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THE IMPACT OF GBAGYI CULTURE ON CHRISTIAN WITNESSING
IN CHIKUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE

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ABSTRACT

In this research work, concerted effort is made to examine the impact of Gbagyi cultural practices on Christian witnessing in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State. To do this effectively, the work established the introductory aspects, identified the people called Gbagyi, looked into the major concepts of Gbagyi culture and effects of Gbagyi cultural practices in Christian witnessing religiously, politically, economically and socially.

The work also looked into the impact of Gbagyi culture on Christian witnessing purposely to discover how Gbagyi culture influenced the Christian faith, to serve as a reference document for further study, to document Gbagyi customs and traditions, to serve as a catalyst for objective evaluation of assessment of the influence of Gbagyi cultural practices.

The methodology used in order to achieve the objectives of the study is literary or historical research method. Also the primary sources of information is interview and related literature.

It is established that some aspects of Gbagyi cultural practices that are in line with biblical teaching help to boost and enhance Christian witnessing in Gbagyi land. The fact still remains that culture had both positive and negative influences on the church in Gbagyi land. This will continue because man is culture and culture is man. This research recommends that leaders should allow innovations in their approach to spreading the gospel, those cultural undesirable practices should be seriously condemned and discouraged. Christian denominations should double their efforts in

educating the members on the need to conform with Bible teachings, positive use of Gbagyi language and people should be given free vein to praise their redeemer and know him out of the core of their social identity. Valid worship style can be structured to address each social environment.

5.2 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one can make the following observations as established by the findings of this study. It is established that some aspects of Gbagyi cultural practices that were in line with Christian teachings help to boost and enhance Christian witnessing in Gbagyi land. Another influence is that in the use of Gbagyi music and musical instruments to propagating Christianity, there were instances whereby unbelievers surrendered their lives and musical instruments to serve Jesus. Some who professed to be part of the church find it difficult to really abandon their native cultural practices for their new faith. The result is what can be termed as adulterated Christianity. For instance, there are church members who also belong to music groups who still pay allegiance to their families or family gods under the pretext of protecting and projecting their culture.

In addition, discussion with my colleagues in the ministry revealed that the influence of Gbagyi cultural practices, especially the undesirable ones, are fast fading away. The trend now is that many Gbagyi Christian youths seem to despise many aspects of Gbagyi culture which are considered abomination to Christian beliefs and practices.

All said and done, the fact still remains that culture had both positive and negative influences on the church in Gbagyi land. It still has and it will continue to have because man is culture and culture is man.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The church leaders should allow innovations in their approach to spreading the gospel. New methods of reaching the congregation apart from the pulpit-pew communication should be devised and utilized. People should become involved in sharing their experiences and problem impeding the gospel should be highlighted and tackled collectively. When witnessing in Gbagyi land embraces and appreciates what they are doing especially in farming work and what they eat. Do not reject their offer even if you can not use it. Respect their community and family leaders. Identify with them just like what E. A. Bamigboye and his team did when they got to Palale Mission Field, they were observing the feast, they joined them and later they granted them audience.

2. Cultural practices such as idol worship, practice of witchcraft and wizardry, some customs of marriage, burial ceremony with regard to ancestors which have negative influence on the church should be condemned and seriously discouraged. On the other hand, cultural practices which are biblically inclined and have positive influence on the church like respect for elders, self-discipline, hard work, communal life, frowning at those who steal, improper dressing, and so on should be promoted.

3. All Christian denominations should endeavour to educate their members more on the effects of cultural practices on the church and the need to conform with Bible teaching rather than satisfying carnal desires. This effort should be made with sincere love, honesty and zeal to sensitize the church rather than hypocritical, holier-than-thou attitude be counter-productive.

4. The youths should be modest and humble in their approach especially in dealing with elders. Castigations and condemnation will not bring the desired change, rather

they will lead to confrontation and rancor. Elders should not be expected to react to change as quickly as possible and the youth should take time to put across their ideas based on new discoveries from the Bible. For example, it needs a lot of patience to convince adults to abandon some life-long bad habits, such as drunkenness, idolatry, belief in supernatural and superstition and marrying more than one wife.

5. The church should take pains to de-emphasize all things that make Christianity look foreign to the Gbagyi indigenes. For example, wedding gown should not be mandatory, Nigerian clergy men should not be mandatory to them always to dress in suit irrespective of the weather or the occasion. However, doctrines should not be compromised for indigenous culture.

6. Positive use of Gbagyi language. It is recommended that the language should be used positively to assist the church in winning more souls for Christ and sustaining the spiritual growth of members. To accelerate the gospel in Gbagyi land, there is need for complete Bible translation into Gbagyi language. The same could be done for other languages. It is also recommended that especially for the elderly ones, one or two Sunday school classes be purely designated to use Gbagyi language and when preaching in Gbagyi dominated community where necessary, Gbagyi should be used.

7. Another recommendation is on the church educational organizations, especially where in Gbagyi communities Baptist is the dominant denomination, it seems that the church members are yet to take full advantage of Baptist educational programmes such as Sunday School, church Training Programme, discipleship programmes and Bible studies. It is in respect to this that churches should find possible means by which every church member would be fully involved in these programmes. More

