

CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
School of Graduate Studies

THESIS

**MONO-ETHNIC CHURCHES IN THE ASHANTI
REGION OF GHANA: AN ASSESSMENT OF GROWTH
OF THE FRAFRA COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCHES
OF THE GHANA BAPTIST CONVENTION: 1993-2013**

BY

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JULY, 2015.

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CONVENTION: 1993-2013**

BY

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of Theology, Christian Service University
College, in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in
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DECLARATION

I, Mark Nso-Yine do hereby declare that this thesis dissertation project report is the result of my own original research except for section for which references have been duly made and to the best of my knowledge no part of it has been presented to this university college or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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DEDICATION

To my lovely wife Mrs. Elizabeth Nso-Yine and my lovely children Elvis Nso-Yine, Joyceline Nso-Yine, Christiana Nso-Yine, Stella Nso-Yine and Josephine Nso-Yine, and not forgetting my church, Eternal Life Baptist Church, Anyano-Kumasi for their support, both financially and spiritually. May God richly bless you all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GBC – Ghana Baptist Convention

GBM – Ghana Baptist Mission

NBC – Nigerian Baptist Convention

FCF – Frafra Christian Fellowship

KNUST – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

WEC – Worldwide Evangelization for Crusade

ECG – Evangelical Church of Ghana

M/A – Metropolitan Assembly

ABSTRACT

The study examined the concept of mono-ethnic churches in the Ashanti Region: An Assessment of Growth of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention. It is based on the hypothesis that mono-ethnic churches are not entities for promoting tribalism, but rather an avenue for indigenous people to express themselves relevantly in the worship of God. From an initial small beginning of one church the Frafra Community Baptist Church Movement has grown numerically, organically and incarnationally as evidenced by the nineteen branches which have been established and chapels constructed. Through interviews and participant observation, the study found out that the achievements so far realized have been made possible through the hardwork and dedication of committed leadership, and prudent administrative and spiritual measures which have been put in place. These include opportunity that is given to the members to worship within their cultural setting, and a holistic ministry which is geared towards meeting the needs of the vulnerable. The study concludes that the mono-ethnic church movement in Southern Ghana is a viable option as it enables indigenous people to respond to Jesus by themselves and appreciate him in their own socio-cultural and political environment.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The concept of evangelistic targeting is built into the Great Commission. The church is to make disciples of “all nations” including all people groups, ethnic entities as implied in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). All people groups need an evangelistic strategy that communicates the gospel in terms that are specific to their cultural environment. The story of the early church gives impetus to Jesus’ command to his disciples, as the early believers took the gospel beyond their immediate environment into Roman and Greek communities. No wonder they made a great impact on the world of their time.

The word “missio” comes from a Latin word “mission” which means “to send”. According to Dennis J’ Mock, “The mission of the church is to glorify God by bringing people to and building them up in Christ”.¹

The history of the Baptist Church in Ghana indicates that “the Ghana Baptist Convention was associated with the Nigeria Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention of U.S.A”.² Nigerian Baptist brethren came to Ghana (formerly known as Gold Coast) to trade in the early part of the 20th century. These Yoruba Baptist traders later grouped themselves to start Baptist churches in Ghana. In 1947 the Yoruba Baptist Association in Ghana (which was formed in 1935) made an appeal to both Nigeria Baptist Convention and Nigeria Baptist Mission to send some missionaries to start Baptist Churches among the Ghanaians because the Yoruba Baptist Churches were failing to attract Ghanaians into their fold since Yoruba

¹ J. Dennis Mock, *Missions. Evangelism. Discipleship* (Georgia: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 20.

² Kojo Amo, *Baptist History and Polity/Practice*, 1998.

language was used in all their worship services.³ In response to the request the Nigerian Baptist sent Rev. and Mrs. Littleton to Ghana in 1947 to start Baptist Churches among the indigenous people. In 1963 the Nigerian Baptist Convention granted the Ghana Baptist Conference independence. The Baptist Conference was renamed the Ghana Baptist Convention.

The vision of the Ghana Baptist Convention is “to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ”, and the mission is “to lead Ghana Baptist Convention Churches to evangelize the lost, disciples believers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, plant churches, train leaders and minister to the spiritual and socio-economic needs of the believers”.⁴

In 1995, a *Southern Baptist Convention Global Report* stated that about 2.5 billion people had had little opportunity to hear the gospel witness in a culturally appropriate format.⁵ The report further revealed that the above figure represented more than 2400 ethno-linguistic groups and that 200 of those groups had a population of over one million. It also revealed that 96% of these groups were found in a single geographical region referred to as the 10/40 widow”.⁶ Ghana in West Africa with over 50 distinct languages fall within this 10/40 widow.

In 1993, the Ghana Evangelism Committee conducted a National Church Survey termed “*Facing the Unfinished Task of the Church in Ghana*”. The report drew attention to a vast, neglected “mission field”. The report further stated that over two million people of Northern and West African tribal origin were living in the seven southern regions of Ghana. The report also referred to the northern and alien people in the seven southern regions as a “hidden mission field”. Thus despite their numbers,

³ The Nigerian Baptist Mission is made up of only Southern Baptist Missionaries working in Nigeria.

⁴ Ghana Baptist Convention, Constitution, *Standing Orders, Procedures and Guidelines* 2013, 11.

⁵ Southern Baptist Convention, *Global Research, Annual Report* (Foreign Missions Board, 1995), 98.

⁶ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *National Church Survey: Facing the unfinished Task of the Church in Ghana*, 1993.

the southern churches had failed to take note of them and had not developed an effective missionary or evangelistic strategy to reach them.

Some southern churches responded to the challenge posed to them by the report and began planting mono-ethnic churches among these immigrants living in the south. These include the Methodist Church, Ghana; Evangelical Church of Ghana; Presbyterian Church of Ghana; the Ghana Baptist Convention and the Church of Pentecost.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The word “church” is a translation of the Greek word “*ekklesia*” which literally means the called out ones. It is used in Scripture to refer to the Christian community of believers, both in heaven and on earth (Hebrew 12:23; Revelation 1:”11). “Church planting therefore refers to the process of bringing together a group of like-minded professing believers to establish a new local church.”⁷ Mono-ethnic church planting is simply establishing a single language congregation where the people can culturally express themselves in the worship of God.

This study seeks to make an assessment of mono-ethnic churches in the Ashanti Region to establish whether they are viable Christian entities with capacity for growth. The Frafra community has the highest number of churches and the largest congregation in the Ashanti Region. The study has therefore chosen to dwell on the Frafra Community Baptist Churches in Ashanti since 1993.

There has been a debate among the Christian community concerning the planting of mono-ethnic churches. While others argue that mono-ethnic church planting is a promotion of tribalism among the Christian community, others think otherwise. Again

⁷ Mock, *Missions. Evangelism. Discipleship*, 3.

while other mono-ethnic churches are growing, others have become static and others have even died out. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the nature of these mono-ethnic churches to find out whether they have a capacity for growth.

1.3 Research Questions

- (i) What constitutes mono-ethnic church?
- (ii) Are mono-ethnic churches viable Christian entities with the capacity for growth numerically, organically, conceptually and incarnationally?
- (iii) Are there deficiencies in mono-ethnic churches?

1.4 Research Objectives

- (i) The main objective of the study is to examine the viability of mono-ethnic churches, whether they have the potential for growth.
- (ii) The study also seeks to analyze their growth numerically, organically, conceptually and incarnationally.
- (iii) To recommend remedies for deficiencies that may be identified.

1.5 Scope of the Research

The scope of the research centres on the Ashanti Region. Specifically, it focuses on the Frafra Community Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention. The study is also limited to a period of two decades, between 1993 and 2013.

1.6 Methodology

A multi-faceted approach was adopted for this study. It is essentially a phenomenological study which employs historical, sociological and theological approaches. The quantitative approach was employed to assess the numerical growth.

Secondary source materials that shed light on the study have been used. These materials addressed historical or theological issues that have a bearing on the area of study.

The historical approach was used to examine the historical background of the mono-ethnic churches, with particular reference to their emergence and key events and personalities associated with them. Since the study seeks to examine the organic growth of the mono-ethnic churches, the researcher also used the sociological approach to analyze the nature of fellowship that exists among the members and their outreach ministry to outsiders which is the incarnational growth.

1.7 Methods of Data Collection

The study employed both primary and secondary sources that are relevant. The primary method involved interviews with key personalities who have relevant information for the study. Again, with regards to secondary source, publications such as books, journals, newsletters, church officials records, and electronic sources such as the internet were used.

1.8 Literature Review

According to Ken Gnanakan, the Bible is central to the role the church plays in mission. In his view, the mission of Israel gives us ample evidence that God uses His people to fulfill His purposes. By electing Israel, God established that He would work through a particular group of people to reveal His mission to the whole world. He concludes that it is the church that carries responsibility for God's kingdom mission.⁸

In view of the author, the church is the instrument of God in carrying out His purposes in the world. It therefore presupposes that God's agenda for the world

⁸ Ken Gnanakan, *Kingdom Concerns: A Theological of Mission Today* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 201.

largely depends on how the church carries out the mandate for mission. The church must therefore position itself in such a way effectively discharge its divine mandate. This study seeks to examine how the divine mandate has been carried out or is being carried out within the Frafra Community Baptist Church.

Bruce Nicholls maintains that, the gospel was revealed by command of the eternal God for one specific purpose; to bring peoples of all nations to obey the faith.⁹ Nicholls seems to suggest that the gospel is a divine command for the church. The mandate of the church is to make it known to peoples of all nations. Therefore, God can only make Himself known through the church in the contexts of evangelism, missions and discipleship. This is significant for the study which is examining the church's mission mandate in the context of mono-ethnic church planting.

Roy Pointer also maintains that, the Bible is the soil from which all Christian faith grows. It is the source of Christian doctrine and the manual of Christian practice. He adds that throughout two thousand years of church history the Bible has constantly reminded the church of her distinctive message and mission. He concludes that, throughout its history, the Christian church has used the Bible as main instrument of its evangelistic activity.¹⁰

According to the author, the church's mandate of proclaiming the gospel is derived from the Bible. The church's message and mission is shaped by its adherence to the biblical mandate. Hence the need to examine the biblical or theological basis of mono-ethnic church planting.

According to John Stott, the word mission concerns God's redeemed people and what He sends them into the world to do. He asserts that conversion must not take the

⁹ Bruce J. Nichols, *The Church: God's Agent for Change* (Cape Town: The Paternoster Press, 1986), 124.

¹⁰ Roy Pointer, *How do Churches Grow?* (Hants: Marshalls, 1984), 62.

convert out of the world but rather send him back into it, it is the same person in the world, and yet a new person with new convictions and new standards. Stott concludes that if Jesus' first command was "come", his second was "go" and that is, we are to go back into the world (out of which we came) as Christ's ambassadors.¹¹

The view of Stott underscores the meaning and purpose of mission. However, he does not disclose how the task is to be carried out. The task in this study is to ascertain how the gospel can be extended to people of every culture using the Frafra as a cultural paradigm.

David Bosch is of the view that mission describes the total task which God has set the church for the salvation of the world. For Bosch the salvation of the world is the task of the church and this involves the communication of the gospel to people of all cultural backgrounds.¹²

1.8.1 Gospel and Culture

Omenyo, citing Busia, says that "those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian gospel in other lands and cultures have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for an encounter between the Christian religion and the cosmology of the people outside European culture and traditions. He concludes that "it is this which has made Christianity either alien or superficial or both".¹³ This assertion seem to imply that the early gospel preachers or missionaries in Africa failed to recognize the local culture of the African people, and which made the new religion of Christianity, alien to them. But this might not be the case now. Christianity is no

¹¹ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Falcon, 1975), 19.

¹²David Bosch, *Witness to the World* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Stott, 1980), 17.

¹³ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism* (Uitgeverji, Boekencentrum: Zoetemeer, 2002), 1.

longer alien to the African. However there is the need to examine the medium and methods communicate of the gospel and make it more relevant to the local people.

According to Kwame Bediako, African Christians, in the early missionary enterprise in Africa, came to the realization that they had been cut off from their own past and denied a continuity within their respective African ethnic identities.¹⁴ This assertion by Bediako suggests that the gospel that was communicated to the African people did not find meaning with them. Therefore, the gospel can only make the needed impact if it is communicated within the cultural milieu of the indigenous people. This is the basis for the mono-ethnic church planting movement which this study is set to examine.

Andrew Walls is of the view that conversion to Christ does not isolate the convert from his community, rather it begins the conversion of that community.¹⁵ For Walls, the African Christian does not live his life in isolation. His life is to be lived in the context of the community. This study examines how the gospel can affect the values and norms of the Frafra people group.

1.8.2 Mono-Ethnic Church Planting

The English word “ethnic” is derived from the Greek word “ethnos” which means “people group”. According to Dennis Mock the word “ethnos” is translated as nation, people, heathen and Gentile. The word “ethnic” refers to nations, people, heathen and Gentile, and that culture is what has divided people into groups in the world.¹⁶ Thus, the Great Commission which mandates Christians to preach the gospel to all nations

¹⁴ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: A Renewal of a non-Western Religion* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 237.

¹⁵ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Mary Knoll N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), 51.

¹⁶ Mock, *Missions. Evangelism. Discipleship*, 41-47.

is not referring to political nations but people of this world according to their culture or identities.

“Mono-ethnic church planting is, therefore, reaching a people group with the gospel of Jesus Christ and planting a church (congregation) where they can culturally express themselves in Worship”.¹⁷

“The practice of targeting specific kind of people for evangelism is a biblical principle for ministry”.¹⁸ According to Rick Warren, Jesus targeted His ministry in order to be effective and not to be exclusive. Warren explains that the Canaanite woman asked Jesus to minister to her demon-possessed daughter and that Jesus publicly stated that the Father had told Him to focus on “the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:22-28).

Jesus went ahead and healed the Canaanite woman’s daughter because of her faith. He publicly identified His ministry target as the Jews. Warren explains that Jesus was not being unfair rather he targeted His ministry in order to be effective.

Even though, Jesus’ ministry was for the Jews described by Matthew as the “lost tribe of Israel”, Luke on the other hand sees Jesus’ ministry as universal in scope. Thus Jesus presupposes that missions that is targeted is not one of prejudice but is meant for effectiveness, with emphasis on “one at a time basis”.

Rick Warren also mentions that “one of the major barriers to church growth is people blindness”.¹⁹ He pointed out that “understanding the demographics of your community is important, but understanding the culture of your community is even more important”.²⁰ Warren makes it clear that, “no missionary to a foreign land would

¹⁷ Mock, *Missions. Evangelism. Discipleship*, 42.

¹⁸ Warren, Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Michigan: Thomson Press, 1995), 158-165.

¹⁹ Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 165.

²⁰ Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 158.

be foolish not to do so”.²¹ Some Christians are against the idea of mono-ethnic church planting. Their argument is that it promotes tribalism. For instance, Rev. Dr. Kingsley Onyina, in his address at the Baptist Ministers Conference at Ejura, mentioned that he is not in support of the idea of mono-ethnic church planting. His reasons were that it can lead to division in the church, citing the Rwandan ethnic conflict that arose between Tsutsis and the Hutus in 1994. Mono-ethnic church planting has the potential of becoming tribalistic if proper measures are not put in place. However it must be noted that mono-ethnic church planting is biblical and must be pursued.

Sometimes Christians have been tempted to look for a form of the gospel which is above all cultures. This is the position of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Thomas Aquinas, who see Christ as the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and restorer of the institution of true society. “Some people have tried to find this super-culture in the Bible. However, the New Testament itself is a multi-cultural model and offers no example of a super culture mode of the gospel.”²²

According to Bowen,

“Peter (and the faith which Peter held) needed to receive the strange culture of the Gentile Cornelius equally as much as Cornelius needed to receive the faith of Peter. That the event of Acts chapter 10 gives a message to the evangelized (Cornelius) and the church at that time was humble enough to recognize its master’s voice when He spoken from another culture. The church was humble enough to reflect on its own message in the light of this encounter with “otherness” and even rethink the way it expressed its own message in the light of this encounter”.²³

“Inculturation” according to Bowen is the process of rethinking. It means stating the message of salvation in a different way and describing Christian life and doctrine in

²¹ Brown Roger, *So I Send You* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 92.

²² Roger, *So I Send You*, 92.

²³ Roger, *So I Send You*, 92.

the thought patterns of different people. The aim of inculturation is to make Christianity feel truly at home in the culture of each people. Bowen gave four principles of inculturation as follows: “One, the message must be relevant to the cultural context. Two, the message must be stated simply, three, the message must be in a language familiar to the people.”²⁴ On the day of Pentecost the people who gathered there were amazed when they heard the word of God in their own native language. This means that the gospel can make the needed impact if it is presented in the language and cultural distinctive of the people.

Wilbur O’ Donovan argues that “the Bible uses several words to describe a person’s cultural origin”. He points out that in Revelation 7:9, a great multitude of people is described as coming from “every nation” tribe, people and language.²⁵

In his argument, Donovan compared the popular use of the word “nation” with the biblical use of it. He explained that the popular use of the word “nation” refers to the different political countries of the world, that in 1980, the United Nations recognized 223 such nations which change from year to year. He explained that these divisions usually had little to do with the way people of an area grouped themselves together by language and cultural similarities. Those political borders are usually drawn without considering the cultural similarities or differences of people concerned. As a result, many countries of the world consist of more than one culture or language. O’Donovan explains further that in Africa the Maasai people are found in Senegal, Mali, Guinea and some other countries.

²⁴ Roger, *So I Send You*, 92.

²⁵ Donovan O’, Wilbur, *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective* (Carlisle the Paternoster Press, 2000), 266-268.

He further argued that “ethnic” is a word which means relating to racial, nation or cultural group. Thus, a nation (ethnos) according to the Bible is a particular ethnic group. That the biblical use of the word “nation” is different from the popular use of the word. God sees the human race as divided according to language and culture groups to which people belong. And that the human race developed into different language and culture groups through the descendants of the sons of Noah according to Genesis 10:4, 31-32. The Bible also says that at the Tower of Babel “the LORD confused the language of the whole world” (Genesis 11:1-9). From there they formed separate communities based on common language. It is reasonable to assume that each of these language groups developed their own patterns of culture, concludes O’Donovan. The lesson in Donovan’s argument is that a political nation may have many nations (biblical) within it. Because of this, evangelistic targeting can make sure that all the people groups within a particular nation (political) are reached, if they are to fully obey the Great Commission to reach all nations.

1.8.3 Church Growth

In their contribution to the discussion on church growth, Donald Anderson and others maintain that church growth is in the heart of God. Christian expansion does not begin with better methods or more money. Rather, it is a continuation of redemption in the heart of God from eternity, revealed in His Son. They conclude that when God lays hold of men and lives in them, He creates an atmosphere in which churches can grow, and inevitably grow. The first apostles spoke and acted from deep personal conviction, not from dogma or theory. Their individual experiences of Christ

produced a sense of personal responsibility which resulted in evangelism and church growth.²⁶

Roger Greenway has noted that authentic evangelism leads to church membership on the part of those who believe, and to church planting, and church growth wherever the gospel spreads. He adds that in the early church, it was assumed that all those who became Christians had chosen the life of discipleship, which involve discipline and training. The goal of this was the expansion of the kingdom of God in the world.²⁷ Church growth is a manifestation that God is at work in His church.

From this assertion of the author, it can be concluded that, any meaningful growth in the Kingdom of God, and for that matter, the church, largely depends on the church's evangelistic efforts. Therefore, as the church goes forth with the gospel, it tends to grow in membership. Through discipleship, the church can also grow qualitatively.

Peter Wagner is of the view that the Bible is in favour of church growth. He adds that evangelism is not only reaching people with the gospel message and bringing them to a decision for Christ, it is making them disciples. He concludes that commitment to Christ is somehow incomplete without a simultaneous commitment to the Body of Christ, the church.²⁸

According to Donald A. McGavran, the growth of the church is always brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit. He continues that, as in the New Testament Church, so today, the Holy Spirit leads, convicts of sin, builds up, selects missionaries and thrusts them out to ripened field The Holy Spirit therefore upbuilds the church,

²⁶ Donald Anderson, McGavran et al, *Church Growth and Christian Mission* (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1996), 2, 29.

²⁷ Roger Greenway, *Discipling the City: A Comprehensive Approach to Urban Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Bok House, 1992), 45, 47

²⁸ Peter C. Wagner, *Leading your Church to Grow* (London: MARC, 1984), 19, 21.

extends and nurtures it. The church is the channel through which He works. The Holy Spirit is the agent of church growth. As the church responds to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, growth is possible in every dimension of the church's life.

In view of the author, church growth is within the will of God. Therefore the church is called to position itself for growth in the context of reaching out to lost humanity and discipling those who make commitment to Christ. Therefore, evangelism and discipleship are key components of the church's growth.

1.9 Relevance of the Study

There is an Akan proverb which says that "the one constructing a road will never know what is happening behind him". This seems to suggest that there is the need to always look at the past as well as the present in order to strategize for moving forward into the future. Therefore the study is relevant for the following reasons:

Firstly, it will help the Frafra community Baptist churches to assess their growth, how far they have come within a certain period of time, the challenges that have cropped up and to come up with measures to enhance their activities.

Secondly, theological institutions offering courses in Church Growth and Missions will find the study useful in planning their curriculum.

Thirdly, other organizations such as Christian donor agencies that fund missionary activities will also benefit from the study because will assist them to determine the groups that warrant their support. And fourthly, missionaries working among other people-groups especially those involved in indigenous missions will also find the study useful.

1.10 Structure of the Work

The study report which examines the impact of mono-ethnic church movements within the Ghana Baptist Convention is divided into five chapters. It commences with the general introduction which is an overview of the study.

The second chapter examines a brief history of the Ghana Baptist Convention and its Missionary Enterprise. It also captures the history of mono-ethnic church planting in Ghana. Chapter three focuses on the background of the Frafra people and the establishment of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches from 1993 to 2013 while the fourth chapter is an assessment of the growth of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches in the Ashanti Region. Chapter five concludes the study and entails the summary of the study, conclusion and some recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

BRIEF HISTORY OF MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE OF THE GHANA BAPTIST CONVENTION

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter entailed an overview of the study project as general introduction. This chapter focuses on some background issues relating to the missionary endeavour of the Ghana Baptist Convention with particular reference to the Frafra Community Churches.

The Frafra Community Baptist Churches are members of the Ghana Baptist Convention. According to the constitution of the Ghana Baptist Convention, “The Convention shall consist of Baptist Churches which follow principles and practices approved by the constitution and which cooperate with and support the convention”.²⁹

The study would therefore take a look at the brief history and missionary enterprise of the Ghana Baptist Convention. It covers the beginning of Baptist Churches in Ghana the Yoruba Baptist period, the formation of the First Baptist Association and the beginning of indigenous work in Ghana. The Aliens Compliance Order and its effect on the Baptist Church growth are also discussed.

2.2 The Beginning of Baptist Work in Ghana

According to Richard Foli, the Board of Foreign Mission of the Southern Baptist Convention, which was formed at a meeting held on 20th February, 1846, chose West Africa as its mission field. It particularly chose Liberia, because it was peculiarly attractive, being motivated by the colonists (mostly Baptist) who had gone to that

²⁹ Ghana Baptist Convention Printed Draft Constitution, Standing Order, Procedures and Guidelines 2013, 121.

country from the Southern States of America. In the view of Foli, it was later on that the work of the Convention reached Ghana.³⁰

The first known Baptist work in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) was started by Rev. Mark C. Hayford. He was a son of a Methodist minister from Cape Coast. He worked as a civil servant in Lagos where he had contact with Baptists. He was converted and baptized. Later he received the call to preach and so he was ordained few years thereafter. He then returned to the Gold Coast now Ghana and established a Baptist Church and Mission.

Rev. Mark C. Hayford held an inaugural meeting of the Baptist Church and Mission at Cape Coast on March 24th 1898.

Thereafter he left for America. He caused quite a stir in America, winning confidence and getting financial support wherever he went. Laymen and ministers alike were impressed by the rhetoric and enthusiasm of this African. In 1902 he was back in Ghana and in 1904 the Baptist Church at Cape Coast was completed. Baptist work in Ghana expanded rather slowly.

According to Hayford's Year Book, Report of March 1913, besides making Cape Coast as his headquarters, he established Baptist Churches in Accra, Elmina, Saltpond, Axim-Tarkwa, Obuasi and Kumasi.³¹ His records in 1926 indicate that his work had extended to Atebubu in the north of Ghana and in the Ivory Coast now Cote d'Ivoire. The same record indicates that in all, he had forty-five (45) churches and over ten thousand (10,000) adherents. Rev. Mark Hayford died in 1935. Unfortunately

³⁰ Richard Foli, *Christianity in Ghana: A Comparative Church Growth Study* (Accra: Trust Publications, 2006), 34, 35.

³¹ J. A. Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 2006, 19.

as a result of his death, it seemed almost all his converts joined other churches or stopped attending the Baptist churches.³²

According to Rev. Dr. J. A. Boadi, present day Yoruba Churches in Accra and Cape Coast have relation with Rev. Hayford's Baptist Churches.³³ The Hayford family had legal rights to the church properties of Cape Coast and Accra First Baptist Church. On September 17, 1985, Dr. M. D. Hayford a medical doctor in Accra and a son of Late Rev. Mark C. Hayford generously donated his father's church property in Cape Coast to Cape Coast Baptist Church of the Ghana Baptist Convention.³⁴

2.2.1 Yoruba Baptist Churches in Ghana

Through trading Yorubas re-introduced Baptist Faith to Ghanaians after Rev. Mark C. Hayford's Baptist Ministry. Wherever the Yoruba traders (who were Baptists) settled they met on Sundays and Wednesday in court yards, rented garages, or buildings and worshiped. Two Yoruba Baptist men, Jacob Fami and Gabriel Oladele volunteered to visit these Yoruba Baptist Churches and taught and counseled them. By the 1920s there were a number of Yoruba Baptist Churches in Ghana in places like Sekondi, Cape Coast, Dunkwa-on-Offin and Kumasi.

First Baptist Church, Kumasi started in 1927, Suhum Baptist Church started in 1929, and others later in other place. As a result the need for baptism arose. Rev. Benjamin Laniyi, a Nigerian Baptist Pastor came to Gold Coast on 2nd December 1931 to baptize the candidates numbering 188 (Kumasi – 92, Dunkwa on-Offin 19, Obuasi – 9, Hunso – 28, Sekondi – 41). Rev. Laniyi returned in 1935 and baptized 171 candidates.

³² Foli, *Christianity in Ghana: A Comparative Church Growth Study*, 34, 35.

³³ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 20.

³⁴ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 20.

2.2.2 Yoruba Baptist Association

In 1935 Gabriel Olodelo and Jacob Fami with the approval of Rev. Laniyi, organized these Yoruba Baptist Churches into Yoruba Baptist Association. The first President of the Association was Joseph Idowu Olla, Vice President Toye Oguririnnu. The objective of the Association was for fellowship and co-operation to establish more churches. 1939, Rev. J. A. Andedrain of Ogbomosho, Nigeria came to assist the Association since they had no trained pastors. He gave leadership and guided the Association in their deliberations. In 1939 after an association meeting, Rev. Adediran visited the churches and baptized 498 believers who were all Yorubas. He came back to Ghana in 1945 and baptized 462 believers. In that same year, Baptist primary schools were started at Kumasi, Sekondi and Suhum. The Yoruba Baptist Churches at this time had been sending percentage of their tithes and offerings to Nigeria because they saw themselves as part of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Yorubas were not able to reach the Ghanaians because of cultural, social and language barriers. They held their services exclusively in Yoruba language. Ghanaians also did not like to associate themselves with the Yoruba Baptist Churches because of the term “Alatafo Asore” which Ghanaians used to call these Baptist Churches.

2.3 The Beginning of Indigenous Baptist Work

The year 1947 was a turning point in the history of Baptist Church in the Gold Coast, now Ghana. On February, 3, 1947, the Nigerian Baptist Convention sent Rev. J. A. Idowu with his family as a Field-Worker for the entire Yoruba Baptist Association in the Gold Coast.³⁵ Rev. Idowu and his family lived in Kumasi. He visited the churches, preached, engaged in missions and encouraged Yorubas to reach indigenous people

³⁵ Amo, *Baptist History and Polity/Practice*, 34.

with the Baptist Faith. On February 9, 1947, Mrs. Idowu organized the First Baptist Women's Missionary Union in First Baptist Church, Kumasi

Again, on February 17, 1947 Rev. H. R. Littleton and his family arrived in Kumasi to begin indigenous work in Ghana.³⁶ They volunteered to come from Nigeria with the approval of the Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, USA. In that year when the Association met in July in Sekondi its name was changed from Yoruba Baptist Association to Gold Coast Baptist Conference.³⁷ Rev. Idowu was elected President of the Conference until 1953 when he retired to Nigeria permanently. In 1952, the Littleton's with the help of Mr. J. Y. Tando, a hospital administrator in Kumasi, the first indigenous Baptist Church was established at Boaman.³⁸ In 1954, Mr. Adewole, a Yoruba Baptist and a teacher stationed at Amoam Achiase invited Rev. W. H. Mc Ginnis, a Baptist Missionary, to start Achiase Baptist Church.

2.3.1 Beginning of Indigenous Baptist Work in Northern Ghana

In 1949, Rev. Morgan and his family arrived in Ghana from U.S.A. to start indigenous Baptist work in the North.³⁹ They were stationed at Tamale. The Morgan's returned to U.S.A. in 1952 for good due to illness. Rev. MC Ginnis took over the work of the Morgans at Tamale to supervise the building of the mission house and teach the natives as well as to assist the Yoruba Baptist Churches in the area. On the 3rd December, 1953, Rev. and Mrs. D. C. Cather arrived in Ghana and they were stationed at Tamale. Before the arrival of the Cathers, there had been attempts made by the Yorubas and the Morgans to reach the natives. Rev. Adabawi, Pastor of Tamale First Baptist Church and two other Yoruba lay leaders, namely, Gabriel

³⁶ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 23.

³⁷ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 23.

³⁸ Amo, *Baptist History and Polity/Practice*, 37.

³⁹ Amo, *Baptist History and Polity/Practice*, 38.

Alasade and Gideon Adediran, who were fluent in the local Dagbani language had four (4) separate evangelistic teams working among the natives. Alasade and Alediran also served as interpreters for the missionaries who came to work in the North. In 1954, Rev. Cather formed a fifth evangelistic team and helped to establish Baptist churches among the indigenous people at Mogla, Walewale, Zuarungu, Sawla, Nandom and Damongo. In 1958 the first nine (9) Dagomba believers were baptized by Rev. D. C. Cather.

2.3.2 Emergence and Development of Indigenous Baptist Leadership

In 1951 when Rev. Littleton visited the Baptist Church in Sefwi-Bekwai, he met J. A. Boadi and gave him a pamphlet which was titled “What Baptists Believe”. From the study of this booklet J. A. Boadi came to understand fully what it meant to accept Christ as one’s Saviour and Lord. He was baptized by Rev. J. A. Idowu on 17th February 1952. On 9th January, 1953, Boadi became a student at Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho.

Rev. Littleton and Rev. W. H. MC Ginnis sponsored him at the Seminary. J. A. Boadi was the first Ghanaian to become President of the Ghana Baptist Convention from 1967 – 1969. He also served the convention as General Secretary from 1972 – 1973 and 1977 – 1986. He spent most of his ministry years at the Ghana Baptist Seminary as lecturer. He also served as the Acting Principal of the Seminary on several occasions whenever the office of the Principal was vacant. He has pastored many Baptist Churches including Grace Baptist Church, Kumasi, and First Baptist Church, Kumasi.

Other pioneer indigenous Baptist Ministers include Rev. J.K. Oteng who was formerly a native policeman. He was converted and became the leader of the

Boamang Baptist Church which was founded in 1952. He received the call into the ministry and was trained in the Nigerian Baptist Seminary from 1955 – 1957.⁴⁰ He pastored the New Tafo Baptist Church in Kumasi from 1958 – 1961. Rev. J. K. Nkrumah succeeded Rev. Oteng as a leader of the Boamang Baptist Church. He was later trained at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary from 1958 – 1960. When he returned, he taught briefly at the Ghana Baptist Seminary, Abuakwa and pastored New Tafo Baptist Church from 1969 – 1971.⁴¹ J. K. Nyame was from Tikrom and member of the local Church there. He also received the call and was trained in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary from 1958 – 1960. He pastored Buoku Baptist Church in the Brong Ahafo Region between Sunyani and Chira and helped in starting a church at Sunyani. He became the secretary of the convention and later resigned from the ministry, Pastor Enyan, a Fanti, who studied at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary from 1960 – 1962, was stationed at Adiembra near Sekondi in order to start a church there. He resigned from the ministry owing to a misunderstanding between him and Rev. G. Garlin, the missionary adviser to that area.

In the seventies other Ghanaian pastors attended the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary. Some of them were Rev. George Mallet who became Principal of the Ghana Baptist Theological Seminary, Rev. Michael Sowu lecturer of Ghana Baptist Seminary and Rev. Yaw Ofori, Secretary of Mission and Evangelism.

2.4 Emergence of Ghana Baptist Mission

Baptist work among the Ghanaian grew and expanded. Besides, the indigenous churches became part of the Ghana Baptist Conference organized by the Yoruba

⁴⁰ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 51.

⁴¹ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 52.

Baptist of Nigeria. However, because of poor connection and communication between Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria the missionaries of Ghana and Nigeria were separated with mutual understanding in 1956.⁴²

The result was that a separate Ghana Baptist Mission was formed in December, 1956. A special service was held at Ogbomosho Community Chapel to effect this historical event. Rev. H. R. Littleton was made the leader of the Ghana Baptist Mission and the Baptist Conference General Secretary. Littleton retired in 1962 owing to illness which led to his death in 1964. Rev. D. C. Cather succeeded him until his own retirement in 1965.

2.4.1 Formation of Ghana Baptist Convention

From its inception the Ghana Baptist Mission (GBM) was made an integral part of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC). NBC attended committee meetings and convention sessions of the GBM. In addition, Ghana Baptist Churches sent a percentage of their tithes and offerings to the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

The need for a separate Ghana Baptist Convention therefore arose. The issue became a long and bitter struggle for some of the churches in Ghana, especially the Yoruba Baptist congregations, because of nationalism. As a result Kumasi First Baptist Church was split into two on the proposed Ghana Baptist Convention because they were Nigerians. One group favoured the proposal, but the other was against it. Those against separated and established a new congregation known as the Ebenezer Baptist Church whose church premises is now occupied by Grace Baptist Church at Kumasi. Unfortunately, the Alien Compliance Order of 1969 affected the Nigerian brethren and they had to leave for Nigeria.

⁴² Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 66.

Interestingly, the Nigerian Baptist Mission and Convention fully supported the idea of Ghana having an independent and self supporting convention. For example Rev. Dr. J. T. Ayorinde and Rev. S. O. Lawonyi who were respectively the then General Secretary and the President of the Nigeria Baptist Convention visited Ghana in early 1964. They advised, encouraged and gave guidelines for Ghana to have a separate convention.⁴³ But sadly the First Baptist Church of Kumasi and few other Yoruba churches disagreed and were later persuaded to join when the GBC was formed in 1964.

In 1967 Rev. Dr. J. A. Boadi was elected the First Ghanaian President. He served from 1967 – 1969 when he went for further studies in the University of Ghana Legon. He was succeeded by Rev. J. K. Nkrumah who served upto 1972, Deacon N. E. Obeng 1972 – 1977, Deacon L. S. Sarpong 1977 – 1985 and Rev. Stevenson Williams from 1985 – 1987.

The new convention grew steadily and was able to establish its own Home Mission at Zuarungu in Northern Ghana in 1969. But the good work came to an abrupt end in 1970 because of the sudden death of Pastor John Azongo, the home missionary. What affected the growth of the young Convention was the Aliens Compliance Order of 1969 also known as “Quit Order”.

2.4.2 The Government Quit Order

The fact that Ghana Baptist Convention Leadership was for many years in the hands of Nigerians and that the foreign Yoruba language was dominant in most Baptist churches, kept many Ghanaians out of Baptist Churches. But overnight, the Nigerian influence disappeared with the introduction by the Quit Order by the Ghana

⁴³ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 89.

Government. The order required aliens without resident permits to leave the country. The reason for this was an effort of the government to bring many sections of the economy under Ghanaian control. It was Dr. K. A. Busia's government which did this. At that time aliens had become dominant in trading in the country. So in November 1969, the Parliament of Ghana passed the Aliens Compliance Order Law which required aliens to leave the country, unless they had resident and work permits.⁴⁴ The consequence was an exodus of hundreds of thousands of Asians and Africans (mostly from Nigeria).

2.5 The Effects of the Quit Order on the Baptist Church in Ghana

The 1969 Quit Order affected the Baptist Church in Ghana severely. The majority of the owners of the various small trading firms throughout the country were Nigerians and their departure meant a loss of about eighty percent of Baptist church membership. Besides, it meant a loss of Baptist church lands and buildings. Because some of the Yoruba Churches took away with them the leases or plans of such properties. Some took advantage of this and tried to claim ownership of the properties. But with some effort and negotiation, the convention was able to reclaim the properties, except those sold by the Yoruba Baptists before they left the country. The quit order also weakened the young Ghana Baptist Convention financially and administratively, for most of the Ghana Baptist Convention leaders were Nigerians.

2.5.1 How Baptist Responded to the Situation

However, the Quit Order also meant the removal of the Yoruba influence which made Ghanaians call any Baptist Church "*Alatafo Asore*" – Yoruba Church. Not quite long after, Ghanaians came to regard or accept the Baptist Church as a universal denomination and not a tribal one exclusively for the Yorubas. Though an air of

⁴⁴ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 89.

uncertainty hung over the Ghana Baptist Convention, the missionaries accepted the unfortunate situation as a challenge. The missionaries and the few Ghanaian leaders met together and made plans to reorganize the whole convention. The chief emphasis of both the Mission and Convention was placed on evangelism, stewardship and leadership training. Missionaries, pastors, student pastors, and lay men mobilized to reactivate the empty Yoruba churches, especially those in the urban centres. Those which could not be reactivated immediately were rented to other denominations. But with the emphasis on evangelism, revivals and crusades, many converts were won.

By 1984 Convention, the Annual Church Report showed that the total membership of all Baptist Churches in Ghana was about fifteen thousand excluding those in baptismal classes.⁴⁵ The former eight associations had increased to eleven associations. For instance, Tamale Association became so large that it was divided into Tamale, Liberty and Nalerigu Associations. Likewise Dunkwa Association was divided into Hope and Bethel Baptist Associations. Similarly, Atebubu Association was divided into Adom and Mampong Associations. Furthermore, the emphasis on stewardship strengthened the financial position of the churches, associations and the convention. For this reason churches worshipping in temporary buildings started erecting new permanent buildings.

They were able to do so because the mission and the convention gave them grants to build. Besides, the mission bought lands for new congregations especially churches in the urban centers.

Beside the Seminary, there was periodic leadership training for lay men to lead churches without pastors. The Ghana Baptist Seminary also in 1975 started diploma

⁴⁵ Boadi, *A Brief History of the Ghana Baptist Convention*, 85.

course in theology for students who had secondary school background. The Seminary diploma was accredited by the University of Ghana in 1987.

There were other developments of growth during this period. In 1973 the convention appointed its first trustees. They were Rev. W. E. Verner, Rev. J. A. Boadi, Rev. J. K. Nkrumah and Deacon N. E. Obeng.

The effects of the Government Compliance Quit Order became a blessing to the Ghana Baptist Convention in disguise. For the Bible says, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”. (Romans 8:28). In line with this The Quit Order accelerated the indigenization of the Ghana Baptist Church in terms of leadership and membership.

2.6 Conclusion

The discussion has focused on the brief history of the Ghana Baptist Convention. The issues addressed include the earliest efforts of Rev. Hayford, re-introduction of Baptist work in Ghana by the Yoruba and factors for indigenization, the beginning of native work in Ghana, the emergence of the Ghana, Baptist Convention, cooperation between the Ghana Baptist Mission and the Ghana Baptist Convention. They are important background issues for the planting of Frafra Church in Ashanti.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BACKGROUND OF THE FRAFRA PEOPLE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FRAFRA COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCHES (1993-2013)

3.1 Introduction

The discussion in the previous chapter entailed an overview of the Ghana Baptist Convention. It examined the history of the Convention as well as its policies and structures.

This chapter examines the background of Frafra people and the Frafra community Baptist Churches. Issues discussed in this section include the origin of the Frafra people including their socio-religious life, as well as the migration of the Frafra people to southern Ghana, and the emergence of the Frafra community Baptist churches.

3.2 A Brief Background of the Frafra People

3.2.1 Origin of the Frafra People

The section traces the origin, present location, and religion and life pattern of the Frafra people.

It is important to recognize that the term Frafra does not connote one single tribal or people group, but it is an umbrella term referring to four major ethnic societies namely the Gurune or Gurunse, the Talensi, the Boose and the Nabdam. These people share similar heritage and yet have minor cultural differences by way of language, and probably did not originate from the same ancestral root.

According to Berinyuu, it is generally believed that the name Frafra was coined by a foreigner from the common informal greetings or murmuring by way of thanks or petition “fara fara” or “fura fura”. Atinga shares the same view that the term Frafra is a name that the British colonial authorities coined to apply to the Gurune-speaking. According to him, it appears that they found it easier to pronounce the word Frafra rather than the proper name Gurune. He adds that the term Frafra is derived from a form of greeting in the Gurune language and it is not very clear how the term came to be associated with the others. He concludes that the reason might be “due to the closeness of language, cultural practices and above all ritual action”.⁴⁶

Thomas Atta Akosah in his research work, *Christian Conversion and Culture from the Frafra perspective*, points out that “the name Frafra originated from the phrase “*Fara-fara*” which means well done”. He explained that it is usually said to people who have worked hard and is sometimes accompanied with soft clapping of hands in appreciation. He further explains that when the British had contact with them what they heard often was “*fara-fara*”. They therefore referred to them as *fara-fara* people and with time it contracted to “Frafra”.⁴⁷

The Frafra occupy the Bolgatanga, Bongo, and Tallensi-Nabdam (now separated) districts of the Upper East Region of Ghana. They share borders with southern Burkina Faso and in fact are believed to have migrated from there to their present location. Their language is very close to Morre a language spoken by one of the major ethnic groups in Burkina Faso (the Mossi).

⁴⁶ Thomas Atta-Akosah, *Christian Conversion and Culture from the Frafra Perspective* (Unpublished, CSUC 2000), 12.

⁴⁷ Abraham Berinyuu, Understanding the Role of Nyaa Healing Among the Frafra of Northern Ghana: *Journal of Development Studies*, 2006, 1.

It must be noted that the Bongo District is made up of two main communities. The original settlers are Gurune-speaking and the second group is the Mamprusi stock that settled mainly in the central part of the present Bongo Township. They later eventually became the traditional rulers of the area. The closest neighbours of the Gurunse are the Nabdam and Tallensi. These share common cultural heritage with the Gurunse. There are great similarities in language, practice of faith and ritual action. As far as language is concerned the difference is minimal and negligible and therefore they do not need an interpreter to communicate with each other. It is therefore possible for them to group under one roof for worship service.

3.2.2 Religious Life and Thought

The Frafra religion and religious practices fall within the general framework of traditional religious practice all over Africa. In general, the structure of the Frafra religion can be summarized into four features, namely belief in the Supreme Being, divinities, ancestors and other spirits.

Belief in the Supreme Being is very strong in Frafra cosmology. The Frafra refer to the Supreme Being as *Yine*. *Yine* is often prefixed with *na-a*, thus *Na-ayine* which implies chief.

The *na-a* is a derivation of Chief – *naba*, *Na-ayine* therefore, means the only Supreme Chief.

Na-ayine according to Barker is believed to be “above all other gods; he knows all, sees all and is all-powerful”.⁴⁸ This belief in the Supreme Being is evident in Frafra prayers of thanksgiving and petitions expressed as *tebora yine fara*, (we give God praise) *yine nde naba* (God is king).

⁴⁸ Peter Barker, *People, Languages and Religion of Northern Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1986), 102.

The abode of the Supreme Being is often viewed as being in the skies or even beyond the skies. As a consequence the sky is called *yinin*, which means the abode of *Yinε*. This can therefore give the connotation that for the Frafra God is completely transcendent, and far remote from people. It is also true that they consider their *Yinε* as one who is immanent and always with them. It is common to hear the Frafra say, *yinε-ka zāe* – God is not far, *yinε-yeti* – God sees.⁴⁹

Besides these, the Frafra have lots of attributes of God. For them, God is love, God is powerful, God is merciful, and God is creator of all there is in the universe. In fact most Frafra names are theophorus. Some of these names include Ayinonyrε (God's love), Ayinbono (God's property) Ayingagya – (God is above) and so on.

In spite of all these, the Frafra do not offer sacrifices to the Supreme Being directly. Their belief is that one can only approach God, the chief through the mediation of their ancestors, a point that would make the Frafra understand the mediation of Jesus Christ between humanity and God.

Besides the belief in the Supreme Being, the Frafra, like many African communities also believe that other divinities exist and they relate with them in their capacities as divinities endowed with some divine powers that influence their lives. These divine beings are good spirits that are interested in the welfare of the various communities. They are perceived to inhabit strange places such as big trees, rocks, mountain and hills, rivers and so on. They are considered to be strong mediators between the communities they represent and the Supreme Being. These divinities are consulted in times of disaster in the community such as drought, famine, epidemics or unexplained

⁴⁹ Atinga, *Death and Dying: A Study of the Mortuary Rites of the Frafra of Northern Ghana in the Light of Christian Funeral Liturgy. An Attempt at Inculturation*, Doctoral Thesis (Unpublished) Katholieke University, Leuven, 2006, 7.

deaths. They are believed to be most active at night, particularly after midnight. People are often warned not to linger around the vicinity of shrines dedicated to these divinities at night, otherwise one might come across them and cause harm to oneself. Thus belief in divinities is ingrained in the Frafra religious worldview.⁵⁰

According to Atinga, belief in ancestors is the commonest feature of African traditional religion, not only the Frafra. Unlike divinities, ancestors were once human beings who lived on earth and have now joined the spirit world through the process of death. The Frafra associate more with the ancestors than with the other divinities because they were once human and are believed to know the human condition and needs very well and thus in a better position to solicit help and blessing from the Supreme Being. For the Frafra, there is a strong link between the ancestors and their living progeny, a link which death does not break. This is why the Frafra build shrines dedicated to the ancestors within their homestead to emphasize this permanent link that exist between the living and the dead.

According to Ayeremoah, “the ancestors are closer to the Almighty God. They are mediators between God and us. When we sin we ask for forgiveness through them. We also get our blessing through them”.⁵¹

To qualify to be an ancestor, one must have raised a family, been responsible, grown old and become an elder in the family, clan or village community, and of course would have died a natural death. A wicked person who uses sorcery, witchcraft or magic to cause harm to people cannot be regarded as an ancestor. Ancestors play a pivotal role in the lives of the Frafra and it is for this reason that they revere them so

⁵⁰ Atinga, *Death and Dying: A Study of the Mortuary Rites of the Frafra ... An Attempt at Inculturation*, 8.

⁵¹ Interview with John Ayeremoah, Bolga Tendongmologo Tengdaana, 15th January, 2015.

much. Sacrifices are offered to them periodically to solicit their help. They are sometimes also invoked in blessings and curses.

Besides the ancestors and the divinities, belief in the existence of other spirits is an integral part of Africa traditional religion. There is however, a difference between these spirits and the spirits of ancestors and divinities. Ancestors are the spirits of people who once lived on earth and have now died and joined the spirit world. The divinities are also spirits that are connected in one way or the other with family, clan or village community. On the other hand the spirit beings discussed here are of different kind. These are ranging spirits that are not confined to any particular place. These spirits are generally feared as they are believed to be malicious and can manifest themselves in various forms and cause havoc to the human society. Witches are believed to possess some of these spirits that make them kill and eat human beings. They also have the power to cause accidents on the roads, in the water, and in fact anywhere.

The Frafra do not offer sacrifices to these spirit beings and there are no shrines dedicated to them. On the contrary the divinities and the ancestors are petitioned to keep the spirits far away from the community. Though generally the Frafra consider these spirits as malicious and wicked spiritual beings, they also believe that there are good spirits among them. These good spirits can possess an individual and reveal some secrets to him or her for the good of the community. The secret could be power to heal various kinds of diseases and ailments, prevention of witchcraft activity, the ability to divine and see the future, prevention of epidemics, drought and so on. The good spirits use their power for the benefit of the community.⁵²

⁵² Atinga, *Death and Dying: A Study of the Mortuary Rites of the Frafra*, 10.

3.3 Occupation and Migration

The main occupation of Frafra people is farming which is carried out within a single wet season. The wet season which begins from May and ends in October, is followed by a long dry season from October to April.

During the long dry season, the people have little to do in terms of farm work and so engage in festivals, marriage ceremonies, hunting, funerals and various forms of entertainment.

With the limited employment opportunities in the area, there is a high level of poverty among the people. Moreover, the harvest at the end of the farming season only suffices for some months due to low output.

The Frafra tend to migrate from the traditional homeland to the southern parts of Ghana in order to break from the poverty caused by impoverished farmlands for opportunity to create a better life.

An issue worth noting is that most of the youth used to be engaged in shepherding in time past when there used to be cattle in almost every compound in Frafraland. Today the story has changed and most of the youth are out of that job as the cattle base of most families continue to dwindle if not totally depleted.

According to Boniface Adagbila Agambila, “the environment makes it difficult for job creation. There is only one farming season with little to feed the people. There is no electricity in the rural areas. The roads are bad and therefore the only option is for the youth to migrate to the south”.⁵³

⁵³ Interview with Boniface Adagbila Agambila, Member of Parliament Nabdam Constituency.

Against this background, there remains no option for most Frafra youth or woman than to travel to south which is perceived to possess 'greener pastures'. They hold the belief that at least they could add value to their lives in terms of breaking out of poverty.

Also they hold the brief that they could secure some form of job, get some money and return home in the next farming season. It should be noted here that the Frafra migrants can be classified into different categories. First, there are those who only come to the south in the dry season to work and to return at the onset of the next rainy season. These type of migrants can be referred to as seasonal migrants. Secondly, there are those who have migrated to the south with or without their families and have settled permanently in the south. People can be identified as the permanent migrants. They look for permanent accommodation and also seek permanent jobs.

When these migrants come to the south, some settle in the cities, whereas others settle in small towns and villages. With little or no education to gain a good job, some of these migrants only have to "perch" with a brother or kinsman till they find work, which are sometimes menial jobs such as being houseboy, roasting meat at drinking spots, cook, steward, or pounding fufu at chop bars. The women also become head porters or wash utensils at chop bars. Some of the youth who are lucky are able to find work as porters or "loading boys" at the big shops in the central business districts.

Some also settle in the rural farming communities and serve as farm labourers. Others are lucky to be given cocoa plantations as managers. Some of the people are reported to have secured their own plantations through share cropping system. There is also the middle class people who, depending on their level of education and qualification, secure jobs. Some of these jobs include shopkeepers, hairdressers, barbers, shoe

makers, food joint operators, tailors and artisans such as carpenters, masons and plumbers.

The upper class may also include businessmen and women who own their own shops and are engaged in the distribution of various items, and are also transport operators.

It is significant to note that the type of job that the Frafra are engaged in the south, tend to influence their choice of which religious group to identify with. For instance, it is on record that those who tend to find jobs such as drivers' mates tend to be attracted to the Islamic faith. This is due to the fact that most drivers of heavy duty vehicles at the *Zongos* are Muslims. On the other hand, the upper class businessmen and women, due to their business relationships with most southerners, tend to be attracted by the southern churches. With their seemingly "high" status, they often shun the mono-ethnic churches. The Frafra community churches tend to be made up of mostly the people of the lower class and some of the middle class.

3.4 Southern Born Frafras

Apart from migrant Frafra people who come to the southern Ghana to look for jobs, there are some Frafra people who were born and bred in southern Ghana, and have had some level of education. There are some who are gainfully employed and are occupying top positions in the society.

In terms of marriage, some of the Frafra men and women have intermarried with some people groups of southern Ghana and are enjoying their marriages. Some of these marriages are either of traditional, Islamic or Christian. In an interview with Priscilla Bonsu, she said she came to Kumasi about 30 years ago in search of job. She got a temporal accommodation and a job. Later she got married to an Akan and they

are both living at Atonsu. Together they attend church at Light House Chapel International.⁵⁴

It is worthy to note that the southern born Frafra seem to be well settled. Even though they have an identity as Frafra, they are very much influenced by the cultures of southern Ghana. Depending on where one is located, he or she may learn the language and the general lifestyle of the people of the community. For instance, if the area is *zongo*, the Frafra may be influenced by the Islamic culture and religion on the other hand, if he or she finds herself in a Christian environment he or she may be influenced by that also. This may also be true of the Frafra who have migrated to the south and are permanently settled there.

As far as the migrant Frafra is concerned, the story is different. Some of these tend to shy away from most of the southern people. They often would not like to associate with them outside working hours and may settle in temporary residence such as with brothers and sisters, or make-shift rooms made of wood in some reserved areas. Such people may be least influenced by the cultures of southern Ghana.

One issue worth nothing is the coming together of some of these Frafra people into associations to foster goodwill and unity among themselves and also to seek the mutual welfare. These associations often meet monthly, or fortnightly to discuss occasions that pertain to their welfare and continuous stay in the south. Some of the issues that often call for the involvement of almost all the people include funerals and marriages. In the view of Baba Nabil Lok, these tribal association offer opportunity to the Frafra in the south to identify with one another. Over the years the associations

⁵⁴ Interview with Priscilla Bonsu, Atonsu 20th January, 2015.

have been instrumental in the settling of disputes amongst the people and have also assisted them in diverse ways.⁵⁵

In terms of language, those migrant from the north to the south, often speak their various dialects among themselves wherever they find themselves. They usually take a long time before they are able to adjust to the southern system, and also learn the southern languages. However, some of the Frafra people who are born in the south often find it difficult to speak their own mother tongue dialects. The reason seems to be that, they become more assimilated in the southern system, being closely associated with the people of the south either in school, business or areas of residence.

As far as relationships are concerned, it is interesting to note that, those who migrate to the south tend to be associated with their kinsmen, fellow tribesmen or other tribes also from the north than with people of the south, outside official working hours. They usually resent being looked down upon and seek no contact with the southerners. At times the problem seems to be out of prejudice. In terms of church life, these migrant Frafra people sometimes see it as a southerner's affair and wish not to be part of it.

3.5 The Establishment of the Frafra Churches in Ashanti

The Ghana Evangelism Committee report dubbed “the Unfinished Task” released in 1993, sparked off the mono-ethnic church planting movement. The report specified unreached towns and villages, as well as communities of northern extraction and West African aliens resident in the big towns and cities who were without a church of their own. It was discovered that the reason for the state of affairs was a lack of

⁵⁵ Interview with Baba Nabil Lok, Head, Nabdam Community in Ashanti Region, 20th January, 2015.

commitment of the southern churches to penetrate the unreached people of the north, who they perceived as Muslims.

Again, there was a growing sense of prejudice among most of the northerners towards the southerners which made it quite impossible for any kind of cross-cultural relationship or association, much more to talk about church membership. The Frafra Christian Fellowship (FCF) became the bedrock of Christian missions among the Frafra in Kumasi. It provided the avenue for most Frafra to meet and have fellowship and also spearheaded the development of indigenous leadership.

There are a number of Frafras living in the seven southern regions of Ghana many of whom have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and accepted Him as their Lord and Saviour. A brief history of Eternal Life Baptist by Rev. Mark Nso-Yine reveal that language became a barrier and this led to the formation of the Frafra Christian Fellowship (FCF) in 1981 by a group of Frafras from different churches in the Ashanti Region.⁵⁶

The people who were responsible for this initiative and who contributed immensely to the planting of the Frafra Churches include James Aluriba, Solomon Ayamga, Moses Apore, Paul Adombire, Mark Nso-Yine, Daniel Ayamga and Joseph Ayimbire. The Frafra Christian Fellowship was formed in 1981 by a group of Frafras from different churches. Their meeting place was at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Canteen in Kumasi. The main purpose however was to bring Frafras together to study and understand the word of God in the Frafra language. This step was taken because most of the people felt the need to worship God in the light of their own culture. As time went by, it dawned upon them to reach out to more Frafras

⁵⁶ Nso-Yine, Mark, *History of the Eternal Life Baptist Church* (Kumasi, Unpublished Work, 2003), 13.

with the word of God. Ultimately the Frafra Christian Fellowship decided to start Frafra churches where preaching and worship will be done in the Frafra language.

The Frafra Christian Fellowship (FCF) initiated the Frafra Christian Missions. Following the Ghana Evangelism Committee report, the Worldwide Evangelization for Christ Crusade (WEC) Mission came to Ghana under the auspices of the Evangelical Church of Ghana (ECG).

In 1989, Rev. and Mrs. Lamb (from Hong Kong) came to Ghana through the Evangelical Church of Ghana (ECG) to plant Frafra churches in the southern part of the country. They sought the assistance of the Frafra Christian Fellowship and thus the first Frafra Church in Ashanti was planted at Ayigya and named Victory Evangelical Church of Ghana. This was followed by Peace Evangelical Church of Ghana at Moshie Zongo, Ejisu Evangelical Church of Ghana, Ejisu and later Atonsu ECG all in the Ashanti region. All these churches were led by members of the Frafra Christian Fellowship. Some of the members later left the Fellowship to become full time Ministers of God. Those who left included Rev. James Aluruba and Pastor Paul Adombire. In 1991 Rev. Dr. Azuma who was with the Bantama Presbyterian Church was the next to knock on the doors of the Fellowship for its assistance to help start the Frafra Church at Bantama in Kumasi which the Fellowship readily did. In 1992, the Methodist Church Ghana sought the assistance of the Fellowship to start a Frafra Church at the Ashanti New Town K. O. Methodist Church Ghana in Kumasi. A crusade was organized with Mark Nso-Yine, a Baptist Minister as the preacher. All these churches are alive today.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Nso-Yine, Mark, *History of the Eternal Life Baptist Church*, 13.

Later, other Frafra Churches were established for the Presbyterian, and the Methodist denominations, through the assistance of the Frafra Christian Fellowship. This phenomenon sparked off other denominations to establish their own Frafra Churches. The Baptists also needed to have their own Frafra Community Church and took steps to initiate a Frafra Church planting movement.

3.6 Plans to Start the First Baptist Church in the Ashanti Region

In the year 1992 Rev. Steve Asante who was then the Chairman of the Evangelism Committee of the Ghana Baptist Convention and the late Rev. Dr. Frank Adams the then General Secretary of the Convention visited the Frafra Christian Fellowship. They gave the Frafra Christian Fellowship the moral support to start a Frafra Baptist Church. The Executive of the Frafra Christian Fellowship together with their wives declared a period of fasting and prayer to seek the Lord direction in the formation of a Baptist Church.⁵⁸

After the fasting and prayer the executives convened a meeting at Ayigya Zongo near Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The agenda was the formation of the Frafra Baptist Church. The meeting was a hectic one regarding the doctrines as the members of the Fellowship belonged to different Churches with different doctrines. After a lengthy deliberation and disagreements however the door was opened for those who wanted to be part of the Baptist Church to do so. All the members present agreed to join the church except Mr. and Mrs. Anaba who could not do so because of their commitment to the Catholic Church. Mr. Samuel Azure of Go Ye Harvest did not join because of doctrinal differences.

⁵⁸ Nso-Yine, Mark, *History of the Eternal Life Baptist Church*, 15.

It is amazing to note that the Catholic members who decided to join the Baptist Church had earlier gone to see Rev. Steve Asante to give them water Baptism by immersion at the KNUST swimming pool on 29th January 1989. Which means that they had become Baptist three good years before that decision to start a Frafra Baptist Church yet they did not know this was going to happen. The members who had agreed to join the Baptist Church immediately set to work. They held an “indoor” crusade at New Tafo Baptist Church, Kumasi. The indoor crusade was chosen so that the target group could be reached without interference. The crusade lasted three (3) days, from Thursday 4th to Saturday 6th February 1993. On Sunday February 7th, 1993 the first Frafra Baptist Church service took off. The congregation is now called Eternal Life Baptist Church located at Anyano in Kumasi.

Following the establishment of the Frafra Community Churches in Kumasi, the Frafra Christian Fellowship began to disintegrate. The reason for this was that most of the leading members of the Frafra Christian Fellowship accepted appointments as full-time ministers of the established churches.

3.7 The Role of Rev. Mark Nso-Yine

Members of the Frafra Christian Fellowship decided to commit themselves to the strengthening of the churches that had been planted. They went round these churches preaching and teaching. This made the absence of Rev. Mark Nso-Yine to be noticed by his church,” Pastor Rev. Thomas Evans Owusu (pastor-in-charge) Bethel Baptist Church. He enquired from Rev. Nso-Yine the reason for his absence from Bethel Baptist Church. Mark admitted that he sensed the calling of God to reach out to the Frafra community. Rev. Frank Adams the then General Secretary of the Ghana Baptist Convention, was informed of this desire of Rev. Nso-Yine. This led Rev.

Adams and Rev. Steve Asante to meet the Frafra Christian Fellowship to discuss the formation of the Frafra Baptist Church of Ghana Baptist Convention.

3.8 The Planting of the First Frafra Baptist Church

The members who had agreed to join Rev. Mark Nso-Yine to start the Frafra Baptist Church were Mr. Solomon Ayamga (now pastor), late Graham Apuko (a deacon), Mr. Moses Apore (now pastor), Mr. David Akugre (now pastor), Mr. David Akologo, late Isaac Bagbire and Mr. Samuel Atingabono (later left). The men did not leave behind their wives. They immediately set to work. They held what they called “in-door” crusade at the New Tafo Baptist Church at Krofrom in Kumasi. The crusade was therefore held in one of the nursery classroom near the church auditorium.⁵⁹

It was a week long programme that began from Monday 1st to Sunday 7th February, 1993. The first three days was committed to a house to house visitation to invite Frafra residents to the programme. A message was given to them to pass on to other Frafra people they would come across to inform them of the programme and its purpose. Activities of the programme included the preaching of the word of God, a film show about the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The side-attraction was local drumming and dancing. The messengers were sent to Frafra populated areas of Kumasi such as New Tafo, Asawasi, New Zongo, Ashanti New Town, Moshie Zongo and surrounding communities.

⁵⁹ Nso-Yine, Mark, *History of the Eternal Life Baptist Church*, 17.

3.9 Eternal Life Baptist Church: First Church Service

The crusade begun on Thursday 4th and ended on Saturday 6th February. The programme begun each day with an opening prayer, praises and adoration of God, backed by drumming and dancing. This was followed by word ministration by Rev. Mark Nso-Yine, and at the end of the programme each day people responded to the altar call. At the end of the three (3) day in-door crusade, 61 people gave their lives to Christ. Sunday, February 7th, 1993 was the day that the first church service of what has now grown to become Eternal Life Baptist Church began. Twenty-one (21) out of the sixty-one (61) new converts attended the first service.

The church service was held in one of the classrooms of Dichemso M/A J.S.S and the sermon was preached by Rev. Nso-Yine assisted by the other founding members. The church encountered series of problems. The major problem at the time was place of worship. They did not have a permanent classroom allocated to them. Sometimes they were even stopped midway in the church service and asked to vacate the room. This discouraged most of the members due to frustration but the leaders did not give up. Eventually they were given a permanent classroom for their worship service.⁶⁰

3.10 Adoption by New Tafo Baptist Church

In 1994, the General Secretary of the Ghana Baptist Convention, requested New Tafo Baptist Church to adopt them as its daughter church. By 1995 the congregation had grown up to about 100 members and the classroom could no longer accommodate them so the General Secretary sought permission from the Executive Committee of New Tafo Baptist Church for the Frafra Baptist congregation to use their auditorium for Sunday Services. The request was granted by the Pastor-in-charge being Rev. Sadiq Menya. The Frafra service was scheduled as the 3rd service and so they closed

⁶⁰ Nso-Yine, Mark, *History of the Eternal Life Baptist Church*, 18.

late in the afternoon. Some of the members of the leadership opposed the move to New Tafo because the service was going to be in the afternoon and their fear was that the members would not come to church. However, the other members believed that with God on their side people would still come to church irrespective of the time.

In 1995, the first service of the Frafra Community Baptist Church began at the New Tafo Baptist Church premises at New Tafo after their two services in the morning. With the introduction of the English service, at New Tafo, the Frafra service became the fourth. But relationship with the host church continued to be cordial and this has enabled the church to reach this stage.

3.11 Emergence of other Frafra Baptist Churches

In spite of the initial problem of securing a permanent place of worship, they still held services every Sunday. The service began with Sunday school from 9:00 – 10:00am. There was a new converts class and a class for the old converts. These classes were handled by some of the founding members. The main church service began with opening prayer and adoration. This was followed by praises, all in Frafra. The praises team was made up of Mr. David Akugre (now pastor) and Mr. David Akolgo; Rev. Mark Nso-Yine was the preacher and sometimes assisted by Solomon Ayamga, and Moses Apore (now pastors) and late Isaac Bagbire. The service closed at 12:00 noon. The founding Fathers did not rest on their oars. They fasted and prayed every Friday for the church. Later on, Wednesday prayer meeting was introduced for the entire congregation at the usual place of worship.⁶¹

The church has been holding a series of evangelistic crusades. The first crusade of the church was held at Asawase followed by Akorem, Sepe Buokrom, Moshie Zongo,

⁶¹ Nso-Yine, Mark, *History of the Eternal Life Baptist Church*, 18.

Roman Hill, New Tafo and Suame Magazine. The crusades were held at regular intervals. There were also deliverance services in which people under demonic influence or those who were sick were liberated. This manifested the power and the presence of God in the congregation and this drew more people to the church. There were also naming ceremonies. During these occasions the entire congregation was present at the home of the member whose child was named. This was a sign of the love that existed among the members and this added to the number in the congregation.

The church has been having visitors' day and on those days the members invite unbelievers to the church. After the preaching of the word of God, the invited guests are refreshed. This was the strategy that the church used to win most souls and which it still does.

As the congregation grew in number, local fellowships were formed whereby members resident in a particular locality could meet and have fellowship in the course of the week. Each fellowship had its executive and they met every Thursday in a classroom in their locality and had prayers, Bible studies or teachings. They also met on Saturday to undertake house to house visitation inviting Frafras to church the next day. The executives of the fellowships linked the leadership of the church and the congregation at the locality. They attended to the needs of their members who lived within their communities and reported what was beyond them to the leadership of the church. The fellowships were started in this order: Asawase, Akorem, Sepe Buokrom, Roman Hill, Moshie Zongo and Old Tafo.

Once a year the members invited unbelievers to the church for a love feast. The members come along with food and drinks, and after the word of God both the

members and the invited guest dine together. After the meal the unbelievers feel a sense of belonging and end up becoming members of the church. The formation of a singing group, also contributed to the growth of the church. The singing group is called Stars of the King. Credit goes to Sister Rosina Atia now Pastor (Mrs.) Rosina Kyei Baffour who started it and Mr. Kusi who has helped build the group to date. The group performed at church and all other occasions both in the church or out of the church. The group used modern musical instruments and whenever they featured in any programme they were marvelous. People who knew the signers saw a great transformation in their lives and so decided to join the church. The word of God was the greatest tool that led to the growth of the church. The salvation message was well packaged and met the needs of the people. The message was well received and understood in the people's own language and so they willingly left all that was not right in the sight of God. Those who were trading in alcoholic beverages willingly took to other trading activities; those who were drunkards stopped drinking. The members were submissive and obedient to their leadership. They had trust and confidence in their leaders and as a result, there was unity among the congregation.

In the 1993/94 academic year, the Ghana Baptist Convention awarded a scholarship to pastor Mark Nso-Yine for pastoral training at the Ghana Baptist Seminary, now Ghana Baptist University College. After two (2) years he transferred to the Christian Service University College to pursue an External Diploma in Theology and graduated in 1997. Rev. Mark Nso-Yine was commissioned by the Ghana Baptist Convention in 1997 at its 37th Annual Session at Sekondi and ordained as a Reverend Minister on the 27th April, 2001. The Frafra Church has all the committees, departments and auxiliary bodies that exist in any Baptist church. Thus, it became independent on the 11th October 2003 at New Tafo Baptist Church. When a church is planted or established

there is a time in that church's life when a special service known in Baptist Circles as "Organization Service" is held to outdoor the church formally. Before the "Organization Service" is held the church should have the following, a constitution, pastor/church leader and elected officers, financially capable to pay her pastor.

3.12 Extension Growth

The church has made some modest achievements. The church has grown numerically from the membership of 21 to about 600. The appointment of Rev. Mark Nso-Yine as the Home Missionary to the Frafra people Group by the Ghana Baptist Convention was an achievement. The church also has daughter churches. They are; St. James Baptist Church at Bantama (1997), Ascension Baptist at Bomso (1998), Barekese Baptist Church at Barekese (1999), First Baptist Church at Akwatialine (1999), Mampong Baptist Church at Ashanti Mampong (2001), Ahenkro Baptist at Ahenkro (2006), Faith Baptist Church at Atimatim (2006), Konongo Baptist Church at Konongo (2006), Ampabame Baptist Church at Ampabame (2006), Wadie Adwumakese Baptist Church at Wadie Adwumakese (2008), Ahinsan Baptist Church at Ahinsan (2010), Asuofua Baptist Church at Asuofua (2011), Adegya Baptist Church at Adegya (2011), Kotwi Baptist Church at Kotwi (2012), Nsuta Baptist Church at Nsuta (2012), Agona Baptist Church at Agona (2012), Royal Baptist Church at Kenyasi (2012), Abofour Baptist Church at Abofour (2013), Bima Baptist Church at Bima (2013). All these churches are being cared for by the Eternal Life Baptist Church. (See Appendix II)

Another area of achievement of the church is in the area of leadership training. The church assisted 12 of her members to pursue further training through the Denominational Track Ministry for the training of pastors and other church leadership. They are Pastor Solomon Ayamga, Pastor Moses Apore, Pastor Charles

Ayindenaba, Pastor Thomas Amaliba, Pastor David Akugre, Pastor Moses Baba, Pastor Ernest Ali, Pastor Akolibila Awuni, Pastor Alex Yamdoor, Pastor Logti, Mathew Logti, Pastor Satchimo Apana, and Pastor James Kofi Ateem. These pastors are now taken care of the Frafra congregations.

The Eternal Life Baptist Church also established literacy classes and taught its members how to read and write in the Frafra Language. Some of these members have become Sunday school teachers. The Eternal Life Baptist Church with the assistance of the Ghana Baptist Convention owns three (3) plots of land at Moshie Zongo of which 2 plots have been used for the church auditorium which is at the foundation level. The other plot will be used for a pastorium.

3.13 Conclusion

The discussion has examined the background of the Frafra people and the emergence of the Frafra Community Baptist Church. The issues addressed include the origin of the Frafra, their socio-religious life, their migration to southern Ghana, the emergence of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches. Being an indigenous people it is significant to understand their response to Christianity and how they live out the Christian faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GROWTH OF THE FRAFRA COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE ASHANTI REGION: AN ASSESSMENT.

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the background of the Frafra people and the establishment of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches in Ashanti Region.

This chapter is focused on assessment of the growth of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches. Emphasis will be on the socio-economic factors and church membership, spiritual growth, the quest for indigenous leadership development, continuity and sustainability of the Frafra Church movement.

4.2 Socio-Economic Factors and Church Membership

The presence of the Frafra in the southern parts of Ghana can be explained in varying ways. These include migration and settlement, and the Frafra born and bred in the south. It has also been realized that pressure born out of poverty attributed to impoverished farmlands in the Frafra homelands as well as other factors have contributed to the seasonal migration of the Frafra to the southern parts of the country. Some get settled with or without their families and are able to secure permanent jobs and accommodation.

The Frafra born and bred in the south tend to be influenced by the southern culture and therefore open to new ideas. It is in this light that many of the Frafra in this category can be found in many southern churches. It is also quiet clear that there are some of the Frafra migrants who professed the Christian faith and belonged to some churches in their traditional homelands before their migration to the south. These upon arrival tend to feel at home in the Frafra Community Churches.

An evaluation of ten (10) Frafra Community Baptist Churches in the Ashanti Region is presented the table below to explain the trend of socio-economic factors and church membership.

Table 1 (a): Churches in Kumasi

Name of Church	Location	When Started	No. at Start	Present Membership				
				Adult Men	Adult Women	Youth	Children	Current Total
Eternal Life Baptist	Moshie Zongo	07/02/93	21	93	125	115	210	543
St. James Baptist	Bantama	30/03/97	12	14	37	25	30	106
Ascension Baptist	Bomso	05/08/98	15	19	79	35	55	188
First Baptist	Akwatiline	23/10/99	13	30	50	96	102	278
Ahinsan Baptist	Ahinsan	22/08/10	9	14	17	29	25	85
Total			70	170	308	300	422	1200

Table 1 (b): Churches outside Kumasi

Name of Church	Location	When Started	No. at Start	Present Membership				
				Adult Men	Adult Women	Youth	Children	Current Total
Agona Baptist	Agona	04/08/13	10	9	30	20	40	99
Ahenkro Baptist	Offinso-Ahenkro	19/03/06	10	20	50	20	85	175
Mampong Baptist	Asante Mampong	02/08/01	12	10	35	16	27	88
Abofour Baptist	Offinso-Abofour	11/08/13	11	10	20	6	20	56
Asuofua Baptist	Asuofua	27/02/11	111	10	35	10	56	111
Total			54	59	170	72	228	529

Source: Quarterly Church Records at Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, Kumasi.

It can be deduced from tables 1 (a) and 1 (b) that the membership of the churches grew from their initial stages. The present membership is enough to attest to the numerical growth of the churches, especially when the total membership is drawn against the number of members at the start of the local churches.

The tables also show that the growth in membership occurred more in the metropolis (Kumasi) than in the districts outside Kumasi considered as rural. However, the growth in the membership of the rural churches could be attributed to the availability of farmland in those areas which is a prerequisite for farm work, the main occupation of the migrant Frafra.

On the part of the Kumasi metropolis the reason is the fact that, business activities occur more there and provide job avenues for many uneducated or semi-educated Frafra as porter's, security services and casual labourers.

A critical look at the tables also indicate that there are more children being born into the churches. The implication of trend is that church membership may be stabilized, since these children may hopefully grow up to form a permanent membership base of the church. In the churches since we tend to have seasonal migrants as members who decide to relocate back home, the future growth of these Frafra Churches will depend more on these children who are born into the churches. It implies the need to strengthen the children's ministry.

Another issue worth noting is the issue of expansion growth which has to do with the number of churches that are planted within a given period. In 1993 the Frafra Baptist Church Movement began with a single congregation, that is, the Eternal Life Baptist Church, but today, within a period of twenty years (1993-2013), nineteen (19) more churches have been planted inside and outside Kumasi. The good news is that the

movement continues to attract calls from various locations inside and outside Kumasi for the planting of more Frafra Churches.

Table 2 (a): Migrants and those Born and Bred (inside Kumasi) 1993-2013

Name of Church	Migrants		Transfers to Kumasi	Total
	Seasonal	Permanently Settled		
Eternal Life Baptist	35	178	31	244
St. James Baptist	5	97	4	106
Ascension Baptist	6	102	0	108
Ahinsan Baptist	3	54	0	57

Table 2 (b): Migrants and those Born and Bred in Ashanti (outside Kumasi) 1993-2013

Name of Church	Migrants		Total
	Seasonal	Permanent	
Asuofua Baptist	0	76	76
Mampong Baptist	1	24	25
Agona Baptist	0	19	19

Source: Quarterly Church Records at Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, Kumasi.

Table 2 details the impact of migration and settlement on church membership. From table 2 (a) it can be deduced that the total membership of the Eternal Life Baptist Church which stands at 213 includes 35 seasonal migrants, 178 permanently settled members and 31 members being those transferred in. It can be noted that the strength of the church rests on the permanently settled members who are capable of rising to

leadership positions if they given the right training and opportunity. Thus, if the seasonal migrants return to their traditional homelands, it might not affect the church very much in terms of numbers and finances.

From table 2 (b), which is the state of the churches outside Kumasi, it is clear that the number of seasonal migrants is insignificant compared to their total membership. For instance, the Asuofua Church has no seasonal migrants, whereas the Mampong Church had only one. This implies that the membership of the rural churches are also gradually becoming less dependent on seasonal migrants and more on settled members. The implication of this is that the churches can be sustained in terms of numbers and even finances.

Asuofua which is closer to Kumasi has more of the permanent members than Mampong and Agona.

Another factor worth noting is migration. It is evident from table 2 that the number of migrants who belong to the Frafra Churches in Kumasi outnumber those born and bred in Kumasi. This might be due to the business climate in Kumasi which seems to attract more migrants seeking for job. The business climate of Kumasi offers jobs to the migrants as traders, head porters and truck pushers. Few of the people are employed in formal vocations such as security services. However, there are some who are unemployed.

Table 3 (a): Educational Levels and Employment Details

Level of Education				Type of Employment			
	Basic	Senior High	Tertiary	Trading	Farm Labourers	Formal	Self Employed
Eternal Life	80	30	18	95	0	10	0
St. James	25	2	2	60	0	0	1
Ascension-Bomso	12	4	7	70	0	3	9
First Baptist	60	14	4	114	0	2	0
Ahinsan	2	4	0	19	0	1	3

Source: Quarterly Church Reports at Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, Kumasi.

Table 3 (b): Churches outside Kumasi

Level of Education				Type of Employment			
	Basic	Senior High	Tertiary	Trading	Farm Labourers	Formal	Self Employed
Eternal Life	23	3	3	19	4	0	0
St. James	5	4	-	20	15	0	1
Ascension-Bomso	19	-	-	12	28	0	9
First Baptist	33	2	2	25	10	0	0
Ahinsan	2	1	2	20	9	4	0

Source: Quarterly Church Reports at Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, Kumasi.

Table 3: The Impact of Educational Standards and Employment on Church Membership

For churches within Kumasi, table 3 (a) shows that some of the churches, particularly Eternal Life, can boast of 30 of its members in the senior high school, with 18 in the tertiary. The implication of this is that the church has potential base of future leaders who have good education. This gives a positive signal of growth. It is possible for these educated ones to acquire employable skills or qualifications for good jobs. This may have positive impact on the church's finances. Some of the educated members are already employed in Banks and other well paid occupations.

In table 3 (b), it is only the Asuofua church which has more members at the tertiary level and this also has positive implications for the church in terms of leadership development and financial support. The reason is that Asuofua is close to Kumasi and is fast attracting more people from the city centre as noted by Charles Sunkore Benim, who moved from Bantama hospital quarters to his present place at Asuofua.⁶² A lot of companies are re-locating to the area. These include construction companies, dealers in building materials, fuel filling stations and supermarkets. Thus, Asuofua is fast assuming a sub-urban status and this is giving the church some positive signals of growth, as some of the church members reside closer to employment centres.

In terms of employment, it is evident that a majority of the members are self employed as traders and farmers. According to Rita Benim, a petty trader at Asuofua, "they are their own masters and can decide when to close from work".⁶³ This has positive impact on church attendance since they can be available for services. The implication of this is that there are many members for evening services, which in turn

⁶² Interview with Charles Sunkore Benim, Asuofua, 28th February, 2015.

⁶³ Interview with Rita Benim, Asuofua, 28th February, 2015.

promotes organic growth, since regular fellowship and worship are key ingredients in the growth of Christians.

Summary of Analysis

The tables presented in 4.2 represent the Frafra Community Baptist Churches located in Ashanti and the socio-economic factors on church membership. As far as education is concerned, it is evident from the tables that the churches in Kumasi have more students at the senior and tertiary levels than those located outside Kumasi due to sponsorship which may be easier for students in Kumasi than their counterparts outside Kumasi. The implication of this trend is that as far as leadership development is concerned, the churches in Kumasi may be able to develop more leaders who are literate than those outside the metropolis. The impact of education on leadership development and sustainability remains a crucial factor for the churches.

With respect to the type of employment that the members are involved in, it is evident that majority of the Frafra are involved in low class employment such as trading, farming and portering.

The Frafra in Kumasi tend to be attracted to trading and portering because of the business climate. On the other hand a larger number of those located outside Kumasi tend to be farm labourers popularly known as “by day” workers. Thus, the churches in Kumasi are financially stronger and capable of supporting church activities than those in the rural or sub urban areas outside Kumasi.

4.3 Frafra Community Churches and Spiritual Growth

The Frafra Community Churches are mono-ethnic entities who use vernacular for worship. The people therefore understand the Christian teachings and also endeavour to practice them. In the view of Rev. Charles Ayindenaba, their level of maturity in

the Christian faith has therefore been enhanced. In the Frafra Community Churches teaching, preaching, prayer, music and dance are done in the Frafra language. The people are given the opportunity to read the scriptures in their own language and this promotes indigenization and fosters unity amongst the members.⁶⁴

4.4 The Frafra Community Churches and the Quest for indigenous leadership

The Frafra Community Churches continue to witness a massive growth through the establishment of more churches. This trend calls for the development of theologically sound leaders who can lead these churches. The grooming of more promising Christians to take up leadership roles remains a challenge.

In response to this challenge a denomination track concept of ministry was developed to train leaders for these churches. It was set up as a discipleship model of ministerial training, which has yielded good results in that more capable leaders (now pastors) have been produced. These include Rev. Moses Apore who pastors the First Baptist Church; Rev. Solomon Ayamga for the Ascension Baptist Church; Rev. Thomas Amalba for the St. James Baptist Frafra Community Church, Rev. Moses Baba for the Ahenkro Church, and others.

A new training programme has also been initiated to train potential pastors. The programme is a two-year diploma offered at the Ghana Baptist University College. Currently, there are twenty-eight (28) trainee pastors of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches who are undergoing training. Upon completion of the programme, the trainees will be commissioned as full-time pastors of their respective churches. Asked about their views of the theological training that they are undergoing, Rev. Moses Baba, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, said it is a dream come true and they see

⁶⁴ Interview with Rev. Charles Ayindenaba, Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, 30th January, 2015.

their training as an opportunity to develop their potentials for the ministry.⁶⁵ The crucial question facing the Frafra Community Churches in Southern Ghana is the issue of continuity and sustainability of the church planting and church growth.

One of the significant developments of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches Movement in Southern Ghana has been in the area of infrastructure. The Eternal life Frafra Community Baptist Church has acquired three plots of land at Moshie Zongo of which two plots have been developed into an auditorium and office complex.

The remaining one plot has been set aside for a mission house. The Barekese church is worshipping in their own structure built on two plots of land. Also the Ahenkro Church is putting up a structure on a two-plot land which is near completion. Other churches which have acquired building plots are Asante Mampong Church, Asuofua Church and the Konongo Church. Also an eighteen-acre land has also been secured by the Eternal Life Baptist Church at Mankranso to be developed into a Vocational Training Centre. The impact of the infrastructural development on the Frafra Community Baptist Churches is that, as they construct chapels it speeds up growth as the members feel proud of their chapels. Also means that the churches have become strong financially.

Secondly, to sustain the organic unity of the Frafra Community Churches in Ashanti, an annual cultural festival has been instituted. This festival brings together all the Frafra Community Baptist Churches and the Frafra Churches of other denominations, to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Frafra through music and dance. According to Rev. Moses Apore, such occasions also foster unity of the churches, and also open doors for non-Christian Frafra to become Christians. Thus the programme,

⁶⁵ Interview with Rev. Moses Baba, Resident Pastor, Ahenkro Baptist Church, 4th March, 2015.

though cultural in nature, is also evangelistic and has contributed in no small measure to bringing some Frafra to salvation in Christ.⁶⁶

Thirdly, there exists a welfare system within the Churches that seeks to enhance mutual support and care among the membership. The Eternal Life Baptist Church which is the mother church spearheads this system whereby upon the death of any member in of the Local Churches, each Frafra Community Baptist Church member, no matter where he resides, contributes an amount of two Ghana cedis (GH¢2.00) as donation for the funeral. This amount which seems affordable for the people has been sustained over the years and has also united the people into one family.

The welfare system is not only benefiting the bereaved families, but is significant in strengthening fellowship amongst the entire membership of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches in the Ashanti Region.

Lastly, the Eternal Life Baptist Church at Moshie Zongo has initiated an area fellowship programme which is being replicated in the other churches. The area fellowship programme ensures that members residing in a particular location meet once in a week for Bible study and prayers. Rev. Charles Ayindenaba is of the view that, the fellowships serve as “doors” to the mother church whereby new members are won at such locations. This is made possible through the annual love feast and friends day that are organized at the area fellowship level. This programme is not only evangelistic but also meant to foster unity among the church members.⁶⁷ Again, many Frafra who are born and bred in Kumasi but cannot speak their mother-tongue are given the opportunity to learn such through the house fellowships.

⁶⁶ Interview with Rev. Moses Apore, Chairman of the Frafra Churches Joint Fellowship, 25th February, 2015.

⁶⁷ Interview with Rev. Charles Ayindenaba, Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, 30th January, 2015.

4.6 Conclusion

The discussion so far has focused on the growth of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches in the Ashanti Region. It has addressed issues such as socio-economic factors and church membership, the Frafra Community Churches and spiritual growth, the Frafra churches and the quest for indigenous leadership and the continuity and sustainability of the Frafra Community Church movement. Beginning from a small beginning, the movement witnessed a tremendous growth in numbers, and also in ministry and spirituality with the adoption of the mother tongue approach.

Among the factors of growth is the impact of migration of the Frafra from Northern Ghana to the south in search of jobs. As the migrants come to the south, some of them find their way into the Frafra community churches. Even though some of these migrants often return to their traditional homelands at the onset of the rains, there are some who are permanently settled with or without their families in the south. They constitute the permanent membership of the Frafra Community Baptist Church.

The settlers have produced the Southern born and bred Frafra, and who form the backbone of the churches. As some of these get good jobs, they become financially sound and are able to support the churches.

The programmes of the churches such as fellowship, annual cultural festivals and welfare schemes are all geared towards organic growth. Members who show signs of maturity are being given theological training in order to handle the new churches that are established.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Frafra mono-ethnic church movement in southern Ghana is yielding good results.

CHPATER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study considered a brief history of the missionary enterprise of the Ghana Baptist Convention. It examined among other issues the beginnings of the Baptist missionary work in Ghana, with emphasis on the Yoruba Baptist Association and the Ghanaian Indigenous Baptist Church movement. Also, the beginnings of Baptist work in Northern Ghana was examined along with the emergence and development of Ghanaian Baptist Leadership which brought about Ghana Baptist Mission and the formation of the Ghana Baptist Convention. Also political developments at the time which centred on a government quit order for foreign nationals or aliens to leave the country was addressed. This development culminated in the departure of the Yoruba who had been the brain behind the Baptist Movement in Ghana. Despite the distress which the quit order caused to the foreigners, it accelerated the indigenization of the Baptist Church in Ghana.

The study continued to examine the background of the Frafra people and the establishment of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches in the Ashanti Region in particular between 1993 and 2013. It considered the origin of the Frafra, as well as issues relating to their socio-religious and political organization. Also addressed in this section is the occupation of the Frafra in their traditional homeland, their migration to the southern parts of Ghana, and the characteristics of the southern-born Frafra people as key elements in the Frafra Churches in Ashanti.

The study further examined the establishment of Frafra Community Churches in Ashanti with particular emphasis on the establishment of the first Frafra Community

Baptist Church, the pioneering role played by Rev. Mark Nso-Yine and the establishment of other Frafra Community Baptist Churches. The account follows with assessment of the growth of these Churches. This was based on the numerical strength of ten churches selected for evaluation and analysis. The assessment was carried out to ascertain the factors responsible for the growth or otherwise in terms of the membership of the selected churches, the nature of spiritual growth, as well as the expansion of the church in terms of church planting. Of particular interest in the analysis is the consideration of the socio-economic factors which affect membership and spiritual growth as well as the sustainability and continuity of the Frafra Community Baptist Church Movement in southern Ghana.

The study concludes on the note that, Frafra Community Churches have capacity for growth in terms of numerical, organic, incarnational, and expansion in terms of church planting.

5.2 General Conclusion

The study set out to assess the growth or otherwise of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches in the Ashanti region. Having considered the factors responsible for the planting of the Frafra Community Baptist Churches, as well as numerical organic incarnational and expansion growth, it can be concluded that the Frafra community Baptist Churches are viable entities and have capacities for growth based on the measures that have been put in place. These include the development of indigenous leadership, and common identity of the congregation in terms of language and social relationships. Again the collaboration between the church and the Frafra community leaders enables many of the Frafras to identify with the churches and they see the churches as their home church.

The holistic ministry of the church which involves the meeting of needs of the people, has made the churches become a home away from home for the Frafra Christians. Above all, as the people are given the opportunity to worship in line with their own cultural setting, they are able to come to terms with deeper truths of Christianity. This inspires spiritual growth and makes the Christian faith culturally relevant. Therefore, the mono-ethnic church movement in southern Ghana is a viable option as it enables indigenous people to approach Jesus by themselves and to appreciate him in their own socio-cultural environment.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Missionary Vision

The emergence of Frafra Community Churches in the south of Ghana is of tremendous strategic importance to the evangelization of traditional homelands. Therefore, a sense of responsibility and missionary commitment to fellow tribal people in other southern areas and in the homeland is to be encouraged. There is a need to develop structures for training, sending and supporting missionary outreach to strengthen the new churches and accelerate the evangelization of traditional homelands. Plans should be put in place to encourage church planting in the Frafra homeland so as to ensure the continuity and sustainability of their Christian faith.

5.3.2 Entrepreneurial Development

A system to develop skills and enable the southern Frafra to learn trades is to be encouraged and intensified. This will offer the people the opportunity to be self-employed, independent and thus open the doors for their emancipation. Funds should be allocated for such skills training and entrepreneurial development.

5.3.3 Literacy Development

The significance of literacy in the comprehension of spiritual truths cannot be underestimated. Therefore, a well structured literacy programme should be put in place to assist the people to develop reading and writing skills. This will enable the people to read and understand the scriptures by themselves and for themselves.

5.3.4 Educational Support

Again, a well resourced educational fund should be established to offer scholarships and support mechanisms for brilliant but needy children to develop their potentials in education. This could that in the future, the church could get enlightened leaders who can support the church.

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INTERVIEW PERSONALITIES

Priscilla Bonsu, Atonsu 20th January, 2015.

Charles Sunkore Benim, Asuofua, 28th February, 2015.

Rita Benim, Asuofua, 28th February, 2015.

Rev. Charles Ayindenaba, Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, 30th January, 2015.

Rev. Moses Baba, Resident Pastor, Ahenkro Baptist Church, 4th March, 2015.

Rev. Moses Apore, Chairman of the Frafra Churches Joint Fellowship, 25th February, 2015.

Rev. Charles Ayindenaba, Eternal Life Baptist Church, Moshie Zongo, 30th January, 2015.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What are your views about:
 - The church?
 - God, (Yine)?
 - Ancestors?
 - The earth goddess?
 - Traditional groves?
 - The Frafra permanently settled in Kumasi?
2. Do you think there are some conditions in the Frafra homeland that militate against progress?
3. If yes, what are some of these?
4. In your view, how can these problems be solved?

QUESTIONS FOR MIGRANT FRAFRA

1. When did you come to Southern Ghana?
2. Why did you come?
3. Where do you reside?
4. Do you encounter any problems in seeking for a job?
5. If yes, what are some of these problems?
6. Do you hope to return to your homeland?
7. If yes, when?
8. Are you here alone or with your family?
9. What are your views about:
 - Church?
 - Education?
 - Other people who are not Frafra?
10. Do you belong to any church?
11. If yes, which church?
12. Why did you decide to join that church?

**QUESTIONS FOR THE FRAFRA BORN IN THE ASHANTI REGION
(PERMANENTLY RESIDENT)**

1. How long have you been residing in the Ashanti Region?
2. Where do you stay?
3. What is your occupation?
4. How often do you visit your traditional homeland?
5. What are your views about:
 - Church?
 - Other people who are not Frafra?
6. Do you encounter any problems in relating with other people who are not Frafra?
7. Do you belong to any Church?
8. If yes, what is the name of the Church?
9. Why did you decide to join that Church?

APPENDIX II

TABLES

Name of Church	Date Established
St. James Baptist Church, Bantama	30 th March, 1997
Ascension Baptist Church, Bomso	9 th August, 1998
Barekese Baptist Church, Barekese	30 th January, 1999
First Baptist Church, Akwatialine	23 rd October, 1999
Mampong Baptist Church, Mampong	2 nd August, 2001
Ahenkro Baptist Church, Ahenkro	19 th March, 2006
Atimatim Baptist Church, Mampong	9 th April, 2006
Ampabame Baptist Church, Ampabame	2 nd August, 2006
Konongo Baptist Church, Konongo	20 th August, 2006
Kotwi Baptist Church, Kotwi	20 th August, 2006
Wadie Adwumakese Baptist Church, Wadie Adwumakese	15 th August, 2008
Ahinsan Baptist Church, Ahinsan	22 nd August, 2010
Asuafua Baptist Church, Asuafua	27 th February, 2011
Adagya Baptist Church, Adagya	25 th December, 2011
Nsuta Baptist Church, Nsuta	27 th February, 2012
Royal Baptist Church, Kenyase-Kwabre	25 th May, 2012
Bima Baptist Church, Bima	13 th April, 2013
Agona Baptist Church, Agona	4 th August, 2013
Abofour Baptist Church, Abofour	11 th August, 2013

APPENDIX III

RELEVANT PICTURES



Eternal Life Baptist Church, Anyano, Kumasi





Agona Baptist Church, Agona Ashanti



Ahenkro Baptist Church, Ahenkro



First Baptist Church, Akwatialine Kumasi



Abofour Baptist Church, Abofour



Mampong Baptist Church, Mampong Ashanti



Asuafua Baptist Church, Asuafua