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Socioeconomic and Cultural Impact of Advertising the Dead in Tamale Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

Death is not a recent development in human history. The study employed a survey research design. The socioeconomic and cultural components of promoting the dead have not received enough attention from sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists who researched in burial customs in traditional societies. The findings indicate that, the living has always placed a high value on the deceased culturally, one element that affects people's social, economic, religious, and political lives both overtly and covertly is death. It takes about \$800 USD to advertise the death of a child of 10-15 years just for a short period. Types of advertising for the deceased include: Print advertising, direct mail advertising, radio, television, mobile, social media, display, and outdoor advertising. The Clergy, Local Government Authorities and the Traditional Authorities work together to create and implement legislation that would limit the frequency of advertising the dead.

Keywords: *Advertising, Dead, Socio-economic, Culture, Funerals.*

Introduction

Death is not a recent development in human history. The financial effects on culture that come from advertising the dead can be both positive and negative. On the positive note, it boosts the economy and finances of the media. One of the most important aspects of any society is the function of advertising. However, by promoting needless product use, it can also have a detrimental impact on people. Advertising communications offer a chance to compare things as social artifacts that represent culture (Pamela 2017). A marketing communication known as advertising, uses publicly financed and impersonal message to sell or promote goods and services, or a concept. Every action we take is impacted by culture. Language and culture are entangled. This holds true for every aspect of human

existence, from intimate partnerships to doing business overseas. Culture serves as a foundation for understanding when we connect with our original cultures (Gannon et al., 2019). However, because of cross-cultural variances, this concept is no longer applicable when interacting with people from different cultures. By creating shared frameworks for cross-cultural interactions, cross-cultural awareness seeks to reduce the detrimental effects of cultural differences (Hofstede, 2014). According to De Mooij (2018), culture is made up of social interactions, communications, and customs that allow members of a community to support one another.

According to Baloyi et al. (2018), people in most African states possess religious and

cultural perspectives on death. Although the dead is not a new phenomenon in human history, how each group views it and how they feel about the socioeconomic, cultural, and health aspects of it are what really count (Okechi, 2017). In Ghana, the deceased's extended family is in charge of the body and has custody of it for burial. In Ghana's southern region, funeral banners are commonplace in public areas. The portraits of departed community members are given a permanent place among the living. Thanks to these enormous Permanent Virtual Circuit (PVC) posters, which also have a decidedly "modern" appearance and feel (Shanunu et al., 2023). Examining the settings and materiality of these image-objects, which are utilized in many ways as props and advertisements during funerals and other events. Studies examining the socioeconomic and cultural effects of advertising the dead are currently scarce.

The socioeconomic and cultural components of promoting the dead have not received enough attention from sociologists, anthropologists and other social scientists who researched into burial customs in traditional societies. According to Rosenblatt et al. (2016), funeral celebrations have significant socioeconomic ramifications even though they are essentially social events in the majority of traditional societies. In a portion of Ghana that appears to be dominated by Muslims, the objective of this paper is to examine the socioeconomic and cultural effects of advertising the dead in Tamale metropolis. It explores the methods in which the deceased are promoted as well as their social and economic life. The persistent effects of colonial history and changing power dynamics are discussed in respect to ethnographic data from modern Ghana. These still influence how the deceased can continue to play an essential role in their communities. In a societal process of promoting the dead, funeral banners may indexically aid in the reconstruction of the deceased and in

transforming negative types of death into more positive, potentially positive ones. They provide semi-permanent locations where the deceased can gain ancestor status in addition to drawing people to funerals. Shanunu et al. (2023) postulated that in Ghana, the dead are held in high regard, with the belief that ancestors remain close by to protect their loved ones.

Death and after Death

In India, it is customary to cremate and dispose of the remains in the Ganges, a holy river (Długozima et al., 2020). As in Tibet, another technique is sky burial, which entails burying the deceased's body on a mountaintop and letting raptors dispose of it (Długozima et al., 2020). According to Ranger (2018), the phrase "culture death" refers to the gradual loss of a culture's customs and traditions or the passing of a significant cultural figure. Many Africans have a spiritual bond with their living relatives and consider their ancestors to be an essential component of their cosmology (Victoria et al., 2017). For Africans, death is a natural part of existence. Nonetheless, society is infamous for being uneasy about death and dying in general. Until the 1960s, when a psychologist by the name Elisabeth Kübler-Ross started studying individuals who were dying, death and dying had not gotten much attention (Sarpong, 1994). A person's initial response to the possibility of dying, according to some early psychologist and sociologist, death is denial, which is defined by the person's refusal to accept that they are dying (Sarpong, 1994). This created fresh opportunities for social workers and sociologists to investigate. The vast majority of African civilizations arrange for the body to be disposed of ritually by friends or family.

According to Lugira (2019), death announcements in Ghana have a wealth of sociocultural and economic value and represent the community's overall perspectives on life, death, and social

identity. These announcements, which were only published in Ghanaian newspapers until recently, are a showcase of the rich culture, societal conventions, beliefs, and rituals of Ghana rather than just a notice of someone's death (Lugira, 2019). Ghanaian death announcements strengthen ties to the community and preserve cultural legacy by celebrating the lives of the deceased as well as providing information. Funerals are fundamental to Ghanaians' social life because of their deep respect for the deceased (Lugira, 2019).

The traditional African belief system, which is based on the understanding that life is cyclical rather than linear, is also known as ancestral worship (Eyetssemitan, 2016). Cultural and institutional contexts influence burial practices (Baloyi et al., 2018). According to Spilka et al. (2016), despite the fact that man has provided numerous reasons for death through religion, culture, and traditional science, death still causes a significant deal of fear and concern for humanity.

Death and Social structure

Death upsets the dynamics equilibrium of social life. According to Wulffs (2019), social structures influence our lives by acting as a source of constraint and opportunity, promoting conflict and change within society. The material end of the body is only roughly congruent with the end of the social self (Wulffs, 2019). Humans organize themselves into both simple and complex groups with the goal of providing common understanding in a community. Howard (2019) indicates that, funerals are frequently regarded in Africa as a celebration of a life transition for both the living and the dead. In order to help the bereaved through this last stage of life, societies often have rituals around dying. Grief can affect our mental and physical well-being (Victoria et al., 2017). Additionally, it may lead to emotional or social reactions, such as a lack of desire to interact with people, changes in behaviour,

or a spectrum of feelings, including rage and guilt.

Sociological perspective, death presents issues for both the preservation of personal meanings that uphold ontological security and the stability of societal systems. Every group handle member death in a different way, and funerals and burial customs constitute a universal human social experience (John et al., 2020). Sammy (2021) opined that groups in society are shattered by the deaths of their members, thus they must preserve their identities through symbols that exist outside of and endure beyond specific individuals. These and other occurrences at the level of social interactions are determined by the body's life and death. Population patterns of disease and mortality are influenced by social structure. The body, social relationships, and social structure all interact. Foley (2017) opined that Funerals are the focal point of Ghanaians' social lives, demonstrating the country's deep respect for the deceased.

Culture and Advertising

According to Schwartz (2019), culture is a system of normative ideals to which people are exposed differently, resulting in significant individual variances within nations. Nearly every element of communication is thought to be influenced by culture. According to Foley (2017), culture is made up of social interactions, communications, and customs that allow members of a community to support one another.

The importance of advertising is paramount in today's corporate environment (Sammy, 2021). It is a crucial tool for companies to interact with their target market while exhibiting their goods, services, and vital brand attributes (Sirgy, 2019). By creating messages that speak to the needs and tastes of their target audience, businesses can use advertising to its full potential. For example, businesses can target particular populations with content by utilizing a

variety of media outlets. In order to increase brand awareness, advertising is essential (Sirgy, 2019). The brand will stay at the top of consumers' minds if it is regularly promoted on a variety of media.

Canda (2016) postulated that, the spiritual healing process following death can be greatly aided by community assistance. An obituary can allow those close to you to provide prayers, condolences, and cultural support when needed (Brodemberger, 2024). Subramanian (2017) expressed that a formal notice of death is called an obituary. In addition to the simple biographical information like age, birthplace, and living relatives, an obituary may cover more fascinating topics like your loved one's interests and career achievements. You can celebrate your loved one's life even while you're grieving by writing an obituary that highlights the things that made them special to you. Since there is a growing diversity of cultural origins and viewpoints in the world, advertising is at a turning point. In advertising, it is essential to comprehend and honour various cultural viewpoints. It entails recognizing and adjusting to various ideas and beliefs in order to maintain inclusion and respect for all cultures. Misunderstandings can result from a failure to acknowledge cultural differences, which can reinforce prejudices and preconceptions.

Funeral Economy

Funerals are becoming more multi-site events due to the important roles that migrants from developing countries play in organizing, financing, and carrying out funeral ceremonies in their home countries (Amponsa, 2017). As a result, funerals lead to cross-border movements of people, money, and things that eventually impact various global economies (Amponsa, 2017). Funeral customs are altered in a number of ways to account for transnational factors (North, 2019). According to Okali (2016), funerals can still serve as a means for both rural and urban home communities to maintain their interest in migrants by

serving as events for confirming relationships and a sense of belonging, even in a transnational setting.

There is reason for concern, if not worry, given the size that modern Ghanaian funerals have taken on in the past ten years (Fletcher, 2017). A higher death rate and higher average funeral costs are necessary for the funeral industry to expand (John et al., 2020). This implies that funerals have to get bigger every year. In order to provide additional funeral-related items, the funeral sector need to be sufficiently inventive (John et al., 2020). More significantly, we will need to rely on a rising death rate to remain in business if the funeral industry continues to attract enterprises (Dunand et al., 2017).

Ghanaians spend time commemorating the departed soul's week, final burial rituals, forty-day commemoration of the deceased, and one-year celebration, while people in other parts of the world are busy working hard, often seven days a week (Taylor, 2016). A major aspect of Ghanaian culture, funerals serve as a means of both commemorating and celebrating the life of a departed loved one. According to Shanunu et al. (2023), the deceased are revered in Ghana because it is thought that their ancestors are still there to watch over their loved ones. Graves serve as a reminder of the conflicts fought in an area over the years, thus they are celebrated as ancestors, while mosque remnants support the imprints left by Islam (Shanunu et al., 2023).

According to Yeboah-Banin (2020), the advertising market in Ghana is expected to generate \$192.6 million by the end of 2024, with TV and video advertising being the largest market in Ghana and expected to generate \$84.22 million in 2024. The estimated global advertising spending in 2015 was US\$529.43 billion. The projected distribution of advertising in 2017 was 40.4% on TV, 33.3% on digital, 9% on

newspapers, 6.9% on magazines, 5.8% on outdoor, and 4.3% on radio (Yeboah-Banin et al., 2020). Advertising is an effective strategy that can help draw in clients, educate them about services, and earn their trust. The majority of businesses utilize advertisements of some kind to help market their goods and services. According to John et al. (2020), you may create a successful advertisement for your business by knowing what advertising is and why it's crucial for businesses to use it. By "branding" a product name or image with specific attributes in the minds of consumers, commercial ads frequently aim to boost the consumption of their goods or services (Thompson, 2016). Public service announcements and other free forms of persuasion are acceptable for non-profit organizations. Additionally, advertising might serve to reassure shareholders or staff that a business is successful or viable (Thompson, 2016).

In both urban and rural areas, the funeral business is one of the biggest local industries. It significantly affects a large number of Ghanaian families. It is among the main drivers of local tourism (Victoria et al., 2017). The body must be taken to the hospital as soon as the death is declared so that a doctor may certify it. In Ghana, the number of mortuaries has increased dramatically. Brochures, stickers, and posters are printed by contracted printers. Carpenters are assigned to construct the chosen coffins. During the week-long celebration, busses, ambulances, chairs, canopies, and traditional music performers are rented. Visitors who come to grieve are given food, water, and drinks by the family. In some urban locations, the expense of preparing the body and burying the deceased includes mortuary fees, burial space, transportation, paperwork, and labour, which comes to between \$4,000 and \$5000 (Victoria et al., 2017).

Dependency theory is the theory that guides this study. According to Hout (2023), it

asserts that the world is divided into distinct social groups according to economics rather than politics. In modern social science, dependency theory is a school of thought that aims to improve knowledge and behaviour of the society. The hypothesis aids in illuminating the disparity between wealthy cultural and impoverished cultural Societies. The idea tracks the sources of the wealth and impact resource exploitation as the root cause of dependency. The benefit of applying the theory is to describe human relationships that offers a foundation for comprehending how society behaves and act.

Methodology

Study setting

The Northern Region of Ghana consists of sixteen districts, including Tamale Metropolitan Assembly. According to the RCC Assembly Profile (2021) states that it was first founded in 1988 as the Tamale Municipal District, a municipal district assembly formed from the old West Dagomba District Council. It was promoted to the status of a metropolitan district assembly in August 2004. Located in the Kingdom of Dagbon, one of Ghana's ancient kingdoms, Tamale serves as the capital of the Northern Region (RCC Assembly Profile, 2021). With a population density of 1,282.3 persons per square kilometer, Tamale has 371,351 residents (GSS, 2021). Tamale is 750 square kilometers in total size. Islam, Christianity, spirituality, and indigenous African religions are among the religions practiced in Tamale (RCC, 2021). Tamale's economy is mostly centered on farming and commerce. There are 35,408 households in Tamale Metropolis (RCC, 2021).

The research approach

In order to explore the socioeconomic and cultural influences on advertising the Dead in Tamale Metropolis, the study employed a survey research design. Mostly surveys focus on "what is." It has a very broad scope. It explains and analyzes the current

state of affairs. We are interested in existing conditions or relationships, prevalent practices, beliefs, opinions, or attitudes, continuing processes, felt influences, and emerging trends when conducting surveys. The key advantage of survey research is that it gives you access to first-hand primary data that you can gather, preserve, and evaluate to meet your objectives. Additionally, surveys are a direct source of important information on human behaviour (Babbie, 2017).

Three types of information were gathered using the survey approach: (i) what is already there, (ii) what we desire, and (iii) how to get there. Important facets of the current situation will be studied and analyzed in order to compile the knowledge about what is existing. Clarifying our goals, aims, and conditions possibly by studying conditions abroad or what experts deem desirable will help us choose what we desire. Information about how to obtain these is gathered by identifying potential ways to accomplish the objectives based on expert opinions or other people's experiences. According to Kothari (2018), this method is based on existing conditions or relationships, beliefs, ongoing processes, observable impacts, or emerging trends. Simple descriptive statistics was utilized to assess the data depending on the various occurrences.

Population, Sample Selection and Sample Size

The entire Tamale Metropolis served as the research population. However, the target sample size consists of the heads of Christian and Muslim families as well as the city's advertising agencies. The chosen participants have extensive expertise in funeral planning in the city. Majority of people in Tamale Metropolis are Muslims, with Christians making up the second-largest religious group. The remaining people are spiritualist and practice African traditional religion. Nevertheless, the sample size consisted of five hundred and fifty (550) heads of households who have

performed all the phases of funeral ceremonies of their deceased relatives, and advertising firms chosen at random. Creswell (2003) states that a representative sample technique is one in which a small portion of a population accurately represents the larger group. According to Ogar (2013), the representative sample technique enables the results to be extrapolated to a broader population. This is particularly unfeasible for a large population. According to Ogar (2013), a representative sample is similar to the important variables and traits being studied. Due to this the study adapted the Representation sampling technique for the research. According to Millar (2016), representation sampling is superior to a large sample size or the entire population. A sample size shouldn't be excessively big or too small (Karma 2019).

Data Collection Approach and Analysis

The techniques used for data collection include in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation, all of which are in line with the qualitative orientation of the study. In order to produce visual representations and structural analyses of advertising the deceased in Tamale Metropolis, the study entailed making observations. The focus group was made of seven (7) persons in a group and ten (10) of such groups were involved. The in-depth interviews were also conducted for frontliners mainly involved in the organization of funerals. These are mostly family close members. According to Connolly et al. (2018), narrative analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis that focuses on extracting the main narratives from each research group member's unique story. First-person narrative is used to collect the data and organized into themes so that the researcher may better understand how the individuals view a situation. The study used this for the data analysis. The task was executed manually, devoid of any analytical software tool.

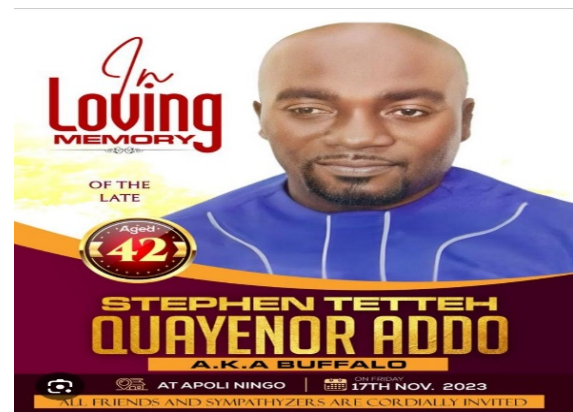
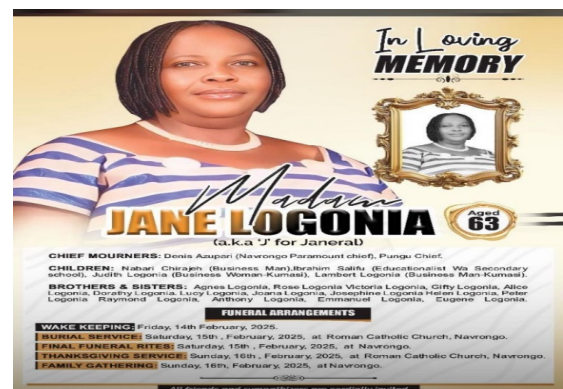
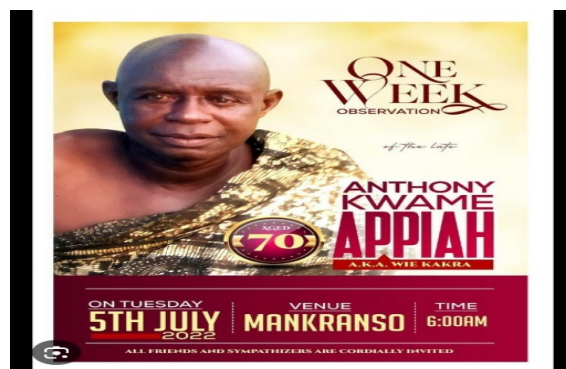
Presentation of Findings

In Ghana and other growing African civilizations, profound societal transformations are occurring, and funeral customs have not been exempted from these changes; rather, they have evolved to represent a new understanding of death. In all five hundred and fifty (550) questionnaires was sent out for the gathering of the data. Only five hundred (500) interview questionnaires guide were returned. Based on that, the findings and discussion would be based on only the five hundred (500) interview guide questionnaires retrieved.

Why do we grieve for the deceased?

This question was posed to the heads of households who have performed all the phases of funeral ceremonies of their deceased relatives in a focus group discussion. Key among the findings include: The living has always placed a high value on the deceased culturally, one element that affects people's social, economic, religious, and political lives both

overtly and covertly is death. Indigenous religions, African cultures, and rituals all have a significant influence on how people mourn the dead. They live according to the African belief in life after death, which makes reference to the importance and function of the departed ancestor. It recognizes how important the individual's life was and how they affected other people. According to one of the female respondents, "... we are mourning what is missing in the family..." This finding supports Sue & Sue (2018) who postulate that the passing of a person impacts not only the departed family but also any other organizations they may have had while they were alive. They added that it is common practice among Akan people to keep a body in reserve in the mortuary for weeks or months until their relatives are able to provide a respectable funeral. One of the male respondents also mentioned that we mourn the dead because ".... ancestors act as a bridge between people and God traditionally".



Source: field data (2024)

What are the Social and cultural pressure in advertising the dead

Findings on social and cultural pressure to advertise the dead in the research area are presented in this section. Heads of households and advertising firms were the sources of the data. These groups of people are thought to have extensive knowledge on activities of Advertising the Dead. The data collection techniques included focus groups and in-depth interviews. According to John et al. (2020), although death happens just once in a person's lifetime, they believe that life continues after death and that there is an

The belief in ancestor worship and the notion that, ancestors are generally good and kind, and are expected to live exemplary lives so that they can be elevated to ancestor status after death. Others include the preservation of harmony with the deceased in order to live a purposeful life. The impact of emotional worth on acceptance of the dead was another intriguing discovery as well as when a family fails to publicize a funeral, it is viewed as dishonourable and the public may mock them. Furthermore, the results revealed that the Social and cultural pressure in advertising the dead sometimes alters some of the ritual and cultural performances. The results support Bredenbröker (2020) who posit that banners form part of this nexus of relations that help to manifest the dead's new existence.

What are the economic impacts of advertising the dead

This in turn makes it possible for businesses to pay taxes and to fully offset the taxes that you and other people would be required to pay in order to maintain infrastructure, roads, and public services. On the other hand, those who patronize the service of the advertising agencies feel that the charges are high and sometimes they need to

afterlife. Major among the results is as follows:

One respondent stated that: *".....there is a strong social pressure to bury the dead, and advertising the dead are a way to meet social expectations at the time of honouring the deceased's memory and their life....."*

The display of rich traditional arts and culture of the people. Some also indicated that *".... because we venerate the deceased and think our ancestors are watching over us to keep their loved ones safe...."*

As originally framed in Goody's (2012) work, Ghanaian funerals have been acknowledged as noteworthy because of their societal significance. Although the Akan people in Ghana are noted for their extravagant funeral rites, Parker (2021) claimed that this is now a contemporary practice throughout the country. Through observations and in-depth interviews with the advertising agencies and households, the following field data was obtained: It helps customers make a wider selection of goods and services by giving them information about them which helps in increasing revenue. Additional job opportunities for the jobless and adds up to greater quality of Life. On a one-on-one close in-depth interview with an advertising agency human resource office, they indicated that: *"..... it makes customers aware that they have a lot of factors to consider while making decisions because they go through a number of purchasing procedures"*.

borrow money to pay. The data also shows that it takes about 800 USD to advertise the death of a child of 10-15 years just for a short period but for adults over 45 years it takes more than 4,000 USD to advertise for a long period. The statistics also showed that mourners' spending at the funeral location reflects the value of promoting the

deceased to the local economy. In-depth interviews with households revealed that some mourners spend an average of two days or longer in hotels and guest houses. This means that lodging costs are significantly higher during funeral celebrations, when the deceased are widely publicized, which boosts the local economy. The findings demonstrate North (2019) opinion that funeral expenses help a number of Ghanaian and international economic sectors, confirming that funerals are partially economic occurrences that ought to be taken into account when doing economic assessments of migration and remittances.

They also indicated that Christians are those who use more adverts for the dead. Another agency's marketing department indicated that *".... Christians do use almost all the advertising types....."*. (Print advertising, direct mail advertising, radio, television, mobile, social media, display, and outdoor advertising). But the most frequently used is the outdoor and television (bill boards, obituaries and print media). The findings showed that the primary causes of variations in how the dead were advertised were cultural, religious and social behavioural differences. The findings support Sue et al. (2018) assertion that varying religious and spiritual beliefs result in varying death-related behaviours and attitudes.

Why obituaries during funerals?

From an observational perspective during the data collection, it was realized that most households use obituaries for the following reasons: Obituaries are utilized for both attention-grabbing images and writing that reinforces ideas, they are regarded as written notices of a person's demise that inform the public of their passing, a platform for distinctive life of the departed to be honoured. The data also revealed the types of obituaries normally being used and this include humorous, inspirational,

What types of advertising do clients opt for in advertising the dead

In light of the data, the following types of advertising for the dead were found: Print advertising, direct mail advertising, radio, television, mobile, social media, display, and outdoor advertising. This was revealed by advertising agencies during an interview. According to the data, the type of advertisement is contingent upon the deceased's and the family's religious affiliation. Some of the agencies indicated that both Muslims and Christians advertise the dead in this cotemporally world. One of them was quick to add that the: *".... Muslims usually use radio, television and social media"*.

biographical, melancholy obituaries. It was also observed that, for any of them that is to be used should always be a representation of the person for whom it is written for. Furthermore, from observation, the results revealed that there was cultural accumulation especially among the Muslims.

Conclusion

Every human community is impacted by death, which is a biological and existential part of life. Because mortality tends to interfere with the continuity of relationships and social groups, all cultures must find ways to lessen its effects. The study's main goal was to gather precise qualitative data regarding the socioeconomic and cultural ramifications of advertising the dead in Tamale metropolis. Death still has a big influence on how we live our lives every day. Ancestral worship and the belief in life after death provide a framework for understanding the belief in the dead and its rituals. Additionally, the study identified a few specific forms of advertising for both Muslims and Christians.

Recommendations

The entire population in a community is worried when someone dies. All Ghanaian communities handle the corpse in

accordance with the sex, age, religion and status of the deceased, notwithstanding variations in the rites and rituals carried out for them. Given the social, cultural, ritual, and economic aspects of deaths and funeral rites, it is advised that the Legislature, the Clergy, Local Government Authorities and the Traditional Authorities work together to create and implement legislation that would limit the frequency of advertising the dead.

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