

**CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, KUMASI**

**Department of Theology**



**THE ASANTE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR  
CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE TODAY.**

**PROJECT WORK  
(LONG ESSAY)**

**By**

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**MAY, 2015.**

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**A long essay submitted to Christian Service University College, in partial  
fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in  
Theology with Administration.**

**MAY, 2015.**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Long Essay has been prepared by myself, that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree, that the work of which it is a record has been done by myself, that all quotations have been distinguished by either quotation marks or indentation and all the sources of information specifically acknowledged by means of footnotes.

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## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to God Almighty, who lifted me up when I thought I had come to my 'educational end' and told me there was more He had put on me and that I can do all things through the strength His Son Jesus provides. Thank you my father and Lord.

To my wonderful wife Mrs. Abena Frimpomaa Baryeh for her love, patience and kindness to me for coping with my absence during the four years course of study, I say God bless you and my daughter, Vera Boatemaa Baryeh.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTROCDUTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Asante is one of the major tribes among the Akans, and, is the largest and popular tribe in Ghana. Asante is politically and traditionally a kingdom, and, is one of the few surviving kingdoms in Africa, and the only kingdom in Ghana. The people of Asante occupy one of the ten administrative Regions in Ghana, namely Ashanti Region. Therefore, the Asante Twi language is well spoken and understood by many people in Ghana. Asante, as kinsmen have many political, social, religious and cultural institutions. Within the context of Asante, to ignore the traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices can only lead to lack of understanding of Ghanaian behaviour and problems. It is based on this idea that the Asantes attach great importance to marriage.

Marriage according to the oxford dictionary is the formal union of a man and a woman, typically as recognized by Law, by which they become husband and wife.<sup>1</sup> Marriage is the recognized institution for the establishment and maintenance of family life. It therefore means that without the institution of marriage there would be no family, nuclear or extended, and therefore no kinship ties. Therefore the Asantes view marriage as the duty of every young man or woman in other to give birth to children who will continue that generation of family and let his or her name be remembered after his or her death.

With the Asante traditional set up, one is qualified to become an ancestor when during his lifetime one was able to marry and give birth to a child. If the opposite happened, one is disqualified to assume the position of ancestor. A dead man without a child is

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<sup>1</sup> A. S. Hornsby, *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary* seventh edition (London: Oxford University Press, 2006), 904.

regarded as an irresponsible person who has refused to assist in increasing the number of people in that family or clan.

Marriage contract, according to the Asantes, go beyond an affair taking place between the two persons who have fallen in love, it is actually the union between the families of the two persons who have fallen in love. G. K. Nukunya, commenting on this, says “When a couple is joined in marriage, their respective lineages and families automatically become final relatives while the children of the union are kin to all”.<sup>2</sup>

However, within the Ghanaian context, marriage systems vary from one ethnic group to the other due to differences in culture. The way a particular group of people behave and go about their daily activities depend heavily on the culture they inherited. In fact, it can be said that culture gives the outline of living from the biblical perspective, marriage is considered as a divine institution. God ordained it, and it was good in His sight. According to the biblical teaching, marriage is a union between a man and a woman. It consists of three distinct aspects; companionship, mutual help and the fulfillment of the sexual natures of man and woman (Genesis 4:1; 2:18; Mark 10:7). Marriage is said to be an ordinance of creation and it is God’s gift to all humankind: He made marriage for men and women, and He made men and women for marriage.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, was born to this world within the cultural environment, and, no doubt the culture of the Jews played a role in His day to day activities. As a result, in the propagation of the gospel to any cultural group, desperate congruence of their peculiar cultural context must be taken into consideration. It is clear that wherever the gospel goes it confronts culture and the impact cannot be over looked.

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<sup>2</sup> G. K. Nukunya, *Traditional and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra: University Press, 2003), 41.

The Asante culture like other cultures is a special handiwork of God. God purposefully gave each culture its uniqueness. It must be noted that, in order to make an impact on a society, its cultural practices must be studied. Our Lord Jesus made use of the Jewish culture in his teaching, because He wanted His listeners to understand what He wanted to get across to them.

People mostly understand when issues are presented to them in a language or images which they are familiar with. The good news spread among the Asantes about some decades ago by missionaries from the mainline churches like Methodist, Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian and other churches. These missionaries did achieve lots in terms of spreading the gospel, yet, according to oral tradition, the influence of traditional religion at that time was very strong.

However, these enthusiastic missionaries might have failed to study the culture of the Asante fully enough, and as such the church shun most traditional concepts including other aspect of the Asante concept of marriage. This has subsequently brought about serious tension between the church and the Asante tradition, especially their cultural concept of marriage. This concept has been branded as religious rituals. The confusion is still not dealt with by Christian Scholars, and Christian marriages today are facing so many confusion and challenges even more than before.

Furthermore, the Asante people in Ghana, upon their dominance in Ghanaian culture, do not have any uniform documented and well structured material about their marriage practices and concept. Sociologist, anthropologists and theologians have not worked immensely in this major tribe in Ghana. Other Scholars and Theologians like Kwasi Sarpong and Asamoah Gyadu have tried to do something, but, some aspects have still

not been touched, especially the Asante concept of marriage and its implication for Christian marriage.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The study addresses the following questions.

1. Is the Asante concept of marriage a problem to Christianity today?
2. Can the challenges in the Christian marriages today be attributed to the concept of the Asante traditional marriage?
3. What impact is the Asante concept of marriage having on the Christian marriage today?

### **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

As stated earlier, the Asante cultural practices were there long before Christianity came to this part of the world. The aim of the research into the Asantes concept of marriage is to find out the concept behind the marriage institution of the Asante that are in consonance with the scripture and as such, the churches can feel comfortable to maintain them. Further, this paper intends to identify the traditional marriage practices that are in conflict with the scripture that the church can cleanse as well as those practices in the institution that need to be modified. To the people of Asante, marriage is uniquely beneficial to society. It is clearly regarded as the foundation of the family and the basic building block of society. With this mentality, every man or woman who reaches adulthood is expected to marry and bear children.

The objective of the researcher therefore is to come out with a material that would further deepen the concept of marriage which takes place within the Asante context and the rites and practices involved. This research work is necessary to serve as a source of reference and guidance for churches when it comes to issues relating to marriage within

the Asante traditional set up, and its relationship with the marriage according to the scripture.

However, Kwame Gyekye has stated that Marriage is thus essential to the development and enlargement of kinship ties, which are a characteristic feature of the African society.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.5 Research Methodology**

The research information shall be gathered through orals as well as structured interviews to Christians and Traditional leaders. Also, elderly men and women in the community who are well experienced in traditional activities and institution shall be interviewed. The researcher might also take personal involvement (observation) in any marriage ceremony in the community, and, the fact that the researcher is an Asante also serve as a useful source of information. This field of research is relevant in the sense that enough has not been achieved in terms of books or materials that deal with the issue of Asante cultural practices. Nevertheless, books and thesis that have relevance to the issues at stake would be consulted when necessary.

#### **1.5.1 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher's main source of data collection procedure is questionnaire. Before the respondents are given copies of the questionnaire, the researcher will obtain a letter of introduction from the department of Theology, Christian Service University College, to the traditionalists in the area as well as some Christians.

Due to the unreliable nature of the country's postal system and since the area is easily accessible, and mobile phones are also available; the necessary arrangements would be made to get the traditionalists concerned interviewed. This method will involve a lot of

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<sup>3</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values* (Accra: Ikam Press, 1996), 67.

movement on the part of the researcher to the Santasi traditional area in order to facilitate direct contact with the traditionalists.

The procedure will help minimize cost. The researcher will re-assure them of confidentiality of whatever information or opinion given. Books, articles as well as internet information have been acquired to study for knowledge about the Asantes, Akan, and African traditional marriage, and that of the Christian or Biblical concept of marriage.

### **1.5.2 Sample and Sampling Technique**

The traditional leaders, all the sub-chiefs and family heads will be selected as part of the sample. The sub-chiefs will be considered for the reason that they interact directly with the families of the community for family issues which includes marital affairs.

In order to obtain more detailed, accurate and less biased information, selection has been made by purposive (useful) sampling method. Those traditionalists who have been purposively selected include a Queen mother and an elder or a family head. They have therefore provided relevant information to the researcher.

Apart from the above mentioned leaders in the community who were purposively sampled, others like pastors, opinion leaders and some “ordinary” people were randomly consulted.

### **1.5.3 Method of Data Analysis**

The first stage was to prepare a set of edited interview questions. In order to draw conclusions from the interview, the responses obtained from the interview had been summarized and the conclusions had been used to make the recommendations for the study.

## **1.6 Scope and Content of the Study**

For the researcher to produce quality work, it is necessary to get parameters. Thus, the scope of this research is limited to only Santasi - old town, which is one of the suburbs in the Kumasi Metropolis, where the area is typically and dominantly occupied by Asantes.

The work is categorized into five main chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction that deals with the Background of the Study, Statement of Problem, the Research Questions, Aim and Objectives of the Study, Significance of the Study, Research Methodology and the Literature Review. Chapter two seeks to talk about the marriage institution from the Asante and Christian perspective. Under this topic, the researcher considers the Marriage in Africa, the meaning of marriage in the Asante context, biblical basis of marriage and the meaning of marriage from the Christian perspective. The third chapter focuses on the nature of the Asante traditional marriage and Christian marriage practice. The topic takes a look at the Nature and process of the Asante traditional marriage, the Christian understanding of marriage, family life from the biblical perspective and the family in Asante mentality. Chapter four is concentrated solely on the main issue at stake: The implications of Asante concept of marriage for Christian marriage today. The emphasis is mainly on the marriage as symbol of unity and identity, marriage and family life and the biblical mandate of marriage. The fifth and the final chapter also deals with the Summary of the study which highlights the main points, then, the conclusion of the study is drawn and the suggestions or recommendations that will help address the tension between the church and the traditionalist of the Asante people now and the future are finally considered.

## **1.7 Literature Review**

In carrying out any research, it is vital that we consider the views and opinion of scholars who have carried out studies similar to the study on hand. This is significant to give a sense of direction and focus to the study.

### **1.7.1 Christian Understanding of Marriage**

Ward Powers points out that “the meaning and significance of marriage goes back to God’s plan in the original creation. It is a creation-ordinance, and derives from the intention of God in the very way in which he made male and female. Therefore to find and to follow God’s purpose in marriage is to be in harmony with the very nature of man as God created them”.<sup>4</sup>

Sproul states that “to the Christian faith, marriage is not a late development of an advanced civilization. It doesn’t emerge on the plain (easily understood) of history as an arbitrary societal convention. Rather, the institution of marriage is located in the divine commandment in creation”.<sup>5</sup>

Powers says that, God intended marriage to be a sacred institution involving the male and female which was depicted in God’s original plan in creation. Sproul also states marriage is not a new thing on the plain (easily understood) of history but is also located in the divine commandment in creation. This means marriage is a sacred institution and was established by God long time ago.

Post is of the view that when men and women marry and bring children into the world, they migrate into a new sphere of mature love that will both challenge and change them. Conjugal (relating to marriage) love and subsequent parental (relating to parents)

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<sup>4</sup> B. Ward Powers, *Marriage and Divorce: The New Testament Teaching* (Australia: Impact Ltd., 1957), 44.

<sup>5</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Intimate Marriage* (Illinois: Tyndale Publishing House, 1986), 112.



love form the basis of the family.<sup>6</sup> According to the United Methodist Church Marriage Manual, “marriage is a human institution in which men and women of all cultures participate in various ways. But it contends that marriage is more than a human institution. It is also a divine institution, a gift from God, a part of this divine plan. It concludes that traditionally, Christians believe in the marriage of one man and one woman”.<sup>7</sup>

The Methodist manual sees marriage as not just a human institution, but also a divine institution in which God is very much interested in. The manual does not mention same-sex marriage but states categorically clear that traditional Christians believe in the marriage of one man and one woman. The essence of Post argument is that men and women enter into marriage and bring forth children. This is the stand of Post which is relevant to the research.

### **1.7.2 Marriage from Biblical Perspective**

McLuhan in his work points out that, “the scripture clearly indicates that neither the legal, commercial union, the sexual union, or, all of them together truly and completely constitute divinely ordained marriage. Only the full joining of two persons in the totally unified being of marital oneness constitutes scriptural marriage”.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Way House argues that, “God’s plan for marriage as indicated in Genesis 2:24, first involves “leaving”. He adds that because God made woman, man must let go of his parents, with a view to establishing his own home and family”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> S. T. Post, *More Lasting Unions: Christianity, the Family and Society* (Michigan: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 5.

<sup>7</sup> United Methodist Church Marriage Manual, *To Love and To Cherish* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Methodist Publishing House, 1991), 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> M. G. McLuhan, *Marriage and Divorce: God’s Will, God’s Compassion* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers INC. 1991), 10.

<sup>9</sup> H. W. House, *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1990), 17.

On the part of Ellison, “the Bible sees marriage and the fulfilling of one’s sexual passions within that union as a gift from seductions of sin. That union is a holy one, for it was established by God”.<sup>10</sup> According to Telford, “divorce is inconsistent with the divine institution of marriage where God made man, male and female, and said, “A man shall leave his parents and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”. This clearly implies the permanent partnership of one man and one woman, till parted by death. Marriage is more than people signing a contract to live together. It is union”.<sup>11</sup> Peterson believes that, “in their wedding vows, a man and a woman commit themselves to the mutual responsibility and challenge of sharing life together”.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Ellison and Telford are all of the view that marriage is a union between persons. Peterson on the other hand says that marriage is not just a union but the partners complement each other. This means that whatever happens to one of the couples affects the other. In view of Okeke, the Bible constitutes the standard for every conduct of man, and that includes marriage. Therefore any form of marriage is to be subjected to God’s standards.

To Evans, “both husband and wife are “one flesh” and that continues so long as they are in the flesh, and they must remain so. This is God’s mandate; no man dare break it. Death alone – and also that which Jesus called fornication – can annul and dissolve that which God had joined together. But nothing else in all God’s creation can dissolve that which God, in the beginning, made indissoluble”.<sup>13</sup>

The writer points out that both husband and wife are one flesh. But he fails to indicate who the husband and wife are by way of sex.

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<sup>10</sup> S. A. Ellison, *Divorce and Marriage in the Church* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 37.

<sup>11</sup> A. Telford, *Why No Divorce* (Florida: No Publishers, No Date)

<sup>12</sup> A. J. Peterson, *Two Become One* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1973), 9.

<sup>13</sup> W. Evans, *The Right and Wrong in Divorce and Remarriage* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, No date), 104.

According to Smith, “woman was created first and foremost to help man’s aloneness. God met that need, not with Himself, but with someone just like Adam. It is interesting to note that God said He would *make* (not find) a helper for Adam, after which He proceeded to show him all the animals. God could fill, but He wanted Adam to come to that conclusion on his own”.<sup>14</sup>

So, In the view of Smith, the woman was created to solve man’s problem of loneliness. But does that constitute marriage as the writer refers to? This study will attempt to find out the biblical basis of marriage.

Olson and Defrain state that, “marriage and family life are microcosms of life itself. They can bring both great joy and terrible pain. A healthy marriage and family can be a valuable resource during difficult times. Conversely, unhealthy or dysfunctional relationships can create problems that may persist from one generation to the next. Marriage and family are perhaps society’s oldest and most resident institutions”.<sup>15</sup>

The writer points out that, marriage and family are dependent on healthy relationships, but fail to state the partners in the relationships. This study will attempt to examine the partners in marriage as ordained by God and supported by the scriptures.

Moreover, to Myers, “couples will leave the altar with the bright sun of hope shining in their faces to launch new homes. God made us for each other, that we may fulfill each other and complement each other in many ways”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> C. Smith, *Why Just be Married why you can be Best Friends* (Colorado: Navi Press, 1989), 19.

<sup>15</sup> D. H. Olson & J. Defrain, *Marriage and Families: Intimacy, Diversity and Strengths* 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2006), 2.

<sup>16</sup> T. C. Myers, *Happiness is Still Hememade* (London: Word Book Publishers, 1969), 3.

So, Myers refers to couples as leaving the altar with shining faces to launch new homes. And, this is significant for the study which examines the biblical basis of marriage.

Okeke states that, “African Christians live within a society very rich in culture and they can afford to pattern their long culturally accepted system. But is that what makes their marriage happy? He asks. God’s standards according to the writer as presented in the Bible, transcend culture and therefore can be applied to any culture and race”.<sup>17</sup>

In the view of the author, the Bible constitutes the standard for every conduct of man, and that includes marriage. Therefore any form of marriage is to be subjected to God’s standards. This is significant for the study which examines the biblical basis of marriage.

### **1.7.3 Marriage from African Perspective**

On the issue of traditional marriage, Sarpong is of the view that, “in all African societies, the search for a marriage partners is the duty of the man. Here in Ghana it is considered disgraceful for a woman even to express openly her interest in a man. The overt initiative must come from the man, either personally or through his father, mother, uncle, or some other relatives. Acting as a group, they approach a girl’s people and ask for a hand, after they have suggested her to the man”.<sup>18</sup>

Sarpong comments that, “to marry is one thing; to be a good wife is quite another. Knowing this very well, Asante women are the last persons to exonerate all wives, or blame husbands for all family troubles. The women resent the unwisely woman because she is a disgrace to her sex. A good wife is obedient to her husband, faithful,

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<sup>17</sup> S. E. K. Okeke, *Made for Love: Marriage as it was meant to be* (Michigan: Lion Publishing Corporation, 1986), 9.

<sup>18</sup> P. Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 81.

hardworking, helpful, and not quarrelsome, she knows how to restrain her tongue and does not talk to others about confidential matters between her and her husband, and so on”.<sup>19</sup>

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

This research will assist the upcoming missionaries, pastors, church leaders and Christians as a whole in the various churches to make sound judgment in matters concerning the Asante marriage, and, that will enable the gospel to make great impact in the Asante society. Secondly, having in-depth knowledge in this marriage dynamics will invariably help the contemporary churches in this vast traditional area in Ghana to avoid certain confusions that sometimes give way for unnecessary conflicts between the church and the Asante traditionalists.

### **1.9 Organization of Chapters**

The research is organized into five chapters with each chapter having an outline of what it entails. Chapter one has the general introduction, which constitute,

The background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, aims and objectives, scope or focus of the study, the methodology used literature review, significance of the study as well as the organization of the chapters.

Chapter two, deals with the marriage in Africa, the meaning of marriage in the Asante Context, the biblical basis of marriage. The next focus is shifted to the meaning of marriage from Christian perspective as well, and finally the conclusion.

Chapter three will start with an introduction to the nature of Asante marriage and Christian marriage practice, the nature and process of the Asante marriage, the Christian understanding of marriage, family life from biblical perspective, the family in Asante mentality and as well as Christian marriage today.

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<sup>19</sup> P. Sarpong, *Girl's Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1977), 81.

Chapter four starts with the introduction to the chapter, marriage as symbol of unity and identity, marriage and family life as well as the biblical mandate of marriage.

The final chapter which is chapter five starts with the summary of the study and the conclusion of the study, and ending with recommendations from the researcher.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MARRIAGE INSTITUTION FROM THE ASANTE AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

#### 2.1 Introduction

Since marriage is at the centre of human life, it is to be expected that there should be marriage customs, throughout Africa. Again, how it meant to the people of Africa in terms of their belief with respect to the African traditional religion and that of Christianity should be taken into consideration.

It is important for those who are not Africans to suspend any preconceived ideas about what marriage should be when discussing African marriage. African marriages are not like Western ones. African concept of marriage is very unique and has developed.

#### 2.2 Marriage in Africa

African marriage is an alliance between two families, not just the union of a man and a woman. However, the bond between the couple's families grows with each gift (eg. cow, goat, kola, schnapps etc) given. The family or parents of the wife who receive the gift from their son-in-law is reminded of the bond everyday by the sight of the cows, goats in the backyard. The cattle take on relational value – the herd becomes a “shadow family” when the marriage gift are given all at once – or when money becomes the principal medium – the nurturing of the family ties, symbolized by the increase of the number of cows or goats is lost.<sup>20</sup>

African marriage is not one time event, but, it is a process. Just as cement must dry slowly for it to become strong, so it is with African marriages. There is wisdom to be

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<sup>20</sup> Kituyi Mukhisa, *Becoming Kenyans: Socioeconomic Transformation of the Pastoral Maasai* (Nairobi: ACTS Press, 1990), 220.

found in this understanding of a lifelong relationship. Over a period of several years there are various stages. Each requires a different kind of ceremony, with different gift. Some say the marriage gift is never fully completed.<sup>21</sup>

For Africans, the final ceremony is performed after the children are born but before any of them are at the age of initiation. It is important to note that the entire celebration seems to revolve around the wife. The ceremony begins with the wife receiving a blessing in her mother's home. Then the wife makes a symbolic procession back to her husband's home because the wife has now established herself and her family's reputation in her husband's home. She now commands honor and respect. When the gift of an animal is given, the legs of the animal are tied to its neck just as the marriage, is bound in a permanent knot. Mutual trust has been built between the families and the husband speaks warmly of his wife.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.3 The Meaning of Marriage in the Asante Context**

According to the way Asante look at marriage, it has several meanings and purposes. Marriage fulfills the obligation, the duty and the custom that every normal person should get married and bear children. This is believed to go back to the very beginning of human life. Failure to get married is like committing a crime against traditional beliefs and practices.

Marriage is the uniting link in the rhythm of life. All generations are bound together in the act of marriage – past, present and future generation. The past generations are many but they are represented in one's parents; the present generation is represented in one's own life, and future generations begin to come on the stage through childbearing.

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<sup>21</sup> Middleton, John & Geert Kershaw, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (London: International African Institute, 1972), 61.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Spencer, *The Maasai of Matapato: A Study of Rituals of Rebellion* (Indianapolis: Indian University Press, 1988), 33.



The purpose of marriage according to the people of Asante is to bear children, to build a family, to extend life, and to hand down the living torch of human existence. For this reason, a marriage becomes fully accepted only when one or more children have been born. It is a very tragic thing when no children come out of a marriage. The people do not consider it to be truly a marriage, and other arrangements are made to obtain children in the family. Marriage also provides for new social relationships to be established between the families and relatives involved. It extends to web of kinship socially.

Through marriage and childbearing, the parents are remembered by their children when they die. Anyone who dies without leaving behind a child or close relative to remember him/her or pour out libations for him is a very unfortunate person. Therefore marriage is intimately linked up with the religious beliefs about the continuation of life beyond death.

Marriage according to the Asante, is regarded as the counter-measure against the lost immortality which is talked about in so many traditional myths. Through marriage the departed are in effect “reborn”, not in their total being but by having some of their physical features and characteristics or personality traits reborn in the children of the family. If no children were born these traits and features of the departed members of the family would not be seen again. While death takes away individuals one by one and disperses families, the purpose of marriage is to bring people together, to increase them, to multiply them, keep them alive.<sup>23</sup>

Marriage puts the individual and his family on the social, religious and physical map of his community. Everyone recognizes that the individual is a full person when he or she

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<sup>23</sup> T. E. Kyei, *Marriage and Divorce among the Asante* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1945), 16.

is married and has children. The life of the individual is extended beyond death when the marriage produces children, because these children succeed the parents and remain constant evidence that their father and mother once existed. The son or daughter subsequently keeps up the memory of the parents. The more children a person has, the higher is his status in society.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, marriage is the one experience without which a person is not considered to be complete “perfect”, and truly a man or woman. It makes a person really “somebody”. It is part of definition of who a person is according to Asante views about man. Without marriage a person is only a human being minors. A happy marriage and family life creates other aspects of marriage qualities such as love, good character, hard work, beauty, companionship, caring for one another, and responsibility of parents towards children and children’s responsibility towards their parents. These are qualities which grow in marriage in the Asante setting. It is as if people would say “Get married first, and these other things will follow if you make a success of your marriage”. Such a philosophy has its risks, but Asante peoples seem to take these risks and make their marriage work.

Because of these views of the meaning and purpose, It is common to find in the Asante communities such as marrying several wives, inheriting the wife of a deceased brother (or husband of a deceased sister), arranging for the wives of long-absent husbands to have children by close relatives or friends, and so on. Where these customs are followed, they are respected and accepted without any feelings of wrongdoings. They are meant to ensure that nobody is left out of marriage. These customs work in their own ways, but, the modern changes these days make it harder and harder for them all to be followed today, but they have not been altogether abandoned.

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<sup>24</sup> Kyei, *Marriage and Divorce among the Asante*, 18.

## **2.4 The Biblical Basis of Marriage**

Marriage is a covenant, a sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God and normally consummated by sexual intercourse. God's plan for marriage involves vital principles.

Marriage is intended to be permanent, since it was established by God (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9). Marriage represents a serious commitment that should not be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. It involves a solemn promise or pledge, not merely to one's marriage partner, but before God. Divorce is not permitted except in a very limited number of biblically prescribed circumstances. Marriage is not merely a human agreement between two consenting individuals (a "civil union"); it is a relationship before and under God (Genesis 2:22). Hence, a "same-sex marriage" is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms of biblical perspective of marriage, since Scripture universally condemns homosexual relationships. God will never sanction a marital bond between two members of the same sex. Marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships, uniting a man and a woman in a "one-flesh" (Genesis 2:23 -25). Marriage involves "leaving" one's family of origin and "being united" to one's spouse, which signifies the establishment of a new family unit distinct from the two originating families. While "one flesh" suggests sexual intercourse and normally procreation, at its very heart the concept entails the establishment of a new kinship relationship between two previously unrelated individuals (and families) by the most intimate of human bonds.

Marriage is a relationship of free self-giving of one human being to another (Ephesians 5:25-30). The marriage partners are to be first and foremost concerned about the wellbeing of the other person and to be committed to each other in steadfast love and devotion. This involves the need for forgiveness and restoration of the relationship in the case of sin. Mutuality, however, does not mean sameness in role. Scripture is clear

that wives are to submit to their husbands and to serve as their "suitable helpers," while husbands are to bear the ultimate responsibility for the marriage before God (Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18, 20). Marriage is not only permanent, sacred, intimate, and mutual; it is also exclusive (Genesis 2:22-25; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5). For this reason, Jesus treated sexual immorality of a married person, including even a husband's lustful thoughts, with utmost seriousness (Matthew 5:28; 19:9). For the same reason, premarital sex is also illegitimate, since it violates the exclusive claims of one's future spouse. As the Song of Solomon makes it clear, only in the secure context of an exclusive marital bond, can free and complete giving of oneself in marriage take place.

## **2.5 The Meaning of Marriage from Christian Perspective**

Most Christians see marriage as a gift from God and a sacred institution. From Christian perspective marriage is vitally important in our society, because, the institution of marriage reliably creates the social, economic and effective conditions for effective parenting.

Marriage is the most basic and significant social relationship to humankind. This relationship must be nurtured and maintained for the welfare of all. God's design for marital relationship according to Christian perspective is heterosexual (desiring opposite sex), not homosexual (attracted to same sex), and monogamous (marriage to one person), not polygamous (having multiple spouses). Human reproduction comes through intimate sexual union designed only for the marriage relationship. Co-habitation (illegitimate living in a place together as couple) abuses the procreative nature of the marriage relationship. While reproduction is a divine purpose of marriage, some couples are unable to have children for various physical reasons. This does not make their marriage second-rate or inferior. However, a married couple should desire to obey the divine injunction of procreation if possible. Children are one manifestation of

the "one flesh" of marriage. The procreative injunction obviously precludes homosexual "marriages."

God brings a man and a woman together in marriage. It is not humankind's prerogative to separate what God has chosen to put together (Matthew 19:6). As creator of the marriage relationship, God becomes the essential supporting party to a marriage, giving wisdom, discretion, understanding, and love to protect the union and to enable it to honor God. A marriage can glorify God and function properly only when both partners are believers in Jesus Christ. Then, the Holy Spirit guides and enables them in their roles and functions. However, continued reliance upon God is imperative for believing spouses.

God made man a relational being in his own image. Therefore, there is the need for intimate relationship within humankind. Such a relationship is also necessary for the reproduction and multiplication of humankind. Without the fall, probably no one would have ever been single. Perfect people would have yielded perfect marriages. Sin brought flaws in humans that sometimes make it difficult to find or sustain a suitable marriage relationship. Being single for life is an exception and, therefore, the unmarried is declared to be a gift from God. The single person is normally less encumbered in God's work. So, although marriage appears to be God's norm, singleness is neither more nor less spiritual than marriage.

A new permanent union, "Cleaving" in Genesis 2:24, pictures a strong bond between the man and the woman. The marriage bond was to be permanent. Separation or termination of the marriage union was not an option before sin entered the world and. All later revelation shows that separation or divorce was because of sin. So, God's ideal was for marriage to be permanent and exclusive.

“One flesh” involves the unity of the whole person: purpose, physical, and life, a unity whereby the two become a new, God-designed, complete life for the couple. They counterbalance each other's strengths and weaknesses. Sexually the two become “one flesh” physically as reflected in their offspring. God's ideal exclusiveness of the “one flesh” relationship disallows any other relationship: Homosexuality, Polygamy, Adultery (extramarital sex), Premarital sex, Concubinage (having a woman lover living with a man), incest, bestiality (sex with animal), cultic prostitution (somebody paid for sexual intercourse with spiritual beliefs). These and other sexual perversions violate the “oneness” of the marriage relationship and were often punishable by death. Becoming “one flesh” is used in Scripture for the consummating sexual act of marriage.

These aspects of “one flesh” argue against premarital sex, promiscuity, and perversion of the sexual act. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, so believers should be holy in their sexual conduct, keeping the marriage pure.

Commitment to exclusive sexual intimacy is treated with dignity, considered honorable and undefiled. Therefore, mutual consent is required for any temporal abstinence from sexual relations. Neither spouse is to exploit the other sexually nor use sex to gratify passionate lust.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the ideas about marriage from the Asante and Christian perspective are the same but the understanding or the meaning differ, to some extent, from the Asante perspective and that of the Christians. Both Asante and Christians leave their parents and other relatives in order to enter into alliance with some people. There are laws that regulate the degree of relationship that must exist between a man and a woman before they can legally marry, and so forth. This is obvious because the natural outcome of

marriage is children that affect the whole society. It is in this connection that marriage is so important to the Asante and the Christian. The concern to bear children in the marriage cannot be overlooked from both perspectives.

However, the Asante see marriage to be completed when children are born to the couple. To the Asante, marriage is viewed from the sociological, economical and psychological point. And, the Christian also see it from mainly the biblical point of view more than any other considerations. The word of God is considered to be the supreme guide to every Christian marriage.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE NATURE OF ASANTE MARRIAGE AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE PRACTICE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Since marriage is at the centre of human life, it is to be expected that there should be marriage customs among the Asante marriage, and the Christian understanding of marriage. Family life from Biblical perspective as well as the family in Asante mentality will be the focus. Marriage according to Mbiti, is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Therefore, marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law-breaker, he is not only abnormal but “under-human”. Failure to get married under normal circumstances means that the person concerned has rejected society and society rejects him in return. Both Asantes and Christians see marriage to be very important.<sup>25</sup>

#### **3.2 The Nature and Process of the Asante Marriage**

Among the Asantes, there is a basic process which marriage is expected to be followed. Asantes do not permit marriage within the same clan or lineage, and it is the man who has to initiate the marriage process. It is also the woman who has to leave her home, go and stay with the man. On the other hand, it happens also that, when two people from the same village marry, they stay in their respective homes, while one of them (usually the wife goes to sleep in the husbands house every night). Traditionally, it is considered disgraceful for an Asante girl or woman to express openly her interest to marry a man.

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<sup>25</sup> John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (England: Clays Ltd., 1975), 104.



The proposal must come from the man, either personally or through his father, mother, uncle, or some other relatives after the man's parents have assessed the woman and her family. Once they are certain, they approach the woman's people and ask for her hand in marriage. The woman's family invariably asks for some time to consider the matter. Both families make sure enough investigation is done. This is to satisfy them that there is nothing to prevent the union from taking place. Basically, they make sure to find out whether there are any hereditary diseases in the family, whether there is a record of criminal activity in the family and whether the family is of good moral standing.

When both families are satisfied that the union is desirable, a day is then chosen, by mutual consent, for the formal proceedings to begin. The father of the boy first performs the "knocking at the door" ceremony, called *kɔkɔkɔ*. It means that the man introduces himself to the family for the first time. This constitutes the formal betrothal. He provides drinks, such as bottles of schnapps to the woman's family or the father. The ceremony which gives legal status to the Asante marriage is performed after the betrothal ceremony. The appreciation fee *tiri nsa*. It means bride-wealth. (Schnapps-alcoholic drink) forms part of the final ceremony performed to bind a couple in legal wedlock.

In the head rum, which may be likened to "bride wealth" in the Asante society, the man's father makes a gift to the woman to show appreciation. After the final legal marriage ceremony the man fixes a date on which he will come for his wife. On that day his maternal aunts go to the girl's house and help the woman to carry her belongings to the husband's house. There is much merry-making and feasting on that day. A marriage meal is usually prepared by the bride and sent to the groom to be enjoyed by him and his relatives and friends.

The researcher had an opportunity to interview Nana Afia Konadu, the Queen mother of Atasomanso who said that children are the real inheritance in the Asante society. She went on to say that the real inheritance of the people of Asante is not the land, building, or cars but the children born to the man and the woman. According to the queen mother, if an Asante man is able to give birth to ten children, the family of the woman presents a ram *badu dwan* to the man for giving the family a large inheritance, as an appreciation. To her, the success of the marriage depends on whether children are born to the couple or not. Any woman who does not give birth to children cannot be safe in the marriage. She should expect or allow the husband to marry another woman who would give him children, if she thinks of remaining in the marriage. She said one of the main causes of divorce or polygamy is as result of bareness of the woman, in most cases.<sup>26</sup> To the researcher, it is baseless to some extent.

When the researcher asked her about the importance of the *tiri nsa* (schnapps), she said that the schnapps are the seal of the marriage contract, without the schnapps the marriage cannot be accepted as legitimate according to the Asante tradition "schnapps are used to seal almost every important contract in the Asante society" she added.

The researcher interviewed another prominent Abusuapanin, an elder, at Santasi, Nana Prince Kingsley Senya, to briefly explain the problem that faces Asante marriage. His first and major problem mentioned was childbearing. He said marriages are being collapsed and polygamy is becoming rampant due to inability of couples to bear children. To him, Asante permits divorce on the grounds of infertility. "Some times, the extended family might force the marriage to end for not producing children", he added.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Nana Afia Konadu, Queen mother Atasomanso, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Nana Prince Kingsley Senya, Abusuapanin and Elder at Santasi, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2015.

### **3.3 Christian Understanding of Marriage**

Christians understand that marriage is established by God. The husband and the wife in a marriage relationship mutually share the blessing, benefits and responsibilities of the marriage. A marriage relationship that is healthy and respected honors God. Any attempt to separate what God has put together attract the punishment of God. Since marriage is a sacred covenant under God uniting a man and a woman as one flesh, church and state expect faithfulness to God's intention that it be a permanent bond. Marriage should be honored by all.

Marriage is a covenant, a strong binding agreement made in the presence of God and people. It is a union established by the covenant of mutual promises. When the solemn oath is exchanged, a covenant is entered into, that is never to be broken.

Marriage is an institution ordained by God for all people, not only for Christians. God preordained marriage equally for non-Christians as well as for Christians. He is witness to every wedding, which is a holy event, whether the married couple understands that or not. Sex is consecrated by God only within marriage (1 Corinthians 7:2) and He condemns impurity and adultery (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is a companionship (Malachi 2:14). It is also a social and spiritual as well as a sexual union.

Marriage again is a permanent bond for one wife and one husband. God gave Adam only one wife; that is God's idea and ideal for marriage. It is also lifelong commitment which is designed to last a lifetime, and not everlasting. The Bible asserts that marriage is only a temporal institution. That is, marriage is lifelong covenant made before God, it does not extend into eternity. Because Bible does not say that there would be marriage after physical death. Jesus, in responding to the Sadducees question about the resurrection in Matthew 22:30 says "for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are

given in marriage but are like angels in heaven” Marriage according to Christians is a personal choice, not an obligation. If someone enters into a marriage, he or she is obligated to be faithful and loyal to his or her spouse. If he or she, however, decides to stay single (not get married), then he or she should abstain from sexual unity (Matthew 19:3-9; 19:10-1).

### **3.4 Family Life from Biblical Perspective**

Christians understand the family as made up of parents and their children if any. There are some key guidelines in the Bible to help Christians in family life. Christians are of the view that men and women are equal in God’s eyes (Galatians 3:26-29). The Bible contains lots of ideas about the different roles men and women should play within marriage and advice about how to get along as a family. The Bible do advice the husband to love the wife as himself and the wife to respect her husband (Ephesians 5:33).

Larry Crabb maintains that, personal meaning in God’s world depends finally on participation in God’s purposes. To build something that has no eternal impact but will disappear like castles in the sand is not meaningful. But to have a part in erecting a structure that will never crumble is meaningful. The family relationship is one of God’s creations for building people.<sup>28</sup>

Children are seen as a blessing from God (Psalm 127:3). When God made the world, He did not want it to be empty (Isaiah 45:18). In the Bible, Adam and Eve, the first humans are commanded by God to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). So having children is part of God’s plan. God created all living things including babies.

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<sup>28</sup> Larry Crabb, *The Marriage Builder: A Blueprint for Couples and Counsellors* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 90.

In the Ten Commandments, children are told to honor their parents (Exodus 20:12). This commandment is repeated in the New Testament of the Bible, where children are told to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4). Fathers in the same way are told not to exasperate their children, but to bring them up to know the Christian faith, and discipline them.

To MacArthur, the only real values that can save the family are rooted in scripture that is, the biblical values and not just family values. The future of our society therefore hinged on the success of those who are commended to the truth of scripture.<sup>29</sup>

### **3.5 The Family in Asante Mentality**

There are two types of families among the Asantes that is the nuclear and the extended family. The nuclear family is made up of only the parents and their children. The extended family is also made up of the uncles, aunties, grandparents and cousins.

In view of Gyekye, when one speaks of the family in the Africa context, it refers not to the nuclear family but to the extended family and it is held as a fundamental social value as well as a mutual value. The nuclear family exists within the broad system of the extended family where children have obligation to their parents and parents have obligation to their children.<sup>30</sup>

The family which is the basic unit of the human society and the centre for the formation of human relationships has come to an age where its survival as living and loving unit is being threatened than ever before a decline in moral character has therefore produced a decline in the character of the society. The reason for this tendency is the desire of many to live selfish and personal lives without interference from any quarters.

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<sup>29</sup> John MacArthur, *Successful Christian Parenting* (USA: Zondervan Publishers, 1998), 8.

<sup>30</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *African Culture Values: An Introduction*, 96-97.

MacArthur has noted that for the past forty years or more the signs of the family's collapse have been paraded before us continually; divorce, the sexual revolution, abortion, sterilization, delinquency, infidelity, homosexuality, radical feminism, the decline of the nuclear family, and other signs. We have been watching the braiding of an intricate rope that will ultimately twine the family to death.<sup>31</sup> To Him we may be watching the death of the germ-cell of all civilization.

### **3.6 Christian Marriage Today**

Traditionally, marriage fell under the guardianship of the of the extended family system; however, as a result of developments, the modern nuclear family has developed. So, it is no longer the extended family which carries the responsibility and control of any marriage. On the contrary, the family now depends on the marriage, in turn, is dependent on the personal affection between husband and wife. The modern and trend of marriage has provided an opportunity for deeper understanding of the togetherness of husband and wife.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

God intends marriage to be a life time commitment between one male and one female. Though the marriage relationship does not extend into eternity, it is meant to last the entirety of their time together on earth. Christians as well as the Asantes see marriage to be the most basic and fundamental societal unit in the world. Therefore, marriages go through processes before they can be accepted as right. Anything apart from the laid down process is not accepted to be a true marriage. Bible has its standard as well as the custom of the Asantes. For one to enter into marriage, the understanding is very important. It means that a fresh family which is nuclear is about to be established.

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<sup>31</sup> MacArthur, *Successful Christian Parenting* 6.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE IMPLICATIONS OF ASANTE MARRIAGE FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In general, the research aims at finding the concept of Asante marriage and its implication for Christianity. It also looks at the challenges in the Christian marriage, and the impact the Asante concept of marriage is having on the Christian marriage today. The research also aims at finding whether Asante Christians are aware of the influence of the marriage customs on marital relationship. Finally, the study looks at the role Asante concept of marriage plays in the Christian marriage today.

The chapter deals with the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of views, opinion of the researcher, traditionalists and some Christians on the subject matter. The data for discussion were obtained from the responses of traditionalists, Christians and scholars during the research.

#### **4.2 Marriage as Symbol of Unity and Identity**

Marriage is basically to unite a man and a woman who have agreed to come together to live as husband and wife. Marriage is an institution that intends to bring unity. That is why the Bible says a man will leave his father and mother and unit to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Here, there is leaving and uniting. This is the plan of God concerning marriage according to the scripture. Is it also in line with the Asante concept of marriage, or there is a deviation?

The Asante concept of leaving the home and uniting in marriage, basically, differ from this biblical concept especially when the man's father is alive and living with the son. The Asantes believes that the sons of every man take the responsibility of the father in

his old age till death. So, it is common to see many Asante men living in the same house with the parents. A typical traditional Asante man find it difficult to leave the family house and unite with the wife. The man might build his own house but still choose to stay with the father or better still take the parents to his own house and care for them. In this case the father still controls the house or the man. Among the Asantes, the man's father and mother do not easily leave their son to stay away from them. The woman may also seek permission from the husband and bring her father or mother to stay with them when there is the need. This system among the Asantes makes it difficult for the couple to leave and stay united on their own without any interference, the cycle continue like that, sometimes, it is the nephews who take the responsibility in caring for their uncles in addition to their own parents.

The extended family system is a great challenge to the unity of marriage. The Asantes place more value in the extended family more than the nuclear, to some extent. There is an Asante saying, *wosum borodie dua na wasum kwadu nso dua* meaning when you support plantain with wood do support banana also Literally, it means that don't put your eggs in one basket. Help your nuclear family as well as your extended family. For this reason, some Asante men pay particular attention to their nephews even more than their own sons when it comes to sharing of inheritance. If something is not done about it, how can an Asante woman and her children work wholeheartedly to support the husband or the father who would later give almost everything to his nephew

However, there is a saying of the Asantes "*wosoro aware gyae wonnya aware papa*". This can be an unfortunate saying, Divorce is supported here. Asante do not see divorce as abomination to God provided it is substantiated by what they believe to be a genuine factor in their traditional context. Asantes can divorce on the grounds where children are not forthcoming. Again, Asante holds a belief that polygamy is part of their cultural



life. When the man in particular feels like marrying another woman, he has that right to do so. However, he has to appease the wife or the wives with some eggs and hen. When this happens in the marriage, the unity that is supposed to exist between the couple suffers, and the consequence is marital unfaithfulness. The couple loses trust in the marriage and eventually, quarreling, gossiping and backbiting begin to set in and the love for each other becomes difficult.

#### **4.3 Marriage and Family Life**

In terms of marriage the couple is supposed to stay together, raise children and take care of the children as well as taking care of themselves. There are two types of families in every society, the nuclear and the extended. The nuclear family comprises the father, mother and their children. The extended, on the other hand, goes beyond the nuclear that includes uncles, aunts, grandfathers, grandmothers, nieces and nephews.

The Asantes as well as Christians recognize these two families and places great value on them. Here, according to the interview conducted by the researcher, Christians place more emphasis and great importance to the nuclear family more, but, the Asantes do place more value on the extended family.

For the Christian, marriage is not only permanent, it is sacred, intimate, and mutual; it is also exclusive (Genesis 2:22-25). This means that no other human relationship must interfere with the marriage commitment between husband and wife. Christians for this reason consider or treat the nuclear family first before the extended one. Among the Asantes, situation like *mpera-waree* (co-habitation) is considered as marriage though it is illegitimate. For Christians, co-habitation is not considered as marriage. So the issue of co-habitation raises questions among Christians if such relationship can be accepted as nuclear family.

Asantes normally say to the women who are being asked for marriage that “*woya adaeε fa bra efie, woya εka, fa ma wo kunu*” meaning if you get property in the marriage, bring it home, but if you make any loses, give it to your husband. This saying raises serious concerns for Christians. Where is the real home of the Asante woman? Is it the nuclear home or the extended family home? The extended family sees the woman to be a stranger in her husband’s home. The *Abusuapanin* (family head) always refers to the extended family members as *me dehyee* meaning “my kinsman”. So who has claims to control over the other when it comes to family decisions now, the Asante concept of marriage make it difficult for the Christian family to function as autonomous. The interference from the extended family members make the couple go through challenges. The Abusuapanin exercises authority over his family members who are in marriage and sometimes threaten to call for divorce if the extended family is not comfortable for how one of the couples is being treated in the marriage. The women are those who normally become victim in the hands of the family heads.

During the researcher’s interview with the Obaahemaa of Atasomanso, Nana Afia Konadu, the researcher was informed that the Asante custom does not permit members of the same clan to marry. She explains that an *Oyoko*, does not marry an *Oyoko*. *Aduana* clan member, no matter where he/she comes from, they cannot marry from the same Aduana clan. When the researcher questioned her of the reasons, she said all members of the same clan are closed relatives. Here, the challenge that confronts Christianity today is that every Akan belongs to one of these clans. So, does it mean that a member of Aduana from Asante cannot marry from an Aduana from Bono, Fanti, Akwapim, Akim or Wassa. Even among the Asantes, clans are far related. Meanwhile, Asantes permits marriage between uncle’s daughter and his nephew. Traditionally, among the Asantes, it is the nephews that inherit the uncle after death. And, by allowing

marriage among the uncle's daughters or the sons and the nephews or the nieces, the properties of the uncles remain in the two families. An Asante man does that to protect his property from going to a different family because the Asante' family system is matrilineal.<sup>32</sup>

#### **4.4 The Biblical Mandate of Marriage**

Marriage is not merely a contract between a man and a woman; it is a relationship that God has established to His glory. The making of a man and woman, and the institution of marriage comes from God's plan. After God had created the woman, He said "therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and shall be one flesh. The man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame" (Genesis 2:24-25).

In the institution of marriage, God blessed them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it (Genesis 1:28). Therefore, marriage as an institution is part of God's creation and He expects all people to be obedient to His word. Christians place value on marriage and expect that everybody marries unless there is a special case where the person wants to set himself or herself apart for God. Procreation in marriage is therefore a mandate from God. God want the couple to be fruitful, so, Christian marriage without fruitfulness or children poses great challenge to the couple. Every Christian woman or man expect the fruit of womb from his/her marriage. When children are not forthcoming, it normally leads the couple into serious prayers, and visiting of hospitals and counselors.

The Asante marriage is in line with what the Bible says about marriage and the procreation. There is continuity here as far as the Asante concept of marriage is

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Nana Konadu, Queen mother Atasomanso, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

concerned. Among the Asantes, marriage without a child or children is serious problem to the couple, family and the society. According to the Asante tradition, every marriage is expected to produce children for posterity.

But, the Asante concept of marriage places too much premium on the marriage. If a man or woman fails to marry, the society discriminate against him or her in so many ways. According to Nana Kingsley Prince Senya, the abusupanin of Santasi, such a person would not be allowed to take any position in the society. In addition, No parent would want to name his or her child after him or her for failing to marry. When he or she dies, funeral ceremony is not organized to honor him or her. And the entire family sees it as a disgrace to them. Obviously, those who might not marry in the Asante society are the mad people, the mentally retarded and the impotent. So, if a man or woman reaches his or her maturity age, pressure from parents, relatives and friends is put on him or her to marry.<sup>33</sup>

Another serious concern is the procreation in the context of Asante concept of marriage. According to the Obaahemaa, Nana Afia Konadu, children are the real inheritance of the family. In view of this, any marriage that does not produce children has to be interfered. To the Asantes, if the problem comes from the women, then, the man has to go for another woman who would give him children. So the man might keep the barren woman and go for another woman who is productive. Here, from the biblical point of view, it is a deviation, because, God does not approve polygamy. Divorce and remarry was not so from the beginning. (Matthew 19:8).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Nana Kingsley Prince Senya, Abusuapanin and Elder at Santasi, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Nana Konadu, Queen mother Atasomanso, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

Marriage promotes mutual help. Scripture is clear that wives are to submit to their husbands and to serve as their “suitable help”, while the husbands are to bear the ultimate responsibility for the marriage before God (Ephesians 5:22-24). Asante marriage differs, in view of this, according to Nana Senya, Women are not in the same position as the men when it comes to responsibility and help. He said wives are to satisfy the men in bed and as servants to the men. Women don’t lead men but a woman can lead women. For this reason, no woman is allowed to take any leadership position in the family. This is the philosophy of an Asante man. Elderly women might be in the family, but, a young man without experience is preferred to any woman when it comes to leadership, like the position of Abusuapanin. This philosophy is not in conformity with the scripture, so, Christians from this background need to consider this issue when entering into marriage.

Companionship is another mandate of biblical marriage. There is an intimate and complementing union that exists between a man and a woman. It is the most basic and significant relationship to the couple. This relationship must be nurtured and mastered for the welfare of the two. Marriage brings companionship. In view of this, God wants all to stay in monogamy (one man one wife). What about the Asante marriage? All the traditionalists that the researcher interviewed affirmed that polygamy and divorce or separation is not abomination in the Asante society. To them, they believe, though not the best, but, they stabilize society.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Biblical concept of marriage is what God has prescribed for humankind. Traditions and cultures differ from one place to another, and the Asante concept is no exception. Human philosophy is mostly dominant in the tradition. It, therefore, means that some aspect of the Asante concept of marriage has deviations from the biblical point of view,

but others are in conformity and continuity. Basically, the concept of marriage from the biblical perspective is the same as the Asante concept. This indicates that God is behind every culture. What brings about the differences is where human factors come to play. So, Christians today have to understand what God has said concerning marriage, and that of the traditional concept like the Asante version. This would save many Asante Christians, pastors, leaders and preachers from confusion and deviation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this research project was to probe into the concept of Asante marriage to find out the concept behind the marriage institution of the Asantes that are in consonance with the scripture that the church can feel comfortable to maintain. Furthermore, the people intends to identify the traditional marriage practices that are in conflict with the scripture that the church can cleanse as well as those that need to be modified because they are in variance with the scripture. The research was limited to Santasi traditional area, a typical Asante community. Interviews were conducted: traditionalist, scholars and Christians were the main group of people that the researcher focused on.

The chapter one was mainly concerned with the aim of the research study, introducing the proposed study by stating and describing the problem of investigation and clarifying some concepts as they are applicable to the study. The research design and methods were explained. The literature review was included in the chapter one, which focused on the Christian understanding of marriage, marriage from biblical perspective and marriage form the African perspective.

The following chapter dealt with marriage in Africa, the meaning of marriage in the Asante context, the biblical basis of marriage and the meaning of marriage from Christian perspective. The next described the nature and process of the Asante marriage. It also talked about the Christian understanding of biblical marriage and the family in Asante mentality.

The last part was dedicated to analysis using the method of interpretation of interview that subsequently led to the findings and recommendations. Having talked about the summary, the next section will focus on the conclusion.

## **5.2 General Conclusion**

The objectives of this research study have been met as they have been outlined. The aim of this research have been identified and related to the need for Christians to understand the cultural practices of the Asantes in terms of their marriage concept. Information was gathered through oral as well as interviews from traditional leaders. In reflecting upon the Asante concept of marriage the researcher has recognized that it is imperative for Christians to make conscious efforts to study the culture of the Asante people. It has become clear from this research that nothing opens people's heart more than a ministry to them through their culture. It is a fact that the Asante cherish their culture and they have practiced it for a very long time of immemorial. The researcher thinks that God's hand is in the Asante culture. However, the word of God (Bible) was not their guide but it is philosophy that has guided them for very long time. Christians can take advantage of the aspect of this marriage concept that are in conformity with the scripture, and modify those that are in deviation with the scripture.

Christian conversion and growth will be considerably be enhanced, when the Asante concept of marriage is impacted by the Gospel. Considering the marriage concept of Asante, Christians have been challenged to broaden their horizons to take in the total picture of God's purpose for humanity.



### **5.3 Recommendations**

From the research work, the writer is of the view that the Christians today who want to make an impact in the Asante society in terms of Christian conversion and growth are those that can appropriately handle the Asante culture. This implies that presenting biblical concept of marriage in a way that people cannot be hit or see it to be an enemy to their culture is key. The Asante marriage practice are not easy to change, thus, European missionary ideas, and other Christian ideas that are offensive and aggressive to the cultural practices of the Asantes must not be used in changing those practices that are not in conformity to the Gospel.

The researcher thinks that any Asante man who joins the church with the ideas of Asante concept that permit divorce, polygamy and other contradictory practice to the Bible should not be attacked, but, he should rather be encouraged to study, understand and practice what God needs, not what the cultural practice say.

Also, the church leaders should organize workshops where traditional leaders are invited and the good cultural practices and social values are appreciated and the implications associated with the negative marital practices de-emphasized.

Furthermore the Christian leaders should undergo culture and Gospel seminars, and workshops to equip them to work effectively as they should.

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## **PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED**

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Nana Prince Kingsley Senya, Abusuapanin and Elder at Santasi, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2015.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. In your view, what is the meaning of marriage in Asante context?
2. What is the nature of Asante marriage?
3. How is the process of the Asante marriage?
4. What do you know about some of the challenges that the Asante concept of marriage are facing today?
5. Is Christianity posing challenges to the customary practice of the Asantes?
6. If yes, in what ways?