From Slave Wife of the Gods to
"ke te pam tem eng"

Trokosi Seen through the Eyes of the Participants

Sofia
Wiking
Abstract

This final essay in religious studies at Malmö Lärarutbildningen (Teacher’s education) is a minor field study (MFS) carried out in Ghana about Trokosi. Trokosi is a tradition, system and practice where young girls are given to village shrine priests as sexual and domestic slaves, or "wives of the gods", in compensation for offenses allegedly committed by a member of the girl's family.

My main research question has been: What are the thoughts of the victims as well as the rescuers of Trokosi thoughts about the Trokosi tradition, system and practice? The thesis is based on a minor field study, observations and interviews.

I observed the work at International Needs Network Ghana (INNG) and their work with Trokosi mainly focusing on the International Needs Vocational Training Centre (INVTC). At INVTC former Trokosi get the opportunity of becoming independence and self-sufficient - ke te pam tem eng. In this essay I have interviewed two opponents to Trokosi, in this essay called the rescuers, as well as one victim of Trokosi.

In my interviews, the only person who criticized the theory and the religion behind Trokosi was the victim, a person who was born into this belief system. INNG’s critics are not about the theory behind Trokosi but how it is practised.

Applying of feminist perspective this thesis focuses religious and cultural practices, in this case Trokosi, as a part of a larger system that is limiting women’s lives. In addition, post colonial theory may contribute to the analysis of “third world women’s own struggle and aspiration for independence.

There are different views and perspectives on Trokosi and despite Ghana’s constitution and other documents that forbid this type of practice it is still vital. This indicates that there are more factors to consider. For instance overall patriarchal structures and post colonial experiences. Information and education is essential for the transformation of Trokosi in order to favour women’s right especially in the fields of human- and women’s rights.

Key Words - Human rights, women’s rights, feminism, post colonial feminism, religious/cultural/traditional practice, minor field study, Ghana, human right’s education, religious education.
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1. Introduction

I am a student at Malmö Lärarhögskola where I study to become a teacher in religious education (religionsvetenskap och lärande). Religious education combines many of the issues that I am interested in and think is important, such as religion, ethnicity, gender and power issues, questions of diversity and cultural studies. Also countries in developing processes, international politics, democracy and globalisation processes are of great interest to me.

Through Eva Kunda Nilsson, a friend of my teacher in African dance, I heard about the Trokosi\(^1\) tradition in Ghana where young girls are given to village shrine priests as sexual and domestic slaves, or "wives of the gods", in compensation for offenses allegedly committed by a member of the girl's family. From the way I pursue it, Trokosi is multiple. Trokosi shows the social and patriarchal structure in Ghana, where young girls are objects in the relationship between gender and power. It exemplifies the African holistic conception of the world that is common in different African religions. Trokosi has existed in times where the "traditional" religion and praxis dominated, and is still vital in Ghana of 2008, which is considered to be a "modern" country. Trokosi can also be seen in the light of Ghana’s colonial heritage and the tendency of using tradition to create and preserve a national identity.

Eva Kunda Nilsson gave me some more information about persons to contact that are involved in the struggle against Trokosi; “the rescuers”. One of these persons was Walter Pimpong, the executive director of International Needs Network Ghana (INNG), a non governmental organisation (NGO). I contacted Walter Pimpong who welcomed me to Ghana and to INNG’s Trokosi project and through a minor field study (MFS) scholarship from SIDA it was possible for me to do my final essay in religious education as a MFS about Trokosi.

Ke te pam tem eng is a Ghanaian proverb that means that people shall struggle for independence and self-sufficiency\(^2\). In my essay, and in my MFS, the struggle of the former Trokosi to achieve this goal through attending at International Needs Vocational Centre (INVTC) will be my main focus. It was also at the INVTC

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\(^1\) Among the ethnic groups Ewe and Adangme in Ghana the practice is called Trokosi or in some districts fiashidi, troxovi or woryokwe. In Benin and Togo the same practice is called voodoosi or vudusi. In this essay I will use the term Trokosi in order to refer to the tradition, system and practice.

\(^2\) Brace, 1995: 45
where I got the chance to interview Patience Vormawor, another rescuer from INNG, and a victim of Trokosi named Beatrice Antiyaa.

1.2 Purpose of this study

The main purpose for conducting this essay is to get a better inside perspective on Trokosi by getting information from the different “actors point of view”.

By using a feminist perspective in this essay I want to put focus on and question religious and cultural practices, in this case Trokosi, which are a part of a bigger system that are limiting women’s lives. And by adding a post colonial feminist perspective I also want to contribute to the awareness on the struggle of women of the “third world’s” and their aspiration for independence. Both of these theoretical perspectives will be more developed in chapter 3.

1.3 Research question

I wanted to know more about the Trokosi tradition, system and practice in Ghana seen from the “participants” point of view. Initially this meant that I had to identify the different “actors” and according to me these are the victims, the rescuers/opponents, the proponents and the law enforcement. The rescuer/opponent in this essay is defined first and foremost as INNG. My main question is:

- What are the thoughts of the victims and the rescuers about the tradition, system and practice of Trokosi?
Disposition of the study

In chapter 2 background facts about the subject of my MFS, *Trokosi*, will be presented in order to gain greater understanding its nature. In chapter 3 my theoretical framework, feminism and post colonial feminism, is presented. Chapter 4 contains my methods: field study, observation and interview, and a short passage about the ethical considerations with regard to these methods. The result of my minor field study, carried out in Ghana March 22- May 19 consisting of observations and interviews, are presented in chapter 5. The respondents in this essay are Walter Pimpong, executive director of INNG, Patience Vormawor, head of gender programmes at INNG and Beatrice Antiyaa who is a daughter to a *Trokosi* (a *Trokosiviwo*, see more 2.2.1) and tells her mother’s and her own life story. Chapter 6 contains an analysis and discussion that follows by a chapter about future research and the essay terminates with concluding remarks.
2. Background to the minor field study

This chapter begins with a presentation of the literature used in this chapter (2.1) and is followed by a short exposition of African traditional religion, which Trokosi is a part of (2.2), followed by the main different characteristics of the practice, system and tradition (2.3). Trokosi will also be seen from different perspectives, legal, proponents and opponents (2.4), with focus on INNG and their work (2.5).

2.1 Presentation of used literature

Most of the available material about Trokosi is produced by different NGO’s campaigning “against” Trokosi and is available on Internet. The research library about Trokosi is not very vast and according to me much of the available material is a repetition of statements already made. Also some of the material has insufficient reference information such as no year of publishing, no author and no pagination.

The articles used in this chapter are by journalists Aird, Sarah C. (Ghana’s slaves to the God’s), Ben- Ari, Nirit, (2001) (Africa’s children. Liberating girls from “trokosi”. Campaign against ritual servitude in Ghana), Ocansey, Ransford & Hayhoe, Anita (2004) (Practice of Trokosi Still Hurting Girls in Ghana), Robson, Angela, (2006) (The chosen ones: Slavery in the name of god) and an article produced by the NGO Anti slavery International (Feature- Ritual slavery in Ghana anti slavery). The same NGO has also made information available about different forms of slavery on their website.

INNG, another NGO, has published facts about Trokosi on their website called Trokosi of West Africa (2007) and Ghana. (2008). During my time in Ghana I attended an information meeting about Trokosi, among other things, held by Awadey Cromwell, Head of projects and research at INNG. It was also at INNG’s office that I got access to three reports submitted to INNG; Dissemination Workshops on the Trokosi practice in Ghana. 24- 27 June, 2008, Dovlo, Elom & A.K., Adzoyi, (1995), Report on Trokosi Institution commissioned by International Needs and Physical and Psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana. Report of the longitudinal (Tracking survey) 1998- 2000. (2001). These reports can only be found at the INNG’s office in Accra, Ghana, but there are plans on publishing them on INNG’s webpage in the future.
Two of my sources are produced by the government in Ghana and can be found on their webpage (*The Role of Religious Bodies – Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses, Volume 4 Chapter 9* and *The Role of Chiefs - Complicity or Resistance to Human Rights Abuses, Volume 4 Chapter 8*). A report called *Ghana. Rapport om de mänskliga rättigheterna* (2007) is produced by the Swedish government’s secretariat (Regeringskansliet) and can be found on the Swedish government’s webpage about human rights. A short information about ritual servitude in Ghana (which *Trokosi* can be seen as) is provided by Wikipedia (*Ritual servitude*, 2008).

### 2.2 African traditional religions

The oldest religion in Ghana is different African traditional religions. According to Ghana’s government’s homepage the belief system of traditional religion is the base and foundation in the Ghanaian culture and could be described as ”the belief or spiritual substructure of Ghanaian culture”\(^3\). For example, a Ghanaian might not be a follower of the practices of traditional religion, but its belief system penetrates the entire culture and is visible in for example the use of language, names and burial systems, which is seen as a form of religious practice.\(^4\)

The traditional religion of the ethnic group Ewe and Adangme in Ghana, where the *Trokosi* tradition is currently most active, is similar to most of the African traditional religions according the ontology. Its ontology posits a hierarchy of beings. Traditionally, this hierarchy is headed by a Supreme Being called *Mawu* who is the creator of the universe. But there are hardly any priests or cults of *Mawu*. Instead it is believed that *Mawu* created less powerful divinities to serve as intermediaries between him and humans. These divinities have powers to mediate the needs of humans and are at the centre of the priesthoods and cults.

Some of the gods in African traditional religions are associated with various aspects of nature such as thunder, mountains and rivers. Apart from different gods, ancestors form a very important aspect of African traditional religious ontology. After the ancestors’ death they are believed to still influence the lives of their descendants by mediating their well being within the spiritual world. The ancestors also serve as guides and guards of moral conduct. The principal function of the gods and

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\(^3\) *The Role of Chiefs - Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses*

\(^4\) *The Role of Chiefs - Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses*
ancestors in traditional belief is that they provide for human needs. They also provide protection from various harmful and “unfriendly” powers such as evil spirits and powers of witchcraft which is a significant part of the spiritual belief of African traditional religions. 

Both positive and negative powers are believed to manifest themselves in the human world. Nature is also believed to reflect these powers and is therefore not regarded as a mere physical substance. In most African traditional religion gods or spirits take residence in different ritual objects and shrines.

The Ewe people believe that priests have the power to communicate directly with the gods and that they can influence the spirit world. The deities have the power to protect the community and also have a function of solving both fundamental and everyday life problems; physically, mentally or spiritually. The shrines thereby function as an administration of justice and help to maintain law and order within the society. The majority of the people working with the Trokosi practice agree that this is the foremost biggest reasons why the Trokosi practice still continues. The shrine and its priests are a part of the legal system that the community rests on and has done so for a long time.

2.3 Characteristics of Trokosi

Today, Trokosi is most visible in the south eastern parts of Ghana, Togo and Benin. Trokosi requires young virgin girls to serve as compensation for misdeeds committees by their family members. According to the tradition, families give a daughter to a priest as a way of making a menace with the Gods for crimes committed by relatives. If an offence has been committed this is reported to the shrine. The transgression can consist of anything from murder to gossiping, anything that goes against the local social norm. The Trokosi practice is used here as a part of the traditional judicial system. In other cases Trokosi can be used mainly as a method of avoiding the rage of the gods by pleading to the gods for mercy through the giving of a Trokosi. Families that feel exposed to

5 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 2-3
6 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 2-3
7 Aird, Sarah C.
8 Aird, Sarah C.
9 The Role of Religious Bodies – Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses
10 A map of Ghana, Togo, Benin is displayed on p. 45
misfortune in some way can go to the shrines for “counselling”, a “counselling” that can result in the giving of a *Trokosi*.  

Once the girl is given to the priests, she is his property. There are no credible statistics on the number of women and girls living in bondage by *Trokosi*. But numbers indicate that up to 1,500 women and girls could be *Trokosi* in Ghana today and that there are approximately 51 shrines where it is known that the practice of *Trokosi* is carried out. Some priests at significant shrines can have many *Trokosi*.  

### 2.3.1 Categories of *Trokosi*

There are two categories of *Trokosi*; those who can be released after a couple of years and those who are committed for life. Even if the girl is in the first category, she is married for life with the Gods and may still be required to serve at the shrine. A *Trokosi* is a *Trokosi* for life, inside or outside the shrine.

When a priest dies, the girl is passed on to his successor. In shrines where servitude for life is practiced, shrines often conduct a practice called *replacement*. *Replacement* means that when a *Trokosi* dies, or if a *Trokosi* runs away, a substitute from the same family or clan must take her place. Some NGO’s report that they have met numerous girls who have been the third or fourth *replacements* for alleged crimes committed by their families.

Girls that are committed to shrines for life have little hope of being released. In some rare cases the shrines can be willing to release a *Trokosi* if she, or her family, pays a certain sum of money. But the fee is usually so high that there is no hope of ever paying it. When a released *Trokosi* dies the shrine is informed. But the shrines do not have to pay for the funeral as expected of a husband. In contrast, when a priest dies, *Trokosi* performs widowhood rites whether she has left the shrine or not. The children of the *Trokosi* (fathered by the priest) are called *Trokosiviwo* and are also slaves of the priest for as long as her/his mother is captivated.

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11 The Role of Religious Bodies – Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses, Trokosi of West Africa, 2007
12 The Role of Religious Bodies – Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses, Feature- Ritual slavery in Ghana, Trokosi of West Africa, 2007
13 I have not come across a unanimous word for *Trokosi* in plural so I will use the term *Trokosi* for both *Trokosi* women and woman.
14 The Role of Religious Bodies – Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses, Trokosi of West Africa, 2007
15 Ritual servitude, 2008
16 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995:8-12
17 Aird, Sarah C.
2.3.2 Arriving to the shrine

Most of the girls that are chosen to become Trokosi are virgins, often before getting their first menstruation and usually being under the age of ten. The girl that is to become a Trokosi is often selected through a process of divination or prophecy. In divination, lots are cast to select a lineage, then again to select a male member of the lineage to provide the Trokosi. It is very rare that the daughters from well educated middle class homes and daughters of important shrine members are being chosen to become Trokosi.

The procession to the shrine is similar to the procession of when a girl arrives to her new husband’s home. The ritual upon the arrival to the shrine includes presentation of the girl by the head of the family, acceptance by the priest and the pouring of libation (libation is water mixed with flour that priests use in different rituals). Later the girl undergo an initiation rite known as tsi de de ta (the same term is used for baptism among Ghanaian Christians) and take a ritual bath called agbametsilele in the inner shrine. Normally the initiation rituals last for two weeks.

As a mark of identification Trokosi wears two strands of fibre around her neck, like a necklace, called la. A Trokosi is also identified by her black-blue clothes called bissi. While being in the shrine the Trokosi get the title Mama (mother) or Wana (grandmother). When a Trokosi is liberated she often takes on a new name.

2.3.3 Life at the shrine

The practice of Trokosi differs since it is practiced in various shrines and in different areas. Every Child Ministries, a Christian NGO with long experience in working with Trokosi, has listed some common features in the Trokosi practice.

Many of the Trokosi are required to do heavy physical labour such as working in the fields, weaving mats, fetching water and wood and so on. If the labour results in any money, all the profits go to the priest or the shrine owner. The Trokosi’s families provide them with all items for everyday use such as toiletries, cooking utensils and clothes.

Practices of rape or obligatory sex with the priest are in most shrines considered as a duty of the Trokosi. Having sex with the priests is sometimes considered a sacred act because

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19 Feature- Ritual slavery in Ghana
20 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 9-10
21 Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001:38,48
22 Ritual servitude, 2008
it is believed to be equal as having sex with the gods. If a Trokosi refuses sex with the priests, punishments for example beatings, are imposed on them.\(^\text{23}\)

Trokosi are expected to observe the taboos of their various gods which varies from shrine to shrine. The Trokosi perform various ritual functions at the shrine. One of these is often to assist the priest when he pours *libation*. The priest then has a number of Trokosi kneeling by his side, clapping and singing in a certain way that they were trained to do.\(^\text{24}\)

One of the great consequences of restricting the girls in servitude is that they are denied access to education and other forms of training that would equip them for a modern life.\(^\text{25}\) Kept in the shrines, the girls and women are denied basic life necessities as education and health care and they have to endure physical and mental abuse.\(^\text{26}\)

### 2.3.4 Leaving the shrine

When a *Trokosi* served her required time at the shrine (if she belongs to that category) they may be released in a ritual called *flaxoxo*.\(^\text{27}\) The girl’s family has to get the items that are required for the release ceremony, items that are very expensive. A priest is also needed for the ceremony and obtaining an available priest can sometimes be difficult for various reasons.\(^\text{28}\)

If families are not willing to participate in a tradition of *Trokosi* the gods will seek vengeance upon the family, or even the entire community. The same belief system is presumably the reason why relatives often refuse to help escaped or released *Trokosi*. People are afraid of the former *Trokosi*; they are believed to bring misfortune. Even if a *Trokosi* manage escaping, she sometimes returns to the shrine because it might be the only place where she is welcomed. This shows one of the difficult aspects of *Trokosi*; the social stigma that former *Trokosi* is forced to endure when, and if, she is released.\(^\text{29}\)

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23 Ritual servitude, 2008
24 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 8-12
25 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 8-12
26 Aird, Sarah C
27 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 8-12
28 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 8-12
29 Aird, Sarah C
2.3.5 Origins of Trokosi

The term *Trokosi* is usually translated into “slave wife of the Gods” and is believed to come from the Ewe words *tro* (deity or fetish) and *kosi* (female slave). Information from oral tradition contributes to the estimation that the *Trokosi* practice in Ghana could have started in the 17th century. But the exact starting point of *Trokosi* is unknown.31

It is believed that *Trokosi* in Ghana primarily started among the Ewes. Prior to that *Trokosi* probably was a war ritual in Togo and Benin during the 16th century. Before entering war, the warriors visited the shrines and offered women to the war gods in exchange for war success.32

There is also one theory that the origin of *Trokosi* is linked with the tradition of asking the gods for help in child bearing. It is a common practice in some African traditional religions that barren women approach various deities asking their help to produce children. This tradition is referred to as *afle do* which means “to buy a womb”. The payment for the help of the gods is a vow to dedicate future resultant children to the gods for a certain period.33

The practice of committing a girl to the gods is linked with certain supposed functions of the gods such as:
- Sustenance of the worlds
- Protectors and guarantors of victory in war
- Mediators and intercessors
- The administration of justice and maintenance of law and order within the society.34

At the early stages of *Trokosi* gods, deities and priests did not demand girls for retribution; this was promises made by people who came to the shrines for help. And as the tradition developed, priest started to demand girls for retribution.35
2.4 Perspective on Trokosi

2.4.1 Trokosi according to the law
Different human rights organisations and other NGO's agrees upon that Trokosi fulfil all the commonly accepted definitions of slavery. Trokosi carry out services which are unpaid for and involuntarily, their life are controlled and owned by the priests and the shrines. Ghana has international obligations and constitutional laws that forbid slavery and slavery-like practices. For example article 7 of The Convention on Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, defines a slave as "a person over whom any or all powers attaching to the rights of ownership are exercised".36 Article 4 in the Declaration of Human rights also states that:” No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms”.37 Ghana’s Constitution also states that “No person shall be held in slavery or servitude or be required to perform forced labour”.38

Trokosi is also a violation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Ghana has signed. This Convention states that no child should be deprived of access to health care, education and children should have freedom from all forms of sexual abuse, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.39

Article 21 of the Ghanaian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. All persons have the right to “practice any religion and to manifest said practice”.40

Proponents to Trokosi have used this law in order to resist any attempts to abolish Trokosi. Officials have been hesitant to interfere in the Trokosi issue due to this constitutional debate and because many considered the practice to be an integral part of the African traditional religions.41

Since only girls and women are committed to the shrines, it can be seen as gender discrimination which is contrary to article 17 of the Ghanaian Constitution. It also violates the UN Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) which Ghana has ratified42. CEDAW defines discrimination

36 Ritual servitude, 2008
37 What is modern slavery?
38 Aird, Sarah C.
39 Aird, Sarah C.
40 Aird, Sarah C.
41 Aird, Sarah C.
42 Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995: 16
against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economical, social, cultural, civil or any other field".  

By ratifying CEDAW, Ghana has pledge to change or abolish any existing gender discriminatory laws, regulations, customs and practices. Also to confront and modify customary and all other practices that is based on the idea of the superiority of one sex to the other.

In 1998 a law was passed in Ghana saying that "ritual or customary servitude" was a crime and persons found guilty to this crime should serve a mandatory three-year in prison. As of yet, no one has yet been prosecuted under the law. INNG held a seminar for police officers in 2001, three years after the law had passed. The majority of the participants said that they were not aware that there was a law against Trokosi.

According to a report issued by INNG concerning the communities’ response to the transformation of the Trokosi practice there are evidence that the shrine priests and owners are increasingly complying with the law from 1998. The degree of compliance does however depend upon the level of confidence in the police and the judicial system.

### 2.4.2 Trokosi according to its proponents

In 1999, Trokosi-practicing priests have formed a council called The Afrikania Mission. Politicians and academics who think that efforts to stop the Trokosi practice are a threat to the “African traditional culture” show their support to this council. The Afrikania Mission has become a very powerful lobbying group in Ghana. Kofitsé Ahadji is the director of the Afrikania Mission and he denies that the girls in the shrines are mistreated: "These people are the stumbling blocks between the living and the devilish forces that create problems for a family. So when you are having problems in your family caused by negative elements, you send your child to the shrine to acquire divine powers

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43 Nussbaum, 1999:87-88
44 Nussbaum, 1999:87-88
45 Ritual servitude, 2008
47 Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001: 50-56.
and come back. That girl becomes a fiashidi or queen. She's not a slave”. From The Afrikania Mission’s point of view, any attempt to stop Trokosi is seen as a threat to the traditional culture and religion.

What according to many people and organizations is a clear case of rape, is sometimes justified by shrine priest saying that Trokosi are priestesses who have sex with the gods through the priest. Some priests state that Trokosi is an effective mean to stop people from breaking the norms within the community. They consider the Trokosi to be links between the family and the gods and that the presence of Trokosi reminds her family members to live moral lives. According to some priests, the crime rate is lower in communities that are practicing Trokosi. The Trokosi is also, according to some priests, seen as a role model, someone to look up to. Osofo Tordzagbo, Secretary General at The Afrikania Mission says that Trokosi is about training young citizens to become role models for their families. "The concept here is to have a role model for the family from which the criminal comes. That person is like bringing peace to the family”.

2.4.3 History of opposition to Trokosi

In the mid-eighteenth century missionaries supposedly had condemned Trokosi. During the colonial ruling of Ghana, the government investigated Trokosi and even though the practice was considered harmful and dangerous nothing was done because of economical reasons.

In the 1980’s a Baptist pastor, Mark Wisdom, claimed to have received a vision from God. Wisdom said that while praying, he saw a vision of women being held in bondage crying out for help. According to Wisdom, the same women were later discovered in a Trokosi shrine nearby Wisdom’s home. This vision incited Wisdom to challenge Trokosi and he began to condemn the practice nationally. Wisdom also founded Fetish Slaves Liberation Movement (FESLIM) and participated in some of the earliest liberations of the Trokosi. Wisdom is considered to be the first person who raised the national consciousness about Trokosi.

The most visible opponents to Trokosi are different human rights groups, women's groups and Christian NGOs. All activists agree on that without

48 Robson, 2006.
49 Aird, Sarah. C
50 Ocansey & Hayhoe 2004
51 Ritual servitude, 2008
52 Ritual servitude, 2008
education and dialogue with the priests, the shrine owners and the public, Trokosi practice will go underground instead of being exterminated or transformed. An abrupt abolishing of Trokosi without communication and education is not desirable since activists fear that in order to avoid punishment from the gods, families might send their daughters to Togo or Benin where the Trokosi practice is unrestricted.\(^{53}\)

Some of the NGOs and organizations that are working for reducing or reforming Trokosi are United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), International Needs Network Ghana (INNG), Trokosi Abolition Fellowship, FESLIM, the Anti-Slavery Society and Survivors for Change (a group of former Trokosi). The latest contribution to the struggle is A Court of Women that was organized in 2003.\(^{54}\)

### 2.5 INNG – International Needs Network Ghana

INNG was established in 1984 and is a Christian NGO and a member of the worldwide International Needs Network (INN) that was founded in 1974 and is now active in over 35 countries. INNG is managed by a nine-member executive board and all funds come from donors abroad and local supporters.

At present, INNG is working in districts in the Greater Accra, Central region, Northern region and the Volta regions of Ghana. INNG provides the Ghanaian society with human rights advocacy, human rights education and rehabilitation of victims of dehumanizing cultural practice, such as Trokosi. INNG aims at the reduction of poverty and the improvement of living standards especially in rural and urban poor communities in Ghana. Among their successful campaigns and projects is Trokosi in the Volta region (North Tongu, South Tongu, Akatsi and Ketu). According to their website, INNG so far has liberated about 3000 Trokosi and estimates that more than 5000 women are still in captivity in Ghana.\(^{55}\)

INNG is convinced that it is through education on all levels, socially and politically, individually and collective, you must approach Trokosi. That includes everything from educating to lobbying at different political levels. According to INNG it is by making people aware of the injustice of Trokosi that the practice can be stopped.

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\(^{53}\) Aird, Sarah. C

\(^{54}\) Ghana. Rapport om de mänskliga rättigheterna 2007, Aird, Sarah C

\(^{55}\) Compared to the number of 1500 mentioning in 2.2. As stated in the same passage it is hard to find credible statistics on the number of women and girls living in bondage by the Trokosi tradition.

Therefore INNG (among other things) is working to educate priest and communities face to face in order to make them aware that the Trokosi practice is unjust and harmful. One of the components in INNG’s education is making the priest aware of other ways for people to remedy their own, or other family member’s, wrongdoing. For example, as alternatives for the young girls and women that are being given to the shrines, animals and material items (such as alcohol and money) could be accepted instead.  

The INNG’s main focus is to educate people about the Trokosi subject and their aim is that the practice gradually should be eliminated, but the elimination of Trokosi practice cannot be done simply by legislation, according to INNG. INNG means that if you only criminalize the practice without understanding it, it might take another form or go underground.  

2.5.1 INNG’s liberation of Trokosi

INNG’s liberation of Trokosi has been done on a shrine-by-shrine basis. This means that first the community, priests, shrine owners and local chiefs in question get “custom made” counselling and education in human- and women’s rights and issues connected to these subjects. Later a community-wide agreement is signed in order to free Trokosi of the particular shrine and to issue that there will be no more Trokosi in this area. Compensations are also given to the shrines for their economical losses.  

In addition to education, dialogue and negotiations, INNG support each shrine with a rehabilitation package. The reason for this is to ensure that the priests and the shrine owners can perform the liberation ritual and organize durbars (public courts of native ruler) for public renunciation of the victims. The durbars are important in the communities because they provide public acceptance of the liberation of Trokosi. The durbar also lifts any curses upon relatives and families to the former Trokosi. In addition to durbars another liberation ceremony takes place within the shrine's sanctuary. As a part of the liberation ceremony, the priests and the shrine owners sign legal documents saying that the Trokosi and their families are hereby free and have no obligations to the shrine.

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57 Feature- Ritual slavery in Ghana
58 Ben- Ari, 2001
59 Ritual servitude, 2008
60 Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001: 34, 20-23
61 Feature- Ritual slavery in Ghana
62 Awadey, 2009
2.5.2 INNG’s *Trokosi* modernization and rehabilitation programme

INNG’s *Trokosi* modernization and rehabilitation programme sought to liberate *Trokosi* victims and help them to return to a normal way of life. The programme targets the *Trokosi*, the shrine priests and owners as well as the community in which the system operates.

In addition to liberating the *Trokosi*, the programme has four overall aims:

- To begin a process of repairing any psychological damage to liberated *Trokosi* women.
- To begin a process of reorienting *Trokosi* women’s personal constructs about themselves, society and various aspects of life (such as marriage and work).
- To identify and appropriately place all the liberated *Trokosi* into formal education, vocational training or to assist them to begin viable economical activities.
- To assist the liberated *Trokosi* to a successful integration into society.

The specific rehabilitation process involves a range of interrelated activities and programmes such as different forms of advocacy and education, negotiations for release and post-release rehabilitation. The rehabilitation process in itself has a number of phases:

- Need Assessment: soon-to-be-released *Trokosi* are interviewed and counselled in order to determine their current social, emotional, economic, skill and experience state.
- Post release counselling: an individual rehabilitation plan is established for every liberated *Trokosi*.
- Follow-up programmes
- Education: based on information from the counselling process liberated *Trokosi* gets formal or vocational training and education. A basic education programme is available for younger liberated *Trokosi* who get their education in the nearest community. Others are, by choice, placed on the vocational training programmes at the International Needs Vocational Training Centre (INVTC) (see more in 2.4.3)
- Resettlement: such as assisting with home- or job arrangements.

The *Trokosi* Modernization and Rehabilitation Programme has under the progress of this essay change its name to *Trokosi* Transformation Programme.

Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001:16-20, Awadey, 2009
2.5.3 INVTC – International Needs Vocational Training Centre

INVTC started in the late 80’s and has a capacity of 150 students. There are two types of training at the INVTC; training that targets younger women with basic education and training that targets older women without basic education.\(^{65}\)

The programmes offered at the INVTC are one regular programme with the duration of two years and one modular programme with the duration of three months. In the regular programme, the students study hairdressing or dressmaking and have lessons in Ewe (the local language) and English once a week. In the modular programme the students study bread making (which also include beads making and soap making) or batik and have lessons in Ewe once a week.\(^{66}\)

INVTC has facilities to provide for the children of those who are enrolled. When graduated, INNG support post training rehabilitation to enable students to establish workshops for their vocations. The graduated students also obtain a “starting- up kit” for their business.\(^{67}\)

2.5.4 Feedback on INNG’s work

In 2001, INNG issued a report where community members, former Trokosi, shrines priest and owners were interviewed. According to the report, the emotional, psychological counselling and rehabilitation of the former Trokosi and their children had enhanced their status and well-being. All the women liberated by INNG were now engaged in various economic activities and were integrated in their communities. The community members, shrine priests and owners were also generally willing to accept the changes in their political, social and economic lives. Liberations from shrines is acknowledged as generally positive. However former Trokosi acknowledge that life after liberation was not without problems and that there still were some post- traumatic stress symptoms among the released women.\(^{68}\)

INNG held different workshops in four different areas in Ghana in 2008. The purpose of the workshops was to inform and educate key government and agencies, traditional authorities, opinion leaders and priests of shrines about Trokosi.\(^{69}\)

On INNG’s request the participants made recommendations and comments on how to

\(^{65}\) Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001:16-20, Awadey, 2009
\(^{66}\) Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001:16-20, Awadey, 2009
\(^{67}\) Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001:16-20, Awadey, 2009
\(^{68}\) Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001: 1-2, 38, 50-56
\(^{69}\) Dissemination workshops on the Trokosi practice in Ghana, 2008: 4-5
come to terms with Trokosi. Some of the opinions were that education on Trokosi must be intensified, those involved with Trokosi should be introduced to Christ and that the Trokosi subject because of its effects (such as inflicting curses on people) must be handled cautiously.\(^7^0\)

The participants believed that Trokosi would gradually disappear without enforcing laws (such as the law from 1998) if workshops (such as those held by INNG) were organized to opinion leaders. It was also stated that efforts need to be done in order to minimize the fear of Trokosi among the people in order to facilitate their liberation.\(^7^1\)

\(^7^0\) Dissemination workshops on the Trokosi practice in Ghana, 2008:10-15

\(^7^1\) Dissemination workshops on the Trokosi practice in Ghana, 2008:10-15
3. Theoretical frameworks

In this chapter I will add a feminist- and post colonial feminist perspective when approaching Trokosi. This means that I aim to investigate Trokosi as a tradition, practice and system that is a part of a universal structure that violates women’s basic rights.

By also adding a post colonial feminist perspective when approaching Trokosi I shall try to avoid portraying the West as the centre of forming feminism. Nor do I assume that women with roots in other countries, such as Ghana, are a homogenous group with the same needs, interests and desires, a view that will be elaborated more in 3.2.

3.1 Trokosi from a feminist perspective

The individuals who become Trokosi are girls and women, whereas the allegedly committed crime, that they are paying for, are always committed by male senior or elder family members like fathers, grandfathers, and uncles.72 Here the injustice begins and the need for a feminist approach. According to feminist sociologist Martha Craven Nussbaum, women are often treated as tools in order to fulfil other people’s goals. The idea is that a woman, not a man, is someone you can afford to lose.73

According to Nussbaum, cultural traditions (both in the Western and the non Western parts of the world) can be obstacles to women’s health and can also make them feel less deserving of basic life quality such as political liberty, civic participation and self-respect. Nussbaum points out that when basic human rights is being denied individuals on religious grounds it brings about a great dilemma for many modern liberal regimes; a dilemma between the demand of freedom of religion and the demand of women’s rights. Is seems, according to Nussbaum, that a free practice of religions, the respect for religious traditions and the respect for basic human rights, is very difficult. Nussbaum comes to the conclusion that all religious traditions that deny human rights are “wrong” and she urges states to interfere with people’s religious beliefs when they are forced to such actions, for example when basic human rights are being violated.74

72 Ritual servitude, 2008
73 Nussbaum, 2002:19-20
74 Nussbaum, 1999:29-32, 41, 49, 81, 84, 213-216
Nussbaum suggests that the dilemma between the demand of freedom of religion and the demand of women’s right must be seen as a dilemma between two equal poles. The solution to this dilemma should, according to Nussbaum, favour the collective and the individual. Nussbaum compares people (and/or states) who think that it is okay to offend someone in the name of religion to murderers who claim that they killed a person because “God told them so”. Nussbaum sees the violation just as wrong either way; no religious law (whether the law of one person or the law of a community or state) should intrude on basic human rights. The best way to prevent that religious traditions clash with human rights is, from Nussbaum’s point of view, to educate democratic citizens.75

Jeff Haynes discusses in the book Religion in Global Politics different ways of looking at the relationship between religion and politics in a global perspective. Religion can, according to Haynes, be seen as a social political actor and can be an alternative to the secular society for individuals, privately or publicly. Religion can use different methods in order to act through the civil or the political society. According to Haynes, religion develops a political agenda in order not to disappear; it refuses to be private and wants through its presence affect the moralist progression of human beings.76

Haynes divides the political influence on religion into two categories based on the inhabitants’ degree of religiosity. If the inhabitants are not markedly religious, the organized religion will be using strategies in order to increase and effect peoples’ moral views and values. If on the contrary the inhabitants are religious it will be much easier for the religion to be able to act politically.77

Haynes states in his book that in many African countries it is common that religion is being used as a tool in order to protests against an oppressing government or a failed modernization process. In some cases, according to Haynes, religion is being used as a protest against the post colonial ruling. Religious organisations can also enter the political sphere in order to affect, what according to these organisations, is the inhabitants moral decay.78 A global and/or post colonial consciousness can in fact strengthen the traditional religion.

75 Nussbaum, 1999:102-103, 116
76 Haynes, 1998: 1-9
77 Haynes, 1998: 12-19
78 Haynes, 1998: 105-117,123 -124
Nussbaum suggests that generally, because of the patriarchal order, women all over the world lack basic conditions that enable them to live a good life. Women have for example generally poorer health, are more exposed to different threats and they often lack an education. Due to Ghana’s ethnic, cultural and ecological diversity generalisation about gender relations and their results are difficult to make. But if one is to make any assumption it is that women in Ghana are more subjected than men to severe abuse and violation of their constitutional rights. Especially in the rural areas of Ghana women remain subject to traditional male dominance. Commission on human rights and administrative justice (CHRAJ) has established that discrimination of women in different contexts is occurring especially in the country side where for instance inheritance and ownership often is denied to women. Despite efforts to strengthen women’s rights, the patriarchal order is still visible in Ghana. Women have had the right to vote and been electable to the Parliament since 1954 but put into practice women are still under represented. Girls are fewer than boys on every educational level and the differences are increasing with the levels of education. Trafficking with girls and women as well as rape and domestic violence are extensive problems in Ghana. According to the international federation for women lawyers (FIDA) every third woman is exposed to this type of violence at some time in her life.

The general opinion of different organizations working with women’s rights in Ghana is that different traditions, customs and social norms are restraining women from effectively claiming their rights. For example, in some parts of Ghana the belief in witches and witch craft can lead to the banishing of women from their home village and into forced labour. Also the discrimination of women in the traditional court system, which often exists parallel with the official system of justice in Ghana, is making the every day life for women difficult. The traditional court enables the local chief and village councils to apply “traditional custom justice” within the civil right sphere, a justice that does not favour women often. Between 15 and 30% of the women in Ghana undergo the religious/cultural procedure of female genital mutualisation, a traditional practices that are harmful to the health and development of young females.
3.2 *Trokosi* from a post colonial feminist perspective

In the chapter *Studying religion and modernity* from the book *Religions in the modern world: traditions and transformations* (Woodhead ed.) Woodhead describes how, not only on different religious traditions, but also religions relation to the wider society can be studied.  

Colonialism has often been regarded as the struggle to determine who is fittest. Ghana is a post colonial country; it gained independence in 1957 from British ruling. Woodhead describes how, in the beginning of twentieth century, mass conversion to Christianity and Islam took place in many colonized countries in Africa. According to Woodhead, this conversion can be linked to the social change within the countries since the individuals who converted often belonged to a new upcoming urban social group. This conversion and introducing of a new religion did not, according to Woodhead, lead to the disappearance of African traditional religions. Instead a new relation between African traditional religions and Christianity or Islam was established. According to Woodhead, any attempt from European rulers to introduce secularism or to modernize policies, lead to a religious backlash and to an opposition through religion. This can be compared to Hayne’s opinion that religion is being used as a tool in order to protests against an oppressing government, a failed modernisation process and the post colonial ruling presented in 3.1. Instead of disappearing, the indigenous religions can gain more strength from a new “rival religion”.

Many non-Western postcolonial societies have experienced different patterns of modernisation and therefore, according to Woodhead, are not as highly differentiated as Western societies. Differentiation here is used to describe a modernisation process where different social activities are distributed between different institutions. In the long run, differentiation involves the blurring of the distinction of public and private. According to Woodhead, minimally differentiated “Third World societies” religion tends to infuse all aspects of social and political life and is not considered to be a private matter. Religion can in this context for instance integrate

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85 Woodhead, 2002:1  
86 Boehmer 1995: 80  
87 Woodhead, 2002:206  
88 Woodhead, 2002:219-220, 227  
89 Woodhead, 2002:325-329
individuals in the wider society, create and uphold values and support existing hierarchies.  

According to Woodhead religion can be used to strengthen women, but also to diminish them. Through the modernisation process, according to Woodhead, religion can also trigger independent national identities. A consequence of this can be that women sometimes are pointed out as “bearers of traditional identity while the men are getting modern”. The new independent, “modern” identities are reserved for men while it falls upon women to preserve traditions. Also in religious nationalism, women often become “symbols of integrity and defenders of faith”. According to Woodhead, women’s participation in religion can be used to maintain and uphold a conservative hierarchical structure in society where women are kept in the domestic and private sphere and men in the public sphere.

Florence Butegwa, the regional programme coordinator in Nigeria for United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), is of the opinion that the practice of Trokosi is just one kind among many of abuse against women and that “women’s rights abuses are not unique to Africa”. Butegwa means that in other countries the abuse is visible for example through physical assault by family members or widow burning. Also Fataneh Farahani, a feminist ethnologist, says in an article in Aftonbladet in 2002 that the patriarchal order is affecting every woman, but in different ways depending on women’s conditions.

According to the book Post colonialism, feminism and religious discourse post colonial feminism depends on ethnicity, nationality, gender, race, class, continents and the type of colonialism you have experienced. Also the authors of Globaliseringens kulturer: den postkoloniala paradoxen, rasismen och det mångkulturella samhället (Cultures of globalisation: the postcolonial paradox, racism and the multi cultural society) points out that women are constituted as women through

90 Woodhead, 2002:332-344, 353
91 Woodhead, 2002:332-344, 352-352
92 Woodhead, 2002:332-344, 352-352
93 Woodhead, 2002:332-344, 352-352
94 Ben- Ari, 2001
95 Ben- Ari, 2001
96 Farahani, 2004
97 Donaldson, 2002:115
98 In this essay referred to as Thörn
a complex interaction between class, culture, ethnicity and religion. This is one of the central ideas in postcolonial feminism; by using the term “woman” as a universal group, they are simply defined by their gender and not by social classes, ethnic identities and so on. As pointed out in 2.2.2 it is very rare that the girls from well educated middle class homes and daughters of important shrine members are being chosen to become Trokosi. Not only is the criterion of being a woman but also which class you belong to is of importance in the tradition.

According to Thörn, every woman does not have the same problems and is not in need of the same things. For this reason there should not only exist a Western way of looking at feminism; oppress of women is global. According to Thörn, it is wrong and stereotypical to assume that women all over the world are uniform. Thörn also discusses the image of the woman in the “Third World”, an image that according to Thörn enables and upholds the image of the woman in the West. It is, according to Thörn, often assumed that the “Third World’s women” cannot represent themselves; they are in the need of representation. This is another central idea in post colonial feminism; the criticising of the ethnocentric feminism of the West. In this feminism the image of the different needs of women is being reduced and women’s subordinate position is seen as universal. Women in the south are simply called “third world women”. By this categorisation the feministic research tradition in the West are creating and reproducing preconceived opinions about the third world’s women as an ignorant victim.

Also Mohanty, author of *Feminism utan gränser: avkoloniserad teori, praktiserad solidaritet* (Feminism without borders), criticize the tendency that feminist’s theories keep portraying the “Third World’s women” as a homogeneous, unidentified group who are victims to their tradition, culture and religion. According to Mohanty, this tendency shows the unconscious strategy of presenting the Western woman as the only legitimate subject in the struggle for equality. The women in the “Third World” must also be understood and seen as subjects in the very same struggle, according to Mohanty.

Also Tuzyline Jita Allan, teacher in African woman literatures says in the closing words of the Ghanaian feminist author Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel *Förändringar en*...
kärlekshistoria (Changes a love story) that there is an idea of the African woman as being passive and unproblematic adjusting to the current patriarchal society and its social and religious norms. Therefore feminism, as seen from the Western woman, is indifferent to the African woman and vice versa.

In *Post colonialism, feminism and religious discourse* the authors states that the interaction between colonialism, gender and religion is a significant force influencing the world today. One of the authors, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak a leading feminist literary and cultural critic, points out in the same book that the spread of feminism and values in the “third world” have often been a case of ”white men saving brown women from brown men".

To summarize; by adding a feministic perspective *Trokosi* is seen as an evidence that the patriarchal order is still visible in Ghana. By adding a post colonial feministic perspective to some of the facts presented in 3.1 would be to say that the violation of women right’s are affecting women as a group in different ways. That a woman is forced to become a *Trokosi* Ghana is not only due to her gender but also due to the fact that she lives in the country- side for example. That a woman is less expected to achieve higher education in Ghana is not only due to her gender but also due to her class for example.

103 McNee, 1998
104 Aidoo, 2002:310
105 Donaldson, 2002:1
106 Donaldson, 2002:64
4. Method
In this chapter, after presenting some basic demarcations (4.1) a short exposition about qualitative methods (4.2) will lead to the use of my different methods in this essay; field study (4.2.1), observation (4.2.2) and interview (4.2.3). Chapter 4 concludes with a passage about ethical considerations in the choice of methods (4.3).

4.1 Demarcations
In this essay I have chosen to focus on the feministic and post colonial feminist dimension of *Trokosi*. The fact that the *Trokosi* often are children is not a method of analysis in this thesis.

As described in chapter 2.4, INNG works with *Trokosi* in various ways. In this essay I have focused mainly on their work in the *Trokosi* Modernization and Rehabilitation programme and especially the work at INVTC.

As mentioned in chapter 1, members of the Parliament and representatives from The Afrikania Mission will, due to their own choices, not be a part in this essay.

In this essay, I have interviewed three individuals, two called rescuers (Walter Pimpong and Patience Vormawor) and one called victim (Beatrice Antiyaa). Walter Pimpong and Patience Vormawor were chosen as respondents by me because of their knowledge and profession. Beatrice Antiyaa was the only student willing to do take part in an interview, according to the teachers at INVTC.

4.2 Qualitative methods
A central ideal within qualitative methods is to have a close and direct relationship to what you are studying. The qualitative methods consist of observation and different sorts of interviews and the main focus within qualitative methods is on “the depth and not the breadth”. Qualitative methods are interested in catching the “actor’s point of view”\(^\text{107}\) and takes as point of departure in the actor’s reality, focusing on what they are thinking/feeling in order to give an authentic description of this. \(^\text{108}\) Qualitative methods

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107 Repstad, 2007: 15-17
108 Repstad, 2007:58
are often limited and specific environments are studied. The goal is to give a comprehensive picture and description of a chosen topic and scene.\textsuperscript{109}

Qualitative methods are more flexible than quantitative methods; you can more easily change for instance your questions\textsuperscript{110}. Different qualitative methods are often combined, for example a field study (4.2.1) containing different forms of observations (4.2.2) are often the base and foundation to an interview (4.2.3).\textsuperscript{111}

### 4.2.1 Field study

A field study is a survey with the most prominent feature is being carried out in those social and physical environments where the activity that is being studied is taking place.

Apart from being qualitative, the method is also described as naturalistic (knowledge about the human being and social groups in the contexts where they live and work). The methods used in a field study are different types of interviews, observations and photographing.\textsuperscript{112} All of these methods have been used in this field study.

The field study I have conducted is a minor field study (MFS) supported by SIDA who has a scholarship programme for students writing an essay on a C or D level in a developing country for the duration of a minimum of two months.\textsuperscript{113}

### 4.2.2 Observation

Observation means the study of people and this include investigating which situations people meet in and how their behaviour in these situations. One of the great advantages with an observation is that it gives access to the social interaction and process among people. It also gives knowledge about the social context in which the respondent lives in. Pål Repstad divides the observations into two types; open and hidden observation. I have used open observation which means that you as a researcher let the people around you know what it is you are doing, your purpose. According to Repstad, the relationship between the observer and the ones who are being observed can never only be that of a researcher and the objects; interaction always takes place.\textsuperscript{114}

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\textsuperscript{109} Repstad, 2007:23-29
\textsuperscript{110} Repstad, 2007: 15-17
\textsuperscript{111} Repstad, 2007:23-29
\textsuperscript{112} Kaijser & Öhlander, 1999:24
\textsuperscript{113} Sida, Internationella Programkontoret
\textsuperscript{114} Repstad, 2007:22, 33-35, 41, 52-56
\end{flushleft}
I have observed the INNG’s work with and within the *Trokosi* project (mainly the work that is carried out at INVTC) through an internship March 22 – May 18. My observations are documented in a logbook which is the empirical base material in my essay. A short extract from my logbook (in Swedish) can be seen on appendix 3. My main role was as a participating observer, but the degree of my participation varied.  

According to Repstad, different interpretations are always made during observations. It is important to be aware of that every note from the field has in some way been filtered; as an observer and a researcher you decide what is being written down. As a researcher you can also influence and affect your field of research and this also has to be remembered when conducting observations.

For a greater understanding of the observations and in order to make a right analyses and assumptions, observations cannot stand alone as a method in a field study; they need to be complemented. Interviews can be this complement; it is in the interviews that you obtain information involving the respondent’s feelings for instance.

### 4.2.3 Interview

I have conducted three interviews, one with a victim named Beatrice Antiyaa and two with rescuers named Walter Pimpong and Patience Vormawor. The interview with Beatrice took place at INVTC April 23, Walter was interviewed April 14 in his room at the INNG’s office and Patience was interviewed April 24 at INVTC. All the interviews were scheduled the same day they where carried out.

I have used the semi-structured qualitative interview. Flexibility and the emphasis on what the respondent is experiencing as important and valuable has been the guiding principle in all of my interview situations.

Some structure is useful to avoid missing relevant information and it also makes it easier to compare different interviews. For this purpose I have conducted an interview guide that contains central themes and questions that together will cover the

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115 Bryman, 2001:286- 87
117 Kaijser & Öhlander, 1999:76
118 Repstad, 2007:95
most important areas for this MFS.\textsuperscript{119} The different interview guides can be seen in appendix 1-2.

The gathered data from an interview does not speak for itself; it has to be interpreted. Repstad describes the interpretation of an interview as a "hermeneutical spiral" where the interviewer reads the interview and thereby gets a general picture. The interviewer can then subdivide the interview in smaller themes and statements and interpret these separately to see if the general interpretation corresponds with the smaller segments of the interview.\textsuperscript{120}

A tape recorder is a good instrument in the process of analysis as you have access to an exact copy of the interview, there is no filtering in the recordings and it also enables the interviewer to concentrate more on the interview since he or she is not occupied with taking notes.\textsuperscript{121}

In two of my interviews I used a tape recorder but in the interview with a victim (5.2) the respondent objected to me using a tape recorder so in this interview only notes were taken. This was also the only interview where an interpreter was needed. The interpreter that was provided for me was the counsellor at INVTC, Priscilla Kalitsi.

In the transcription of my three interviews, I have only transcribed the spoken words of my respondents. Body language, coughs and so on are not part of my transcribed data. The three transcribed interviews are in the possession of the author, a short extract of a transcribed interview can be seen in appendix 3. In the recapturing of the interviews in chapter 5, the quotes from my informants will be imbedded in the text.

4.3 Reflection on choice of method

Whenever using an interpreter one has to be aware that the interpreter’s presence and mediation can affect the context as well as results of the interview. For example when conducting an interview with the assistance of an interpreter it is hard to know if the respondent changes his or hers answer; usually the interviewer will only hear the translation of the final, “cleaned-up” answer. It can also be difficult to discuss a certain topic or subject further when only hearing the translated answer to a certain question. It is important to bare in mind that the respondent’s quotes may not be as colourful as they would have been in his or hers mother tongue. The interpreter’s vocabulary and

\textsuperscript{119} Dahlen, 2007:31
\textsuperscript{120} Repstad, 2007:127, 137-139
\textsuperscript{121} Repstad, 2007:93-95
knowledge of a subject (it could be a case of knowing too much or to little) must also be considered. After interviewing the victim, the interpreter told me that, based on her acquaintance with the respondent, she could tell that talking about *Trokosi* made the respondent uncomfortable. This also has to be considered in interpreting an interview about a delicate and emotional topic.

The main purpose for conducting this study was to achieve an inside perspective on *Trokosi* based on information from the different “actors’ point of view”. During the work with this essay I tried to get an interview with members of the Parliament and someone from The Afrikania Mission (an influential lobby organization for maintaining *Trokosi*, see more in chapter 2.3.2) but without success.

Prior to going to Ghana, it was hard for me to have a hypothesis about the outcome of my methods since I did not have any interviews scheduled. But one thing I knew; my being a younger, white woman from an industrialized country could sometime be an advantage but also a disadvantage. Due to these factors the degree of my participation in different participating observations could differ and maybe it could also affect my field of observation. This has to be considered in the results of different observations.

### 4.4 Ethical considerations

There are some ethical routines that have to be followed when an interview is carried out. The respondent has to be informed of the purpose and the different aspects of the essay and that it is voluntary to participate in the interview. The respondent should be informed that he or she always has the choice to end the interview. The researcher also has to inform the respondent that the interview is strictly confidential and that the information from the interview is only to be used in the purpose of the essay. The respondent should also have the choice to be anonymous. This information was shared to all my respondents and is to be found on the transcribed interviews that are in my possession. My respondents also had the opportunity to review the interview as it appears in this essay and make requests of any changes.

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122 Tangeman, 2001

123 Repstad, 2007:90, Kaijser & Öhlander, 1999:51
5. Results - The minor field study

In this chapter the results of the MFS will be presented. The chapter begins with the setting of the MFS and the results of my observations with information of my time spent with INNG and mainly on INVTC (5.1). This is followed by a chapter with the results of my three interviews; with a victim, Beatrice (5.2), and two rescuers Walter Pimpong (5.3.1) and Patience Vormawor (5.3.2).

5.1 The setting of the minor field study and results of observations

On March 22 I arrived in Accra, Ghana and the two following weeks were spent at INNG’s office. There I had the chance to get an idea about their work with Trokosi through informal interviews and reading the available material about the Trokosi subject. I also got a chance to revise my apprehend data I already had tried to gathered from Sweden. On March 30 I attended an information meeting INNG’s work and its different components held by Cromwell Awadey, head of projects and research.

Most of my observations, and the bulk of my MFS, took place at INVTC. The first time I went to INVTC at Adidome (located in the Volta region about ten miles outside Accra) was the 6th of April, the day before the students from the modular vocational training program graduated. I attended the graduation ceremony and
went back to the office after a couple of days since the students still in school, went on their Easter break.

The 21st of April and the two following weeks were spent at INVTC where new students had joined the old ones. I attended and participated in all the different classes and other activities that took place. Through observation and informal conversation I got a chance to see how one component of the Trokosi modernization and rehabilitation programme was implemented.

An ordinary day at INVTC starts at 7.45 AM with a morning assembly where the students are showing their affection to God and Ghana through singing, praying and raising the Ghana flag. The assembly ends with the marching out of the students divided in their different classes. At 9 AM, after breakfast, the lessons begin, usually with a short prayer. At 12 it is time for lunch and 4.30 PM the school day ends in the same fashion as it began. The students now have leisure time until 6 PM when dinner is served. During this time they can for instance do their different household chores, do some farming on the surrounding land or just mingle.

On Wednesdays the morning assembly is held in the chapel as devotion. During my stay at INVTC, a priest held the service after the students had taken turns in singing different psalms as a “warm up”. On Friday evenings students assembly in the chapel, to sing, pray, dance and play games. I was amazed how brave the students were in the way that they could stand in front of 150 girls and women they do not know very well, acting like a dog as a part of a charade. The teachers also praised them and meant that these types of games were one way to empower the girls and women; to give them self-esteem. In the long run, according to the teachers, it can be seen as helping the students to reclaim their rights or to strengthen their sense of visibility. Every Sunday, the week ends with a church service in the chapel.

The students live in rooms with six beds. The teachers make the living arrangements and have as a policy to mix newly arrived students with the old ones and also to make sure that a room does not only shelter students from the same community.

5.2. Meeting with a victim
Beatrice Antiyaa is 25 years old and is graduating as a hairdresser from INVTC in June 2009. An ordinary day for Beatrice is to attend the morning assembly with the other students at INVTC, have breakfast and go to hairdressing class with a break for lunch.
When the clock strikes half past three the school day is over and it is leisure time for Beatrice until dinner is served. Beatrice can now change her red and white checked school uniform for the blue and white checked after school dress. But this has not always been the conduct of an ordinary day in Beatrice’s life. Beatrice was born in a shrine by a Trokosi; she is a Trokosiviwo. Beatrice told me her mother’s life story as a Trokosi and her own life story as a Trokosiviwo.

When Beatrice’s mother, Yoatia, was a girl, aged maybe around 10 years old, bad things occurred to her family, some relatives died. It was then decided by Yoatia’s family and the village priest that Yoatia should be send to a shrine to pay for a crime committed by her great great grandfather. The reason for her being sent to the shrine, the crime, was never revealed to her. Yoatia’s family made her a promise before she entered the shrine, she would get a farm or a cow when, and if, she got released from the shrine. This promise was never fulfilled.

The exact age of Yoatia (now and then) is hard to estimate because the village she was born in does not keep such information. But she became a Trokosi before her first menstruation. The shrine was Yoatia’s “home” for 18 years, during which time she was only referred to by her Trokosi name Mama. None of Yoatia’s family members visited her while being in the shrine, they were too afraid of socializing with her. They were so afraid that when Yoatia was in a desperate need of food they refused to help her.

Through the work of INNG Yoatia was liberated and came to INVTC where she stayed for two years and learned dressmaking. After graduation Yoatia returned to the shrine to collect her two children; a boy and a girl (Beatrice) who she gave birth to in the shrine, fathered by the shrine priest. Yoatia and her children moved to another village and Yoatia tried to start a business of her own, but it was too hard. She sent Beatrice to INVTC so that she could have a chance to get some basic education and to learn a profession.

Beatrice tells about an ordinary day in the shrine which involves the pouring of libation, farming, fetching fire wood, pick flowers and maintaining the household in the shrine. Flowers and other items were sometimes sold but all profit went to the priests. But Beatrice reveals that if you had the chance you could secretly pick flowers and sell for your own purpose and keep the money. The older you got the more duties you were given. The shrine that Beatrice called “home” for about twenty years was attended by one single priest (sometimes his assistants were there) who also was the shrine owner. But there were many other Trokosi in the shrine. How many is hard to tell,
but Beatrice guesses at least twenty. According to Beatrice the relationship between the *Trokosi* was good; they were all in the same situation.

During her time in the shrine Beatrice thought a lot about her situation and cried a lot. She describes a life filled with hunger, poverty and with no access to healthcare. In the shrine Beatrice was called by her weekday name (the name of the day she was born), she was forced to keep her hair short, wore *La* around her neck and her “shrine uniform”, consisting of a sarong around her waist and bare breasts which they covered with a cloth when they went outside the shrine. Beatrice does not know how old she was when she was liberated from the shrine, but according to her good guess it was somewhere in her late teens.

Beatrice says that because of the preventive work made by INNG, because of the education in the village, she does not feel that her old community despises her and her mother, or are afraid or them for being former *Trokosi*. The community was given counselling and the priest had a liberation ceremony where any curses were lifted from them. Otherwise it would have been hard for Beatrice and her mother to continue with their lives, according to Beatrice.

If Beatrice should give advice to people that are involved in the *Trokosi* practice she says: “Don’t do it. Share the word of God. Because then you will know that God is not a god that kills and curs people for not giving up their daughters. If every village heard the word of God they would be empowered.” According to Beatrice you need a law that forbids the practice, but you also need another religion: “Even if the law is there people will still be afraid of what the gods and deities can do to them. They need to change the religion so they will have no fear for the demons.” Beatrice is of the opinion that the practice of *Trokosi* should disappear completely, the *Trokosi* girls should not be replaced with money or kettles for example: “What happens if you don’t have any money or a cow? Then you will be in debt to the shrine for life.”

When I ask Beatrice in what way she thinks she has been affected by being a *Trokosiviwo* she answers without hesitating: “Prevented from higher education.” If Beatrice never had been born in the shrine she thinks that she would have had a better education than her current one which is the education provided through INVTC. She would have gone to university to become a nurse. “Taking care of sick and weak people” has always been a dream of Beatrice. After graduating from INVTC Beatrice hopes that she can establish her own business and become the “mistress of her own work”. She wants a big business with a lot of employees.
Beatrice’s final message to people all over the world concerning Trokosi is that “It is a bad practice. They should stop. Persons should be educated instead of going to the shrine so that they can see the bad things about it. Because there are still priests that refused to release their Trokosi.”

Priscilla, the interpreter tells me after we have closed the interview that Beatrice is normally a very joyful and lively person. According to Priscilla you could tell that talking about this subject was hard and that it brought back a lot of bad memories.

5.3. Meeting with a rescuer

5.3.1 Walter Pimpong

Walter Pimpong is the executive director of INNG with an education in town planning, NGO management and development management. He has lived abroad in the Netherlands, Switzerland and the US. He is a husband and a father of four and he preaches every Sunday at the Methodist Church were he is a part time minister. Due to this job many of his co workers at INNG simply just calls him “Reverend”. It was when Walter worked for a youth group called “Youth for Christ” in Geneva that he first met the founder of INN, a meeting that later led to Walter starting up a branch of INN in Ghana.

When I met Walter Pimpong, he was tired. Prior to our meeting it had been an exhausting period with visits from sponsors from Canada, Australia and the US that ended with a summit. This all took place just hours after Walter returned to Ghana from Canada where he had been promoting the work of INNG as well as raising funds for the survival of the organisation in this “financial crunch era”.

Walter first heard of the Trokosi practice in 1989, quite recently according to him. At that time, just by talking about Trokosi was infected and secretive, and so it remains: “It has something mystical in it, not too many people would repeat it. It is such a powerful deity so people are afraid that something terrible will happen to you that you will fall ill or die. Just by talking about it.”

According to Walter, Trokosi is a tradition, a religion and a culture. “It is all. Culture because it is a way of living for people, religion because it involves the worship of deities that leads to how the people conduct their lives. It is also a tradition that has been handed down for generations and generations.” There is also another dimension to the cultural aspect according to Walter; communal dimension: “If it would have been in Europe the tradition would have died out long ago. In Europe you are not as
much part of a collective and feel obliged to have obligation to the community. Would you be willing to give up a child for someone else in Europe?”

According to Walter, Trokosi is still vital due to the lack of knowledge and fear of individuals. “The families give their children out of fear. You could blame them for giving the children away, but they too have been enslaved and do not know any better. If you look at the deities that receive these girls they do not know any better either. Their defence is ignorance.”

Fear is also, according Walter, a reason why nobody is reinforcing the law from 1998: “Government is unable to enforce the law because the law enforcement agencies are individuals who also have some fear for the system. They who are instruments of the law are afraid of the system.” Walter acknowledges the problem between having a law that in some people’s eyes “restrain” their religious freedom: “It has to do with people’s beliefs and I think that is going to cause a problem.” But still Walter is of the opinion that “it is a problem that will have to be managed, it is a problem that the government should be actively involved in.”

The struggle against Trokosi demands, according to Walter, that individuals take a stand in order to affect the collective; a social change should lead to a political change: “It is important that opinion leaders and different NGO’s take a stand. And well educated individuals will also put pressure on the system.”

As an executive director of a NGO that has taken a stand, Walter is of the opinion that INNG has made a difference: “We have exposed the practice local and international. Putting pressure on the practice.” But taking a stand has its price. Different threats, both personal and towards the organisation has occurred. The common harsh criticism towards INNG is, according to Walter, that they are “disrupting the culture and peoples way of living”. And also of that they are “being led by the white man to do things that are African.” The reason for the latter criticism is because the sponsoring comes from outside Ghana.

Walter thinks that it is his strong Christian belief and faith that is strengthening him in his daily work with the Trokosi project. One of the motivating factors for Walter is “the Christian message to help other people out of bondage.” But according to Walter there is also a social context that has to be considered: “These women are voiceless, someone must speak for them. If it were men who had been the victims, the practice would have been stopped long ago.” Walter’s message to people all over the world concerning the Trokosi subject is simple: “It is a dehumanizing tradition.
It violates human rights. Women’s human rights.” Our interview ends here. Walter’s phone rings and for him it is back to work.

5.3.2 Patience Vormawor

Patience Vormawor is a social worker and titled head of gender programmes at INNG which, involves the Trokosi modernization and rehabilitation programme. It was in 1996 when Patience was working for the government in researching and promoting various cultural issues that she changed her job to be a part of INNG’s Trokosi research team.

The purpose of the research that Patience was involved in was to find out more about Trokosi and its location. After locating the shrines, Patience and her co-workers from INNG went from village to village trying to negotiate the liberation of the Trokosi with the priests. They also started to educate the communities surrounding the shrines: “We educated them to know the practice. And then we tried to explain that it’s not fair for the girls to be enslaved for other people.” According to Patience the negotiating with the shrines to release the Trokosi was not easy: “Initially it was very hard, the priest was very aggressive. They didn’t want the trouble because they were afraid that if they let them go the spirits, the gods, will be angry with them. So we had to start with the community education and negotiating until we could do liberation.”

Patience explains that the released Trokosi do not come to INVTC directly after the liberation. They go back to their families while INNG continues to work with providing their basic needs: “The goal is to re-integrate them back to their communities.” The Trokosi can then choose whether to come to the vocational centre. Because of old age some women cannot come and join the programme at INVTC. Instead they send their relatives, for example their grandchildren: “So they will send their relatives to this place and they will go back and take care of them.”

Patience sees Trokosi as a culture: “Culture involves belief, practice, religion and everything. So it is part of a cultural system of the people.” For this reason Patience finds it hard to blame anyone for allowing the practice to continue: “There is nothing like blame. I don’t blame anybody because culture is just the way of life of people. And if you are born into something, this is how people do things. I don’t blame them. What you can do is educate them so they know basic human rights.”

According to Patience there are several reasons for Trokosi continuing despite the law forbidding it: “It is one thing making a law, it is another thing implementing the law. People have not been educated about the law and the practice. The
practice is in very very remote areas. The law enforcement agencies are not resourced so that they can go to these villages. They are also afraid to go into the shrines. And if you want to go into the shrine they put you to an ordeal.” The hardship of getting information about Trokosi is according to Patience also a contributing factor which makes it difficult to implement the law: “Sometime people are afraid to give out information about the practice. If you discuss details about the practice and your experiences the gods will be angry. You will die. Your parents will die.”

Patience thinks that the principal success in working with Trokosi has been that the priests have let the girls and women go; they have understood the education given by INNG: “When you are educated you can challenge the system. When the children are educated they will resist the system.”

Patience identifies three factors that enables the Trokosi tradition to carry on; poverty (that can make a person steal food for instance), the lack of healthcare and the lack of information: “One of the factors is what people thinks are crimes. Sometime the crime is not a crime it is poverty. So poverty is part of the system. Secondly health. When someone is sick they run to the shrine to get healing for that child. They say we think somebody committed a crime, she must become a Trokosi. So they believe it. If there is no scientific base for that child’s illness she becomes a Trokosi. And information. Information doesn’t get to the people.”

Patience is of the opinion that Trokosi, a “misplaced justice system” according to her, needs a sociocultural transformation, but not to be abolished:

Transformation in the sense that the practice is tied to the belief system of people. We have freedom of religion in Ghana. You can’t tell someone, you can’t force someone into what to believe. So if people believe in the shrine; let them go ahead. That is what they believe, that is my believe. They should go ahead to worship in the shrine and do everything. But the transformation in that shrine is that when you believe that something has gone wrong a virgin girl should be brought – change that one, transform it. If you change something it means that you are giving it a different face. No, when you transform a thing it is just like you add another colour to it. It gives you a different shade of it.

Patience’s message to the world about Trokosi is that it marginalizes women and girls and that “the struggle is still ongoing. It has not been entirely eliminated from the system even though it is a law against it. All other should join us to win this war against the system”.

Patience would like to add that “Apart from the Trokosi practice I think that there are other sociocultural practices. We are just tackling one issue. So those other things should also be identified, raised to the public domain so that people who have the
hearts could change the marginalization and domination balance against women and children. Curve it for a better society”.

With these words our interview is over and Patience is off to a week’s leave due to the hours of overtime that she has put in the recent months. But according to herself she will probably be back on INVTC on Monday.
6. Analysis and discussion

The *Trokosi* victims are powerless and voiceless with regard to cultural, religious and traditional practice but also to the norms and structure of the society. In this essay I am not trying to “become their voice” as Mohanty and Thörn\(^{124}\) states often are the case, but to carry forward their own. With a feministic and post colonial feministic perspective I want to show that men’s violence and abuse towards women is a problem connected to the unjust organization of society; it is a structural issue. It has it’s foundation in the unfair distribution of power that directly and indirectly facilitate men to dominate, control and abuse women. The unfair distribution of power is institutionalized in economical life, laws, norms and values that shape relations between individuals and also set the terms in political and social life. In the *Trokosi* tradition, system and practice women are being abused as single women by single men. But it is also a control by the collective of men based on traditional patriarchal structures that also dominate the society.

It is not only in the tradition and practice of *Trokosi* that the unjust distribution of power is being seen in Ghana. The same oppression and marginalization is visible in Ghana through female gender mutualisation, the lesser chance of an education, trafficking, domestic violence against women and so on. The feminist approach highlights the independence of gender roles, traditionalist practice and abuse of women; *Trokosi* is an inherent part of an all-embracing system that violates and diminishes women’s rights.

By using a post colonial feminist perspective I aspire to start a theoretical discussion where you are questioning the power of representation. Just as *Trokosi* is not the only African Traditional Religious practice, European women are not the only women. *Trokosi* is not the only way women are being marginalized and oppressed. Women get oppressed and marginalized through *Trokosi* because they are women and they belong to a certain group in society, a certain tradition, culture and religion. The patriarchal oppression differs and affects women differently depending on their ethnicity, class, religion and so on. The fact that you are a woman does not mean that you can speak on every woman’s behalf, being a woman does not mean that you share the same experiences as every woman on earth. Women all over the world are being oppressed, the same oppression in Ghana is visible in Sweden but in different

\(^{124}\) Mohanty, 1999, Thörn, 1999
ways. But the bottom line is; it is not up to women in the West to draw the map of universal feminism which according to me often is the case.

Spivak points out that the spread of feminism and values in the “third world” have often been portrayed as” white men saving brown women from brown men”\textsuperscript{125}. I agree. You often hear about the problems in other cultures, the good and the positive things are often not “that interesting”. According to me, you almost never hear about a culture, country, religion that is doing something with their own force to prevent, or put an end to, an untenable situation. The solution is often in the beholders eye, constructed by outsiders and from their point of view. The Trokosi project by INNG is an initiative that comes from the Ghanaian people, with a strategy that is designed by the Ghanaian people. By using a post colonial feminist approach I have deliberately tried to not make this essay about “a white woman saving brown women from brown men”.

According Walter and Patience\textsuperscript{126} one reason for why the Trokosi tradition is continuing despite legislations could be the aversion of the government to interfere with religious practices. The strong belief system in the community and the alleged power of the priests makes the implementation of the 1998’s law very difficult. And also, as INNG’s report stated, communities’ degree of following the law is depended upon the level of confidence the community has in the police and the judicial system\textsuperscript{127}. Many people also fear that bad things will happen to them if they offend the priests in any way, for instance by not giving a girl as retribution. Trokosi is an integral part of the traditional religious beliefs and practice of some people in Ghana, which they are guaranteed in the Constitution. But it is in conflict with other provisions in the Constitution such as gender discrimination and slavery and I believe, as Nussbaum\textsuperscript{128}, that in such situation it is time for the government to act. The bottom line is that the practice of Trokosi cannot co-exist with Ghana’s Constitution and other documents that Ghana has ratified. But this is the case which indicates that it is not only political will but other factors that has to be considered in Trokosi. According to Haynes, often religion and religious organisations develop political agendas in order not to disappear; they resist privatization and thus target the moral “decay” of society. If the inhabitants

\textsuperscript{125} Donaldson, 2002:1
\textsuperscript{126} Interview with Walter Pimpong, 2009-04-14, Interview with Patience Vormawor 2009-04-24
\textsuperscript{127} Physical and psychosocial adjustment of liberated Trokosi/Woryokwe in Ghana, 2001: 50-56.
\textsuperscript{128} Nussbaum, 1999:102-103, 116
are religious it is easier for a religion to be able to act politically.\textsuperscript{129} Also Woodhead states that attempts to introduce secularism or to modernize policies, can lead to a religious backlash and to an opposition through religion.\textsuperscript{130} In Ghana, as stated in 2.1, the belief system of traditional religion penetrates the entire culture and the inhabitants are seen as religious.\textsuperscript{131} The Afrikania Mission has entered the political stage and proclaimed themselves to be spokespersons of, according to them, \textit{Trokosi} as role models and the defenders of African tradition and religion. The Afrikania Mission perceives a moral decay that needs to be restrained.\textsuperscript{132} According to Woodhead, the conversion and introduction of a new religion does not lead to the disappearance of African traditional religions. Instead a new religious relation has been established.\textsuperscript{133} The Afrikania Mission does not share Woodhead’s opinion; they believe that INNG and other NGOs are a threat to African traditions and cultures. This has to be seen in the light of global and post colonial theory.

In my opinion, freedom of religion can also be used as a reason “against” \textit{Trokosi}. If the \textit{Trokosi} tradition is based on religious beliefs and it violates so many basic human rights, then such a religious system itself constitutes a spiritual abuse of the people. The young girls become participants in religious rituals against their will. Freedom of religion means freedom to any religion, but also freedom from any religion. And this is a choice that the \textit{Trokosi} does not have.

In this essay I have demonstrated that the views on \textit{Trokosi} are polarized. Opponents see the girls as slaves; proponents see them as students being trained as role models. Nevertheless, the reasons do not take away the fact that girls are sent to shrines against their will, where they are being deprived of the most basic human rights, like their rights to go to school and to not be held in servitude. Some shrine priests deny the accusations of sexual abuse. The life-story of Beatrice, a \textit{Trokosiviwo}, does however contradict the views and opinions about \textit{Trokosi} as a non sexual practice.

The discussion of the \textit{Trokosi} problem has been constructed as a confrontation between Christianity and African traditional religions. But I cannot help to think that if the transformation of \textit{Trokosi} would mean a total collapse of African traditional religions then it means that the religion is only based on an unjust foundation.

\textsuperscript{129} Haynes, 1998: 1-9, 12-19, 105-124
\textsuperscript{130} Woodhead, 2002:325-329
\textsuperscript{131} The Role of Chiefs - Complicity Or Resistance To Human Rights Abuses
\textsuperscript{132} Aird, Sarah C.
\textsuperscript{133} Woodhead, 2002:219-220, 227
And if this is the case; maybe the disappearing of it is the best solution? The way I see it, a tradition, religion, practice must be able to stand for criticism without falling a part.

Both Walter and Patience’s message, as spokes persons of INNG, was that the practice was dehumanizing; it is a question of human rights\(^{134}\). According to them INNG’s main focus are on the human right aspect and not the religious aspect. In the eyes of INNG they are a part in the promotion of human rights. In the eyes of their opponents they are a part of the promotion of the white man’s attempt to diminish African traditional religion.

After having conducted all my interviews, I found it very interesting to see that the only person who criticized the theory, the religion behind *Trokosi* was Beatrice\(^{135}\), a person who was born into this belief system. Maybe the religion is creating its own critics? Maybe the real threat to the continuing of *Trokosi* does not come from the outside (INNG according to some) but from the inside? Maybe it is the tradition in itself that is enabling a new message, in this case Christianity. I found it very interesting that the people who demand that the belief system behind the practice *Trokosi* should vanish is the same person who is expected to follow the tradition; Beatrice. The people who demand that the practice, not necessarily the belief system behind it, should vanish are the same people who have another belief system and are pointed out as “the enemies”. But Beatrice would not be able to express her opinion if it was not for INNG’s work but also if it was not for the interpreter. INNG has given Beatrice a voice, not only in a metaphorical sense. One must have in mind that the person who interpreted in the interview with Beatrice was a member of a Christian NGO working for the transformation of *Trokosi*. As stated in chapter 4, working with an interpreter can have disadvantages. For instance, I not understanding the question the interpreter ask Beatrice and me not understanding her answers before the got “filtered” through the interpreter. An also, as stated in chapter 4 and 5, according to the interpreter Beatrice felt uncomfortable talking about *Trokosi*, this could affected her answers. For instance Beatrice maybe answered more briefly so that the interview would be over more quickly.

INNG’s criticism does not concern the theory behind *Trokosi* but how it is practised. As Christians the INNG does not engage in a religious discussion about beliefs and faith in theory, but they do engage in a discussion and is criticizing the practice. In

\(^{134}\) Interview with Walter Pimpong, 2009-04-14, Interview with Patience Vormawor 2009-04-24

\(^{135}\) Interview with Beatrice Antiyaa, 2009-04-23
my opinion we all should, because it is violating basic human rights to which all humans are entitled such as freedom of religion, the right not to be enslaved and equality. Their goal is not to convert *Trokosi* but simply give them there rights back. INNG talks about a “modernization and rehabilitation process”, not a reforming or converting process. The way I pursue it, INNG does not blame the religion behind, but the practice.

The aim of the *Trokosi* system is to demand instant justice. It is defended by its proponents as a system of reparation that is aimed at protecting the moral of society. But in the same system a woman is paying for someone else’s past with her future, she is paying for a person’s (often a man) safety with her own shattered life. I ask myself; where is the justice in this? Woodhead is of the opinion that religion can be used to strengthen women, but also to diminish them. One consequence of creating modern, independent national identities is, according to Woodhead, that women sometimes becomes “bearers of traditional identity while the men are getting modern”.

According to Woodhead, women’s participation in religion can also maintain women in the domestic and private sphere and men in the public sphere. Also in religious nationalism, women often become “symbols of integrity and defenders of faith”. In *Trokosi* it is women that are being incarcerated in shrines and the men committing the crimes are free to participate in society. *Trokosi* are believed to have the "power" to create balance in an unattainable situation; they are indeed “symbols of the integrity and defenders of faith”. The fate of the family and the morals of the community lie on their shoulders. This could be a factor that strengthening women’s status, but in *Trokosi* the case is the contrary. *Trokosi* is not only a religious strategy of conquest, but also a patriarchal strategy of conquest. As Woodhead states, religion have the power to create and uphold values and support existing hierarchies.

Nussbaum, INNG, key government and agencies, traditional authorities, opinion leaders and priests of shrines agree on one thing – information and education is essential for the transformation of *Trokosi* in order to favour women’s right, not diminish them. Beatrice is of one of several girls and women who have suffered and continue to suffer under the guise of culture, religion and tradition but also under a social

136 Woodhead, 2002:332-344, 352-352
137 Woodhead, 2002:332-344, 352-352
138 Woodhead, 2002:332-344, 353
patriarchal system. That is the problem. The solution is education; education in human rights and women’s right.
7. Future research

INNG points out the need of educating the citizens in human- and women’s rights in order to change Trokosi. A part of their work is to negotiate the liberation of the Trokosi with the priests and the communities through education and counselling.

In Swedish schools we have something called fundamental values (värdegrunden). In Läroplan för det obligatoriska skolväsendet, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 1994, LPO-94, (curriculum for the compulsory educational system, nursery school and after-school recreation centre 1994) it is stated that the public educational system should have a democratic base and that the activities should be conducted according to basic democratic values. Everyone that works within the school domain has an obligation to promote human’s intrinsic values’. It is also stated that the school has an important task concerning mediating basic values to students. These basic values consist of the inviolability of the human life, individual freedom and integrity, equality of right for all humans, sex equality and solidarity with weak and exposed individuals. The educational system should also, in the spirit of Christian tradition and Western humanism, raise student’s conception of justice and responsibility, generosity and tolerance, raise awareness about the cultural inheritance and context that the student is in and help the student to increase their empathically capacity. In a future essay it would be very interesting to compare the education and counselling by INNG with the implementation of the fundamental values in a Swedish school. What does the education provided from INNG and from the school have in common? What are the major themes and what are the biggest differences in comparing the contents? These are some questions that could be of interest to explore in a future study.

Another idea for future research concerns the four forms of knowledge often discussed at Malmö Lärarhögskola (Malmö Teacher’s Education): facts (fakta), skills (färdighet), understanding (förståelse) and familiarity (förtrogenhet). My experience from attending lessons at INVTC is that there is a lot of focus on facts, skills and familiarity. The students learn to repeat the facts that the teachers are saying, for instance when learning the different materials and tools in a certain occupation. The student then gets the chance to “learning by doing” (skills) and this is repeated until the teachers are sure that the students are familiar with the subject. But do the students understand what they are doing and why they are doing it? For instance, do the students

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understand why they should put the baking powder in the flour and not in the water? Another example; the students in soap making knew what a nose cover was, they knew how to use it but they did not understand the meaning of the word or why they should use it. They did not know that “nose” meant “nose” and “cover” meant “cover”, only that the white “thing” is called nose cover. They had no understanding of the word in its self nor the use of the product. According to me, this could be another interesting topic for a future essay to study; the different forms of knowledge in the pedagogic at INVTC and if it matter that the students, from my point of view, maybe do not understand what they are doing.
8. Concluding remarks

This essay is the result of a minor field study made in Ghana about Trokosi; an African tradition religious system, tradition and practice where shrines take young virgin girls in atonement for alleged misdeeds of a family member.

Ke te pam tem eng is a Ghanaian proverb meaning people shall struggle for independence and self-sufficiency. In this essay the struggle of the former Trokosi to achieve this goal through attending the Christian organisation International Needs Network Ghana’s (INNG’s) International Needs Vocational Centre (INVTC) has been my main focus.

One victim; Beatrice Antiyaa and two rescuers; Walter Pimpong, the executive director of INNG and Patience Vormawor, head of gender programmes at INNG were interviewed. One result was that the only person who criticized the religion behind Trokosi was Beatrice who was born into the belief system. INNG’s critics were not about the theory behind Trokosi but how it is practised.

With a feministic perspective I wanted to show that men’s violence and abuse towards women is a problem connected to the unjust organization of society, it is a structural issue. By adding a post colonial feministic perspective I wanted to start a theoretical discussion addressing the issue of the power of representation.

There are different views and opinions about Trokosi, but the bottom line is that the practice of Trokosi stands in sharp contradiction with Ghana’s constitution and other documents that Ghana has ratified. Yet Trokosi persists. This indicates that there are more factors to consider for instance overall patriarchal structures and post colonial experiences. Information and education on human- and women’s rights are essential for the transformation of Trokosi in order to favour women’s right instead of diminishing them.
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Appendix

Appendix 1. Interview guide in meeting a victim

Opening – explain the purpose of the interview; hint what you are interested in. Participating in the interview is voluntary; you can stop at any given time.

Anonymity - no one will be able to identify you, no one but me will listen to the recorded tapes. If you want I can change your name in the essay.

Opening question – If you would describe your life to someone who doesn’t know you, what would you say?

The first meeting – Can you describe the first time you came to the shrine? Did someone explain to you why you were there?

The first period - What is your experience about the first time in the shrine? Can you tell me about the first period in the shrine? How was an ordinary day in the shrine? What duties did you do? Did anything change after some time? More/less duties? What were your thoughts while being in the shrine with the priests? Did you have a certain Trokosi name, special hairdo, clothes? How was the relationship between you and the priest/s? Do you think that he/they cared about you/the girls in the shrine?

Social contact – during your time in the shrine, did you have any contact with your family? How is your relationship with your family today? Can you/have you forgiven your family?
If there was more than one Trokosi in the shrine; how was the relationship between them? Is there any?

Attitudes – what do you think that your family/your village/community/people in general thinks of you?

Advice- In what way would you like the practice and tradition of Trokosi to be prevented?
If you should give some advice to families that are planning to give away their daughter to a shrine what would this be? If you should give some advice to the government on how to act in this matter, what would this be? What is your message to people all over the world about Trokosi?

Motive – According to you, what is the motive of the conduct of Trokosi?

Future – How do you look upon your future? What are your future dreams?

Retrospective – Looking back, is there anything that you would have done differently. What has been the best experience in your life as a Trokosi? What has been the worst experience?
In what way do you think that your experience as a Trokosi has affected you?
How do you think your life would have been if you never were a Trokosi/if you never ended up in the shrine?
Would you like to listen to the tape?
Would you like to erase something/change something?
Is there anything else you want to say/tell me?
Appendix 2. Interview guide in meeting the rescuers

Question marked * was only asked to Patience Vormawor

Opening – explain the purpose of the interview; hint what you are interested in. Participating in the interview is voluntary; you can stop at any given time.

Anonymity - no one will be able to identify you, no one but me will listen to the recorded tapes. If you want I can change your name in the essay.

Opening question – If you would describe your life to someone who doesn’t know you, what would you say? Education, present trade, family, hobbies.

Getting involved - How old were you when you first heard of the tradition/practice of Trokosi? Why/how did you get involved with the INNG?

Your opinions about Trokosi - According to you; is Trokosi a tradition, religion or culture? According to you; what is the purpose of Trokosi? What is most significant according to you in the struggle against Trokosi; that individuals take a stand or that the collective take a stand? Can you talk about a social change and/or a political change?

The status of Trokosi - Who is to blame for that this tradition/religious practice is not changing faster? Can you put the blame on the system or the people? Since 98 it has been prohibited by law to practice Trokosi. Why is it still continuing? What do you think about the cooperation between different NGO’s, the government and the police? Is there any?

Other people’s opinions about Trokosi - How does the practice affect the lives in the community? What do the villages thinks happens to a girl when she becomes a Trokosi? Can you describe a situation where people has criticised you in your work with Trokosi?

*Arriving at INVTC - What happens when the girls and women comes to INVTC? What is the procedure? How is a normal day at the Vocational centre?

Personal thoughts - Is there any of the girls stories that has made the biggest impression on you? If you should look at the work that you have been doing, do you think that you have made a difference? Do you think that you will ever be able to stop the fight against Trokosi?

If you should look upon your own life; what has this struggle/fight cost you? What is it in you that make you strong enough to take the fight?

What is your biggest success in your work with Trokosi?

What is your message to people all over the world concerning the Trokosi subject?

Would you like to listen to the tape?
Would you like to erase something?
Is there anything else you want to say/tell me?
Appendix 3. Extract from logbook and extract from one transcribed interview

Extract from logbook 27 April, måndag

Morgonrutinen:* Good Morning Jesus, good morning Lord. I know you come from heaven above. The Holy Spirit sits on your throne. Good Morning Jesus, good morning Lord. In the morning, early in the morning, in the morning I will raise and praise the lord * Fader Vår
* God Bless our country Ghana – hissar flaggan. Har även en australiensisk flagga (skolan är sponsrad av Australien)* Handen på hjärtat för Ghana*Announcements

Extract from the interview with Walter Pimpong, 14 April 2009

I= Interviewer
R=Respondent

I: Is there any of the girls stories that has made the biggest impression on you?
R: Yes I remember one girl especially. She had been given by her uncle because he did not have a daughter of his own, so he just took the closest girl around. He just took her, you know. She was in the shrine for twelve long years before she could get out with the help from INNG. It was one of my early rescues. I still remember it clearly.
I: Do you think that you will ever be able to stop the fight against Trokosi?
R: It is a problem that will have to be managed; it is a problem that the government should be actively involved in. It has to do with people’s beliefs and I think that is going to cause a problem.
I: If you should look upon your own life; what has this struggle/fight cost you?
R: People has threatened both me personally and the organisation.
I: What is it in you that makes you strong enough to take the fight?
R: My Christian belief. One of the motivating factors for me is to help other people out of bondage and that is a big part in Christianity. You also have to consider the social context, these women are voiceless.