

SLAVERY DOES EXIST IN GHANA, AND IT IS NOT A GLORIOUS INSTITUTION!

Answering the ludicrous false claims of the Afrikania “Mission”

THE REALITY: For hundreds of years, young virgins have been given to traditional shrines in Ghana as living sacrifices or payment for the transgressions of others—almost always men. Although conditions and precise practices vary from shrine to shrine, the girls are usually raped regularly by the traditional priest. An average of four children are born to them through that ordeal, and the priest who sires them takes no responsibility for them and bestows no affection on them. The girls often are reduced to scrounging for food for themselves and their children, since the shrine provides little or nothing and the families often live in mortal fear of the “gods” served in the shrine. No human affection is every expressed, and punishment is frequent and harsh. For a long time Ghana’s dark, dirty secret thrived amongst the Anlo-Ewe people in the southern Volta Region and in parts of the Eastern and Greater Accra Regions (as well as in Togo and Benin), simply because stark fear kept anyone from talking. It was considered a traditional taboo to talk about the slavery system. People believe that the “gods” served in the shrines could hear every word they said and would strike them dead if they dared reveal what was happening to their daughters. One man from the area wrote to the early colonial government, hoping to persuade them to do something about the debilitating practice. A precursory investigation followed, the priests told the colonial masters that they had no idea what the man was talking about, and the case was dismissed. The lone, brave soul who dared to speak up was ridiculed, branded as the one eyed man in the land of the blind, a misguided soul whose learning had gone to his head.

He was right, of course. Thousands of girls who have now been released through the intervention of Christians now attest to the practice, called trokosi (the traditional spelling is troxovi) or fiashidi.

One would think that after suffering the humiliation of bondage in the Arabic and the western worlds, everyone would be anxious to get rid of every last vestige of slavery. Not so. Ghanaians had the good sense to outlaw the practice in 1998, but fear of the gods of the shrines has been so pervasive that the law has never been enforced.

In recent years, the Afrikania “Mission” has appeared trying to bring all forms of African Traditional Religion together under one central banner, giving them one name (the “Afrikania” faith, of course), and making them look more like other religions. This is evident by the arbitrary collection of ancient religious writings from Egypt, etc., into a “Bible”, the establishment of a weekly service at a cultural center, and the choice of the ancient Egyptian “god”, Amen-Ra as their fundamental deity. The ply seems to be to find devotees of gods and goddesses whatever they be, then to strengthen and unite them into one religion. All these are simply their exercise of freedom of religion, guaranteed under the Ghanaian constitution.

Afrikania Mission does not stop there, however. On the internet, in the public press and in constant public pronouncements, they are fighting to maintain the traditional practice of trokosi slavery. Actually, their methods vary like a yo-yo going up and down. They speak out of both sides of their mouths, sometimes claiming that such a practice is unknown and has never existed. At other times they claim it is a glorious institution and argue that it should be retained and perhaps modified.

The leaders of the Afrikania Mission are well educated, while the girls enslaved by the trokosi system remain illiterate, since it is almost always forbidden for them to go to school. Therefore there is an imbalance. The traditional voices are heard constantly, and their victims are less able to be heard in the public arena. This is why we have decided to speak up for them. Slavery existed in the past because fear kept it as a nasty little secret, quietly tucked away for fear of being struck dead. That began to change when one Christian, Pastor Mark Wisdom, began to publicly challenge the priests and the system. It was widely believed that he would be struck dead, but he declared in the public press that he was not afraid of the curses of the shrines. Twenty years later, the fearless pastor is still

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alive. All who know the truth about trokosi slavery must take the good pastor's example to heart. We must stop being afraid and we must start speaking up with the truth.

We cannot afford to let the Afrikania Mission publish its propaganda without check. We must answer its lies. Those who know the truth must speak up. Only then will the scourge of trokosi be eliminated from this great nation of Ghana. We call on everyone who knows the truth to come forward now and let your voices be heard!

For answers to AMPL (AFRIKANIA MISSION PROPAGANDA & LIES), come back here. We will add more answers as more propaganda is released.

AMPL: "What exists in Eweland is Troxovi (a divinity that adopts children), a religious institution that has been the most effective educational and social welfare." (Osofo Kofi Ameve, leader of Afrikania Mission, in a letter to Mrs. Gladys Asmah, Minister of Women's Affairs and made available to the press, February 14, 2001

TRUTH: Trokosi slave children in the shrines are almost always denied formal education. They have no time either for informal education, since they work from morning til night in the priest's fields and then have to scrounge for food on the side to enable them and their children to survive. Constant hunger does very little for anyone's social welfare.

AMPL: "When a family member commits a heinous crime and calamity befalls the affected family...one member of the family is sent to Troxovi for spiritual, moral and social training so as to serve as a role model for the effected family and society as a whole." (Osofo Kofi Ameve, leader of Afrikania Mission, in a letter to Mrs. Gladys Asmah, Minister of Women's Affairs and made available to the press, February 14, 2001

TRUTH: This is an interpretation that those who take in trokosi slaves want us to believe. We have interviewed many former slaves and have yet to find a single one who received moral training that made her a role model. Many have said that they considered their priestly masters to be "very wicked men." The only truth in this AMPL is that trokosi slaves do receive spiritual training. They are forced to worship the images of the shrine and the gods they represent. They have no religious liberty (a direction violation of the Ghana constitution). They often are not even permitted to sing or even hum any other songs other than those directed to the deity of the shrine.

AMPL: A shrine that enslaves women does not exist in Ghana. (Osofo Kofi Ameve, leader of Afrikania Mission, in a letter to Mrs. Gladys Asmah, Minister of Women's Affairs and made available to the press, February 14, 2001

TRUTH: Although conditions and practices vary, many shrines keep women and children in forced labor which cannot be called anything but slavery. The women and children involved are given no choice in the matter. They work without wages or benefits. In most shrines sex with the priest is forced on them. Those who have at long last been freed from the system say unequivocally that they were slaves.

AMPL: Non-profit organizations are enlisting ordinary men, rehearsing and presenting them as "fetish priests" in a fraudulent money-making scheme.

TRUTH: The liberation ceremonies are a public matter involving both leaders and common people from the community. They are not done in secret. The people know the shrines and priests of their area. How can anyone masquerade ordinary people as traditional priests in public and get by with it? This kind of comment shows only how desperate traditionalists have become, and what kind of nonsense they have to resort to. Secondly, the non-profit organizations who are freeing the slaves are also spending huge amounts of money to rehabilitate them—providing free vocational training and

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schooling for their children amongst other things. These organizations are spending lots of money to help those coming into freedom. They have also built preschools in some of the villages—something that no shrine has done. They are not making money, they are spending money on behalf of these poor victims.

AML: “How can a practice, which has continued for longer than Christianity and is present in other countries like Togo and Benin carry on if it is a con job?” (Osofo Kofi Ameve, leader of Afrikania Mission, quoted in Southern African Broadcasting News, August 25, 2001)

TRUTH: Trokosi slavery has existed for a few hundred years and is nowhere as old as Christianity. It exists in Togo and Benin because the Ewe tribe that hosts the practice lives there as well as in the Volta Region of Ghana. It has gone unchecked because stark fear of the gods was widespread.

AML: “If the Kennedy family consulted the shrine and identified the cause of all their tragedies, they would be a happy lot today. All it would take them is a bottle of schnapps and some 5000 cedis (Ghanaian currency—roughly \$1 US) to appease the deity and identify the criminal.” (Osofo Kofi Ameve, leader of Afrikania Mission, quoted in Southern African Broadcasting News, August 25, 2001)

TRUTH: Help from the shrine is far from cheap or easy. All too often the price exacted at the shrines is the perpetual servitude of a virgin daughter of the family. That’s how 5,000 women got into slavery in Ghana alone (1997 survey figures, not including the children born to them when they were raped by the priest). I wonder which daughter the Kennedy family would be willing to send to the shrine in order to assure the good fortune of the rest of the family. Ameve also errs in referring to the images/spirits served in the shrines as deities. Images are created by human beings, and all spirits were created by God. Some have rebelled against their Creator, according to the Bible, but none can properly be called deities. They are creatures, not Creators.

**THE PLAIN, UNVARNISHED TRUTH IS THIS:
TROKOSI SLAVERY DOES EXIST IN GHANA. ABOUT
2,000 WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE STILL IN
BONDAGE.**

**THE PLAIN, UNVARNISHED TRUTH IS THIS:
TROKOSI SLAVERY IS FAR FROM A GLORIOUS
INSTITUTION THAT SHOULD BE PRESERVED. IN
FACT, IT IS A DISGRACE AND A SCOURGE THAT IS
NOT WORTHY OF THE GREAT NATION OF GHANA.**

