.

government were compounded by a further fall in cocoa prices leading to the devaluation of the Cedi by 45 per cent.

On 13 January 1972, a coup led by Colonel (later General) Kutu Acheampong ousted the Busia regime in a desperate attempt to stem the economic collapse. Acheampong was not an ideologue, but his National Redemption Council (NRC) was anti-IMF and nationalistic. The most popular policies introduced were the selective repudiation of Ghana's external debts, the reintroduction of student loans, and the restoration of union rights. These measures quickly gained the support of both the TUC and the students, but the Christian Council mainly opposed the Acheampong government. Although Acheampong had been brought up a Roman Catholic, he turned for spiritual guidance to several spiritual churches, various cult leaders and even fetish priests.¹³ A close associate of Acheampong was Rev. Brother Yeboa-Korie of the F'Eden Church who was given unimpeded access to the Castle, and in 1974 a place on Acheampong's Charter of Redemption Committee. Many prophets associated themselves with the government, and courted favour by offering spiritual advice and protection. However, the MDCC was not represented among these groups. In 1970, Akaboha II undertook his long seclusion after which he did not take any major role in the political scene, his sudden death in August 1972 coming as a surprise to all. His successor was not well known outside the MDCC and lacked the respect afforded his father.

The NRC introduced top and middle ranking officers into important economic and political positions, with the result that there was an increased opportunity for corruption. *Kalabule*, as the corruption was later called, was to become a major factor in the break-down of the Ghanaian economy with a downward spiral of political decay and economic deterioration. Inflation pushed to 100 per cent per year, and many people became destitute as salaries were unable to sustain families. Trading became the only lucrative enterprise in the country, and the growing social chaos produced a sense of hopelessness and anomie. Professionals and students led the opposition to Acheampong, demanding a return to civilian government. In September 1976, Acheampong first proposed the idea of a Union Government (Unigov). His supporters argued that such a new type of government would bring about national unity, eliminate

¹³ John S. Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Pub., 1991), pp. 92-100.

division in society, and allow the military to have a permanent place in the politics of Ghana. His opponents saw the proposal as a clever ploy by the military officers to entrench themselves in political power and protect their corporate interests.

As the economy deteriorated Acheampong's initial support disappeared, and he began to deal ruthlessly with opponents. Student protests led to arrests and the closure of universities, but this merely scattered the discontent as radical students sought to educate the working people on the need for change. In the face of opposition from the Christian Council, Acheampong sought support from the leaders of other religious organisations. One such person was Rev. Abraham de Love, a Ghanaian evangelist and founder of the little known Church of Philadelphia. He persuaded Acheampong to officially declare a week of national repentance from 27 June to 3 July 1977. The reason given was that the ills of the nation, political and economic, were due to the sinfulness of the nation. In taking this step, the General sought to divert attention from political and economic mismanagement, and place them within the realm of religion. The historic churches largely ignored the proposal.

Acheampong also sought support for Unigov from the Summit Lighthouse of the Keepers of the Flame Fraternity of Southern California, which sought to combine elements from all the major world religions. The Mother Prophet of Summit Lighthouse was Elizabeth Clare Prophet, an American who came to visit Ghana in January 1978.¹⁴ Most of her expenses were paid for by the government, and a senior minister escorted her on all her functions. Most of her lectures had a pronounced political emphasis supporting the idea of Unigov making use of Christian metaphors and quotations. She pronounced that General Acheampong and the Union Government were placed there by God, so that all they said required careful and sympathetic hearing. Mother Prophet's particular use of religion caused a reaction among Ghanaians. The *Catholic Standard*, the *Pioneer* and even the state-controlled *Daily Graphic* carried letters expressing disgust and contempt.¹⁵

On 15 March 1978 the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops

¹⁴ Richard Jeffries, "Ghana: the political economy of personal rule", in D. Cruise O'Brien, J. Dunn & R. Rathbone, (eds.) *Contemporary West African States* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), p. 82.

¹⁵ Statement of Christian Council issued 14 February 1978.

Conference sent a delegation with a memorandum denouncing the violence done to the opponents of Unigov, and the one-sided propaganda. Rev. Brother Yeboa-Korie was a member of the Christian Council's delegation, but suddenly at the meeting spoke in favour of Unigov. This both surprised and embarrassed the other members of the delegation.^{16 17} Even so, the delegation was able to state its case and Rev. Korie was shown to be the lone dissenter. Rev. Korie, however, continued in his support for Unigov, and asked Christians to embrace Unigov.¹⁸

On 30 May 1978 a referendum was held to decide the future form of government for the country. Heads of the spiritual churches, and even Muslim groups, accepted Acheampong's Unigov.¹⁹ The Christian Council, on the other hand, called for its rejection. The dispute was finally ended with the 5 July 1978 coup led by Lt. General Fred Akuffo who deposed Acheampong and promised free elections. Acheampong, like Nkrumah before, saw value in the independent churches for two reasons. First, both men sought to legitimate their positions. Nkrumah was elected, but he was a commoner who appropriated aspects of chieftency. Acheampong came to power through military power, and wanted divine legitimacy for his rule. Second, the African nationalism of the politicians and the cultural revival of the independent churches made them natural allies who saw the historic churches as the remnants of colonial rule. The change in attitude of Akaboha II reflected the general disillusionment in society with the failure of the economy and the great aspirations that had been generated by nationalism. Akaboha II was more concerned with the growth of the MDCC, and his son continued this process.

In 1974, Akaboha III made his first visit to Monrovia where Ghanaian migrants who had been members of the MDCC wanted to establish a new church. The Akaboha was invited to lead an evangelistic healing crusade in the city, which resulted in several small congregations being established among the Ghanaian community in Monrovia, and where a plot of land was acquired for a permanent "cathedral". In 1976,

¹⁶ The F'Eden Church belonged to the Pentecostal Association, but at the same time since 1970 was a member of the Christian Council. Yeboa-Korie saw his church as a bridge between the spiritual and historic churches.

¹⁷ Pobece, *Religion and Politics in Ghana*, p. 84.

¹⁸ *Ghanaian Times* 26 March 1978

¹⁹ Pobece, *Religion and Politics in Ghana*, pp. 111-114.

evangelistic teams visited the Northern and Upper regions of the country, and congregations were opened at Bolgatanga, Wa, Pong and Tamale, almost exclusively among southern Ghanaians working in the North. In 1977, the Akaboha visited Nigeria and Ivory Coast, and in the following year, together with a team of pastors he visited London for an evangelistic crusade. A small group of members was formed, and the church leaders committed themselves to establish a mission base in London. In all cases, the church followed the Ghanaians who migrated to obtain work, but some local people were also attracted to the new congregations. In so doing, the MDCC began to take the role of an international church, not one that was merely African, and the leaders believed that this was finally the fulfilling of the vision of the founder that the church was for all nations.

The Rawlings period

While the country was preparing for elections in June 1979, suddenly on 15 May, the government announced that a mutiny involving an air force officer and 15 airmen had been quelled. At the trial, the Director of Public Prosecutions revealed that the leader, Flight Lieutenant Rawlings, had for a long time felt disillusioned about injustices in the society.²⁰ The trial generated much national interest and sympathy for Rawlings. At dawn on 4 June 1979, some sergeants, corporals and junior officers rose up in rebellion, and released Rawlings to make him leader of the coup. They unseated the higher and middle ranking officers who were ruling the country, and formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) with Rawlings as chairman. The movement had set out as a moral crusade to cleanse the armed forces from dishonest officers, but as the weeks passed these objectives extended outside the military sphere. The coup matured into a revolution affecting all areas of life.²¹ In response to popular demand, the AFRC set up a Peoples Court to deal with allegations of corruption. Officers and civil servants were arrested, and all reported cases of racketeering and profiteering were dealt with ruthlessly. On 16 June 1979 the new government announced on the State radio that Acheampong, with other senior officers, had been shot by firing squad

²⁰ Kojo Yankah, *The Trial of J. J. Rawlings: Echoes of the 31st December Revolution* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1987).

²¹ Joseph G. Amamoo, *The Ghanaian Revolution* (London: Jafint Publishers, 1988).

following a secret military court at Burma Camp barracks. The shooting of a second group of officers after a secret trial finally resulted in public criticism.

The General Elections took place without incident on 18 June 1979. On 24 September 1979, the AFRC handed over power to Dr Hilla Limann and his Peoples National Party (PNP). Even though the PNP had won the mandate of the people, it was concerned about the immense impact of the 4 June uprising on Ghanaian politics. By late 1981, the country was still saddled with intractable economic problems, and rumours of coups were rife. At dawn on 31 December 1981, military forces under the leadership of Rawlings overthrew the PNP. Unlike earlier coups this one did not have popular support, and the regime was required to use increasing violence. Late 1982 and early 1983 were marked by a series of executions of radicals from student and worker organisations, and many leaders fled the country.²² Press Censorship was introduced, and a general climate of fear permeated the nation. Rawlings was also aware of the dangers of opposition being channelled through religious fundamentalism. In 1986, soldiers attacked the largest mosque in Accra, ostensibly because it was a haven for illegal trading in foreign currency. In 1989, after social unrest in Wa, capital of the Upper West Region, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) banned all forms of public preaching by Muslims in the town.

Rawlings frequently clashed with church leaders, but they were tolerated because they did not seek to mobilise public support against him. The most significant clash occurred in 1989, when the PNDC introduced Law 221 known as "The Registration of Religious Bodies".²³ This resulted from Rawling's decision to expel foreign missionaries belonging to the Jehovah Witnesses' and the Latter Day Saints. The generally enthusiastic public response to this move encouraged the administration to apply Law 221 more widely. Rawlings was concerned about the spiritual churches that had been supportive of the Acheampong Government. Many rumours began to spread concerning the various independent churches and the wealth they had gathered. Even though the MDCC had not been involved with the Unigov, it came under suspicion. One rumour concerning the Akaboha said that he owned sixteen cars at a time when most people were struggling to merely feed their families. The Akaboha insisted that

²² Zaya Yeebo, *Ghana: The Struggle for Popular Power* (London: New Beacon Books, 1991).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-1.

he only borrowed cars from various well-wishers and this is why he was seen riding around in many different vehicles. When Law 221 was applied to all denominations there was a reaction from the church leaders who were able to mobilise public opinion, and the Law was finally dropped.²⁴

The members of the MDCC were mixed in their views concerning Rawlings, most appreciating the general stability of the country while remaining concerned about the economic situation. Akaboha III had little political influence and was happy to keep a low profile in these uncertain times. However, with elections planned for November 1992, Rawlings accepted an invitation to visit the 1992 Peace Festival. During the festival the Akaboha warned the people to greet the Head of State with respect and avoid any signs of dissension. When Rawlings arrived he was clearly surprised at the size of the crowd, and responded warmly to the crowds of friendly people all waving their handkerchiefs. He was escorted into the main temple where over 6,000 church members sat dressed in their best robes. The Head of State was politely welcomed by the Akaboha, and both politician and church leader appreciated that the meeting was of mutual benefit. After preliminary words of greeting, President Rawlings addressed the congregation with an impromptu message on the importance of science for national development, which was a strangely contradictory theme considering that people had come hoping to see miracles. The Akaboha avoided the potentially embarrassing situation of responding to the President's message by suddenly asking myself, as the one and only foreigner present, to give a response. Following the welcome gathering Rawlings was escorted to the new Secondary School built by members of the church. With a flourish of activity, the Rawlings motorcade left Mozano, and the members of the church continued with their spiritual gatherings. The nine o'clock news was eagerly watched by the church leaders. The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation not only broadcast the visit of the Head of State to Mozano, but also some comments from the British anthropologist. The leaders felt very satisfied at how the day had gone. The broadcast not only showed the importance of the MDCC nationally, but their white visitor had added an international dimension.

²⁴ Kwesi A. Dickson, "The Church and the Quest for Democracy in Ghana", in Paul Gifford (ed.), *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 265-266.

Internal problems

Although the MDCC saw growth during the 1980s, it also faced two notable problems. The first related to the Ghana Pentecostal Association, which Akaboha II had helped establish in 1969. At this time the Pentecostal denominations were only small and felt overwhelmed by the much larger Christian Council and the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Pentecostal churches were all growing rapidly, and none more so than the Church of Pentecost. With the conclusion of the litigation between the Church of Pentecost and the Apostolics over the ownership of the church buildings, the denomination became associated with the English Elim Pentecostal Church. David and Margaret Mills went from the Elim Church in UK to help set up a Bible College to train pastors. This proved to be a creative relationship, which built upon the foundation laid by James McKeown. The four months training course enabled pastors to become literate and have a reasonable knowledge of the Bible and theology. Perhaps more than this it allowed the church to become part of the worldwide Christian community, and not see itself exclusively as either a child of European mission or as purely an African Church. During the 1970s the Church of Pentecost became the largest member of the Pentecostal Association dwarfing the MDCC. There had always been some tension between African Independent Churches and those that would regard themselves more specifically as "Pentecostal" than "African". The way that various "sects" had supported General Acheampong caused many of the Pentecostal churches to keep their distance, until finally they proposed that the Pentecostal Association should exclude them. The term "sect" was used of groups such as the Jehovah Witnesses and the Church of the Latter Day Saints, but when the Pentecostal churches first began they too were regarded as "sects" by the historic churches. As the Pentecostals sought to become more established they wanted to achieve recognition by the historic denominations. They therefore wanted to make a clear distinction between themselves and those groups they regarded as unorthodox. Two issues emerged as indicators of error: polygamy and animal sacrifice. Both were practised by the MDCC, but before the council actually voted on the motion Akaboha III quietly withdrew to avoid embarrassment. Nothing was reported to the church members, and most of the pastors and church-workers had little awareness of the issues involved.

In doing this, the Pentecostal Council, as it was later called, drew a boundary that described orthodox Pentecostalism, and excluded practices that they considered as mere adaptations of traditional African customs. This was not because these practices were disliked by Western missionaries who had worked with the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, but because the African pastors of the newer Pentecostal churches wanted to be identified with the international Pentecostal movement with its specific teaching on the empowering of the Holy Spirit. This episode illustrates the difficult position in which the Akaboha found himself. Was he to follow the internationalising trends of the Pentecostal churches or continue the African traditions of the MDCC? The history and rituals of the MDCC had sought to establish an African Christianity, and if these were abandoned the Church would lose its very identity.

The Christian community in Ghana was from this time divided into five groups: Roman Catholic; Christian Council which included the Methodists, Presbyterians and Anglicans; Pentecostal Council; African Independent Churches (the "Spiritual Churches"); the various sects such as Jehovah Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists.²⁵ The Pentecostal Council was increasingly dominated by the Church of Pentecost, but included various denominations resulting from the Apostolic Mission and the more recent American Assemblies of God.²⁶

The second problem that the MDCC faced during this period was not the result of external events, but internal disagreements. For most of the 1980s the MDCC was hindered by the question of who should inherit the position of the Akatitibi ("Queen-mother"). The founders of the MDCC had not given clear patterns for the continuation of leadership, but had assumed that at the necessary time guidance would be given by the Holy Spirit. For the role of the Akaboha the pattern of primogeniture had become accepted, but no such arrangement was assumed for the role of the Akatitibi. The first Akatitibi was Hannah Barnes, who became the wife of Prophet Jehu Appiah as described in Chapter 4. She died on 22 June 1979 at the age of 77 years, and was

²⁵ The Seventh Day Adventists are generally considered falling on the borders of orthodoxy by the Christian Council and Pentecostal Council.

²⁶ Later they changed their name to the Pentecostal Council, and the name Pentecostal Association was adopted by a new organisation in 1994.

buried in the mausoleum in Mozano alongside her husband and eldest son, Akaboha II. Within Fante society the role of Queen-mother (*Ohemaa*) is important in that she can reprimand the king in a way not allowed even by his elders, and she has an important role in appointing the new king. If the Queen-mother dies when on the stool, her successor is chosen by the king's elders from among the women of the royal lineage.

Soon after the death of the Akatitibi, Akaboha III heard news that a woman had been confined in preparation for enstoolment to the office of Akatitibi. She was the niece of the former Akatitibi, so she, and her matrilineal clan, assumed that she would inherit the office according to the traditional pattern of Fante society. When she was a child it had been prophesied that she would be a helper of Akaboha II, and she had become one of his wives. However, Akaboha III and many of his elders felt that the person to succeed the Akatitibi was the first wife of Akaboha II and the mother of Akaboha III. The disagreement was essentially between the matrilineal and patrilineal members of the Jehu-Appiah family, but it also marked a division between the traditional and the modernising. The dispute became increasingly severe with bitter accusations from both sides. The Akaboha was even said to have consulted a shrine for spiritual help in resolving the problem of succession. The matter was taken to the High Court in Cape Coast when Prophet Diasara Forson filed against the Akaboha, and it was not finally settled until 1986 after some leading protagonists had died of old age.

On Saturday 11 July 1987, eight years after the death of Akatitibi I, Prophetess Mathabinaia Jehu-Appiah, the mother of Akaboha III, was enstooled as Akatitibi II.²⁷ The tragic dispute is one the church would like to forget, and all members are conscious of the destruction that it caused. Many people began to question the spiritual power and integrity of the church leaders in Mozano, and some began to look for alternative charismatic leaders. As the centre of the church seemed to lack spiritual power new sources began in the periphery within the Healing Camps.

Peripheral shrines

Healing Camps have been a common element of the MDCC since the time of Prophet Appiah, and several are scattered throughout southern Ghana. Over the years these

²⁷ *MDCC Peace Festival Programme 1987*, (Mozano: MDCC, 1987), p. 3.

have become more developed with successful camps having constructed toilets, electricity, living quarters for the sick, and an area sheltered from the public gaze. However, in recent years these have taken on a more significant role as some of the priests or prophetesses in charge have developed the camp into a particularly sacred site. Two centres are now of special importance within the MDCC.

The first is near the Healing Camp at Gomoa Dunkwa, the place where Prophet Appiah received his first revelation, just a few miles from Mozano. The person in charge of the camp is Prophetess Siliciana who is greatly respected even though she is illiterate and only speaks Fante. She is credited with great spiritual discernment, and has guided many people in the performance of "special systems" that have resulted in their blessing and healing. It is her reputation in this respect that has resulted in the support, both financial and material, which has allowed her to construct the shrine.

Near the Healing Camp is the place where the angel is first said to have spoken to Prophet Appiah. Today, the area has been marked off by boundary stones, and is kept clean and tidy (Figure 10:2). Just in front of the walled area is a large white cross with its base made as a star. Prophetess Siliciana informs the new visitors that the star is there to remind one that Christ is the glory of the stars, but the educated Church leaders point out that the star is no more than the "trademark" of the particular builder.²⁸ Immediately within the walls is a pentagonal prayer room, which according to the prophetess carries through the theme of the five pointed star. To the left were three crosses, which the prophetess considers represent the Father - Son - Holy Spirit, but she adds that they could represent Akaboha I, Akaboha II, and Akatitibi I (Figure 10:3). This is the very type of association that the educated young people find particularly distasteful as it appears that uneducated members are encouraged to worship ancestors. In front of the crosses are areas of clean sand where people can prostrate themselves when they pray, and to the right of the three crosses was a tall cross with a hemispherical base. The Prophetess explains that the globe represents the world and people should come to worship taking their stand at the place of their country to pray. The final structure in the courtyard is a raised platform on which burnt offerings can be made.

²⁸

Rev. Suma Kupa Jehu-Appiah who accompanied me on my first visit in August 1992.

Figure 10:2 Schematic plan of new shrine at Gomoa Dunkwa

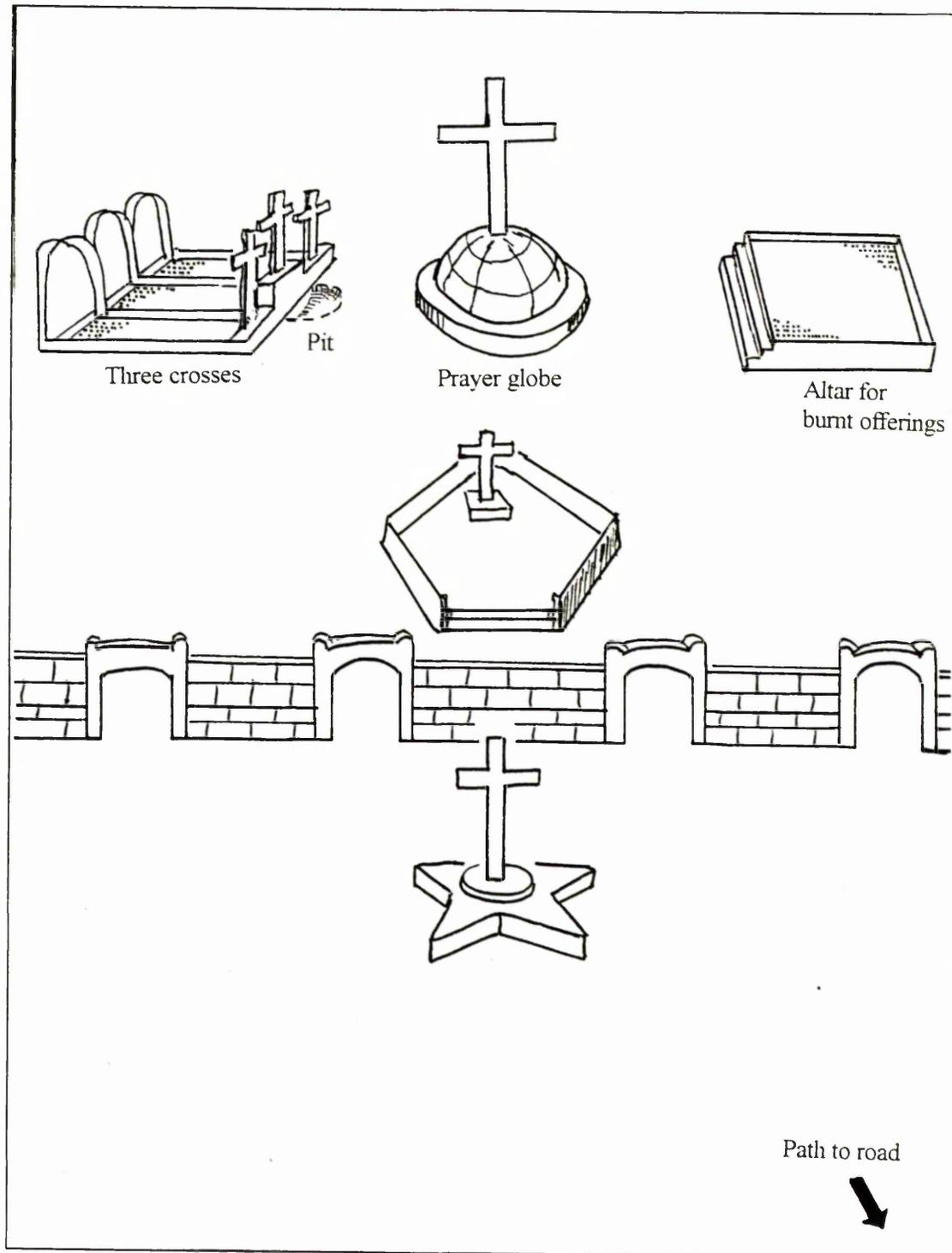
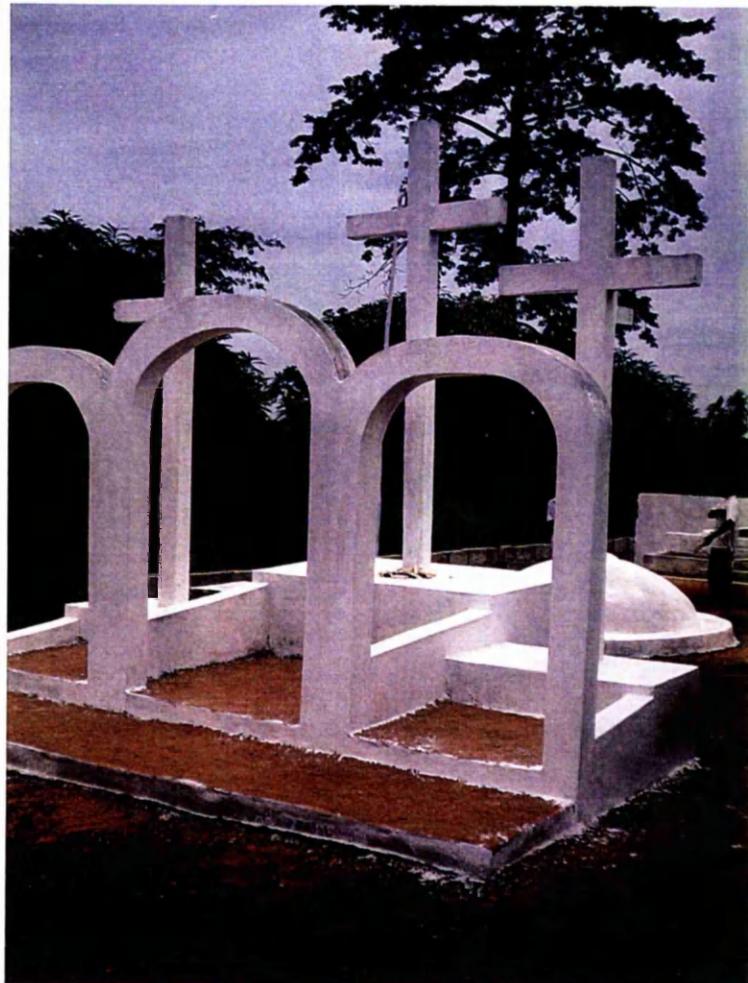


Figure 10:3 Views of shrine near the Prayer Camp at Gomoa Dunkwa



Above:
Entrance to shrine
showing central cross
set in a base in the
form of a
five-pointed star.



Side:
Three prayer crosses
before the place that
Prophet Appiah was
believed to have received
his initial vision.

All these structures have been built since about 1985, and the prophetess said that the designs were given to her by revelation. She hopes to develop the site still further, and encourage more people to come and pray. She is open about the fact that she has received little encouragement and no finance from the Church hierarchy at Mozano. All money has been donated by the increasing number of people who come to the site for healing and blessing, and it is for this reason that the church leaders have not stopped her in the project.

While the Gomoa Dunkwa shrine is based at a site of historical significance for the MDCC, near to Mozano, a more elaborate structure is at Senchi, off Akrade on the Accra-Akosombo Road. This is not a traditional Fante area, but consists mainly of Ga people and it has no significance in the history of the Church. It is however easily accessible from Accra by means of the many lorries that travel along the road to Volta Region. The area started as a Prayer Camp in the 1970s, and was steadily developed by a prophet during the 1980s. Even though the church leaders question the value of the shrine it was finally dedicated on 28 June 1987 by the Akaboha III. The shrine consists of a walled area entered through an ornate gateway within which there are various crosses, sculptures and monuments. The sight is certainly unique and distinctive. One turns a corner to be faced with a huge eye painted on the white wall, said to represent the all seeing eye of God. Various pillars cast out of concrete, and carefully painted, point to the sky. The prophet in charge claims that all the designs have been revealed to him by an angel when he was in a trance state. The various monuments show a striking originality, that has the feel of a spiritual Disney World.²⁹

The church leaders and many educated people in the church are critical of the shrine considering it to be "more like a fetish shrine than a Christian centre."³⁰ The leaders are perplexed over the large sums of money that have been given for its construction and continuing maintenance. As it is mainly poor illiterates who attend the shrine, this suggests that many people must come to the centre. Prophet Ankuma whose visions

²⁹ This raises the question of the value of the study of individual innovation especially when it involves ornate symbolism. The answer must depend upon the degree of social appeal of the innovation. If it attracts many clients and becomes a major movement it is clearly of social importance. Time will tell if Senchi becomes the new centre for the MDCC or merely local speculation that will soon pass. The present leaders of the MDCC are convinced that the latter will prove to be the case.

³⁰ This was a comment made to me by many leaders.

and prophecies have designed the Senchi shrine was however in 1993 appointed as second to the Senior Prophet. The church leaders appear to consider the best policy is to draw this creative prophet into the central leadership of the church. This would seem to avert the dangers of a division, and enhance the authority of the church leaders.

There is a general pattern among the prophets and prophetesses to develop their healing camps, and to make them more attractive and convenient. As more people come for meditation and healing to the peripheral centres they now receive the financial support that formerly went to the headquarters at Mozano. Thus, the leadership based at Mozano is experiencing a shortage of funds. This has made life difficult for many, as church workers are not allowed to take secular employment, and according to the church constitution they must give all their time to the church.

The main reason people visit the new centres are to perform "special systems", or *ntormuadze*, which was an early institution of the MDCC as mentioned in Chapter 6. These are essentially prayer performances asking for spiritual assistance for a personal or family problem as mentioned in the previous chapter. A system may be performed either in the open or secret, but it is popular to perform them at prayer camps under the guidance of a prophet, or prophetess. Frequently, the systems are done at night and as such have an esoteric quality, which has led to some criticism of the Church from those outside the movement. Various rumours are told by members of other denominations of what occurs during these systems, and I was told stories of immoral practices said to take place at night in the sanctuaries. No one could give me any proof of such activities, and most protested at my enquiries by saying, "Everybody knows that these things happen!" In the light of this criticism it is not surprising that the Musama Church is strongly insistent that: "No system of the Musama Church is known to go against the Commandments of God, as for example if it constitutes magic, idolatry or the worship of other gods or spirits; or rape or adultery; or murder. No system of the Musama Church is known to make necessary a woman or man to go naked in the presence of a man or woman respectively."³¹

³¹ Suma Kupa Jehu-Appiah, *Our Practice as Divine Healers* (Mozano: MDCC, 1992), p. 16.

The church requires that all services of spiritual assistance and healing must be offered free of charge. However, once the patient is healed they are expected to make a voluntary offering according to their means. This payment is made during a simple "cleansing" ceremony at the church called in Fante *esubo*. This usually occurs some months after the person is healed, and a gift is given to the healers.

People perform systems for many reasons, and for a broader range of issues than would be considered relevant for Western therapy. Patients recognise that Western medicine is most effective for certain needs. However, beyond this domain there are many problems that cause people a general concern (dis-ease) which Western therapy is unable to answer. It is at these wider levels that systems play such an important part.

The first cluster of problems is gynaecological and especially barrenness. For the Akan this raises important social issues where the birth of children is the principal, if not the ultimate, end of marriage. Barrenness or impotence is therefore of major concern to the whole family, and the people involved will seek any cure once there is the merest hint concerning their inability to have children. The MDCC seeks to meet this social need through the use of prayer. However, the church does place the healing within a moral context by saying that they will only treat married women. "An unmarried woman who comes for healing for childbirth is not entertained."³² Prayers are said for such persons, but they are only allowed to join the healing services once they are married. Another issue is that of complications at birth. Breach-births are not only difficult births, but are regarded as a bad omen. Closely related are those where there has been a history of miscarriages, still births, bleeding, or where the child has died before it has reached three years of age. Women often perform prayer rituals ("systems") if they have had a history of any of these problems. Genetic disorders, or a family tendency to alcoholism are also of great concern.

The second cluster of complaints are those regarded as "spiritual diseases". This is a broad category difficult to define, but may be considered as anxiety states. It tends to embrace those illnesses that a hospital is considered unable to deal with, and the patient feels as having a spiritual cause. No one could give me a list of such illnesses, because

³² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

they are essentially afflictions that fall outside the normal. For example, a person who falls off a chair, and breaks an arm. Why should such a small fall cause such damage? There must be a deeper cause. One case I was told which illustrates this type of affliction was that of a young man who had been working in Germany and had returned to Accra. He was doing well in his job and owned his own car. However, he had a continuing sensation as if something like worms were creeping beneath his skin. The healer felt that this was a typical example of a spiritual disease caused most probably by the jealousy of others. Other symptoms are like a strange feeling on the top or back of the scalp. Another is a tensing of the muscles at the side of the neck giving a sense of a heavy weight. Some healers just pray for the sick, while others pray and massage the neck, and yet others counsel the person about family problems before praying. The variety of practices illustrates the individual innovations that have been, and still are going on within the MDCC. A recommended system for this type of illness would be:

The patient must be healed at midnight whilst dressed in white for seven days. During the system only a candle should be lit in the room. When the patient is sleepless, the patient's bed position or lying position on the bed should be changed to a different position and incense burnt in the room with strong prayers. Note: Such patients are healed with holy water mixed with kazatu; and sanitas fluid.³³

Another common complaint is that of witchcraft (*ayen*).³⁴ This is usually described by those coming for healing as having a "python in the belly".

Financial problems make up a third cluster of issues brought to the Healing Camps. People come to the prophets(ess) saying, "I trade a great deal, but I don't see much!" These people have not had much schooling, and those who have, attribute this failure to accrue wealth as due to the dwarfs who come and steal money while the owner is distracted. A recommended system for loss of money is as follows:

One day fasting in confinement using Psalm 16 as hourly prayer dressed in white with a lighted candle and reading the Lord's prayer after each hourly prayer.³⁵

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁴ *Bayie* is the common word in Twi for witchcraft, and thus a witch or sorcerer is called a *abayifo*. The Fante dialect uses the word *ayen*

³⁵ Suma Kupa, *Our Practice as Divine Healers*, p. 19.

Some healers give the client a special box for them to keep their money. They then pray for both the person and the box that they will be protected from the dwarfs. The educated healers discount this sort of practice and think that the problem is one of bad money management that requires financial counselling. They say that people spend the money on items of no significant value like impulse buying in the West. However, it could also be the result of many demands from dependent relatives. Often there is a sense of guilt concerning how the wealth was acquired.

Legal problems make up the fourth cluster. People facing legal charges may come to the healer and ask for prayer that they may be pardoned, or at least that the judge may be lenient. Usually the people who come for systems in this area are guilty and are sorry and want to be pardoned. The ritual therefore can be seen as having a cathartic effect, and individuals leave "feeling better". Usually these clients are illiterates who feel overwhelmed by the literate world of the judiciary, but often educated people come in desperation. Another common legal problem relates to visas. Many who want to travel will perform systems so that when they go to the High Commission they will have an interviewer who will favour them, and grant them the necessary visa to travel. Family members may also perform systems for relatives who have travelled to Europe or America, but there has been no news from them for a long time. In these systems references are often made to Biblical characters such as Joseph who was lost from his family in Egypt, or Jacob away from Israel, or Daniel in Exile in Babylon.

These common concerns show how the special systems have come to meet those needs that were previously addressed by traditional healers. Today the role is not taken by the pastors and leaders of the church, but by the prophets and prophetesses in the outstations. What needy people are looking for are charismatic personalities who claim to have direct revelations and authority. On the one hand, this is being filled by some of the fringe leaders who are creating their own spiritual centres of power with peripheral shrines. On the other hand, some are turning from the MDCC to look for new centres of charisma that are not based on traditional Fante customs, but relate to the modern nation of Ghana. It is to the pentecostal and charismatic churches that the young people are particularly turning. The central leadership of the MDCC is therefore seeing a fragmentation of its support and an overall loss of members.

Chapter 11

The Contemporary Search for Spiritual Power

The voice of the Apostle boomed over the PA system calling those who wanted to receive the Holy Spirit to come forward. Men and women rushed from every quarter of the temporary shelter into the open court quickly forming lines stretching away from the platform. One could see the earnest desire on the faces of those seeking the Holy Spirit as they asked God to bless them. As the Apostle began to pray for them, some of the leaders moved forward and started praying for those at the front of the lines. A woman falls backward into the arms of the person behind her who gently lays her on the ground, and voices shout "Hallelujah, she has received the Spirit". Another woman similarly collapses, and then a second and a third, until the ground is covered with those slain in the Spirit.¹

The quest for spiritual empowerment continues today. People struggle with social and economic problems as the nation of Ghana shows a slow recovery, students seek to relate to the global society, and many of the poor find difficulties in getting access to modern health facilities. The Church in Ghana continues to be the major institution apart from the state, but the inherent character of the Christian community has changed markedly during the 1980s. No longer do the historic denominations dominate the scene, but now it is the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches that have the largest and most vigorous churches. In this chapter I want to consider the growth of these new movements, and their influence on the existing denominations and especially the MDCC.

The Ghana Church survey

The Ghana Church Survey of 1992-3 attempted to obtain reliable data that could be used to compare the attendance of different denominations and obtain a measure of the

¹ A typical scene from one of the meetings at the Bethel Prayer Camp, Sunyani, Ghana.

growth of all the churches during the previous five years.² Data was first collated in terms of the ten Regions of the country, and then compiled into national figures.

The historic churches showed the following results:

	Attendance	Percentage increase
Anglican Church	29,354	- 2 %
Evangelical Presbyterian Church	68,966	-14 %
Methodist Church	188,725	+ 2 %
Presbyterian Church	178,870	+17 % ³
Roman Catholic	343,957	- 2 %

The Roman Catholic Church is still the largest single denomination in Ghana. The Christian Council of Ghana churches as a whole grew by only 7 per cent compared with an increase in population of 17 per cent. In comparison the largest of the Independent Churches have shown a marked decline.⁴

Church of the Twelve Apostles	34,808	- 22 %
African Faith Tabernacle	29,051	- 23%.
MDCC	21,436	- 17 %
Saviour Church of Ghana	15,550	+ 4%
Apostles Revelation Society	13,807	- 17%
Church of the Lord	13,313	- 21%
Cherubim and Seraphim	7,006	- 24%

It is important to note that the number of congregations of the MDCC has actually increased, meaning that the average attendance for a congregation has declined by over 20 per cent. This has put great strain upon the finances of local congregations, and has resulted in less support being forwarded to the headquarters at Mozano.

² Ghana Evangelism Committee. *National Church Survey: Update 1993* (Accra: GEC, 1993). Appendix 1 gives fuller details.

³ The increase in the Presbyterian Church is said to be the result of a well organised evangelistic programme assisted by the Ghana Evangelism Committee during the period.

⁴ GEC, *National Church Survey: Update 1993*, p. 17.

	First Survey (1988)	Second Survey (1993)
Adults	26,720	21,436
Children	9,791	8,946
Congregations	749	806
Average Attendance	49	38

In contrast, the Pentecostal denominations have all shown significant growth:

Church of Pentecost	259,920	+ 31 %.
Apostolic Church	51,100	+ 27 %
Christ Apostolic	36,270	+ 36 %.
Assemblies of God	60,298	+ 87 %

The Church of Pentecost is now the largest Pentecostal denomination, and has a greater number of congregations than either the Presbyterians or the Methodists. The Assemblies of God missionaries are working mainly in northern Ghana and are seeing converts from other Protestant denominations as well as from traditional religions. The new Charismatic churches are also showing remarkable growth.

This survey illustrates what may be a much wider trend in African Christianity, as noted by Paul Gifford:

These changes, monitored over a five year period, would support the impression given in so many countries in Africa: the AICs are in serious difficulty; the mainline churches are static if not decreasing; substantial growth lies with new Pentecostal and 'mission related' churches.⁵

From conversations that I have had with people who have left the MDCC all have joined Pentecostal or Charismatic churches, and none have started attending any of the historic churches. This observation is not based on a statistical sampling of former members, but on informal conversations with some 20-30 persons. My casual observations also suggest that the illiterate members of the MDCC join Pentecostal denominations, while the educated young people join the newer Charismatic churches. Prophet Appiah and his son Akaboha II were eager to encourage Western education,

⁵ Paul Gifford, "Some Recent Development in African Christianity" *African Affairs* 93 (1994), 527.

and the result has been the emergence of an educated elite within the MDCC. When I have asked as to the number of illiterates within the Church, I have often been given a figure of about 85% compared with a national figure of 47%.⁶ Illiterates clearly outnumber literates by four to one, if not more. The educated young people make up only about 10%, and possibly less. This is reinforced by the fact that only a few of the church members speak any English, while many in the historic churches are English-speakers.

In this chapter I first want to consider the proposition that there is a movement of members from the African Independent Churches to either the Pentecostal denominations or the Charismatic churches. Second, I want to consider the reasons why the former members are joining one or other of these new churches.

Rise of the Charismatic churches

As mentioned in Chapter 9, the Latter Rain movement began in Canada in 1948 and came to Ghana through the invitation to Dr Wyatt by James McKeown. The revival meetings had a major impact upon many Christians in Ghana, including Akaboha II, and stimulated the rapid growth of what was to become the Church of Pentecost.⁷ In North America and Europe the Latter Rain had little impact due to the antagonism of the existing Pentecostal denomination. However, it was to become the forerunner of a much wider and more accepted movement that was to become known as the "Charismatic Movement". Poewe takes charismatic Christianity "to encompass all Christianity from its beginning in the first century, that emphasised religious or spiritual experience and activities of the Holy Spirit."⁸ However, I will use the term Charismatic Christianity to refer to the contemporary movements who appropriate that designation in order to distinguish themselves from established Pentecostal denominations. Charismatics generally hold to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, and that the gifts of the Spirit are relevant for today. They do not claim, as do

⁶ Although no accurate data is available for the church, this is within the range I have been given by the church leaders, pastors, members and critics of the church.

⁷ Richard M. Riss, *Latter Rain* (Ontario: Honeycomb Visual Productions Ltd, 1987).

⁸ K. Poewe, *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1994), p. 2.

most Pentecostals, that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of being baptised in the Holy Spirit.

The new movement caught international attention when in 1960 a respected Episcopal minister in Van Nuys, California, spoke to his congregation of his experience of speaking in tongues.⁹ The minister, Dennis Bennett, was well respected with a congregation of some 2,500 members, and his honest stand triggered a widespread discussion throughout the Anglican community. News reached Britain through reports in *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines, and in April 1961 the *Church Of England Newspaper* carried an article on glossolalia. The Rev. Michael Harper was a curate at All Souls, Langham Place, London, one of the most influential evangelical churches in the country and particularly popular with students. In the summer of 1963 he openly started speaking of being "baptised in the Spirit". This news spread rapidly through the evangelical Anglican community in Britain and to non-conformist ministers, many of whom testified to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Harper had been warned by an American priest to beware of Pentecostals exerting an unhelpful influence as they would upset more sensitive members of the new movement. In fact, the Pentecostals did not rush to help, but the warning had effect and the new movement kept a distinct identity. There was however some co-operation between the two movements, and in 1965 a joint conference was held encouraged by the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI). Two plane loads of "spirit-filled" Christians flew from North America to Heathrow for the conference, and after the conference they went out in teams to various parts of Britain. One of the most influential figures was Nicky Cruz, an ex-drug addict and gang leader converted through the ministry of David Wilkerson. The story was recounted in the book *The Cross And The Switchblade* that became available in Britain in 1964.¹⁰ The remarkable account told of how a small town Pentecostal pastor was called to minister to the drug addicts and gang members of New York. By preaching the Gospel in their language and by stressing the power of the God in the baptism of the Holy Spirit the lives of many young people had been radically changed. Many young people were challenged by the stories, and the movement quickly spread through Christian Unions in both

⁹ Dennis Bennett, *Nine O'clock in the Morning* (Eastbourne: Coverdale, 1970).

¹⁰ David Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (Westwood: Spire, 1965).

British and North American Universities and Colleges. Initially this caused concern for the more conservative Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVF), but the growing acceptance of the teaching by well-known evangelical church leaders led to a cautious approval. In the USA this gave rise to the so-called "Jesus Movement" that began about 1967 when several independent ministries began on the West Coast.^{11 12} There were also several reported revivals at university campuses. One of the most widely publicised campus revivals took place at Asbury College in Kentucky during a service on 3 February 1970, and this spread to several other colleges.¹³

Some of the early Charismatic leaders either left, or were expelled from their denominations and they formed their own congregations that often grew rapidly.¹⁴ The 1970s and 1980s saw the widespread acceptance of Church Growth ideas by evangelical Christians around the world.¹⁵ The Church Growth movement, initiated by the theories of Donald McGavran, applies sociological principles to understand the growth of congregations and the development of mission strategy.¹⁶ Even though Church Growth has been criticised for relying upon sociological techniques rather than the power of the Holy Spirit, it has been adopted by many Charismatic groups with great success. Charismatic and Pentecostal churches now have some of the largest congregations in the world.

Another teaching that has been adopted by some Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders is what has become known as "prosperity teaching", which advocates that a Christian committed to the will of God will know success in every part of life. For example, if one has faith God will give you a large growing church. The person who is filled with the Holy Spirit will experience wealth, health and happiness. As Dr Paul Yonggi Cho, the pastor of the largest Pentecostal congregation in the world in Seoul, writes at the conclusion of his book:

Brothers and sisters in Christ, right now you have all God's power dwelling within you. You can tap that power for your tuition, your clothes, your books, your

¹¹ Billy Graham, *The Jesus Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1917).

¹² R. S. Ellwood, *One Way: The Jesus Movement and Its Meaning* (Englewood N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

¹³ G. D. Kittler, *The Jesus Kids and Their Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, 1972).

¹⁴ Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985).

¹⁵ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1970).

¹⁶ John N. Vaughan, *The World's Twenty Largest Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984).

health, your business, everything! When you go out to preach the gospel you are not preaching a vague objective, a theory, philosophy, or human religion. You are actually teaching people how to tap endless resources. You are giving them Jesus, and through Jesus God comes and dwells within our hearts.¹⁷

In the late 1960s and 1970s Ghanaian business people and students began to return home speaking of their experiences of the Charismatic movement in Britain and America. The American-founded FGBMI began to hold Charismatic meetings in Accra and Kumase. The nature of the organisation meant that it attracted upper-class, middle-aged Christian businessmen who were already members of the historic churches in Ghana. The teaching provided a dynamic Christian message within a modern business context, and began to have a positive effect within the historic churches. The association was, however, specifically middle-aged, and lacked appeal for the young people of the historic churches. The Scripture Union (SU) however, was an existing international association of Christian students with the aim of encouraging the reading of the Bible. News of what had been going on among students in Britain, America and New Zealand caught the attention of the African members of the SU who began to read Charismatic literature and listen to the new Christian songs.¹⁸ As early as 1966, Charismatic prayer meetings were being formed in the SUs of the main universities, but it essentially remained a movement within the mainline denominations in a similar way as in Britain.^{19 20 21}

In the 1980s, a number of new Charismatic congregations and ministries emerged in Ghana. In addition to the usual evangelical-pentecostal message they place an emphasis upon abundant life and deliverance ministry. These now include the Grace Outreach Church, the Victory Bible Church, Calvary Charismatic Church, Resurrection Power Evangelistic Church.²² The first of the Charismatic Fellowships were formed in Accra among University students and recent graduates associated with the SU. Matthews Ojo has described how the major Charismatic church in Nigeria, the Deeper

¹⁷ Paul Yonggi Cho, *The Fourth Dimension: A Guide to Successful Living* (Seoul: Yongsan Publ., 1978), p. 186.

¹⁸ Samuel Adubofuor, "Evangelical Parachurch Movements in Ghanaian Christianity: C. 1950-Early 1990s", (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 229-241.

¹⁹ Private conversation with Rev. James Abakah, leader in SU of Ghana, April 1996.

²⁰ Matthews A. Ojo, "The 1970 Charismatic Revival in Nigeria", *Thelia* 3 (1990), 4-10.

²¹ Abamfo O. Atiemo, *The Rise of the Charismatic Movement in the mainline Churches in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa, 1993).

²² Emmanuel Larbi, "The Development of Ghanaian Pentecostalism" (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 1995).

Christian Life Ministry, showed similar growth from enthusiastic students at Lagos University.²³ All, to some degree or another, hold to the "prosperity gospel", and this is an important element in the attraction of these new churches.^{24 25}

Christian Action Faith International

Christian Action Faith International claimed to have 8,000 members in 1992, and was the largest congregation in Ghana. Its headquarters is in the middle class Airport residential area, but the services take place at a new complex near the Tema highway within walking distance of Legon University. There is only one service on Sunday mornings, but this lasts three hours or more. The service is totally in English apart from occasional reference to Twi or Ewe for some popular saying or illustration. Translation is provided into Ewe and French at one side of the main auditorium in a way similar to other international Charismatic churches around the world. The service usually commences with an hour or so of worship, making great use of the new songs and choruses from around the world.²⁶ Use is also made of the overhead projector to display the words of the song, which allows the worshippers to raise their hands in a way characteristic of many Charismatic churches in the English-speaking world.

The Action Faith Church was founded by Nicholas Duncan Williams who was brought up by his mother, a nurse in the North of Ghana. After a wild youth, Duncan Williams became a "born-again" Christian when in hospital suffering something of a breakdown in 1976. A Church of Pentecost evangelist spoke to him at that time, and he was "born again". In the same year, Duncan Williams went to Nigeria to study at the Bible College established by Benson Idahosa to teach his expression of Pentecostal Christianity. After completing his studies in 1978, Duncan Williams returned to Ghana, and founded his own church in 1979 with the aim of emulating Idahosa in forming the largest church in the country. When Oral Roberts visited Ghana in 1988

²³ Matthews A. Ojo, "Deeper Christian Life Ministry: A Case study of the Charismatic Movement in Western Nigeria", *Journal of Religion in Africa* 18 (1988), 141-161.

²⁴ Paul Gifford, "Prosperity: A New and Foreign Element in African Christianity", *Religion* 20 (1990), 373-388.

²⁵ Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "The Gospel of Prosperity in West Africa", in Richard H. Roberts (ed.), *Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism: Comparative Approaches* (London: Routledge, 1995).

²⁶ The pattern and style of service and organisation of the congregation are very similar to other Charismatic churches I have attended in Korea, Britain and USA.

he was accompanied by Idahosa.²⁷ Roberts spoke at the worship centre of Christian Action Faith Ministry, and laid hands on Williams for a special anointing of God's Spirit.

An underlying theology of the church is prosperity teaching as illustrated in Duncan Williams's recent book - *You are Destined to Succeed!* Commencing from the Genesis account of the world before the Fall, he argues that God never planned that human beings would be sick, hungry or defeated. Because people disobeyed God, sin entered human experience, but if human beings turn to God and obey his spiritual laws, they will be blessed in abundance. He holds himself up as an example, pointing to his Mercedes cars, big house (with security guards) and lavish lifestyle. Williams writes:

The traditional and orthodox churches we grew up in held many views which were diametrically opposed to God's word ... They preach a doctrine which says in essence - poverty promotes humility. But you know this is not true ... The missionaries erred tragically by not teaching the Africans God's Word and laws regarding sowing and reaping... Thank God, He has called us to declare his full counsel to our generation. I preach and teach prosperity like any other doctrine of the Bible.²⁸

This teaching has been widely criticised by the historic churches, but the church continues to grow and regularly attracts crowds of students and wealthy professionals.

International Central Gospel Church

The second largest Charismatic church in Ghana is the International Central Gospel church, Accra, founded by Mensa Otabil on 26 February 1984.²⁹ The church currently meets at the Baden-Powell Hall at the sea-front where over 2,000 people meet for the two services organised on Sunday mornings.³⁰ Those who cannot fit into the rented hall sit in the sheltered overflow and participate with the help of closed circuit television. Visitors are warmly welcomed, and all members encouraged to greet each other. This is typical of many Charismatic churches around the world and is in accordance with Church Growth teaching.

²⁷ *West Africa*, 25 July 1988 reports that 70,000 people attended meetings held at the Accra Sports Stadium.

²⁸ Duncan Williams, *You are Destined to Succeed!* (Accra, 1994), p. 145, 150.

²⁹ Larbi, "The Development of Ghanaian Pentecostalism", pp. 300-328.

³⁰ In 1994 the services were from 8.30-11.00 am and 11.30-2.00 p.m., and followed a similar order with the preaching of the same sermon.

Otabil also preaches a message of prosperity to his young congregation. In his book *Four Laws of Productivity* he teaches four basic laws.³¹ First, God wants to bless every person whatever his race or country. Second, God has given every person a talent, and since all have some talent, all can succeed. Third, one must discover one's special talent, protect it, then use it with confidence and willingness to learn and study. Finally, one must not hoard, but manage well. Like Duncan Williams' book this is essentially a "how to succeed" manual.

Paul Gifford claims to detect a difference between the teaching of Otabil and Duncan Williams, Otabil's message being one that success is reached through self-confidence and determination, while Duncan Williams sees success as being achieved through immutable laws.³² In my opinion the members of these churches do not see any difference between the teaching of the two, and regard the message as an active faith in God. First, you must name what you want. Second, ask your Heavenly Father for it in the Name of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, claim it from God, and believe that He has given it to you. This message has enormous appeal especially to the young. No wonder *West Africa* magazine in 1985 speaks of "spiritual revival sweeping the country".³³

Both these churches are characterised by loud music, dynamic preaching, exercise of speaking in tongues and praying for the sick. The leaders of the MDCC are perplexed about the popularity of this aspect of the Charismatic churches, believing that they have merely copied this from them. The new Charismatic churches are critical of the music and liturgy of the older churches, preferring to sing the increasing number of new songs from Charismatic churches in Britain, America and New Zealand. Audio-tapes of the music quickly travelled around the world, and became part of the worship of the new churches in Ghana. They followed recognised Church Growth principles such as mid-week home groups in which the members receive pastoral care and teaching, organised evangelism, multiple services, and use of mass media and especially audio and video recording. In this way they are very similar to charismatic churches in

³¹ Mensa Otabil, *Four Laws of Productivity: God's Foundation for Living* (Accra: Altar International, 1992).

³² Paul Gifford, "Ghana's Charismatic Churches" *Journal of Religion in Africa* 24 (1994), 241-265.

³³ Akaptah M. Rogers, "Spiritual Renaissance" *West Africa*, 13 May 1985, 943.

other countries, such as the Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, Korea and the Hope of Bangkok in Thailand.

There is strong competition between the various charismatic churches as they compete to encourage young people to join them. Attempts were made to form a Charismatic Council in 1989, to avoid internal tensions between rival Charismatic churches, but this has never fully succeeded.

Pentecostal blessing

By the end of the 1980s there were four broad groups advocating healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit: the "Spiritual Churches", the Pentecostals, the Charismatics, and those congregations and associations that remained part of their historic denominations while considering themselves Charismatic. It is my argument that the illiterate members of the MDCC have found the Pentecostal denominations and associated movements most attractive, and for the following reasons:

First, the former association of MDCC with the Pentecostal denominations conveys a message to the members that these churches are similar to the MDCC, and possess spiritual power to deal with their problems. Services often end with an "altar call" in which those in special need are called to come forward to be prayed for by the leaders of the church. For example, after preaching at one Church of Pentecost congregation I was asked to pray for twenty or more women who were barren.

Second, although the style of the church meetings lacks the traditional rituals of the MDCC, much is familiar and follows many traditional customs. For example, in the Church of Pentecost men and women sit separately as do elders and deacons. Looking from the pulpit, men sit to the right of the aisle with pastors' wives seated on the front row next to the pastors who sit on the right of the pulpit. To the left of the aisle sit the women with visitors sitting at the front. At the far left, and looking towards the elders are the deacons. Women are required to cover their heads with a white scarf. The service is usually in Twi, or the language of the majority in the area. Visitors from other congregations are always invited to "bring a song", which means that they should

greet the congregation and start to sing their favourite hymn. The congregation quickly joins in to help the newcomer and ensure them a warm welcome.

The third advantage is that the Pentecostal Churches do not face the same criticism from the historic denominations as does the MDCC. They are perceived as respectable denominations confirmed through their affiliation with British or American Pentecostal denominations or foreign mission agencies. The Church of Pentecost has contacts with the English Elim Pentecostal Church, which has had a major influence through the training of their pastors. The pastors are therefore literate and enthusiastic in teaching the Bible to their congregations. The pastors also have a good reputation for being moral in their conduct and church workers are instantly dismissed for wrong behaviour.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the majority attending the Church of Pentecost are illiterate, or have achieved only primary school education. The primary language of communication is Twi, rather than English as in the historic and Charismatic churches. Generally the members who have moved to the Pentecostals from the MDCC have done so because they feel that that the Pentecostals have power. A typical testimony would be that they were not healed in the MDCC, but when they went to the Pentecostals they were. Even so, there appears to be a general flux as people with differing needs go to various churches or crusade meetings for healing. The rapid growth of the Church of Pentecost has provided its own dynamic, which contrasts with the MDCC that appears more traditional and lacking in power to deal with current issues.

The Church of Pentecost has followed the patterns taught by James McKeown and his followers in the 1950s, but some of the patterns now appear dated and are a concern to English missionaries working with the church. The educated young people have especially found the pattern rigid and lacking the dynamism of the Charismatic congregations. Some students have started attending the Charismatic churches, much to the concern of the church leaders. To stem this flow a new style of service has been instituted in a few of the congregations in Accra and Kumase. In these congregations, the head-scarf is now optional, men and women can sit together, the majority of the service is in English, visitors do not have to "bring a song", and they have started using

an overhead projector to show the words of the Western choruses. These changes have been appreciated by the students at Legon University who now feel that they are on a par with their fellow Charismatic students who attend the newer churches. In 1993, they formed their own fellowship known as PENZA, Pentecostal Students Association. Even so, these congregations have suffered from the criticism of senior pastors who consider that they are losing their identity as Church of Pentecost.

Although Prayer Camps have existed within the Church of Pentecost for many years, a proliferation of new prayer camps began in the 1980s. The Edumfa Prayer Camp in Central region is the largest and was the first to be incorporated into the Church of Pentecost in the 1960s. The Bantama prayer camp is in Kumase, the Okanta prayer camp is located in Eastern Region, and the Bethel Prayer Camp in Sunyani, Brong Ahafo Region was established in 1990.³⁴ The Bethel Camp is centred on the ministry of Pastor Paul Owusu Tabiri, an itinerant evangelist who was formerly a businessman and Regional Field Representative of the FGBMFI.³⁵ He was encouraged by some of the leaders of the Church of Pentecost to start prayer and healing meetings. Attendance grew rapidly until the numbers were so great that they formed a temporary prayer camp just outside Sunyani. Many thousands of people attend the gatherings, in which the climax is healing and prayer for the anointing with the Holy Spirit. The people stand in line to be prayed for by the leaders, and many are "slain in the Spirit" and caught before being gently lain on the floor (Figure 11:1a). Pastor Tabiri's style is essentially a cross between the American revivalists and the Camp meetings previously held by the Methodists, Pentecostals and the MDCC. He is keen to make a distinction between his ministry and that of the Independent Churches, and does this not only orally, but symbolically by flying national flags around the prayer camp with the American "Stars and Stripes" being particularly obvious (Figure 11:1b).³⁶ The people attend for similar reasons to those who go to the MDCC Peace Festival, and peripheral shrines.³⁷ The *Bethel News* is filled with testimonies of healings, deliverance,

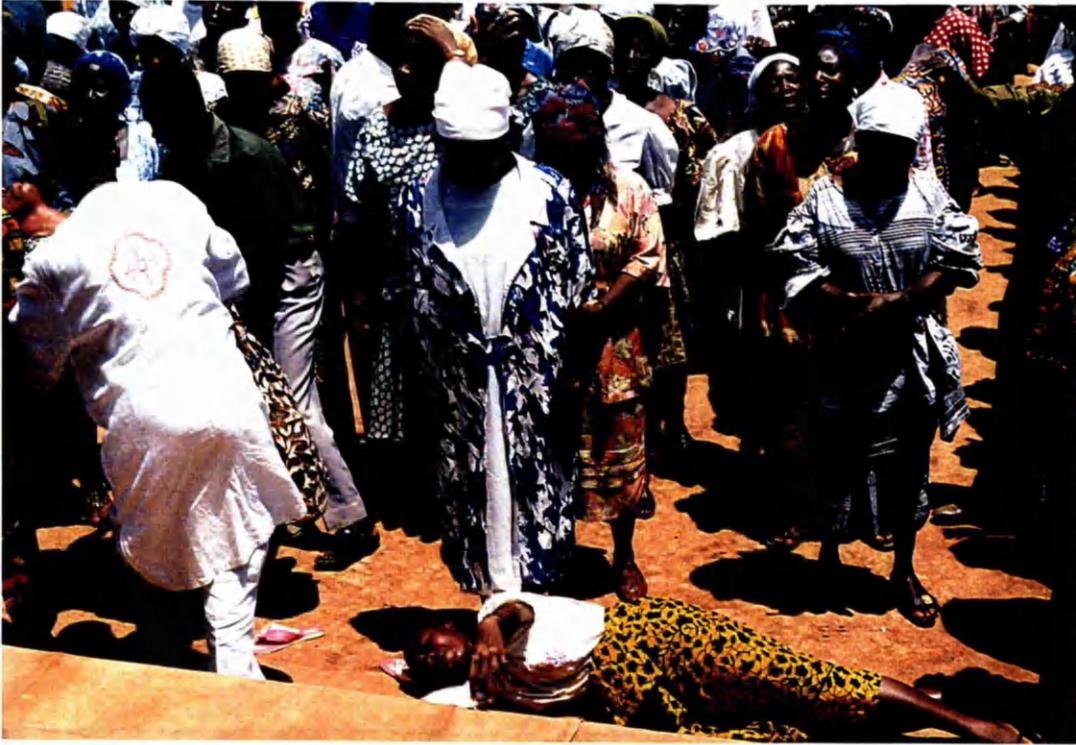
³⁴ Over 40,000 people were believed to attend the five-day gathering in August 1994.

³⁵ Larbi, "The Development of Ghanaian Pentecostalism", pp. 351-362.

³⁶ Tabiri resigned from the Church of Pentecost in 1995 after criticism about his financial dealings, and now runs the Bethel Prayer Camp as an Independent organisation. Rijk A. Van Dijk, "From Camp to Encompassment: Discourse of Transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora", *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26 (1996), 1-25.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Figure 11:1 Bethel Revival Camp in Sunyani (1994)



(A) Women queue to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.



(B) The woman speaking is giving testimony of God's blessing.

protection and blessing.³⁸ Stories are about “Twelve years breast cancer healed”; “A blind lady receives sight”; “Fetish priest turns to Christ”. Other stories recount how God provides people with a fortune after they have been prayed for by Tabiri. The emergence of these Pentecostal prayer camps illustrates the flux among many Christians who move around the various Pentecostal gatherings in the hope of finding one that will meet their particular needs. They are not particularly concerned about the denomination, but whether the prophet has spiritual power. Larbi concludes, “The silent message of the camps to the churches, both pentecostal and mainline, is that unless the present fears, desires, and aspirations of the people are addressed, alternative movements will emerge as protest movements to address these needs.”³⁹

The educated elite

Within the MDCC, the educated, English-speaking elite may be divided into those who are members of the Jehu-Appiah family and are part of the extended family of the present Akaboha, and those who are outside the family. The leading positions of the church are currently held by members of the Jehu-Appiah family, and only the middle and lower ranks are seen as open to other members of the church. The leadership of the church would deny any such restraint, but this is a widely held view of most of the members of the church. The other educated group are not members of the family, but have managed to attain a good education through individual endeavours or the favour of their families.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, during the second generation of the church the disruptive tendency of the young people was channelled into constructive activities through the MYCA youth group. However, during the third generation there has been no MYCA organisation, and the young people have become increasingly vocal in their criticism. This has especially resulted from the antagonism that they have met from other Christians while at college or university. This has caused them to raise questions concerning the practices of the MDCC, and encouraged them to read the Bible. Many young people have therefore stopped wearing their ring and chain while at university, and have started to attend other churches. This has only heightened criticism passed

³⁸ *Bethel News* Issue 1 (1993).

³⁹ Larbi, “The Development of Ghanaian Pentecostalism”, p. 376.

on through the families of the young people to others in the church. The result is that many members are currently dissatisfied with the practices of the MDCC, and this is openly expressed by the young people and recognised by the leadership of the church. There are five main areas criticised by the young people.

The first criticism is of animal sacrifice. Although this is not widely practised it does still occur on two occasions: at men's prayer meetings at some prayer camps, and during major festivals at Mozano. The young people have questioned the Biblical validity of the practice because it is no longer needed following the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The second criticism relates to the role of chieftaincy within the MDCC, and especially the pomp surrounding the Akaboha. They ask why there should be such a hereditary leadership in the church surrounded by what they call "pseudo-Akan traditions". Third, the young people are critical of the ceremony that has developed around the graves of Prophet Appiah, his wife the Akatitibi I, and his son Akaboha II. The leaders of the MDCC speak of them as "saints" of the church, who are considered good examples of the Christian life. The educated young people however claim that many illiterate people actually pray to the "saints", and tend to worship them rather than God alone. Four, the young people accuse the Akaboha of immorality, and he is known for having many women about his compound. His official wife left him in 1990. Similarly, several church workers are also accused of using their position to take young women as sexual partners. The practice of polygamy is still common among the less educated pastors, but is generally disliked by the young women in the church.⁴⁰

Finally, the educated young people are questioning the spiritual guidance given by leaders of the church and especially the prophetesses most of whom are illiterate with little Bible knowledge. They therefore depend on dreams and visions to provide counsel for the many who come to them. One group of young people said to me, "There are many different spirits in the world. We do not know what kind of spirits the prophets use."⁴¹ Certain members feel threatened by some of the prophecies made by the priests predicting evil upon a young woman unless her father gives her to him as

⁴⁰ The women were not at ease speaking to a stranger, but after taking part in the "Peace Festival" in 1992 I was generally accepted as "a man of God". When the more educated women were informed that I was writing about the MDCC they wanted to express their views to me.

⁴¹ A leading young man in the church, 1992.

a wife. Many of these criticisms are heard among members of other denominations, but they often have biased views based on stories of gross immorality and spirit activity.

During the time of Akaboha II there were many prominent people associated with the church. I have already mentioned how some members of the Government and military sought advice and counsel from Akaboha II. Few now come to the present Akaboha, who does not have his father's reputation of being "a spiritual man". There are said to be only five people in the whole church whom the leaders now consider to be "wealthy".⁴² A variety of reasons are given as to why there are now so few wealthy people: "Those who remained found that they began to lose their money." "God did not bless them in their business." "Akaboha is always grabbing, grabbing money, but it soon goes because God is not blessing him."

There is a deeper underlying issue that relates to the change in attitude of the young people generally. Although traditional leadership and some customs are still respected, the major interest of young people is the achievement of a modern western life-style. There is a prevailing view that if something is "made in Ghana" it is no good. The young people are interested in western education and the hope of studying in Europe or America. Western music and films are very popular, as are western clothes and life-style. The claim of the MDCC to be an African expression of Christianity has therefore little appeal for these young people. This can be seen at the great procession during the Peace Festival, known as the *Piodama*. This regal procession finds a climax in a great "durbar" of chiefs, and all attending are expected to dress in traditional costume. Many young people, on the other hand, dress in comical clothes reminiscent of a university rag possession, rather than an important ceremonial event. Young men dress up as school boys with cap and tie, and even some of the girls dress in boy's clothing with no hint of traditional Akan dress. Although this behaviour is criticised by the leadership, groups of young people continue to publicly flout their expressed preferences.

⁴² A person is considered wealthy if they can afford to own a car and build a modern Western style house.

Movement from the MDCC

Although many young people are open in their criticism of the church the majority simply stop attending the church when they are away from home. The Universities in Ghana all have a high percentage of active church attenders. At Legon University, Accra, William Amegatse, the Secretary of the Legon Pentecostal Union, estimates that 80% of the students attend church, half going to the Roman Catholic and Christian Council churches, and half to the various Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.⁴³ The Charismatic churches are growing from the transfer of young people from the historic churches. The leaders of the historic churches are aware of this loss of their young people, but hope that they will return to the denomination of the families when they have left university. Although the Pentecostal churches have retained many of their own young people, they too are conscious of the movement to the newer Charismatic churches. Students are especially attracted by the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the growing Charismatic churches. They like the new western songs that are quickly learned and sung, the use of English, but especially they like the emphasis on progress and prosperity. The historic churches are sharp in their criticism of such "prosperity teaching" as are many churches in Britain and America.

When people move from the MDCC, or any of the independent churches, to the Charismatic churches they usually keep their former church allegiance secret. The Charismatic and Pentecostal churches often consider that membership in one of the independent churches results in possession by a spirit. This is how they explain the way that members of Spiritual churches speak in tongues and prophecy. The individual therefore needs prayer, and the spirit exorcised before they can become members of the new church.

Deliverance is perceived as a distinct step after salvation, and it is usually considered to fall into three classes. First, are those people possessed by spirits that can harm other people through the individual. Witchcraft is an example of this form, which in southern Ghana is often described by the phrase "having a python in the belly". This is the same issue as addressed by the MDCC, and other Pentecostal churches. The second class are those persons who are afflicted with physical illness due to evil spirits.

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William Amegatse interviewed August 1994.

These include stomach pains, headaches, and sores that will not heal. The third class of afflictions to be codified by Charismatic churches are usually described as "Bad Habits". These do not particularly harm people, but the individual cannot control them. Examples that I have noted in the larger Charismatic churches are: alcoholism, smoking, masturbation, fornication, and even "sleeping in church when the preacher is speaking". At the end of a service it is common for people to be invited to come forward for deliverance from any of these "Bad Habits".

Former church workers have additional problems because the MDCC has provided their livelihood. Throughout the last few years several pastors not of the Jehu-Appiah family have left the church. They have been challenged by the growth of the Pentecostal churches, and are frustrated with a lack of change in the MDCC. As they have read the Bible they, like the students, have felt increasingly unhappy with the church teaching. These pastors have received little or no biblical training within the church, so that they have no qualifications to be accepted as a pastor in another denomination.

Pastors leaving the MDCC have therefore sought to set up their own church. Preparations for this are usually done quietly, drawing upon the support of several like-minded lay people. For example, Rev. Blankson was the head of the pastor's training organisation at Mozano, but became frustrated by the failure of the church to make it more relevant to the changing situation. He went on a visit to London where he gathered around himself disillusioned former members of the MDCC, and started his own church. The Rev. Forson was the District Superintendent of the Accra region of the MDCC, which included some of the largest congregations within the MDCC. He took a 40-day seclusion during which time he spoke to many young people, one at a time. At the end of the period he announced the formation of his own church structured on the lines of the Pentecostal denominations which commenced by meeting in his house in Accra. He was soon joined by many disillusioned young people whose family were part of the MDCC.

Ossamadils Church

The growing tension within the MDCC is paralleled in the case of the smaller Ossamadils Church (Church of Light) mentioned earlier in Chapter 5. This denomination was founded by Samuel Dankwa, one of the founding members of the Faith Society, who left Prophet Appiah in 1925. The leaders of the Ossamadils Church were practising polygamists, and had many children. This together with the fact that the leaders did not give schooling the same priority as the MDCC, meant that few of the church members were educated. Even so, more recently younger members have been attending Colleges, and facing the same problems as the young people in the MDCC. The grandson of the founder, Edward Botchway, did attend university and met up with Charismatic organisations. In 1984, he was appointed head of the church. Initially he sought to follow its traditions, but he became increasingly unhappy. In 1989 he started attending the FGBMFI in Swedru, and was joined by other young pastors who began criticising the older leaders of the Ossamadils Church.

Their main areas of criticism were the practice of polygamy by leaders of the church, growing irrelevance of the rituals (which were similar to those of the MDCC), and constant requests for money. In addition the young leaders were impressed by the "The Holy Spirit power" of the leaders they saw in the Charismatic Churches, which they felt was lacking from the Ossamadils Church. This they believed accounted for the lack of growth that the church had seen in recent years.

The church has 44 congregations (called "stations") in the North, which have introduced many new practices advocated by Edward Botchway. They have given up the traditional hymns of the church, and have begun singing Pentecostal choruses. The pastors are encouraged to preach from the Bible, and avoid the old rituals. The members have been taught to pray for themselves, so that the prophets have become redundant. In contrast, the 23 churches in the South have held strongly to the traditions of the church. Under the leadership of the uncle of Edward Botchway, they have opposed modernisation, and are dividing from the northern churches. The main issues have been disagreement over properties that both fragments want to retain. The outcome of this continuing disagreement has been the loss of members, and both groups appear near to complete disintegration. Leaders of the MDCC have no contact

with the Ossamadils Church, but when I have informed them of what is happening, all realise that it could well happen within the MDCC. Most think that it could well have happened to the MDCC if it had not been for the outstanding character and personality of Akaboha II.

Response of the current leaders

The members of the Jehu-Appiah family are aware of problems within the church. Obviously, they are not eager to speak about it with outsiders, but once they are aware of a sympathetic attitude they are willing to talk about what can be done. They are already seeking a way ahead.

First, Suma Kupa Jehu-Appiah, younger brother of Akaboha III, has commenced writing various apologetics explaining the teaching of the church on various issues. The three books published by the church deal with sacrifice, marriage and the family, and healing. Suma Kupa makes use of British and American writers to present a reasoned case for these practices. The interesting feature is that these books have been published in English, not Fante, and this is in a church where the greater majority of the members have had little education. The main audience for these books is not the ordinary members of the church, but the literate young people of the church and Christians of other denominations.

Secondly, the church is eager to achieve social acceptance. This has resulted in inviting the Head of State to open the new secondary school in 1992, gaining a reputation as an international church, attending international conventions, and giving hospitality to visiting Western academics.

Third, they are trying to introduce a more western understanding of healing, and argued that the use of western medicine does not show a lack of faith. Reference is often made by the current leaders to the attempt of Akaboha II in 1960 to try to establish a small clinic in Mozano. Today, a clinic has been built in Mozano, a male nurse has been appointed, and many are hoping that the Government will provide additional medical staff and funding. The old compound used to restrain psychiatric patients' still remains, but it is now derelict. During the Peace Festival disturbed

people are still brought for healing, and sometimes chained for both their protection and that of the residents of the town. However, some leaders feel that this is not the right way to deal with such disturbed people, and they would like to introduce Western counselling techniques to supplement the power of prayer. There is now a spectrum of views concerning the use of *edur* within the MDCC. At the conservative end of the axis are the older members who refuse all medication, but it has been pointed out that they are willing to visit the dentist and optician. Most of the members are happy to use any methods that actually provide a cure. Most of the illiterates would come into this category, and they would often take western medicine, if they could afford it, and perform systems. At the liberal end, are the educated elite, who are critical of the "by prayer-only" approach.

The fourth area emerged when the church began to move outside the Twi-speaking area and began to face problems of internationalisation. In Ivory Coast, the MDCC started to grow among the migrant Ghanaian workers, but the church soon realised that if they were to reach others in the country they would have to use French. They had difficulties in translating the established songs of the church which were written for the *asafo* type of music. Some church responses were translated into French, and members were encouraged to memorise the greetings of the church given in "tongues".

In 1977, Akaboha III passed through London on his way to America. As London has been a major centre for Ghanaians to come for both study and trade, it was only logical that the MDCC should consider establishing a congregation among the Ghanaian community. The Akaboha therefore asked several pastors from Ghana to join him for a mission in the capital. The mission lasted about four weeks after which nine people had committed themselves to form a new MDCC congregation in London. These people continued to meet at Forest Gate for the next year when the Akaboha returned with six ministers to organise another mission. More people were added to the initial group, and it was decided that two of the ministers should remain in London to help the young congregation. Two months later these ministers returned to Ghana to report on how things were proceeding. Clearly the congregation needed continuing pastoral care, but there was a problem of financial support as it was not then possible to send

money out of Ghana.⁴⁴ Rev. Jehu-Appiah expressed his willingness to stay in London, and he arrived back in October 1979. This was initially for one year, but he has remained for over 15 years.

Pastor Jeri Jehu-Appiah has attempted to contextualize the ritual and teaching of the MDCC to a multi-cultural urban area of Britain. Although the theory of contextualization is simply expressed, the practice is not straight-forward for several reasons. First, people familiar with the orthodox patterns of the MDCC are often reluctant to change. They enjoyed singing the familiar hymns in the Fante language. Rev. J. Jehu-Appiah is a gifted musician, but he was unable to translate the Fante into English without doing radical damage to the style of music. He therefore set about writing his own songs in English, but with an MDCC character to the music.⁴⁵

Second, changes are only introduced when issues are seen to cause confusion or difficulty for the people themselves.⁴⁶ This has been the case with many West Indians accepting the patterns of the MDCC. For example, Rev. J. Jehu-Appiah has to explain to people from the Caribbean that it is not acceptable to give one's offering during the service with the left hand. They are unaware that in Ghana the right hand is regarded as clean, and the left hand is for profane functions.

Third, although the meaning of a symbol may not be explicitly understood, it becomes part of the tradition of the church. An act, therefore, is considered merely the right way to do things. Members will protest that they have always done it that way. An example of this issue experienced by the congregation in London was that of burning incense. The church in Ghana often burns incense for the purpose, according to the priests, of purifying the air. Rev. J. Jehu-Appiah made use of this practice in one London hall they rented to remove the lingering smell of tobacco smoke. When, in 1982, the church moved to a better hall they were requested not to burn incense. Rev. J. Jehu-Appiah was happy to accept this condition, but some members were adamant that it was essential to burn incense. The incident eventually led to a split in the small London congregation.

⁴⁴ The Musama clergy are not paid salaries, but are given support by the members of the local church.

⁴⁵ Jeri J. Jehu-Appiah, *Songs of Inspiration* (London: MDCC, 1992).

⁴⁶ Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspective* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), pp. 191-210.

Contextualization is never a simple process, but one that involves a dynamic interaction of the beliefs and rituals of the church with the social needs of the community. In a multi-cultural society, symbols and rituals that are flexible and simple are more likely to attract the interest of a wider social mix. The more specific the ritual and symbolism the greater is the need for explanation to give meaning and avoid misunderstanding and rejection. One problem of instituting change in a charismatic religion is that of explaining why ritual and teaching that were previously purported to have been given by direct revelation need to be changed. Another problem is how one avoids destroying the very character of the organisation itself. It is a tension between traditions given by God, and the practical realities of contemporary society. This is a problem that not only faces the MDCC, but all Christian denominations.

* * * * *

It is now possible to address the question posed at the beginning of this chapter. Why are people leaving the MDCC? The main reason stated by the members themselves is that the church no longer has spiritual power. Most members have a pragmatic view of Christianity, and if one church does not seem to be meeting their need they will move to another. Second and third generation members of the MDCC do have a commitment to the church, but when faced with the practical difficulties of living in modern Ghana they will seek spiritual power from other sources. For university students that source is within the new charismatic churches which relate to the international scene of education and business. For the illiterates it is found with the Pentecostal churches and the developing Camp Meetings where revivalists proclaim the "full" gospel of salvation, prosperity and healing.

Conclusion: a Church for Tomorrow?

When in Mozano I enjoyed sitting on the concrete base of the building that was the Music School. It made an ideal seat that looked down the main street that sloped past the great Jubilee temple on the right to the cross-roads at the centre of town. The road then continued climbing up the hill opposite and on towards the town of Eshiem in the distance. From the seat one can see the lorries and taxis busy unloading at the junction, and people carrying loads, and doing all the things people do in any African town.

The evening sun would shine from behind the hill leaving the seat in pleasant shade. People would therefore come to the seat to talk, to laugh, and to chew over the latest gossip. Here they would discuss their hopes and problems. Even spiritual communities have to feed their families, pay for the education of their children, and repair their homes. It was here at the seat that JB would express his frustrations with the old generator that had again let the town down and plunged all into darkness. Tired farmers would sit and talk about their fields and the need for rain. Here the children would play with their carts skilfully made from a few pieces of bent wire. Old people would like to reminisce about the past and comment upon the failings of the younger generation.

It is always easier to criticise the present than the past. Time like distance gives an air of mystery and a sense of the exotic. Like the distant hill that shone as gold in the evening sun, so the past takes on a lustre of its own. The problems of the present, however, are all too clear. The MDCC lives in the contemporary world and has to face problems and differences of opinion in meeting changing conditions.

In the introduction I raised questions concerning the contextualization of missionary Christianity, and the role of revivals and the attendant experiences as important

elements within African Christianity. I now want to explore these issues further in the light of the social history of the Musama Disco Christo Church, and some of the global movements that have shaped the Christian community in Ghana during the twentieth century. I want to argue that contextualization cannot be considered only in a local and particular sense, but one must also recognise the forces of globalization. Both the local and global aspects impinge upon the church in Africa today, and will increasingly shape its future.

Contextualization

The essential issue of contextualization is how the inherent teachings of a universal religion may be expressed in particular and local forms that are relevant to a particular community. In the specific situation under discussion one may ask, "What form may a Christian Church have in Fante culture?" Is the MDCC a contextualization of Christianity in Fante culture? Although colonialism had undermined much of the political role of the *omanhene* in Fante society, the religious and symbolic importance continued to have popular support.¹ The role of the Akaboha therefore provided a focus for a Christian *oman* that integrated society in a similar way to that which existed in the pre-Christian *oman*, as well as a visible focus of spiritual protection and blessing for the Christian community. During any process of innovation there is a continual feedback in at least two ways. First, there is feedback between the innovator and the emerging innovation, as a painter reacts to what he has put on the canvas. Second, there is feedback at the social level, as the innovation creates new social conditions to which the innovator has to respond. In the case of Prophet Appiah, as I have shown, there is no evidence that he planned to form a new denomination, and it was only after his exclusion from the Methodist Church that a new Christian community was formed.

New patterns of worship emerged not due to a rejection of the practices received from the Methodist missionaries and church leaders, but as a result of new revelations from God that had significant authority. Some elements of the indigenous culture were therefore adopted while other elements were rejected as incompatible with Christianity.

This is seen in the practice of healing where, in contrast to Prophet Harris, the

¹ K. A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (Oxford: OUP, 1951).

traditional healers with their herbs were totally rejected, and the power of God alone was regarded as sufficient to heal and bless. Initially, many of these changes came about spontaneously as a result of divine revelations, and their accounts have become an important part of the oral tradition of the MDCC. One example is the story of the “crazy man” who entered a meeting of the early community and started beating time to the music. As I recounted in Chapter 4, the people wanted to expel the man from their meeting, but Prophet Appiah stopped them and called them to pray and ask God to speak to them. The resulting revelation told them that God wanted them to worship with drums and other traditional music forms. The story provides the divine sanction for the use of traditional music in worship, which was at that time condemned by the missionaries.

It was with Akaboha II that the church acquired a fuller awareness of its truly African identity, and this must be seen as an inherent part of the growing national aspiration for political independence. By 1952, Akaboha II was introducing more indigenous traditions into the MDCC which sought to express the spiritual liberation in parallel with the desired political liberation. To the pattern of the *omanhene* Akaboha II added the *asafo* companies, by transforming what remained of the Methodist circuits. However, it appears that Akaboha II was somewhat reluctant to personally indulge in all the rituals for the *omanhene*, and, for example, he is now said to have wanted to dispense with the palanquin.² Even by that time, some of the early traditions had become an established part of the church ritual that the followers were reluctant to change. These ceremonies may be regarded as “invented traditions” in the sense used by Hobsbawm and Ranger, who made a distinction between the notion of custom, which dominates so-called “traditional” societies, and traditions themselves.³ Hobsbawm writes: “The object and characteristic of ‘traditions’, including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which they refer, impose fixed (normally formalised) practices through repetition. ‘Custom’ in traditional societies has the double function of motor and fly-wheel. It does not preclude innovation and change up to a point, though evidently the requirement that it must appear compatible

² Several of the Akaboha’s son made this comment to me at various times. As the current Akaboha still rides in a palanquin it is unlikely that this was being read into history.

³ E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 1951), p. 1.

or even identical with precedent imposed substantial limitations on it.”⁴ In this sense the difference between “tradition” and “custom” can be illustrated by the judicial system in Britain. “Custom” is what judges do, and “tradition” is the formal paraphernalia and ritualised practices surrounding their activity. A decline in custom will inevitably cause changes in tradition. Concerning the MDCC, the church implemented many of the traditions of Akan kingship, but found it difficult to divide these from custom. The Akaboha, therefore, became regarded by the members with the role and custom of an *omanhene*, surrounded by invented traditions.

The question as to why rituals associated with royalty have such emotional and ideological power to move and organise participants has been one of recent debate. Geertz in his discussion of Balinese royal ritual argues that these rituals cannot be explained in terms of their social or political functions, and proposes that the royal rituals exist as “theatre”, reflecting an order that is superhuman.⁵ Rituals of royalty attract, according to Geertz, because of “splendour”. This could apply to the *omanhene* of the MDCC with the brightly coloured clothes, parasols, stools and horn-blowers. Bloch, however, is dissatisfied with Geertz’s view and suggests that it is the fact that the royal rituals are constructed out of the existing fabric of culture that makes them so captivating.⁶ People come to the annual Peace festival at Mozano not to watch a spectacle as theatre, but as an event in which they may take part. The gathering of the Church into *asafo* companies that process along the main street is an enjoyable and satisfying social event, and it is only the occasional visitors who stand and stare, and take photographs.

Traditions, whether invented or not, carry within them an inherent persistence that encourages not only stability, but inertia. Therefore as other elements of culture change a growing tension develops between the religious tradition and the rest of society. The result is that religious tradition can become irrelevant, and marginalized. This is of special relevance in the debate concerning contextualization because as

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵ Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: University of Princeton, 1980).

⁶ M. Bloch, “The Ritual of the Royal Bath in Madagascar: the dissolution of death, birth and fertility in authority”, in D. Cannadine & S. Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), pp. 271-97.

Conner writes, "contextualized Christianity is culturally specific."⁷ Especially during periods of rapid social change religious traditions can lose much of their social relevance. Thus, a church that was contextual fifty or one hundred years ago may become culturally marginal, and become a historic anomaly rather than a contextual entity. This is illustrated within the MDCC by the suggestion made by some of their leaders that Mozano should develop its tourist potential. Western tourists would be bussed in by air-conditioned coaches from Accra, and local guides would give conducted tours of the town. Soft drinks and light refreshments would be served, and the visitors invited to take part in "traditional" Mozano worship. The tourists would then return to the luxury of their hotel in Accra with photographs and postcards of an *authentic* African Church.⁸ This is not a new suggestion within the Church world-wide, and today more tourists visit St Paul's in London than those who go to pray!

With routinization the new movement slowly begins to lose relevance from the rest of society. One may therefore argue that the most authentic African churches are those that are emerging within current African society, and not those that look back to past traditions. Contextualization should not look to the past, but to contemporary society.

In terms of Bible translation a contemporary translation is more relevant than an ancient one that can appear archaic. It is therefore the growing charismatic churches that could be said to represent the life of today's Ghanaian students, and not the traditions of the MDCC. This reverses many of the views about contextualization, and also contradicts the common argument that Christian contact is tantamount to a denial of authenticity.⁹

In any discussion of contextualization, the word syncretism often lies as the hidden agenda for most missionaries, threatening some shadowy danger. Is syncretism always wrong or merely a necessary step in the process of contextualization? This issue has been discussed at several international theological forums.¹⁰ Theologians and missionaries use the word syncretism with negative connotations because "pure"

⁷ J. H. Connor, "When Culture Leaves Contextualized Christianity Behind" *Missiology* 19, (1991) 21-29.

⁸ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: a new theory of the leisured class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

⁹ Lamin Sanneh makes a similar comment in *Translating the Message* (Orbis: Maryknoll, 1989), p. 185.

¹⁰ *The Willowbank Report* (Lausanne Continuation Committee, 1978), p. 28.

Christianity is perceived as mingled with non-Christian religious ideas, symbols and practices. This view assumes that there is an authentic pure tradition associated with the notionally standard "world religions" such as Christianity and Islam. The concern is that elements of another religion may be borrowed without critically passing through the judgement of the historic Christian tradition, so that the resulting expression of Christianity is watered-down or destroyed in the process. Vatican II, in section 22 of its report that calls for a more profound adaptation of the faith, warns against syncretism: "Every appearance of syncretism and false particularism will be avoided."

Some Christian writers, however, would seek to save the word "syncretism" by rescuing it from inadequacies. Sanneh, for example, speaks against an "uncritical syncretism", and implies an acceptable critical syncretism.¹¹ Luzbetak asks, "Must syncretistic assimilations always be judged pejoratively?"¹² These views hold that particular cases of contextualization must be examined to judge whether they are adequate and authentic.

In contrast to the theologians, anthropologists have viewed syncretism more positively as cultural hybridisation, although preferring to restrict its use to religion and ritual. One difficulty in making this restriction is with the word "religion" itself, since it is a Western constructed category, which may not be significant in other cultural and historical contexts. Where religious practice is inseparable from other social practices, there is no distinction between syncretism and other forms of cultural hybridisation. Thus, to identify a ritual as "syncretistic" tells one little since "all religions have composite origins and are continually reconstructed through ongoing processes of synthesis and erasure."¹³ Shaw and Stewart argue that they prefer "rather than treating syncretism as a category - an 'ism' - we wish to focus upon *processes* of religious synthesis and upon *discourses* of syncretism. This necessarily involves attending to the workings of power and agency."¹⁴ This led them to recast the study of syncretism as the politics of religious synthesis, and the antagonism to religious synthesis shown by agents that they called "anti-syncretism". This approach to syncretism focuses on the

¹¹ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 13.

¹² Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), p. 60.

¹³ R. Shaw & C. Stewart, *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

issue of the agents who are concerned with the defence of religious boundaries and construct authenticity, which in turn is often linked to notions of religious purity.

Authenticity does not necessarily depend upon "purity", and even a cursory study shows that most, if not all, religious traditions have incorporated elements from other traditions. The premise that pure equals authentic is a dominant theme in religious movements that are categorised as "fundamentalist". Here a sharp boundary is made between the pure tradition and others are rejected as "cults" or "heretics". This line is usually drawn by established leaders, and expresses itself in the association of the denomination with some and the rejection of others.¹⁵ The case of the withdrawal of the MDCC from the Pentecostal Association is an example. The issue is of great importance for the MDCC who have continually been regarded as heterodox, if not heretical, by the historic churches in Ghana.

In a discussion of syncretism Meyer makes a useful distinction between that "from above" (from church authorities) and syncretism "from below" (local religious movements), which she suggests represent different poles in a field of power.¹⁶ At one pole is the imposition of religious synthesis by those who claim to be able to define biblical and cultural meanings, and at the other pole is the development of religious synthesis by those who create meaning for their own use out of contexts of cultural or political domination. Attempts by theologians to contextualize have often appeared elitist coming from the top down in the attempt to control the direction of religious synthesis. As Meyer comments: "Indigenous interpretations of Christianity are not *given* by the mission, but *made* by converts themselves in a process of appropriation (often against the meanings intended to evoke)."¹⁷ However, Shaw and Stewart warn that a simple dichotomy of "from above" and "from below" should not be understood as reified "types" of syncretism, because not all religious syntheses can be neatly assigned a position at the top or bottom of a hierarchy of power.¹⁸

¹⁵ Eugene S. Heideman, "Syncretism, Contextualization, Orthodoxy, and Heresy", *Missiology* 25 (1997), 37-49.

¹⁶ Birgit Meyer, "Beyond Syncretism", in C. Stewart & R. Shaw (eds.), *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-68.

¹⁸ Shaw & Stewart, *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism*, p. 22.

For the theologian a central issue of the authenticity of a church relates to its appropriation and use of the Bible and its message. All Christian denominations claim a biblical authority for their teaching, but they may have a different understanding of the status and interpretation of the text.¹⁹ Western theology has developed a system of biblical hermeneutics in which an accumulating revelation is recognised from the Old Testament to the New. Concerning the MDCC Baëta comments: "The two Testaments of the Bible are regarded as having equal authority. It is reported that the founder of the Church repeatedly declared that God had said to him: 'Why do some of my messengers believe in the Old Covenant and not in the New? Why do some believe in the New but not in the Old? I am the same God who speaks in the Old Testament as in the New.'"²⁰ The MDCC considers all parts of the Bible to be of equal inspiration and relevance, so that Old Testament commands are of equal importance with those of the New Testament. This literalist interpretation ignores the historical and cultural context of the Middle East during the period of the compilation of the text, so a command to take off one's shoes before God is understood in terms of Fante culture as one of respect and thus readily adopted. In contrast, the European missionaries, and their theologically trained African colleagues perceived the Bible as an accumulation of information concerning God's character and work. The New Testament fulfils and completes the Old, and is therefore given greater significance. Concerning polygamy, for example, the Europeans gave more weight to the New Testament with its emphasis upon monogamy, and condemned polygamy. The MDCC, however, accepted the whole Bible as of immediate relevance, and saw the many references to polygamy in the Old Testament as endorsing the traditional Fante practice. They were more concerned about the strictness of the teaching of Christ against divorce, than was the Western missionary. Monogamy was considered as a rule developed by the white man that was not meant to be universally relevant.

Although people can only understand the Bible through concepts and categories of thought with which their culture has equipped them, this does not mean that there is no objective reality. The person and work of Jesus Christ are the essential instruments in God's redemptive work that occurred in a particular space and time. Differing cultural

¹⁹ It is here assumed that groups that reject the Bible, or add to it are not inherently Christian, although they may have emerged from the Christian tradition.

²⁰ C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 43.

perspectives will lead to different perceptions of the person of Christ as illustrated in the four Gospels each with its own distinct character. It is at this level that questions emerge as to the content of the "core" message that must be preserved in the vernacular. Thus, Christians need to interact with others to share their understanding of the Biblical teaching, because if this does not occur a church can easily deviate from the mainstream of Christianity and be regarded as "heterodox". This is especially important with indigenous churches that are often restrained by their particular local context and its representation of Christianity. Indigenous churches need to enter discussion with the wider Christian community to share their understanding and gain from the historic perception of the older churches. With the increased scholarship of the leaders of the MDCC, their theological understanding is developing and they are seeking to present a more "orthodox" position, but they are faced with the question of how to deal with their traditions without losing their distinct identity.

Is the MDCC a "sect" or an indigenous expression of Christianity? Today, the MDCC is rejected from the Christian Council, Pentecostal Council and the Charismatic Council for its toleration of polygamy, the kingly role of the Akaboha, the practice of sacrifices and the use of special systems. The anti-syncretising trends of these councils continue to mark the MDCC as a "sect". The church therefore faces the problem of whether to conform to the universalising forces of the established denominations, or hold to the traditions of the church that give it its particular identity. This is the same issue that is dividing the Ossamadiis Church as mentioned in the previous chapter. It is also a similar issue that the historic churches face as Obeng has shown in his recent study of Asante Catholicism and their use of contextualized rituals.²¹

The MDCC has sought relations with other churches, and in 1994 was instrumental in the formation of the new Pentecostal Association. This association consists almost exclusively of the smaller AICs who feel excluded from the major Councils. The Association gives the MDCC a broader identity and acceptance, not just within Christian circles but politically. The question of whether the MDCC is a sect or contextualized church is not merely one of academic interest, but of vital importance for the future of the MDCC.

²¹ Pashington Obeng, *Asante Catholicism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

Religious experience

Sanneh has proposed that the vernacular principle is the "pulse of the 'revival' movements", at least in the case he examines in the Niger basin.²² As I have shown, periods of revival were not only associated with Prophet Harris and the other African prophetic movements in the Gold Coast, but had occurred earlier among the Methodists during the nineteenth century. The emergence of the Faith Society was certainly associated with religious experiences like those known in revival.

According to Wallace, religious revitalisation occurs when a society finds its day-to-day behaviour has deviated from the accepted norms so that individuals cannot sustain the traditional religious understanding.²³ During the period of cultural dislocation a charismatic leader emerges who epitomises the crisis of culture, and proposes a new way forward. To these leaders are attracted members of the society who are willing to experiment with the new thought-patterns and life-style. There is often a collective retreat to a conservative and negative position before there is a sudden leap forward to a new and seemingly radical position. Finally the innovators succeed in influencing the more passive members of the community and a new religious culture is shaped by the past and the present. According to this theory the core issue is the need for people under stress to find a dynamic equilibrium in which they may achieve mutual harmony. Craemer, Vansina and Fox used this type of model to discuss the religious movements in Central Africa, which they argue emerged from out of a common Central African culture.²⁴ The authors argue that the common religion was remarkably stable, while the specific movements would rise and fall over periods ranging from a quarter to more than half a century. They acknowledge that they do not know to what extent their findings are valid outside Central Africa, but the emergence of anti-witchcraft cults in West Africa suggest a similar process. Although Christian revivals may be seen in terms of alternative religious movements, Christian mission came to Africa as part of the wider colonial experience, and it not only introduced new symbols of power, but a sophisticated theological system. Christian revivals cannot be simply regarded as

²² Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 230.

²³ A. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966).

²⁴ Willy De Craemer, Jan Vansina & Renee C. Fox, "Religious Movements in Central Africa: A Theoretical Study", *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 18 (1976), 458-475.

similar religious movements, because they were global in perspective and not merely African movements.

As I have shown in Chapter 2, the nineteenth-century revivals among the Fante occurred immediately after the Asante invasions, and similarly the Faith Society emerged during the time of social dislocation following the First World War. The Wallace model therefore broadly applies to these situations, but it is essentially a descriptive device rather than explanatory. Further revivals occurred only among the Methodists and not among the Basel Christians. This would suggest that news of revivals in other parts of the world is important as is the openness of the missionaries who are effectively the representatives of the wider Christian community. The Methodist missionaries were responsive to the teaching of Wesley, Finney and Moody and so they were interested in news of revivals in other areas of the world, but this was not so among their contemporary Basel missionaries. News of revivals appears to stimulate Christian communities that are seeking similar experiences. The news may come in the form of books as sent by Rev. John Milum, or teaching, as with the visit of the North American Latter Rain movement in 1953, which had a significant impact on Christians in the Gold Coast. Today, as I have shown, the growing churches are those with an international perspective while emphasising revivalism both as experience and for healing.

Another problem with Wallace's model is that it fails to take adequate account of the religious experience that it is a crucial part of revival. For the early members of the MDCC religious experience came before an intellectual understanding of an African church suggesting that revival provided the dynamic for innovation and change. An alternative explanation of how revivals may facilitate change has resulted from the use of Turner's theory of ritual behaviour.²⁵ Here revival may be regarded as "ritual" whereby social structures are viewed as static and unchanging while rituals are fluid creative processes.²⁶ Rituals are ambiguous conditions in which there is a dissolution of categories with the emergence of a state that Turner refers to as *communitas*. He therefore suggests a dualistic model of social life consisting of relatively fixed social

²⁵ G. A. Rawlyk, "Writing about Canadian Religious Revivals", in E. L. Blumhofer & R. Balmer (eds.), *Modern Christian Revivals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 208-226.

²⁶ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

structure and *communitas* where there is spontaneity, self-discovery, inner freedom and actualisation. Turner holds that many mystics and founders of religious movements like St Francis of Assisi exemplify *communitas*.²⁷ Likewise, Turner argues that pilgrimages are social institutions that typically exemplify *communitas* and produce new relationships based upon common experiences. He writes, “*Communitas* is spontaneous, immediate, concrete - it is not shaped by norms, it is not institutionalised ... It is that ‘sentiment for humanity’ of which Hume speaks, representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship between person and person.”²⁸

Periods of revival therefore provide similar occasions of *communitas* where people experience first-hand anti-structural liminality. Revivals become social means whereby various complex and hitherto internalised desires, hopes and aspirations emerge. Often traditional behaviour and values were openly challenged and seemingly aberrant behaviour became “rituals of status reversal”. During revivals adult men may openly weep. This is not regarded as a sign of weakness, but of the grace of God. People shake, feel dizzy and fall to the ground as if they are drunk (“slain in the spirit”). Others prophesy or speak in tongues as part of their experience of a divine encounter. According to Turner, there is in the ritual process an intensely satisfying and pleasurable feeling of fellowship as “the ecstasy of spontaneous *communitas*” overwhelms those involved. Similar emotions are generated during revivals when people feel both exhilaration and fear, and this draws them together as those of a common experience. The “spontaneous *communitas*” is not a permanent condition, and the individuals must return to a normal state. However, they return as people who have been changed by their experience, and now have a different perspective on their daily life. Revival provides the situation whereby people become part of the new religious community in a way similar to passing through a rite of passage, so achieving renewal and revitalisation.

Revivals and allied emotional expressions, however, are not always accepted by the church authorities, and can even be regarded as a danger to the church. As previously mentioned, the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast avoided speaking about the ministry of

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁸ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 274.

the Holy Spirit because of the danger of uncontrolled emotional expressions. Freeman, in contrast, accepted the 1876 revival as genuine, but missionary correspondence shows that even here there was a need to justify the African experiences by drawing parallels to the Wesleyan revival, and reporting the role played by Rev. John Milum in sending books to the African pastors. Even so, some elements were not accepted by Freeman who rejected the claims of a group of women who said they were "Apostles of the Lord come again in the flesh". The emotional fervour generated during revivals can result in expressions that may be interpreted in unorthodox ways by those not familiar with the historic Christian tradition. Authentic expression and interpretation requires an authoritative knowledge of the message of the Bible within its historical and cultural context. The question then arises as to the nature of the authority that is able to give correct interpretation. In 1876, Freeman took the role as the senior missionary, but in later years the role came to the established leadership of the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast. One of the tasks of leadership is to maintain the organisation, which often requires the continuation of the status quo. This process therefore means that revival experiences often occur at the fringes of the church, and are viewed with suspicion that may result in rejection.

Among the major world religions the visionary or mystic is often perceived as a religious rebel who can undermine the orthodox establishment by placing his, or her, own experiences above the doctrines of the accepted authorities. Katz has argued that although this is so, there is still a conservative element within mysticism because all human experiences are mediated.²⁹ "Again, the Christian mystic does not experience some unidentified reality which he then conveniently labels 'God', but rather has at least partially, prefigured Christian experiences of God, of Jesus, and so forth."³⁰ Katz is therefore arguing that special revelation is culturally conditioned. For example, in Acts 10 a vision experienced by the Apostle Peter is recounted:

He became hungry and wanted something to eat; while the food was being prepared, he had a vision. He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being lowered by its four corners to the earth. In it were all kinds of animals, reptiles, and wild birds. A voice said to him, 'Get up, Peter; Kill and eat!' " (Acts 10:10-13).

²⁹ Steven T. Katz, "The Conservative Character of Mystical Experience", in S. T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford: OUP, 1983).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

The message of the vision was that the distinction between Jews and Gentiles that was fixed by the Mosaic code of ritual purity was no longer relevant in the new covenant. Even so, the vision is embedded in both personal and cultural forms. Peter was feeling hungry and waiting for food to be prepared, so the command to eat was relevant. The word used in Greek for large sheet means a sail, which was especially appropriate for the fisherman currently residing at a house of a tanner near the sea.

Droogers in a study of religious experience writes, "Experience can, therefore, never exist without a cultural framework, and contextualized religious experience can never be isolated from total experience."³¹ With regards to the Twi language Michelle Gilbert notes that it is filled with allusions to trees and leaves.³² "A large tree has fallen" is a common euphemism for the death of a king. Every type of leaf is considered to have its own "power" (*tum*) that may be harnessed for healing or ritual purposes. It is therefore not surprising that trees are a common symbol in dreams and visions recounted by members of the MDCC. For example, as described in Chapter 6, after the birth of Mathapoly Moses, his mother had a vision of a big tree with very many leaves. On each leaf was a face and on the forehead was written the person's heavenly name, so when people came to her she was able to recognise them and know their heavenly name.³³ Special revelation is therefore expressed in symbols immediately relevant to the individual through indigenous forms, so a church greatly influenced by special revelations is more likely to be indigenous in character. However, the speculative nature of the revelations will also mean that it may deviate more widely from the patterns accepted by existing Christian denominations, and will be more readily accused of being syncretistic.

Globalization

The third major issue that has been raised in this study is the influence of global Christian movements upon local expressions. The thesis of globalization in the first place suggests that communication links are now world-wide, so that no society is

³¹ Andre Droogers, "The Normalization of Religious Experience" in Karla Poewe (ed.), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1994), p. 40.

³² M. Gilbert, "Sources of Power in Akuropon-Akuapem: Ambiguity in Classification", in W. Arens & I. Karp (eds.), *Creativity of Power* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), p. 75.

³³ C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SCM, 1962), pp. 50-1.

completely isolated. By this is implied more than just the expansion of Western culture with its domination of other societies. Globalization theories claim that, at least in the West, radical social changes that occurred during the past few centuries have brought about a new type of society that has resulted in the spread of certain vital institutions of Western modernisation to the rest of the globe. For example, the global spread of the capitalist economy, nation-states, and scientific technology has resulted in a new social unit that is more than Western culture. As Peter Beyer writes: "Globalization, however, is more than the spread of one historically existing culture with its attending social structures at the expense of all others. It is also the creation of a new global culture with its attendant social structures, one of which increasingly becomes the broader social context of *all* particular cultures in the world, including those of the West."³⁴ This theory relativizes all particular cultures, with the religions that form part of those cultures, including those of the West.

Globalization does not mean the progressive homogenisation of all cultures so that eventually only the global culture will exist. Two aspects must be recognised. First, the juxtaposition of particular cultures or identities not only brings differences into sharper profile, but makes them more visible. In this context no single society is self-evidently "correct", and many people seek to preserve and even recreate particular identities. The second is that existing powerful social groups ignore, or at least recast all group identities, through the greater intensity of their communication. Beyer argues that "The resulting conflict, in this case, is then not so much against rival cultures and identities, although people may formulate it as such, as against the corrosiveness of the system itself."³⁵

The religious dimension of globalization therefore allows two options. First, there is the "fundamentalist" response with the insistence that little change is necessary or desirable, or rather its a change that represents itself as a going back to an allegedly prior pristine form. For a religion to have such an adamant position, it must be part of a major civilisation such as Sunni or Shia Islam in the Middle East, Fundamentalist American Christianity or European Roman Catholic Christianity. The second option is the reorientation of a religious tradition towards the global and away from the

³⁴ Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage, 1994), p. 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

particular culture with which the tradition identified itself in the past. Religion of this form takes on the values of the emerging global culture, with an openness to change. It will therefore attempt to address the problems of globalization on the basis of relatively indeterminate future possibilities rather than past customs. This does not imply the move towards a new "meta" or world religion, but more an attempt to reformulate the old.

In sum then, there are two formal directions for religion under conditions of globalization, one that approaches the global system from the perspective of a particular, sub-global culture, and one that focuses on global culture as such.³⁶

Rapid change is a feature of globalizing society, and as I have described, the invented traditions of contextualized churches are unable to adapt to the speed of change. At a deeper level it is not so much a matter of the speed of change as to who controls the change. Are the leaders of a contextualized church initiating change as a result of divine revelation, or merely responding to external issues? The problem is therefore not only one of meaning, but of power. Globalization not only results in the gradual erosion of the particular religious system, but it also encourages the creation and revitalisation of particular identities as a way of gaining control over systematic power.

Stark and Bainbridge have argued that religions around the globe have always been, and continue to be in a state of flux.³⁷ Religions arise, flourish and eventually decline to be replaced by others more in tune with changed social contexts. This would suggest that globalization means the emergence of religions characteristic of the new global culture and international communication. It would also imply the decline of contextual churches with their particular expressions of Christianity, and their existence as minority isolated cults.

Returning to the nature of the church in modern Ghana, two specific questions can now be addressed: Why is the MDCC declining in the number of adherents? Why are the Charismatic churches growing? When a comparison is made between the MDCC and the growing Charismatic churches there are several points in common. First, both stress the power of the Holy Spirit to bless and meet human needs by direct intervention, and especially in the realm of healing and social problems. Second, both

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁷ R. Stark & W. Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularisation, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985).

groups encourage participation of the members with lively worship, clapping, singing and praying. Third, they both emphasise the importance of the Christian community, but one is characterised by the *oman* and the other by the cosmopolitan global community. This last point illustrates a major difference in the cultural orientation of the two churches: the MDCC is overtly focused upon Akan cultural forms, while the Charismatic churches have adopted cosmopolitan patterns. This identification of the Charismatic churches with the global community is seen in many symbols: use of international languages, video, audio tapes, overhead projectors, electric organs and instruments, visits to international conferences. In addition there is the rapid employment of spiritual songs and rituals from around the world. These are not merely Western forms that are being applied. The writings of the Korean pastor Paul Yonggi Cho, are not only being read in the USA, but also in Ghana.³⁸

Poewe has similarly argued that charismatic Christianity “has become a global culture or way of life based on perceptions and identities that are transmitted world-wide through high-tech media; international conferences, fellowships, and prayer links; and mega-churches.... It is a global culture because it transcends national, ethnic, racial, and class boundaries, but it does not transcend, or rarely transcends, other world religions. It cannot do so because at the core of this global culture is the story of Pentecost: of Jesus, the Christ, who upon his death and resurrection sent his faithful followers the Holy Spirit to comfort, inspire, and empower them.”³⁹

It is important to remember that the Charismatic movement is not affecting every level of society in Ghana. The people being drawn to these new churches are the educated elite, fluent in English and familiar with modern technology. They are those within Ghanaian society who have been most affected by the “globalization” phenomena. Although radio, television, videos, and magazines have made all people in Ghana more aware of the total world order, none have been so affected as the university students. The failure of the dream of independence has left this social elite disillusioned with talk of African traditions, and they have set their eyes upon the material advances of

³⁸ Rev. Yonggi Cho is associated with the Assemblies of God, and his church in Seoul is the largest congregation in the world with a membership of over 300,000. His main teaching is based upon the verse 3 John 2: “beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health: I know that it is well with your soul.” He would therefore be seen as expounding a “prosperity Gospel”.

³⁹ Poewe, *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, pp. xi-xii.

modern technology and lifestyle. Some have abandoned any religion apart from a few rituals to avoid possible sources of spiritual danger, but most are looking for a religion that will relate them to the wider global society, and not to a particularist community. They want to be part of emerging global culture, to speak the language of science, and talk of English, American, Brazilian, and Korean Christians as their "brothers".

What is fascinating about people involved in charismatic Christianity is that they have bridged the divide between science and religious experience. As Poewe has shown in a study of North American scientists who are charismatic Christians, they have taken literally the biblical story that upon his death and resurrection Christ would send the Holy Spirit as a self-defining story. "Contrary to postmodernism, which tends to be relativist in both its ontology and epistemology, the ontology of charismatic Christians is realist while the epistemology is both realist and revelationist. Charismatic Christians share with empiricists the assumption that reality exists independently of the observer. But contrary to empiricists, the reality of charismatic Christians does not only refer to prior facts or discrete objects in space and time.... It is the unseen that is tacitly known and therefore will inevitably reveal itself through a happening some time in the future."⁴⁰ This anticipated experience opens an individual to a new and wider world, and this can be found among all people everywhere in the world.

Although globalization may be regarded as affecting the whole of Ghanaian society through the mass media, it is no more than a dream to the little boy selling coconuts in the market place. He may hear somebody else's radio, or look at the pictures in a discarded newspaper, but the images of such wealth are beyond the little boy's imagination. He wants only to have regular food, schooling, a house, and health for his family. His English is inadequate to understand the preaching of the Charismatic pastor, nor does he feel comfortable among the well-dressed, educated members of that Church. Where does he go to find spiritual answers to his felt needs? This leads us to the question of why illiterates are also leaving the MDCC.

Many illiterates are joining the major Pentecostal denominations which reflect a mixture of both Western missionary models and African leadership. Perhaps more important than the issue of culture is that they address the question of spiritual causes

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

of affliction more directly than did the earlier Western missionaries. It could be argued that at the less educated levels of Ghanaian society, globalization is having little, or no effect, but the people are attracted by modernisation that they see emerging around them in elite enclaves. Thus, it would be concluded that Ghanaian society is divided with an educated elite much affected by globalization, and the rest of society seeking the economic benefits of modernisation. This would imply that globalization is increasing the divisions within Ghanaian society. Christianity is therefore developing in two main ways, one in the realm of globalization, and the other at a local level among illiterates. Around the world some churches from Pentecostal denominations have sought wider relationships with charismatic churches outside their particular denominations, and in so doing have taken on the global character.⁴¹ The Church of Pentecost is seeking to develop such congregations in Accra and Kumase in order to retain their students.

Concerning contextualization, this suggests that world-wide there is an emerging pattern of Christian expression with many common features. New songs are quickly transmitted from one country to another, and new rituals are eagerly adopted.⁴² For members of these mainly Charismatic churches, talk of contextualization appears no more than suggestions that they return to past traditions, which they do not want. In fact, it appears as if the West is trying to deny them the opportunity for development, and it is therefore the subject of criticism and scorn. Even so, contextualization is occurring among these Charismatic churches, but it is not a process to the "particular" but to the "global".

The historic churches of Ghana have not remained unaffected. The fact that they have emerged from the missionary work of Western churches gives to the historic churches the feeling of being part of a world-wide community. Expressions such as "The Anglican Communion", and the "Holy Catholic Church" reflect the character of a particularist religious tradition that has taken on a world-wide dimension. In so doing, these denominations face the tension between, on the one hand, a fundamentalist

⁴¹ The Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul is affiliated to the Assemblies of God, but has associations with charismatic churches around the world.

⁴² In 1989, I was speaking at a conference in Accra where I suggested that we say the grace together in a manner we had adopted at my home church in England, that is with our eyes open and saying it with sincerity to others. Within a few weeks the practice had spread through many churches in Ghana.

universalism, such as with the making of a papal decree, whereas on the other hand, it may allow local particularist expressions within the wider confession of the world-wide Church, as with the toleration of, for example, Liberation Theology or the Charismatic movement. Within the historic denominations in Ghana, many congregations have adopted various aspects of the Charismatic movement just as have many congregations within the West. Rev. Cephas Omenyo has identified six or seven renewal movements within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, most of which began as prayer bands for revival that had been influenced by Pentecostal teaching.⁴³ In 1979, the Presbyterian Church recognised them as their main evangelistic wing, and since then it has grown rapidly throughout the denomination. In 1992, they had 1,600 groups with 20,000 members, most of whom are lay-persons, but who now include some notable pastors.⁴⁴ Although the Pentecostal denominations do not carry quite the same world-wide character as the historic denominations, they are greatly respected because of their American or British origin. Their missionaries and pastors are accepted by the mainline denominations for their Biblical training, unlike those of the African Independent Churches. Perhaps this is an explanation for why the Church of Pentecost focuses upon the ministry of James McKeown and is eager to continue its association with the Elim Church of Great Britain.

The future of the MDCC

What will happen to the MDCC in the coming years? Can the MDCC fulfil the early prophecy to be a world-wide church? Akan society lacks the social and economic vigour and prestige that would allow the MDCC to follow the "fundamentalist" response. Ghanaians living in London are little influenced by the edicts from the Akaboha, and are more interested in what is happening in local Pentecostal churches. This probably explains why in Ghana many new shrines and innovations are developing at the fringes of the MDCC under the influence of local prophets. This will all imply that the MDCC will continue to remain classed by the historic denominations as a

⁴³ Personal conversation with Rev. Cephas Omenyo at the University of Legon, who is currently researching the renewal movement in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

⁴⁴ Discussions with Dr Elom Dovlo, Department of Religion, University of Ghana, who has been researching this movement for several years.

“sect”, a social curiosity to the social historian, and an aberrant form of indigeneity to the missiologist.

The MDCC believes that its unique character was given by God through special revelation.

If this is the case, change is inhibited unless the Church denies its own distinct identity. Even during the process of contextualization, certain things must remain if the Church has to have any association with the past. When I asked Rev. Jeri J. Jehu-Appiah what he considered was the heart of the MDCC, he said that it was two things:

First, is the promise given to the founders, and the second, members working together for the promise. The promise was that they should know the Peace of God. The method of working for this promise was the struggle against idolatry in whatever form. In Ghana, the struggle was initially against the fetish and traditional religion. In Britain, it is against the 'idolatry' of wealth, materialism and prestige-seeking. Idolatry is anything that keeps us from God.⁴⁵

What can be changed? What does one say to members of the Church in Britain or Jamaica as to how they should live? What would you say to these people? When this question was put to the old prophet Jimiru Fuah he answered as follows:

I would speak to them in the light of the prophecies that God gave to us. They should be careful not to cast aside any of the directives God has given us. They should always listen for the direction of God.⁴⁶

His answer reveals the tension between keeping the directives given to the Church in the early years of its history, and an openness to new commands from God. It is a tension between traditions given by God, and the practical realities of contemporary society. Today, most of the members of the MDCC have been members of the denomination for over 30 years, or more.⁴⁷ They are convinced that God has revealed to the Church his principles of Christian life and worship, and they will not change these unless they are convinced that God has spoken to them today. In November 1992, Akaboha III, at the insistence of the young people of the church, tried to change the rule banning the wearing of shoes in the sanctuary. The result was a major reaction from the older members condemning the change of a God-given practice. Change in a revelatory religious tradition can only come about through a new revelation, but what

⁴⁵ Personal discussion 16 April 1991 with Rev. Jeri J. Jehu-Appiah.

⁴⁶ Prophet Jimiru Fuah, personal conversation August 1992.

⁴⁷ The leaders of the MDCC have quoted a figure of 60%, but there has not been any survey.

happens when there are no prophets in the Church? This is a problem that not only faces the MDCC, but all Christian denominations.

For the MDCC, the question follows about how new commands may come from God.

Do they only come by revelation as inferred by prophet Jimiru Fuah, or may they come through a Christian response to contemporary needs? Healing provides an example as was discussed in Chapter 6 when the suggestion of Akaboha II that a clinic should be built in Mozano was strongly resisted. Changes have however occurred in the MDCC, albeit mostly unplanned and almost unnoticed by the members themselves.

It is only when they reflect upon the way things used to be done, and compare them with the present that they are surprised by the changes that have actually occurred. Little by little change has taken place. This is where the matter of history becomes important, because it raises topics that are not part of general discussion. The Church leaders were pleased when I initiated the translation of Prophet Appiah's account of the early years of the MDCC and its practices.⁴⁸ When some of the leaders began to read the text, however, they were disturbed with a sense of guilt when they realised how far they had moved from the original foundations of the Church.⁴⁹ Was this the reason that their Church was now in decline, or was it that they had not changed enough to keep up with modern society?

Can the Musama Disco Christo Church be a Church for tomorrow? Although the MDCC is facing issues of change and criticism from other denominations, most of the leaders are convinced that the Church has a unique role. There is a sense of pride among the members that God spoke to an African in the person of Prophet Appiah. A song that is popular in the MDCC says:

An African has started a Church and non-Africans are now joining. The Word of God through his prophet has come true.

They realise that many of their practices seem strange to outsiders, but they are convinced that these were given directly by God. Although they have been ridiculed by many in the past, they are convinced that one day they will be understood. The impassioned words of my friend Rev. Suma-Kupa Jehu-Appiah state his belief:

⁴⁸ *History.*

⁴⁹ A member of the Jehu-Appiah family actually used the word "guilt" to describe his feelings after recently re-reading the text of the *History.*

I know that we will be accepted in our own right. The MDCC is a bridge between African spiritual tradition and Christianity as it was brought to Africa by the white man. It is something you feel inside. It is only a matter of time before others will understand. MDCC is a Church that knows that one day it will be understood.⁵⁰

⁵⁰

Suma-Kupa, Jehu-Appiah, in personal conversation 16 August 1992.

Appendix 1

Ghana National Church Survey

The plans for the Ghana National Survey originated when four members of the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) attended a course on Church Growth that I had organised in Great Britain in 1983. During the course we considered the statistics available from the various denominations in Ghana, and saw that it was impossible to make a comparative analysis because each had their own definitions of membership and often the data itself was suspect. The only common factor was church attendance, which in most cases was either not available or inaccurate. A plan was therefore formulated to send teams of official enumerators to every church in the country, and count the number of men, women and children present. Fortunately, in March 1984, the Statistical Service of the Ghanaian Government undertook a detailed population study of every town and village in the country. A preliminary report of the survey was released in December 1984, and the detailed individual Regional Surveys published in 1986 and 1987. The Statistical Service was very co-operative, and provided GEC with all the data needed for the Church Survey.

The Region of Brong Ahafo was chosen for a pilot study in 1985. A locality survey was prepared for every locality listed in the 1984 Government census schedules with a population of 50 or more persons. Survey teams were trained. Over a period of three months they visited every village and town in the Region on a Sunday morning and visited every congregation. I had the opportunity of working with the teams on several occasions, and I travelled to all 10 Regions of the country. I well remember one hot Sunday morning in Accra visiting 20 different congregations!

Census Data

The following data were sought by the teams:

- 1 Name of town, village, and confirmation of Government population figures. The Statistical Survey had divided the country into enumeration units (e.u.) which were used by the Church Survey to allow comparison.
- 2 Confessed ethno-linguistic allegiance, e.g. Ga, Fante, Asante, Ewe.

3 Church Affiliation - For convenience denominations and individual congregations was grouped under six categories that were readily accepted by all denominations.

- 1 Christian Council of Ghana
- 2 Sundry Mission Related Churches
- 3 Ghana Pentecostal Council
- 4 African Independent Churches - "Spiritual" churches¹
- 5 Seventh Day Adventist²
- 6 Roman Catholic (Regional Dioceses of Ghana)

4 Church Attendance - Aggregated number of men, women and children attending Sunday forenoon worship service, forenoon Sunday school, or children's service on the day of the church census. Care was taken to avoid a visit on a special church festival such as Easter Sunday.

5 Number of full-time pastors, if any.

6 Year in which the congregation was established.

7 Special note was made of any town or village with no congregation.

The data was compiled into a book, and pastors invited to a three-day conference in which the pattern of the survey, results and analysis explained. Pastors then met in denominational groupings under the leadership of the denominational head of the region to discuss the data, and make plans for future growth.

From the observations of the Brong Ahafo Region, some small modifications were made to the strategy and the procedure expanded to other Regions. In the three

¹ Although initially (1984-6) the "Charismatic", or "born-again" churches, were placed in this category as African initiated churches it became obvious that they were a distinct phenomenon. In the Accra Region where these congregations were most significant in the late 1980s, they were placed in a separate sub-group.

² Seventh Day Adventists meet on Saturday for their main meeting, but the regional office had good data on attendance that was confirmed by visits to selected congregations on Saturdays.

northern Regions, greater use was made of the information from missionaries working in the Region. Mosque buildings were also noted and loosely classified as to whether they were roofed or not, which provided an indication of the wealth and position of Muslims in the village.

In 1989, the data for the whole country was compiled into a complete report, and presented at a national conference in Accra to the heads of all denominations.³ The procedure was repeated in 1992-3, and this provided data that was comparable to that obtained in the first survey undertaken about four years earlier. The results of the second survey were published in 1993 as the *National Church Survey: Update 1993*. Working from Government statistics the national population was in mid-1988 14,000,800, and in mid-1993, 16,379,300, a 17% per cent increase in population. For the same period the average church attendance for all denominations was only 12% showing that growth in attendance was not keeping pace with the increase in population.

³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *National Church Survey* (Accra: GEC, 1989).

Average Church Attendance

DENOMINATION	ADULTS		CHILDREN		TOTAL		CHANGE
	First	Second	First	Second	First	Second	%
CHRISTIAN COUNCIL							
A.M.Zion	6,330	7,014	3,380	4,057	9,710	11,070	14
Anglican	20,806	19,632	8,978	9,722	29,784	29,354	(2)
Baptist (Convention)	10,640	17,715	4,643	8,544	15,283	26,259	72
Evangelical Lutheran	602	1,835	446	1,373	1,048	3,208	206
Evangelical Presbyterian	50,427	45,308	29,808	23,658	80,235	68,966	(14)
Mennonite	449	246	184	166	633	412	(35)
Methodist	126,767	123,819	57,956	64,906	184,723	188,725	2
Presbyterian	101,167	114,685	51,951	64,185	153,118	178,870	17
Salvation Army	5,526	6,173	3,202	3,644	8,728	9,817	12
Interdenominational	4,316	4,453	2,056	2,658	6,372	7,111	12
Sundry	1,237	1,491	481	541	1,718	2,032	18
Sub Total	328,267	342,371	163,085	183,453	491,352	525,824	7
MISSION RELATED							
Baptist (Non Convention)	2,323	3,222	1,667	2,331	3,990	5,553	39
Church of Christ	10,993	13,689	3,39	6,481	14,832	20,170	36
Evangelical Church	1,991	3,197	1,267	1,954	3,258	5,151	58
Good News Churches	1,238	1,828	749	1,025	1,987	2,853	44
New Apostolic Church	3,042	13,963	1,332	6,545	4,374	20,508	369
United Christian Churches	1,564	1,695	552	670	2,116	2,365	12
Sundry	3,542	4,248	1,271	2,060	4,813	6,408	33
Sub Total	24,693	41,942	10,677	21,066	35,370	63,008	78
PENTECOSTAL COUNCIL							
Apostolic	30,847	38,56	12,558	16,524	43,405	55,100	27
Apostolic Reformed	3,174	2,448	658	721	3,832	3,169	(17)
Assemblies of God	21,757	40,643	10,489	19,655	32,246	60,298	87
Christ Apostolic	18,615	24,940	8,052	11,330	26,667	36,270	36
Church of God	1,531	2,385	1,005	1,282	2,536	3,667	45
Church of Pentecost	139,078	176,634	58,963	83,286	198,041	259,920	31
Deeper Life Bible Church	4,320	14,245	1,284	6,287	5,704	20,832	265

Divine Healer's	8,012	6,346	2,918	2,593	10,930	8,939	(18)
New Covenant Apostolic	2,125	2,739	1,178	1,401	3,303	4,140	25
Sacred Action Church	2,404	2,125	688	841	3,092	2,966	(4)
Sundry	8,966	13,053	3,362	5,332	12,330	18,385	49
Sub Total	240,831	324,134	101,255	149,552	342,086	473,686	38

AFRICAN INDEPENDENT

African Faith Tabernacle	28,000	21,259	9,768	7,792	37,768	29,051	(23)
Apostles Revelation Society	12,069	9,848	4,645	3,959	16,714	13,807	(17)
Cherubim and Seraphim	6,038	5,095	3,223	1,911	9,261	7,006	(24)
Church of Christ (S.M.)	5,506	4,320	2,43	2,133	7,929	6,453	(19)
Church of the Lord (Group)	11,822	9,612	4,945	3,701	16,767	13,313	(21)
MDCC	26,720	21,436	9,791	8,946	36,511	30,382	(17)
Saviour Church of Ghana	9,471	10,679	5,533	4,870	15,004	15,550	4
Twelve Apostles Church	33,960	25,656	10,559	9,243	44,519	34,808	(22)
Sundry Spiritual	99,348	42,614	7,317	17,871	30,406	60,485	99
Sub Total	256,023	244,850	94,782	98,062	350,805	342,912	(2)

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

	50,387	56,677	18,931	22,822	69,318	79,499	15
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CATHOLIC

	247,094	237,442	103,556	106,515	350,650	343,957	(2)
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TOTAL	1,147,295	1,247,416	492,286	581,470	1,639,581	1,828,886	12
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Bracketed numbers are minus values.

Number of Congregations and Average Attendance

Denomination	No of Churches		Average Attendance	
	1st survey	2nd survey	1st survey	2nd survey
CHRISTIAN COUNCIL				
AME Zion	137	154	71	72
Anglican	330	332	90	88
Baptist (Convention)	200	318	76	83
Evangelical Lutheran	25	59	42	54
Evangelical Presbyterian	759	812	106	85
Mennonite	14	15	45	27
Methodist	2,413	2,484	77	76
Presbyterian	1,675	1,898	91	94
Salvation Army	137	152	64	65
Interdenominational	45	46	142	155
Sundry	26	28	66	73
Sub Total	5,761	6,298	85	83
MISSION RELATED				
Baptist (Non Convention)	47	63	85	88
Church of Christ	305	371	49	53
Evangelical Church	80	119	41	43
Good News Churches	43	49	46	58
New Apostolic Church	96	478	46	43
United Christian Churches	49	52	43	45
Sundry	117	137	41	47
Sub Total	737	1269	48	50
PENTECOSTAL COUNCIL				
Apostolic	679	827	64	67
Apostolic Reformed	32	26	120	122
Assemblies of God	421	642	77	94

Christ Apostolic	497	579	54	63
Church of God	39	60	65	61
Church of Pentecost	2,985	3,617	66	72
Deeper Life Bible Church	72	274	79	76
Divine Healers Church	153	152	71	59
New Covenant Apostolic	67	74	49	56
Sacred Action Church	86	83	36	36
Sundry	235	316	52	58
Sub Total	5,266	6,650	65	71

AFRICAN INDEPENDENT

African Faith Tabernacle	800	821	47	35
Apostles Revelation Society	249	256	67	54
Cherubim and Seraphim	139	128	67	55
Church of Christ (S.M.)	116	121	68	53
Church of the Lord (Group)	318	313	53	43
MDCC	749	806	49	38
Saviour Church of Ghana	264	259	57	60
Twelve Apostles Church	1,366	1,436	33	24
Sundry Spiritual	3,022	3,205	45	41
Sundry Charismatic	443	654	69	93
Sub Total	7,466	7,999	47	43

SEVENTH DAY ADVENT

	1,131	1,296	61	61
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CATHOLIC

	3,563	3,674	98	94
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Total	23,924	27,186	69	67
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Appendix 2

African Methodist Ministers in the Gold Coast from 1842 to 1925

The year corresponds to the date that the minister began his work. Until 1960 it was the practice of the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast to ordain their ministers four years after the date of entry.

1843	William de Graft John A. Martin	1901	A.W. Stanhope
1845	John Hagan	1902	J.A. Hayford
1851	John Ossei Ansah George P. Brown Joseph Dawson Timothy Laing	1904	Christian E. Barnes
1852	J.A. Solomon	1905	I.A. Assan
1854	E.J. Flynn	1906	F.E. Ekuban J.C. Mensah
1856	John Plange H.F. Morgue	1908	J.J. Mettle
1857	Fred France	1909	D.M. Bruce
1873	J.D. Hayford J.R. Hayfron A.W. Parker	1910	E.O. Lartey (Lartson)
1877	F.E. Wood	1911	M.L. Portuphy A.M. Wright
1884	R.M. Acqual Isaac Anaman I.A. Graham R.G. Jones	1912	G.R. Acquaaah J.W. Acquaaah
1886	J.O. Hammond I.H. Hayford J.A. Markin	1913	H. Bart-Plange
1887	K. Egyir Assam (William F. Penny)	1914	J.E. Appiah J.G. Koomson Joseph Oppan T.S. Quarshie
1888	Henry Anaman Ernest Bruce	1915	J.T. Clegg S.C. Dodd F.C.F. Grant B.A. Markin
1889	S.R.B. Attoh-Ahuma (S.R.B. Solomon)	1916	F.A. Acquaaah J.E. Addo A.B. Dickson Moses Enin F.A. Markin
1890	Jacob Anaman J.J. Reynolds	1917	Robert Acquah C.H. Bartels
1892	J.B. Baiden	1919	K.A. Blankson S.Q.G. Ghartey
1893	A.E. Brew E.A. Sackey	1921	S.D. Nate-Kodsi J.E.A. Pappoe
1894	W.S. Forson F.J. Nelson	1923	J.S. Aidoo J.E. Wi-Afedzi
1896	J.R. Addo E. Butler J.B. Graham John A. Quayson	1924	C.C. Ohene J.B. Wilson
1898	T. Marshall	1925	S.B. Akyeampong I. Amonoo Eben. Brown S. Butler

Appendix 3

Glossary of principle Fante terms

In using this glossary the initial vowel or nasal "m" or "n" should be ignored. This is because often the plural is formed by prefixing an "a", "e", or nasal "m" or "n". For example, *oman* and *aman* both come under "m". The plural may also be formed by suffixing "fo" which gives the notion of a people, e.g. *obosomfo* ("people of the bosom"),

If the Twi word is different from the Fante it is placed in parentheses. Most words have a broader context of meaning than given here, and for this the reader is referred to J.C. Christaller, *A Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language called Tishi* (Basel, second edition, 1933). A more popular language guide has recently been produced by Spider Language Books: *Fante Language Guide* (London: Spider, 1992).

B

<i>bayi</i>	Witchcraft.
<i>obayifo</i>	Witches.
<i>benkum</i>	"Left hand", used to refer to the left wing of an army.
<i>obo (plr. abo)</i>	Stone.
<i>aboatia (plr. mmoatia)</i>	"Dwarf", a small spirit that dwells in the forest.
<i>bogya (Twi: mogya)</i>	Blood.
<i>abontsen (Twi: Abonten)</i>	Main street of a town.
<i>obosom</i>	Deity; a regent of the creator.
<i>Obosomfo (Twi: bosomfuo)</i>	"One who has an <i>obosom</i> on him". A priest of a traditional shrine who is occasionally possessed by the deity.
<i>obosonsomfo</i>	A worshipper of an <i>obosom</i> .
<i>obrafo</i>	Loosely used to mean executioner, but traditionally assistant to a priest.
<i>abusua</i>	Matriclan: kinship reckoned by matrifilial relations.

D

<i>Adae</i>	A festival at which offerings may be made to the ancestors, occurring twice in every month of forty-two days. Hence the <i>Akwasidae</i> always held on a Sunday, and the <i>Awukudae</i> on a Wednesday.
<i>odekuro</i>	Head of a village responsible for collecting taxes.
<i>Odonko</i> (plr. <i>Monkofo</i>)	Foreign-born slave.
<i>edur</i> (Twi: <i>edul</i>)	Medicine.
<i>dwa</i>	"A stool", the symbol of office.
<i>Odwira</i>	The major annual festival, of religious and political significance, at which attendance was obligatory.

G

<i>Gyaase</i>	Literally, "the hearth", used to describe the personnel of the royal household.
<i>Gyaasefo</i>	Elders responsible for the exchequer of an <i>oman</i> .
<i>egya</i> (Pl. <i>egyanom</i>)	Father.
<i>egyabosom</i>	The deity of the father's <i>asafo</i> .

F

<i>afarebo</i>	Sacrifice.
<i>Afenasafo</i>	Sword-bearer (<i>afena</i> is sword).
<i>Fufu</i>	The colour white.

H

<i>Ohen</i> (Twi: <i>ohene</i>)	A term of wide connotation: king, ruler, head etc.
<i>Ohenemaa</i>	Queen-mother.

K

<i>koko</i>	The colour red.
<i>okomfo</i>	A priest, ("one who is possessed")

<i>akonheyfo</i>	Prophet.
<i>nkonmwasofo</i>	The stool carrier.
<i>Kontihene</i>	A military title, nominal commander-in-chief of an army.
<i>kra</i>	An element of the divine given to every person at birth ("soul").
<i>nkrabea</i>	Destiny, literally the mission of the soul.
<i>kronkron</i>	Holy.
<i>kro</i>	A town.
<i>akuraa</i>	A smaller village or temporary residence.
<i>Okyerema</i>	A drummer in an <i>asafo</i> .
<i>okyeame</i>	Often translated "linguist" or "spokesman". They were responsible for counselling the <i>omanhene</i> .

M

<i>oman (Pl. aman)</i>	"Nation", "state", "polity" etc.
<i>omanhene</i>	The ruler of an <i>oman</i> .
<i>Mogya</i>	Blood, but most important considered synonymous with matrilinear descent.

N

<i>nana</i>	Grandfather; a term of great respect.
<i>nifa</i>	"Right hand", the right wing of an army. Hence <i>Nifahene</i> , commander of the right wing.
<i>nkomhyenyi (Pl. nkonkyefo)</i>	Prophet.
<i>Nyame (Twi: Onyame)</i>	The supreme creator, God. The name used for God in the Fante Bible.

P

<i>pa</i>	Good - always compounded with a noun.
<i>papa</i>	Moral good, goodness, good action, well-being.

S

<i>asafo</i>	A company organised for war, or other communal purpose.
<i>nsamanfo</i>	Ancestors.
<i>Saman</i>	Ghost
<i>samanadze</i>	Spirit world, place of the dead (<i>saman</i>).
<i>sasa</i>	Dangerous. Thus, <i>sasabonsam</i> dangerous forest monster
<i>Asase Efiua (Twi: Asase Yaa)</i>	The earth deity.
<i>esiei</i>	Cemetery.
<i>esiwdu</i>	The assembly point of an <i>asafo</i> company.
<i>osofo</i>	One who officiates at religious ceremonies, "priest".
<i>asomfo</i>	Administrative officials or functionaries, from <i>esom</i> , "service".
<i>esubo</i>	Wash.
<i>suman (Pl. asuman)</i>	Charm.
<i>sunsum (Twi: honhom)</i>	Breath, or spirit.
<i>sunsum kronkron</i>	The Holy Spirit.
<i>supi</i>	Leader of a company of the <i>asafo</i> .

T

<i>Tano</i>	River, also important river-god of the Asante.
<i>ntoro kra, or</i>	Cultic organisations concerned with the "washing" of the soul, membership is determined by patrification.
<i>etskuw</i>	A company within the <i>asafo</i> .
<i>tum (Twi: atumi)</i>	Power.
<i>tuntum</i>	The colour black.

W

<i>awowa (plr. mwowa)</i>	Pawning, surety, mortgaging as security on a loan.
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Appendix 4

“Tongues” - The Heavenly Language of the MDCC

“Tongues” is the English expression used to describe the various sayings and prayers characteristic of the MDCC. These were believed to have been given by direct revelation to the founding members of the Church and have been advocated as of spiritual value to all who would use them. Leaders of the Church have sought to identify the beginnings of a new language in these phrases - “the language of heaven”. There is no clear correlation, and the only word that can be identified with a consistent translation is *Obeko* meaning Lord. The members learn these phrases by heart, and their use indicates that the person is committed to the Church.

Tongue

Meaning

1 Salutations

Malamito

May joy be unto you.

Me yaw dasu

May God bless you.

Mamini dore?

How are you this morning?

Bamisi-la doko

By the Grace of the Father I am
alright.

Menu-suta?

How is the day?

Menu-suta Dubashie

He is fairly with me.

Bahadu mu saka mu Obeko

May the Lord be with you tonight.

Yamu busudu Mukweeta

May he multiply unto you.

<i>Ma mashi sipi</i>	I am feeling sleepy.
<i>Mura Doreto (or Towe plr.)</i>	Good night.
<i>Ala Sabudu Mashie</i>	May you go and sleep under God's care.
<i>O Obeko sutre</i>	O may blessing be unto God.
<i>Okana Shina</i>	Thank you.

When Entering a house:

<i>Ahibahado</i>	May peace be unto you.
<i>Ahumasuta</i>	May peace come.
<i>Owulaka mu saka?</i>	May I enter or not?
<i>Alabuka-Musaka</i>	Do enter please.
<i>Mumsi Buka</i>	Don't enter.

2 Prayers

<i>Yea Bidani Noko O Obeko</i>	Draw nigh and help me O Lord.
<i>Mafa Sumi Durey ashiey</i>	However sinful I am.
<i>Noko Satee Mi</i>	Come and Bless me.
<i>Mo Boko O Obeko</i>	I am waiting for Thee, O Lord.
<i>Bae Hee Mikara</i>	Come quickly.
<i>I'Odonee maheem</i>	Exert Thyself in Power.
<i>Masa Palme Sueh</i>	And keep not silent.
<i>Matuka Nubra Ba ka Subu. Amen</i>	Let Thy Powerful Sword descend. Amen.

Prayer for travellers in a vehicle

*Ma fa ma Ali Supra bashi aye, Lo bena
ma Obeko Suprini hasheni wuta, O fafa
me dimee lee buam desase shia nuu.*

*Mi lawuka mi dimee pritinee ni batoe
peesa na do maa. Prima ma deema
naa, fata fata bubruba maseem du bani
ma Okroni Bee sa Siriham mi deem.*

Amen (Issa Sara)

*Saeti bubuma kuma wuprey me
Musama Disco Christo Batome
ponde asondee, Amen*

I bow before the Eternal Throne and
cry unto the Lord God who is the
Guide to all travellers to deliver me
from any danger of accident as I
travel in His Name in this vehicle. O
Mighty father, steer this vehicle
safely home for Thy Name's sake,
Amen. (Lord's Prayer)

Exert yourself in strength and
conquer for the Musama Disco
Christo Church and let your Power
descend upon the earth. Amen

3 Appellations of God

1 Jaibusi Miham

2 Kiki Tara Bee

3 Aka-Sumi

4 Bashey Susuba

5 Mita Chee Wuprey

6 Kutala-Kutara

7 Sapaa Supa Nee

1 King of Angels.

2 He locks and no one unlocks.

3 The Prophet of the Prophets.

4 The Sharp Sword.

5 He does what He likes.

6 The High Tower.

7 The Independent.

Appendix 5

Discussion and critique of *The History of the Musama Disco Christo Church*

This History is the only evidence for the first ten years of the church apart from the stories often recounted by the older members. It therefore has provided the main body of evidence for my reconstruction of the early history of the MDCC, and a critical assessment of the document is therefore essential. Important questions are raised concerning the purpose of the *History* itself and the relationship of its narrative to other historical sources.

Concerning the authorship, the text is usually considered to have been written by the founder himself, and Baëta speaks of it as “the founder’s history”.¹ However, most of the present leaders of the church believe that the book was actually written by Prophet Appiah’s secretary Pastor Junamoe E. Botwe. But it is clear from the preface of the *History* which is signed by “Prophet J. Jehu Appiah (Akaboha), Founder”, that the *History* was approved and authenticated by him, so he can probably be regarded as its effective author.

The preface of the Fante text is dated as 22 August 1943. Although there appears to be no question concerning the date of publication as being 1943, the last date mentioned within the text is the conference of ministers held in 1935.² This would suggest that either the writer completed the history soon after 1935, or saw this as a significant point to conclude the narrative for his purpose. In the preface Prophet Appiah implies that the timing of the writing was important, “It has therefore become necessary now that I write this short book.”³ This raises questions about what was happening within the church and community during the period 1935-43.

The *History* recounts that the young church suffered criticism and persecution in its early years. However, following the confusion over the person of Appiah following the Benu incident, the church was left relatively undisturbed. Older members say that

¹ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 28.

² *History*, p. 36.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

this was a time when they were busy developing the organisation of the church to cope with the increasing number of new members. It is also known that in the early 1940s Prophet Appiah was interested in the aims of the Aboriginal Rights Protection Society (ARPS), and was eventually invited to become a member of the executive. It is therefore likely that a primary purpose of the book was to gain recognition by showing that the MDCC was a valid Christian church though having an African character.

Several points support this suggestion. First, the last major topic in the *History*, is entitled "The Response to the Petition to the Government", which was made by Prophet Appiah following the Bensu incident. The letter from the District Commissioner G. P. H. Bewes is reported in full, including address, date and reference number. The Commissioner writes, "to inform you that so long as your Mission makes earnest endeavour to promote the welfare of its members, you need not expect any opposition from the Government."⁴ The letter shows that the Colonial Government now recognised the MDCC as a legitimate organisation, and the assumption could be that the missionary churches should do likewise. Second, the closing paragraph of the book commences: "At the present, the Musama Disco Christo Church which the sceptics were quick to oppose as a useless church, has today become a major church here in the Gold Coast."⁵ Third, several references are made to the missionaries who influenced the church in the Gold Coast: Thomson, Dunwell and Freeman are all mentioned. With regards to the criticism of the spiritual ministry of the church, the writer comments: "This was so because spiritual work began when the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman came to the Gold Coast, so it is not a new thing." It would appear likely that this is a reference to the revivals which occurred during Freeman's ministry.

This purpose alone still does not fully explain why the book was not published until 1943. It may have been because the Prophet was not in good health as he is said to have suffered from diabetes near the end of his life. He may have been eager to produce his own account of the history, and this is suggested within the preface of the book itself. Prophet Appiah states that he had been asked many times for an account of the founding of the church, "so that many will come to know the amazing works that the Lord God is doing here in the Gold Coast."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55

Yet another aim stated in the preface was that the account was to have a teaching role within the new church:

It is my hope that this short book will be useful to many who will take time to read it, and that they will take note of its contents; in particular, let the members of the Musama Disco Christo Church make it a point to read it in their Sunday schools, so that the younger members who have just begun to study will know how the Church started and what it stands for.⁶

The book is not simply a historical narrative, but the latter part of the text also answers “the main reasons why some people deny the Musama Disco Christo Church”. The text therefore had an apologetic role answering the criticisms of the church under seven headings: an African church, religion of our times, false prophets, baptism in the Spirit, divine healing, polygamy, playing drums and dancing.⁷

Consideration also needs to be given to the question as to how the text can be independently corroborated. There is no known external documentary evidence concerning the early years of Prophet Appiah in the Wesleyan Methodist archives or the Gold Coast papers of the time. *West Africa* does report the “Religious Disturbance in Gold Coast” in 1933 and gives an account of a revolt in Swedru led by Prophet Appiah, which accords with the record of the *History*.⁸ The letter from the District Commissioner dated 17 January 1934 is also carefully documented. Hans Debrunner visited Mazano in 1952, and Baëta in 1962, and both discussed the history of the church with Akaboha II and accepted the account of the *History*. Baëta mentions that he saw another historical account in manuscript form, which was written by Rev. B. E. Yorke, a minister in the MDCC. Baëta noticed many errors in this account, and the Akaboha actually told him that it contained mistakes, which is probably the reason that it was never published.⁹ Akoboha II was known to be a great correspondent and reader, but unfortunately his library and many documents were lost in a fire that completely destroyed the palace in 1984.

The main corroborative source is the continuing oral tradition within the church itself. As the book was published only 20 years after the foundation of the MDCC, many of

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ The word used for “Religion of our Times” is *nkyirba* meaning something newly formed and untried, trendy.

⁸ *West Africa* 5 January 1933, p. 147.

⁹ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, p. 28.

the people actually involved would have been alive and able to confirm the authenticity of the record. Most members of the church are aware of the main stories mentioned in the *History*, such as the call of Appiah, the visions of Hannah Barnes, the birth of Mathapoly Moses Appiah, the special baptisms of Appiah, and the exodus to Mazano. The *History* does, however, omit some well-known stories such as the three-fold baptism of Appiah, and the promised birth of Mathapoly Moses. Reference is made to Appiah being like an *omanhene*, but with little elaboration. It must be assumed that these topics were not included because they were not relevant to the purpose of the book at that time. For example, in 1943, Mathapoly Moses would have been only nine years of age, and the significance of the account of his birth was not necessary to authenticate his later leadership. Other events could have been omitted simply to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding and criticism.

The majority of the events in the *History* are dated, but there is some confusion with the earliest dates. For example, Appiah's appointment as catechist is given in the *History* as 1914, while the leaders of the church prefer the earlier date of 1911. Similarly the declaration of the MDCC as a church is said in the *History* to have been in 1925, but the leaders prefer 1922. Although members know the main stories, few are aware of the dates of these events, or the particular chronological order. As with most religious texts the importance for the believers is the content of the narrative rather than the chronology or the social context.

It is notable that only a few aged Fante copies remain, and today little reference is made to them by the church. This must be due partly to the fact that the majority of the members are illiterate. However, it also shows that the *History* has not recently been used by the leadership to publicly authenticate their position in the church hierarchy or validate the nature of some practices.

The *History* therefore appears to provide an inherently plausible account of the main events in the growth of the MDCC. As with most religious documents, the elements of the miraculous and the interpretation of visions and dreams are highly subjective. However, for the people concerned these confirm that the God of the Bible had spoken directly into their lives, and this is the most important element for any committed believer.

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The MDCC Headquarters has kept copies of past programmes of the Peace Festivals that they kindly made available to me together with various letters and press cuttings. Almost all the writings and correspondence of Akaboha II was lost in a fire that destroyed the palace in 1984.

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