

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: A CASE OF TROKOSI SYSTEM  
IN KETU-SOUTH DISTRICT**

**CHARLES DJAH**

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: A CASE OF TROKOSI SYSTEM IN  
KETU–SOUTH DISTRICT

BY

CHARLES DJAH

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## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date: .....

Charles Djah

### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature: .....Date: .....

Prof. Akwasi Kumi-Kyereme

## ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to assess violation of women's rights in the Ketu-South District. Being an essentially qualitative study, it adopted a descriptive and exploratory approach to expose the incidence of human rights abuse or violation in the study area. A purposive sampling technique was used. The main instrument used for data collection was the interview guide.

The findings from the field show that there are varying views about the origin of the Trokosi system among the people of the various shrines. However, the use of females as atonement to the gods was clear indication in the narrations of how it (the Trokosi system) originated among the Ewes.

Further findings reveal that the Trokosis are sexually, physically and psychologically abused. Moreover, respondents were found to be experiencing other forms of abuses in the various shrines.

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that although there are varying views concerning the origin of the Trokosi system, demands for females to serve the gods on behalf of the people or particular family as a result of predicaments was explicitly mentioned. Again, women and girls who serve at the shrines are denied the most fundamental of human rights due to the practices of the Trokosi system.

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**DEDICATION**

To my lovely Wife and Daughter.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit
DWM	December Women`s Movement
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FBOs	Faith Based Organizations
FIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
GNCC	Ghana National Commission on Children
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
MGCSP	Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations

PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDW	United Nations Decade for Women
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WAAF	West Africa Aids Foundation
WAJU	Women and Juvenile Unit
WSC	World Summit on Children

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Study**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) stipulates in article 1 that; ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (UN, 1948). Therefore human rights of women are embodied in International, Regional and National instruments. It states further in Article 2 that everybody, is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration “without distinction of any kind, as race, colour, sex, language, religion, creed or any other status.” Article 25(2) which is particularly important states that Motherhood is entitled to special care and assistance.

This was the reason, why on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly gathered in Palais Chaillot in Paris, France, where the chairperson of the United Nations commission on Human Rights rose to give a speech. In a firm voice, Eleanor Roosevelt, told members gathered; ‘We stand today at the threshold of a great event in the life of mankind, that is the approval of the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.’

The council recognized from its first session in 1946 that issues related to the status of women would require specific attention. It thus, established a Sub-Commission, latter called Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to submit proposals, recommendations and reports on the status of women to the Commission on Human Rights. The Commission focused its attention on the unequal legal situation which women find themselves in most countries, compared to men. The

Commission, thus, proceeded to develop international human rights norms to address discrimination against women in order to achieve equality. The Commission purposely ensured that women`s equality was specifically included in the Declaration, including women`s equal right to marriage and at the dissolution, Batitger (2002) as cited in Benedek, Kisaakye and Oberleritner (2002). Though women are globally affected by all human rights issues , both in gender specific and a general way, women in Africa, especially those in rural areas suffer most (Edwards, 2011).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), or the International Women`s Human Rights Treaty, was adopted by the United Nation in 1979. CEDAW was the first document to comprehensively address women`s rights within political, cultural, economic, social and family spheres. The convention`s definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is violence directed against women (Dana, Sylvanna, Sharmila & Molly, 2010).

Historically, the responsibility for human rights violations, is only when state agents or officials were the perpetrators. Indeed, certain forms of violence against women by state agents have been acknowledged as torture. However, women more often face abuses from both state and non-state actors, such as employers, partners, husbands, families and community members. When international law is applied without an understanding of the state`s responsibility for abuses committed by private actors, women are denied an essential part of the protection that the human rights system is supposed to provide (Dana, Sylvanna, Sharmila & Molly, 2010).

Other United Nations Conventions recognise not only the principle of equality but also guarantee women rights, thereby prohibiting discriminations. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protect basic Civil and Political rights; right to life, freedom from torture, degrading and inhuman treatment, freedom from slavery and forced labour, the right to liberty and security of persons, right to fair-trial, the rights to privacy, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to marry and form a family, the rights of the child, women`s right to equality, the rights of minorities, freedoms of association and right to assembly (Padmini & Clyde, 2010).

Article 2,5,10 and 15 of CEDAW, (UN, 1979) in turn accord protection to women, right to family benefits, equal status with men, modifying cultural patterns that perpetuate discrimination and right to custody of children as well as right to enter and dissolve marriages (UN, 1979).

In 1993 at Vienna, human rights issues and gender-specific violations of women`s human rights were also recognised. These included domestic violence, rape, genital mutilation and crimes against women during wars and in occupations. The United Nations has since appointed a special rapporteur and instituted a mechanism to address these violations, which was in the UN Declaration of Human Right document (Maria, Eva-Britt, Carita, & Ann, 2010).

When Ghana became a member of United Nations, she endorsed the Declaration and has since accepted it as part of her constitution to be used as a yardstick to measure the degree of respect for human rights. Dr. Herbert V. Evatt, the United Nations General Assembly President at the time predicted that “millions

of men, women and children all over the world will turn up for help, guidance and inspiration from this document” (Padmini & Clyde, 2010).

Fifty years after, human rights violations have become a daily reality. For instance, the development of a global human rights culture according to Elsa Stamapolou (2003), explains why in 1998, the United Nations (UN) launched a worldwide public information campaign to educate people about their rights and countries about their responsibilities. Again, because the Universality of human right is still under sustained attack, the Human Right Watch World Report 1998 noted that the United Nations had declared December 10<sup>th</sup> of every year as a Human Rights Day (Padmini & Clyde, 2010).

The issue of gender balance or equity in all aspects of life and violence against women has been so significant to the United Nations that the years 1976-1985 were declared the “United Nations Decade for Women.” Again, due to the relevance of the issue of gender balance, a seminar on Human Right and Development attended by African leaders in Gaborone, Botswana in (1982) agreed to pursue appropriate ways of eliminating all sorts of discrimination against women (Brown, 1998).

In recent times, because of increase in the incidence of the violations of women`s rights, a campaign to end violence against women in Africa was launched at the United Nations Headquarters in January 2010, in New York, U.S.A. by Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of United Nations Development Fund for Women, (UNIFEM). Furthermore, the campaign recognizes the role of culture and tradition in restricting women`s enjoyment of rights and calls on states to take



appropriate measures to eliminate sex role stereotyping through family education. On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1997, Human Rights Day, the first lady of the United States of America Hilary Clinton re-echoed UN's stand on the abhorrence of all sorts of violence against women in these words '...the world continues to treat women as less than complete citizens'' ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), 2011) The issue of male domination and chauvinism has been a global one. It has stained the history of humankind right from the primitive times to the dawn of the new millennium (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2005).

Three world religions place women in an inferior position to men. Islam permits plural marriage up to four wives. Many Moslems, interpret the Koran Surah IX, verse 25 to permit temporary alliance for men far away from home on business, or at war. In Islamic religion, the husband may dissolve the marriage bond with any wife at will (Plichta & Falik, 2001).

Before the beginning of the new millennium, some Ghanaian women began to show discontent towards the social status which Ghanaian culture assigns them. This show of discontent has been predicated on the state of the Ghanaian society in which people's roles are considered worthwhile only if such roles stand up to the dynamics of economics. Even the traditional Ghanaian woman of modern times must in addition to her role, of wifehood and motherhood, equip herself for life by being a support to family income. Because women's issues have come to the fore in Ghana, a number of women organisations have been established to address the needs of women (Brown, 1998).

In addition to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, numerous women organisations have sprang up in recent years, for instance the 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement (DWM) and the Network for Women's Right in Ghana (NETRIGHT). An international conference to discuss women issues in Beijing, China, in 1996, was also attended by Ghanaian women who came to proclaim the message of gender equality to their counterparts in Ghana although the Ghanaian constitution mandates the formation of a Human Rights Commission to expose and to deal with human right violations if any exists. In recent years this commission has become more interested in fighting for the rights of women. This is a clear confirmation of the fact that some Ghanaian cultural practices confirm a gender bias (Amoakohene, 2004).

The issue of the exploitation of the girl child to the detriment of her health, education, physical and mental development is also a social problem. The Trokosi system is an ancient traditional practice in Agbozume-Klikor of Ketu South of Volta-Region in Ghana. It is a practice, which involves the giving out of a person normally (female) to a deity to expiate and atone for sins committed by living or dead relatives. The person given to the deity remains in the shrine as a slave serving the priest and other functionaries for a number of years. The system is one of the many aspects of the Troxovi institutions (A Troxovi being a deity that accepts human being as compensation for work done for clients) (Amoakohene, 2004).

Slavery has been generally defined as a social system in which one person is a property of another. A slave is therefore a human being who is a property of another, subject to compulsory labour beyond the limits of the family. A slave

works hard with little or no rest. A Slave can therefore not quit his master to save his or her dignity as a human being. He or She is looked on as an animated tool to be used at will. He or She is a person who has no personal freedom (Andoh-Kwofie, & Appiah-Sakyire, 2011).

The definition and explanation of the term “slavery” renders the Trokosi system as an institution of slavery. Ritual servitude is a practice in Ghana, Togo, and Benin where traditional religious shrines (popularly called fetish shrines in Ghana) take human beings, usually young virgin girls, in payment for services or in religious atonement for alleged misdeeds of a family member. In Ghana and in Togo, it is practiced by the Ewe tribe in the Volta Region, and in Benin it is practiced by the Fon. These shrine slaves serve the priests, elders and owners of a traditional religious shrine without remuneration and without their consent, although the consent of the family or clan may be involved (Rouster, 2008).

If a girl runs away or dies, she must be replaced by another girl from the family. Some girls in ritual servitude are the third or fourth girl in their family, suffering for the same crime, sometimes for something as minor as the loss of trivial property. It is still practiced in the Volta region of Ghana, in spite of being outlawed in 1998. Among the Ewes who practice the ritual in Ghana, variations of the practice are also called “trokosifiashidi”, and “woryokwe”, with "trokosi" being the most common of those terms. In Togo and Benin it is called voodooosi or vudusi. Victims are commonly known in Ghana as fetish slaves because the gods of African Traditional Religion are popularly referred to as fetishes and the priests who serve them as fetish priests (Awudi Gadri, 2010).

One of the threats to the girl child comes from the unscrupulous man who wants to satisfy his sexual urge. The Ghanaian girl child therefore is opened to early sex, which endangers her life. The issue of the defiling of the Trokosi girl-child by the Trokosi Priests has become a viable social problem in Ghana today. The sexual exploitation of the Trokosi girl child goes hand in hand with other forms of her exploitation. In 1989 for example New Convention on the Right of the Child was debated and unanimously approved by the United Nations' General Assembly (Amoakohene, 2004).

The activities of Anti-Trokosi and Pro-Trokosi groups have aroused interest in the phenomenon of Trokosi. Rev. Walter Pimpong of the International Needs, Ghana and Mark Wisdom of the Fetish Slaves Liberate Movement have spearheaded the Anti-Trokosi drive; non-governmental organisations (NGO`s). Osofo Kofi Ameve and Osofo Kwakuvi Azasu have headed the Pro-Trokosi drive with support from some traditionalist. The approach of the above named groups towards solving the Trokosi problem has been confrontational. Rich western countries have felt compelled to support financially and materially governments of third world countries, which have been plagued by problems of women`s rights violation. Grants and loans from donor western countries, which have been used in solving the problems of women`s rights violation, could be used instead for the much needed development of these third world countries.

### **Statement of Problem**

The phenomenon of Trokosi is one of the most widely reported cultural practices in Ghana today, which confirms a human right violation. International

human rights law present an essential tool for women and children in the pursuit of equal right and opportunities at the national level. Domestic human rights legislation represents the local implementation of internationally-recognized rights that are universal and inalienable. Equal treatment of women in the law is an essential basis for the achievement of women's defacto equality which depends greatly on women's role in society and on attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes concerning the role (Schaeffer, 1987).

Ghanaians condemn the Trokosi system as a denial of the rights of its victims and have called for its total eradication, however, some Trokosi protagonists have insisted on retaining the system for the reason that the system addresses the survival needs of Klikor community. It is very difficult to understand why the Agbozume Klikor continues to observe the Trokosi system in spite of its absurdity, illegality and obsolete nature have been pointed out to them.

Indeed, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) put the responsibility upon state parties to ensure the realization of equality. In Ghana, several institutions have been set up to promote women's rights and equality including many non-governmental organizations. A ministry has been created for gender and children protection (Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection). A specialized Police Unit, institutions like Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP), exist to ensure the enforcement of women's rights. Nevertheless abuses or violations of these rights are pervasive and have been

extensively documented. Coker, (1999) for example reported widespread gender-based violence against women in Ghana. Also, despite the efforts of several human rights oriented organizations like NGO'S, Christians, Government institutions to end this barbaric cultural practice in the area, Trokosi still prevail in the Ketu South District of Volta Region. The issue is that victims miss their rights and privileges to education, healthy life and self-esteem as they are treated as slaves to the gods. Again, the Trokosi system adversely affects gender issues, especially on the side of women in the society. It is against this backdrop that the study was conducted to assess the violation of human rights pertaining the Trokosi system in the Ketu-South District.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to assess 'Trokosi'; violation of women's rights in the Ketu-South District.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the origin of the Trokosi system in Ketu South;
2. Describe the types and experiences of women's rights violations or abuses;  
and
3. Discuss the reasons for the discrimination against women in the choice of candidates as ritual slaves.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to address the following research questions;

1. What is the origin of the Trokosi system in Ketu south in the study area?

2. What types of human rights violations do the women experiences?
3. What are the reasons for the discrimination against women in the choice of candidates as ritual slaves?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is of great importance to Ghana in particular and African countries where issues of gender inequality and women's rights violations are encouraged. Indeed, the academic and practical significance of this study cannot be underestimated.

Academically, the study shares new light on the Trokosi system in Ghana, and also adds to the existing knowledge in Ghana. The study also adds to the existing knowledge in the field of women emancipation in Ghana

Practically, the need for expunging customs and how they are done in societies, which in modern times retrogress women's development and oppressed women are revealed in this work. The study also reveals the need to encourage women to take their rightful places in their societies alongside men and not behind them. The study also help people to appreciate women's right in this modern era through research in development studies. The study provides a guide to policy makers as to how to find solutions to societal problems in development studies. For instance, the need for government to use education as a tool for the eradication of obsolete traditional customs and practices and not only the passing of laws banning such customs and practices.

### **Organisation of the Study**

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One focus on the introduction, background of the study, statement of problem, research questions, objective of the study, significance of the study and the organisation of the study. Chapter Two deals with review of related literature. Chapter Three looks at methodology used in the study. Chapter Four dwells on results and discussions of the study while Chapter Five involves the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

The first section of this chapter focuses on definitions of human rights, the theory of natural law and origin of Trokosi system. The second part of the chapter looks at the mode of operation of the Trokosi system in Ketu South, knowledge and experiences of human rights violations or abuses and reasons for discrimination against women in the choice of candidates for the shrines (gods).

#### **Definitions of Human Rights**

According to UNICEF (2001) human rights as “entitlements that an individual may arguably possess by virtue of being human and in accordance with what is natural” Thus, she is supposed to enjoy her rights as from the time she or he was born into this world as a human being. She/he then claims a right to life, liberty, freedom and basic needs of life. She/he does not owe anyone such entitlements. Human rights are, therefore the foundations of human existence and co-existence.

In another definition, Ezejiolor (1964) in his book, *“The development of the concept of Human Rights”* explains that “human or fundamental right is the modern name for what have been traditionally known as natural rights and these may be defined as moral rights which every human being, everywhere, at all times, ought to have simply because of the fact that in contradistinction with other beings, he is

rational and moral". No human may be deprived of these rights without grave affront to justice.

According to International Labour Office (2003), human rights are basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. Examples of rights and freedoms which have come to be commonly thought of as human rights include civil and political rights, such as rights to life and liberty, freedom of expression and equality before the law, and economic, social and cultural rights include the right to participate in culture, the right to food, the right to work and the right to education.

Also, all human beings are born free with equal indignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of unity. Human rights are international norms that help to protect all people everywhere from severe political, legal and social abuses. Examples of human rights are the right to freedom of religion, the right to fair trial when charged with a crime the right not to be tortured and the right to engage in any political activity. These rights exist in morality and in law at the national and international levels. They are addressed primarily to governments, require compliance and enforcement. The main sources of the contemporary conception of human rights are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and the many human rights documents and treaties that followed in international organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States, and African Union.

Pogge (2002), point out that Human rights are political norms dealing mainly with how people should be treated by their governments and institutions. They are not ordinary moral norms applying mainly to interpersonal conduct to engage human rights. But we must be careful here since some rights such as rights against racial and sexual discrimination are primarily concerned to regulate private behaviour (Okin, 1998). Shue (1996) suggests that human rights concern the “lower limits on tolerable human conduct” rather than “great aspirations and the exalted ideals”.

Nickel (2006), defines human rights as minimal standards, they are concerned with avoiding the terrible rather than with achieving the best. Their focus is protecting minimally good lives for all people. As minimal standards they leave most legal and policy matters open to democratic decision-making at the national and local levels, this allows them to accommodate a great deal of cultural and institutional variation and to leave a large space for democratic decision-making at the national level.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights(1948), also highlights some rights such as, security rights that protect people against crimes such as murder, massacre, torture and rape; due process rights that protect against abuses of the legal system such as imprisonment without trial, secret trials and excessive punishments, liberty rights that protect freedoms in areas such as belief, expression, association, assembly and movement, political rights that protect the liberty to participate in politics through actions such as communicating, assembling, protesting, voting and serving in public office; equality rights that guarantee equal citizenship, equality before the law and non-discrimination; and social or “rights that require provision

of education to all children and protections against severe poverty and starvation. Group rights include protections of ethnic groups against genocide and the ownership by countries of their national territories and resources”.

As Cranston (1967), puts it, Human rights are matters of “paramount importance” and their violation “a grave affront to justice”. Griffin (2001), says human right should be understood as “resistant to tradeoffs, but not too resistant”. The high priority of human rights need support from a plausible connection with fundamental human interest or powerful normative considerations.

Human rights require robust justifications that apply everywhere and support their high priority. Without this, they cannot withstand cultural diversity and national sovereignty. Robust justifications are powerful but need not be understood as ones that are irresistible.

Human rights are rights, but not necessarily in a strict sense. As rights they have several features. Broadly, the right holders or human rights are all people living today. More precisely, they are sometimes all people, sometimes all citizens of countries, sometimes all members of groups with particular vulnerabilities (women, children, racial and religious minorities, indigenous people) and sometimes all ethnic groups (as with rights against genocide). Another feature of rights is that it focuses on a freedom protection, status or benefit for the right holders (Brandt, 1983).

Human rights are inalienable. Inalienability does not mean that rights are absolute or can never be over ridden by other considerations. To say that a right is inalienable means that its holder cannot lose it temporarily or permanently by bad

conduct or by voluntarily giving it up. Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms entitled to any person, regardless of economic status, nationality, jurisdiction, age, ability, ethnicity, sex and sexuality. These basic rights are the right to life, freedom, equality, justice and freedom of thought and expression. Human rights have a universal character, inalienable, interdependent, indivisible and undeniable (Beitz, 2009).

Chrismek (2000), defined human rights as those needs that are inherent (in born) to our nature without such conditions of respect and dignity we live in sub-human existence. These rights are the foundation of human existence and co-existence. They are what make us human, and they are the principles by which we create the sacred home for human dignity hence there cannot be good governance without respect for human rights. Conversely, there cannot be respect for human rights if good governance is lacking.

Morris (1987), also defined human rights as universal moral rights. Something which no one may be deprived, something which is owing to all human because she/he is human. Human rights are a product of a philosophical debate that has raged for two thousand years within the European Societies where there were no human rights in the colonial rule. It is the modern name for what has been traditionally known as natural rights (Rhomeimer, 2000).

Natural rights may be defined as moral rights which every human being, everywhere at all times, ought to have simply because of the fact that, in contradistinction with other beings, she/he is rational and moral. No human being may be deprived of these rights without grave affront to justices (Ezejiofor, 1964).

## **The Theory of Natural Law**

In the development of the natural rights, the theory of natural law played a dominant role before the formulation of the theory of natural law by the stoic philosophers, citizens of certain Greek states enjoyed some of their rights, which are today claimed as fundamental equal rights, freedom of speech, equality before the law and equal respect for all. During the middle ages, there was even greater stress laid by political philosophers, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, on the concept of natural law as a law higher than all positive laws and one, which all rulers must obey (Rhomheimer, 2000).

After a temporary setback resulting from the popularity of teaching of Machiavelli, and the absolutism of the nascent national state in the 16th century, the idea of natural rights was revitalized by two factors (Arkes, 2002). Firstly, the reformation and the resulting religious struggles brought about a widespread outcry. The second factor was the doctrine of social contract, which was closely associated with the theory of natural law, since the raw materials used for the formulation of the former were the common places of the latter. The doctrine made its appearance in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries when political theorists turned to the idea of contract in order to interpret the relationship between the individual and the community. Another major event that contributed to the development of modern day human right consent is the American Revolution. The American patriots backed up their claims with the concept of natural law and natural right and made

use of Lock's doctrine of the social contract to justify their rebellion (Bertram, 2004).

### **Types and Experiences of Women's Rights Violations**

Violence against women and girls is not confined to any particular political or economic system, but it is prevalent in every society in the world. It cuts across boundaries of wealth, race and culture. It is an expression of historically and culturally specific values and standards which are today still executed through many social and political institutions that foster women's subservience and discrimination against women and girls (Brown, 2002).

Countries have made some progress and initiatives developed to address and prevent violence against women and girls throughout the world in recent years. However, gaps still remain in too many countries. Evidence shows that:

- Six hundred and three (603) million women live in countries where domestic violence is not yet considered a crime;
- In India, 22 women were killed each day in dowry-related murders in 2007.
- In Guatemala, two women are murdered, on average, each day.
- As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical or sexual violence during pregnancy;
- Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18; and

- Approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Manjoo, 2010).

The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner, with women beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused. Studies have found that rates of women suffering physical violence perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner range from 6 percent in China and 7 percent in Canada to over 48 percent in Zambia, Ethiopia, Ghana and Peru. Several global surveys suggest that half of all women who die from homicide are killed by their current or former husbands or partners (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010).

- In Australia, Canada, and Israel 40 to 70 per cent of female murder victims were killed by their partners, according to the World Health Organization.
- In the United States, one-third of women murdered each year are killed by intimate partners.
- In South Africa, a woman is killed every six hours by an intimate partner.
- Up to 7 in 10 women around the world experience physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime.

The 2005 Country Report reveals that, Ghana is amongst the countries that records high levels of gender based violence including physical, psychological, economic and sexual abuse. Records available to the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana police service indicated that, between the period of 1999 to May 2010, 109 784 cases of



domestic violence were reported of which a greater portion was perpetuated against women (UN Women, 2011).

Violence against women throughout their life cycle is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men. It is perpetuated by traditional and customary practices that accord women lower status in the family, workplace, community and society (United Nation (2010) The World Women 2010: Trends and Statistics).

### *Sexual violence*

Sexual violence includes abusive sexual contact, making a woman engage in a sexual act without her consent, and attempted or completed sex acts with a woman who is ill, disabled, under pressure or under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Rates of sexual violence are difficult to establish because in many societies sexual violence remains an issue of deep shame for women and often their families. Statistics on rape from police records, for example, are notoriously unreliable because of significant underreporting (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2010).

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the proportion of women suffering sexual violence by non-partners after the age of 15 varies from less than 1 per cent in Ethiopia and Bangladesh to between 10 and 12 per cent in Peru, Samoa and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- In Switzerland, 22.3 percent of women experience sexual violence by non-partners in their lifetime.

- In Canada a study of adolescents aged 15 to 19 found that 54 per cent of girls had experienced “sexual coercion” in a dating relationship.

Forced and unregistered marriages can increase the vulnerability of women to violence, including sexual violence. The practice of early marriage – a form of sexual violence – is common worldwide, with more than 60 million girls worldwide married before the age of 18, primarily in South Asia (31.1 million) and Sub-Saharan Africa (14.1 million). Young girls forced into marriage and into sexual relations may suffer health risks, including exposure to HIV/AIDS, and limited school attendance. One effect of sexual abuse is traumatic gynecologic fistula: an injury resulting from severe tearing of the vaginal tissues, rendering the woman incontinent and socially undesirable (UN General Assembly, 2006).

### ***Violence and HIV/AIDS***

Several studies from around the globe confirm the links between violence against women and HIV (Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011). Women’s inability to negotiate safe sex and refuse unwanted sex is closely linked to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Unwanted sex results in a higher risk of abrasion and bleeding and easier transmission of the virus. Women who are beaten by their partners are 48 per cent more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS (Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011).

Young women are particularly vulnerable to coerced sex and are increasingly being infected with HIV/AIDS. Over half of new HIV infections worldwide are occurring among young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and

more than 60 per cent of HIV-positive youth in this age bracket are female. The vulnerability of women and girls to HIV remains particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa; 80 % of all women in the world living with HIV live in this region (Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011).

### ***Female Genital Mutilation/Genital Cutting***

Female Genital Mutilation/Genital Cutting (FGM/C) refers to several types of traditional cutting operations performed on women and girls. It is estimated that between 130 and 140 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM/C, mainly in Africa and some Middle Eastern countries. Three million girls a year are thought to be at risk of genital mutilation (World Health Organization, 2011).

### ***Dowry murder***

Dowry murder is a brutal practice where a woman is killed by her husband or in-laws because her family cannot meet their demands for dowry a payment made to a woman's in-laws upon her marriage as a gift to her new family. While dowries or similar payments are prevalent worldwide, dowry murder occurs predominantly in South Asia (World Health Organization and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2010).

Violence against women continues to be a problem and policy makers lack comparable cross-national data to help tackle the issue. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) is currently interviewing over 40,000

women across the EU to document their experiences of violence at home and at work, including stalking and experiences in childhood (Htun, & Weldon, 2012).

The survey has been developed over the course of two years, with input from leading experts, as well as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). In an effort to reflect and understand the diversity of women's experiences, the data will compare findings across Member States, taking into account differences according to factors such as age, employment and education. For more, see FRA factsheet on gender-based violence against women (Heise, Ellsberg & Gottemoeller, 1999).

### **Origin of Trokosi System**

In the Ewe language, “Tro” means “god” or “shrine” and “Kosi” means “wife, queen or slave”. This linguistic ambiguity reflects the controversy around the practice. The giving of virgin girls to the gods was part of many ancient religions. In West Africa the practice has gone on for at least several hundred years. Similar practices using similar terminology were found in the royal court of the Kingdom of Dahomey (in what is now Benin), in the 18th and 19th centuries (Gadri, 2010).

As people migrated within the region of West Africa, the practice spread. Sandra Greene (2004), has noted that in Ghana, the practice dates to at least the late 18th century. At the time the Amlade clan Sui became very powerful, and began to demand female slaves from those who sought its services. The practice called "replacement" also began in Ghana at that time. Under this practice, if a shrine slave

died or ran away, the family was required to replace her with another girl (Rouster, 2008).

Trokosi is a traditional practice alleged by many to be a form sexual slavery in some parts of Ghana, Togo, and Benin. In Ghana, it is practised by the Ewes in the Volta region. In this practice, young girls, usually under the age of 10 and sometimes as young as three, are given to village fetish shrine priests as sexual/domestic slaves or "wives of the gods" in compensation for offenses allegedly committed, or debts incurred, by a member of the girl's family, or as payment for favours sought from the shrine (Abayie, 2001).

They become living sacrifices, protecting their families from the gods' wrath. Some stay at the shrines for a few years; others for life. The tradition, also practised in Ghana is deeply rooted in the beliefs and identity of the Ewe (ay-vay) people. It serves rural communities' need for justice and meets the material and sexual needs of the fetish priests. But it's also considered a spiritual act and as such it is, along with female genital mutilation, one of the most difficult human rights violations to eradicate (Lorella, 2007).

The Categories of *Tro* adherents in the practice include:

- Those who join the *Tro* of their own volition (extremely rare) and those who were born to women associated with the *Tro* and initiated as children (*Trovivo*);
- Those thought to have been born through the intervention of the *Tro* (*Dorflévivo*) and thus incur a lifetime obligation of servitude to the tro;

- Those allegedly called by the tro to serve as priest and priestesses of the shrine (*Tronua*);
- Those who were forced to become *Trokosi* to repay the *Tro* because their family supposedly benefited from it.
- Those *Trokosi* who are sent by families, often against the will of the girl involved, out of fear that if they do not do so, further calamities may afflict them through the anger of the shrine deities.

This last group consists of those vestal virgins who are sent into servitude at the shrines of the *Troxovi* due to crimes allegedly committed by their senior or elder family members, almost always males like fathers, grandfathers, and uncles. The *trokosi* is sort of a "living sacrifice," who by her suffering is thought to save the family from trouble (Lorella, 2007).

Opponents of the practice claim that all except those who joined of their own volition are virtually slaves in every normal sense of the word. However, some evidence point out that practices in traditional shrines vary, but *trokosi* are usually denied education, suffer a life of hardship, and are a lonely lot, stigmatized by society (Mariusz, 2009). This reveals a serious violation of human rights against women and girls in that part of the country (Ghana) where it (*Trokosi*) is still encouraged.

### ***Trokosi***

Torokosi which is the main focus of this study is one other human rights violation which most women suffer among the Southern Ewes. Some evidence on

the subject show that, Trokosi is a form of ritual slavery, which has been practiced for several hundred years. Based on a system of traditional beliefs which is innately discriminatory against women and children (Gillard, 2010).

It is a traditional judicial system to check crimes so that families may offer their children (usually, daughters) as atonement for sins and crimes committed by relatives who might well be long dead. It is an aspect of African traditional religion, and a cultural practice, that managed to evolve among two main groups in Ghana. Trokosi (women and girls) are required to stay for the rest of their lives as wives of the gods through their medium-the fetish priest (Claske, 2009).

Some studies indicate that, in addition to performing ritual duties and domestic chores at the shrine, a trokosi is usually also expected to work long hours on farmland belonging to the shrine. She does not receive anything in return for her labour and her family is required to provide her with food and all other necessities (U.S. Department of State, 2005; Quashigah, 2001).

Merry (2006) concludes that once a Trokosi reaches puberty, the shrine's fetish priest (tronua) is entitled to sleep with the girl to consummate the marriage between her and the gods. Groomed from a very young age into accepting their servitude at the shrine, the girls are not in a position to refuse. Daughters born from such sexual relations also have certain obligations to the shrine.

The author further concludes that after serving several years at the shrine, a trokosi may be released from servitude if her family pays for a special ceremony, but she will retain a relationship with the shrine and continue to perform certain rituals there. Released trokosi are allowed to marry, but are often unable to find a

husband. If a trokosi dies, her family is expected to replace her with another girl and the cycle of ritual servitude and exploitation recommences (Merry, 2006).

Amevi, (2001) examines the Trokosi system from different perspectives. Firstly, Amevi gives reasons for becoming a Trokosi. She says, Trokosis become slaves in shrines through crimes committed by senior or elder relatives. She gives reasons why the system should be seen as an unacceptable practice. Amevi says offspring's of Trokosis are the same under privilege social positions as their mothers. The system is an instrument of discrimination against women and girls. She further reiterated that Trokosi becomes mystified body and therefore becomes a curse in her society. She concludes that the system violates the rights of women and therefore should be abolished.

### **Reasons for Discrimination against Women in the Choice of Candidates**

Very few studies were found to have considered the reasons for discrimination against women in the choice of candidates. A study by Benjamin (2003), reveals that women slaves (trokosi, vudusi) are taken into servitude for several reasons. The most common is that some male in the family is accused of an offense and it is believed that a female virgin of tender age is needed to atone for the alleged crime. Other reasons include:

- **Sickness:** If cured by the shrine, the girl must become a slave of the gods. If she desists, it is believed she will lose her healing; and



- Fertility: If a woman consults the shrine and later bears a child, it is believed that this child must become a slave of the gods or it will die (Benjamin, 2003).

According to the Trokosi tradition practiced in southeastern Ghana, virgin girls are given to village priests as a way of appeasing the gods for crimes committed by family members. Once given to the priest, the girl becomes his property and is made to carry out domestic chores such as cooking and washing, as well as farming and fetching water. After the onset of menstruation, the bondage also involves sexual servitude. These functions cannot be performed by male Trokosi in any way and that is one reason why males are not suitable for Trokosi practices at the shrines (Lorella, 2006).

Robert (2000), concludes that payment of a Trokosi is arbitrarily requested by a priest or shrine of African traditional religion in an act often called "atoning", it is believed that it is only the girl's servitude that atones for the misdeed of a family member, relative or ancestor, generally a male. The requirement is presented to the family in the belief that the payment of a Trokosi may assuage the anger of the gods against the family and the community. The family is then forced to select one of its virgin daughters to become a Trokosi, or a shrine slave. This is often done against the will of the selected daughter. The Trokosi then serve the idol gods of the shrine, offering them sacrifices, cleaning and powdering them, and sweeping the compound around them.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the study design adopted for the study and the study area. The chapter also focuses on the methods of data collection, discussion/analysis of data and research instrument.

#### **Study Design**

The study is a descriptive and exploratory one designed to assess women's rights violations or abuses in the Ketu-South District. It is essentially a qualitative study focusing on experiences of violations of girls and women.

The research design is the road map of how the researcher intends to conduct the study (Delport, 2005; Mouton, 2005; Bless, 2006). Specifically, it addresses how data will be collected in order to answer the research questions.

The primary goal of qualitative research is to describe and understand human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). On the other hand, quantitative research aims at explaining phenomena or variables and the relationship between them (Fouché & de Vos, 2005). The qualitative method was chosen by the researcher as the most appropriate method to outline the origin of the Trokosi system in Ketu south, describe types and experiences of human rights violations or abuses and discuss the reasons for the discrimination against women in the choice of candidates as ritual slaves. This study deals with numerical data collection methods, numerical data

analysis and the comparison between the data obtained and the prescribed guidelines.

According to Bless, et al. (2006), exploratory research is conducted in order to understand a situation or phenomenon. Exploratory research is used to gain a deeper understanding of the situation in order to formulate a problem. Soanes (2001) states that to explore is to travel through an unfamiliar area in order to learn about it. Neuman (2006) has also addressed the issue of exploratory research. The author describes the value of this kind of research as becoming familiar with the basic facts, settings and concerns. Fouché's (2005) and Babbie and Mouton (2004) explanation on this kind of research is in agreement with the discussion presented. Bless (2006) adds that in exploratory research the focus is on "conditions" and that the researcher must also carefully decide on the "unit of analysis".

In the context of this study, the researcher set to search out, by means of a careful investigation, women's rights violations or abuses in the Ketu-South District. The researcher wanted to understand the origin of the Trokosi system in Ketu south, types and experiences of human rights violations or abuses and the reasons for the discrimination against women in the choice of candidates as ritual slaves.

According to Neuman (2006) and Babbie and Mouton (2004), descriptive research presents specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship. The researcher defines a problem and conducts research to describe it accurately. The researcher described the nature, knowledge and reasons for the violation of women and girls in the district and this is the essence of the study (Fouché, 2005). Having

identified these, the researcher analysed results to determine the extent to which they relate to the situation, especially the trokosi system in the district.

### **Study Area**

Ketu South District established by legislative instrument (LI) 1469 of 1989, is one of the 18 districts in the Volta Region. It spreads over a land area of 1.130 sq km in the south/eastern part of the Region. The district, which has its capital at Denu, is bordered to the north by the Akatsi district, to the south by the Gulf of Guinea, East by the Republic of Togo and to the West by the Keta Municipality, lying between Latitudes 5° 45N and Longitudes 0° 30N. By its strategic location, a common border with the Republic of Togo, the district serves as the Eastern Gateway to Ghana where continuous cross-border trading activities occur.

The Ketu South District comprises of commercial towns such as Agbozume, Ehi, Klikor, Akame, Adina, Agavedzi, Denu, Aflao and Tokor. The most predominant occupation of the indigent of these towns is agriculture. The population of the District keeps on increasing despite the numerous accounts of migration from of the District. However, the District's position as a border area also contributes greatly to its increasing population.

By settlement 1.8 percent of the population lives in the urban areas of Aflao (38,927), Dzodze (18,957). Avoeme (7,251), Klikor (6,856), Pernyi (5,403) and Agbozume (5,073). There are a total number of 10,086 houses in the 6 urban localities mentioned above with 19,594 households and having an average household size of 4.2. In all, there are about 713 settlements in the district. With

the population density of about 210 persons per square kilometre, land holdings are small especially in the farming communities. In addition, the heavy population in the district puts pressure on the existing social infrastructure.

The ethnic groupings include Ewes, Akans, Gas, Hausas and Ga Adangmes. About 62 percent of the sample populations are Ewe, Akan, and Hausas constitute 36 percent (each group has 6%) and the Ga Adangmes 2 percent. According to the survey the other ethnic groups are found largely in the Dzodze and Penyi Area Councils.

There are 325 educational institutions in the district. 71 (21.8%) are at the pre-school level. 155 (47.7%) at the primary level. 90 (27.7%) at the JHS level, 8 (2.5%) at the SHS level and only 1 (0.3%) vocational school. The public and private sectors continue to panicle educational facilities in the district. The private sector contributes about 17% of the facilities and the public sector about 83%. The gross school enrollment rate is 70% and enrolment for girls is 65%. Twenty percent of the total enrolments in school drop-out and 2-1% of those who drop out are girls. The teacher/pupil ratio in the district is 1:35 and 91.5% of the teachers are trained. Generally the academic output of the basic schools is low.

The district is primarily an agricultural one, in which about 70% of active population economically engage in agriculture. Productivity is relatively high and investors in the district enjoy a distinct advantage due to its geographical position. The district is a major producer of cassava and maize. Other important crops are cowpea, sweet-potato, sugar-cane and vegetables, while tree crops include coconut,

mangoes and oil palm. At Penyi, cassava and gari production ranks as the best in Ghana, in terms of sheer productivity.

Livestock thrives too, with cattle, goats, sheep and pigs bred alongside poultry. Indeed, Agbozume boasts of one of the west coast's most vibrant livestock markets. Similarly, marine fishing is prominent along the district's extensive coastline, while aqua-culture stands out in the creeks and along rivers, dams and ponds. Market gardening along the coast from Aflao to Adefienu has received a tremendous boost in recent months.

The practice of trokosi is predominant in the district with most of the girls sent at anytime to serve the gods of the land at the expense of their health and education. This provides the reason why the area was chosen for the study.

### **Sources of Data**

Data for the study were collected from the primary source whilst relevant information was sought from the secondary source. The primary data were obtained from the selected shrines using interview guide. The secondary sources of relevant information were journals, books, the internet, newspapers and records and reports on the issue under study.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for the study include all persons in the study area, especially those affected by the trokosi system in the Ketu South District of the Volta Region of Ghana. According to the 2010 population and housing census, there are 160756 people in the Ketu South District. Out of this, 75648 are male while 85108 are female. The main population for this study are Trokosi girls, priests and some elders of each shrine.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

Since females are the focus of this study, purposive sample technique was used to determine a population of 45 females for this study. With the use of purposive sampling, the researcher made a deliberate choice of participants due to the qualities they possess. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006). Thus respondents for this study were chosen deliberately from ten shrines for interview. This implies that respondents for the study were selected based on the researcher's own judgement (purposive sampling). In each of the five (5) shrines, (Sofati and Adzimah shrines in Klikor, Trokoshi shrines in Adidome, Vodun shrine at Dagbamete and Nogokpo shrines in Keku) different number of respondents who were Trokosi were selected purposively to be interviewed for the study until the sample number was reached.

## **Research Instrument**

Interview guide was used for data collection. This is because of the nature of information required. The researcher interviewed the Trokosis about what brought them to the shrines, how they were enrolled into the servitude and their experience as servants in the shrines.

The questions were put under three main themes to help answer the study objectives: a) origin of the Trokosi system in Ketu south; b) types and experiences of women's rights violations or abuses; and c) reasons for discrimination against women in the choice of candidates as ritual slaves.

The interviews were basically unstructured. Open ended questions were asked because of the many advantages that it offered both the researcher and the respondents. These types of questions allowed freedom of expression, feelings and thought on the issue under study. This also helped the researcher to solicit views from the respondents independently without any influence.

## **Methods of Data Collection**

The main method used for data collection was face-to-face or one on one contact with respondents. All forty five (45) respondents were reached by personal contact with the help of three field assistants. Aided by an interview guide, the researcher solicited data from the respondents through interviewing process. Permission was sought through elders of the shrines and the shrine priests with a bottle of shnap. This was a difficult process to go through because of the sensitive nature of the subject under study.



Since most of the respondents could not read or write, the researcher conducted the interviews through the local language of the study area which is Ewe/Anlo. Personal observations were used in the data collection to gather evidence of servitude, denial of education, long hours of working and traces of physical abuse among trokosis.

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethics means conforming to accepted standards and being consistent with agreed principles of correct moral conduct (Strydom, 2005; Mouton, 2005). Leedy (1997) adds that researchers are trustees of integrity and trust and should conduct themselves ethically during research. With this in mind, this study was conducted with due consideration to the ethical principles of academic research (Forster, Emanuel & Grady, 2001).

This is a requirement that the research should not harm individuals or research subjects (Beaucamp & Childress, 1989; Mouton, 2005). In the same vein, Strydom (2005) concurs with these authors on the subject that the researcher should protect research subjects from any form of physical discomfort. The analysis was retrospective, identifying in the process the study population and the research sample only.

Confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner (Strydom, 2005) The Helsinki Declaration states that the duty of the researcher is to protect the privacy, and dignity of human subjects (Forster, 2001). Babbie and Mouton (2004) and Mouton (2005) have also addressed the issue of confidentiality in social research. These authors emphasised the importance of ensuring that

subjects' identities are never made public in order to protect their right to confidentiality. The instrument used in this study was designed to identify the research subjects by number only. No names were used at any stage in the study to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected was transcribed manually. Narratives were mainly used to describe the phenomena under study. Findings were analyzed thematically in line with the study objectives. These include: a) origin of the Trokosi system in Ketu south; b) types and experiences of women's rights violations or abuses; and c) reasons for discrimination against women in the choice of candidates as ritual slaves.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the results and discusses the findings. It focuses on the background characteristics of respondents. It also outlines the mode of operation of the Trokosi system in Ketu South, knowledge and experiences of human rights violations or abuses, and the reasons for the discrimination against women in the choice of candidates as ritual slaves.

#### **Background characteristics of respondents**

This section of the work concentrates on background characteristics of respondents (Trokoasis) at the various shrines in the Ketu South. Results in Table 1 show that a significant percent (76%) of the respondents are in the age group 10-14 years. Obviously, more than half of the respondents have never married (56%). This is perhaps because most of them are in their teen ages or are teenagers. Further results indicate that majority of the selected respondents have no formal education.

**Table 1: Background Characteristics of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age		
<10	4	9.1
10-14	24	75.6
15-19	10	22.2
>20	7	15.5
Education		
Primary	2	4.4
Middle/JHS	1	2.2
Never	42	93.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2010

### **Origin of the Trokosi System in Ketu-South**

The origin of the Trokosi system is shrouded in mystery. It is a complex phenomenon that many of the aspects of its phenomenon are difficult to explain. Hardly anyone spoken to, knew the origin of Trokosi. However upon researching the various shrines, some respondents were somehow able to give some information base on their knowledge. This is what a respondent had to say:

*“It is a tradition I inherited from my ancestors and so all I know is that families that suffered during the olden days had to atone the gods by offering a daughter to stop their suffering” (Male, Priest of a shrine: 42 years).*

One other respondent who indicated haven been told the story of the origin of the practice had this to say:

*“A long time ago, there was a clan among the ewes which became very powerful, and began to demand female slaves from those who sought its services. This continued for some time and everyone who sought for the services of this powerful clan became used to offering their female family members as slaves to that powerful clan and that is how Trokosi started” (An elder of a shrine: Male, 51 years).*

Further responses were sought from participants in order to ascertain the story line as the Trokosi practice originated. Another elder from other shrine shared his views:

*“It was believed that our ancestors had to pacify the gods whenever there was any predicament in a family or among the entire people. The gods in the days of our fathers only demanded for females to serve them in order to stop the suffering of the people or particular family. This became the only known means of saving the people in times of suffering and that is how the Trokosi started” (Femaale, 54 years).*

Responses from the participants show that there are varying views about the origin of the Trokosi system among the people of the various shrines. However, the use of females as atonement to the gods was clear indication in the practice.

### **Types and Experiences of Violations or Abuses**

The nature or way of operating the trokosi in the Ketu South is usually through sexually, physically and psychologically abusing women and girls who are

sent to the shrines. Usually, the victims suffer from actions of the priests of the shrines.

### ***Sexual abuse***

It was observed that most of the girls were put under family way and not catered for. This is what some respondent had to say:

*“I am a girl who is serving at the shrine and been slept with many time by my master (the shrine priests) when I like it or not. This occurred on several occasions and I became pregnant and nobody took care of me” (12 year old girl).*

*“After any sexual act, I get some cuts inside my vagina and later become pregnant. Sometimes, I am given concoction to terminate the pregnancy” (13 year old girl).*

### ***Physical abuse***

It was observed that some of the girls were subjected to beatings while others were under hard labour. These young teenage girls who were Trokosis serving at the shrines, could be seen going through some level of physical abuse. This was obvious by traces of bruises and wounds all over the body with tribal marks on their faces (for tribal identifications at the shrines) and certain parts of the body (arms, legs, backs and faces). This is what some respondents had to say:

*“When we came here, we have been bare-chested and footed and half naked around the compounds of the shrine. The shrine priests used snail shell to shave our hair and normally, it is painful” (23 year old girl).*

*“Sometimes, we are asked to be in the sun with no apparent reasons. Our hairs from head, armpit and genitals are normally shaved with broken bottles or snail shells. We are sometimes too sent to flowing stream to be washed at dawn and left there at the mercy of the cold weather. We are being beaten by the priests on daily basis” (25 year old woman).*

*“I was beating dearly when I tried to run away from the shrine. The shrine priest chained me on several occasions. I was denied food for several days and then subjected to constant beatings by the chief priest and his priestly dominion” (9 year old girl).*

*“I have been confined in a dark room for some number of days without food and water because I refused to take instructions from the shrine priest. When I was released I became weak and felt sick. I was also punished when I attempted to escape in the shrine. I could remember a sharp edged blade was used to cut my skin and some*

*black powdered like substance put in it. This created very sharp pains on my skin” (12 year old girl).*

### ***Psychological abuse***

By the researcher’s observation, Trokosis go through psychological effects which resulted into agony and trauma. According to the data, the respondents in the various age categories are abused. Some of the respondents had this to say:

*“We were forced to wear tattered cloth around our waists and smeared with white clay and also denied with education and to medical care. We were not supposed to eat some species of fish especially mudfish, also forbidden to have sex outside the shrine except with the troxovi priest” (19 year old girl).*

*“Spirits were invoked on us during the initiation ceremony which affected us. Because of this, some of us wanted to escape from the shrines” (16 year old girl).*

Furthermore, some of the respondents in the age category of 20 years and above had no education at the shrines because they were grown enough.



*“At the shrine, I am being denied access to education, prohibited from leaving and banished from my family home” (34 year old woman).*

### ***Other forms of abuses***

Personal observation revealed that children whose mothers were serving at the shrines were also abused in one way or the other. This is what a 9 year old girl had to say:

*“I could remember on two occasions the priest of the shrine had sex with me and I had a cut in my vagina. At times we were asked to kneel down in sharp pebbles when we refused to take instructions. My friend was beaten and nearly collapsed” (9 year old girl).*

Respondents who had not yet been to bed with the priest recorded the highest percentage. These have been subjected to beatings, hard labour and sexual exploitations like defilement and all kinds of molestation. They gave birth to complement the population at the various shrines. They also served and performed other oracles. Eight (8) of the respondents were divorced or separated before coming to serve at the shrine.

They were all in the working group; they worked without food at times. They also burnt charcoal and sold for their survival, they appeared humiliated with body marks, bare-chested, tied their waists with large beads and ropes and bare-footed. None of the respondent was widowed during the interview at the various shrines. One respondent reported:

*I could remember I was being forced to marry an old shrine priest who lost his teeth in the mouth (15 year old girl).*

It was also observed that, education was not given any importance at the shrines. In the various categories or levels of education, it showed that only a few of the respondents (Trokosis) interviewed had access to education before they were brought in. Two of the respondents had Primary Education whilst only one of the Trokosis attended Middle School or Junior High School. None of the respondent had either second cycle or tertiary education. Two teenagers had this to say:

*“I was never allowed to go to school while at the shrine” (16 year old girl).*

*“I worked on the cassava and rice farms daily without food” (13 year old girl).*

Respondents are beaten as a result of trying to escape from the shrine gods. They are being forced to do heavy manual labour in the fields belonging to the priests (Personal observation). This is what one has to say:

*I am an ex-slave or trokosi who escaped from the shrine the day after a priest ordered three men to beat me. The beating was so severe that I almost lost my unborn child (20 year old woman).*

Verbal assault is another form of abuse that features prominently in the Klikor town and its allied environs, after these girls and women serve their terms as trokosi, fixing themselves back into the society or the community become a

problem because people say all kinds of things against them in the form of verbal assault. Indeed, this form of abuse is widespread among the Trokosis. This is a form of violence that causes injury to the mind in the form of trauma. It has become fashionable to come across some of the elderly, youth and children engaged in this behaviour (Field observation).

### **Reasons for Women as Candidates of Ritual Slaves**

As observed on the field, there is a divination to choose a suitable candidate. According to troxovi clients, troxovi shrine owners, priests of troxovi shrines, the name of the candidate, and her parents' names are mentioned by the diviner to prove that the candidate is the choice of the deity. The deity chooses a virgin who is yet to experience a menstruation. The candidate is to be without blame or blemish and according to the elders, only females are required not males. This called for the attention of the researcher to investigate the reasons for females as the only choice for ritual slaves.

However, it was told that it is only after all the search for a suitable female candidate within the family expected to provide a candidate fails that a male candidate is chosen.

Priests and shrine owners have given the following reasons why the gods prefer female candidates to male ones:

*Men are rebellious; they could easily challenge the authority of the priest.*

Personal observations revealed that perhaps it is as a result of the priests fear that male candidates could have sexual intercourse with their wives (trokosis). A serving priest who wanted to remain anonymous said:

*“Candidates are the automatic wives of the priest and it is only female candidates who could provide this need. A long-term benefit from a candidate could be derived only from a female and not a male candidate. The female candidate would give birth to children who would work for the priest” (Male, 39 years).*

Some elders of the shrines also had some views to share:

*“Candidates are expected to perform domestic duties for example sweep the compound, wash pots, cook, fetch water and firewood. Although cooking, fetching water are also male roles in Klikor these roles cannot be performed properly by a male candidate. Women would provide sexual favours to the priest”*

Although it was difficult to come by the reasons for female choice of candidate for servitude, the above serves some reasons why females are chosen over males in the Trokosi system. Moreover, females are the only choice of candidacy for the gods by reasons that males are rebellious and they cannot do what females are needed to do for the gods.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study. It presents the conclusions and the recommendations for the promotion of human right in Klikor.

### **Summary**

The main objective of the study was to assess violation of women's rights in the Ketu-South District. Being an essentially qualitative study, it adopted a descriptive and exploratory approach to expose the incidence of human rights abuse or violation in the study area. A purposive sampling technique was used. The main instrument used for data collection was the interview guide. Data from the field were mostly transcribed manually from Ewe dialect into English language.

The findings from the field show that there are varying views about the origin of the Trokosi system among the people of the various shrines. However, the use of females as atonement to the gods was clear indication in the narrations of how it (the Trokosi system) originated among the study area.

Further findings reveal that the Trokosis are sexually, physically and psychologically abused. Moreover, respondents were found to experiencing other forms of abuses in the various shrines. Most of the Trokosis were tribally marked, bare-chested and footed and had to work all day under the sun without food. The respondents have no form of education and or health facilities in the shrines.

Additional findings show that females are the only choice of candidacy for the gods by reasons that males are rebellious and they cannot do what females are needed to do for the gods. For instance females are to serve the priests as wives in

providing sexual needs and some chores which cannot be provided by male candidates.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that although there are varying views concerning the origin of the Trokosi system, demands for females to serve the gods on behalf of the people or particular family as a result of predicaments was explicitly mentioned. Again, women and girls who serve at the shrines are denied the most fundamental of human rights (education, health care, etc.) due to the practices of the Trokosi system. To make matters worse, females are the only choice of candidacy mostly chosen by the deity or the gods to the various shrines due to the many services (through exploitation of their bodies) they provide to the priests of the shrines.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Those traditions which encourage the Tokosi system must be stopped by the leaders of the society to prevent its effect as fundamental human right violation of the victims.
2. Indigenous people should play leading roles in eradicating the Trokosi system in order to ensure the absence of abuse of young girls and women.

3. The local people must be educated to stop using human beings as sacrifices in the form of servants to the gods. This will ensure that young girls and women can enjoy their fundamental human rights.



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APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**Interview Guide for Human Rights Violations of Women in Klikor of the Ketu-South District**

Instructions to the interviewer

1. Respondents should not be forced against her wish if not willing to give information solicited.
2. Explain to respondents that their responses would be kept strictly confidential.

Name of community.....House No.....

Name of interviewer.....

**A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Age:

5 – 9 [ ]      10– 14 [ ]      15 – 19 [ ]      20-24 [ ]      25+

2. Are you a Native?

3. Non- Native

4. Marital Status:      Single [ ]      Married [ ]

5. Total number of dependants (including own children .....specify  
.....before ticking)

1      --      10 (20)

11 -- 20 (10)

21 -- 30 (5)

31 -- 40(1)

41 -- 50 (1)

6. What is your level of schooling?

None (-) / Primary ( ) / Middle ( ) / J.S.S ( ) / S.S.S ( ) / Tertiary ( )

7. What is your religion?

Christian (-)                      Traditional (8)                      Moslem ( )                      Others (2)

**B. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS**

8. Have you had occasions to hear about human rights?

Yes ( )    No ( )

9. To the best of your knowledge, explain human rights.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

10. Do you think the idea of human rights is a foreign one?

Yes ( )    No ( )

11. Do you see strands of human rights in the culture of the Ketu-South people?

Yes ( )    No ( )

12. Is it a good thing to have human rights respectively?

Yes ( )    No ( )

13. Who should enjoy human rights?

.....

**C. HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES/VIOLATIONS (WOMEN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS)**

14. What is domestic violence?

.....

.....

.....

15. Why are women battering?

.....

.....

.....

16. What do you do for a living at the camp?

.....

.....

17. How long have you been in this camp?

..... How

do your rights been violated?

.....

18. Who takes care of you?

.....

19. Would you prefer being in school?

Yes ( )

No ( )

20. What would you want to do in future?

.....  
.....

21. Have you regretted been here?

Yes ( )

No ( )

**D. PHYSICAL ABUSE**

22. What in your opinion is physical abuse?

.....  
.....  
.....

23. Have you ever gone through physical abuse before?

Yes ( )

No ( )

24. Who was the perpetrator of this act against you?

.....

25. Do you have any scars on you as a result of this?

Yes ( )

No ( )

**E. PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE**

26. To the best of your knowledge, what in your opinion constitutes psychological abuse?

.....  
.....  
.....

27. Can you give example of this abuse?

.....  
.....

28. Have you gone through any of these in your life?

Yes ( ) No ( )

29. How did you react to the perpetrator of this abuse on you?

.....  
.....

**F. SEXUAL ABUSE**

30. What is sexual abuse? Are there various forms of this abuse?

.....  
.....  
.....

31. Are you married or in a relationship?

.....

32. Have you ever been forced into sex against your wish or been raped?

Yes ( ) No ( )

33. Does it go on often against your wish?

Yes ( ) No ( )

34. Who perpetrates this against you?

.....

35. Would you take any action against the person?

Yes ( ) No ( )

36. Have you ever heard of WAJU? The Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service?

Yes ( ) No ( )

**G. OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE**

37. How do you understand the word rape?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

38. What is domestic violence? Do you suffer from it?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Yes ( ) No ( )

39. Have you heard of the proposed bill on domestic violence?

Yes ( )

No ( )

40. Are you in favour of it? If no or yes why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

41. Are you bare-chested at the camp?

Yes ( )

No ( )

42. What marks are all over your body?

.....  
.....  
.....

43. Are you been subjected to severe beatings in the shrine?

Yes ( )

No ( )

**H. KNOWLEDGE ON CEDAW**

44. What do you know about the CEDAW?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....





.....  
.....