

# **A REPORT OF FIELD TRIP TO GHANA FROM 14<sup>th</sup> JULY TO 9<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2011**

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## **Introduction**

This field trip to Ghana was the second and span from 14<sup>th</sup> July to 9<sup>th</sup> October 2011. It was a follow up to the first trip which meant to familiarise and explore the field as well as make initial contacts. The aim of this second trip was to gather the necessary data for my thesis. All the issues that were not fulfilled during the first visit were handled in the second visit. Additionally, it was necessary because some of the ideas I had before the first visit were not wholly applicable and had to be reviewed, prompting the need to find answers to them. The project tries to address the increasing plausibility of faith healing in Ghana with particular reference to Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana. The issues that I set out to address include the following:

- To find answers to the recent explosion of Pentecostal-charismatic activities in Ghana taking into account how they strive for power and recognition using healing as a tool, delving into what it takes to become a prophet or a Pentecostal-Charismatic church healer, uncovering the dynamics including social, political and economic that influences the working of these movements in Ghana.
- Investigate why healing is a core of all Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana, and circumstances under which demonization of indigenous healers resonates so strongly among the poor and the middle class and why the indigenous healers are losing their legitimacy and perceived efficaciousness in treating the same illness causing spiritual and occult threats that Pentecostal-charismatic healers address.
- Explore how spiritual power comes to the pastors of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, and how they use it to solve problems of their members including the evil machination of invisible forces, resolution of tensions surrounding ill-health, providing meaning to the unexplainable events and how the healed relate with their traditions both family and values.

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## **Research Location**

The study location is Ghana in West Africa in a city called Tamale in the northern part of the country. Tamale is the capital city of northern region, one of the ten regions in Ghana and

occupies an area of about 70, 383 square kilometres, making it the largest region in Ghana in terms of land area. It shares boundaries with the Upper East and Upper West regions to the north, the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions to the south and two neighbouring countries, the republic of Togo to the east and La Cote d'Ivoire to the west. The region has a population of about 2,334,540 representing 9.6% of the country's population. This is made up of 49.7% male and 50.3% female. The commonest settlement pattern in the north is the nucleated village type where houses are grouped together around the market or chiefs palace. Agriculture is the main economic activity employing about 63% of the workforce. The factory accounts for only 14.7% and commerce 16%. Communication networks within the region are adequate but their condition is poor. There is one airport in Tamale and an inland port at Builpe, which serves the whole of the north.



## **Research respondents**

People with diverse knowledge in the subject under study were contacted in my bid to get the necessary information that could best address the issues that I set out to find answers to. Among these individuals were the Pentecostal/Charismatic church pastors/prophets. Appointments were made and meetings scheduled for interviews. Almost all those I approached were kind and were able to share their experiences with me. In addition to the pastors/prophets, two training schools for pastors in the northern region were also visited. I had discussion with their instructors and some of the students to get first-hand information on the training they get before joining their various churches. One of these schools is located in Sakasaka-Tamale while the other one is located at Kumbungu, few kilometres away from Tamale. I also contacted the executives of Local Council of Churches, as well as those of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, all in Tamale, to share their experiences with me. In addition to all the above were people with sicknesses and other problems who were healed by these Pentecostal-Charismatic pastors/prophets.

## **Methods used**

I used a blend of interview, observation and focus group discussion with the respondents. The interview was conducted on the pastors/prophets and the officials at both the training schools as well as the Local Council of churches and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council. I took part in many of the activities of the churches as an observer to acquaint with their activities as well as know and approach individuals who would have experienced healing. Some of the churches had banners advertising their activities, as is shown below;



With this technique, a lot of people were identified and follow ups were made for relevant discussions. To know whether individuals share similar views or not, two focus group discussions were organised. I initially wanted to organise four, but getting them together was a difficult task and the days for my stay were also rolling fast.

### **Emerging Issues**

There were lots of issues that came up during my interaction with the selected respondents. Such issues as economic serving as a push and pull factors at both the giving and receiving ends; social-political dynamics, also serving as push-pull factors (internal and external), serving as drivers to the explosion of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in Ghana. There were also some remote and immediate causes ranging from ideological differences, the need to get results as quickly as possible as well as economic concerns (poverty and self-respect) were all

identified to either push-pull people into seeking medical attention from these churches, thus explaining the current state of affairs.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, I will say that the visit was successful since I was able to get answers to the objectives that I set out to address. Though I know that in the course of the write up, certain gaps might need additional information to fill them up, I am optimistic that what the information gathered have answered the mind boggling questions.