Interdependenz von Individuum und Gesellschaft in Bezug auf Religion und Glaube. Am Beispiel der methodistischen Kirche und der Akan in Ghana.

Does religion enhance or undermine work ethic?

Dissertation zur Erlangung der Würde einer Doktorin der Philosophie

vorgelegt der Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät
der Universität Basel

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Oberursel, Deutschland

Basel 2022

Genehmigt von der Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät der Universität Basel auf Antrag von Prof. Dr. Elísio Macamo, Universität Basel und Prof. Dr. Andreas Heuser, Universität Basel.

Basel, den 02.08.2022
Der Dekan
Prof. Dr. Martin Lengwiler

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To Adjoa, the Monday born,
at peace with seemingly divergent values
by harmonizing them for herself.

Acknowledgement

research to a successful end! You gave me continuous and invaluable support, especially in all those matters demanding high in demand of thinking along and IT-knowledge.

I am profoundly indebted to Dawn and Antony Royal for their spontaneous, professional, and highly valuable support in editing this paper.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the interrelationship between religion and economic development in Ghana by addressing the specific question: Does religion enhance or undermine work ethic. My interest in the Ghanaian daily life reality arose and deepened during my frequent travels to Ghana on work assignments for a German development institution and later, private visits with Ghanaian friends. I became aware of the variations within Ghana and the distinctions between my homeland and this country, which I needed to understand. I have seen the strength of Ghana's political clout as several election processes and outcomes are driving Ghana toward becoming a stable democracy. Moreover, my visits to Ghana have been marked with strong impressions of an increasingly dynamic period of economic development, an observation that has been substantiated by the World Bank[1] and observed by Heuser (2020:248). However, most notably, I was struck by what seemed to be a proliferation of Christian religious manifestations throughout the country. My observation in urban Ghana is best summed up by Oduyoye, a renowned Ghanaian theologian, who asserts that "religion is the way of life of all, rich and poor, female and male" (2003:90).

Religion is about the transcendental, of course, but as forcefully argued by Durkheim, it provides an important metaphor for the description of how individuals come together to form communities and endow them with meaning. In my view, the study of religion is part of a general concern with stability and social change, both central themes of sociological theorizing. In this sense, therefore, I claim that religion is central to sociology in its importance of inquiring into the nature of religious life as a way of eliciting insights into society as a whole. As I will discuss in detail throughout this paper, I use the term "religion" similar to Meyer "as an umbrella term that encompasses a broad vocabulary" (2020:159) and meaning.

I was intrigued to take a deeper dive into understanding the two themes central to this concern, both of which relate to the tension between stability and change. One theme is on accounts of whether general changes in society lead to fundamental changes in the nature of religiosity itself and how these changes, if they indeed occur, ultimately affect individuals' and communities' relationship with the sacred. This theme is generally known under the broader notion of secularization. The other theme flows from this and has to do with how individuals and communities address the challenges of managing their everyday lives.

In order to devise this particular focus, I borrowed from Weber's seemingly interchangeable use of the concepts of "capitalism" and "modernity". Being intrigued by Berger's (1970) observation

that "churchly religiosity" is on a decline in modern societies, which he views as a "global phenomenon" alongside the waning acceptance of the traditionally religious interpretations of life and world events (Berger 1967), I wanted to better understand, if what Berger defines as a "global phenomenon" might hold true today. As I sought to understand this decline, my attention was drawn to Berger's (1967) characterization of secularization as "a process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols." Secularization, according to Berger, arises when society places greater emphasis upon reason rather than faith. The process of secularization deemed "rationalization," stems from an increasing level of doubt that was initiated in and eventually became a substantial part of the Age of Enlightenment. Rationalization, substitutes traditions and religious values with rational ones (Habermas, 1998). This line of thought, although it appeared to follow a logic I could appreciate, seem to be too short-sighted. By focusing on the areas where reason prevails, it blends out those areas where faith prevails and, by consequence doesn't address their differences: A topic I will address in this study.

My outline exposes my entry into the field of research with a partially formulated understanding of modernization that is built on a foundation of rationalization processes culminating into apparent secularization. However, I do not intend to create a false ideological binary that contrasts a view of Africa as religious with a view of Europe as secular, parroting a mind-numbing contrast of presumed "African emotionality with European rationality" (Meyer, 2020:164). I rather wish to approach the study of religion in my research context in the sense of "Africa is what it is because of what the world is like, and vice versa. So, we study Africa to understand the world" (Macamo, 2018:8).

Macamo warns against the "assumption that scientific knowledge is by definition universally valid because it applies objective concepts" (2016). Perhaps, modernization does not inevitably lead to secularization, as the American example would evidence, and, thus, religiosity[2] is compatible, or, at least, not incompatible, with rationalization. Is the kind of religiosity emerging or being practiced in Ghana an entrepreneurial one? Where, as Heuser aptly asserts: "The gospel of prosperity and modernity is evident on banners with photographs of a self-confident African pastor dressed in a neat and flamboyant Western suit" (2009:77). And maybe, after all, Ghanaians are not particularly religious, but rather have special culturally routed ways of religious manifestation making it "fashionable to be religious," as Prof. Okyerefo at the Legon University in Accra explains in an interview.

To approach the research topic, I focus on people forming a culture sharing community that is grounded in a Methodist church, Mt. Zion, situated in Tema, a city in Ghana. Although Mt. Zion

consists of people who belong to various ethnic groups in Ghana, the vast majority of Mt. Zion's church members (70%-80% of the estimated 1,800 members) belong to the Akan ethic group. As, according to the Ghana Population and Housing Census 2010 (2013:61), the Akan also represent the largest ethnic group in the country (47,3%), I decided to center my attention within Mt. Zion on the Akan to analyze a possible interdependence between religion, in particular Christianity, and economic development in Ghana. Although I will elaborate in detail upon the reasons for having given preference to the Akan ethnic group, I need to emphasize that the broader concept of religion is intentional. It is meant to allow me to include different facets of Akan rational, as I am convinced that in order to give meaning, it would be short-sighted and unwise not to include Akan immanent decisions and behavior patterns which lie beyond an adherence to the Christian, or for that matter, Methodist doctrine.

I also need to address a potential misinterpretation regarding the question of essentialism at this early stage. As illustrated below, my focus lies with a person living in Ghana who is subject to a multitude of influences. These influences are not static, but permeable. They determine the personality. And these components are reflected in the answers and opinions of all 26 study participants. Within the study, although keeping in mind the complexity constituting a human being, I move three areas into the spotlight, namely work ethic, affiliation to Methodism (in particular the Methodist congregation, Mt. Zion, in Tema) and self-definition as belonging to the Akan ethnic group. I will also revert to this issue in the following chapter on Methodology.

Fig. 1 Illustrating the research subject

Furthermore, although I will discuss tradition and modernity in their multifaced nature in more detail in the course of this paper, it deems important to establish that all my interviewees lead a modern life. Modernity is defined in an individual way: It is about personal negotiation processes between

what is perceived as tradition and defined as modern and can culminate into a hybrid or multiple modernities.

I also wish to mention that, when designing my research, I was tempted to apply a holistic approach of comparing the influence of the Protestant Church and the so-called Freikirchen in Germany with those in Ghana. However, I very soon realized that this approach was too broad as to allow any in-depth learnings. Thus, I challenged my initial instinct to focusing on comparing and contrasting my findings with Western theories and turned, instead, after having presented the Western concepts and their influence, to follow in the footsteps of African and in particular Ghanaian scholars, such as Wiredu, Danquah, and Busia, just to name a few. Their writings freed me to capture and give meaning to the local perception regarding the significance of religion and whether Ghanaians believe that religion has any influence upon economic development of their society. And here, I needed to take the decision of favoring a deep dive into a particular entity in Ghana, while narrowing and at the same time, sharpening my research instead of concentrating on comparison between countries.

My work is designed sufficiently broad, so as to encompass the complexity of the perceived reality on the ground, and, at the same time, appropriately restrained, so as to foster a particular focus within the scope of the research. The thesis is structured in three parts: (i) Methodology and Theoretical Foundation, (ii) Empirical Studies, and (iii) Conclusion.

The first part is subdivided into four chapters. The *first chapter* is dedicated to establishing the methodological basis and explaining my decision to apply an ethnographic design, after which the reader is taken step by step through the methodological process I use. The three following chapters establish the theoretical foundation, and here I deal with the analytical reappraisal of the interrelationship of religion and work ethic.

Chapter two addresses the origins and meanings attributed to the terms: "work," and "work ethic," from a multi-layered perspective and its evolvement throughout history in the Western as well as Ghanaian context.

I consider it important to give space to Max Weber and his ground-breaking conceptual work, where he conveys a causal relationship between the Protestant Ethic and the capitalist economic spirit that emerged from it. He further purports that the religiously engaged are committed to maximizing profits and that profit maximization escalates to become a dominant individual goal. Interestingly, during my previous sociology studies (M.A. 1998) where I used Max Weber's concept of the Protestant Ethic influencing the rise of Capitalism to analyze a significant economic development in two Mennonite settlements in Russia between the 18th and beginning of the 20th

centuries, the research results pointed to a systematic relationship between religious mores, professional ethics, and capitalist economic sentiments. Drawing from these findings, I was intrigued to learn if similar correlations would reveal themselves in the Ghanaian context fed by Methodist influence, which, according to Weber, forms part of the "Ascetic Protestantism" that originated in England and is also widespread in Ghana.

In the *third chapter*, I shed light on the Akan culture and Traditional Religion. Conducting the research in a country where culture including Traditional Religion significantly differs from the imported and imposed Christian religious and cultural values, I deemed it necessary to establish an understanding of meaning embodied in the individual's cultural background.

The *fourth*, and final *chapter* of the first part is concerned with the spread of Christianity and in particular Methodism in Ghana, familiarizing the reader with the research object, the Methodist Church Mt. Zion, whose members (a selection) form the empirical research context.

The second part is dedicated to illustrating the empirical findings, focusing on the exploration of religious and cultural influences on socioeconomic behavior in general and on personal work ethic in particular in Ghana. In the third part, I discuss the theoretical and analytical relevance of my findings. To illustrate their level of complexity, I draw attention to the social worlds at the meta, meso, and micro levels of personal interactions.

I aim to illustrate where the application of Max Weber's concept, when applied in the Ghanaian context, finds its limits. Hereby, I rely on theoretical and empirical findings gained during my research in Ghana between September 2017 and January 2020.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY

Setting the stage: Implications from the literature

Based on both the literature analysis and the references to publications throughout my work, I have elected to focus exclusively on process in this section (Aveyard, 2007). I started with a theoretical approach before engaging in the other methodological steps. This meant reviewing findings from initially Western and ultimately African scholars.

Initially, I identified three themes in the literature. The first of these themes was that African research on religiosity in Africa seeks to explain the status quo by referring to cultural and historic development on the continent. This viewpoint was inspired by scholars like Oduyoye and Atiemo. Oduyoye, an influential Ghanaian Methodist theologian, observed that "even those who are not officially affiliated to any faith community would vouch for the importance of being religious, or fearing God" (2003:90). Similarly, Atiemo surmised that "Ghanaian concepts of human dignity have been based, largely on the belief that human beings are the children of God" (2003).

The second theme was that Western research attributes economic development to religion. Sociologists like Weber (2005) introduced me to this thinking by arguing that behavior drawn from religious conviction can lead to an economically beneficial work ethic.

The third theme was that Western religious theory focuses on replacements for religion. This supposition was supported by, for example, Habermas's logic that rationalization replaces traditions and religious values with a rational (1998), calculated mentality that ultimately morphs into secularization (2001). Parsons's identification that such progression leads to a privatization of religious beliefs (1966) and Berger's depiction of "the self-liquidation of theology" (1970:21) and related institutions further bolstered this preconception.

As I progressed, it soon became obvious to me that the three above mentioned themes are not isolated but rather could be combined into a complementary approach to my research question. Therefore, I evaluated the relationship between religion and work ethic in Ghana by focusing on the factors influencing them and the interdependencies between them while being aware of the pertinent risk of not doing justice to the Ghanaian reality by allowing a mental short cut in aligning with Western concepts too fast.

Wiredu, in reference to African philosophy, has said: "We are living in a transitional epoch in which our actions and habits of mind are governed, frequently unconsciously, by inherited traditional conceptions in combination with ideas and attitudes coming to us from foreign lands" (1980:16). This observation led me to consider the actions and habits in my research and connect them with their traditional and foreign roots. Hence, my selection and interpretation of literature was guided by various complementary factors, including (i) the awareness that European historicity influences the present-day Ghanaian identity, (ii) our globalized world where trends and influences move easily from East to West to South, and (iii) the framework surrounding the Ghanaian religious-cultural concept, including their personal rituals (Parrinder, 1968:90ff), and their influence upon a particular work ethic.

The Qualitative Study

The empirical process is based on data collection and analysis in relation to three essential elements:

(i) **Work ethic in the Ghanaian context.** I consider work ethic to act as an amorphous term, comprising (i) attitude, (ii) behavior, and (iii) the presence or absence of personal characteristics, such as honesty, integrity, and accountability. Work ethic also embraces intrinsic values and attitudes. Although a number of mostly Western researchers have examined this topic, their findings cannot be applied wholesale to an analysis of work ethic in the Ghanaian context. How do individual Ghanaians define work ethic and what meaning do they attach to it? Which are the commonly acknowledged rules and norms influencing social behavior (Yin, 2011:114), possibly in addition to a legally binding framework such as the Ghana's Labor Law Standards that determine their work ethic?

(ii) **The Akan ethnic group in Ghana.** Since I have dedicated a separate chapter to the Akan history, culture, and tradition, this section is limited to delineating the rationale and methodology for focusing on this group. However, before opening the discussion, I wish to state that my research is not based on a culturizing view of the Akan, which could possibly give primacy to primordial notions of belonging in accounts of how individuals negotiate modern life. It is rather about the Akan as a culture sharing group whereas being Akan is not the sole determinant of a person as illustrated in Figure 1. By consequence, it is neither possible nor intended to determine the Akan in a particular static manner. My reason for selecting those members in Mt. Zion who define

themselves as Akan is rooted in my assumption of an Akan common belief system that flourishes along with modernity.

Although this belief system currently also encompasses Christianity, Traditional Religion continues to play a complimentary role in the society. Methodism was first introduced in Ghana to the Fante, whereas other sub-groups, like the Kwahu, encountered Christianity through Presbyterian missionaries. Furthermore, Akan are generally labeled as being successful in society and at the same time, by their own account, are still deeply rooted in customs and tradition.

An additional reason for focusing on those Mt. Zion members who also define themselves as Akan stems from the existing literature produced by Ghanaian scholars. The Akan scholars like Busia, Wiredu, and Danqua offer a holistic understanding of cultural behavior as discussed in Ghana in addition to the Methodist theological view (e.g., Kwesi Dickson, Mercy Oduyoye, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Casely Essamuah). This literature provides a wealth of insight into the influence of Akan culture, including traditional religious concepts and Methodism on the formation and sustenance of work ethic.

My methodology for assessing people who define themselves as the Akan on a meta level with respect the collective people, formulates a holistic perspective of the group's shared history, customs, and socioeconomic development, which is perceived as economically successful in the Ghanaian society. I further assessed this group on a meso level with respect to its sub-groups like Ashanti, Fante, Kwahu, Akuapem, Akyem, while invoking a deeper analysis of each sub-group particularities. On the micro level, I assessed a number of individual members of these sub-groups who are also linked by their membership in Mt. Zion, to understand their personal experience of balancing religion and work ethic.

I am aware about an ongoing political discussion on essentialism and to avoid misunderstanding wish to state that while focusing on the Akan ethnic group, it is not my intention to feed into essentialist thoughts possibly "fostering stereotype endorsement" (Bastian & Haslam, 2006:229). I rather aim at avoiding social stereotyping or a static view of human nature. Hereby, I take Gelman's (2003) assertion that "people understand some attributes and social categories in terms of fixed, underlying, and identity-determining essences, and that such essentialist understandings may have important implications for phenomena such as prejudice"

(quoted in Bastian & Haslam 2006:229) as a caution. This is a reminder to approach my research field open minded, led by the conviction that human beings are prone to a multitude of influences throughout a life circle, and people's qualities are not fixed but rather malleable (Levy et al., 2001) as they feed from different sources. I would also like to stress that it is not intended to use the Akan as a representative counterpart to, for example, developments in Europe. The referrals to this ethnic group are made exclusively based on reasons explained above.

(iii) **Methodism as practiced in Ghana and, specifically, within the Mt. Zion Methodist Church in Tema.** Before familiarizing the reader with Methodism, I wish to state that I use Methodism as much as an expression of religiosity as it is a document of how individuals coalesce into communities in the face of challenges presented by life. I opted to evaluate a so-called "established-church"[3] because its origin is traceable to early Christianization in Ghana (Bartels 1965). I was drawn to the Methodist church because its development can be interpreted to parallel the nation's development. For example, after serving as a district in the British Methodist Conference, the Methodist Church Ghana attained full independence in 1961, only four years after Ghana became independent. In addition, as I will discuss in detail in chapter 4, the Methodist church remains influential within Ghanaian society, partially due to its provision of welfare to society through the operation of schools and hospitals. With its strong affiliation with the Methodist Church, the Library of Trinity College of the Bible and Theological Seminary in Accra has yielded useful information.

I wish to emphasize that Akan culture as well as Methodism are dynamic concepts which do not make Ghanaians hostage to their ethnicity and / or culture, but rather active individuals who negotiate all sorts of resources to master their lives.

I pictured the above-described elements as interdependence of individual and community being reflected in the role religion plays in enhancing or undermining the work ethic. This can be visualized as the challenge of conquering three "hills". In this analogy, I would depict my relationship with the process as virtually climbing the three hills of "work ethic," "Akan," and "Methodism," building bridges from one hilltop to the next while struggling to balance the research from the Western theorists with the reality in Ghana.

In the following, I would like to summarize different methodological concepts before turning to explaining my methodological approach.

I wish to start with the school of social anthropology represented by Malinowsky whose approach is probably best summarized as "human institutions, as well as partial activities within these, [who] are related to primary, that is, biological, or derived, that is, cultural needs" (1960:159). Malinowski strongly emphasizes the importance of culture to mainly satisfy our biological needs. It appears that culture, in his view, is a precise reality and he bases his theory on this assumption. Another well-known social anthropologist, Brown (1940) views culture as abstract and argues that culture has a role only in preserving society and not in fulfilling individual needs. In addition, there is also the concept of "thick participation" used by Spittler (2014) which spells out a research procedure common in ethnology: The researcher lives for an extended period of time with the group he or she is studying, speaks the local language, and participates in group activities to a high degree.

My approach to tackle my research question differs from the above. It is grounded in a modern understanding of "ethnography" as the study of a "culture sharing group" which, in turn, is carried out with attention to coding, thematic analysis and the interpretation of findings drawing from the articulation of themes, on the one hand, and the three pillars identified above. I decided to mainly rely on Creswell (2007), Yin (2011) and Dey (1993) because of the offered a mosaic of views, orientations, and methodological choices (Yin, 2011:32). This mosaic leverages a holistic study of unique human expressions, behaviors, and opinions in a natural setting, using multiple sources of data, including socio-psychological and socioeconomic considerations. This approach deemed me the most suitable to ascertain what impact decisions made under certain living conditions and among a variety of alternatives had on my research. I am convinced that applying this methodology will enrich our understanding of modern life in Ghana.

Despite these advantages, the selected methodology is prone to interpretative bias by the researcher who then gives meaning and transports her own definitions (or concepts about religion, work ethic, etc.) into the analysis. Moreover, qualitative research is characterized as being particularistic (Yin, 2011:119), rendering the task of generalizing findings from a limited number of interviewees to a broader level, such as addressing the question of "how does religion interface with economic development in Ghana?". I will further explore the challenges presented by this methodology when discussing substantive analysis in the following chapters.

While my methodology has been consistent, certain aspects of my findings arose through random encounters and an element of luck.

Studying attitude towards work ethic – ethnographic design

I referenced numerous options for approaching a qualitative research design for application to this project. These include options outlined by Creswell with a particular focus upon Narrative Research, Phenomenological Research, Grounded Theory, Ethnographic Research, and Case Study Research (Creswell, 2007:7ff).

Through this analysis of the range and correlation among these approaches (Dey, 1993:4), I selected the Ethnographic design (Creswell, 2007:9ff). This decision was based primarily on my assessment that Ethnographic Research or Ethnomethodology could be utilized to focus on a cultural group within Mt. Zion by identifying its common pattern of beliefs, values, and behaviors (Creswell, 2007:68ff). Emanating from Harold Garfinkel's works (1974 and 1984), this approach draws on the inherent tendency to simultaneously create and make sense of social settings, culminating into what Berger and Luckmann deem a "social construction of reality" (1966:1). Garfinkel's prioritization of the shared understanding among members of a social group over theoretical concepts and assumptions also directed my work. In addition, I reviewed in this process the term "ethno-method-ology" and found meaning in its etymology: **ethno** referring to a specific socio-cultural group, the Akan, in my case, who are members of a particular church, Mt. Zion; **method** referring to the practices of this particular group related to work and work ethic, whereas **ology** points to the process of generating data and describing the above-mentioned methods and approaches. In Creswell's words: "Ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned pattern of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture sharing group" (2007:68). Keeping in mind that a culture sharing group comprises of people sharing norms and values, be it those of Mt. Zion and / or essential notions of the Akan, and agreeing with Yin that "culture is an abstract concept, if not a theory about the existence of unwritten rules and norms governing the social behavior of groups of people" (2011:93), I will revert to the term "culture" and discuss its different facets throughout this research paper.

Another factor contributing to my ethnographic design was my intrigue with whether I could use elements of quantitative research to record statistically verifiable correlations on the basis of measurable data to demonstrate interdependence between qualitative and quantitative data (Dey, 1993:274). However, employing a regression analysis to establish meaningful correlation between factors and outcomes did not appear promising. In application, this would require attributing numerical values to "work ethic" and inputting variables for family socioeconomic background, religion, education, income level, and similar factors. In other words, a regression analysis is a

mathematically rigorous method of determining those contributing characteristics that correlate most significantly with the outcome. Although this approach has the advantages of illuminating comparisons of different attributes, I did not pursue it for two reasons: First, determining a way to measure the characteristics, either on a scale (e.g., socioeconomic background on a scale from 0 to 1) or as a binary variable (e.g., Methodist as a 0 or 1) would contradict the interpretative and descriptive nature of ethnomethodology. Second, a regression analysis by itself doesn't prove causation, and it threatened to disrupt the qualitative value of research design without providing significant additional benefit. Therefore, while I rely on attribution and correlation to analyze my data, I depict the findings from this process descriptively rather than mathematically.

Finally, I borrow the design of my research ethnography from Creswell and his interrelated "data collection activities" (2007:118). These activities provide a good framework to account for the various phases of data collection while allowing sufficient space to develop strategies.

Locating site and Individual

As previously mentioned, my focus lies on members of a Methodist church in Ghana, Mt. Zion, who define themselves as belonging to the Akan ethnic group. On few occasions, I have deviated from my target research group for reasons I will justify in due course.

Methodism

The Methodist Church in Ghana is hierarchically structured. As further detailed under chapter 4, usually several church congregations, called "Societies," form a "Circuit," which, in turn, are amassed under regional Dioceses governed by the elected "Presiding Bishop." Mt. Zion is one of the five Ghanaian Societies and has been considered influential in the Methodist community because of the socioeconomic status and financial resources represented by a considerable part of its membership.

When selecting a suitable church community, I was guided by a preference in favor of familiar clerical structures. Admittedly, I was also drawn to the congregation's methodical and structural setting, as I assumed these traits to be coupled with an intellectual approach that I could appreciate. As I attended Methodist church services in Germany earlier in my life, I hoped that these experiences would enable me to comprehend faster and dive deeper into the Methodist culture in Ghana, naturally remaining mindful of the distance between my home and research field. The decisive factor to center my work on Mt. Zion and not another Methodist church in Ghana arose through a "gatekeeper" (Creswell, 2007:71), a young Mt. Zion member, who informed me that he was "born into the church," and willing to pave my way into the congregation. The

gatekeeper, whom we can call "Kwesi,"[4] gave me background information on and introduced me to the church hierarchy as well as some of my interviewees.

Mt. Zion Methodist Church Sakumono

Mt. Zion has about 1,800 members (statistics 2018) with a statistically recorded average attendance of 37% - 50%. People from all walks of life attend church services and activities. However, it has been pointed out to me, repeatedly, by a range of sources and mostly coupled with a sense of pride when spoken by a member, that Mt. Zion holds a considerable representation of those perceived to be rich and successful. Furthermore, according to oral sources, about 70%-80% of Mt. Zion members belong to the Akan people, although Mt. Zion is situated on Ga land. Thus, focusing on Mt. Zion members with an Akan background, living in an urban setting, paved the way for a holistic approach. I considered members from (i) different age brackets, (ii) varying socioeconomic positions within society, (iii) a range of positions within the Mt. Zion community structure, and (iv) the multiple ethnic groups within the Akan including Ashanti, Fanti, Kwahu, and Akyem. Employing this cross-section of sources allowed me to discern individualized realities by highlighting participants' unique perspectives and not forcing them to converge on a "single reality" (Yin, 2011:13). When conducting each interview, I assumed that the individual's responses would feed from different sources including Mt. Zion teachings and Akan customs. Keeping this in mind was important to pursue an approach that goes beyond the influence of the culture sharing group, Mt. Zion, but also sheds light on the framework in which participants live and work, in order to contextualize their feedback in the appropriate religious, historical and cultural settings.

Each visit to Mt. Zion was a window of opportunity to better grasp Ghanaian Methodism, its doctrine and the implementation thereof, its behavioral norms, the messages from its teaching and preaching, and its manipulative elements. On some occasions, I asked interviewees to clarify or explain or share a personal opinion regarding the preceding sermon. As further detailed later in this paper, financial contributions, like tithe and donations to the church, played a remarkably prominent role in each sermon I heard. Corruption was addressed as a form of dishonesty leading to unmerited benefits. As confirmed by my interviewees, I have found that each of these topics have a clear correlation with individual work behavior.

At the beginning, I was challenged with a large amount of information, filtering and structuring the feedback to apply to work ethic. I singled out the depicted influence of Akan intrinsic customary behavior, which has been anchored to primary socialization, constantly dealing with the question of attribution. Attribution became more challenging because, as it turned out, except for one, all my interviewees had either been "born into the church" or at least been part of the Methodist

education system, as opposed to having joined Methodism later in life, as I had assumed many of my interviewees would have. I will touch on this phenomenon in more depth when discussing interview analysis in chapter 5.

Gaining access

As my research draws from empirical bases, I was conscious of the need for permission to conduct interviews (Neuman, 2007:282). How could the Superintendent Minister / past Bishop,[5] a former military colonel holding a very respected and influential position within the Methodist hierarchy and about a year away from retirement, be convinced that my research would not disrupt the congregation? It seemed unlikely that he would invite inquiries into the inner workings of his congregation, particularly given that I was unknown to him and had never visited Mt. Zion before I embarked upon this research. Fortunately, I worked with my contacts, and Kwesi introduced me to the congregation's Very Reverend, whom he knew well and who was about to leave for a different Methodist church. Through Kwesi's introduction, this Very Reverend Minister welcomed me warmly into his home, developed an interest in the research topic, and obtained the Bishop's permission for me to conduct my studies, including interviewing purposefully selected church members. To my benefit, the Superintendent Minister's permission was granted unconditionally and coupled with an appointment of the incoming Reverend Minister as my main resource and contact person. The incoming Reverend Minister turned out to belong to the Ga ethnic group, a fact that necessitated that I make an exception in respect of my target group, on one hand, but, on the other, allowed me to view elements of Akan behaviour as perceived and analysed by a Ga.

Aiming at a culture sensitive approach, I had to ponder numerous questions, such as "Should a foreigner and non-Methodist call a young "man of God" by his first name when having a discussion or interview?". This question only occurred to me when a Ghanaian friend asked me if I really called the Reverend Minister by his first name. After being alerted to this nuance, I realized that nobody else called him by his first name, but rather that congregants preferred "osofo," the Twi word for "pastor," while the Superintendent affectionally used "odifo," meaning prophet in the same language.[6] The significance of the Reverend Minister's position ultimately became evident to me through my interviews both with the Reverend and church members, clearly also forming their source for motivation to work. Accordingly, as it obviously was not my intention to be perceived by the Reverend Minister as someone lacking respect for his position, I added Reverend to our conversations when addressing him directly.

The microcosmos of Mt. Zion presented the challenge not only of defining my personal and academic approach towards Mt. Zion members, but in identifying Key Interviewees (Creswell,

2007:71) willing and able to provide background details, who were also open to sensitization regarding my research topic (ibid.:119). Kwesi supported the process, introducing me to congregation members with the only criteria at this stage being that they belonged to the Akan people. As I started building trust within the congregation, I was able to approach people after church services, independent of Kwesi, and ask to arrange interviews. I also found myself developing a snowball procedure (Aveyard, 2007:108) for identifying interview targets, as I began making potential contacts based on recommendations by the Reverend Minister and at some point, from the interviewees themselves. However, I remained purposeful (Yin, 2011:110) in my use of the snowball procedure, so as to gather additional enriching information relevant to my research while adhering to a descriptive approach (Dawson 2002) and reconciling conflicting situations to justify my ultimate findings leading to conclusions.

On one occasion, I spotted a middle-aged gentleman dressed in traditional clothing in a side row with only two chairs in the middle of the building. While not seated prominently, the man was frequently approached by numerous members with evident displays of respect, which led me to hypothesize that he held a significant position in society and church. Naturally, this piqued my interests and, after Kwesi confirmed that the gentleman was an Akan and, in fact, Ashanti, I approached him. After listening to my introduction and request for an interview, the gentleman paused, pondering if he should grant this favor and likely accustomed to requests for multiple favors wherever he appeared. He ultimately agreed with a stipulation that the interview take place at his office and be limited to 20 minutes. I learned later that I had just made an appointment with a founder of Mt. Zion who held multiple advanced degrees, lectured at two Universities in Ghana, and acted as the Managing Director of a private company. As I will explain in more depth when discussing the interviews, my conversation with this gentleman serves as a good example of interviewee's increasing interest in the research topic as he willingly almost tripled the interview time and introduced me to an employee who was a Mt. Zion member and Akan, allowing for an interview during work time. During his own interview, he – as most of my interviewees– went far back in his biography, starting at early childhood and guiding me along a path from poor economic roots to high social recognition, all influenced by a pronounced work ethic founded on culturally influenced primary socialization and further developed by convictions based on Methodist teaching.

Purposeful sampling

The main purpose and, simultaneously, the main challenge, of purposeful sampling is to refrain from generalizing the information and to home in on the particular and specific details (Creswell,

2007:126). Purposeful sampling also seeks to acknowledge that meaning differs depending on the social context and that meaning is "a matter of making distinctions" (Dey, 1993:12).

At the beginning, the core questions I faced were: "How do I start and with whom should I speak?" and "How do I get information which helps me to deal with my research topic?". Moreover, I doubted whether people were even willing to talk to me, a complete stranger, not only to make their time available, but also to share personal views and experiences.

Although not intending to pre-empt the analysis of the interviews, it is important to showcase to the meaningfulness of gathering stories about the evolution of the interviewees' attitudes towards work, particularly as they recall these attitudes being formed by Akan culture while also acknowledging that "Methodist church has impacted in my life." If the interview situation would allow, I would invite my interview counterpart to attribute meaning and reasons to the living conditions they experienced throughout their life, while keeping in mind that the significance of life event changes over time (Dey, 1993:39). In addition, as Yin amply points out, I remained vigilant of the reality that "researchers cannot avoid their own research lenses in rendering reality" (2011:12). Mindful that more than one interpretation can be drawn from another's previous experiences, especially where such experiences took place in a different social environment, I sought to refrain from imposing my own view onto the interviewee's characterization of a given experience. The practice of Critical Thinking requires pondering assumptions, discerning hidden meaning or values and understanding the reasons behind these statements, evaluating evidence, and making sense of conclusions (Myers & DeWall, 2007:24). Critical Thinking leads one to probe for any hidden agenda of the interviewee and culminates in a quest for possible alternative explanations of narrated facts while negotiating meaning (Dey, 1993:38).

Discussions with Ghanaian friends helped me to shape my approach while honing the requisite sensitivity for conducting interviews. With them, I hypothesized on pertinent questions, such as, "How does one deal with normativity in regard to socio-religious issues?"; "Who defines it?"; "How does one critique, replace and transform concepts and theories derived from "northern" contexts?"; and "How does one develop more inclusive bases for intercultural dialogues?".

To test my research field, I decided to conduct some pilot interviews with members who Kwesi and the Reverend suggested might be willing to meet with me, the only selection criterion being that they belong to the Akan people.

I initially prepared for the pilot interviews by seeking "life-stories." I chose this approach mainly because of its "non-interventionalist" characteristics (Punch, 2000:53), which, in a best-case

scenario, would unfold a biographical narrative of those factors which influence the social behavior" (Yin, 2011:93) and were internalized during primary socialization and disemboguing into adulthood. This impromptu narration would allow me to better perceive a foreign culture from an autochthon perspective. Ideally, I was hoping that interviewees would lead me along the path from their childhood to adulthood, focusing particularly on the meanings attributed to work and personal faith and how this meaning evolved over time. As I was uncertain if my interviewees would be responsive to this "life story" approach, I had also prepared guiding questions, just to be well-equipped and flexible.

I conducted five pilot interviews and engaged in two more informal conversations, each between twenty minutes and one hour. All interviewees were men belonging to different socioeconomic groups and holding various positions within Mt. Zion. The interviews were conducted in different locations: two interviews took place in the interviewee's offices on the church premises amidst occasional interruptions from church members needing clarifications. One interview was in a private home where three young children interrupted several times, and the other two interviews were conducted under ideal circumstances in a private home. All interviewees accommodated my "life story" approach, though buying into it at varying levels. In this round of pilot interviews, I would introduce myself, explain my research topic, thank the participant for his/her willingness to be interviewed, and then invite him or her to share about their upbringing and how they become members in Mt. Zion.

When evaluating the pilot interviews, I struggled to distinguish in the narrative between the actual biographic process and its reconstruction during the interview. As I will evidence when discussing contributions, it appeared that some interviewees were processing a cognitive on-going process of analyzing the evolvement of their social worlds (Flick, 2009:58) while sharing life experiences. This was followed by orientation towards isolating out possible influences with regard to biographical socioeconomic development, drawing from professional history where influence upon this development was being attributed either to internalized customs and /or factors attributed to Methodism.

My analysis of the material clearly showed that I would have to deviate from a pure "life story" approach towards a semi-structured interview in which I created a platform to enable my interviewees to share their experiences in their own words. Being invited to start with their childhood, my interviewees strongly emphasized occurrences in their life where their Christian faith had a significant impact upon favorable outcomes, attributing it to God's guidance. The following interview excerpts with a recently retired, successful, high ranking church official, who

established himself as an entrepreneur owning two companies, whom we can call Abraham, might serve as a good illustration. He started with early childhood by saying: "I was sent to school […] and to tell you the truth, my being here, is actually the hand of God". He further reflects: "I am what I am today because God has made it." And "concerning the work that I do, the kind of work I did …I see that it was God." Next to the attribution of personal and economic success to God ranked the importance of Mt. Zion: "We, the successful people in the church have been people […], who are committed to the things of God." Although providing valuable insights, these interviews left me puzzled, because I had not expected that there would be so little interest in talking about behavior forming influences that go beyond or stand in addition to personal Christian faith and membership in a Methodist congregation. On the contrary, in my previous experiences when conversing with Ghanaians, who are also devoted Christians, they would often, in a personal manner, introduce me to ethnic customs and explain to me how they are practiced and their influence upon the narrator. The attitude towards work figures prominently among those Akan values which were held dearly. So, where did I miss it? Was my introduction too narrow, not leaving enough room for a broad spectrum of reasoning? Did my interviewees try to anticipate what they thought I might want to hear and do their best to live up to their own anticipation? I felt that we had remained on a kind of religious surface, and I needed to change my approach, not trying to underestimate the Methodist influence, but bringing to the surface the bigger picture which embraces other attitude shaping influences.

Reading carefully through the transcripts from the pilot interviews, I was struck by a salient dichotomy. On one hand, one interviewee strongly emphasized on a particular Akan attitude towards committed work behavior, and disavowed a causal relationship between Methodism and work ethic, saying:

> I don't think that Christianity introduces work ethic or hard work behavior to people in the Akan setting for instance. The thinking around Christianity being as something that changed the mind of the people is overhyped. Before the coming of Christianity, there would definitely have been people who worked hard, knowing there was a reward for working. Otherwise, the society that does not give premium to hard work, will not survive. It will fail. It's going to be a civilization that will fail.

And on the other hand, other interviewees supported, to a various extend, the connection between Methodism and work ethic, emphasizing that

> most people believe in the pastors; all they say, is true. Pastors preach to take work seriously, get to work early. Methodists encourage work. Through work, members will be

able to contribute donations. What is the work ethic of the church? Like I said earlier, be punctual, work, be hard working, and also don't complain too much.

This contrast in findings together with certain assertions (e.g., "With the Akan, the aspect of gods or religions there doesn't come in. It is more something you have to do for another and it's really initially of no reward. Only that you are probably going to be rewarded if it is done and done to the fullest") led me to dig deeper to ascertain if and to what extent this perception was shared by representatives of different socioeconomic groups within Mt. Zion. I wanted to gain feedback on how does the above resonate with the Christian teaching also practiced in Mt. Zion, like the promising of rewards, e.g., if you work hard and tithe, you will be blessed also by an improved economic situation and rewarded in the afterlife, keeping in mind a reflection made by the Reverend Minister, "we play on the emotions of people"? Is there any evidence that points to Christianity, or for that matter Methodist teaching at Mt. Zion, being amended to suit the agenda of those seeking economic wealth and calling others to willingly share their finances with the church?

I began untangling the apparent Gordon knot of pilot interview findings by clustering the information gained into the following emerging topics:

(i) **Christianity and Church attendance** – looking at the reasons interviewees attend church services and various church activities;
(ii) **Interactions within the church** – addressing the issue of classism within the church and its implications;
(iii) **Tithe/donations** – focusing on a possible influence of these forms of giving on behavior at the workplace and in church;
(iv) **Work ethic** – understanding not only the meaning attributed to "work ethic," but also the factors which feed into this meaning;
(v) **Work** – contrasting "work ethic" with workplace descriptions and the meaning and attitudes to them; and
(vi) **Economic status** – singling out factors leading to attribution of economic status.

As "work ethic" is the center of my research, I analyzed the interview responses by inquiring whether the work ethic revealed was congruent with Mt. Zion teachings, keeping in mind that Ghanaian Methodist doctrine is the source of the Mt. Zion teachings, or was it rather leaning on narrated Akan values. Here, I singled out statements about "work ethic," "reasons for working," links to Christianity and, in particular, Methodism as practiced in Mt. Zion. Looking at my material from these different perspectives made the need only more apparent, to learn further about cultural

influences upon the individual and collective work ethic, as well as familiarize myself with literature about Methodism in Ghana and references to work ethic written by Ghanaian scholars.

Interview Structure and Criteria

I learned from the pilot interviews that a narrative interview disposition enabled me to capture both cultural and religious perspectives and their influences in an unfolding, emerging style (Punch, 2000:42). At the same time, I saw the need to adapt my approach, inviting my interviewees to share their personal growing up experiences; what kind of influences and which sources had become deeply entrenched in their minds?

Retaining the focus upon the meaning of work ethic to my individual interview partner, I now began with Akan culture and questions like "What was your family's attitude towards work?" followed by "How did you take on the cultural practices of your native place /childhood?" moving further to trying to find out whether this approach to work changed over time and whether it had contributed to any form of socioeconomic success. From here, I would usually return to my preferred "how" questions, like "How did you become a Methodist?" diving deeper during conversation to "How does the church promote a work ethic?". Since I will discuss the questionnaire at length in the following chapters, I'd like to limit myself to these examples now, so as to emphasize that the phrasing and re-phrasing of questions required deliberate attention.

The socioeconomic structure of Mt. Zion enabled a comparative analysis between, for example, those who prosper economically and those who do not. This brought about a need to capture multiple perspectives of affiliation with the same church and, at the same time, shaped by high socioeconomic divergence (Yin, 2011:147). Assuming that there might be an individually perceived correlation between economic status and engagement in Mt. Zion's church activities, I formed a preliminary structure of interviewees using the following criteria:

Group 1: self-employed or high income + active in church

Group 1A: self-employed with moderate income

Group 2: self-employed or high income + irregular church attendance or left the church

Group 3: gainfully employed in formal sector including retired + active in church

Group 4: gainfully employed in formal sector + irregular/left the church

Group 5: informal sector with irregular income + active in church

Group 6: informal sector with irregular income + irregular / left the church

Group 7: unemployed and poor + active in church

Group 8: unemployed and poor + inactive or left the church

Group 9: church leadership

During the interview process, I added Group 10: retired + active in church.

In retrospect, these criteria proved too ambitious, as, for example, I was only able to interview one person, Kyei, who although having been well acquainted and active in church, left the congregation when relocating to another area. Representatives of groups two, four, six, and eight, even when approached through intermediaries, simply refused to talk and this, as one person hinted, was because they did not want to disclose the reasons why they distanced themselves from Mt. Zion. Interestingly, Mt. Zion maintains records of new church members but doesn't retain data on or investigate the reasons why people leave. Some reasons were shared orally, like several interviewees who mentioned friends who left Mt. Zion because they did not have a job and "the church wasn't helpful to them." I will revert to this particular topic throughout this research paper.

Interviews with individuals working in the informal sector or being unemployed presented another challenge. We were facing a language barrier, as most of them only spoke rudimentary English, and I am not knowledgeable of any local language. Furthermore, it appeared that this group of potential interviewees had the tendency to shy away from offering their contribution to the research. However, Kwesi finally managed to convince two church members to talk to me, offering himself as translator.

At this point, I am limiting myself to only presenting those findings that directly relate to the methodological aspects, as I will discuss the analysis in detail in the following chapters.

Changing the interview structure proved very helpful in gaining a more comprehensive and holistic picture of my interviewees and how they were formed by Akan culture and Methodist teaching. It allowed for a change of perspective as the following example clearly shows: Abraham, who initially emphasized the importance of his Christian/Methodist faith attributing success in life to God alone, later, reminisced about his childhood in the village and started to elaborate on the negative consequences of the dwindling cultural, traditional, and religious influence saying, "now, with Christianity, we don't regard the powers of god, even if they exist, and now, it has brought filth to the community." He was going as far as stating, "so, people say, Christianity has not helped us, and I agree with them. Our tradition was so good." The time span between the two interviews, the first and second statements, was four months, and the interviewee exhibited no sense that these divergent opinions were contradictory. No, it rather appeared that he attributed one part of his personality to intrinsically appropriated Akan religious-cultural values and the other part being dedicated to Christianity, in particular, Methodism, and more precisely, Mt. Zion, as underlined by

him saying, "I love Mt. Zion." These two interviews with the same person unveiled a kind of epiphany, confirming the efficacy of the new approach of starting interviews by asking about the interviewee's upbringing in the Akan cultural setting and then moving to influences of Methodism. This now appeared to take me along the right path toward deepening my understanding of different influences upon Mt. Zion members' attitudes and behaviors surrounding work.

Although my research focuses on Akan Mt. Zion members, I was also intrigued by an opportunity that arose and enabled me to interview two elderly Kwahu, one, an 85-year-old former businesswoman and the other, a 68-year-old local politician, both Presbyterian Christians. As I will show in my study, their narratives presented a valuable addition to the findings in the Methodist context.

The interview process

At the beginning of each interview, I presented myself as a trained sociologist and researcher with the University of Basel. I then explained my research topic elaborating on why, in general, I had chosen Ghana (the Methodist Church) and Mt. Zion, specifically those members of Mt. Zion who identify themselves as Akan. Permission to record the discussions was sought, with assurance the information provided by the interviewees would be anonymized for academic use (Punch, 2000:64; Yin, 2011:75). The interview introduction concluded by thanking them for their time and willingness to talk to me. The introduction was used to establish transparency and debunk the impression that I was only curious about their personal lives (Yin, 2011:136). The approach sought to balance the need for academic research, albeit the risk of intruding on privacy, guided by a hope that the interviewees would share stories which would enable me to identify common patterns (Czarniawska, 2004). In fact, my whole research was based on a heuristic approach in which I continuously phrased and rephrased questions for a better understanding, both to myself and the interviewee (Macamo, 2017:18).

The Polish proverb "To believe with certainty we must begin by doubting" resembles the "cautious skepticism" of Myers & DeWall (2015:23) and leads to questions such as "What do you mean?" and "How do you know?". These texts reminded me to remain cautiously aware of the power of framing (Myers & DeWall, 2015:362f) and observe the impact of my style of questioning on the responses, as well as an awareness of the influencing power of my understanding and interpretation. In addition, Dey (1993:66) amply points to the danger in making assumptions about a particular context and shows how this can lead to communication errors and erroneous interpretations. Throughout the interviews, I was conscious not to miss any emerging important

tracks, adopting an open-minded attitude, absorbing the richness of details to access a different social world (Flick, 2009:30), in the hope that this colorful bouquet of increased knowledge would allow me to generate typification for the purposes of making comparisons and assuring quality.

Throughout all interviews, I posed exploratory, semi-structured, open-ended, biographically oriented questions, inviting my interview partner to validate the importance of the questions, and at the same time, elaborating on issues that struck the interviewee's interest, to fit with my research frame. In taking this approach, prepared me for unexpected findings, while allowing stories to emerge (Creswell, 2007:119) and granting the narrator a comfortable and private space for sharing a "life-story" with a stranger and obvious foreigner. While conducting the interviews, I applied what Elliot defines as "first-order narrative" and "second-order narrative" (2005:12ff). Thus, the interviewees' own experiences and opinions about other people's behavior was illuminating. For example, when asked for reasons as to why, in the interviewee's opinion, people would attend services in Mt. Zion, next to the "need to belong and fellowship" (pious connotation) came "job market / career" (an economic reason). As I will discuss in depth, the notion of Mt. Zion as a job market resonated well with my research, and my questions were aimed at understanding whether interviewees attributed their successful professional development specifically to Mt. Zion or to Methodism in general. In addition, I wanted to learn if Mt. Zion entrepreneurs offer jobs to fellow Methodists and the interviewees' reasons for favoring or disfavoring such behavior. Furthermore, I asked formal sector employees with different levels of income whether they would prefer being employed by a fellow Mt. Zion church member or expect support from the congregation when searching for a job.

As Yin (2011:119) rightly points out, interviewees are also observing the interviewer and strive to connect at different levels, showing empathy or knowledge. Some would also try and see the interview as an opportunity to evangelize. My personal learning from each interview went far beyond the raw research material, as it included insights into social behaviors, customs, attributed meanings, and personal values while studying human behavior, which is also a means of communication (Dey, 1993:35). As Creswell (2005:140) rightly mentions, the constant self-reflection of the interviewer is indispensable to the interview process. I remained very mindful of the likelihood that selective attention would lead to unintentional blindness (Myers & DeWall, 2015:97). A main goal was that I was perceived by the interviewees as an emphatic, reassuring yet inquisitive listener (Yin, 2011:151ff). To accomplish this goal, I remained alert when an interviewee deviated from my topic of interest and redirected, trying to ascertain whether the deviation conveyed a hidden message, either implicitly or explicitly (Dey, 1993:35). Empathy paid off as it eased tension for those who, like an elderly influential founding Mt. Zion member, were at

the beginning of the Interview worried that they might not be able to answer all my "academic" questions. This elderly founding member was put at ease when asked just to share whatever seems valuable to him about the meaning of attitude towards work whilst growing up. This founding member's narrative included many attributions to culture as well as Methodist teaching. Deploying flexibility in following the thoughts of my interviewees allowed for privileged information and led to critical reflections, which defended against what might otherwise have culminated in stereotypical thinking.

Keeping in mind the time-related availability as well as assuring their level of comfort to elicit valuable information, I continuously followed the suggestions of my interviewees as to the location of an interview. Most interviews (12 out of 26) were conducted on the church premises because they either occurred on Sundays (after church services) or, if we spoke on weekdays, the interviewee (who lived close by), would prefer to meet there. In my observation, the church holds many programs during the week and always maintains a permanent office for meetings on any given day. Six church members, all either entrepreneurs or in high positions within an organization, accorded me one hour (on average), for an interview at their place of work. One particularly informative interview took place in a car. I also had the privilege to be invited inside private homes and, on one occasion, sat on plastic chairs in a settlement passageway next to the private apartment. Wherever possible, I would suggest a place free of distraction. However, this proved not always possible, especially when speaking to members influential in the church hierarchy (in their office after a church service), but in retrospect such settings did not have a significant influence upon the information's quality.

As already mentioned, my focus lay on a purposeful sample with maximum variation within the given frame of cultural background and Christian affiliation, focusing on interviewees aged in their mid-20s to mid-60s. I also strove to interview with a balance of both gender and socioeconomic status. As I will show when discussing my findings, economic status is omnipresent whether in the worship service, access to esteemed leadership positions,[7] or as a theme prominently pointed out in interviews.

As I progressed with my interviews, a certain pattern emerged in which interviewees attributed significance and meaning to cultural and Methodist influences upon work ethic. This sharpened my attention to certain expressions like one of the Reverend Minister's, who stated, "Those who are coming from the Akan Traditional Religion, see the religious aspect; they understand work. Because in Akan, the God, the gods want them to work so that out of their work, they are blessed." Or a sociologist working for an international organization, himself Ashanti, said in reference to Akan values, "We have this belief that a good name is better than riches." Statements like these

make apparent that despite an allegiance to Mt. Zion, they single out an influence Akan culture holds upon work ethic. As one entrepreneur put it:

> You do not come to church praying, expecting that manna will drop from heaven; it doesn't come. You trust God for grace and for favor, but you go out and you work. So, we say work and God will prosper the work of your hands. If you do not work, the Bible says that idle hands shall not eat. So, we believe that we are supposed to work hard but our faith also tells us, as we trust God and we work hard, He will prosper our work.

Here, as throughout the whole research, I was faced with the challenge of attributing causation and the extent to which attribution made sense. With respect to the potential influence of religion on work ethic, it appeared more fruitful to look for variations, identifying similarities and differences.

I intentionally limited myself to a maximum of 30 interviews, in order to allow for a variety of different views and perceptions while limiting the complexity of the analysis. On several occasions, after having transcribed and analyzed the interview content, I went back to an interviewee, asking him or her to fill gaps of missing information or to provide an additional perspective. In summary, I sought to see with the "eyes of the other," diving as deep as possible into Methodist teaching and the Akan culture from the viewpoint of their influence on work ethic.

Mechanics of conducting the interview

As Creswell (2007:134) points out, effective interviewing finds access to a stranger, not only by asking relevant questions, but also by adopting supportive behavior. My experiences confirm the assertion made by Yin (2011:77 referring to Maxwell, 1996:1ff) that interviews are by no means one-way streets but are based on interaction, either orally or through body language. This requires the ability to adapt perspectives, maintain self-awareness, and demonstrate reflection while building trust and credibility.

Change of perspective

When sitting face-to-face with a different culture, one must maintain an awareness and acceptance of cultural differences among beliefs, values, tradition, and reasoning. Yin defines this process as "representing the views and perspectives of the people in a study" (2011:28f) singling out the need to capture those perspectives. He proceeds to characterize the ability to capture the perspectives of the participants as being a "major purpose of a qualitative study" (ibid.).

I also had to keep reminding myself of the human tendency to develop prototypes. Grounded in Tverky & Kahneman's heuristics (1974), I remained aware that when meeting unknown people, most of us tend to search for a stereotype from previous experiences, into which the new person

seems to fit. This often leads to erroneous assumptions that other characteristics of the stereotype also apply to the person concerned. By consequence, mental shortcuts enable immediate decisions but might lead to wrong judgement. Although our mind seeks patterns to help us to make sense of our environment (Myers & DeWall, 2015:359), it is imperative to approach others with a goal of seeing through his or her eyes so as to provide a constant factual check. To this point, Dey aptly sums up that "our subjects perceive and define situations including their own intentions, according to their understanding of their own motivations, and of the contexts in which they act. Neither motivation nor contexts self-evident, and we have to allow for the unusual mix of ignorance and self-deception, delusions and lies" (1993:37).

Reflexivity and self-awareness

I agree with Myers & DeWall, who emphasize the significance of self-reflection by stating: "Putting the scientific attitude into practice requires not only curiosity and skepticism but also humility – an awareness of our own vulnerability to error and an openness to surprises and new perspectives" (2015:23). In addition, Kyale (2006) urges interviewers to reflect on behavior throughout the interview to avoid dominance.

My interactions were continuous exercises in acknowledging the difference in my socialization and culture of the place which I call "home" and how my background shapes the research process (Creswell, 2007:140). At the same time, I am aware of the similarity uniting humankind and manifesting itself in attending and satisfying a common pattern of needs. In the same spirit, Myers & DeWall (2015:161) amply establish that, irrespective of their culture, people throughout the world show more similarities than differences and share the same life cycle.

Bringing it closer to home, regardless of my self-definition, I am living in a cultural environment where individuals give priority to self-defined goals, long for individual control, and strive for personal achievements in which they take pride (Myers & DeWall, 2015:157). Privacy is held in high regard, although the need to belong is also immanent. Conversely, in group activities, the sense of belonging does not necessarily imply a strong attachment to group norms or the fulfillment of duties towards the group. There is a high level of permeability that allows the individual to alternate between different groups (Brewer & Chen 2007). I conducted my research in an environment that Wiredu defines as "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (1996:140). The individual pursuit of belonging is served by merging of personality into responding to group expectations. Wiredu goes so far as to grant the individual an identity only through group membership by stating "a human creature is not a human person except as a member of a community" (ibid.:19). Placing high value on cultural identity, taking pride in belonging to a certain

ethnic group, and within this group the extended family of brothers and sisters, mothers and grandmothers, where it is alien to talk "blood relatives" or "nuclear family" is of utmost significance. As an interviewee, himself an Ashanti, put it: "if I lose my mother in the village, it is the village that has lost a mother not me." Against this knowledge, conducting each interview required an attentiveness beyond rendering causal attributions. In order to give justice to the individual, I needed to get as close as possible understanding his or her social reality as perceived and narrated at a given time.

Safeguarding group spirit and avoiding social humiliation is of high importance and leads to the avoidance of candor and the discussion of uncomfortable topics (Myers & DeWall, 2015:157). Having said this, it also needs to be acknowledged, that no culture is monolithic, and in Ghana, there are subcultures formed based on region, membership in a certain ethnic group, adherence to a religion, and achieving a certain economic status, just to name a few. As I will show in course of my study, each of the Akan cultural sub-groups, like the Ashanti, Fante, Kwahu, Akyem, etc., have their own behavioral norms rooted in the early ethnic socialization.

In addition, globalization matters. In our increasingly globalized world, where social media has a high and rapid influence upon societal changes, the predominantly Western-based individualism is breaking ground predominantly in urban Ghana. This has led to behavioral changes, which, in particular, were manifested when comparing answers of different age cohorts.

Building trust and credibility

Agar's recommendation to study groups where the researcher is identified as a "stranger" (Agar, 1986) was exactly how I perceived myself in a church attended by about 600 people, as I was the only obvious and visible stranger. In addition to this, it was evident that I took notes during the church sermon and limited my bodily expressions when the congregation was invited to dance, admiring the grace of the movements of others while aware of my own stiffness.

It took some time until church members would greet me and engage in a brief conversation. Actually, Mt. Zion observes a practice that each Sunday first time visitors are invited to introduce themselves in front of the congregation after which the leading minister for that Sunday prays for and accompanies the newcomers to their seats. I did not introduce myself in front of the congregation, and the church clergy also didn't encourage me to do so. I did not attach importance to this official introduction but rather focused on gathering the necessary data in as short a time as possible, taking into account the criteria of the project.

Luckily, only one person I approached declined to be interviewed. The one who refused introduced me to someone whom he thought more suitable and available. As it turned out, this particular interview partner was very open and shared unique insights.

Observation

My first-hand observations of individual and collective behavior in a religious social reality aimed at getting direct observable information in a given situation (Punch 2000), being aware of the fact that, while unconsciously selecting the focus of my attention, I contribute to what I see and hear. I aimed for direct observation without interaction, so as to absorb the scene without asking questions and, especially at the beginning of my research, as I was unsure as to what kind of questions to ask (Dawson, 2002:32f), being careful that my presence didn't affect the dynamics intrinsic to the social world of Mt. Zion.

Meaning attributed to data collected and knowledge gained through observation is less subject to verification as it is strongly influenced by personal perceptions and interpretations. On several occasions, I was puzzled by the flow of worship or content of sermons and would seek clarification from Kwesi and other interviewees.

Church sermons and other church activities

Next to direct interaction with people, observation during church worship services played an important role in my data collection as it opened an entirely new universe of expression of beliefs. Observing and studying behavior under particular conditions, I sought to assess the variety of importance attributed to the institution of the "church," and in particular Mt. Zion. My interviewees defined church as "the place where you come, you worship, and you go" but also as a source of "spiritual welfare," offering to "have a personal relationship with God," or responding to the need to belong, a "place to meet friends." In due course, I will shed more light on the plethora of ambiguities that resulted from the interviews.

According to Mt. Zion statistics, an average of 590 (3rd Quarter 2018) and 653 (2nd Quarter 2018) church members filled the church between 8:30am and about 12:30pm. As already mentioned, Methodism is highly structured and this is reflected in the design of the church service: a weekly theme predefined by the Almanac, a connexional calendar with mandated passages from the Bible, subdivided into passages from the Old and New Testaments, as well as suggested hymns for each Sunday and liturgical colors to be worn by the clergy. As was explained to me, limited deviations were possible and the incoming Reverend Minister who, by his own account, took ample advantage of this leeway by introducing charismatic elements to attract the youth.

As motivation leads to a favorable work behavior, I focused on identifying factors that might lead or contribute to motivation or, alternatively, serve as sources of discouragement. I heard elements embedded in sermons connoting honest behavior with reliable behavior at the workplace and avoiding corruption. However, most striking, and surprising to me was the high importance given to collecting several offerings during the sermon. Each chair had a synthetic leather envelope imprinted with "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously for God loves a cheerful giver" taken from 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. At various times, during the sermons, the whole congregation would be ushered forward, row-by-row, to put in a particular envelop, financial contributions into a big bowl. The need to give strongly appeared to be indoctrinated in the minds of congregational members and social pressure appeared to make it next to impossible to avoid. This procedure repeated each Sunday evoked my desire to understand the factors leading one to donate: are people guided by the fear of losing God's love or is it rather a notion of: "I am going to give because that's a way to personally prosper"? In each offering call, a statement was given as to the reason the money was needed, while different means were employed for the collections themselves. For example, the Reverend Minister would say, "It is a very good atmosphere. I want to take your offering. Bring it to the altar and praise it at the altar." He would also invite those born on a particular weekday to come forward for offering or would set a certain sum as a target with the Reverend Minister walking between the church rows calling for donations of 1,000 GHC, applying pressure to selected members and finally inviting the whole congregation to come to the altar and contribute the amounts they were willing to give. These contributions were all supplemental to the biblically grounded tithe of one-tenth of one's income (i.e. Leviticus 27:30-34). It was highly probable that church members would donate visibly a considerable amount of money to different church activities on any given Sunday. Thus, I decided to include the topic of donation into my interviews trying to ascertain whether this practice formulated a group pressure that furthered certain work behavior or possibly changed attitudes towards church influence.

On some Sundays, English was heavily mixed with Twi (the predominant local language) during sermons, and this made it difficult to follow. I also wondered if the meaning and influence of words changed when it crossed linguistic boundaries. As language is an integral part of culture, what is the intention of switching into Twi? Does it play an integrative part in a heterogenous socioeconomic institution, a binding cultural element used in a religious setting? A means of encouragement? But if so, encouragement to do what?

"Mt. Zion is seen as a big church. So, inadvertently, you are having a wider network. And they have this class thing… though, they wouldn't want to accept it, there is this class thing there. You

know, the Haves, the Have-Nots… and then those in the middle." A quote from an interviewee that matched my observation and prompted me to dig deeper and touch on the topic of classism within Mt. Zion. How do those belonging to different socioeconomic classes interact with each other? Do the "Haves" support the "Have-Nots" to climb up the socioeconomic ladder?

My interest was reinforced by the revelation about the greeting (or not-greeting) practice. As a greeting is commonly seen as a sign of recognizing and respecting another, especially in a Christian church setting where the attachment of "brother" or "sister" to a name is common, I was very surprised to observe that people closely passed by each other on the church premises without acknowledging each other's presence. While the attitude changed between those who were familiar with each other, it was obvious that belonging to the same church was not enough to acknowledge or be acknowledged with a personal greeting.

Although the Methodist Church Ghana attributes different clothing to its church groups like the Women's Fellowship, Singing Bank, Choir, Boy's Brigade and Girl's Brigade, in my observation, church attendance is also used, as someone put it, as "fashion show." As fashion involves financial resources, I also touched on the topic of dressing in some of my discussions.
In addition, I also took part in a meeting called "Youth on Fire" and in an evangelical gathering on the church premises to which I will refer in chapter 4.
The above illustrated observation during church sermons and activities led to adjustment and sharpening of my questions and attention during interviews.

Bible Class and the not-to-be focus group discussion

When analyzing the pre-test interviews, I had the idea of conducting focus group discussions, aiming at a rather neutral write up not taking position as a researcher. It seemed a promising way to gain knowledge through observation, such as on how people with different socioeconomic background talk, behave, voice their opinion, try to convince others of their views, and counter opposite viewpoints. However, my emphasis would rest on gaining insights to define "work ethic" and its distinct components, such as agreeing on what would be "very hard" in the context of work ethic meaning to work "very hard." An option I took into consideration was to use a sermon where the preaching contained tithe and donation and ask group members how they responded to this sermon.
I considered this idea with a Methodist friend, who expressed doubts as to its potential mainly because organizing such focus group discussion(s) was not something seen in the institutional structure of Mt. Zion, or for that matter any Methodist church in Ghana. Here, group discussion took place in the Bible Class setting. The Constitution of the Methodist Church Ghana attributes

high importance to the membership in a Bible Class. In fact, membership in Mt. Zion is derived from membership in a Bible Class. Bible Class Members are encouraged to meet weekly and discuss topics defined by the Weekly Bible Lessons (WBL) published at semi-annual cycles. As we will learn more detail in chapter 4, I limit myself, for the present purpose, to pointing out that the specifications are predetermined to a high degree.

Having gained knowledge about the importance of the Bible Classes, I then embedded some of those topics meant for a focus group discussion into three Bible Class themes:

1. "Marks of the church: One, Holy," suggesting a discussion surrounding whether a church should be business-minded and possible reasons for people to come to church.

2. "The poor in our midst – the role of the church," here, picking up the topic proposed for discussion, "They are poor because they are lazy?" and inviting discussion on "How would you describe the common belief in your class on your common work ethic?" "What is a work ethic?" and "How do you think that Methodist (or Mt. Zion) teaching intersects with work ethic?" adding "What distinguishes your work ethic from that of people who do not attend church (practice Methodism)?"

3. "The poor in our midst: the role of the individual Christian (church member),". Here, the intention was to invite discussion on "How do church members interact with each other across different socioeconomic backgrounds?" and "Do you observe classism in Mt. Zion? What are the indicators? How has it evolved or changed over time?"

The Reverend Minister approved my approach, however, rightly pointing to the fact that those questions would be debated when the Bible Class topic was scheduled for discussion. Due to the distance between Germany and Ghana, it was most likely that I would not be able to take part in these discussions, and thus, as the Reverend Minister pointed out, the discussed content would not be made accessible to me. He offered to integrate those questions into an upcoming Bible Class meeting the following Sunday morning where he would discuss it forehand with a particular Bible Class leader and introduce me to the Bible Class. We, thus, agreed to meet at 7am at the church premises. However, when I arrived in time, and waited for about 30 minutes for the Reverend Minister, it became clear that this approach would not work out. Possible interpretation: the permission of Superintendent was needed, and it was decided that my proposed questions would deviate too much from the scheduled Bible Class topic and, in turn, might have caused irritation and be reported to the Presiding Bishop.

Although focus group discussions would have added value, they were not an essential part of collecting data and I, therefore, decided not to pursue this issue further. However, I obtained 11 Weekly Bible Lessons dating back as far as 2011 and searched for references that could be attributed to work ethic and will refer to them in detail in due time.

Leadership Meeting

To help me understand the corporate structure of Mt. Zion, the Reverend Minister invited me to observe a Leadership Meeting. The Society standing Committee as the Leadership is formally called is comprised of about 223 members (34% women), and about 73% belonging to the Akan people.[8] Having learned from the Reverend Minister that the Leadership Meeting is "the highest decision-making body of the church," I was particularly interested not only to listen to the presented content but also to observe the behavior and interactions. I had hoped to confirm interviews to be conducted at a later stage. These interviews ultimately led to some valuable insights, which I will elaborate upon in the following chapters.

Recording information and storing data

As Dey rightly point out, the semantics about "data collection" were wrong (1993:68). The process is not of collecting data that has already been completed but rather selecting produced data where the researcher can impose different criteria that fits the research purpose. The sources of my empirical data included observations of different church activities and a review of documents, emails, artifacts, and photographs, as well as conducting of interviews.

Each interview was recorded with the permission of the interviewee. Recording interviews allowed me to focus more closely on the narrative of my interviewees, keeping appropriate eye contact and showing signs of empathy and understanding. At the beginning, some interviewees seemed a bit irritated by the visible recording device, a tablet. In most cases, a trusted atmosphere was established after a short time, and as the narrative progressed, the interviewee naturally ignored the recording device. All but three interviews were conducted in English and transcribed by me; the remaining three were conducted in my presence in Twi using an interpreter and thereafter translated and transcribed by a university student who speaks both languages.

I conducted interviews with 26 persons, 16 male and 10 female and held innumerous informal discussions with four Mt. Zion members. In most cases, I limited myself to one interview per person. However, during my pilot interview phase, the Reverend Minister and three other people availed themselves on more than one occasion, allowing me to gain information from different angles, enriching my understanding and, most important, giving more precision to the following interview process.

To be able to account for my analysis, I followed Creswell's (2007:148) advice on data processing and used MAXQDA for organizing by coding and analyzing the data. I fed each interview into the

system and the text was then coded keeping in mind that "a code represents and captures a datum's primary content and essence" (Saldana, 2009:3).

Following the ethnographic perspective, I used a deductive approach by first defining a-priori codes and allocated sub-codes to them. The structure of the a-priori codes derived rather from the more general cluster, namely (i) Tithe / Donation, (ii) Work Ethic and Corruption, (iii) Work Ethic: Akan values or Mt. Zion teaching, and (iv) Corporate Structure. These were also the primary topics covered in each interview as I kept the above-mentioned cluster rather as a general theme (Creswell, 2007:118). However, when analyzing the interviews and virtually taking them apart or, to use Yin's term, "disassembling data" (2011:177), it became apparent that a more detailed structure was required. Contrary to "condensing the codes," I was rather searching for some pattern that would lead to a first level of sub-codes, and second level of sub-codes. Some of the coded info was used for rather descriptive purposes while others served as in-depth analysis of formal and substantial relations.

I derived code names from the context of the text or sentence, rather than in vivo coding. In my view, this approach allowed me to attribute different wording but similar meaning in various interviews to the same code and facilitated comparison and /or triangulation of evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2011:79). Sometimes, sentences or whole text passages were allocated to multiple codes. This approach not only fostered my systematic and deep familiarity with the interview material but equally enabled me to later conduct the "reassembling procedure" (Yin, 2011:179), leading to the interpretation of the data, and finally, the derivation of a conclusion (ibid.).

I took notes during each church service, describing the process and observing behaviors before transcribing them. In addition, I compiled field notes to capture my observations, short conversations, logos or slogans on church furniture, artifacts and clothing that identified a person as belonging to Mt. Zion. I also took photos to visualize and document my observations. This material became a substantial part of the data analysis. In agreement with Macamo, ultimately, "retrieve reality through our own data, but these data document our understanding of reality, not reality itself, although our understanding of reality is informed by the nature of reality itself" (2017:84).

CHAPTER 2: STUDYING WORK, ETHICS AND WORK ETHIC

Wo feefee asem mu a, wuhu saman – He who looks into matter comprehends it

Introduction

In this chapter, I wish to lay the groundwork for the theoretical frame of my empirical research. Although the overall approach of this research paper focuses on selected individuals who are (i) members of a particular Methodist church, Mt. Zion, situated in the city of Tema and equally (ii) define themselves as belonging to a particular ethnic group, the Akan, it is necessary from time to time to deviate from the individual perspective and introduce a holistic approach. This is designed to better enable the analyzing and embedding of interview statements and personal observations in following chapters. However, when referring to the Akan as an ethnic group, I use the concept of a cultural group, as proposed by the quoted research, when diving deeper into the empirical part of this thesis. I narrow the definition by focusing on individuals, i.e., members of a particular Methodist church who define themselves as Akan. I view this procedure as complementary, allowing a holistic approach favorable to my research.

I shall start with a broad overview of meanings attributed to "work" and "ethic" from historical, scientific, and semantic perspectives. My aim hereby is to establish an understanding of assumed similarities and differences by shedding light on European and African, and specifically, Ghanaian, concepts and views. Going back in history, it is much easier to find literature representing Western viewpoints, which, as I will show, don't necessarily always conform with the African or Ghanaian reality. In addition, Ghanaian history, philosophy, and wisdom accumulated over centuries, has until recently, predominantly relied upon oral transmission. This made it accessible to defined groups of people, such as the Akan, or sometimes allowed it to cross the clan lines and enter into a common Ghanaian knowledge. However, the rest of the world remained mostly deprived of this knowledge. Although a few Western anthropologists (e.g., Rattray 1969; Westermann 1937) gained profound insights into parts of Ghanaian life, their views were influenced by their socialization and education as scientists in a Western country. It is only after Ghana gained independence in 1957 that a Ghanaian educated elite (e.g., Danquah, Busia, Wiredu) became known internationally. This was a major breakthrough for the emergence of a science rooted in Africa and the beginning of shared African knowledge, norms, and traditions by African scholars worldwide. As an African proverb puts it: "Until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." The emergence of widely accessible African research representing different academic disciplines significantly contributed to a holistic approach towards grasping and understanding better the "tale of the hunt."

In this chapter, I attempt to apply knowledge gained from Western and African scientists. I begin with Western scientists, because it has significantly influenced the worldwide discourse about "work" and "work ethic" and often forms the theoretical basis for African research, as acknowledged by Wiredu (2002). However, I will also use African, and wherever possible Ghanaian, or even more precisely, Akan academic writings, pointing to differences and particularities. By making this distinction, I am aware of the fact that many African scientists (e.g., Wiredu, Busia and others) have been, at least partly, trained in the West. The reason why I nevertheless hold on to this distinction, lies in my conviction that scholarly work is fed by different influences, beyond the place of academic training. In other words, I agree with Gyekye (2010) that societal background of any researcher is reflected in the outcome of his research.

Work in society or attributing value to work

"Work is work. You do it and get money" (Interviewee Jill). This reference to "work is work," repeated three times in the course of an interview, portends to a fact that in the mind of the interviewee, the term "work" does not require any explanation. It is rather suggestive that to her the meaning is obvious, clear, and unquestionable. It is precisely this repeated matter of course statement that supports the conjecture of a normative meaning attributed to work.

Work and work ethic as normative categories

Norms play an important role in our lives as they help define the selection criteria among alternatives. In his book *Why Humans have Cultures*, Carrithers uses the rather philosophical question attributed to Socrates "How should one live?" to elaborate upon "How do we associate with each other?". He stresses in particular that the core of being human is the "display of great intensity of mutual concern and tremendous dependency upon each other" (1992:1). Godelier asserts that "humans not only live in society, but also produce society in order to live" (1986:236), necessitating interrelation with others for the sake of socialization as well as gaining knowledge about oneself. Echoing my research experiences, Carrithers points to the human dimension of "tremendous variability" (1992:4) that culminates in the "magnitude of differences across forms of life" (ibid.).

Given the fact that human beings are social people, existing and interacting in relation to each other leads to the central question: How does human relationality manifest itself? As this is a crucial question cutting across various academic disciplines, I will focus on those members of a particular Methodist church, Mt. Zion, who identify themselves as Akan and their narrated views concerning the topic of work ethic and religious convictions while trying not to lose sight of other

dimensions. As Good & Still (1992 & 1998) showed in their mutualistic approach, people are constantly involved in human interactions shaping a common system of values. The internalization of common values and their subsequent integration into norms starts with socialization, a process influenced by ongoing interactions with significant others that drives members of society to conform by displaying norm-abiding behavior. Thus, norms, in the form of social expectancies, coagulate into functional roles. Brennan et al. (2013) argue that the purpose of norms is to hold individuals accountable to each other expecting loyalty to their normed principles as they are constituted by values shared in a given society, a perception also echoed by Geertz (2017). It is, however, important to note that "the early process of basic directional orientation" (Parsons, 1951:163) leads to the fact that norms are also not static, and in each society, they are accessible to change (Holtman et al., 2007:247). Individual choices echo personal preferences or to use Parsons's words, "There are also mild and/or temporary deviances which do not place the individual in an irrevocably deviant role but may afford some relief from the pressure to conformity" (1951:163). However, these preferences need to coincide with social expectations. Adherence to norms is reflected in social function and motivation to act (Parsons 1937). Although the above provides an overview about the emergence of norms and their societal importance, it remains to be seen how the normative meaning of work leading to the statement "work is work" evolved, also addressing the issue if, and to what extent, this quote can be held representative for members of a particular Methodist church who define themselves as Akan. I will revisit this question throughout this paper, discussing it from the theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Before diving into the normative connotation(s) attributed to the term "work" in a particular society, I wish to draw a broader picture of a phenomenon, which, while leaning on Darwin's evolutionary theory, Engels defines as emerging simultaneously with humankind, as in his view "labor created man himself" (Engels, 1950:7).

Semantic perspectives on work and work ethic

In my view, Smith's approach in his *The Wealth of Nations* (1999) is different. According to him, the term "work" contains different meanings: (i) different collective productive tasks to be performed in manufacturing (p. 109), (ii) the task type performed by the individual (p.122), (iii) production volume (p. 115), (iv) individual capacity (p.115), (v) the quality and quantity of the work product (p. 122; p.151), as well as (vi) the field of activity (p. 120). Smith also employs the word "labor" by saying "but in consequence of the division of labor, the whole of every man's attention comes naturally to be directed towards some very simple object" (p.114). In his view, it is natural that those employed in each particular type of labor soon discover easier and more accessible

methods for performing their particular work, wherever the nature of it admits to such improvement. The above leads to the assumption that Smith uses "work" and "labor" synonymously because division of labor is found in parceling work. The assumption is also supported by International Labor Organization's thesaurus that uses the term "labor" equivalently with work, defining both as: "Human activities, paid or unpaid, that produce the goods or services in an economy, or supply the needs of a community, or provide a person's accustomed means of livelihood." In many of my sources the words "work" and "labor" are used interchangeably. As a native German speaker, I note that key sources I used to develop my understanding of "work" and "labor" as it relates to society were originally written in German, notably by Max Weber. In the German language "work" and "labor" are both commonly subsumed in the single word "Arbeit." Noteworthy is Marx's (2009) distinction between "Erwerbsarbeit" and "Lohnarbeit". According to him, "Erwerbsarbeit" is positively connoted with labor to earn a living, which allows the laborer a high level of identification with the work process, and beyond, with the outcome (product) of his work culminating into personal satisfaction. On the contrary, "Lohnarbeit" as discussed by Marx, was introduced by a factory system, and refers to an economic relationship between employee and employer defined by an agreement on a wage for a certain quantity and quality of labor. According to Marx, wages were determined through the struggle between the worker and his employer, often to the worker's disadvantage. Furthermore, Marx depicts a propensity of alienation of labor in the sense that the worker doesn't have a direct relationship to the products of his labor, he merely works under the compulsion of a direct physical need.

Although a profound analysis on the applicability of these terms in the Ghanaian context would take us beyond the scope of this research, I will refer to them throughout this study.

In the following, I will use the term "work" throughout this paper, only deviating to "labor" for quoting purposes and employing the term "job" when referring to a particular temporary remunerated occupation. In addition, I will also introduce and discuss "adwuma," the local language Twi word that encompasses a particular Akan work concept.

Scientific viewpoints on work

Having clarified the semantics, I wish to now approach the term "work" from scientific points of view. And here, we are faced with an intellectual contortionism. The scientific community has not reached an agreement on a uniform concept and definition of work; it rather approaches the term from different perspectives of their various disciplines. In physics, work signifies the result of force and distance (Jammer 1957; Gaspar-Gustave Coriolis 1826).[9] The transposition of the terms "force" and "distance" from the realm of a priori conditions to the sphere of time and human experience fits well with the connotation attributed to work by economists. As we have seen,

according to Adam Smith, the value of a product is determined by how much effort it took to manufacture this product (in time). Thus, in economics, work is primarily defined as a production factor (next to land and capital), something true to the principle of cost-effectiveness: maximum benefit with minimum cost or maximum satisfaction with minimum sacrifice. With this definition, work generally embodies concepts aligned with the labor, force, energy, and/or effort required to produce a specific result (in time).[10]

Evolvement throughout history

Historically, and here I am leaning on European history with its roots in the conceptual worlds of classical antiquity and its pronounced and metaphysically based social difference, chronicled uses of the term "labor" (especially physical labor) often resonate with a negative, derogatory connotation. Work was regarded as an unworthy activity whose linguistic synonyms were hardship, plague, burden, and misery; it thus became a matter for the lower social strata. In the Western hemisphere, the basic Christian view that all people were ultimately equal before God introduced a kind of pre-democratic motive, through which the connotation of work is redefined and gains a more positive tonality. The Protestant ethic work became identical with the fulfillment of duty and godly deeds, and in an ascetic way of life marked by work, the predetermination for eternal bliss was already visible in this world. During this time, the class of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat both profited, albeit unequally, from an image that labor was something productive and necessary for the sustenance of basic needs (Fürstenberg 1977). The positive evaluation of work, an understanding leading to work being perceived as an opportunity, as a determination of the essence of man, prepared itself theologically in Protestantism coinciding with the industrialization in Western societies; Weber (2005) saw the Protestant ethic as the preconditions for the capitalist industrialization process. The perception that personal work, especially diligent work, was a valuable virtue took its course, now positively connoting to the increase of wealth seen as "the liberal reward of labor" (Smith 1999).

The complexity from a multi-layered perspective

Through a rather holistic approach, Lewin (1920) offers a multi-layered view on the definition of work. He agrees with work being labor and burden ("Mühe und Last"), but also points to the fact that work bears traits of creative joy, satisfaction, and contentment, aspects which increase the value of life and make work rich and humane. Work motivation comprises two different aspects. On the one hand, it can contribute to finding the necessary strength to cope with unpleasant but necessary tasks, and on the other hand, it acts as an impetus for a meaningful, humane life, in

which one, as an individual, gets involved in solving social tasks and develops one's abilities and rites with two different faces:

> Work is on one hand, labor and burden, expenditure of energy. […] Work is an indispensable requirement for living, but it is not yet real life itself. It is nothing but a means, a thing without its own life value, which has significance only because it creates the means for life, which can only be affirmed if it provides such. Just as one does not live to eat, but eats to live, so one must necessarily work to live, and does not live to work. […] Because all productive value comes to this work only indirectly, only by the economic advantages which it offers to the worker, it is a burden without its own value, nothing but a means. (Lewin, 1920 :11ff, own translation)

And he continues:

> Work is indispensable to man in a completely different sense. Not because the need of life forces it, but because life without work is hollow and incomplete. Freed from the compulsion of necessity, every person who is not ill or old is looking for a job, in a field of activity of some kind. This need for work, the escape from constant idleness is not based on mere habit to work, but on the 'value of life' embedded in work. It is the same over-individual quality of work that causes the worker to do clean, solid, "good" work, even if less good work would not bring any material or personal disadvantage. This ability of work to give meaning and importance to individual life is somehow inherent in every work, whether it is heavy or light, varied or monotonous, provided that it does not produce fictitious performances. Because work itself is life, therefore one also wants to bring all the powers of life to it and be able to have an effect in it. […] they do not hinder personal advancement, but rather enhance the ability to deliver its full potential. The progress of the working method is therefore not based on a possible reduction in working hours, but on an increase in the value of life at work, making it richer and more humane. (ibid.)

Deducting from this quote, we see a dichotomy: all work is simultaneously productive and destructive. On the productive side: Work engenders identity, creativity and includes the aspect of satisfaction and contentment, an important constituent of a meaningful life (Dahrendorf 1982:182), and work encompasses the fact of self-exploitation leading to an embedded antagonistic exchange with oneself. Self-exploitation is desirable when assuming that everything taken away is for one's own benefit. On the other hand, self-exploitation is to be avoided, because everything you have, you have to take away from yourself. The I-Myself relation defines itself in the mirror of

one's own work as having worked yesterday and enjoining the fruits of this work tomorrow. It is about anticipatory satisfaction: the now-action bestows something upon tomorrow's needs.

Karl Marx takes the term "exploitation" to the negatively connoted level of being exploited by others. With the slogan "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," Marx (1891) points to the existence of exploitation when the workers are not receiving according to the work rendered to the best of their ability. In his view, employment is designed to maximize the profits of the employer while providing the minimum necessary amount of compensation required to incentivize workers to increase productivity.

Unlike an attitude which Weber calls the "spirit of capitalism," it is crucial that work not be merely a means to cater to wellbeing or survival of the individual and his family, but that work as such becomes an end in itself. This means that an individual does not merely work for a certain time and with a certain quality because this is a prerequisite for a higher remuneration or an expected profit. Work itself has become an independent value for the one who works, a dedication to a certain form of interaction with the physical world, something that is pursued despite momentary affects and impulses such as displeasure, tiredness, satiety, and demands certain quality standards. In other words, the traditional definition of work as a necessity or means to an end becomes an aspirational end in itself.

As discussed throughout this paper, "work" is replete with paradoxes. I will be explaining how work fosters the development of identity, but it also creates, or at least accentuates inequality. Work is backed by rituals, grounded in the behavior at the societal level and operates as a means to increase production. Trade and, especially in Africa, (collective) farming supported by protocols may have culminated into the concept of work being social. Trade creates social relationships, connects people, and requires collaboration of many. Although work is shared by all, it forces differences which might culminate into social differentiations.

Work in Ghana
"We are born to work. It is in our DNA" (Kwahu lady)

Having discussed work from a holistic perspective, I attempt in this chapter to bring the discussion close to the research field, namely Ghana. Firstly, I will establish an understanding of how to situate work in a historical frame. Secondly, I will elaborate upon the legal framework related to work, and thirdly, dive deeper into reasons for working.

Colonial influence

The concept of work is developed and internalized at home and within a cultural context. Early childhood skills practices, rooted in societal traditions, transition into mechanisms for earning a livelihood as the children grow older (Atkins, 1993). It is striking how little is known about the pre-industrial and the pre-colonial Ghana as "the whole area of Akan origins is surrounded with uncertainty" (Klein 1996:248), one of the reasons being that "the relations between the Akan oral traditions and real historical time is problematic" (ibid.:253). Leaning on research by physical anthropologists, botanists, and linguists as well as genetic research, Klein asserts that the Akan was an agrarian forest population and these "cultures of the West African forest developed over millennia of cultural-ecological adaptation" (ibid.:249). In addition, it was an area populated by a people of the Kwa language, which is part of the Akan language (ibid.), both indicators that the Akan had been part "of agricultural populations through the forest zone of West Africa, including Ghana" dating back as far as "the early centuries of the Christian era" (ibid.:254). Although Klein admits to disparity in defining the roots of the Akan forest agriculture depending upon the supporting research evidence, such as historic documents and radiocarbon data as well as sickle cell traits for genetics and archeologists, the link of the Akan ethnic origin pointing to agriculture is widely accepted (ibid.:263).

Following the encounter with European cultures, the slavery trade emerged as a significant means of economic activity next to agriculture. Starting with domestic slavery in early Akan societies, it evolved and flourishing under the European slave trade. Furthermore, starting as early as the 15th century, the Akan people became highly influential in trade and gold mining (Levtzion, 1973:155). The costal part of Ghana, previously named Gold Coast and primarily inhabited by the Akan sub-group, the Fanti, became British crown colony in 1874. Although facing major resistance, most notably from the powerful Ashanti Empire in 1896, the British succeeded to expand their territories occupying Akan land (Gifford 2001). Work culture became influenced by colonial, European customs, the autochthon people being expected to adopt to it without compromise. A refusal or possibly a different notion towards the regime of work time led to stigmatization, for example, being characterized as "work shy" or "lazy" (Atkins 1993). A temporary escape from wage employment related to land availability ensuring an independent subsistence. For the Akan, and certainly for the Ashanti, access to land was of high value also for reasons rooted in culture "as the land belonged to the ancestors it was a link between them and their living descendants" (Busia, 1951:44). Furthermore, land possession was attached to responsibility towards the family, the living, and the ancestors, as "this idea that the land belonged to the ancestors made the Ashanti

unwilling to sell his land. There was always the dread that the ancestors would summon him to account for such a conduct" (ibid.:43).

Labor in significant numbers was driven to the market by external factors such as either ecological disaster (e.g., drought) or social control in form of capital introduced by the colonial state. The shift from rural work to urban or from peasant to industrial worker marked the beginning of capitalist development influenced by missionaries and their transmission of Christian teaching and values. This is a situation Atkins describes as the "context of a settler-based colonial regime, in which the master and servant represented totally different social worlds and operated from systems of logic that mutually eluded comprehension" (1988:229), which incited significant conflicts. In addition, motivation was fueled by creating new demands:

> From all these various activities, from the sale of cocoa, kola, rubber, cattle, or hides, of foodstuffs or fish or snails, or European goods; from the work on the road or farm or mine or skilled or unskilled laborers, from employment with trading firms as clerks or commercial middlemen, the people earned money, and bought more and more goods. The imports were an ever-expanding assortment of goods. The people spent their money on whatever new commodities the trading firm brought from Europe. It was supply that created new desires and stimulated an acquisitive and insatiable demand. (Busia, 1951:124)

I agree with Atkins (1993) that, at its introduction, the autochthon lacked knowledge about how to respond to an emerging wage economy, a specific form of cash economy imported and enforced by the Europeans. They were inexperienced with its influence upon possible work choices and behavior on the job. It is beyond the scope of this research paper to elaborate in depth as to what extent the acceptance of or, at minimum, the adaptation to the above-mentioned external factors of the foreign economic concept influenced the consciousness of the Akan worker and his work ethic. Possibly, Marx would define this process as an onset of a Ghanaian transition from "Erwerbsarbeit" to "Lohnarbeit". In Ghana, contrary to the West, it was not industrialization starting the process, it was rather grounded in colonization. An interviewee amply illustrates the entailed potential clash of different work cultures:

> Before colonialism, people lived their lives. […] And they worked in the farm and they knew, when I have planted a seed, I have to come back again and weed it. […] And people were ethical to know that, when I plant my seed, I don't go in the night and cut down my neighbors' maize which is just about flowering. So, ethic has always been with society. […] Colonialism introduced a system of control to assure exploitation. It introduced a system which allowed in a workplace people to be confined to their tasks and thereby allow –

because that was the first introduction of the contact with Europeans and it's the European work system – people to be confined to their tasks and to be able to tell, how much work has been done and for it to be remunerated in a way.

Here, the justification and evaluation horizon of the colonial, industrial work ethic is purely based on quantitative output maximization. However, the interviewee suggests that there was also a work ethic in the traditional order. There, too, people did not only live from hand to mouth according to the pleasure principle, but they also acted with the willingness for personal restrictions and impulses. The reference level, however, was not maximum production output, but perhaps rather preservation and reproduction of relationships with neighbors, the social collective, the ancestors, and the spiritual-organic life context in the broader sense. This would also be a profound work ethic, which, however, is oriented to other variables and therefore also forms itself differently (in the process as well as in the result). As we will see, when getting to the interview analysis, keeping in mind the historical development is essential to comprehend information shared by my interviewees.

Contemporary Ghana

The Constitution of Ghana (1992) guarantees Ghanaian citizens economic rights. Article 24 (1) stipulates every person's right to work under satisfactory, safe, and healthy conditions as well as the entitlement to equal pay for equal work without distinction of any kind. Furthermore, sub-section (2) stresses upon the assurance of rest, leisure, and limitation of working hours, holidays with pay, and renumeration for public holidays, while sub-section (3) guarantees the right to form or join a trade union for the promotion and protection of economic and social interests.

The Ghana Labor Act defines in more detailed manner, in the Section "Protection of employment" Article 8, the rights of employer to include the right to "employ a worker, discipline, transfer, promote, and terminate the employment of the worker." Furthermore, the employer has legally defined duties (Art. 9) such as to "(a) provide work and appropriate raw materials, machinery, equipment, and tools; (b) pay the agreed remuneration at the time and place agreed; (c) take all practicable steps to ensure that the worker is free from risk of personal injury or damage to his or her health during and In the course of the worker's employment or while lawfully on the employer's premises; (d) develop the human resources by way of training and retaining of the workers; I provide and ensure the operation of an adequate procedure for discipline of the workers; (g) keep open the channels of communication; and (h) protect the interests of the workers.

The Labor Act also defines in Article 11 the duties of workers to include to (a) work conscientiously; (b) report for work regularly and punctually; (c) enhance productivity; (d) exercise due care; I obey

lawful instructions; (f) take all reasonable care for the safety and health of fellow workers; (g) protect the interests of the employer; and (h) take proper care of the property of the employer. In addition, the legislation stipulates that employment for at least six month "shall be secured by a written contract of employment" (Art. 12). I like to draw attention to Article 17 defining notice of termination of employment. It reads: "1) A contract of employment may be terminated at any time by either party giving to the other party, (a) in the case of a contract of three years or more, one month's notice or one month's pay in lieu of notice; (b) notice or two weeks' pay in lieu of notice; or (c) in the case of contract from week to week, seven days' notice. (2) A contract of employment determinable at will by either party may be terminated at the close of any day without notice. (3) A notice required to be given under this section shall be in writing."

These far reaching, well defined, and reassuring employment rights hold true for approximately 17% of the so-called formal sector working population (2015). The legal regulations are observed, as my Ghanaian interlocutors explained, in governmental or financial sector employments and serve as guidelines for international institutions or companies who would be expected to conclude legally binding working contracts with their staff. Otherwise, most employment agreements, except those at a managerial level, are established verbally, making monitoring and enforcement difficult. The main reason for doing so and succeeding albeit the obligation to adhere to the regulations is the available manpower desperately looking for a job.

The majority of the employed is concentrated in the service sector (49%), having constantly increased over the past ten years by 13%, whereas agriculture shows an employment decrease by 21% for the same period, and at a rate of 29% in 2019. Over the same period of time employment in industry increased by 22%.[11] The vast majority, 83% (2015) of the Ghana population who are of a working age, are working in the much more vulnerable, volatile, and less protected informal sector.[12] Sources, such as Ninsin (1991) or Adu-Amankwah (1999) trace the origin of the Ghanaian informal sector to the beginning of colonial capitalism in the Gold Coast era. Adu-Amankwah points to an emerging dualistic economy:

> On the one hand, a small formal sector covered essentially capital investment in mining, transportation, infrastructure, commerce, social services, and administration with wage employment. On the other hand, the promotion of primary commodities production for export and import of consumer goods for domestic trade gave rise to large contingents of the labor force in both agriculture and petty trading who were either self-employed or hired under traditional or informal arrangements. (ibid.:1)

Throughout the decades following independence and contrary to the expectations that the expansion of modern economy would lead to increased and stabilized formal employment, the informal sector grew both in rural and urban areas. A study conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2011) points to the fact that today's urban informal sector in Ghana can be best described within three categories: (i) services, such as food traders, domestic workers, hairdressers, mechanics, small scale graphic designers; (ii) construction, largely encompassing all trades required for construction, and (iii) manufacturing, encompassing seamstress or wood and metal works processing. The informal sector is characterized by insufficient or poor working conditions, underpayment, lack of job security, and high dependence on the respective employer. Fleming et al. (2000) call it the "shadow economy" and offer two approaches defining its activities: definitional and behavioral. Their definitional approach points to "unrecorded national income" (ibid.:389), whereas the characteristics of the behavioral approach maintain the basis of the informal sector determined by "noncompliance or circumvention of the established rules" (ibid.:390).

While conducting the empirical research among selected Mt. Zion church members, it became apparent that social status based upon the perception within the congregation, both self-perception and being treated by other members, was attached to means of employment. The desire and motivation of getting an employment possibly in the formal sector became apparent in number of interviews underlining the above stated reasons. Informal sector workers escape governmental regulations, such as minimum wage payment due to excess labor supply; there is usually no legally binding work agreement resulting in a minimum of job security, it is rather marked by the constant fear of being fired; the informal sector is furthermore marked by an absence of official protection and recognition. Employees cannot take any legal action for employers' tendency not to respect labor obligations set out in the Labor Act and the informal sector is linked to poverty because the often-irregular income hardly allows for sustaining a family. The protections for workers under the labor regulations appear to be designed to balance workers' interest with those of their employers, however a significant portion of the work population cannot access these rights.

Why do people work?

The perception that work is a natural part of life finds its manifestation in an interviewee's statement: "work has been with us throughout history," indicating that work is a fact, a natural given. The speaker is a Kwahu, and by emphasizing on "us," he points to socialization patterns which contribute to forming the personality of an individual (Parsons, 1951:162). Although in the wake of globalization where societal patterns are changing in Ghana, the interviews strongly support the notion of a personal identification with cohesive in-groups expecting and manifesting

loyalty towards these groups. Interviewees support the claim pronounced by Busia (1962), Danquah (2016), Gyekye (1987), and Wiredu (1996) that family and community continue to play a prominent and significant role for defining personal identity and reciprocal aid feeding from an ethnic background. Cultural cohesion is based on shared values, with the function aimed at persistence. Thus, adaption to a socioeconomic environment that operates on a different set of values can be a process of slow and reluctant change, exposing the individuals to the necessity of navigating between contradicting social imperatives and exposing them to the risk of social and cognitive dissonance. An additional aspect is what Etzioni (1978) calls "alienation": it encompasses the transition from work in a village (e.g., farmer) to work in the urban setting with high aspirations towards a better paid and more prestigious job in the formal sector.

Sources of motivation

Work or rather work performance as a form of behavior is energized and directed by motivation. Hofstede et al. sketch two interdependent levels of motivation by stating, "Motivation is an assumed force operating inside an individual, inducing him or her to choose one action over another. Culture as collective programming of the mind thus plays an obvious role in motivation. Culture influences not only our behaviors but also the explanations we give for our behaviors" (2010:327; see also Myers & DeWall, 2015: 423). Motivation to work can further stem from a need to belong where mutually dependent relationships and membership in a group built on loyalty can appease this need. This loyalty finds different ways of manifestation such as adaptation of skills and abilities enabling acceptance into a group at the workplace (Hofstede et al., 2010:119), which according to Hofstede, can go as far as resembling "a family relationship with mutual obligations of protection in exchange for loyalty. Poor performance of an employee in this relationship is no reason for dismissal; one does not dismiss one's child" (ibd.:120). Remaining at the "family"[13] level, "the ideal boss in the subordinates' eyes, the one they feel most comfortable with and whom they respect most, is a benevolent autocrat or "good father" (ibd.:74). Thus, the workplace mutates to an emotional home, worthy of trust with a high value put upon establishing and sustaining personal relationships. Although the manifestation of the need to belong might differ depending upon the cultural environment, psychologists agree (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Mayer & DeWall 2015; Diener & Seligmann 2002) that the need to belong – or affiliation need – constitutes a basic human motivation. Next to motivation routed in a harmonious relationship with colleagues, a good team spirit, is motivation deriving from the ability to take individual decisions or exercise personal control and competence (Myers & DeWall, 2015:449), leading to achievement motivation which Murray (1938:454) links to remarkable accomplishments, mastering skills, and reaching a high standard.

With almost 94% of Ghanaians, as captured in the Ghana Population and Housing Census 2010, stating that they believe in a concept of God and have specific religious affiliations (Christianity accounting to about 70%), it can be safely assumed that religious convictions permeate an individual to an extent that these values gain entry into the working place. This can manifest itself in discussing faith related issues at the workplace and culminating into assumptions that a spiritually minded workforce manifests itself in a collective work ethic leading to motivation of individuals. Some research (e.g., Kutcher et al. 2010; Roof 2015) points to the beneficial influence of religion at the workplace; however, it also indicates that this field of research, although having gained interest in the past years with a particular focus on the USA requires further approaches and regional expansion to better address the issue of religion, or more specifically Christianity, as a motivation factor for performance at a workplace. Since this question runs like a leitmotif through the entire dissertation, I will return and deal with it in following chapters.

Remuneration

"I realize, that for us, the Akan, and especially when we get to the Ashanti, they value money. I don't know if you noticed, but in this country, they are more like the rich, they are entrepreneurs… they don't mind what they do, work is work, you do it and get money. So, as for them, work is so important to them." In this quote from an interview, work and money become synonymous leading to a new dimension: work, regardless of its content, becomes a mere means to an end, i.e., the accumulation of wealth. I will elaborate on this connotation when analysing the interviews, at this stage, I want rather to use this statement to address the Ghanaian renumeration system.

Ghana has introduced a minimum wage determined by the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) composed of representatives of the Government, employers' organization, as well as organized labor representatives (Art. 112-113) and enshrined the employer's obligation to effect payment in Art. 75 Labor Act. The above mentioned NTC has announced that as of 1 January 2020 the daily minimum wages are GHC 11.82, which is an 11% increment of the GHC 10.65 daily minimum wage in 2019. It is noteworthy, that the minimum wage 2019 is exactly at the international poverty line of US $1.90 a day.[14] Taking into account an inflation rate of 7.7% [as of 13.11.2019], where according to Ghana Statistical Service, food and non-alcoholic beverages remain the driver of inflation, the 11% increment will barely pass the poverty line. The same source indicates that the inflation at the Greater Accra Region, where Tema is situated, has reached an inflation rate of 11.8%, the highest in the country. Those, who work in the informal sector, often being self-employed have a very volatile income, often falling below the minimum wage. As the vast majority doesn't benefit from social security meaning that even temporary illness or unemployment can easily lead to a poverty trap.

While in 2019 the World Bank estimated the overall unemployment rate of 4.3 percent for the working age population (15 years and above) and youth unemployment rate of 9 to16 percent, it is generally believed that both rates are not representing the situation on the ground. This presumed under-estimation of unemployment and /or underemployment is attributed to the definition adopted by the Ghana Statistical Services (GSS). The GSS regarded all people, who during the period of the survey were engaged in any form of economic activity, whether on gratis or for income/profit, as being employed.

Low wages as well as insufficient job opportunities are considered as one of the main reasons leading to corruption. Ghana scored 41 points out of 100 and is ranking 80/180 on the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International. Corruption Index in Ghana dropped seven points moving from 48 in 2014 to 41 in2019 (ibd.:21). I will refer to the issue of corruption in the ecclesiastic setting in due time as it was brought up by some of my interviewees and was addressed during several church services.

Interpretations of Ethics and Work Ethic
Obra ye nnoboa – Life is mutual aid

In my experience, when discussing the topic of work ethic, the European mind will most likely turn to Max Weber and his emphasis on the influence of Protestantism upon a positively connoted work ethic. Since his thesis is still influential and has produced a great deal of literature, I will in the course of this chapter elaborate on Weber's lines of argument concerning the influence of Protestantism, including Methodism (Weber, 2005:53), upon the development of a positively connoted ethic towards work. Beginning with an analysis of Weber's concept towards a "protestant ethic", I will introduce a discussion of the predominant influences within contemporary Ghanaian society.

In the further progress of this study, I will explicitly point to topics and behavior that I observed or was informed about by my interviewees in Ghana, those which might have been influenced by Christian, or more precise Methodist convictions and, following Weber's argumentation, might have an influence upon an emergence of a particular work ethic. I will also point out behaviors and convictions in the Ghanaian, and more precisely, Akan context, which are less supportive of Weber's theory.

Work Ethic – a Western view

Weber's argument about the relation between Protestantism and capitalism has spawned an extensive and diverse literature dealing with the effect of religious values on economic performance (e.g., Fullerton 1959, Basten & Betz 2013, Green 1959, just to name a few).

Throughout the literature, Weber is commonly referred to as the person starting the debate about the link between religion, Protestantism, ethics, and economic growth. In Weber's view, both the understanding of the term "work ethic" and the degree to which it is internalized and expressed in social as well as individual behavior are closely interwoven with Christianity, or more precisely, his work points to an elective affinity between Protestantism and economic success. For the purpose of this thesis, I will limit myself to outline what I deem to be the most important statements in relation to my research interest. Here, I will focus on Weber's work without being oblivious to the fact that many scientific approaches (e.g., Tawney 1926; Robertson 1933) assess it critically.

Weber's "Protestant Ethic" establishes a historical relation between the emergence of capitalism as a dominant economic system in Western Europe and the Protestant Reformation centuries earlier. Weber draws attention to the peculiar ascetic ethical system propagated in Protestantism. Here it is the idea of a "calling" originated (Weber, 2005:19), a recognition of personal work as a God-given duty. This is aptly illustrated in the original text using the German term "Berufung" an individual perception of an "inner call" to a certain life task, an explanation still often used by clergy. Or to determine it with Luther, "calling" meaning to live the secular life piously, not apart from the world, and serving God as a response to one's calling. This term lays the groundwork for "Beruf" to signify profession or professional occupation. In Weber's sense, while introducing the connotation of "calling," the emphasis on worldly activity as a means to prove one's faith eventually evolved, through a process of rationalization, into what Weber calls the "spirit of capitalism"; the idea that working for the purpose of profit is a moral good in itself (ibid.).

A process which is aptly summed up by Basten & Betz:

> In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argues that the rise of capitalism was facilitated by what could be named an 'Ascetic Protestantism.' The religion provided a spiritual sanction for work in a calling and thus made hard work and the acquisition of wealth an end in itself. Labor came to be considered in itself the end of life, ordained as such by God. St. Paul's 'He who will not work shall not eat' holds unconditionally for everyone. (Basten & Betz, 2013:71)

It is noteworthy, especially in the context of this research, that Weber considered Methodism as well as Calvinism, Pietism, and Baptism as being part of this "Ascetic Protestantism" (2005:53).

Weber's argumentation has two aspects to consider and distinguish in the analysis of those manifestations of Protestantism: Firstly, the professional duty: defined as "an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel and does feel towards the content of his professional activity, no

matter in what it consists, in particular no matter whether it appears on the surface as a utilization of his personal powers, or only of his material possessions (as capital)" which is "most characteristic of the social ethic of capitalistic culture" constituting its "fundamental basis" (ibid.:19). Secondly, the rationalization of the way of life: For the individual, it is based on the religious impulse to methodically control his way of life in its ascetic penetration. This ascetic lifestyle means a rational shaping of the whole existence oriented to God's will (ibid.:74). Only in the connection of the inner-worldly professional duty with a systematic rationalization of the way of life which grows out of it does an attitude emerge which Weber calls "spirit of capitalism."

First of all, it had been made absolutely obligatory to consider oneself chosen, since a lack of self-confidence would, by logic, have resulted into the possibility to deduce an inadequate faith, i.e., an inadequate effect of God's grace (ibid.:99). This introduced self-perception allowed a transformation of humble sinners into self-assured "saints" (ibid.). As a result, it necessitated restless professional work as a means of attaining and maintaining this self-assurance. Restless professional work was meant to scare away religious doubts and assure with certainty the state of grace. The function of secular professional work for Weber lies in its capacity to react to religious anxiety effects (ibid.:67). Not necessarily guided by the notion of need or even possibility to buy bliss, but rather led by the motivation to eliminate fear for bliss, was the reason for a Calvinist[15] to devote himself to secular professional work (ibid.:68). It culminated in the assertion that success in work performance positively related to creating the certainty of being blessed due to the conviction that "God helps those who help themselves" (ibid.:69). This approach also includes the fact that the fulfilment of professional tasks takes on a particular objective and impersonal character (ibid.), defining the individually determined purpose of life not to be oriented towards people, but towards factually rational purposes (ibid.:113). It is an intrinsic perception made possible by the indoctrination that one had to obey God more than human beings (ibid.:61). It is precisely here that a methodically rational way of life became possible, one that is free from tradition, conventions, ideas of what is "human," i.e., traditional ethical standards, to organize one's entire life from the point of view of professional success. This tendency to rationalize the world was further promoted by the thesis that God must want the objectively purposeful as a means of glorifying his name (ibid.:180). The work was also seen as the prescribed self-esteem of life; those who do not work should not eat. Unwillingness to work was considered a symptom of a lack of grace.

Although the entire ascetic literature of almost all denominations assumed that faithful work, even with low wages on the part of those to whom life had otherwise not granted any opportunities, was something most pleasing to God, puritanical asceticism had not only deepened this point of view,

but it had also created that norm which was the only thing that mattered for its effect, namely: the psychological drive to work, guided by the worker's perception that their work was a means to secure their state of grace (ibid.:121). Fullerton (2017) rightly points to a dilemma inherent to Puritanism, where seeking accumulation of wealth is considered to be a sinful pursuit, while engaging in constant, systematic, efficient work, which is valued as leading to salvation and glorifying God, is economically rewarding. "The rigid limitations of consumption on the one hand and the methodical intensification of production on the other could have but one result – the accumulation of capital" (ibid.:18f). In fact, Fullerton views the denotation of life as a "calling" fuels the spirit of modern capitalism.

I agree with Basten & Betz that "Ascetic Protestantism encouraged the accumulation of wealth, which it regarded as a sign of God's blessing, but restricted consumption. Hard work in a worldly calling is sanctified as the surest means to attain certainty of salvation" (2013:71). In Weber's view, the productivity of the work had considerably increased by church discipline (ibid.:120).

The meaning of Ethics and Work Ethic in the Ghanaian context
Ti bone wofano fam, womfa nnwo – One is not born with a bad "head", but one takes it on from the earth.[16]

In his "the Akan Doctrine of God," Danquah offers deep insights into the Akan concepts and way of thinking.[17] In his view "all that matters in morals and religion [are] the right ideal to make men live well" (2016:109). He does not favor any doctrinal approach, but rather highlights a pragmatic viewpoint allowing the individual the freedom of choice by saying:

> the Akan propositions or postulates about morality and religion are of some value because, whilst not designed to repeat merely what Jew or Gentile, Christian and non-Christian have discovered about the coinage of morality and religion, they emphasize aspects which had appealed to the Akan as valuable and probably fundamental in man's approach to the problem of how to make men in any community live well. (ibid.)

In his book *Foundation of an African Ethic*, Bénézet Bujo (2001) suggests a critical view upon Western ethics and offers a groundwork for an understanding of African ethics. I would like in particular to highlight three areas addressed by Bujo and echoed by Ghanaian scholars which are of fundamental importance to this paper.

Firstly, Bujo draws attention to the immense significance of interaction between the individual and the community in Africa. In his view, African morality is grounded in the community. As already mentioned, the Akan view community as essential for reciprocal aid (Busia 1962; Danquah 2016; Gyekye 1987; Wiredu 1996). Danquah underlines its importance by asserting:

> The cumulative experience of the community, its experiment or effort in goodness, its knowledge of the laws of life, its struggle against disease and ignorance, its effort to eliminate pain, nay, even its ordering of human relations by the laws of society, and above all, the accumulated knowledge of the laws of physical nature – are all modes of traditional inheritance which make for a greater and a more constant achievement and a greater and more real correlation of total effort of virtuous men with a complete good. (Danquah, 2016:91)

However, this does not imply that the subject is non-existent in the African (Bujo) or Ghanaian, Akan (Wiredu) concept, it is rather a position pointing to influential reciprocity between individual and community (Wiredu, 1996:140). The community takes the responsibility of forming the "moral character" of the individual and, in turn, expects unconditional commitment to its ethics, setting limitations to personal freedom (Danquah, 2016: 114). It is underlined by the Akan philosophy that "an individual is not a person in the fullest sense unless he has shown a responsiveness to the ethic of demonstrating basic commitment to the values and ideas of the society in confirmed habits of life" (Wiredu, 1996:58). The above is probably best summed up by Wiredu, who asserts that although a "human person is a product of culture" (ibid.:21), "human behavior is governed by both instinct ["instinct" in his view representing a "certain species-distinctive uniformity in human actions and reactions"] and culture" (ibid.:22).[18]

Secondly, Bujo stresses the need to understand the role of virtue when defining African ethics. In his view, the structure of morality in Africa invokes a narrative dimension, such as fairy tales, proverbs, riddles, and initiations. On this, he is in agreement with MacIntyre, who insists that narratives "provide the historical memory" and "moral background of societies" (2007:121) and concludes by saying "every particular view of the virtues is linked to some particular notion of the narrative structure or structures of human life" (ibid.:174). This echoes well with the Akan people in Ghana being renowned for their adages and proverbs. It is a way to impart moral knowledge upon society members by creating awareness of its values, principles, and sanction systems. In their traditional chieftaincy system, which is still functioning today, they have established a respected office of a "linguist" (okyeame). It was explained to me that the meaning of "okyeame" encompasses a representative of the office as a lawyer, ambassador, mouthpiece, spokesperson, and speaker. Because the chief is viewed as an embodiment of the ancestors, it is forbidden to address the chief in a direct way, but rather use the okyeame to transmit a message to the chief. The chief, on his part, when speaking to the people, except messages addressed to other elders and chiefs, will address the okyeame who will then convey the message skillfully using Akan adages (Busia 1951).

Thirdly, Bujo holds the view that in the African context, discussions or palaver is part of the communicative ethic. In his view, palaver is where social norms that guide a given society are elaborated. He goes beyond the Habermas concept of "ethical communication" (Habermas, 1985), beyond a concept based on a Westernized rational, putting less emphasis upon the community. Bujo, for his part, is convinced that African palaver ethic has the component of the best features of communitarianism and discourse ethic.

As communication is about use of language where the usage of a certain language makes common experiences objective and accessible to all within the language community while simultaneously serving as the basis and vehicle of collective knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:68), I want to draw attention to some particularities in the Akan language which is not only spoken by the Akan but has become the dominant local language in Ghana. In the Akan language, individual "ethic" and "morality" is seen as equivalent to "character"; when detecting the absence of these characteristics in an individual, the expression in Twi is "onni suban," pointing to the absence of character, thus English statements concerning "morality" and "ethic" would point to discussing "character" in Akan. This connotation falls in line with the meaning of the Greek ēthikós (ἠθικός) rooted in the word *êthos* (ἦθος) which contains the meaning of "moral," leading to what Aristotle defines as "showing moral character."

Furthermore, I note that "onipa" literally translates to "person" but implies values and a normative form of acumen; an individual whose conduct is viewed as inappropriate, wicked or unsympathetic would be described as "onnye onipa" ("he is not a person"), whereas someone with perceived good behavior is "oye onipa paa" ("he is truly a person"). The significant part here is the apparent negation or denial of personage to someone who doesn't abide to defined norms. Similarly, the Akan assume human nature to be essentially good and unplagued by the original sin taught in Christianity. Curiously, while human nature is good at its core, personhood is earned, as the individual's moral achievements earn them the status of "onipa." Every individual has the capacity for performing morally right actions and is to be afforded the respect of having the potential to act as a morally responsible agent.

As discussed above, the influence of Christianity upon work ethic has been dealt with in Western sociology, theology, economics, and history, analyzing how far a particular work ethic emphasizing hard work and personal economic success is rooted in religious convictions (e.g., Weber 2005, Durkheim 1981, just to name a few). African scholars (e.g., Busia, 1951, Williamson,1959; Martey, 1995, Bartels, 1965, Bediako, 1995, Assimeng, 1989, Essamuah, 2010, Dickson, 1984) unanimously agree that Christianity impacted education, influencing the economic market in

general and individual job opportunities in particular, and thus providing a bridge to the mentioned Western concept. However, before turning our attention to a particular Christian denomination originated in England and now deeply rooted in Ghana – Methodism – it is essential to establish an awareness and appreciation of the Akan culture and tradition as well as their belief system, which is commonly defined as "Traditional Religion" (e.g., Dickson 1976, Martey 1993, Parrinder 1968) to avoid taking a too narrow of a focus.

Traditional Religion goes beyond any particular affiliation towards a denomination but points at a particular set of beliefs in supernatural beings, whether that be a God, gods, or culturally defined practices of reverence and/ or worship that the World Council of Religious Leaders calls "religious traditions."[19] Gifford shows brilliantly the different facets of religion:

> A religion provides definitions, principles of judgement and criteria of perception. It offers a reading of the world, of history, of society, of time, of space, of power, of authority, of justice and ultimate truth. Religion limits or increases the conceptual tools available, restricts or enlarges emotional responses, or channels them, and withdraws certain issues from inquiry. It inculcates a particular way of perceiving, experiencing, and responding of reality. Religion can legitimize new aspirations, new forms of organisations, new relations and new social order. Every religion involves struggle to conquer, monopolies or transform the symbolic structure which order reality. (Gifford, 1998:26)

Following this line of thought, Gyekye categorically ascertains that "it is generally accepted that Africans are religious people, in the sense that they possess elaborate systems of religious beliefs and practices" (1987:8). Gyekye, himself a Ghanaian philosopher, brings it closer to home by stating "life in the Akan world is religion and religion is life"[20] (ibid.:286). In my understanding, this Akan concept of religion encompasses culture and customs more broadly; it is a shared understanding of reality.

Contrary to Christian doctrine, the Traditional African religion doesn't foresee any possibility of accessing the will of the Supernatural leading to the fact that moral values or principles cannot be deducted from the will of God. Furthermore, Busia's observation that "the gods are treated with respect if they deliver the goods, and with contempt if they fail. Attitudes to [the gods] depend on their success and vary from healthy respect to sneering contempt" (1954:205). This leads to the assumption of deities becoming subject of human censure and, contrary to Christian teaching, the definition of morality is not rooted in divine pronouncements. It stems, in the traditional setting, from the concern for human well-being and social harmony, where norms defining right or wrong are embedded in customs (McVeigh 1974). This does not exclude the attribution and awareness

of powers to supernatural beings, leading to individual requests such as health or economic prosperity. This is in line with Assimeng's assertion that religious beliefs influence behaviors in social settings and "can never be completely divorced from other forms of social activities, especially those activities that deal with social and economic order" (1989:10ff). I will elaborate on the Akan social foundation, turning now to their customs and traditions followed by thoughts about the Akan concept of God and religion.

CHAPTER 3: AKAN CULTURE AND TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Innyim asaw a, edɛ 'Kyen nnyɛ dɛw' – You regard drumming to be discordant, if you do not know how to dance

Introduction

The Akan (meaning the Enlightened or Civilized) consider themselves to be a society that shares metaphysical and cultural values and beliefs at a fundamental level, although their external ritualistic manifestations at the level of each Akan branch, such as Ashanti, Fanti, Kwahu, Akim, Akwapim among others, may vary. According to Berger (1990), a society functions dialectically because, on the one hand, it is created by man, but, on the other hand, that creation also reforms the individual anew every day. Berger stresses the importance of belonging to a society and points out that society evolves from cultural memory (ibd.:41). This is also reflected by Luckmann, who avers that an "individual learns to act only through the actions of other people" (1986:35), and that the actions and language of others and the consequences thereof "socialize" the consciousness of the "normal" adult to such an extent that the individual's actions are socially determined to a considerable extent. This leads to a dichotomy of a culture being "rooted in the subjective consciousness of human beings" (Berger, 1990:9), as well as attaining "the character of objective reality," once it is humanly produced.

The Akan people are characterized by rich culture and religious belief systems that reach far back into history. With reference to Amilcar Cabral: "One of the most serious mistakes, if not the most serious mistake, made by the colonial powers in Africa, may have been to ignore or underestimate the cultural strength of African people" (quoted in Martey (1993:13), Martey aptly draws particular attention to the "inalienable rights to have their own history whose continuity lies in culture" that forms "the foundation of a people's liberation" (ibid.).

Applying Cicero's philosophy of "historia magistra vitae" (history being life's teacher) to the Akan, it is evident that the cultural and religious past continues to be part of present Akan life, to a slightly different extent depending upon the individual. This view feeds on one hand from literature, and here I will give, as much as possible, the floor to autochthon, Ghanaian, mostly Akan, researchers because they are suited best to acquaint us with the culture as well as religious beliefs of their

own origin. While on the other hand, it also resonates with the information gathered during interviews. All but two interviewees view their respective cultural background as a backbone to influence personal behavior including an individual's attitude towards work ethic.[21]

While leaning upon transmitted scientific knowledge, I remain cautious of the fact that "cultural values leave no fossils" (Hofstede, 2010:439), which affords increasing space for speculation as the particularities of the Akan culture, which Wiredu deems "the accumulated wisdom of what might be called the collective mind of our societies" (1980:28), have been transmitted orally or behaviorally from generation to generation until probably the end of the 19th century. It is noteworthy, that those who pioneered the conversion of Akan cultural knowledge to writing at the beginning of the 20th century were European anthropologists, such as Rattray (1923) and Westermann (1937). Although these were major contributions that may have broken through to avail Akan culture to the world, they faced serious criticism (Danquah 2016). Two prominent Ghanaians, K.A. Busia and J.B. Danquah, both Akan and educated in Ghana as well as in England, put this early research into perspective by giving an autochthon insight into cultural matters (Busia 1951 & 1962, Danquah 2016). Thereafter, research from different parts of the world, including Ghana, started to highlight Akan cultural traits and build a considerable knowledge base about them.

I readily admit my fascination with deep and detailed research explaining Akan culture and Traditional Religion as offered by e.g., Danqua, Busia, Wiredu. I restrained myself from getting carried away, carefully deciding what is pertinent for the present research. Thus, with deference to the rich and broad Akan narrative, this chapter sheds light on aspects of the culture and its traditional religious practices, to establish a foundation for the ensuing analytical discussion.

Encounter with culture and religion

Culture is an amorphous term comprising of social norms and social behavior. Social norms feed into behaviors that comport with social expectations, which are accepted on an individualized basis. Sociology as well as psychology and philosophy offer numerous ways of defining culture (e.g., Myers & DeWall 2015; Berger 1990; Wiredu 1996). Culture refers to a historically preserved pattern of symbols to which meanings are attributed, and a system of traditional ideas expressed in symbolic forms that people use to communicate, develop, and deepen their knowledge of and attitudes toward life (Geertz 2017). Tylor's definition of "culture," or "civilization," taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1958:1), continues to be cited widely as equalizing culture and civilization. The importance of

culture is well-echoed by Wiredu who adds the element of language as the "cultural universal par excellence" (1996:28). The term "civilization" invites a discussion which would go far beyond the scope of this research paper. At this point, I would merely like to emphasize that I view the term as being used by the above quoted authors to be positively connotated, in demarcation from, for example, the use by the missionaries and anthropologists such as Westermann.

In my understanding, the Akan concept of culture also encompasses religion; it is a shared understanding of reality. Wiredu (1996:28) offers a holistic concept by defining culture as "a patterned accumulation of contingencies of social consciousness and action in the context of a specific type of physical environment" and customs as "rules of thought, talk, or conduct" (ibid.:34), leading to the fact that a human person is shaped by culture and customs of which "traditional" religion is an intrinsic part.[22] In addition, according to Busia (1962), from birth, each man is automatically in touch with God because the Akan believe that man is born with the knowledge of God ("Obi nkyere akwadaa Nyame"). Subsequently, while religious manifestations are only visible on special occasions, accepted customs and traditions determine daily behavior.[23] In my view, Morris is right in his analysis that "religious structures are not necessarily evident at the empirical level" (1988:305). Instead, daily life reveals internalized cultural values that guide behavior. This also reflects the statements from my Akan interviewees, assuring me, that even though not all Akan are actively religious, their understanding of life and thus their social practices and individual behavior are rooted in belief structures usually handed down through (traditional) religion. This is supported by the empirical evidence I gathered as well as the prevailing literature (Danquah 2016; Oduyoye 1997/98; Gyekye 1987, Busia 1951), even though not all of them go as far as Wiredu, who is an Akan. "Imagine the belief in Nyame to be altogether removed from the Akan consciousness. What losses will be incurred in terms of sustenance for any institutions or procedures of practical life? The answer is: exactly zero," writes Wiredu (1996:57). Geertz has a valid point by stating "religion helps one to endure 'situations of emotional stress" (2017:103). Unusual circumstances drive people to seek a higher power. Religion illuminates the capacity to "open up escapes from such situations and such impasses as offer no empirical way out except by ritual and belief into the domain of the supernatural" (ibid.), a topic on which I will elaborate in more detail in due time. Mt. Zion's Reverend Minister, himself not belonging to the Akan, holds the view that this ethic group takes "spirituality and religiosity" seriously.

Culture applies an expectation of conventional behavior whereby conventions (lat. "agreement") are consolidated by the pressure of conformity and control of socially enforced unquestionableness and enact self-awareness. This gives way to conventionalist behavior, in the sense of one must behave like everyone else in the given environment. On the other hand, modern

life can be characterized by the people acting in a plurality of life areas, none of which remains centered on a particular environment, allowing a personal perspective, due to the social abstraction more internalized notion of being "right in the middle." Modern life is defined by the need for partial integration of multiple life-fields (Lebensfelder), which often only touch each other tangentially. These phenomena confront the individual with the challenge of permanently deciding which lifeworld to rely on in the decision-making process leading to action and behavior.

In agreement with Sheriff, who views values, customs, and traditions as "cultural products" (1936:2), and given the fact that phenomena of Akan values, customs and traditions become accessible through accepted scheme of transmission, I will address these particularities or pillars of the Akan culture. With the intention to establish a plausible comprehensive framework, it is not about attachment to a particular explanation, taboo infringement, or hypothesis, but rather the ability to choose from a variety of explanatory patterns and rules of conduct rooted in culture in the broader sense. I will draw attention to Akan values when discussing in-depth Akan culture and religion as, in my view, it needs to be emphasized that the integrative nature of social processes of mutual expectations and common evaluations express the values which characterize a community or society. The action-guiding meaning of social behavior is based on the interaction between the acting subjects, and their immediate social environment. Macamo makes a valid point by defining the two components of social action, namely: "actual practice and the reasons people have for engaging in such practice" (2017:83). Religion serves human beings to establish a comprehensive and superimposed reference structure, a "sacred cosmos" (Berger, 1990:25), to legitimate "socially objectivated knowledge" that serves to explain and justify the social order" (ibid.:29). Williamson (1965) bridges the phenomena of social order and influence of the "sacred cosmos" by illustrating the merging of life and religion in the Akan mind. He writes that "when he goes to cut bush for his farm, or to hoe the ground, the Akan is conscious not only that he makes use of what belongs to the asamanfo [spirits of departed ancestors], but also that he engages in an activity which involves the spirits of trees and plants, and the fertility of the ground (Asase Yaa), and the gifts of the sun and rain (Onyame)" (ibid.:96). As a result, according to Williamson, the Akan will allocate success or failure to the disposition of the "universe of spirit-powers" instead of to natural phenomena (ibid.).

Assimeng eloquently asserts that tradition provides "a behavioral pattern of a long, customary, and chequered standing" (1989:48) being internalized since early childhood. Tradition serves as a reference to the accumulated wisdom of past generations, or what Wiredu calls "collective mind of our societies" (1980:28). Danquah stresses the function of culture to create a moral framework, that orients social behavior by stating that "tradition is the determinant of what is right and just,

what is good and done" (2016:3). He further aptly elaborates on the influence of the Akan family and community on their individual members. In his view, the transmitting source for accumulated capital of ancestral wisdom forms and provides a blueprint for behavior, legitimizes actions, and defines and enforces sanctions, as it "dominates their thought and spirit. It molds their environment and bends them to be what they are to become" (ibid.). Thus, responsibility for individual behavior lies (to a large extent) with the community, a viewpoint supported beyond the particular Akan context by Nietzsche (1903), who establishes that responsibility for the behavior of an individual lies with those who can exercise influence upon him, his family members and friends.

According to Danquah (2016) the Akan have a general, instrumental understanding of "good" in the sense that to be good implies to do good. While Wiredu (1980) attributes the concept of the "morally good" to the individual well-being and his community rather than to faith in a Supreme Being, Danquah links the concept of morality to the Akan Traditional Religion (ibid.:152). In addition, Abraham makes a valid distinction between culture and religion by writing, "If God made man, God did not at the same time create culture. Culture is not biological but is entirely of man's making. Its content at all levels and at all times depends on mental bent and other prevailing conditions" (2015:32). Religion is grounded in the belief in a supernatural, supreme being, whereas culture is rooted in a commonly shared experience that is passed on from generation to generation. Both religion and culture provide orientation on how to relate to others, what is good and evil. Both are a source of morals. Religion is more narrowly based, as it encompasses the relationship with a supernatural that is believed to be God-inspired (which is then prone to human interpretation). Culture, on the other hand, is the passing on of accumulated knowledge of a people. I side with Dickson, who points to the fact that "religions are culturally different, and their adherents have distinctive cultural orientations" (1991:90), which are reflected in the religion's "exclusive character" and its "distinctive way of looking at reality" (ibid.:90). While seeing the need for distinction between religion and culture, Dickson (1991:98) aptly asserts that "religion and culture are not always easily separated one from another; it is still possible, within limits, to distinguish the so-called cultural life from the religious." I revisit these subjects repeatedly throughout this work because both the similarities and the differences are of fundamental importance for the present research. Religion is both God-inspired and man-made and thus in living reality prone to change.

According to Williamson (1965:86-87), the Akan religious concept doesn't support the notion of religion as an organized entity with institutional structures, guiding scriptures, and proselytizing habits. An Akan linguist illustrated this by explaining the Akan usage of the term "som" to express his service to the Supreme Being (Onyame or Nyame) by saying "me som Nyame" meaning "I

serve God." "Som" is also used when pointing to a service performed for a chief or notables in the Akan society. In response to a question regarding religious preferences or affiliations "esom ben na wo mu?" ("what is your religion?"), an Akan's answer can be manifold, such as "(O)Nyamesom" – worship of God, or "Abosom" – worship of stones, or "abosomsom" – worship of lesser gods or deities. Williamson brilliantly offers a way of bridging culture and religion, while, at the same time, affording them independence, by stating "both Onyamesom and abosonsom in their traditional meaning relate to rites and practices conducted according to customs, or in relation to a specific personal or communal need" (p.87). In addition, Danquah speaks of the ethnic group of the Akan as a whole who "possess a doctrine of God" (2016:1) that is immanent only to them.

Based on the above discussed arguments, my view diverges from Majeed's (2014:136) opinion that "som" doesn't stand for religion but rather "represents ways in which Akan culture tries to make sense of Western culture." It is rather that Majeed's analysis demonstrates the difficulty that arises when a term like "religion" must be thought of differently, as, for example, in Christianity, when describing Akan sacred beliefs and practices. Frequently used words such as "religion" tend to take on a life of their own. They – to engage Macamo (2016) – think for us, a fact which calls for cautious use. Here, Oduyoye's description of African particularities regarding religion offers access to the widely used term "Traditional Religion." She asserts that "in traditional Africa, that is, Africa when people are being themselves, discounting Christianity, Islam, and Western norms, God is experienced as an all-prevailing reality. God is a constant participant in the affairs of human beings, judging by the everyday language of west Africa of my experience" (1997/1998:494).

Taking some aspects from Majeed's (2014) terminology, I define Traditional Akan Religion as the indigenous system of beliefs, values, and practices relating to the worship of God by the Akan people in Ghana. I will elaborate, in due course, upon the Akan religious concept including the hierarchy of gods culminating with a Supreme God, Nyame.

In reference to the above, I understand culture as the expressions and attributed meaning of consciously designed or unconsciously adopted forms of everyday life shared by a group of people and passed on from generation to generation.

In the following, I wish to present and clarify some characteristics of the Akan culture and Traditional Religion, which should serve to sketch the complexity of the real world of my interviewees. In my observation, as backed by literature, the Akan manifest adherence to their cultural values, either through behavior or by oral testimony, even though the Akan in today's Ghana are not homogeneous in their adherence to the cultural values of their forefathers. As of now, there is evidence that for a significant part of the Akan people, the future rests on the present

and the present is the outcome of the past (Abraham, 2015: 164). This concept necessitates a certain level of acquaintance with particularities of the Akan culture as well as the traditional religious concept.

Studying Akan Culture
Onipa nua ne 'nipa – Humans rely on each other for survival

In his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber attributes a remarkable quality to traditionalism by saying that an individual "by nature" wishes "simply to live as he is accustomed to live" (2005:24). Traditionalism in this sense means putting a person at ease, allowing for predictability, and stressing upon the absence – or at least minimalization – of the unexpected. Being accustomed – a term which derives from "custom" – stands for the internalized processing of prevailing cultural values and adaptation to existing practices, conventions, and conditions. By defining the need for traditionalism as natural and, thus, self-evident unquestionable, Weber attaches great importance to this need, its satisfaction becoming an existential necessity for the individual. Although Weber had not written this with the Akan in mind, the same is confirmed throughout literature on Akan culture. Thus, tradition and, in the broader sense, the culture of the individual living environment, the lifeworld (Lebenswelt),[24] feeds into the concept of serving essential human needs. It is worth noting that Maslow's (1943:370ff) pyramid of needs captures the realities of particular cultures focusing on their reflection upon the authors culture of origin. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs,[25] the need to belong is reflected after physiological and safety needs have been taken care of.

In my assessment, the traditional Akan culture addresses and serves the inherent need to belong, to exist and act in relation to others, and to operate on common social life (Carrinthers, 1992:10), through "communal belonging" (Wiredu, 1980:5). Coelho aptly echoes this, stating that "Community is life: from it comes our capacity for survival" (2013:105). Wiredu defines the pillars of the Traditional Akan Culture as "a community of shared beliefs in the wisdom of age, the sanctity of chieftaincy, and the binding force of the customs and usages of our ancestors" (1980:4). These shared beliefs or internalized cultural values offer orientation on how to relate to one another within or, even outside of, one's own community. The role of chieftaincy is one of the binding elements between Akan culture and Traditional Religion, as pointed out by Busia, who describes the functions of a chief as "maintaining amicable relations among the persons and groups within the community and between the community and its ancestors and gods" (1951:64-65), a topic to which I will return during this chapter.

Dickson offers a rather holistic description of an Akan by saying:

> The Akan, on his part, possesses no conception of an ideal life, revealed through Divine intrusion into the human. Man, as he is, is man as the Creator intended him to be. The required life pattern for man in his society is set forth in the traditional cultural pattern which he shares; he is provided with a moral code and standard which wisdom and circumspection allied to social training renders capable of fulfilment. His moral horizon is never beyond his reach. His ethics are socialized ethics, sanctioned by spirit-ancestors and gods but expressed by society and his own socialized personality. As against the religious and moral perfectionism of Christianity he sets the custom of his people: "it is in our custom" is both ground and defense of what is acceptable in the community and before gods and ancestors (1991:143-144).

Based on my observations and discussions in Ghana, I assess the concept of culture, which encompasses traditional Akan culture as dynamic, an interaction with ever-changing context and interpretation. This concept aligns with the high level of acceptance and compliance with cultural tenets so as to form the essence of the "us-community." The need to safeguard a culture necessitates the introduction of taboos as well as commonly accepted sanctions. These culturally determined sanctions stipulate the values that are acceptable within a society (Abraham, 2015:40). Hereby, finding myself in agreement with Berger, I wish to underline that the coerciveness of a given society does not depend upon its culturally established mechanisms of social control, but rather stems from "its power to constitute and impose itself as reality" (1990:12) in a given social world.

By stating that an individual "without the assistance of cultural pattens would be functionally incomplete […] prevented from realizing his full potentialities," Geertz (2017:99) aptly summarizes that culture matters for any human being.

As any culture, the Traditional Akan Culture spans many elements. These include metaphysical and cultural values; morals even though external ritualistic manifestations might slightly differ between the different Akan tribes. Traditional Akan Culture is also governed by norms, including behavioral aspects such as loyalty, customs, and rituals. The symbols and language of the Akan society are key to developing and conveying their traditional culture.

Social Norms
Obi nnim a, obi kyerɛ - If someone does not know, someone teaches

The immanent quality of social norms whose functions vary according to culture (Geertz 2017) lies on their social function and person-oriented motivation to act (Durkheim 1950, Parsons 1968).

Norms are often meant to attain or maintain social order based on cooperation as is seen in social norms of loyalty, honesty, respect, appreciation of the other. As Alexander (2007) has shown, it is highly probable that cooperative norms are being characterized by comprehensiveness developed in close-knit behavioral groups with a low level of permissibility and, thus, become easy to follow by members of this particular group. An essential element for maintaining a norm is the existence of conformity. In agreement with Bicchieri (2006), the mutual presence of a conditional preference for learned conformity and a conviction that other people will likewise conform leads to a reflective interaction of normative beliefs and behavior. Conformity is defined as predisposition of an individual to embrace thought and viewpoints as well as behavior of other group members. Thus, although reflecting personal preferences, individual choices will be based upon social expectations (Bicchieri 2006). Norms also exhibit a high influence upon behavior as they are based on shared beliefs forming the individual's concept of how behavior ought to be (Homans, 1961). Norms become part for personal motives from an early stage of the personal socialization process. The consequences of conformity have only a limited influence upon the conformity to established norms in a stable acquired disposition. Common values embodied in norms are formed by long-term interactions with significant others, who in the Akan setting are usually members of the extended family. Internalization of the common values expressed through norms leads to the performance of norm-abiding behavior, which is perceived as good and appropriate as opposed to deviant behavior, which causes guilt and shame. High identification with group values in a cohesive society, a "one for all and all for one" mentality, has been found in persons who feel embarrassed by the behaviors of other group members who infringe on the norms of Akan society. Busia pertinently sums it by saying, "There was always present the fear that some misfortune would befall the community unless the transgressors were tried and punished, and the laws of Komfo Anokye [priest of the Ashanti Empire] and the ancestors were obeyed" (1951:74f).

Coleman (1989) argues that a norm corresponds to a set of sanctions that enforce an expected behavior. Furthermore, norms also govern group behavior, identified by distinctive characteristics such as a sense of similarity amongst group members, cohesion, the tendency to work together to achieve common goals, common attitudes and beliefs and conformity to group norms. According to Brewer (1979), individual self-categorization as a member of a particular group culminates in the perception that personal and group interests and goals are identical. As group members commence to embrace these interests and goals as personal, and act further on them, a level of "depersonalization" results. On the other hand, the motivation to conform with norms leads to a high level of consistency in normative beliefs and actions. I gained a noteworthy insight from one of my interviewees who said, when reflecting upon the meaning of adherence to norms

at the workplace, "in the quest of survival and acceptance, adjustment to the norm is the currency of the less competent. As for the competent, conformism is the essential part leading to rewards manifested in promotion in status and/or salary increase. Both attitudes feed into the need of staying away from trouble, hoping for job security in a country with high unemployment."

Furthermore, normative beliefs that individuals observe as being collectively shared not only matter in regard to behavior but also lead to predictability (Macamo 2017). When interactions become predictable, it has a positive impact upon a person's "psychological economies" in the sense that, instead of tasks and behavior being questioned permanently, they are perceived as part of triviality of everyday life and thus enlarge the sphere of "taken-for-granted routines" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967:57). Customs can also serve as institutionalized behavior which serves the individual as a guarantor for behavioral security. This relieves individuals from being impeded from actions by considering questions of meaning.

The Akan culture reveals a rich landscape of norm-induced behavior. Akan define patterns of behavior and believe that such behaviors are unique to them, viewing their idiosyncratic norms as evidencing group membership and distinguishing them from other ethnic groups. Behavioral norms, which are formed by agreement, consent, habit, or regulations and encoded by the social expectations and our functional reference systems, culminate into individual roles. As Berger (1967:37) rightly points out, recognition of others defines human role-playing. Furthermore, a precondition for one's self-identification with a role is that others identify the person as holding such role. Significant others are also influential in determining the scope and depth of one's personal identification with a given role. Roles "endowed with [a] cosmic significance" which, in the Akan reality could be a fitting description for a chief, who can serve as interlocutor with God or a medicine man, who is believed to possess supernatural powers, bestow supernatural powers upon the holder of such a title.

Illustrations of dealing with norms

I wish to illustrate the above by discussing some selected Akan norms. Not going to the farm on a certain day represents a taboo, which is a norm that can be enforced or punished if not obeyed. Wiredu defines a taboo as "pedagogic expedient designed by the sages of old to concentrate ordinary minds on the path of desirable behavior" (1996:75). A number of my interviewees that relayed activities of their agrarian communities were regulated by taboos, such as not going to the farm on a Thursday. This day is dedicated to the Earth spirit, Asaase Yaa, and is, therefore, sacred. An infringement of this taboo was not only considered as unethical but also viewed as disrupting the harmony among man, nature, and the spirit world, rendering it prone to sanctions.

On several occasions, the narrators, per their own definition staunch Christians, bemoaned this almost lost traditional practice.

As I will show when explaining the meaning the Akan attribute to the term "adwuma," translated into the English term "work,"[26] the Akan attribute a normative behavioral connotation to what work means and how it should be done. Interestingly, however, the Akan do not necessarily sanction if a person is an "onihafo," someone who doesn't want to work, who is viewed as being lazy. Direct sanctioning of individual misconduct is cushioned by balancing norms such as what Wiredu calls "African communalism" (2009:16). Loyalty among members of the Akan society and the prioritization of membership to a family over immediate kinship can be traced through generations ("mogya, wompopa" meaning "blood is indelible"). The value of membership to a family feeds the perception that everybody is related to somebody prevents anyone from going hungry. "Ohiani mpaw dabere" – "the poor relation never lacks a bed," indicates that the extended family has to care for its less privileged members regardless of the reasons for poverty. Likewise, while an "onihafo" who doesn't work could be denied food as punishment within the family, he can still go to another house and eat. Sanctions, and thus punishment for out-of-norm behavior, enters at a psychological level in the form of disgrace which changes the position and reputation of the person in the community. As aptly pointed out by Danquah (2016), shame has a high penalty value with the Akan voiced by adages such as: "biribiara nye yaw se aniwu" – "nothing is more painful than disgrace" or, more radical, "aniwu ne wu, na efanim wu" – "better death, than disgrace." Accordingly, being tagged as a lazy person is synonymous with being disgraced by the peer-group. This can be manifested through name-calling, which reveals the high level of disapproval for the individual's behavior as denigrating someone that is typically unacceptable among the Akan. Further demonstration of Akan disapproval of laziness is the parading through the village of those perceived as unwilling to work. It now becomes not only a stigmatization and punishment due of "onihafo's" deviation from group's normative behavior but also serves as a deterrent for others not to follow this example. Members of the Akan society want to be proud of who they are and to get the respect of their peer-group.

Another norm among the Akan, in particular attributed to their Kwahu and Ashanti people, is the principle of reinvesting, which reigns supreme and leads to the accumulation of wealth. The tendency to reinvest by diversifying business ties provides security in times of sickness and old age and enables an individual to meet his obligations towards his extended family (Garlick, 1967:479). At a certain time in history, the Kwahu and the Ashanti were also perceived as one people because of this specific practice and "known as astute and industrious traders" (van der Geest, 2002:440).

In the following, I will focus on presenting and illustrating characteristics of the Akan culture as well as its Traditional Religion (the "Primal Religion", according to Oduyoye). The ensuing paragraphs should serve to illustrate – even if only in summary – the complexity of the real world of my interviewees.

Investigating Akan customs
Wo yɔnko da ne woda – The fate of men is interrelated

As Wiredu asserts that customs define thoughts, communication, and behavior in a given culture (Wiredu, 1996:34), I want to point to patterned behavior which is considered characteristic within the Akan. Hereby, I use the terms "customs" and "tradition" interchangeably. Tradition as much as customs is meant to sustain the solidarity among the Akan people at large preserving order and social harmony, and at the individual level, their metaphysical conception (Sharma, 2013:117). Wiredu asserts that for the Akan "customs and moral rules relating to the critical stages and circumstances in the lives of individuals do not have their basis in the belief in Nyame" (Wiredu, 1996:57). He not only characterizes customs as independent of religion but further views customs as more important in the Akan Traditional Philosophy. This is echoed by Oduyoye, who defines that authority in the Akan traditional philosophy stems from "serving the unity and well-being of the whole people" (1997/1998:498).

As reflected in the Akan adage "onipa firi soro na obesi a, obesi nnipakuro so" – "if a man alights on earth from heaven, he alights in a habitation of men"- the individual is not perceived as isolated but rather an integral part of an interconnected universe with a high degree of interdependence between a multitude of components. The adage "onipa nye abe nane ho ahyia ne ho" – "man is not a palm tree that he should be self-centered" – points to the prevailing communitarian ethic where the individual's relationships and behaviors in the social world not only influence one's identity but also one's sense of morality. In Danquah's terms, "the cumulative experience of the community, its experiment or effort in goodness […] even its ordering of human relations by the laws of society […] are all modes of traditional inheritance which make for a greater and more constant achievement and a greater and more real correlation of total effort of virtuous men with the complete good" (2016:91). Similarly, according to Abraham, "morality comes to be based on those complex which suits men in their present circumstances, or on consensus of human opinion" (2015:41).

Identification with group values has an influence upon personal selection of meaningful experiences or actions. Meaning also enables a conditional autonomy of subjective actions and lifestyle in relation to a complex environment which influences personal identity. Personal identity

in this understanding includes a successful incorporation of an existing system, handed down through generations, into the expectations, behavior and evaluations that relate to the individual or "myself." This is facilitated by the factual perception that what I am, what I know, and what I want to be, is defined by established customs. In addition, personal identity reflects cultural norms revealed through close social connections that leverage symbolic, affective, emotional, and ritual representations, understanding and coordination. Communicative processes apply the logic of learning processes to the development of personal identity. Personal identity finds its expression in social action where the individual's social identity is a key motivating factor. Social identity is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981:255). An apt illustration of bridging the personal and social identities was brough to my attention by an Akan interviewee who gave an example of Akan personal and social pride. He says: "Akan don't take lightly disgrace. No. It's something they cannot stand. This is throughout the whole Akan. Because Akan say 'Animguase mfata Okanni-ba' (disgrace does not befit an Akan). So, disgrace does not befit anybody who is an Akan. It's a society where people want to be proud of who they are and to get the respect of society."

This is echoed well by Danquah who calls this pride "the honour and the dignity which consider the greater self – the family, the community (of whatever size) – as standing for a value in itself so noble as to deserve the name divine. […] a value akin to God" (2016:25).

Family as the Akan forte
Abusua te sɛ kwaeɛ, wowɔ akyiri a ɛyɛ kusuu, wopini ho a na wohunu sɛ dua koro biara wɔ ne siberɛ - The matriclan is like a forest; if you are outside, it is dense, if you are inside, you see each tree has its own position

The Akan concept of *family* offers a perfect illustration of customs and tradition manifesting themselves at the personal level, influencing the individual in his experience selecting process. The family is the immediate unit through which the individual is incorporated into the setting of customs and traditions and thus integrated into the social community. The success (or failure) of this integration is then less an individual achievement but is viewed as a living attribute of the family itself. Danquah, who in the span of centuries, views an Akan as "a practically minded man" (2016:149-150), allocates this quality to strength of a family because, in his view for the individual "the family life, the life in common, the here and now, the life of action, is his forte" (ibid.). This is well echoed by Ackah, who also places the family standard at the apex of authority, asserting it as "what can be called the first and foremost ethical standard among the Akan" (1988:121). The standard is for every member to behave outwardly in a manner that never discredits or shames

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the family. Within the Akan family, a hierarchical structure prevails, with members of advanced ages viewed as wise and receiving respect.

In the Akan culture, family membership is acquired through consanguinity and affinity. The understanding of a family goes far beyond the nuclear family concept, encompassing a wide range of relatives belonging to the clan (Bujo 1990). The oldest form of family is represented by the abusua. As most of the Akan people practice a matrilineal descent system, belonging to a particular abusua means sharing a common maternal ancestry (Busia, 1951:85). People belonging to one of the eight abusua consisting of Agona (parrot), the Aduana (dog), the Asenie (bat), Oyoko (falcon/hawk), the Asakyiri (vulture), the Asona (crow), the Bretuo (leopard), and the Ekuona (bull) share an ancestor dating back centuries. Membership in the same clan creates feelings of belonging together, and of spontaneous goodwill towards one another. The abusua family cuts across different tribes and clans. For example, an Oyoko can be an Ashanti or a Kwahu. Belonging to an abusua is defined through blood (mogya) transmitted from a woman to her descendants, whereas a man passes on his spirit (ntoro) (Rattray, 1969:77). Another name for "ntoro" is "kra" which entails according to Rattray "the gods or spirits of the seven days of the week on which a person was born" (ibid.:318) – a reason why many Akan are named after the day on which they were born. Members of an abusua are expected to ensure the welfare of each other with respect to internal family affairs. Thus, family ties form deep solidarity and loyalty. The extended family is highly influential from the early socialization process and continuing throughout adulthood. As I was informed and also witnessed in a Methodist church, in the case of marriage, the performance of traditional rites, where the families of the bride and groom play a crucial role, constitutes a precondition for being eligible for a church wedding. In fact, traditional marriage is recognized by Ghanaian law as legal marriage – an indicator that tradition is not only valued but also legally recognized in Ghana. Distant blood relatives, even those sharing the same great-grandmother, can be referred to as brother or sister, uncle or aunt. These involuntary relationships are perceived as given by nature and help to form an "us-group" that distinguishes its members from the rest. Bujo aptly points to the dichotomy inherent to this concept of family in modern times by stating:

> [Family members] are a source of strength and support throughout periods of hardship. On the flip side, in times of increased importance of money economy leading to a socioeconomic divide between family members living in the modern urbanized context with a stable income and those staying behind in the rural area, the expected expressions of solidarity can be abused justifying forms of parasitism. (Bujo, 1990:110)

Through my personal observation and as outcome of discussions with Ghanaians I gained the insight that belonging to an extended family or us-group leads to mutually dependent relationships at the practical as well as psychological level resulting in adaptation of behaviors necessary for acceptance as a worthy family member. The individual is not only motivated to adapt customs and traditions to be accepted as a worthy member of his greater community but furthers his social recognition by strengthening through his conduct the esteem of his family, which provides him with additional legitimation. The primacy for social recognition is thus the observance and perpetuation of tradition and values. Occasionally, belonging to an "us-group" can impact modern working life. In the employment context, when hiring new employees, it might be deemed advantageous to employ relatives of the existing "us-group" members. The employer might hope to reduce risks by safeguarding the family reputation and, thus, correcting misbehavior in the workplace. Some employers, themselves familiar with the influence power of an Akan family, will strive to create an "us-group" at the workplace, resembling familial relationships. These structures create a shared sense of responsibility and generate loyalty to the supervisor, resulting in a superior who is seen as benevolent autocrat or "caring parent." The hierarchical structure of the Akan society is mirrored in the existential inequality between a supervisor and staff. Supervisory power is centralized in the hands of very few. As a tool to enhance productivity and organizational development, an employer might create a sense of harmony by promoting group cohesion to create a bond similar to that shared among families.

The above discussed meaning attributed to "family" establishes that Akan society is not primarily atomistic and individualized in a way that would put a primacy on the individual's intentional, purposeful, and autonomous social action. On the other side, and possibly as a parallel development, the life in urban areas is characterized by striving for modernity. Socialization is organized in much smaller (nuclear) family units. This leads to a weakening of the binding forces of the bigger us-group and puts more weight on personal attitudes and interests. As Zajonc (1968) showed, the individual's reaction to a stimulus positively correlates with the frequency and intensity of his/her exposure to it. In this view, repeated personal exposure to a stimulus is sufficient to create attitude enhancement toward it. As a result, the intensity of conformity to traditional customs depends less on socially imposed imperative but is rather actualized upon individual needs and goals such as emotional comfort and rational usefulness. In the end, it is again up to the individual to balance these contradictions and bridge the differentiation between the traditional understanding of family and social belonging and the more individualistic and rational approach to tradition and social integration.

In interviews, my interviewees often referred to "my hometown" or "my village" when talking about their place of birth, or if they were already born in a Ghanaian metropole, to the place of their extended families' origin. I understand this reference as an indicator of attachment to and affinity and solidarity with family roots despite progressing cosmopolitanism (Dickson, 1991:117). Notwithstanding the fact that personal exposure to this perceived place of origin may have been rare, the confirmed close-knit interaction with family members appears to maintain a meaningful socially binding element. Conformity presupposes the trustworthiness of the knowledge and advice derived from the traditional, local knowledge. The research focusing on the credibility factor conducted by Pratkanis et al. (1988) showed that individuals tend to perceive a message as credible and comply with advice if the source of the message is commonly known before it has been communicated. On the other hand, the willingness to act in accordance with advice is diminished where the source is been communicated only after the message is made known. In the light of these findings, advice based on customary values stemming from a well-known source, and being internalized since early childhood, is likely to be perceived as trustworthy, and, thus, stands a fair chance of being appreciated and adopted. This is most likely a driving force for the perpetuation of customs along with modernity. Daniel Katz (1960) takes this thought a step further by claiming that values and beliefs central to an individual, such as inherited and accepted cultural values, contribute to establish personal identity and gain social endorsement when manifested. Williamson, however, observes a decreasing family cohesion and bemoans that "the introduction of money economy and the development in trade and commerce has led to some undermining of Akan traditional life through the scattering of families and the fostering of individual enterprise and wealth" (Williamson, 1965:126). My observation in present day Ghana tends to confirm Williamson's thought:

> Yet, while all this is true, and in the face of the inroads made by westernism, including the impact of the Christian faith, there is no evidence that, except for the limited few, for whom what follows, would not be true, the Akan has abandoned his traditional view of life. The modern Akan, literate and preliterate, traditionalist and Christian still views his world as his forefathers did, with the difference that where the men of old enjoyed a stable society and relied unworried upon the efficacy of state-gods and spirit ancestors to preserve it so, the new man, uncertain in his changing world, seeks frantically for "power" wherever it may be found. (ibid.:167)

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Symbols and rituals

Symbols, cultural representations of the integration and legitimation patterns of social structures, appear as devices through which individuals can depict and interpret, what Weber calls, the "significance of social relations." According to Rossi (1983), the meaning of symbols stems from their cultural content determining their significance at the individual's level. Geertz stresses the importance of symbols as being essential for any human being by "depend[ing] upon symbols and symbol systems with a dependence so great as to be decisive for his creatural viability and, as a result, his sensitivity to even the remotest indication that they may prove unable to cope with one or another aspect of experience raises within him the gravest sort of anxiety" (2017: 99). Geertz illustrates how individuals perceive symbols as "tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs" (ibid.:91).

Geertz aptly connects the meaning of symbols and the function of rituals by writing that "in a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality" (2017:112). This reality can include ritual actions which rely upon magico-religious beliefs and are depicted through symbolic actions. Parsons (1968) succinctly points out that rituals are not to be measured "by the standards of intrinsic rationality." Along with Beattie (1966), who attributes the symbolism of magico-religious beliefs to rituals, I interpret rituals as symbolic expressions shown during the performance of the actions taken by those performing them. One of my interviewees explains, "in a village, there are more spirits than in town. The people believe more in tradition than in Christ. Every family has a small kind of shrine to which they pour libation. Pouring libation is asking the gods to protect the family wherever their members are." He continues to elaborate that a visitor will be directed by villagers as to "which house to enter or not" because of the belief that bad spirits may occupy certain domiciles. He also offers an explanation to a perceived lack of interaction between the rural and urban population by saying, "most rich people don't go to the villages, they are afraid, if they come back, business will go down. Because of witchcraft."

As Oduyoye rightly asserts "when words fail, symbols take over" (Oduyoye 1997/1998:495). She points to the Akan Adinkra symbols that represent aphorisms to convey traditional wisdom, some of them revealing a theophorous connotation.

While the above said is true, the fact remains that the main symbolic system is manifested in language, a transmitter of culture, or as Wiredu put it "a kind of custom, a custom of symbolization" (ibid.:27).

Language and the Distinct View of the World
Tekyerema mpors – words do not decay

As stated in Habermas's (1981) theory of communication, social action is controlled by communicative processes (the act of speaking). Accordingly, communication shapes and determines the meaning and quality of the social action. Berger takes this even further by identifying language as the fundamental function to structure social reality. It is the "paradigmatic case" which contributes to the coerciveness of a given society by enabling it "to constitute and impose itself as reality" (1967:12).

I do not intend to join the exegetical dispute, which was triggered by the linguistic relativity (Gumberz & Levinson 1991) rooted in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Swoyer 2003), because it would go beyond the scope of my research. I side with researchers such as Luckmann (1979), Berger (1967), Lystad (1958), and Wiredu (1996), who assert that each language embodies a distinct view of the world. The form of a given language corresponds to the culturally fundamental patterns of definition, interpretation, and valuation of reality. The experiences and problems of a given society as well as the socially established patterns for solving these problems by many past generations are reflected in the vocabulary of a language. In speaking this is perpetuated as the perfectly natural matter of course. Language presupposes certain relationships among characteristics, events and objects, and attributions. As Luckmann (1979:302) points out, language contains preliminary decisions as to which motives and plans of action are generally binding, and which are only binding under special circumstances to a determined group of individuals. In Luckmann's view, a particular language is always an integral part of the social a priori, which inevitably both directs and limits the development of personal identity. Language, thus, simultaneously provides a vehicle for depicting the world and an opportunity to represent interpretations, evaluations, and actions therein.

A very fitting example of the foregoing is the Twi word "adwuma," the Akan expression which comes close to the English term "work." "Adwuma" implies doing something for another, although it doesn't necessarily connote a quid pro quo or encompass performing simple tasks such as moving an object from one place to another. It just says, something you do for somebody "adwuma," with "ma" standing for "another."

Regarding work, Akan normally say, "adwasmasin ni akatua," meaning "passionate work has no reward." This leads to the expectation among the Akan that work must be done well for its own sake. There is nothing like any expected appreciation from anyone for a job done with passion, and the goal of being rewarded if the work is done well is not part of the etymology of the word "adwuma." The Akan also say, "w'adwuma doso a woye ne nyinaa," which translates as, "if you have a lot of work, or many tasks to deliver, you must deliver all." The statement means, that if someone is tasked with certain duties, he is supposed to take it as a responsibility conferred to him and thus position himself in a way that enables him to complete them without compromising out of egoistic considerations. The presence of existing duties or obligations to complete other tasks do not excuse noncompletion of the particular assignment or to deliver mediocre work. Although the accumulation of wealth is not part of what Akan necessarily associate with "adwuma," revenue, or placing energy into making some income, is an integral part of motivation to work. Nevertheless, it is rather implied as a side-effect and an indicator of good work done, less as an end in itself.

Derived from the meaning attributed to "adwuma," the Akan concept of "work ethic" is based on the fact that first of all, work must be done in a wholehearted manner, and it must be complete and done well. If the task is not completed, then it does not merit any reward. Thus, the ethic around it focuses upon ensuring that any work started gets completed. The ethic also encompasses the notion of making sure that work is accomplished, especially if it encompasses an income generating purpose. Work must be beneficial to the target group or person who commissioned the working task as much as to the performer. Consequently, ethic is derived from mutual benefit of the outcome of the work that is done. This assertion is echoed by Mt. Zion Reverend Minister saying:

> Traditionally, we believe that work is part of life, and it is work that fulfills you so that it is your way to contribute to the general economic wellbeing of society, you find your own satisfaction. So, you work, first of all, for satisfaction. So that after getting this satisfaction, you bless other people, and you also get satisfied. So, you don't do what you do, just because you want something from it, but you do what you do because you also want others to get something from it.

The already mentioned Akan term "onipa" is another example of a word to which significant importance is granted. "Onipa" denotes normative and descriptive and empirically observed elements. The normative interpretation conveys the fulfillment of expectations set by significant others or as reference to a personal ideal. "Onipa" encompasses the process of becoming a moral being or, under Wiredu's normatively connoted explanation implies that a person has

demonstrated an ability through hard work to sustain a household and make contributions to the communal welfare (Wiredu, 1996:160). In his view, "personhood is not something you are born with but something you may achieve, and it is subject to a degree, so that some are more *onipa* than others, depending on the degree of fulfillment of one's obligation to self, household, and community" (ibid.:160). This appreciation finds its climax in the Akan axiom "onipa na ehia" ("he is truly a person") meaning that this member of the community truly embodies its values and by contributing to its vitality gains individual recognition as an achieved human being ("person"). The descriptive connotation of "onipa" refers to the existential status of a human being which is immanent to the individual and cannot be taken away. Gyekye (1987) illustrates this fact by using an antonym "onye onipa" (she or he is not a person), which, although it points to falling short of expected conduct or behavior which doesn't correspond to social, communal norms, is not denying the existential status of the individual.

I was informed by Akan language experts that the Akan language also lacks certain terminologies found in other languages, such as the English term "luck." For an Akan, output is the product of one's own hard work with the individual's specifics in the physical, probably favored by destiny and God's blessings which can manifest through e.g., rain – a divine favor shared by the whole communally. Whenever there is the attempt to refer to concept known as "luck" or the absence of it in English, the Akan will say alternatively "metre nyē" or "me hyebre nyē" meaning "my destiny is bad".

As in a family relationship, being part of the "us-group" puts a high primacy on manifestation of harmony to the out-group rendering direct confrontation offensive and undesirable. For example, in case of disagreement, Akan tend to avoid the confrontational word "no" and instead voice disagreement using polite deflections, such as "I will think about it," "maybe another time," "you might be right." An attitude, which is well captured in the Akan adage "Ti koro nko agyina" (wisdom is not in the head of a single individual). At the workplace, this code of communication is shared and understood between those who share the same cultural background. In the international setting, however, where part of the workforce's cultural background views communicating one's mind and direct feedback as a virtue, the employer might face the challenge of turning a possible confrontation due to different cultural imprints into a salutary process.

Metaphors, sayings, and proverbs, according to Sharma, reveal the malleability of language, particularly through usage in oral traditions, to "convey deep truths arrived at by a people." Proverbs and sayings unite cultures around ideal norms of behavior (Sharma, 2013:117).

Akan cultural wisdom is powerfully transmitted through Anansi (Akan word for spider), which originates in an exclusively oral tradition. Using Anansi's penchant for ingenuity, the stories

became a prominent and familiar part of Akan oral culture encompassing fables of varying arts which made it into todays educated Ghana and are still being perceived as synonymous with skills and wisdom when spoken.[27] Another Akan treasure lies with their three thousand and six hundred maxims recorded by Christaller (reference in Danquah, 2016:188), an important cultural body of knowledge, rich with moral values (explicit or implicit), which "postulates the harmonization of interests as the means, and the security of human-well-being as the end, of all moral endeavor" (Wiredu 1996:65). Avoiding blatant language, the Akan tend toward wise sayings or analogies that mollify the message, allowing the speaker and the lister to save their respective faces as well as maintain a harmonious relationship: "Obanyansofoo yebu no be, yennka no asem" (the wise is spoken to in proverbs, not plain language).

Remaining open minded
Honam mu nni nhanoa – the being of man has no boundaries

Next to customs and traditional values, religion has been acknowledged by Sombart (1959:30), Weber (2005), Danquah (2016), Busia (1962), just to name a few, and necessitates my addressing the belief system immanent to the traditional Akan thought.

I am taking seriously Wiredu's reminder that the attribution of "explanations of natural phenomena in terms of activities of gods and spirits" is immanent to each nation. The exciting and, at the same time, challenging part is to ascertain "in what different ways the belief in spirits is employed by various people in the attempt to achieve a coherent view of the world. In such specific differences will consist the real peculiarities of African traditional thought in contradiction to, say, Western traditional thought" (1980:39). Wiredu laments the absence of this proposed kind of comparison, writing that "many Westerners have gone about with an exaggerated notion of the differences in nature between Africans and the people of the West" (ibid.). Keeping this in mind, therefore, eclecticism appears to provide a valid approach to remain open-minded and cautions about the trap of a cultural and religiously influenced bias.

Another warning comes from Dickson:

> Now, while in the early days of its presentation this subject [Traditional Religion] tended to be caricatured by European writers, often out of ignorance, these days there is a real danger that its worst caricaturists will be Africans, particularly those who believe, quite erroneously, that because they are Africans, they are by that very fact qualified to expound it. Statements about African Traditional Religion seem to be rather easily made, even where little research or none has been carried out. (Dickson, 1976: 15f)

The Akan Traditional Religion

Nsem nyina ne Onyame – all things/affairs pertain to *God*

Wiredu confirms my observation that the Akan "have a religious aspect to their culture" (1998:34). Beyond this observation, Wiredu describes the particular characteristics of this religious aspect by pointing to the fact that, in his view, the "Akan religion consists solely in the unconditional veneration for God and trust in his power and goodness – i.e., in his perfection" (ibid.). And he goes on to stress that the Akan religion is not institutional and instead, followers are not expected to manifest their "genuine belief in God" through formalized worship. The Ghanaian sociologist, Max Assimeng (1989:10), bridges religion, particularly, morality, with social action. Morality is not defined in Akan in terms of the will of God but rather in terms of human interests emanating into procedures for the promotion of morality found in the home. In Assimeng's view, however, religious convictions not only provide a pattern of explanations in the personal search of meaning but also influence social behavior, "especially those activities that deal with social and economic order" (ibid.:12). Furthermore, social function of religion is manifested in organizing and taking part in collective activities containing a particular meaning "such as festivals in traditional societies" (ibid.:9). Assimeng concludes that the "ultimate source of cohesion in society" emanates from religion regulating the network of social relationships. Martey adds by underlining the importance of religion by saying, "Today, religion is still powerful in determining the thoughts and actions of the educated lawyer in modern cities and towns, as well as of the African peasant in the village. Religion permeates every aspect of African life and, therefore, there is no dichotomy between the religion and the sociopolitical" (1993:39). A view echoed by Dickson, "Religion is basically interior to people, and is often at the basis of their hopes and fears" (1976:3) as well as Heuser's assertion that "religious language, ideas, and imagery unveil a kaleidoscope of hope" (2015:15).

While viewing religion at the core of traditional culture, Atiemo (2013) draws a conclusion that religion has been central to the development of visions and practices to promote dignity in traditional Ghanaian society. Oduyoye supports this thought by stating that, according to her, only a fool "says in his heart 'There is no God'" (1997/1998: 494). Although she is quoting the Old Testament (Psalm 14:1), Oduyoye links the scripture to the traditional religious beliefs by emphasizing that "in traditional Africa there are no such "fools." "The African view of the world is nourished by a cosmology that is founded on a Source Being, the Supreme God, and other divine beings that are associated with God. As God is the foundation of life so nothing happens without God. God lives, God does not die, and so indeed humans do not die. Even if we do not occupy a touchable body, we still live on" (ibid.:495), she continues, again using metaphysical explanations

which can be also attributed to the Bible. This is also embodied in an Akan adinkra symbol with the connotation "Nyame nwu na ma wu" (I live because God is Incapable of dying).

As biblical and particularly Old Testament, references reappear in the literature along with analyses linking the archetypal image of Christian God with that of Traditional Religion, I wish to briefly turn our attention to this topic before diving into the particularities of the Akan Traditional Religion. It will help us to better understand some of the statements made by interviewees in the following chapters. Wiredu offers a critical reflection by stating that it

> is particularly worth stressing in view of the tendency of many African writers on African religions, proud of their African identity, to suggest that their peoples recognize the same God as the Christians, since God is one. The origin of this tendency seems to me to be the following: almost all these writers are themselves Christians, in most cases divines. Being scandalized by the opinion of some of the early European visitors to Africa that the African was too primitive to attain the belief in God unaided, they have sought to demonstrate that Africans discovered God on their own before a European or any foreigner, for that matter, set foot in Africa. However, since they themselves have been brought up to think that the Christian God is the one true God, it has been natural for them to believe that the God of their ancestors is, in fact, the same as the God of Christianity. (Wiredu, 1998:37)

In view of the above, I pursue the intention to let as many Ghanaians, and wherever possible Akan scientist's voices be represented, so that we get an insight of the prevailing social religious discourse. Personally, I adhere to Geertz's conclusion that "whatever role divine intervention may or may not play in the creation of faith, it is not the business of the scientist to pronounce upon such matters one way or the other" (2017:112).

J.B. Danquah, one of the founding fathers of modern Ghana, esteemed statesman, lawyer, and philosopher has summarized his thoughts, which are influential to this day in the monograph *The Akan doctrine of God* (2016). In the following, I will refer repeatedly to his findings because they coincide frequently with the statements and explanations of my Ghanaian interlocutors.

Danquah dichotomizes the concepts of "Christian" and "African" by stating that "the Akan doctrine of God is the doctrine of an Akan type of God. The true God is not of several kinds, but he can be known under several degrees or colors, for each people has a name for God" (ibid.:I). This view has been echoed by Idowu (1973) who states that "there is no being like "the African God" except in the imagination of those who use the term, be they Africans or Europeans. There is only one

God, and while there may be various concepts of God, according to each peoples spiritual perception, it is wrong to limit God with an adjective formed from the name of any race," As far as the Akan are concerned, "the conception of God is such that he is the "father, the "old one," the first man, the ancestor of the family, the tribe, the race, and indeed, of all things, or as the phrase goes in Akanland, Creator of the Thing, the universe of being" (Danquah, 2016:20). [28]

It is possible that the historically nomadic Akan, may have, at a point in time, assumed the Abrahamic form of worship that is vividly documented in the Old Testament. Akan individuals described elements of this form of worship as existing in today's Akan religious expressions such as sacrifice of food, the usage of an altar, a staff in the hand to symbolizing power, reliance on prophets, tabernacles and stones while reaching out to God, as well as a speaking to the dead and reincarnation's being viewed as ontologically continuing from generation to generation (Berger, 1990:62). In this context, Oduyoye offers "the African view" of God as the foundation of life, meaning that nothing happened without God. "God lives, God does not die, and so indeed humans do not die. Even when we do not occupy a touchable body, we still live on" (Oduyoye, 1997/1998: 495).

The occidental Image of God, as defined by the Hebrews, was codified at a very early stage which significantly contributed to broad dissemination as well as transmission between generations, an advantage the Akan lacked, - a long time oral culture – when defining their image of God. In a conversation, an Akan pointed to

> God's saying Jews are chosen is per documents of Jews. In Akan thinking about God, we are his chosen too, just that our victories at war which God gave us are not documented. If Akan had a book of how they sacrificed their children to God like Abraham wanted to do [sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19)] then that would have been something. And if Okomfo Anokye [1. Priest in the Ashanti Empire] had been written about then people would compare him to Jesus.

Danquah, who repeatedly elaborates upon the absurdity of superiority claims to a biblical concept of God, sums it up by saying,

> just as the Hebrews, unaided by modern Europe and Rome and Greece, were able to discover for themselves all the God that there was and could be, so, too, even though the African had not Moses and the prophets, he was able to discover for himself all the God that there was or could be, gradually coming upon that discovery in the quietude of the dark recesses behind the Sahara oases and dunes. (Danquah, 2016:17)

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Each of these discoveries form what Dickson & Ellingworth call "a mystery with which people are grappling according to their own native capacities" (1972:22), supporting individuals with "world construction" and "world maintenance" (Gifford, 2004:196).

The Akan doctrine of God[29]
Nnipa nyinaa ye Onyame mma – all men are the offspring of God

Danquah's explanation of the Akan religious doctrine is confirmed generally by other, mostly Ghanaian, scholars (e.g., Busia, Wiredu, Oduyoye). Although these other scholars' detailed explanations might differ from Danquah's assertions in certain respects, these differences are not relevant for the purpose of this research. I will, thus, rely heavily on Danquah and, where appropriate, add additional explanatory thoughts by his Ghanaian peers.

Psychological research has determined that humans tend to search for patterns to reference in their existing psyche, when trying to grasp new information (Myers & DeWall 2015). To reduce the complexity, or, rather, to make this concept accessible to my own understanding, it was helpful to borrow from the Christian doctrine of Trinity meaning that God, the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Spirit form a Tripartite God. This unification of three distinct deities, each holding different attribution into one God is similar to the Akan perception of God. The Akan religious doctrine is also based on only one God (Danquah, 2016:39), although the Akan refer to God by using distinct appellations for each of God's attributes, including Nyame (or Onyame), Nyankopon (or Onyankopon), and Odomankoma (ibid.:28). Nyame means the "Shining One," the trait of God at "the foundation of Akan Deism [and serving as] the darling for the busy man of action, the materialist who wants to get things done for particular uses" (Danquah, 1968:41). Nyame is perceived as the essence of all in the world (Wiredu, 1996:99) and according to an Akan adage "nsem nyinaa ne Nyame," he is the "justification (End-Cause) of all things" (Danquah, 2016:63). Onyankopon stands for "the middle term of the Akan syllogism where he is confronted with the moral need for personal relation with the Godhead, the Nana [ancestor] of the Ultimate Reality" (Danquah, 2016:150). "Through [Onyankopon] each man, each soul, obtains his intelligence, his okara, the message to realize a destiny" (ibid.:152). Akan address Onyankopon for answers to "practical questions of how to live well; that which generates the harmony and sustains it, that which makes of life one beneficent sharing" (ibid.). And finally, Odomankoma signifies the "creator par excellence" (ibid.:28), it is due to his creation that there are poor men and rich men (ibid.:77).

One of the best entrenched orthodoxies in the literature is the idea that Akan believe in a whole host of lesser gods or lesser deities. Rattray (1969:141) explains this phenomenon in an understandable manner: "Nyame, the Sky God, is considered too remote to be concerned very

directly in person with the affairs on man, and has delegated His powers to His lieutenants, the *abosom*, or lesser gods." It is believed that Nyame passes on power to the abosom, who according to Wiredu, can manifest themselves as objects, such as rocks or rivers, thought to contain "extra-human forces" (1998:31). As we will see in due course, the Akan attitude towards these abosom is more utilitarian than religious.

While explaining, an Akan friend graphically illustrated the Akan approach to religion as a pyramid or bagpipe model. There are different media, but one Supreme God at the apex. In his view, which is supported by different interlocutors, religion is important to the Akan when they need to find solutions beyond human capacity. Otherwise, people live without the need to worship as they believe that they hold a constant, automatic link with God through their "hyebre" – an expression that is best described as the gift DNA from God, the Creator on how their life should be on earth. "Hyebre" is built into the individual's "sunsum" or personality.

In the Akan cosmology, the Earth is governed by a spiritual power called Asaase Yaa, whose creation or birth by God is commemorated on Thursdays,[30] attributing to land tenure special importance. Asaase Yaa, a power of spirit, could prove either helpful or harmful if neglected (Busia, 1951:40). The Akan observe certain rites to appease Asaase Yaa, including the offering of the year's first yam while pouring libations and expressing traditional words of gratitude. A farmer establishes the right to farm on a given parcel of land "by tracing his descent in the matrilineal line to an ancestor known to have farmed [that parcel of land] before him" (ibid.:47). Farming is, thus, both a right and a significant duty with respect toward a farmer's ancestors who entrusted the land to him. By observing certain rites, a farmer seeks to appease spiritual powers aiming at receiving certain favors and benefits. The literature (e.g., Wiredu, Busia) and information I received from Akan people, however, stress the day-to-day work as continuing with little religious consideration. Farmers are not expected to adhere to a regular worship routine or to maintain a schedule of explicit prayers. Prayers are reserved to specific occasions, such as when asking God to send rain after planting, as God is viewed as the keeper of the rain, meaning that if the crops do not yield well, then God willed it so. Oduyoye sums it up aptly by stating:

> If there is too much rain or flood, we do not attribute them to God but to the anger of the divinities that are associated with nature or ancestors whom we may have wronged by some unethical behaviour or lack of reverence for what pertains to the spirit world. God always gives what is sufficient. The experience of God as good and the experience of evil becomes a challenge to Africans. In the tradition, some would say both come from God but that when God gives you disease, God also gives you the cure. (1997/1998:496)

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Considering the aforementioned assumption linking Akan and Abrahamic religious roots, work ethic has also been part of Abrahamic religions since Genesis 2:15, when God commissioned the first human to till the Garden and enjoy its fruits.

Water constitutes another important spiritual power. It is used to perform libations and ritual ablution. Sea and rivers, highly charged symbols in Akan cosmology, symbolize growth, peace and fertility and provide food for the fishermen.

Religion as a source for meaning
AsƐm a Nyame edzi esie no, dasanyi nndan no – Man is unable to alter God's judgement

According to Geertz, religion offers a model of "reality" and a model for "reality" simultaneously. From the analytical point of view, religion's essential function is to offer meaning (Weber) or to explain abnormal events and provide emotional comprehension for human suffering. In Geertz's (2017:104) view, religion is incapable of contributing to the avoidance of suffering but rather provides methods for making suffering bearable. It endows humans with analytical capacities as well as ways to express emotions.

Research suggests that religion may, more than other types of meaning systems, deal with stressful occurrences in a way that provides hope and equip people to appraise situations as consistent with a meaningful cosmic providence (Inzlich et al., 2009). For example, individuals who hold beliefs such as "fa ma Nyame" translating into "all things happen for a reason, which is beyond human understanding" or "I may not have control over this situation, but I know that God is in control" may be prone to overlook potential signs that would undermine their beliefs (Inzlicht et al., 2009; Park 2005a), averting a disruption of fundamental beliefs and alleviating a need to search for meaning (Park, 2010). When a stressful event such as long-term unemployment or loss of job is perceived as divergent from one's goals (providing income for the family; professional aspiration) and is not amenable to simple problem-solving (such as finding means to generate income), a religious person may be able to rely on religious explanations to develop a strategy rather than descending into an existential crisis. Traditional Religion allows a person who has exhausted all of her or his known options for resolving a particular situation to turn to a medium, in the form of sub-deities or other spiritual entities either through personal petition and worship or via specialized agents like spiritual leaders in the community, dedicated places or objects in order to access God, since it is viewed that God is not answering his direct prayer. The individual can pursue a variety of non-exclusive pathways, addressing different spiritual entities through a wide array of practices until he finds answers or solutions. Thus, the Akan first belief is in his hard work and direct communication to God but, if that fails, he will then invoke a spiritual intermediary or call on ancestors to intercede on his behalf for God to hear him. Gifford (2004:196) summarizes

that an individual's determination of a situation's irreversibility or acceptability or potential for improvement is attributable to religion.

Intermediary between God and people

Nsa baako ntumi nkata Onyame ani - no single hand can cover the eye of God

According to Busia (1951:24) and Atiemo (2013:21), the key to Traditional Religion is a proper relation with a spiritual universe that encompasses the material world. Since adherents to Traditional Religion view themselves as a part of the spiritual universe, seeking union with the sacred forces or beings, the followers are not only thought to have the faculty of communication with it but also, to a certain extent, are viewed as being vulnerable to the authority of the spiritual forces, which are considered to exercise effective power over the material world.

In Danquah's view (2016), it is believed that God deals directly in the affairs of people. God does not need a medium to show his mercies to a human being or to punish for wrongdoing. Possibly, as a result of the increasing influence of rational explanatory models, natural occurrences, such as lightening, sickness or snake bites, have enforced in the individual the belief that God punishes directly, creating fear and preventing wrongdoing. Some of my elderly interviewees bemoaned the fact that, with Christianity, the fear for God's instantaneous punishment has been mostly replaced by the Christian concept of God's grace, a fact, in their view, that led to the moral deterioration of personal and public behavior. This is illustrated well by one of my interviewees, Abraham, who, despite holding a highly respected position in the Methodist church and attributing economic and personal success in his life to the Christian God's guidance, does not see any contradiction when attributing the deterioration of his native village to the negative influence of Christianity:

> And so, we are now seeing the wisdom of our old people. […] We thought they were idol worshipers because they will tell you, don't go to this forest because the gods will be there. And so nobody will go there. As for that long period that we were practicing these things, our forest remained. Now, our forests are depleting because people know, there are no gods there, who will kill you. And so, they go there to do whatever they like. And that thing has not helped us.

And he continues, "So, it's like Christianity coming to Ghana has not helped us on those sides." And then he concludes, "And so, all those days, our village was very, very neat. Now, with Christianity, we don't regard the powers of the god, even if they exist. […] and so, we go and defecate, we do also other things. And now it has brought filth to the communities." This insightful confession provided a rare glimpse into a deeper level of consciousness developed during primarily socialization lying beneath the surface of a devoted Christian.

Although it is not necessary to worship any medium to receive of God's mercies and punishment, Akan religious cosmology offers a multitude of avenues to accessing and experiencing God (Oduyoye, 1997/1998:497), such as direct communication with God, turning to a sub-deity or spirit, ancestors, a chief or a fetish priest to intercede. I was told that the reason Akan apply different options to reach God is speed. The Akan turn to spiritual intermediaries when the direct communication doesn't bear the expected results. If God is perceived as slow to respond to a request, then, possibly, the request hasn't reached him, as many are appealing to his ears. Such non-delivery of one's request necessitates employment of a sub-deity or ancestor, who are closer to God thus enabling him to hear the message and answer it quickly. This results in an attitude where a person might frequently change the medium until he or she finds a satisfying answer or solution to his or her problem. The Akan, while worshiping different spiritual entities or gods through a hierarchy of gods and spiritual entities, ultimately worship Nyame who sits at the apex of this hierarchy. The Akan relationship with gods is utilitarian, meaning that they will avert their attention and stop worshipping a particular god if he is no longer able to address their needs and turn to another god, always with the intention of reaching toward Nyame. This is confirmed by Wiredu (1998:34), who writes that the "[Akan] attitude to those extra-human beings generally called minor gods in the literature … is utilitarian, for the most part." A noteworthy aspect was brought up when an Akan, who defines himself as Christian, explained means of reaching out to God. He pointed to a parallel attitude in Christianity where Christians call upon Jesus, viewing Jesus as a medium to reach God. Although Christians have the option to reach God directly, they can also choose to call on Jesus who is "the way" (John 14:6) to intercede on their behalf as he is placed next to God (Mark 16:19). Christians also view Jesus as having God's ear similar to the belief accorded to the ancestors rooted in Akan Traditional Religion. An additional view offered by a Methodist clergy fit into this picture. He says, "In some instances, Jesus has been ascribed by Methodists as being an ancestor." An ancestor, who – as the clergy further reflects – "is watching us" which is the reason for "being good." Thus, for an Akan, Christianity may also offer different routes to God which make it easy for an Akan to switch between religious concepts.

As I further learned, in Akan, the individual can be spiritually powerful like a god. An indicator of this is that, in Akan areas, no chief worships a god out of personal utilitarian motivations. Chiefs usually pour libations to God, Asaase Yaa (Mother Earth), or the ancestors, only consulting the gods when all else fails. In some Akan areas, especially among the Ashanti, the chiefs play a special role in the social structure, which, along with their responsibility, also bestows upon them a privileged access to the spirit world, whose structure is thought of in a way analogous to the social and ecologic environment of the people. Thus they (the chiefs) can regulate activities of the

fetish priests and gods through a sub-chief responsible for the interaction with the gods – Nsumankwahene.

In order to establish relationships on the spiritual plane, communication through procedures called rituals needs to be established (Wiredu, 1998:34). The performance of rituals as religious social actions is conferred to spiritual leaders (Danquah, 2016:18), who call upon God in prayer and/or by pouring libations (Oduyoye, 1997/1998:496). The spiritual leader, a fetish priest or a chief is in charge of performing the rite of pouring libation (Danquah, 2016:53), praying, "Almighty God, we offer drinks; God of the Earth drink; our ancestor's drink. We call to you today to intercede on our behalf." Abraham offers a slightly more differentiated interpretation of these actions, stating that "the rites of ancestor-worship are not rites of worship but methods of communication" (2015:59).

As the ancestors play a prominent role in Akan cosmology, I wish to explore this concept in more depth. Wiredu offers an autochthon and accessible definition:

> The ancestors are conceived to be the departed spirits of erstwhile elders of our societies who live in a world analogous and contiguous to ours and work for the good of the living by watching over their morals. On this showing, they are both like and unlike the living. Like the living, they have an interest in morality of which they are, indeed, recognized as, in some ways, guardians. Moreover, in so far as any imagery is annexed to the conception of the ancestors, it is person-like. But unlike persons, they are not normally perceivable to the naked eye, and they can affect human life in super-human ways for good or, in exceptional cases, as by the present hypothesis, for ill. (Wiredu, 1998:32)

Busia observes that ceremonial rites "reaffirm and strengthen the sentiments of solidarity and continuity of people" and, therefore, concludes that such rites maintain "social organization" (1951:136f). Ceremonial rites manifest a communal expression of dependence on the "ancestors for its welfare, and its belief that the ancestors watch over the conduct of its members, ceasing to send them blessings and punishing them with sickness and misfortune if they fail in their duties" (ibid.). The prestigious institution of Chieftaincy legitimizes its authority by being bestowed by the chief's ancestors, as the chief "sits on the stool of the ancestors" (ibid.:137). Although the traditional position of a chief "as the religious as well as political head of his tribe" (ibid.) has been challenged by Christianity, it continues to prevail, albeit in a mitigated manner, in today's Akan society.

With reference to today's Christian influence on the Akan culture, an Akan interviewee notes that the values of the Akan such as "ensa a enye adwuma no endidi" – "the hand that does not work

does not eat" or "enimguase nfata Akan ni ba"– "an Akan is not deserving of disgrace" implying that the Akan must work hard and live with pride at all times, and not steal, etc. become enhanced by teachings of Christian values. Yet, when the Akan have problems, they will look to any of the mediums, such as abosom, ancestors, gods, but also to Nyame or the Christian God who offer them answers in a quicker fashion.

Destiny
Obi fre ne Nyame na obi ngyina ho – Nobody was there when I was taking my destiny from my God

Next to Danquah (2016), Wiredu aptly presents the components of the Akan person as "(a) nipadua (bodily frame), (b) mogya (blood), (c) ntoro (a genetic factor due to the father), (d) sunsum (basis of personality), I okra (soul)" (1996:16f). The okra or soul constitutes an "actual particle of the Supreme Being" (ibid.:126). God "in the making of a human individual apportions a part of himself in the form of an *okra* for dispatch to the earth to be born of man and woman. Before the departure there is a ceremony at which the okra, alone before God, takes leave of his or her maker. The high point of the proceeding is the announcement of destiny. God reveals to the *okra* what career awaits her or him on earth and how it shall be brought to a conclusion. Thereupon, the *okra* descends to be incarnated into human society to fulfill that blueprint" (ibid.:127). This assertion is echoed by Danquah (1968:68), who views sunsum and okra (Danquah uses here the term "okara") as being immeasurably intertwined in "nkrabea," meaning destiny. Wiredu voices the symbolism of destiny by describing it as (1996:126) "the principle of individuation of the akra (plural of okra), the divine specks that constitute the principle of life in the human frame." Two Akan maxims, "mihuu Nyame na mekraano ansa na mereba" (I saw God and took leave of him before coming), and "Onyame nkrabea nni kwatibea" (there is no by-pass to God's destiny) demonstrate that the individual derives his destiny directly from God (Wiredu, 1980:18). Thus, God entrusts every Akan with a pre-determined destiny (one's "nkrabea") (Gyekye 1987, Wiredu 1980), which each Akan is responsible to realize throughout his/her lifetime, or even several lifetimes (Danquah, 2016:83).

Wiredu (1996:127) points to a problem of lack of personal responsibility inherent in this concept of destiny, which he views the Akan to know. This is reflected by an Akan, who illustrates the concept of destiny by referring to an Akan adage "fa ma Nyame" meaning "leave it to God," an Akan belief that everything happens for a purpose and mostly in accordance with the will of God. Inherent to this conviction is the belief that God has willed all occurrences in a person's life, and everything is designed by the Supreme God for a particular person to align with his destiny. These convictions, in the view of my interviewee, are key reasons for the lack of initiative by some Akan individuals. The root is that God decides all affairs in the life of man, and by consequence, man is

only an actor of his life but not an author of it. However, the Akan believe that, through Nyame, they have direct knowledge of God can always go to the "hyebre sesa four" – Changer of Destiny – directly or through a medium, to ask for a more favorable destiny. According to my interviewee, a favorable destiny can be stolen or revised. Here, he points to a similar occurrence described in the Old Testament where Jacob stole the destiny of his brother, Esau (Genesis 27). "You have to work to maintain your destiny," he concluded.

The following excursus, focusing on the funeral ceremony of a lady I had the privilege to interview about one year before she passed away, aptly illustrates the prevailing coexistence of Traditional Religion and Christianity.

Excursus: Beyond Christian Convictions

In March 2018, a then 85-year-old matriarch of an extended Kwahu family granted me an interview in her home in Accra. Our conversation took part in the presence of her daughter and grandson, both of whom were referred to as such, based on a cultural-normative determination (the old lady was in fact an aunt who had taken the responsibilities of a mother following her sister's death) as opposed to their being direct descendants. Originally from a Kwahu village, the matriarch had spent a considerable part of her life as a successful trader in Accra. Our conversation was in English and Twi, with the grandson acting as a translator.

The matriarch emphasized the fact that, in Akan, "the moment you are born, you know there is God".

> Q: Let me take this up. This is the believe that Nyame has always been there. So, then Christianity came, and the Christian God came, namely Jesus Christ. Has the concept of Nyame changed into a concept of the Christian God, or has just another God (Jesus) been added?
>
> A: God is not two. The same God in those days as is now. So, God is not two. It's the devil who can take many forms. But God is the same as in these days. Only the way to reach him is different.
>
> Q: The way to reach Him has changed?
>
> A: Yeah. In those days, there were gods. And everybody also knew that there was an Almighty God, a Supreme God. But you were not obliged to worship any of them. […] So, some people had decided, they won't worship the lesser gods and we don't also know if they were obliged to worship the bigger God. But it was when Christianity came, then they realized that they are supposed to worship the Almighty God. So, then some people made the bold decision to say, "I am now a Christian and I dedicate my life to worshiping the

Almighty God." Whereas in the past, they knew, there were lesser gods, and they didn't care to worship any of them. They were not obliged to worship any of them. So, custom was there to regulate people, the behavior, and it worked then. But today, it's all been abandoned.

Based on the matriarch's description of her own upbringing, it appears that her socialization process was influenced by traditional religious values as her parents were "worshipers of idols" who, nonetheless, did not oppose her becoming a Christian. Upon my request, she elaborated on Traditional Religion as well as customs, stressing the point that "when Christianity came, there was some kind of dilemma somewhere, still worshiping Christianity, others were with their gods. Because of the customs and traditions, you are supposed to accept them." She continues that "even to this day, there are people who, if there is a problem, they go back to one side. Even though they regret that they have abandoned one other form of religion or the other. So, there is a certain kind of contradiction in people's mind even to this day as to where they belong." She attributes the success she found in her later life to God having answered her prayers through her Christian faith/ practice. "If you believe in God, he even helps you personally," she says.

The lady died on 12.10.2019 and was buried on 22.02.2020. The nearly four-month period between her death and the funeral was mostly due to the steps needed to prepare her requested burial which is appropriate to her status. A funeral lasting several days with high attendance signals honor and respect towards the deceased. Respect for the elderly is the first and foremost principle within the Akan. Even in modern days Ghana, when the request for advice by the young people has declined, the respect for the elderly, enshrined in customs and tradition and based on their experience of life and the spiritual power deriving from these experiences, is felt regardless of the person's socioeconomic status. A long life is tantamount to the accumulation of wisdom. The respect is manifested through an honorable funeral. Another reason for putting a large amount of effort into a funeral ceremony lies with the "belief in a world of spirits (asaman) where all ancestors live in very much the same way as they lived on earth. This conception of a life after death similar to life on earth is implicit in funeral ceremonies" (Busia, 1951:23). Furthermore, as shown, ancestors play an important role in society as intervenors between humans and God and this is a contributing factor to the need of dignified and honorable funerals.

The funeral took place in the lady's home village, Aduanoa, in Kwahu land. The narrative of the ceremony process was shared by her grandson, who took part in the interview and the burial ceremony. On a Friday evening, before the actual burial ceremony took place, a very close inner circle gathered at the former house of her father. The lady belonged to the Oyoko royal lineage

and the queen of Akwasihu was present at the ceremony. The reverence offered to her had a high degree of respect as is due to the earthly elders.

It was a solemn moment where women used holy water from the nearby river to wash her body. They collected the items the deceased needed for her afterlife, such as clothing, jewelry, money, and food. In the Akan concept, the dead remain on earth until their funeral rites are concluded, after which the journey to the afterworld begins. "Death and the beginning of a permanent ontological departure of the individual from mankind to spirithood" (Mbiti, 1990:160).

While the deceased was lying in state in the house that had belonged to her father, a family relation who is a senior catechist, with a bottle of schnapps in the crook of his arm supervised the pouring of libations on the tomb of the deceased's father in the house. This is done to establish contact and inform the father of the coming of his daughter and to summon the dead to welcome her as she is transcending to the company of God and her ancestors. Performing the rites on a deceased person is viewed as an important part of the Akan culture. Only when a deceased, having become an Ancestor, is being called upon to mediate between a person and Nyame, it falls under traditional religious belief where all ancestors who are honored in this way are viewed as being in line with the Great Ancestor, Nyame (Danquah, 2016:28). Christianity, where at death a person is believed to have left the body and gone home to be with God (2. Corinthians 5:6), cutting all ties and losing all influence upon the living, differs in its metaphysics from the traditional religious belief. Wiredu aptly summarizes his analysis by saying that Christianity and Traditional Religion and worldviews "persist in mutual incompatibility and become selectively operative in the various circumstances of life" (1980:30). This is a view which has been transmitted throughout a majority of my conducted interviews.

After a night of wake-keeping by close relatives, the church priest arrived to deliver a prayer before the corpse was taken to the church for a special sermon dedicated to her memory. She was then buried in the section of the cemetery reserved for those of her lineage, as high importance is attributed to being buried beside one's ancestors. The funeral ceremony started after the body was buried. Such ceremonies are meant to symbolize a cosmic wholeness, leaving little distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the sacred and the secular. On the following Sunday morning, a celebration of life service was conducted in the Presbyterian church.

CHAPTER 4: CHRISTIANITY AND METHODISM IN GHANA

Wope asem aka akyere Nyankopon a, ka kyere mframa – If you have a message for God, talk to the wind

Public display of Christianity

In Ghana, at least in the central and southern regions, Christianity is, at least on the surface, the dominant religion. Manifestations of Christianity are a prominent part of everyday life, with an increasing number of churches housed in a host of structures, ranging from impressive buildings to makeshift schools and improvised set-ups with plastic chairs and benches, at times planted so close to each other that the attending to spiritual needs of the believers on a Sunday morning almost gives the impression of competition for members. On weekends, along with any given evening during the week, the air is filled with the sounds of Christian singing echoing from many churches or Christian gatherings spread all over the city, sometimes lasting for hours.[31] Huge billboards of church leaders promise solutions to all kinds of life challenges by advertising "Giant problems. Giant Solutions" or "Giant Mercy." These are a few examples of the proliferation of Christian religion throughout the society. Christian slogans are broadcast on commercial vehicles, in the form of stickers, reminding that "God is Love," "Glory be to God" or "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, Isaiah 54:17" evince not only a personal religious conviction but also point to a hope for protection by a supernatural power, the biblical God. Most of the small roadside shops or service providers like hairdressers or food sellers advertise biblical verses and expressions such as "God is Great" and "By His Grace" throughout most parts of Ghana, and certainly in Accra, the capital, and Tema, the neighboring harbor city. These references could both serve as expressions of the proprietors' affiliation with the Christian religion and prove commercially advantageous. Successful entrepreneurs have deliberately defined themselves with reference to the principles of Christianity by posting banners such as "Jesus is Lord indeed!" – which is placed prominently on a multi-story building.

This snapshot serves not only as an introduction, but I also use it as a springboard for the deeper discussion and analysis that will require tracing the missionary involvement in Ghana, especially in Akanland. Following this, I will narrow the missionary involvement down to Methodism, and finally arrive at discussing different facets of a particular Methodist institution, Mt. Zion in Tema, the local focus of my research. The reason for the deductive approach I use in this chapter results from my conviction that such an introduction to the understanding of the realities on the ground prepares the basis for a holistic comprehension of the interview statements I collected.

Christianity infiltrates the Akan

Ade a ohene pe na woye ma no – What the king orders is what is done, or the king does no wrong

Around the seventeenth century, Christianity was introduced as a religious and social force into the Akan concept of culture, its customs, and religion and began penetrating every aspect of life. The introduction was partly enforced by European missionaries collaborating with the colonial forces by advocation for a salvation project and representing European values and the affiliated concept of modernity (Williamson, 1965: xii), which Dickson describes as "the western Christian interpretation of reality" (1991:170). Sombart confirms this view by stating, "Religious systems and churches are able to influence economic life in different ways, particularly by their power of directing the mind to this goal or that. Sometimes their influence may be direct, sometimes roundabout. It may check certain tendencies and give them an impetus. It is not surprising therefore that the history of the capitalist spirit should be inextricable bound up with the history of churches and religious systems" (1959:29). I agree with Martey (1993:57), who uses historical evidence to assert that "religion has been the most far reaching and forceful instrument of legitimation" (see also Berger 1967:32).

A paradigm change introduced by missionaries

The defining characteristic of ministry or evangelism as asserted by Weber is "its decisive influence in the formation of national character" (2005:102), portraying it as a depersonalized social service with the notion of "social" gleaned from the fact that it is performed within society. However, as those introducing Christianity embarked upon a zealous missionizing and considerable intervention, disrupting prevailing societal structure purportedly for the glory of God, it follows that the purpose was not carried out for the sake of society, but for an anticipated benefit of society. The biblical mission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15, KJV) translated into salvation of the world for its own sake. This entails a certain level of detachment from the world, deriving from the emphasis on God's glory and thus neglecting concrete living environments and individual motives. The mission project tried to establish Christianity by replacing the worldview of the Akan with a European worldview (Dickson, 1991:170). Danquah, a critic of the Christian missionary efforts and their claim of Christianity being superior to Akan religious and ethical concepts (Bediako, 1995:78), laments this enterprise in his *The Akan Doctrine of God* as it ignored that "the "Christian" and the "African" share between them a Supreme Being of like nature" (Danquah, 2016:10). Perhaps preemptively, I want to note Oduyoye's recent observation; she laments that "to a significant extend the charismatic-pentecostal-prosperity churches have returned Africans to the anti-African culture of the Western missionaries. They maintain that to succeed, you must move away from African beliefs related to

ancestors, African practices and rituals, and seek "deliverance" from evil and poverty through the Church, your new family" (1997/1998: 501).

In my view, Dickson (1991:140) contrasts the two religions appropriately. Christianity, on one hand, is based on the conception of the "Divine demand and the Divine purpose in relation to man" manifested in the Christian doctrine of Man, Sin and Grace, culminating into "the fellowship of redeemed worshippers, believers who are experiencing deliverance from the bondage of sin to righteousness of life" (s. also Danquah, 2016:80). To the contrary, the Akan religious concept doesn't contain the thought of man as "fallen" or "sinful" (Danquah, 2016:82). The Akan concept of life is based on the notion that human life is grounded in society, "sanctioned by spirit-ancestors and gods, expressing itself in Akan institutions and behavior patterns […] and wrong-doing may be set right within a framework of traditionally sanctioned rites and practices" (Dickson, 1991: 141). Unlike Christianity,[32] the Akan religious concept doesn't encompass an element of seeking to become the image of God[33] (Danquah, 2016:109). Dickson concludes, "the Akan assumes that he is pleasing to his god, otherwise dire calamity would overtake him" (1991:141).

An idiosyncratic interpretation of enlightenment

The introduction of Christianity was bolstered by it being coupled with the process of exposing Ghanaians to a foreign language through education. Language, "the key to the soul" (Dickson & Ellingworth, 1972:24), is a vehicle for transmitting cultural values. Accordingly, the proliferation of "imported" European education throughout Ghana, in which English was "under penalty to be exclusively spoken in the schools" (Bartels, 1965:8), created a creeping internalization of the imported values, not by personal choice, but by the subluminal force of historical circumstances. In the early days of missionary activities and introduction of church-led education in the nineteenth century, the Ashanti in Ghana tried to resist this avalanche of foreign concepts (Busia, 1951:133f; Dickson, 1991:125),[34] leading to manifold conflicts, a milder form of which included barring their children from school attendance. However, as highly economically oriented traders, the Ashanti realized that the education offered by the missionaries served as a gateway to economic advantages (Busia 1951, Williamson 1965). Dickson brilliantly elaborates on this topic by stating:

> In the apprehension of what they know as Christianity, a large number of Akans have become confused between the enlightenment which accompanied the total impact of westernism, including the western missionary impact, upon their society, and the specific religious experience Christianity claims to promote in its converts. The missionary appeared, in the nineteenth century context, as the harbinger of enlightenment as well as the bearer of the Gospel. He firmly believed in the mutual association of western civilization

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and the Christian religion. In missionary practice, the enlightenment whereby men were emancipated from superstition and ignorance, and the Christianity, which was itself a new religious faith were, in the manner of their presentation by the missionary Church, inextricably bound together because they were so entangled in the cultural western background from which this Church sprang. In the result, as the Akan appropriated the missionary effort, there are grounds for asserting that the enlightenment proved more attractive than the religion. (Dickson, 1991:173)

This conflation of formal education with Christianity, driven by the conviction of the missionaries to bring enlightenment as emancipation from ignorance, nevertheless incited a fervent demand for education, as it became apparent that it opened better economic prospects. In no time, the number of schools planted by the missionaries could not meet the local demand for education. Thus, the belief that active church participation could prove a viable mechanism for securing a place in school found its footing[35] and "the premium was paid in church membership" (Williamson, 1965:20). In Dickson's view

Through the schools, a new class began to emerge, able to function as an intermediary between the European's literate world and preliterate Akan society, and possessed of skills which gave them an advantage, economic and social, over against their preliterate fellows. The emergence of this class of literates was in many respects but a further aspect of the progress of economic change, but deep social consequences were also apparent. (Dickson, 1991:122)

Williamson (1965:19) offers an insightful explanation as to the perception of Christianity as a "foreign religion." In his view, it was owing to the fact that "the Christian faith was seen as the White Man's religion, rather than as a universal faith for all hearers" and thus in the Akan mind creating a clear link between Christianity and professed European cultural values.

Conversion was conceived as an individual act of choosing Christian faith over traditional religious beliefs and practices, and as integration into Christian society to be taught and nourished in the new faith. In this process, the Akan acted outside their cultural and naturally immanent background and heritage to the extent that they were called upon to make a personal, responsible act of decision. Williamson (1965:166) named the church as an agent for social change because the Akan were drawn to the new economic and social ideas that missionaries presented as they taught the religious and moral principles of Christianity. These secondary entrepreneurial motives of the Akan may have encouraged their acceptance of the religion, particular as its focus on good character, personal integrity, public responsibility, and social service matched values of their

traditional culture. Furthermore, by stressing the values and attributing importance to the individual, Christianity transmitted a new sense of personal dignity and status. Simultaneously, as western Christianity was implanted into the Akan culture, it practically demanded of them the denial of their socialized personality. It led to what Dickson asserts as:

> The individual Akan was called out of his society; he was required to abandon his traditional past by a process which differentiated him from the society by which he had been nurtured. The invitation to accept the Christian religion was also a call to participate in a western interpretation and expression of it which denied his own world view. (Dickson, 1991:170)

This development dichotomizes self-identification through religious-culture-based values, on one hand, and the induction of Christian and Western philosophies on modernity, on the other.

As a result, the diffusion of Western religious values into the Ghanaian society culminated in a scenario where prevailing culturally comprised customs and Traditional Religion remain deeply rooted and influential, existing in tandem with Christianity. Wiredu (1980:45) asserts that description of prevailing social reality by saying: "Besides, conversion to Christianity in our lands has generally not meant the exchange of the indigenous religion for the new one, but rather an amalgamation of the two" is supported by statements made by interviewees, such as "when choosing for a job [an employee] preference is given to someone from the same tribe than the same church." This assertion is echoed by Young (1993:41) as well as Dickson, who states: "The average Church member engages in this worship of Onyame, not as the Church officially requires as the only rightful worship, but as an addition to his beliefs and practices" (1191:161). African theologians (Tiènou 1990, Oduyoye 2003) have also shared their view about African Christians simultaneously living in two multifarious religious universes. Van den Toren (2013) elaborates on this thought while taking it a step further by saying: "Because a religious universe will also encompass an ethic, they will therefore sense the claim of two different moral systems which sometimes may be irreconcilable." And here Dickson (1991:160) reflects upon the co-existence of different constructions and interpretations of Akan socio-religious realities. In his view, when confronted with unique life situations, such as birth, marriage, and death, the importance of customs finds its manifestation whereas "the Church is at these great moments an alien thing." Furthermore, he emphasizes that the power and influence of these values are routed in society and passed on to "those young people who have forgotten or have never known clearly what their forefathers believed; there is some inheritance in their mind, some fear of vague unknown forces of evil, some residual belief in magic, which makes them easy converts to some new fetish with a big following, even if they are well-educated Christians" (ibid.). This view is all the more remarkable

given the fact that the writer was a President of the Methodist Church Ghana as well as the All-African Council of Churches and an academic at the University of Ghana.

My focus now turns to Methodism in general to enable a comprehensive placement in its historical context, which will then allow me to turn our attention to a particular congregation, Mt. Zion. Throughout the discussion, my particular interest lies in the meaning Methodists and specifically, Mt. Zion attribute to work and work ethic. In the course of this work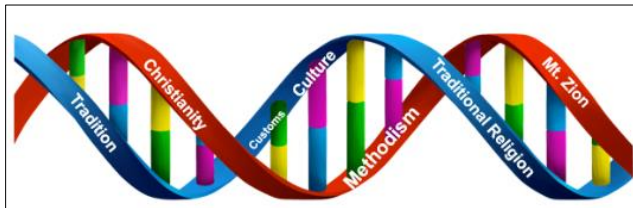, I will illustrate how elements which constituted the backbone of Methodism as part of "Ascetic Protestantism," especially regarding work ethic, found their way into the Methodist Church Ghana and, where relevant, their expression.

Fig. 2. Social-religious DNA

Methodism

The Methodist movement started in the 18th century with John Wesley aiming to reform the Church of England by introducing "a new awakening of the ascetic spirit within the old" (Weber, 2005:53), leading to the institutionalization of an autonomous church. In England, the Methodist church predominantly gained traction in the industrial areas because the new faith enabled workers to endure economic hardship through alleviation from poverty and provided a spiritual background for the aspirations of an emerging middle class. As such, Methodism, according to Weber, displayed characteristics of "Ascetic Protestantism" (2005:53), such as summarized by Troeltsch:

> the inner severance of feeling and enjoyment from all the objects of labor; the unceasing harnessing of labor to an aim which lies in the other world, and therefore must occupy us till death; the depreciation of possessions, of all things earthly, to the level of expediency; the habit of industry in order to suppress all distracting and idle impulses; and the willing use of profit for the religious community and for public welfare. (Troeltsch, 1959:27)

The Methodist renewal movement culminated into a middle-class church whose members experienced a rise in their economic status elevating them out of poverty. In Weber's observation the concept of "Ascetic Protestantism" tied the biblically grounded maxim of faithful labor (Acts 20:35, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Luke 16:10) with the power that was the sole determinant of its effectiveness, namely: "the psychological sanction of it through the conception of this labor as a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the only means of attaining certainty of grace" (Weber, 2005:121). In other words, a calling "becomes the means of moral discipline" (Fullerton, 1959:15),

allowing a justification of personal accumulation of wealth before one's own conscience as it entailed the possibility for redistribution (Troeltsch, 1959:26).

While agreeing with Weber's assertion that Wesley "was a believer in the universality of grace" (2005:78), Gifford (1998: 28-29) elaborates in more detail by asserting, "Wesley's doctrine of the universality of grace was incompatible with the Calvinist notion of 'election'," and, for him, Christ's ransom was only provisional. It became Methodist doctrine that forgiveness of sin lasted only so long as the penitent went and sinned no more; the saved were in a state of conditional, provisional election. How then to keep grace? There were three obvious means: first through service to the church; second, through the cultivation of one's soul; and third, through a methodical discipline in every aspect of life – above all, in labor. God's curse over Adam, when expelled from the Garden of Eden, provided irrefutable doctrinal support to the blessedness of hard labor, poverty, and sorrow "all the days of thy life." Wesley saw work, under the condition that it was performed for God's glory, as a means of assessing one's state of grace and identification as a true believer (Bristol Declaration of August 1771).

This is also the basis of Calvinism's intense self-consciousness, whereby followers hold a sense that it is the exclusive form of Christianity adapted to modern life, because, on the one hand, it is able to justify modern forms of economic production before the tribunal of conscience, and on the other hand, by means of Christian Socialism, it strives to rectify the abuses of the system when they occur (Weber, 2005:26).

The assertion of grace as attainable through a high performance for the glory of God (Fullerton 1959:14) and the identification as "a real Christian believer" (Bristol Declaration of August 1771) had at least two conflicting consequences: it opened the door to exploitation, on one hand, leading to Marx's "religion is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1982) and, on the other, allowed an attitude towards acquisition of wealth (Weber, 2005:121). By introducing his maxim "Earn all you can, give all you can, save all you can" in a pamphlet called "thoughts upon Methodism" in 1786, Wesley approved and encouraged personal wealth accumulation, by introducing at the same time the need of redistribution. Redistribution was less drawn from the biblical command to "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:31, KJV) than from a desire to assure personal growth in grace and accumulation of treasure in heaven. In more drastic words, Wesley places those who keep their wealth to themselves at the level of a betrayer of the Christian foundation by saying: "When a man becomes a Christian, he becomes industrious, trustworthy, and prosperous. Now, if that man when he gets all he can and saves all he can, does not give all he can, I have more hope for Judas Iscariot than for that man!" (ibid.).

However, as asserted by Weber (2005:119), Wesley was concerned that Methodism might face the same fate as other great religious movements whose economic success emerged after the summit of religious passion had passed. This would then reorient the search for God's grace into pursuit of wealth, culminating into religious roots slowly drying out, and thus allowing for "utilitarian worldliness."

Wesley said:

> I fear, wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore, I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches. How then is it possible that Methodism, that is, a religion of the heart, though it flourishes now as a green bay tree, should continue in this state? For the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently, they increase in goods. Hence, they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. Is there no way to prevent this—this continual decay of pure religion? We ought not to prevent people from being diligent and frugal; we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich. (As quoted by Weber, 2005:118)

The Methodist Church's development coincided with the so-called British industrial revolution, which led the United Kingdom to turn into a powerful economy and industrial power in the 19th century, leading high income per capita lasting into the first decades of the 20th century (Lee 1986). Max Weber believed that in the heyday of British industrialization, the phenomenon of "ascetic Protestantism," immanent in the Methodist teachings, contributed to economic development. Ascetic Protestantism went beyond influencing to even impressing the notion at the individual level that a person's economic actions were being conducted under grace and are legitimized by that grace, thus influencing social development. As a result, Weber establishes a new phenomenon, which he calls "bourgeois economic ethic" and explains:

> With the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God's grace and being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois businessman, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put his wealth was not objectionable, could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so. The power of religious asceticism provided him in

addition with sober, conscientious, and unusually industrious workmen, who clung to their work as to a life purpose willed by God. Finally, it gave him the comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of the goods of this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence, which in these differences, as in particular grace, pursued secret ends unknown to men. (Weber, 2005: 120)

Simmel's view of money as comparable to the notion of God can be viewed as a reference to Nietsche's, "Gott ist tot" [God is dead], aptly drawing the attention to the increasing importance of money in society.

Early days Methodism in Ghana

Methodism was introduced to Ghana in 1835 by Joseph Rhodes Dunwell in a village called Cape Coast, an area inhabited by the Fanti, an Akan sub-group in then Gold Coast (now Ghana).[36] This can be seen as an attempt to export to Ghana the concept of "acetic Protestantism" and other world views that originated in the Methodist church in England. Bartels exemplifies this by characterizing Dunwell's contemporary, Thomas Birch Freeman, a Methodist missionary in the 19th century, as follows:

> [Freeman] believed that the Church should be both Christian and industrious; that its members, young and old, should develop a sense of the value of steady and vigorous industry, and for this purpose they should be introduced to large-scale agriculture on well-organized plantations. This would drive out of the life of members of the Church in particular and ultimately out of the community in general the indifference and laziness which the insignificant demand of the smallholdings and subsistence economy tended to induce. The school, he was convinced, should be associated with such large-scale agriculture, not only because it must give a lead, but because of the inescapable need of the country. Unless Christian education taught habits of steady industry through training in manual work, he was sure, "civilization" in that part of the world could never be healthy or progressive. (Bartels, 1965:66)

It is evident from the above citation that the conditions found by the missionaries in pre-industrial Ghana differed strongly with those at that time in prosperous and industrious Britain. This inevitably led to missionaries believing themselves to be representatives of what they saw as a more developed society, with the transmission of its canon of values, in addition to the transmission of Christian doctrine holding high importance. This fact often led to close cooperation between missionaries and representatives of the colonial powers. Essamuah brings it to the point

by saying: "One of the recurring criticisms leveled against missionaries was that they were the willing handmaidens of colonialism, and that expatriate missions enabled European powers to take over the lives and governance of the people" (2010:24). Methodism, in line with other Christian denominations, introduced a new dimension, namely: "civilization" being defined by European or British standards and completely ignoring the fact of an already well-established and functioning civilization shared by the Akan people. The missionaries completely lacked autochthon religious literacy and comprehension of existing cultural values (Danquah 2016). As Bartels asserts, the slogan of the time was "to civilize and to Christianize Africa" (1965 :66). It is noteworthy that the numerical church member decline in England since 1910 (Lee 1986) coincides with constant growth in Ghana.[37] One of my interviewees offers an insightful perception:

> It [Christianity] came to Africa, when, at that time, Europe was beginning to leave Christianity. Christianity was beginning to die in Europe. By the early 19th century, Christianity was waning. It stayed only with a few countries in Europe. Christianity was introduced when the European came to the realization that machines could even create more wealth than religion, and then people realized, hey, why do I waste my time in a church when I can be here and make wealth. So, it had come at a point when Europeans themselves no longer believed in religion.

Moreover, the late 19th century was marked by intense missionary activity in Africa, while none of the established churches in Europe wanted to be inferior to another denomination in its evangelistic efforts. A competition for church members emerged, which brought with it the need to create incentives among the population that went beyond mere church doctrine. The Methodists, along with being concerned with improving the health system, put a high emphasis upon education where "rivalry between church in trying to attract members found its manifestation in the competition for the construction of school buildings" (Bartels, 1965:244). A kind of amalgam of incentives and sanctions developed, incentives directed towards the privilege of education and perspective of gaining economic wealth by using the acquired knowledge and sanctions in form of a ban on observance of religious rites.

The threat of deprivation of educational privilege without denomination or active participation in church service extends to the present day. For example, I have been told on several occasions that the management and teaching staff of Methodist schools insist that pupils attend Sunday services regularly; otherwise, they must leave the school. In today's Ghana, however, where educational institutions are no longer restricted to a Methodist sponsor, this sanction does not entail the far-reaching consequences of the early missionary age, when, in many places, access

to education was equated with access to a Methodist school or educational facilities of other denominations (Dickson, 1991:173). Education is now available through local authorities and governmental schools. Church-run schools are now mostly accessible to all who wish to attend, without denominational or religious conditions.

The rise of the Methodist Church Ghana

After serving as a district in the British Methodist Conference, the Methodist Church Ghana attained full independence from the British body in 1961, only four years after Ghana's independence, enshrining their basic principles into the church's constitution and standing orders. In particular, the liaison between Methodism and education fueled the expansion of the Methodist Church in Ghana (Robert 1996).

The Methodist Church Ghana uses many of the structures introduced by its founder, John Wesley, while others are adapted to local contexts. A certain number of Methodist congregations led by a Reverend Minister form a so-called Society, over which a Bishop presides. The Societies reunite into Circuits which then form Dioceses, both structures also being headed by a Bishop who in turn reports to the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana. The Methodist Church comprises (in 2020) 17 Dioceses, 3,814 societies, 1,066 pastors, 15,920 local preachers, 24,100 Lay Leaders, including Bible Class leaders with pastoral responsibilities. The church continues to be involved in educational work made up of 16 secondary institutions (9,299 students), three mixed training colleges (1,734) and two specialist schools: Mmofraturo in Kumasi (for girls) and the school for the blind at Wa, Northern Ghana. Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, an ecumenical seminary, continues to train ministers for Ghana Christian Council member churches. Meanwhile, the Methodist Church Ghana has expanded its portfolio of engagements to commercial ventures such as the Methodist Investments & Properties Limited (MIPL), which is a fully owned private limited liability company of the Methodist Church Ghana. The company was instituted on 20 January 2011 to undertake commercial ventures on behalf of the Church to generate additional financial resources to support the Church's Mission. Strategic objectives: i.e., "To use aggressive marketing strategies to promote income generation activities and to increase sales."

Identification tools

The Methodist Church Ghana has defined a Vision, a Mission, a Methodist Anthem, and Logo. The Vision is: "To build a vibrant, spirit-filled and spirit-led church for the holistic transformation of society." Its mission is "to equip the church for ministry to the world through the demonstration

of Christian faith and love." The Methodist Anthem reads: "I will serve the Church with all my mind and strength, wherein Thy honor dwells, to glorify Thy name. With a right good will and a right good heart, I will serve the Church."

Noteworthy, the Methodist Church Ghana Logo suggests that Methodism in Ghana has found a way to accommodate traditional religious beliefs. The logo is described as: "a map of Ghana with the 'Nyame Dua' (God's Tree), the symbol in the middle embossed with a cross. The cross is meant to symbolize that Methodist proselytism went beyond borders so as to stretch from the ocean over the upper part of the map and also beyond the countries East and West borders. The vertical piece of the cross stretches into the ocean pointing to the fact that Methodism reached Ghana by the sea in

Fig. 3. Methodist Logo

1835. The "Nyame Dua" symbol is a reminder that before the advent of the missionaries, the concept of God was already known. Finally, the gold background is meant to symbolize the richness "of our heritage in the glorious hope of Jesus Christ" [The Methodist Church Ghana, [25.02.2020]). Some Dioceses integrate local adinkra symbols in their particular symbol.

Bridging the religio-cultural gap

Prayɛ, sɛ woyi baako a na ebu; wokabomu a emmu – When you remove one broomstick it breaks but when you put them together they do not break

The independence allowed the Methodists Church Ghana to adopt what Dickson, a Methodist theologian, calls the "lifestyle of those being evangelized" (Dickson, 1991:95), so that integrating elements such as dancing and songs in local language make the church service more vibrant. Methodism in Ghana received an influx of dynamism through adaptation to local context and expression of emotions. Mt. Zion's Reverend Minister holds the view that adding dancing, clapping, and drumming to Methodist worship services "sells because they feel you have contextualized the Christianity." Dickson offers an interesting analysis by explaining:

> It is in the interest of Africans not to lose their identity, as they would surely do if they failed to take account of their religio-cultural heritage. Being who they are involves the realities of African languages, social customs, traditional religious presuppositions, societal interrelationships [...] and it is imperative that the African's view of the wider world should be an endorsement of his or her integrity. (Dickson, 1991:144)

This approach illustrates what Macamo asserts as "conversion to a single God reduces African differences to the Sameness of the West" (2007:68).

Although in my observation of four different Methodist churches in urban Ghana where attributes from the "religio-cultural heritage" formed an integral part of worship, the extent to their integration is subject to controversial discussion within the Methodist church, as some clergy, such as Rt. Rev. Yedu Bannerman (in Foreword to Nortey, 2014:2), take offence at the noise level, as in his view, "we must always be conscious that we are miserable sinners worshipping a disciplined, holy, gracious Savior. Our God neither slumbers nor sleeps; neither is he deaf as to awake Him with shouts and noisy clapping prayers." The uniqueness of this statement lies in the broader assertion that a culturally rooted expression of contentment,[38] such as expressing appreciation by raising the voice or clapping, has given way to an internalized, imported behavior introduced by the missionaries.

Facing the charismatic challenge

The charismatic Christian movements which are relentlessly gaining ground in Ghana have introduced an unpreceded level of competition for attracting church members. The country-wide spread of the charismatic movement led to a market mentality where religious institutions function as marketing promoters and the religious content turns into consumer commodities following the logic of market economics (Berger, 1967:138). In addition, this charismatic movement has brought about structural and content-related adjustments to significant areas of the church, such as placing an even higher emphasis on success and wealth (Gifford, 2004:195).[39] Thus, charismatic elements have found their way into prayer meetings, evangelizations, youth work, and are reflected in some sermons of the Methodist church as well. The Reverend Minister asserts the present situation in Mt. Zion by saying:

> The challenge we have had is with the charismatics. The way they do their service. People feel a bit liberated in their worship services. When you have a church like ours where everything is strictly ordered, sometimes, people don't feel free to express themselves the way they would want to. […] That's very important. So, when they come, they want to feel free, some form of liberty. And we, in the Methodist church are liturgy.

And he adds that, for the above reasons, he is different from his colleagues: "Some people are very strict with it. I am not. I am not at all." An illustrative example is the introduction of healing testimonies embedded in Mt. Zion's church service mirroring, what Heuser (2009:71) asserts as "the testimony of miracles and healing experiences" playing a significant role in the Ghanaian religious contexts as it "channels expectations and emotions into trust in God's power alone" (ibid.:74). There is a repetitive pattern of the person being healed and the Reverend Minister standing up front and facing the congregation. The person will then narrate about his or her health

problem and an occurrence during church service where the Reverend Minister announced that it has been revealed to him that someone with a health problem is in the audience and this person is as of this moment been healed. An example: "There is someone with a heart issue who is supposed to meet the doctor on Thursday. God has taken care of the issue. But she should go and meet the doctor, and the Lord will do it." The lady concerned would report her healing after 15 years of pain. These confessions are recorded and shared on social media. Another example is Reverend Minister's Sunday morning announcement that the service will be shorter because of a service in the evening during which a "supernatural" visitation is expected. "Every member has to be here, something of the Spirit that is hanging in the air will be dropping tonight." He promises to relieve, in a miraculous way, all those who carry a burden.

Although I don't know to what extend the above holds true for other congregations within the Methodist Church Ghana, the tendency to draw closer not only to the charismatic churches but also to invoke traditional beliefs (Dickson & Ellingworth, 1972:45) is confirmed in interviews and can be determined with almost certain probability.

The career of a Methodist clergy person begins with a three-year term as lay preacher, followed by three years of seminary studies, a further three-year probation period within a congregation and, ultimately, ordination as a Reverend. Moving up the career ladder means becoming a Very Reverend, Right Reverend, Most Reverend, and finally Superintendent Minister, a title through which a position in church opens doors to other means of income, such as serving on boards or advisory systems of private companies. The most common reason cited for this professional choice is that it is one's "calling." Some start with theological training while pursuing a successful career in a secular institution because they "love to do the work of God" and the possibilities for leadership it entails. Next to the ordained clergy are evangelists and lay preachers.

Mt. Zion Society Sakumono

Having introduced selected aspects of the evolvement of Methodism in Ghana, I now intend to focus more precisely upon Mt. Zion Society Sakumono and acquaint the reader with the religio-social environment that was a significant part of my research.

Mt. Zion is a grassroots church, as it is founded by people who saw the need for worship, observing Methodist particularities in a newly developed housing area in Tema-Sakumono. At the time, Sakumono was a village populated by poor fishermen belonging to the Ga people that was also newly populated by governmental employees, an area which is still called "the Estates." This area expanded, attracting private investors and thus creating a middle-class area whereas the

Sokumono village remains largely populated with people who need to put much effort in making ends meet.

Those few pioneers of the middle-working-class, mostly belonging to the Akan ethnic group, confronted the challenge of a three-hour commute to their Methodist congregation. A brief attempt to unite with a small poor local fisherman Methodist church didn't bear any fruit. As a founding Mt. Zion member explained, the main reason for this failure was that the community set the priority to generate income for survival instead of following a sermon. He explained that the congregation left the sermon on a Sunday morning as soon as the fishermen returned with their canoes from the sea with fish: the fishermen needed help to pull the canoe ashore and take care of commercializing the catch. According to my interviewee, the majority of the new to-be Methodist members who settled in the Estates were employed in the formal sector with regular streams of income and established structures such as work-free Sundays, which could then be dedicated to personal preferences, like attending church services.

Fig. 4. Methodist Church Mt. Zion (© Helene Widmer)

The Estate residents thus opted for a door-to-door evangelism and musical animations in the streets while starting to meet in a classroom and then relocating to private homes. Next to Sunday services, they introduced other activities immanent to the Methodist community, such as Bible study and prayer meetings. Once the group had reached 30 members, the dynamic of attracting new members increased. Mt. Zion celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2017 and built a church with a capacity to accommodate about 2,000 people. Mt. Zion has chosen as their church motto, "God, our Fortress!" which also serves as a response to the official greeting among members. When greeted with, "Mount Zion," the response is "The Lord our fortress".

It has merged with the local fisherman's church and attracted, in the words of the Reverend Minister, "so many people who are very, very rich." Simultaneously, a different Mt. Zion population is described by listening to a long-time resident (since 1990), one who is employed and active in church. When asked about the present job situation of Mt. Zion members who attend his Bible class in Sakumono village, he explains that most of those people living in Sakumono village don't have "proper work". When asked for reasons why people can't find a job, he replies that they were not able to learn any trade for the luck of financial resources, and now left with "petty jobs, buying and selling things."

As the congregation grew, the class differences (and disparate social opportunities) between the members became more evident, and although people from both communities attend the same

church, the established socioeconomic boundaries are manifested in behaviour, such as lack of greeting or ignoring the presence of the other members. I gained the chance to interview a retired active Mt. Zion member who lives in the Estates since the very beginning in 1992 and was also part of the group who felt the "need to establish a church." My interviewee describes present occupants of these apartments: "Most of them, they are all workers. Behind me you see people, workers from SSNIT,[40] Accountant General Department, there Bank of Ghana." I was interested in the present-day Estates for two reasons: (i) because this is the cradle of Mt. Zion, the place where the pioneering work to establish a local Methodist church began, and (ii) it has over time become a source of localized social divide. The latter is grounded in hints of what a thirty-year-old Mt. Zion member living in Sakumono village laments:

> And at my time those living in the Estates and Sakunomo were like close. Because we knew each other. Because they knew that the church started from the village, so we were very close, we used to play… but now, it's not like that. Now, there is a little bit rank, the rich ones see those living in Sakunomo, they see us in a certain way.

And he continues:

> We knew each other very well… but now, if I am from Sakumono, someone from the estates driving a car will pass KNOWING that I am going to the church. […] So, in our time, it was so interesting because we mingled with each other… the Estates, we can go to their houses to play, and they also come to Sakumono to play… so it was kind of fun, going to Mt. Zion especially.

The perception of those who originate from Sakumono village and identify themselves with the origin of the church is markedly different from those who came from the Estates and see themselves as Mt. Zion's founders. While the latter take pride in having contributed to "one of the best Methodist churches in Ghana," the villages seem to fall further behind in being acknowledged for their part in church establishment. During the period of my research, villagers requested that the Reverend Minister start a new Methodist church in Sakumono village because – to quote the Reverend Minister – they "didn't feel welcome among the rich in Mt. Zion." This may be an indicator that a social divide is still prevailing, possibly even deepening. I will return to this issue when discussing the impact of classism as narrated by my interviewees.

Mt. Zion statistics

Mt. Zion compiles its statistical data quarterly. As of 30 September 2018, the church had 1,512 members (580 males and 932 females, inclusive of 321 children and teens). Against the background that "youth," especially in their numbers in Africa, present unique global issues

including youth welfare, rights, and employment, the position of young people in Mt. Zion doesn't seem to get the requested attention. During a Sunday sermon, this was strongly emphasized by a senior leader who served as the spokesman for the church youth who shared his personal views by saying, "As a church we don't trust the ability of young people because of their age." Then he continues, "The voices have become too loud to ignore. The young people are concerned that we are not listening to them" and "we don't have to treat the young people as a group who is isolated from society." He pointed to blind spots in the Mt. Zion's vision by asking, "What kind of policy does the church have towards the youth?"

It is noteworthy that the church records new arrivals but not departures or deaths. All members are expected to be part of one of the 52 weekly Bible Classes, each constituted according to age, proximity to the place of residence or personal preference. Membership is legitimized through payment of a tithe which is recorded by the Bible Class Leader.

The average church attendance on a Sunday range between 39% and 43%. The rapid growth in membership since the early nineties necessitated a new church building, which resulted in considerable financial commitments and expectations by church leadership towards their members to share in this burden. Social activities and church engagements, such as scholarships for needy children and youth, had to be sized down and the appeal for donations increased, giving rise to several offerings during one service. As I will show, these measures have led to a considerable level of resentment.

The socioeconomic structure as estimated by several members is as follows: 20% poor; 60% middle-class (high percentage of Government employees); 20% very wealthy or "top level."

As this is core of my research topic, I asked several members and church leaders to estimate the percentage of those members who belong to the Akan. The appraised estimate was 75%. This is also reflected in the Society Standing Committee for 2018. Here, out of 223 members, about 73% belong to the Akan. It can also be assumed that in Mt. Zion the personal economic status correlates with a leadership position or using the words of a clergy as reported to me, "if you want to be a chairman you need money."

Structure

Mt. Zion has remained true to the Methodist trademark, maintaining itself as a methodical, thoroughly structured church. This fact is confirmed by the church clergy as well as interviewed members. The structure is manifested in different ways, what I call liturgical structure and hierarchical structure within the institution, Mt. Zion.

Liturgical structure

At the beginning of each year, the Methodist Church Ghana provides an Almanac for oversight and to establish the content preached in the respective Methodist churches in the country. In the view of Mt. Zion's Reverend Minister, the Almanac offers an orientation in what he calls the "religious marketplace". The Almanac[41] defines for each Sunday the liturgical colour worn by the clergy, the theme of the sermon, the reading from the Old Testament, Psalms and New Testament, as well as the Bible text for the gospel and suggests hymns to be sung during church services. It also sets the Methodist Church Ghana yearly theme. From 2017 to 2020, the overarching theme was, "Go and make disciples of all Nations" and the sub-theme varies from year to year: in 2020, it is "Intensifying our Teaching Ministry towards Disciple making," based on Colossians 1:28. In addition, the Weekly Bible Lessons (WBL) are designed to guide each Bible class in Ghana throughout the whole year. The writers are selected Methodist clergy members who introduce a Bible passage, offer an interpretation of this passage, and close under the heading of "live the narrative" with questions related to observation, interpretation and mediation, reflection and resolution and application.

The above-mentioned opening up to charismatic elements is seen by clergy and interviewed members as going back to the Wesleyan "heritage," because in their view "Pentecostal is traceable to Methodism."

While trying to grasp with the theological approach mainly applied in Mt. Zion, I familiarized myself with different theological interpretations of the Bible. In his book *Zankapfel Bibel. Eine Bibel – viele Zugänge* (Luz, 2007), which can be translated as "Bible – bone of contention. One Bible – many approaches" offers six European theologians' approaches to a single biblical text (Mark 6:30-44 – Jesus feeds the five thousand). This particular passage in the Bible is not my focus of attention but rather the six approaches used for its exegesis. The proponent of historic-critical approach (Marquerat, 2007) stresses the necessity to consider the historical circumstances prevailing at the time when the text was written as well as the target group and the specific needs being addressed. He concludes that reading the Bible does not mean that we take from it any unalterable truth or order for behaviour that should be repeated unaltered today but rather stresses upon the interplay between reason and faith. The evangelical approach discussed by Bittner (2007:55-70) defines a grassroot and less theological approach. It tries to find out what is God's message behind the given text. In his view, the Bible is not a collection of eternal, divine truths, but mainly a collection of human narratives – the way God has spoken on different occasions and made His will known. A feminist approach offered by Jornod (2007) is embedded in the Liberation Theology, pointing out that biblical texts are not ultimate norms which have to be observed in exactly the same

manner at all times. Füssel (2007) elaborates on the materialistic approach, deriving its hermeneutics from Marxism, linguistic and cultural anthropology. In his view, the theological reasoning and spiritual direction of the biblical text are closely interconnected with its conditions of production and reception. Consequentially, the Bible cannot be seen as collection of abstract truths and norms. Kaufmann (2007) offers the avenue of the depth-psychological approach based on C.G. Jung's assertion that, in the depths of the human psyche, the religious part plays a central role. He puts the emphasis on religious tolerance. And finally, the fundamentalist approach (Lerle, 2007) is based on the phrase, "Thus says the Lord" (here, Lerle points to Amos 2:1, 5:3). According to Lerle, the biblical teaching claims truth in full accordance with reality with the expectation that followers maintain an unquestionable loyalty to the Bible. Interpretation of the Bible is based on faith – all other sources, including theological approaches, are sinful (Lerle underlines this statement with Rom. 14:23). An additional approach used by an interviewee added an important piece in my struggle to grapple with the approach(es) used by theologians at Mt. Zion, particularly those of the Reverend Minister. My interviewee explained that his literary approach gives meaning to the Bible as contained in the words making up the verse and no more. As a next step, he applies this literary meaning as he deems fit.

Discussions with the Reverend Minister, as well as listening to preaching in Mt. Zion, showed his preference for the fundamentalist approach mixed with elements of a literary use and personal interpretation. A conforming indicator for use of these approaches combined with the awareness of occupying an outstanding position lies in a statement by the Reverend Minister, "We play on the emotions of people. People don't pay attention to details." A supportive attitude of exercising influence lies in his view that mostly preaching is delivered in a raised, exceptionally loud voice, because "loud voice also influences the emotions."

However, in my observation, he has used psychological means to draw the congregation's attention to what he deems meaningful in his sermon by asking, "Are you in church? Did you hear what I said? Are you here with me?" or by using personified appeals, such as: "You have disappointed me in one area. This week you have to make it up to me. Please, don't disgrace me, come and listen to his [American lecturer] teachings." Obviously, it is the others, the church members who, through recognition of the attributes defining the Reverend Minister's role, bestow recognition. In the present case, the Reverend Minister can safely rely on the Bishop's backing who affectionally calls him "odifo," meaning Prophet.

Hierarchical structure

A description of the hierarchical structure encompassing management is more challenging because it is more controversial. Deviating from the rather theoretical approach used in this

chapter, I wish to use my empirical findings to illustrate this topic. My attendance at 14 church services formed my impression that Mt. Zion was run as a business in the sense of structure as well as using psychological means to influence. I addressed this observation both with the Reverend Minister, who is also a co-owner of a financial business and Board member in several companies, and with a leading church member and business owner, asking each of them if in their view Mt. Zion was run as a business. Both confirmed my observation. The Reverend Minister says:

> The Methodist church is very well structured just as any company. You have a Managing Director, then you have line managers. It is the same with the Methodist church. Even though you have the minister, like the Superintendent Minister being the head at this level, there is a Leaders Meeting which acts like a board. A board for the church. They decide on how the church should be run. It is not the sole decision of the minister. It is the Leaders Meeting acting as a Board that directs what should go on. Now, when the minister comes to work, he has stewards that he works with. Now, the stewards also have people, they work with. In this church, we have Human Resources Department, we have Personnel Resources, we have Finance and Development, we have all kinds of committees that work. We call the coordinating offices. So, the structure is like that; you cannot by-pass one and do another. It must go through the procedure; it's a bit bureaucratic.

The Reverend Minister explains Mt. Zion's governance:

> All organizations have their representatives at the Leaders Meeting. Now, all [Bible] classes also have their Leaders. Their Leaders are members of the Leaders Meeting. And then there are Stewards; they are Chairman of all the groups, the committees. All are members of the Leaders Meeting. They constitute the Leaders Meeting. The Superintendent Minister is the Chairman of the Leaders Meeting. Then […] for every 50 or 60 people, we select one Leader to represent them. They constitute the Leaders Meeting. That is the highest decision-making body of the church.

Both narratives agree with Williamson who aptly describes the situation as follows:

> It must also be clear that the status of the minister in the community is enhanced. He is a king or a chief among his people. He is also the initiate into sacred mysteries. The ordained priest or pastor is entitled osofo, the traditional title for the officiating priest at the shrine of the god. With the adoption of this traditional word for its clergy the Church has gathered to itself much of the traditional attitude of the Akan animist laity to their priests. The Christian osofo is accorded the prestige and respect traditionally accorded to one versed in holy

things. The Church's theological training course seems to acquire in the Akan mind the efficacy of the initiation period and training undergone by novitiate animist priests. It is assumed that a man trained in the theological college is ipso facto made minister, and once he had donned the clerical collar, he can never be less than osofo. In relation to the pastor in his work the subtle atmosphere of traditional attitude appears in the common understanding that the osofo is the initiate into sacred mysteries, that the essential aspect of the Church service is the rite he conducts, that one has recourse to him in time of need, and concerning whom, in the exercise of his office, criticism is improper. (Williamson 1965:81)

Thus, although as enshrined in the Ghanaian Methodist Constitution, the guidance and control power should lie with the elected church leaders, the de-facto control is allocated to "some powerful members" who are well connected within the Methodist church structure and the fear is that they might report a leader to the hierarchy. As the Reverend Minister says: "Because, if you misbehave, from there, they just report you. You are fired."

Church as a medium to cope with life

Although the Bible in its Gospel of Salvation focuses upon the individual (i.e., Luke 15:7), it also emphasizes the need for fellowship, something commonly called the church (i.e., Hebrew 10:24-25, Acts 2:42, Acts 2:46-47, Romans 12:4-5, Romans 16:17). Fellowship carries along social control and social encouragement and support, possibly including a considerable level of trust (Ferguson, 2011:264). It contains orientation and provides the platform for making "reality humanly meaningful" (Berger, 1967:100) by, for example, offering "the poor with a meaning for their poverty […] the rich with a meaning for their wealth" (ibid.:59). It carries the important element of religiously legitimized solidarity, which includes the element of personal surrender under its ordering power. As the Reverend Minister indicated, everyday life in Ghana is hardly characterized by predictability. Here lies the chance for institutionalized Christianity to act as a medium to cope with social change and to provide a notion of stability to those like-minded individuals who belong to a community of faith.

Beginning with the missionaries during their early days in Ghana, church attendance as an act of social communalization, exchange, and strengthening of social ties has been linked to economic success and opportunities, evolving into social codes and practices, which Ferguson (2011:266) labels as "fashion," a meeting point for the like-minded and an occasion for networking, which includes "display of dress and fine manners" (Williamson, 1965:21). Furthermore, as I assert from the conducted interviews, the belief in miracles is one of the reasons, if not the main reason, for

high church attendance. The popularity of conforming to expected Christian behavior, which in Ghana is also manifested through church attendance, stems from the fact that it is associated with economic prosperity.

A leading member of Mt. Zion shared his view by asserting, "we [Ghanaian society] are religious almost to a fault. We are drunk, we are almost intoxicated, so high on religion… there is religious activities everywhere you turn." The Reverend Minister shared his view on this phenomenon by saying, "I told the congregation, just last week that the greatest gallery of hypocrites is the gallery of Christians. And the reason is because many people come to church and yet, they are not practicing Christians." He correlates his view of the situation in Mt. Zion with Christianity in Ghana by sharing his religio-psychological point of view:

> Because we are very religious in this part of the world, it looks odd for you not to be identified with a Church or religious group. And so, it has become fashionable for certain people to attend church. So, they don't come for the purpose of meeting the spiritual needs that the church is supposed to serve, as you don't see the effect in their lives So, they live double standards. When they come to church, they put on a nice face, they try to look like they are Christians, but outside the church, they have a different outlook altogether.

A possible explanation to the Reverend Minister's assertion that people attend church sermon without believing, is echoed in Dickson's conviction of people adhering simultaneously to two religions for practical reasons. In Dickson's view:

> The vast majority of the Church membership, however preliterate or educated, live at two levels, conforming to a minimum of Church discipline but not emancipated from traditional beliefs and practices. Their Christianity is additional to rather than a displacement of the traditional outlook. Their lives show the impact not so much of the Christian faith per se, as of an invading westernism, which includes an association with the Church. (Dickson, 1991:172)

Activities and services of the Mt. Zion community

The above is reflected in my interviews, to which I will refer at a later stage. Here, I narrow the focus to the incentives that Mt. Zion offers its members. The church attributes high importance to events dedicated to evangelism performed by celebrities. Regular prayer meetings are dedicated to specific topics, such as all-night prayers [26.07.2019], which was advertised with the line "all believers' all night." Additional examples include the motto "like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Ghana" and festivals such as a "Love Feast" on Valentine's Day, or a three-

day "Mega crusade" in 2019 and the "My testimony" festival. Most events provide means of advertising by wearing particular clothing with a financial implication for members, as they need to purchase the material and have the clothes made.

When I started my research in 2017, the church offered each Sunday morning one service starting at about 7:30am and ending around noon or 12:30pm. For years, members had been discussing the possibility of offering two consecutive services to increase attendance. The current leadership approved this proposal, and, by end of 2019, Mt. Zion started to offer two Sunday services: 7:00am – 8:30 am and then 9:00am -11:00am. When I visited Mt. Zion in January 2020, I attended both services and when I asked for opinions on this new approach, I received mixed reactions. Some complained that the time allocated, particularly to the first service, was too short, while others appreciated the fact of starting and ending the worship early in the morning. The Reverend Minister bemoaned that the time allocated to his sermon did not allow him to properly elaborate on his thoughts and convey the message to church members.

Most of the core activities taking place throughout the week can be traced back to the founding members. Those of my interviewees who either were part of the founding members or descended from them mentioned this status with pride. Their identification with Mt. Zion appeared to be rooted in their status as part of this founding members group. Some founding members confessed that, after they advanced economically and relocated from Sakumono, they still have taken it upon themselves to drive the distance to Mt. Zion, even though other Methodist churches were closer to their places of residence. They perceive themselves as pioneers who contributed to a renowned church and wished to claim their share in the church's benefits and its prestigious reputation.

There is Sunday School, the Boys Brigade, and the Girls Brigade. Other groups include the Men's Fellowship, the Women's Fellowship, and the Youth Fellowship, as well as a Girls Fellowship. Different instrumental and vocal groups, such as the Church Choir, the Youth Choir, Zion Praise Singing Ministry, Christ Little Band, and the Singing Band also exist. Furthermore, church members can join a Guild and females above 18 are welcome to become part of Susanna Wesley Mission Auxiliary (SUWMA). Some of the groups require special cloth and headwear, a unique identification of membership or belonging. However, it remains difficult to estimate the broad impact of this manifold offer, as it appears that people maintain multiple memberships.

Financial Governance

The church is expecting each member to contribute 10% of his or her income, the so-called tithe, which constitutes the main church income.[42] In addition, Mt. Zion has created other streams of income, such as adult and children offertory, thanks offering, harvest, prayer meetings, special

programs, donation, sales of cloth and books – all of these set up in a way that they are religiously legitimated.

Each Sunday, synthetic leather envelopes meant for donations are readily available on each chair with a quotation from 2 Cor. 9:6-7: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously for God loves a cheerful giver"[43] written on top. At a certain time during each sermon, all church attendants are expected to line up in an orderly manner and are ushered, row by row, to the altar where the envelop is deposited as an offertory. Although I was assured by church leadership that the donations were voluntary, I never saw anyone remaining seated during this portion of the service. This is possibly due to the use of the "normative authority of the Bible" (Weber, 2005: 91) as well as social pressure and control which lay in the expectation of standing up and queueing with the other members and visitors. In my observation confirmed by some interviewees, lining up for the offertory is also perceived as a social event: to see and be seen, to show off new clothes or hair style, to openly greet people well placed in society. A lady member, when reflecting upon a possible psychological pressure, sheds some light on the evolution of the present procedure by saying:

> At first, we used to have those things going round. But then, you know, Africans want to show off. People have clothes, they want to get up, they want to dance, and probably, because the church is so big, when you are seated in the back and your friends are somewhere, the person won't see you in church. So, during offering time, he goes, "ha, this person came to church." So, the church is like a social… it's a drama… a lot of drama (laughs)… I would say, we have a lot of drama going on there.

Harvest is another institutionalized procedure within the church that is employed to increase income. During this event, church members are grouped based on the day in the week they were born. Although, to my knowledge, it is only the Akan who, rooted in a traditional cosmological belief (Rattray, 1969:318), frequently name their children after the day of the week they were born, attributing to those names meanings related to the character of the person. It appears that each church member is in the position to join a "day-born" group. Individuals are invited to pick, fill in, and sign a form and pledge a certain amount the person wants to donate to the church in a year's time. This is accompanied by, "If you want to be alive in 2020, you take a pledge form" [being said on 03.2019]. My church pew neighbor asked me to help her with her year pledge of 50 GHC (about 9 EUR). A request which I interpret as a sign of perceived social pressure towards financial contribution experienced by members with restricted financial resources. Another member narrated his inner dilemma in an interview:

Last week, we did a pledge. And my believe is that, if I am able to pledge even 500 GHC, and at the end of my pledge donation, I have not been able to redeem this amount, I have not been faithful to God. So, I decided not to write any amount. […] Some members, too, they will pledge in anticipation that they will get money, maybe the same amount. And along the line something goes wrong, they won't get what they pledged, are you going to blame the person? Or stop the person from coming to church? no.

Representatives of the "day-born" groups are elected and a minimum expectation from each group is announced (on 02/2018 it amounted to 50,000 GHC). After church, the "day-born" groups meet and encourage members to find means to donate to surpass this minimum threshold amount. Competition within and among the groups is highly encouraged and, throughout the year, several Sundays are dedicated to "day-born" groups to share with the congregation in a festive manner the amount thus far collected.

Once a month, all members born in that month are invited to gather at the altar and receive a benediction accompanied by the encouragement for donation. Every third Sunday is dedicated to the welfare offering which was 2 GHC per member in July 2018 and earmarked for charitable congregational tasks. Donations accompany events such as welcoming of new members to the Women's Fellowship.

And then there are additional or what appeared to be spontaneous calls for donations under the auspices of what Troeltsch calls "ecclesiastical philanthropy" (1959:25). There are different ways that Christian charity is evoked by linking it to a conception of God's purpose (Geertz, 2017:98). For example, the Reverend Minister will create a certain emotionally loaded atmosphere, and then invite the congregation by saying, "It is a very good atmosphere. I want to take your offering. It is a very good atmosphere. I want to take your offering. Bring it to the altar and praise it at the altar." Alternatively, the Reverend Minister would introduce the special need for a donation, and then walk with a big plastic bowl under his arm, saying, "We want to show our love to God by pushing the activity of His kingdom." He would then start asking for a considerable amount of 2,000 GHC approaching certain members to invite them to write a check. Then, he slowly starts decreasing the amount. The congregation is very quiet, giving me the impression that people seem to be embarrassed, and the Reverend Minister eases the atmosphere by starting to sing and inviting everyone to join in the song as well as bring whatever money they want to donate to the altar. My general observation is that lively singing is supposed to encourage people to donate.

On one occasion, the Reverend Minister pro-actively addressed the discomfort of church members in response to the high number of requests for donations. He admitted that people asked him to stop talking about money. In that conversation, he mentioned that "we need 80,000" to service the

loan for the church building. He enthusiastically tries to motivate people's conscience to help the church.

The church also offers the possibility to giving a "thank-offering," a special donation meant as gratitude for a benefit received stressing upon deliverance from misfortune or success in achievement such as offerings for a successful master's degree, childbirth, birthday donation, safe return from a journey.

Church service

The below includes observations and elements from several services which are repeatedly exercised throughout the year.

Entering the large, empty building at exactly 8:30am, the time designated to start the sermon, I chose to sit rather towards the back with the fantasy that, although my foreignness was obvious even in such a large community, I could unobtrusively assume my role as an observer. In retrospect, church members allowed me to observe and, during my first visits, only rarely established eye contact or offered a greeting. Over time, I became more noticeable in the sense that some church members would greet or exchange some words with me. However, throughout the whole research period, I remained a visitor who was not expected to integrate into the community of believers.

During the early part of the service, the church was almost deserted, just a few people scattered in the big hall. Most are sitting quietly, glancing at their cellphones, whispering here and there. The organ starts playing, while the choir enters the church hall walking slowly one-by-one down the church aisles singing a hymn. This is a signal that the service has started and within the next twenty minutes worshipers start to arrive in bigger numbers, filling up to three quarters of the church hall. It is obvious that people pay a great deal of attention to how they dress for church, on some occasions a particular dress code points to membership in a certain church group. Children might be seen wearing clothes with a quote from Psalm 111:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" or adults wearing yellow or blue T-Shirts with "God is our Fortress," or "I am proud to be a Methodist."

Special, larger and higher chairs are placed behind the altar facing the congregation – they seem to be reserved for church clergy and leading members. Very early in the service, there are readings of long passages from the Bible mostly in the local Twi language. Then, it is time for singing, which, at first, felt a little overwhelming. All members know the local songs by heart and sing with much passion and joy, some raise their arms up, simultaneously waving with a white handkerchief, a request from the Reverend Minister. The melody and rhythm invite dancing and people follow. The whole congregation is moving in waves, while some in their quest for more space dance in

the aisles or the front of the altar. This singing and dancing seems to unite church members allowing the socioeconomic differences to vanish for a moment. When, after about 20 minutes, the excitement seems to reach its climax, the music will die down and, during some sermons, this would be the time to call for an offering. While everyone is lining up, the Singing Band contributes by singing in Twi to a special enthusiastic atmosphere. The main sermon, delivered by an ordained Minister on most Sundays, follows. After reading a Bible passage, the preacher elaborates on the text by including his interpretation. On some Sundays, it would be next to impossible to follow a sermon because the preacher applies a "language salad," jumping from English to Twi and back again. I was surprised by the persuasiveness of gestures, voice, and repeated calls for reassurance that the congregation is understanding the message, "I don't know whether you understand?" and the following silence and utterances of "praise the Lord" by the preacher. From what I could grasp, the didactics of the Reverend Minister's sermons were highly moralizing and instructive. At times, the Reverend Minister sought support from the faithful by instructing them, "this is a good place to clap," or asking that they confirm their agreement with his statements by favorably responding to his call, "this is a good place to say 'amen'." At times, the preacher appeared to position himself as a rigorous advocate of Christian moral coercion. By taking the role of a "moral apostle" who preaches a moral sermon, he appeared to lay claim to the unconditional nature of the values he preaches, presenting himself to the congregation from a superior standpoint to underline the asymmetrical power difference between the moral preacher and his listeners, between the right standpoint and the wrong path.

Although, as confirmed by the clergy, my interviewees, as well as the guiding Methodist Church Ghana literature, the church's emphasis lies upon evangelism, sometimes I was able to pick up statements, which, at least partly, resonated with my research topic, such as "Spirituality is not what we do in church, it's what we do in society. You go to work at 9 and you close at 12 – and you don't know that the devil is using you." [clapping] or – and this one is particularly interesting because it defines a "good citizen" at very different levels, correlating indicators in an unusual manner: "You must be a good citizen. Stop sleeping with other people's wives. If you don't pay your taxes, you are stealing. And God doesn't like it."

Prayer is an immanent part of a Methodist service devoted to a variety of needs and concerns. As already mentioned, accumulation of financial resources played a significant part in each sermon along with its redistribution to the church. High emphasis was put on trust, the outcome of which would culminate in a miraculous blessing: "Trust. He will give you money."

A Sunday church sermon ended as it started, with the choir reentering the church hall, walking slowly one-by-one down the church aisles, and singing a hymn, and the congregation rises and sings along.

As aforementioned, Mt. Zion offers different formats of gatherings. At the Reverend Minister's invitation, I attended a Sunday evening event on the church premises. About 60 people had gathered and the meeting began with a long prayer. Both the Reverend Minister and the Bishop joined and, after the Reverend Minister delivered a sermon, participants were invited to share any concerns and ask questions. The following interaction caught my attention. A member intervenes: "Our problem is unemployment. When we ask for help, they turn us away. I once talked to a man from Men's Fellowship, and he laughed at me." The person is abruptly interrupted by the Bishop who spoke in the local language in an energetic manner. People laugh [later, I am informed that the bishop said to the person, that now, that he has a job, he should not complain any more]. Next, the Reverend Minister added: "The reality of life is that nobody owes you a living. Don't come to church expecting that someone owes you anything. You are corrupt, you talk about people behind their back. And that's how they talk about you. I think, this is a good place to clap" and he continues to elaborate on the reasons for refusing to support a member in a job search: "If the person knows the father, he will take his child. It is different as if you bring someone unknown." Attempting to bridge the gap, he announces that he would want to start with a mentorship program. The program places older, well-established people in the church with young people. Young people can apply. The upcoming Sunday, there will be a meeting with the Men's Fellowship to discuss the details of this program.

After the church service, in the shade of an impressive parking lot, filled with cars, the most apparent, if not most perplexing observation, was the interaction, or lack thereof, among members. Most people seem to be in a rush to leave the church premises, leading to an assumption that the socializing function innate to this church community is largely satisfied by the length and content of the sermon; the bonding constituent defined by membership of the Mt. Zion church community is fulfilled. To my surprise, members hardly greet each other, except if people are obviously bound by friendship. To an observer, the apparent unity professed during the church service rapidly dissolves upon its conclusion. Over time, classicism within Mt. Zion became noticeable, an observation confirmed by interviewees, which I will address later in this paper.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 5: EMPIRICAL STUDIES
"There are no facts, only interpretations" Friedrich Nietzsche

Introduction

Having traced Methodism through the Judeo-Christianity introduced by missionaries in Ghana, discussed the origins of work ethic, and described the Akan's historical, cultural, and religious experience, the research terrain is now sufficiently established, allowing us to turn our attention to individual interviews with the principal interviewees.

Whereas the previous chapters established an understanding of the past and present using a holistic approach to situate Akan members of the Methodist church Mt. Zion in present-day Ghana, the attention in the following will now turn to individuals, focusing upon their perceived reality in a given situation while keeping in mind Macamo's warning that "our accounts of reality are based on what data tell us about that reality and depends of our way of giving meaning to this data" (2017:81). While individual capacity to produce meaning relates to the origin and consequences attributed to it by the interviewee at a certain place and time (Dilthey, 1976; Dickson, 1976), the researcher's comprehension cannot exclude a certain level of anticipation and personal interpretation. In addition, Carrithers observes a phenomenon that he describes as the "greater theme of human life, namely the continual shuffling of people from one society to another, as visitors or settlers or converts, willing or unwilling. In these circumstances people do manage not only to deal with each other, but to achieve a mastery of skills native to other society" (1992:10).

Given this phenomenon, there is still a process of learning beyond what is passed on from generation to generation. It is more than parroting codes of the host society as the act of social mimesis and adaption inevitably also includes the introduction of new elements (stemming from the original socio-cultural imprint) in the process, leading to change in the host society as well. Thus, as I will show there is, as expected, no clear-cut attribution to only one source of influence responsible for the development of personal values that have an impact upon an individual's work ethic. I attempt to share the reflections of Mt. Zion church members belonging to the Akan with an attitude of openness to the richness of social worlds, while attempting to reveal enough information to allow for a certain level of typification. It is about an insight into social phenomena influencing behavior and decision making for social actions, while being aware that by framing the data there is a risk of reducing the complexity innate to it (Macamo, 2017:82).

Explaining the structure

From the methodological point of view, the content of this chapter is an attempt to reflect a truthful account by using referential means. As the term "truthful" entails a level of ambivalence, I wish to clarify that in my view the truth of what my interviewees shared with me lies in my attributions to it whereas my attributions are the result of my reconstruction of their narratives.

While reassembling my data, aiming to give an account of the repeating patterns that emerged from the data gathered from the field interviews, it became clear that to interpret and pursue their economic needs and aspirations within the context of a specific social environment (like the religious community which is focus of my research), the interviewees attribute a considerable significance to the fact that they perceive this environment to be supportive and encouraging, so as to allow them to articulate their expectations and interact with each other in a manner that is contributive towards the satisfaction of their individual needs. This mutual understanding of the legitimacy and usefulness of specific social practices (like providing a networking platform as well as being of selective appeal to Akan culture) forms a sheltered environment that at the same time offers a shared interpretative framework for the meaning of these practices. Social behavior and the interpretation thereof, are thus directly interlinked with the level of trust and integration of the individuals in the community, its codes and the meaning they provide. I will elaborate on this in more detail in my concluding chapter.

Data provide substantial evidence that culture has an influence upon a personal work ethic. Data also captures ample information as to which extend Mt. Zion's teaching informs a certain attitude towards work. However, as a single attribution to the source for a personal work ethic is not always clear, I decided to discuss this topic separately. Thus, paying tribute to the substantial relations, where the focus lies on connection and interaction, three themes came to the fore:

1. Work ethic attributed to Akan values and upbringing,
2. Work ethic accredited to Methodism, including Mt. Zion's teaching,
3. Work ethic and the attribution gap: Akan values or Methodist influence?

The data captured in the apriori code Tithe / Donation and Corporate Structure, as well as elaborations on corruption, did not prove a convincing stand-alone topic but rather a highly valuable contribution when discussing the Mt. Zion environment and therefore have found their appropriate expression in the theme, "Work ethic accredited to Methodism, including Mt. Zion's teaching."

From a holistic perspective, the two first themes deal with the phenomena of a plethora of influences that shape human behavior in the pursuit of need satisfaction and thereby implying a

certain attitude towards work. By exploring these perspectives and bringing them closer to the research field, the considerable qualitative and quantitative mentioning of Akan influence upon personal attitude towards work and its attained results require that this theme be illuminated in depth. The data gathered made it compulsory to dive deeply into the religious and social world of Mt. Zion, aiming to assess its meaning for and influence upon individual behavior where the means to generate income play a significant role, and thus the topic of work and its ethic gains importance. The third theme points to a dilemma as I assessed it through my attribution of what has been voiced by my interviewees.

I will discuss each of these themes using categories as brought up by my interviewees. In addition, although I have already dedicated a chapter to the definition of work ethic as discussed in literature with a few references to interview statements, I believe it is important to include a further discussion on the interviewees' understanding thereof, which, while often representing "thinking outside the box," will contribute to the term's empirical definition. Their views not only will broaden the definition Illustrated by inclusion of personal views and experiences; it will also simultaneously narrow it to a local perception — local being Mt. Zion church members defining themselves as Akan. The importance of highlighting the target group's definition of work ethic is manifold: (i) it allows a glimpse into their understanding of this particular social reality, (ii) it lays a foundation for their social action while simultaneously, (iii) it identifies how they define a proper work ethic. Furthermore, while analyzing the interviews, I am also interested in finding out the extent to which the theoretical framework matches the empirical reality.

Although each interviewee will be introduced individually, it seems helpful, from a holistic analytical approach, to classify each interviewee along socioeconomic lines. Socioeconomic status seems to play a significant role in Mt. Zion. In my observation, those interviewees who perceive themselves as socioeconomically successful also are perceived by others as being influential within Mt. Zion. They are engaged in visible subgroups, such as choir or brigades, and in most cases the economic status correlates with leadership status, either as a leader of a Bible class and/or being a member of Mt. Zion's leadership team. In fact, seven interviewees who either owned a company or were highly placed in formal professional employment were all leadership members. This leads to the assumption that their statements have been influenced by their socioeconomic status. Except for one person and the Very Reverend, all interviewees are still active Mt. Zion members and fit into one of the following groups:

Group 1: self-employed or high income + active in church

Group 1A: self-employed with moderate income

Group 3: gainfully employed in formal sector + active in church

Group 5: informal sector with irregular income + active in church

Group 7: unemployed and poor + active in church

Group 9: church leadership

Group 10: retired + active in church

CHAPTER 6: PERSONAL DEFINITIONS OF WORK ETHIC

The ambivalence of interpretation

In this chapter I wish to share an individual ethical and moral framework which illustrates a social as well as individual behavior being closely interwoven with the Christian faith. The attempt to integrate Christian conviction in different spheres of life showcases a personal construction of meaning either leading or deriving from human action. It is, in my view, a suitable example of showcasing to what extent attribution of meaning depends on contextualization within a given environment. My decision to share a rather lengthy part of an interview, is based on its density in illustrating different components which contribute to a personal work ethic, such as the interviewee's assertion that success in work performance positively relates to creating the certainty of being blessed.

Although the speaker, Abraham, has already been briefly introduced, I need to add some information allowing a more profound appreciation of his narrative. Within four months, I had the privilege to conduct two interviews with Abraham, a recently retired soldier who was about to start two businesses. He had spent his adult life in urban settings and reached his desired socioeconomic status, describing himself as belonging to the "upper class" in Mt. Zion, where he holds a respected position within the laic church hierarchy. He was part of my pilot interviews, where I tried to focus on the "life-story approach," hoping to capture influences from the cultural and Christian Methodist perspectives. In the first interview, Abraham put a high emphasis upon God's guidance in his life, his commitment to the "things of God," his love of and involvement in Mt. Zion, mentioning 67 times God's influence in his life during a one-hour interview. The lack of reference towards cultural influences in his life was surprising and prompted me to rethink my interview approach. In the second interview, I invited Abraham to elaborate on cultural aspects that have influenced his life in general and attitude towards work ethic in particular – and here, I was amazed by the richness and diversity of information. By using quotes from both interviews, I wish to showcase different influences upon a Mt. Zion member, identifying himself as Akan regarding attitudes and behaviors surrounding work. In the first interview, he says:

I was the Head at [location in Ghana] […] they have gold mines […]. And those days, they were stealing gold […] I was going to arrest the people, who have been stealing the gold. And then, they warned me, […] if you involve yourself in those things, they can kill you. So, I went to headquarters and told my boss […] that I have informants who come to tell me these things, and the informants are ready to help me arrest those people. So, my boss said: 'OK, I'll be behind you. So, don't be afraid. Go.'

So, I went and did it. And then, the thing was discovered. Those people were arrested […] about 700 million had been stolen. So, I told them that the informants who informed me, they actually came from inside, we have to ─ by our work ethic ─ they have to be given informant award. And so, I was asking the big men in the company, the managers, to give an award.

Then they told me I should show the identity of my informants. Otherwise, they will take it, that it's my own job as a customs officer. […]

I said: "No, no, no, we don't do it, it's against our work ethic. We don't expose informants.' They said, 'If you don't do it, it is your job that you did.'

I said, 'Ok, no problem, I will go and tell my bosses. They will come. They will write for you to pay that moneys.'

And […] they went to Minerals Commission to report. […] and I was actually interdicted for six months. But I have come to understand, that all those things, God took me through all that – to actually train me and to show me his hand in my life. So, for six months I was not paid, and I was in the house. No money, at a point, there was no money in the house for anything. And throughout my life, I have come to accept and to establish the fact, that God, actually God is, he has spoken to me.

The second interview took place four months later:

And then, when I was sent to be the commander, you know, in customs there are places, apart from your salary, people give you work, you work for people …me, I will not be telling you, bring me this, so I will be doing this for you, but you work for people, and they appreciate.

There was a time, I was at the airport, and then there was a white man, who was maltreated by some of my officers, by junior officers, I think. And then, when I heard it, I went to my officer, I said, 'Sir, what is it?'

'Well, this, this, this.' I said, 'Oh, no, you don't treat people like that.' So, I actually saw that he was attended to […]. But before he went, he called me […]

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I said, 'Oh, that is my job, I need to. And God also tells us… actually: be nice, even at work. And we must do everything, that we find to do, as if we are doing to Christ. So, that is my job, and I have done it.'

'So, OK, [he said] I will hear of him next time when he comes from ... eh, America. He was an American. So, I was there for about three months […] then this man came. They said, someone was looking for me, white man was looking for me, white. Then he came and said, '[Name,] I brought you [unclear].

In those days, computers were very scarce in Ghana. Only few people had computers. And so, he had brought me a desktop computer complete. Oh yes. And before then, my children had been worrying me because they saw some of their privileged friends using them. I said: I don't have money to buy computer. So, this man brought me the computer. And I brought it to the house.

These two examples aptly illustrate that a personal definition of work ethic might entail contractionary aspects. It encompasses honesty, righteousness, dedication to work assignments, and responsibility towards others based on trust. Remarkably, the narrator doesn't expose any sign of doubt when sharing the story about receiving a precious gift while performing his job. To situate this behavior into a theoretical frame, I wish to approach it from two different angles: firstly, it points to "moral character," an ingredient of ethics as defined by Aristotle. Here, it seems helpful to apply Deigh's argument of "conventional morality" (2010:8), deriving from societal norms is determining at the individual level what is right and wrong. An argument supported by Gyekye (2011) also emphasizes that social norms direct personal conduct and influence the perception of what is good or evil. To take it a step further, the above occurrence may demonstrate Danquah's definition that being a good person implies doing good, which aligns with Wiredu's (1980) beliefs that "morally good" behavior is defined by the individual well-being that has a positive impact upon significant others. Secondly, the narrator brings in a religious, namely Christian perspective, by emphasizing his obedience of God's commands when describing his intervention on behalf of a foreign traveler. And although he doesn't explicitly say so, he seems to view the foreigner's origin in a wealthy country as instrumental to the delivery of God's reward. This perception fits well with Weber's observations on a positive correlation between work performance and the personal perception of certainty of being blessed, based on the conviction that "God helps those who help themselves" (Weber, 2005:69). When asked to define what "work ethic" means to him, Abraham elaborates:

Well, we, the successful people in the church have been people […] who are committed to the things of God. They are successful. You see their homes; you see their children. They

are not people who are saddened with sicknesses. I call those one successful because of what they do for God. […] Even if they go through problems, you see that God's hand comes to deliver them from whatever problems they have.

As I will turn to analyzing church influence upon work ethic during this chapter, I wish to limit my observations at present to sketching individually chosen, manifold components of the definition of "work ethic." The choices also pay tribute to particular circumstances, internalized norms and religious convictions.

Mutual benefits

The following resonates Lewin's assertion that work acts as impetus for a meaningful life allowing the individual to develop specific abilities.

During my interviews, a normative connotation of holding individuals accountable to each other and loyal to their normed principles (Brennan et al. 2013) repeatedly emerged. It is well illustrated by Kyei saying:

> I think "work ethic" derives from the fact that, like I said, 'a passional job has no reward,' so the work ethic comes from the fact that first of all, work must be done in a wholehearted manner, but it must be complete. So, whatever task you are put to, you must complete it. If it is not completed, then it does not merit any reward. So, the ethic around it is more about making sure that whatever you set out to do, you finish it. That's the first thing about the ethic. The ethic also, is to make sure, as you deliver the work for someone, especially in return for some kind of an income, it has to be beneficial to that person as much as to yourself.

Responsibility

Next to perseverance and mutual benefit resulting from an accomplished task, the definition of work ethic takes on the term "responsibility." In this chapter I wish to draw the attention to two Mt. Zion members from unequal socioeconomic background, occupying different position within church and society. The binding element is their interpretation of why those, who are not part of the churchly "us-community" do what they do, and the consequences of their behavior. It almost seems that, although unintendedly, both elaborate on a norm which in their view is inherent to the "us-community", namely responsibility. This entails consequences for their social actions. It is the personal distancing from the irresponsible, the lack of self-reflection as well as legitimation via clerical status to conduct disciplinary actions in the secular environment which stuck my attention.

Henry, a young man in his early 30s, meets me at the church premises. He describes himself as a freelance, self-taught, graphic designer and university student living in Sakumono village next to Mt. Zion. He has been recommended by his close friend, Kwesi, who encouraged me to interview someone who does not attend church service regularly. However, throughout our interview, Henry created the impression of being very active in church. I abstained from clarifying this apparent contradiction, as I would have had to point to my source of knowledge when asking him about his church attendance. Another detail, where behavior appeared contractionary to his statements, was the scheduling of our interview. It took several calls and two postponements before a meeting happened, with a one-hour delay on his end. His style is like performing a lecture: "Be responsible… I don't know, but how I like that word so much. Be responsible. You have to do, do it. You don't need to wait for someone to come and do it. And I think in a corporate world, that is what? You have been employed to type, so type. You don't wait for your boss to come and tell you to do it, before you do it."

During the 45 minutes interview, he confirmed his liking of the term "responsible" by mentioning it 17 times, elaborating on different perspectives such as catering to basic human needs. By sharing his personal insights into the structures of Sakumono village, he describes "responsibility" as taking a personal decision to break the cycle of poverty while pursuing this goal. My interlocutor shares his view about the prevailing, poor economic situation in Sakumono village by saying, "A lot of people from the village, and I will say it emphatically, we have, they have not, or let's say we don't have much of education, but we want to earn much salary. A lot of people in the village have that issue." Henry obviously struggles to come to terms with viewing himself as part of his analysis, and thus, in the concluding sentence he distances himself from the villagers by stating: "They want a job where they won't do anything, but they will only get paid." Trying to better grasp his thoughts and to encourage him to elaborate in more detail, I ask him, "What does it tell me about work ethic?" Firstly, he stresses the lack of influence parents exercise upon their children's education, such as monitoring their school attendance. And he continues:

> The Bible makes it clear, thou shall not steal, but yet people do steal. The individual. [...] Not that the person doesn't know ... he knows… but at that particular instant, he decides to do what he does. It is his alone. And he has to be responsible for it. In Sakumono village, like this is a fishing community. And you can attest to the fact, that in Ghana, all fishing communities have unemployment rate being high. [...] Some people have completed senior high school, even the university, and nothing pushed them to go and look for a job. And they are all in Sakumono. […] If I don't take my personal decision, and I decide to go with how the society sees us, and I'll become who they are. Because, if they decide not going

to school, and I decide to join them…. And eventually, having my way … and end up in unemployment. But when I decide to go to school and take things seriously… that's the difference between us. […] The job ethic is pushed, is being talked about said, education keeps going, but individuals prefer staying home hoping the job will come.

The Reverend Minister combines responsible behavior with expectations by the Christian God that would cause drastic consequences for conduct falling under its antonym "irresponsibility" by saying:

I tell them all the time – I sit on some boards of companies – and I tell them all the time, I am the one responsible for hiring and firing for most of the boards, that I sit on. And when I am going to fire people, I go with the cassock because I want them to understand that God does not tolerate unproductive living. […] Oh, he is the priest, he has to be compassionate, and all that… But God doesn't tolerate irresponsibility. So, I will sack you.

The influence of the personal economic situation

In this section wish to showcase to what extend personal Christian faith offers meaning and provides emotional comfort. It further illustrates what Wesley might have had in mind when indicating that a true believer is identified through his work, performed to glorify God. The displayed clergy's advice, although it connotes with the pure economic principle of cost-effectiveness of maximum satisfaction with minimum sacrifice, still entails the aspect of economic affordability. The chapter concludes with reflection on religious convictions turning into distraction factors at the workplace.

Robert is a man in his late 30s who caught my attention due to his expressive manner during church services. He interacted with many people, offering his support whenever he perceived a need for help during church activities. As mentioned, I had faced some challenges identifying and engaging in an interview with economically frail Mt. Zion members, and I shared this challenge with my gatekeeper, Kwesi. On a Sunday, he informed me that he had arranged an interview and to my surprise, I found myself with Robert. Robert was vocal, and when answering my questions, easily drifted into mission mode, which probably can be explained by his self-definition as a "local preacher, preaching everywhere, mostly in tro-tro [the local minibus transport]" and "prayer warrior." His income derives from a security officer job, but, after eight years, he is yearning to leave for a better position. He worried about the lack of opportunities due to his low education level. His narrative is remarkable in the sense that he seems to be led by a divine explanation for life occurrences:

> When I was growing up, I prayed to God [...] the two different words that came in mind: being a military officer or being a man of God, a pastor. As I was growing up [with grandparents] both of them were farmers, very serious ones, I learned a lot from them. As time went on, I pray to God: God, teach me what to do. So, the military side, I try and try and try and it don't work. […] Sometimes, I feel like serving the word of God to people. So, a voice came, that'Is what's God will is to do. So, I don't take my religious activity for granted. I am very much associated with people. Making friends is not a problem. Here, you can't do those things, when your education is not... academic background...or a certificate doesn't qualify you to be. It's all about education. So, you need to upgrade yourself, go to school, a lot of schools before you will be able to get to a point that the society and the church will accept you as a man of God. I don't think previously it was like that.

The question I asked was, "What did adwuma mean to you as a child?" Although his answer does not really address my question, it is insightful; he turns to explaining his life with his grandparent who would wake him up "at dawn, at 4 or 4:30 [am]" charging him with work around the house, "They said, my hard working will take me everywhere."

The above statement is rich in meaning. It is about the search for a professional future, the personal meaning-making of not achieving the preferred professional choice. Although he is convinced of being called to ministry by God – the same explanation given by the Reverend Minister when asked why he became a full-time clergy – Robert is aware of the big divide between his present status and that of a "man of God." As he explains, the family's economic situation did not allow him to reach the status of a salaried pastor, necessitating him to perform a job he does not like, and counterbalancing these realities with a dedicated engagement in missionary work. This observation falls in line with the Reverend's view of ensuring "that people do what they are supposed to do to be fulfilled in life and then to fulfill others." The Reverend explains:

> Every individual is supposed to know his or her gifts and graces, talents, and abilities, what they can do, what it is that they do, that fulfills them. […] So, you must find what satisfies you, what fulfills you. That one, when you are doing it, you don't do it because of money, you do it because of satisfaction. […] even get money, even if that might not be your focus, you should look out for what satisfies you, what is your target, what are you good at.

The question that springs to mind when reflecting on these two contributions involves the range and depth of work ethic, or in other words: is it proper to use the term "work ethic" outside a renumerated environment? In Robert's case, it is evident that he puts much energy into living up

to his aspirations of "being a man of God." This energy easily can be translated into unpaid work for a personally defined higher good. To what extent this thorough engagement is reflected in the renumerated job, remains unclear in this interview.

It is, however, noteworthy that several interviewees (e.g., Jill, Daniel, Lydia) condemned using work time for "quiet time," a term that stands for daily personal Bible study recommended by the church. An example is Lydia. Although she is a devoted Christian, she states clearly, "We preach work ethic because you can't come to work and spend your employer's time reading your Bible and preaching the Word instead of doing what you have been employed to do." This could be interpreted as an indicator that the term "work ethic" is primarily linked to engagement in obligations with fellow humans. Daniel even takes this a step further, prioritizing the economic aspect by saying: "Work ethic is not to satisfy you or to meet a certain standard, it's just to gain money. But when the economic situation is favorable, people do what they love to do. What they enjoy doing, they do it well and even get money."

Attitude

Attitude is a substantial part of work ethic. This section is about the observed social dynamics tied to "attitude", and personal qualities attached to it. My interviewees view a particular quality in working hard. This resonates with Lewin's conviction of a 'value of life' embedded in work. By offering different opinions, my interviewees contributions feed into our previous discussion as to what extent work ethic, emphasizing on hard work, is rooted in religious convictions as well as feeds from the Akan conviction rooted in their culture putting a premium on hard work. It is also about attributed meaning that turns behavior into action.

Gloria, a mid-thirty-year-old Mt. Zion employee, who, although she runs a busy schedule in the office on the church premises, offers herself for an interview after finding out that I am on a research mission. She attaches high importance to "patience," "consideration," and a "smiling face." She explains:

> Right now, I know that dealing with human beings is really, really a work on its own. Apart from the work that you are doing, the human being itself is work. […] You need to work your own job description; you need to balance everybody. Some are kind, some people, the way, they talk to you, you feel like you should stop working. […] You need […] patience and consideration so that you can balance all of them. Even if you are angry, you have to keep your smiling face. So, cope with them, do what they want.

She is well echoed by Kwesi who believes in "always smiling even if you are upset" as well as, "be punctual, work, be hard working, and also, don't complain too much."

Kwame, a retired official and engaged church founding member adds "honesty" when affectionally explaining how his grandmother, a small-scale trader, treated her customers. And he also touches upon the topic of personal dignity, manifested by accomplishment: "When you are tired, you want to finish, so that everybody will know, that you have done something."

Hard work

The most common denominator when defining "work ethic" is "hard work." It is mentioned by 14 interviewees from different walks of life. Although interviewees have already had a voice on this topic, I wish to add a number of contributions shedding light on additional perspectives.

Jill is a highly educated lady in her mid-fifties, who is employed by an international organization. Despite her position, she aspires to become a fully trained Methodist pastor and is currently undergoing a training process in addition to her employment. She allocated me an hour interview in the meeting room of her office building. In her view, "in terms of culture and religion, attitude to work … it's about the same attitude that you cannot be lazy. So, you are more focused; you are more serious with your work. When it's time to work, it's time to work, and even if the money is small, you still have to work."

Daniel is a company owner and actively engaged in life coaching, as well as being a publisher and advisor. For the lack of a convenient place, we held the interview in his car which did not have any influence upon the interview. Daniel appeared as an open-minded interview partner willing to share insightful views upon his biography and his experience at Mt. Zion where he serves in a leading position. He elaborates upon his definition of work ethic by saying: "If you want to earn good money, work hard. The worst sinner who works hard, will make more money than the greatest saint who is lazy." And he adds: "So, I find a correlation between hard work and prosperity more than religion or Christianity and prosperity."

In summary, in the view of my interviewees, the term "work ethic" encompasses honesty, righteousness, dedication to work assignments, and responsibility towards others based on trust, completion of a task, and quality performance, being responsible and the need for encouragement. It is further in line with patience consideration, friendliness, not complaining, punctuality, and especially, hard work. The latter is fittingly defined by an informant as "ethic is not hard work, but hard work is ethic."

Prior to taking up the themes of the sources of individual work ethic, I wish to introduce some of the reasons that interviewees mentioned for their engagement in hard work, including factors that contributed to work motivation or served as sources of discouragement.

Excursion: Why do people work hard?

In agreement with Macamo that "social action consists of what individuals do plus the reasons which they have for doing it" (2017:83), I view it as important to give voice to autochthon explanations of the reasons they have for engaging in the work process. At this point, I am interested in their trenchant statements, which are as value neutral as possible with respect to associations with their sources of influence. I will repeatedly address the influencing factors during the analysis.

Elisabeth, a small-scale informal trader, selling fabric is in her early 40s. She lives with her unemployed husband and children in Sakumono village and is the only Mt. Zion member where I needed interpretation because we did not speak a common language. She says, "to me, work is selling," a precondition for earning a sufficient income to support oneself and one's family.

The same attitude is echoed by Abena who, now in her late 20s, joined her relatives in Sakumono for work reasons about 10 years ago. After finding a job in a low-paid, formal sector, working about 12 hours a day, except for Sundays, she supports not only herself but also caters for her mother and five siblings left behind in the village. Both ladies granted me 30-minute interviews each on the church premises. None of the interviews went beyond a question-answer exchange. These were the two interviews where I was not able to bridge the divide between me, the researcher, and my interviewees and satisfy my hope of an empirically grounded discussion about their social reality. My questions were usually answered in a short, polite manner not inviting a deeper dive. I understand this approach as a means to protect privacy, personal experiences which in their eyes, as it seemed to me, could not be profoundly understood by a stranger. Possibly out of politeness and doing a favor to Kwesi, both ladies agreed to the interview, while sharing only as much information as they deemed absolutely necessary.

Although I have already briefly introduced my gatekeeper Kwesi, it is now time to put him in the foreground while he is sharing his reasons for engaging in hard work. Fortunately, he was very willing to grant me two interviews to enrich my knowledge during our numerous car rides, being supportive of my struggle to put information into context. Our discussions, starting in September 2017 and continuing until end of 2019, were also highly insightful. He displayed multiple realities and never showed any signs of purposefully contradicting himself or being aware of inconsistencies in his narrative. On the contrary, our conversations appeared coherent as he

attempted to make sense of his social world. The inherent eclecticism of his attribution of meaning and reasons confirmed Dey's "communication of meaning is always negotiable" (1993:38). In fact, due to his rich and versatile narrative, I was contemplating the possibility of an exceptional person-centered approach by adding views of his family, employer, and closely affiliated Mt. Zion members to complement his story. My assumption, that gaining access to Kwesi's parents whom he defines as Mt. Zion's "founding members" and who encouraged him to attend Mt. Zion from early childhood, would be welcomed and supported by him proved wrong. Although he did not firmly decline my request to speak to his parents, over time, and after manifold explanations of why an interview could not take place during one of my visits to Mt. Zion, it became apparent that Kwesi did not approve of my approach. It did not feel appropriate to ask for explanations but rather accept those hints which substituted for it, such as the father being of Moslem origin who rarely attended Mt. Zion and differences in socioeconomic status between the researcher and family members, which could lead to intimidation rendering any discussion very challenging.

Kwesi was born and raised in Sakumono. Now, in his early 30s, as a result of his character, qualities, and hard work, has taken the courageous step of moving away from home. He explains:

> I am really gradually moving, climbing up. Because when I lived at Sakumono, most of them would say, 'When are you moving from here? You have been here all your life.' I thought 'OK,' I have moved one step ahead. If I go to Sakumono, people like, 'It's a long time that I saw you. OK, you are looking good.' People see me differently. 'OK, you are able to move from Sakumono.' […] but as long as you are living there, they are seeing you all the time, they are not seeing you as a serious person even though you are working. They would like to see you moving away from the town. Because you see that, you still living in the town, doesn't make you a serious person.

This personal achievement of climbing a socioeconomic ladder has in his perception gone unnoticed in Mt. Zion:

> Up to now, I am still from Sakumono village in the church. They don't know that I have moved. But I am not worried about it. I see myself OK. Since I am OK, I am not worried about those. But I still have some friends there … I don't worry about it. I don't think about it too much.

The topic of being unnoticed in Mt. Zion will occupy us later in this chapter, when discussing classism. By his own account, Kwesi is deeply attached to Mt. Zion, being highly influenced by the Sunday school and the brigades. Being "born into the church," he became heavily engaged in Mt.

Zion's children and youth organization – the Brigades – which earned him a scholarship. In fact, his narrative reveals that he was a good student during those three school years when he was supported by the scholarship. He finalized his basic education and then left school to start his first job, which was followed by several others. Although his biography discloses a high dependency on income, his motivation for work lies at an ethical level of trust, honesty, and reliability. He explains:

> There was a time when my [employer's] ATM card [bank card allowing to withdraw money from a bank account] was with me. I knew the password of his ATM card. Because of that trust… he knows as for me in that area …money is not my issue, even though we all work for money, I won't let money control me. So that was to me, my main objective in life, that anywhere I go, I leave a good name there. […] so, if I am doing something, I don't complain, no matter how tired I am. I'll do it like I have all the energy.

The above points to multi-layer sources of work motivation. It confirms the attendance to physiological needs. But beyond that, he draws his work motivation from meeting the need for belonging by alluding throughout the interview to his perception of being an accepted part of the family. The implicit possible exploitation does not come to his mind. Furthermore, being entrusted with his employer's ATM card professes an exceptionally high level of trust between employer and employee, indicating that Kwesi draws his work motivation from attending to esteem needs. And finally, as his employer sent him to a driving school to enable him to render the required services of a chauffeur, Kwesi reached a certain level of realizing his childhood dream of becoming a driver, "I liked driving a lot. I really, really liked driving, so most of my friends are not surprised, I am a driver."

This realization of a passion resulting in job satisfaction is also mentioned several times by Daniel, Lydia, and Simon, highly educated and business owners, whom I will introduce in the following chapter. They place high emphasis on dedication to a professional vision, which, similar to Kwesi, provides meaning and importance to their individual lives.

CHAPTER 7: WORK ETHIC ATTRIBUTED TO AKAN VALUES AND UPBRINGING

Onipa na oma onipa ye yiye – the beneficence of man depends upon man

Introduction

Before diving deeper into exploring an interdependence between economic success derived from personal work ethic and personal affiliation to Christianity in general, and Methodism, in particular, I wish to draw the attention to influential factors grounded in primary socialization which is fed by family upbringing. This discussion will lead to the question of whether, and if so, to what extent, work ethic that culminates in success is enhanced by Mt. Zions's teachings. In the process, I will also present the voices of those who are less successful.

As discussed in chapter 3, consanguinity and affinity are determinants for acquiring family membership. The concept of being a family encompasses a cultural perspective, including Akan customs and tradition, and possibly embeds aspects of Traditional Religion. Having established that ethics stem from norms rooted in a particular culture, I will start by drawing attention to influences which can be attributed to an upbringing shaped or impacted by values peculiar to the Akan ethnic group, and then turn the attention to a culture which is fed by Christian and more precisely, Methodist teaching in Mt. Zion.

My interviewees will speak to Akan customs and tradition by illuminating numerous influences. However, I intend to start with the influence exercised by those who form part of the family, because in interaction with the family – and sometimes, extended family – values embodied in norms are considered to have a high psychological influence upon an individual. On some occasions I asked my interviewees if in their childhood, they could have expressed views that deviated from their parents. This was denied by all, as they emphasized that a premium was set on obedience of parents, guardians, and, when discussing a village setting, community members who felt a need to contribute to education. Here is an example narrated by Abraham, illustrating the previously discussed communitarian ethic attributed to the Akan (Wiredu 1996, Danquah, 2016). Abraham explains:

> When we were growing up, […] because we were in small, small communities and everybody knows everybody, so you when I went out and I fooled around […] somebody heard… and then, he caught me and then give it to me … give it well, well, well. If I told my mother, then she will also cane you for disgracing the family. So, everybody was to ensure that the children… a child was for everybody… as a child, we belong to every

family. And so, when you do something wrong, that other family, if they see it, can punish you.

By using the most vivid illustration of influence in a rural Akan community, it is not my aim to discuss in the frame of this paper the significance of corporal punishment [which I personally disapprove off] but rather illustrate the accepted influence of significant others upon a child's development which has been also confirmed by the young generation, those who were born in the urban area but confess influences upon their upbringing by the larger family.

In the next step, I will enlarge the circle to influences of the environment shaped by internalized Akan cultural and customary values, primarily leaning on research confirming that a person's early age cognitive development is essential for shaping a behavior pattern in the further development of the individual's personality. Furthermore, I wish to give space to voices reflecting upon Akan tradition and culture, and whether social norms feed into conformity towards social function and motivation to act. Do they, and if so, to what extent, exercise an influence upon setting personal norms and behavior in accordance to existing or perceived expectations of the community? Having heard these contributions will help us later to deal with the question of how religiosity, in particular Methodism as it is taught in Mt. Zion, relates to a behavior influencing individual work ethic.

A young lady who, when asked if Akan cultural aspects play a role on a personal level, aptly illustrated their perceived influence:

> If you are talking about the influence of the Akan, you cannot say, you are not influenced by the Akan, because they are dominant in our side of the world. In Ghana, the Akan tribes are very dominant. And that's the language widely spoken here. If not then for anything at all, I eat their food, I have a lot of friends – and that's the language – I speak their language with them.

As discussed, culture is not static and the Akan culture, although influential in Ghana, does not lack for alternatives, as Ghana is comprised of a multitude of ethnic groups (Langer & Ukiwo 2007 have identified 60). A better comprehension of the perceived dominant influence of the Akan ethnic group led to the necessity of giving voice to engaged Mt. Zion members, listening to their attribution of qualities related to work ethic of the Akan ethnic group.

Work ethic attributed to the family – upbringing

In this section I wish to highlight the different cultural aspects woven into early education as displayed by my interviewees. I chose a methodological approach that allowed me to absorb the multitude of details to access a different social world. My aim was to explore the extent to which

my interviewees trace back their contemporary economic behavior to family influence during primary socialization. Would the interviews reveal internalized values that guide their current behavior? To what extent, if at all, did personal upbringing form a social system which constituted the foundation to reduce life complexity and provide a sense of stability as well as security? The meaning my interviewees attributed to the family displayed forms of solidarity and loyalty as well as adherence to norms which enforced and governed behavior. Although I faced the challenge to attribute causation, my interviewees were explicit in linking these norms to customs.

Lydia in her late fifties is a chief executive and company owner of a leading brand in Ghana. Since she started her business over 24 years ago, she has gained recognition all over Ghana, serving on different boards, has co-founded a successful all-girls school, publishes a magazine with sector information which is, according to her, the only one of its kind in Ghana. She is present in the Ghanaian media and serves on the boards of other institutions. When in search for Mt. Zion members whom I could approach for an interview, her name came up several times as being someone who is not only successful in business but also perceived as highly influential in Mt. Zion. The Reverend Minister informed me that she is sitting on several boards at the Methodist Head office. Lydia willingly grants me an hour interview in her spacious office. Although, as I will show, Lydia strongly emphasized her Christian faith and its influence on her professional behavior and lifestyle, she also refers to the imprint in her childhood that instilled in her the meaning of hard work and entrepreneurship. Lydia explains:

> My home has basically been a home of entrepreneurs. My mother was a baker […] And my siblings have all been entrepreneurs. There is one, who […] owns a school, there is one who is a contractor, there is one who is into catering. So, we have been entrepreneurial, and we understand the meaning of hard work and with entrepreneurship, if you don't work hard, you will see it with your results.

Here again, the value of "hard work" introduced in early childhood spreads within the family and stimulated entrepreneurial behavior. In this sense, work is a means to allow and foster identity. Simon, an entrepreneur in his late 30s, who is successfully expanding his businesses shares a similar family background:

> My mother herself was a trader. So, it's a family thing. Most of my uncles and aunties and all are businesspeople. So, the attitude towards business is good. It doesn't matter what your background is in. You are encouraged to do one business or the other.

And while referring to the present situation, he notes:

My mom would sell two handcloths in the market, but I have the benefit of tertiary education, like a Master's, so I want to do a different kind of business. So, I see that this generation, even though most of us are also into business has shifted from the traditional type our parents used to do. But the common thing still remains, we find ourselves in business.

Daniel adds the component of the cultural environment influence. Although he partly attributes his present industrious behavior to his parents' role modelling, he simultaneously credits his childhood formation in the Kwahu area, an Akan sub-group, whom he qualifies as being "very industrious" creating a productive ambience. Daniel explains his parents' attitude towards work:

My parents were regular employees, my mom was the secretary […], and my dad was the headmaster. Now, while in this regular employment, they had side businesses. My mom was always cooking, frying, she has always been industrious. So, she woke up VERY early, at dawn, prepare the kenke, sometimes she starts in the evening, and during the process, all of us are involved somewhere, somehow, there is a division of labor. […] My dad was also into producing art works; he is a textile specialist. […] So, I naturally followed. So, bringing that attitude to life came from my upbringing, more or less, the cultural aspect of finding something to do at all times being sure was established from that angle.

Daniel brings in the element of influence by family as well as influence by the environment. By quoting specific attributions to certain Akan sub-group, it is not my intention to play them against each other but rather, by focusing on work ethic, to point to the influence of a cultural setting upon an individual as narrated by my interlocutors.

Another good example is Akosua, a successful, self-employed seamstress, who over time has diversified her business by adding a "machine processing food (local fufu) and vegetables" capability to it. She also holds a leadership position in Mt. Zion. For the interview, she invites me to her home. It is obvious that in her busy schedule, allocating time for an interview is allocating a privilege which was only made possible through the intervention of my gatekeeper, Kwesi. Due to some emergency issue at the workplace, I had to wait several hours until the interview finally took place. We sat in the living room, TV entertainment in the background. Akosua explained that she is not confident regarding her English language skills and thus was hesitant to allow the interview to be recorded. After a short exchange with her youngest daughter, a university student present in the room, volunteering to translate into English should the need occur, Akosua was put at ease and agreed to the recording of the interview.

Although her profession was not her first choice, now being in her late 50s and having "started sewing before 25 years" she says, "I don't get tired in sewing. But when I don't sew, it's like, something is missing." Her business goes beyond production, it encompasses passing on skills, "I teach, I teach, I have trained almost 70." When asked about the apprentices' socioeconomic background, it becomes apparent that she covers a wide range: "Some years ago, the government brought street girls, street children, these children, they have nothing to do, they are roaming on the streets. They brought me some, about 15 of them to train them." Elaborating on these experiences she explains that those trainees were "difficult to handle". She mainly attributes this fact to the unfavorable conditions of lacking a family centered upbringing. In her view, the trainees' lack of "aim" to acquire a job successfully was due to missing family ties.

Thus, motivation to favorable work behavior comes into the focus, including her personal source of motivation. She repeats six times in two sentences that as a girl child, she had to work "very hard" because "my mother had children, boys. She has boys." She continued to emphasize gender inequality by saying: "If you are only a girl, you have to do all the housework, washing, preparing the food, cleaning, tidying the compound. It is meant for the women." In her view, "a woman should work as a man. We all go out from the house, we all go out, find a job and then we come back." Akosua's statement:

> That is not actually your parents' work [to teach work behavior]. This is the house chores. That is not a work, that your parents will say, go and learn or go and work, go and learn and then come up as a work where you earned your living. No. I am talking of being in the house with your parents. When you are alone, you work very hard. Because all the housework is meant for girls. And if you are not careful, they don't even send you to school.

Her statement emphasizes her adherence to social expectations while striving to overcome gender inequality. The added hope of future access to the job market encourages her: "When you are encouraged to do hard work, it will profit you. I have said it. When they encourage you to do hard work in the house, you become used to [it]. When you grow up and you get to the office […] then you apply it in the office too. […] Hard work, it's good."

Akosua is enormously proud of the academic achievements of her four children and – upon her initiative – introduced me to her daughter, Sylvia, who lives with her family in the neighborhood. Sylvia grants me an interview in her house, a spacious place furnished in a Western style. Sylvia holds a master's degree and is a mother of three. At the time the interview took place, she had to pause her employment, but when I met her a year after the interview, she had taken up a teaching position. With my question, "how was the attitude to work in your family?" I aim to find out in how

much her mother has passed the so-called hard-working-approach to her daughter. Sylvia explains:

> Looking at my mom's side, work is very important. It prepares you for marriage. So, she was very much interested in my upbringing. I needed to learn how to do house chores in addition to education, which is so very vital. […] So, I got that from there. I would say, it was too much but probably God was preparing me for something. […] And naturally, when you are good with house chores, you take it to your work environment as well. Because the way you handle your house is the same attitude you put in when you are working at the workplace. So, I think, I take that same meticulous attitude to the workplace as well.

As her reflection contains a reference to a possible divine influence upon the process of acquiring a hard-working attitude, I enquired further if she inherited that attitude towards work from her mother. She responded, "Yes. Really, yes, yes."

Marc echoes Sylvia by explaining the high influence a family exercises upon its members by saying, "You see, for every child, what he becomes is mainly from what happens within your household. The home you come from virtually determines who you are." And he continues by embedding it in the Akan cultural setting:

> So, even when someone is going to marry, they will ask, which home does the partner come from. When they say "home" they don't mean the house, they want to investigate and find the background of that person in terms of the values that the house shares […] they do that background check before the family gives the OK. So, values are very important especially to the Ashantis. And as I said, these values are passed on from generation to generation in the household.

Moses has already been introduced when illustrating my approach towards Mt. Zion church members. Possibly an additional indicator that he enjoys high respect within Mt. Zion was a ceremony introduced by the church leadership to prominently announce and celebrate his appointment to a renowned post in the Ghanaian financial sector. In addition, during an interview with the Reverend Minister, he drew my attention to my interviewee's status by saying, "On Sunday, you were talking to Moses. Moses is a very BIG person in this country […] he is a big person in this country as a nation." It was in the context of pointing out members who are highly respected due to their position in society but also to their perceived humble behavior in church: "But when you come to church, anybody at all can approach him."

We started the interview in his office by talking about the transmitted meaning of work and work ethic during early childhood that are attributable to the influence of the Akan, and particularly the

Ashanti, cultural aspects. Moses willingly allowed me to take him back to his early childhood and throughout the interview sketched a paradigm change in lifestyle. As we will see in this paper, the remarkable part of this interview is the display of his capacity to adapt behavior to the persisting expectations by the family when visiting a home-village rooted in Akan culture in contrast to his self-perception and behavior within the urban setting, using the workplace and Mt. Zion as example. During the interview, he also mentioned his professional travels to different continents and seemed to be at ease with "being modern and Akan" (Williamson, 1965:156). Throughout the interview, while displaying some deep insights into his biography, he pointed to various influential factors starting with the influence allocated to his upbringing.

Question: "How has this work ethic, let's say, the Akan work ethic, guided you through your professional life? What kind of influence did it have?" Answer:

> The influence is that …I mean promptly […] at 7 o'clock, you have to go to farm. […] They go and work and then at 12 o'clock, they eat and continue, by 5, they come. So, it was a punctual aspect of life for my parents. And we all learned it. You see, because of that (laughs) here, I come to the office at 6:30, early in the morning. And I have done that for looooong time. If even, I am in the house at 7 o'clock, I don't feel, as Managing Director, I have to work, sort out my table. By 8, the people will come, I have done what I am supposed to do. So, I got that practice from my parents. Right from the village to this. […] But it wasn't written. But it was a conviction they followed, and it had an impact on us.

Q: But the children, don't they feel compelled to argue?

> At that time, we can't question.

Q: It was something, a given?

> Yes. You can't question, because they are the parents; they are in the house. At this time, you say, it is my right. No, at that time, it wasn't there. What your parents will do, you have to follow it. And you follow it; everybody will follow it without any question.

The aforementioned adherence to family norms introduced in childhood remains influential throughout the individual life cycle. The conversation also sheds light upon the process of work attaining a normative meaning. The described internalized work behavior renders work as an accomplishment of perceived duty, engendering the aspect of identity and contentment. Moses gives a noteworthy insight into elements of cultural influence that are deeply rooted and can be evoked as needed. He is "number seven" out of eight children, two of them women. And he explains:

See, now even though, I am a professor, and I am a MD, my senior brothers and others are there. When I go to the family house […] and a sort of cooking… we pound fufu… yes… I have to go and do it. If a junior is there, a senior person is not supposed to do these jobs. I have to go and do it. Even if it comes to sweeping and my wife and the children are not there and there is no junior staff, my senior brothers … I won't allow them to do it, I will do it. Even though I am working, feeding them, giving the chop money, it's my duty, because that is the culture.

Marc is a sociologist working with an international organization who agreed to meet me in his office. When I arrived on time, it turns out that his time schedule had changed, and we needed to shorten the interview to about 30 minutes. I was particularly interested in inputs on my topic from a sociological perspective which he willingly offered. "And we have this belief that a good name is better than riches," he emphasized that the outmost value is attributed to personal reputation. Although this maxim echoes Kwesi, the difference lies in source attribution. Kwesi refers to Mt. Zion as his source for internalizing this particular value, whereas Marc views it as rooted in Akan cultural values, a dichotomy I will return to in due course. Marc, while endorsing Danquah (2016), Wiredu (1996), and Ackah (1988) on the Akan being a cohesive society based on loyalty towards norm-abiding behavior defined by the significant others with a high emphasis upon the family, continues: "So, you want to maintain the family name. And the family will do everything to protect that name. So, when doing something, you are thinking more of the family name than you as an individual. And I think in a way this influences people's action. It's passed on to the children."

This statement illustrates the previously discussed self-definition through collectively defined values and indicates a generationally transmitted preference towards adaption of norms set by the collectivity – family – because compliance leads to acceptance as a worthy family member. It serves the need to belong and is a means of social control. Marc also addressed what Etzioni (1978) calls "alienation," and Marc names "acculturalization" by saying, "In the rural setting where the solidarity amongst the people is stronger, then these values are more enhanced" because there is tighter social control as "everybody knows you." In his opinion, in spite of the fact that, "culture is employed by several factors including urbanization, where is your residence, the way you live, the education and religion play a central role in the way you perceive things [the cultural, traditional values]. They are deeply rooted… they are deeply rooted."

The transmission of deeply rooted cultural values from generation to generation is illustrated by Akosua, who was born and raised in a rural area. When asked if the encouragement to work hard does, in her opinion, also draw from her Akan cultural background, she affirms with a strong

"yeeees," adding the appreciative "when you are encouraged to do hard work, it will profit you." Her daughter, Sylvia, born and raised in the urban environment and whose "acculturalization" is visibly exposed by her living environment, reveals behavior which complies with family expectations and attributes associated with the Akan people, even though she claims that she is "not deeply rooted in Akan."

A different, additional angle is presented by a Sakumono village resident, Kwadzo, an Akan, whose parents were Muslims and who, as it turned out to my surprise, is the only interviewed person who was not "born" into Methodism but having experienced Methodist influence in school, later became Methodist, as he states, "from my own will." Before starting his present job as a security man, he had worked on a plantation and in construction. He explains that when he was young, he had to assist his parent in their farm work, adding, "because of how they trained us in our childhood, that is why we can work anywhere we go." Due to his parents' religious affiliation, Kwadzo stands as an example of attributing work ethic to personal upbringing embedded in the Akan (Fanti) culture.

Generational influence

Although this chapter thematically builds on the preceding, it attempts to broaden the horizon by introducing what is perceived as the accumulated wisdom of past generations. This capital of ancestral wisdom provides, in the view of my interviewees, a guidance for behavior. Notwithstanding the fact that personal exposure to places of origin may have been rare, the confirmed knowledge derived from the traditional, local knowledge appear to maintain a meaningful impact, and to offer rational usefulness. Similar to the previous chapter, the interviewees were invited to share what they deemed important when reflecting upon their personal attitude to work. It made them think about their past and brought to the fore some statements that surprised me, and which complement the theoretical discussion with personal examples.

When asked about her family's attitude towards work, Jill responds:

> You know, because my father was a teacher, it was a more disciplined attitude, responsible attitude. Work is work. When I was growing up, that is what we were exposed to. So, I mean, even when it's time to learn, you have to learn because it's time. There is time to play. Everything was well structured, even if you had work to do at home. We grew up with that mentality that work is not punishment.

It is noteworthy that by stressing that "work is not punishment," while attributing to this definition qualities such as "discipline" and "responsibility", she falls short of pointing to any elements which connote personal fulfillment as defined by Lewin (1920) and Dahrendorf (1982). The connotation with "discipline" and "responsibility" also clearly appears in Gloria's contribution: "Because you see what your mother does, and you watch it, and you see it. Then you will become like, you clean the children, you clean the house, you fetch water, you cook food, you go to the market. That's multitasking."

In her reflection, Gloria singles out a specific Akan cultural phenomenon which deems important to her: "They don't want cheating and they don't want to be put down. Even if the person doesn't have money, even the name the person carries, he boasts himself with it. You don't know, 'I am the king's daughter' […]. They are all in business, work, selling, buying, trading, travelling."

In this statement, next to the aforementioned protection of family values, comes the personal and social pride echoing Danquah's definition of pride as "the honor and the dignity which consider the greater self" (2016:25).

Kofi gets two chairs for us in the Estate's public space next to his apartment in a passage between two houses. He is an example, confirmed by other interviewees, of a still prevailing practice that children live and are raised by (extended) family members. He explains: "With my real parents, I haven't experienced any care because I left them at the age of five. So, I came to my aunty. She was the one I stayed with through elementary school until I came to another family where I completed my secondary school." When asked about the economic activities of his guardians, he gives a succinct answer: "She also was doing some small, small trading. When I come home, I go, and I sell." It is rather the cultural aspect, starting with an emphasis upon the need for local language skills that draws his willingness to share in more detail: "They don't go away from our language. English is there at school… and all those things, but you don't have to forget your own language. Or our culture, things that we do among us, or what our parents will tell us not to do."

As already discussed, language embodies an enunciated view of the world (Wiredu 1996), influencing group as well as individual identity (Luckmann 1979). The common language is a binding element to name those "things we do among us," whereas their definition is incumbent on "our culture." Kofi continues to explain local customs such as not going to farm or to sea on certain days, because he was told that:

> In the bush there were small gods in the bush or forest; they do their things. So, these days, you don't go to farm, and you accept it. And then, we had fishermen, they don't fish on the sea on Tuesdays…why?... because they went fishing and there was a disaster …

yes… terrible storm… most of them were perished […] they said, no, these days, they should not go […] So, up to now, Tuesdays, the fishermen, most of them, they don't go.

The above draws the attention to visibly and cautiously manifested Akan customary practices. By allocating space to this topic, I intend to introduce my interviewees' views upon the discussed significance of culture immanent power to "impose itself as reality" (Berger, 1990:12). This perceived reality influences individual behavior by enforcing adherence to norms because of a fear of punishment in cases of deviant behavior either by the supernatural or empowered institutions. Jill points to, "Fearful sanctions … for example they tell you, if you flout that law and go to work that day, the gods would arrest you. So, they put a lot of fear in the people, and then, they won't go." Or if not for the gods, as mentioned by another interview partner (Kwame), it will be the "asafo"[44] the "village protectors," who would arrest and escort the law breaker to the chief's palace to receive punishment.

Although, in the interviews, partly distancing themselves from adherence to these practices, which according to my interviewees, at least partly prevail in the rural areas, the interviewees positively stress the deeper meaning they presently allocate to these customs ─ "protect the environment" or, as repeatedly mentioned, prevent harm.

Being a highly respected and influential Mt. Zion member, Abraham makes the effort to explain in detail the negative consequences of the dwindling cultural, traditional, and religious influences by saying:

> We have it [customs] among the entire[45] Akan. This is with all the Akans for instance, my village, and they are fishermen. On Tuesdays, you are not supposed to go to sea. So, on Tuesdays, you see all of them, they will grab their canoes and mend their nets. And the reason… our old people will tell you that… that is the day, the gods will go and fish and so you are not supposed to do that. If you go, you meet the gods there. So, you don't go. And definitely, if you go, something will happen to you. And so, people will not break that law. They kept to these things very strictly.

The remarkable part is the affirmative "definitely," stating the influence of supernatural beings entrenched in the Akan traditional religious cosmos as a given without allowing any doubts. Abraham continues:

> And so, we are now seeing the wisdom of our old people. […] We thought they were idol worshipers because they will tell you, don't go to this forest because the gods will be there. And so, nobody will go there. As for that long period that we were practicing these things

our forest remained. Now, our forests are depleting because people now know, there are no gods there, who will kill you, and so they go there to do whatever they like. And that thing has not helped us. So, it's like Christianity coming to Ghana has not helped us on those sides. Because now, I don't believe all those thinks that our old people said. […] In those days, they thought, or they actually believed that when you go, something will happen to you. […] Nobody will dare go against the rules or the laws of our elders. But these days. It is not like that. As I remember in my own village, there was a river god […] that river god hated filth. He hated filth, like you go and openly defecate around. No, that god will kill you instantly. And so, all those days, our village was very, very neat. Now, with Christianity, we don't regard the powers of the gods, even if they exist […] and so, we go and defecate, we do also other things. And now it has brought filth to the communities.

With a notion of mourning for past times, he is echoing Danquah's (2016:3) assertion of the moral categories embedded in tradition where the community is viewed as responsible for enforcing norm-abiding behavior. The cherished "wisdom of age" (Wiredu, 1980:4) comes into focus, while simultaneously bemoaning a personal loss. The above statement also resounds well with Atiemo (2013), who argues that traditional religious values have been central to the development and promotion of human dignity in traditional Ghanaian society.

There is an ambivalence about legitimacy of values and consequences of visibly maintaining and nurturing cultural roots as some are uncertain about its compatibility with Christian teaching. Jill for example, is doubtful if attending festivals "especially, if related to Christianity, may not really be proper"; however, "once in a while, you go and celebrate, because that's where we come from." This is echoed by Kofi: "the only thing they will do is the annual festival, asafo. I only go there to visit, because asafo, is not, somehow, a Christian activity."

Individual character quality deriving from cultural background

This section is about changing perspective by allowing the interviewees to reflect on their normative beliefs and their immanent motivation to act. It attempts to introduce a meta-level of shared views while cautiously avoiding serving a possible confirmation bias.

It is noteworthy that my interviewees are convinced that their perception of the Akan, or rather particular Akan people, is reflecting the view of a general Ghanaian population. As already introduced by Gloria and regardless of the educational background, my interviewees take pride in belonging to a particular Akan tribe and display a high level of identification. Simon's analysis reads:

I belong to the Akuapem. We are noted for our respect and truthfulness. It is said, when people make fun of us, even if we want to insult you, we would go like (me ka tschau buja buja), meaning, "please, you are behaving like an animal." Even, when you insult, you would still want to be courteous about it by saying, "please." So, it tells in the way, people from our side behave and yes, we turn to get people to relate to us in a better way because they think, we are respectful, cordial, and truthful. So, in business these trades come to play that "oh this guy is an Akuapem, oh these people are like this, like: you can trust him.

I wanted to find out from Simon if, in his opinion, this quality of personal ethic attributed to a people correlates positively with work ethic attributed to the Akan by asking, "This work ethic, does it contribute to success? And what does success mean?" Simon responds:

Yeah, it does. It did and it still does contribute. You are looking at resilience and people in your family not giving up on business, it doesn't matter what misfortunes they encounter; they rise up, they go, they are still in business. For example, my mom, when she was at the Cantonments Market, […] and when there is a fire outbreak, they lost everything. But they keep going back. I mean, so I would say we struggle but we never give up. [...] Yeah, when we start business, we go through challenges but there is nothing like retreating or giving up in the face of those challenges, because that is not us. We got into business, and we must succeed regardless of challenges. So, these things we learn from the family of our cultural background. […] And I think that these traits have contributed toward the success in businesses we are doing.

And he continues:

The Akans believe in hard work. Dedication. Commitment. We used to laugh at the Akans and say: oh, they will come, say, the Ashanti region or Eastern region and they don't have anything. Maybe they start as shoeshine boys and after a few years [they are] running big businesses. And that is something, the Akans are identified with, whether you are a Fanti or an Ashanti or an Akyapim. […] Even here in Accra being the capital, you might find more Akans, they start small and with dedication and commitment, they take over.

This manifestation of strong perseverance fits into the Akan "adwuma," because it addresses the expectation that work must be satisfactorily accomplished. The Akan hardworking attitude is also pointed out by Jill. She relates the hard work to accumulation of wealth. Mt. Zion is the place where, in her view, prosperity is displayed:

> The Akan people place high premium on work. […] majority of the Akan people are wealth making. […] So, because of this, they also believe in work. And they also believe in enjoying themselves. So, you realize, in my church, we have people with various levels of jobs, high level jobs. I mean, you have higher percentage, who own their own businesses and they are employing people, but they are also making wealth. You have to make money, not just small money, big money (laughs). […] I mean, you can see, the big cars, big, big cars (laughs). They believe in everything.

In this statement, the element of reward manifests through displaying socioeconomic status at a church community and the pride of being part of this community is added.

Marc elaborates in detail upon the question "what is particular about Akan work ethic?" by referring to different Akan people and explaining the characteristics attributed to them:

> And even times, when some of the Akan sub-ethnic groups, for example everybody knows, that the Kwahus who are a sub-set of the Akans, are mostly traders. And therefore, if you see a Kwahu in another profession, people will wonder, why?... Many of them want to go into trading. Now, if you take the Ashantis, the Ashantis are more aggressive in seeking money, and for an Akan, who is an Ashanti, they believe in what you call property. […] So, an Akan can come to Accra without nothing, after some few years, you realize that he has made his fortune.

And he continues:

> But then, the idea is that every Akan person wants to leave something behind in terms of property because you are more respected if you also have […] maybe own a house of your own and that kind of thing. So, with that kind of mentality, they want to be more hard working and aggressive when looking at issues of jobs.

The interviewee's focus on cultural attributions runs throughout the whole interview giving reason that beyond replying to my question, he also shares a personal belief in a cultural practice. The first statement is comprised of two analytical elements: it is about a personal assertion that cultural background determines an individual occupation, and that acquisition of wealth has a cultural element attached to it. The second statement gives rise to a link between the quality of respect within the Akan, according to Danquah (2016:25), which is a high currency deserving to be labeled as "divine," and property ownership, requiring a high level of work ethic.

Aiming to avoid a so-called confirmation bias and knowing that Marc also holds a leading position in Mt. Zion, I asked him if this motivation towards work ethic attributed to an ethnic identity has

changed over time as it is rooted in culture. While affirming "Yes. It is rooted in culture," he asserts that "patterns are changing … but then, because it's rooted in a way in the past, it will take a long time to die."

Complementary to the Akan self-assessment is the voice of an "outsider," the Reverend Minister, whose reflection when asked for possible reasons as to why a Methodist church in Ga land was dominated by individuals with an Akan background, amount to, "The Akan take culture seriously. They take religious things seriously."

This attitude is also acknowledged by the Very Reverend, who in addition to being supportive of me by introducing my request for conducting the research in Mt. Zion to the Bishop, also granted me an interview in the following year on the church premises where he is serving now as the lead pastor. He had just ended a church sermon, had some brief exchanges with some members before they left the church building, and then he ushered me into his office. He was as attentive as I remembered from my first meeting, and we started the interview by me inviting him to share the attitude towards work in his family and in the environment where he grew up. The Very Reverend elaborates:

> The Akan attitude towards work is good. They take work very seriously. Because, remember, those in the farming area, when time comes to go to the farm, it is early in the morning. And when they are going, they take the work so serious. […] And they retire late to the house. So, you see, they put all their strength, all their resources in that farm venture, so that they will be able to earn something for their family. So far as I know, the Akan, they take their work very seriously.

Keeping in mind his position as a clergy person but also perceiving him as a very open-minded Akan, I attempted to dig deeper, inviting him to share his thoughts about the roots that influenced this particular work ethic. He reflects:

> It is both. Those, who are coming from the Akan Traditional Religion, you see the religious aspect, how they understand work. Because in Akan, the God, the gods want them to work so that out of their work, they are being blessed. Let me also take for example those who are in the farming communities — they associate their work with the gods. Because it's the gods that have given them the land. And they have to take good care of the land. And so, whatever they are doing on the land, they have the gods in mind. […] So, it informs them what they have to do as far as their work is concerned. And is it for those coming from the angle of being Christians. Now, it is not the gods, but now, it is their relationship with God. The God, who has created the land, the God who is giving them the ability to work. And

so, whatever they do, as far as their work is concerned, they are well informed about God who has entrusted something to them, that at the end, they are going to give an account about that particular job.

This reflection falls well in line with an explanation he offered when I mentioned a remark repeatedly made during our first short introductory meeting where he said, "We are moving from the known to the unknown." It was made in the context of getting his views on the influence of Akan culture and traditional religious thoughts about Christianity. I regretted not having asked him to explain this remark to me further, as it was somehow entrenched in my mind without being able to situate it in the context. When now asked to enlighten me on his statement, the Very Reverend explained, "I was quoting Paul. When he went to Athens, preaching to them, there were so many gods, and there was a particular altar named to the unknown God. And Paul used that to speak about Jesus Christ. This was what I was referring to." The Very Reverend is referring to Acts 17:19-24 (KJV):

> And they took him [Paul] and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, may we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean. For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.

The Very Reverend is drawing a meaningful parallel between the situation in Athens where Apostle Paul was introducing an until-then, unknown religious concept – Christianity – to a "very religious" audience and present-day Methodism, which was introduced to Ghana in 1835. The "known" is associated with "identifying" or "recognizing." It is implying the "familiar," "trusted," "being understood"; in the present context all attributes associated with Traditional Religion and possibly also embedding some cultural elements. It is a manifestation of the omnipresence of traditional religious beliefs, which also have been acknowledged by other interviewees who have underlined their assertion by pointing to the present-day observance of family shrines. The term "moving" is an additional indicator for simultaneously living in two multifarious religious universes (Oduyoye 2003). On the other hand, "moving" also indicates the "leaving behind." However, the Very Reverend had hinted to a selective process of which elements to leave behind while others, such as drumming, dancing, and clapping have been integrated into the Methodist service. By

consequence, we are faced with a phenomenon of "moving while taking something along." The movement is towards the "unknown." The "unknown" triggers curiosity, being taken out of one's comfort zone, but is in psychology, often associated with uncertainty leading to a search of already familiar pattern entrenched in the individual's mind. The Very Reverend's description of the mission-oriented Methodist church as one that is "reaching out to the unsaved" and searching for ways to "make the Gospel known to unbelievers so they also come and accept Jesus as their personal Savior," is similar to the experience of Paul in the quoted Bible passage. All the more remarkable is the Very Reverend's personal inclusion of the movement from the "known" to the "unknown" by repeatedly emphasizing "we," an indicator acknowledging a co-existence of traditional and Christian influence. It also aptly echoes the above discussed ambivalence, the struggle between the appreciation of values transmitted by "the wisdom of the old" and the discussed symbol for the "unknown."

As I will show, a number of my interviewees point to a level of complementarity when discussing the sources which influence their work ethic. To pave the terrain for these reflections, we need to be familiar with the influence my interviewees concede to the Christianity in general while focusing on Methodism, and Mt. Zion, specifically. Therefore, in the following, I will showcase individual reasons for attending church services followed by a discussion about whether Mt. Zion has a role as an employment agency and influencer of economic development before getting to the heart of Mt. Zion teachings and attitude related to work ethic.

CHAPTER 8: WORK ETHIC ACCREDITED TO METHODISM INCLUDING MT. ZION'S TEACHING

Reasons for attending Mt. Zion church services

Because God is perceived as benevolent, he is expected to step in whenever a personal need occurs. Christians generally view a church as a suitable place to encounter God in an individually defined way, expecting him to attend to personal needs brought before him. This and the following chapter attempt to illustrate a certain dichotomy, in some cases, a personal struggle to analyze the cause for attending a particular church, Mt. Zion.

On the topic of why people attend church services, the range of statements is striking. On some occasions, I purposefully chose not to ask about a person's personal church attendance, assuming that talking about others would be perceived as more anonymous and thus bear more insightful information. It is extremely important to emphasize the individual's attempt to make sense of their ecclesiastic world during a specific one-year period, October 2017 and November 2018, when

most interviews were conducted. Thus, their understanding of a particular reality appears static, is "frozen in time," neglecting the important dynamic caused by interaction with an ever-changing context and interpretation (Gifford 2001). This assertion is obviously not limited to ecclesiastic input. However, remarks made by some key interviewees in 2020 during casual chats, after I had finished the data collection process, clearly point to a higher dynamic regarding changing views, behaviors, or perceptions with reference to Mt. Zion compared to issues concerning culture. All had reasons for adapting their views due to internal or external factors such as alienation from church due to time and place of work engagement or the arrival of a new Superintendent who had a different style of leadership. Diving into personal reasons for attending church services will allow us to better understand to what extent the church might transmit values on personal work-related behavior. It also will shed light on Mt. Zion's immanent culture, as well as particular instruments used to influence and stimulate attitude, behavior, and mindset. In other words, we will be introduced to data that inform us about the social reality of Mt. Zion members who simultaneously identify themselves as part of the Akan ethnic group.

All active interviewees confess appreciation of Mt. Zion for manifold reasons. It is a place of "enlightenment" (Harry), "a wonderful place" (Kwadzo), a place where "God's work is practiced" (Abraham). Lydia confesses to being "happy to be a member of Mt. Zion." Members manifest pride in its location by saying: "When you enter God's house where the spirit of God is, you really, you really feel it. […] Just like Mt. Zion is … you enter Mt. Zion, look at the building, this is a place, you need to worship." They perceive it as superior: "We are one of the best Methodist churches in Ghana" (Maria) or in Sylvia's words, the church members are "the rich people."

This connotation finds it climax in the words of the Reverend Minister (as reported by Kofi), "osofu [attribution to the Reverend Minister] will tell you, when God is visiting churches, that the first place God visits is Mt. Zion." This assurance is aimed to set apart Mt. Zion members from the multitude of all Christians in Ghana as privileged by God. Of relevance is the fact that it is a "man of God," who has already served in other Methodist churches, who voices this assurance.

Agora to serve a plethora of human needs

The complexity of attributing meaning in search for reasons leading to a particular social action exists for the actors and the researcher. By reflecting on codes which I subsumed under "reasons for attending church services in Mt. Zion," it is striking that most motivation factors fall under the broader category "need to belong," followed by "job market/career," and finally "spiritual welfare." Mt. Zion appears as a modern agora to serve a plethora of human needs as illustrated by the Very Reverend elaborating on reasons for church attendance: "Some, to get job. Others, to be

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connected to people, others for spiritual powers and protection, other for possessions, others for socialization. Others, maybe sick, you want healing. Others, for signs and wonders and prophetic answers, and others, they are there to develop their spiritual life, to make it to heaven."

Noteworthy is the above narrated sequence of reasons by someone who gains this knowledge through office and experience. Simon, a former secretary of the Visitation Committee, shares his experience by saying: "For most people I have interacted with […] Mostly people want a place they can fellowship, that is number one reason. But on the flip side, I have seen a lot of people who come with the hope that they will get some assistance from the church."

Clearly, the definition of "fellowship" connotes with joining a community of perceived like-minded people, although the individually attributed determination of who is perceived as sharing the same ideas, opinions, or interests, thus being a like-minded, and constituting a motivational source for joining Mt. Zion, remains unclear. Simon instead draws the attention to economic motivation by saying:

> Even if Mt. Zion is a rich community, there are a lot of people around the church, across the streets heading towards the railway, who are squatters of a sort, and they look around and the church is there. They see Mt. Zion as a rich church. And some of them come and on the first day, they are telling their problems and yes, they want to be part of the church, and if there is a way, the church can also help them to do one trade or the other, they will appreciate it.

At first sight, the data seem to point to a remarkable discrepancy between people's personal reasons for attending Mt. Zion and what they assume other people's motivations are. Personal thoughts reflect a shared socio-religious reality with a significant level of identification, whereas reason attributed to others have a higher level of variances and critical reflections. It is this alternation between these different viewpoints which, while introducing a higher level of complexity, simultaneously allows for better comprehension from a holistic perspective that contributes to its reduction.

Mt. Zion is a place to meet friends (Akosua, Sylvia, Kwesi, Henry, Moses, Abraham, Lydia). It "has become a family" for some (Lydia, who also cherishes the personal fulfillment resulting from coming "into the presence of God"). Whereas others (Marc) see it as a "place where you come, you worship, and you go." Mt. Zion offers manifold opportunities for personal benevolent engagement, such as singing (Sylvia, Abena), holding a leadership position (Abraham, Marc, Daniel, Moses, Kwame, Lydia, Jill), being part of a Guild (Kwadzo) or brigade (Kwesi, Akosua).

For those who live in Sakumono village or Estates there is also a proximity reason. Mt. Zion also provides an opportunity to visibly exercise personal influence culminating into "I know I am the boss. I am proud to go to the church" (Moses). This pride, for him, includes the need "to do a fellowship" taking upon himself time-consuming commute between his present residence and Mt. Zion. Remarkably, also other socioeconomically well-established interviewees, Jill, Marc, Lydia, take "one hour to get to church." Jill offers an insightful explanation by explaining: "The caliber of the congregation, they are high up there, there are a lot of elites, it's an elitist church […] a church that can fuel, both spiritual growth and then career, academic, everything." Adding: "The churches around where we are now living, they are not as fascinating as Mt. Zion." This resonates with the Reverend Minister's assertion that "there are people who come from very far away" because they value the established fellowship.

Kwesi is an excellent example of multifarious reasons providing context for actions. He alludes to the need to belong by describing the decisive influence the engagement in the Mt. Zion Boys Brigade had upon him. He confirms: "It was the brigade that attracted me to the church … and still now. […] that was the main reason that I stayed in Mt. Zion." Beside the excitement he drew from actively taking part in the Brigade activities, it was the reward system Mt. Zion had attached to it that captured his attention, as "during my time we heard about this scholarship which we also wanted to gain. Even our parents were saying, we should also get a scholarship from the church because we started the church. So, we should have some benefit from the church. So, it is really encouraging to stay in the church for the scholarship and all those things."

"Being loyal to the brigade and very active in the brigade" led to it being "easy for me to get the scholarship." Possibly this personal experience leads to his assertion that, "poor people come to church because of the scholarship scheme. Most people come for jobs or scholarships for children." The emphasis upon the spiritual welfare, or as the Very Reverend puts it, "spiritual powers and protection," is also well illustrated by Kwesi. Kwesi clearly states that "Sunday is for God" and explains:

> If I don't go to church, […] I feel very bad. And people in the area will be asking me sometimes when I don't go to church: are you sick? Me, I am always in church. If you don't go to church one Sunday, they ask you so many questions (short laughter). But sometimes, if I don't go to church, depending on the situation, maybe I am very sick … as for that one… but, if I don't go to church, as for Bible Class, I have to go.

This statement is about spiritual power being attributed to a particular Mt. Zion pastor who contributes to a positive spiritual experience. It also points to being integrated in the sense of being

known to and cared for by those who attend Mt. Zion and live in the same area, although it also hints to social control Kwesi wants to avoid. And finally, this statement underlines the importance of Bible class attendance, a more intimate circle. An additional element in a statement he made in a previous discussion, "if the poor have a good encounter with God, the opportunity will come." The statement illustrates how in his view, the social class of the poor - and he views himself as being part of it – depends upon the benevolence of the Supernatural. By staying imprecise as to defining to what the "opportunity" refers, he alludes to it intervening into all spheres of life.

My particular attention was drawn to Daniel's analysis when asked, "In your perception, what are the reason for people attending church?" He answers:

> Various, various. But for me, the first and foremost is – it became a cultural thing to do. When growing up, you see, we were going to church. So, Sunday becomes a natural thing to do. So, you go to church, because the people you come to meet are going to church. And then also, Christianity is one of the most advertised religion or even let me put it "commerce business." Ok, it may be is unfair to use business, but I put it in quotes. There is a lot of evangelism, evangelistic drives, in the radio, morning, afternoon, night. You hear a message, a Christian message more or less inviting you to go to church. That is, if you don't go to church that is as if you are doing something terribly wrong and all that. And then, they attach promises to going to church: God will bless you; your business will prosper, you get a good marriage. All the good things which is very enthusing. So, people naturally prefer to going to church because of the supposed benefits they are going to get. And then also, there is some excitement at church. All the music, the dancing, the encouragement, it suits people. Especially in our environment. …eh… what do you call it? Clinical psychology or clinical psychologists are not seen much, OK? You don't find a Ghanaian readily going and look for a counselor or a psychologist to help with the issues of life and faith, various issues. And people need others to counsel them. Elsewhere you go and see a shrink, or you go to a professional counselor, here, it's not the natural thing to do. So church is playing that role. So, for that reason, people get that kind of psychological reorientation to be able to face life. As a matter of fact, every Sunday, people are given the confidence to press on, and that it will be well.

Q: Is this perception changing with advanced economic prosperity?

> It is but at a very slow pace. Very, very slow, almost negligible. Because you find more people going to church. Even now, even though a few are beginning to question this whole Christianity. But the average Ghanaian has this consciousness that: I have to go to church, I have to go to church because, every now and then, you hear messages that ask you to

go to church and if you are not going to church, you might even feel guilty. So, it is not really going down.

Q: And even for those, who are wealthy, or rich, there is this need to go? Because they are already wealthy, so the blessing is already there…

Yes, but the substance of that blessing, some believe that it is God that has blessed them, so they have to go and worship God to sustain their blessings. Otherwise, God will be angry with them. I don't think there is a strong correlation between the wealth or class of wealth and attendance to church. You find the very rich going to church as much as the very poor in their numbers.

The above statement conveys a wide range of reasons, from those already stated by co-members to drawing attention to other, more "radical" motives for church attendance. Some appear in a contingent relationship while others are facts on their own. While striving for an adequate understanding, I will first extract reasons from Daniel's statement and thereafter treat them individually. Daniel starts by pointing to culture, a term, as discussed, that means embracing unwritten rules, social norm influencing behavior. The social norm which Kwesi identifies by saying "Sunday is for God" is defined by social lifeworld as "everybody goes" and is enforced by an extrinsic motivation induced by and maintained through peer pressure. Adherence to social norms is partly fed by the need for predictability, allowing the individual "to formulate more or less safe expectations concerning the action of others" (Macamo, 2017:64).

Because Christianity permeates a considerable part of Ghanaian society (Oduyoye 2003, Atiemo 2013, Gyekye 1987), church attendance also serves the intrinsic need to belong; it entails the social element of meeting in church those one wants or needs to meet. Positioning church in proximity to business or possibly equating both entails two dynamics: it is the institution that is being run as a business, an assumption which has been confirmed in regard to Mt. Zion by several interviewees, and it is also a place to do business, perform business interactions before or after church service. The allusion to extensive advertisement matches my observation when listening to radio, as well as when walking or driving through the streets of Accra or the neighboring Tema. Daniel points to the influential, intrinsic perception of violating the norm, as "doing something terribly wrong" accompanied by the fear of divine punishment if the individual neglects church attendance. Attending church, on the other hand is attached to promises such as God's blessing, personal prosperity, and "good marriage," providing the ingredients many individuals define as part of their pursuits of happiness. Church also offers entertainment, a rewarding system for time allocation in form of music, dancing, excitement. In a discussion, a Ghanaian professional lady

reaffirmed that church, in her view, serves as means for entertainment by saying, "We don't have many parks or places to go and relax or meet with friends."

By elaborating on how the church substitutes professional psychological care and assistance, Daniel points to different dimensions of functionality: Church functions as a catalyst, a metaphor describing the abatement, taking care of harmful or disturbing substances, which he calls "the issues of life and faith." I confess that I doubt if the term "clinical psychology" conveys what he meant. According to Myers & DeWall clinical psychology signifies "a branch of psychology that studies, assesses, and treats people with psychological disorders" (2015:12). I assume that Daniel alerted to the need for counseling psychology defined as "branch of psychology that assists people with problems in living and in achieving greater well-being" (ibid.). And here, in his view, church becomes a substitute for professional counseling. The fact that three of my interviewees identify themselves as marriage counselors in Mt. Zion tends to confirm his assumptions. Finally, the possibility of metaphysical values and beliefs being encouraged, strengthened, and confirmed "every Sunday" and explanations about abnormal incidents being offered alongside emotional understanding of human suffering point to Mt. Zion being viewed as a source enabling people to lead a "meaningful life" (Dahrendorf, 1982:182) within a complex environment.

Does membership in Mt. Zion lead to the rise of entrepreneurship?

In this section, I wish to exhibit the role my interviewees attribute to Mt. Zion in achieving a personal socioeconomic status. My intention aims also at better understanding if Wesley's maxim "earn all you can, give all you can, save all you can" impacts on Mt. Zion's members wealth accumulation. I also intend to probe if Wesley's fear that increase in wealth will in the same proportion lead to a decrease in, what he calls "the essence of religion" and I translate into "Mt. Zion attendance", has a fruitful basis in Mt. Zion.

Kwesi's statement that Mt. Zion is "a wealthy church [that] attracts more rich people" as well as the often-emphasized individual perception of Mt. Zion harboring "big, big people" (Reverend Minister) has prompted the need to examine the question of whether membership in Mt. Zion serves as a stimulus to economic performance and contributes to the rise of entrepreneurship. Do individuals desire to conform to the character of what Jill called "elitist church" or to Abraham's views as "the successful people in the church" who are presenting themselves as good followers in the quest for acceptance, possible pursuit of wealth or either attaining or keeping a personal status within the Mt. Zion collectivity?

Abraham offers a pious connotation to personal business matters. The day before the interview, he had started two business. He explains, "I have told myself, I told God, if he will help me, this

company will do well, then, if I get money, I'll just go and pay the entire, this thing [meaning the church debt]." The loan issue was at the time of the interview a considerable financial burden for the church, leading to a considerable level of discontentment and mentioned in almost all the interviews. By offering the Divine a business deal, the rational thought that is oriented towards professional success and the irrational or emotional act of promising a considerable amount towards the objectively purposeful, find their manifestations. The Divine's acceptance of the offer will manifest in economic success and accumulation of wealth, becoming a sign of God's blessing embedded in a special agreement between God and Abraham of which Mt. Zion is a co-beneficiary. The Reverend Minister was invited to the businesses opening ceremony "as my pastor to come and open it" alluding to the high esteem attributed to "osofo" and the metaphysical conviction that he is God's representative on Earth. Moreover, he also "came with the blessing of the church" underlining the utilitarian aspect of the proposed deal.

Simon positively connotes the ecclesiastical environment and business motivation, stressing upon the fact that he also has a number of clients from Mt. Zion.

His assertion is confirmed by Sylvia's, "it's a kind of church, we have bankers there… if you are an entrepreneur, if you want to do business, you get all the people… we have bankers, we have people in the insurance sector, health sector. So, you have a broader network, people, you can connect with to boost your business."

The Reverend Minister highlights another aspect:

> If you go out there right now, at the youth part, I told the young people that they must be creative, innovative, what do you like doing. And then there is a lady who is being doing smoothies for me. And, I was like, you can commercialize this, so she got a brand […] and now she packages it nicely and when we come to church, she sells it. So, and she feels fulfilled doing it because that is what she likes to do.

Here, the element of encouragement derives from the personal influence of a Mt. Zion clergy who, being satisfied with a particular service offers qua his position, the church premises for business development.

Although the above invites an assumption of a positive correlation between church membership and economic development, other statements point to a different account of perceived reality. Thus, the data, as expected offers an epistemological inconsistency.

There is Elsa's view:

And Mt. Zion is also associated with family name: once, you mention your family name, we know, oh, you are one of the rich people there or you are one of the poor people. And then like the person "do you know, who I am? I belong to this (unclear) This is my name." then, it sends a signal to people "oh, this person is in group A or category, and others find it very difficult fitting into A. They tell you, as for Mt. Zion […] if you don't have money, it's very difficult for you to be accepted. And sometimes, if you don't have money, it's even difficult for you to get a Leadership position in the church.

Although Elsa's contribution points to the subject of classism within Mt. Zion, a topic which I will take up in more detail in due course, it is also important for our present discussion. The need to belong is served though acceptance by significant others within Mt. Zion. The intention of the above statement is to highlight the interdependence of a particular financial status and family name, indicating that the family name gains importance and attains privileged status due to wealth. Wealth also is a prerequisite to gaining influential positions within Mt. Zion, confirming a previously mentioned remark, which was attributed to the Reverend Minister by a church member. However, this social pattern also reveals the lack of possibilities not only to climb a social-economic ladder but beyond that to deny acceptance if the main ingredients such as wealth and family name are missing. Being rebuked by "successful people in the church" could serve as a disincentive or a prompt to abandon personal ambitions.

Daniel favors a separation of the two social worlds, stressing that the church has no influence on his business, because "business is business and church is church." He divulges that Methodism does not play a role in his professional endeavor. He expects his personal performance to promote him and not affiliation or engagement within Mt. Zion.

Job market/career

Having shed light on the "why-question," I now turn to elucidate the phenomena of work in the Mt. Zion context. From the methodological perspective I have embarked on two different paths: firstly, the institutional level, where Mt. Zion acts as an employer. Zooming into the church's function as job provider served the purpose of honing the requisite attention to performance expectations from a religious institution as viewed by its employees as well as opportunities it might offer to them. Would my interviewees attribute any specifications to Mt. Zion by isolating the religious nature of the employer? My second path was focusing on Mt. Zion as a job marketplace, or what Kwesi labels as "church is an opportunity for a very good job." I am also concerned with possible assumptions my interviewees hold towards Mt. Zion, and their role attributions. This section is

about a divergent interpretation of reality filled with misunderstandings, at times a sign of non-reciprocated trust.

Employer Mt. Zion

After interviewing two clergy employed by the Methodist church Ghana, I spoke to two Mt. Zion employers. The current Mt. Zion Reverend Minister as well as a Mt. Zion employee gave insight into the topic of his/her personal employment and the consequent understanding of work ethic. Without claiming that these statements are also representative for others, I wish to give the floor to the Reverend Minister, who will introduce us to his work reality. Early in our first interview he points to poor remuneration: "We are not paid well. Our salaries are not good." It is however noteworthy that although he bemoans an inadequate salary, he highlights a unique characteristic adherent to his position, namely: exercising influence upon those who are part of the Methodist community in Ghana. After being asked if people in Mt. Zion are easily influenced, he answers, without any hesitation, "Yes." Admittedly, being taken by surprise, I wanted to crosscheck if my perception was in accordance with his intention by asking: "Depending on the social class or all over?" to which he confirms "all over."

Most likely, this influential position paved the way to what he describes as having "created multiple streams of income to help me take care of myself and other people." According to him, he "sits on boards of companies" and authors books, which are sold on the church premises and advertised on Mt. Zion's social media. When asked to explain what work ethic means to him, he referred to Matthew 25:14-30, the "Parable of the Talents," and explained: "What it means is that a Christian is supposed to be hard working, and no matter how small the capital is, he should be able to invest it in lucrative productive ventures for meager returns so that he could keep a good account for the little you have been given. No room for excuses."

Gloria orients her daily work to the "need to work your own job description." However, while she tries to adhere to it, she faces the challenge of meeting her "clients'" expectations, which take her beyond the performance requirements she agreed to with her employer. A particular challenge lies in the fact that while professionally serving her clients, she is simultaneously dealing with her peer-group, fellow Mt. Zion members, whose expectations exceed the attainable and lead to frustration. Gloria explains: "Right now, I know, that dealing with human beings is really, really a work on its own. Apart from the work that you are doing, the human being itself is work. […] you need to balance everybody. Everybody has his own character. Some are kind. Some people, the way they talk to you, you feel like you should stop working."

In addition, her job also requires working under pressures and overtime. She makes it clear that it is not the financial aspect which attracts her to this job because, "when you work hard, the renumeration out there [she refers to my former colleagues work in the banks, in the Ministries] is more than in church." It is her commitment to the metaphysical, the "working in the house of God" – an expression she emphasizes five times when describing her working reality – the "personal fulfillment" she draws from this assertion, which leads her to declare, "I want to work here. There is something, like to receive the other blessings that are not tangible. The o–her blessings that you can't see, because it's not physical. You want to enjoy that kind of blessing."

Job marketplace?

The structure of local interpretation about the extent to which Mt. Zion serves as a job marketplace has a significant level of complexity. Before dealing with individual opinions, it seems important to draw attention to relevant areas which are constitutive to these local accounts. There is the process of making known and becoming known, the area of preparedness to recommend or employ a fellow church member and the willingness to be employed by one. Furthermore, there is the cognitive perception as to why someone has been employed by a fellow church member. And finally, I will address the question of whether the individual interpretation of unfavorable circumstances leading to personal disappointment results in leaving Mt. Zion.

Gaining knowledge of job availability on one hand and suitable candidates on the other is perceived as an important area for church intervention. While digging deeper into this area, I discovered a deviating reality. The uniting factor is the need for jobs as has been revealed by most of my interviewees. Kwadzo provides first-hand insights by confessing that most Sakumono village inhabitants do not have permanent employment bound to perform "petty jobs" such as "buying and selling things."

Kofi, himself already retired, sees the need for church intervention:

> I know there are a lot of people who have a need for job. I don't see people coming out that they say that 'we are looking for people.' It's rare; they don't.

Q: Why do you think they [business owners] should give preference to Mt. Zion?

> They… once you are there, the little ones are also yours, they are your children. If I am a director of this institution, this is where I worship … they have children. If there is a vacancy in my institution, I won't go far away. I will come inside my own people and pick out those who qualify, those who qualify to do the job.

And he laments that although he had raised the issue of hiring from inside the congregation, the outcome was unsatisfactory to him, "I haven't seen anything."

Influential church members seem to draw from a different source of knowledge. Jill is convinced about "support systems, where people, those who are employers, who sometimes make announcements in church for those who don't have jobs, if they want to apply. So, I think, with all this support – for me, I think, it's good. It's good."

Abraham echoes: "sometimes we go around, searching for job opportunities… and then, we offer them to our children." And Marc adds a reflection on the probability of Mt. Zion entrepreneurs employing a fellow church member by saying, "yes, sometimes, especially, if people are looking for a driver or somebody to assist in the shop." The use of "sometimes" in all three statements points to a sharing of information but does not say much about its frequency.

This aligns well with the Reverend Minister's conviction that, "It's the foremost responsibility or duty of every Christian to be actively involved in productive work." In an institutionalized meeting with young church members, which he calls "Youth on Fire" in March 2018, he teaches: "Heaven helps who helps himself, resonates with the Bible. If God gives you grace, use it to develop something on your own."

An interaction during the "Youth on Fire" meeting illustrates Rev. Minister's perspective. A male participant laments, "Our problem is unemployment. When we ask for help, they turn us away. I once talked to a man from Men's Fellowship, and he laughed at me." The Bishop abruptly interrupts the person in the local language and after his intervention, people laugh. Later, I was informed that the Bishop told the person, that now that he has a job, he should not complain any more. After the Bishop's intervention, the Reverend Minister – called "odifo" meaning prophet by the Bishop – offers his conclusion: "The reality of life is that nobody owes you a living. Don't come to church expecting that someone owes you anything. […] If the person knows the father, he will take the child. It is different if you bring someone unknown."

Or as Marc explains: "You see, there are people, who don't want anything in terms of recruitment of people in the church, because if you go there and you don't perform or you do anything disgraceful, it goes to the person, who brought you there, right?" Keeping in mind the importance of a personal reputation, members are less inclined to vouch for other members. I became increasingly intrigued to get the view from business owners on this issue. To my surprise, it is Lydia, whose statements differ significantly from external perceptions. Abraham refers to her as "a sister in the church who employs young people from the church." Lydia is very clear on employment of Mt. Zion members:

I won't give preference to Mt. Zion. If you happen to be two people who are on the same level, and I have to decide, and one is from Mt. Zion, I'll chose the person that is not from Mt. Zion.

Q: Why?

I feel more comfortable.

And she elaborates on those who "already have an advantage for having access to me in terms of mentorship and things. I am able to help people from Mt. Zion without necessarily giving them a job." This may possibly be the reason for the high esteem she appears to enjoy in Mt. Zion. And she explains, "So, I prefer to give to somebody who doesn't have that advantage." Other entrepreneurs are not as outspoken against church members employment, but they concede they have employed only very few church members. Although having probed different approaches to find out reasons, I was not able to reach a satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon. We ended up at the obvious requirement of "performance and qualities" but none of the entrepreneurs went as far as Lydia by providing a personal reason.

To balance the local accounts of those who are in the position to either offer a job or recommend for one, I asked the job seekers if they would prefer to work for a fellow church member and encountered from some of them rather reserved reactions, such as uncertainty concerning regular payment and fair treatment. I want to highlight Abena because she fulfills the criteria of being hard working, engaged in Mt. Zion activities, known in the church due to these activities and although presently employed, in search for a new position. When asked if she would give premium a job offer by a church member, she answers:

ehmm… the church… if you work, it's difficult for you to come to church. They won't allow you. You won't get time. You go, work every day. Outside … maybe today is your off day, go to church or do your things in the house … but church MEMBER …that's why.

Q: you mean, you work harder if you work for a church member?

"yeah, that's how they behave.

Q: and why is that so?

[pauses]…

Q: what do those who work for church members say?

Some are complaining, its bad. Because they give, they give them work today. They don't allow them to do their things, so they are suffering. Even some have stopped the work.

Abena hints about exploitation, contradicting the Reverend Minister's view that "it is difficult for you to exploit your church member. He is in the same church with you, and he is working with you

because, you know that he will talk about it in church." Is it the fear of potential employers being discussed unfavorably by fellow church members in the same social environment or are they guided by the assumption that fellow church members won't display the required work ethic to satisfactory perform the job? Daniel offers an interesting reflection while pondering the possible pro and cons of engaging a Christian:

> Yes, to some extent. But to another extent: no. Because the workplace is for producing a certain kind of results. […] Being a Christian is a plus, but some Christians are frankly … lazy… you wouldn't want a lazy Christian around you no matter how much he confesses. You don't want someone who will spend time reading the Bible when he should be working. So, in a sense, it could even be a disincentive. So, you don't necessarily have to give preferences to a Christian. It's a plus, but you must check the person's ethical behavior and attitude towards work.

Mt. Zion reflects the heterogeneity of the society in manifold facets, including an example of successful job brokerage, representatively described by Elsa:

> It's very difficult [to get a job thought Mt. Zion] unless you are well associated with the businesspeople. If you know them, it's quite easy getting a job. I came through, I came to this place, because a friend knew the MD here. He was in the same church with the MD. I didn't know him, but I knew a friend who introduced me to him, and I got a job. It would have been difficult, if I would have approached the man myself because he didn't know me then.

The personal reasons for job engagement by a Mt. Zion member can deviate as illustrated by the example of Kwesi. By stating, "He trusted me because he saw me that I was a church member," Kwesi is convinced that the deep trust which developed between him and his employer, including the family, was grounded in his church membership. While keeping this information confidential, I wanted to find out from his employer what convinced him to employ Kwesi and if belonging to the same Methodist church played a role. He elaborates:

> I don't think for me it is very important, whether […] you are of my religion. I don't care. It's more […] good attitude. And Kwesi had that also. Had a calm disposition also. And then a certain loyal disposition also. So, to me it was more important at that stage than the fact that later I realized, he was a Methodist. It didn't matter, not at all.

Q: So, there wasn't a higher level of trust or something?

> It meant nothing in my mind. It really meant nothing for me.

Q: the church values or teaching didn't influence you?

> But what particularly would be a Methodist value, which if he would have belonged to a different church, would have been missing? Or belonging to the Methodist church brought? He was an individual that I had the time to access in a different setting, […] and I think his humility, his calmness, his composure, his willingness. […] I mean wanting to be around me, it was more important to me than the fact that he was in church.

The above reasoning falls in line with the answer Michael Okyerefo, Professor of Sociology at Legon University in Accra, offered to my question, whether a Christian would stand a better chance getting a job. The answer was: "In society, it doesn't matter if you are religious, Christian or not."

Due to his deep insight into Mt. Zion's structures and dynamics which partly resulted from his engagement or leadership on five Mt. Zion Committees, I asked Simon to share his view on Mt. Zion acting as employment facilitator. His estimation [11/2018] reveals that about 40% are in gainful official employment, out of which 10% gained it through other members. Taking into account the statistics for the third quarter ending 30 September 2018, Mt. Zion counted 1,506 adult members, following Simon's estimation, about 60 people had succeeded to get employment in connection with their church membership.

Mary is a lady in her mid-20s, originated in Sakumono, who after graduating with a BA has finished her National Service, a requirement in Ghana to work for the duration of one year for a fixed salary after having terminated university, and now in search for employment.

Possibly due to the interview situation and her uncertainty about the level of trust she can put into a stranger, Mary illustrated her point by referring to others:

> People sometimes say the church is not doing anything to help concerning employment.

Q: Why would they say that?

> Because the church should have a system, that if any graduate has done with school, they come and say: oh, I am done with school… and there should be something …. They think it should be worked out for them to get a job.

Q: what is your take on that?

> I believe that …that should also be something like that should also work for the church … something the church should do for the youth…

Q: For which reasons?

> For which reasons? If they want the youth to stay in church […] I think they should be doing that because if someone from another church helps me and […] I believe that I have people

here who are in the same position and didn't help me, and I believe that someone, let's say Assembly of God helped me, I don't mind going there. And people won't mind following the person to church.

Here, she introduces the dimension of religious permeability, attributing it to utilitarian reasons. Permeability also coincides with statements made by other interviewees and my observations. Kwesi's observation complements this perception. He says: "Most of my friends who don't have jobs, now are no more in the church. Because at some point, they felt the church was not helping them. Also, the church was not all that active for them."

The above statements shed light on a particular understanding of the social phenomena – being like-minded, belonging to a "family" – attributed to Mt. Zion by singling out social relationship based on the expectation that fellow congregation members are co-responsible for gaining a personal foothold in the world of employment. In the quest for economic security, the need to belong is strongly associated with an attained social action by relevant others, which finds its main manifestation in being identified as a fellow member in need and thus provoking an altruistic pattern of behavior leading to a positive impact upon the individual's social reality. If this trust is frustrated, it provides fertile soil for a decision to let go of church affiliation for some individuals while others, such as Elisabeth and Abena, remain dedicated to Mt. Zion. Both mention their unsuccessful attempts to improve their working situation through the help of church members (Abena in search of support to set up a small business), and while keeping trying they testify to feeling bound to Mt. Zion because it is the place "to come and worship y God" (Elisabeth) or due to a membership in a church singing group (Abena).

Giving as blessing

Throughout my interviews there has been a multitude of references towards expected financial contributions to Mt. Zion. While some interviewees have successfully established personal means of justification and encouragement to donate, others complain about the perceived pressure culminating into a financial burden with a multitude of consequences. Because the individual's possibility to give depends on his disposition of financial resources which, in turn, mostly links to work, this section is about the implications, the expected donations behavior has on my interviewees. Firstly, I wish to turn the attention as to why Mt. Zion is in need for extra funding. Thereafter, the reader will be introduced to an expected normative behavior, which manifests itself in a specific form of donation, the tithe. I also decided to discuss the topic of donation because it offers insights into group pressure that furthered certain work behavior and impacts attitudes towards church influence.

The need for money

To comprehend the financial situation of Mt. Zion during my studies, it is important to take a step back in history. An engaged founding member explains in detail the missionary effort of those Methodist pioneers who aimed at establishing a Methodist church in Sakumono. They started from "house-to-house evangelism," met in private places, then moved to a classroom in a neighboring school, assembling under a "canopy," meeting in a more spacious private house, followed by being allocated a hall in a private school for then about 30 worshipers. As they grew in numbers, the faithful managed to acquire property and build a church, where, as described by the founding member, Kwame, "most of the people, who have joined the church are people … public servant, a civil servant, work on their own who have come to reside here and want to join." In parallel, the fishing community, Sakumono village, had their own Methodist church. Soon, experiencing growth in membership due to merging with the fishing community church, successful evangelism and increasing Methodist population in the Estates, it became evident that the building could not accommodate all the faithful. This assertion led to the decision of building a church, which could accommodate 2,000 people, culminated in highly ambivalent reactions from its members. On one hand, there is a proud identity with an impressive edifice while on the other, most lament the considerable financial burden for Mt. Zion members, which is attached to it. Simon shares an insight by saying:

> The leader's view… I get a lot… some people complain, look, this is not Mt. Zion. But sometimes, we communicate that to our Reverend Ministers. […] But there was a change in policy from the Methodist head office, that changed our financial arrangements. So, Mt. Zion put up this huge edifice, we used to be in a small hall at the entrance and we have outgrown the place. So, we got a loan from the bank to finish. Initially, we were building from our internally generated budget. Then this new Rev. Minister came, the Bishop, and wanted us to finish the roofing. So, he pushed and the leadership at the time agreed to take a loan from the bank.

This statement highlights several components: (i) the previous place which served for worship had become too small, (ii) by stating "this huge edifice," he voices a disagreement directed towards the new building's size and simultaneously (iii) indicates a prevailing preference to progress with available funds. Evidently, those cautious members were not able to bring their concerns to fruition as (iv) a newly appointed Mt. Zion clergy took the decision to speed up the construction process, and (v) "pushed" the church's leadership into agreeing to his decision that (vi) required taking a loan from a bank which, as Simon specifies, "at the time was around 32% [interest]. So, it was

really affecting our finances and even this year we have got them to renegotiate with the bank and they have reduced it to 28% now." The decision taken by the clergy resulted in (vii) complaints leading to disassociation with Mt. Zion. This recurring theme affects behavior, according to Sylvia, who describes the factual and emotional dimensions, and thus best reflects the different contributions on this topic:

> In Mt. Zion, for so many years, there was a rule, that we only did one offering. Because the people in the church understand what it means to give. I mean, I came to church, I am appreciating God out of what I have. I come and give. So, there is no need for anybody to convince me to give more. Okay. But that has changed… a little… because a new minister came. […] and in fact, our church has never been like this. You will be shocked. Most of our Ministers who started with us… this was not the intend… people gave freely in the past in this church. You don't have to ask. It's normal. And the kind of money you get is enough. But…it's like… they did something people did not support. Why do you go for a loan? You are building the house of God. Why don't you take your time and do it step-by-step? And you burden people. And at time, when we started, most of the people had babies, like younger kids. So, the burden was not so much. Now, that the kids are growing and they are paying expensive school fees, they don't have that much to give. And besides, people do not trust the system anymore. They don't trust the system anymore.

Next to the burden of paying interest to the bank, the Methodist Church Ghana has a system of financial reallocation to those small Methodist congregations who are not able to pay their pastors' allowance. This results in an additional financial expectation, or some called it burden, towards Mt. Zion, culminating in unprecedented expectations towards fellow church members.

Tithe

Tithe is the pillar, the reliable source of income for the church. The concept of tithe is rooted in the Old Testament and finds its first expression in the Mosaic law captured in Leviticus 27:30-32. Literarily it prescribes setting apart a tenth of the produce of the land to God. This commandment appears to be deeply engrained into the Ghanaian Methodist consciousness, not only due to the visible size of the offertories marked "tithe" placed next to the altar in Methodist churches, but because membership is defined through a tithe payment. The introduction to tithe paying duty started in Sunday School, where, according to Kwesi, children were taught that "even if you are not working, you can pay tithe."

Kwesi, who is on a low income, has internalized the need for contributing to the church. He says: "If I am working, number one is my tithe; then my personal needs." And he adds: "If you keep

paying your tithe, some opportunity will open up for you, like better job". Paying tithe signifies a social obligation, a fulfilment of duty towards oneself and significant others, living up to the expectations by the social environment, and it is also a carrier of hope for an improved job opportunity or economic advancement. It entails a specific assignment to the anticipated reward, unlike the previously discussed, general award allocated to church attendance.

In search for better placing this taken-for-granted element of ecclesiastic teaching, I asked the Reverend Minister, who personifies a direct financial beneficiary as well as major influencer, to share his views on donations in general and tithe in particular. The interview took place after church service, and while referring to my observation of inviting the congregation to queue three times during service for different types of donations, I invited him to elaborate on the procedure and whether it implies social pressure to donate. He responds:

> But I think that's what happened in the Bible. Jesus was sitting by the treasury and the people came to give. And they dropped their money. We also do…But you see, it also comes back to the question of integrity and honesty. In giving of offerings, I am not supposed to give it to please anyone. So, if you don't have, you should have the confidence to sit down, because it is between you and your God. And… and nobody should bother you. Nobody should do that.

Q: Is that realistic?

> Oh yes. If you feel intimidated… then… sometimes, I am telling them that … eh… when was it? I think it was yesterday, I did a birthday party for someone who was raising funds to pay people's fees and I said, don't let the people move in line and make it look as if everybody must come and give. People should get up and come at will. So that anybody who wants to give should come, anyone who hasn't got, should not come, and even us, who doesn't want to give, should sit. And that is what giving is supposed to be. It's not supposed to be compulsory. Because every form of giving in the church is supposed to be free will.

And he continues to elaborate on tithe:

> I am saying that in church where you record tithe, and you said, that because this person has not paid his tithe if he comes for baptism of his child, I won't do it, it is wrong. It is injustice. […] And we are not supposed to tie sacraments to it and say, either because you have given this, we do this, or because you have not done this. It is wrong. Otherwise, we are selling grace. That's what it is (laughs).

Q: How do you monitor for example those tithes? Write the name on it?

Yes. Over here, people write their names on it. I disagree with that.

And he continues on the importance attributed to paying tithe by saying:

> What some people have wrongly done and that has any expression in the Constitution of the Methodist Church in Ghana, but some individual ministers will refuse to attain to certain needs of church members because they are not seeing them paying tithes. And it is wrong. In a first place, it is not even supposed to be recorded in terms of people's names and all that. If we are recording it for proper accounting – fine, that we have received this amount and that amount. But as to who brought it, it doesn't matter. It's nobody's business.

His perception of reality focuses on (i) justification, (ii) voluntary action, and (iii) malpractice. By referring to moral personal attributes, such as "integrity" and "honesty" that are derived from norms set by the Bible and relating them to church donation monitored by the highest spiritual authority, he evokes a personal level of responsibility to offer money. The offerings are directed towards the Almighty and only those who "don't have" are exempt. The dichotomy arises by emphasizing, on one hand, personal responsibility and an the other a means of social control where those who are poor must contribute, because everyone is giving, "I can't watch them, so I have to give," Elisabeth states.

In addition, not participating in the offering could imply an alienation from the Mt. Zion community, leading to social pressure to conform. When Simon voices, "yes, I think that money has become a central part of the church's operation which is not so good, because those who are not able to give sometimes feel a bit not belonging," he hints towards the awareness among church leadership of the church's departure from its core business, namely: a place of worship and service, toward financial issues that leave behind those who are unable to abide.

The conviction among Mt. Zion members clearly points to an accepted normative behavior to share at least a tenth of one's income with the church, and almost all interviewees referred to its justification by defining it as a biblical command. In Akosua's words: "What you have to offer is your tithe. The Bible says, you should pay your tithe" indicate that, according to the data, the tithe payment is not being contested. It is rather those financial contributions which are expected each Sunday that cause criticism by church members. The individual's struggle between following the clergy's request for donation and personal means to do has been voiced in many interviews. For illustrative purposes, I wish to use Harry's reasoning who confirms his commitment by saying: "I will donate because it is my responsibility to give," a conviction that, in his view, is rooted in the biblical assurance of "God loves a cheerful giver," a quote taken from 2 Cor. 9:7. It is marked on

the donation envelopes distributed on each chair In the church and thus entrenched in the collective memory. Then, lowering his voice, Harry draws the attention to his perception that "members are complaining too much, because the church is full of monetary aspects. The church, the Methodist church is full of monetary aspects" culminating into a view that "for the Methodist Church and Mt. Zion, it's too much, is too much." In his observation, the present situation leads to a behavior which he describes as "members will give, but the giving will not be that much …will not be that wholehearted giving, you will be forced to give." Some interviewees observed absenteeism at church services, especially when several additional donations were expected.

The way in which malpractice is referred to is surprising. The Reverend Minister clearly points to what he considers as inappropriate, thereby distancing himself from these practices and evoking the impression of their occurrence with other Methodist congregations, not Mt. Zion. The segment of reality I was able to observe shows a more complex picture. When asked for the main collection, I was never able to detect any person remaining seated, even though I was seated in the back of the nave. In fact, at my very first time in Mt. Zion, I decided to remain seated because I did not want to draw attention by walking the aisle. The opposite seemed to take place, namely: drawing attention and being gently reminded by the usher to follow the procedure. As previously explained, an emotional emphasis on donations by the Reverend Minister took a prominent part in each sermon I was privileged to attend. Although the emphasis lies on "free will," psychological means of enforcement are being successfully used. Abraham perfectly nails it by sharing his conviction:

> It is unfortunate, but I have to say this one: you realize that those people who have been giving to God's work, you see them always prospering, you see them that they always doing good, doing well. Their children and so they can always continue to give. And unfortunately, for those, who have been saying that we think that we are not well-endowed and therefore, you always cry over money when there is something to be done for God's work, they always complain: As for me, I don't have money. You see that they continue to be like that… do you get what I am trying to say?

A source for social pressure lies in the fear of being stigmatized as not willing to contribute to "the work of God" as well as to forego a promised reward. Sylvia offers a pragmatic reflection of this perceived reality: "The ministers they do talking, talking, talking. At the end of the day, they watch out for those, who have money. They are comfortable with them, because, at the end, they will bring the money. If a rich person wants to do something, they [the ministers] will come."

Revolving Fund

In this section I turn the attention to reciprocal expectations: The individual's expectation on institutional investment in her/ his development and the church's expectation on the return on investment. It appears that here we are witnessing a period of change. What seemed reliable, and thus, predictable, a safe expectation by those with scarce financial means, to enable their children's education is turning into an uncertainty. An almost taken for granted established reality is threatens to fall apart, a situation which triggers a high level of concern with church members.

One way of investing in its members, which was repeatedly mentioned in the interviews, is allocating scholarships to children in need. It is perceived as a successful instrument by the beneficiaries as well as those who contribute financially to its realization. Several bemoaned the decrease in awards due to the present financial pressures of serving the church loan and finalizing its construction.

The Methodist Church Ghana operates schools throughout the country. In fact, out of my 26 interviewees, 8 mention in the interview having had attended a Methodist educational institution, and 6 confirm either they or their child profited from scholarship. Next to educational support, the interview data point to three major elements attributed to scholarship: (i) distribution of Christian knowledge enriched by elements specific to Methodism, (ii) long-term attachment to the Methodist church, and (iii) work motivation rooted in gratitude.

The emphasis upon the need for formal education goes back to the early missionary days. As it was established as a gateway to economic advancement, and in some cases prosperity, the "harbinger of enlightenment" mixed with the "bearer of the Gospel" (Dickson, 1991:173) culminated into a fervent demand for school attendance. The missionaries very quickly realized a need to link secular education to the teaching of Christian denominational content to ensure growth of church membership. Two interviewees, one in his early sixties (Abraham) and the other in his late thirties (Robert) confirmed the close collaboration between school and church, the latter explaining: "And those days, if Monday you didn't go to school, they will come, they will discipline, they will cane you. Those days, somewhere 98-99, if Sunday, you didn't go to church, church Sunday school, they will cane you." While both approved to these measures, Robert voluntarily offers an explanation: "They wanted to promote the word of God. So that you won't grow up and become a stubborn person in the society. But they want that you grow up and become responsible person. Out of that, going to church, you are going to study the word of God. And the word will serve you as your light and guide you."

"School feeds the church" is a statement used by the Reverend Minister to explain why, in his view, the Methodist church is comprised of a considerable percentage of wealthy people. And he bemoans the increasing number of educational institutions that do not feed into the church. Those, who receive a Mt. Zion scholarship are bound to attend Methodist schools, which in present-day Ghana, enjoy a high academic reputation and remain closely attached to the church. All interviewees, who had personally received a scholarship, expressed a high level of gratitude, indicating that it was decisive in their socioeconomic development. Some were able to complete secondary education while others profited from support at the tertiary level. An analytical reflection by a beneficiary (Kwesi):

> So, the scholarship came for those living most in Sakumono. It was not in general, but in those days, they did it mainly for those who were in Sakumono […] But at the end, everyone got it, even the rich who can pay their school fees came for the scholarship. Because they all wanted to benefit from the church. Yeah. And the church saw it necessary […] to get educated, because they will come and take over the church in the future, so they established that scholarship scheme.

And he continues, pointing to the reciprocity by saying: "They have invested in you. And they want to see how that investment will yield […] in the church, all the time talking about money. They want you also to be able to pay or bring some contribution to the church on Sunday."

Financial support by Mt. Zion became a credit scheme, where the church makes an investment by financing acquisition of scientific knowledge as well as building up magical-transcendental convictions based on the Christian-Methodist doctrine. In return, beneficiaries are expected to "feed the church" through socioeconomic participation. To my knowledge, all interviewed beneficiaries expressed their gratitude for the educational opportunities offered to them. They also are aware of the trust put in them by the church investment. Mary's statement, "I have this notion, I have to give back to the church in the same way the church helped me, the same way other people will be expecting or should be helped" is representative of the other scholarship recipients, including Henry: "I feel I can do, or I wish, I could do one day, is to be able to pay the fees of at least one student. […] So, that is one of my dreams."

The data allow us to assume that scholarship is an incentive for income sharing with the church, provided the beneficiaries find employment. In some instances, there is the expectation of topping up the investment by offering assistance in the job market once the education that was supported by a scholarship has been successfully completed.

Incentives for employment?

Unlike in the previous section, I now wish to point to a phenomenon that took me by surprise: The reasons my interviewees give when explaining their expectation for Mt. Zion's assistance in job search support, and beyond that, job placement services. And here again, we are confronted with several misunderstandings: (i) expectation for support the individual holds in regard to Mt. Zion, where it remains at best unclear to which extend these expectations are part of the existing Mt. Zion concept; (ii) expectations of those who have benefited from a scholarship to give back and (iii) expectations for ecclesiastic blessing. As we will see, "blessing" has two dimensions: the trust in a miraculous blessing to avail financial resource and their redistribution echoing to a certain extend Wesley's teachings.

Unexpectedly to me, several interviewees related the need for increased church employment support among those who belong to Mt. Zion. And as much as Mt. Zion's scholarship scheme is applauded by all interviewees as a means to educate those who are financially underprivileged, nurture hope for social cohesion, narrow the gap of socioeconomic differences within Mt. Zion, as well as reward those who contribute with a notion of altruism, the perceived lack of assistance when entering the job market has been repeatedly voiced as a problem. Those who have profited from the scholarship scheme unanimously confirm their intrinsically felt need to prove to the community of Mt. Zion that they are worthy of the trust placed in them. At the same time, they also are guided by extrinsic motivation — a response to perceived and sometimes openly voiced expectation by Mt. Zion members for a return on the investment. This, however, implies that generating income from employment will lead to employing fellow church members, as voiced by Sylvia who had been aided by a church member finding employment: "Because we are in the same fellowship, we believe that, if I have … anytime, they are asking for money in church, I will only be the one to give. But if I should employ another additional person and we all end up in the church, when you are contributing, the stress goes down with me because we have a lot of people who are employed."

Jill takes up this thought, adding different perspectives:

> When you come to the Methodist church, you realize that we actually encourage people to work, to earn money, so that we can also contribute to the church because we have a lot of programs, give money to this assessment, that assessment this offering… even on Sunday, you saw it in church … offering this… and sometimes, its competition, especially the type of harvest, we do it by day-born, so how would you get the money for those…

Q: This invitation to donate and the reasons behind it, does it have any correlation to work ethic?

It should. Because, because you see, where are you getting the money from? So, one leads to the other. If I work well and get more money, I can go and give more. And if I give more, I can get blessings. So, the whole blessing is giving and receiving. If we follow the Bible, it says, if you give to support his work, God will give. So, if I will get money, I can give more, […] God can give me promotion, my job and things, and I will be happy. And the church will be happy. So, there is a correlation.

I will briefly point to the aspects these statements entail followed by a discussion on the insight it yields as far as the relationship between individual motivations and expectations by significant others are concerned. The shared opinion entails the following components: (i) redistribution of income, (ii) contribution to church programs, (iii) competition of the fittest to give, leading to (iv) status, (v) altruism, (vi) reward by the Almighty (vii) reference to the Bible, and (viii) win-win situation.

By emphasizing the need for redistribution, work becomes a means to an end. It is placing emphasis on the importance of individual work where the source of motivation is bound to a specific purpose, namely: contribution to the common good of a community of faith one belongs to. It aligns well with Lewin's (1920) conviction that although work is "indispensable for living," it does not constitute life as such. Practically, the meaning of work gets reduced to the dimension of renumeration, whereas ideologically, it gets lifted up because it's associated with a promise of future divine favors and protection. In other words, where the value of a work product is largely determined by renumeration, redistribution adds meaning and importance to the individual's life. This meaning in the above narrative is derived from the expectation of personal support or sacrifice for the common good, such as supporting church programs or visibly writing a check.

The motivation to donate is associated with selflessness and renunciation, what Peter Singer (2015) calls "effective altruism," which provokes what psychologists call a "warm glow," positive emotions which are experienced by giving. The Bible (Acts 20:35, NIV) confirms this perception and encourages giving, based on Jesus's admonition, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The added promise of blessings is an important motivational factor that was confirmed by other interviewees from different socioeconomic background. God's blessing is essential in the Christian metaphysical cosmos. In Mt. Zion, signs of blessing were repeatedly referenced to visible interventions, such as having experienced healing, finding a job, discovering a financial source, or being successful. The state of being blessed also entails a certainty of salvation. In addition, the expression "God bless you" is viewed as a symbol for well-wishing. Jill's repeated emphasis upon the need for sharing her monetary work outcome with a community bound by the common Christian faith and grounded in Methodist teachings, suggests that sharing has culminated into a

norm. Its main properties lie in expecting norm-abiding behavior, while putting emphasis upon a functional role of holding individuals accountable to each other. The socialized expectation of reward manifests itself in envisaging mutual loyalty and God's blessing. Akosua partly repeats and at the same time aptly sums up the above by saying: "The church teaches that we have to work hard. Not even for yourself. So that you earn a good salary. […] when you go to Mt. Zion, they teach you: you have to work hard, and you earn money. You earn some for yourself, you earn some for the church (laughs), isn't it?" And she explains: "They say, there is more blessing in giving, more than receiving. So, when you give, definitely you are blessed. So, when you give, definitely you are blessed. So, they encourage you to get hard work, get some and then you give." There is evidence that the strong emphasis on divine blessings being contingent on contributions triggers the expected behavior. Kyei offers a critical reflection:

> I think in the Akan setting, maybe among the Kwahu, the whole notion of wealth or being wealthy is to invest. […] I think Christianity today is rather built on: make money and bring it to the church. And make more money and bring it to the church. It is not a situation where very much even the teachings are towards people investing and enlarging, but people being told: If you can bring your money to the church, then grace is assured for you, and then you will become wealthy because you have more of God's grace. […] They can teach sometimes that you can even work hard, but if you don't have God's grace, you won't be prosperous.

Furthermore, data indicate that the "responsibility to give" (Harry) is also rooted in an attempt to fit in, serving the "need to belong." Sylvia reflects:

> I think that money has become a central part of the church's operation, which is not so good, because those who are not able to give sometimes feel a bit not belonging. […] The people in the church, who are well-to-do, they will not feel pressured to give. Because, it is like, this is what I can give, and I give. You can't force me. So, the concern is really on those who can't give. They always feel pressured. […] So, it's a bit of a problem.

Classism

Throughout the previous sections, I have hinted to perceived classism within Mt. Zion, and now I intend to focus in more depth upon the repeatedly mentioned aspects of classism. Herewith, I pursue three aims: firstly, to illustrate the social environment within which my research was carried out, secondly, to present in a dynamic manner how individuals perceive their lifeworld, Mt. Zion,

and thirdly, to share individual expectations towards fellow church members with a particular focus upon work-related issues.

Classism appears to be a burning issue in Mt. Zion, although at times, it is only being reluctantly admitted because it contradicts the teaching of being "united by Christ." As it turned out, the question of classism was tedious to pursue because those belonging to the affluent class affirmed its existence, but often attempted to relativize it. The less privileged cautiously pointed out grievances, while often simultaneously trying to convey their ability to cope with the circumstances, to make sense of their perceived social reality and, as we will see, in their quest for economic survival, prioritize economic support over social acceptance. This analysis deemed it necessary to allocate a section observing social dynamics within a church community. To what extent does the us-group, namely all those who are members of Mt. Zion, disaggregate along the socioeconomic lines? The statements are dense with meaning, they allow insights into defined values and accepted norms. I also noted a certain level of acceptance of the prevailing status-quo leading to a sense of predictability which helps to manage expectations and allows the individual to reflect on actions.

My observation that regardless of the socioeconomic group to which an individual is assigned, there is a unified attribution to Mt. Zion as a wealthy institution this is complimented by the testimonies of my interviewees. Although the estimated percentage allocated to a specific socioeconomic group differs, those who are labeled "lower class," or "have-nots" are anonymously viewed by my interviewees as representing about 35% of Mt. Zion population.

We also need to know that in Ghana, regardless of the Christian denomination, it is common to address the fellow Christian as brother or sister. A phenomenon well explained by Marc: "In the Christian world, right, we are called brothers and sisters, and we are called brothers and sisters because we are united by Christ." Next to the biblical reference, it is also a reminiscence of the previously described meaning of family in the Akan setting, the perception of being part of an us-group. And although these resemblances are undeniable, they are, as we will see, disconsonant with the meaning the Akan attribute to family.

The notion of family is determined by a unifying factor that feeds into satisfying the need to belong but also commonly responds to physiological, safety, and esteem needs. In Marc's view, a union established by the supernatural and documented in the Bible (e.g., Psalm 103:13: "The Lord is like a father to his children") does not give room for differences or "classes, even among Christians," and he continues by giving an account on the present situation: "But it is the optimum, that everybody wants to see, but as us, human beings, the differences are there." Before diving deeper into the manifestation of these differences and their possible implications, it seems

important to allow Marc to lay down specifications for the circumstances under which family solidarity, in his view, still prevails:

> In the rural setting, we are related in a way where everybody knows me, everybody knows my parent. Solidarity within the rural setting is stronger. So, the bond in the rural setting is stronger than in the urban area. […] for example, if something happens to someone in the rural area, it is a community issue. For example, if I lose my mother in the village, it's the village that has lost a mother not me. It's a very big family because my mother is related to this person and this person. So, there is that kind of interconnection. You have a lot of networks; it's very complex. So, when something comes, it is seen more as a community issue than an individual issue.

Abraham, when referring to the Akan tradition, also emphasizes the unifying elements: "I will never be lonely because of my tradition. I can go to anywhere; I can enter in any room. If I feel hungry, I'll go there. If I don't have money, I'll go there, and they will give me food."

Both statements contain an emphasis upon mutual social responsibility, which, as Marc pointed out, can also entail social control. Having relocated to the urban setting, the social cohesion which prevailed in rural environment seems to crumble. In Abraham's view:

> In my village we regard everybody as a human being. Everybody is a human being. And fellow feeling is there. When I come here, we try as much as possible to be like a family… you'll still have partitions…

Q: Classes…?

> Classes. You'll still have classes. You'll still … as a church, we talk about it, but we still have these… like you can't avoid it. There are the upper class, the middle class, the lower class.

He describes the social lifeworld as containing drastic implication for the individual. By repeatedly stressing upon "everybody is a human being," he indicates a humanistic perspective which puts a premium on personal growth rather than supernatural matters. It contains a person-centered perspective.

Rogers (1980) defines three qualities necessary for personal growth-promotion: (i) genuineness or congruence: Genuine people are expected to be transparent and self-disclosing, forming a "basis for living together in a climate of realness" (p.160), (ii) acceptance is about an unconditional positive view of the "other individual as a separate person, a respect for the other as having worth in his or her own right" (p.271), and (iii) empathy, a sincere attempt to stand in somebody's shoes and view the world though his eyes (p.272-273). By physically moving away from the stability and

opportunity for personal growth which was provided by the community in the village, the in-group consisting of biological or perceived extended family, the churches tend to become a substitute in the personal search for genuineness, acceptance, and empathy.

Although the data strongly support a continuous identification with intrinsically entrenched values important to a particular Akan ethnic group, there is also evidence that to meet the need for personal development or growth in the given lifeworld, expectations get projected onto Mt. Zion.

I wish to exemplify the ambiguity or conflicting data evidence using answers given by the Reverend Minister during two differed interviews. The Reverend Minister when explaining expectations towards donations pointed out that "because we know there are classes" the contributed amounts have to differ. However, during the second interview, the discussion turned towards possible socioeconomic differences within Mt. Zion followed by the question about whether or not he observes classism in Mt. Zion, his answer was a triple "no."

The following answers to the questions about the existence of classism in Mt. Zion will enable us to better understand the current situation. Moses says: "Yeah [sighs] in fact, we have that problem [classism]. Oh, you see Sakumono in general was for people who are salary workers, so at least, those who come to church, at some level, they have their own things […] Apart from that, those who come, they are in their own class. They are big men, they are holding high positions."

Jill's thoughts:

> Hmm… seriously… you know, sometimes, people say there is… to some ... maybe it's in a disguised form, because you have … maybe who are rich, so-called rich with their friends and they relate better among themselves. […] Of course, there is some organization, where you could say: oh this organization, only the high level people are there. You know, there is the township, we have a place we call in the Sakumono village, where a lot of the low-level people actually come from. […] Maybe, if you want to associate with them, not too deeply. […] When we come to worship, everybody is free, we are all worshiping, but then after worship, you see cars, without cars… so if they are walking, they will walk … maybe if you ask the people with cars to give you a lift they will.

This introduction of level-attribution, which is a comparative element indicating a ranking of superiority for some and insignificance for others, is remarkable. She also indicates a hierarchical level by pointing to the wealthier people being asked for assistance by those whom Sylvia labels as "have-not," whereby the "maybe" indicates an additional level of expected dependency. Kwesi shares his experience of unfulfilled expectations of genuineness, acceptance, and empathy:

Someone is walking, instead of giving that person a lift, they say the car is full. […] During the first Sunday all our organizations, we are wearing our uniforms, […] so, if I am a Methodist and I see the uniform, I know, you are going to the church. But sometimes, when I see them, they will just pass by, sometimes, they will even wave (short laughter). But some of them, they will see you in the uniform, but they will not mind you.

Q: Will they greet you?

No, they just pass by. And you go to the church, and get there, and they are there.

Q: Will they greet you when they get to the church?

Depends on the person.

And he adds the assurance that he will greet a person irrespective of getting a response or not.

Kwadzo's son, a young university student on a Mt. Zion scholarship living in Sakumono and contributing to the church in his function as a chorister, confirms Kwesi's perception by asserting, "They just see themselves like they don't socializing with us." I was interested in finding out if he – who can be easily identified as a church member by his chorister attire which he wears every Sunday, - was acknowledged by being greeted, and he responds:

That one… hm [short laughter] sometimes, they don't even see you. So, you… you can't think about, isn't it the person, I am in church with? He just saw me and passed by… you… you begin to think about… sometimes it happened to me… you see some people like … you know the person from this church, but then you realize the person doesn't know you. But you, you know the person. The person doesn't know you.

By stating that "classes are sometimes created unconsciously, but it's there. It's very felt," another scholarship recipient attending university, Henry, confirms this strongly prevailing situation. Others, like Elsa allude to an established and accepted normative behavior according to the socioeconomic class by asserting that those church members who are financially well off do not see the need to associate with the poor. In her view, they do not want to be "mixed with them."

The issue of mingling

Sylvia adds an additional perspective by introducing the interactional level by saying: "You see that they normally walk together; they talk together. Naturally, those who do-not-have, they shy away from those who have." This statement contains an expectation towards the "do-not-have" in bridging the gap with remaining church members. It is not about a mutual movement towards each other – in a sense of a family – but rather indicates a one-sided pursuit of interests. The Reverend Minister alludes to this by explaining: "There are some people, who by themselves feel removed

from others. And they feel there this people at this level, so we can't mingle with them. Meanwhile, those people have alienated themselves." And he continues to explain that the church is a fruitful terrain to directly approach those who are "very, very rich". By his allusion to those member "paying school fees" and "always supporting people", he hints to an asymmetric interaction where the gap between social classes becomes very obvious. The need for social interaction is one-sided, as those who are seen as rich and influential are not expected to approach fellow church members of a different social class.

Henry shares an insightful perspective:

> Probably, talking to a rich man is that he or she to give you an idea how to get employment or make some money. Because you are looking down upon yourself, you might not get there. And most rich people will also not come to you to talk to you because […] of their status. For a lot of people in this church, being able to identify that you need help is quite difficult. If you don't go, no one will come to you. I believe in that. So, if you are rich and I want an idea, I need something, I have to approach you. But because of your status, a lot of people are coming to you. Let me use the Minister for example: if you don't go to the Minister, the Minister might not be able to identify you in the church. Because, when church ends, a lot of people want to say "hi" to the Minister. "Osofo, you are looking good," "osofo, how is the family." So, if you don't get closer to talk to the Minister, the Minister might not even get the chance to ask you, "What is your name?" So, when you are able to do that, at least you give room for these people to appreciate you. The next time, he sees you… he has seen you before… and then there is someone who will tell him, "This is the guy, who spoke about this," he will be able to call you for a discussion.

It is remarkable that in this statement the minister joins the group of those who need to be approached due to status, whereas the Bible connotes ministry with service. As already mentioned earlier, personal financial resources play a significant role when it comes to exercising influence within Mt. Zion. Thus, members belonging to this group hold the advantage of gaining any requested attention. As for the others, they risk of being left unidentified.

The encouragement of bottom-up interactional contact appears focused on asking for support, either in finding an employment or financial contributions. Trying to get more clarity on this perception and my personal observation, I asked Sylvia if an attempt to mingle with a wealthier group for other than job purposes would be accepted. She seems surprised: "…it will be very difficult… as accepted… how?... because what is the motive behind you wanting to break that?... I sit in church … like, I am not angry with you, like "hallo, hi" [she smiles] is it not enough? Why do you want to be extremely closer to me?"

The data indicate that the personal need to belong is rather met within the Mt. Zion peer-group at the same socioeconomic level, and less at the congregational level. This fact seems to find acceptance with the less economically privileged. Mary aptly sums it up and adds a utilitarian aspect by saying:

> You know there is a vast difference between the rich people and the poor people […] they don't even want to associate. […] But at the end of the day, the rich people still will pay money or give out for it to be used to help the poor. So that is one thing, I like about this church. I don't mind, they are having a social class […] so far as this social class is able to help the poor, I think (clicks with her fingers) they are good to go.

How do values evolve into code of conduct?

The data indicate that within Mt. Zion different societies along socioeconomic lines have found their footing. It further favors the assumption that classism in Mt. Zion is accepted, nurturing the expectation of a distinct normative behavior of its respective members. I could not establish any evidence of social permeability between the identified social classes. However, there is corroboration within a social class for economic advancement, either due to asymmetrical, top-down, financial interventions or due to networking possibilities on the vertical level for the economically privileged. In the Christian-Methodist social world of Mt. Zion, economically determined values such as dependability and superiority evolve into code of conduct through socialization and acceptance.

Socialization process in the Methodist Church Ghana starts with Sunday school, which, as my interviewees confirm is obligatory, either being intertwined with the prevailing school system or enforced by parents. In retrospect, interviewees appreciated the value of Sunday school attendance. Kwesi's elaboration is insightful:

> When we were in Sunday school, they used to tell us, you don't have to take your mother's money, it is something, you ask before you take it. So, in Sunday school they will teach you all this. […] So, when I started working, I didn't let money be ahead of me. I was not thinking too much about money. I was thinking about the name I'll leave behind. […] That is what still my employer will remember me of. So, me being a Christian really helped me. […] Because when you are in Sunday school, and you pick something, or you steal from the house, most parents will bring you to Sunday school to come and report you to your school teacher: he took my money. And you stand in front of the class, […] and you feel

very bad. So, you don't even go there […] so that's what really help me, working with all those I have worked for.

It is noteworthy that Kwesi attributes the development and maturing of his "good name," a personal positive value which is recognized as such beyond his lifetime by the social environment linked to Mt. Zion's Sunday school teaching, whereas Marc and Kyei view the nurturing and manifestation of this quality as part of the Akan culture. Also, as Kwesi explains, Sunday school tried to level social differences among children: "And if you go to Sunday school, in my time, you will not be allowed to sit with someone you always come with to chat, you sit with a different person. So, we mixed Estates, Sakumono. But now, it's not like that."

As Gloria explains, in Mt. Zion classism starts in Sunday school: "the Sunday school children, the upper, they know themselves. So, when you are not part of them, the children, even the children, they know… so, they don't play with you. And you also play with your other colleagues." The above statements reveal moral values and norms being transmitted in early childhood and later applied in the professional environment. The statements also indicate a segmentation according to parental economic status that helps cement the existing class society structures.

It is as it is?

It is difficult to determine the extent to which the prevailing structures are accepted. The picture seems homogeneous in as far as acknowledgement of classism in Mt. Zion is concerned. It becomes heterogeneous when acceptance is correlated with the perception of a norm as being suitable. The data support the assumption that those who are part of the "upper class," although bemoaning the existing classism, have established a code of conduct which supports the continuation of the prevailing system. As for those who form the "lower class," the picture is more complicated. While hoping to be a beneficiary of "effective altruism," their code of conduct is best described as humble, at times perseverant, in their striving for economic success while seemingly turning a blind eye on the perceived class-ridden society. In the attempt to serve the need to belong and gain acceptance, they focus on their appearance, the clothing. By doing so, they create their own reality of experiencing a social world within Mt. Zion, which is an outcome of social action. Kwesi explains:

> But now, if you come to the church right now, they will not always know, if you are from the estates or from Sakumono. They will never know unless the person tells you 'OK, I live in the village.' Because they all come in the best of cloth, of shoes, they are all in the best of mobile phones. So, if you are a visitor, they will never know the difference, like, this person lives in Sakumono, this person lives in the Estate.

The intensification of meaning embedded in "not always know" and "never know" is an indication for the need to belong, be part of the whole, which in his perception is achievable through optical equation in the sense that "they want to show them… okay… even though, we are living in the village, we are not poor. That's the question they are giving them." This is probably an explanation for the repeatedly mentioned church support of Sakumono villagers with used clothes.

In Simon's view Mt. Zion is a reflection of the prevailing Ghanaian society. Although members testify to scattered attempts to create a climate of brotherhood, the main interaction between members of different socioeconomic classes focuses on economic issues, job availability, and financial support. Marc uses a different approach. While focusing on the church as an institution abiding by its function of obeying God's command of serving equally all people (Romans 2:11), Marc attributes deviations in action to individuals' responsibilities. He explains: "But when you come to the church, the church doesn't discriminate with people. There is one message that is been given and that message is supposed to be taken by the people and then use it."

Corruption

Corruption is a term which has gained high prominence especially when discussing reasons for slow economic development in Sub-Saharan African countries. The frequency in which this term has been applied points, in my view, to a certain level of inflation of meaning. The term "corruption" permeates all societal layers, explaining perceived deficiencies caused by others. Corrupt actions erode trust, reinforce inequalities and social division. These are the parameters of significance in the present research context, focusing on the manifestation of corrupt actions and their repercussions on personal values and influence on the individual's work ethic. As corruption was so obviously put into the spotlight by my interviewees as the antithesis of "sound" work ethic, I decided to follow this indication and include reflections on corruption within the boundaries of the Mt. Zion lifeworld and its sphere of influence. I was interested how my interviewees perceived Mt. Zion dealing with values, and possibly how social – and religious – reality is being renegotiated by redefining meaning. Did corruption have an impact on group identity resulting into a negative impact on socioeconomic dynamics?

The term was first mentioned by the Reverend Minister in an early stage of the interview process answering my invitation to elaborate on whether Mt. Zion encourages a work ethic. He says:

> We make the emphasis in our class meetings and in our service, but then it is left to the church members to practice it. And sometimes, you don't see that big time. That's why I said that when you look at our nation, the level of corruption, you think of the fact that most

of the people [unclear] business, I call them hypocrites. Because you can't be a Christian and be supporting corruption. […] If you are a Christian, your work ethic is sound, and you will not do the wrong thing.

Shortly after this conversation, I spoke to Kwesi, who shared that he had stopped schooling for a well-paid job, and then left this job due to the high level of perceived corruption.

When we were working at […] because of the money we were getting it was like… why go to school … because we are making much money, we were really making money there. But we got to the point that we realized […] the corruption was too much for us. Because we'll be tempted with so much there… that's why. omeone can make like a 1,000 a day, like just a day because of the corrupt action there.

He attributes his capacity to resist what he identifies as the corrupt means that secured his personal economic survival and a path out of poverty, to values being taught in Mt. Zion's Sunday school and Brigade.

Accounting for financial sources

In my aim to get a broader holistic picture of what corruption meant in the ecclesiastic setting and its possible manifestations, I asked several members to share their views on the topic which may or may not be related to personal actions. The emphasis was focused on the issue of whether the repeatedly expressed need to financially support the church results in a certain mirroring of corruption in Mt. Zion. After having conducted several interviews, I decided to test the question, whether there is a possibility that corrupt money ends up as a church donation hoping that the answers will lead to deeper insights.

Sylvia responds:

Certainly. It comes back to what I said, that we always are talking about corruption… corruption… but on Sunday we see the same people who all work and drive to church … so, who are we blaming… we are our own enemies … it's the same people… when I say "politicians," you may not be a public figure, but we are all part in a small way, in your office. When you do what you are expected to do and you take money from the person, you take money from whoever you rented a service to – it is corruption. So, YES, certainly... all the money ends up in church (laughs).

Q: Can it be assumed that the church leadership or those calling for donations are not aware of it?

They are, they are, but they want to pretend not to be in knowing of it. If you really would be frank with yourself, you would know. […] these people work, they have children, they need to take care of, so when you are always taking money from them, what you want them to do? Do you want them to go and steal and bring it to church? So, it comes back the same thing…you want people to go and steal? Because when the pressure is too much then you compel them to do things out of their strength, things that they can't do. […] So, they don't care where the money is coming from, once you are giving.

Sylvia's reflections shed light on a cognitive perception of intentional and extensional meaning attributed to tolerating corruption within the church environment. Sylvia is not voicing criticism towards the established and widely accepted norm of church offering. Her criticism is aimed at conformity to increased financial church demands while exercising pressure upon church member to contribute more than they might be able to afford. Her statement also indicates a shift in values; the worth of a fellow member, the respect he or she is being paid, gets defined through the amount someone is contributing to the church. The satisfaction of the need to belong, or what Daniel will call "the feel-good factor," seems to be coupled with meeting expected financial contributions despite their sources. Daniel choses a rather holistic reflection on links between corruption and Christianity before turning his attention to Mt. Zion:

Why is the society so religious, yet corruption is so wide prevailing? I think, and not just think, I am quite persuaded that it is because we are more or less focusing too much on the nice part of Christianity, where we are giving people confidence that God will do things for you. And when they face the situation and God is not doing it the way their pastor says, God will do it, then they are compelled to unorthodox means to get the riches. Because church is demanding financially … yeah… we make a lot of contributions. And directly or indirectly, people who seem to be making more contributions, seem to receive more attention. So, it is a feel-good factor. Being able to meet some financial obligations… every now and then, there is announcement, if you haven't pledged, please pledge… we need money for this… you feel guilty if you are always there and you are not contributing significantly. So, I believe, people are compelled in that, to find means, to make the money, so that they can meet the financial needs.

The feeling of guilt usually arises when trust put into a person by significant others is not met. It is accompanied by the certainty of having disappointed. This disappointment goes beyond human beings; it relates directly to God. Furthermore, just as a financial contribution implies a blessing, there may be the fear of foregoing a blessing. And here again, Daniel doesn't touch the accepted

norm of voluntary contribution according to abilities but stresses the pressure of "contributing significantly," which compels members to find creative means of income generation. For the benefit of doubt concerning the exemplary role which has been attributed to Mt. Zion's ecclesiastic leaders, I want to pick Daniel's mind about whether the clergy were aware of the origin of the financial sources by asking: "Is there a way to make sure that corrupt money doesn't end up in church offering?"

> We pray over it and sanctify it. And make it fit for use. That's our preferred option. We will tell you; we don't want corrupt money. How do we tell corrupt money? We don't know where you bring the money from; we have to accept it. But Ministers can get close to church members to try and understand what goes on in their lives.

When I asked the Reverend Minister to reflect on the possibility of money acquired by improper means ending up in the church's offertory, he answers:

> Of those, who always give those big moneys, you know what they do, you know where they work … and so, if they give you that amount of money, you know that is something they can give. But then, if someone comes to give an amount that you don't expect the person to have, as a Minister, I think, it is still part of your responsibilities to find out where it is coming from and help people to do the right thing.

By the statement, "Ministers can get close to church members," Daniel indicates an option which the Reverend Minister defines as "responsibility" to avoid "corrupt money" becoming part of the church budget. His statement excludes any doubt that those offering "big monies" are beyond any suspicion of illegitimate money acquisition. The suspicion concerning the source is directed towards those who contribute more than expected. In such an occurrence, the Minister defines his responsibility as finding out the financial source and offering the person to do "the right thing." The Reverend Minister, however, stops short of declining the offering. During my research period, Mt. Zion's financial obligations and additional varying financial requirements were passed on to its members on Sundays, embedded in biblical quotes and admonishments as well as accompanied by impassioned singing. Both, my observations and the statements of my interviewees confirm the Reverend Minister as the driving force behind the charismatic approach to fundraising.

Redefining meaning

Kyei's reflection on the perceived social reality provides an analysis of an interplay between a norm violating social action and an adjustment in meaning by attaching to its consequences a metaphysical justification that may be perceived and reaffirmed as a laudable act.

You see, there is also the thief who is leaving to go and steal somebody in the night. Who is saying: O God, let me go and come safely? There is somebody sitting in an office who has done a deal to make a lot of money and says: God, let this deal go through. A thief thought. And yet, when it goes through: I prayed to God. And add this: God is faithful. And yet, when you go underneath, what actually had been done, you will realize that a lot of corrupt actions that had been undertaken. They had disclosed something to somebody, they should not have disclosed, they had aided somebody to have an upper hand in a bid that they should never have done, and then the person has won, and brought him something that, 'oh the ways come through God, let it go through.' […] In my view, people do all sort of things, and yet because at the end they are praying to God not let them be exposed, or praying to God for those things they have done to go through, they still feel, it is God who has made it possible. And some of them will even bring through things of this corrupt action as tithe to God or as offertory to God also without any fear of contradiction.

Furthermore, by referring to Luke 19:28-40, he offers an ecclesiastic justification of the above:

I think, one thing which is very instructive, very instructive that Jesus had particularly ordered donkeys not horses. […] He could have had horses with chariots. So, for me, what it teaches is that, even the work you do, when there is a reward there should be modesty in that reward. Again, yet, there have been occasions, when Jesus himself, he had Mary bathing his feet with choice oil and using her hair, as the Bible narrates it, not me, to clean his feet. These things are also used by pastors to say it is also a sign that your reward should also be here, you are supposed to enjoy the good things of the world. So, for me, I think, I see Christianity sometimes also being the cause of a lot of the corruption that is happening in our society. All these corrupt people syphoning millions from offices, they go to church. And I tell you, that's where the competition is, that's where the pastor is saying, you are supposed to be prosperous here on earth not when you are dead. And that even Jesus allowed that the choice oil to be used to wash his feet and the lady's hair – that means, he also uses the best. So, I think, in my view, Christianity rather has become a nice tool for exploitation and or masking corrupt life in the society.

Although this understanding of reality is rich in meaning, I want to draw attention to two elements: (i) modesty and (ii) his voicing a caveat of the pursuit of prosperity being preached in the church. In my view the concept of modesty towards a reward for work done is well reflected in the Akan normative concept of "adwuma," where performance is based on the intrinsic conviction to deliver high quality work for another person regardless of whether it is acknowledged by others or not.

Interestingly, long after this interview, I attended a Mt. Zion church service where the preaching was dedicated to John 12: 1-10, which narrates the anointing of Jesus's feet in Bethany. The teaching was embedded in a call for generous offering towards the church. By answering a rephrased question of "why wasn't the money used for the poor?" (John 12:5) with "when we ask God to bless us, we ask abundantly, when we have to praise God, we behave logically." The preacher continues, while referring to verse 8, by saying "the poor will always be with us, but that shouldn't stop to do good for God," encouraging the congregation to pledge money. Before the Superintendent and Reverend Minister kneel and bless the pledge, assurance was given to the congregation about "the best we can give to God is our heart," falling in line with the expressed expectation that all donations must come from the believer's heart. During the same sermon, following the pledge, the Reverend Minister announced the need for an additional donation. While using the biblical Mary as his reference, "the woman took the money she had worked for a whole year and put it into oil for Jesus," he called on the church community, "I want you to take your check book and write a crazy check for me." This experience brings us back to the opinion voiced by Kyei that "Christianity […] has become a nice tool for exploitation […] masking corrupt life in the society," which prompted me to get the Reverend Minister's perception of the situation in Mt. Zion. He reflects:

> Riches lose their comforting edge when they are illegitimately acquired. […] So, from where I sit, I know that many rich people are not as happy as they seem to be. In our time, a good number of people have joined all kind a secret societies that are using black magic and charms to create wealth. […] It is therefore of great importance to us to know the biblically prescribed means to wealth creation, so that we do not get choked by criminally acquired riches. At the end of the day, everything comes down to obedience.

By saying "from where I sit" and confirming – on demand of understanding – that he speaks about Mt. Zion, this statement condemns wealth creation using improper means. It also points to the "rich people," including Mt. Zion members. However, it left me puzzled as I tried to relate these insights with the above quoted assertion about the origin of the "big money" donated to the church. Possibly Sylvia's response to my question "Does the church have a certain teaching towards work ethic?" provides a pragmatic explanation. Sylvia shares her view:

> Yes, yes, very much. Whenever there is a …these governments mishandling our finances, whenever it comes up, our minister will preach and preach. They are always saying that our politicians are spending our money. These same politicians, they are the same people in our churches, they are the same people who come to church. So, who are we fighting?

We fight ourselves. So, if we are all to do the right things in our little, small space, we will see the change. The change will not come from anywhere, it is from the church. Because the same people who take the bribes, it is the same people who mishandle the government's property, they are the same people that you see wearing nice clothes, driving nice cars, when they come to church.

Positioning work ethic in Mt. Zion's teaching

Remarkably, when asked about reasons for attending Mt. Zion church services, none of my interviewees explicitly mentioned the need for being instructed on a particular topic. Attending church services primarily serves as social interaction of social beings under the umbrella of ecclesia. Emphasis was placed on fellowship, a term used in the sense of the Greek κοινωνία (koinonia), which is the New Testament concept of community with like-minded Christians and with God. The voiced pursuit of spiritual welfare in the "house of God" with singing, dancing, and preaching supports this assumption.

At our very first encounter, the Reverend Minister offered to help me in my research by preaching in two different ways on two subsequent Sundays: a sermon that would affect mind and heart, and a sermon that would only affect the heart. After the sermon meant to affect the heart, he said I should ask people how they liked the sermon. "They will reply that the 'sermon was fine," he predicted. Then he advised I should ask, "What do you remember?" He expected that answer to be "nothing." In addition to the manipulative power of exercising influence or "playing on the emotions of people," this statement also points to the depth of knowledge about which instruments are used to achieve intended results.

Available interview data indicate that the faithful expect a response to and satisfaction of their emotional needs, which finds its expression in the metaphysical outlook of an "encounter with God," possibly facilitated by the clergy and their possession of special knowledge transpired through the position as a "man of God." It comprises creating an atmosphere for praying and looking "for something spiritual" (Kwesi) or the aforementioned atmosphere for an offering (Reverend Minister). It appears that reaching out at the emotional level allows God to exercise influence in the individual's life, while the urge for addressing the cognitive level fades into the background. An indicator to support this line of thought is the time allocated to preaching, which in my observation amounted to about 30 to 40 minutes within a Sunday morning church gathering of between 3 and 4 hours. As the topic of work ethic offers an approach addressed at the emotional level, I turned to those, closely affiliated with Mt. Zion, hoping to find out the extent to which work ethic has been used as a theme in church.

When asked "What does Methodism teaching about work ethic? Is it something on the preaching and teaching agenda?" the Very Reverend replies:

> Every year, the church has a special theme given to us to give us the focus of the church. And from past years it has been "go and make disciples of the Nations" and they would add a little, but the focus is witnessing, evangelism. So, the focus of the church is more on reaching out to the unsaved, how we can make the Gospel known to unbelievers, so that they also come and accept Jesus as their personal Savior. […] this is the mission of the church.

This answer confirms the high priority attributed to evangelization by the Methodist Church, which is approvingly echoed by other interviewees as adherence to the biblical command. But, in my view, the response doesn't answer my question, so I try to direct the Very Reverend back to my subject of interest by asking if the topic on work ethic features in the call for evangelization. He says:

> Oh yeah. Because… work… God expects us to work. And in our teachings, we have to say to our members, how they should conduct themselves in their work environment. Tell them, that they work very seriously. Because we are in the nation and we have to build the nation. If we are not doing well as Christians, it affects the whole of the nation, and we have to accept the blame. So, you have to conduct yourself in your work environment to please God. The kind of work you have to do, the input to your work, the time you have to close… yes. You have to be diligent and sincere in your work. And anything bad, you have to do away with it. And at times, part of our teaching activities, we treat special issues. This Sunday, we were talking about how we can influence Christian politicians. So, this was the topic which we had this morning. Prepare our members, how we can affect our political environment. If you are a Christian and a politician, what life do you have to lead? And we, who are not into full politics, what can we do? The Bible teaches us to pray for our leaders and to become good citizens. So, anything that we have to do for the betterment of the Nation, we have to do it.

By triangulating Christianity, work behavior, and politics, he introduces a different dimension, putting the emphasis upon conduct at the workplace in a manner that allows a worker to be identified as a Christian. The statement contains a rather appealing notion, similar to the Reverend Minister's statement that "the greatest gallery of hypocrites is the gallery of Christians," which both indicate a discrepancy between expected Christian behavior and the reality on the ground. This

recurring topic of behavior that deviates from the Christian ideal, as pointed out by Sylvia, also confirms my observation during church sermons.

Without diving deeper into Ghana's political situation, I wish to draw the attention to the temporality used. By saying: "And in our teachings, we have to say to our members how they should conduct themselves in their work environment. Tell them, that they work very seriously," he instructs them toward future action – what they will do or should do – leaving unclear to what extent the teaching towards work ethic as defined by church members is applied. Turning to the faithful, the clergies' target group, I aimed to get an idea of their perspective on how the topic of work ethic is addressed in Mt. Zion. Daniel offers an insightful reflection on different aspects of his perception when he addressed the question, "Does Mt. Zion teach work ethic?"

> Yes. Yes, but I wish, it would have been more. Because we don't take those issues as core for our Sunday services, it is only when the preacher finds need to chip in work ethic that he does so. […] So, he is bringing in work ethic, so that you also hard working… and all that … but you won't find a topic, that is focusing directly. […] However, we hold annual seminars, where we take such topics and deal with them. Not church, seminars … so, if I should say, yes, to some extent, there is that aspect that is giving me the "yes." But in general, we don't make that predominant.

Thus, in Daniel's view, teaching on work behavior is a peripheral phenomenon, a by-product or ingredient in selective sermons. Since teaching, in addition to knowledge transfer also contains a component of exercising influence, I attempted to determine the congregation's level of susceptibility to teaching by asking the Reverend Minister:

Q: Would you say people are easy to be influenced?

    Yes.

Q: Depending on the social class or all over?

    All over.

Q: All over?

    All over.

Given this manifested level of self-assurance to shape awareness, the Very Reverend indicates the means to exercise positive influence while addressing the unsatisfactory situation concerning individual work behavior. Since both statements were uttered by clergy, I was puzzled as to why the topic of work ethic was not pushed more into focus. Had I exercised a selective perception,

not heard the "whole" story? If so, that would necessitate getting more views on whether "work ethic" is taught in Mt. Zion

I asked Moses, "What would you say, does Mt. Zion teach work ethic?" His responds: "Well, they do… they do… but mostly the teaching comes from the class book. The topic under it. At times, you call people from outside to come and teach us about –--eh… I mean… work ethic. That one is not frequent."

I felt a hesitation to address this question, a phenomenon I repeatedly sensed in my interviews. As already illustrated, interviewees are well placed to define the meaning of the term "work ethic," but seem to struggle with embedding it into Mt. Zion's teachings. Jill picks up Moses's reference towards the institutionalized, weekly Bible Class attendance, where the discussed topics are predefined six months in advance in the Weekly Bible Lessons booklet. Here is Jill's answer to the question, "Does Mt. Zion teach work ethic?":

> Sometimes, if you attended the Bible Class. In the Bible study booklet, once in a while, we teach. […] As for the collective church, it depends, unless it's in the Almanac, the minister will preach on it once in a while, but it is not very often. Once in a while, we pick it as a theme or topic and then we invite a resource person who comes and then shares and then people ask questions. It's not something we do collectively often, but once it comes up in the Bible study, people discuss it.

The content theme of the 2017-2020 Almanac, which is published by the Methodist Church Ghana, was "Go and make disciples of all Nations." My observation confirms the adherence to this topic in several Sunday sermons, and Mt. Zion's engagement in evangelization has been mentioned several times by my interviewees. Marc puts this into perspective by answering the question: "Is there any Methodist or Mt. Zion teaching in particular, with regard to work ethic?"

> No. You see with the church as such, […] especially when you study the Protestants, work is seen as a service to God, so everything that you do, you are doing it, as if you are doing it unto God. We can all not be pastors or be evangelists and those kinds of things. The Bible says, "Shine, you are like the light in the world." So, your service to God could be exhibited through the kind of work that you also doing. […] So, if you have Christian values, you are supposed to translate those Christian values even at a place of work. Otherwise, there is no difference between you and other people. So, that's what the church teachings are supposed to instill certain values in people so that they can influence the rest of society.

Marc elaborates on a behavioristic approach where certain moral behavior is expected in the individual's social world. He refrains altogether from pointing to a particular teaching required to motivate this moral behavior based on "Christian values." His statement is vague and does not name these values. Marc does not see the need for any metaphysical explanations, the relation between mind and matter. The socio-religious reality of someone who was "born into the church" takes it for granted that Christian values are known as such, by those who define themselves as Christian as well as by "the other people." He doesn't seem to see the need for differentiation between potentiality and actuality of social world knowledge. This certainty concerning a commonly shared knowledge of what comprises Christian values appears to make a particular teaching towards work ethic obsolete, because they are part of moral behavior attributed to a Christian.

Lydia shares a similar understanding, answering a broader question about whether Mt. Zion emphasizes work ethic in sermons:

> You know, the message is the same: love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and all your spirit, love your neighbor as yourself. So, what you don't want somebody to do to you, you don't do for others. And that is the message we preach. We preach the Gospel. […] You see, we need to understand, we don't actually put emphasis on work ethic per-se. But work ethic, if you are somebody who is a worker, God has instructed you to occupy till He comes, he has given you an opportunity to do something in the marketplace. [,,,] We are supposed to proclaim Christ in the marketplace. […] So, in a way, the emphasis is more on living a Christ-like life. When you are like Christ, you will definitely have a good work ethic.

Lydia's statement reflects her lifeworld where her definition of being a Christian is prominently manifested within the "marketplace" she is influencing. She exhibits a high level of integrating her faith-based reality into the workplace, and also visibly manifests it by putting on her commercially used three-story building a visible sign proclaiming, "Jesus is Lord." In her view, ethical behavior is rooted in adherence to metaphysical instructions. By stating, "God has instructed you," she promotes an assertion of intrinsic knowledge directly transferred from the Supernatural and enshrined in anyone who has an occupation to live "a Christ-like life." It can be assumed that Lydia, who says she is a regular Mt. Zion attendee, expects the ecclesial teachings to focus on defining the meaning and possible content of a "Christ-like life," as well as to provide the parameters to embed them in the given social reality. Also, the Christian conviction of man being born a sinner (Romans 3:23) supports the assumption that a proper encounter with God is required to gain knowledge of "how" life must be shaped. By stressing the commandment of love towards

God and fellow human beings (referring to Leviticus 19:9-18), she, like Daniel, alludes to work ethic as a byproduct of compliance with biblical teaching. As already mentioned, she is crystal clear on her expectations towards performance of the renumerated work assignment without any tolerance towards the time-consuming exercise of faith, such as "reading your Bible and preaching the Word." By consequence, in her view, the workplace offers an environment to manifest one's calling through high-quality performance.

Interpretations of reality

I wish to bring our attention back to Jill and her view on the frequency of the topic of work ethic being addressed in Mt. Zion as "not very often." The statement below illustrates a level of contextualization which is requested when analyzing produced data or as Macamo (2017:84) said, "We retrieve reality through our own data, but these data document our understanding of reality, not reality itself, although our understanding of reality is informed by the nature of reality itself." Contrary to her answer to the precise question of whether Mt. Zion directs its teaching towards work ethic, Jill shares her appreciation of the Methodist church with reference to the theme of "work" by saying:

> So, when you come to the Methodist church […] we believe everything in the Bible. John Wesley said, "earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can". And so, John Wesley also believes in work. I mean, work is biblical. So, Christians must work, Christians must work. But then, […] Paul also told the people not to be lazy. As an example, he says that he who doesn't not work, should not, what? – eat. I think this is to encourage people to work. Some of them were saying that Jesus is coming very soon, so some of them sold all their belongings and just started waiting for Jesus to come. He [Paul] said, that whilst we are waiting, you have to work. As for the Methodist church, we believe in work.

Elaborating on the manifested faith in "everything in the Bible" would take us beyond the scope of this research. Also, regarding the quoted Wesleyan teaching, emphasis can only be made towards the sequence of (i) earning, (ii) saving, followed by (iii) giving, without digging deeper into the implementation of his teachings in Mt. Zion. Two aspects are particularly interesting for our discussion: (i) the commandment to work rooted in the Bible and (ii) the reason for this action. In Jill's view, the commandment is a given and is passed on from generation to generation of Christians. The reason in her elaboration for the explicit need to work is based on the requirement of basic needs satisfaction. The motivation lies in the need to survive, to produce enough means to enable the purchase of food. By contrasting the term "work" with laziness, she simultaneously

reduces it to a laborious activity or what Lewin (1920:11) calls "Mühe und Last" (labor and burden). Admittedly, this definition falls short in view of Wesley's appeal. To me, it seems important to illustrate Jill's conviction that those who identify with the Methodist church have internalized the necessity to work. This conviction could possibly provide an explanation for not prominently addressing the topic on work ethic in Mt. Zion's teachings.

To a certain extend this notion is also echoed by Simon's answer to the question: What is Mt. Zion's teaching with regard to work ethic?

> The Methodist church in general emphasizes hard work. In Mt. Zion, there is always the push from members to be the best at what they do. So, at organizational levels, there are always training seminars related to business because there are very successful business people in the church.

Simon also refrains from using the term "teaching"; instead, in his view, under the auspices of Mt. Zion, members themselves create incentives for high performance. Keeping in mind that Simon is a businessman and recalling his appreciation towards "people on the top in Mt. Zion" who constitute a motivational environment among peer-groups, "hard work" is implied as a reason for their success. It appears that socioeconomic status is reflected in their value of knowledge because some of the interviewees who are respected and have well-paid positions or are entrepreneurs also voiced their appreciation towards Mt. Zion for providing this business exchange platform. On the other hand, Simon's affirmation of Mt. Zion "always" offering business related training is not confirmed by other interviewees. For example, Mary points to the opposite, lamenting that the church doesn't take enough interest in its youth and their needs.

Gloria brings an example of knowledge transfer in Mt. Zion:

> When you are working for a company or somewhere, you don't steal, you don't. It's not stealing only something, even the time… if you are supposed to be at work at 8, you don't go and register your name and go somewhere and then come later. […] They teach that because, what you teach in the church, what you want to be in the church, if on the outside you are not doing it, they will talk.

It appears that the social pressure for behavioral conformity accompanied by the fear of being identified as a non-conformist causes people to work responsibly. With reference to the formal sector, time physically spent at the workplace dedicated to performance of remunerated assignments seems to be a societal issue. Next to being mentioned in some interviews, I equally witnessed the Reverend Minister addressing this issue in one of his sermons by saying: "Spirituality is not what we do in church, it's what we do in society. You go to work at 9 and you

close at 12 – and you don't know that the devil is using you." This statement was met by the congregation's approving applause, possibly confirming that he hit a nerve of the prevailing attitude at the workplace. An attitude which Jill describes as:

> I am sure you find sometimes, we are not very honest about work, […] maybe for example, you are in a rush to come to work, I haven't had time to do my quiet time, so I come, and do it in my office. […] Maybe, there is a nice program going on in church and maybe this program is starting at a certain time, so you yourself, you know, it's not time to close, but maybe, you close.

Henry points to a dimension which has not been mentioned, as such, when work ethic was defined by the interviewees by explaining, "The job ethic here, what they have been teaching us is a lot, how to respect your bosses; it's all about respect." He elaborates on the hierarchical behavior at the workplace, which is embedded in culture, by saying: "Our environment is a little bit different when it comes to work. And in some companies, when you see your boss, you need to be on a look out, you need to run away because that kind of timidity is a little bit there… you get it?" It seems important to him to explain the perceived prevailing attitude at the workplace and to be understood by a Western researcher. The church teachings as viewed by Henry reinforce the prevailing cultural attitude at the workplace, possibly also approving and encouraging the socioeconomic divide.

Simon's worldview of Mt. Zion's approach, as he does not apply the term "teaching," towards work ethic entails many elements of the above contributions. He states: "So, every now and then, we encourage hard work, yes make the money and you can be a blessing to others with that. […] We emphasize a lot on dedication and commitment to work. So, business, the church, and staying out of corrupt activities."

Two dimensions are particularly noteworthy: (i) time and (ii) wealth generation within the categories of distribution and prioritization. Regarding time, the statement entails an obvious contradiction: The "now and then" indicates a rather rare knowledge transmission about "hard work"; whereas "we emphasize a lot on dedication and commitment to work," which points to the opposite. As for wealth generation, the approving emphasis is unquestionable, enriched by its connection to redistribution. The sequence he is applying in the last sentence is interesting: firstly, commitment to business, and the secondly to the church. When asked about his view of how the church instructions resonate with Akan teaching, Simon answers: "Same, same. I mean I look back at things that are acceptable, and those that are not acceptable. The Akans believe in hard work. Dedication. Commitment."

This answer is a suitable transition to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9: WORK ETHIC AND THE ATTRIBUTION GAP: AKAN VALUES OR METHODIST TEACHING?

By applying a holistic approach to the framework in which participants live and work, in order to contextualize their feedback in the appropriate cultural and religious settings, the collected data support my assumption that the individual's responses would most likely be informed by both Akan customs and Mt. Zion teachings. Many discussions, particularly with those that explicitly confirm their unwillingness to cut the umbilical cord with their rural place of origin (15 out of 26), touch upon the perceived conflict of identifying as a Methodist Christian and nurturing cultural roots. As for the younger generation, although they don't confess a personal attachment to a rural village but are aware of its existence from their parents' stories, they do acknowledge a cultural influence by the significant others who share these roots. After listening carefully to their statements, it appears that parents and possibly parts of the environment have been successfully passed on, not only the Akan traditional values but also their appreciation of them. Bringing the previous assertion closer to the research topic, I wish to establish that there is no clear division between attribution of personal work ethic to cultural values or Methodist teaching. On the contrary, as I will show, attribution gaps, where my interviewees were unable to clearly allocate the source for a certain positively connoted work behavior to a particular origin, the cultural background of Mt. Zion's teaching will emerge time and again.

I was concerned not to foreclose avenues of opinion sharing, and favored, therefore, a neutral approach by inviting interviewees to elaborate on similarities and differences between Akan cultural influence passed on by significant others and Mt. Zion's teaching regarding their personal work ethic. I will start with economically successful members who are part of Mt. Zion's leadership. Simon reflects:

> Same, same. I mean I look back at things that are acceptable, and those that are not acceptable. The Akans believe in hard work. Dedication. Commitment. We used to laugh at the Akans and say: oh, they will come, say, the Ashanti region or Eastern region and they don't have anything. Maybe they start as shoeshine boys and after a few years they are running big businesses. And that is something that the Akans are identified with, whether you are a Fanti or an Ashanti or an Akyapim.

Q: Do I understand you rightly: An Akan, even not being affiliated to a certain religious group or church, would still be successful?

> Yes. Yes. Not because you are affiliated, you are in a church – it is inherited.

Jill says:

So, in terms of culture and religion, attitude to work … it's about the same attitude that you cannot be lazy. So, you are more focused, you are more serious with your work, when it's time to work, it's time to work, and even if the money is small, you still have to work.

When asked if the intrinsic motivation that encouraged hard work and ambition and thus paved the path to success and acknowledgement in society was grounded and encouraged by values rooted in the Akan culture or Methodist teaching, Moses responds: "A combination. As far as ethics are concerned, I give credit to my parents."

Lydia, who was the most pronounced laic advocate for her Christian conviction during the interview, has a noteworthy approach to the question because she attributes any cultural influence as a motivational factor behind the hard work, which, as she explained, had led to success. She starts by saying, "I don't believe, I can't speak to that. I don't think so. I just think, it's the family we came from, the family background, we are a close-knit family." She then elaborates upon her "very strong Christian upbringing." Just to be sure that I haven't misunderstood her message, I ask her if she considers herself more influenced by Methodist teachings than by cultural values. Admittedly, I expected an affirmative answer, and thus was surprised by her response:

I believe they are intertwined. But my daily is that I live for Christ. It is in Him I live and move and have my day. So, I am defined by the principles of Christianity, which the Methodist faith […] talks about. So, regarding cultural beliefs, I think, our culture, whether its Ghanaians or Akans is that we believe in tradition, we respect seniority, we believe that people must be responsible for their families and bringing up children in the way of Christ. So, those things, I believe, they are intertwined.

Her struggle to answer this question in a way that does justice to her profound Christian convictions, while still giving a fair account to other influential factors, can be vividly sensed. A possible key to a more adequate understanding lies in the informational material such as a quarterly magazine and a company's profile which Lydia generously offered. The company profile, although very structured, detailed, and informative regarding the company's values, vision, mission, logo, tagline, and corporate responsibilities does not show any reference to Christianity. The brochure alludes to professional competence and achievements, while not reflecting at all the high emphasis put internally on being a Christian as captured during her interview. Was the obvious emphasis on her Christian convictions due to a particular importance Lydia might have attached to my research field, namely: Mt. Zion, a church she refers to as "home" and "family"? It is noteworthy that secular conduct is displayed when interacting on business matters outside the sphere of direct personal influence. This could indicate that behavior rooted in religious convictions

adapts to a given socioeconomic context and environment, pointing to the already mentioned commercial use of the Christian religion in Ghana and also providing a deeper understanding of Lydia's answer my question.

Daniel's contribution entails an analysis as well as a suggestion:

> I think they complement each other. I would wish that more teachings would be done by the church on how to get us to be more productive, rather than always going and 'you are going to heaven, God will do this for you if you are faithful in your tithe, if you are faithful in your offering, and God will bless you' and all those things. I wish there would be more teachings on the practical aspect of the work ethic beyond what the Kwahus and Akan culture brings on board.

Abraham's contribution to this topic is indirect, a derivation from his narrative. As already mentioned, Abraham takes pride in narrating his impressive professional career and explaining the need to forego engagement in the church during that time. He explains: "I was rising up in rank […] I didn't have time to do the ministry work. So, I truncated it for some time and then, now that I… I am on pension, I decided to rewind things." Although this statement was made in our first interview where Abraham strongly emphasized the Christian God's influence in his life by evoking the term "God" 68 times within an hour interview, it seems to be coherent with his perception of his socio-religious reality. His remark indicates that he doesn't attribute his professional success to church's teachings. This doesn't necessarily prove that Abraham didn't see himself guided and protected by a Christian divine power at a very personal level.

I invited the Very Reverend to share his views on whether it is possible to attribute his attitude towards work to either his upbringing influenced by the Akan culture or if it is otherwise grounded in his Christian faith? The answer was a decisive, "it is both, it is both," followed by elaboration of influential aspects from both sources.

While trying to be "sensitive to the inherent strangeness" (Macamo, 2017:84) of what I intend to describe, the presented data allude to an agreement among influential Mt. Zion member respondents that work behavior which leads to success is not attributable to one source alone. This perception also was confirmed by other Mt. Zion members. Gloria, for example, is of the view that teaching in Mt. Zion and her upbringing influenced by Akan cultural values are "a blend."

When speaking to Akosua, who throughout the interview put a strong emphasis on hard work, I decided to slightly change my approach by borrowing from Ferguson (2011:275) and asking if [Mt. Zion] congregation works harder than they would otherwise if they didn't go to church? To be more precise, I personified my question by adding: if you weren't a member of Mt. Zion, would you work less hard? Akosua answered without hesitation with "no."

Admittedly, while leaning on Ferguson, my personal question reveals a suggestive nuance as shown in Simon's answer:

> It is possible. It is possible. Especially where there is expectation on you to succeed as a child of God. […] I will not accept that I have failed in business as a child of God. Because I know, there is that opportunity to come back. If I fall sometimes, the Bible says, I will rise again. So that is my motivation. So, yes, faith has a role in making people work harder.

I consider Simon's contributions an excellent example to showcase the attribution gap when it comes to reflecting upon the source of individual work ethic. On one hand he describes his source of motivation being grounded in his Christian faith while on the other, he stressed the inherited Akan belief in hard work, which, in his view, is entrenched in the individual and serves as personal motivation. This view, which also is shared by others and in their mind doesn't indicate any contradiction, is the existence of two different factors of influence.

The data show that preaching on work ethic is not viewed as a considerable reason to attend church services. This does not mean that the members do not hope for advantages to their professional or economic career through church attendance. This advantage may well lie at different levels. The data allow the conclusion that Mt. Zion offers to the representatives of its "upper-class" an opportunity for professional networking which possibly influences entrepreneurship, and to a much lesser extent personnel recruitment.

A significant number view Mt. Zion as a platform for employment: the educated hoping for a recommendation to a suitable workplace and those with less or virtually no education, for any employment. Beyond that, church clergy encourage the thought of return on investment, i.e., financial contributions to the church in return for blessings that encompass economic advantages.

PART THREE

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

Researchers cannot in the final analysis avoid their own research lenses in rendering reality (Yin 2011:12).

Interview dynamics

In retrospect, I consider it an advantage that there was no official introduction of either myself or my research project in Mt. Zion. Thus, I had the opportunity to present myself and my research topic individually, adapted to the situation as I assessed it. It is safe to assume that my presence in the church services did not go unnoticed. On one hand, because of my physical appearance, I was recognizable as a stranger; and on the other hand, because donations at the altar every Sunday from the entire congregation was expected, it was impossible for me to remain seated and not be noticed. The majority of the worshipers treated me with a certain indifference, just as they, according to my observation, treated each other. When I initiated a greeting, it was returned but rarely was the initiative taken by others towards me. I suspect that the fact that some interviews, including those with influential church members and the Reverend Minister took place on the church premises, contributed to the acceptance of my research. I remain doubtful as to whether I succeeded in conveying the meaning and purpose of my research to the interviewees. All were doing me a favor, some because they were Kwesi's friends and possibly felt obliged to favorably respond to his request to answer some questions.

I assume that for some, the immediate comprehension of my research interest failed, necessitating additional means of both verbal and non-verbal communication. The described hermeneutics were reciprocal: I was challenged in going beyond the outer manifestations to the investigation of their inner meanings (Dilthey 2002) whereas some of my interviewees were faced with a non-conscious mimicry (Lakin & Chartrand 2003). But they all patiently answered my questions, most interviewees showed interest and became enthusiastic during the interview, allowing deep insights into personal matters, trying to make me understand what seemed important to them, and in their view, necessary for me to hear. At times, a social mirroring took place as my interviewees appeared to self-reflect while observing and giving meaning to my reactions. In my observation, confirmed in discussions with my Ghanaian friends, Mt. Zion mirrors the Ghanaian society where a stranger remains in this position for a considerable time because trust is not bestowed lightly. Time and time again, I was left with the impression of being gently evangelized. I found myself

asking if some conversations would have been different if I had been perceived as Methodist, as Akan, or as Akan and Methodist?

Who defines what is significant?

It is noteworthy that when discussing early childhood, upbringing and customs, most of my interviewees seemed to be more at ease just to share information, sometimes freely going back in time and sharing their memories. Whereas when it came to discussing Mt. Zion, there was – except for Sylvia, Moses, Daniel, and Kyei – a noticeable initial hesitation before responding to questions that invited the interviewees to share objective observations and which, in some cases, translated into criticism. In my view, there are two reasons: Firstly, deeply rooted loyalty which is, as discussed, a social norm of the Akan Traditional Culture and in adherence to the biblical command (Genesis 22, Matthew 6:24). Secondly, the need for building up trust towards a foreign researcher.

In both cases, the object of loyalty seems to matter. It appears that when discussing Akan Traditional Culture and Religion the object of loyalty is located in a wider sense at an interpersonal level, a relationship between kin members perceived as extended family. The aphorism "blood is thicker than water" was mentioned when explaining strong ties based on Akan genealogy, pointing to its strength as well as broad scope. Older and middle-aged interviewees were particularly eager to share values and beliefs rooted in culture. Although, in their view, some of these values and beliefs were antiquated, there remained a deep respect for them. When discussing Mt. Zion, the object of loyalty moves to a rather institutional level. The discussed discrepancy of the intended image of a family through "brothers and sisters in Christ" and the socioeconomic divide within the congregation repositions loyalty from the interpersonal level towards a more anonymous institutional setting. Hence, loyalty becomes rather rooted in doctrinal teaching; it remains on a broad scope but loses its depth; it still serves the need to belong but becomes more permeable. Thus, as soon as a trustworthy atmosphere had been established between me and the interviewee, the individual would offer a rather holistic personal view of Mt. Zion, including the display of critical analytical views.

Although, especially when conducting my first interviews, I did mention my previous affiliation with the Methodist church in Germany, applying it as a means to connect. I realized that this information was not perceived as any binding element in any of my interviews. It was rather the emphatic approach inviting the interviewee to start from his or her childhood and then moving into Christian or more precisely Methodist influence upon their lives in general and in particular their work ethic.

As illustrated in the discussion regarding the attribution gap, my interviewees did not seem to have given any thought to identify the roots of their personal work ethic prior to our discussion. Some tried to make me understand that, although the dynamics of their social worlds, either Mt. Zion, family or clan setting were different, they mostly existed peacefully next to one another, being used on different occasions determined by the individual. Regardless of their educational background or economic status, the need for an analytical attribution to the origin and motivational factors for continuance of a particular work ethic were alien to all my interviewees. They shared what they deemed to be significant in their lives from the Christian and specifically Methodist as well as the Akan Cultural perspectives respectively. I was allowed to direct the interviews towards my research topic and could broaden the spectrum of knowledge gained through elements that my interlocutors viewed important for me to understand.

Social worlds and their significance

In agreement with Macamo (2017:82), the choice of methodology, analytical frameworks, and statement weightings we use to describe and analyze a perceived reality entail the danger of deciding upon how to perceive the world and thereby most likely leads to a reduction of its complexity.

Defining the components of "work ethic" as honesty, righteousness, patience, friendliness, punctuality, dedication to work assignments, and responsibility towards others based on trust, completion of a task, quality performance, being responsible, not complaining and, especially, hard work, neither informs about a personal adherence, nor the frequency of application, be it in parts or cumulative. Data point to a high complexity of internal and external factors such as physiological needs, the need for a motivational environment, fear of sanctions but also the need to belong, necessitating to translate these qualities into personal actions while simultaneously competing for attribution to different sources of influence and motivation. Motivation behind a predisposition called "work ethic" is reflexive in the sense that action is rewarded, be it by monetary and/or by immaterial means such as status. The display of work ethic requires a context for action and a recipient of this immanent predisposition.

My methodology of purposeful sampling, constantly pondering assumptions, trying to understand reasons behind statements, probing into alternative explanations which found its footing in conceptualizing the interviews, proved useful. From the conducted interviews, I deduced three different spheres of influence that enhance or undermine work ethic. Firstly, there is what I call the primary social world, restricting its meaning here to social phenomena that describe the influence

of upbringing in accordance with Akan cultural and religious values, as well as ongoing personal life within a family setting. Secondly, there is the workplace where components attributed to work ethic find their expression. And thirdly, although admittedly the extent of influence may differ significantly, my interviewees were within the influence of the social and religious world of Mt. Zion.

Primary Social World of family defined as Akan

During our discussions, most interviewees would, unsolicited, single out specific characteristics that are positively connoted to a particular Akan sub-group even though they may not be a member of this sub-group themselves. Carried out independently and at different times, the results of interviews about those attributions with interviewees, who were representative of society as a whole, were very consistent in their informative value. Remarkably, the only non-Akan participant in this study would, unsolicited, describe the Akan in a favorable manner when comparing them to his own people's ethnic background. This observation gains importance when reflecting on mechanisms which influence a positively connoted work behavior. According to Lewin, work motivation leads to personal satisfaction and enriches the "value of life." Gathered evidence indicates that the driving force for it lies within the family sphere, its cradle being Akan cultural and to a lesser extent, Akan traditional religious values. Although this attribution manifests in all interviews, its intensity varies according to cohorts, generally increasing with age.

Interviewees also defined responsibility as an important behavioral property. In their perception, responsible attitude and behavior were rooted in the personal ethic connoting with discipline (most explicitly stated by Jill and Gloria) and directed towards the fellow human being, elaborated at length by Henry. In their view, the sense of responsibility is transmitted by the family and entrenched in the person's consciousness. Lydia, although she confesses having a "very strong Christian upbringing," joins into this perception by saying, "I think, our culture, whether it's Ghanaians or Akan, is that we believe in tradition, we respect seniority, we believe that people must be responsible for their families." Another characteristic of "work ethic" corroborated by all socioeconomic groups involved, is that emphasis on hard work is attributed to upbringing and cultural specificities.

Data further indicate that reference to culture, and in a narrower sense customs, are applied when explaining the source through which influence is exercised or enforced upon the desired behavior of a family member. As shown in chapter 3, family is the Akan forte perceived as the major factor to form the "moral character" of the individual and to be used as a means of social control. Remarkably, even the young interviewees take the Akan cultural world as a formative a priori; the

message "work has always been with us" being part of this assertion. This entails what Berger & Luckmann call "taken-for-granted-routines" (1967:57), comprising thorough work performance. As shown, the need to work hard and perform an entrusted task well is a norm enforced by a cohesive group of those who identify themselves as Akan, which also found an expression in the Akan term "adwuma." In a nutshell, the prevailing Akan norms entrenched in an individual consciousness are still influential when "developing perspectives on the world and ensuring grounds for action" (Macamo, 2017:231), although to a different extent of intensity.

High importance has been attributed to the immediate nuclear family, parental or guardian upbringing and their influence as role models. This is best illustrated by Sylvia, who at length explained the influence her mother had upon her acquired work ethic, and when asked to reflect if the teachings in Mt. Zion had added to the behavior internalized at home, answered with a "no."

Contrary to the influence of Akan culture, the data do not refer to an isolated influence of Traditional Religion; it is only assigned an indirect influence, for example, when Abraham points out that the fear of the gods' sanctions led villagers to a disposition of work commitment for the common good by keeping their villages clean.

Social World – workplace

The Ghanaian philosopher, William E. Abraham, adeptly singles out the influence of a regular wage system oriented towards the individual culminated in a "sense of private power" (2015:138). Furthermore, as shown in this research, work is viewed as a process and or outcome that entails factors that contribute to assure human physical survival, well-being, and a boost of self-perception. The anticipation or fear of losing this source, equally serves as a tool to enhance behavior, which positively responds to the employer's expectations.

Strict adherence to workplace regulations and expectations depends upon the personal need for job security and is shaped by personal selection and evaluation of return on investment. The latter also holds true for the informal sector, where individual commitment underlies efforts to anticipate and fulfill customers' demands.

The Social World Mt. Zion

To avoid being misunderstood, I wish to state that it is not my intention to trivialize the personal, spiritual, purposeful elements that the Christian faith entails for its followers. As shown throughout this paper, participating in the religious rites and in the activities of the parish can be viewed as an expression of the individual´s spiritual devotion, while at the same time can also serve as a function for social integration. Both motivations are of course not mutually exclusive and may very well

inform and strengthen each other. However, they are not necessarily equally pronounced for all members and the social factor alone can serve as an important driver for being a member of a Methodist community. It provides a sense of belonging as well as an affirmative framework for striving to develop and maintain desirable social roles and positions. Adherence to Christianity can become part of a lifestyle that attempts to answer questions and doubts. The Reverend Minister summed up what had been mentioned in discussions with Ghanaians from different walks of life, within and outside the frame of this research, by saying "In a very stressful continent like Africa where people have all kinds of avoidable challenges, religion is very important for both, their health and world views, their visions and whatever they want to achieve in life." The church, however, also holds expectations towards its members. An important, frequently mentioned expectation is in the request for their financial contributions.

Data reveal that the consideration granted to Mt. Zion strongly depends on personal allocation within church structure. The clergy runs the church similar to a commercial enterprise, offering sacred liturgy, advise, admonishments, and responding to the need to belong in exchange for money and reverence to the dignitaries.

Macamo's finding that individuals in religious communities "render authoritative accounts of the world and, in so doing, grant their followers elements with which they can go about structuring their social relations" (2017:223) also applies to Mt. Zion's pastors. Qua proclaimed divine authority, the clergy exercises influence upon church members; even so, the interviews showed that, to a certain extent, individuals are capable of deviating from indoctrinated thoughts. However, most church members want to remain within the church framework and are therefore careful in selecting options, thoroughly weighing costs against personal benefits.

"Moral apostle"

As shown by examples, Mt. Zion's preachers, especially the Reverend Minister, appear as rigorous representatives of Christian moral constraints. The interviews also occasionally make hidden or overt references to a "moral apostle" who preaches a "moral sermon". This reference lays claim to the unconditionality of the values he is to enforce, representing himself on a higher level than his environment (or congregation), so that an asymmetrical power imbalance between the "right point of view" and the "wrong way" builds up between a "moral preacher" and those who listen to him. An inner moral pressure can become an inner compulsion. Such a tension between moral height and the lowlands of life practice, of everyday life, can certainly be internalized, so that the "moral law in me" solidifies into a moral superego, under whose pressure behavioral changes can result. Although the above applies to different life spheres, my focus lies on the

predisposition toward the undeniable attempt at behavioral change, i.e., towards "ecclesiastical philanthropy" (Troeltsch, 1959:25) directed at Mt. Zion.

Data indicate that church members tend to move in the opposite direction; although they still hold Mt. Zion dearly for various reasons and mostly refrain from voicing criticism openly, they privately resist the pressure of behavioral change towards donating the expected amounts of money to the church. Speaking about morals, I want to draw the attention to a frequently mentioned component of "work ethic" defined by the interviewees, namely: honesty. Honesty, as a facet of moral character, serves as a good example to illustrate different approaches by Mt. Zion's clergy. As illustrated in chapter 4, the clergy condemns (in a sermon) dishonest behavior at the workplace, such as working significantly less hours than is contractually agreed and paid for, thereby defrauding the employer. The Reverend Minister asserts that "the devil is using you" when such a dishonest behavior is displayed. Then again, several interviewees from different socioeconomic background (Kwesi, Moses, Elsa, Mary, Daniel, Jill, Sylvia, Harry, Reverend Minister) confirmed that money not only plays a central role in Mt. Zion, but also leads to status, prestige, and power within the church setting. These qualities are considered desirable and therefore money acquisition becomes central. As several statements clearly indicate, although bemoaning the high level of corruption in Ghana, the clergy seems to intentionally turn a blind eye on the origin of financial resources of those members who profess a high socioeconomic status. They serve as examples of generosity towards Mt. Zion. Here, as clearly shown by Sylvia and Daniel, the question of morality exemplified by honesty, tends to change direction, and now points towards the church clergy.

Members' expectations

The available data indicate that adherence to Mt. Zion is mainly based on two pillars: a rational and an emotional sphere.

The rational sphere

The gathered data allows me to conclude that regardless of the personal adherence to a particular social stratum, Mt. Zion is viewed as an important platform to improve one's individual economic situation.

With regard to the less privileged, and/or poor, it can be deducted that herein lies an important, if not the main reason, for joining the congregation due to the fact that – as repeatedly confirmed – Mt. Zion is a "wealthy church" with many "rich people" who are expected to help fellow members in need, preferably by employment or some seed money to start a small business.

However, as clearly stated by the Reverend Minister, "don't come to church expecting someone owes you anything", Mt. Zion declines any responsibility towards bridging the acknowledged existing socioeconomic divide labeled classism. Alternatively, Mt. Zion does encourage what can be called "benevolent paternalism," a top-down charity by means of recycled clothing or occasional offering of medical and food support.

It is further hoped that church programs, such as scholarships, although they have been significantly cut back during my research time, will be allocated to the children of the needy. Since early missionary times, education has been a highly desirable virtue aspired to lead out of poverty. Those interviewees who had benefited from scholarships, display gratitude towards Mt. Zion. Thus, those members on the low economic strata accept their position at the lowest level of Mt. Zion hierarchical structure, while hoping for economic returns. A fitting example is Mary, who, although she holds an academic degree, is economically deprived, and is searching for support within Mt. Zion to find a job. She elaborates on classism in Mt. Zion as a natural matter of fact, saying, "So far as this social class is able to help the poor, I think they are good to go," and appreciating that "they still come down to our level anytime we want to talk to them."

The church offers a **platform to network**. There is evidence that successful use of this platform correlates with the socioeconomic status. The mentioned economically fragile members need to overcome the psychological barrier of getting the attention of a possible benefactor, elevate themselves into the position to convincingly present a personal request and then hope for a favorable response. Some of my interviewees complained that they were being stalled, waiting many years for a definite response. The data allow to assume that the middle class is more effective in getting positive use out of connecting to those at a similar or higher professional level resulting in some cases in improved employment. However, the data also show that this platform offers the greatest benefits to Mt. Zion's wealthy people, reinforcing their status and economic position. Data show that success in business positively correlates with an influential position within Mt. Zion's governance structure, leveraging personal influence and relevance. It is what Jill describes as "the caliber of the congregation, they are high up there, it's an elitist church" that attracts members of this socioeconomic class to Mt. Zion. Furthermore, the possibility to display personal wealth and to conduct business interactions after the church service incentivizes regular church service attendance.

The sphere of emotions

Data signify that it is the need to belong which reigns supreme when defining reasons to attend Mt. Zion church services. Keeping in mind that the research was conducted in an urban area,

deprived of a close-knit cultural environment which was supposed to take care of the individual in the urban setting, the churches tend to become a substitute in the personal search for acceptance and empathy. The need to belong to the congregation, a "family," as some interviewees pointed out, seems however to be satisfactorily addressed during sermon time – a joint worship in the same building. As soon as worship activities end, classism emerges where disposition of personal financial resource or lack of those, determine to which class one belongs. Thus the "family" setting becomes very fragmented. Herein lies a significant contrast to the culturally defined notion of "family" as the latter is a natural given, a lifelong companion.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the faithful expect the church to provide answers to the unpredictability of everyday life or at least point out mechanisms to make life's hardships bearable. Or as Peter Geschiere said in a colloquium, it's about, "constructing a way of life that is livable."

Last but not least, Mt. Zion is a forum to perform "things of God." My interviewees used this term with a cognitive bias of shared knowledge between me and them. They were successful, as it did not occur to me to ask for a particular definition. I am thus left with the assumption that "things of God" amount to a personal interpretation of adherence to righteous behavior, as is in their view determined by the Bible.

Lifeworlds – their similarities and differences

There is evidence that these three different social worlds intersect but also collide with one other, depending on different factors, such as circumstances, time, and age. It may well also be that a certain canon of values, which has an Akan cultural origin, has found its way almost unnoticed into the social world of Mt. Zion. Thus, a synergy has been created that is difficult to assign to a specific origin. I use Weber's concept to juxtapose an influential theoretical frame for empirical findings whose influence and limits of applicability in the Ghanaian context were discussed in chapter two.

Notwithstanding the fact that Mt. Zion does exercise influence upon its members by defining what is right or wrong, drawing legitimacy from the Bible, I could not find evidence of the church actively interfering with individual behavior or actions, neither in literature nor with my interviewees. Although the church has means of enforcement by punishment or expulsion (Matthew 18:15-17), Mt. Zion, to my knowledge, addresses misbehavior in sermons in a more general manner but does not take disciplinary actions towards a member, at least not in the sphere of my research interest. The topic of honesty in the work environment was mentioned several times by my interviewees but enforcement action was lacking.

It is different with the primary social world and the social world of work environment. As mentioned by several interviewees, the deeply entrenched Akan cultural and partly religious values are a source of identification and pride for most of them and form a set of values an individual can expect to be enforced upon him. As shown, although in an Akan community a fellow Akan is less likely to go hungry if he disrespects appropriate work behavior and is labeled as lazy, the person will be faced with disgrace ("disgrace does not befit an Akan"), putting a significant psychological pressure upon him not to remain in this state of laziness.

The expected collective adherence to the explained concept of "adwuma" finds its expression in "ensa a enye adwuma no endidi" – "the hand that does not work does not eat". This is resonated by the Bible in "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). As shown in chapter 2, Weber (2005) sets out an argument of restless professional work to assure a state of grace and unwillingness to work as symptom of the lack of it, culminating in "God helps those who help themselves" (ibid.:69) to secure their state of grace.

By contrast, "adwuma" aims at quality performance equally beneficial to the commissioner as much as contributing to fulfilment and satisfaction of the performer. "Adwuma" has an inner-worldly orientation where "work is part of life," meaning a conscientious feeling of duty, to cater for personal and family needs as well as personal fulfillment. Local worldviews such as "work is work" are embedded in culturally defined norms and govern individual behavior in a manner intelligible to others at the workplace, be it at public or private level.

The Reverend Minister also applies the term "grace," in the sense of talents granted by God to an individual for which the person is responsible to put them into commercial use to sustain him/herself. As shown, it is common knowledge that any kind of income is expected to be shared with the church. Contrary to what Weber theorizes as an essential part of "ascetic Protestantism," namely: through diligent and restless work one can transform the self-perception from being a humble sinner into that of a self-assured "saint" (Weber, 2005:99), scaring away doubts and assuring with certainty the state of grace. At Mt Zion, the teaching focuses on wealth accumulation in the living world thereby placing the individual at the focus. This is, however, with the caveat or expectation that the individual shows gratitude towards Mt. Zion in the form of financial support to the church.

When adding the lifeworld of the workplace to the above considerations, I first wish to state that workplaces use highly effective codified means of performance enforcement at the monetary as well as psychological levels, used in the event of deviations from the expected behavior. Whereas Weber thinks that unwillingness to work was considered a symptom of a lack of grace (ibd.:106),

the Reverend Minister points to personal responsibility towards others in the workplace, sanctioning unsatisfactory performance by terminating the person's employment contract. It is noteworthy that the Reverend Minister acts as a member of a commercial company's board, and he vouchsafes authority to his action, as he stressed, by intentionally wearing his clergy attire when taking care of business matters. This attire is expected to identify him as a man of God but also to grant him legitimacy in the practice of his powers allegedly bestowed to him by the Divine. He acts as His extended arm and states that "God does not tolerate unproductive living." It is notable that in a commercial setting, a display of Christian or Methodist conviction is used to exercise personal power conveying its legitimation by the Christian God.

Most likely unknowingly, Mt. Zion's socioeconomic elite echo elements from the ascetic Protestantism as asserted by Weber, when elaborating on the collective "we, the successful people of Mt. Zion" (Abraham). The difference, however, lies in the attribution: whereas Weber analyzes that hard work is necessary to assure God's grace, the view of Mt. Zion members centers on the outcome of their commitment to the "things of God" in the form of personal socioeconomic success. This might be the reason as to why the clergy had repeatedly put strong emphasis on the redistribution of personal wealth to the church's needs, but also to equate them with the pursuit of the "things of God" held in a high esteem. Abraham provides a fitting example of a utilitarian application of "blessing": when he started his two commercial businesses, he offered to God a pledge to settle all remaining debts Mt. Zion still owed the bank in exchange for God's help to prosper, and he used Mt. Zion's clergy to perform the act of blessing his commercial businesses.

By substituting the term "grace" with "blessing," I asked Simon (the successful businessman holding several leadership positions in Mt. Zion), to elaborate on whether personal success can be attributed to God's blessings. In doing so, I wanted to find out more about personal attribution to the origins of commercial success. Simon explains:

> Well, I don't have empirical evidence to say that. Because these sets of people have a certain level of blessing that is why they are available for the things of God. Because the other side is, ok, I am also looking for blessings, so I should be closer to God and to the activities of the church. So, you can't say for sure, what the cause the effects are specifically. But I think it's an attitude, if you understand and appreciate what you are doing whether it is a church setting, whether it is a business setting or even a social organizational setting, the attitude is the same. If you don't have it, it will show, whether it is church or business or whatever you are doing.

This answer comes close to the attitude innate to the concept of "adwuma," underlining that work represents an independent value requesting certain quality standards and entailing creative joy, satisfaction, and contentment (Lewin 1920); it is thus an aspirational end in itself.

Except for Kwesi, none of the interviewees implied that the root for a personal established work ethic lies in Christian doctrine or Methodist teaching. When explicitly asked if Mt. Zion teaches work ethic, interviewees seemly feel hard pressed to identify occurrences where the church explicitly touched on the topic of work ethic, some of them bemoaning that this is a peripheral phenomenon, a by-product or ingredient in selective sermons. However, there are hints, for example by Jill and Simon, that those who identify with the Methodist church have internalized the necessity to work. This conviction was, from their point of view, providing an explanation for not prominently addressing the topic on work ethic in Mt. Zion's teachings.

The data available convincingly indicate that when discussing the origin of a personal work ethic, the interviewees referred to a pattern of attitudes and behavior which they had learnt from their parents, guardians, and sometimes with the support of the extended family and/or village community.

Furthermore, the data on hand back the assumption that elements, which, in the view of the interviewees define work ethic, are taught within the extended family, and already internalized in childhood. As established in literature (Danquah, 2016; Wiredu, 1996; Ackah, 1988) and confirmed by Marc and Kyei, Akan form of a cohesive society was based on loyalty towards norm-abiding behavior defined by the significant others, with a high emphasis upon the family. The recurring theme from across my interviewees is that a hard-working attitude is transmitted within the family setting (explicitly mentioned by Sylvia, Akosua, Robert, Kwame, Moses, Kwadzo, Jill, Gloria, Lydia, Simon, Very Reverend). Although, as already stated, Christian influence cannot be ruled out as a contributor to form the personal character, the evidence here again points to two separate sources of influence, where cultural elements are more powerful, or as Dickson aptly illustrates by saying, "it is in our custom" being "both ground and defense of what is acceptable" (1991:144), thus forming a basis for moral normative behavior. Data do not indicate that Christian or Methodist teaching has substituted for these values; at best, it has used some of them to reinforce Bible based teachings. This is resonated by interviewees, who, after having elaborated on their personal work ethic rooted in cultural values transmitted in a family environment and narrated about their affiliation with Mt. Zion, conclude "same, same" (Simon), "a combination" (Moses), "intertwined" (Lydia), "complements each other" (Daniel). "It is both" (Very Reverend) when asked to allocate the source of their personal work ethic.

The church clergy views personal work ethic in the realm of the private, while expecting what Kwesi internalized as, "If I am working, number one is my tithe; then: my personal needs." This conviction is intertwined with gratitude towards God' s guidance and entails the hope, "If you keep paying your tithe, some opportunity will open up for you, like better job." Although this thought is echoed by other interviewees, they do not go as far as affirming an admittedly suggestive question: if their Christian and/or commitment to Mt. Zion faith would make them work harder?

As stated in literature (e.g., Wiredu 1998) and illustrated by interviewees, the Akan apply a utilitarian religious approach in search for solutions beyond human capacity. Data provide evidence that there is a one-way transfer in the sense of applying this approach to the Methodist church Mt. Zion and most likely beyond. Encouraged by the clergy, the Christian God is expected to cater to the personal, with an emphasis upon economic needs in exchange for piety manifested in prayer and financial contributions to Mt. Zion.

There is one concrete hint that points to the fact that Christian teaching undermines work ethic. Three of my interviewees, Daniel, Jill, and Lydia (two are employers and one is a high positioned employee) bemoan and condemn that Christians use working time to read the Bible and pray. Observance of the so-called "quiet time" is an important and recurring topic in the church's sermons and teachings; it is viewed as obligatory to every Christian to create in their mind the need to prioritize the practice over the attendance to work assignments.

Religion interfacing with economic development in Ghana

It is uncontested that advertising Christian religion visibly penetrates the public sphere in Ghana, using means such as TV shows or billboards on the roadside of church leaders promising solutions to all kind of life challenges. There are a considerable number of churches representing a wide range of denominations housed in a range of structures, from impressive buildings, makeshift schools to improvised set-ups with plastic chairs and benches, at times planted so close to each other that the taking care of the spiritual needs of the believers on a Sunday morning, almost giving the impression of competition for members.

Interestingly, data do not display any evidence that Christianity, although heavily present in the public sphere, has permeated Akan culture. There is convincing evidence that the historically grown Akan culture as compared to this relatively new concept of Christianity, remains largely detached from each other, notwithstanding the fact that selected cultural expressions such as dancing, and drumming have found their way into church. As established in chapter 3, the Akan concept of culture also encompasses religion, and more precisely Akan Traditional Religion. This

concept forms the basis upon which the Akan ethical system is grounded. Bearing that in mind, much as it is believed that an Akan is born knowing God (Danquah among others), it is culturally established behavior and mechanisms of social control that shape and give meaning to actions in his everyday life. Kyei's assertion that "any given society has to give premium to hard work otherwise it will not survive. It will fail" aptly illustrates the above.

It is also evident that Akan have adopted to a rapidly changing world order beyond what is passed on in their own culture from generation to generation. Their mastery of skills native to other countries and societies is a best example. A focus on the adjustments they had to make to global influences entails new elements leading to change and brings out the ability of both leaders and people to grasp the opportunities available to them, deploying them to purposeful effect. The agility demonstrated in selecting and adopting to imported Western norms and values in a rapid globalization is impressive.

Although these developments have significantly contributed to social and economic changes, it is pointless to conceptualize the Akan society in terms of a dichotomy between "traditional" and "modern," as voiced by Williamson (1965:155f). If at the beginning of the missionary intervention in Ghana, Christianity and modernity were used almost synonymously among the Akan, the actual use of these terms seems to noticeably diverge, not least under the influence of a globalized world.

On the ground, multifarious ways allow a fluent accountability to both concepts, which, in the Akan mind, found a way to complement each other. It appears that we are faced with an increasing development of self-identification through cultural-based values, and to a certain extent, include traditional religious values on one hand, and modernity that comprises an induction of Christian and Western philosophies, on the other. As a result, although Christian religious values are widely diffuse in the Akan society, deeply rooted and influential cultural values prevail. In this vein, Okyerefo argues that the churches have not only educated people but also liberated them. In his view, a sign of this liberation is that people he singles out "the educated" in search of identity, start to assert traditional values manifested in giving traditional names to their children. The multidimensionality of these different sources of influence are aptly summed up by Atiemo, who rather confidently stated that, "the experience of Ghana has been one of marriage between tradition and modernity, and there is no sign that the forces of modernity will completely obliterate tradition in the near future" (2013:16). Or, to speak with Macamo (2005:5), "It is more appropriate to think in terms of multiple modernities as against a single, Western, and all-conquering singular modernity."

Final remarks

Mt. Zion consists of people who belong to the various ethnic groups in Ghana and are influenced or shaped by them to varying degrees. As previously mentioned, various sources suggest that at least 70% of Mt. Zion members belong to Akan. Each individual brings his or her imprint to Mt. Zion and as Aristotle rightly points out, something new emerges because "the whole is more than the sum of its parts". This new emerged phenomenon – Mt. Zion – reciprocally exercises influence upon the individual. And out of this arises a culture, which in my observation is rather temporary, and reaches beyond the respective ethnic affiliation of the individual church members. People form a culture sharing community that is grounded in Mt. Zion. They attribute personal meaning to this phenomenon, Mt. Zion. New group dynamics emerge, which are fragmented, and interest driven. This culture sharing community goes beyond providing its members with the aforementioned offer of Christian encouragement. It also selectively contributes to their economic development by offering mechanism to either safeguard or enlarge the individual economic status, and by supporting in the search for gainful employment and/or integration into the labor market. It is noteworthy that the high proportion of Akan among this particular community indicates that this ethnic group has recognized the benefits resulting from their affiliation with Mt. Zion.

Although my research field was limited to selected members of a Methodist church, Mt. Zion, who explicitly declare being rooted in Akan, my findings echo Gifford's conclusion, "My study of the religious situation in Ghana has not convinced me that much of Ghana's new Christianity leads naturally to many of the benefits sometimes suggested, benefits like a new work ethic" (2004:196). The data on hand back up the assumption that elements which, in the view of the interviewees define work ethic, are taught within the extended family and are already internalized in childhood. As established in literature (Danquah, 2016; Wiredu, 1996; Ackah, 1988) and confirmed by Marc and Kyei, Akan is a cohesive society based on loyalty towards norm-abiding behavior defined by significant others with a high emphasis on family. The recurring theme made by my interviewees is that hard working attitude is transmitted within the family setting (explicitly mentioned by Sylvia, Akosua, Robert, Kwame, Moses, Kwadzo, Jill, Gloria, Lydia, Simon, Very Reverend) and forms a strong social expectation by this group of significant others. Although, as already stated, Christian influence cannot be ruled out as a contributor to form the personal character. The evidence here again points to two separate sources of influence, where cultural elements are more powerful, or as Dickson aptly illustrates by saying, "it is in our custom" being "both ground and defense of what is acceptable" (1991:144), thus forming a basis for moral normative behavior. As established and reaffirmed by Marc, the cultural pattern is also changing, but "because it's rooted in a way in the past, it will take a long time to die." Data show that the younger generation displays less adherence

to particular cultural traits, although all do attribute cultural influence upon their upbringing, especially when discussing the obtained work ethic.

Internalized work behavior appraises work as the accomplishment of perceived duty that defines an aspect of identity and engenders contentment.

Max Weber's concept and the reality in Ghana

In the kind of work ethic described by Weber, the individual is defined as "God's steward" (Weber, 2005:108), who is expected to multiply his possessions, "holding them undiminished for the glory of God and increasing them by restless effort" (ibid.:115). From this develops the concept of an ascetic, puritanical way of life, which fell on fertile ground in the Europe as asserted by Weber. Weber defines indicators of an ascetic way of life as:

> The religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life which we have here called the spirit of capitalism. (Weber, 2005:116)

Furthermore, in the concept of "Ascetic Protestantism," hard work was viewed as a necessity in assurance of God's grace and the pursuit of certainty of salvation (Weber, 2005:69). Salvation is an alien concept to Akan Traditional Religion. In Wiredu's view: "There isn't any notion of an afterlife of possible salvation and eternal bliss; what afterlife there is thought to be is envisaged very much on the model of this life" (1996:57). Danquah adds, "Salvation is meaningless" (2016:27). In an environment where, as shown, different religious sources exercise an influence upon the individual, it is most likely that the Christian concept of personal salvation has also found its footing. However, the message I wish to convey here is, whether or not a person adheres to the belief in salvation, the gathered data do not provide a hint towards a positive correlation between work ethic and need to attain certainty of salvation.

As the concept of "grace" has been discussed in this chapter, I only wish to add that Weber correlates "grace" and hard work (ibid.: 105). He elaborates on the aphorism, "He who will not work, shall not eat," although rooted in the Bible ("The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat" 2 Thessalonians 3:10) in a way as to equate "unwillingness to work" to "lack of grace" (ibid.). Remarkably, as shown, the Akan claim the statement "ensa a enye adwuma no endidi" – "the hand that does not work does not eat" for themselves, as part of their innate concept. The Akan term "adwuma" entails meaning which shows that the society gives premium to hard work. As

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voiced by Daniel, the correlation between hard work and prosperity is higher than Christianity and prosperity.

Furthermore, the data do not indicate any predisposition, neither in the Akan cultural nor Christian sense, to a personally chosen ascetic lifestyle, which Weber defines as an important ingredient to enable the "spirit of capitalism" to evolve. Rather, on the contrary, there is encouragement to invest for personal gain, such as expensive consumer items and elegant clothes, as socioeconomic status plays a significant role within Mt. Zion's environment. Enjoyment of personal wealth is considered as sign of divine favor and thus granted religious legitimation. Rather, as a by-product of this return on investment, Mt. Zion explicitly voices its expectation towards a certain level of redistribution, evoking "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9: 6) and assuring, that in return, "God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good" (ibid.).

The micro sociological perspective

Approaching my findings from a micro sociological perspective and focusing on the question whether personal work ethic is enhanced by adherence to a particular Christian denomination namely the Methodist church, or at a broader level, addressing the role of Mt. Zion as voiced by my interviewees, the following summarized picture emerges.

Data suggest that, regardless their socioeconomic status, interviewees associate the community of Mt. Zion with a network of solidarity. This network is embedded in a religious setting, Mt. Zion. The expected functions of this network are directed towards addressing economic needs, either regarding a job market, poverty reduction issues, or entrepreneurial exchange. The network is based on interpretation of meaning (i) nourished by perceived like-mindedness in a protected environment, (ii) drawn and controlled by an obvious hierarchical structure, (iii) sheltered by a shared cannon of a particular Christian faith or doctrine, and (iv) perceived as providing safety enabling to "get that kind of psychological reorientation to be able to face life" (Daniel).

Mt. Zion also feeds into the need to belong which draws from different sources: (i) to cope with "all kinds of avoidable challenges in a stressful continent like Africa" (Reverend Minister), (ii) to comply with expectations of society because "it looks odd […] not to be identified with a Church or religious group" (Reverend Minister), and (iii) to satisfy the persistent need for solidarity in the urban setting, as explicitly pointed out by Marc.

The data point that Mt. Zion is viewed as a mission-oriented Methodist church that is "reaching out to the unsaved" (Very Reverend and others). The knowledge gained through interviews and

observation supports the cognition that individual work ethic is to a considerable extent entrenched in the individual through channels rooted in family and culture. There is, however, evidence that the church exercises selective appropriation and integration of preexisting cultural concepts and values, including Traditional Religious values. It builds on the already existing internalized attitude towards work, evokes these values, and while adding Christian / Methodist behavioral expectations such as financial contributions towards the church, at least partly deflects from the culturally rooted reasons to work.

Data evidence suggest that Mt. Zion's most important contribution towards personal economic development lies in offering a platform which allows addressing economic needs, either regarding a job market or entrepreneurial exchange. It is probably the character of this platform that has an influence upon individual work ethic, one reason being that its members serve as example to and expect certain behavior patterns from each other. In this case, Mt. Zion members allocate to an ecclesiastic institution a worldly connotation that has an impact upon the individual economic development which then spills over into society. It is probable that the outcome of the individual use of this platform has an indirect influence on (or contributes to) economic development within society.

This study is a snapshot in time. While focusing on sources of influence on personal work ethic and their implications, signs of a society in transition became apparent: both, in terms of the influence and impact of Christianity and within the sphere of cultural imprint. In addition, the signs of transition offer promising directions for future research, first at the conceptual level, because those analytical concepts rooted in European / Western realities do not do justice to the reality in Ghana. Then at the micro sociological level, further research is recommended focusing on church members of one of the so-called "established churches" to better understand, which multiple factors shape their behavior under which circumstances.

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Appendix - MAXQDA codes

- Tithe/Donation
  - Donation as work motivation
    - History/previous habit
  - Approaches to get money
  - Donation and Blessing
  - Meaning Tithe
- WE and Corruption
- WE: Akan values or Mt. Zion teaching
  - Mt. Zion-general info
  - Characteristics Mt.Zion
    - Methodology
    - Charismatic elements
    - Greeting
    - Language
  - Reasons for attending church services in Mt. Zion
    - Networking
    - Spiritual welfare
    - Impressive building
    - Getting financial support
    - "elitist church"
    - Habitude
    - Role
  - location
  - job market/career
  - Need to belong/fellowship
  - recognition/respect
  - Predictability
- Background
  - Christianity has not helped us
  - Importance Christian values
  - "Work of God"
  - Personal ambitions
  - Founding Member
  - Involvement in church /Position
  - "Born into the church"

- Communitarism
- WE and context
- Entrepreneurialism
- WE and Methodism
  - work related dishonesty
  - Employed by church
  - who does not work should not eat
  - WE in Mt. Zion's teaching
  - Methodism and education
- WE and Akan culture
  - Akan culture (general observation)
    - urban area
    - rural area
  - "adwuma"
  - Manifestation of primary socialization
  - deeply rooted traditions
  - preservation of culture
  - Primary Socialisation
- Definition WE
  - WE Overlap Christianity +Akan culture
  - Reasons for job recommendations
  - Job description
  - working reasons
  - "work is work"

- Corporate Structure
  - Military structure
  - Classism
    - poor
    - salary workers
    - Rich / Big men
  - Church support
  - Dressing
  - Scholarship
  - Influence of church structures
  - Leaving
  - Mt. Zion as enterprise
  - Society within society

Notes

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[1] In its publication Ghana Economic Update: Enhancing Financial Inclusion (2019) the World Bank states, "Ghana's annual economic growth continued on a strong path at 6.3% in 2018, although at a slower pace than the 8.1% in 2017.[…] The report projects Ghana's economic growth to increase to 7.6% in 2019".

[2] I favor the use of the admittedly somehow "unwieldy" terminology of "behavior routed in religious convictions" to the more common and widely used term "religiosity" for a number of reasons: It is a difficult endeavor to precisely define religiosity in a manner agreed by all researchers. Various approaches across academic disciplines such as psychology, theology, education, or sociology point to the diversity of attributions to religiosity (Cardwell, 1980; Demerath & Hammond, 1969). It culminates in multiple dimensions associated with the term, placing emphasize either on its cognitive dimension (Cardwell, 1980) or the application of religious knowledge (Allport & Ross, 1967). By emphasizing "behavior rooted in religious convictions," I lean on the concept of extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of religiosity as singled out by Allport and Ross (1967), acknowledging its dichotomy where "the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated person lives his religion" (Allport & Ross 1967:434).

[3] The term refers to the Christian denominations: Presbyterians, Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists which were introduced by the Europeans.

[4] I wish to note that all names of my interviewees quoted in this research are not their real names.

[5] Official title as printed on Sunday sermon flyers.

[6] Since I do not master the local language, Twi, all references in Twi and their discussion are based either on information provided by local linguists or discussions in literature.

[7] I was informed about the Reverend Minister saying, "If you want to apply for a Leadership position, you need money." Apparently, this statement led to irritation within the church congregation and was broadly discussed.

[8] Admittedly, this percentage needs to be viewed only as an indicator, as the ethnic background is for very good reasons not kept in any church statistics. However, as I learned that names point to ethnicity, I asked Kwesi to analyze the list from this perspective, at the end leaving with only 12% which could not be attributed.

[9] Jammer, Max (1957). Concepts of Force. Dover Publications Inc. Mineola. New York. p. 167; footnote 14 (pointing to Coriolis, Gustave. (1829). Calculation of the Effect of Machines, or Considerations on the Use of Engines and their Evaluation (Du Calcul de l'effet des Machines, ou Considérations sur l'emploi des Moteurs et sur Leur Evaluation). Paris: Carilian-Goeury, Libraire.

[10] "The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use or consume it himself, but to exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labour which it enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities. The real price of everything, what everything really costs to the man who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it" (Smith, 1999).

[11] Data used as provided by statista https://www.statista.com/statistics/447530/employment-by-economic-sector-in-ghana/ [04.02.2021].

[12] Data applied as provided by the World Bank https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.ISV.IFRM.ZS [04.02.2021]. The remaining 17% are employed in the so-called formal sector.

[13] In personal work experiences in Ghana, I have witnessed this described identification of a secular (international) workplace as "family." New colleagues we greeted as "welcome to the family," and team WhatsApp messages strongly echoed this "family" identification.

[14] Exchange rate applied as of 15.11.2019.

[15] It can be assumed that in Weber's logic this assertion also holds true for Methodists.

[16] Akan adage meaning that a bad habit is not an inborn characteristic; it is one that is acquired. And because character is formed by actions, customs, practice, and reactions to moral instructions; it is subject to change or adaptation.

[17] When quoting Danquah, I use his concept focusing upon the Akan people.

[18] Wiredu defines "culture" as "patterned accumulation of contingencies of social consciousness and action in the context of a specific type of physical environment" (p.28).

[19] The Charter of the World Council of Religious Leaders passed in July 2002 strongly emphasizes upon the equal value of all religions and "religious and spiritual leaders."

[20] The concept of "religion" applied by Gyekye seems to rather point to an individual refence to God outside the dogmatically and socially delegitimized church institutions, and not to a socially constituted and regulated frame of reference. I will revert to this distinction.

[21] I deduct from different statements made by my interviewees such as "we believe in tradition, we respect seniority" (Lydia) , attribution to "cultural aspect of finding something to do at all time" (Daniel), the pointed out need of keeping up with "our culture, things that we do among us" (Kofi), and subsequently to expose children to cultural beliefs and practices (Simon), the need for parents to pass on their cultural knowledge to the next generation (Marc), attitude to work "that you cannot be lazy" (Jill, Kyei, Daniel). There are moral attributions to culture such as respect for the elderly (Gloria). In addition, many interviewees, although living in an urban environment, call "home" the place (village) where the extended family is rooted.

[22] This assertion is also supported by "Despite the general belief in a Supreme Being, cults to the "high God" are notably absent from many African religions; prayers of petition or sacrificial offerings are directed toward secondary divinities, who are messengers and intermediaries between the human and sacred realms. In West Africa, among the Asante of Ghana, for example, elders regularly pour libations and offer prayers to Nyame, the Creator, giving thanks and seeking blessing. The most significant aspect of Asante ritual life, however, is the veneration of matrilineal ancestors, who are considered the guardians of the moral order." (https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-religions) [18.05.2019].

[23] Assimeng (1989) asserted: "Considering the prevalent tenacity with which traditional religious and cultural beliefs are still held by Africans, it should be clear that conversion claims on the basis of membership statistics, could be a very poor indicator of Christian religion."

[24] Following Schütz and Luckmann (1988), the term "Lebenswelt" is to be understood as the "distinguished reality" ("ausgezeichnete Wirklichkeit") in which people live, act, and communicate with others.

[25] I do not intend to join the academic discourse regarding the validity of Maslow's pyramid of needs. Suffice to say that different societies prioritize their hierarchy of needs differently.

[26] The English word "work" is not etymologous synonymous with "adwuma" but is the chosen translation for the lack of an English term that captures all of the denotation of "adwuma."

[27] "Obi nko anase fie enko kyere no adwen" (in English: No one goes to the house of the spider Ananse to teach him wisdom).

[28] Rattray (1969: 141) goes as far as equating the Akan Supreme being to Jehovah by saying "… it is true that this great Supreme Being, the conception of whom has been innate in the minds of the Ashanti, is the Jehovah of the Israelites."

[29] Title borrowed from Danquah's book (1968) which serves me as reference throughout this chapter.

[30] The coastal fishing-oriented Akan determine Friday as the natal day of the Earth spirit adjusting the name to Asaase Efua.

[31] "Although huge religious assemblages are still visible in the urban communities in West Africa, especially on Fridays, Sundays, and other festive days, the reasons for such religious assemblages should now be perhaps sought in other than purely spiritual spheres. Much of what is done now is done on grounds of rationally calculated utility, pleasure, and practical need" (Assimeng, 1989:125).

[32] As example, see Philippians 3:10-11 ESV, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." Or Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

[33] The Akan maxim states that everyone is born knowing God.

[34] Dickson (1991:125) points to the fact that missionaries' efforts were discerned as bearing the potential to a clash of cultures by quoting the Asantehene's Mensa Bonsu when he was visited by Rev. Picot of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1876: "We know God already ourselves. As to the commandments of God, we know that we keep them all. We keep the first through our fetishes. In Ashanti we do not allow people to abuse the name of God. But we will never embrace your religion for it would make our people proud. It is your religion that has ruined Fanti country, weakened their power, and brought down the high man on a level with the low man."

35 Although throughout literature, the missionary's success is attributed to education, the quality of these education facilities is not as clear. Bartels (1965) asserts: "As places for teaching English and formal school subjects, these schools were ineffective; but as centers for moral and religious teaching they were irreplaceable" (p.89). Furthermore, he points to a dilemma resulting from the high illiteracy rate in spite of schools. In April 1944, "Ironically, the same Synod that proudly hailed the achievement of a printed Bible had the discomfort of being reminded of the gross illiteracy within the Church. Thirteen years had passed since its members recorded their regret that, although the Methodist Church had been at work in Ghana for over hundred years, seventy-five per cent of its adult members were unable to read. […] they could only listen; they could not read the Bible for themselves; therefore, their education in Christian truth proceeded by hear-say only" (ibid.:213).

36 The Wesley Methodist Missionary Society reached Ghana seven years after the Basel Mission (1828) which founded the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The Methodists were followed by the North German (Bremen) Mission in 1847 resulting into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana. Then, in 1880 the Society of African Missions established the Roman Catholic Church, finally followed by the Society for the propagation of the Gospel which led to the Anglican Church (Asamoah-Gyadu, 1994:23).

37 1910 marks the beginning of evangelization of Northern Ghana. https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/member-churches/name/ghana-methodist-church/ [25.02.2020].

38 Here we are bound to refer to culture since the Akan religious concept cannot be invoked as they see no rational in worship at social or individual level in a sense as introduced by the Christian missionaries (Wiredu, 1996:46-47). Danquah (2016:27-28) although not contradicting Wiredu's view, is more precise by pointing to a particular mean an Akan can use to reach out to Nyame – the ancestor. Danquah writes: "Akan knowledge of God teaches that he is the Great Ancestor. He deserves to be worshipped and is worshipped in the visible ancestral head, Nana."

39 The most prominent charismatic churches dominant in Ghana are: Action Chapel International (ACI) under the leadership of Nicolas Duncan-Williams; International Center Gospel Church (ICGC) under Mensa Otabil, Lighthouse Chapel under Dag Heward-Mills, World Miracle Church International (WMCI) under Agyin Asare and Winner's Chapel supervised by David Olaniyi Oyedepo.

40 Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT).

41 Almanac 2019 and 2020 are only available against payment, whereas Almanac 2017 is available online http://methodistchurch.org.gh/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-Almanac-Final-Final.pdf [25.02.2020].

42 This is exemplarily shown in the Financial Statements for the quarter 4 ended December 2016.

43 2 Cor. 9:6-11 (New International Version) reads: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever" [referring to Psalm 112:9]. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

44 "Asafo" derives from the Twi language where "sa," meaning war and "fo," meaning people. Thus, those forming a particular "asafo" are traditionally meant to protect their territory of influence.

45 This is an opinion sharing by two interviewees, where in the course of the interview the question to estimate Mt. Zion's socioeconomic structure came up naturally. Otherwise, it seemed inappropriate to me to invite my interviewees for an opinion using allocation to socioeconomic classes. In addition, to approach this question from a scientific angle, I would have needed to define indicators for each category, an undertaking that does not add significant value to the present study. The mentioned two interviewees came up with dividing the community in three groups although varying in naming and percentage allocation: there is the "upper class" (45%) or the "haves" (30%). Followed by "middle-class" (20%), and "average" (35%). And finally, the "lower class" (35%), and the "have-not" (35%).