

COMMUNICATING CHRISTIANITY TO THE ASHANTI TRIBE:
A STUDY IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

APPROVED:

Don Edward Beck

Major Professor

Bullitt Lowmy

Minor Professor

R.V. Halland

Chairman of the Department of Speech and Drama

Robert B. Toulouse

Dean of the Graduate School

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The problem with which this study is concerned is that of identifying the significant variables involved in cross-cultural communication and applying these concepts in communicating the Christian faith to Ashanti tribe members of central Ghana in West Africa.

The investigation has a threefold purpose. The first is to study the general field of cross-cultural communication and determine the factors which affect communication. The second is to make applications of these to the Ashanti tribe in order to determine more effective ways of communicating Christianity to them. The third is to make these findings available to those interested in cross-cultural communication, such as mission teachers and missionaries, for possible adaptation to the cultures of their interest.

Data have been acquired from two sources: (1) findings from both theoretical and historical literature, and (2) from the writer's own experiences as he lived and worked among the Ashantis for over five years.

The thesis is composed of a preface and four chapters, the first being a general introduction of the Ashantis and the nation of Ghana.

Chapter II discusses the nature of cross-cultural communication as related to (1) a definition of culture, (2) the meaning and structure of communication, and (3) factors involved in cross-cultural communication. In this chapter certain factors or principles are isolated and described. These factors could be used by any person interested in pursuing the field of cross-cultural communication.

Chapter III is an investigation of the Ashanti tribe as related to cross-cultural communication. The Ashanti provide a case study for the application of these factors as studied in the previous chapter. The Ashanti world-view is spiritual or other-worldly. Much of Chapter III discusses the Ashanti religion and social structure as related to this Weltanschauung. An examination is made of the Ashanti and these communicative factors: decision-making, insider-outsider aspects, the communicator's position, music as a form of creative communication, symbolism, language, and the time and space factor.

The final chapter is divided into three parts: (1) the summary of the thesis, (2) conclusions of the thesis, and (3) recommendations for further research. This study concludes that culture and communication are so closely connected that

no one can expect to communicate with or to a culture other than his own unless he takes that culture seriously and attempts to absorb some of its milieu.

American communicators must look for ways of lessening the tension between the traditional life of the "foreign" culture and that of the American or western culture. Communicators must strip themselves of all preconceived ideas as to the good or evil of either their own culture or that of the "foreigners."

COMMUNICATING CHRISTIANITY TO THE ASHANTI TRIBE:

A STUDY IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

THESIS

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By

¹₁ D. Dewayne Davenport, B. A., B. D., M. A., M. R. E.

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PREFACE

As the world has grown smaller and Americans have spread out to cover the earth, we have become acutely aware of the need to communicate with other cultures. From the ambassador in his plush embassy office to the Peace Corps volunteer living in a mud hut two hundred miles from the capital city, Americans are recognizing their failure in the area of international or intercultural communication. The President's recent journey to the People's Republic of China has pointed out the need for, and the interest in, mastering the art of cross-cultural communication. The President attempted to understand the Chinese culture and to create an atmosphere in which cross-cultural understanding would be possible.

Edward Hall, in The Silent Language, brings this indictment against our international cultural knowledge: "We have to learn to take foreign culture seriously. The British are ahead of us on this, and the Russians are far ahead. . . . We in the United States, are in the stone age of human relations in the overseas field."¹

¹Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Greenwich, Conn., 1959), flyleaf.

The Undergraduate Speech Interest Group of the Speech Association published these findings in their Newsletter.

- (1) Students today want to be oriented to an international role rather than a nationalistic one.
- (2) We must stop thinking of communication in terms of a particular mode of address, such as platform speaking, small group discussion, or mass media communication.
- (3) The ways we have taught people to communicate in this country may not be the best for [America today] and certainly not the best for all countries.
- (4) We need to understand the ways in which our communication efforts are distorted or buried as they cross national lines.
- (5) People of two different cultures may understand each other, but this does not mean agreeing; in fact, it may result in greater disagreement.²

This is only a partial list of their conclusions, but it will suffice to show us that the academic world has become vitally interested in the field of cross-cultural communication.

In addition to the State Department and the academic world, the churches have become greatly interested in this field. Such books as Missionary, Go Home³ and The Unpopular

²Undergraduate Speech Interest Group of the Speech Association of America, Newsletter, A Report of the Conference on Intercultural Communication, LXXVII (Winter, 1968), 1-2.

³James Scherer, Missionary, Go Home: A Reappraisal of the Christian World Mission (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964).

Missionary⁴ indicate that all is not well on the mission front. Over the years, many American missionaries have been more interested in taking western culture to the "natives" than Christianity. In mission circles it is being realized more and more that the two are not necessarily equal. Church-affiliated colleges and seminaries are adding courses to their curricula in the area of cross-cultural communication. In the area of mission studies, the field is becoming one of the most popular in terms of interest groups.

This study is among the first to concentrate directly on the Ashanti tribe in central Ghana in an attempt to find better avenues of crossing the bridges of communication from the American culture to the Ashanti culture.

This writer has served a total of three mission tours in Africa, spanning a total period of eight years. From 1961 to 1967, he served in Ghana, West Africa, living in Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti people. Most of his work and research was done in Kumasi and surrounding Ashanti towns and villages. From 1950 to early 1972, he lived in Southeastern Tanzania in East Africa, where he served as a hospital administrator and missionary. He has visited over twenty nations in Africa.

⁴Ralph Dodge, The Unpopular Missionary (Westwood, N. J., 1964).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Brief Look at Ghana, Its History, People, and Religions

Ghana is located in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea, within 4 1/2 to 11 degrees north of the Equator. Its size is comparable to that of Illinois and Indiana combined. Ghana's boundary neighbors are Ivory Coast to the west, Upper Volta to the north, and Togo on the east. Of note here is the nation of Ivory Coast, for its citizens on the eastern border speak the same language as the Ashanti, and at one time they were members of the same tribe. Much, then, of what we conclude about the Ashanti of Ghana will apply to the people of Eastern Ivory Coast.

Ghana's climate is much like that of other equatorial countries. The central (location of the Ashanti) and the southern sections of Ghana have two rainy seasons. These are separated by two dry seasons, a short one in July and August and the long one from December to February. The harmattan winds blow into Ashantiland from the northeast in January and February. Most of the area of the Ashanti has an annual mean rainfall of 55-70 inches. This climate

has been referred to as the "cocoa climate," for the Ashanti are the leading growers of cocoa in all West Africa. Consequently they are the richest tribe in all Ghana. Their money and climate play a large part in the culture of the Ashanti.

History and Government

Ghana received its name from an ancient kingdom of the Western Sudan of the same name. This is now the Mauritania-Mali area and speculation is that many of the tribes of present Ghana migrated from this part of Africa. Prior to independence, Ghana was known as the Gold Coast. The first authenticated contact between the Gold Coast and Europe dates from 1470, when the Portuguese landed in West Africa. In 1482 the Portuguese built the Elmina Castle as a permanent trading post. This castle is still standing and is only one of the "castles of the coast" for which Ghana is famous.

The Portuguese were followed by many other Europeans, including the English, Danes, Dutch, and Germans. It was the British, however, who moved in to gain more control than the other European powers. In 1844 the British made a pact with the Fanti¹ chiefs, thus gaining power in the coastal area.

¹Fanti--the tribe of the western coastal area of Ghana. Their language is much the same as Ashanti.

The Ashanti resisted the British. From 1826 to 1900 they fought long and costly campaigns against the Ashanti, who were fairly safe in their interior kingdom. Finally, in 1901, the British marched into Kumasi and declared their authority over the Ashanti. Ashanti was ruled separately from the coastal area, known as the Gold Coast.

Fifty years went by before the "winds of change" began to take root in this part of Africa and the local people began their drive for independence. In 1954 a new constitution established a cabinet composed of only African representatives. Elections followed and the majority of the seats were won by the Convention People's Party, with Kwame Nkrumah as the Prime Minister. Nkrumah had recently returned from attending colleges in the United States and Great Britain. Ghana, a combination of the Gold Coast, Ashanti, the Northern Territories Protectorate and the British Togoland, gained its independence on March 9, 1957, becoming the first colony in Africa to do so.

Prime Minister Nkrumah decided to take Ghana along the road to socialism. His strong-arm tactics and politics made him unpopular with the people. On February 24, 1966, his government was overthrown by a coup executed by the army and police. From this group developed the National Liberation Council, which ruled the country until October 1, 1969, when

an elected civilian government was installed. Kofi Busia's Progress Party won the election, and he became the Prime Minister. This government lasted until January, 1972, when the civilian government was overthrown, and the army again took control.

The majority of the opposition to Nkrumah had come from the Ashanti tribe. Some of the officers leading the coup against the Nkrumah regime were members of this tribe. The Ashanti support of Busia gave him the votes needed for election. This election illustrates the power which the Ashanti hold in the matter of Ghana politics.

The People of Ghana

The estimated population of Ghana in 1969 was 8.6 million. The greatest concentration of population is found in the coastal areas and Ashanti. Accra, the capital city, has 522,000 inhabitants, while Kumasi has about 250,000. Its density is about 93 persons per square mile, with an annual growth rate of 2.8 per cent. In the 1968 figures, the latest available, Ghana had a Gross National Product equal to two billion United States dollars and a per capita income of \$238 in U. S. currency. These figures rank Ghana among the richest of the black nations in Africa.

Small ethnic divisions are numerous in Ghana, with the result that over fifty different languages are spoken within its borders. In many cases it would be more correct to speak of these languages as dialects of the same language family. Akan is the linguistic group spoken by most of the Ghanaians. Akan is the overall term for the language, while each tribe using this language has its own dialect. The Ashanti is included in this group, and Ashanti is the most widely used dialect of Akan. Other major tribes of Ghana are the Fanti on the coast, the Guans on the plains of the Volta River, the Ga and Ewe of the south and southeast, and the Moshi-Dagomba of the Northern Territories. Almost 25 per cent of the Ghanaians speak English, which is the official and commercial language.

The Ashanti Tribe

The Ashanti tribe, which is the subject of this study, lives mainly in the rain forest area of central Ghana. Their capital city, Kumasi is located about 185 miles north of the Atlantic Ocean. While Kumasi is the heart of the Ashanti nation, most Ashantis, being predominately a rural people, live in the countryside. The Ashantis are a proud and independent people, generally ambitious and industrious. The Ashantis are both farmers and craftsmen. Their farming

is primarily for food and secondarily for cash income. Principal crops include cocoa, yams, cocoyams, and cassava. As craftsmen the Ashanti excel as cloth weavers, gold and silver smiths, basket-weavers, and wood-carvers. The Ashanti farm is not only a place for farming but education as well--a place of training for the children.

Ashanti life-style is based on the communal system. This style, according to two Ashanti writers, "seems to imply common ownership of everything possible except a wife."² In this society, there is no such thing as intruding into someone else's business. One has the right to listen to whatever is being said on the compound³ and to intervene, with or without an invitation. As a part of this communal living, the average Ashanti is polygamous, with all the wives and their children living in one compound. This absence of intrusion illustrates the compactness of the Ashanti society, and will play an important part in Chapter III as an attempt is made to explore better ways of communicating with this society.

An outstanding characteristic of the Ashanti is matrilineal descent. The clan is traced through the woman;

²P. W. Tufuo and C. E. Donkor, Ashantis of Ghana: People With a Soul (Accra, Ghana, 1969), p. 15.

³Compound--the living area of an Ashanti family or group of families, usually consisting of a main house, lesser house, and a court yard.

and the authority of the family lies mainly in the hands of the maternal uncle. According to Rattray, an early and outstanding authority on the Ashanti, only a woman can transmit blood to the descendants.⁴ The male transmits his ntoro, or spirit, which is present in every person. This belief, in turn, gives the Ashanti women a great deal of power, not only in the family, but in the government as well. A Queen Mother rules behind the throne of the Chief of the Ashanti. As the inheritance is matrilineal, even the chieftaincy comes through the woman's side of the family. Indeed, the women in the court are the first ones to approve or reject a new successor to the chieftaincy.⁵

Women's liberation came early to Ashantis. Two Ashanti writers praised the Ashanti woman in this manner:

One glorious enviable heritage of the Ashanti is the uniquely strong competition between male and female Ashantis. Their women can do almost all that the men do. Many women are excellent farmers. When the necessity arises, women can take leading positions in the political and military organizations of the people. In many cases the men and women go side by side.⁶

⁴R. S. Rattray, Ashanti (London, 1923), p. 77.

⁵Tufuo and Konkor, p. 35.

⁶Ibid., p. 12.

The chieftaincy is of utmost importance to the Ashanti. The Ashanti Kingdom is ruled by a chief or king with sub-chiefs under him in descending order, going down to the local village or smallest of political units. The Asantehene, king of Ashanti, is the guardian not only of the political system, but the cultural and religious systems of Ashanti as well. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, without the chieftaincy, there would be no Ashanti nation. Sir Osei Agyeman Prempeh II, a long-time king of Ashanti, illustrated the pressure put on the Ashanti to maintain the ancient culture and, at the same time, to live in a modern world. He was a member of such modern organizations as the Kumasi Golf Club and the Kumasi Rotary Club, of which he was an honorary chairman. He spoke English well, but preferred to speak in Ashanti.

All chieftaincies were in danger during the rule of Nkrumah, especially the Ashanti. Nkrumah wanted more power in the central government and, to achieve this, he had to suppress the power of the chiefs. Despite the trend toward central government, the Asantehene survived the Nkrumah regime. This survival was partly due to the political shrewdness of the Ashantis. The Ashanti has been referred to as "a born politician."⁷ Attainment of power is the

⁷Ibid., p. 25.

"highest ambition of the Ashanti,"⁸ and he will go to any lengths to secure power. Wealth is sought because it will bring him political power. The following Ashanti proverb explains his desire for power: "Yeeton tumi a ton wo ni koto na wo nsa nya ka a wobanya kwan a wo nam so begye no." An English translation of this proverb is "If power is for sale, sell your mother to obtain it. Once you have the power there are several ways of getting her back."⁹ This proverb is all the more striking when it is remembered that parents, especially the mother, are so highly regarded in the Ashanti culture.

Ashanti Religions

Africans are a very religious people, and the Ashanti are especially so. To the Ashanti, his culture and religion are the same. Because of their interest in religious and supernatural matters, the Ashanti are known as "the people with a soul." The native Ashanti religion is animistic, and they were worshipping the Supreme God (known to the Ashanti as Nyame or Onyankopon), long before the arrival of white missionaries. They also worship lesser gods, such as the Earth, or "Mother Earth." In Twi,¹⁰ this

⁸Ibid., p. 26.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Twi--another name for the Ashanti language.

god is Asaase Yaa, and her special day is Thursday. Other gods such as rivers, trees, etc. are worshiped.

To Ashantis, the body is made up of a soul and the flesh. Each man has a soul (Okra), and it is the guide of every man and woman. This soul can communicate with the gods, including Nyame, the Supreme God. When a man dies, his soul separates from the flesh and becomes a spirit (saman). The saman is a supernatural power which can act for good or evil; its actions may be influenced and controlled by the deeds of the living. If the person has lived a good life on earth, his spirit goes to live with the ancestors. Thus, it may be observed that Ashanti society is composed of the interaction of two groups, the living and the departed.

Into this animistic religion came Christianity. First came the Roman Catholics with the Portuguese trading companies in 1482. They were driven away from the coast by the Dutch Protestants in 1642. Then came the British in 1752, and the Anglican church was established. The nineteenth century saw a great surge in missionary activities in the Gold Coast. The Basel Mission of Switzerland entered in 1827, followed by the Methodists in 1835. After these came others who did much for the welfare of the natives, as well as establishing their churches.

Christianity, however, was late in coming to the Ashantis. In 1901, Ashanti was annexed by the British, and in the wake of this political success the missions had success and growth on the Coast and in Ashanti. Thomas Birch Freeman of the Methodist church is thought to be the first missionary to preach in Ashanti. Most of the European and American denominations are now represented in Ashanti. Indigenous African churches have become popular there as well. These churches are known by the locals as "spiritual churches," and are an attempt to bridge the gap between Ashanti culture and traditional Christianity. Their founders have especially sought for new ways or forms of worship.

While acknowledging that the Christian missions "have given definite benefits of real and lasting values"¹¹ to Ghana, they still come under strong criticism by Ghanaian historians. Three of these criticisms are:

(1) The Christians stood apart from the traditional life of the community. This led to disagreements, quarreling, and, in some places, even to rioting.

(2) The differences among the European Christian missions and denominations had an effect on their local followers and led to divisions, even amongst people of a single community.

¹¹C. M. O. Mate, A Visual History of Ghana (London, 1959), p. 28.

(3) Misunderstandings arose as a result of missionaries lacking adequate knowledge of the traditional life of the people and this led to bad relationships with the people.¹²

In addition to Ashanti traditional religion and Christianity, Islam is also established in the Ashanti Region. In many ways the Islamic religion is closer to the traditional life of the Ashanti than is Christianity. There is, however, one outstanding exception: the practice of circumcision. This is totally against the Ashanti belief that the whole body should be kept intact and that one must not impair "by design any part of a free-born citizen."¹³ A new Muslim group, the Ahmaddiya Movement, seems to be making more converts among the Ashanti than the orthodox Muslim groups. In brief, "many Ashantis think the laws and behavior of the traditional Muslims are too much in contradiction with their mode of life, customs and practices to allow them to embrace that Faith completely."¹⁴

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study will be to determine better ways and means of communicating the Christian faith to the people of the Ashanti tribe of central Ghana in West Africa.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Tufuo and Donkor, p. 90.

¹⁴Ibid.

The intent of this thesis is to search for ways of lessening the tension between the traditional life of the Ashanti and that of traditional Christianity.

Statement of the Purposes

This study has three primary purposes. The first of these is to study the general field of cross-cultural communication and to determine specific factors affecting communication, such as local customs, space, time, language, signs and symbols, identification, and value systems. The second purpose will be to make applications of these to the Ashanti tribe in order to determine more effective ways of communicating Christianity to them. The third aim is to make these findings available to those interested in cross-cultural communication, such as mission teachers and missionaries, for possible adaptation to the cultural settings of their interest.

Method of Approach

In order to accomplish these ends, this study will be divided into three principal sections. The first chapter will offer a description of the cultural setting in which this research was carried out. It will also offer the research methodology. In the second chapter, an attempt will be made to construct a theory of cross-cultural communication by

examining the works of social psychologists, cultural anthropologists, and communication experts. The third chapter will illustrate and reinforce these principles through a case study of a particular example of cross-cultural communication, the sharing of Christianity with the Ashanti tribe of Ghana. The final chapter will offer a summary of the findings of this investigation, conclusions that may be drawn from them, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Toward a Definition of Culture

Culture has as many definitions as it has definers.

T. S. Eliot became so concerned over what he considered to be the wrong usage of the word that he wrote an entire book to define culture.¹

In the realm of theology, H. Richard Niebuhr discusses culture in his book, Christ and Culture.² Niebuhr does not attempt to give the "essence" of culture. Indeed, he says that "we cannot venture to define culture."³ His approach, then, is to describe some of the chief characteristics of culture. One of these characteristics he takes from Malinowski, who stated: "The essential fact of culture, as we live and experience it, as we observe it scientifically, is the organization of human beings into permanent groups."⁴

¹T. S. Eliot, Notes Toward the Definition of Culture (New York, 1949).

²H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York, 1951).

³Ibid., p. 32.

⁴Bronislaw Malinowski, A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays, p. 43, cited in Niebuhr, pp. 32-33.

This being true, Niebuhr feels that culture "is the social heritage they receive and transmit."⁵

When one examines the anthropologists' definition of culture, he is still left without a clearcut definition. They do not agree among themselves as to its meaning. In a discussion of language, thought, and culture, one editor was forced to conclude: "On bringing culture into the problem, however, one is faced with an anthropological controversy as to just what culture includes."⁶

Two scholars in this area have given this definition of culture:

All those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men.⁷

While this sounds well and good, it is not the type of definition which adequately meets the needs of cross-cultural communication study.

Another definition is: "Culture is all learned behavior which is socially acquired; that is, the material and

⁵Niebuhr, p. 33.

⁶Paul Henle, editor, Language, Thought, and Culture (Ann Arbor, 1958), p. 3.

⁷Clyde Kluckhohn and William H. Kelley, "The Concept of Culture," The Scientific Man in the World of Crises, p. 97, cited in Henley, p. 3.

non-material traits which are passed on from one generation to another."⁸ Thus, in the view of the anthropologist, like the theologian, the word "society" comes into play in any definition of culture.⁹ For there to be culture, there must be human society, as this is what transmits culture.¹⁰ The society is what expresses or communicates the culture. Thus, "there is no culture apart from society, but there may be societies without culture."¹¹

The words "society" and "culture" are, at times, used in reference to the same situation. The two are so closely related that this seems to present no contradiction in terms. Culture has to do with the patterns of behavior, while society "designates the particular aggregate of individuals who participate in the culture."¹²

A working definition of culture for cross-cultural communication follows: "Culture is the way of behaving, thinking, and reacting within a society."¹³ As Eugene Nida says, "one can speak of a culture as being the ways of life

⁸Eugene A. Nida, Custom and Cultures (New York, 1954), p. 28.

⁹Niebuhr, p. 33.

¹⁰Nida, p. 28.

¹²Ibid., p. 29

¹¹Ibid., pp. 28-29.

¹³Ibid.

characteristic of a single society or group of closely related societies."¹⁴ For purposes of this study, culture is defined as the way of life of any society or group, usually located in a given geographical area.

In a discussion of culture, it is difficult to conclude without reference to "subcultures." This could be thought of as a culture within a culture. For example, one speaks of the "American culture." Yet, within this there are many subcultures, such as the mountain people of Tennessee and Kentucky, ghetto Blacks, and the Amish of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.¹⁵ The principles used in communicating with foreign cultures, are used with success in communicating with these subcultures within the American society.

The Meaning and Structure of Communication

What Is Communication?

Here one has somewhat the same problem as with defining culture; however, there is more general agreement among the scholars in this field. One writer defines communication as

¹⁴Ibid., p. 281.

¹⁵Manford H. Kuhn, "Factors in Personality: Socio-Cultural Determinants as Seen Through the Amish," Aspects of Culture and Personality, edited by Francis L. K. Hsu (New York, 1954), pp. 43-65.

"the transfer of meaning."¹⁶ Another refers to communication as "the transference of information."¹⁷ This definition may seem too narrow for our purposes, but the author goes on to explain that he means to include all types of information transference, such as "movements, gestures, singing . . . dancing, in so far as they are informative."¹⁸

Hance, Ralph, and Winksell go a step further and say, "Communication may be defined as 'the process of transmitting meaning from one mind to another.'"¹⁹ If the communication is to be considered a success, there must be not only a "transmitting of meaning," but the transmitting must be accurate.

Communication has also been spoken of as "sharing." The word "communicate" itself means "share."²⁰ Coming from the Latin communicatus, communicate shares its etymology with our English word "common." Communication has been defined

¹⁶Don Fabun, Communications: The Transfer of Meaning (Beverly Hills, 1968).

¹⁷A. J. Ayer, "What is Communications?" Studies in Communications (London, 1955), p. 13.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Kenneth G. Hance, David C. Ralph, and Milton J. Winksell, Principles of Speaking (Belmont, California, 1962), p. 5.

²⁰Colin Cherry, On Human Communication, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 4.

as a process "of sharing with another person, or with other persons, one's knowledge, interests, attitudes, opinions, or ideals."²¹ Thus, communication is a process with a purpose, and it can only be effective when that purpose is realized; namely, "when the other person understands as one wishes him to understand."²²

The implications of this "sharing" concept for cross-cultural communication are very important. If one accepts this concept, he would have to change his entire outlook toward cross-cultural communication. Most of the time Americans look upon cross-cultural communication as a one-way circuit.²³ As Becker stated,

When we hear this term, we think about the effect of stimuli from this country on the people of other countries. We seldom think of the equally important question of the effect of stimuli from other countries on us.²⁴

If one took seriously the concept of communication being a sharing, then he could easily see that cross-cultural communication is a two-way circuit. The importance of this for true communication of the Christian faith is tremendous.

²¹Hance, pp. 5-6.

²²Ibid., p. 6.

²³Samuel L. Becker, "Directions for Intercultural Communication Research," Central States Speech Journal, XX (Spring, 1969), p. 4.

²⁴Ibid.

Use of the standard terminology of the speech discipline, such as source, message, and receiver, has been carefully avoided. Here there is agreement with the implications arrived at by the Speech Association of America:

We must depart from the traditional ways of treating communication problems--we must stop trying to study every problem with the same cookie-cutter methods, we must stop assuming that the ways we have always taught people to communicate are the best ways now, and that the ways we have taught people to communicate in this country are the best ways for all countries.²⁵

Communication and Culture

Edward Hall, a leading anthropologist who has made extensive studies of culture and communication, states dogmatically, "Culture is communication and communication is culture."²⁶ He plainly states, however, that he did not originate this concept. Hall gives credit to Franz Boas, who laid the foundation for this view over fifty years ago by claiming "that communication constitutes the core of culture and indeed of life itself."²⁷

²⁵Hall, p. 169.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Edward T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension (New York, 1966), p. 1.

Hall cites Benjamin Lee Whorf, who worked among the Hopi and Shawnee Indians in the 1930's. Whorf's work here had "revolutionary implications for the relation of language to both thought and perception."²⁸ His conclusion is that language is more than just an avenue for expressing thought; it is "a major element in the formation of thought."²⁹ Hall's two books, The Silent Language and The Hidden Dimension, both have as their theses "that the principles laid down by Whorf and his fellow linguists in relation to language apply to the rest of human behavior as well--in fact, to all culture."³⁰ Anyone who has attempted to learn another language, especially a so-called "primitive" one, will certainly find it difficult to disagree with Hall's premise.

Hall is not the only one who sees this relationship between culture and communication. Cherry goes so far as to define a culture or society as "people in communication."³¹ When an analysis is made of the communication process, one finds that the message "reflects in innumerable ways the structure of the culture of which it is a part."³²

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

³¹ Cherry, p. 4.

³² Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission (New York, 1960), p. 36.

Hall also points out that the culture is vitally involved with the message.³³ The meaning of a message, therefore, must be thought of in terms of cultural context; apart from this setting, the message has no meaning.³⁴ Symbols, either audible or visible, have no meaning themselves; they stand for something else. This is where culture enters in for it is culture which assigns and gives meaning to the symbols.³⁵ Nida goes so far as to say that "there are no universal symbols immediately apprehended by all mankind."³⁶

Culture and communication are interwoven. It is quite easy to see why a scholar of the standing of Edward Hall would declare "culture is communication and communication is culture."

Intracultural Communication

Intracultural communication is communication which takes place between persons of the same culture. Examples of this type of communication might be discussions among the Ewes of Ghana and Toga, middle-class white Protestants in

³³Hall, The Silent Language, p. 169.

³⁴Nida, Message and Mission, p. 57.

³⁵Ibid., p. 35.

³⁶Ibid.

Nashville, Tennessee, Jewish people in New York City, or Pigmies of the Central Congo.

Sharing a common background is very essential in communications. In fact, communication occurs always in the setting of a particular time and place and, as such, it is part of a large framework.³⁷ This larger framework is a common culture.

Our own culture places a definite imprint on our means of communication.³⁸ An example of this can be seen in the emphasis which the American culture places on verbal expression. When Americans enter into a different culture, one which does not place this emphasis on verbal expression, they sometimes find it difficult to communicate. However, this method works very well in our own culture.

People of the same culture usually have the same world-view. This has a bearing on their abilities to communicate with each other. Communication also depends upon the backgrounds of the participants.³⁹ The backgrounds of those within the same culture are usually similar. Even if they

³⁷Ibid., p. 35.

³⁸Dominick A. Barbara, Your Speech Reveals Your Personality (Springfield, Ill., 1958), p. 7.

³⁹Nida, Message and Mission, p. 37.

have not shared common experiences, they often find common ground through books, newspapers, and other media. Often they acquire the background knowledge through "bush telegraph."

Intercultural Communication

Inter- or cross-cultural communication are the terms used to describe communication between persons of different cultures. Intracultural communication has been defined as "the communication process within various cultures,"⁴⁰ while intercultural communication is defined as "communication process across various cultures."⁴¹

Nieuwenhuijze, in his study of cross-cultural communication, gives this definition:

What is meant here by communication is just simply anything going on between given optimal sociocultural units: any traffic or absence of traffic: of persons, of ideas or other imponderables such as power, and of goods, image-formation relevant across the divide implied by their distinct sociocultural identities. Communication in this sense is a matter of more or less, also a matter of greater or lesser entropy sides: material and spiritual, economic, social, cultural and political, etc.⁴²

⁴⁰Becker, p. 4.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²C. A. O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, Cross-Cultural Studies, Vol. V of Publications of the Institute of Social Studies (The Hague, 1963), p. 85.

The fact that the above author is Dutch, and that English is his second language, may explain some of the cross-cultural problems one has in understanding this definition.

Intercultural communication is trying to do the same thing as intracultural, transfer meaning to another person or persons. With intercultural communication, however, one is dealing with a much more difficult situation, in that he must, in some way, cross over the cultural bridge in his attempt to transfer meaning.

Certain Factors Involved in Cross-Cultural Communication

This section of the paper will examine certain factors which must be taken into account if one is to be able to communicate with people of different cultures. These are local culture, time, space, social structure, identification, and world-view.

The Local Culture Factor

The importance in communication of both parties sharing a common background has already been noted. Individuals who represent different cultures are severely handicapped. Alexander feels that part of this handicap may be overcome "by learning as much as they can about each other's cultural

traditions."⁴³ With this knowledge, the communicator would be able to find, "certain cultural parallels which will make . . . a message significant within the immediate context of people's lives."⁴⁴

The Time Factor

When discussing a meeting time with a white man, Ghanaians may often be observed asking, "Do you mean European⁴⁵ or African time?" Africans have had enough contact with the white man to know that his concept of time, and theirs is not the same. Americans tend "to think of time as something fixed in nature, something around us and from which we cannot escape; an ever-present part of the environment; just like the air we breathe."⁴⁶

Americans have a tendency to think that every other culture has this same concept of the formal patterns of time. Time, as one uses it, is determined and defined by

⁴³Hubert G. Alexander, Language and Thinking (Princeton, 1967), p. 27.

⁴⁴Nida, Message and Mission, p. 59.

⁴⁵European--the term as used in Ghana by the Africans meaning "White man."

⁴⁶Hall, The Silent Language, p. 19.

his culture.⁴⁷ Time, as used and expressed by the Africans, American Indians, Latin Americans, or Arabs, is likewise determined and defined by their "cultures." For example, certain American Indian tribes have no word for "waiting," because within their culture there is no "established limit of time for an event to take place."⁴⁸ The same pattern may be experienced in Africa. An announcement might be made that church services would start at 10:00 A. M. What this meant to most of the congregation was that they started getting ready to attend at 10:00 A. M. If an American gets upset about this situation, he is usually the only one unhappy. For most of the African people, it is just a way of life.

Hall and Whyte⁴⁹ give us some excellent examples of this time factor in action. If Americans are to communicate with non-Americans, it is absolutely necessary that they understand this "foreign" concept of time. Four time factors very relevant to inter cultural communication with non-Americans are appointment time, acquaintance time, visiting time, and time schedules.

⁴⁷Fabun, p. 21.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Edward T. Hall and William Foote Whyte, "Intercultural Communication: A Guide to Men of Action," Communication and Culture, edited by Alfred G. Smith (New York, 1966), pp. 567-576.

Appointment time.--If an American has an appointment at 1:00 P. M. with a businessman, he expects the man to receive him into his office at exactly 1:00 P. M., or closely thereto. This is not the case in most of the rest of the world, with the possible exception of some of the westernized nations. The American arrives a few minutes before 1:00 P. M. and waits for his time to enter the office. He will not start getting upset until 1:10 P. M. By 1:45 P. M. his temper is frayed and he is upset. The signal communicated to him is that he is not wanted, and he is just about ready to leave when invited into the office. The Latin American businessman does not mean this as an insult; he just has a different way of looking at time. The forty-five minute delay is usual and should not be considered any more out of the ordinary than a five-minute wait in the United States.⁵⁰ The implications of this for international or intercultural communication are of grave importance. Americans consider this wait as a "waste of time." The African or Latin American does not interpret the time concept in this manner.

Acquaintance time.--This has to do with the length of time a person must know another person before he is willing

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 567.

to do business with him.⁵¹ "Business" here could be thought of as any type of transaction.

The American salesman would not consider it unusual if he walked away with an order in his pocket after the first meeting. However, in South America, local custom would not permit this first-time sale;⁵² for there it is the custom that you must "see your man at least three times before you discuss the nature of your business."⁵³ This does not necessarily mean that the buyer is not interested or that he is trying to get rid of the salesman. His local culture dictates to him that he must do "business within a close circle of friends."⁵⁴ If he really wants the product, he will try to bring you into this circle of friends. This cannot be accomplished in one meeting. The Latin feels he must first build up a friendship.

The application of this principle for communication can be seen immediately. The Ambassador, the Peace Corps volunteer, or the missionary must first build up friendships before he can be expected to do a good job of communicating to people of such a culture.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 568.

⁵²Ibid., p. 569.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

Visiting time.--Here in America, the expression "come any time" is merely an expression of friendship. One is not literally expected to show up at just any time. One does not take the invitation seriously unless his host proposes a specific time. Such is not the case in many cultures. India is an example. Edward Hall cites this story told by a social psychologist from India.⁵⁵ An American businessman received this invitation from an Indian businessman: "Won't you and your family come and see us? Come anytime." The American replied that he would like to come for a visit, but never did. He was, of course, thinking in terms of his own culture; where the host actually sets the time. However, in India, "it is the essence of politeness to leave it to the guest to set a time at his convenience."⁵⁶ Therefore, when the American did not visit the Indian, the Indian assumed that the American just did not want to visit and considered this an insult. Such misunderstanding could have serious consequences in the area of cross-cultural communication.

Time schedules.--Americans are oriented to the idea of schedules, deadlines, priorities, and timetables. In our system, there are rewards and penalties, depending on how

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 570.

one holds to schedules. In fact, our integrity and reputation are at stake.⁵⁷

Most of the non-Western cultures are oriented just as strongly away from the time schedules as Americans are toward them. To say the least, conflicts arise when citizens of Western and non-Western try to communicate or do business with each other. Hall gives us a very interesting example of what happens in the Middle East:

Not only is our idea of time schedules no part of Arab life but the mere mention of a deadline to an Arab is like waving a red flag in front of a bull. In his culture, your emphasis on a deadline has the emotional effect on him that his backing you into a corner and threatening you with a club would have on you.⁵⁸

He then goes on to give an illustration of this conflict by referring to the hundreds of American-owned radios lying on the shelves of Arab repair shops. They have not been repaired because "the Americans made the serious cross-cultural error of asking to have the repair completed by a certain time."⁵⁹

The way to get things done in most of these nations is by being overly persistent. This is considered impolite in American culture.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The Space Factor

An American is brought up to regard certain spaces as his. He has his own house, yard, bed, chair, and place at the table. He considers these as "private spaces." When someone else occupies these private spaces, he may become annoyed or upset. Most Latins, Asians, Arabs, or Africans are not brought up with this concept of space. Hall, however, points out that space communication problems can also exist between Americans and certain European cultures, such as Germans, English, and French.⁶⁰

The word "territory" has been given to the private space that each of us has.⁶¹ It has been compared to a "plastic bubble" hovering over us.⁶² When someone gets too close and this space is violated, it is our cultural nature to become tense or even hostile. This will, in turn, affect the communication between the persons involved.

American culture calls for a certain distance for normal conversation. One feels more comfortable if he keeps a proper distance when talking to others, especially strangers. For the American, this proper distance is

⁶⁰Hall, The Hidden Dimension, pp. 123-138.

⁶¹Fabun, p. 24.

⁶²Ibid.

usually about two feet.⁶³ The Latin American, however, sees things in a different cultural light. To him, the two feet would seem like what five feet would to a North American. The Latin would feel uncomfortable and think the North Americans are distant and cool. When the Latin moves in closer, to be polite, the North American moves back and accuses the Latin of being rude and pushy.

In offices, Americans who do not realize the cultural significance of space usually barricade themselves behind a desk or typewriter when having conversations with Latins. The North American may feel comfortable because he is maintaining his proper distance, but "the distance and equipment unconsciously make the Latin American uncomfortable."⁶⁴ Communication here is difficult, if not impossible.

The space factor is a prime ingredient in what has been called "culture shock." Hall states it this way:

Whenever an American moves overseas, he suffers from a condition known as "culture shock." Culture shock is simply a removal or distortion of many of the familiar cues one encounters at home and the substitution for them of other cues which are strange. A good deal of what occurs in the organization and use of space provides important leads as to the specific cues responsible for culture shock.⁶⁵

⁶³Hall and Whyte, p. 571.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 572.

⁶⁵Hall, The Silent Language, p. 156.

The Social Structure Factor

If one is to communicate effectively with other cultures, he must take into consideration the manner in which communication flows within a given culture. In the American culture, which is heterogeneous, the natural flow of communication is direct to the masses. This is not the case in most of the homogeneous cultures. In homogeneous cultures, effective communication must start with the "elite," or those in positions of leadership. This has been borne out by a number of studies, as well as observation and study.

This problem has been referred to by a SAA interest group:

In the U. S. the availability of most information is about equal for all men, but this is not true of many other cultures. We need to understand the differences among cultures in the ways in which different types of information are diffused.⁶⁶

In his discussion of the communication of the Christian faith to other cultures Nida brings forth these four basic principles with relation to communication and social structure.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Newsletter, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Nida, Message and Mission, pp. 110-112.

(1) Effective communication must be based upon personal friendship. This principle is important in this context. The principle of friendship has many ramifications, especially in the area of missionary activities. One missionary, in Peru, operated successfully on this principle by never going into a village without a personal invitation. He felt he needed a sponsor or friend. In this way he never entered a village a complete stranger.

(2) The initial approach should be to those who can effectively pass on communication within their family grouping. In most African cultures, this will mean the tribal chief, or his elders, or some respected and successful business leader. It is most important, when trying to communicate with other cultures, that one goes through people who are highly respected in their own society. If one does not, then the people suspect the message because they suspect the messenger.

(3) Time must be allowed for internal diffusion of new ideas. This takes time and patience, but North Americans do not seem to have enough of either. Our time-oriented culture wants things done "right now." Effective communication takes time. The message must be allowed time to filter down through the family groups.

Becker has given an example of this process with relationship to the diffusion of birth control information.

In all of the family planning programs in countries where some research on diffusion has been possible, it is clear that a major contribution has been made by informal discussions among neighbors, relatives, friends, and acquaintances. In one study in Taiwan, three out of four acceptors of a method of birth control had had no contact with the official communicators (or field workers) and, by the end of a year, a fourth of the acceptors came from areas not even being reached directly by the formal campaign. In one town in Thailand, over half of the women who accepted the use of contraceptives were brought to this acceptance through conversations with friends who used them.⁶⁸

(4) The challenge for any change of belief or action must be addressed to the persons or groups socially capable of making such decisions. The clan or extended-family concept of many cultures makes it practically impossible for an individual to act alone. The appeals, therefore, must be to people who are capable of making a change. Effort must be put forth to get the entire social group to change as a body.

A study has been done in Israel on immigrants, that tends to support the preceding principles set forth by Nida. S. N. Eisenstadt found these requirements with relation to effective communication as directed to the performance of roles and other factors.

⁶⁸Becker, p. 7.

(1) Its positive function in conferring and maintaining status aspirations and identifications (*i. e.*, being compatible with the status images and aspirations of the receivers of communication).

(2) Its being originated by prestige-bearing elites or mediated through them.

(3) Its being compatible with the cultural orientations and social interests of the elites.

(4) Its being transmitted by the elites in personal primary relations which are interwoven within the structure of hierarchy between the elites and non-elites.

(5) Its being assimilated through personal interaction in primary groups and relations.⁶⁹

It will be noted that this list closely resembles the one by Nida, as discussed above.

There are problems also present when dealing with the elite. The Keesings, in their report on Samoa, deal with some of these.⁷⁰ These problems in communicating with the Samoian elite are much the same as in any culture of this type.

First, when a united stand is taken by an elite group it is often crucial to try to ascertain to what extent this represents genuine agreement, or whether it is merely a public

⁶⁹S. N. Eisenstadt, "Communication Processes Among Immigrants in Israel," Communication and Culture, p. 587.

⁷⁰Felix M. and Marie M. Keesing, "Opinion Formation and Decision-making," Communication and Culture, pp. 588-595.

front of agreement.⁷¹ The background and culture of these peoples demand that they at least appear united to the "outsider." This knowledge is especially needed by the policy-makers of our government. The leaders of a nation may appear to be supporting the United States of America, while the masses may be opposed to the United States. Of course, the reverse could also be true.

Second, elite negotiation is likely to be strongly oriented toward producing a public show of immediate unanimity.⁷² In elite negotiations, a number of things are at stake, in addition to the problem being discussed. Three of these are "the solidarity of their own groups, the issues of 'peaceful co-existence,' and the prestige of the negotiators."⁷³ Even when a person is in opposition, he will usually go "with the crowd." It is just a part of the Samoan culture to do so.

Third, because of the above, elite opinion formation is likely to involve every possible effort to delay or avoid a public position which aligns a majority against a minority.⁷⁴ At times, more informal discussion will go on at such meetings

⁷¹Ibid., p. 593.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., p. 594.

⁷⁴Ibid.

than formal discussions. Behind-the-scenes negotiations are very common in such situations. They will negotiate until by "suasion, compromise, or down-right weariness, at least an outward appearance of unanimity is forthcoming . . ." ⁷⁵

Fourth, once, the elite have spoken, it is nearly impossible to get a public expression of individual opinion or minority opinion on any issue. In such cultures a secret balloting would be resented at this stage. "Elite subjects must be dealt with through elite channels." ⁷⁶

Fifth, elite persons are rarely in a position to make "spot" decisions. ⁷⁷ In such societies the elite are more closely tied to the masses than in the United States. To act independently would be to go against their culture. Some have been known to do so, but these are in the minority.

The principles of communication and the social structure cannot be separated, if one expects to get his message across to the other culture. As far as the missionary is concerned, the above factors could likewise be applied to other fields. Nida summarized in this manner:

(1) The response to the preaching of the Good News may at times reflect a social situation, even more than a religious conviction.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

(2) Opposition to the communication of the Christian message may be in many instances more social than religious.

(3) Changes in social structure may alter the religious view of behavior.

(4) Effective communication follows the pattern of social structure.

(5) A relevant witness will incorporate valid indigenous social structures.⁷⁸

Identification as a Factor

There are certain psychological factors in communication, and identification is one of the strongest. Identification is very complex, as it "involves the totality of interhuman relationships."⁷⁹ Robert T. Oliver reports that the "types of identification may be classified in the four-fold division: interests, feelings, beliefs, and methods."⁸⁰ In the realm of cross-cultural communication, all four divisions are important.

The word "empathy" plays a part in defining identification. Becker writes on this idea.

Not only may cross-cultural communication aid in the process of learning to project oneself in

⁷⁸Nida, Message and Mission, pp. 132-133.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 162.

⁸⁰Robert T. Oliver, The Psychology of Persuasive Speech, 2nd ed. (New York, 1957), p. 179.

non-experienced situations, but this project or empathic ability is also important in order that individuals may comprehend many of the messages, which they receive from other cultures. We need to learn what factors in individuals are associated with this empathic ability and what means can be employed to increase this ability.⁸¹

Identification is not imitation. Americans must avoid the attempt to "go native." If Americans take this route, they are trying to be someone other than themselves.

"Identification means, not being someone else, but being more than oneself."⁸² Imitation is false identification, and this only creates contempt. Contempt, in turn, sets up a barrier to mutual understanding and communication.

The type of identification desired can only be achieved by realistic participation with the people. One participates with them in their lives "not by working for people, but with them."⁸³ The application of this principle should be made by the United States Agency for International Development, as well as the missions.

A distinction must be made between external and internal identification. Being physically close to people is no guarantee of psychological identification. Internal identification means that one tries to learn to think like the

⁸¹Becker, p. 8.

⁸²Nida, Message and Mission, p. 162.

⁸³Ibid., p. 163.

people of the other culture; because, until he does, "there is no real communication."⁸⁴ It is not necessary that one adopt the value system of the other culture, but he must take it seriously.

Some basic ingredients in effective identification are these.

(1) One must first recognize that he is identifying with specific persons.⁸⁵ He must not think in terms of identifying with "the Africans," but with African individuals. At best, identification can only be partial.

(2) One must recognize his own motivations.⁸⁶ This is the concept of "knowing ourselves." Until a person achieves this and understands his own motives, he will never be able to communicate with people of other cultures.

(3) One must know others.⁸⁷ This means that the person must know something of the field of anthropology. Otherwise, he will learn very little of the techniques whereby different customs and cultures can be understood.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 164.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 168.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 169.

(4) One must participate in the lives of people, not as benefactors, but as collaborators.⁸⁸ This must be a genuine interpersonal experience.

(5) One must be willing to expose himself to being known.⁸⁹ He must want to know others, for not being willing to be known results in smug paternalism. Since communication flows best between equals, paternalism kills any opportunity for effective communication. Americans must be willing to admit that they, too, have faults, as does our "American way" of life.

From the standpoint of the missionary, Jacob A. Loewen gives these six items with relation to self-exposure.

a. That just as there is a gulf between God and man, so also there are barriers, gulfs, and walls of separation between man and his fellows.

b. That all men, by nature, as partakers of human culture, are trained to wear a variety of masks to cover their true identity.

c. That missionaries, like other men, have learned to live with masks which will stand as barriers between them and the nationals whom they want to serve.

d. That God, in the incarnation of Christ, has demonstrated that man needs a "human" sympathetic priest, one who has experienced and is willing to admit the pull of temptation and the limitations of the human flesh and nature.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 170.

e. That effective witness to others, especially to people in a different culture, will require an honest differentiation between the reality in one's daily life and the ideal of one's profession.

f. That the honest facing and admission of the reality in one's life can often serve as a catalyst for a redemptive response in the life of one's brother.⁹⁰

(6) Last, but not least, effective identification requires that one must have a genuine love for people.

The Importance of World-View

No theory of cross-cultural communication would be complete without a proper look at the concept of world-view. Herein lies the basic psychological problem of cross-cultural communication. On this concept hand three possibilities-- understanding, non-understanding, or mis-understanding between cultures.⁹¹ Here the communicologists borrow from concepts long used by the psychologists.

Every culture, indeed, every individual, has this world-view:

⁹⁰ Jacob A. Loewen, "Self-Exposure: Bridge to Fellowship," Practical Anthropology, XII (March-April, 1965), 50.

⁹¹ Gerhard Maletzke, "Intercultural and International Communication," International Communication, edited by Heinz-Dietrich Fischer and John Calhoun Merrill (New York, 1970), pp. 479-480.

With the mature individual, a quite specific manner and method both of apprehending and dealing with the world has already developed, which enables him to interpret and evaluate it. This relatively constant and stable World View is the product of a few inherited traits and a larger variety of living experiences in his concrete, social and cultural surroundings.⁹²

This phenomenon has been referred to as "the fact of a definite structuring and evaluating of human experience within its environment."⁹³

This world-view has been given many names. "Cognitive Structure," "Cognitive Style," "Subjective Experience World," "Frame of Reference," "Subjective Value System," "Value Constellation," and "Thinking Style" are a few of these terms. Most cultures consist of people with a similar realm of experience. They have the same frames of reference and value-systems; moreover, these specific world-views are linked to their language. "The common language" [of a given culture or tribe] "is both an expression of the Weltanschauung and a determinant of it."⁹⁴

Communication theorists have concluded three important things from psychological research:

⁹²Ibid., p. 480.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

(1) The extent to which individuals or groups understand one another, fail to understand, or misunderstand, is determined by the degree to which the World Views and frames of reference of the partners in communication overlap.

(2) The larger the common ground of Weltanschauung is, the more likely and more simple it is that there will be an adequate meeting-of-minds.

(3) The less common ground there is, the fewer forms of reference, then the more likely it is that there will be serious misunderstandings and non-comprehension.⁹⁵

Maletzke reinforces this theory of world-view:

. . . We can say with certainty: [that] the extent of intercultural understanding, misunderstanding or non-understanding is determined by the extent of likenesses and differences in frames of reference, value systems, or World Views of the cultures involved, from their cognitive and affective distance from each other.⁹⁶

Here the study arrives at the essence of cross-cultural communication. What does it mean to understand a foreign culture? "It means comprehension of the foreign manner of seeing, experiencing and judging, an accommodating to the alien cognitive structure, and adopting of a foreign frame of reference."⁹⁷

This process of understanding and accommodation brings with it a number of problems and difficulties. Two of these are (1) that it calls for a high degree of empathy, and

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 480-481.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 481.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 401.

(2) that cross-cultural understanding can never be perfect in itself. It is a difficult and painful process, which can even lead to cultural shock.

In this chapter, discussion has centered around the nature of cross-cultural communication. The purpose has been to establish certain principles or factors which can then be built upon. In the case study, which is to follow, these factors will be related to the Ashanti tribe of Central Ghana in an attempt to find better ways of communicating the Christian faith to this culture.

CHAPTER III

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY

The Ashanti World-View

As the world-view of any culture is the foundation stone upon which all else is built, our first search is for the world-view of the Ashanti. This search is a short one, for in practically every book, article, and report on the Ashanti their world-view comes to the forefront immediately. Ashanti world-view can also be readily ascertained by personal observation.

The Ashanti is part of a living universe. His world-view is "socialized, rather than a personal, apprehension."¹ Every true Ashanti "grows to assimilate and express in his religious and social practice"² this world-view. The Ashanti view has little to do with theological and philosophical structures; rather it is rooted in his "socially inculcated personal attitude to the living universe of which he is a part."³ For the Ashanti, the emphasis in life is on the living, spiritual, or unending part of the universe.

¹S. G. Williamson, Akan Religion and the Christian Faith (Accra, Ghana, 1965), p. 86.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

While the Ashanti believes in two worlds, the visible and invisible, the two are more or less unified to him.

Ashantis are taught that only when one understands the unity of these two worlds, and acts accordingly, can he obtain the good things of the present world.⁴

Lystad explains the relationship as follows:

Prosperity comes from planting and harvesting from a lush cocoa crop and high prices, from the fortunate interplay of all those social, economic, and political forces which a man may try to manipulate; prosperity is worked for and earned. But at the same time, in the same breath, in the same thought, prosperity is the token of a good soul; success is the gift of a strong, protecting spirit, the symbol of the approval of benign, well-satisfied ancestors, of the benediction of the gods, of adequate control over sorcerers and ill-willed spirits. Children, long life, vigorous health, happy marriages, a stable society, and all other good things are but reflection of a state of harmony and unity existing between the seen world and the unseen.⁵

This unity works itself out in a very practical way.

While the Ashanti is engaged in politics, family matters, and earning a living, he is also being religious. The reverse is also true--if he is religious, he will take part in family affairs and politics. Unfortunately, as western culture has moved into Ashantiland, many Ashantis have accepted the

⁴Robert A. Lystad, The Ashanti: A Proud People (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958), pp 154-155.

⁵Ibid., p. 154.

western world-view of a division between the religious world and the practical. For the true Ashanti, "his work and his prayers are integral parts of the same act."⁶

The basis of this world-view is the fundamental belief in the soul. It is difficult to know which comes first, the belief in the unity of the two worlds, or the belief in the soul. It comes as a surprise to the western mind that the Ashantis believe, not in one soul, but two. The okra (soul) comes from the Creator. The second soul could more properly be referred to as a "spirit." The first soul originally is placed in man by Nyame, the Supreme God, and is transmitted through the father to the child. The second soul or "spirit" is the sunsum and it, likewise, comes through the father. Its primary function is to protect the person and his soul (okra). The sunsum or spirit dies with the person, but not the okra or soul proper, for it comes from God, the Creator, and never dies. The okra is the mark of the Creator within man; thus, "the vitalizing power of the Creator is within him."⁷

In the Ashanti world-view, the living man is composed of three parts: (1) mogya--blood or physical being which comes from the mother; (2) sunsum--the spirit or individual personality which comes from the father; (3) okra--the soul which comes from the Creator. Ashantis have a marked belief in

⁶Ibid., p. 155.

⁷Williamson, p. 92.

destiny, as do most Africans. This destiny of the soul is known only to the Supreme God, and only he can change one's destiny. The matter concerns "the general quality and ultimate end of a man's life; it is not fate in the sense of kismet."⁸

While the soul usually abides in the body, it is also capable of taking leave from confines of the body and travels into far places. When a person feels especially powerful, his soul can leave his body and perform deeds even more mighty than if in his mortal body. This belief struck home after the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. Nkrumah, while living in exile in the West African nation of Guinea, over one thousand miles from Ghana, was thought by many to be returning at nights, via his soul, to plan ways of regaining support in Ghana. A woman can appear to be sleeping peacefully beside her husband, while in actuality, her soul is many miles away cavorting with other souls. This is the basis of witchcraft, which will be studied later in this thesis.

Children are born under the power of the okra of the parents.⁹ It is in marriage that the children finally receive mature souls. This is true of the girls even more than boys, because the soul of the woman is not considered as strong

⁸Ibid.

⁹Tufuo and Donkor, p. 75.

as that of a man. At marriage, the soul of the girl passes from the care of the father into the care of her husband's soul. This care will continue until she is widowed or divorced.¹⁰ The soul is all-important in every undertaking; and thus, in marriage, the soul must first be consulted before marriage and then be introduced to the new wife.

The souls can communicate with the gods (abosom) or even with the Supreme God (Nyame). These gods will make known to the souls of the humans their wants and demands and these, in turn, should be fulfilled by the Ashantis. This is a vital point in the problem of taking Christianity to these people. Ashantis expect their gods to answer in a direct and outright manner. With the exception of what Americans call Pentecostal churches, most churches are vague as to how and when God answers prayers of the Christians. This partially accounts for the rapid success of these and similar types of churches in Africa. Missionaries going to communicate Christianity to the Ashanti must first be very certain as to how, when, and why their God communicates to human beings. A church with little emphasis on prayer has little chance for success among the Ashantis. The Ashanti soul communicates with its gods for guidance in matters large and small.

¹⁰Lystad, p. 157.

In regard to this matter, many Ashantis would see the acceptance of Christianity as a step backwards in his spiritual life.

When a person dies his soul becomes a spirit (saman). While his body goes to the grave, his soul takes on new life or function; it joins the ancestral souls. In this way the unity between the seen world of the living and the unseen world of the ancestors is maintained. Taking the form of the saman (spirit-ancestor), the soul starts its journey to the world of the ancestors. This journey is symbolized in the rituals of funerals and burials. Ashantis have a widespread belief in reincarnation.

A person's psychological factors are explained in terms of the soul. The province of the soul includes such traits as emotions, sensation, perception, memory, insight, and thinking, as well as the gathering, storing, sorting, and combining of knowledge.¹¹ Success and failure are also attributable to the soul of man. If his soul is spoken of as good, then he is successful.

The manner in which a man dies has much to do with what happens to his spirit (saman). If this death is premature--by accident, suicide, or murder, his spirit becomes samantwentwe, or a harmful spirit. He may not enter the

¹¹Ibid.

world of the ancestors and roams the in-between world doing all the harm possible.¹² Ashantis have a fear of being harmed by such spirits and will carry arms for protection in case one is met while walking in the night.

Certain animals are said to have spirits (saman). This is likewise true of hills, trees, mountains, and rocks. The spirits, however, of non-human things are considered weaker than those of humans. These spirits must never be offended, as they are capable of bringing vengeance upon the offender. One needs their help at all times. The most striking example among the Ashanti of a soul being in an inanimate object is the Golden Stool of the King of Ashanti. The stool is considered the embodiment of the soul of the Ashanti tribe.¹³ This stool is believed to have descended from the skies through the incantations of Okomfo Anokye, the chief priest of the King of Ashanti, Osei Tutu. This event took place in the 17th century and the stool was presented to the tribe as a symbol of their unity and the authority of their king. From that time on, it has been regarded as a sacred object and worshipped at times. The Golden Stool is believed to

¹²Tufuo and Donkor, pp. 75-76.

¹³Ibid., p. 84.

enshrine the soul of the Ashanti tribe.¹⁴ It is not difficult to understand why the Ashantis have been named "the people with a soul."

According to Maletzke, the extent to which we understand the world-view of another culture is the extent to which we will be able to communicate.¹⁵ This means Americans going to the Ashanti as representatives of the government, religion, or business will have to start thinking in terms of the spiritual world if they wish to have any success.

The Ancestors and Their Activities

Related to the Ashanti world-view are their views toward their ancestors; indeed, their belief in ancestors could be included as part of their world-view. It has been said in Africa, "No man fears his gods half as much as he fears his ancestors." Ancestors play an important part in the life and actions of the Ashanti. Indeed, some of the ancestors go on to become gods and are worshipped as such. It is the hope of every Ashanti that he dies in the correct manner in order that he may go straight on to the land of the ancestors, the land from which he came at birth.

¹⁴A. A. Y. Kyerematen, Panoply of Ghana (London, 1964), p. 25.

¹⁵W. T. Harris and E. C. Parrinder, The Christian Approach to the Animist (London, 1960), p. 31.

Life among the ancestors goes on much in the same way as back on earth. Lystad made this observation:

Life among the ancestors differs from that among men primarily in that the participants are disembodied and deathless. Otherwise, the ancestral world is a society of Ashanti men and women and children with a structure like that of living Ashanti society, with its pleasures and satisfactions, its families and classes, its royalty and free commoners and slaves, its politics and courts, and all that makes Ashanti proud.¹⁶

The ancestors are in an invisible world, but not an apart world. They are still very much a part of the living. For example, all of the land in Ashanti belongs to the ancestors. There is a phrase "stool land" among the Ashanti, which literally means that the land belongs to the ancestors. The chief holds the land in trust for the ancestors. Any Ashanti farmer going to till the land must first gain permission of the owner--the ancestors. The chiefs, heads of clans, and families are but temporal representatives of the ancestors. If an Ashanti wishes to succeed and enjoy the good life, he must "learn to dance to the ancestral drum."¹⁷

This intimate relationship between the earth residents and the ancestors--the respect they are given and the power

¹⁶Lystad, p. 160.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 161.

they exert--has led to what is termed "ancestor worship." One Ghanaian writer says the rites surrounding the ancestors are not worship, but communication.¹⁸ The ceremonies are not worship services, but "an occasion for remembering them, a sort of family reunion."¹⁹ When thought of in this manner, the practice does not clash so directly with the Christian faith. However, these rites do seem to be worship, sacrifices being made on most occasions. The difference between worship and communication is difficult to understand. Missionaries must be more tolerant at this point. No Ashanti would be disrespectful to his ancestors, yet by demanding the complete abolition of this practice, the Christian faith appears to be disrespectful of his ancestors. Some type of compromise needs to be worked out.

Actually, the Ashanti does not see his "sacrifice" to the ancestor as a sacrifice, but more as feeding him a meal or giving him a drink. This is best illustrated in the practice of offerings surrounding a dead chief. When the chief dies, his stool is blackened and placed in a special house, along with those of other departed chiefs. Then upon certain occasions, these stools are brought out to honor the departed chiefs, for the stools contain the souls of the

¹⁸W. E. Abraham, The Mind of Africa (London, 1962), p. 63.

¹⁹Ibid.

departed chiefs. Each stool has its own cup and dish or bowl which is used for pouring libations and feeding the ancestors;²⁰ and each stool has its own caretaker or custodian.

At times food and drink will be left in large pots around the grave of one who has died, even if the death occurred many years before. A soul has to continue eating and drinking just as it did in this world. Eva L. R. Meyerowitz describes graphically these celebrations in the Tekyiman area, located west of Kumasi. Her first-hand observations took place at the sacred grove at Tekyiman during the Knyifie celebrations. These rites were in honor of dead kings, their purpose being to renew the power of the kra (soul) of the living king²¹ and that of his Royal Ancestors.²² At first, she tells how calabashes were brought into the group and filled with palm-wine. Before each one drank, they would pour some out on the ground around the grave so that the dead king could drink first. Then, while

²⁰Kyermaten, p. 19.

²¹King--at times this term is used interchangeably with "chief." In practice there is only one King of Ashanti, the Asantehene, who lives in Kumasi.

²²Eva L. R. Meyerowitz, At the Court of an African King (London, 1962), p. 174.

each one drank from a calabash, praises were sung to the Royal Ancestors. Some palm-wine was also poured into the libation cups which were placed around the grave. The king then took some of the Dutch gin²³ which Meyerowitz had brought along for the occasion. Some was put in the empty calabashes while some was poured out for libation.

After the "libation of drinks," food was prepared. This is considered a sacred meal in which the dead and the living share a common meal in order to renew the bond between the two. Meyerowitz then tells what happened when the first course of the meal was brought in an old earthenware vessel.

The Banmuhene got up, took the golden spoon of his office, dipped in into the vessel and filled four little bowls with the eto (mashed yams) and fufu (Mashed yams beaten into a glutinous doughy mass). He said a short prayer to the dead King and then placed the four bowls round the grave in such a way that they formed a cross.²⁴

After this, a snow-white ram was brought in and sacrificed and the blood was drained into the libation cups and offering bowls. A second ram was sacrificed in the same manner. Then, the animals were cut up and cooked. Some of the meat was

²³Libation is usually made with the most expensive alcoholic beverage possible to obtain. Gin is a favorite. The writer once asked a chief why he did not use just water. He replied that such cheap libation would be an insult to the ancestors.

²⁴Meyerowitz, p. 178.

eaten by those present, some sent out to the villages, and some left at the grave for the dead kings. This process of "sacrifice" to the ancestors is generally followed by all Ashantis. The size of the meal is determined by the importance of the departed and the financial resources available to the families concerned.

As western civilization has moved upon the Ashantis, their interest in sacrifices to the ancestors has diminished.

Religion of the Ashanti

The Ashanti is an animist, which, in popular terms, is known as a "spirit worshiper." A distinction must be made between spirit worship and the worship of the gods or God; though, at times, the two seem impossible for a white man to distinguish. Our attention is first turned to the upper pantheon in Ashanti belief.

The Supreme God.--The esteem in which this Supreme God is held is reflected in this proverb: "The Earth is large, but God is greater." Considering the reverence the Ashanti holds for the earth, this puts God in a very high position. The belief in a Supreme God, who is the Creator, is common throughout Africa. When the Christian and Muslim missionaries came to Africa, they found this concept already firmly

entrenched in the minds of the people.²⁵ But, the Ashanti are special in respect to this belief because they are the only tribe in tropical Africa to have temples, priests, and altars to this Supreme God.²⁶ The Kikuyu in Kenya give similar attention to God, but not to the extent of the Ashantis.

In his outstanding work on the Ashanti, first published in 1923, R. S. Rattray tells of this belief in God and has photographs of priests standing in front of the temples to Nyame, the Ashanti Supreme God.²⁷ A Nyame dua (God's tree) is found at the temple. This altar is in the shape of a forked branch with a large pan placed in the forks. Even today, in the more traditional Ashanti homes, this Nyame dua can be found. Before eating, the head of the house will place some food in the basin. Eggs are a common sacrifice to Nyame. The larger sacrifices, such as animals, are reserved for lesser gods.

This God has many names and characteristics. Odomankoma, the Everlasting Creator of all, and Onyankopon, the

²⁵Geoffrey Parrinder, African Mythology (London, 1967), p. 18.

²⁶Geoffrey Parrinder, West African Religion (London, 1961), p. 15.

²⁷Ashanti (London, 1955), pp. 139-144.

Unchangeable One on whom he leans, are two of these. Other names for God are "Giver of Rain," "Giver of Sunshine," "Elder," "Grandfather," "God of Comfort," "Mighty," "He who is beyond all thanks," and "The Great Spider," the latter coming from the Ashanti myths concerning the powers of the spider. God's special day of worship is Saturday, and one of his names is "Almighty Saturday," a fact which is an advantage for the Seventh-Day Adventist church in their mission work for Ghana.

Worship to Nyame is usually individual, while there are communal prayers at times for such things as rain and fruitful harvests. Nyame lives far away in the sky. At one time, however, he lived very close to man. One myth says that God moved away from man when a woman kept hitting him with a large stick as she was pounding fufu. Because he felt that men wanted to hurt him, he moved to his present distant location, where he maintains an attitude of interested aloofness.²⁸ This aloofness is the major reason why the Ashantis believe in lesser gods who act as go-betweens. The Supreme God, to them, is just too far away and has too many other things to do to be interested in the everyday affairs of man.

The traditional Ashanti doctrine of God has many similarities to the Christian doctrine of God. Robert Lystad,

²⁸Lystad, p. 163.

who spent many months in Ashanti doing first-hand studies of their culture, tells of a conversation with one of the priests of Nyame at Goaso, Ashanti.²⁹ First of all, God is Creator; he made the earth, rivers, waters, plants, trees, and all other things. Then he made man to enjoy these good things. After man, he created animals to eat the plants and enjoy his other bounties. Lastly, God created the lesser gods to protect man. Nyame created the world in such a fashion as to ensure harmony and order. He gave every person a task or work to perform; and, if a man fails in this appointed task, he can expect no help from Nyame or the other gods. Nyame's greatest taboo is evil; however, he created the possibility of evil in the world. Before people are born, they tell Nyame what they want to do on earth, even to the ideas and opinions they wish to hold. He, in turn, permits them to do this, even if they chose evil actions. Some people ask that they have a short life and return soon to the land of the ancestors, so they meet death usually from falling trees or drowning. A man who has chosen evil may have a long life, but he will not escape punishment. This will come when he returns to Nyame and the ancestors.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 163-166.

This belief in the Supreme God among the Ashanti accounts for limited success which the Christian missionaries have had converting the Ashantis. Conversion is limited because there are still far more Ashantis outside the Christian fold than in it. The problem arises not so much over the Supreme God but in the worship of the lesser gods and spirits, the problem now before us.

The Lesser Gods and Spirits.--No chief or king among the Ashanti can be approached directly; this approach must be made through the chief's linguists. The linguists serve as the voice of the chief. So it is with God. He, too, must have linguists or intermediaries. Therefore, he created lesser gods to be his linguists and take care of these matters pertaining to the well-being of the human race.

Second only to Nyame in power is "Mother Earth," the first of his creations. Asase Yaa is her Ashanti name and she is personified as the fertile great-breasted goddess. Thursday is her day, and it should be honored as a holiday and no farming should take place. The theory behind this is that the earth is tired and needs a rest from her labors. No graves should be dug on Thursday. Still, in certain sections of Ashantiland, the farmers will not go to their farms on certain Thursdays or Fridays, the reason being

to avoid mishaps and seeing such oddities as the red-haired albino with flowing beard, the very tall woman with sweeping breasts or the Ghost Hunter, Saman Bomofo. On such days Mother Earth lets out its children to roam at large and sons of men must guard against meeting them and being frightened to death.³⁰

Of all the children of Nyame and Asase Yaa, the River Tano is the most important. This river is located in western Ashanti and from it have come major gods of the Ashanti. Temples have been built to this god and are described by Rattray.³¹ Fish may not be eaten from this river. This taboo also applies to other rivers and lakes which are considered gods. Sacrifices are made from time to time to show respect and avoid evil consequences. Other taboos are in effect. For example, Lake Bosomtwe, near Kumasi; is a god and no boats must be permitted in its waters. If farms are to be built beside such gods as River Tano, sacrifices must be made near the banks. These sacrifices will guard against mishaps and insure good farm crops. Failure to do this can bring harm and even death to the farmer. Snakes and wild animals will be sent out by the gods to harm the offenders.

³⁰Tufuo and Donkor, pp. 76-77.

³¹Ashanti, p. 11.

The moon is also a god, and the Queen Mother of Ashanti is considered the daughter of the moon, the female aspect of the Supreme Being. Of the making of gods to the Ashanti there appears to be no end. They are found everywhere. Spirits possess such objects as high hills, large rocks, unusual trees, and deep bush. Out in the deep bush live dangerous ghosts who have been lost, drowned, or burnt alive and did not have a proper burial. Certain forest animals also have spirits.

It comes as no surprise that the Ashanti will go to any lengths to protect himself and his family from the evil powers of the spirits. For, while some gods offer help to humans, they can also do harm. The Ashanti, therefore, "has to find out where such powerful spirits exist protecting oneself with such juju as can pay the necessary homage or be a protector."³² Talismans with special powers are worn on the body or carried around to offer protection from these spirits. There are certain gods which are classified as "executioner gods" (Abosombrafo). Certain Ashantis will make annual offerings of money and animals to these gods to shield themselves from their deeds.

³²Tufuo and Donkor, p. 78.

All of these gods and spirits use dwarfs for messengers or errand boys.³³ The little beings (Mboatia) can be found anywhere. They have even been known to kidnap children, hide them, and, later, leave them at places where they will be found and returned to their homes. At times, the dwarfs are capable of carrying adults away and giving them spiritual powers, then permitting them to return to their families. If one takes bananas from the dwarfs, he can never return to the human form, even though he appears to be human. It is not difficult to understand why the Ashanti will go to any length to keep these gods and spirits pacified, for upon their happiness depends his very existence.

Witchcraft in Ashanti

As a natural outgrowth of their world-view, the Ashantis believe in witchcraft. This belief is universal in black Africa. Most Africans are so afraid of the witches that they are even reluctant to discuss the subject. One Ghanaian student said, "There is no word that frightens the superstitious African more than the word "witchcraft." To him the mere mention of the word means a lot and he will do all in his power not to be called by it [a witch]."³⁴

³³ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁴ H. Debrunner, Witchcraft in Ghana (Accra, 1959), p. 2.

The importance of witchcraft is illustrated by the number of pagan anti-witch cults which have sprung up in Ashanti. Because of the fear the Ashanti has of witches, these cults have won many converts, even from the ranks of the Christians. Their main attraction lies in the claims of special power to "either combat witchcraft effectively, or to protect and deliver from it."³⁵

The Ashanti concept of witchcraft is that there is "some supernatural power of which man can become possessed, and which is used exclusively for evil and anti-social purposes."³⁶ Witches are feared and hated, and witchcraft is regarded by all as an evil thing. Witches are thought to perform only evil and destructive deeds. Witchcraft takes place in the spiritual realm. Usually, the soul of a woman who is a witch will leave her body and go about her evil ways at night. Even though in the spiritual realm, the harm they do is just as real as if in the physical realm. Do the witches really harm people? This question has been answered by H. Debrunner, an eminent authority on the subject.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Dewayne Davenport, The Missionary and African Studies (Memphis, Tennessee, 1964), pp. 98-99.

One thing is absolutely clear to me. The greatest power of witchcraft belief is the fear it inspires. I am quite convinced that, in many cases, death ascribed to the activities of witches is due solely to the fear of them, or of being bewitched.³⁷

It is just at this point of fear where the Christian churches should be doing their most effective work in Ashanti, yet it is here they have failed. Some of the African "healing churches," which have arisen in Ashanti, have had their most success in being able to offer the people help in the matter of protection against witches. African prophets who are leading these churches claim to have powers to hunt out witches, and they say their prayers are strong enough to ward off the witches. The success of these churches should indicate to the traditional Christian churches that they cannot succeed in Ashanti without offering the people assistance in the matter of witches. Herein lies the problem. Most western missionaries do not even recognize that such a problem exists or that witchcraft has any power at all.

If Christianity is to be communicated to the Ashanti, the church must face up to this problem, for it pervades every aspect of the Ashanti's life. Here the church should take a psychological approach. One African said that if the mans sunsum (personality soul) is made strong, then the witches

³⁷ Debrunner, p. 47.

cannot harm him. Here, then, is the task of Christianity-- strengthening the personality. Kindness must be shown to those who have been accused of being witches. Prayer meetings have proved effective in building up the personality to give the person power to overcome the threat of witchcraft.

Experiments have been conducted as to the effectiveness of overcoming the influence of witchcraft through congregational prayers. An elderly woman in the church had been accused of being a witch. The accusers had said that as proof of her guilt her soon-to-be-born grandchild would be born deformed. The church prayed that the baby would be born whole, and that if the woman did possess the powers of witchcraft, she would be freed from such evil power. It was a happy congregation that Sunday when the woman brought a perfectly formed baby and presented it to the people. This was proof to all that she was not a witch, as had been claimed. The woman and the congregation regarded this as an answer to prayer. Of course, before a missionary can take such an approach to these problems, he must first know and take seriously the Ashanti world-view.

Social Structure of the Ashanti

The Life Style of the Ashanti

The more practical side of every-day life among the Ashanti is related to spiritual considerations, although it must be remembered that all phases of their lives are ruled by the spiritual world. The life-style of the Ashantis has been well described by Ashanti writers, Tufuo and Donkor.³⁸ They bear down very strongly on the fact that Ashanti life style is communal, but not Communistic. Some African politicians, drawing upon the communal life of the Africans, have tried to take their nations into Communism. Most have failed; for, although the African is usually communal in practice, he is usually far from Communism as a political theory. Nkrumah tried to introduce Communism in Ghana and failed, with most of his opposition coming from the Ashanti tribe.

The Ashanti tribe could be considered as one large family. This large family is then broken down into smaller communities, each of which is still one large family. The smallest unit in this system would be the home or compound, where one husband or father rules over his wives, children, and any other relatives who might choose to live with him. The Ashanti

³⁸Tufuo and Donkor, p. 14.

is taught that he is his brother's keeper and must not refuse hospitality to any relative or visitor. In his home, the Ashanti man is boss and assumes responsibility for administration, security, and settlement of internal troubles.³⁹

There is one exception to this--any trouble between his wives is usually settled by help of a third party. The assumption is that a man with more than one wife could not remain neutral in such matters.

The traditional Ashanti home is polygamous. While some have estimated that as many as 75 per cent of the Ashanti men have only one wife, observation will show differently. Most of the Ashanti men, even with the impact of Christianity, still have more than one wife. Some men, in order to get around the problems posed by Christianity, have only one "official" wife. While sex is important to the Ashanti, this is not the sole reason for his taking more than one wife. The number of wives is an indication of a man's wealth. Taking more than one wife shows a man's willingness to share his wealth. By having more wives and more children, the man will have more opportunity to be generous. This is good theory; but, in practice, it does not always work out that way.

³⁹Ibid., p. 48.

The husband lives in a compound or house with all his wives and children. In some large compounds each wife has her own small house within the compound. The husband has his own house and the wives take turns sleeping with him. A wife could only leave the compound by consent, and this would have to be based on a good reason, such as helping a sick parent or relative. Even if a wife is living off the compound, she must not fail in her duties toward her husband. She must see that the husband has water for bathing and food when it is her turn to provide them. Turns are on a weekly basis, and the wife who sleeps with the husband must do the cooking for that week. It is also the wife's duty to see that the husband has clean clothes. For her husband to appear in public with dirty clothes during her week would be a disgrace. When a wife's week is over and it is time for her to go "off duty," all the "articles of cover-cloths and bedspread are removed by her and washed before 'handing over' the man to the incoming rival."⁴⁰

Even those who oppose polygamy must admit that there is more harmony in such a home than would be expected. The elder wife is in favor of this arrangement, for she now has workers to help her. She is usually in charge of all the

⁴⁰Ibid.

other wives. Every wife must take care not to dominate the husband, for this might result in jealousy among the others. As would be expected, the youngest or best looking wife is usually more in demand by the husband. Polygamy, however, does have its problems, not the least of which are the children. At times, one wife will make the charge that her husband is partial to the children of another wife. Emotions can cause problems between the wives. One African expressed it this way. Suppose you had gone off on a long journey, being away from the home for many months. When you return, which wife's door do you knock on first?

Polygamy is universally practiced in black Africa. From the beginning of Christian missions, the missionaries have taught against it. Still, most of the Ashantis have more than one wife. It appears that the Christian faith will have to take another long, hard look at polygamy and see if some new approach can be determined. Christianity was born and spent its childhood in a polygamous society. By using indirect evidence, it appears that the early New Testament church had polygamous members. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the evangelist Timothy, gave him certain qualifications as to those he appointed bishops. A part of these are found in the epistle of I Timothy, chapter three, beginning at verse one. "The saying is sure. If any one aspires to the office of

bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, . . .". This qualification of one wife for church officers is also stressed in other passages, such as Titus, chapter three. The deduction, therefore, is that some of the members of the early church had more than one wife. This conclusion is based on the fact that so much stress is placed on the one wife qualification.

Non-family visitors who come to live in the compound are completely under the command of the husband or landlord. If the husband leaves the compound, the senior wife is left in charge if the husband has no brothers around.⁴¹ In some rare cases, his oldest son will be left in charge. There is no discrimination and all things are shared alike in the compound. There are rules governing the children. They must never stare at their elders while the elders are eating. The father is always served his meal first. He will sometimes take this at a communal table. In the father's home, the father, sons, nephews, both paternal and maternal, may eat at the same table. In the uncle's home, uncles and cousins of both sides may share a common meal. All of this food is prepared by the women for the men.

⁴¹Ibid.

Children eat with their mothers; however, the girls will usually band together for meals when they grow old enough. The boys long for the day they will be permitted to eat at the table with the men. There is an Ashanti proverb which tells when the boy can join his father's table. "When a child has learned how to wash or clean his hands, he dips his hands in the same dish with his elders."⁴² Knowing how to clean one's hands is only one part of joining the adults. The children must also learn how to keep their mouths and teeth clean. Having mouth odors and dirty teeth is considered disgraceful among Ashantis. Women eat as a group, if they are living in the same house. Men and women do not eat together in this tribe--a rule common throughout all black Africa. They are not permitted to "dip their hands into the same dish."⁴³

The expression "cleanliness is next to godliness" certainly applies in the case of the Ashantis. In addition, to the hands, mouths, and teeth already mentioned, they pay much attention to the body. From the child's third birthday, his lessons start in personal hygiene. He is first taught to wash his face and then to clean his teeth. The Ashanti "toothbrush" is a stick made from the Tweapea tree.

⁴²Ibid., p. 45.

⁴³Ibid.

These are sold in the markets and on the streets, and every respectable Ashanti has one and cleans his teeth after every meal. They are usually bought in bundles, as they wear out rapidly. The function of the stick is to remove food particles without injuring the gums.

Attention is also paid to having clean toes and nails, and "regular shaving of the beard and other parts of the body such as armpits and sometimes the nostrils."⁴⁴ Offensive body odors have even led to divorces. No woman would want this charge to be brought against her in divorce hearings. Therefore, she will go to much effort to keep clean, taking baths twice a day, or three in the case of extreme heat. When the girls reach puberty they are given a thorough education on cleanliness, especially as it relates to marriage.

Communal life among the Ashantis is practiced also with relationship to work. Services must be given free of charge to others simply upon request. This may involve clearing land for a farm, working on the farm itself, or building a barn. One must help if he is asked to do so. As would be expected, some members of the tribe take advantage of the others.

If one goes hunting and makes a kill, he must share the meat with all others. This is illustrated in the following

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 47.

story of a hunter who killed a large buffalo. He asked those in the compound to go and help him bring home the meat. One of the elders told him the kill must be divided among the tribe.

He was told that the right hind leg was for the paramount chief as the custodian of the stool land, the left was for his father who bought him the gun and whose soul guarded him in the hunting expedition, the waist was for his mother who bore him for nine months, the breast for his wife or wives, the right foreleg for those who would bring the carcass home, the left foreleg to be distributed among the neighbors; the neck for his children who would carry his body for internment after death, the head for his cousin whose father was his (the hunter's) half-brother of the same father of his grandfather's brother's grand-grandchildren.⁴⁵

The above story vividly demonstrates the power of the communal life style among the Ashanti. Nothing is one's own, save his wife or wives. This makes it very difficult for an enterprising Ashanti to gain wealth, as his relatives and friends will usually take much of what he acquires. This is shown in the Ashanti view of hospitality. Guests are highly regarded in the Ashanti home. Invited or uninvited, a guest must, according to custom, be given every comfort. It would bring shame upon the head of the household if a guest were to leave telling others that the host was inhospitable. A guest must never be asked when he is going

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 49-50.

to leave, and, even when he asks to go, the host must ask him to stay on. No guest can leave the host's house without first asking permission. If a guest has stayed for two or more days, he must seek permission to leave the previous evening. Twelve hours, or more, must be left so that all matters can be cleared up before the departure.

Marriage in Ashanti

Marriages are usually for politics, prestige, family pressure, or money; there is little love as the western mind understands love. The selection of the mate is usually made by the parents or the family. An Ashanti cannot marry those of his own family or clan. Those to be married must have separate, unrelated ancestors. Since the Ashantis have the matrilineal system of kinship, only the cousins on the mother's side are truly cousins. Those "cousins" on the father's side are not related at all, so it is permissible to marry those on the father's side.⁴⁶ The cardinal principle is to "never caress the ear of a fellow clan member." Of all the sins against the ancestors, incest, i.e., mating with a clansman, is among the most horrifying.

⁴⁶Davenport, p. 30.

The girls are ready to marry at puberty. Rattray observes that in the old days, Ashantis were expected to marry at puberty.⁴⁷ At times, infants or, perhaps, unborn children were promised to a friend of the parents.⁴⁸ Both Western and Christian influences have changed many of the marriage customs in Ashanti; many of the traditional practices have been modified. Trial marriage is still very common in Ashanti. This is where the couple live together without first performing the ceremonies required by Ashanti marriage customs. If such a marriage does not work out, the couple simply separate. Regardless of how many children a man and woman might have, they are not considered as married until they have paid all the bride price.

The questions a family might ask about a future daughter-in-law are much like those American parents might ask.

How old is she; has she been married previously; why did her earlier marriage fail; does she possess the personality of a good woman; is she educated in womanly acts; will she work hard; will she bear many children; will she raise her children well; does she come from a fine family; is the history of her family such as to give pride to anyone allied with it; is it a prosperous family; is her family free from the taints of indebtedness and sorcery; is she from a powerful family; is she from a royal family, or at least from a free family rather than from a slave family?⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ashanti, p. 76.

⁴⁸ ibid.

⁴⁹ Lystad, p. 59.

These are more questions than would be expected of an American family. It must be kept in mind that Ashanti boys and girls cannot marry until they have permission from their families. This includes the extended family, such as uncles, grandfathers, grandmothers, and aunts.

Once the young couple has decided they want to marry, the long and costly process of getting married begins. So costly is it that many of the boys do not get married and just settle for "trial marriages." The proper customary channel of marriage is known as "Knocking, Asking, and Taking."⁵⁰ The young man first goes to the parents of the girl and asks their consent for the marriage. Then he goes to his own family and tells them his desires. His family then calls the group together and carefully studies the girl and her family. From the boy's family are selected two or three women to approach the girl's family to bring the news of what the boy's family has decided. This is known as "knocking at the door of the parents of the girl."⁵¹ Now, the girl's family is in no hurry and acts very non-committal; they ask the representatives to come again after they have had time

⁵⁰C. K. Dovlo, Christianity and Family in Ghana (Accra, 1962), pp. 17-18.

⁵¹Ibid.

to talk to the girl and other members of the family. It is now the turn of the girl's family to put the prospective groom and his family through a long investigation. The women from the boy's family now make a second call; and, if everything is agreeable, the expenses begin.

The "knocking gift" is usually a bottle of gin and the equivalent of three to four American dollars. Then follow the engagement gifts which are given during the third visit of the delegates. These gifts consist of drinks from whiskey to mineral water--sometimes by the case; the engagement ring; the engagement Bible; a piece of cloth; and cash which will range from \$3.00 to \$15.00. The purpose of the drinks is for the father to celebrate the engagement with his extended family. The cloth is for the mother as a symbol of the cloth she used in carrying the girl on her back as a baby. The ring, Bible, and money are for the girl herself. All of this is an expense of the boy, for the girl's family does not have to share any cost of the marriage.

At this point, things are just starting to cost the boy or his family. After giving the engagement gifts, the relatives on both sides officially inform others of the engagement, and the boy and his family set the wedding date. The girl's family is told the date and the notices are filed

and announcements are made in the church, if the marriage is Christian. The cost of a Christian marriage to the boy is even greater than that of a pagan marriage. After the date is set, then comes the greatest expense of all--the dowry. Assuming it is a church wedding, the boy must provide the rings, dresses, including those for the bride's maids, and any other items needed. Trinkets of gold and silver, along with money, must be placed in an iron box. Then, a day or two before the wedding, the box is taken to the home of the bride. Whether it is a church wedding or a traditional one, a party of some kind is held after the wedding, the boy bearing all this expense as well. It is not against custom in Ashanti to attend such an affair uninvited and eat and drink to one's heart's content. As would be expected, all these expenses result in a marriage that begins in heavy debt and, at times, brings unhappiness and bitterness.⁵² For this reason, few Ashantis have church weddings.

Birth, Children, and Divorce

The importance of children in Ashanti is indicated by the fact that being childless is the greatest ill which could befall an Ashanti home. The couple would be looked down on in society.⁵³ Being barren is a terrible curse for

⁵²Ibid., p. 18.

⁵³Davenport, p. 34.

a woman. Couples will go to any lengths to have children. Many such couples go to church for prayers that they might have a child. A couple from Accra once traveled five hundred miles to pray at the shrine of the god Tango, in Northern Ghana.

Being barren is immediate cause for divorce, if the other party wishes it. If a couple has been married for one year and there is no child, a divorce is possible. If a man suspects his wife is barren, Ashanti custom permits him to marry another woman to prove his potency. On the other hand, if a woman suspects her husband is barren, she may take secret lovers to become pregnant. This "arrangement" is often done with the approval and knowledge of the husband. The more respected men in Ashanti society are, at times, asked to father such a child. It is not considered a disgrace, but an assistance to the couple.

Some of the causes given for being childless are youthful promiscuity (for this reason it is condemned), witchcraft, and fornication. Often, a barren woman will be given a disgraceful burial to prevent reincarnation. As Dovlo has stated, "Love and marriage are things of a sophisticated society."⁵⁴ For the Ashanti, however, marriage is for having

⁵⁴Dovlo, p. 22.

children, not love. That possibility, however, has now come to light through the influence of western movies and books. Children are universally wanted among the Ashanti. Some reasons given for wanting them are that they are gifts from God, they can be of great help in the house, or the farm, they can support the parents when grown, and they offer social prestige.

When a woman is in labor, she is considered between life and death. Considering the lack of medical facilities in Ashanti rural areas, this description of what takes place is very accurate. A woman is told not to cry during the delivery. To cry out in pain during labor or delivery is a sign of weakness; and, besides, women of other tribes do that, and it is a sign of their loss of self-respect.⁵⁵ If a woman has excessive pain and a difficult delivery, she is thought to have been unfaithful, so the husband is brought in to "help" in the delivery. First, he puts his hand on her stomach and says, "If you are my child, come forth." If this fails, it is automatically assumed that adultery has taken place, and the woman is called upon to confess so the baby can come forth.

An example of such a case in Ashanti has been described by Barrington. Working out of the University of Ghana, she did an outstanding study of birth and children in Ghana. One of her Ashanti researchers told her this story.

⁵⁵Kaye Barrington, Bringing Up Children in Ghana (London, 1962), p. 49.

In cases of difficult delivery, the pregnant woman is given a medicine, which is squeezed into two tiny cuts on the forehead, and then drunk. Her husband makes presents of gold nuggets and pieces of white calico, which are placed before the woman. The child is then told to come out for these presents. If these measures fail, the woman is urged to disclose the names of the lovers she had during her pregnancy. If she refuses, the midwife addresses the womb saying, "If your father is so and so, then come out," running through a list of all the possible fathers. He whose name is pronounced when the child is delivered is assumed to be the real father.⁵⁶

A woman who dies in childbirth is usually considered as having died a disgraceful death. Deformed children are considered unlucky and, in the old days, were killed. In contrast to many African tribes where twins are looked upon with horror, they are honored in Ashanti society. Children's first names are given according to the day on which they were born. Girls and boys have a separate set of day names. The second name is after some ancestor, clan hero, or relative.

Because of all the precautions which take place before the marriage, divorce in Ashanti is uncommon. The marriage is not just between the boy and girl, but, in actuality, between the families.⁵⁷ As a result, the families will do everything in their power to keep the marriage together. The Ashanti proverb is "It is the marriage that has no

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Tufuo and Donkor, p. 43.

backing that breaks."⁵⁸ A couple who get a divorce spoil the good name of their parents and families. Since, in traditional Ashanti marriage, the couple can stay together for three years before the final ceremonies, there seems little chance for a failure. No problem is caused if they separate before this three years is completed. Sometimes the father of the girl is sad because he must return part or all of the gifts which the boy's family had given him if the marriage does not succeed.

As in most societies, divorces do take place in Ashanti. Some reasons which have been given are: family trouble,⁵⁹ finances, barrenness, and disputes over children. The attitude toward divorce, once it is granted, is one of acceptance. Divorce usually makes little change in the domestic or economic situation of the woman. Neither her own nor her children's legal status is changed. Among the Ashantis, divorce seems to carry little or no moral or social penalty.

From the time a child is born, he is taught as "Ashanti-awareness." The Ashantis are proud of their national cultural heritage and do everything in their power to pass this on

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Because of the matrilineal system, the men say the woman's grandmother has too much control over the children.

to the children. A child is reprimanded if he does something "un-Ashanti-like."⁶⁰ These words may be used to scold the child: "Omanfrani aboa (You are a beast or fool of the uncultured settler)."⁶¹ Once the child has learned to walk, he is accepted into the extended family and everybody becomes his keeper. From then on, he is a member of the "community" and is never alone.

There are no problems of loneliness for the Ashanti child. This link with the extended family is explained by Ashantis in this way:

From the cradle to the grave the Ashanti has always known to belong, to a point of saturation, to the community as an inseparable entity. To him death is even a process by which he joins a host of ancestors in the other world. During his burial he receives many gifts of gold ornaments.⁶²

Death and Funerals

The Ashanti longs for death from a serene old age. His desire is to die at home among relatives and friends. If the person has lived a respected life and died a proper death, then the message is sent out to all relatives and friends in other communities that they should come and pay homage to the departed. The people begin gathering the

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 54.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., p. 9.

night before the ceremony, and throughout the night they sing the death songs of Ashanti. If the person was a Christian, then Christian hymns are also sung. During this time, the family is bathing the body and dressing it in the finest cloth available. It is then placed in a polished mahogany coffin resting on the most expensive blankets the family can afford. The next morning, the body is buried in the cemetery. If the deceased was a Christian, then the burial is usually preceded by a funeral at the church. Each church usually has its own cemetery, while the "pagans" have their separate ones.

The funeral, if conducted according to full Ashanti custom, has at least five phases to it: "the preparation, the pre-burial mourning (including wake keeping), the internment, after-burial mourning, and subsequent periodic mourning."⁶³ The preparation is considered very important. It is at this time the deceased is being prepared for his journey to the other world, the world of his ancestors. Before the dead draws his last breath, he should have been given a drink of water for his journey to the next world. The wailing and funeral dirges are sung by the women, as it

⁶³J. H. Nketia, Funeral Dirges of the Akan People, (Achimota: Ghana, 1955), p. 7.

is considered something not becoming to a man. The singing of the funeral dirges is an individual performance. Some of the women are quite good at this and have the art of moving the audience.⁶⁴

Each singer follows her own particular style of singing at the funeral.

Each singer sings dirges of her choice often without regard to what others may be singing or how they may be singing them. The individual is left to her own resourcefulness and to her knowledge of the material of the dirge and the accompanying conventions of form and performance.⁶⁵

The singers are expected to be sincere, and it is necessary to shed a tear or two lest one be suspected of being a witch.

The following is an example of a dirge of one clan or lineage:

Mother, Aba, the great Breast that children suck,
 Mother, Aba, the great wooden Food Bowl
 around which children gather,
 Mother, you know that when people confer together
 privately behind a house,
 They do so with people of their own flesh and blood.
 Mother, you know our plight: ⁶⁶
 Don't go too far away from us.

Ancient Ashanti custom requires that a person should be mourned on the 8th, 15th, 40th, and 80th days, as well as on the first anniversary of the death; but this custom is not

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 10.

followed by most Ashantis these days. A memorial service of some type is observed on one of these days, usually the 40th.

While there is much mourning, the Ashanti funeral has the flavor of a party in many ways. It becomes a social event with drumming, dancing, and visiting. A major part of any funeral is drinking, so the palm-wine, gin, and beer flow freely. The departed is getting ready to assume his social rank among the ancestors. One criterion for deciding what this rank is is the size of the funeral that his relatives and friends have given him on earth.⁶⁷ Most families have large funerals, at times spending more for the person in death than while living. The cost of the funeral is offset by donations given by friends who attend the funeral. Receipts are usually given out with the amount of the donation listed. The donor's name and the amount he has given will be shouted out to the audience. Ashantis have long ago learned that this brings in much more money than a silent donation.

Social Structure and Decision-Making

The supreme power in Ashanti is the Asantehene, King or chief of Ashanti, who lives in Kumasi. This has been limited to traditional matters in modern times, since the

⁶⁷Lystad, p. 101.

central government in Accra has taken over most of the political affairs. Ashanti government is monarchical, having been set up by Chief Osei Tutu and Okomfo Anokye, his priest-counselor, about 1697.⁶⁸ The King of Ashanti was the center of all political power, especially in older days. Even though stripped of much of this power today, the traditional power and respect are still in the minds of all Ashantis.

Next in power to the Asantehene, occupant of the Golden Stool, is the Mamponghene (chief of Mampong, a town near Kumasi), occupant of the Silver Stool. Under these chiefs rule the paramount chiefs within a given region. The chain of command goes on down to the local chiefs in the villages. Each chief has a group of respected men called "elders" who advise and guide him. No Ashanti chief is a law unto himself, and this includes the King of Ashanti. Ashantis pride themselves on having a voice in government. The power of their structure lies in the fact that the political power was "built and strongly maintained from inside."⁶⁹ Ashantis have

⁶⁸For a full discussion of the relationship between the priest and the king, see W. E. F. Ward, A History of Ghana (London, 1958), pp. 115-124.

⁶⁹Tufuo and Donkor, p. 110.

much respect for minority views and each person is expected to give his views, and only after discussing each view will a decision be made. Once the majority decides, it then becomes a matter of law, and all people are required to abide by the decision.

Second in the Ashanti tribal pecking order is the chief's linguist (okyeame). He is a member of the elders, and it is through these men the Ashanti chief speaks and is spoken to during both private and public meetings.⁷⁰ He thus becomes the mouthpiece of the chief and, as such, he wields much influence. Ashantis will work at being friends with the linguist, for through him one gains audience with the chief.

The linguists have other duties of importance, as well.

They advise on traditional law and custom, being regarded as experts in these matters; they are sent as ambassadors to other states to declare war, negotiate for peace, or convey some important message, they act as chiefs of protocol for visiting potentates; in courts of law they pronounce judgment on behalf of the chief; and at ritual ceremonies they are present to support the chief in the offerings of prayers.⁷¹

Another duty of interest to missionaries is the beating of the "gong-gong." This bell-like instrument is used by the linguist or his representative as he goes through the town delivering the news, and making announcements. If a

⁷⁰Kyerematen, p. 92.

⁷¹Ibid.

missionary goes to a village to preach, he should first approach the linguist, who will in turn secure approval or disapproval, of the chief. If the chief agrees, then the gong-gong is beaten in the village and the people are invited to come and hear the missionary. To begin preaching or teaching without the approval of the chief and linguist is considered very bad manners and will have an adverse affect on what the missionary is trying to communicate. The beating of the gong-gong tells the villagers that this visitor has official approval and blessing. "Come and hear what he has to say," says the town cryer.

Doob, in his outstanding work on communication in Africa, points up the importance of the linguist as a spokesman for the chief.⁷² The linguist is the most famous of the intermediaries in communication, of which Africa has many. Doob refers to two functions of the linguist. First, he symbolizes the power and sacred character of the chief; second, he stands as a barrier between a sacred or semisacred man and the nonsacred followers. The presence of a linguist, or number of linguists, communicates the chief's status in the society to his audience. This delay in communication caused

⁷²Leonard W. Doob, Communication in Africa: A Search for Boundaries (New Haven, 1961), pp. 20-21.

by the linguist fulfills two worthwhile functions. Each party hears the message a second time, and this gives less opportunity for misunderstanding. Also, while the repetition of message occurs, the party has time to reflect upon his reply.

It is this function of the linguist which comes closest to the use of an interpreter by the missionary. The ideal is for the missionary to learn the local language of Ashanti. Failing this, he could use an interpreter to teach the people. Cultures which are accustomed to the role of the linguist would be more willing to accept the missionary's use of an interpreter. This does, however, present problems if the missionary wishes to have direct contact with the people. The people place the missionary in the role of the chief with his linguist, and this puts barriers between the missionary and the Africans. The missionary will be more accepted by the people if he does not use an intermediary.

Decision-making in Ashanti is quite unlike that in America. The western mind is trained to answer quickly, and to wait long in giving a decision is considered impolite. It is the reverse with the Ashanti. The Ashantis like to take time to think or brood over matters before giving a decision. They have an unsavory proverb which illustrates this.

"Words once spoken are like vomit; they cannot be taken back." The Ashanti is never in a hurry to speak or give an answer. This is a cause of much frustration for the American who usually wants an answer yesterday.

Decision-making is looked upon as being very important. The Ashanti takes time to see that it is done correctly. He strives to give the best answer to the problem. Medi no mprem, na eye mono ("If no time is allowed for cooking, one eats half-cooked food").⁷³ This Ashanti proverb gives an idea of the importance which the Ashanti attach to taking their time before making a decision. There would be few times when, receiving a request, the Ashanti would not answer, "I shall think it over." He usually says the same thing when one asks him a month later. To the fast-acting American missionary, this aspect of Ashanti culture is one of the most difficult with which to deal.

Any discussion of decision-making in the Ashanti tribe would not be complete without a look at the role and status of women within this tribe. The tribal attitude toward women appears ambivalent on the surface.

Women, especially old women, are respected as the best decision-makers among the Ashantis. The Ashantis have always

⁷³Tufuo and Donkor, p. 70.

"recognized the powers of a wise woman and made use of them."⁷⁴ There can be no doubt that this concept derives from the importance placed upon the woman through the matrilineal system of the tribe. When a group tries to settle a case, their final act before making a decision is to consult "the old woman." Women in Ashanti are considered the custodians of "all knowledge and treasures of the community."⁷⁵ The men usually grant the women this high place of respect. To the outsider, the Ashanti woman may not appear to have such respect, but there is no doubt among those who have lived for long periods of time in Ashanti that the women do indeed have such power. In fact, two Ghanaian writers go so far as to say that the woman "is the final decisive factor in all the activities of the men and the arbiter of what is good or bad for the whole community."⁷⁶

Any Christian group wishing to make inroads into the Ashanti must come to grips with this aspect of Ashanti culture. Those churches which play down the role of women--who deny women leadership in the church--will have a difficult time gaining converts to their faith. Behind the Ashanti chief is the Queen Mother. Behind the elders is the "old

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 59.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 58.

⁷⁶Ibid.

woman" who must be consulted before a decision is made. A Christian church must also permit its women members to have a voice and take part in the decisions and leadership. It must be born in mind that this significant role of women applies to the Ashanti and will not be true in many other African tribes where the women are not permitted to have any voice in decision-making on the tribal level.

Yet, with all this respect for women among the Ashantis, they consider the woman as an outcast during her menstrual period. This "curse" is thought of as practically a national taboo. At the age of ten an Ashanti boy will have stopped eating with the women, even his mother, during their periods. For a man to have anything to do with a woman during this time is "considered the worst manner of contamination and the cause of many defeats in man's various struggles in life."⁷⁷ In the old days, a woman had to leave the main compound and live separately during this time. Young girls and women who have reached the menopause are "clean" and are permitted to mingle with men at any time.

This belief about the uncleanness of the woman during her menstrual period is important for the churches. If one understands this Ashanti belief, he will have no trouble

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 82.

understanding why the men and women always sit on opposite sides in worship services. Some of the African independent churches forbid women during this menstrual period even to enter the building. They gather outside the front door and take part by listening. American missionaries have been brought up in a culture where the men and women sit together during worship services. A person wanting to teach the lesson of "family togetherness" by insisting that the entire family sit together in worship would commit a fatal blunder in Ashanti.

Communication Among the Ashanti

Insider-Outsider Aspect of Communication in Ashanti

Within each society, the status of the communicator is important to the success or failure of the communication. Among the Ashantis, this is especially true. The insiders are those within the Ashanti tribe. A pure Ashanti is proud of the fact that both his mother and father are of Ashanti blood. Being very tribal-conscious, the Ashanti would consider only those of Ashanti blood as the true "insiders." Outsiders would be those from surrounding tribes, such as Ewe, Ga, and Fanti. Certainly all non-Africans would be considered as outsiders. This list would include such groups as Europeans (the whites), Arabs, Lebanese, and Chinese.

At times, an effort will be made by the Ashantis to fit the outsiders into their structure of society. Missionaries are usually placed into the positions of teachers or doctors. A well-liked person will be given a nickname and is accepted by the people more than other outsiders.

Doob points out that, given the technical ability, the insider will be "more likely to transmit more effective communications than outsiders."⁷⁸ As soon as possible, therefore, the outside communicator must put the communication in the hands of the insiders--in this case, Ashanti teachers and preachers.

Other important outsiders in modern Africa are those who migrate from one region to another in search of jobs, either permanent or temporary. Ashanti, especially Kumasi, is filled with such people. They are usually Fantis or Gas from the coast or Ewes from the Transvolta region to the east of Ashanti. Great numbers of the northern tribes also migrate into Kumasi in search of household servant work. Of all the African outsiders within Ghana, these are looked down on more than any other by the Ashantis. Africans from other nations, such as neighboring Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Togo, and Nigeria, also migrate into Kumasi in search of

⁷⁸Doob, p. 18.

jobs or for the purpose of trading. All such people are outsiders to the Ashantis.

A common mistake of the American missionary is to assume that any African will be accepted by another African. Not realizing the importance of the "insider-outsider" aspect of communication, the missionary will try to evangelize a given tribe with members of another tribe. Even though of the same skin color, an outsider is still an outsider to most tribes, and the Ashantis are no exception. Many mission leaders have the idea that if they can just build a strong church in one African nation, that nation, in time, will take Christianity to the neighboring nations. Or, they feel that once they have evangelized one tribe in Ghana this will somehow cause all the others to be evangelized. This is not the case. Depending on how one tribe views another, the evangelization of one tribe first may hurt the cause in another. If tribe "A" is fiercely disliked by the tribe "B," and Christianity comes to them via the first tribe, they may decide to have nothing to do with this religion simply because it is the religion of tribe "A." Outsider-insider theory is most important when trying to take Christianity to African tribes. In all practicality, each tribe must be evangelized separately and its own tribal leaders developed.

The Communicator's Position in the
Communication Network in Ashanti

The status of the "initiator" within the society is very important.⁷⁹ Who brought the message? Who first told about Christianity? What is the position of the person who first stated the communication? These are the questions the Ashanti would want to answer before he accepted or rejected the communication. In fact, he would want these questions answered before even taking the matter under consideration, much less making a decision one way or the other.

The higher the position of the communicator, the more likely the message is to be received in Ashanti. Age is highly respected. Elders of the villages hold a place of honor. Not realizing this, many missionaries make the serious mistake of first initiating the communication of Christianity through the young people of the tribe. They build schools, teach the young, and convert them to Christianity. They have high hopes that these young converts will, in turn, teach their parents who will, in turn, embrace this religion. In most of the cases it just does not work this way. The new religion becomes a religion of the young people. Why should the elders give up their old established religion to accept this new "children's religion?"

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 19.

Communication in Ashanti flows best from the elderly down to the young. Missionaries, therefore, should concentrate on winning converts among the elders, chiefs, and other high-status people within the Ashanti tribe. The young people will follow the advice of their elders; the reverse is not always true.

Within the context of the communicator's position, the "recipient-disseminator"⁸⁰ aspect is also worthy of note. This person fulfills the function of altering or interpreting the communication before passing it on to the audience. This corresponds to what others refer to as "opinion-leaders."

Drake conducted a survey in Ghana during 1958-59, which shows the importance of the recipient-disseminator within this society.⁸⁰ These people perform the function of reporting the news, as well as expressing their opinion. They also gather news and opinions from others and pass these on as well. These people greatly influence others within the Ashanti society.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 23.

⁸¹St. Clair Drake, "Communications Survey: The Village Communications Structure," unpublished questionnaire, University College of Ghana, Department of Sociology, 1959, cited in Doob, p. 24.

Whereas the western type of communication would be more on the formal side, the Ashanti type would be informal. This is the more popular type of communication in Ashanti and involves what the anthropologists refer to as secondary groups.⁸² Probably the most outstanding example of informal communication in Ashanti is the market. Markets for buying and selling occur either daily or on specified days of the week. These markets are more than economic affairs. People gather from far and wide to meet friends; and, usually, the market is a big social event within Ashanti society. Those who attend must be considered as communicators, for at such markets they receive and disseminate information.

Any person or groups, wishing to communicate a given message to the Ashanti tribe must take this "recipient-disseminator" factor seriously. A good word or two in support of the message by a respected Ashanti at a weekly market place might go further toward communicating to the Ashantis than two years of ordinary preaching. An opinion against the missionary of his religion could, likewise, destroy two years or more of progress. Cultivating the opinion-leaders of the tribe is of utmost importance. Even though they might not whole-heartedly endorse Christianity, it is important that

⁸¹Doob, p. 25.

they say nothing adversely against, or, at least, remain neutral on the subject.

Communicating Through Body Movements and Gestures

Doob breaks body movements into two groups--relatively involuntary and relatively voluntary.⁸³ Such items as facial expression, eye shifting, dilation of the pupils, muscle twitching, changes in breathing, jerks, and scratching are examples of relatively involuntary body movements. These are considered important to the Ashanti.

Relatively voluntary movements include gesturing, posture, contrived facial expression, position of the body, movement of any organ, spitting, nose-blowing, urinating, and excreting. Certain types of gestures are taboo with the Ashanti. For example, if a person extends his left hand to greet another, this is considered an insult in Ashanti. When receiving a gift from another, one must use the right hand or both hands. The taboo concerning the left hand arises from the Ashanti custom of using the left hand for toilet functions. Doob⁸⁴ tells of committing the error of crossing his legs in front of a chief in Ghana. Later, he apologized when it was explained that the gesture showed disrespect for

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

the chief. Doob was forgiven by the chief who, smiled and said he knew the impoliteness had been unintended.

Missionaries and other Americans living and traveling in Ashanti would be unwelcome if the Ashantis were not so forgiving and overlooked their cultural impoliteness. How much better it would be if those going to Ashanti would first take the time to learn the cultural taboos.

Another form of body communication in Ashanti is dancing. Dancing, in its broadest form, includes all body movements--moving the arms, hands, feet, and head. Dancing is important and occurs frequently in Ashanti culture. As early as 1935, Geoffrey Gorer reported that Africans "dance for joy and they dance for grief; they dance for love and they dance for hate; they dance to bring prosperity and they dance to avert calamity; they dance for religion and they dance to pass the time."⁸⁵ Ashantis dance for all this and more.

Of special importance to this study is the fact that dancing in Ashanti is always linked with other expressive forms. Hailey gives this summary. "In the African village, singing, clapping, dancing, and drumming are not separate entities, but may be said to constitute one homogeneous

⁸⁵African Dances, p. 289, cited in Doob, p. 73.

art form."⁸⁶ The connection between singing and dancing is necessary for the missionaries to understand. The approach of most missions has been to suppress or forbid dancing outright in their worship services. This is usually carried to the extreme of forbidding any type of body movement while singing. This, of course, amounts to stripping all emotion out of the worship experience for the Ashanti. One Ashanti minister said to a missionary, "You white people may be able to sing, 'There is power in the blood,' while sitting still; but, we Africans have to move around or there is no power in the feeling." Clapping is another form of body movement which must be allowed to develop naturally in Ashanti worship services.

Music is closely related to dancing and "infuses all the activities of the African from the cradle to the grave."⁸⁷ This being the case, missions should give serious attention to the type of music with which they wish to communicate Christianity to the Ashantis. Music, as related to worship, come in both vocal and instrumental forms. Attention is first turned to the vocal music.

⁸⁶ An African Survey, revised 1956, p. 67, cited in Doob, p. 73.

⁸⁷ Doob, p. 79.

On the traditional level, there is no "sharp line between performers or communicators and the audience, for virtually everyone is performing and everyone is listening."⁸⁸ This creates many opportunities for those churches which stress congregational singing. However, Ashanti music includes many special performing groups known as singing bands and choruses. Churches should make use of this musical background and develop special singing groups within each local church. These singing bands are usually composed of mixed (male and female) or female singers. At times they use instruments, but most of their performing is done through vocal music.

The form and technique in vocal music of the Ashanti is quite different from western or American form. Of the form, an outstanding Ghanaian musician says that

. . . the form of an African song is derived partly from the contexts in which it is used and partly from the form of the verbal texts on which the melody springs. There is always room for rearrangement of the order of verses, so that the actual shape of a song grows out of the situation in which it is sung.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ J. H. Kwabena Nketia, African Music in Ghana: A Survey of Traditional Forms (Accra, Ghana, 1962), p. 27.

A common form of singing in Ashanti is the call and response.⁹⁰ Here the song has a phrase consisting of two sections, and these are sung alternately by a cantor (the leader) and a chorus. The phrases may be repeated over and over again, depending on the mood of the singers and the audience. Solo and chorus refrains are also commonly used in Ashanti. Here the cantor introduces the song which is then sung by the chorus. He either sings the entire verse or short phrases and then the entire chorus repeats the verse or song. The teaching aspect of this function is obvious. This is the manner in which the Ashantis learn most of their songs. Most Ashantis are illiterate and could not learn new songs by reading them. Solos for both inspiration and teaching purposes, should be incorporated in the music of the Ashanti churches.

The style, melodies, tones, patterns, harmony, and rhythms of Ashanti music must be used in composing hymns for the Ashantis. The motif structure of Ashanti rhythm is very important. Ashantis make great use of the duple motif⁹¹ in their traditional songs. Nketia has very accurately described the performance of a children's play song.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 28.

⁹¹Duple motif--motifs which add up to two quarter or eighth notes.

It is sung by children as they sit in a circle, each one holding a piece of stone. As they sing, each one of them passes on the stone in his hand to the one on his right, leaving it on the ground, but near enough for him to pick it up.

As the game is played, the right arm is continually in motion. It swings rhythmically to the right to place the stone in position for it to be picked up. Then it swings back to the left to pick up the stone on the left. These movements are so timed that the placing of the stone coincides with the accented beats of the song, while the lifting of the stone coincides with the weakly accented beats. The stone is placed down with a loud thump, while lifting is silent. This gives two contrasting beats: a heavily accented beat and a weakly accented one.⁹²

Eighth-note rhythms are predominant in Ashanti music. From the above example, it should be clear that Ashanti music is different from American, and that western tunes and words will not always fit into Ashanti culture. There is a great need for Ashantis to write their own hymns and songs from their own culture and to their own tunes and rhythm.

Instruments also play a large part in Ashanti musical performances. The chief instrument is the drum. Drumming performs many functions in Ashanti. Ashantis are famous for their talking drums. The tones of the drums are made to resemble the human voice as closely as possible. The drums are also used for sending messages. All types of communications are achieved by use of the drums. An Ashanti minister

⁹²Nketia, pp. 67-68.

once explained that, when he was young, he had an uncle who was a drummer; and the uncle would talk to him through the drums. If they were at a festival and the uncle wanted him, he would send the message on the drum, and he would know to come to his uncle. Drums are also used in worship of the Supreme God and the lesser gods.

Other Ashanti instruments include the calabash, the lute, bells, and reed instruments. The organ and piano are western instruments, yet they are sought after by city churches in Ashanti as if they were the only instruments which could be used in worship. God is thought to have, in some way, put a special blessing on pianos but a curse on African instruments.

The Africans are taught, either intentionally or unintentionally, that their instruments are "the work of the devil." Instrumental music affords more opportunities for dancing; and, in attempts to keep the Ashantis from dancing in worship, the western missionaries have forbidden African instruments.

Geoffrey Parrinder, an outstanding authority on African religion, made this observation about the matter.

Men's and women's voices have been strained to a screech trying to sing foreign airs to this [organ] accompaniment. But no sooner are African drums, bells, and beaded calabashes introduced than an immediate change comes over the people. There is not much more tune, but there is a rhythm which sways the body and mind.

Mission churches⁹³ only use these instruments occasionally, at Harvest Festivals, and one has heard horror expressed at the notion that African mission pastors are often as conservative as some Europeans, and have been trained to think of these instruments as essentially pagan.⁹⁴

Symbolism as Communication

Symbolism permeates all facets of Ashanti traditional culture. Clothes, carvings, colors, stools, and other items convey certain information to the Ashantis. An example of Ashanti symbolism is the community stool.

In traditional Ghanaian community, the Agua (Adwa) stool is the symbol of the soul or unifying spirit of society. Every part of the structure is symbolically meaningful. For instance, the top portion which forms the seat, symbolized the warm embrace of the mother. The center represents God in society. The rectangular base always represents men in society. Men are sometimes presented as pillars carrying the mother or woman. Where such pillars occur, as in the case of the stools called Mbaagua, female stool, and Mbarangua, the male stool, they are always accompanied on the sides by small crescent moons or zigzag-shaped bodies. These are known as Mfewa (the beauties of life) and they represent children in society. The central portion of the stool is often replaced by some meaningful symbol which may be representational abstract.⁹⁵

⁹³Mission church--those churches controlled or influenced by western missionaries.

⁹⁴G. Parrinder, Religion in an African City (London, 1953), pp. 143-144.

⁹⁵Kofi Antuban, Ghana Arts and Crafts (Accra, Ghana), p. 9.

The Ashantis stamp their clothes with symbols of all types. A stamp is carved and then black dye is used to imprint the symbol on the cloth. Rattray⁹⁶ devotes an entire chapter to this Ashanti art. Some symbols of interest to this study and their meanings are: Nyame dua, an altar to the sky God; Musuyidie, something to remove evil; Nyame biribi wo soro ma no me ka me nsa, "O God, everything which is above, permit my hand to touch it"; Nyame nwu na ma wu, "May Nyame (God) die before I die"; Gye Nyame, "Except God" (I fear none); Akoma, the heart, with a cross in the center; and Nsoroma, a child of the Sky. (Its literal meaning is "Like the star, the child of the Supreme Being, I rest with God and do not depend upon myself.")

With all this rich symbolic background in religion, the western missionaries have done nothing to incorporate these symbols into the symbolism of the Christian faith in Ashanti. Most Protestant missionaries have even discouraged the use of accepted Christian symbols--the cross, for example. Yet, when Ashantis start independent churches, they always make great use of the cross. Ashantis are a highly symbolic people; yet, for all purposes, they have been stripped of this heritage when they have accepted Christianity.

⁹⁶R. S. Rattray, Religion and Art in Ashanti (London, 1927), pp. 264-268.

Ashanti Language and Communication

If a religion is to become indigenous, it must speak to the people in their mother tongue. An Ashanti was once heard to say, "English speaks to my head, but Ashanti speaks to my heart." Therefore, if the Christian religion is to truly take roots in Ashanti and become indigenous, it must speak to Ashantis in their own language. Ashanti is a dialect of the Akan (or Twi) language. The Bible has now been completed in Ashanti, and the missionary who would cross into the Ashanti culture must learn this language and preach and teach in it.

Within some of the churches in Kumasi, the service is translated into two or three languages, English usually being one. This seems to be unnecessary and a deterrent to the worship. If an American missionary were living in France, he would not expect the service to be translated into English. He would learn the French language. Why should he not act the same way when he lives and works in Ashanti? If he wants the nationals to understand the service, he should not force them to learn a second language. When a service is translated into a second language, it loses its liveliness and the enthusiasm of the worshipers is dampened. In total disregard for the cross-cultural aspect of missionary work, some

missionaries demand that the Ashantis not only translate the preaching and teaching into English, but even require the people to sing hymns and songs in English during part of the worship. When this is done, we communicate to the Ashanti that Christianity is religion of the head and not one of the heart.

Ashanti is a tonal language. Depending on the accent, "papa" could mean good, father, fan, or to pat. Ashanti has only three classes--nouns, pronouns, and verbs.⁹⁷ It has no passive voice, nor any expression of the gender; therefore, he, she, and it are the same word in Ashanti. An outstanding characteristic of Ashanti is its wide use of proverbs.

Here are several examples of Ashanti proverbs.

Proverb--"Because the baby is not weeping will you not feed it?"

Meaning--If you owe money do you not pay because your creditor has made no claim?

Proverb--"Even if a woman possesses a talking drum, she keeps it in a room belonging to a man."

Meaning--However great a woman, she is dependent on a man.

Proverb--"If a polygamist is ill, he is starved to death (because each of the wives thinks the other wife will cook for him)."

⁹⁷J. G. Christaller, Dictionary of the Ashanti and Fante Language (Basel, 1933), p. xv.

Meaning--Everybody's business is nobody's business.

Proverb--"The destruction of a castle comes from within (the mind)."

Meaning--Whatever a man does is first conceived in the mind.

Proverb--"If the young of the vultures eat filthy things, it is because of bad examples."

Meaning--Bad education or poor breeding produces poor results.

Proverb--"Even if a goat becomes a sheep, there will always be black on its body."

Meaning--If an African tries to imitate a European, his black color will always remain.

Proverb--"One should not cast away a thing in the bush and then go back again to take it."

Meaning--The pagan converted to Christianity should not fall back into heathenism. This one is used by Christians when trying to persuade backsliders to return to the Christian religion.

A special study must be made of the meaning of words in the Ashanti language. The Ashanti belief concerning the soul illustrates this. When an Ashanti speaks of the soul or spirit, he means something different from the person brought up in the American culture. When a missionary comes to say "I have brought you a religion to save your soul," the

Ashanti might reply, "Which soul are you wanting to save? I have two." While learning the vocabulary is important, learning meanings of Ashanti words is even more important.

The Time Factor in Ashanti as Communication

In Chapter Two of this thesis the relation of the time-factor to cross-cultural study was established. The American concept of time was shown as something fixed in nature, something around one, and from which one cannot escape. The Ashanti world-view is quite the opposite. Time, for the Ashanti, is not fixed. Time, as Americans think of time, is of little importance to him. Time is thought of with relation to events. When one Ashanti mother was asked the age of a child, she answered, "In the year that King Prempeh crossed the Pra River." As this had never been done before, it became a major event in the history of the Ashantis.

Ashanti time is an unending circle. When an Ashanti dies, he simply goes back to the ancestors and the time cycle is never broken. This view seems in keeping with the teachings of Christianity; however, in practice, most Americans think of death as an end and not a beginning, as do the Ashantis. Since the Ashanti has such a broad view of time, he is not concerned about times for the starting of events. If a worship service is scheduled to start at 10:00

a.m. and the people do not turn up until 10:45, no one really gets upset. Neither are they too concerned about the time to end the service. If everyone is "in the spirit," they might go an hour longer than scheduled.

Appointment time is also different in Ashanti. If an American missionary has an appointment with an Ashanti to come to his house at 2:00 p.m., it is highly unlikely that the man will show up exactly at the appointed time. He feels it no insult to the host if he shows up an hour late, nor should the American take it as an insult. Acquaintance time is important to the Ashantis. While in America, the minister might expect to make some converts the first time he speaks to an audience; this is highly unlikely in Ashanti. He should not expect to gain any substantial number of members of Ashanti society on his first attempt. Ashantis like to get to know the communicator before they accept his message.

The Space Factor in Ashanti Culture as Communication

Space is very much a part of the silent language. As Hall has pointed out, one often communicates more by the silent language than the spoken. Of particular importance to the American is his territorial space. The American has been brought up in a culture in which private space is most

necessary to his mental state. The two space factors which cause the most conflict between Americans and Ashantis are the need for private space and the proper distance when speaking or assembling.

Ashantis are taught from birth that they are part of a community. This belief in the communal life goes with them throughout life. The Ashanti is accustomed to living surrounded by many people. He has no concept of private space as Americans hold. Being a part of this communal society, he lives in close quarters. Touching and being touched is a way of life to the Ashanti. In fact, he does not want to live in isolation. He wants to be in contact and have interaction with the family and community.

Contrast this with the American background. The American has been brought up to "mind his own business" and keep out of the way of others. On the other hand, the Ashanti hears every loud argument which takes place in the compound and can interfere and make suggestions, if he wishes. Private space is outside his world-view. Therefore, when the American comes and lives in a house apart from the community, and then builds a fence around it to protect his territorial space, it is no wonder he is looked upon as strange by the Ashantis. He is communicating to the

Ashantis that he does not care for them and that they should stay away from him.

Most Americans feel threatened when an Ashanti moves very close to them to speak or extend a greeting. Africans can feel this attitude. One African told of a doctor who was afraid to touch them when he was treating their illnesses. It can be a strange feeling indeed, for an American when an Ashanti man comes up beside him and takes his hand and walks along for half a mile. There is no uneasiness on the part of the Ashanti, for he is simply expressing his feelings of companionship. To draw away, as is the first impulse, is to communicate unfriendliness to the Ashanti. The space factor must receive careful attention of the missionaries if they communicate Christianity to this communal society.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Thesis

Cross-Cultural Communication, A Rapidly Growing Area of Research

Much criticism has been brought against Americans for paying too little attention to the study and application of cross-cultural communication and understanding. But they are now beginning to recognize this failure and, possibly, are making needed corrections in the international area.

Speech and communication groups are now taking special notice of cross-cultural communication and are doing research in the field. For example, the Speech Association of America has been requested to orient students toward an international role, rather than a nationalistic one. The International Communication Association has had so much interest in the area that they have added an Intercultural Communication Division within the I. C. A. The Missions Advanced Research and Communication center of Monrovia, California, has

published a listing¹ of over nine hundred studies in cross-cultural research and related areas. This indicates the interest being taken in the subject by the church mission scholars.

The Importance of the Ashanti Tribe

The Ashanti tribe of Ghana is one of the more important tribes of Africa. This study has looked at their culture and customs, as related to communication. Except for the system of matrilineal inheritance, the Ashantis are representative of other major African tribes. Their religion is animistic, spiritual, and "other worldly," in nature.

A Definition of Culture and Communication

Culture is difficult to define. For this study, it has simply been defined as the way of life of any society, tribe, or group, usually located in a given geographical area. There are many definitions of communication. The one which seems to suit best for this study is the concept of communication as sharing. Culture and communication are intertwined. Hall has stated, "culture is communication and communication

¹Christianity Across Culture: A Survey of Available Research (Monrovia, Calif., 1970).

is culture."² Intracultural communication is that which takes place between persons within the same cultural group. Intercultural is the communication process across cultures, thus giving rise to the term "cross-cultural."

The Ashanti World-View and Religion

The Ashanti world-view is social rather than personal. The Ashantis put emphasis on the living, the spiritual side of the universe. They see unity between the seen and the unseen worlds. To them, there is no division between the religious world and the practical world. The basis of this belief among the Ashantis stems from their view of the soul. This world-view gives rise to the belief in the unending life cycle. When one dies, he goes to the land of the ancestors. Life continues there much in the same way as here on earth. Ashantis show great respect for their ancestors, and this is sometimes termed "ancestor worship."

Ashantis are very religious people. They believe in a Supreme God, as well as many lesser gods and spirits. For example, the earth, rivers, mountains, etc. are thought to possess spirits and are worshipped at times. Witchcraft is a natural outgrowth of the Ashanti religion, and that religion offers the people protection from evil deeds of witches.

²Hall, The Silent Language, p. 169.

Ashanti Life Style

Ashanti life style is communal. The concept of the extended family is the foundation of their life style. Polygamy is the common way of marriage. Childlessness is looked upon as a curse. Divorce, if carried out according to Ashanti customs, carries no stigma. They put much emphasis on dying the proper death and having the right type of funeral. Both of these affect the way they are received into the world of the ancestors.

The Function of Decision-Making Among Ashantis

This tribe places great importance to the function of decision-making. The correct decision cannot be made rapidly, but is a long and deliberative matter. Communication flows more smoothly if the communicator is a member of the Ashanti tribe. The higher the social position of the communicator, the more likely the message is to be received. The Ashanti communication system is informal, in contrast to the formal one in the United States. Women hold a high place behind the scenes in decision-making in this tribe.

Body Movements and Symbolism in Ashanti Culture

Gesturing and other types of voluntary movements communicate much within this society. Dancing is an important phase

of Ashanti culture. Music is closely related to dancing and infuses all activities of the Ashantis.

Symbolism permeates all parts of Ashanti culture. To them, symbolism is a vital part of the communication process. The use of the tribal language is necessary, and the Ashanti naturally like to have messages in their own language.

Time and Space in Relation to Ashanti Culture

The time concept for the Ashantis is not fixed, but the life cycle is something from which one cannot escape, not even temporarily. Time is thought of in relationship to major events. In regard to the concept of space, the Ashantis have little concept of private territorial space in the sense that Americans do. They are part of a community and come in much closer physical contact than do Americans. Everyone's business is everyone else's; and everyone's space is not his own, but that of the community.

Conclusions of the Thesis

Conclusions Relative to Cross-Cultural Communication

1. Communication and culture are closely connected. No one can expect to communicate with or to a culture other than his own unless he takes that culture seriously. He must attempt to absorb some of its milieu.

2. Much importance must be given to the study of the world-view of world cultures, for within the world-view of a culture is the real key to understanding.

3. Those wishing to communicate with another culture must first come to an understanding of that culture's concept of time and space.

4. Symbolism changes from culture to culture. To communicate effectively with another culture, it will be necessary to first learn the symbols of that culture and then use that culture's own symbols to communicate one's message.

5. Before going to another culture, the communicators must learn everything possible about its history and traditions. This desire to know about the culture and why it does certain things must continue during the entire time the communicator is actually living among the people. The more the communicator knows about the culture, the more effective he is likely to be in his communication.

6. American communicators must constantly look for ways of lessening the tension between the traditional life of the "foreign" culture and that of the American or western culture. This means the communicator must strip himself of all preconceived ideas as to the good or evil of either his own culture or that of the foreigners."

7. Communicators, to facilitate effective communication, must discard the masks they wear to keep those of other cultures at a distance. This can be achieved by first believing in one's self and also believing in the people to whom he attempts to communicate.

8. Communicators must acknowledge that there is a section of the minds of other cultures, especially the African mind, which they have not been able to penetrate. Another way to say it is that there is a sphere of the African soul-world which they have not been able to enter. To learn and understand the Africans' belief, communicators must come out of the citadels of their own religious heritage and prejudices and venture into wide, unexplored fields of knowledge.

9. Communicators must work at developing more patience, thus permitting the decision-making processes of other cultures to take their course without outside interference. Decision-making for most non-western cultures takes time, which means that westerners may not get to put their ideas to work as soon as they would like. The more important the decision, the longer it takes in most African tribes.

Conclusions Relative to Religious Cross-Cultural
Communication with the Ashantis

1. The Ashantis, while having a history of contact with many Christian missionaries from many denominations, have not truly incorporated Christianity into their culture.

2. Ghana, because of its high literacy rate, would provide a ripe field for Christian evangelism if new methods, based on cross-cultural principles, were adopted by the Christian missionaries, as well as the African ministers.

3. The traditional Ashanti religion has much in it which is in keeping with basic Christian concepts and should not be destroyed. Rather, it should be incorporated within Christianity. This new African Christianity will not resemble American Christianity in some ways, but it will be African and Christian, and this is more important than being American.

4. The Ashanti concept of "ancestor-worship" is not so foreign to the biblical idea of "honor thy father and mother," properly understood.

5. The Supreme God idea, held by the Ashanti, is worthy of note and should be built upon.

6. The belief in lesser gods and spirits is out of harmony with the teaching of the Christian faith. Great patience must be used with these people when "teaching them

out" of these beliefs. The emphasis should be on the positive. They believe in these spirits because of fear. The power of Christ to overcome all evil spirits and powers must be emphasized.

7. The spiritual, healing, or indigenous churches of Ashanti are experiencing rapid growth, in many cases taking members from the regular or main-line denominations. There seem to be two reasons for this. The first is emotional, and is well explained by Tufuo and Donkor.

No wonder then that the new so-called spiritual churches with their rousing rhythmic music, not unlike the music for the traditional gods and ancestral spirits, are so appealing and attractive to him. He is being firmly gripped by them. The women folk seem completely converted to these new ways of worship. The predictions resulting from visions and the giving of the meanings of dreams are not far from the predictions by divination made by the traditional gods and goddesses or the medicine man. Singing and drumming to what is like ragtime music are sufficient to catch the women who characteristically are better musicians and lovers of music than the men. The "healing powers" of the churches must be most appealing to those who are upholders of the preciousness of life as the Ashantis are.³

The second reason for their growth is the protection and deliverance which they give from those possessed or bothered in any way by witches.

³Tufuo and Donkor, pp. 84-85.

8. The life style of the Ashanti, being communal, has much in common with that of the early Christians, especially as suggested from Chapter Two of the Acts of the Apostles.

9. The Ashanti have great love and regard for children. Some of the Christian churches are not putting the emphasis on children that there should be when dealing with this culture. Much emphasis is put on childbirth in the traditional culture, yet the churches more or less ignore the event. Churches have virtually overlooked the problem of childlessness, causing the people to seek help from "pagan" doctors or "spiritual" churches.

More attention must be given to the matter of children and birth by the Christian churches. Because of the curse of being barren in Ashanti, the church must help in this matter. First, the church should have special services and prayers on behalf of those wanting children. Second, counseling should be done with these women to help them overcome the stigma of being childless. When a new-born child is brought to the church, some recognition must be made of the child and the mother. A special service could be arranged which might combine the idea of thankfulness on the part of the family and other worshippers, as well as dedication of the child to the Lord.

10. Christian churches should study and come up with some answers concerning the intertwining of the traditional Ashanti concept of death with that of the Christian view.

The importance which the Ashanti places on death should not go unnoticed by the Christian church. Funeral services should be developed which are not only traditional Ashanti, but also Christian. The Christian must be buried as a Christian, with Ashanti Christians taking the lead in the burial. This communicates to the non-Christians that they will be taken care of even in death, and that becoming a Christian does not mean abandoning the ancestors.

11. The Christian churches have come to Ghana with their own brand of church government. Yet, the traditional social structure and decision-making process of the Ashantis are ideally suited to church government. Christ could be thought of as some type of head chief or king. The elders and others would be under him.

12. While women in Ashanti play an important part in decision-making, most Christian churches have overlooked this fact and continued their male-dominated churches. These are common in the western culture, as well as most parts of Africa.

Missionaries, especially Americans, must permit the Ashanti women to take a more active part in the

decision-making, as well as leadership, in the churches. The matrilineal system of the Ashanti places the women on a higher plane than is the custom of most American churches.

13. Body movements or gestures have been taboo for most of the western missionaries. They have seemed to discourage the Ashanti love for rhythm and played down the emotional aspect of the worship services.

Realizing the importance of body movements in the Ashanti culture, it is recommended that Christian churches incorporate more of these into their worship services. Hand clapping would develop naturally, if missionaries would not condemn the practice. Dancing is another body movement natural to the Ashantis. If dancing develops naturally from the singing, then it should not be forbidden, but encouraged as a part of one's praise to God. Body movements are an important part of one's praise to God. Body movements are an important part of communication and should become a part of the worship.

14. Missionaries have given little thought to the problems involved in bringing western music to the Ashantis, thus, after leaving the idea that their traditional music and harmony are somehow pagan.

Ashantis must be encouraged to use Ashanti harmony and song styles in their worship. Singing bands or choruses could be used effectively as a teaching tool, as well as a

function of the regular worship.

15. Some type of worship activity must be adopted within the churches which permits the Christians to give honor and respect to their ancestors without having to go outside the Christian faith to acknowledge their ancestors.

16. The matter of the belief in the lesser spirits and gods must be taken seriously. The same is true of witchcraft. Missionaries must work with the Ashanti Christians and come up with worship services and prayers which will give them release from the powers of these evil spirits. Any missionary who does not have enough faith in his God to perform these "miracles" for the Ashantis will have little success in communicating his faith to this tribe.

17. More study must be given to the problem of polygamy. A new approach seems needed as the dogmatic insistence upon monogamy does not take into consideration the Ashanti culture. One possible recommendation which has been made is that the new converts be permitted full church membership, even if having more than one wife. Upon becoming Christians, however, they would not be permitted to take any more wives. Nor would they be permitted a leadership role such as elder or deacon, since the Apostle Paul strongly teaches against this in the New Testament books of Timothy and Titus.

Christianity should recognize monogamy as the best state of marriage, but the Christian church in Ashanti must be patient in permitting the Ashantis to work out this problem in harmony with their own culture.

18. Churches need to become more involved in the marriage customs of the Ashantis. In place of staying aloof from the ceremonies, Christians need to develop services of marriage which incorporate the traditional ceremonies into the church. This would also permit the churches to take a stronger stand against the large dowries which are required of most marriages, and, in turn, create great social problems.

19. As a rule, the missionaries have appealed to the younger men when starting a new congregation; however, the social structure of the Ashanti points up the need to approach the older, more mature men of village or town first. A church built upon these men will have a more solid foundation.

20. Considering the insider-outsider aspect of communication, missionaries must concentrate on teaching the Ashantis to preach to their own people. This can be accomplished in two ways. First, schools should be organized in which missionaries will teach the people how to carry on the task. Second, missionaries should go into the churches and appoint

African leaders; these, in turn, will select the people they wish to teach them. A missionary-dominated church prohibits the insiders from taking over the leadership.

21. Missionaries should make a study of Ashanti symbolism and incorporate those possible into the Christian faith. Church buildings, for example, could be decorated with Ashanti symbolism. Even more important, missionaries must use the recognized forms of Christian symbols among the Ashantis. The cross should be used extensively. Every church building should have a cross to communicate to the non-members that this is a place where Christians meet.

One great use of the Ashanti symbolism could be use of Ashanti stools when ordaining elders and deacons, or any person, into a leadership position. Among the Ashanti, the chief is said to be enstooled as a part of the Christian service of ordination.

22. Realizing the importance of communicating, it is recommended that a missionary learn the Twi or Ashanti language before he starts his work among this tribe. This can be done in the United States or in Ghana.

23. Americans, especially, must work at the task of getting used to their space being violated and imposed upon. When missionaries can accept the invasion of their territorial

space, they are well on the way to becoming good communicators of the Christian faith to the tribe of Ashanti.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. The tools and procedures of experimental or quantitative research in communication need to be adapted for other cultures than the American or British. Each particular culture should generate the creation of its own set of communication factors.

2. Further research needs to determine the extent to which there exist common or universal communicative expressions or avenues that cut across a number of cultures.

3. New and innovative teaching methods need to be developed in order to prepare a person to communicate effectively with a culture different from his own.

4. Conferences of opinion-leaders from Ghana and America should be conducted in Ghana to discuss matters pertaining to the world-view of both the Ashanti and American cultures in order to search out ways to bridge the gap between the two.

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