

Traditional Akan Ethics: Relevant or Trash to Ghanaians Today?

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Abstract

Many works exist on the Akan people of Ghana. Whereas some present their history, socio-political structures, and their languages others examine their ethical systems. Nevertheless, from the past through to the present, it seems Ghanaians have drifted from applying and using the content of Akan ethics in their world of life. This drift raises the question of what went wrong or right within the timelines. In view of this, there calls the need to investigate and examine Akan ethics and to establish whether it serves any relevance or not, to Ghanaians today. In this study, the paper uses the historical and descriptive research methods. The paper's findings are that to a very large degree, majority of Ghanaians have let go of Akan ethics for Western culture, have refused to value Akan ethics and then perceives Akan ethics to be archaic. In view of these major reasons and others, the paper maintains that Akan ethics is of no relevance to Ghanaians today. In this perspective, the paper concludes on the note that Ghanaians should revisit, revive, reinstate and apply Akan ethical systems to problem solving situation in Ghana today. This will preserve and maintain the wisdom enshrined in Akan ethics for the present and future generations.

Keywords: Akan ethics, Ghanaians, relevant, Traditional Akan, trash

Introduction

Ghana and Ghanaians have earned many accolades from different cultures. Some of the notable accolades are *hospitality, generosity and peacefulness*. There is reason to believe that Ghana and Ghanaians earned the accolades because of their "nature". By the term nature, the paper implies, the way and manner Ghanaians behave, receive strangers, and all manner of human persons into their fold. Nevertheless, the 'nature' of Ghanaians did not come in a vacuum. Studies have proven that the ethical values shaped their nature. By ethical values, the paper refers to *Akan Ethics*. It is partly in view of this background that Ackah (1988) maintained that caution, careful and painstaking studies of Akan traditional beliefs and practices be undertaken to avert the loss of wisdom of the past². Looking at the present state of Akan ethics vis-à-vis Ackah's observations, there is reason to suggest that Ackah made a laudable postulation. This is because his assertion has been affirmed in a study conducted by Anderson (2013) on "the future of Akan

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²Ackah, C. A. (1988). *Akan ethics: A study of the moral ideas and the moral behaviour of the Akan tribes of Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, pp. 19-20.

ethics". In that study, Anderson (2013) compares how Akan ethics worked in the past with the present and maintains: majority of the prominent Akan ethical values seems to have been

abandoned. Secondly, Akan ethics seems to have lost its value³. His stance was based on the less attention he observes Ghanaians today have given to Akan ethics. Thirdly, majority of Ghanaians have developed much interest in foreign culture. Finally, he notes that the individualistic tendencies have gradually taken over the Akan communalistic philosophy. Now, if one infers from the numerous studies and findings by the scholars on Akan ethics, there is reason to investigate into and ascertain the relevance or otherwise the trashiness of Akan ethics to Ghanaians of today.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative type. The historical and descriptive research designs were adopted as the study's design. Wiersma (1986) says historical research is the type of research design that deals with critical inquiry into past events. This inquiry for Wiersma (1986) helps to produce an accurate description and interpretation of those events⁴. Authors such as Isaac & Michael (1977) say a descriptive research systematically describes the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, factually and accurately⁵. For Kothari (2004), descriptive research includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds. He adds, the major purpose of descriptive research design is to describe the state of affairs, as it exists at present⁶. The study adopts the two research designs because the topic under discussion requires a historical and descriptive analysis of past and present events to make a case for today. The study involved a total number of five opinion leaders and five clan heads from Cape Coast and Ajumako Ochiso respectively. Of the five opinion leaders, three were men, whereas two were females. The clan heads composed three men and two women. The opinion leaders and clan heads were selected purposively for the study. This is because the researcher knew that such groups of people have the information needed for the study.

Traditional Akan People of Ghana

The term "traditional" is very important for discussion in this context. This is because the term explains the *indigenous* and *unadulterated* state of a particular entity, in this case, the *Akan people* of Ghana. Appiah-Sekyere and Awuah-Nyamekye (2012) highlight on the term *traditional Akan*. They write that the term "traditional Akan" people refer to the Akan people of Ghana who hold on to the African indigenous religion who their forebears bequeathed to them⁷. Away from the two authors, statistical data from the Ghana's 2010 Population and Housing Census records that the Akan represent 47.5% of the total population of Ghana. The Akan according to the data are mostly located in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions; greater parts of the Western and Eastern regions; the whole of Central region except the Efutu and Awutu around Winneba; and a small area in the Northern part of the Volta region. The Akan include the Asante, Bono, Denkyira, Tufu, Assin, Wassaw, Sefwi, Akwamu, Akwapim, Akyem and Adansi. The main languages they

³Anderson, Jr. G. (2013). The future of Ghanaian-Traditional-Akan ethics: Bleak or bright? *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities*, 3(5), p. 257.

⁴Wiersma, W. (1986). *Research methods in education: An introduction*, (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

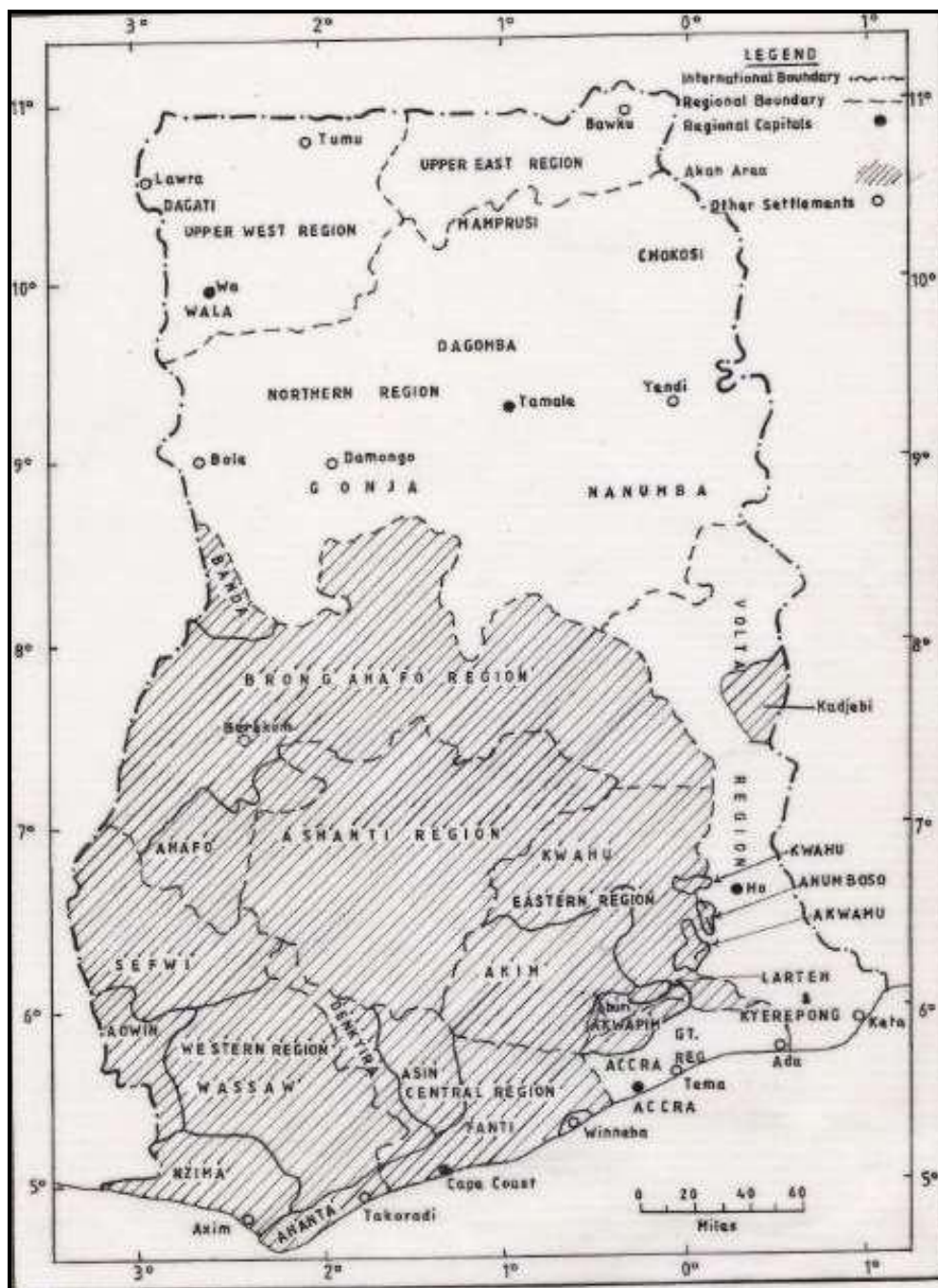
⁵Isaac, S. & Michael, W. B. (1977). *Handbook in research and evaluation*. San Diego, CA: EdITS Publishers, p. 18.

⁶Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*, (2nd, rev. ed.). New Delhi: New Age International Publishers, p. 2.

⁷Appiah-Sekyere, P. & Awuah Nyamekye, S. (2012). Teenage pregnancy in the life and thought of the Akan: Moral perspectives. *Sociology Study*, 2(2), 129.

speak are Twi and Fanti⁸. **Figure 1** below is a map of Ghana. The shaded areas on the map show where the Akan people of Ghana occupy.

Figure 1: Map of Ghana⁹



NB: The shaded areas on the map show where the Akan people of Ghana occupy.

⁸ Anderson, Jnr. G. (2013). pp. 257-8. See also: Ghana Statistical Service (May, 2012). 2010 *Population and housing census: Summary report of final results*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, p. 34. See also: Awuah Nyamekye, S. (2009). The role of religion in the institution of chieftaincy: The case of the Akan of Ghana. *Lumina*, 20(2), 1-2.

⁹ Map of Ghana sourced from: Anderson, Jnr. G. (2013). p. 258, or See: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/ppp/projects/Berekum.htm> l, See also: Awuah Nyamekye, S. (2009). The role of religion in the institution of chieftaincy: The case of the Akan of Ghana. *Lumina*, 20(2), 1-2.

Conceptualising the terms Ethics and Traditional Akan Ethics

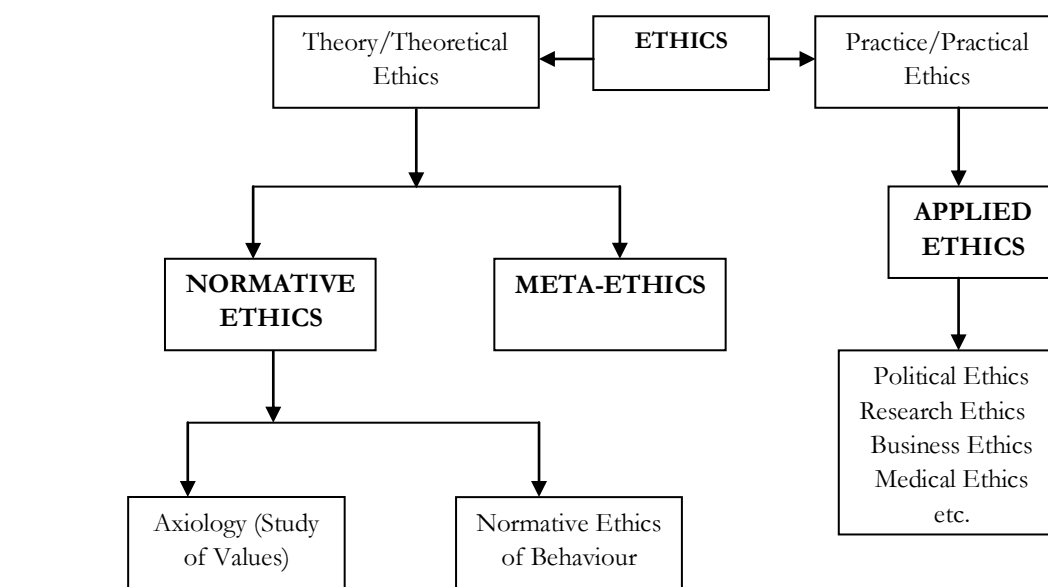
Under this section, the paper briefly explains the terms ethics and traditional Akan ethics. Explanations of the terms are important for the sake of clarity and reader-guide.

Explaining the term Ethics

The term ethics is technical¹⁰. For some philosophy scholars, the terms ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ are often taken to be identical, and have as their cognate, the word ‘morality’¹¹. Fagothey (1959) traces the roots of the term ethics and gives a definition. For him, ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos* (meaning custom). It is often used to mean a man’s character. The Latin word for custom is *mos*; its plural, *mores*, is the equivalent of the Greek “*ethos*”. From *mores*, we derive the words *moral* and *morality* which means the rightness or wrongness of human acts”¹². In the words of Azenabor (2008), ethics consists in the study of the fundamental principles (i.e. the ‘whys’ and ‘why-nots’ of human action or conduct). For him, the principles guide the individual’s conduct within the context of the social interactions and the community. In sum, his definition implies that ethics is all about human behaviour or conduct.¹³

In *Ethics: Discovering right and wrong*, Pojman and Fieser (2012) first maintain that ethics is a branch of philosophy. Secondly, they say ethics guides the individual’s way of life and provides him/her with good ideas. They also see ethics to deal with concepts such as “right” and “wrong”¹⁴. Like Fagothey (1959), Anderson (2013) understands ethics as a science. For him, ethics studies people’s way of life. This study includes studying the customs, behaviours and the people’s patterns of adaptation and change to culture¹⁵. Philosophically, the study of ethics divides into two distinctive fields, *theoretical* and *practical* ethics. Theoretical ethics subdivides into *normative ethics* (under normative ethics are axiology and normative ethics of behaviour) and *meta-ethics* whereas practical ethics is also called *applied ethics*¹⁶. The branches of ethics is summarised in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: A Brief Sketch of the Philosophical Study of Ethics



¹⁰ Gyekye, K. (2013). *Philosophy, culture and vision: African Perspectives: Selected essays*. Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, p. 206.

¹¹Agulanna, C. (2007). Moral thinking in Traditional African society: A reconstructive interpretation. *Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, 8(1). Retrieved from <http://agulanna.blogspot.com/2008/06/hh.html> Accessed on 17th December, 2014.

¹²Fagothey, A. (1959). *Right and reason: Ethics in theory and practice*, (2nd ed.). Rockford, Illinois: Tan books and Publishers, p. 29.

¹³Azenabor, G. (2008). The Golden rule principle in an African ethics, and Kant’s categorical imperative: A comparative study on the foundation of morality. *QUEST: An African Journal of Philosophy / Revue Africaine de Philosophie*, p. 230.

¹⁴Pojman, L. P. & Fieser, J. (2012). *Ethics: Discovering right and wrong*, (7th ed.). USA: Wadsworth, p. 2.

¹⁵ Anderson, Jnr. G. (2013), p. 259.

¹⁶ See: Machiavelli II: *The three branches of ethics*. Retrieved from <http://www.exurbe.com/?p=1489> on 17th December, 2014.

From the discussions on ethics, we understand the term ethics as that branch of philosophy that studies the *ought* of human conduct.

Traditional Akan Ethics

Barely few people have written on Akan Ethics. However, majority of the literature¹⁷ on Akan present their history, socio-political structures, and their languages. Only a handful of literature exists on their ethical systems. Nonetheless, in this work, we fall on Ackah (1988) whose work on Akan ethics serves a good reference point.

The expression, ‘*Akan ethics*’ is very difficult to define. For Ackah (1988), one of the difficulties is that ‘*Akan ethics*’ is not systematically presented, or stated in a series of coherent and logically related propositions. Rather, Akan ethics describes a system of ethics worked out pragmatically in the day-to-day living of the people. Ackah (1988) notes that Akan ethics are enshrined in Akan language of morals, which are; maxims and idioms, nouns, adjectives, proverbs, *ananse*¹⁸ (italics mine) tales, drums and horns¹⁹. Like Ackah (1988) who attempts a

definition of Akan ethics, Anderson (2013) writes, traditional-Akan ethics is the unadulterated practical normative science of the moral values, ideas and behaviours of the traditional Akan people of Ghana²⁰. Generally, the constituents of Akan ethics are enshrined in the ‘*Adinkra*’²¹ symbols and Akan proverbs. Some of the notable ‘*Adinkra*’ names and their symbols that educate the Akan people on ethical lessons are the “*Gye Nyame*”, “*Sankofa*”, “*Boa me na me mmoa wo*”, and “*Bi nka bi*”. In **Figure 3** below are the symbols.

Figure 3: Some Selected Notable Akan Adinkra Symbols and their Meanings

Gye Nyame



Sankofa



Boa me na me mmoa wo



Bi nka bi



¹⁷ See the following works: Agyekum, K. (2010). The Sociolinguistics of Thanking in Akan. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 19(2): 77–97

Arkoh, R. B. (2011). *Semantics of Akan bi and no* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia (Vancouver)).

Awuah-Nyamekye, S. (2009). The role of Religion in the Institution of Chieftaincy: The case of the Akan of Ghana. *Lumina*, 20(2), 1—17.

Botchway, De-Valera N.Y.M., & Sarpong, A. A. A. (2015). Indigenous work ethics among Akan of Ghana *Religions: A Scholarly Journal*. 14, 41-49. DOI: 10.5339/rels.2015.work.14

Eshun, E. K. (2011). Religion and nature in Akan culture: A case study of Okyeman environment foundation. Master’s essay submitted to the Department of Religious Studies in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Queen’s University Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/7417/1/ESH_UN_EDWIN_K_201106_MA%20.pdf Accessed on 26th July, 2015.

Gyekye, K. (1978). The Akan concept of a person. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 18(3), 277-287.

Warren, D. M., & Andrews, J. K. (1990). *Akan Arts and Aesthetics: Elements of Change in a Ghanaian Indigenous Knowledge System*. Technology and Social Change Program, Iowa State University.

¹⁸The Akan word “*ananse*” literary means spider. “*Ananse tales*” as used in this context by Ackah (1988) refers to the wise stories elderly folks narrate to people in the community to draw out moral lessons for life.

¹⁹Ackah, C. A. (1988). *Akan ethics: A study of the moral ideas and the moral behaviour of the Akan tribes of Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, p. 20, 25-27.

²⁰ Anderson, G. Jnr. (2013), p. 257.

²¹ The word *Adinkra* is a printed or stamped traditional cloth made by the Asante people of Ghana. The symbols, which decorate the cloth, are called Adinkra symbols. These symbols are used to decorate much more than clothes, including houses, furniture, pottery, textiles, metal casting, woodcarving, architecture, etc. Each Adinkra symbol has a name and a proverb associated with it. Every Adinkra symbol has a meaning, which is a word of wisdom reflecting the philosophy, religious beliefs, social, ethical values and political history of the Akan people.

The Akan word, “*Gye Nyame*”, which literary means “Except God” translates into “Fear no one, except God”. The symbol reflects the Akan belief of a Supreme Being, Omnipotence and the Omnipresence of God, the creator who the Akan refer to by various names, e.g., Oboadee, Nyame, Onyankopon. “*Sankofa*” literary means “Return and get it”. This Akan Adinkra symbol reflects the importance of learning from the past to build the future. The symbol is of a bird that has its foot firmly planted forward, but its head turned backwards. “*Boa me na me mmoa wo*” means literary translates as: “help me and let me help you”. This symbol projects the ethic of cooperation and interdependence among people in the society. “*Bi nka bi*” literary means “no one should bite the other”. The symbol teaches that everybody must live at peace with his/her fellow human. Away from the Adinkra symbols and the ethics they espouse, Akan proverbs are important for discussion. This is because proverbs, like the symbols formed a core aspect of Akan ethics. The Akan people of Ghana call proverbs, “*be*” or “*abebusem*”²². These are wise sayings couched by the elderly persons in the traditional society. They are picturesque and express a hidden or obvious wisdom and to communicate expected codes of behaviour²³. In a personal communication with *ten opinion leaders*, and *clan heads*²⁴, they explained some prominent Akan proverbs and the moral lessons the proverbs presented to the society. They maintained:

“*Esen w’agya tsentsen a, nna nnye wo pen bi a*”. The proverb literary means,
“*If you are taller than your father, it does not follow that he is your equal*”²⁵.

The leaders explained that the ethic enshrined in this proverb is *respect*, mostly for the elderly in society. The proverb translates as: *no matter well-off a person is in life, it is that person’s duty to show respect to all those who are superior to him in age*. Sarpong (1974) suggests that our forebears to

demonstrate the dignity and respect due the elderly persons in the society couched the proverb. For Sarpong, the elders in the society knew that at old age, it is plausible for the youth in the society to claim equality with the old. In this essence, there was the need for an ethical mechanism that would check behaviours, most especially, the youths’. Another important indicator for the proverb according to Sarpong (1974) is that the elderly persons are regarded as the embodiment of words of wisdom, history, knowledge and at times the final authority in decision making²⁶. The reasons above in the perspective of Sarpong (1974) partly explain why the elderly in the society were and are consulted in many cases for pieces of advice and directions in life. Other Akan proverbs that the ten opinion leaders and clan heads cited are as follows:

“*Amma wo nyenko anntwa akono a woso nntwa du*”. The proverb literary means, “*If you do not allow a friend to cut nine, you cannot cut ten*”.

“*Wotiatia obi de so hwehwɛ wo de a, wonhu*”. The proverb literary means,
“*If you trample upon what belongs to someone in the hope of finding what belongs to you, you never find it*”²⁷.

The proverbs above, according to the leaders teach that *selfishness does not pay*. In other words, interest in other people’s welfare is more a certain way of ensuring one’s own interest. Apart from the Adinkra symbols and proverbs that constitute Akan ethics, the ten opinion and clan heads maintained that virtues like *Nokwaredzi* (truthfulness), *Papa or Papaye* (goodness), *Asem-trenee* (just or righteousness), *abotare* (patience), *Ɔɔ* (love) were encouraged to be pursued

²² See: Yankah, K. (1986). Proverb speaking as a creative process: The Akan of Ghana. *Proverbium* 3:195-230.

²³ See: Kquofi, S., Amate, P., & Tabi-Agyei, E. (2013). Symbolic representation and socio-cultural significance selected Akan proverbs In Ghana. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 86.

²⁴ Personal interview with ten opinion leaders and clan heads on 12th May, 2015.

²⁵ Ackah, C. A. (1988), p. 52.

²⁶ Sarpong, P. (1974). *Ghana in retrospect: Some aspects of Ghanaian culture*, (reprint 2006). Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, p. 65.

²⁷ Ibid.

by the members in the society. Aside the virtues, society abhorred certain vices. Some of the abhorred vices are; *Awudzɔ* (murder), *Nkontompɔ* (deceit), *Aɔɛsɛnnkonya* (selfishness) and *Aniamonbo* (disrespect).

The Present State of Akan Ethics: An Observation

The paper maintains that Akan ethics is in its bad state. This is because there seem to be no active and existing structures keeping Akan ethics operative and vibrant at present. This is evident in the following developments. In Ghana today, the elderly person's moral right to render punishment seems to have been buried to the earth by some people in the society. This is in view of the seemingly impermissibility of elderly persons to chastise a child who has misbehaved in the society. If they did, the parents of the child retaliated vehemently against that elderly person. Moreover, the youth and children use abusive words on elderly persons without feeling remorse. They also barely show respect for authorities in the society. Away from the above, there is reason to mention that technological advancement, diverse philosophical stance on democracy, and the heightened desire expressed in foreign cultures by majority of Ghanaians has rendered Akan ethics of no or less relevance. Akan ethics seems to have no significant role and place in the Ghana's educational system/curriculum. There seems to be no Akan Ethics taught-courses integrated in the school's curriculum to expose Akan ethics. However, courses like the History of America, Russia, Modern Europe, Caribbean and the like are rather tailored into Ghanaian school's curriculum. This, to a large extent has obscured the exposition of Akan ethics.

In the past, there were Ghana's educative television programmes like "*Che Che Kule*", "*Fan World*" and "*By the Fireside*". These television programmes were geared towards teaching Ghanaian children and the youth moral lessons and exposing Akan ethics. Nevertheless, such educative programmes are no more. Instead, traditional priests and priestesses who perform magic and incant spell are the programmes streaming on almost every television station in Ghana. Pastors and politicians who are expected to be epitome of life and embodiment of knowledge now pose insults against each other and are telecasted on television and aired on radio stations daily. Moreover, Ghanaian movies, music and advertisement on national and private televisions are now oriented with abusive languages, alcoholic beverages and with pornographic scenes. Entrepreneurs have subscribed to cocaine business and fraud to the international level and have defamed the nation, Ghana. The question is, where are the ethics that shaped the lives of Ghanaians that earned Ghana many respectable accolades? Nonetheless, if we should go by the current developments in Ghana, can we deny the assertion that Akan ethics is in its bad state?

Discussions:

Traditional Akan Ethics vs. Ghanaians Today: Relevant or Trash?

Today, one observes an attitudinal change in majority of Ghanaians vis-à-vis their moral lives. This change is evident in varied endeavours. Decisively, in the areas of religion, morality, politics, work, and social dimensions (dress code, behavioural attitude etc.). Some of the issues that narrow down to such endeavours are, but not limited to bribery and corruption, religious confrontations, armed robbery, rape, chieftaincy crisis, industrial actions, and internet fraud called "*Sakawa*"²⁸. On religious front, there are many streaming topical issues. For example,

²⁸The word *SAKAWA* as used in the text is understood to mean Internet fraud. It generally involves the youth who cheating people via the internet to get hold of huge sums of money from such victims' financial account. Recently, it has taken a different

religious manipulation, religious commercialisation, religious competition and the use of fear by Penteco-Charismatic pastors and traditional priests to accrue wealth from people. Today, it can be called a ritual to hear and watch *religious personages*²⁹ airing on national radios and televisions respectively to showcase their potentials. Often times, they display and discuss about some self-made 'religious products'³⁰. Such products are hyped and are told to possess supernatural powers and origin.

Nevertheless, testimonies by some church members coupled with self-pilot studies conducted in four Penteco-Charismatic churches³¹ in Ghana revealed how three different head pastors from three of the four Penteco-Charismatic churches charge³² their clients sums of money before their (clients) problems are addressed. Away from religious commercialisation and manipulation, one reads from the national dailies about pastors undergoing public disgrace coupled with court charges. Primarily because of their failure to fulfill a promise made after acquiring spiritual powers from traditional priests to cause exponential increase in church membership, or by duping people to accrue wealth, bathing, impregnating, and having sexual relations with another man's wife. Nevertheless, in the past, such practices were abhorred and

rare to hear. This is because Akan ethics vehemently opposed such vices. In this regard, it espoused friendliness, care, faithfulness, no cheating, and desisting from having sexual relations with one's husband or wife.

Moving away from religion, the paper turns to the youths in Ghana. In almost every Ghanaian traditional society at past, it was rare to observe the elderly folks disregarded, insulted, challenged and battered by the youth³³. Again, the youths³⁴ (young girls and men) in the society dressed modestly and attached respect to sharing greetings. Dressing was purely a cover-up of the entire human body. This implies covering the breast area to the feet. There was no room left for someone to observe one's breasts, thigh or buttocks. Greetings were to be couched in a polite manner. Young girls were to lower their height to say "*me pa wo kyem, me ma wo akye*" in the Twi language which translates, "please good morning". The young men were of no exemption, however, they were to remove their hats or caps to share greetings. Gambling and fraudulent means of getting money was hard to hear about the youth. The manners above expressed by the youth became practical and grounded because there were operating mechanisms devised to check the conducts of people in the society, i.e. *Akan ethics*. These manners/attitudes portrayed by the youths in the society were by diverse means inculcated into them. One of such means is referred to as '*by the fire side*'. This term "*by the fire side*" was couched inferring from a particular setting. A setting whereby children and the youth gathered under a tree in the evening for an educated elderly folks from the society to narrate to them stories. Normally, during this setting, fire was set in the midst of the people gathered. The aim was to provide warmth to those who may feel cold. Generally, the content of such stories admonished the listeners to put up chaste

form. Sacrifice ritual has been introduced into this venture with the aim of rapidly gaining much money from their victims.

²⁹ By religious personages, the paper refers to pastors, magicians, traditional priests and priestesses. These persons are all over in the dailies, on the internet, and national televisions claiming to have powers to address people's problems. Generally, they display their phone contacts, web home page address and religious artefacts to attract people.

³⁰ Some of the notable religious products are anointing oils, holy water, handkerchiefs, scarves, and stickers.

³¹ The five Penteco-charismatic churches are Ebenezer Miracle and Worship Centre (Kumasi, Ahenema Kokoben), International God's Way Church (Accra Branch), Synagogue Church of All Nations (Accra Branch of the T. B. Joshua fame), and Perez Chapel International (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch).

³² In two of the churches I visited, five respondents narrated to me that they have each spent an amount of GH¢ 2000 for daily acquisition of Christian religious products (anointing oil and holy water) and lodging.

³³ Anderson, Jnr. G. (2013), p. 260.

³⁴ By the term youth and its relation to young girls and men, the paper refers to both girls and boys with age range between 18 and 30 years.

lives, embrace good behaviours and to eschew bad attitudes so that they became responsible children and adults in the future³⁵.

In Ghana today, it is very rare to see young girls who have tailored their dresses to their feet or beneath their knee level as it used to be in the past. Generally, they dress to expose their thighs, breasts, beads, and their buttocks. This dressing is generally called “*I am aware*”³⁶. The young men dress with their collar standing, and under wears showing. At other times, one finds their (young men) trousers pulled down. This type of dressing is called “*autofista*”. In the rural and some parts of the urban settings in Ghana, one observes how some of the youths maltreat the aged. In this regard, the aged are insulted, yelled at, pushed down, and severely battered³⁷. Moreover, almost all social vices ranging from internet fraud, rape, armed robbery, abortion to theft are associated with the youth. Moving to the political terrain, there is reason to argue that politics in Ghana today is characterised by insults (abusive language), cheating, deceits, unfairness and favouritism. Furthermore, most politicians especially, those in government seem not to care for the entire nation. They live luxurious life furnished by the taxpayers’ monies whereas the majority of the Ghanaian populace wallows in the quagmire of poverty and squalid conditions³⁸. Still on politics and its relation to governance, there is the issue of bribery and corruption, the appalling attitude of workers to work and the clients who come to seek clarification on issues. Studies³⁹ conducted on corruption in one hundred and twenty nine (129) African countries

placed Ghana as third (3rd). However, if the findings revealed by the studies are facts to go by, then there is reason to question the state of Akan ethics and its relevance to current trends of developments vis-à-vis the attitudes of Ghanaians. This is because one would want to know the whereabouts of ‘the ethics’ (Akan ethics) that guided and shaped the lives of people in almost every Ghanaian society in the past. The question is can we still place hands on these ethics? If we (Ghanaians) can, then, wherein lies their relevance to us today?

Conclusion

The paper sought to investigate the relevance or trashiness of Akan ethics to present day Ghanaians. The paper’s findings point to the following. Firstly, Akan ethics is in its bad state. This is partly because the structures and mechanisms that keep Akan ethics vibrant and operative are extinct. Secondly, Akan ethics serve no relevance to Ghanaians today. In one development, this stance is evident in the maximum attention and importance the Ghana’s educational system has attached to the study of Western taught-courses (for e.g. History of America, Russia, Modern Europe, Caribbean etc.) in Ghana’s Senior High Schools and Universities than courses that are Ghana-oriented- for e.g. Akan ethics. Secondly, Ghanaians today have developed much desire in and interest for western culture and their ways of doing things. Here, the paper makes reference to the style of dressing, the way of talking, and the manner the youth treat elderly persons in the society. Finally, the paper notes that there seems to be less or no application of Akan ethics in the political, religious, economic, business, and social spheres of Ghanaians. In view of the findings, the paper concludes on the note that Ghanaians should revisit, revive, reinstate and apply the Akan ethical values and ideas that shaped their moral life in the past. This will in turn preserve and maintain the wisdom enshrined in Akan ethics.

³⁵ See: Sarpong, P. (1974). & Gyekye, K. (1996). *African cultural values: An introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company.

³⁶ “I am aware” in the sense that she is already aware that her vital bodily parts are displayed and they are intentionally exposed.

³⁷ See: Ntreh, B. A. (2008). *Sexual and domestic violence*. Cape Coast: Hampton Press, pp. 98-104.

³⁸ See: Pobee, J. S. (1991). *Religion and politics in Ghana*. Accra: Asempa Publishers.

³⁹ Studies conducted by Transparency International. See: http://www.transparency.org/country/#GHA_DataR search See also: <http://vibeghana.com/2015/02/21/ghana-ranked-3rd-least-corrupt-african-country-report/> Accessed on 10th March, 2014.

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Lists of Interviewees

Five Opinion Leaders interviewed on 12 the May, from Cape Coast

Opanyin Kwabena Annu
Opanyin Kwesi Ammuzu
Opanyin Kwabena Fosu
Obaa Adwoa Saah

Obaa Esi Sesema

Five Clan Heads interviewed on 28th May, 2015 from Ajumako Ochiso

Abusuapanyin Kwabena Darko

Abusuapanyin Kofi Atta

Abusuapanyin Kwabena Essuman

Obaapanyin Alice Otsiwah

Obaapanyin Esi Maanan