

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE PRACTICE OF SAKAWA (CYBER-CULT) IN THE AGONA
SWEDRU TRADITIONAL AREA

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

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

Candidate's Signature Date:

Name:

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's SignatureDate:

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ABSTRACT

Sakawa practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area is not a matter of perception but a fact and also a canker that is spreading very fast among the youth. The study examined the philosophy behind *sakawa* practice and how one becomes a practitioner. The study contributes to the existing discourse on *sakawa* in Ghana and West Africa sub-region. It also reveals some scamming techniques used by the *sakawa* practitioners to persuade their victims. The instrument used for the study in terms of qualitative assessment is the interview guide. The findings from the study showed that the respondents are aware of the *sakawa* practice although, there were mixed views about the practice. The study examined the morality of the practice; that is, the badness or the goodness of *sakawa* practice. Also, the study established the reasons why many youth in Agona Swedru area engage in the *sakawa* practice. Among such reasons were bad parental control, get-rich-quick mentality, poverty among others. The study recommended that parents should take up full responsibility of the welfare of their children. Traditional as well as religious leaders should organize series of durbars and talks on the dangers associated with *sakawa* practice. The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government should team up to create jobs for the youth.

KEY WORDS

Agona Swedru Traditional Area

Cyber-crime

Occultism

Sakawa

Scam

Wealth

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In every society across the world, both individual and collective conduct is regulated by clearly laid down principles to ensure civility in that society. Conformity to the laid down principles receives communal approval while nonconformity receives communal disapproval. This applies to every sphere of life, including wealth acquisition, the focus of this study.

However, in recent times, the acceptable principles in wealth acquisition among the Agona Swedru Traditional Area appears not to be followed by many youth in the area. The determination to get rich quickly has made many, especially the youth, to indulge in all sorts of vices, including *sakawa* practice.

The term *sakawa* is a Hausa word derived from the root word *saka chike*, which means ‘put in it’, ‘put inside’, or ‘drop something’. It is derived, according to its root word, to mean swindle, trick, defraud and so on. In the Ghanaian society, financial scam or internet fraud is popularly referred to as *sakawa*. The term *sakawa* could also be used to refer to any dubious or unethical means of amassing wealth. However, in this study, the term *sakawa* is contextualized as the type of cyber-crime that combines internet scam with spiritual powers in order to enhance one’s chances of defrauding one’s victims. In other words, *sakawa*, otherwise known as cyber-cult, is defined as an action geared towards wealth acquisition that is linked to magical powers and activities such as those of witchcraft and astrology acquired through the use of the computer or the internet (see: the synonym for “cyber” on the Acer

computer; “occult” or “cult” in the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*).

Indeed, one cannot dispute the fact that education thrives on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). However, it appears that advancement in technology (internet) in the 21st Century is, without question, threatening education and religion in the sense that ICT and for that matter the internet has become the major tool *sakawa* practitioners use in administering their evil plans.

One of the greatest aspirations of most people is to be wealthy. The desire for wealth has produced insatiable quest which has become a canker eating into every sector of the Ghanaian society, be it religion, education, health, business, sports, or entertainment. This is to such an extent that people care little about the means (whether genuine or not) through which the aspiration will be achieved.

An estimated forty percent of the youth in the Ghanaian society, particularly Agona Swedru Traditional Area, engage in one kind of internet activity or the other. That is, scouting for answers to assignments given at school, reading the news and current affairs in the world, applying for admission into colleges, looking for employment, applying for visa or passport to travel, and so on (Frimpong, 2015). But it appears about half of the estimated number (twenty percent) seeks to be wealthy through the activities of internet scam with the aid of spiritual or mystical means commonly known as *sakawa*. In other words, the main motive of this section of the youth who practice *sakawa* in Agona Swedru Tradional Area is to be wealthy.

It has been revealed that, on daily basis, students abandoned classes for *sakawa* (Yeboah, 2016). As a matter of fact, *sakawa* has become an alternative means of livelihood for some people, particularly the youth in Ghana today.

According to Yeboah (2009), the late Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Awuni, in one of his addresses to internet café operators, stressed that the police would raid any internet café that allowed children to browse pornographic materials or engage in *sakawa*. He added that the internet was more of a blessing than a curse but the *sakawa* practice was having a negative influence on school children.

Young people, mostly boys, deceived foreigners (especially Europeans and Americans) over the internet to part with money. As time went by, when the victims refused to give out money, their names and pictures were used for juju (occultism), with the intention that they (*sakawa* perpetrators) would get, without delay, whatever they demand from their victims.

While Rampa (1977) maintains that occult knowledge is knowing a thing which cannot be known by ordinary mundane power and that it is dangerous for such knowledge to be in the hands of amateurs, Yeboah (2009) affirms that occult practice has become common among the Ghanaian youth, especially in places noted for *sakawa* practice such as Nima, Dansoman, Kasoa, Tema, Takoradi-Effiakuma, and Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) stressed that, until the emergence of the charismatic movements (ministries) and for that matter prosperity gospel, Christian ministry in Ghana was seldom considered an avenue for economic

gain. He further said that Ghanaian Christian traditions have generally stressed on modesty in material things.

Indeed, in Africa, religion preceded a man before he is born into the world, bonded him throughout the stages of life, and followed him even after physical departure from the world (Akrong, 1991; Awolalu & Dompamu, 1979; Gyekye, 2003, Idowu, 1973; Mbiti, 1999; Opoku, 1978). As a result, life in traditional societies in Africa, in general, and Ghana, in particular, was a true reflection of modesty and simplicity. Hardly could one differentiate between the wealthy and the poor, the 'have' and 'have not' in a typical traditional society, because humanity, irrespective of the background, sex, and age, was highly valued.

However, the situation is not the same in our contemporary time. Agona Swedru, a traditional area in Central Region of Ghana, has, in recent times, been associated with *sakawa*. As an indigene of the area, I have realized that Agona Swedru has become a training ground for young people interested in the *sakawa* practice. It is not uncommon to see young people, particularly between the ages of seventeen and thirty-six, who have not officially been employed in any organization or engaged in any meaningful business or inherited properties from parent (relatives) owning very expensive cars, living in their own mansions, and dining constantly in expensive restaurants. This has even made a section of the public to believe that *sakawa* practice in Ghana originated from the Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

There are dozens of cases that could attest to the fact that *sakawa* practice, indeed, exists in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. One of such cases was a rape case between a final year student of Swedru School of

Business (Swesbus) and a boy (*sakawa* practitioner) in the Agona Swedru town in the year 2016. The case was reported to Agona Swedru Divisional Crime Unit of the Ghana Police Service by the parent of the student. The police investigations turned out to be true. The *sakawa* boy was arrested and prosecuted accordingly (Ghana Police Service, Agona Swedru).

Another instance involves a mentally-challenged young lady believed to be between the ages of twenty to twenty-seven years, roaming the streets of Agona Swedru. She is a resident of Wawase, a suburb of Agona Swedru. Many people attribute her condition to a *sakawa* boyfriend who has become wealthy over-night after the lady has gone mad. The boyfriend, now, owns both mansions and fleets of vehicles. What astonishes many residents of Agona Swedru is that this girl goes constantly to no other house except her *sakawa* boy's house to collect money, despite her lunacy (Personal Communication with Ama Banyywa, resident of Wawase, a suburb of Agona Swedru, September 19, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Sakawa practice has not only given Agona Swedru Traditional Area a bad name but also created numerous problems. Economically, the cost of living is high, compared to the period before the emergence of *sakawa* in the area. The price of items such as vehicles, building materials, electrical appliances, or even farm produce which would cost less in another area is twice the price when the same item is brought to Agona Swedru Traditional Area today. Spiritually, the people in the area are scared of being used through their items like sponge, towel, and sandals for *sakawa* rituals. Consequently, some Ghanaian analysts, including the late Assistant

Commissioner of Police (ACP) Awuni, have proposed that, if the *sakawa* practice is not controlled early, in the next two decades, about seventy percent of Ghanaian youth may be school drop-outs.

As a matter of fact, there are articles written on this chosen topic but one that addresses the core (nature) of this menace is the one entitled “Agona Swedru and *Sakawa*,” published on the internet by Kossi Akplah in June 2015. However, the article did not spell out exactly where and who started *sakawa* in Ghana and, most importantly, the dangers linked with the *sakawa* practice. It neither gave the causes nor offered solutions to eradicate the *sakawa* practice. Also, while some articles, including “*Sakawa* Scare” alluded to the fact that the *sakawa* practice is not only affecting attendance in schools, churches, mosques, and shrines but also destroying good morals that hitherto existed in our traditional societies, they did not provide empirical evidence to back those claims (see: Akplah, 2015; *Christian Messenger* July 17, 2009; *Daily Graphic* February 24 2016)

It has, therefore, become needful for a study to delve into the world view of *sakawa* practitioners and the field of *sakawa* itself in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. It is against this background that the study is using Agona Swedru Traditional Area to investigate the practice of *sakawa*.

Purpose of the Study

The study was motivated by the ‘bad name’ and its associated challenges such as school drop-out, occultism, and hardship that *sakawa* practice has brought on the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

The purpose of the study was to examine the various reasons why some of the youth in Agona Swedru Traditional Area go into *sakawa* practice.

The study emphasized the effects *sakawa* practice has brought to the people living in Agona Swedru and its environs particularly in the area of commerce and education. In addition to that, it sought to propose solutions that can help eliminate the *sakawa* practice.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Examine various meanings of the term *sakawa*.
2. Identify various reasons why most youth of Agona Swedru Traditional Area engage in *sakawa*.
3. Investigate and establish the dangers associated with *sakawa* practice and its effects on the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area.
4. Explore various ways the menace of *sakawa* practice can be curbed.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is *sakawa*?
2. Why do the youth in Agona Swedru Traditional Area engage in *sakawa*?
3. What are the dangers of *sakawa* on both its practitioners and ordinary people living in Agona Swedru Traditional Area?
4. What measures can be employed to curb the practice of *sakawa* in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, in particular, and Ghana, in general?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study have revealed some scamming techniques used by those who engage in the practice of *sakawa* to persuade their victims. Additionally, the study would assist teachers, religious leaders, parents, chiefs,

social commentators, government, and so on to effectively address the challenges that the youth in Agona Swedru Traditional Area in particular and Ghana in general are grappling with, especially as regards to *sakawa* practice. This, it is believed, could inform how policies that define the moral and career development of the Ghanaian youth may be enacted.

Furthermore, the study has not only pointed out some reasons why some of the youth in Agona Swedru Traditional Area are involved in the *sakawa* practice but also made recommendations (from the study) to curtail the *sakawa* practice in both Agona Swedru Traditional Area, in particular, and Ghana, in general. Finally, the study has added to the existing literature on *sakawa* in Ghana and West Africa sub-region as well as served as a resource material or literature for educational institutions.

Delimitation of the Study

There are several issues like vehicular accident, armed-robbery, teenage pregnancy, and illegal mining that Central Region of Ghana is grappling with. However, the researcher chose *sakawa* in Agona West Municipal, precisely Agona Swedru Traditional Area, because of the well-known involvement of many of its youth in this practice. Another reason for the selection of Agona Swedru Traditional Area was easy access to data since the researcher is an indigene.

Limitations of the Study

Firstly, being a native of the area also affected data collection in the sense that Agona Swedru Traditional Area has relatively small population. As a result, people who live in the traditional area are closely knit due to the nature of work and are familiar to one another; hence, practitioners of any

unethical activities such as prostitution, armed-robbery, *sakawa*, and so on deliberately hide their identities and also refuse to divulge information, especially if the researcher hails from the area, perhaps for fear of victimization.

The initial stage of the field work was quiet challenging and that slowed down the data gathering. Three of the interviewees consulted refused to cooperate. One of them categorically stressed that *akwoa yi menngye no ndzi*, literally meaning ‘I do not trust the identity of this person’, that is, the researcher.

The reserved attitude of these people toward the researcher was influenced by the fact that, occasionally, officers from the Bureau of National Investigation and the Police swoop on the internet cafés to arrest people who are suspects of this practice but, the researcher overcame this limitation by the letter of introduction received from the Department of Religion and Human Values of the University.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The main idea of conceptual and theoretical frameworks revolves around wealth, its acquisition, occultism, and *sakawa*. For this reason, the following concepts are involved: wealth, acquisition of wealth, African views on wealth, wealth and other religious traditions in Ghana, revenge, occultism, and *sakawa*.

Wealth

According to Kiyosaki (1992), ordinary people could become extraordinary people by simply practicing the principle of wealth creation because the principle that governs wealth and its acquisition is no respecter of

any person. In other words, wealth creation takes no cognizance of one's gender, race, religion, age, and so on but of how effectively and diligently one uses its principle. On the contrary, diligence to the principle of wealth is not a factor in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area at all. There are many youth who are wealthy yet did not follow the wealth principle.

Adei (2003) established that a man can change his status from poverty to prosperity if he diligently follows specific principles such as hard work, positive mental attitude, delayed gratification, consistent saving, and so on. This could explain the reason why some accomplished Ghanaians like Dr. Sam Jonah, Rev. Dr. Kwabena Darko, Rev. Dr. Mensah Otabil, and the like did not allow their poor backgrounds to limit them in wealth acquisition in their respective individual careers.

But it appears that, in contemporary times, prosperity or wealth acquisition, as Bediako (1995) stressed, has become a matter of all cost, without regard to the strategy or principle governing it. In his book, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion*, Bediako (1995) spelt out how man's quest for economic empowerment has made many contemporary Ghanaian Christians to view challenges like poverty, suffering, sickness etc. as curses coming from God instead of considering other angles.

As established earlier, the desire for wealth or economic empowerment has produced insatiable quest for material gain, which has become a form of canker eating into every sector of Ghanaian society. It is not surprising, therefore, that *sakawa* practice in our contemporary time is booming every passing day among the youth.

Acquisition of Wealth

The law of conservation states that it is not how much you make but how much you keep that determines your financial future (Tracy, 2002). Therefore, wealth acquisition is not something one merely stumbles upon. It is the product of hard work, delayed gratification, having a clear vision, determination, conscientious planning, investment (of time and resources), patience, and so on.

Coincidentally, like the Marxian economics, hard work is not only appreciated and regarded as a condition to wealth acquisition. They are evident in traditional African societies. African proverbs, maxims, and everyday language reflect this, some of which are as follows:

1. 'He who gets blisters from the hoe handle, will not die of hunger' (Ewe ethnic group in Ghana).

2. 'Treat your guest as a guest for two days, on the third day give him a hoe' (Azania ethnic group in South Africa).

3. 'Work is cure for poverty, be hard – working my friend for one can become great only through hard work. When we have no supporter we may appear lazy but in such a situation it only pays to keep on working hard' (Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria). (Gyekye, 2003)

Additionally among the Akan ethnic group, when an individual meets people at work, the person greets '*Adwuma, adwuma*' (work work). The response from those at work is, '*Adwumaye*' (work is good).

According to Stanly and Danko (1996), wealth is more often the result of a lifestyle of hard work, perseverance, planning, and most of all, self-discipline (p. 2). They are of the view that one cannot accumulate wealth if

one has insatiable desire for spending (of what one gets). They also emphasized that, “Even high-income earners must live below their means if they intend to become financially independent” (p. 95). No wonder Tracy (2002) buttressed this point by affirming that wealth acquisition or financial independence comes by “violating Parkinson’s law” (p. 170).

The Parkinson law is not only accepted as important when it comes to money and wealth acquisition but also taught as one of the major topics in higher economic institutions worldwide. It was originally invented by the English writer, Cyril Northcote Parkinson, in the year 1955 as one of the explanations to the reason why people retire poor. The law states that no matter how much wealth or money people earn, they tend to spend the entire amount and a little bit more. For that reason, Parkinson (1955) admonished that, for one to accumulate wealth and also be financially independent, it is imperative one develops sufficient willpower to resist the powerful urge to spend everything one gets.

Kiyosaki (1998) additionally buttressed this point by stating that poverty is bound to happen anytime one’s inflow (income) exceeds one’s outflow (expenditure). And also, identification of problems and subsequently offering the solutions to them, according to him, are two major ways that one can acquire wealth.

Agreeably, if one major way wealth could be acquired is to solve problems (Damodaran, 1995; Kiyosaki, 1998; Menifield, 2008; Ramsey, 1992; Stanly & Danko, 1996), then, it stands to reason to ask ourselves whether *sakawa* practitioners are solving any problems in their pursuit of wealth acquisition or adding to the numerous problems existing in the world.

African Views on Wealth

The value and acquisition of wealth is not a new concept in Africa, because, according to Gyekye (2003), wealth

was sought after because of what it could do for the individual, the member of the family, and the state as a whole, and the desire to seek it did not have to await the arrival of the European on the shores of the African continent (p. 100).

Most African maxims affirm the African people's desire to acquire wealth. Among the Bantu ethnic group, for instance,

economic culture implies that the idea and practice of private property is as old as human society and is a natural out-growth in the economic development and life of a people, unless it is consciously and systematically suppressed by some political authority. Even so, in the event of political or legal relaxation, at the earliest opportunity people will assert their individuality by seeking to own their own enterprises and properties. This indicates that the desire to own property, to have something that belongs to oneself, is resilient and, thus, may be said to be natural (Gyekye, 2003, p. 102).

Among the Akan, an individual gains recognition and respect from the entire community by virtue of the number of properties (example lands, livestock etc.) one owns. Wealth by which an individual gains social

recognition and respect is the self-acquired wealth, that is, wealth through individual's own exertions. As Gyekye (2003) stressed, outside the structure of the economic activities of the extended family or the clan, some of the maxims that depict the importance of wealth among the Akan in Ghana include the following:

1. When wealth comes and passes by, nothing comes after.
2. Money is like a servant; if you abuse (i.e. mismanage) it, it runs away (Gyekye, 2003).

According to Gyekye (2003), although land, a fundamental property in African societies, is communally owned, it is possible for a hardworking, energetic, and frugal individual to acquire private wealth while working on a family or ancestral land. He added that, in traditional African communal societies and cultures, individual ownership or private property could be divided into two kinds: individual ownership and family (i.e. corporate) ownership (Gyekye, 2003; Opoku, 1978).

African view on wealth is derived from its religion in the sense that traditional African believers thought that religion is life and life is religion (Awulalu & Dompamu, 1978; Dickson, 1978; Gyekye, 2003; Idowu, 1973; Mbiti, 1999; Opoku, 1978). In other words, hard work is also believed to be an attribute of the Supreme Being, which he (Supreme Being) experts from his children (Mbiti 1999).

Hard work is the source of all genuine wealth. This is evident in daily activities such as fishing, hunting, farming, trading, and so on. For that reason, any achievement or wealth acquired through bad ethical means such as arm-

robbery, illegal mining, prostitution, drug trafficking, and *sakawa* is regarded as evil.

As a matter of fact, Mbiti (1991) stressed that the basic African and also adherents of African Traditional Religion's view is that "the individual exists only because others exist" (p. 174). As a result, the wealth God gives to his morally upright servants should not be to the benefit of oneself but others as well. Similarly, in many African societies, it is believed that morals were given to humankind by God and for that reason, they (morals) cannot be challenged.

Furthermore, ancestral spirits keep watch over people to ensure that the moral laws are not broken and whoever breaks them (moral laws) is accordingly punished (Gaba, 1973; Mbiti, 1991; Opoku, 1978; Sarpong, 1996). Judgementally, adherents of African Traditional Religion believe that the lazy and immoral people such as prostitutes, thieves, illegal miners, drug traffickers, *sakawa* practitioners, and others, irrespective of the amount of wealth they command or the benevolence, are under the wrath (curse) of God because their source of wealth is not ethical (Gaba, 1973; Idowu, 1973; Mbiti, 1991; Sarpong, 1996).

Indeed, the acquisitive, profit oriented elements of the African character inspired the attitudes reflected in the traditional practices of religion and that an intense desire for material wealth and success was an integral part of the religiosity of the African (Gyekye, 2003, p.101).

This is evident in African prayers to the Supreme Being and other supernatural beings. One of such prayers is seen below:

He who is not prosperous,
May he enjoy immeasurable prosperity.
Those who are fishermen among us,
If they go out with their nets,
May their net bring them prosperity.
If anyone should wish evil to follow the nets,
May this evil come upon him who plans the evil.
... May peace abound forever.
May it come to rain
So that our crops may produce abundantly,
And when we sell them,
They must earn plenty of money
To fill our rooms,
So that we can continue to serve you (Gaba, 1973, p.13).

The notion and value for wealth and its acquisition, coupled with hard work, is unequivocally anchored throughout the communal social structures of African traditional societies.

Wealth and Other Religious Traditions in Ghana

Owing to the religious multiplicity in our contemporary world, in general, and Ghana, in particular, discourse on wealth will be incomplete if one does not consider the concept of wealth in other religions. In Ghana, apart from African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam are other major religions. There are other minor religions, for example, Hinduism and

Buddhism. These religions allude to the fact that wealth is not only a gift but a mandate from God to those who serve Him.

On the part of Christianity, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005, p. 211) stressed, “theologically, ‘the gospel of prosperity’ replants the belief that the ‘blessing of Abraham’ has been willed by God to believers as beneficiaries of the new covenant mediated by Christ.” He added that, this “blessing of Abraham,” hermeneutically, refers to his wealth in cattle, silver and gold, men servants and maid servants, camels and donkeys, and the gift of a son as attested by his servant (Gen. 13:2, 24:35-36). Islam, on the other hand, posits that Allah blesses faithful servants with wealth but His primary expectation from His servants is worship (Surah 51:56).

Singh Ji (1973), however, contended that wealth is not worthy of humans devotion, because, to him, the purpose of life is not wealth acquisition. He admonished that wealth is like a shadow that lengthens and shrinks at different times. He further stressed that wealth is for the use of man, not for man to be its slave.

Tracy (2000), on the other hand, counter argued the position of Sing Ji in this context with the “the law of ‘cause and effect’”. He affirmed that the result of hard work is acquisition of money (wealth).

But Sing Ji (1973) stressed that the devotees of wealth work day and night ceaselessly and amass wealth and that the desire of amassing more wealth continues unabated. This (money - amassing obsession), according to him, completely over-powers many people. The effect, he emphasized, shifts many people’s focus from God’s original plan, that is, fellowship (communion) between mankind and God.

Revenge and Other Religious Traditions in Ghana

The *Cambridge International Dictionary* of English defines revenge as harm done to someone as a punishment for harm that they have done to someone else. But does God approve of revenge by humankind as an antidote for the individual who had been badly treated?

Adherents of the African Traditional Religion believe that vengeance is the sole prerequisite of God. As a result, its adherents advocate that God is the sole entity responsible for punishing evil or bad people and not the other way round (Awolalu & Dompamu, 1979; Idowu, 1975; Mbiti, 1991; Opoku, 1979). The following African proverbs and wise sayings lay credence to this fact: God exercises vengeance in silence (Burundi Rwanda); God saves the afflicted according to his will (Uganda) (cf. Mbiti, 1991, p. 208).

In Christianity, Christians are admonished in the Bible to demonstrate love to their enemies, especially those who have wilfully maltreated them:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:44-45KJV).

The Bible also entreats Christians not to revenge since vengeance is the Lord's.

Muslims also believe that forgiveness is the answer to an offence. According to them, although the Qur'an permitted some elements of revenge, that is, the giving of equal magnitude of punishment for the person who had

trampled upon another person's rights, they posited that Allah in his infinite wisdom knew that the possibility of humankind going beyond the limit or magnitude of the offence could be high. For that reason, Islam admonishes its followers that forgiveness is the answer to an offence (see Fussilat 41:34-36).

However, revenge could be possible in Islam on condition that there were established facts that the activities of the person in question were detrimental to the innocent lives in the society. The example given to such activities were arm-robbery, adultery, occult practices that involved human blood for its sacrifice, and many more (Personal communication with Sheik Mohammed Khamis, Agona West Chief Imam, December 18, 2017).

Occultism

The *Cambridge International Dictionary* of English defines the term *occult* as something that relates to magical powers and activities such as those of witchcraft and astrology.

According to Rampa (1977),

Occultism is concerned with the knowledge of things which are beyond the ordinary mundane senses of the body. Upon this earth we are confined to certain sense. We can touch a thing and know it is there, we can know if it is hot or cold, or if it gives us pressure or pain. That is mundane knowledge, but occult knowledge (occultism) is concerned with knowing a thing which cannot be made known by ordinary mundane power of the world. That is, while in the fresh you cannot touch it, you can only be aware of it, and when one can be so aware of it one can have it (p. 93).

In his book *Occult Grand Master now in Christ Vol. 1*, Uzorma (1993) contended that a person can use occult spell to manipulate people and collect money from them. He added that this modus operandi can make one wealthy overnight. However, he warned that there are serious and disastrous repercussions if the person fails to follow the rules and regulations governing it. Furthermore, he stressed that, even with all his credentials in occult practice, when he received the mystical handkerchief prepared with human blood for making money, the restrictions were not left out. The occult laws, according to him, governing its (mystical handkerchief) use included:

- 1) Not to be removed from its sanctum or travel with it.
- 2) That its money should not be given to anybody except his personal use.
- 3) After spending each day, surplus monies should be bent, not to be used the next day.
- 4) After every 90 days, pigeon must be killed and its blood used to revive the occult powers in the handkerchief.
- 5) Finally the mystical handkerchief must be destroyed after its deadline (pp.148-149).

Even though Rampa (1977) emphatically asserted that it is dangerous for occult powers and knowledge to be in the hands of amateurs, Yeboah (2009) affirmed that occult practice has become common among the Ghanaian youth (amateurs), especially in suburbs noted for *sakawa*, like Nima, Dansoman, Kasoa, Takoradi-Effiakuma, and Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

Sakawa

The term *sakawa* has several meanings in the Ghanaian society, especially when the thing is associated with negative connotations, for instance,

something that makes one person to be at an advantage over another. However, the present study defines *sakawa* (practice) as the type of cyber-crime that combines internet scam with spiritual powers in order to enhance one's chances of defrauding one's victims.

Sakawa began as a strict internet scam. But in recent times, it is increasingly shifting from the physical to meta-physical. That is, there is some level of amalgamation of spiritual powers nicknamed *sunsum mu akwan kyere* meaning 'spiritual direction', which the practitioners subscribe to in the practice of the *sakawa*. This is supported by the statement made by the *sakawa* insider: "Nowadays, for you to achieve major breakthrough in this internet scam practice, you need a 'lawyer' (where lawyer denotes spiritual or occult power); otherwise you would be dry for a long time" (Personal communication, Ato Delpiero, an expert in the internet scam practice, December 25, 2017).

Several reasons have been ascribed to be the brain behind the shift from a strict internet scam to the use of occult powers. Prominent among them is the rapid increase of internet scammers in the Ghanaian society, in particular, and West African sub-region, in general. There is a growing awareness of internet fraud activities in Africa, especially in countries within West African sub-region. Many attribute the prevalence of the practice to poverty and the high rate of unemployment in the sub-region.

Theory (1)

Since the thrust of this study is *sakawa*, it is deemed appropriate to adopt a theory that borders on wealth which is the main reason for *sakawa*. Although there are various theories on wealth, the one leading theory

according to many scholars (Damodaran, 1995; Menifield, 2008; Ramsey, 1992) is Karl Marx's theory on wealth, otherwise known as labour theory of value. The basic claim of Marx's theory on wealth is simply that the value of a commodity can be objectively measured by the average number of labour hours required to produce that commodity. In other words, one cannot expect to live a life of affluence if one is not prepared to put in corresponding labour hours. In this sense, wealth is defined as great quantity of store of money, valuable possessions, property, or other riches, including good name, character, and information measured in time spent.

The researcher, therefore, finds it appropriate to build this current study within the context of Karl Marx's theory on wealth. One key reason for the selection of this theory is its emphasis on ethic of hard work as key to wealth acquisition (Harvey, 2017).

Agreeably and also in relation to *sakawa* practice, Mintah-Botchway (2015) affirmed that children who are trained to be responsible individuals in a community must acquire knowledge in morality (ethical values) in order to shape their future.

Ethical Theory (on Wealth)

A person without ethical values could be equated to an animal. The theory of ethics is arguably the most controversial since the dawn of enlightenment of humankind. Indeed, there is no discipline in the world of which ethics is not part. It is, however, not surprising that some scholars are of the view that ethics on wealth or ethical values could be viewed and understood as not only a religious phenomenon but also social phenomenon (Gyekye 1996; Kant, 1998; MacIntyre, 1967; Opoku, 1978; Dompamu, 1975).

Ethics on wealth, according to Frankena (1973), Gyekye (1996), and Kant (1998) could be viewed and understood as a religio-social phenomenon in the sense that, firstly, it came about out of the relation between individuals. If there were no such thing as human society, there would be no such thing as ethics on wealth and, more importantly, money. One major source of wealth amongst others is considered not only as a legal tender for exchange of goods and services in the world; it is also the scale on which the growth of many economies in some countries is measured (Kiyosaki, 1998; Stanly & Danko, 1996; Tracy, 2002).

Secondly, it could be considered as both a requirement and a necessity for ensuring an independent and comfortable life for oneself and family. Thirdly, wealth or money can be very good servant but a bad master. That is, it has the tendency of doing all sorts of negative things such as separating one time good friends, soiling one's hard-won reputation and above all derailing one's focus from God if it is handled without discretion. "For the love of money (wealth) is the root of all evil" (1Timothy 6:10, KJV).

While ethics is defined by some scholars as branch of philosophy that examines moral behavior, ethical concepts such as justice, virtue, duty and so on (MacIntyre, 1967; Kant, 1998; Frankena, 1973), Popkin and Stroll (1981) affirm ethics to be 'a set of principles by which men live'. That is, one can talk of African traditional ethics - principles which regulate and guide the behavior of adherents of African Traditional Religion which are found primarily in the 'indigenous religious beliefs and practices of Africans that resulted in the sustaining faith held by the forbearers of the present Africans' (Idowu 1973). Also, one can talk about Christian ethics – 'the principles which prescribe the

behavior of Christians such as the rules for conduct which are found in the Judeo-Christian Bible (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2005).

Furthermore, one can talk about medical ethics, school ethics, legal ethics, and so on. On the part of wealth, the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* defines it as a large amount of money and other valuable possessions. Also, wealth can be defined as great quantity of store of money, valuable possessions, property or other riches including good name, character and information (Otabil, 2003). Merging and inferring from the two definitions of the terms, ethics on wealth in the context of this present thesis is defined as a system of accepted beliefs or set of principles which control or govern the acquisition of wealth.

Theory (2)

There are numerous ethical theories connected to wealth propounded by numerous scholars such as Socrates, Plato, Epicurus, and others that alluded to the fact that wealth obtained outside ethical principles, involving wealth justice, hard work, earnings from one's work, perseverance, consistent savings, delayed gratification and the like, is not only unacceptable but also against the law. For the sake of clarity, I will limit myself to Kant (1998) and Frankena (1973), whom many believe are the most influential scholars in the field of ethics.

Kantian theory is an example of a deontological moral theory but its relevance to wealth acquisition cannot be overemphasized. It establishes that right or wrong of an action does not depend on the consequences but as to whether they fulfill a duty or not. Additionally, Kantian theory admits that "Supreme Principle" of morality is "Categorical Imperative." In other words,

the principle of morality is not based on self-interest but unconditional command.

For instance, “do not bring foreign material to examination room.” In this case, although bringing the foreign material will serve your interest, you cannot bring it. According to him, the basic idea of the categorical imperative is that one is not allowed to do anything by oneself that he/she will not be willing to allow anyone to do. That is, there is no exception to anyone. Like the teachings of Jesus found in the Synoptic gospels in the Bible ‘do unto others what you want others do unto you’: That is, if you do not want to be cheated don’t cheat someone and if you do not want to be disrespected do not disrespect someone. The above analogy buttresses the position of Kant (1998) on the fact that a person’s action determines his moral worth, in that, to him (Kant), ‘Reason’ is an instrument or the measuring rod that forms the basis for one’s action.

He further advocated that a person is good or bad depending on the motivation of his/her actions and not on the consequences of his/her actions, where “motivation” means reasons for an action. In simple terms, motivation is a person’s reason for doing something. In the light of this, Kant (1998) contended that moral worth (that is, being a good person) only comes when one does something within his/her duty regardless of the whether he/she liked it (consequences).

Inferring from this piece of idea, one can agree with Kant (1998) that the consequence of an action does not matter in the sense that regardless of the intended or actual outcome, moral worth is properly assessed by looking at the motivation of the action.

This argument can be demonstrated in the case below:

Case 1

Consider two students noted to be habitual late comers having realized that 30minutes had gone past their lecture period decided to run to the lecture hall but in different directions. One of them, got to the lecture hall without facing any trouble on the way despite reckless running. The other student was not so lucky and collided with another person and by the intensity of his speed injured the person badly.

Consider two orphans who grew up in a relatively poor neighbourhood, one decides to rob people and banks in order to survive. After all, he did not have anyone to love him neither did he get anyone to help him in his unfortunate situation. The other, on the other hand, decides to steal not physically or violently but with his brain (posing as business executive or potential marriage partner on the internet which in actual fact he is not) in order to dupe people.

Making reference to the two scenarios given, Kant (1998) position (view) is that based on their actions both the students and the orphans are equally bad and the fact that the first student got to the lecture hall safe does not make him better than the other. Likewise the fact that the second orphan uses the brain to cheat does not make him better than the one who uses weapons to cheat. Frankly all of them made choices and nothing within anyone's control interfered with the difference in their actions.

Furthermore, he (Kant) contended that this line of reasoning applies to people who act for the right reason as well. Assuredly, he affirmed, if all of the characters had acted for the right reasons, then all would have been morally

worthy, despite the fact that their actions happen to lead to bad consequence by bad luck.

Case 2

Consider a charity organization that has a weekly budget of sending food to lepers so that thousands of depressed starving lepers in a remote camp will be saved. On one fateful week the food arrived safely but some gangsters stormed the place, ransacked, killed everyone and took the food away. Looking at this scenario, the intended consequence of feeding depressed starving lepers was good but the actual consequence was bad. Again Kant's (1998) argument is that one should not look at the consequence and make a moral evaluation because moral worth is properly assessed by looking at the motivation of the action, that is, the intention.

Aristotle on the other hand, categorized wealth acquisition, beauty, health and fitness as external qualities while courage, compassion, love, self-control, piety, respect for oneself and others, justice, wisdom and the like as internal qualities. He contended that irrespective of the amount of wealth one possesses, it takes virtue (those internal qualities) to be truly happy. To him, true wealth or happiness is a life which is objectively desirable.

In the same vein, the Stoics are of the view that virtue is necessary and sufficient for wealth acquisition or faring well in the sense that it encourages character traits like hard work, justice, honesty, moderation, simplicity, self-discipline, fortitude, courage and the like cementing the fact that a happy life is a morally virtuous life.

As a result external traits such as wealth, honour, physical beauty and so on are merely 'neutral', in other words, not absolute. In effect, they are only good on grounds that they are conditions to achieving happiness.

Theory (3)

Frankena (1973) affirmed, "The moral end to be sought in all we do is the greatest possible balance of good over evil (or the least possible balance of evil over good) in the world as a whole" (p. 34). According to him, no matter how good and relevant an action is, if the result will be to the disadvantage of the masses, then its morality is questionable.

For instance, a poor loving husband robs the bank or the church to pay the sick wife's medical bill. When one takes this issue into perspective, the intended purpose was good and it may be possible he (husband) might have tried other avenues but to no avail and in addition the medical attendant or doctor might have given him a dead line for payment to be done, failure to do so might have resulted in the death of the wife.

Frankena (1973), therefore, argued that, morally, the husband is wrong in the sense that his action will cause a lot of people to suffer. Frankena admitted the weakness associated with this theory; however, he strengthens his support for the theory on the ground that the resultant force seeks to promote not only the interest of the masses but also the greater good of the masses.

A man worth anything at all does not reckon whether his course of action endangers his life or threatens death. He looks only at one thing – whether what he does is just or not, the work of good or of bad. Admittedly, the growth and stability of the society hinges on virtuous people in the sense that a person with virtues acts morally and treats others with respect,

compassion, and love. Such a person thinks of others first even above personal interest and desists from any form of cheating. In effect, political power, wealth and its acquisition, success, and achievement of all kinds may be good but they are nowhere comparable to someone with a virtuous soul. “A good name is better than precious ointment (wealth)” (Ecclesiastes 7:1b KJV).

Theories Versus Concepts

From the discourse so far, one sees that the motivation of *sakawa* practice is wealth acquisition. But the practitioners are not willing to pay the price of hard work or be diligent to the tenets of wealth acquisition. In other words, the practitioners want to own valuable asset over-night. This mind set of the practitioners violates the main theory of the study, that is, labour theory of value. The theory primarily emphasizes hard work as the main means one acquires wealthy.

The labour theory of value was supported by Frankena’s (1973) theory on morality. The justification of this theory is that *sakawa* practice ends up impoverishing the client and that cause hardship and suffering to their family. This means that the practice is morally wrong because it ends up disadvantaging the masses at the expense of an individual. Furthermore, the practice is wrong because in Africa, acquisition of wealth is morally based. The “means” justifies the “end” in all matters.

Also, apart from wealth acquisition as a motivation, many *sakawa* practitioners justify their action from the premise that the practice is ‘payback’ to the injustices meted out to the forbearers of present generation of Africans through colonialism. On account of that assumption, Kantian theory was used to emphasize the fact that the “measuring rod” that forms the basis for one’s

action is equally the same as the motivation (reason). Based on that assumption, the practice is again considered to be morally wrong. In the nutshell, *sakawa* practice was viewed as bad on grounds that it violates all the above theories.

Methodology

This section explains how empirical data was generated for the study. First, it gives information on the research design adopted, the sampling techniques and procedures in addition to the target, and study population from which the sample was drawn. Second, it describes the research instruments used to collect the data, and emphasizes data collection and handling procedures. Importantly, issues that border on ethics in the research process were defined and given utmost attention.

Research Method

The study was conducted in the discipline of the Phenomenological study of Religion. The Phenomenological study of Religion is defined as taking a step away from our background assumptions in order to let religious phenomena shine through (Cox, 2006; Herling, 2007; Rachels, 1993). Although some scholars affirm that the phenomenological approach has inadequacies (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Bailey, 1987), buttressing their point from the fact that the tendency of phenomenologist giving value judgment is high, the researcher finds this method preferable because it creates an awareness of one's background and biases in order that they do not distort the process of interpretation (Herling, 2007).

Research Design

The researcher used the case study design for the study. A case study design is defined as detailed analysis of one or more events, settings, programs, groups, or individuals (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Bailey, 1987). The choice of this design was not only informed by the fact that it allowed the researcher to have an in-depth knowledge of the problem under study but was also helpful in understanding particularly how the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area perceive *sakawa* practice.

Again, this case study approach was chosen because, apart from the fact that it can be identified as empirical enquiry into a specific social variable, it makes the purpose of this study, which is the practice of *sakawa* in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, to be achieved. Additionally, the creative nature of this approach that allows the use of multiple instruments to gather data from participants in their natural settings rather than artificial was helpful for the study.

Population and Sample

The population for the study was the indigenes of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. A total number of 20 people were chosen as sample and interviewed. The researcher chose his focused population for the study primarily based on their knowledge on *sakawa* practice in the study area. Additionally, other reasons that made the researcher to select the targeted population were as follows.

First, the internet café operators were chosen because, in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, the main people who patronize internet café business are *sakawa* perpetrators and also many internet café owners and

attendants were believed to be involved in the *sakawa* practice. Second, the security official, that is, the chief crime officer of the Ghana Police Service in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area was included in the sample because many criminal acts such as trade in narcotics (cocaine, marijuana, codaine), ritual murder, arm-robbery, prostitution, and so on that occurred in Agona Swedru Traditional Area are alleged to be associated with *sakawa* perpetrators. Third, the chiefs in Agona Swedru Traditional Area were added to the sample to give the actual history of the people of Agona Swedru. Fourth, religious leaders from each of the three main religions—Traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam—practiced in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area were included because it is believed that some of them are more often consulted for supernatural directions (*susumm mu akwankyere*) in the practice of *sakawa*.

Fifth, heads of educational institutions in Agona Swedru Traditional Area were selected. The reasons for their selection was that there were evidences of students who had abandoned schooling in order to devote their time fully to *sakawa* practice. Also, there were alleged records of students who have declined in their academic performance due to their involvement in the *sakawa* practice. Sixth, business owners were also included in the sample because many have ascribed the cause of high prices of goods in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, compared to the prices of goods in similar traditional areas in the Central Region, in particular, and Ghana, in general, to be as a result of the *sakawa* practice in the area. Finally, *sakawa* practitioners were chosen because their activities form the core of the study.

Sampling Procedures

The purposive sampling techniques were used for this study. The researcher used purposive sampling technique because it is a technique through which the researcher deliberately selects his or her informants on the basis of the knowledge or experience that the informants possess, with the aim of securing informants that will be able to provide the relevant answers to the researcher's questions (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Herling, 2007; Rachels, 1993).

Data Collection and Instrument

The researcher used both structured and unstructured interviews, analysis of published research work, and personal observation as key instruments for gathering data. The interview guide focused on the practice of *sakawa* in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. The interviews were drafted exclusively for internet café operators, security officials, chiefs, religious leaders, heads of educational institutions, business community, and *sakawa* practitioners. This aided the researcher to analyze the perceptions that each of these persons had about *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

The primary data for the study was based on the responses from the respondents through self-administered interview. This method gave the researcher the chance to explain issues that needed clarification which were brought forward by the respondents. Also, secondary data was taken from the existing literature on the topic.

Data Analysis Procedure

The descriptive method was used as the principal method of data analysis. Qualitatively, the researcher analyzed the various responses from the

respondents. This was done by organizing (in terms of line upon line and precept upon precept) the data across all respondents and their responses so as to identify consistencies and differences. The link and relationships between respondents served as a conduit through which the study was explored and accordingly addressed.

Definition of Terms

Agona Swedru – A traditional town in Agona West Municipal in Central Region, Ghana.

Cult - A group of people who follow a particular system of religious belief.

Cyber - The synonym for Computer-generated (see: cyber on the Acer computer).

Cyber-crime – illegal action which is aided by computer- generated activities.

Cyber-cult wealth – computer-generated wealth relating to magical powers and activities such as those of witchcraft and astrology (see: the synonym for cyber on the Acer computer and occult in the Cambridge International Dictionary of English).

Internet (Net) – Is a collection of computers, all linked together, to share information globally.

Juju – It is a term that refers to traditional medicine (charm) used to champion the course of its possessors mostly for bad reasons (Adegbola, 1998)

Sakawa – Is a jargon used in Ghanaian society to refer to a type of cyber-crime that combines internet scam with spiritual powers in order to enhance one's chances of defrauding one's victims. It also means amassing wealth through cheating (see: *sakawa* on Wikipedia).

Scam – A plan or action for making money which is dishonest, illegal and often clever.

Traditional – Home-grown or indigenous (society).

Occultism – “It is concerned with the knowledge of things which are beyond the ordinary mundane senses of the body. Upon this earth we are confined to certain sense. We can touch a thing and know it is there, we can know if it is hot or cold, or if it gives us pleasure or pain. That is mundane knowledge, but occult knowledge (occultism) is concerned with knowing a thing which cannot be known by ordinary mundane power of the world. That is, while in the flesh you cannot touch it, you can only be aware of it, and when one can be so aware of it one can have it” (Rampa, 1977, p. 93).

Occult Powers – Mystical knowledge (spirit) that comes to an individual after one has been formally initiated into occult kingdom through series of rituals (Rampa, 1977).

Wealth – It is defined as great quantity of store of money, valuable possessions, property or other riches including good names, character and information (Otabil, 2003).

Youth – Ages that falls within fifteen to thirty or thirty-five years.

Organisation of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction. This comprises the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, literature review, methodology, definition of terms, and the organisation of the study. Chapter Two discusses the study of the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. Chapter Three deals with the

nature of sakawa practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area. Chapter Four examines the impact of sakawa practice on the people of Agona Swedru and finally Chapter Five constitutes the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

Summary

This chapter, being the first chapter of the thesis, provided the background information for the research. Key issues presented in this chapter include background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study. The theoretical framework and the classification of concepts are also presented in this chapter. The classification of concepts basically focused on themes such as wealth, ethics on wealth, acquisition of wealth, ethical theories on wealth, African concept of wealth, wealth and other religious traditions in Ghana, occultism, and *sakawa*. From the various ethical theories presented and the concepts, we have also seen how unlawful and evil *sakawa* practice is. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the methodological procedure used in conducting the study, where it was emphasized, among other things, that the study falls under the discipline, Phenomenological study of Religion. Finally, the chapter presented the definition of some key terms used in this study. In the next chapter, the researcher took the discussion on the history of the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area and traced the origin of *sakawa* practice from some aspect of their history.

CHAPTER TWO
THE STUDY OF THE PEOPLE OF AGONA SWEDRU
TRADITIONAL AREA

Introduction

The chapter studies the Agona people in the Central Region, Ghana, with special focus on the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. Under this chapter, the researcher focused the discussion on the origin, social, political, religious, and economic life of the people of Agona, in general, and the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, in particular.

The Origin of the Agona People

The Agona people are located 30km from the coast situated in the eastern corner of the Central Region of Ghana within latitudes 5.30' and 5.50'N and between longitudes 0°35' and 0°55'W. They occupy a total land area of 447 square kilometers. The Agona people share boundaries to the south with the Gomoas, to the North West with the Bremans and to the West, Ajumakos (Agona West Municipal Assembly's Profile).

The location of the Agona people is divided into two constituencies: the Agona West constituency with Agona Swedru as the municipal capital and the Agona East constituency with Agona Nsaba as the district capital. Figures 1 and 2 present the study area in the national and regional contexts respectively, while the population with respect to the major settlements in the two constituencies is seen in Tables 1 and 2 below.

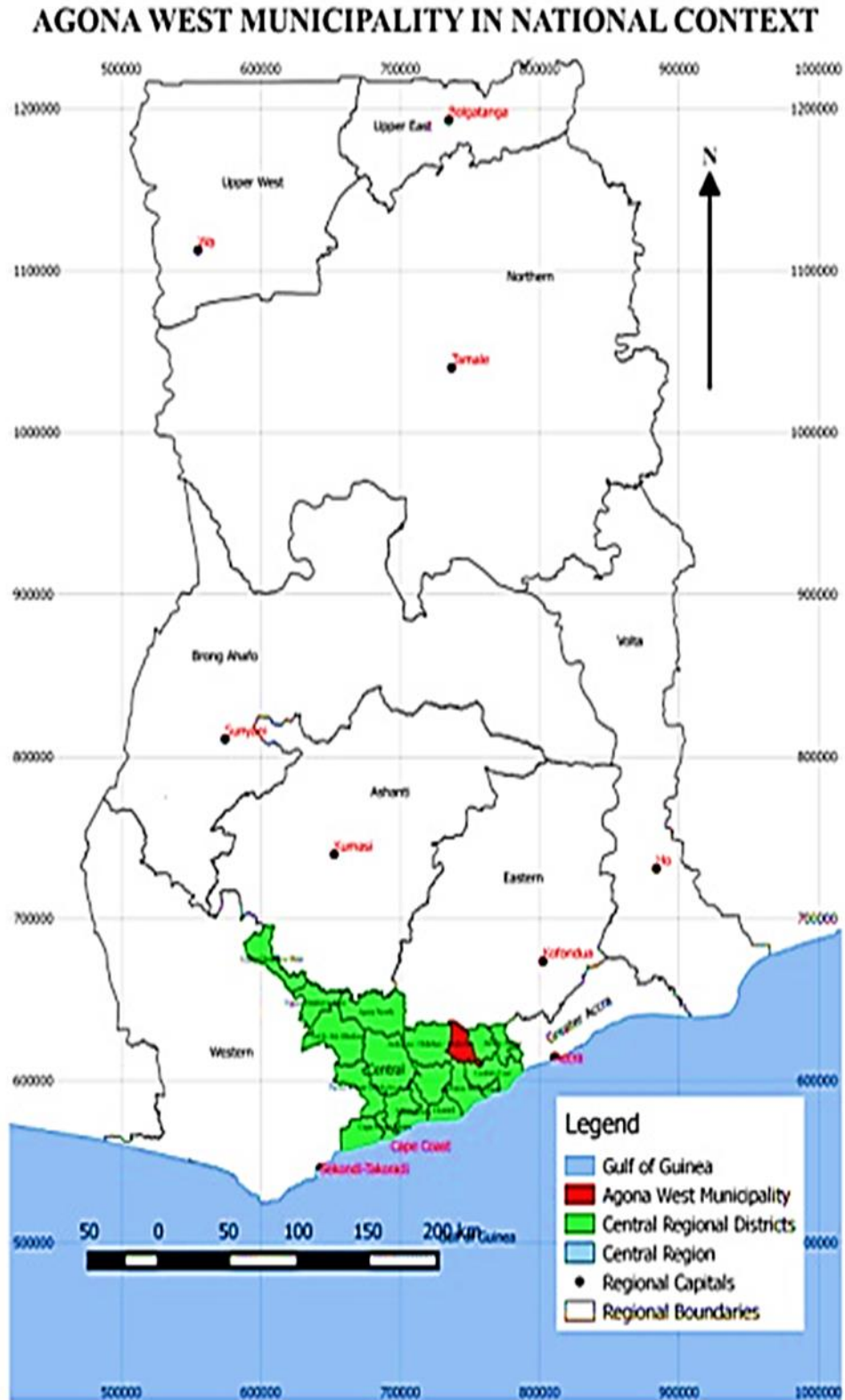


Figure 1: Agona people in the National Context

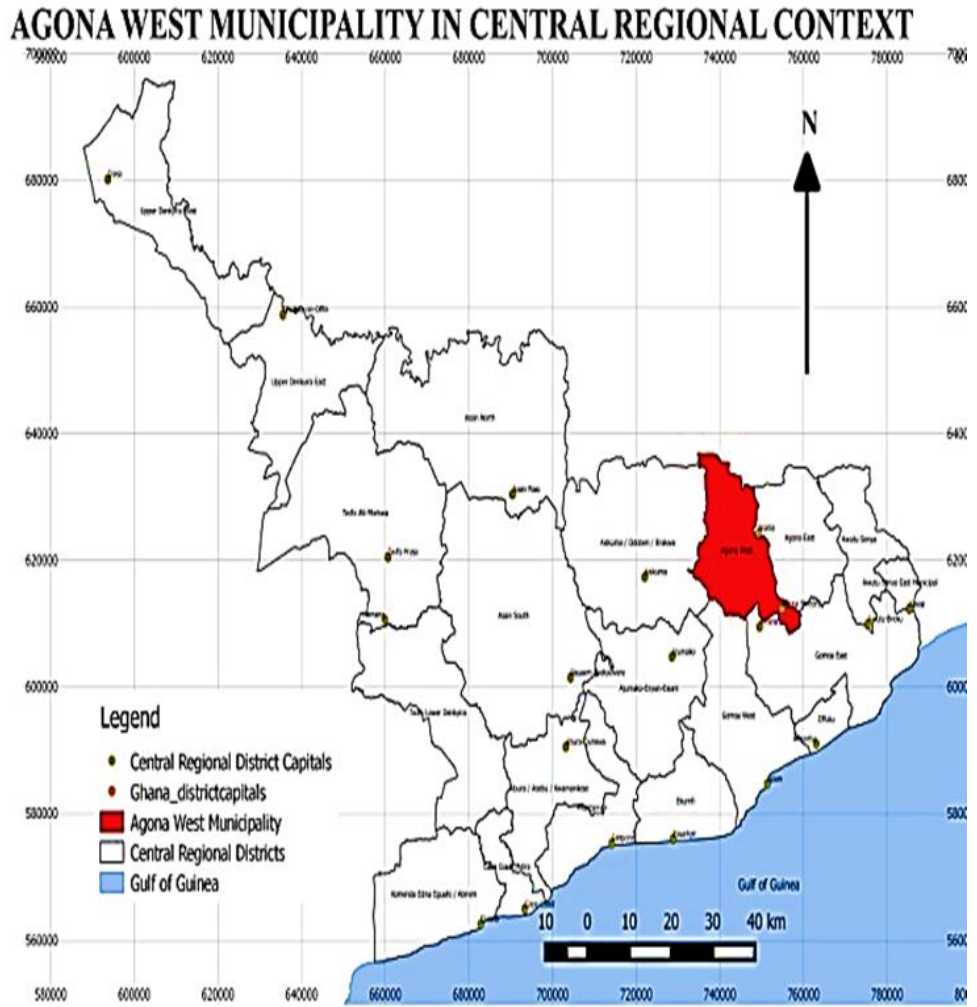


Figure 2: *Agona West in the Regional Context*

Table 1: Population of Major Settlements in the Constituency (Agona West)

S/N	SETTLEMENT	POPULATION
1.	Swedru	55,239
2.	Nyakrom	18,666
3.	Bobikuma	7,980
4.	Abodom	6,576
5.	Kwaman	3,846
6.	Nkum	3,073
7.	Wawase	1,588
8.	Otsenkorang	1,076
9.	Adukori	891
10	Otepro	878
11	Ahomadonko	745
12	Odomu	736
13	Dadzie	735
14	Nkwantanando	729
15	Kukurantumi	599
16	Bosompa	600
17	Jukwafum	510
18	Amponsahkrom	506
19	Nkranfo	485
20	Nsonan	467

(Agona West Municipal Assembly's Profile)

Table 2: Population of Major Settlements in the Constituency (Agona East)

S/N	SETTLEMENT	POPULATION
1.	Kwanyako	10,976
2.	Nsaba	9,376
3.	Asafo	8,913
4.	Duakwa	8,374
5.	Mensakrom	3,148
6.	Nkwanta	2,596

(Agona West Municipal Assembly's Profile)

The Agona people are believed to be part of the larger Akan ethnic group in Ghana (Personal Communication with Kwaahene Kwame Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, June 26, 2017). However, the question of whether all Agona people admit their source of origin to be from one subgroup of the Akan ethnic group in Ghana has been the subject of controversy amongst researchers for centuries. It is against this background that some researchers in Ghanaian history, African studies, anthropology, and ethnography have concluded that any account of the Agona people that omits Agona-Gomoa-Fante relations is bound to be fallacious or misleading (Akornor, 2000; Owusu, 1970; Reindorf, 1966; Vansina 1965).

The Agona State in the Central Region, Ghana could be said to have been founded between the years 1600 and 1620 (Akornor 2000; Meyerowitz, 1952; Vansina, 1965). King Nyarko Eku, a royal from the Ashanti Oyoko royal house, is credited with the founding of the Agona state (Souvenir brochure on

late Okofo Katakya Nyarko Eku IX, Omanhene of Agona Nyakrom Traditional Area, April 2000).

However, whilst some oral traditions affirm that the Agona people migrated from Ashanti and settled at Kuntanase near Lake Bosomtwe in order to escape from political and economic instability that characterised Denkyera-Ashanti wars of 1699-1701 (Meyerowitz, 1952; Owusu, 1970; Vansina, 1965), other oral sources believed that the Agona people first settled at Kwamang, the then capital of Ashanti.

However, Nyarko Eku, who should have inherited Oti Akenten (d. 1660), was denied the opportunity due to the fear that he could throw the state into turmoil as a result of his unpredictable character. Obiri Yeboah, Nyarko Eku's nephew, instead ascended the throne. As a sign of protest, Nyarko Eku left Kwamang with his supporters and settled at Kuntanase. By this action, he (Nyarko Eku) had planned initiating a rebellion against Obiri Yeboah but this plan became abortive as it leaked. To avoid further humiliation, Nyarko Eku migrated further southwards to settle at Okumaning near Kade (Akornor, 2000; Personal Communication with Kwaahene Kwame Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, June 30, 2017).

Contrastingly, Osiripi Kofi Nyam, chief guard of the Asona clan in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, contended that not all Agona people within the Agona state admit that they are from the lineage of Nyarko Eku. He argued that, before Nyarko Eku and his team came to the area, there were groups of people already on the land (Agona) but they were conquered by Nyarko Eku and his team due to their poor military organisation (Personal Communication

with Osiripi Kofi Nyam, chief guard of the Asona clan in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, June 28, 2017).

Some people argued that Nyaku Eku and his team could not have captured many territories of Agona land without the assistance of his magical powers believed to be his special protection against enemies. These magical powers were believed to have been obtained from *serem mu* (northern part of Ghana).

Opanyin Kwame Asoa, *owu mpaso hene* (funeral bed king) of Yogo No. 2 Asona clan in Agona Nyakrom contended that protection from charms and other deities had been an aged-long practice of the Agona people. He added that *oben* or *woa ben noho* (supernatural fortification) and *anoho-baa* (pledge) or *sumantu* (charm against enemies or for success) in the form of contract between humankind and deities had always been the normal practice of the ancestors of Agona people. For that reason, he posited that Nyaku Eku was not the first person to have introduced it, that is, the belief and practice of charm to the Agona people which is believed by many (Personal communication with Opanyin Kwame Asoa, *owu mpaso hene* (funeral bed king) of Yogo No. 2, Asona clan in Agona Nyakrom, October 15, 2017).

The indigenous people, before the arrival of Nyaku Eku and his team, were considered to be from three of the Akan sub-ethnic groups in Ghana. According to Osiripi Kofi Nyam, although the people co-existed peacefully, their source of origin could not be traced from one particular sub-ethnic group. He emphasized that, though a section of the group affirmed that they came from the descendants of foremost ancestors of the *Fante* kingdom, (*Obrumakuma*, *Oson* and *Odapagyan*), others, for example, the Agona people

in Nyakrom, trace their root to the Ashanti kingdom. The Agona people in Swedru, however, trace their root to Osor-Ase, a town in the Eastern Region of Ghana (Personal Communication with Osiripi Kofi Nyam, chief guard of the Asona clan in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, June 26, 2017).

Reindorf (1966) affirmed that one cannot specifically pinpoint the exact origin of some ethnic groups in the present day Ghana partly due to the principle of the 'survival of the fittest' that prevailed in the olden days. That is, new arrivals at a settlement either fought the indigenes there and conquered them to become the new owners of the land or co-existed with them and were given a portion of the land to settle. Indeed, the Agona people mostly migrated from one part or the other in the then Gold Coast as a result of the inter-tribal wars waged for more land and in effect greater economic power and influence.

Oral tradition indicated that the first settlers of Agona Swedru Traditional Area were from the Asona clan of Osor-Ase, a town around Akwapim in the Eastern Region of Ghana namely, Kwaw-Tutu, Gyan Kodjo, and Ewuakyiwa their younger sister. This means that there were people who had already settled in Agona Swedru over a century before the coming of Nyarko Eku and his team (Personal communication with Kwaahene Kwame Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, June 26, 2017). This confirmed the fact that Nyarko Eku cannot claim to be the sole founder of all the Agona people within the Agona state in the Central Region of Ghana as suggested by some scholars.

As stated earlier, inter-tribal wars and the prestige that came with land ownership in the olden days made migration a common practice. Kwaw-Tutu, Gyan Kodjo, and Ewuakyiwa, having discovered the fertile land in their new

settlement in addition to a river (*Akora*) flowing on it, begun cultivating cassava, yam, plantain, and so on immediately after their settlement. Evidently, plantain harvesting from their new settlement was not only unique in terms of its quantity and weight but also its constant availability in the area despite the changes in the climatic conditions within the year. For that reason, traders from far and near nicknamed the place *wo ntumi nsua broadze dur* which literally means ‘you cannot carry a bunch of plantain’. The phrase *wo ntumi nsua broadze dur* was quite difficult for colonial masters, the British, to pronounce. Hence, it was later on changed to Swedru. In other words, Swedru is the corrupted version of the phrase *wo ntumi nsua broadze dur* (Personal communication with Asafo Baatan Kobina Abam, November 14, 2017).

As part of the agreement in the Bond of 1844 with the British, Agona was added to Swedru to become Agona Swedru, with the view to differentiate it from another town in the Eastern Region called “*sua-duro*”, now Akim Swedru (Personal communication with Asafo Baatan Kobina Abam, November 14, 2017). The Bond of 1844 was a treaty signed between the British and the coastal chiefs in Gold Coast which, among other things, gave the British the legal rights to establish boundaries within their jurisdiction (Boahen, Ajayi, & Tidy, 1986; Davidson, 1965).

Several administrative styles of governance such as crown colony system, military rule, and democratic rule that Ghana as a nation experienced in the various stages of its political development tried to change the system of governance practiced in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area but to no avail. What some indigenes have alleged as a major worry in recent time, however, is the allegiance of some chiefs to either of the two major political parties in

the country: the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). This phenomenon, according to them, is gradually but steadily eroding the strong bond that hitherto existed between the Agona Swedru chiefs and their subjects. Additionally, they contended that the break in the bond between the Agona Swedru chiefs and their subjects has brought some level of division which has adversely affected the growth rate of Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

According to Honorable Samuel Oppong, one time Member of Parliament of Agona West Constituency (1996 – 2000) and Municipal Chief Executive of Agona West District (2012 – 2016), the politics in Agona West Constituency, in general, and in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, in particular, is likened to a pendulum. He added that it swings between the two major political parties in the country, depending on the following factors: economic conditions prevailing in the country at the time of elections, the cycle of change of the particular power (party) in government—the trend in Ghana politics since the inception of the fourth Republic has been that after every eight years, there is change of government—and finally the human nature of the candidate in question (that is, strong campaigning machinery in terms of ability of the candidate to relate well with the masses or ordinary people within the constituency).

Furthermore, Honorable Oppong contended that a win in Agona Swedru electoral area is automatic win of the candidate in the constituency likewise a lost in Agona Swedru electoral area adversely contribute to the defeat of the candidate within the constituency. He also added that Agona Swedru town has the highest population, compared to all the towns within the

two constituencies of the Agona people, and it is also the administrative seat of Agona West Municipal Assembly. Agona Swedru area also serves as a conduit through which the central government functions under the umbrella of its arms of Judiciary, Legislature, and Executive to its citizenry and vice versa.

He (honorable Oppong) finally admonished that politics is not intended to bring divisions; rather, its essence is to promote democracy and in effect enable one to appreciate the fact that wisdom is not only the preserve of one person. Wisdom can be likened to a baobab tree: One person's hands alone cannot embrace it (African proverb).

Below is the brief history of the winners of Agona West Constituency seat, their party, and year depicting unpredictable nature of politics in Agona West constituency since the dawn of the Fourth Republic of Ghana: Kojo Brempong, National Democratic Congress (NDC), 1992. Samuel Oppong, National Democratic Party (NDC), 1996. Samuel Obodai, New Patriotic Party, 2000; 2004; 2008. Obeng Nkum, National Democratic Congress (NDC), 2012. Cynthia Morison, New Patriotic Party, 2016.

The indigenous administrative structure of settlement in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, just like any other Agona town or Akan town, is the clan system. The clan system is defined as a group of people from the same matrilineal lineage or traced to one ancestor. The chief of the town is mostly chosen from the first settlers or from the descendants of the first settlers of the town and the chief. With the assistance from his subjects, he confers a leadership role or chiefly position on other clan subjects depending upon the time of their arrival as well as their origin.

Clans in Agona Swedru Traditional Area and also Agona towns are made up of seven and these are as follows: Asona with the symbol *Akonkoran* (Crow); Abradze with the symbol *Gyata* (Lion), Twidan with the symbol *Osebo* (Leopard), Yego with the symbol *Ekoo* (Parrot), Oyoko with the symbol *Ekoo Awirekwa* (Parrot), and *Kona* with the symbol *Eko* (bufalo). Indeed, each clan is headed by a clan head, *Abusuapanyin*, the embodiment of all powers and authority of the clan. However, the clan head is subject or subordinate to the chief of the town.

The style of appointment of a chief (and importance of chieftaincy institution) in Agona Swedru is not different from other Agona towns. The current paramount chief of Agona Swedru, Nana Kojo Botwe, and his predecessors are not only royals of *Asona* clan but also are direct descendants of the first settlers of Agona Swedru. This buttresses the assertion, “an alien cannot be the chief in any Akan town” (Personal communication with Kwaahene Kwame Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, June 26, 2017). One elder, however, debunked that assertion. He stated that a powerful alien who could conquer the original inhabitants can be the ruler.

Social Organisation

Just as it is practiced in other Akan communities, the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area practice the matrilineal inheritance system. Female children in the family under this system are considered important for the survival of the family as a unit and mostly, inheritance until recent time was transmitted from brothers to their sisters’ children (nephews and nieces)

(Personal communication, Osiripi Kofi Nyam, chief guard of the Asona clan in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, October 21, 2017).

Although the indigenous people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area are the Agona people, over the years, they have co-existed with other prominent minority migrants such as Ewes, Gomoas, Effutus, Fantis, Kwahus, Kontokoris, and several other ethnic groupings of Northern Ghana origin (Four year Integrated MTDP, 2010-2013). While some believe these migrants are attracted to the area due to the existence of public and private sector business activities, others are of the view that the presence of these migrants is as a result of warm and accommodating nature of the Agona people, in general. Also, Kwahene Atta Panyin, the flag bearer of the Agona Swedru town, affirmed that, naturally, the ancestors of Agona Swedru Traditional Area love visitors and appreciate the need for communal living (Personal communication with Kwahene Kwame Atta Panyin, June 26, 2017).

There are solid social bonds and economic ties between migrant tenants and their indigenous landlords to the extent that the groups intermarry and participate in joint partnership not only in the area of agriculture but also in public and private sector businesses. In the Agona Swedru Traditional Area, each member acknowledges the existence of common values and obligations, feels loyalty and commitment to the community, and thus expresses the desire and willingness to advance its interests. As a result, to ignore one's community is not only to ignore one's people but also to sever oneself from one's lineage.

The people in Agona Swedru Traditional Area celebrate *Akwambo* (path clearing) festival. According to the traditional calendar, the festival

(*Akwambo*) is celebrated every year between August and October, and it is one most paramount social event that brings people together with the aim, amongst other things, of mobilizing various communities and clans in the traditional area together and also to plan their developmental activities. The festival (*Akwambo*) serves as an avenue for generating funds for project implementation. Funeral rites, though solemn occasions, as compared to *Akwambo* festival, also serve as a major opportunity of bringing people together.

Political Structure

The governance and political structure in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area is not different from the one practiced in the Akan traditional societies in Ghana. However, one cardinal ritual that is worthy of note regarding governance and political structure in Agona Swedru Traditional Area is that assistance in the form of invocation and petitions from the deities of the Agona land is sought for anyone who assumes a leadership position. The assistance is sought for both people who assume royal positions (such as the chief, the clan head, the *supi*, and so on) and those who assume positions on the behalf of the central government, like the Assembly man or woman, the Municipal Chief Executive Officer (MCE), the Parliamentarian, and so on.

The assistance sought from the deities could be in the form of animal sacrifice and libation. The main rationale behind this ritual, amongst other things, is to invoke both the protection and the blessings of the good spirits, some of which include the ancestors, the gods, and the Supreme Being as against bad spirits such as charms and amulets, sorcerers, magic, and witchcraft.

The chief, together with his elders, administer justice. The nature of the justice system in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area is so transparent to the extent that one cannot be convicted of wrongdoing without ample evidence to back it. The judgement given to culprit is subject, however, to the gravity of the offence (Meyerowitz, 1952; Owusu, 1970; Reindorf, 1966; Vansina, 1965). This buttresses Akornor's (2000) work on how law and order is maintained in Agona Swedru Traditional Area. He established that all crimes, be they trivial or felony, were punished by a fine or the culprit sold into slavery. The nature of punishment has, however, changed in our contemporary times. For instance, culprits are no longer sold into slavery. The culprit had the right to appeal to the elders of another district or preferably the *Omanhene* if there were justifiable reasons to prove his/her (the culprit's) innocence.

According to Osiripi Kofi Nyam, the stool ranks first in the political structure before the swords, followed by the people from the royal ancestry respectively in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. He established that the stool epitomizes and represents the highest powers and authority in the land. Hence, the paramount Chief, *Omanhene*, the occupant of the stool, commands power in so many areas, some of which include politics, religion, judiciary, commerce, and so on. Under no circumstance should the chief's order be violated, and like all other Akan ethnic societies, the chief's position is held until he dies.

However, Osiripi Kofi Nyam stated that the chief could be dethroned or removed from office if there are enough reasons that suggest that he has misconducted himself, especially in the area of violation of ethical codes that commensurate the office of the chief. He added that, even when enough

evidences have attested to the fact that the chief has misconducted himself, he can only be removed from his post after he (the chief) has wilfully rejected series of counsel from the colleague chiefs ((Personal communication with Osiripi Kofi Nyam, chief guard of the Asona clan in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, June 26, 2017).

The sub-chiefs assist the paramount chief to effectively govern the traditional area. However, the sub-chiefs can administer justice without necessarily seeking the opinion of the *Omanhene*. The political structure of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, according to Kwaahene Kwame Atta Panyin, consists of the following divisions.

Kyirem	Scouts
Adonten	Mainbody
Twafo	Vanguard
Gyase	Bodyguard of the <i>Omanhene</i>
Kyidom	Rearguard
Bankum	Left wing
Nifa	Right wing
Ankobeia	The home guard

(see also Akornor, 2000, p. 29).

He further added that the Asafo company, the anchor of Agona Swedru Traditional Area's political structure, is divided into two: *dontinfo* (seniors comrades) and *tuafo* (Juniors comrades). These divisions could also be called *apegya* and *nkrantwia* respectively (Personal communication with Kwaahene Kwame Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, December 14, 2017).

Every indigene of Agona Swedru Traditional Area belongs to either of the two groups. One is immediately recruited into the group after the celebration of the puberty rite. The puberty rite is the rite performed on the adolescent to signal that a person's status has been changed from adolescent into the adult stage (Mbiti, 1991; Opoku, 1978). This stage of transition is very crucial in the life of every traditional Agona Swedru person, in the sense that it is the period where one is spiritually fortified and also taught the cultural norms such as history of the people, hard work, perseverance, respect for authority, taboo and its repercussion, and above all, defensive tactics.

It is worthy to emphasise that the type of Asafo company one will be enlisted into after the puberty rite celebration is strictly dependent on one's *agyabosom* (father's deity). Discourse on the political structure of the people of Agona Swedru area will not be complete without the mention of *supi*. The *supi* acts as the criminal investigator or the chief captain of each Asafo company. This means that every chief has got his *supi* and Asafo company that assist him in administering his authority within his jurisdiction (Personal communication, Kwahene Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, December 21, 2017; see also Adu, 1949; Akornor, 2000; Busia, 1951; Owusu, 1970).

The Asafo flag demonstrates the uniqueness of the Asafo company in that defeat of the Asafo company means that the Asafo flag is captured (Akornor, 2000). This means that only the bravest person becomes the flag bearer of the Asafo company. However, the actual leader of the Asafo company is the Asafohene (Personal Communication with Kwaahene Kwame

Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, December 21, 2017).

The Agona Swedru Traditional Area’s political structure clearly defines the order of power and hierarchy of the chiefs, and at the peck of the hierarchy in terms of administrative authority of the chiefs is the *Omanhene*. This is followed by *Omankrado* or *Krontihene*, *Tufuhene*, *Ankobeahene*, *Dabewhene*, *Nkosuohene*, and *Dwantoahene* in that order. Apart from the *Omanhene*, each chief can discharge his duties only within his jurisdiction. That is, each chief cannot operate outside his jurisdiction.

Table 3 presents a list of chiefs in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area and their responsibilities, and Table 4 presents a lists of *Amanhene* of Agona Swedru Traditional Area since 1698.

Table 3: List of the Chiefs in Agona Swedru Traditional Area and Their Responsibilities.

Chief	Responsibilities
Swedrumanhene	Overseer of all cases within the traditional area.
Omankrado	Direct assistant to Swedrumanhene.
Tufohene	Head of the various military groups and also ammunicions of the chiefdom
Ankobeahene	Head of domestic defence. That is, he offers security for women and children before, during and after war.
Dabewhene	Overseer of the warfare of immigrant settlers in the chiefdom.
Nkosuohene	Head of the developmental projects in the chiefdom.
Dwantoahene	In charge of arbitration between the chiefs and their subjects within the chiefdom.

(Source: Souvenir brochure on late Okofo Katakya Nyarko Eku IX, Omanhene of Agona Nyakrom Traditional Area, April, 2000)

Table 4: List of the Amanhene of Agona Swedru Traditional Area Since 1698

Name	Period	Remarks
Nana Kwao Tutu	1698-1725	Died
Nana Eyisa	1725-1750	Died
Nana Gyan Kodwo	1750-1778	Died
Nana Kwaa Tsen	1778-1830	Died
Nana Kobina Kuma	1830-1834	Destooled
Nana Kwa Okurodu	1834-1854	Died
Nana Adensum	1854-1896	Died
Nana Kweku Torgbor	1896-1918	Died
*Nana Kodwo Nyarko	1918-1921	Destooled
*Nana Kwa Okurodu II	1921-1924	Destooled
Nana Kodwo Nyarko	1924-1931	Abdicated
Nana Kobina Botwe I	1934-1967	Died
Nana Kobina Botwe II	1968	

(Source: Kwaahene Kwame Atta Panyin, Flag bearer of Agona Swedru Traditional Area; see also Akornor, 2000, p.51).

Religion

Religion indeed cannot operate in a vacuum; it incarnates itself in a culture (Idowu, 1973; Mbiti, 1991). It is, therefore, not surprising that Mbiti (1999) stressed that it will be impossible to effectively study African people without studying their religion. Furthermore, he added that the African is not only notoriously religious but also religion permeates through all departments of life in Africa. As a matter of fact, in communities in Africa, generally, and

Ghanaian communities, in particular, knowledge about God (God consciousness) is discerned (realized) without being formally taught (Gyekye, 2003). An Akan adage states *Obi nkyere Abofra Nyame*, literally meaning “nobody teaches a child about God.”

Prior to the introduction of other religions such as Christianity and Islam, Agona people had their own religion called African Traditional Religion (Souvenir brochure on late Okofo Katakya Nyarko Eku IX, Omanhene of Agona Nyakrom Traditional Area, April 2000). One of its (African Traditional Religion) major beliefs is the belief in the Supreme Being (God) which its adherents referred to as ‘*Nyame*’ (filled up with satisfaction when grasped), ‘*Onyankopon*’ (the great friend), ‘*Twedeampong*’ (the tower of strength), ‘*Tumiwura*’ (Owner of all authority and powers).

The belief is held that the Supreme Being has given part of his powers to lesser creatures, the gods. In the field of management or business, this relationship between the Supreme Being (God) and his subordinate could be termed “delegation of authority” (Tracy, 2000). Such lesser gods are believed to be spirits, some of whom reside in rivers, streams, mountains, hills, trees, and so on. African Traditional Religion, therefore, supplicates to the Supreme Being (God) through these spirits and the departed souls. Adherents of African Traditional Religion believe that departed souls (ancestors) still exist but in spirit form and they intercede on behalf of the living (Sarpong, 1996).

However, about close to half a century ago, the situation is not the same as on the ground now. Other religious affiliations such as Christianity and Islam are now in existence and the one that seems to have attracted mass followers of inhabitants of the study area in general and Agona Swedru town,

in particular, is Christianity (2010 population & Housing Census, District Analytical Report, Agona East District and Agona West Municipal profile).

It is worthy to note that religious groups found in the study area co-exist peacefully and respect each other's rights. This, the researcher believes, defeats the concept of some religious extremists who see nothing good in other people's religion except theirs; hence, they are intolerant with people from other religions.

Religion ought to be a unifying factor but not to divide mankind. After all, there is one Ultimate Reality (God) to whom every religion seeks to revere or honour (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2005). The person who is more likely to be hostile to another man's religion is that man who knows no other religion than that of his own (See *Course book for Comparative Study of Religion*, National Open University of Nigeria).

Additionally, there are taboos – rules and regulations that govern the lives of people in the towns or villages. These taboos, though may differ in form or style, exist in most Akan towns, if not all, and even some other ethnic groups in Ghana. In the study area, in general, and Agona Swedru, in particular, the taboos are considered to have socio-economic and spiritual importance, including regulation of farming days, land use, water resources use, and control and adherence to some social norms (Agona West Municipal profile).

Furthermore, taboos help in the protection of the forest in the study area and its fragile ecosystem through the creation of sacred grooves known as *Nananom Mpow*, the final resting place of the chiefs in Agona Swedru Traditional Area. Moreover, since it is prohibited to engage in some economic

activities (for instance, farming) on taboo days, most clans in Agona Swedru Traditional Area fix community or family dialogue meetings on such days.

Table 5: Taboo Days in Some Major Towns in the Traditional Area

Zonal Council	Taboo Days						
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Swedru			√				
Nyakrom			√				
Otsenkora ng		√					
Bobikuma		√					
Nkum			√				
Abodom		√					
Kwanyako			√				
Nsaba				√			
Asafo			√				
Duakwa				√			
Mensakrom		√					
Mankrong				√			
Nkwanta							

Incest is believed to be sacrilegious by the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area based on the fact that the universe, to an African, is composed of two dimensions - the ‘profane’ and the ‘sacred’ – and the two must unite for them to become reality, for one has no meaning without the other although the sacred presides over the profane (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2008; Gyekye, 2003; Idowu, 1973; Mbiti, 1991; Opoku, 1978). This view by the Agona people underpins every aspect of life particularly in the area of sex.

On the account of clarity, incest is categorized into two. Category one includes engaging in sexual act with one's half-sister, that is, same father but different clan mother or one's father's brother's child. Category two includes engaging in anyone of the following sexual acts: brother's wife, son's wife, one's wife's mother, uncle's wife, wife of anyone of the same clan, father's other wife not being of the same clan with one's mother etc. as well as having sex with a woman in her menstrual period.

Additionally, *Agya* (father) is not just human but also a spirit in the Agona people's perspective. He (father) is believed to give *ntoro* or *agyabosom* - the male totemic spirit which every child possesses whether male or female. And that *ntoro* spirit has power over the children before and even after the lifetime of the father (Gyekye, 2003; Opoku, 1978; Rattray, 1969; Sarpong, 1974). As a result, nothing of any sort should be done to hurt it (*ntoro* spirit), because its negative consequences, particularly on the child, cannot be overemphasized. One major thing amongst others that can hurt the *ntoro* spirit is through sexual act with any one of the same *ntoro*, some of which have been stated in the above categories.

Economic Activities

From the period of pre-colonial era through to post-colonial era, Davidson (1965) contended that the Agona people have organized themselves creditably particularly in the area of trade.

Agona Swedru Traditional Area has an appreciably well-developed road network and is easily accessible from Accra, the national capital (about one and a half hours drive) and likewise from the regional capital, Cape Coast. In addition to that, it is the main commercial center of the Agona people and for

that reason, anything that affects the town, Agona Swedru, especially in the area of commerce indirectly affects the surrounding towns.

The resource base of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, just like any other town or city, is determined by the natural resources of the area. Indeed, the climate, soil, and labour base of Agona Swedru Traditional Area is agricultural biased. Hence, its economy is predominantly agriculture oriented, accounting for about 64% of its entire population (Agona West Municipal profile). There is always, on daily basis, some form of economic interaction between Agona Swedru Traditional Area and the commercial towns around. These include Akim Oda, Winneba, Apam, Bawjiase, Asikuma, Ajumako, and Kasoa.

Agona Swedru Traditional Area's economic activities date back to several decades in the sense that, until recent times, the only important road to the West (Takoradi and beyond) was through Nsawam, Adeiso, Kwanyako, and Agona Swedru. Consequently, Kwanyako and Swedru became important stop-overs during the journey and opened up the area to commerce and other economic activities. In addition, Winneba, which was then an important port, was serviced mostly by economic activities in Agona Swedru and that made the town an important outlet for the goods from the port (Personal communication, Honorable Samuel Oppong, June 28, 2017).

Commercial activities have grown rapidly in recent times in Agona Swedru Tradition Area. The service industries in the area, example, Agro-processing, *gari* processing, palm oil extraction, '*apeteshie*' distilling (locally manufactured alcohol), wood carving, and basket weaving, although on a small scale level, is booming. There has been an increase in the number of

artisans, mainly masons and carpenters, which has accelerated the growth of the construction industry. However, the major challenge has been youth employment and economically inactive people. Indeed, the latter, according to Ghana Statistical Service (2010), are the too young (due to massive teenage pregnancy and premature father), disabled, sick (invalid), too old, people in full time education, and people who engage in home duties (household chores). Consequently, the high dependency ratio in the area is not only alarming but also horrible, resulting in all sorts of economic pressure.

Polygamy is not only a common practice but also believed by many as the source of economic empowerment in Agona Swedru Traditional Area. The reason is that, out of the total population of 2,201,863 in the Central Region of Ghana, the population of Agona people alone is made up of 201,278. Females dominate their male counterparts, with the population of 56,213, and that of males is 45,065 respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The wide disparity of the male-female ratio in the traditional area, that is, women being more than men, coupled with inadequate job opportunities in the area, compel them, especially teenagers, to seek early marriage. The wives are subsequently used as labour on farms by some men (Agona West Municipal Profile). The effect is that people, particularly the youth, engage in all sorts of unethical activities, with the major one being *sakawa* practice, not just to survive but also to meet the demands of their dependents.

For instance, a report released from the Central Region Health Directorate of Ghana Health Service published in Ghanaian Times News Papers under the caption “Agona West Records 762 Teenage Pregnancy Cases” affirmed that teenage pregnancy cases in the Agona West Municipality have not only

increased in recent times but also topped all districts and municipalities within the Central Region of Ghana (see Table 6). The report further stated that, between the years 2016 and 2017, the Agona West municipality recorded a total of 762 cases of teenage pregnancy in 2017 as against 748 cases in 2016. The victims were mostly school girls aged between 10 to 15 years (“Agona West Records 762 Teenage Pregnancy Cases,” 2018).

Table 6: Teenage Pregnancy Cases

YEAR	DISTRICT / MUNICIPAL		
	BREMAN ESIKUMA	EFUTU(WINNEBA)	AGONA WEST (SWEDRU)
2016	708	419	748
2017	632	412	762
2018	726	394	625
2019	308 (half year)	179 (half year)	253 (half year)

Source: District/Municipal Health Directorate of Agona West, Efutu and Breman Esikuma.

Although the report ascribed events such as festivals celebrations, funerals, and other social gathering as the main contributory factors to the rapid increase in number of teenage pregnancy cases in the traditional area, authorities like Swedruman Council of Chiefs, Chief Executive Officer of Agona West Municipal Assembly, and others insisted that the high rate of *sakawa* activities in the area is the main brain behind this anomaly.

Coincidentally, an investigation conducted by the health directorate of Central Region, Ghana (Productive and Child Care Unit) and others about the causes of these rampant cases of teenage pregnancies revealed that the ages of men who impregnated these girls also range between 10 and 19 years. The

investigation further confirmed that many of these young men are either Junior High or Senior High School drop-outs, hence the *sakawa* practice amongst other things (Personal Communication, Sir Bright, Junior High school teacher at Swedru A. M. A. 'E', July 24, 2018).

This revelation about the ages of these potential teenage fathers had established the fact that activities of *sakawa* practitioners do not only pose a threat to the progress in terms of the stability of the communities in Agona Swedru Traditional Area but also had constantly given psychological trauma, especially to parents of female adolescents living in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

Summary

This section of the study looked at the study of the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. The various sections dealt with the location, clans, and nature of settlements of Agona people in general, and Agona Swedru Traditional Area, in particular. Furthermore, the section expatiated on the origin, social, political structure, religious organizations, and economic activities of the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area and finally the relevance of taboo despite the variations in religious affiliations of the people. In the next chapter, the researcher presents the nature of *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF SAKAWA PRACTICE IN AGONA SWEDRU

TRADITIONAL AREA

Introduction

To discuss the nature of *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, there was the need to examine, first, the philosophy behind the practice, its origin in Ghana, at large, and Agona Swedru Traditional Area, in particular. For that reason, this chapter is divided into four parts. In the various parts, the researcher discussed the philosophy behind *sakawa* practice, the origin of *sakawa* practice, the training of *sakawa* practitioners as well as *sakawa* and occultism.

The philosophy behind *sakawa* practice as established in the Chapter Two is not new to the people of the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. This is due to the fact that ‘*oben*’ or ‘*woa ben neho*’, ‘spiritual fortification’ of oneself, family, work, and so on against activities of evil forces in the world of humankind had long been part of the beliefs and practices of the people. However, it is the name *sakawa* and its *modus operandi* that have been modified in recent time.

The phenomenon of *sakawa* practice is of great concern to the people of Agona Swedru and the nation as a whole. This is because, Africans in general, and Agonas in particular, believe that wealth acquired through dubious means negatively affects the stability and harmony in the society. Hence, there is a general belief across the West African sub-region and Ghanaian societies, in particular, that the progress of any society leads to

destruction when its people are bereft of good moral values (Idowu, 1991; Mbiti, 1979; Opoku, 1979).

Indeed, in this day and age, one cannot claim to be ignorant of the fact that virtually everything from sports, education, business as well as nuclear power plants is being run on the computer and this to a greater extent has made cyber-crime to assume rather disturbing implications (Haggins, 2010). To be abreast as an individual with the changing trends of occurrences happening globally in the 21st Century, the use of the computer, and for that matter the internet, becomes indispensable.

The nature of *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area was discovered to be both dynamic and superstitious in the sense that it was quiet difficult to decouple the belief system of the people in the area from the *sakawa* practice. In addition to that, there were various interpretations about the concept *sakawa* as a phenomenon, especially in the area of its operations.

On the account of clarity, the section caption “the training of *sakawa* practitioners” in the chapter was characterised with the case studies in order to depict the *modus operandi* involved and also to emphasise the rationale behind the *sakawa* practice.

Philosophy Behind *Sakawa* Practice

The philosophy behind *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area has been attributed to several factors but the one that seems to have been widely accepted by the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area themselves is ‘*asumantu*’ (spiritual fortification) against witchcraft activities, in that witchcraft activities are not only believed to impede the progress of the community at large but also that activities of witches could inflict serious

atrocities on the individual as a person particularly in the area of barrenness, pre-mature death, chronic illness, drunkenness, lack of success in one's work, and so on.

Witchcraft, the activities of performing magic mostly to do evil (*Cambridge International Dictionary*), is arguably the most common belief that runs through the belief system of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. For that reason, there is a general belief in the area that one cannot fully succeed in anything, particularly in the area of business, especially *sakawa* practice or being in leadership, particularly chieftaincy position, without *asumantu* or *oben* (supernatural fortification).

It is not uncommon to find out that, within many communities in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, there are one or two individuals who are known to have fortified themselves supernaturally and that made such individuals unable to be defeated by the enemy, particularly from the activities of witches. Similarly, there are some people, particularly many youth, whose source of wealth is believed to have been acquired supernaturally and such money is described as *sika duro* (ritual or blood money), and most common in recent time is the acquisition of occult knowledge.

For instance, in Kwaman and Asafo neighbouring towns in the traditional area, it was seen as normal when some individuals within the community predicted, with accuracy, the colour and number of beads a woman was wearing or the kind of food, especially soup, a woman was carrying to the fiancé (which was the common practice by ladies those days), just by seeing her on sight.

According to Opanyin Kwame Asoa, if anyone dared challenge as to how they (the predictors) could possibly know the exact colour, number of beads, or soup being carried by the woman, the beads could break off instantly or the food (soup) could pour on the ground mysteriously to prove to all and sundry, including the challengers that such individuals, as they put it *onnda ho kwa*. That is, those individuals were fortified in the realms of the supernatural (Personal communication with Opanyin Kwame Asoa, *owu mpaso hene*, ‘funeral bed king’ of Yogo no. 2 Asona clan in Agona Nyakrom, June 29, 2018).

The belief in witchcraft by the people gives a clearer picture and also some revelations about the reason why *sakawa* practice - an action geared towards wealth acquisition by the use of a computer or the internet is linked to magical powers - is on the rise every day in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

When asked whether *sakawa* practice had any link with the beliefs and practices of the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area, Opanyin Kwame Asoa answered in the negative. However, he argued that the ritual aspect in the *sakawa* practice is not new to the Agona people and had been practiced for many years (Personal communication with Opanyin Kwame Asoa, *owu mpaso hene*, ‘funeral bed king’ of Yogo no. 2 Asona clan in Agona Nyakrom, June 29, 2018). This means that, although *sakawa* practice as a phenomenon has changed in form (that is, in terms of its original name and the *mudus operandi*) in contemporary times, the concept has long been the ideology and practice of the Agona people in the Central Region of Ghana.

These pre-conceived ideologies about the activities of witches are transferred into the practice of *sakawa*. That is, when a *sakawa* practitioner

gets his supposed client, there is the belief that the client must be protected, where protection means shielding the soul of the client from activities of witchcraft so that the practitioner can effectively extort money.

Additionally, the *sakawa* practitioner himself should have favour before the client in order that whatever he requests from the client would be granted. Some section of the people in the area, especially the elders, indicated that the philosophy behind *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area was not only informed by the belief in witchcraft but also believed to have been borrowed from the concept of the two dimensional view of the universe of Africans, seen also in African Traditional Religion, which was the original religion of Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

However, Honourable Samuel Opong contended that the excessive attention that is given to superstition in the Agona Swedru and its environs, particularly with regards to witchcraft, is increasingly becoming impediment to progress in the area. He added that apart from the general belief that witches inflict physical and material losses on innocent people, many people in the Agona Swedru and its environs have been indoctrinated to believe that the main diets of the witches, amongst others, are human blood and flesh.

He stressed that, as a consequence, any misfortune or bad thing that occurs in Agona Swedru and its environs is thought to be the work of witches. This, according to him, had bred many people in the area who refuse to take full responsibility for many of their actions. He cited a flood case that occurred on June 20, 2010 as an example.

The main bridge in Agona Swedru area broke down as a result of flood of the *Akora* River, the main river in the area. The collapsed bridge brought about economic burden and also created all sorts of challenges for the people and others living in the neighbouring towns. Traders could not cross to the other side of town where the main market was. As a result, they had to either reduce the price of their farm produce (goods) drastically or risk them to perish. In the same vein, school children and passengers enrooting to the other side of town and suburb towns like Akroso, Akim Oda, Bawjiase, Winneba, Accra, and so on had to take extremely longer routes in order to get to their destination.

Many people in the area, including chiefs, came to the conclusion that the flood that resulted in the collapsed bridge was not physical but spiritual. In other words, the collapsed bridge was caused by evil spirits (witches). As a result, the gods of the land, especially the river (*Akora*) god, must be appeased in order for the people to be freed from the hardship and subsequent challenges. That is, libation ought to be offered, with animals such as a cow, sheep, and others slaughtered in addition to the performance of series of rituals in order to remedy the situation.

Contrary to the people's belief, the findings from the officials from the Department of Urban Road Work, upon their arrival made the following revelations:

- a. Most buildings in the river banks, particularly towards the bridge, must be demolished in the sense that such buildings impede the river's movement during flooding.

- b. From 1942 to date, the bridge had not experienced any major renovation. The officials stated that, after every 50 years, the bridge had to go through complete overhauling (shut down maintenance).
- c. Vehicles carrying loads exceeding 50,000 tonnes must not be allowed to pass on the bridge.

However, none of the points raised by the officials from the Department of Urban Road Work had been effectively obeyed by the custodians (the chiefs or the people of Agona Swedru).

Considering the above case, the hardship with regard to the broken bridge that the people experienced would have been avoided, if they had been responsible enough or obedient to the rules and regulations of the bridge (Personal Communication with Honourable Samuel Oppong, Member of Parliament/Municipal Chief Executive Officer, Agona West Municipal, November 17, 2017).

In a related incident, the water plant factory at Agona Kwanyako, the main source of pipe borne water supply to Agona Swedru and its environs, embarked on major shut down maintenance that lasted for three weeks. As a result, there was shortage of water supply in the area. Many people preferred to wash their dishes and clothing at the river (*Akora*) side. A four year old girl who was left at the banks of the river with other children got drowned. It took nearly half a day before the deceased body was found.

When the mother of the deceased child was informed about the child's death, she broke into tears and lamented with these words: "My enemies had done it again." What she meant, according to Opanin Kofi Arko, was that the witches have succeeded in the killing of the daughter this time around. The

lamentation from the mother paints the picture of how deep superstitious beliefs had sunk into the minds and hearts of many people in the Agona Swedru, in particular, and Agona communities, in general.

In a critical assessment of the case, one could unravel the fact that, obviously, the young girl died out of the mother's negligence, not through the works of the supposed witches (Personal communication with Opanin Kofi Arko, December 2, 2017).

Origin of *Sakawa* Practice

On the origin of the word, *sakawa*, the Agona West Chief Imam, Sheik Mohammed Khamis, asserted that *sakawa* practice is anti-godly and thus has no link with Islam, neither has it got any equivalent word in Arabic. He admitted that the word, *sakawa*, derives its root from Hausa language *sakachike* which is translated as "put in it" or "put inside," *saake*, "exchange," or *saakewa*, which means "continuous exchange." However, exactly what should be "put in it" (*sakachike*) or exchange (*saake*), according to him, remains a mystery because only the practitioners of *sakawa* themselves can concisely tell "the what" and "into what" should be put in (Personal communication with Sheik Mohammed Khamis, Agona West Chief Imam, December 7, 2017). This adds to the general belief that *sakawa* practice is quiet controversial.

Also, examining *sakawa* as a term from its etymology, the equivalent English word or phrase that could be used to describe it (*sakawa*) is "to master mind," "to breakthrough," "to trick," "to outsmart," "to swindle" and so on (Personal communication with Rev Addai-Baah, Minister of Assemblies of God church, Ghana, Agona Swedru branch/Assistant Headmaster, Swedru

Senior High School, December 10, 2017). Inferring from this piece of idea, it makes every sense for one to establish that there is some amount of occult or mystical dimension to the practice of *sakawa*.

As a matter of fact, if one juxtaposes the root word for *sakawa* with the views obtained from the respondents, the definition for *sakawa* practice is the type of cyber-crime that combines internet scam with the occult or spiritual powers in order to enhance one's (the practitioner's) chances of defrauding his victims (Personal Communication with Dr. Nana Yaw Asabre, Lecturer in Professional and Social Computing, Computer Science Department, Accra Technical University, August 16, 2017; see also Asabre, n.d.). The spiritual powers connote *sumsum mu akwankyere*, "supernatural directions," some of which, according to the responses from the various respondents, are in the form of "anointed handkerchief," "magic ring," "magic chain," "holy oil," and so on which are obtained from traditional priests, mallams, and pastors.

On the contrary, a section of the respondents also believe that *sakawa* or *sakachike* is considered to have taken place or successful when a person with an advanced knowledge in information technology (IT) hacks into a database and copies details of other people's credit cards to purchase for himself items on the internet. For such people, *sakawa* practice has got nothing to do with occultism or any supernatural dimension.

The belief that *sakawa* practice has no link with the occult is further explained that the practice operates exclusively by the use of a software on the internet. The purpose of that software is to help generate details of people's credit cards on the internet (in their hundreds). These fraudsters then enter each credit card with a secret code on the software. The intention is to have

access to the password of that particular credit card because without the credit card's password, there is no way one can use it to make purchase (of items online) or withdrawal (of money).

Steadily, the fraudsters enter the secret code on each credit card until they eventually have access to any of the credit card. Although access to most cards, they confessed, register invalid details (that is, the card rejects the secret code because it does not match with the details on the card), access to at least four or five of every hundred credit cards they attempted to decode became successful. This, according to the two of the interviewee, confirmed the fact that *sakawa* practice is the game of chance rather than being occult (Personal Communication with interviewee one and interviewee four, Agona Swedru, December 8, 2017).

Additionally, the argument contended that not anybody or internet fraudsters can practice *sakawa* in the sense that it takes not only advanced knowledge in information technology but also how to use credit card on the internet to practice. In Ghana, the places that these types of *sakawa* fraudsters are believed to have predominance are Kasoa, Nima, and Tema (Personal Communication with Interviewee One, Agona Swedru, December 16, 2017).

As a matter of fact, this notion on *sakawa* practice contradicts Yeboah's (2009) and Oduro-Frimpong's (2016) article on the subject that *sakawa* practice is associated with some level of occultism. Furthermore, it also contradicts the meaning of the term "web jacking" or "hacking" which is defined as illegal entry and take-over of a website, database, credit card, and so on in order to satisfy one's selfish interest. So, does it mean that web jacking or hacking is the same as *sakawa* practice? Evidently, whatever side of

the coin one looks at *sakawa* practice, one thing that cannot be taken out from its definition is that it is a type of cyber-crime.

Cyber-crime could be defined as an unlawful act wherein the computer or the server is either a tool or a target or both. In other words, the computer becomes a conduit through which illegal acts are committed. As a matter of fact, discourse on cyber-crime covers wide range of activities but for clarity sake, it is important we group them into two main areas.

The first area is when the computer is used as a target. The interest of the criminals when the computer is used as target is to dysfunction a particular computer network, device, and database by deliberately infesting or attacking the system with viruses or denial-of-service (Dos). A typical example is web jacking. Second is when the computer is used as a tool. The interest of the criminals when the computer is used as a tool is to use the computer network to stage or advance other diabolic acts. Prominent amongst them are digital piracy, child trafficking, money laundering, counterfeiting, identity theft or impersonation, credit card theft, and so on.

Of late, cyber-crime has become a global problem and what makes it more worrisome is the fact that cyber-crime or attacks can go on undetected for months or even years. Additionally, the dynamic nature of cyber-crime (that is, moving from identity theft or impersonation, password theft to stealing of credit card details, digital piracy, web jacking and so on) makes it quiet cumbersome for even advanced countries to completely eradicate it. For instance, on May 29, 2009, the then president of the United States of America, Obama, declared his commitment to combating cyber-crime by establishing a high-level initiative to address the growing problem of computer attacks —

against the government, corporations and individuals — by coordinating the various efforts to fight hackers and other computer criminals under the direction of a coordinator already dubbed the ‘cyber czar’ (Markoff, 2009).

The article further reported that, for the past two years, computer crime has cost America \$8 billion (See also “Sarah Palin E-Mail, Hacked,” n.d). And also Americans Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Internet Complaint Centre in 2014 alone affirmed that there were 269,422 complaints filled with a total loss index of \$800.492.073. The statistic further confirmed that there are 1.5 million cyber-crimes committed annually and when one breaks them down into days and hours there are 4000 cybercrimes committed daily and 170 cybercrimes committed hourly (Markoff, 2009).

Coincidentally, the story is not different in Africa in the sense that Tomi Oladipo, BBC Monitoring Africa Security Correspondent, in his article posted on the internet on 17 November, 2015 under the heading “Cybercrime is Africa’s ‘Next Big Threat’,” contended that the porous situation in many countries in Africa is such that it can take a hacker just 15 minutes to break into websites which have the typical level of security. The article further stated that, in Kenya, businesses are losing about \$146 million every year to cyber-crime. In a related article, banks in countries such as Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia had lost US\$245 million to cyber criminals in 2011 alone (Oladipo, 2015).

Additionally, in October 2015 alone, there was recorded incidence of 6,000 cyber-attacks against South African infrastructure, internet service provider (ISPs), and businesses (Oladipo, 2015). Calculatedly, these recorded incidents of cyber-crime and attacks could have been more if the numerous

cyber-crimes that have taken place but yet to be noticed or recorded were to be added. In Africa, many have argued that the rise in cyber-crime is partly due to the fact that many countries do not have clear legislation to combat the menace.

The story is not different from Ghana in the sense that the document for the ratification of the convention on cyber-crime, otherwise known as Budapest Convention, is still at the cabinet level waiting for approval. Even though the president, Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo, emphatically declared at the launch of National Cyber security week that his administration will equip the country's law enforcement agencies in terms of training of crime officers with state of the art ICT equipment to enable them tackle issues related to cyber-crime completely (Ministry of Interior, 2018). The question is, what success will this statement stand to achieve if the legislation that will help enforce and also back the legislators to prosecute convicted cyber criminals has not yet been gazzeted?

Statistically, the rate at which cyber-crime activities are penetrating the Ghanaian societies cannot be quantified. Cyber-crime has become an alternative livelihood for many contemporary Ghanaian youth. As a matter of fact, what seems to make the situation (cyber-crime activities) alarming, particularly among the youth in Ghana, is the belief that the occult or spiritual powers can assist in successfully committing cyber-crime which is popularly referred in the local parlance as *sakawa*.

The exact date *sakawa* practice began in Ghana and for that matter Agona Swedru Traditional Area is not known. While some affirmed *sakawa* practice in Ghana to be an importation from neighboring Nigeria and

Cameroun, which are ranked by some analysts as the leading states in West Africa sub-regions, as the target and source of malicious internet activities, others also are of the view that *sakawa* practice in Ghana originated from Ghanaian expatriates, particularly from Europe and America in Nima-Maamobi area, suburbs in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

But in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, *sakawa* practice is alleged to have begun by the Kotokoli ethnic group in Yalwa Zongo and Waraba estate vicinities as pen pal correspondence in the early nineties. The practice was influenced by their relatives (Kotokolis) resident in Nima-Mamobi area, suburb in Accra, Ghana. But Accra being the capital made them easily exposed to security operatives (Personal Communication, Interviewees One, Two, and Three, Agona Swedru, December 14, 2017).

People, particularly the youth and students from both basic and senior high schools, began writing letters in the form of correspondence to Christian organizations abroad for items like Christian magazines, tracks, devotional guide, the bible, and so on, with the pretext that they (the letter writers) desired to be educated and also become well equipped in the area of growth into the Christian faith in order that they (letter writers) could be effectively equipped and also evangelize the gospel of Jesus Christ in Africa.

Some section of the youth, on the other hand, also wrote to charity organizations to seek for various kinds of assistance using various reasons including lies such as being an orphan, battling with chronic diseases with no assistance from anyone, and having been dropped out from school because of inability to pay school fees. Gradually, these crafty means of extorting money from foreigners got to the peak when a popular magazine based in London,

Great Britain named “Match-maker” believed to have been introduced to Agona Swedru Traditional Area by Kwame Nimako (not his real name), a deportee from Great Britain. The magazine published exclusively pictures of young ladies worldwide seeking for their suitors (marriage partners). It was believed that one gets not less than twenty potential marriage partners mostly from Europe and America, when one’s particulars (picture and the address) are published in the magazine for the first time (Personal Communication, Interviewees One, Two, Three, and Four, Agona Swedru, December 16, 2017).

Many of my informants also affirmed that the success in terms of growth in the correspondence with the foreigners in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area was as a result of the fact that many pen pal correspondents (fraudsters) saw the place as secure and safe, compared to pen pal correspondence in suburbs like Dansoman, Nima-Mamobi, Kasoa, and Winneba. These informants attested to the fact that the threat of security operatives in the aforementioned areas was constantly and increasingly becoming unbearable every passing day.

Another reason that made the correspondence with the foreigners successful was the fact that ladies from Africa were believed to be not only well mannered but also beautiful and, above all, sexy. Cunningly, one (the writer) has to marshal all tricks at this point to maintain the friendship and extort money, accordingly, ranging from school fees, utility bills, medical bills, visa and plane ticket, groceries bills, air time bill, and so on (Personal Communication, Interviewees One, Three, and Four, Agona Swedru, December 5, 2017).

Over time, somewhere in the late nineties, Agona Swedru Traditional Area experienced rapid growth in the internet café business where almost every vicinity within the area could boast of at least one internet café in operation. Consequently, the traditional way of pen-pal correspondence (that is, sending and receiving letters from the post office) was seen as both obsolete and time wasting, hence the patronage of the internet café. Comparatively, there is not too much difference in terms of the *modus operandi* used by the traditional pen-pal correspondents and the modern internet fraudsters.

Training of *Sakawa* Practitioners

Unlike formal training that is accompanied by well-structured syllabus and teaching aid, traditional apprenticeship is normally what is used to recruit “new comers” into the *sakawa* practice. Indeed, to be trained as *sakawa* practitioner is a life long journey with no specific date for graduation. This, perhaps, is due to the dynamic nature of technology in our contemporary times.

In Agona Swedru Traditional Area, there are three major stages one goes through before one gets to the *sakawa* stage. These stages are the amateur stage, the scammer’s stage, and the cyber-spiritual stage. In all cases, the success of the practitioner is based primarily on character traits such as humility, submissiveness, obedience to simple instructions, respect for the seniors in the game, and above all the level of education of the trainee (Personal Communication, Interviewees One, Two, Three and Four, September 15, 2017).

The amateur stage is the point where the person formally expresses the desire to learn the game and also to be like the master. This stage is influenced

by the flamboyant as well as extravagant lifestyle of the master or senior *sakawa* practitioner, that is, the material possessions of the master practitioner such as expensive laptop, mobile phone, vehicles, mansion and so on that he/she (the master) enjoys. The person (the beginner) becomes a servant to the master, running errands, washing his car, accompanying him to internet cafés and so on. He (the beginner) learns through observation, especially how to hunt for clients in the various sites such as “ehamony.com,” “mate1.com,” “widdate4sex,” “one night friend,” and many others on the internet and also how to negotiate a deal, whether marriage or business with the client. Additionally, he learns at this stage the role apparatus like naked picture of ladies, pictures of fake diamond, and gold, play in the game and how it is scanned and used as part of negotiations on the internet.

The second stage is the scammer’s stage. This is the point where the person single-handedly scouts for the client and establishes a rapport through chatting on the internet. That is, the person at this stage, is permitted to negotiate with the new client but when there is some difficulty, he could consult the master for directions. As a matter of fact, in Agona Swedru Traditional Area, the leading cyber-crime, according to most of my informants, is identity theft, otherwise known as impersonation (Personal Communication, Interviewees One, Two, and Three, September 10, 2017).

An impersonator is someone who copies another person’s speech, behaviour, and facial expressions (*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*). This can be subdivided into two, namely arranged or false marital relationship and fake business deal. Indeed, each of the above deals is

approached with tact and craftiness so much so that at the end, the client is swindled.

In a conversation with three of my interviewees, they demonstrated to me the skill they use to swindle their clients. The details of the conversation seen in the cases below, according to them, are aspects of impersonation commonly practised in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

Case one

Kojo is a sixteen year old Ghanaian male bearing a female name Becky and Lucas is a fifty-eight year old Canadian man. Below is the conversation that took place between them via the internet.

Becky: Hi, am Becky, 19 years from Ghana, West Africa

Lucas: Hi, Lucas from Canada

Becky: What do you do for a living?

Lucas: Taxi driver

Becky: good, I am a student in the university

Lucas: ok

Becky: How is your family I mean kids and wife

Lucas: Two kids but divorce. What about you?

Becky: I am single with no kid. Which part of Canada are you from?

Lucas: Toronto, 458 Blumberg Street. S. T.

Becky: also in Agona Swedru Yaabem Street H/N^o YB 343/15. What are you here (the website) for?

Lucas: friendship, Serious relationship and have some fun. What about you?

Becky: looking for solo (soul) mate

Lucas: Same as well

Becky: For how long have been searching for (soul mate) on this site

Lucas: Just a month

Becky: Well I am serious but have not met any serious guy who can care for me. If you would not mind can we talk on hangout (Google Hangout) so that we can get to know each other well?

Lucas: Good this is my number +009147559708

Becky: Ok wait I will save the number in my hangout and get back to you soon.

Lucas: Ok

Becky: Hi

Lucas: hello

Becky: Yeah this is Becky

Lucas: Oh ok

Becky: How many ladies have you been chatting with at the site

Lucas: Two but all did not have enough time for me.

Becky: Do you still chat

Lucas: Not anymore. Can I see your picture

Becky: ok

Lucas: nice pic

Becky: Thanks, have you been to my country Ghana before

Lucas: No, what about you, to my country Canada

Becky: No, tell me how much serious are you and what makes you real

Lucas: I am serious to stay with you the rest of my life. (What about you?)

Becky: Yes, I am ever ready to love you but I don't want to be hurt anymore so promise and swear to me that you will ever love me to the end of our life.

Lucas: Ok I promise babe

Becky: Can I see your pic

Lucas: Ok wait for me

Becky: Wow you are looking handsome, Honey

Lucas: Thank you

Becky: Babe can we talk tomorrow (Note: Becky's first trick)

Lucas: Why?

Becky: Maybe going to cook or running out of airtime

Lucas: Ok, make a recharge

Becky: Don't have enough credit right now to recharge my internet bill so tomorrow

Lucas: Ok how much will it cost

Becky: 50dollars

Lucas: ok so how can I do that?

Becky: Dear I will try and do by myself

Lucas: Come on babe am ready to make you happy

Becky: hmm. ok

Lucas: So tell me how can I help

Becky: Then you have to send it by Western Union

Lucas: Ok, can you give me your details

Becky: Sure (Name, Country, Town, Code) (Note: these are necessary details that assist the client to send the money via Western Union Money transfer).

Lucas: Ok

Becky: ok

Lucas: Babe I will get back to you soon

Becky: Ok

Chatting breaks

Lucas: Hi

Becky: Hello

Lucas: When I check my pocket I got you 100 dollars

Becky: Wow thank you that is real man of you and good to have you in my life honey

Lucas: You're welcome

Becky: Please can you give the details

Lucas: Sure (TCN 7541383492)

Becky: Thank you

Lucas: ok

Becky: Can I go recharge and chat you later Babe

Lucas: sure, am waiting babe

Becky: ok

30 minutes break

Becky: Hello honey

Lucas: hi

Becky: am back and I got the money; I never thought you could do this for me within this short time. I will love you for the rest of my life. And thank you so much for your care

Lucas: ok never mind it's my pleasure to do that babe and you can ask me whatever you need. You are loving and good to stay with.

Becky: thank you

Lucas: Ok

Becky: Ok babe can we talk in 4 hours' time in my time, because I have to go to the office and make the payment and take my shower and my breakfast.

Lucas: sure am waiting, what your time now.

Becky: it 10:05am

Lucas: ok mine is.....

Becky: ok take care love you sweetheart

Lucas: love you too

Becky: Kiss.. Kiss...

Lucas: Kiss.....

Case two

Cindy is a nineteen years old Ghanaian boy but with female name. Tony is a sixty-eight years old pensioner from the state of Louisiana, United States of America. Below is the conversation that took place between them via the internet.

Cindy: Hello

Tony: Hello

Cindy: Where do you come from?

Tony: Louisiana, United States and you?

Cindy: Ghana, West Africa. Have you been to Africa before?

Tony: No

Cindy: Do you smoke or drink

Tony: I enjoy drinking alcohol but don't smoke

Cindy: I don't drink and smoke either. Do you drive? (are you left-handed or right-handed)

Tony: I drive but why do you ask?

Cindy: Just want to know you more, are you married or single?

Tony: Was married but lost my wife

Cindy: sorry, for how long have you been single?

Tony: Nine years

Cindy: After your wife's demise have you been in any serious relationship before?

Tony: Yes but did not last long

Cindy: oh ok. Any kids? , How many?

Tony: Yes two kids

End of personal information (Part 1)

Cindy: Do you love me?

Tony: Yes

Cindy: What are you here (the website) for?

Tony: relationship and also to have fun. How about you?

Cindy: I am also here in search of a man whom I can depend on and possibly marry a man who will not lie to me but be truthful to me

The next day

Cindy: Note: it is important you wait for the man to say hello to you because it's an indication that he is serious.

Tony: Hello

Cindy: Hello, how was your night. Did you dream about me?

Tony: Yes

Cindy: As the conversation is getting hot and romantic you pause and say, sorry we chat again babe (Note: this is also another trick commonly used)

Tony: why?

Cindy: I am out of airtime

Tony: how much?

Cindy: 20 dollars (then quickly you send your details. The moment he sends the code that will be used for the withdrawal or the credit then you 'hi' him and conversation continues)

Tony: hello, how are you?

Cindy: I am not fine baby (Note: Cindy's second trick)

Tony: why

Cindy: since morning no food

Tony: so why that.....what happened?

Cindy: No money baby send money to buy groceries so that I can stock my fridge.

Tony: Ok how much

Cindy: 100 dollars

Tony: ok

Cindy: When will you send the money?

Tony: tomorrow morning

Cindy: ok will be waiting baby

Cindy: love you

Tony: love you too baby

A critical analysis of the two scenarios given reveals that the skill of extorting money from the clients begins from the demand for air time bills and gradually proceed to grocery bills, utility bills, medical bills, and so on. This way of extorting money is influenced by the African mentality that it is the man's responsibility to maintain or cater for the woman and not verse versa.

Furthermore, out of the scenarios given, one can see that money received from the clients within the first year of supposed relationship ranged from 20 dollars to 150 dollars, and this obviously cannot purchase even a second-hand vehicle, let alone, buy one-bedroom flat in Ghana. The amount of money received at this stage is termed “hand-to-mouth,” that is, money meant for one’s daily upkeep. So, how do these *sakawa* practitioners manage to own those expensive brand new vehicles and houses they live in? The answer to this question is in two forms.

First, one can do that by making one’s clients to deeply love and trust you. This would be done through consistent communication, being obedient to whatever he requests from you including sex, whether on phone or on the internet and so on. Averagely, it will take between three to five years for one to build that trust with the client before one can demand for huge amount of money that could purchase a vehicle or build a house. The methods commonly used by these *sakawa* practitioners to demand for huge amount of money include the request for money to process one’s visa or buy plane ticket to visit him (the client), introduction of fake gold or fake diamond business and so on. The challenge associated with this form is that the client, along the line, may discover the scamming schemes being used on him and may discontinue the relationship or communication. Also, it takes a long time for the client to be swindled. But many of these *sakawa* practitioners do not have that kind of patience. Hence, they switch their attention to the second option.

The second option is done when the name and pictures of the client is taken to a deity. The rationale behind this form is two-fold:

- a. That the deity will assist the *sakawa* practitioner to obtain favour before the client
- b. That the deity will “tie the soul” of the client so much so that whatsoever the *sakawa* practitioner requests from the client will be granted.

This form is what is known as the cyber-spiritual stage. The cyber-spiritual stage is the third and final stage of the training. At this stage, the will of the trainee is absolutely in his/her hands. That is, it is the sole responsibility of the trainee to either continue with strict internet scam or combine the internet scam with the occult power. In other words, it is at this stage that the trainee decides to use the acquired knowledge to get his desires from the clients (business partners or fiancés) by employing IT skills and spiritual knowledge where apt. It is paramount to state at this point that many of the *sakawa* practitioners opt for the latter and one major reason why *sakawa* practitioners choose the occult way, according to my informants, is that it is quick and also does not require much intellectual manipulations, in terms of how one devises strategies to mastermind the client. The informants added that the “occult way” is one sure method that could make an individual wealthy over-night (Personal communication, with Interviewees One, Two and Five, January 16, 2018).

***Sakawa* and Occultism**

The blending of the internet scam with the occult power by the *sakawa* practitioners is not devoid of strict guidelines known as *sumsum mu akwankyere* (spiritual direction) one must adhere to. These guidelines, however, are subjected to the kind of deity or spiritualist one consulted. The

five objects that are commonly used across the three main spiritual leaders—traditional priests, mallams and pastors contacted—are magic ring, white handkerchief, anointing oil, holy water, and magic chain. These objects do not only act as medium but also as a point of contact to the occult world whenever these *sakawa* practitioners use them.

The answer to the question whether the aforementioned occult instruments really worked for the *sakawa* practitioners was not only interesting but also revealing. The informants stated that “if occult or magic could work in the real marriage, then it could equally work in the internet scam as well.” What the informants meant was that if a husband could be influenced by his wife’s charm or juju to the extent that he (the husband) could do virtually whatever the wife requested from him in the real world, then it also possible for one to influence the client with occult power (Personal communication, with Interviewees Two, Three, and Four, January 22, 2018).

However, these occult instruments mentioned had to be revived periodically (forth nightly, monthly, yearly and so on) in order to maintain their potency and this again is subjected to the kind of deity or the spiritualist consulted. This means that each of the occult instruments would not be able to function after a particular period of time. Among the things used to revive these instruments could be urine from a virgin lady, a lady’s used menstrual pad, blood of a pregnant woman, hair or nail of the dead person, not eating a particular type of food or food cooked from open fire such as coal pot, clay stove, gas stove, and the like. Others include having sex with insane persons or feeding insane persons, sleeping in the coffin or sleeping on the tomb in the

cemetery and many more (Personal communication, with Interviewees Two, Three, Four, and Five, February 5, 2018).

There are other means of becoming wealthy in Agona Swedru Traditional Area that has got no connection with the use of the internet scam or cyber related activity. They include “money for money or instant money,” “pocket no dry,” “watch in the pot,” and “blood money.”

Money for money or instant money

The money for money or instant money works by the principle of compound interest in the sense that the more money one presents to the spiritualist, the more money one gets. Each amount of money has got its equivalent interest. For example, when one presents GH¢1,000, one gets GH¢5,000 in return. Likewise, when one presents GH¢5,000, one gets GH¢50,000 in return. This type of money-making is commonly termed *abosom sika*, which is translated as “gods’ money” (cf. Words from Nana Agradaa, traditional priestess on Royal Television Station, 14 November, 2017).

The money can be used for exchange of goods and services just like any other currency, except that there are some levels of restrictions. Some of these restrictions include money should not be given to one’s close relatives, used after some period of time, buy a fixed asset like a house. In order to overcome the restrictions attached to this type of money-making, many of the *sakawa* practitioners deposit these monies at the various credit union companies and banks so that the *abosom sika* (gods’ money) will be exchanged with real money during withdrawal. Perhaps this could be one of the reasons why many of the credit union companies and banks in

contemporary times in Ghana are either running into debt or closing down (Personal Communication, Honorable Samuel Opong, former Member of Parliament/Municipal Chief Executive Officer of Agona West District, October 20, 2017).

Pocket no dry

The pocket no dry mode has some resemblance with the money for money. The major difference is that one gets a type of wallet depending upon the amount of money presented. The wallet, it is believed, will never run out of money irrespective how one spends the money in it.

Watch in the Pot

The watch in the pot type of money-making, as the name implies, works according to timing. That is, there is a specific period of time, either within the day or within the night, which the pot has to be opened so that the necessary rituals are performed. The rituals include, among other things, the spraying into the pot with a recommended perfume after it had been opened. The pot is closed again, but this time, one waits for another specific time with the guidance from the watch. It is believed that when the said time is due and the pot is opened, the pot will be filled with money.

However, the pot would not be able to function when it is seen by another person. For that reason, the pot is mostly kept in one's bedroom or in the jungle where no one can see it (Personal communication, with Interviewees Four and Five, February 18, 2018).

Blood money (*sika duro*)

The blood money or *sika duro* type of money-making, unlike the money for money or instant money, the pocket no dry, the watch in the pot

and the like, believed to be contemporary ones, had been an ancient and by comparison the most cruel means of making money or becoming wealthy. That is, human life (blood) or vital parts of a living human being, for instance, tongue, heart, sexual organ, and so on are used for rituals before one begins to acquire the money.

What makes this type of money-making quiet dangerous is the fact that it takes human blood periodically in order that its potency will be maintained, and failure to present it may result in the demise of the possessor or the practitioner (Personal communication with Opanyin Kwame Asoa, *owu mpaso hene* ‘funeral bed king’ of Yogo No. 2, Asona clan in Agona Nyakrom, October 26, 2017).

An interaction with these *sakawa* practitioners revealed that many of them wished they had remained in the stage two, that is, the scammers’ stage of the game. The major reason given was that not only have they allowed greediness to change the course of their lives but also the fear that their lives will someday be cut short pre-maturely constantly gives them nightmares.

As a result, many of these *sakawa* practitioners have resorted to alcoholism, drug addiction, womanising, and so on as a way of making them happy in their relatively short period of life in the world of the living. It is not uncommon to see them constantly in their luxurious vehicles and dining at expensive restaurants in Agona Swedru area but the reality is that they live unfulfilled lives (Personal communication, with Interviewees One, Two, Three and Five, January 26, 2018).

Summary

The chapter discussed the nature of *sakawa* practiced in Agona Swedru Traditional Area. The discourse exposed the dynamic nature of the term *sakawa*, particularly the fact that one could be practising *sakawa* without necessarily being involved with the usage of the computer or the internet. Again, we saw in the chapter that the type of *sakawa* that many youth in Agona Swedru practice is the impersonation.

Also, the chapter established that amongst the stages involved in the training of *sakawa* practitioners is the cyber-spiritual stage that combines the internet scam and the occult power and that had been seen as the “penumbra” to many innocent youth. The cyber-spiritual stage is seen as penumbra in the sense that the stage is viewed by many as flamboyant on the outer side but inwardly, it is a life characterized by pain, frustration, hopelessness, regrets, and so on.

Finally, the chapter sought to contend that, by comparison with regard to the various types of *sakawa* practice – ‘impersonation’, ‘fake gold or diamond business’, the ‘money for money’ or ‘instant money’, the ‘pocket no dry’, the ‘watch in the pot’ and the like common – in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area, the most cruel and dangerous in terms of the commitment from/to either the self, the act or the deity was discovered to be the blood money (*sika duro*).

The next chapter discussed the impact *sakawa* practice has on the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF SAKAWA PRACTICE ON THE PEOPLE OF AGONA SWEDRU TRADITIONAL AREA

Introduction

This chapter presents the impact *sakawa* practice has on the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. It was done through comprehensive analysis of data obtained from the field work. Although the previous chapters witnessed some level of data analysis, the present chapter focused the analysis in accordance with the research questions. The researcher used a face-to-face interview to collect the data from twenty (20) respondents. These respondents were subsequently divided into two: ten (10) youth respondents and ten (10) adult respondents.

Background Information of the Youth Respondents

The youth comprised *sakawa* practitioners and internet café operators. Of the ten (10) youth interviewed, eight (8) were males and two (2) were females. Distribution of the respondents by age was as follows: four (4) were between the ages of 13 and 19 years, four (4) respondents were between the ages of 20 to 29 years, and the other two (2) respondents were between the ages of 30 to 39 years.

Six (6) out of the youth interviewed were Junior High School and Senior High School drop-outs. One (1) respondent was a graduate from a tertiary school. With the remaining three (3) respondents, one was still in the Junior High School and the others were in Senior High Schools.

On the part of the beliefs of the respondents, two (2) were atheists, five (5) were Christians, and the rest were Muslims.

Youth Perspectives on *Sakawa* Practice

Meaning of *Sakawa* Practice

Respondents whose ages fall within thirteen to thirty nine years expressed their views on *sakawa* practice as follows: Seven (7) of them who were interviewed stated that *sakawa* practice is the use of rituals or occult means to get money.

The seven (7) respondents furthermore defined *sakawa* practice as an action, whether internet activity, trading, learning towards exams or sports that had implored supernatural assistance in order to succeed. They added that any achievement or success that comes through rituals only or a combination of an individual expertise and rituals could be termed as *sakawa* practice.

However, another two (2) were of the view that *sakawa* practice is the exclusive but clever use of one's expertise or skill, especially one's knowledge in information technology (IT), to defraud people on the internet. Only one (1) respondent, unlike the others, stated that *sakawa* practice was the same as *sikaduro*, blood money.

When the youth respondents were asked who they would consider a *sakawa* practitioner, eight (8) respondents indicated that anyone who has graduated from strict internet scam stage to the cyber spiritual stage could be termed as a *sakawa* practitioner. That is, when one scams via the internet with a spiritual backing he or she is considered as a *sakawa* practitioner. In other words, anyone who seeks assistance from a spiritualist in order to succeed in whatever he/she does.

Two (2) out of the ten (10) respondents, however, differed from what the eight (8) respondents affirmed regarding who a *sakawa* practitioner was.

While one stated that a *sakawa* practitioner is anyone who uses dubious means, whether mentally or spiritually, to acquire wealth, the other one concluded that a *sakawa* practitioner is the same as an occultist; hence, an occult practitioner is equal to *sakawa* practitioner.

Reasons for *Sakawa* Practice

When the youth were asked whether *sakawa* practice was good or bad, the responses were as follows: nine (9) respondents were of the opinion that *sakawa* practice was good. According to them, the poverty level in Agona Swedru Traditional Area had been reduced to some extent. These respondents stated that *sakawa* practice had given employment to many youth without which they would have been a burden to their parents. Furthermore, they stressed that *sakawa* practice enabled them to support their siblings in school and their aged parents financially.

The eighth respondent out of the nine (9) respondents who affirmed *sakawa* practice to be good also stated that, but for *sakawa* practice, he would not have completed tertiary school. What he meant was that he was able to pay his school fees from Senior High School level through to tertiary level by the money he was generating from the practice.

Only one respondent, however, stated that *sakawa* practice was bad. Even that, the respondent condemned the infiltration of occultism into the practice of internet scamming. He added that the addition of occult power to the internet scamming known as *sakawa* practice had made it extremely difficult for ordinary people to differentiate, in his words, the genuine ones from the bad ones in the practice. He is of the view that the genuine ones are those who practice internet scamming only.

When asked whether *sakawa* practice has been a blessing or a curse to the communities in Agona Swedru area, only one (1) respondent stated that *sakawa* practice has been a curse to the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. According to him, the *sakawa* practice had produced arrogant youth who disrespect the elderly, particularly those in authority such as parents, teachers, chiefs, and so on with impunity.

The other nine (9) respondents, however, stated that *sakawa* practice has been a blessing to the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. The following were their reasons:

First, *sakawa* practice had reduced the rate of stealing and armed robbery in Agona Swedru area. They stated that, but for the practice, many youth in Agona Swedru area would have ended up as armed-robbers.

Second, *sakawa* practice had instilled fear of death in Agona Swedru area to the extent that it reduced crime rate, especially theft. According to them, the fear of dying that had been the topical issue in recent times among the people in Agona Swedru area stems from the fact that many believe that if one steals, one could be cursed by these *sakawa* practitioners.

Third, *sakawa* practice had reduced the rate of unemployment in Agona Swedru area. They added that many taxi cabs and commercial vehicles plying on the roads of Agona Swedru and its environs are owned by *sakawa* practitioners. Also, many shops, particularly spare parts shops, building material (cement and iron rods) shops, stationary shops, and even some preparatory schools in Agona Swedru, area are owned by *sakawa* practitioners.

Effects of *Sakawa* Practice

Education

On the part of education, four (4) of the respondents, although admitted that *sakawa* practice had negatively affected their performance in school, confessed they could not stop the practice because their livelihood and that of some of their relatives depended on it.

The other six (6) confessed that they abandoned their education in order to fully concentrate on the practice. One of them who was categorical in his statement said, “If you do not spend more time you do not get money” in that, the geographical locations in terms of time of the clients (mostly Americans and Europeans) and Ghana time are not the same. As a result, he stated that most practitioners spent many nights and sometimes early mornings chatting on the internet. According to him, these periods are the convenient times that one can fully get the client’s attention. This always makes them to become exhausted in the mornings. This explains why they find it difficult to combine it with school.

When asked whether they considered *sakawa* practice more important to education, eight (8) of the respondents answered in the affirmative. But the answer given was that both education and the *sakawa* practice seek to achieve one goal and that goal is making-money. The other two (2) of the respondents also stated that education was more important than *sakawa* practice, but they happened to be in the practice because they did not have anyone to assist them financially.

Commerce

For once, all the ten (10) respondents affirmed that *sakawa* practice has improved the cost of doing business. One of them emphatically contended that many businesses have now been introduced into the economy of Agona Swedru area because of the practice. He, furthermore, stated that prior to the emergence of *sakawa* practice in the area, nobody would dare trade in vehicles or hard ware materials such as laptop computers, android phones, flat screen television, modems or DST dish and decoders. The reason, according him, is that such business and others are thriving in the area because *sakawa* practitioners are the main customers.

Religion

When asked whether there was any room for *sakawa* practice in the doctrinal teachings of their respective religions, six (6) of the respondents could not comment on it. However, the comment given by the other four (4) respondents sounded rather revengeful. One of them philosophically posited that “an African should not be made to suffer the loss of an arm from a gunshot in Europe.” In addition to that, he justified the action by citing the principle of the Mosaic law that stated that “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Exodus 21:24-25 KJV).

These respondents stated that *sakawa* practice is payback time and also the means to revenge for Africa’s plight. They confessed that their clients are the descendants of the colonial masters who exploited Africa’s rich resources to develop their respective countries.

Furthermore, they affirmed that part of the crises in Africa, especially economic and religious ones, with its associated religious extremists such as Al-shabab, Boko-Haram that Africans are facing in recent times could be traced to colonialism.

Background Information on the Adult Respondents

The adult respondents comprised the traditional leaders, the heads of educational institutions, the security, the business owners and religious leaders (one from each of the three religions namely Christianity, African Traditional Religion and Islam practiced in Agona Swedru area).

Out of the ten (10) adult respondents who took part in the study, eight (8) were males and two (2) females. The ages of these adult respondents interviewed ranged between 40 to 75 years and over. The number of adult respondents in the age group that ranged from 60 to 75 years was five (5), one respondent was 40 years old while the rest had ages ranging from 41 to 59.

Out of the ten (10) respondents interviewed, two (2) persons had no formal education, three (3) persons had the ordinary level (O level) certificate or the Senior High School education level and five (5) persons had either tertiary or professional training certificate. Six (6) of the respondents were married and two (2) of them were widows. The other two (2) were divorcees. However, all of them were parents.

With respect to the religious background of the adult respondents, there were three (3) Traditionalists, three (3) Muslims, with the other four (4) belonging to the Christian faith. In terms of their profession, six (6) were self-employed and the other four (4) were civil servants.

Adult Perspectives on *Sakawa* Practice

Meaning of *Sakawa* Practice

Respondents whose ages fell between forty to fifty-nine years expressed their views on *sakawa* practice. The views of three (3) of the respondents sounded mysterious and self-defensive. One of them stated that the practice could be defined as supernatural fortification of oneself, family, work, and so on against the activities of evil forces. The views of the other seven (7), however, expressed mystery, revenge and theft. Two of them stated that *sakawa* practice was the practice whereby an omen was cast upon an individual with the intention to get something, especially from the individual. One of them emphasised that the omen acts as an instrument of manipulation on the minds of its victims.

When the adults were asked who they would consider as a *sakawa* practitioner, many of the responses given painted a picture of mystery, revenge, theft, self-defence, ritual practice, and occultism. Two (2) stated that a *sakawa* practitioner is anyone who uses occult or supernatural means other than natural one to achieve his/her purpose. One (1), furthermore, explained that the common denominator that identifies a practitioner is the ritual performance associated with them.

Reasons for *Sakawa* Practice

When the adults were asked whether *sakawa* practice was good or bad, the responses were as follows. Two (2) of the respondents were of the view that, if the motive or the purpose of the practitioner in terms of the usage of the omen was for self-defence, then, it is good. On the other hand, if the

purpose of the practice was to manipulate people against their 'will' then, it is bad.

The views of the other eight (8) respondents, however, were characterised by words of condemnations such as *cruel, sinful, bad, evil, unjust*, and so on. One of them made a categorical statement that *sakawa* practice was bad. The following were his reasons:

First, *sakawa* practice has not only given a bad name to the people of Agona Swedru area but also created the impression that anyone who lives in Agona Swedru area is a *sakawa* practitioner. According to him, this erroneous impression by some sections of Ghanaians about people living in Agona Swedru area has become so bad that many inhabitants of the area sometimes refuse to disclose that they hail from Agona Swedru Traditional Area and Agona Swedru, the commercial town of the area, in particular.

Second, *sakawa* practice has produced the general feeling of insecurity among many parents in Agona Swedru area. This insecurity emanates from the numerous teenage pregnancy cases that have been associated with the *sakawa* practitioners in the area. That is, the record of 2,388 teenage pregnancy cases within a space of four years six months (see Table 6)

Third, *sakawa* practice has produced arrogant youth who lack basic manners such as courtesy, comportment, godliness, patriotism, empathy, brotherliness, respect for the elderly, and many more. This, according to him, has produced many deviant youth in the area. Among other things, most of the youth have become addicted to dangerous drugs such as cocaine and heroin and also abuse opioid such as codeine, tramadol, and hard liquor.

Fourth, *sakawa* practice has brought about a high cost of living in the Agona Swedru area. Prices of goods that could have cost less in another area are twice the price when brought to Agona Swedru area because the practitioners are ready to pay any price for anything.

Effects of *Sakawa* Practice

Education

All the ten (10) respondents stated that *sakawa* practice has not only increased the school drop-out rate in Agona Swedru area but also produced poor academic performance in many educational institutions in the area.

Two (2) of the respondents who are heads of educational institutions in the Agona Swedru area also stated that students known to be involved in the *sakawa* practice are very truant. They added that such students are not only incorrigible but also have bad influence on their peers. Furthermore, they stated that the high spending culture of such students makes it easy for them to influence their colleague students to have bad habits. These bad habits, according to them, included running away from school before school closes, habitual absenteeism, bad haircut, indecent dressing, smoking of cigarette, and many more.

One of them, furthermore, stated that every year, there are records on at least four or more students known to be involved in the *sakawa* practice who refused to participate in the final examinations, that is, the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West African Examination Certificate (WASSCE), although they had been registered. Moreover, they concluded that the examination results of students known to be involved in

sakawa practice are always poor compared to other students who are not involved in the practice (see Tables 7, 8 and 9).

Table 7: BECE Yearly Analysis by all Schools

YEAR	ENROLMENT		ABSENT		PASS	FAIL
	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS		
2015	1203	1098	7	11	1147	1154
2016	1304	1265	11	8	1820	749
2017	1332	1239	6	6	1937	637
2018	1440	1400	5	3	2043	797

Source: Ghana Education Service, Agona West Municipal Education Office, Agona Swedru.

Table 8: BECE 2017 Analysis by Individual Schools

Group A Schools																
S/N	Schools	Enrolment	No. Of Candidates		Number of Candidates with Aggregates							Number Of Candidates That		Percentage		Position
			Present	Absent	06	07-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-36	Passed	Failed	Passed	Failed	
1	Swedru Calvary Chrit. Acad. Basic School	72	72	0	1	6	18	15	11	14	7	72	0	100.0	0.0	1
2	Swedru Greenfield Basic School	66	66	0	0	1	16	26	18	3	2	66	0	100.0	0.0	2
3	Swedru A.W.M.A 'E' Basic School	40	40	0	2	1	4	7	13	12	1	40	0	100.0	0.0	3
4	Abodom Methodist Basic School	37	37	0	0	2	5	15	15	0	0	37	0	100.0	0.0	4
5	Abodom Cath. Basic School	35	35	0	0	0	6	12	16	1	0	35	0	100.0	0.0	5
Group B Schools																
S/N	Schools	Enrolment	No. Of Candidates		Number Of Candidates With Aggregates							Number Of Candidates That		Percentage		Position
			Present	Absent	06	07-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-36	Passed	Failed	Passed	Failed	
1	Swedru S.D.A Basic School	82	82	0	0	0	1	7	10	15	27	60	22	73.2	26.8	66
2	Swedru Holy Quran 'A' Basic School	19	19	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	4	11	8	57.9	42.1	81
3	Swedru A.M.E Zion 'B' Basic School	44	44	0	0	0	0	1	4	4	13	22	22	50.0	50.0	88
4	Swedru Holy Quran 'B' Basic School	21	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	8	13	38.1	61.9	96
5	Swedru Narrow – Way 'A' And 'B' Basic School	20	17	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	16	5.9	94.1	108

Source: Ghana Education Service, Agona West Municipal Education Office, Agona Swedru.

Schools in Agona West municipal and Agona Swedru in particular for the past six consecutive years and counting have performed poorly in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE.) results. However, there are other few of the schools in the Agona Swedru area who have maintained the record of 100% within the said years in the BECE

Table 8 presents the devastating effects *sakawa* practice has on education in Agona Swedru area. Group B schools are schools alleged to have many of the *sakawa* students (practitioners). When one juxtaposes Group A and B schools, the following evidences are seen. First, there was no record of student absentee in 2017 BECE in the schools in Group A, but in group B schools, there is record of three students who registered as candidates of BECE but were absent throughout the examination.

Second, there is no record of failed students in the 2017 B.E.C.E results in the schools in Group A. But in group B schools, there are many failed students. In addition to that, none of the schools in group B had 100% as in percentage of passed students. Third, enrolment in Group A schools is good and increase year by year in the BECE but enrolment in Group B schools is bad and decreases year by year in schools in Group B

As a matter of fact, the bad effects *sakawa* practice has on education in Agona Swedru area cannot be quantified. For comprehensive analysis, see Appendix.

Commerce

All the ten (10) respondents blamed the *sakawa* practice as the main cause of the rise in prices of goods and service in the Agona Swedru area. One of them argued that, since more than half of the population of Agona Swedru Traditional

Area's economy is agriculture-based, if anything would rise in price, it should not be farm produce. Table 9 depicts how expensive farm produce is in Agona West district (Agona Swedru area) compared to neighbouring districts.

Table 9: Weekly Whole Sale and Price Questionnaire (for Monthly Report)**Month: 30/12/17**

S/N	COMMODITY	WHOLE SALE		PRICE (GH¢)			
		UNIT OF SALE	Weight /volume(kg /litre)	BREMAN ESIKUMA	EWUTU-SENYA	EFUTU (WINNEBA)	AGONA WEST
1	Fresh pepper	Bag	20	120	220	220	160
2	Onion	Bag	73	250	380	380	240
3	Tomatoes	Crate	52	250	205	205	400
4	Maize	Bag	100	100	230	230	158
5	Gari	Bag	68	150	90	90	130
6	Yam	100 Tubers	250	400	405	405	500
7	Plantain (Apem)	Average Bunch	(9-11)	9	27	27	15

Month: 30/12/17

S/N	COMMODITY	WHOLE SALE		PRICE (GH¢)			
		UNIT OF SALE	Weight /volume(kg /litre)	BREMAN ESIKUMA	EWUTU-SENYA	EFUTU (WINNEBA)	AGONA WEST
1	Fresh pepper	Bag	20	110	218	305	170
2	Onion	Bag	73	237	380	423	260
3	Tomatoes	Crate	52	240	200	250	440
4	Maize	Bag	100	100	210	115	165
5	Gari	Bag	68	138	95	150	147
6	Yam	100 Tubers	250	390	385	390	500
7	Plantain (Apem)	Average Bunch	(9-11)	7	22	27	23

Source: District/Municipal Food and Agricultural offices of Breman Esikuma, Awutu-Senya, Efutu, And Agona West.

A careful study of the above table shows that many of the food commodities in both the opening month (January 2017) and the closing month (December 2017) are high at the column of Agona West (Swedru). As a result, it is fair to conclude that agricultural produce are high in Agona West (Swedru) as compared to its neighbouring districts. Also, from the table, one can see that, in the other districts/municipality, food commodities are decreasing in prices in the closing month of the year. On the contrary, the prices at Agona West (Swedru) rather increased in the closing month. For comprehensive analysis of the full report of 2017 and the subsequent years, see Appendix.

If farm produce which under normal circumstance should be cheap in Swedru is this high (in price), then one can draw the conclusion on the prices of goods such as vehicle, building materials, cosmetics, and so on (Personal communication with Selorm, Senior Agric Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Agona Swedru area).

Religion

When asked the influence religion has on *sakawa* practice in the area, all ten (10) respondents stated that religion, as far as Agona Swedru area was concerned, was thriving. However, it has not done much regarding the fight against *sakawa* practice in the area because the *sakawa* practitioners hardly fellowship with adherents of the religious bodies in Agona Swedru area. This, they attested, is the major reason why *sakawa* practice has become a canker in the Agona Swedru area.

Evaluation and Analysis of Data on *Sakawa* Practice

This section juxtaposed the perspectives of the youth and adult respondents to find out the dominant ideologies that the people of Agona Swedru area have about the *sakawa* practice. The section has been grouped into five headings namely meaning of *sakawa* practice, *sakawa* practice and commerce, *sakawa* practice and education, *sakawa* practice and religion and the future of *sakawa* practice.

Meaning of *Sakawa* Practice

As indicated, *sakawa* practice was defined in this study as the stage whereby internet scam or cyber fraud is combined with the spiritual which is termed cyber-spiritual stage. The rationale behind the inclusion of the occultism in the practice is to make the practitioner wealthy over-night (Uzorma, 1993).

The adult respondents finally concluded that *sakawa* practitioners were aware of occult practice, and this confirms the position of some analysts (Akplah, 2015; Oduro-Frimpong, 2016; Yeboah, 2009). But on the part of the youth, few indicated that *sakawa* is the practice reserved for people who are highly skilled in IT and it can be practiced without involving the occult. Many of the youth contended that, without the involvement of the occult, the practice remains internet scam. That is, in the *sakawa* practice in Ghana, occultism is the single denominator that separated cyber criminals from *sakawa* practitioners.

The study also showed that both the youth and adult respondents are knowledgeable on *sakawa* practice. The adult and many youth respondents alluded to the fact that *sakawa* practice involved the use of occult power to the

practitioner's advantage. This, nonetheless, implies that occultism has become a common practice among the youth who engage in cyber fraud. This phenomenon has, indeed, confirmed the assertion of Yeboah (2009) that occultism has become prevalent in Ghanaian societies, particularly in areas noted for its engagement in the *sakawa* practice.

***Sakawa* Practice and Commerce**

The findings from the study indicated that the impact of *sakawa* practice on the commercial activities in Agona Swedru area was contradictory. The youth respondents differed in their opinions from those of the adult respondents. While the youth indicated that the *sakawa* practice has offered job opportunities and also alleviated, to a greater extent, poverty in Agona Swedru area, the adult respondents, however, indicated that *sakawa* practice has produced deviant youth who lacked both manners and purpose in life.

Additionally, the adult argued that *sakawa* practice has rather brought hardship to ordinary people in the area. According to them, the high cost of living in every sector of the economy in the Agona Swedru area has been influenced by the *sakawa* practice. Based on the perspectives of the two categories of the respondent and evidences presented, one can conclude that the assessment and also the position of the adult are true.

***Sakawa* Practice and Education**

On the issue of education, all the respondents, that is, both the youth and adult respondents, for once agreed that the *sakawa* practice has negatively affected the quality of education, especially the performance of many students in Agona Swedru and its environs. The effects of the poor performance of students is not only alarming but also reflects in the area of two of the four

main core subjects offered in the Senior High Schools in Ghana namely, Mathematics and English Language (see Tables 10 and 11).

Table 10: Nyakrom Senior High Technical School, WASSCE Analysis 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018

Subject s	Grades																								Total quality pass		Total candidates						percentage			
	A1				B2				B3				C4				C5				C6															
YEAR	15	16	17	18	15	16	17	18	15	16	17	18	15	16	17	18	15	16	17	18	15	16	17	18	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2018
SOCIAL STUDIES	10	14	2	61	16	19	11	71	71	109	57	191	56	55	31	45	39	55	33	43	83	93	91	46	275	345	225	503	394	430	440	515	70%	80%	51%	97.7%
MATHS	0	0	0	2	1	0	4	17	6	16	28	209	28	28	27	93	50	49	59	112	164	163	186	70	249	256	304	515	394	430	440	515	63%	60%	69%	100%
ENG. LANGUAGE	0	13	0	0	0	14	0	0	8	99	16	11	2	60	24	37	22	65	28	75	113	117	123	209	145	368	191	497	394	430	440	515	37%	87%	43%	96.5%
INT. SCIENCE	0	0	2	4	2	3	3	7	8	12	24	100	8	17	10	107	12	23	27	96	37	84	104	149	67	139	170	515	394	430	440	515	17%	32%	39%	100%

Source: Nyakrom Senior High Technical School

Table 11: Swedru Senior High School, WASSCE Analysis 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018

Subjects	Total Number Of Candidates Submitted By The School																								
	A1-C6												D7-F9												
	%Pass												%Fail												
Core	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	CDS	%	CDS	%	CDS	%	CDS	%	CDS	%	CDS	%	NO. CD	%	NO. CD	%	NO. CD	%	NO. CD	%	NO. CD	%	NO. CD	%	NO. CD
Social Studies	567	702	764	740	773	460	81.1	567	80.8	642	84.0	664	90.0	763	98.7	107	18.87	135	19.23	122	15.97	74	10.03	10	1.29
Maths (Core)	566	700	763	744	773	173	30.6	145	20.7	300	39.3	330	44.8	519	67.1	393	69.43	555	79.29	463	60.68	407	55.22	254	32.86
English Language	566	702	764	744	773	421	74.4	578	82.3	666	87.2	628	85.1	693	89.7	145	25.62	124	17.66	98	12.83	110	14.91	80	10.35
Integrated Science	566	703	764	744	773	185	32.7	290	41.3	620	81.2	504	68.3	712	92.1	381	67.31	413	58.75	144	18.85	234	31.71	61	7.89

Source: Swedru Senior High School

They all indicated that the *sakawa* practice has made many people, especially the youth, to view education as not only a mistake but also a complete waste of time.

***Sakawa* Practice and Religion**

The findings from the study also showed that the people of Agona Swedru area are very religious. However, religion has not been able to either reduce or eradicate the *sakawa* practice in the area. This, according to all the adult respondents, was as a result of the fact that *sakawa* practitioners refuse to associate with adherents of the religious groups in the area, let alone, be taught about religious moral values.

The adult respondents, nonetheless, are optimistic that someday the good moral values, some of which are found in the proverbs and wise saying in the theology of African Traditional Religion, the Holy Bible, the Hadith, and the Holy Qur'an, could transform the *sakawa* practitioners.

Future of *Sakawa* Practice

Based on the perspectives of the respondents, one could project that *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru area has become a canker that could stay for a long time. And also, the numerical strength of *sakawa* practitioners could be doubled in the not so distant future if drastic measures are not put in place to check this.

The study is of the view that the combat against *sakawa* practice in the Agona Swedru area cannot be an individual affair. Rather, it needs collective efforts from parents, traditional leaders, religious leaders, the security operatives, educational authorities, government, and others, in order to eradicate the *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru area.

Summary

This chapter has presented and analysed field data on the *sakawa* (cyber-cult) practice in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. The study found that people, particularly the youth, are driven into *sakawa* practice primarily because of poverty and greed. The *sakawa* practice has also created insecurity to parents and aggravated the cost of doing business in Agona Swedru area.

On the other hand, some see the *sakawa* practice as the solution to the high unemployment rate in Agona Swedru area. What seems to be the major concern is that there has been a decline in students' performance in many schools in the area that resulted in the abandonment of education by students known to be involved in the *sakawa* practice.

In conclusion, *sakawa* practice was viewed by the study as both a curse and a blessing depending upon the camp one belongs to.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Summary of the Study

The study examined the phenomenon of *sakawa* and how it is practiced by some people in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. The study looked at the link between *sakawa* practice and the belief system of the people of Agona Swedru Traditional Area. It also examined the history, social life, political structure, commercial activities, and religion of Agona Swedru people. Furthermore, it explained many of the modus operandi the *sakawa* practitioners use in swindling unsuspecting victims.

The motivation for the study was derived from the bad image *sakawa* practice has brought to the people in the study area couple, with the challenges such as hardship, occultism, school drop-out, consistent poor performance of students, and so on. The methodology aspect explained the research design, research instrument, population, sample and the sampling procedure. Face-to-face interviews with the aid of interview guide was the means through which data were collected. The data was analysed qualitatively.

The study used descriptive method primarily for the research design, that is, case study. The choice of the design was based on the fact that it allows one to have an in-depth knowledge of the problem under study and also gives room for the use of multiple instruments to gather data. Above all, it makes data gathering natural.

The main theory for the study was labour theory of value. The theory emphasizes hard work as the means to acquire wealth. The supporting theories were derived from Kant (1998) and Frankena (1973). Kantian theory was used

because it argues from the premise that reason (motivation) is the measuring rod that determines one's moral wealth. Juxtaposing the justification of *sakawa* practice – the fact that many of the practitioners see the practice as 'payback' to the injustice given to the forbearers of the present generation of African people through colonialism – with Kantian theory, the practice was seen to be morally wrong. In the same vein, Frankena's (1973) theory was used because it argues from the premise that the means justifies the end. In other words, since the means of practicing *sakawa* ends up swindling and eventually impoverishing others and their families, the practice was seen to be morally wrong because it ends up disadvantaging the masses at the expense of an individual. Also, in Africa, wealth that is widely accepted by its people is the one that is morally based. The "means" is a major factor in determining the 'end' in all matters.

Findings of the Study

The data confirmed that the practice is on the rise in the study area. However, the youth contended that the practice had been a blessing to the people of Agona Swedru area. Amongst the reasons given were that the practice has brought financial independence to many youth, who hitherto, would have been a burden on their family. The practice, according to them, has reduced stealing and armed-robbery rate in the study area. Also, it has instilled a kind of fear of dying (of the offenders of crime) in Agona Swedru area. In effect, the practice has reduced crime rate. Furthermore, the practice, they stressed, has not only solved the problem of unemployment but also made many youth owners of commercial vehicles, businesses, houses for rental, and so on.

The adults, however, were of the view that the challenge that has come out from the *sakawa* practice in the study area is beyond measure. To them, the practice has increased both poor performance of students in school and school drop-out rate in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area. Also, the practice has produced the general feeling of insecurity among many parents, especially those with adolescent female children.

The study found that there are two major camps regarding the definition of *sakawa* practice, and that appeared contradictory. First *sakawa* practice was known to be the type of cyber-crime that combined internet scamming with the occult or spiritual powers in order to enhance one's (the practitioners) chances of defrauding unsuspecting victims. Second, *sakawa* practice was known or considered to have taken place when a person with an advanced knowledge in information technology (IT) hacks into a database and uses copied details of other people's credit cards to purchase for himself items on the internet.

Among the two camps, the one the study approves is the former (the first). The reason is that it was widely accepted by the practitioners themselves, compared to the later. Contrary to the popular basis (poverty) given as the main reason why *sakawa* practice is on the rise amongst the youth in the study area, the study discovered that greediness (get-rich-quick mentality) was the major reason that drove many youth into the practice. Also, another thing discovered to be a contributing factor was youth unemployment and economically non-active people. These challenges were also known to be the major cause of the increase in high dependency ratio in the area. And, in the attempt to meet the demands of the dependents, the people, especially the

youth, engage in all sorts of unethical activities, with *sakawa* practice being the major one.

The study discovered that many of the youth who engaged in the *sakawa* practice came from broken homes. Many of the *sakawa* practitioners would not have entered into the practice in the first place if they had caring and responsible parents. Many children in Agona Swedru Traditional Area have become victims of divorce. The children have been left to their own faith, wandering without any proper parental guide.

Rampant teenage pregnancy cases in the area were linked to *sakawa* practitioners. Additionally, the practice has produced drug addicts with incorrigible behaviours that have affected every section of Agona Swedru area. Above all, they contended that the practice has projected Agona Swedru town, in particular, and its inhabitants, in general, in a bad image.

The study found that the dynamic nature of technology in our contemporary times had made *sakawa* training to be a life long journey with no specific date for graduation. In Agona Swedru area, there were basically three main stages one goes through in order to become a *sakawa* practitioner. The stages include, first, the amateur stage. The amateur stage was primarily based on observation. The trainee observes the activities of the master via the internet, especially how the master is able to scout for clients on the internet.

The second stage is the scammer's stage. The scammer's stage was the point where the trainee, on his own, could scout and consequently establish a rapport though chatting with a client via the internet. But the trainee could consult the master in times of difficulty. The final stage is the cyber-spiritual stage, otherwise known as the *sakawa* stage. The *sakawa* stage was the stage

of dilemma. It is regarded as the stage of dilemma in the sense that the trainee could choose either to use the acquired knowledge to get his desires from the clients by employing the IT skills with spirituality (occultism) or remain in the scammer's stage.

The study also discovered that there were other means one could become wealthy in Agona Swedru area that had no connections with the usage of the internet scam or cyber related activity. Few of such means stated were the "money for money" or the "instant money," the "pocket no dry", the "watch in the pot," the "blood money" and many more.

The outcome of the data with regards to the *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru area showed that the *sakawa* practice had its good and bad connotations or advantages and disadvantages. The youth stated that *sakawa* practice was good because the practice has not only reduced the poverty level in the Agona Swedru area but also created jobs for them and even non-*sakawa* practitioners. The adult group, however, stated that *sakawa* practice is bad because the practice has given a bad name to the people living in the Agona Swedru area. Moreover, the *sakawa* practice has produced visionless and unpatriotic youth whose major aspiration in life was to acquire wealth. *Sakawa* practice has been attributed to poor performance and subsequent abandonment of school for the *sakawa* practice by the youth in the area.

The study discovered that African Tradition Religion was the original religion of the people of Agona Swedru area. However, the study found that, about close to half a century ago, the situation is not the same on the ground. There are in existence now other religious affiliations such as Christianity and Islam. But the religion that seemed to have attracted mass followers of

inhabitants of the people in the study area in general, and Agona Swedru area in particular, was Christianity. One remarkable thing discovered regarding the religious groups found in the Agona Swedru area was that all the religions co-existed peaceful.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made with respect to the study.

First, the efforts in the clamping down on the *sakawa* practice should be participatory. It ought to take the collective efforts of parents taking full responsibility of the children's needs. The traditional and opinion leaders have to live an exemplary life worthy of emulation and also become the role model for the youth. The religious leaders must consciously preach against *sakawa* practice in churches, mosque, social gathering and so on. Also, there should be the re-introduction of counselling units in the educational institutions to cater for students believed to be involved in *sakawa* practice and others to effectively curb the practice.

Second, parents, particularly fathers, should desist from the neglect of the children as a way of punishment to the ex-wives. Also, mothers should desist from encouraging the children into the *sakawa* practice. They should question the source of the money and expressive gifts the children give them. In effect, parents and guardians should show concern in the welfare of their children and wards. They should be both the role models and also the friends to their children and wards

Also, traditional leaders as well as religious leaders should consciously organise series of durbars and talks on the dangers associated with *sakawa*

practice. Such programmes should be organised in such a way that it will appeal to the conscience of the youth.

Moreover, counselling departments in the educational institutions should be well resourced with modern methods of counselling. Students should be discouraged from condemning other students purported to be involved in the *sakawa* practice. Such type of condemnations rather cause the students and *sakawa* practitioners to abandon school.

More so, corporate bodies and the government should team up towards job creation for the youth. Such jobs should not necessarily be the white collar job that require, averagely, the university degree to be able to be employed. For instance, about sixty percent of Agona Swedru area's economy is agricultural based. For that reason, agro-processing industries such as "gari" processing, cassava starch manufacturing, corn dough manufacturing, and the like could be sited in the area. Such industries would provide employment to the youth as well as the adults. The adult whose main occupation is farming would produce the raw materials for the industries whilst the youth would serve as machine operators in the industries and do other industrial activities.

Conclusion

Sakawa practice derived its philosophical base from the beliefs and practices of the people of Agona Swedru area. Nonetheless, the motive and the modus operandi of the practice violate all the theories (Frankena, 1973; Harvey, 2017; Kant, 1978) used in the study.

Sakawa practitioners seek to be worthy yet not willing to follow the tenets, especially hard work that lead to the acquisition of wealth. Furthermore, the practitioners in their line of work appeared to revenge for,

and also, seek after their fair share of what their ancestors lost during the colonial era. Again, the practitioners in their attempt to acquire wealth end up impoverishing others and their families. This mode of wealth acquisition, clearly, is not accepted by the people in the study area and also Ghanaian societies in general. Indeed, the wealth that is respected and appreciated by all people is the one that is morally acquired.

Though the Bureau of National Investigation officials and the police occasionally came on operation to the various internet cafés to arrest people suspected to be involved in the *sakawa* practice, the reality on the ground now attests to the fact that *sakawa* practice, as far as Agona Swedru area is concerned, is still on the rise.

The fight against *sakawa* practice ought to be all inclusive, in that the internet café patronage and operations in Agona Swedru area have taken a new dimension in recent times. The reason is that many of the *sakawa* practitioners nowadays preferred the use of laptop computers with modem or android phones for the practice to visiting the internet café. Modern *sakawa* practitioners sit in the comfort of their homes and bedrooms with the aforementioned gargets and operate without necessarily going to the internet café.

Nonetheless, the exposure of their modus operandi by the study, particularly the scamming techniques used to dupe unsuspecting victims, is believed, will equip many people in order not to fall prey to their trap. Furthermore, the reasons discovered to be the cause of mass patronage of many youth into the *sakawa* practice would better inform the government and opinion leaders to effectively address the challenges the youth in our contemporary times face. The study, amongst other things, has added to the

resource material for educational institutions and also ignited the existing discourse on *sakawa* in Ghana and West Africa sub-region.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE YOUTH LIVING IN AGONA

SWEDRU TRADITIONAL AREA

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES INTERVIEW

GUIDE

Name:

Date:

Interview on the practice of ‘*sakawa*’ in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

Introduction

This instrument is designed to investigate the effect that ‘*sakawa*’ practice has on the people living in Agona Swedru traditional area. I therefore solicit your cooperation and permission to participate in this study.

The confidentiality of your response is guaranteed. Thank you.

SECTION A

Background information / status of Respondents

1. Sex
Male []
Female []
2. What is your age?
13 – 19 []
20 – 29 []
30 – 39 []
40 – 49 []

50 – 59 []

60 and above

3. What is your level of education?

Junior High Level []

Senior High Level []

Graduate []

Post graduate []

4. Religious background

Christian []

Traditionalist []

Moslem []

5. How long have you been living in Agona Swedru Traditional Area?

3 years []

5years []

10years []

15years []

20years []

Since birth []

6. What is your employment status?

Self- employed []

Unemployed []

Government employee []

SECTION B

Youth respondent knowledge on sakawa practice

7. Which of this type of cyber fraud is commonly practiced in Agona Swedru Traditional Area?
 - a. Hacking
 - b. Blackmailing
 - c. Scamming
 - d. 'Sakawa'

8. What is the meaning of the following cyber fraud terms?
 - a. Hacking
 - b. Blackmailing.....
 - c. Scamming.....
 - d. 'Sakawa'.....

9. Can 'sakawa' rituals increase one's chances of acquiring wealth in cyber-fraud business? (Yes or No)
Please explain

10. Which of these types of 'sakawa' rituals is commonly related to cyber fraud business in Agona Swedru Tradition Area?
 - i. The use of magic ring when browsing
 - ii. The submission of names and pictures of one's client for prayers
 - iii. The use of anointing oil on one's face and fingers when browsing.
 - iv. The given of client by the spiritualist himself for one's cyber-fraud business
 - a. I only
 - b. III and IV only

- c. II and III only
- d. I, II and III only
- e. All of the above

11. What motivates 'sakawa' practitioners?
-
12. How did 'sakawa' practice start in the Agona Swedru Traditional Area?.....

SECTION C

Good or Bad

13. Is 'sakawa' practice good or bad? Give reasons to your choice.
-
14. What effect has 'sakawa' practice brought on economic activities in Agona Swedru Traditional Area?.....
15. What sociological challenge does 'sakawa' practice pose to the people living in Agona Swedru Area?.....
16. How can 'sakawa' practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area stop?
-

SECTION D

'Sakawa' practice and education

17. How do you identify 'sakawa' students from ordinary students in the school?.....
18. Does the presence of 'sakawa' students pose any threat in the school?
-
-

19. How do you address students known to be indulging in ‘*sakawa*’ practice?.....
20. Do you see any bright future in the schools situated in Agona Swedru Traditional Area? (Yes or No). Please give reasons to your choice.
.....

SECTION E

‘Sakawa’ practice and religion

21. What does your religion (Christianity [], Traditional [], Islam []) teaches about ‘*sakawa*’ practice.
.....
22. In what capacity does ‘*sakawa*’ practice affect your religion?
.....
23. As a religious person what are you expected to do in curbing ‘*sakawa*’ practice?.....

SECTION F

‘Sakawa’ practice and the future

24. Suggest practical ways the community can play in eradicating ‘*sakawa*’ menace in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.
.....
.....

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE ADULT LIVING IN AGONA

SWEDRU TRADITIONAL AREA

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES INTERVIEW

GUIDE

Name:

Date:

Interview on the practice of ‘*sakawa*’ in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.

Introduction

This instrument is designed to investigate the effect that ‘*sakawa*’ practice has on the people living in Agona Swedru traditional area. I therefore solicit your cooperation and permission to participate in this study.

The confidentiality of your response is guaranteed. Thank you.

SECTION A

Background information / status of Respondents

1. Sex
 - Male []
 - Female []
2. What is your age?
 - 40 – 49 []
 - 50 – 59 []
 - 60 – 70 []
 - 71 and above []

3. What is your level of education?
- Junior High Level []
- Senior High Level []
- Graduate []
- Post graduate []
4. Religious background
- Christian []
- Traditionalist []
- Moslem []
5. How long have you been living in Agona Swedru Traditional Area?
- 3 years []
- 5years []
- 10years []
- 15years []
- 20years []
- Since birth []
6. What is your employment status?
- Self-employed []
- Unemployed []
- Government employee []

SECTION B

Adult respondent knowledge on sakawa practice

1. What do you understand by the term ‘*sakawa*’
.....
2. What is the difference between Omen seeker and *sakawa* practitioners
.....
3. What connection does *sakawa* practice have with the history of the people of Agona Swedru area?
.....

SECTION C

‘*Sakawa*’ practice and the parents

4. Do you have any adolescent children? Yes [] No []
5. If Yes. How many are they? .
One []
Two []
Three []
Four and above []
6. How do you identify the child who is into the *sakawa* practice
.....
7. Does *sakawa* practice in Agona Swedru area pose any threat to you as a parent?
8. How do you address the child involved in the *sakawa* practice?
.....
9. What motivates ‘*sakawa*’ practitioners?
.....

SECTION D

Good or Bad

10. Is ‘*sakawa*’ practice good or bad? Give reasons to your choice.
.....
11. What effect has ‘*sakawa*’ practice brought on economic activities in Agona Swedru Traditional Area?.....
12. What sociological challenge does ‘*sakawa*’ practice pose to the people living in Agona Swedru Area?.....

SECTION E

‘Sakawa’ practice and education

13. How do you identify ‘*sakawa*’ students from ordinary students in the school?.....
14. Does the presence of ‘*sakawa*’ students pose any threat in the school?
.....
15. How do you address students known to be indulging in ‘*sakawa*’ practice?.....
16. Do you see any bright future in the schools situated in Agona Swedru Traditional Area? (Yes or No). Please give reasons to your choice.
.....

SECTION F

‘Sakawa’ practice and religion

17. What does your religion (Christianity [], Traditional [], Islam []) teaches about ‘*sakawa*’ practice.
.....

18. In what capacity does ‘*sakawa*’ practice affect your religion?
.....
19. As a religious person what are you expected to do in curbing ‘*sakawa*’
practice?.....
.....

SECTION G

‘Sakawa’ practice and the future

20. Suggest practical ways the community can play in eradicating
‘*sakawa*’ menace in Agona Swedru Traditional Area.
.....
.....
21. How can ‘*sakawa*’ practice in Agona Swedru Traditional Area stop?
.....
.....