

**Land Management and the Bayaa Institution: The Enduring Impact of  
Kasena-Nankana Mortuary Practises**

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**Abstract**

The significantly enduring traditional Kasena-Nankana Bayaase or Bayaaro institution is one of the profound cultural institutions that serve its communities' spiritual and mortal needs in diverse ways. A pall-bearer ritually fortified to execute indigenous mortuary and burial practices. This ritual, per its very nature and function, may appear unenticing but is indispensable when it comes to preparing the dead for final travel, and the appeasement of Mother Earth. This institution has since not received deeper scholarly attention and is currently facing challenges resulting from enculturation, sheer neglect, and conflict with adherents of the Christian faith. While the expected harm to face when a deceased person's mortals and spirits are not properly and customarily interred has been the major discussion of some scholars, there is still the need to offer deeper traditional and cultural insights into this institution, considering the increasing erosion of most indigenous cultural institutions and with that, the unpalatable resultant effects. The paper scrutinises some of the key traditional practices, challenges, and services of the Bayaa institution through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) of six seasoned Bayaase of high ranks within the Kasena-Nankana speaking areas of Navrongo. The study shows that the increasing Christian population and its 'strange' doctrines regarding traditional burial rites conflict with the age-long traditional practices of the Bayaase. The paper will show that from the dialogue with the Bayaase, it emerged that being subservient to traditional authority and incorporating elements of traditions that do not require traditional sacrifices are seen as one of the means for peaceful co-existence.

**Keywords:** Appeasement, Bayaase, Bayaa, Doctrines, Enculturation

**Introduction**

Burial and mortuary rites are a major concern in the social world of most Ghanaians (PETIO, 2023; SUMBO, ndn., 2023) and by extension, other parts of the world (AKBAR, ndn., 2021; ndn., TURNER, 2020) where 'land' burial is culturally sanctioned. Funerary practices and places of interment are prominently captured in most media discourses on land management strategies of Ghana's major cities and towns where land is increasingly becoming an invaluable commodity (ASEDIBA, 2023; MAXIMUM SERVICE TELEVISION, 2021). This

invokes an irresistible temptation of examining indigeneity, and Euro-American Christian paradigms of modern burials (EDWIN, ndn, 2020) and with it, the expected, or 'lived' benefits pertaining to land management strategies and hygiene. The paper thus will introspect the Bayaa institution along with the growing concerns of land management and conflicts resulting from indigenous funerary sacerdotal rites.

It is important to recognise first and foremost that the inimitably male Bayaaro institution, is a secret society or traditional cult in its own right (AKULIGA, 2023; ADONGO, ndn, 2005; ABASI, 1989). Parts of the sacred rituals are exclusively the preserve of high-ranking initiates and revealed to their subordinates upon assumption to senior ranks through certain types of burials and strict adherence to its institutional rules. It would, therefore, be impossible to capture the sacred rituals of these practices in full detail even if one were to be initiated for the purposes of the study. Per their traditional structures, the Bayaa is immune to destruction and contamination of 'dirt' due to the potent concoctions they use. The knowledge of these concoctions; herbs, root elixir and sacred stones are secretly and sacredly guided.

The Bayaase institution is culturally present in most clans of the Upper East Region of Ghana. In the Upper East Region is the Kasena-Nankana Municipality, with Navrongo as its administrative capital. The predominant languages in this area are; Kasem, Nankana, Buli and minority Mosi speakers. The population of the Municipality, according to 2021 population and housing census, stands at 99,895, with 48,658 males and 51,237 females (PERVARAH, ndn, 2024; OSMAN, ndn, 2023). Even though the Kasena-Nankana Municipality is an educational hub famed countrywide and globally, agriculture is one of the economic activities sustaining many households (CHIRAWURAH, ndn 2023; ALATINGA & WILLIAMS, 2019). Traditional institutions and indigenous cultural practices mutually exist alongside Christianity and Islam, thereby giving the municipality a blend of rich culture. In almost all traditional Kasena-Nankana Communities, there is a <sup>1</sup>*Dngɔ* (an heirloom from the horn of an animal, and <sup>2</sup>*Dokɔ* (pot) both complementing the spiritual efforts and 'firming up' of the Bayaa. The focus of this paper is to examine the role of the Bayaa in finding a home for a deceased person. The economic and religious impact of the Kasena-Nankana Bayaaro practices is also scrutinised alongside the existing conflicts and encounters with the secular world, including the influx of foreign cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> Kwara in Kasem

<sup>2</sup> Kambia in Kasem



**Fig. 1: Dɔngɔ** (Heirloom from the horn of an animal) Akadaribisi clan. **Photo: Joseph Aketema**



**Fig. 2: Doko (Pot)** of the Akadaribisi clan. **Photo: Joseph Aketema**

### **Methodological Consideration**

The study used both the discursive analysis (OSWICK, 2012) and Focus Group Discussion (NYUMBA ndn., 2018), involving 5 participants both of whom are from Kasena-Nankana enclave but whose operatives extend beyond their own community of Vunania. Questions were thematised and the sixth research participant acted as a regulator of the discourse. To guide the discussions, the following questions were drafted:

1. Through what means does one become a Bayaa and what are the different ranks in the Bayaa institution?
2. What would one have to do to assume the high ranks and what are the economic benefits of these traditional burial systems?
3. Why are there fresh graves and 'bailable' graves in Kasena-Nankana Tradition?

4. How does one bail a grave, and what consequences would one face if a grave is not customarily bailed?
5. What rituals would a Bayaa perform on the dead before burial?
6. What is the significance of these rituals for the deceased in the afterlife?
7. What significant differences exist between Judo-Christian burial rites and the Kasena-Nankana rituals for burial?
8. We hear of challenges with space by those who perform Church burial rites, do the traditional practitioners face the same challenge?

### **Etymology of the word Bayaa**

It is unclear which local language in Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana the word Bayaa come from. The word's semblance to most local languages in Upper East including the Builsa, Kasena-Nankana and the larger Frafra speaking areas makes limiting its etymology to one language community more difficult. Bayaa is the singular form of the plural Bayaase in Nankani/Gurune, Baye in Kasem and Bayaasa among Builsa people (Focus Group Discussion; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA; 2023; AKANSORIGE; 2023). It is unclear which of these communities the word emanated from. Anabila (2020) makes reference to Bayaase as, "The fetish which was in the nature of a pot was called 'Baya-yoore' (meaning sexton's pot). It was from this juju pot that many men were initiated into the mystery of sextons or grave-diggers" (2020, 676). Notwithstanding this conflicting piece of information, a recent engagement with Kasena-Nankana Bayaaro suggests an unconvincing etymology they claim is from Kasem-speaking area. Although strange as it may appear, the Bayaaro Institution itself may not have emerged from the Kasena-speaking people (Focus Group Discussion; ACHANA, 2023; AKASORIGE; 2023; AKULIGA; 2023). The word Bayara may have derived from Bà (they) and Yara (suffering). As was explicitly stated by the participants, "Our work is all about suffering and depravation hence, Bayaara" (ACHANA, 2023). As Awinita (2023) explains it, the word Bayaase may have spread and gained prominence in other parts of the Kasena/Nankana enclave and beyond possibly through enculturation and intermarriages.

### **Understanding the Bayaa Institution**

The Bayaa institution is one of suffering and unpalatable traditional structure requiring detailed and strict adherence to taboos but with very little compensation. Studies have shown that the Bayaase often experience some health problems resulting from their handling of infected corpses (CHIRAWURAH, ndn., 2022; ADONGO, ndn., 2005). Even in the face of this seemingly improvident nature of the institution, Abasi (1989) explains that the reputation of the Bayaa institution within its traditional enclave is "as esteemed as the one of diviner or of political titleholder" (1989, 1). From softening of the body when it is stiffened; rigor mortis, to bathing it through to interment (CHIRAWURAH, ndn 2022; ADONGO,

ndn., 2005), the traditional mortuary rites of the Bayaa are sought as intermediary rituals between the dead, the living and the after world. The Bayaase, in the exercise of their duties have power over the Earth Priest; Tindaana or Tigatu in some aspects of funerary rites and practices. The Bayaa wields the power to prepare and bury any corpse if he has reason, “to believe the continual lying in state of the body would bring unpleasant health and emotional stress to the bereaved” (AKULIGA, 2023).

In the words of Abasi (1989), the Bayaa as “a funeral or burial expert/s, can perform the very art of funeral, that is, celebrating the journey from this life to the world... to the benefit of both the deceased and the community of the living” (1989, 1). These benefits include the ability of the institution to overlook every conflict the deceased or their family would have had with the <sup>3</sup>Earth Priest. They could easily sidestep this and bury the dead for purity of the environment and Mother Earth of which the Tindaana remains its very custodian. The Bayaase would normally say that when it comes such decisions, nobody can stop them. Not even the Tindaana who himself would be buried by the Bayaase when he dies (Focus Group Discussion; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA; 2023). The Tindaana could then solve their personal differences with the deceased family after the interment.



**Fig. 3:** Victorials for the Bayaase. **Photo: Joseph Aketema**



**Fig. 4:** Sorting the Victorials for the Bayaase. **Photo: Joseph Aketema**

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<sup>3</sup>Before a body is committed to Mother Earth, the Tindaana has to be traditionally notified for them to grant permission for burial. This request could be denied if the person is found not to have lived in conformity with tradition or violated mother earth in some serious ways.

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### **Rankings within the Bayaase Institution**

Rankings in the Bayaa Institution depend on the different Bayaa institutions and the traditions undergirding the taboos of the pots of the respective clans. Hence, rankings in the Bayaa institution are not often explicitly given to non-members but are informed by the types of burials one has performed over the years. The first step of becoming a Bayaa is if one has buried his <sup>4</sup>mother or father and is traditionally fortified (a process known as *Duglogo*) afterwards (Focus Group Discussion; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA, 2023; AKASORIGE, 2023; AWINIMITA; 2023). This is the very first rank after which one is officially called a Bayaa. Subsequently, if one buries a male or female whose death is not a result of strange and inexplicable sickness, there is no fortification nonetheless, the rank is still the same. Before attaining the subsequent ranks, it would require the Bayaa to bury a leprous person before the (<sup>5</sup>*Duglogo*). After, when a leprosy person dies, no fortification is needed. Then, the next high rank is a blind person, a *Pogyabiliga*, red head (albino). Later, if a person dies from any of such diseases as chronic diarrhoea, bloating or coughing and is interred by that same Bayaa, there is a need for fortification, after which a higher rank is attained (Focus Group Discussion; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA, 2023; AMELIA; 2023).

Given these unanticipated circumstances, the Bayaa rankings are not based on how long one has been initiated but on the kinds of corpses the initiate is 'privileged' to have buried. In their discourse, the participants mentioned that a young and recent initiate could assume higher ranks than one initiated much earlier due to certain types of burials conducted. In their burial rites, the Bayaase explained that after the burial, they thrust elephant turf grass into the grave which they remove the next morning. This is to enable some <sup>6</sup>'eyes', which might have been mistakenly imprisoned in the grave to come out (Focus Group Discussion; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA; 2023; AKANSORIGE; 2023). In these rankings, a Bayaa who has not yet interred a corpse in an old grave may not be permitted to do so without first being fortified. There could be some untold health and spiritual consequences should the Bayaa fail to strictly comply with these rules (ABOKOPOM, 2023; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA; 2023). It is to be noted that before a Bayaa would carry a corpse and after final interment, they would perform a bath ritual before establishing contact with non-initiates. Even though this tradition is changing, the fact remains that no Bayaa would risk 'contaminating' or infecting those they love, unless they have ritually washed themselves clean.

### **Benefits of Traditional Burial Rites**

Traditional burial rights have innumerable benefits, including traditional land management and grave architecture. As the participants correctly affirm, they often dig the grave of the elder in a much more spacious and accommodative way to allow room for the unanticipated death of a young person whose shocking and untimely passing requires immediate interment (AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA;

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<sup>4</sup>Not necessarily one's biological father or mother, but one the Bayaase traditionally call their father or other.

<sup>5</sup>Fortifications with herbs for both spiritual and physical sufficiency.

2023). According to Akuliga (2023, Interview), “This underground design would not collapse or cave in. We excavate an old grave, which in itself was purposely well-designed to entomb any person whose burial must be hastened due to cultural and situational demands. This does not require extensive labour and time to execute. The Bayaase have to hasten to the funeral house, excavate the desired grave, and take the corpse out for interment” (Focus Group Discussion; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA; 2023; AKANSORIGE; 2023).

In his further explanation, Akuliga (2023, Interview) details, “This was very necessary in the recent past because families and close associates used to faint, some die when such deaths occur but now our people appear to not be bothered anymore”. Some of these traditional practises parallel the current Euro-Christian burial processes in terms of time and land management as well as reducing funerary cost. As Amelia (2023, Interview) puts it:

You cannot break a casket or a concrete grave to replicate these our traditional burial processes. The Euro-Christian tomb commonly practised here is solely designed for one corpse per a grave. Our grave design can accommodate not less than ten people in a space that is twice smaller than the Euro-Christian grave.

An observation of critical importance is that land management is much better in the traditional burial system than burying with caskets. For these reasons, bailing a grave is still a common cultural practise in most traditional communities in the Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana.

In current times, major cities across Africa, including Ghana’s Osu, and Labadi cemeteries are not only struggling for space and land for interment but currently facing some health implications (BALAKRISHNAN, 2022; AMOAKO-GYAMPAH, 2022). The situation is entirely different in indigenous land management burial rites. The unrewarding merits of Judo-Christian burial rites are now a common phenomenon in almost every community touched either by Christianity or enticed by its burial rites.

### **Bailing the Traditional Grave**

The Bayaase also play a role in finding a home for a deceased person. Finding a home transcends just digging Mother Earth to inter a corpse (ABASI, 1995, 1993). Other significant processes involved in bailing a grave for a deceased require strict obeisance to rituals. A grave must be bailed in order to inter the next deceased person. Bailing a grave implies seeking permission from a deceased person, whose grave, the Bayaase intend to bury a ‘recently’ deceased person. In the explanation offered by Amelia (2023, Interview), “the one that was initially buried is the owner of the house. Adding another person to such a household requires the Bayaase to work with the the owner of the funeral to bail the grave for the recently departed”.



**Fig. 5:** Typical Kasena-Nankana grave that was 'bailed'. My sources indicated that over the years, not less than a dozen persons have been interred here. **Photo: Joseph Aketema**



**Fig. 6:** An example of a Christian grave. It often entombs only one person with very minimal or a non-existent chance of being bailed. **Photo: Joseph Aketema**

The accoutrements with which the house is bailed include a basket of millet, tobacco cake and a fowl (hen/cock, depending on the gender of the deceased) to customarily acquire the grave or request permission from the owner of the grave to accommodate the newly passed on youth. So, the Bayaa with these items goes to the grave site and says:

Achorbonu, following the passing of Amoah, we come with these gifts to make a humble request to you, and to buy this house so that you can ensconce him in your house for us. It is for these reasons we come bearing a fowl, tobacco and millet. (AMELIA 2023, Interview)



The fowl is struck against the grave. It is very important to note that not every ranking Bayaa eats this fowl (Focus Group Discussion; AKULIGA, 2023; ACHANA 2023; AKANSORIGE 2023; AMELIA 2023). This further affirms the difference in ranks of the Bayaase and the entitlements.

### **Tabooing in the Bayaa Institution**

Apart from the specialised rituals elevating individual Bayaase to higher ranks, certain taboos deprive some ranking officials of partaking in some edibles, including not eating animals or fowls that fly or walk over corpses. Similarly, wandering animals which fall into broken or carved-in graves are equally not eaten by some ranking officials. In the words of Akuliga, “one young man had eaten a fowl entrapped in a broken grave. He became seriously sick. We did not only treat him but had him initiated because he had ‘entered’ our grave even though unintended” (AKULIGA 2023, Interview). The unrewarding health consequences of entering a grave by non-initiates include growing pale, bloating, becoming scrawny and if not detected and treated with our specialised herbs much earlier could result in death (Focus Group Discussion; ACHANA, 2023, AKULIGA, 2023; AWINIMITA; 2023). The Bayaa, as an intermediary between the living and the dead, ensures that curses, oath swearing involving members or individuals and the deceased are revoked before burial can occur. A small chicken representing purity, and innocence is held across the elephant tuft mat or whatever material the body is wrapped in. The living, and the Bayaa, who now impersonate the deceased cut or tear up the life chicken into pieces after having revoked whatever curses there was. The pieces are then thrown off signalling the end of whatever argument or curse that may have existed between the two whether one is wrong or both are wrong (ABASI 1989, Interview). The power of the dead over the living and the desire for a fluid transition to the after world of the dead require the execution of this traditional revocation processes in its full detail.

### **Challenges confronting the Bayaa Institution**

What is observed as a major conflict plaguing the Bayaa institution is the increasing detachment of the Church (Christianity) and the Islamic faith from very important traditions that should be binding the communities together. The conflict with the Church is a recent phenomenon (AKULIGA, 2023).

I attest that in the days of <sup>7</sup>Akanlu and Akanaa, both of whom were early converts to the Catholic Faith, these kinds of conflict were non-existent. Yes, they would not directly perform sacrifices but would not hesitate to provide us with sacrificial items to carry out supplications desired by the gods. Many current adherents who now despise our ways would not want to conform to any tradition involving sacrifice even if indirectly required. (AKANSORIGE 2023, Interview)

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<sup>7</sup>Early converts of the Catholic Faith both of whom passed on before 1985

For instance, we, together with the Earth Priest are often deprived of every important item when the Church exclusively enjoys the right to commit bodies to Mother Earth. The Bayaase argue that the institution of the Tindaana is as old as our first ancestors who ‘sat’ on this land, and obviously older than these new faiths. The over-riding importance is that “irrespective of one’s faith, the existing burial traditions mandate the deceased family members to inform the Tindaana of anyone’s passing in a family within their jurisdiction” (AKULIGA 2023, Interview). If this is not strictly adhered to, the body cannot be committed to Mother Earth. At this juncture, the deceased family is either given the leeway to continue or surcharged to make peace and amends with the Tindaana if it is eventually established that the now deceased or their family had violated Mother Earth or its caretaker, the Tindaana in some spiteful way/s.

The funeral is traditionally and publicly announced only if the Tindaana gives permission. Before the Bayaase start digging a grave, they use a calabash to mark the suitable spot by circumnavigating the ends of the calabash on the of part earth they want to dig and bury the corpse (ACHANA, 2023). Achana (2023, Interview) explains:

With this tradition, some food items are supposed to be added to the calabash for the Tindaana called <sup>8</sup>*Yoture* in Nankani. If the calabashes are two, one would go to the Tindaana, the other to the Bayaa who finally commits the body to Mother Earth. (ACHANA, 2023; AKULIGA, 2023)

Also, the participants further disclosed that an animal, given on account of the *Yoture* is often killed and shared with the earth priest and the Bayaase. They are entitled to a foreleg, hind leg, neck, and waist while the Tindaana takes foreleg, ribs cavity, hind leg, head, and the hide. They divide the lever into two parts, which the earth priest uses to sacrifice to Mother Earth. The meat for the Tindaana is put in the calabash, used for marking the grave, and given to the Tindaana.

The above practices are inherited culture from the past. This growing dissent with the Church has motivated the need to interrogate the basis of the contentions. In the words of the Bayaase, the current conflict with the Church started close to a decade ago when the Church began side-lining them by refusing to allow them perform traditional burials after theirs (ACHANA, 2023; AKULIGA, 2023; AKANSORIGE; 2023). The words of the participants, the Church’s argument is that there cannot be two graves for one deceased. There have been instances where Christians contemplate our interest in perpetuating our tradition. Few have linked this interest to the edibles, which are often given to us on account of our services. Others hold the perception that the whole process is a fetish and a preserve for idol worshippers. But that is not the case considering the sacrifices and labour, the sleep we deprive ourselves and the warmth of night we deny our wives and families just to prepare a journey for the deceased (Focus Group Discussion, AWINIMITA 2023; AKULIGA 2023; ACHANA 2023; AKANSORIGE 2023).

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<sup>8</sup> *Yo* (grave) dig (*tur*). Animal giving on account of digging mother earth.

As the discussants suggest, a solution to this growing conflict is the need to yield and conform to tradition, especially those that directly fall within the Tindaana's ambit and have cultural underpinnings. Achana (2023) suggests that dialogue between all grieving parties in these affairs could be a healthier approach to solving such cultural clashes.

### **Conflict resolution-the Bayaa, the Church and the Earth Priest**

The first conflict is the continual misconception that the Bayaase 'heckle' the Church to maintain its institution because of some of the victuals. The first impression fuels the second thought currently expressed by the Church. There are instances we hear them say:

It is food they want. They are fighting because of food. We should give them their entitlements without allowing them to conduct a second burial. With this, they Bayaase would be content and pester us no more (AKULIGA 2023, Interview)

Regrettably, as Amelia (2023, Interview) points out, "This is wrong and incorrect. It came out very strongly, the Bayaa no matter how hungry, would leave any food tabled before them to a funeral house immediately they are informed of one's passing" They do not take or eat any food given to them in the name of their tradition when they have not executed that tradition in the first place.

Giving these troubling developments, it can be argued that these conflicts require serious attention. For example, freedom of worship is a constitutional provision in Ghana and it is equally important to look at the over-lapping and entwining principles that bind communities together. The paper contends that stakeholders and the government have a lot to do to ensure that the foreign religion does not marginalise the indigenous ones. In light of decolonial proposals and the call for epistemic justice in current scholarship, one finds a strong motivation to preserve the local cultures of the people, such as the Bayaase burial practices. As Awiniimita (2023) puts it, "there is a need for all, irrespective of their faiths to respect the Tindaana institution so long as they live in their traditional jurisdiction". Anything to the contrary amounts to cultural hegemony and epistemic injustice against indigenous traditions.

Akuliga (2023, Interview) shares a similar opinion with Amelia when he states, "The church and foreign cultures came to meet tradition and to foster peace and perpetuate tradition, the church cannot be the ones dictating and bending the rules". In most colonial British administrative towns for instance, the colonial 'invention' on burial sites was with the intention of stealing land from the indigenes. The traditional taboos that restricted indigenous people from selling family lands, which they had interred their kindred, was something of a worry to the Euro-American colonists. In her study, Balakrishnan (2022, 3), recognises that:

The problem of in-house burial was a problem of land. The British state's insistence on cemetery burial in colonial Ghana arose out of a recognition, crucial to urban planning, that wherever the bodies of ancestors were buried, the land could not be bought or sold because people would resist interfering with their family house.

This led to the allocation of large sites and portions of lands for cemeteries rather than those owned and traditionally managed by the local people. As Balakrishnan (2022. 3), elucidated, “cemeteries marked a radical departure from both precolonial death rites and indigenous approaches to land, power, and property” . The discussants also gave prominent but unverifiable examples of some families within the Navrongo enclave who hid under the cover of Christianity to deprive traditionalists of their burial right only to scurry back to it for protection and solace after incurring inexplicable deaths and untold misfortunes (Focus Group Discussion; AKANSORIGE, 2023; AKULIGA, 2023). The quest for amicable solution to the conflict arguably lies in dialogue. Giving a practical example, Achana (2023, Interview) explains:

When your father who was a devout Catholic and who openly stated his will to be buried as his Church requires passes on, he who is dead is dead and obviously cannot redeem such promises, however, tradition would require the Tindaana to grant you permission for burial and for the Bayaa to mark the earth with their calabash. If there are no serious pleas and dialogue with the Tindaana for an amicable solution, there would be consequences should tradition be overlooked.

In such a situation of potential conflict, one way to handle it could be to allow the priest to perform the Christian burial rites first, as the deceased wanted, but that should not stop the Tindaana from executing his age-old tradition. Achana (2023, Interview) added:

All is about the ‘heart’ (purity of the deceased) and Mother Earth. You can be a Christian or traditionalist with an evil heart. How one is buried does not guarantee them salvation. That is our institution. If we had done that in that house (Bishop Akanlu’s House), why should we not do it anywhere. So, total submission to the Tindaana is the road map to peace.

Additionally, the traditional burial rites have an important advantage in land management compared to the Christian rites. With land becoming scant in Ghana due to industrial needs and population growth, it does seem that the traditional burial rights play a major role in land conservation. Also, the liquids and herbs used in preserving corpses are natural and do not pose any danger to the environment and other organisms in the ecosystem compared to the Christian rites that make use of various dangerous chemicals in preserving corpses. Some of these chemicals affect both humans and the organisms in the natural environment. Thus, once again, we can argue that the traditional Bayaase mortuary practices have an immense advantage in environmental conservation in comparison to its Christian counterpart. Added to the initial arguments about cultural hegemony and epistemic injustice, the case for the protection of the Bayaase burial rites becomes stronger.

## **Conclusion**

From the forgoing discussions, indigenous Kasena-Nankana funerary practises cannot be complete without the expert involvement of the Bayaa. It is the Bayaa who ensures that a corpse is well-'prepared,' its grave well-dug, and the burial processes well-adhered to, so that the deceased can journey in peace. In the traditional interment processes, the Bayaa liaises between the dead, earth priest, and the deceased family to ensure that all traditional and sacerdotal rites related to funerary practises are adhered to. The paper argued that these traditional rites have several advantages over the Christian burial rites, such as land management and environmental conservation. The current dissent of the Bayaa institution stems from the conflict and opposition to its age long established authority by the Christian community. The paper argued that such opposition and attempt to repress the traditional culture amount to cultural hegemony and epistemic injustice. For these reasons, the discussants adduce that there is a need for inter-faith dialogue and discourse at the community level to avoid personal and communal clashes.

## **Declarations**

\*The author declares no conflict of interest or ethical issues for this work

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### **Interview Participants**

Asakivvonongo Achana (February, 1<sup>st</sup> 2023) Focus Group Discussion  
Amelia Achei-lisiya Edmund (February, 1<sup>st</sup> 2023) Focus Group Discussion  
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Akoliga Abagna (February, 1<sup>st</sup> 2023) Focus Group Discussion  
Awinimita Nicolas (February, 1<sup>st</sup> 2023) Focus Group Discussion  
Abokopom David (February, 1<sup>st</sup> 2023) Focus Group Discussion

