

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Religious Pluralism: The Perspectives of Tolerance and Repercussions on Indigenous Frafra Religious Culture in Bolgatanga Municipality

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Abstract:

Religious culture in some countries have become a thorn in the flesh of its practitioners. But in Bolgatanga Municipality the situation has a different characteristic of tolerance. Against this background that the perspectives of religious tolerance and repercussions on Indigenous Frafra religious culture was chosen as the theme. The study examined the foreign the presence relationship between religious diversity with the indigenous religious cultural practices to determine the position of indigenous religion. Among the findings were several counts of Christian and Islamic temples. The traditional religious mediums were found to be in shambles as majority of the indigenes had abandoned the practice. The levels of deterioration of the religious mediums comprising constructed structures and groves of foliage, were evident enough to conclude on the position of indigenous religion compared to the adopted ones. The Chris-Mu-dominant custodians of the land of the municipality were found to have nurtured a new culture of religious practice termed by the study as Chris-Mu-Tradit. The objective of the study was achieved.

Keywords: Tindambas, frafra, religious pluralism, mediums, elders, shrine, groves, abodes, veneration, inter sectionism, sacrifice. chris-mu-tradit, nyaabas, bakolog, bagrechris-mu-dominant, custodians

1. Introduction

The Gurune speaking Frafra are the ethnic custodians (Tindambas) of the Bolgatanga Township and capital of the Upper East Region (Akanpatulsi, 1977). The lands that were bequeathed to government for the purposes of regional administrative siting were released by the Tindambas. They were practicing African Traditional Religion like all other native Africans for centuries before they began accepting both Islamic and Christianity in the early 1900s (Ratray, 1928). The Town is one of the ten regional capitals of Ghana and one of the two regions in the upper part of the country that share boarder with Togo and Burkina Fasso. Like any other developing city, the township and its environs have become cosmopolitan within the last few decades of elevation as a municipality

The urban nature of the town has come along with its concomitant population growth following the influx of migrants from the catchment areas made of workers of formal educational institutions and government departments, commerce, and the religious industry Haque, (1999). This rapid increase in population has also brought about a relative increase in diverse religious denominations, therefore the reason why the municipality is currently springing up with numerous numbers of Christian and moderate Islamic temples at vantage points that seem to overshadow the indigenous Frafra religious sanctuaries. In all cases, it is believed that individuals gain favour and salvation through good work and loyalty to the religious denomination by association with the supernatural the prime aim of the said religions (Kottak, 2000)

Many people are seeking religious experience in any form, some crave for mysticism probably forgetting that their own religious faith; being Islam, Christian or African native religion provides the way to true union with God. The habit of religious affiliation could be attributed to the quest for survival-either in the spiritual realm, or physically, to sustain the individual's guaranteed safety and the source of livelihood as it is happening in modern days (Akanlu, 1986 & Otobil, 2012). Hence, it is speculatively accurate to state that people choose to belong to particular religion on grounds of survival. As urbanization entwine its populace with commerce and merchandise, it becomes difficult for cosmopolites in 'secular' countries like Ghana to religiously segregate the kind of work force a company or institution may have on its payroll. This eventually leads to the utmost resolve to embrace one another in the field or religious diversity (CCPDC, 1997).

The natives are largely the Gurune speaking Frafra(s) whose view of religion, like any other human race is underpinned by physical vitality and dynamism, and spiritual forces. "With the exception of the Hebrews" (Abadamloora, 1986) most societies until the advent of Christianity and Islam were polytheists, worshipping the sun, the moon, the sea, mountains and many other physical objects as divine manifestation, invested with divine power. So, the Frafra people worshipped God through the use of mediums modelled in mud and others carved in wood. The rest were large Baobab tree species and grooves of foliage.

In Frafra culture, the most senior male member of the household controls the means of production and labour power of all the household members, and this was sanctioned by their religious belief. He was responsible for appeasing the ancestors and the goddess of the earth being the religious intermediary between the household and the earth goddesses and ancestors, the compound head could apply religious sanctions against anyone in the family who violated authority (KrÖger 1982). After decades of this religious monopoly, we shall now try to delve into the dynamics of this cultural trend in contemporary era of cosmopolitan life. So, the fundamental question is; what is the perception of the position of the Frafra traditional religion in contemporary era and their native settlement as having been influenced by these religious diversities? Two major outcomes are possible in this context. They have either become victims of enculturation or militants in the struggle to avert extinction

This paper looks at the issue of religious pluralism in the case of Bolga Municipal emanating from rapid population growth and urbanization to have casts three-pronged shadows on general tolerance among the respective practitioners, the impact on the indigenous religion as in the Frafra traditional area, and the relative symbiotic effects on social developments of the religious mix.

1.1. Background

Tolerance refers to the acceptance and respect for one another's religious and social ideologies, beliefs and affiliation; the opinion of one's nuclear and extended family members in the sharing of amenities regardless of religious and social status (Akanlu, 1986). Religion on the other hand refers to the belief of a people in relation to spirituality; the mediating mediums between the living and the dead (ibid). Ghana as a secular nation, since the first republic, has had in its supreme constitution the freedom of worship and the forth republican constitution of the 1992, Article 21c also makes provision for same freedom, thereby binding on all ethnic groups, families, institutions and individuals to respect that fundamental human rights and freedoms. (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992). So, all government institutions and urgencies throughout the country have the character of non-denominational religious workforce which according to Tandoh, (2011) promotes national unity among the citizenry.

Considering Sims' assertion above, the culture of religious tolerance has therefore become an obvious salient secret for peaceful co-existence, harmony and development at cosmopolitan settlements due to factors including inter-religious marriage, that is Muslim marrying Christian and vice versa without any hindrance. Traditionalist marrying Muslims or Christians or vice versa. The other factor of concern is educational and social equity - the non-denominational religious sharing and patronage of educational and health institutions, associations and parties among others without religious discrimination. The third factor being Festive integration and social cohesion; cross religious celebration of festive seasons where Muslims share occasional meals with Christian friends and vice versa.

To be peaceful is the account of the satisfaction of the share of pluralist religious balance, intellectual property, services, business as well as identifying and suppressing threats to religious diversities associated urbanization (UNDESA 2006). People feel a deep sense of shared commitment, joy and belongingness to their religion. Discrimination on the part of religion is a rampant news headlines in recent times especially in neighbouring Nigeria, however, the case of Bolgatanga is different where identities of multi-religious household, neighbours and well-wisher-citizens have lived in harmony to the admiration of all and sundry and worthy of emulation (Kottak, 2000). The religious pattern in the area could be described as syncretic following the cultural mixes and religious blends as a result of the acculturation. There is a complete exchange of cultural features in Christian and Islamic occasions.

There is the need to protect and sustain the rapidly increasing religious diversity in the areas of Frafraism, Christendom and Islamism are vital sects of spirituality that form part of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms along with securing ecological and genetic diversity. This standpoint is premised on the view that sustainable peaceful co-existence and development is only achievable if there is tolerance Hawkes, (2006). The alignment between the objectives of religious differences and that of social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability is eminent in modern societies to thrive in development. This has been a driving secret to the harmonious social life over the years within the municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana (REGSEC, 2017).

The purpose of this article is to highlight on the depth of multi-religious tolerance amongst inhabitance in Bolgatanga from the angles of ethnic-ethnic, family-family and household as the panacea to the sustained and sustainable peaceful co-existence along with the social, economic and environmental dimensions. Again, the key premise of the paper is that religious tolerance is more than just the manifestations of mere acceptance.

This paper therefore examines the religious pluralism in the Bolgatanga municipality in terms of its evolvement and how the religious arena manifests itself on the indigenous religion, among the practitioners in the construct of peaceful co-existence. In this way, the paper examines it from an operational standpoint of the locations and patronage levels of various religious (indigenous Frafra shrines, churches and mosques) objects, mediums and abodes in the municipality.

1.2. Study Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- To find out the extent to which Christian and Islamic religions have affected the traditional religious culture of the indigenous Gurune speaking Frafras in the municipality and
- To determine the kind of religious culture of the people in this 21st century.

2. Methodology

In attempt to penetrate the spirituality of community, one needs to identify and rely on some opinion leaders to serve as key informants. The case study survey was conducted using descriptive approach because it provided avenue for describing the levels of the theme (Gerring, 2007). The primary informants were therefore purposively selected including Tindaanas, family and household heads and elders. Analytical statistics was used to determine relationships among the various variables (how the indigenous Frafras religion is influenced by foreign religions) of the study in order to offer some explanations for the observations.

The 24 indigenous communities in and around the Municipality constituted the target population for the study. Forty-five (45) households per each group of three (3) communities totaling 360 household units were randomly selected as respondents.

2.1. Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedure

The main instrument that was used for the study was a content validated questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability coefficient of the Likert scale type instrument after pre-testing by a pilot study. Data was collected using questionnaire with a translator research-assistant. There were interviews for respondents who had vital information but could not speak English. There were two schedules for each session to obtain data. Respondents were made to indicate their family religious affiliation from a set of four (4) listed religions namely (i) Christianity, (ii) Islam, (iii) Traditional religion and (iv) The four (4) religions put together including all other unmentioned ones. They were also made to indicate their reasons for joining or converting to, or otherwise, the particular religion by ticking any of the listed reasons. The set of reasons were obtained from a pilot questionnaire which sort to find the most probable reasons why people convert from their religions to other religions.

The second part sought information on the respondents' household level of care of traditional shrines and practices, and other religions as well as associated factors. The researcher visited the residences of respondents and interviewed them at separate times for a period of six months during which most of the resource persons were revisited for clarifications and confirmation of information. A linguistic interpreter of Gurune-English was recruited to assist in the interviews for respondents who could not speak the English language. For the purposes of obtaining accurate information, the researcher recorded the audios which later replayed to confirm the transcriptions.

2.2. Profile of the Indigenous Gurune Speaking Settlements in Bolgatanga

Kwamina and Benneh opines that long before the independence of Ghana, the traditional religion of the Frafra was in existence among the then rural-based societies. The religious temples were in the form of mud-constructed towers and groves of clustered trees branded as shrines. The rest were huge savanna trees like the Baobab, figure 1a show the features of the mediums. As indicated earlier, a renowned anthropologist, R.S. Rattray affirms (in the 1920s) and Fortes (in the 1930s) that the Frafra practice of religion was devoid of the influence of both Christianity and Islamic religion until the nineteenth and twentieth century's (Kwamina & Benneh, 2004 & Rattray, 1932) when trade routes and general merchandise were popularized with the advent of slavery and colonization. The religious abodes were in the form of objects, earthen-ware, mud-constructed forms and some renowned and nocturnal tree species. The siting of these religious mediums (shrines and gods) were determined by some factors

According to an opinion leader in a personal interview and confirmed by the Centre for Cosmo-vision in 1999, the criteria for siting religious mediums are guided by five key factors: first point settlement of first ancestor of a village, the burial site of the first ancestor with a grown tree, a proposed site for a sacrifice identified by a soothsayer and a commemorative point of a legendary event in a village and finally a mythical site of belief of the indigenous people (Centre for Cosmo-vision in 1999). The vegetation consists of savanna tall grasses with dotted bushes and scattered trees. The Frafra land experiences high temperature, a long dry season with a few months of rainfalls. They were practicing subsistence farming based on the cultivation of land permanently surrounding their environs



Figure 1: Frafra Family Priest, Frafra Religious Shrine Grove
Frafra Religious Mediums

Source: R.S. Rattray (1932). Source: CECIK (1999) Source: Researcher's Field Work (2018)

The Frafra traditional house setup has entrance facing either the west or south-west. The entry way was believed to symbolize the economic and social independence of a particular extended family. Traditionally, ancestral shrines in the form of conical towers (platforms) which are protectively covered by potsherds or pieces of calabash, are located outside the entry way. These structures are considered to house their ancestral spirits with the actual shrine being either bangle or stone buried underneath the conical building and protectively covered by potsherds or pieces of calabash. Figure one above is a typical example (Rattray, 1932, Parker & Allan, 2005, Barker, 1986).

The altars serve as tangible links between the living family and their dead and reinforces the belief system of life after death. The living ones are constantly reminded of their obligations to those who are living and no longer living to day-to-day world but are still considered to be part of the family. They are monument to keep memories. In appreciation by the living, sacrifices are offered to honour them. Also, in ideal events, family members hold commemorative ceremonies yearly. In practice every ancestral home takes care of these altars. Family of sound financial background necessitate dedication to sustain the belief and practice of veneration (Kröger, 1982).

Modernity has come as an agent of acculturation where indigenous people lose their traditional religious practices due to the dominance of the imposing culture; the inhabitants tend to imbibe into the current traits of the incoming ethos (Duut, 2016). The case of Bolgatanga municipality and Frafra communities in particular is no exception. The question being that, how has the classical Frafra traditional worship mediums with its aesthetic values, vigorous and austere technique of construction survived in today's times of so much modernization and westernization in our so called fast-paced lives? We appreciate that tradition is always fast respond to catch up with the rapidity of modernization without obliterating the practice among the younger generations.

2.3. Philosophy and Concept of Religion

Mbiti (1969) describes the philosophies of some African religious mediums as manifested and revealed through dreams and divined-findings. According to an informant who was also a family head and care taker priest of the family gods, the verticality of ancestral altars in conical shapes to the height of about 2feet connotes the immortalization of the departed ones. That the rendition of the mediums in such earth-perpendicular position keeps them 'awake and alive', and as active as they used to be in the physical world. He added that the arrangement and position of an abode in a row is determined by ones' family status among the ancestors (Nyaabas) ranking relating to the growth of the family tree. In figure 2 below, there are two families in that cluster of ancestors. Each line of three contains male siblings who have had male offspring as counts of the family membership. It was believed in the tradition that, a male who had not had a male son for the extension of the family tree was not revered; therefore, did not have a medium representing him at all in the row of ancestors. The arrow shows the eldest of the six male ancestors and is therefore modelled with exceptional identity

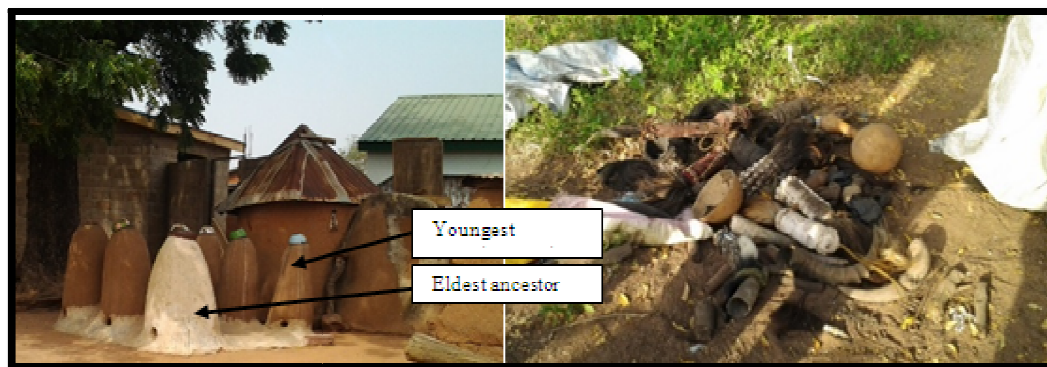


Figure 2: Order of Ancestor Altars of the Tanzui Lineage, Discarded Divination (Bakolog) Accoutrements

The people believed that, problems relating to poor crop yield, epidemics, famine, death, illness, fortune and calamities were all controlled by the forces of the underworld and they could only diagnose the cause through soothsayers or diviners. Along the Bolgatanga-Navrongo highway in October, 2014, a bunch of accoutrements of a diseased soothsayer (see figure 3 above), were found to have been discarded by his surviving children who are now converts to Christianity. To authenticate that fact, the researcher reached out to one of the children, a Teacher by profession (name withheld) and he confirmed that, none of the siblings could inherit the soothsaying (bakolog) vocation following their adoption of Catholicism as their source for spiritual empowerment. He however did not hesitate to pose for a photograph in front of a group of altars (Bagre) that were inherited by a relative (see figure 8).

Traditionally, one of the sons would have been initiated into practicing the career as a calling by inheritance but not as a vocation. Despite that the children have declined to take-up the traditional religion, they still believe they could be haunted by the invisible forces that inhabit in the articles (Kröger, 1982). In view of that, all the clothing that accompanied the bakolog (divination accoutrements) were all thrown away, not even to donate them to the needy. The researcher inquired from the Teacher to know whether they have the conviction of being haunted by the spirit, having failed to inherit the vocation; he responded that, they were not perturbed by their defection from the Native Religion to Christianity which

Jesus Christ is the Saviour. He however concluded that, they take part in family occasions like funerals and other social gatherings without any hitches.

2.4. Mode of Succession of Domestic and Lineage Deities and Shrines

The typical Gurune speaking settlements that have become urban of the Bolgatanga municipality is made up of 24 lineage communities from the fourth retrospective generation. To advance the interrogation of this study, let us outline the main indigenous settlement according to their retrospective generation as Yikine, Soe, Kumbosigo, Zaurungu, Sumbrungu, Tindommologo, Tindonsobilgu, Pubaga, Bukere, Zobisi, Sokabisi, Kalbion, Anateem, sherigu, Dorungu, Azimsim, Zaare, Yarigabisi and the rest. For the purposes of this paper, the communities were classified as: Group 1 (Atulbabise, Bukere and Dapoortindongo), Group 2 (Gumbisi, Pubago and Dagmio), Group 3 (kumbosigo, Duluku, Zuarungu), Group 4 (Tindommologo, Tindasoblgo and Sherigu), Group 5 (Sumbrungu, Kolibia and Ananim), Group 6 (Dorungo, Yikine and Azinsim), Group 7 (Zaare, Soe and Yorogo), and Group 8 (Tanzui, Zobisi and Sokabisi). We shall see the characteristics of the ritual mediums in Table 1.

In the area of succession, the gender dimension of ritual inheritance and performance [among the Frafra] is male-centred (Goody (1966); the majority of surviving males of a clan-section has access to nearly all ritual 'offices' in a house hold. This type of succession according to Kröger (1982) is described as 'circulating succession' where the highest ritual title can be handed from compound to compound after the demise of each incumbent holder.

The Frafra customs demand that the eldest amongst the children of the eldest generation is qualified in seniority to inherit and perform any sacrifice on the ancestral deities and shrines. The principle, on this kind of seniority is dependent on generation and individual age where the order allows a young man of an older generation to become the main sacrifice and elder of a lineage. This does not lose sight of older men than him who may be in the same compound. Every male of the elder generation waits in an imaginary queue for their turn of access to the deity/shrine office

The practice of indigenous religion and the fate of religious mediums appears to be under serious threat of extinction among the frafras in the Bolgatanga municipality. Just like all other african, the frafras belief in the existence of god and life after death and therefore had a system through which they venerate their ancestors and worship God. Each house hold especially family heads raised towers of silos which were assigned to each departed ancestor of the family, and celebrated as a way of worship. Thorough visual inspection indicated that religious mediums are fast deteriorating coupled with a rapid decline of the population of indigenous Frafra who practice the religion. Factors influencing these purported threats include the proliferation of Christian churches, and Muslim mosques and changes in architectural designing of the households, migration to greener pastures and most likely also, lack of surviving male children in the respective lineage.

3. Characteristics of Native Frafra Religious Mediums

3.1. Earthenware-Constructed Mediums and the Respective Ages of Care Takers

Family	Age of care taker	Style of construction	Special features	Parallel function	Condition & Maintenance culture
Atulbabise	65 years	3-4feet high Conical	6 th generation one in grey colour, youngest one in brown	incubatory	All round cemented
Tanzui	76years	Graduation in height ranging from 1-4 feet	Equal height of 4 feet conical	Restricted hole access to poultry	Bare floor with surrounding stones Uncovered potsherd
Zaare	60 years	Dwarf-high of about 1 foot	Gentle vault without potsherd	Small hole likely to host reptiles	Deplorable with stuttered bases and roofs
Tindommologo	59 years	Very tall silo-like shapes	Top parts and base well-fortified with stones	Sizable entry for average hen hatchery	Well-kept with regular maintenance
Soe	61 years	2-3ft with steep roof	Lots of feathers stuck to the top parts	Limited entry access to fowls.	Lacking maintenance, some parts giving way, near damage
Dorungo	63 years	About 1½ft tall	Conical and rounded base	Partial sat on during family meetings	Bare floor, prone to erosion and other hazards
Kumbosigo	59 years	Very tall to human waist	Stains of blood stuck with fluffy feathers	Suitable for use by fowls	Not well renovated, partial cracks
Gumbisi	58 years	Shot in nature with belly-base	Earthenware potsherds	Restricted entrance for hens and chicks	Well-fortified roofs. Elevated pedestal on veranda

Table 1: Characteristics of Mud-Constructed Mediums and State of Condition

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2018)

Findings indicate that the family heads who are now in charge of the ritual performance, maintenance and sustenance of the mediums are above the ages of 60 years and do not have interested youngsters understudying them in preparation to succeed them.

3.2. Aesthetic Qualities of the Religious Abodes

Aesthetically, the mud-constructed abodes are built to take the shape of silos (see figure 1 A & D). They are conical in shape; broad at the bottom and narrow up to form an enclosed vault at the top. In most of the designs, a small hole with the size of an average hen is created at the bottom of the conical structure. The roofs were found in some households were crowned with potsherds made of either metal bowls or twisted ropes to serve as their distinctive status. The philosophy behind the conical shape, according to an 82-year-old man at Pubaga is that, the spirits of the ancestors being revered are believed to inhabit in the hollow part of the structure. Where the crown an abode of a particular ancestor is made of twisted raffia and skulls of wild animals, the person was perceived as a hero in the family and was always sacrificed with the plumpest animal during libation. The beauty of the Silo-style altars is comparable to the ancient Nubian Vaults and also the Wa Naa's Palace of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The plastering technique is also characteristic of the typical Northern architectural plastering method.

Again, on the aesthetic quality of the Bakolog accessories in figure 3, there is commendable craftsmanship in the construction of the flywhisk and the quivers that serve as container for the divination act. Accessories like cowries have been tucked linearly in a systematic pattern thereby appealing to the eye. It is believed that while some of the unique make-ups offer the soothsayers some clues of themes at stake, others are meant to invoke the presence of oracles for charming incantations. There are also those that contain potions for blindfolding the solution-seekers to be inspired by the practice. Following the demise of the family head, the next of kin declined to inherit the gods. They were therefore discarded along the Bolga –Navrongo high way. Again refer to figure 3 above.

The huge Baobabs and other savanna trees are most often adorned with strips of calico to signify its status among the other trees. In most cases, the baobabs vegetate and bear fruits at some time within the season and the swinging oval pods create very artistic feature as they interact with wind and leaves. As the season goes lean when the fruit mature a bit, yet in green state, the indigines go plucking them to roast and cheat as vegetable source. The greeny leaves are hereby not spared as some women do not only admire but harvest them into their popular straw-woven basket to exchange them to for other unavailable ingredience at neighbouring marketing centres. One significant part of the gaiant trees worth mention is the cave-like hollow spaces that occur as a result of stem expansion over time. This part of the shrine-tree in most places serve as habitats for the mentally insane who loitre around the towns and villages.

3.3. The Characteristics of Shrine Groves and Other Non-Constructed Medium

Family	No of shrines (Baobab & Groove)	Special features	Parallel function	Condition & Maintenance culture
Atulbabise	1	Large baobab tree	People playing cards under	Savanna tree species. Calico strip rapped round the stem
Tanzui	4	Huge Baobab and other savanna trees	Animals found resting under	Savanna tree species felled for fire wood
Zaare	3	Cluster of neem trees and raffia palm	Open place for defecation	Full of fecal matter and rubbish Prone to wild fire
Tindonmolgo	3	Stream-like stretch of vegetation	Aquatic life conservation	Appears natural, minimal destruction of vegetation
Soe	4	Rocky highland with Baobab and savanna tree species	In accessible to human pleasure	Prone to wild fire. No protective fire belts.
Dorungo	4	Cluster of Baobab around a pond	Storm uprooted some trees, reptile infested	No fire protection, felling for fire wood
Kumbosigo	3	Groove of green foliage	Suitable for picnic	Very clear under, shady and cool
Gumbisi	2	Large baobab trees	Community cemetery	Clear and accessible by humans

Table 2: Characteristics of Shrine-Groves and Baobab Tree- Mediums and of Condition
Source: Researcher's Field Work (2018)

The table above shows the condition of the sacred grooves which in the past were well protected and revered as goddess of the earth in line with the beliefs of the people but are not in shambles following the urbanization. It is in few cases that the places are still preserved and used for the purposed they were meant. This calls for a deeper inquiry into the

prospects to revamp not only the religious needs but to possibly boost traditional tourism. We shall not shift our attention to foreign religions and their state in the municipality.

4. Categorization of Foreign Religious Bodies

Within the municipality, a total of 74 church outlets namely Orthodox, Pentecostal, Spiritual etc. were identified. The populous ones were the Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, Fountain Gate, Pentecost, Church of Christ, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), Assemblies of God, Rock Foundation, Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, International Central Gospel Church, Evangelical Presbyterian, Church of God, Salvation Army, Jehovah Witness and Others (Spiritual earth masters, e.g. Eckankar, Ananda Marga). There were 3 main Islamic religious bodies, identified as the Ahmadiyya Muslims, the Sunnis, and the Shia Muslims. They were dominant at slams, the Zongo communities and settlements noted for hosting hawkers, majority of whom hailed from neighbouring Muslim-dominated West African countries.

The paper classifies the religious bodies into three(3) main denominations as follows:

- Traditional worshipers (shrines, grooves and household mediums)
- Christian worshipers (all kinds of churches)
- Islamic religious worshipers (all kinds of Islamic religions)
- * If there are any other forms of religions, they will be addressed as such.

4.1. Distribution of Religious Mix among the Lineages in the Municipality

Lineage groupings	Names of Communities in the groups	No. of Churches in communities	No. of Mosques in communities	No. of Households (families)	Religious affiliation of households			
					No. of Christian families	No. of Islamic families	No. of Traditional Relig. fam	No. Practicing C+I+T
Group 1	Atulbabise, Bukere, Dapoortindongo	6	4	45	25	9	7	4
Group 2	Gumbisi, Pubago, Dagmio,	6	9	45	14	23	5	3
Group 3	kumbosigo, Duluku, Zuarungu	7	4	45	27	10	6	2
Group 4	Tindommologo, Tindasobligo, Sherigu,	7	3	45	21	13	8	3
Group 5	Sumbrungu, Kolibia, Anatim	5	2	45	27	9	8	1
Group 6	Dorungo, Yikine, Azinsim	5	3	45	24	10	9	2
Group 7	Zaare, Soe, Yorogo	6	3	45	24	7	10	2
Group 8	Tanzui, Zobisi, Sokabisi	5	3	45	23	6	13	3
Totals		47	31	360	185	87	66	20
Percentage		100%						
		60%	40%	100%	52%	24%	18%	6%

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Level of Religions Practice among the Indigenous Frafra Household
Source: Researcher's Field Work (2018)

5. Discussions

Before we discuss the results let us note that during the study, some families were discovered to have some members of their families practicing all the three (3) religions and were enumerated as such. The table above comprises 360 household family heads drawn from the 8 classified Frafra ethnic lineage groups were used to solicit the data on the religious affiliation to ascertain the level at which foreign religions have impacted on the Frafra indigenous religious culture. A total of 47 Christian outstations were identified within the indigenous settlements to be serving a total of 185 Christian families. Also, 31 community Mosques were enumerated, serving a total of 87 Muslim families. While only 66 families were in active practice of traditional religion, only 20 households had membership in all the four (4) religious bodies. That is a clear indication of the practice of syncretism (Akanlu (1986)

It is worthy to comment that the vastness of the gap between Christianity and Islamic religious practices among the indigenes is hinged on the immense educational development Christianity brought to the people. Quoting from the testimony of one of the informants, he noted that, the Notre Dame Seminary Secondary was the school through which all the siblings passed, and now, some have become workers who earn money while others have become Catholic priests. The analyses show in the table that the Tanzui-Zoe-Yorogo Communities have the highest number of traditional religious practitioners. This number also correlates with the number of surviving male religious practitioner above the ages of 70 years. The meaning here is that, considering the life expectancy, it is likely within the next few decades when these over 60-year-old men pass on, there will be no body to inherit.

If a total of 66 household family heads out of the 360 families representing 18% are into full traditional worship as against 185 families representing 51%, in Christianity and 87 families representing 24% in Islamic religion, then it means the rate at which traditional religion among the people is endangered and likely to be consumed by the other religions in the few decades to come (Kottak, 2000). Only 20 families representing 6% are syncretic worshipers and appears very insignificant to appreciate over the near future. Group 3 comprising Gumbisi, Pubaga and Dagmio recorded the highest number of Mosques (9) with relative number of Muslim families (23) out of 87 families. This is no surprise due to the fact that the central Mosque is located in that area, and is also dominated by strangers of the Islamic background. The social interaction has therefore instigated the indigenes to adapt to the religion in order to enjoy smooth assimilation

6. The Impact of Christo-Islamic Religion on the Frafra Traditional Religion

6.1. Decline in Traditional Worship and Courses

Among the household members where these religious mediums were inspected, 76% (52% +24%) of the population had converted from traditional religion to either Christianity or Islamic religion. In that case, while the Christians took their worship sessions in chapels, the Muslims also had the prayers in mosques located at strategic spots in the communities. Stephen Abudama and his four other siblings preferred to be known by their Christian names instead of their traditional names. They attributed their dislike for the practice of the traditional religion and maintenance of the abodes to the stringent economic and moral demands of the religion.

They lamented that traditional religion requires a restricted channel of communication (that is the channel to make a sacrifice) which they could not honour - that before one could offer any sacrifice, he needs to be 'pure' and none of them could guarantee any form of personal purity; also that one must mention the names of the ancestors according to their hierarchy, out of which if an error of slip of tongue occurs, one is likely to incur the displeasure of the gods, that can lead to cascading deaths in the family. Also, that, the sacrifice requires customized domestic animals and birds such as bulls, rams, he-goats, fowls and pigeons and they could not afford. They hinted that anytime they slaughter any animal suspected to be a sacrifice to the shrine, none of their Christian friends would agree to share in the meals with them. One of the younger brothers who is a deacon at the Holy Ghost Assemblies of God church expressed fear of demotion in rank, should his pastor hear that he indulges in syncretism. Some other indigenous families have had their third generations being converted to Muslim and intern.

According to Awolalu (1979) Christianity limits the number of wives to one which goes to affect the number of Christian population over the years; based on this assertion another household head who spoke on anonymity had himself and the children also returning to Christianity just to avoid multiple marriage as one reason and avoiding parenting many children that comes with polygamy. This angle was opined by Konrad in his argument that in polygamous homes, the wealthiest man is that household man with many wives and children. Here, the women tend to compete in child bearing with the husband in order to secure the prestige of fertility and human wealth to make the husband great. It has also been confirmed by Konrad that Islam permits polygamy for the purposes of populating the Muslimdom

6.2. Changes in Architectural Designing of the Households:

Modernity has had influence on the architectural make-up of the altars. Wealthy families that are able to put up a semi-modern block houses would raise a veranda and mount the altars on it with minimal height. In that case of modern self-contained and compound houses, the architectural designing does not cater for the construction of peripheral structures such as ritual buildings as was done in the traditional setting. Comparing the figures below, one would agree that the future of the altar in figure 4 is prone to destruction by stray moving vehicles and threatened by neglect while that of figure 3 is secured with solid veranda.



Figure 3: Altars on Elevated Pedestal (Veranda)
Due to Changes in Architecture Design
Source: Researcher's Field Work 2017



*Figure 4: Altars on the Bear Floor.
Due to Changes in Architecture Design Source
Source: Researcher's Field Work 2017*

6.3. Migration to Greener Pastures

During the verbal interview, some respondents indicated that the state of the mediums and the practice were declining as a result of the migration of members of the family to different locations in and outside the country on educational occupation. The search for jobs outside the municipality does not permit them to maintain the mediums and also take part in the worship. Adongo, a first-born child of the father who is a teacher by profession in the Kintampo South District and now a Christian explained that he could not have transported his father's shrine from Bolga to his new place since the custodians of the land would not permit. He also added that, he was unable to frequently travel back home to give attention to the gods in terms of maintenance and sacrificing due to distance and the tight schedules at his work place. These few reasons, in replication to the wider population of indigenous Frafra in diaspora go to explain why the continuity of native religion is being faced out.

6.4. Lack of Surviving Male Children in the Lineage

The study also found some of the families to have lost all male children of the family who would have inherited the maintenance and continuity of the worship. Narrating her version on the matter, Mma Adompoka, a 77-year old woman who lives together with four other widows explained that, the Frafra tradition does not permit females to perform ritual sacrifices and therefore cannot continue the practice. They lamented that, all their male siblings did not bring forth to male offspring resulting in their coming back from their matrimonial homes to keep the house alive. They added that for fear of being at the mercy of evil spirits and other life forces, they opted to seek refuge in the Catholic Church with the hope that Jesus would protect and unite them with their departed families when they die.



*Figure 5: Neglected Altars of Diseased Family Heads
Source: Researcher's Field Work 2017*

According to Mr. Ayandoo a 66-year-old retired teacher, it seems Christianity is a movement with so many programmes of activities, each asking for monetary commitment (Ayandoo, 2016). Being the eldest son of the father, he practices traditional religion. He inherited the father after his demise in 2013. Despite that he has put up a modern block apartment in which he lives, he has made room for the traditional structures to cater for the ruminants and poultry which he uses for the ritual sacrifices. He has also maintained a constant rehabilitation of the altars, each one crowned with galvanized bowls which in the past used to be potsherd (Rattray, 1932). Figure 7(a & c from left) shows the position and state of the altars and domestic animals pens in the compound house setting.



Figure 6: From Left to Right, Altars of a Surviving Family Heads Indicating Their Physical Appearance
Source: Researcher's Field Work 2017



. Figure 7: A Staunch Catholic Poses for a Picture In Front of the Elder-Brother's Inherited Religious towers
Source: Researcher's Field Work 2017

7. Discussing on the implications of religious pluralism on Frafra religious culture

7.1. Religious 'Intersectionism'

The peaceful atmosphere prevailing in the traditional area has made it a Municipality of convergence of different cultures with conspicuous adaptation of a hybridcultural ideals in fashion and general adornment. The Bolgatanga Municipality, having encountered Catholicism since 1908 (Akanlu, 1986) is in no doubt of its traditional religion being influenced. The most profound cultural transformation is visible in religious syncretism where indigenous compounds host multiples of religious believers crisscrossing and participating in one-another's religious events without restrictions.

There is also a blend of indigenous and borrowed Christian/Islamic beliefs where the indigenous people can be found exhibiting the ideals pertaining to each at every point in time. It has also become common to find Baobab trees that are branded as shrines wearing strips of calico fabrics at the trunk as a sign of identification. The images above show an empirical evidence of some of the mud-tower-shrines wearing metallic cups - some made of discarded galvanized bowls and buckets, instead of the traditional earthen-wares and skulls of wild animals. Cement is now the most suitable building material for plastering the mud-modelled religious tower mediums to show distinction among a cluster, guarantee durability and also to enhance aesthetics.

7.2. Religious Interdependence

Once again like any other ethnic group in West Africa, the Frafras have a belief that life on earth here is inevitable and interminable no matter how long a person may live. So regardless of their religious affiliation, the indigenes still hold on to the communal solidarity to funeral and social performances where there is massive attendance. In such occasions, there is no discrimination and shun of one another. The religious culture in respect to funerals, intermarriage and social events of the indigenous people in the municipality is becoming what I term as Chris-Mus-Tradit. "A culture of religious interdependence". Figure 10 is a diagram illustrating how the three religions intersect at a point.

The other binding factor of the people is the culture of unrestricted inter-marriage amongst the indigenes and strangers as well, regardless of religious affiliation. It simply means that intermarriage and death (funeral for that matter) are the binding factor of the indigenous people where they participate and adorn in the traditional costume. One would then describe this kind of society as Chris-mu-dominant because Christians and dominating followed by Muslims and finally Traditionalists. Figure 9 and 10 show the diagrams describing the nature of the traditional society and household setup.

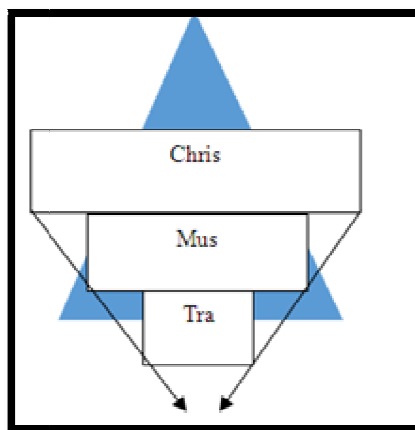


Figure 8: A Diagram of Chris-Mus-Dominant Society

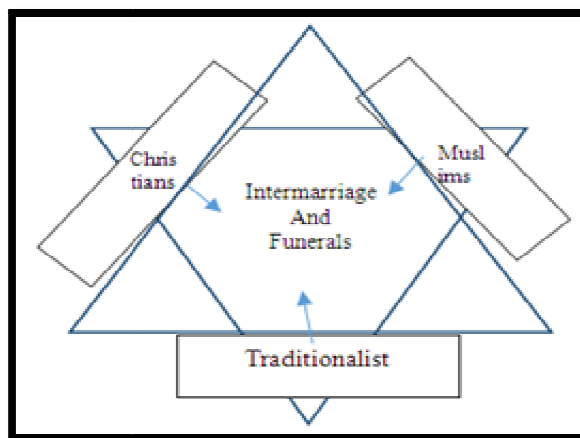


Figure 9: A Diagram of Chris-Mu-Tradit Household

Figure 9 shows the dominance of Christianity over Islamic religion and the traditional religion. The diagram also shows the size distinction and how possibly the two dominant religions will swallow up traditional religion. The movements of the arrows are pointing at a common spot of convergence in the near future. If the prospects of traditional religion are anything to go by, the fact that Christianity offers a more flexible and enticing package will make the people to face it out with time.

7.3. Economic Implication

The indigenous ruminant and poultry farming where specific coloured domestic animals and fowls were cherished and bread for the purposes of sacrifice have dropped to the barest minimum and such farmers are now rearing for the once-in-a-blue-moon consumption. The inverse advantage however, is the scramble for space among the religious bodies to build chapels here and there. The custodians of the land regulated by the Office of Traditional Council and the land-tenure holders are harvesting a lot of money from the sale of the smallest piece of land within the municipality (Office of the Administrator of Stool Land, 2018).

The population growth and the opening of suburb markets have equally boosted the traditional straw basket and hut weaving craft for consumption by the market women and export with the support of the Ghana Export Promotion Council. It is also evident that the Catholic missionaries also established educational and health institutions which most of the indigenous people are employed as cleaners, security guards, cooks and other categories of supporting staff (Palmer-Buckle, 2011). The Islamic missionaries have also established some institutions that offer job opportunities to the indigenes (Ahammaiyya Mission, 2018)

It is unfortunate that the religious medium that were produced in wood, bone, mud and other perishable materials have long been lost and the few left cannot be preserved and used as source of domestic tourism. Constructors of the towers of conical ritual abodes are out of job and the skill of that kind of architectural technology will be lost in posterity. The area has lost its traditional architectural culture following the adoption of the modern detached, semi-detached, and compound houses that do not make room for ritual needs.

7.4. Threat of Extinction of Frafra Traditional Religion

The Frafra indigenous traditional Bakolgo (divination) and the Abagre (worship abodes) in the forms of groves shrines, towers, rocks, animalistic objects etc. are facing desecration and deteriorating conditions coupled with reluctance

in inheriting for the sustenance of the religious cultural practice. The several sacred groves that served as shrines at every suburb within the municipality and geographically provided vegetative cover for rainfall (Oleoje, 1976) have now been encroached by individuals and developed into residential estates and all kinds of religious and social structures.

8. Conclusion

There are two scenarios of indigenous perceptions to religions in the municipality, whereas majority of families see religious tolerance as a needy tool for cosmopolitan peace and development and see nothing wrong to lose the religious tradition and to adapt to the foreign ones, there are a few diminishing population who are in-fact at their advance ages who hold firm the religious tradition. The future of the traditional religion is therefore endangered by the rate of defection from the traditional region. The swiftness of Christian and Islamic denominations to initiate new converts coupled with modernity and urbanization does not give room for the possible future resuscitation of traditional religion. The religious mix has also brought about a new religious cultural dynamism among the indigenes making the study to term the indigenous population as Chris-Mu-dominant who now live as a Chris-Mu-Tradit society.

9. Recommendation

For the purposes of reconciling mankind with nature for guaranteed rainfall and conducive atmosphere, the study recommends that the ongoing depletion of the sacred groves should cease with immediate effect. The groves which formed the conspicuous part of the savanna vegetation (Dickson & Benneh, 1970, 1988 and 2004) and were protected under the Frafra traditional religion by taboos as shrines (Rattray, 1932) are being converted into parcels of building plots for housing. Today, the giant Baobab trees species which served as sources of shade and vegetable aside the spiritual protection are getting extinct day by day as a result of unchecked erosion around them, although some may be out of age. If the indigenous people have found suitable alternative religious that guarantees better remuneration to their spiritual and physical needs to the neglect of their native religion, it could equally be of great economic value to find ways to preserve and repackage the skill of performance and ritual production into a museum to generate income. This would also go a long way to promote their intangible religious culture.

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