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Rites of Passage and Inculcation of Values among the Ashanti of Ghana: A Case Study

Seth Asare-Danso

Associate Professor, Department of Arts Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract:

This qualitative case study aimed at exploring the performance of rites of passage and their influence on the promotion of values among the Ashanti of Ghana. Through the use of interviews, observations and content analysis of documents, data were collected for the study. A theoretical framework for the study was based on Arnold Van Gennep's theory of Rites of Passage. Three research questions were used to guide the study as follows: (1) what traditional rites of passage are observed by the people of Agogo-Ashanti in Ghana? (2) What values are projected through the performance of rites of passage among the people of Agogo-Ashanti? And (3) what is the relevance of the performance of rites of passage in modern Ghanaian secular pluralistic society? The findings of the study revealed that the Ashanti of Ghana observed outdoorings and naming ceremony, puberty rites, marriage rites and death rites. Secondly, the traditional rites of passage that were performed by the Ashanti of Ghana were meant to provide values education to the people. The gods and ancestors saw to the enforcement of morality. Regrettably, with the influence of modernity and western civilization, traditional religious rites of passage seemed to be giving way to modern secular rites of passage and the potency of the gods and the ancestors have been denounced. This has resulted in the high rate of indiscipline and immorality among people. The study highlights the importance of both traditional religious rites and modern secular rites. It therefore recommends that both traditional religious rites and modern secular rites continue to be encouraged and used as a means for the promotion of values education among people, rather than secularizing the rituals and merely performing them as a way of following tradition.

Keywords: Rites of passage, transition rites, values education, morality

1. Introduction

Human beings go through certain developmental stages in life. This study examines four developmental stages, which are birth, puberty, marriage and death. It is important to note that each of these stages is marked with transition rituals, which are performed to usher the individual from one developmental stage to the other. Arnold Van Gennep referred to these transition rituals as "rites du passage" (in French), which was translated into English as "rites of passage". In the Sub-Saharan Africa, the subject "rites of passage" has been explored extensively by many social anthropologists in the past, and the rites continue to be studies among modern scholars. It has been studied among the Bemba of Zimbabwe (Richards, 1956); the Zulu of South Africa (Krige, 1968); the Nyakussa of Tanzania (Wilson, 1957); the Gisu of Uganda (La Fontaine, 1972); the Tswana of Botswana (Schapera, 1950); the Nuer of Sudan (Evans-Pritchard, 1951); and among the Swazi of Swaziland (Kuper, 1950). In Ghana, "Rites of Passage" have been explored extensively among the Krobo by a number of anthropologists (Teyegaga, 1985; Huber, 1963; Adjaye, 1999; Schneider & Danquah, 2000; Boakye, 2010; Nanegbe, 2016; Abbey, 2016), because it appears to be only among the Krobo that puberty rites are still performed in Ghana. Only a few works have been done among the Ashanti (Sarpong, 1974; 1977) and the Ewes (Hevi-Yiboe, 2003; Nukunya, 2003). This limitation has been the main motivation drive for researching into birth, puberty marriage and death rites among the Ashanti of Ghana.

1.1. Review of Literature

By nature, the African has been described as being notoriously religious (Mbiti, 1969), and incurably religious (Parrinder, 1954). Religion permeates all aspects of life, and rites of passage portray an aspect of human religiosity (Everson, 1991). The term "rites of passage" ("rites du passage" in French) was coined by Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957) in 1909. He was a Belgian French anthropologist and folklorist. He studied the concept as a social phenomenon among preliterate and literate societies and observed that primitive people regard life as a journey from one stage of existence to another. In the course of the journey, rituals and ceremonies are observed and used to aid them to move from one transitional stage to the other. He identified the critical stages or turning points in human life as birth, puberty, initiation, betrothal, marriage and

death. He therefore defined "rites of passage" as rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age. He also extended his definition to include a change in space and time. From his study, Van Gennep held the view that when activities associated with such rites were examined in terms of their order and content, it was possible to distinguish three major consecutive phases or stages. He referred to the stages in French as "separation", "marge" and "aggregation" which were translated in English as; separation, transition, and reincorporation.

He referred to the rites of separation as "pre-liminal", the rites of transition as "liminal", and the rites of incorporation as "post-liminal" (Van Gennep, 1909, p. 11). He gave the following explanation to the various stages as follows: At the pre-liminal stage, people withdraw or they are symbolically severed from the group and they begin to move from one place or status to another. According to Beattie (1964), rites of separation express the initiate's relinquishment of his former status. Van Gennep saw rites of separation as being prominent in funeral rites.

The second phase (the stage of transition), as the name implies, is a transitional period with gradual removal of barriers. At this stage, the initiate undergoes adjustment, in order to fit into the new status that he or she is going to assume after the performance of the rituals. Victor Turner (1967), who has pioneered the modern study of rites of passage by studying initiation rites among the Ndembu of Zambia observed the transitional stage as a time during which people occupy ambiguous social positions and they are "betwixt and between" and they "live in a time out of time", that is, they live out of their normal social life (Turner, 1967, pp. 93-111). According to Van Gennep (1909), transitional rites play important role in pregnancy, betrothal, puberty and mourning. He identified contrasts or opposition among the stages, i.e. pre-liminality, liminality (or the transitional stage) and the post liminality. For example, at the pre-liminal state, the person who will go through the rites of passage will have a name, status and rank. However, at the liminal stage, the person will have no name, no status and no rank.

In the third phase (stage of reincorporation), the people who, through the performance of the ritual, have passed through the transitional stage, re-enter society where they are reintegrated into their new social status. In the words of Beattie (1964), the rites of integration express the initiate's acceptance in his new status. Van Gennep (1909) also saw rites of reincorporation as being prominent in marriages. He used the dichotomy of the "sacred" and the "profane" as the central concept for the understanding of the transitional stage in which an individual may find himself or herself from time to time. He explained that the person who enters a status at variance with what he/she previously held becomes "sacred" to the others who remain in the "profane" stage and it is this new condition which calls for the rites that eventually incorporate the individual into the group and return him or her to the customary routines of life.

Van Gennep (1909) saw these changes to be very dangerous and upsetting to the life of the group and the individual. The transitional period is therefore met with rites of passage to cushion the disturbance. He also applied his concept to the analysis of periodic changes associated with natural phenomena. This made him extend the rites of passage to cover ceremonies which accompany the changes of the year, season or month. Apart from social status, he also talked about transition in time and space which all involve certain emotional disturbance, thus calling for the performance of rites of passage. A person who travels to a place at a particular time would find himself in transition in time and in space during that period, unconsciously while participating in the transition rituals associated with birth, puberty, marriage and death.

Values are cherished in society and as a result, they have to be taught (Jarrett, 1991). According to Ganguli, Methrotra and Mehlinger (1981), values may be classified according to their benefits into religious or spiritual, moral, political, economic, social, intellectual, professional, aesthetic, sentimental and material or physical. This typology will help to determine the type of values that could be developed from the performance of the various "rites of passage". Huitt (2004) has identified five approaches to values education, which were Inculcation, Moral Development, Analysis of Issues, Action Learning and Values Clarification. It is of interest to note that the Inculcation Approach will be applicable to this study because it requires teaching people to develop the acceptable values of society. A number of works have been done on values education (Superka, Ahrens & Hedstrom, 1976; Raths, Harmin & Simon, 1978; Robb, 1991a; 1991b; Carr, 1991; Jarrett, 1991; Taylor, 1994; Gyekye, 1996). Gatherer (1991) identified three principal ways by which educators could provide values education. According to him, these could be done through (i) the use of the formal and informal curriculum; (ii) the use of the hidden curriculum; and (iii) the use of personal interaction between the teachers and their pupils. Among the three approaches to values education, the use of the hidden curriculum seems to be applicable to this study, since people may acquire values education unconsciously by going through the transition rituals or the rites of passage.

1.2. Country Background and Ethnographic Study of the People of Agogo-Ashanti

Ghana occupies an area of 240,000 square kilometers. The Akans form the largest ethnic group in Ghana, and they constitute almost half of the country's population (Buah, 1998). According to Ghana's 2010 population census, the population of Ghana was 29.6 million. Out of this number, the Akans represent 47.5% of the total population of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). In an interview with a traditional leader, who was one of the informants, he listed the following Akan ethnic groups: Akyem, Asante, Kwahu, Twifo, Assin, Fante, Denkyira, Sefwi, Ahafo, Brong, Adanse, Aowin, Ahanta, Akwamu, Akwapim, Nzema and Wassa. These groups occupy six out of the ten regions of Ghana. Among the Akan group, the Ashanti ethnic group was selected, and Agogo was used as a case study for the research.

The Agogo township lies twenty-seven kilometers north-east of Konongo on the Accra-Kumasi highway. It is now the District capital of the Asante -Akyem North District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It is situated on the middle part of the Koforidua-Kintampo Range. It shares boundaries in the east with the Kwahu South District; in the west with the Sekyere-East

District; in the north with the Ejura-Sekyer District; and in the south with Hwidiem, the nearest town. According to one of the informants, Agogo is counted among the three towns with the largest population in Ashanti Region of Ghana. He mentioned the other two towns as Kumasi, the capital, and Obuasi, a gold mining town.

According to the data obtained from the Asante-Akyem North District Assembly, the people of Agogo, together with the villages surrounding it was about eight thousand, with about a quarter staying in the Agogo Township. The town could boast of its well-planned housing or building structures, with well-laid streets, making human and vehicular movements very easy. The main occupation of the indigenous people is crop farming. The farmers grow crops like maize, yam, cocoyam, plantain, tomatoes and other vegetables. They used to grow cocoa on a very large scale but recently, bush fires have claimed large hectares of the cocoa farms. Some settler farmers have also been engaged in cattle rearing. Apart from farming, some of the people are petty traders, while others have learned different trades like dressmaking, hairdressing and carpentry. Other categories of workers in the town are teachers, bankers, nurses, doctors and other paramedical staff. The town has two senior high schools, one nursing training college and one college of education for the training of teachers. Besides, it has a hospital.

The primary form of Ashanti social organization is the family, which is referred to in Akan language as "abusua". The Ashanti practise matrilineal inheritance. This gives members a sense of identity, determines their status within the community, *and* defines their right of succession to wealth and to political offices, inter alia. Every family (or abusua) has a symbolic carved stool, which helped members to trace their ancestry. One family member is selected to be the occupant of the stool, and he or she becomes the chief of the town or the community. To ensure that members live in peace and in harmony, rules of conduct have been made to regulate their behaviour. One of the means by which these rules were enforced was through the use of "rites of passage". Busia (1954), Rattray (1923; 1927; 1929; 1932) and Lystad (1968) have written extensively about the Ashanti of Ghana. The two maps presented below provide the geographical location of Agogo in the map of Ghana (Fig. 1), and the map of the Ashanti Region of Ghana showing the geographical location of Agogo (Fig. 2).



Figure 1: Map of Ghana Showing the Geographical Location of Agogo



Figure 2: Map of Ashanti Region of Ghana Showing the Geographical Location of Agogo

2. Methodology

The study was used to explore the rites of passage that are associated with birth, puberty, marriage and death, and how these rites are used to inculcate values education among the people of Agogo-Ashanti in Ghana. A qualitative research paradigm was selected for the study (Creswell, 2013), and the case study design was used to enable the research setting to be explored, in order to understand the themes (or the rites) to be studied (Cousin, 2005). The study area was Agogo-Ashanti. Through the use of interview, observation and content analysis of documents, qualitative data were collected for the study in the four thematic areas, namely birth, puberty, marriage and death. Three Research Questions were used to guide the study as follows: (1) What rites of passage are observed by the Ashanti of Ghana? (2) What types of values are projected through the performance of rites of passage among the Ashanti of Ghana? and (3) What is the relevance of traditional rites of passage in modern Ghanaian secular pluralistic society?

Four respondents were selected for the study. For the purpose of anonymity, the four were given the pseudonyms as Informant A, Informant B, Informant C and Informant D to provide information about birth, puberty, marriage and death rites respectively. The informants were purposively selected from Agogo-Ashanti because they were all indigenes of the town, and they had adequate knowledge about the culture and traditions of the Ashanti. Informant A was a retired teacher with a Bachelor degree in Education (B. Ed). He was 62 years. Informant B was a queenmother with basic education. She was 64 years. Informant C was a retired banker with a Bachelor of Science (B. Sc.) degree in Administration. He was 65 years. Informant D was a farmer, a retired Education Officer, and a traditional ruler (a sub-chief) of the town. He had a Specialist Teachers' Certificate in Education. He was 66 years.

Three main instruments were used for this study. These were semi-structured interviews, observations and content analysis of documents. The four transition rituals were observed. The participant observation method was used to enable the researcher to join in the celebration of the ceremonies and collect appropriate data required for the study. With the exception of puberty rites which the researcher relied on oral information provided by the informant through the interview, the researcher participated in the birth, marriage and death ceremonies and observed the rituals that were performed in connection with the ceremonies. A semi-structured interview guide was designed and used to enable the researcher gain insights into the meaning of the rites of passage and the values that are projected through the performance of these rites. Finally, books and journal articles which related to the research topic were consulted for the purpose of data collection.

Two qualitative data analysis techniques, namely thematic data analysis and content analysis were used for the data analysis. Thematic analysis was used for the analysis of the data collected based on the four themes, namely birth, puberty, marriage and death, using the three research questions. This was supported by the data which were analysed through the

content analysis of documents, in order to cross-check the information that was obtained from the oral sources and through the observation.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the Ashanti observed rites of passage in four major transition stages, namely outdoorings and naming ceremony, puberty rites, marriage rites and death rites. Secondly, the traditional rites of passage that were performed by the Ashanti of Ghana were meant to provide values education to the people. The data collected with the instruments during the rites of passage were analysed according to the three research questions as follows:

3.1. *What Traditional Rites of Passage Are Observed by the People of Agogo-Ashanti?*

Four rites of passage were observed by the researcher. These were birth, puberty, marriage and death rites. To begin with, the study was used to explore the rites of passage that are associated with birth. Informant A, who was a head of family was interviewed at Agogo-Ashanti. He became my principal informant. According to the informant, a new born baby is regarded as a stranger during the first seven days after birth. This was based on their belief that during the period of waiting, the child's mother in the ancestral world would be searching for the child to take it back to the ancestral world through death. Thus, if the child's ancestral mother does not succeed in taking it back to the ancestral home and the child survives within the seven-day period of confinement, the child is officially outdoored on the eighth day. The outdoorings of the child is followed by a naming ceremony.

The local name for the naming ceremony is "abadinto". The ceremony that I participated in involved relatives, friends, members of religious groups, members of social groups, and parents of the newly-born baby. The ceremony began early in the morning with a traditional prayer. This was offered in the form of libation text, which was directed to the gods and the ancestors. According to the informant, this ritual was performed in order to inform the gods and the ancestors about the outdoorings of the child, and to ask for their blessings upon the child, the parents and the family. During the ceremony, the father of the child was asked to provide a name that should be given to the child. I was told that in the absence of the father, his representative, who may be his brother, could provide the name. The child was given a day-name (what is locally referred to as "kradin"), and a family name ("agyadin"), that is, the name provided by the father.

Two symbolic objects were provided for the performance of the naming ceremony. These were a glass filled with water, and another glass filled with wine. The principal officiant put the child on his lap and announced his name to the people gathered to witness the naming ceremony. He dipped his right forefinger into the water and dropped it unto the tongue of the child, saying, "If you say water, say water". In the same manner, he dipped his right forefinger into the wine and dropped it on the tongue of the child, saying, "If you say wine, say wine". The use of water and wine were very symbolic. According to the informant, they were to teach the child to distinguish between truthfulness and falsehood. The outdoorings ceremony was described as an occasion to give the child "its first moral instruction. This was confirmed by Asare-Opoku (1978, p. 111). Besides, the right forefinger was used because it is referred to in Akan as "akyerekerekwan" (i.e. the finger that is used to show direction). Thus, the forefinger was used to show the child the path to the acquisition of values education. Having gone through the rituals associated with birth, the child was then accepted as a full member of the society. Finally, the father and other family members and friends presented gifts of various kinds to the child and the parents.

On the question of what purposes, the outdoorings and naming ceremonies served in the traditional community, the following responses were obtained from the informants. In the first place, the rituals were supposed to be performed to welcome the new child into the family and the community. Second, the rituals were to give recognition to the child as a human being. Three, the performance of the rituals enabled the child to be accepted as a member of the clan. Similarly, the rituals sought to reaffirm the values of the community (e.g. truthfulness and loyalty) to the child. Besides, it was a time for giving ancestral name to the child, and to perpetuate the family name, and to keep the ancestors and the departed ones alive in the family.

At this stage, Victor Turner's concept of liminality could help us to explain this rite of passage. At birth, the newly-born child has been separated from the ancestral mother, and the child will be in a stage of transition during the first seven days after birth. That explains why the newly-born child was regarded as a stranger, who had no identity as a human being and had no family status and a family name, unless the child passes through the transitional stage before he can be reincorporated into the family and ultimately, into the larger community or society.

Concerning the rites associated with puberty, the Informant B was interviewed. She indicated that no elaborate puberty rituals were performed for boys in Ashanti. This was contrary to what was done to boys among certain ethnic groups in Africa. For example, among the Ndembu of Zambia, boys undergo circumcision in the forest, as part of their initiation rites during their puberty stage (Turner, 1967, p. 50). However, for girls, elaborate rituals are performed for those who undergo puberty rites ("bragoro"). According to the informant, in the olden days, when a girl menstruates for the first time (or experiences the menache), her mother will rush to inform the Queenmother to go and examine the girl. This was done to ensure that the child would not be hiding pregnancy, in order to avoid the "kyiribra" rituals. "Kyiribra" (literally meaning "hater of menstruation") rituals are performed on girls who become pregnant without undergoing the nobility rites ("bragoro"). The girl's mother also informs as many relatives as possible, so that they would all join in the performance of the communal rituals associated with puberty (or "bragoro"). A day was set aside for the performance of the puberty rituals.

According to the informant, two traditional days were not suitable for the performance of the puberty rituals. These were sacred Wednesday (which the traditional people referred to as "Kuudapaakuo"), and sacred Sunday (which the traditional people referred to as "Akwasidae"), because these days were set aside for the worship of the traditional gods and for the veneration of the ancestors.

Early in the morning, the girl would be asked to take a bath. Her mother will beat a metal hoe to announce to people and the women to come and sing "bra" songs. The girl will be clothed in white and made to sit on a white stool in front of the house in an open space, with her breast exposed, while the women sing "bra" songs and dance around her. The exposure of the breast was interpreted to serve the purpose of attracting suitors. In front of the girl, a brass basin (locally called "yaawa") would be placed, and it contains leaves of the "adwera" plant, an egg and a dry okro fruit. When I asked for the symbolic meaning of the items, I was told that the white clothes, white stool and the "adwera" plant symbolize purity or cleanliness. The egg symbolizes fertility, and the okro seed symbolizes childbirth. At this ceremony, people present gifts of various kinds like money, clothing and food items to the girls who undergo the puberty rites. Libation is poured to thank the gods and the ancestors for guiding and protecting the girls from childhood and ushering them into adulthood.

According to the informant, in the evening, the girls undergoing puberty would be sent to the stream in the town for a ritual bath. The informant also added that an old woman performs this ritual. This will be accompanied by a traditional prayer at the stream. The next ritual which was described was the "anoka" or feeding the girl undergoing the rituals with mashed yam and plantain (known as "oto" and a boiled egg. While taking the egg, the girl was supposed to masticate and swallow the egg, but not to bite with the teeth. According to the informant, biting the egg means biting the seed of the girl, which may lead to barrenness. After eating the meal, children will be made to scramble for the mashed yam and plantain ("oto"). I was told that the symbolic meaning was that it enables the girl to have as many children as possible in future. According to the informant, the girl will be confined to the house for six days, while many girls attend to her. She also added that during the period of confinement, the girl will be given sex and family life education. On the sixth day, the girl is dressed in beautiful "kente" (a traditional Ghanaian cloth), and she goes around to thank her donors and well-wishers. She will normally be accompanied by other girls of her age. According to the informant, girls' puberty rites serve the following purposes. First, the rites serve as an incentive for the development of good manners, as girls who remain chaste and are respectful receive a lot of gifts from well-wishers. Secondly, the rites enable girls to acquire some capital before they enter into marriage. Thirdly, a girl who is able to go through the rituals brings honour to herself, her family and the entire community. Similarly, a girl who successfully goes through the rituals are likely to get a good husband because such a girl will be declared morally upright. Another point is that, during the period of confinement, the girl also learns about some Ashanti traditions like dressing and dancing.

Marriage rituals were observed by the researcher, and the Informant C was also interviewed for the data collection. According to the informant, the traditional people of Agogo-Ashanti consider marriage as a union between two families, rather than between two individuals. In view of this, when a young man and a young woman declare their intention to marry, the first thing they have to do was to inform their parents, in order to get their consent. The parents will then begin to investigate the background of the families, in order to ascertain whether the family has a good moral or social record. When the man's family is satisfied with the family record of the woman, his father officially informs the girl's family about their son's intention to marry their daughter. Both parties conduct their own investigations. Having completed their investigations, a day is fixed for the actual marriage rites to be performed.

The first ritual that was observed was the payment of the "knocking fee" ("epon akyi bo"). The father of the man would be made to present two bottles of schnapps – one to the girl's father and the other one to her maternal relatives. I was told by the informant that in the absence of the father, his brother who is a paternal uncle could represent the father. A specified but undisclosed amount of money would be added to the schnapps. I was informed that the amount varied from one family to the other, depending on the family status of the woman. The next ritual was the payment of the head drink or head rum ("tiri nsa"). It also involved the presentation of drinks and two bottles of schnapps or gin, and a specified but undisclosed amount. Another ritual that was performed was the payment of the bride wealth or bride price ("tiri aseda"), which Asare-Opoku referred to as "appreciation fee" (Asare-Opoku, 1990, p. 128). When I tried to find out the amount paid for the bride price, I was told that the woman's family demanded Five Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHC 500) which has a dollar equivalent of about One Hundred and Ten US Dollars (\$ 110), but through a plea from the father of the groom, the amount was reduced to Two Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHC 200), which had a dollar equivalent of about Forty-Four US Dollars (\$ 44). According to the informant, the bride wealth was said to be considerably lower among people who practice matrilineal inheritance than it was among those who practice patrilineal inheritance. This was confirmed by (Sarpong, 1977, p. 82).

Information gathered from the informant revealed that the payment of the bride price served the following purposes. First, it gives the husband uxorial rights or exclusive sexual rights over his wife. However, it does not give the husband genetical rights, because his children practice matrilineal inheritance. Secondly, the payment of the bride wealth entitles the husband to collect adultery fee in the event of unfaithfulness on the part of his wife. Thirdly, the payment of bride wealth legalizes the marriage and cements the marriage contract. Similarly, it binds the two families together. Besides, the ability of the husband to pay the bride price shows his ability to take care of a wife. Again, it enhances the status of the family of the groom in the society, as it brings honour to them. Finally, some people were of the view that the payment of the bride price stabilizes the marriage, because the woman would have to return the bride wealth or the dowry if she initiates divorce, and

the refund may be difficult for her and her family. I don't think this may apply to modern women in Ghana who have now been economically empowered.

The last rites of passage to be examined are those associated with death. The people of Agogo community believe that death is inevitable. They also believe that death can bring stress to the bereaved family and society as a whole. As a result, certain rituals have to be performed to give the bereaved family a kind of emotional balance. I attended a funeral at Agogo-Ashanti and observed certain rituals that were associated with death in the community. Besides, I interviewed the informant, who narrated to me that in the olden days, when somebody becomes unconscious and he or she is about to die, people, especially women run to the various footpaths linking the town to other communities, shouting at the top of their voices, calling out the name of the person who was about to die. According to the informant, this was done with the aim of calling the departing soul back to life. The people believed that in some cases, the performance of this ritual has helped to bring the departing soul back to life. If this attempt fails, then on the verge of death, a relative of the deceased puts water down the throat of the dying person three times. According to the informant, this was based on their belief that a dying person climbs a hill before he or she enters the ancestral world. Therefore, as soon as he or she gives the last breath, it means he or she has finished climbing and descending the hill so he or she must be provided with water to quench his or her thirst.

According to the informant, the death of a person was announced in two main ways. First, the people of the immediate neighborhood get to know about the death through the loud wailing of women at the time that the death occurs. Secondly, the death of a person can be announced by sending messengers to inform relatives and friends who live outside the town or in the immediate community. Besides, the chief and elders of the town are officially informed with some drinks. These days, the death of a person is announced through several media like the radio, television, the newspapers, WhatsApp, etc. The preparation of the corpse is a very important ritual that is connected with death among the people of Agogo-Ashanti. According to the informant, the body of the dead is washed thoroughly with very hot water by family members. The reason for the use of hot water is that if the person was to be in comma, the hot water is likely to bring him or her back to life if the water touches the body. These days, when people die, their bodies are kept in the mortuary, and on a few occasions, some of the dead were able to come back to life at the mortuary.

It was also observed that having prepared the body, it is laid in state on a bed, and people go around to pay their last respect to the departed one. The body is nicely dressed with "kente" (a Ghanaian traditional cloth) or any decent cloth, and it is decorated with beads and gold ornaments, depending on the status of the dead person within the community. Again, based on the belief of the people in life after death, they send messages to their departed family members through the dead person. Another significant ritual connected with death is burial. Among the traditional people of Agogo-Ashanti, just like other Akan communities, the dead is put in a coffin before burial. It was observed that the burial takes place in a rectangular grave, which measures between four and five metres deep. It was observed that the corpse was buried with items, which were locally referred to as "asiedie" (i.e. burial items). These items included a piece of white cloth (locally called "nwera"), handkerchiefs, rings (locally called "petea"), and some unspecified amount of money. The coffin bearers were family members, though these days, some funeral directors like T. Cribb & Sons Ghana Limited provide professionally trained coffin bearers to render this service. After the burial, a post-burial rite that I observed being performed was the washing of hands by the mourners who went the cemetery. Even though the informant interpreted this ritual to mean that the people did not want to have anything to do with the dead, I also considered the ritual as serving a hygienic purpose, thus ensuring cleanliness or purity among the mourners. The last ritual that I observed was that the funeral rites were performed after the burial. This involved the presentation of drinks and cash donations to the bereaved family.

3.2. What Values Are Projected Through the Performance of Rites of Passage among the People of Agogo-Ashanti?

Social and moral values are cherished in African societies. Sarpong (1974) has outlined some of these traditional social and moral values. These include godliness, respect, honor, motherliness, motherhood, tolerance, truthfulness, hospitality and loyalty, just to mention a few. Let us see which of these values are projected through African rites of passage.

Taking rituals associated with birth, the dropping of water and wine on the tongue of the child undergoing the naming ceremony signifies that the child should distinguish between truthfulness and falsehood. Truthfulness and loyalty can be identified to be social values which are promoted through the observance of rites of passage associated with naming ceremony. Besides, the child is prayed for to grow up to acquire the value of obedience to authority. Introducing the child to the gods and the ancestors through prayer also helps to instill in the child the virtue of godliness.

Puberty rites can also help with the inculcation of values education. Among the Ashanti, puberty rites are performed to usher girls from childhood into womanhood or adulthood and to prepare them for marriage. Therefore, one of the traditional values which are inherent in puberty rites is motherhood. Again, not until the girl has gone through the puberty ritual, she will not have any sexual access to men and for that matter, she cannot be allowed to marry. Thus, chastity and responsibility are also seen to be moral values inherent in puberty rites. According to Lystad (1968), before the coming of the Europeans, virginity test was part of marriage rites of the Ashantis, and on the first night, the married couple was made to sleep on a white cloth. The following morning, the girl was supposed to show the white cloth which would be stained with blood as evidence of her virginity to the elders. Failure to produce the blood-stained white cloth could lead to the break of the marriage contract. The performance of this rite teaches us that chastity, faithfulness, loyalty and honor were seen to be some

of the traditional social or moral values which were projected through the performance of rite of passage associated with puberty. Such a girl will also command respect in the community.

Another ritual which was performed during girls' puberty was the confinement of the girls for seven days or one week. During this period of confinement, the girl learns how to live with others in a home and treat them well. Some of the social values that she can learn during the period of confinement are courtesy and hospitality. Besides, the girl is given sex, family life education, and education on personal hygiene or cleanliness. They were taught to perform the duties or to assume the responsibilities of a mother and as such, motherliness is seen as a moral virtue inherent in puberty rites. According to Sarpong (1974), motherliness requires a woman to provide adequate food and shelter for her own children, husband and when necessary, for others and strangers and this is projected through the rites of passage. After the one-week period of confinement, the last ritual which is performed as part of the puberty rites is thanksgiving. The girl receives a lot of gifts from people during the initiation period and she, together with the mother and some elders of the family, as well as friends, go around to express their gratitude to people for their donations. According to Sarpong (1977), by Ashanti standards, a good girl is one who greets people, is not gloomy but smiles when talking to her elders, is ready to help older people and go on their errands and is not quarrelsome and abusive. The rite therefore acts as an incentive to the development of moral virtues, for a bad girl doesn't receive many gifts.

The values which are inherent in the performance of marriage rites were also explored. One major criterion that guides an Ashanti man in his search for a wife is beauty. Beauty therefore becomes an aesthetic value which is inherent in rites of passage associated with marriage. People also take into consideration the economic status of their spouse. Among the Ashanti, a man must have a vocation or a job before he could be considered as a responsible husband. Productivity therefore becomes an economic value which is inherent in marriage rites. Again, in Ashanti marriage, the couple are advised to love and accept their spouses as they are. Love and acceptance are therefore identified as examples of sentimental values that are cherished by the Ashanti of Ghana. Among the Ashanti, if a pregnant woman finds it difficult to deliver her baby, it is believed that she has committed adultery. Therefore, she has to make confession by mentioning the name(s) of the culprit(s) (or the man/men) before she could have safe delivery. The act of confession (that is, the mentioning of the name(s) may serve as a rite of transition. Here, the moral values to be drawn from marriage rites include faithfulness and loyalty. This calls for proper investigation into the background of each of the partners and their family for the two parties to be convinced before the marriage could be contracted. Probity and accountability become another set of social values which are inherent in marriage. Even though Ganguli, Mehrotra & Mehlinger (1981) categorised probity and accountability to be political values, within the context of my study, I considered these values to be social in nature.

Taking death rites, funeral rites may be considered for discussion. Among the traditional people of Agogo- Ashanti, before the dead was buried, libation is poured to inform the gods and the ancestors that the deceased was coming to the ancestral world so he or she should be guided on his or her way. The performance of the rite signifies that the person was religious, and we see godliness as a traditional religious value which is inherent in burial rites. Another social value which is associated with burial rites is collective solidarity. The rites help to foster social unity.

The values that were projected through the performance of rites of passage associated with birth, puberty, marriage and death among the people of Agogo-Ashanti have been summarized below.

| Transitional Stage | Category of Values | Examples of Values |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Naming Ceremony | Social values Moral values Religious values | Truthfulness, Loyalty Obedience to authority Godliness |
| Puberty Rites | Religious values Moral values Social values | Holiness Chastity, Faithfulness, Loyalty, Honesty, Gratitude, Respect Courtesy, Hospitality, Cleanliness |
| Marriage Rites | Social values Moral values Aesthetic values Sentimental values | Probity, Accountability Faithfulness, Loyalty Beauty Love, Acceptance |
| Death Rites | Economic values Social values Religious values | Productivity Courtesy, Commitment, Collective solidarity Godliness |

Table 1: Values Which Were Inculcated During the Performance of Rites of Passage at Agogo

3.3. *What Is The Relevance of Rites of Passage in Modern Ghanaian Secular Pluralistic Society?*

In the past, rites of passage have observed as religious events, and they were performed with the aim of inculcating in people values education, using the traditional approach. However, in modern secular life, the nature of the rites of passage is generally seen as being fundamentally secular though they aim at serving the same purposes. Some of the modern rites passage which are secular in nature are associated with promotions, installations of chiefs, induction of new public officials into office, movement into new apartments, and investiture of institutional heads. Others are matriculation ceremonies, graduation ceremonies, and birthday parties, just to mention a few. In all these events, the three stages of separation, transition and reincorporation can be identified.

Turner (1962) used the entry into the military service as an example of a modern rite of passage, identifying all the three stages, namely separation, transition and reincorporation. According to him, initially, the recruits are separated from civilian life but have not yet acquired the skills needed to become soldiers. They therefore find themselves in a period of transition during which they undergo some military training. As part of the rite of passage, they are given identification haircut, they are given identical uniforms, they are quarantined (that is confined to the barracks), they have no ranks, they are subordinated to their superior officers and they do a lot of physical exercises like climbing ropes, inter alia. Finally, after they have successfully completed their military training, the recruits are incorporated into the military. All these are done to inculcate in the new military personnel some social and moral values like courage, discipline, dedication, endurance and determination, inter alia.

From the above discussion, one could say that though rites of passage have been secularized in modern world, contrary to being regarded as traditional religious rites in the past, they all have a common goal that is the inculcation of social and moral values in people. Therefore, the rites of passage are still important in modern secular life. Regrettably, the explicit goals of the rites seem to have been forgotten, and that the means have rather become the goals. Funeral rites for example, which are meant to separate the dead from the living have turned out to be fun fares and scenes of entertainment and display of wealth. There is a new morality and that the traditional morality is lost in the name of modernity and civilization. The result is the high incidence of immorality among people of today.

Ever since the emphasis was shifted from the traditional religious rites, the disregard of puberty rites for girls for example has resulted in a high incidence of adultery, sexual promiscuity and abortion among people in the modern era. Even among the Krobo of Ghana, the Dipo rites of passage are performed to usher girls from childhood into womanhood has been abused, and girls as young as eight years are allowed to go through the Dipo ritual. Its implication is that it gives those girls sexual access to men at a very early age. According to Fortes (1950, p. 265), in the big towns, people are making use of European contraceptives which is encouraging sexual relations outside or before marriage. Some of our military personnel, in spite of their training seem to have low moral values. They go about molesting and exploiting innocent civilians.

In the past, the gods and the ancestors were regarded as the custodians of morality and they punished those who deviated from the norms of the society. This helped to instill discipline and to enforce good moral values among people. However, with the influence of modern civilization, the potency of the gods and the ancestors has been denounced, and secularism has become the order of the day thus creating most of the social, moral, economic and other types of problems that we face in today's world.

4. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the study has revealed that the Ashanti of Ghana use rites of passage to provide values education to their people. These values are social, moral, religious, economic, aesthetic and sentimental, using the typological framework provided by Ganguli, Mehrotra & Mehlinger (1981). The study has also established the fact that rites of passage are still important in modern secular life as they were in the past. The reason is that even though the traditional religious rites have been secularized, they are still important because they are meant to serve the same purpose – i.e. the inculcation of values among people. It is rather unfortunate that the goals seem to have been abandoned and that the means seem to be emphasized, which should not be the case. It was in view of this shift of focus from religious perspective to secular perspective that Sarpong (1974) advocated for a judicious return to the religious atmosphere of the past, which I personally disagree with him. I believe that whether the rites of passage are religious or secular in nature, they can serve a good purpose by using the performance of the rights to inculcate in people values education. What is important is for each of the parties who believe in either religious morality or secular morality to have a fruitful interaction with the other, as proposed by Cox (1998), so that the means will justify the end, but not the vice versa. Because of the pluralistic nature of society, both religious and secular morality are needed to guide us in life.

5. Recommendations

The study recommends to all and sundry that first, we need both religious and secular morality because of the pluralistic nature of society. Secondly, whether rites of passage are religious or secular in nature, they should be used for the inculcation of values among people, rather than merely performing the rituals as a way of following tradition. Besides, when performing rites of passage, the focus should be on the goals, rather than the means that are used to achieve the goals.

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