

Teenage Pregnancy in the Life and Thought of the Traditional Akan: Moral Perspectives

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Abstract

In the past, teenage pregnancy was very rare among the traditional Akan people, currently, however it has reached an alarming stage. The traditional rites that were effective in instituting measures that ensured chastity among the Akan teenagers are now replaced by foreign rites that seem to be less effective. This paper examines teenage pregnancy and its morality among the traditional Akan of Ghana. The paper discovers that the morality of teenage pregnancy among the traditional Akan depends on the circumstances under which the pregnancy occurs. The following among others are identified as the major factors responsible for the upsurge of teenage pregnancy among the Akan: the breakdown of the extended family system and social cohesion; the influx of foreign cultural and religious practices coupled with the wrong mentality that indigenous African cultural practices are uncivil. The paper posits that the *bragorɔ* and *kyiribra* rites are important traditional tools which can be refined and used together with other modern methods to remedy the upsurge of teenage pregnancy and restore the moral sanity that existed among the Akan.

Keywords

Morality, traditional Akan, teenage pregnancy, puberty rites

The Akan are the biggest ethnic group in Ghana. The Akan occupy six out of the ten administrative regions in Ghana. The Ghana's 2010 Population and Housing Census breakdown are yet to be released. The 2000 Ghana's Population Census put the Akan at 49.1% of the total population of Ghana.

The institution of rites was one of the principal means through which the traditional¹ Akan people of Ghana ensured social control in their society. One important set of rites that featured prominently among the Akan was puberty rites, for they were used to ensure chastity among the Akan people especially the teenagers. Consequently, the incidence of teenage pregnancy was rare. Presently, under the influence of foreign cultures, as well as religions like Christianity and Islam, some Akan people consider some

traditional Akan rites as old-fashioned and outmoded. The indiscriminate borrowing of foreign lifestyle and cultural practices at the expense of the indigenous cultural practices such as *bragorɔ* (see below) and *kyiribra* (see below) have contributed towards sexual immorality among teenagers and the alarming rate of teenage pregnancy among the Akan and in fact, in Ghana as a whole. This paper examines the issue of teenage pregnancy particularly its morality among the

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traditional Akan of Ghana. The objectives of this study include exploring what constitutes teenage pregnancy among the traditional Akan; how it was dealt with in the traditional Akan society and why teenage pregnancy was rare in the traditional Akan society.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a research carried out between 2008 and 2011 in some traditional communities of the Akan people of Ghana to examine their moral perception on teenage pregnancy. The data were collected through informal interviews with the people of the study areas which include local chiefs, queen mothers, opinion leaders, community elders, traditional priests and priestesses, diviners, and ordinary citizens. The interviews were also complemented with desk studies. Although the interviews were informally conducted, 60 respondents were purposively selected for the interactions. The data were analysed qualitatively using in-depth assessment of the various thematic areas.

THE AKAN CONCEPTUALISATION OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY

In every human society, there are a set of ideas about what constitutes a right or wrong deed.² As opined by Opoku (1978: 152), these moral principles and norms indeed influence the conduct of members of that society. These notions about right and wrong, good and bad usually have some force or forces behind them which compel people to accept and obey them. This force, in the life and thought of the traditional Akan people, is overwhelmingly a supernatural one—God, gods, ancestors and other spirits. It is because of this that those who go contrary to the moral and customary norms that are spelt out in the societal code of behaviour are severely dealt with. The

belief is that if any of the codes of conduct is infringed upon, it affects the relationship between the deities or spirits and the humans.³ This implies that among the Akan, morality has religious undertone.

It is worth noting that the term “teenage pregnancy” is a modern term and strictly speaking, it does not have an exact linguistic equivalence among the Akan people. Perhaps, the only Akan term that may best explain the concept of teenage pregnancy is *kyiribra*. Among the Akan, *kyiribra* means becoming pregnant without going through the *bragorɔ* rites (puberty rites).⁴ *Bragorɔ* rites are traditional rites that are designed to usher a girl from childhood into adulthood.

In his work *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, Sarpong (1977: 48) explained that the word “*kyiribra*” is derived from two Akan words “*kyiri*” that is “to hate” and “*bra*” that is “life” or “menses”. *Kyiribra*, therefore, is an offence which a girl with her accomplice commits by “taking seed” before the performance of her puberty rites. The same word *kyiribra* is used in reference to the parties that committed the offence.

Puberty rites are not limited only to the Akan in Ghana but every traditional society in Ghana has similar rites to usher the adolescents into adulthood. Among the Krobo for instance, these rites are collectively known as *Dipo*.

After the child naming ceremony, puberty rites are the next set of rituals of social status transformation which children undergo in Ghanaian culture. The most well preserved puberty rites are the *Dipo*... of the Krobo ethnic group and the *Bragorɔ* of the Ashantis. These ceremonies mark the entry of young women into adulthood. (Osei-Adu)

From the literal and etymological perspectives, teenage pregnancy may be described as a girl who becomes pregnant between the ages of 13 and 19. It must be noted, however, that if the age solely is used as the basis for determining what teenage pregnancy is,

then its moral rightness or wrongness in the Akan traditional society needs to consider factors that include, for example, the circumstances within which the pregnancy occurs. For example, is the pregnancy the result of a rape case? This and similar questions help one to analyse objectively, whether the pregnant teenager is fully culpable or not.⁵ The argument here is that the degree of her culpability may be maximised or minimised depending on the situational context within which the pregnancy occurred.

Therefore, among the traditional Akan, there are laws that are meant to ensure that a woman maintains her virginity until marriage. As Sarpong (1974: 74) rightly stated:

the most important effect of initiation ceremonies is that they introduce one into sex and marriage life... Boys and girls who married for the first time were said to have been taught how to perform the sex act... Sex was for the adult.

Marriage, therefore, served as the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. These traditional norms and rites were effective means of preventing premarital sex and teenage pregnancy in the society.

According to traditional law no woman is allowed to get married without having gone through the puberty rites and every young woman must remain a virgin prior to this. These laws ensure that young women grow up disciplined enough to control their sexuality and to prevent them from premature motherhood and unwanted babies. So important are these laws that any woman who gets pregnant or breaks her virginity before the rites are performed is sometimes ostracized together with the man responsible for it. (Osei-Adu)

Interestingly, traditional Akan society encourages early marriage especially among the females. Several reasons account for this. One of them is that giving birth to many children is cherished very much and it is seen as a blessing from God, the gods and the ancestors. The logical deduction, therefore, is that if an Akan woman marries early, then the hope is highly

probable that she will be able to give birth to many children. In view of this, if a girl goes through the *bragorɔ* ritual and is customarily married to a responsible man and conceives even in her teens, it is not considered as immoral or a social evil.⁶ The reason is that during the *bragorɔ* ceremony, the initiand as has been noted is taught how to keep the matrimonial home among others. Specifically, she is educated in matters of sex, marriage, procreation, motherhood, family life and the responsibilities of adulthood and the religious underpinnings of the rites including taboos.⁷ In fact, in the Akan culture, women represent the beauty, purity and dignity of the group, so the Akan believe that they need properly trained mothers with good morals to bring up good children (Osei-Adu). Therefore, once the girl has gone through these important rites, it is believed that she will be capable of handling most of the respective challenges associated with the various aspects and transitional stages of the life of a woman.⁸

Furthermore, during the traditional marriage ceremony, a provision is also made to help the young couple to deal with the more difficult marital issues. With regard to this help, what is usually done is that two experienced persons (one from the girl's lineage and the other from the boy's lineage) are asked to support the newly married couple. Their main duty is to see the settlement of any marital problem that the couple may be unable to solve by themselves. These two designated helpers are traditionally described as "*otaa aware akyi*" which literally means "marriage supporters or backers."⁹

Our informants stressed that unlike the contemporary situation whereby a girl of about 10 years may experience her menarche, perhaps due to the changes in diet or modern medicines, in the past, a greater percentage of girls grew to an appreciable age before they experienced menarche.

After the *bragorɔ* rites, the newly initiated girl is

considered matured enough for marriage or marital life which involves sex and procreation. In fact, a pregnancy after *bragorɔ* is considered a blessing even if the young lady may still be in her teens. Nevertheless, if such a post-*bragorɔ* pregnancy occurs outside a marital union or is an incestuous-related one, then the Akan customary norms would consider such a pregnancy as morally unacceptable.¹⁰

The pregnancy that occurs outside marriage is considered morally unacceptable because, similar to other indigenous African ethnic groups, the traditional Akan culture hails marriage and even accepts polygamous marriages (Mbiti 1990: 138-139).¹¹

Unlike today, the traditional Akan society had nothing like formal education such as the present day school system.

The earliest history of formal, western-style education in Ghana is directly associated with the history of European activities on the Gold Coast. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive at the Guinea coast in 1471... The best known Castle Schools on the Gold Coast included the ones operated by the Dutch at the former Portuguese fortress at Elmina, the British school at Cape Coast Castle, and the Danish school at Christiansburg, near Accra. In the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, children of wealthy African merchants on the coast and relatives of some of the important local chiefs were instructed at castle schools.¹²

Until the advent of the western formal type of education, the major form of education was the informal type where the girl or boy learnt the parents' trade through listening, observation and participation. Perhaps the only formal education was during the *bragorɔ* rites when the young girl was formally educated on how to keep the matrimonial home and other marital issues. Of course, one can also talk of vocations like gold and blacksmithing wherein a sort of formal training was required but these were not meant for the girls.¹³

In the traditional Akan society, what was considered immoral and was seriously abhorred is *kyiribra*. It is crystal clear from the above discussions that any girl who did not submit herself for the *bragorɔ* rites and became pregnant had to lose a lot. Though procreation is considered praiseworthy in the Akan traditional society, it must be done in accordance with the laid down procedures. In other words, marriage is a cherished institution among the Akan people for it is through it that kinship may be sustained. In fact, marriage is not cherished only by the Akan people but also by all indigenous African ethnic groups as Mbiti (1990: 130) rightly said, "for African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence...". Actually, among Africans, the institution of marriage is also viewed as "a sacred drama in which everybody is a religious participant, and no normal person may keep away from this dynamic scene of action" (Mbiti 1990: 130). This also explains the reason why some well thought out procedures were designed to regulate it. The belief, therefore, is that if a girl commits *kyiribra* she will lack the basic education regarding marital issues. This is likely to impede her progress in any future marriage. Furthermore, the girl in question has prevented her family (as the marriage laws require) from conducting the necessary investigations or "mutual spying" (Sarpong 1974: 81) that would have cleared the boy's family of any dubious character before the marriage is allowed to take place.

Among the Akan, customary marriage begins with the man's family sending a delegation to the woman's family to formally request for the woman in marriage. Usually, the woman's family would ask for some time in order to consider the request of the man. This is to enable the woman's family to investigate the background of the family of the man in question. It is important to note that the man's family should have also investigated the girl's family background and become satisfied before the afore-mentioned proposal

is made.

The investigations enable the respective families to find answers to questions such as:

(1) Are there any communicable or hereditary diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy, insanity and epilepsy in the family?

(2) Had there been any criminal record such as burglary, thievery, murder, incest and rape in the family?

(3) Are the women in the family faithful?

(4) Is there any sign of barrenness in the family?

(5) Is the woman lazy?

(6) Is the man a hard-working person?

(7) Is the man capable of taking care of a wife and children?

(8) Is the family quarrelsome?

It is only when the families are satisfied with the answers to the above questions that the marriage is permitted. Obviously, therefore, any pre-marital pregnancy will deny both families the opportunity to satisfy themselves with the above conditions, hence, the morally unacceptable nature of premarital sexual relation and teenage pregnancy.

From a further perspective, it is not only the aforementioned effects of *kyiribra* on marriage that are considered morally wrong, but also, and more importantly, *kyiribra*, in the view of the traditional Akan people, constitutes a serious offence. In fact, it is an abomination in the eyes of the spirit powers for it brings a great shame to the matrilineage ancestors and defiles God, the gods, and other spirit powers. This implies that anytime that *kyiribra* is committed, the mutual or the harmonious relationship between the living and the spirit powers becomes severed and it is only through propitiatory and purification rites that normalcy is restored (Osei-Adu). Anything short of this could incur disaster not only on the culprits but also, on the entire family and the community as a whole.¹⁴ Since *kyiribra* constitutes a taboo among the Akan, elaborate purification rites¹⁵ are performed to

pacify the offended spirit beings and also cleanse the culprits and the entire community. This underscores why religious instructions form part of the programme designed for girls undergoing *bragorɔ*. Among the traditional Akan people, it is the queen mother who has the sole responsibility to declare a girl and her putative lover *kyiribra*. That is, when a girl who has not undergone the *bragorɔ* rites is found pregnant, the queen mother will inform the elders of the pregnant teenager and then summon the girl's parents and inform them formally of the hateful thing that their daughter has brought into the community. The queen mother further orders the parents to submit their daughter for the necessary rites. The putative lover, if known, must also suffer the same fate.¹⁶

The culprits are shaved to the skull and stripped almost naked in the full view of the crowd, a sheep is slaughtered for the blood to run down their bodies including their genitals. This, it is said, is a necessary part of the ritual, for it is that which will make the ritual acceptable before the spirit powers. They are then matched to the outskirts of the village amidst a deafening boos and jeers. The disgraced culprits are then banished from the village (Sarpong 1977: 52). They are supposed to stay in the bush away from the village till the girl delivers before they are re-admitted into the community. This means that both the woman and the man suffer social degradation and other indignities.

The above-mentioned traditional rites and measures are meant to deter young girls and boys, including teenagers, from indulging in pre-marital sex. This makes chastity the hallmark of the traditional Akan people. Because of the humiliating sanctions and the stigma attached to *kyiribra*, it becomes an incumbent on parents and other members of the extended family to ensure that their young children, particularly, female children remain chaste. They ensure this by telling the youth stories that border on high morality. This confirms what Mbiti says about

sexual offence in African societies, when he stated:

Africans consider the proper uses of sex to be sacred and must therefore be safeguarded.... African peoples are very sensitive to any departure from the accepted norm concerning all aspects of sex. This is a fundamental religious attitude since any offence upsets the smooth relationships of the community which include those who have already departed. For that reason, many of the offences must be followed by a ritual cleansing whether or not the offenders are physically punished, otherwise misfortunes may ensue. (Mbiti 1990: 144)

TEENAGE PREGNANCY TODAY

From the above discussion, it is crystal clear that it is no wonder, therefore, that in the past, as affirmed by Sarpong (1977: 49), teenage pregnancy or *kyiribra* was very rare in the traditional Akan society. The situation is different now. Presently, we hear of moral decadence, sexual immorality among teenagers and teenage pregnancies day-in and day-out among the Akan and in Ghana as a whole. Indeed, teenage pregnancy is making nonsense of the national programme dubbed—“Girl-Child Education”. For instance, a study conducted in Berekum, revealed that 70% of the high school drop-out in the area was due to teenage pregnancy (Appiah-Adjei 2002: 35).

A *Ghana News Agency* (GNA) report on Wa, the Upper-West Regional capital, and attributed to the Headmaster of the Islamic Senior Secondary School (ISSEC) in Wa said, “over twenty female students drop-out annually from the Islamic Senior Secondary in Wa as a result of their being pregnant” (GNA July 4, 2004). This was contained in a speech that the Headmaster delivered at the School’s Second Speech and Prize Giving-Day held on July 4, 2004. The situation is almost the same in several schools in Ghana, particularly at the basic level as evidenced in the following words:

School authorities at the Ayetepa District Assembly “B” Junior High School in the Ningo-Prampram district

of Greater Accra are having unending sleepless nights over what they describe as the alarming rate at which the basic school is losing its best crop of pupils, particularly girls, to teenage pregnancy. For the past seven years, not a single term has passed without a pupil dropping out of school due to pregnancy; and not a single term has ended without a very gory case of illegal abortion of innocent foetus popping up. The usual excuse for the murder of the foetuses is that their mothers must continue their education. And as if the various interventions employed to address this trend are not enough; this term, the authorities had yet another shock, if not the biggest, when they learnt that two Class 2 pupils had got pregnant, hence, their absence from class... He believed that the only authority that can solve the problem at hand is the minister of education... measures to deter unscrupulous men who lure the promising but naïve girls and impregnate them. (*The Heritage* July 5, 2011)

Among the Akan, similar to the situation in other ethnic groups in Ghana, the reality of the alarming situation of teenage pregnancy cannot be overemphasised. Ghanaweb.com also reports of the dismissal of 17 pregnant students of the Aduman Senior High School in the Afigya-Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region by their headmaster (*Citifmonline* March 1, 2011). This is another concrete example of the alarming situation of teenage pregnancies among the Akan. Bemoaning the situation, a human rights activist, Nana Oye Lithur described the situation as unfortunate. She was, however, not happy with the dismissal of the 17 girls. Nevertheless, she urged the government to put in place measures to ensure that girls who find themselves in such unfortunate situations would be assisted to gain education to contribute to the development of the nation (*Citifmonline* March 1, 2011).

Again, in an address to the Basic Education Certificate Examination candidates, the Gomoa West District Chief Executive (DCE), Mr. Theophilus Aidoo-Mensah, who is also the President of the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG), expressed disappointment when he was told that five of the female candidates who were

writing their papers at the two Apam Senior High School centres were pregnant. The DCE, therefore, advised parents particularly fathers to provide the needs of their children, especially young daughters, to avoid such unfortunate situations (*Ghana News Agency* April 13, 2011).

It is in line with this reality about the growing cankerous issue of teenage pregnancy and its related abortion among teenagers that the *Ghana News Agency* rightly reports that:

Pregnant teenage girls, particularly students, have been urged not to resort to unsafe abortion, in order to save their education. Nana Yaa Ntidwuma, Queen of Kurofa, near Adomfe in the Asante-Akim South District, gave the advice at a forum held to educate young girls in the area about the dangers of unsafe abortion. It brought together students from the Juaso Senior High School (SHS), Bompata SHS and the Asankare Youth Leadership and Skills Training Institute. Nana Yaa Ntidwuma cautioned that abortion could be perilous and underlined the need for them to concentrate on their books and stay completely away from pre-marital sex. 'You should never give in to peer-pressures that would lead you to promiscuity and sexual adventurism.' The Queen expressed worry about the growing incidence of early sex among teenagers and invited stakeholders to join hands to tackle the unhealthy situation. (GNA July 15, 2011)

The pertinent question that one would like to pose now is: Why the upsurge of teenage pregnancy in our societies today? Obviously, several factors are responsible for this unfortunate situation. Some of the major contributing factors towards the upsurge of teenage pregnancy among the Akan, and perhaps in Ghana as a whole, include the following:

(1) The steady disintegration of the extended family system

The extended family was the life-wire that bound members of the traditional Akan family together in all their endeavours including the collective up-bringing of the child. Similar to other traditional African ethnic groups, there was a spirit of communalism (Gyekye 2003: 35) among the traditional Akan people. Today,

with the near collapse of the extended family system, the "moral principle" seems to be "each one for himself and God for us all". This has, indeed, affected the collective responsibility for the training of children in the Akan society.

Currently, in the Akan extended family, a member does not seem to bother much about what goes on in the life of another extended family member except during the occasion of funerals. Apparently, funerals have continued to maintain the Akan peoples' spirit of communalism to some extent (Sarpong 1974: 29-31). Notwithstanding the cultural and moral values such as solidarity, communal spirit and the celebration of life at funerals, presently, there are often some exaggerated and extravagant celebrations of funerals that have called for numerous criticisms.

(2) The breakdown of social cohesion

Closely connected with the disintegration of the extended family system is the breakdown of social cohesion among the Akan. In the past, every normal adult among the Akan people was a "teacher" and a disciplinarian and thus could discipline any child that was found misbehaving anywhere. When later on this came to the notice of the parents of the child, they could even go to the one who disciplined their child and thanked him or her for injecting sense into their child. But today, such a disciplinarian may find himself or herself at the police station for disciplining somebody's child. In fact, currently, even some professional teachers are being violently attacked by parents for disciplining the latter's children in the school. In view of this, the children are left to their own devices.

(3) The increasing number of irresponsible parents

When parents fail to be responsible for the needs of their children, the consequences can be disastrous. Irresponsible parents leave their children to fend for themselves. *The Heritage* (July 5, 2011) affirmed this factor when it stated that "lack of parental control and guidance have been cited as one of the major reasons for the spate of teenage pregnancy in the area as most

of the students literally live on their own”.

In line with this issue of the dangers associated with irresponsible parents, Nana Yaa Ntidwuma, Queen of Kurofa, near Adomfe in the Asante-Akim South District “... appealed to parents to spend quality time, especially with their adolescent children, provide them with the needed guidance and help them to make responsible choices” (*Ghana News Agency* July 15, 2011).

Once a teenager is taking care of himself or herself, he or she assumes prematurely, the role of an adult. Consequently, the teenager thinks he or she can also perform what adults do including sexual activities. This factor ultimately leads to lack of parental control in the life of the teenager. The teenager, at this juncture, may employ try and error as the *modus operandi* in moral decision-making. Obviously, there is a very high probability that this inexperienced teenagers’ try and error experimentation may result in casualties in the form of teenage pregnancies. From a related perspective, the inability of parents and guardians to prevail on teenagers to remain chaste may also explain the reason why there is an increasing rate of teenage pregnancy as well as the continuous spread of sexually transmitted diseases/infections including the dreadful HIV/AIDS.

(4) Current institutions (CHRAJ, DOVVSU)

Notwithstanding the benefits that society gains from some of the current institutions such as the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the Domestic Violence and Victims’ Support Unit (DOVVSU) that aim at protecting human rights, the Akan however believe in the principle of “child rights” but are not in support of a situation whereby the child is let loose and grows up to be undisciplined. Apparently, nowadays there is no limit to which the child can go. This is, indeed, making it more difficult for people to train their children. With an attempt to discipline one’s child in the house, one may find oneself before the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police in Ghana or DOVVSU

to answer questions for disciplining one’s own child. This may partly explain the reason why parents have not been successful in their quest to train their teenagers to observe the societal moral norms including those that prohibit premarital sex, teenage pregnancy and sexual laxity.

(5) Western mentality that traditional cultural practices are uncivilised/barbaric

Unfortunately, the traditional cultural practices and beliefs that sustained the moral sanity in the Akan society are now looked down upon as archaic and uncivilised. Akan cultural practices such as *bragorɔ* and *kyiribra* which helped to check sexual immorality among minors are no longer or rarely observed due to modernisation and westernisation. For instance, *bragorɔ* has been substituted by some church rites such as “confirmation”. The latter though does not seem to be effective enough to achieve the traditional objectives that the former was able to do.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above discussions, the paper offers the following recommendations:

(1) Sex education should form part of the curriculum for the primary pupils through the senior high school students. The sex educators should involve the parents of the students;

(2) Stakeholders of education in Ghana must see it that the study of the Ghanaian cultural practices and traditional moral values are made compulsory for Ghanaian students;

(3) Policy-makers and traditional leaders in Ghana should ensure that our indigenous cultural values and practices are safeguarded and promoted to maintain an identity as a sovereign people;

(4) The education system in Ghana must endeavour to eradicate this wrong mentality that everything of traditional or indigenous African origin is uncivil;

(5) Without any male-afore-thought as regards the dynamic nature of culture and the benefits of intercultural relations, the wholesale importation of foreign practices and value systems that attempt to replace the indigenous beliefs, practices and value systems of Africans should be discouraged.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion has shown the crucial role that the *bragorɔ* and *kyiribra* rites played in ensuring sanity in family life particularly, sex and procreation in the traditional Akan society. It has also pointed out that the Akan did not have any exact linguistic equivalence for what is today known as teenage pregnancy, but an indigenous Akan term that may explain the concept of teenage pregnancy is *kyiribra*, which simply means, a girl who becomes pregnant without going through the *bragorɔ*, a rite which has been designed to usher girls into adulthood.

The paper has furthermore noted that age is not the main factor for the determination of the moral rightness or wrongness of an adolescent girl who becomes pregnant but rather, the circumstances within which the pregnancy occurred—has she gone through the prescribed course for adolescent girls (*bragorɔ*), has she been properly married?—are among the principal determining factors.

Factors such as the steady disintegration of the extended family system, the breakdown of social cohesion and the increasing number of irresponsible parents, among others, have been noted as being responsible for the upsurge of teenage pregnancy and its related forms of sexual immorality in the Akan society today. The paper argues that the *bragorɔ* and *kyiribra* rites are important traditional tools that can be refined and used together with other modern methods to remedy the upsurge of teenage pregnancy and

restore the moral sanity that existed among the Akan.

Notes

1. By “traditional” Akan people, we mean the Akan who, in spite of the inroads of western civilisation and religions such as Christianity and Islam, have still not abandoned the indigenous religion bequeathed to them by their forebears, which is commonly referred to as African Traditional Religion.
2. See Ackah, C. A. (1988: 119). *Akan Ethics*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press; see also Kudadjie, Joshua N. and Robert Kwesi Aboagye-Mensah. (1992: 3). *The Christian and Social Conduct*. Accra, Ghana: Asempa Publishers; Gonsalves, Milton A. (1989: 3). *Fagothey's Right & Reason. Ethics in Theory and Practice*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall; Midgley, M. (1993: 3). “The Origin of Ethics.” In *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by P. Singer. Oxford: Blackwell.
3. This was the view of all those who were interviewed during the study.
4. This was the common definition giving by almost all our respondents. See also Sarpong, Peter. (1977: 48). *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
5. All the queen mothers and the opinion leaders interviewed confirmed this view.
6. Personal communication, January 20, 2009.
7. This was emphasised by the queen mothers whom we interacted with.
8. This view was affirmed by all those who were interviewed during the study.
9. This was the view of all the chiefs, queen mothers, traditional priests and priestesses interviewed during the study.
10. This was the common affirmation by our interviewees.
11. See also Sarpong, Peter (1974: 78).
12. Retrieved May 11, 2011 from <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/539/Ghana.html>.
13. This was the view of all the chiefs, queen mothers, traditional priests and priestesses interviewed during the study.
14. This view was affirmed by all the interviewees during the study.
15. This was confirmed by all the chiefs, queen-mothers and the diviners we interacted with during the study.
16. All the queen mothers and the chiefs we interviewed affirmed this view.

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