


A Study of the Concept of Prophecy in Nawuri Culture and Its Implications on Christian Practice

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on studying the cultural concept of prophecy among the Nawuri people of Northern Ghana and its impact on Christian understanding and practice. The study aimed at establishing the cultural understanding of prophecy among the Nawuri people. This understanding is subsequently analyzed to determine its patterns and operations among Nawuri Christians in Ghana. The paper is both descriptive and exploratory, describing the traditional Nawuri concept of prophecy and examining how such an understanding influences the practice and understanding of Nawuri Christians. To achieve this, the study discussed the Old Testament concept of prophecy, its understanding and practice and further discussed the concept as understood in the traditional Nawuri setup. This understanding is then assessed to reveal how it impacts the Nawuri Christian's understanding of the phenomenon of prophecy and its practice. Using a qualitative research approach, the study focuses on in-depth observation and participation in the Nawuri cultural context as well as interviews. The paper shows that Nawuri culture recognizes two main functionaries as performing the roles of prophets – the 'Oseepu' and the 'Lagipu'. The cultural understanding of their roles has an impact on the practice of Nawuri Christians. This understanding has implications for the reverence that the Nawuri Christian accords the prophets. It also has consequences on the theology of evil, the level of consultations with prophets, the relationship between the believer and the prophet, and issues of Bible translation. The paper concludes that oral culture, regardless of how remote it may be from modern-day Christianity, has a significant impact on Christian practice.

Keywords: *Prophecy, Ghanaian Christianity, Nawuri Culture, Oseepu, Lagipu*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Prophecy has become extraordinarily significant and widely used in modern-day Ghanaian Christianity. Many Ghanaian Christians today judge the power of a pastor or 'man of God' by the ability to exhibit prophetic prowess. It is an undeniable fact that prophecy is a phenomenon that can be traced back to several past ages and is found in many religions (Ustinova 2013, 25). This does not appear to be a new trend, nor is it exclusive to any particular group of people. For example, Nmah and Nwadiakor (2011, 291) observe that most world religions, both past and present, exhibit the prophetic phenomenon either continually or at some stage of their development. This observation explains why prophets are found in many provinces of the world's religions, in both ancient and modern times (Nmah and Nwadiakor 2011, 291; De Villiers 2010, 1), and many people seem to be obsessed with the ability of pastors to exhibit prophetic prowess in their operations.

Similarly, among the Nawuris, such views are held. The Nawuris are a people whose primal religion was African traditional Religion (Ampiah 1991, 39). However, many have now embraced Christianity and belong to various denominational persuasions. Notwithstanding this, there has been little research conducted into Nawuri Christian experiences, including their encounters with the prophetic phenomenon. Scholars, however, have studied the Nawuris and have focused on their traditional religious heritage (cf. Burukum 2016, 1-147) and the Nawuri-Gonja conflict in the early 1990s (cf. Mbowura & Longi, 2016, 172-195; Mbowura 2014a, 108-118; Mbowura 2014b, 270-278; Mbowura 2014c, 1502-1516). Thus, the development of Christianity among the Nawuris, as well as various phenomena in their Christian practice, are rarely discussed in scholarship. This makes a discussion of prophecy among the Nawuris a significant study.

In a recent contribution to a book on contemporary issues in Ghana, Andor (2020) discusses the phenomenon of prophecy as it is practiced among Christians today. It is argued that the practice stems from the traditional understanding of the phenomenon. This was done using the Akan and Nawuri concepts of prophecy (Andor 2020, 2). Although it provided a good introduction to the Nawuri understanding of prophecy, the book chapter only presented a general view of prophecy in Ghana. This current study, however, aims to provide a more critical examination of the cultural concept of prophecy among Nawuris and its influence on their Christian understanding and practice, a relationship which remains unexplored. The rest of the paper focuses on establishing an understanding of the biblical concept of prophecy, the concept of prophecy in Nawuri culture, and the impact of the Nawuri understanding of prophecy on Christian practice among the people. Before addressing these aspects, the methodology employed is briefly discussed.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study combines interpretive anthropology, contextualization, and comparative analysis. First, it employs a descriptive and explorative approach, drawing inspiration from Clifford Geertz's interpretive anthropology (Geertz 1973), to investigate the cultural concept of prophecy among the Nawuri people of Northern Ghana. By adopting a similar methodology, the research aimed to provide a contextualized understanding of prophecy within the Nawuri culture. The study focused on describing the traditional Nawuri understanding of prophecy and exploring its impact on Christian practice and experience. This approach is reminiscent of Charles Kraft's work on contextualization (Kraft 1979), where he emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging with local cultures in Christian mission. By examining the Nawuri concept of prophecy, the study aimed to illuminate how cultural understandings of prophecy influence Christian practice and theology.

The methodology also involved a comparative analysis of the Old Testament concept of prophecy and its understanding in the traditional Nawuri setup. This comparative framework was informed by Paul Hiebert's exploration of cultural anthropology and Christian mission (Hiebert 1985). Hiebert's work highlights the importance of understanding local cultures and worldviews within the context of Christian mission. By comparing the Old Testament concept of prophecy with the Nawuri understanding, the study aimed to assess how the cultural knowledge of prophecy influences the

practice of Nawuri Christians. This comparative analysis allowed the researcher to identify areas of convergence and divergence between the biblical understanding of prophecy and the Nawuri cultural context.

Data for the study were gathered through ethnographic observation, interviews and participation. This ethnographic research method involves immersive observation and participation in the cultural context being studied. In this study, the author, being a Nawuri native himself, conducted firsthand research among the Nawuri people to gather nuanced insights into their cultural understanding of prophecy and its impact on their Christian practices.

The methodology, therefore, incorporated ethnographic research, firsthand observation, interviews, and qualitative analysis. Using a qualitative research approach, the study focuses on in-depth observation and participation in the Nawuri cultural context. Also, the data was collected directly from the Nawuri people, through the interview of purposively selected individuals, ensuring that the findings were grounded in their own experiences and perspectives. Apart from being part of the culture, the author further observed the Nawuri people's cultural practices, rituals, and interactions, gaining a deeper understanding of their cultural context.

The findings from the observation were analyzed to reveal the implications of the cultural understanding of prophecy on various aspects of Christian practice, including reverence for the prophets, theology of evil, interactions with the prophets, and Bible translation. By examining the intersection of culture and Christian practice, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the Nawuri context, ultimately contributing to a more effective and culturally sensitive understanding of Christian practice among the Nawuri people.

3.0 THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF PROPHECY

Generally, prophecy involves serving as a spokesperson for another person. Thus, a prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of another person (Hill and Walton 2000, 1112). Among Christians, prophecy originates from the fact that God cannot directly talk to humans, making it necessary to use intermediaries (Jemison 1995, 13). Christians believe that God has endowed some people with the special gift of prophecy, which they use in various forms to minister to their members. This understanding is derived from the practice observed among the ancient Israelites in the Bible.

In the Bible, a prophet is often a spokesperson or mouthpiece of God. Through the prophets, God maintained direct contact with the people without necessarily speaking with them face-to-face (Jemison 1995, 15). This stemmed from the fall of humankind, which seriously impacted the relationship between God and humanity. Humans could not talk to God face-to-face; hence, prophets stood before the people as representatives of God (Jemison 1995, 15). Their presence demonstrated that God was still interested in His people and that He was close to them, valuing them enough to choose individuals from among them to represent Him (Jemison 1995, 15). The understanding is that God chooses a person and endows them with a special spiritual gift, which enables them to bring the message of God to the people (Rice 2000).

Although the term prophecy generally refers to the act of speaking for God, there are instances where a human mouthpiece is described as a prophet. For example, in Exodus 7:1, Aaron functions as a prophet for Moses. In simple terms, prophets are the mouthpiece of God, conveying God's opinions, reactions, intentions, and words. That is, God's agenda or plan is announced through the prophets (Hill & Walton 2000, 1112). Nmah and Nwadiolor (2011, 293) opine that the prophet speaks the intention of God, interprets God's message to his people, and applies it to particular situations.

God Himself chooses such mouthpieces and gives them messages to communicate to the people. Hence, Rice (2000, 261) affirms that "prophecy consists of a revelation from God and the proclamation of what has been revealed" (Rice 2000, 261). The concept is better understood when its practice and operation in the Old Testament are considered in perspective.

In the Old Testament, the prophet is designated by many titles. The most frequent of such titles is the Hebrew term *nabi*'. Since it appears to have its roots in the idea of 'to announce' (Rice 2000,

262), this term suggests that the prophet is called by God to ‘announce’ His message. In other words, God calls a prophet to be a spokesperson who proclaims or announces God’s intentions, messages, and ideas to the people. Another title that is often used is *ro’eh*, ‘seer’ (cf. 1 Sam. 9:9,11; 2 Kings 17:13). This title usually refers to the prophet’s ability to ‘see’ revelatory visions (Hill and Walton 2000, 1112). The same idea is expressed by the designation of the prophets by the title *hozeh* (cf. 2 Sam. 24:11; 1 Chron. 21:9; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15). Combining these ideas, a prophet in the Old Testament can be said to be a person called by God to proclaim His messages to the people. Prophets, by virtue of this call and function, are endowed with the supernatural powers that enable them to see beyond the physical realm and to reveal what they see to the people (Andor 2020, 2).

The terms “*ro’eh*” and “*hozeh*” and their use illustrate the concept of prophecy in the Old Testament, implying that it is a communication from God to the people through a person that God Himself chooses. He gives the individual the ability to see beyond the ordinary and to proclaim the message just as He intended it to be communicated. In essence, God calls the prophet, who ‘sees’ and ‘hears’ messages from God (*ro’eh* and *hozeh*), and proclaims (*nabi*) those messages to the people as God’s spokesperson.

Another critical element that requires attention is the fact that the ministry of prophets in the Old Testament was often clustered around times of crisis. God used them to guide His people in times of national crises, such as the official sponsorship of Baal worship or the political crises caused by the Assyrian and Babylonian threats (Hill and Walton 2000, 1112). For example, one would see narratives of Prophets like Elijah publicly fighting the official sponsorship of Baal worship (1 Kings 18). Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and other prophets were calling for a godly social order and repentance on the part of the people to avert the coming calamity (cf. Hosea 6:1-3; 12:6-7; Amos 2:6-7; 5:24; Micah 2:1-2; 6:8; Isaiah 1:16-17; 2:2-4). In the Old Testament, it was assumed that the prophets understood their message to have a direct and immediate relevance for their audience. Bible interpreters, however, believe that this assumption need not preclude the fact that the message could be appropriated by a future audience (Hill and Walton 2000, 1112; Zvi 2013, 167).

Prophecy in ancient Israel can be observed at various stages of development. This is likely the reason why Kelle (2014, 275) argues that ancient Israelite prophecy should not be viewed as a single phenomenon, but rather as a set of related phenomena that may include historical, social, anthropological, religious, and literary aspects. Considering the stages of prophetic development, there were, observably, the pre-monarchic stage, pre-classical stage, and classical stage of prophecy (Hill & Walton 2000, 1117). The pre-monarchic stage of prophecy was the stage when prophets held the reins of leadership at the beginning of Israelite history. As the name implies, this was a period in which there was no king. Hence, the prophet serves as both the political and religious leader of the people. Apart from functioning as a leader, the prophet also delivers messages that offer national guidance, maintain justice, and provide spiritual oversight to the people. The best example of this kind of prophetic leadership in Israelite history was Moses (cf. Deut. 34:10-12; Num. 12:6-8). Later on, Deborah did the same during the period of the Judges (cf. Judges 4:4,5). The following best example is Samuel, who was both a prophet and a priest (cf. 1 Sam 3:20; 7:9-17).

The pre-classical stage commenced after the introduction of the monarchy. This started after Samuel anointed Saul king. With the coronation of an earthly king, the role of the prophet shifted from that of a leader to an advisor. As described, the prophet’s services moved to the king and the court. The prophet in this stage of the development gave military advice and pronouncements of rebuke or blessing to the kings. This was evident in the prophetic functions of Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah in ancient Israel during this stage of prophecy’s development. They were attached to the royal court and functioned as advisors (cf. 2 Sam 7:1-17; 12:1-14; 1 Kings 1:8-45; 17-21; 18:20-40; 19:16-21; 22:1-28; 2 Kings 13:14-21; 2 Chron. 18:1-27).

The most familiar phase of prophecy in the Old Testament is the classical stage of its development (Hill and Walton 2000, 1117). This is the stage at which prophets functioned as social and spiritual commentators, and most of their oracles were directed at the people. Their work was

primarily focused on rebuking the people regarding the state of society. For example, they gave warnings of captivity, destruction, exile, and a promise of eventual restoration. They also called for justice and repentance (cf. Isaiah 1:17; 39:5-7; Jeremiah 25:8-11; 29:10-11; Amos 5:24; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Micah 6:8). Furthermore, they were aware of other nations and dedicated some of their oracles to prophesying against them (Peterson 2011, 164). This phase began in the 8th Century BCE during the reign of Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This is the stage where one would place all the canonical prophets, such as Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, among others. They not only uttered the oracles of their prophetic message, but they also chronicled them for future generations. It is from their ministry that the prophetic corpus is preserved for all who believe in the Bible (Hill and Walton 2000, 1117).

As Andor (2020, 2) posited in a recent book chapter, the practice of prophecy in contemporary Christianity is rooted in the ministry of the prophets as described in the Old Testament; however, the Ghanaian practice has also been influenced by traditional settings (Andor 2020, 2). In this paper, the impact as observed among Nawuri Christians is the focus. Hence, an understanding of the concept of prophecy among the Nawuris is essential here. The following section, therefore, focuses on discussing the concept of prophecy among the Nawuris. The section will present an overview of the Nawuri people and proceed to discuss their traditional understanding of the concept of prophecy.

4.0 THE CONCEPT OF PROPHECY AMONG THE NAWURIS

4.1 Overview of the Nawuri People

The phenomenon of prophecy is not a new trend in Ghana. This phenomenon has become a common feature in Ghanaian Christian practice (Gifford 2014, 83; Omenyo & Atiemo 2006, 55). Generally, priests of traditional communities in Ghana serve as spokespersons for the conventional deities, making them ‘prophets’ of the gods. The function of prophets in the Old Testament, as shown above, is similar to that of priest-prophets in traditional Ghanaian society. In most Ghanaian conventional settings, the priest-prophets serve as custodians of the deities, functioning as the divine representatives who give counsel to the political leader of the society.

This seems to be the practice among the Nawuris. The Nawuri people are described as being part of the larger Guan group in Ghana. They are part of the few Guan groups located in the northern part of the country. Generally, the Guans are scattered across several regions in Ghana, including the Greater Accra Region, Oti Region, Eastern Region, Northern Region, Upper East Region, and Upper West Region, among others. Some examples of Guans are the Kraakye/Krachi, Akpafu/Lolobi, Buem, Nkonya, Likpe, Logba, Anum-Boso, Effutu, Awutu, Senya, Larteh, Kyerepong, Gonja, Nchumburu, Mpre, and many others from different parts of Ghana (Burukum 2016, 18).

Aside from these groups are the Nawuris, who are concentrated in the present-day Northern Region. After the recent creation of new regions in Ghana, however, some are in the Oti Region. Nawuris have Awuratu, Balai, Bladjai, Gyiman, Kabonwuli, Katiejeli, Kitari, Kpandai, Nkanchina, and Tampoai as their major settlements. However, the central commercial town of the Nawuri people is Kpandai, which is currently the capital of the Kpandai District. Regarding their current location, Nawuris “claim autochthony and trace their origins to the Afram Plains and Larteh-Akuapem in Southern Ghana” (Mbowura & Longi 2016, 180). Though they have their homeland in these places, the socio-economic situation in Ghana has scattered most of them to various urban locations within the country.

Despite having African Traditional religious roots (Ampiah 1991, 39), the majority of Nawuris are adherents of Christianity, belonging to various Christian denominations. Among the Nawuri villages, one can find the presence of many historic mission churches, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and the Evangelical Church of Ghana, among others. One would also find the Church of Pentecost, as well as other Pentecostal and Charismatic faiths, in the area. Most of the members of these churches have some cultural understanding of the concept of prophecy. Although this cultural understanding of the concept

shares similarities with the Old Testament concept (Andor 2020, 4), it also has some unique elements that impact their Christian practice.

4.2 Understanding of Prophecy among the Nawuri People

Among the Nawuris, two main terms describe the concept of prophecy: *Oseepu* and *Lagipu* (Andor 2020, 5). Understanding the concept requires a proper appreciation of the roles of these two functionaries in society. An *Oseepu* is the priest who works directly with the gods. The work of these priests is synonymous with that of a prophet, as understood in the Bible: they communicate with the gods and transmit their intentions and messages to individuals, kings, and the entire community. Additionally, they consult the gods on behalf of the people, particularly in times of crisis. They also prescribe rituals that the community or individuals must undertake to avert any future calamities (Andor 2020, 4).

The *Oseepu* is referred to as '*Eseipu*' (Plural '*Aseipu*') by Burukum (2016). This variant spelling is due to the linguistic and pronunciation differences that exist among the Nawuris from different villages within the Nawuri territory. The pronunciation '*Eseipu*' is characteristic of Nawuris in the Balai area, where Burukum's work was generated. Despite the different pronunciations, the roles they play are the same. Burukum expands the role of the '*Eseipu*' to include being the overlord of Nawuri lands. In other words, the *Oseepu* or "*Aseipu*" were "responsible for the day-to-day administration of the village" (Burukum 2016, 61). This role was very significant before the colonial era, as they were responsible for the political, social, cultural, and religious functions within the community. With every Nawuri community having many "*Aseipu*" who were in charge of the various deities within the village, the day-to-day activities of the community were prescribed by the deities and communicated by the "prophets." It was only after the institution of chieftaincy that the *Oseepu*'s role was reduced to only the religious functions (Burukum 2016, 61). However, unlike other cultures, which typically have only one prophetic office, the Nawuri culture does not limit the prophetic role to the work of the *Oseepu*.

The *Lagipu* is another functionary that plays the prophetic role. The title of *Lagipu* is given to a category of people who also work with the deities. The primary task of a *Lagipu*, however, is to reveal secrets from both the past and the future to individuals and the community (Andor 2020, 5). People will often consult the *Lagipu* to find out why a relative died prematurely, why they had a low yield during the last farming year, why a particular calamity is prevalent in the family, or why they keep having recurrent miscarriages. The *Lagipu*, who can see beyond the physical realm, will reveal to the individual seeking answers what is happening in the spiritual realm. He will then prescribe certain rituals that may be needed to avert further calamities in the future.

In addition to revealing the causes of events, the *Lagipu* is also believed to possess the spiritual ability to see into the future. With this ability, he can predict what will happen in the community in the coming years (e.g., the delay of rains, war, or the death of prominent people) and that of individuals. These roles confine the work of a *Lagipu* in a Nawuri community to one who can be described as a revealer of secrets.

The roles of the *Oseepu* or *Lagipu* among the Nawuris are similar to those of the Old Testament prophets in many ways. They 'see' farther than the average person and communicate the same to individuals and the community as a whole. In the history of the Nawuri traditional communities, the *Oseepu* and *Lagipu* could warn the people of impending disasters, wars, famines, or death, and prescribe the sacrifices that needed to be performed to appease the gods and avert the coming dangers.

Compared to ancient Israel and the practice of prophecy in the Old Testament, one observes that, though they may be dealing with different deities, the concepts are pretty related. For example, just like the Old Testament prophet, the *Lagipu* is believed to have a divine inclination to see through what is happening in the spiritual realm and what is likely to occur in the future. He therefore reveals such to the people. Just as the Nawuris believe that their 'prophets' are chosen by the deities, the Old Testament prophets are believed to have been called by YHWH as well. It is also thought that the deity

endows them with the supernatural abilities they possess and portray – hence they speak as spokespersons for God (Andor 2020, 2). The *Oseepu* is a representative of the deity among the people, occupying both political and religious leadership roles.

Comparing the Nawuri understanding to the Hebrew understanding, it will be noted that the Hebrew terms convey the idea found in the Nawuri understanding of a prophet: a person who can see beyond the ordinary and reveal to people what they see. He is also a person whom the people consult for answers to issues that are beyond their human understanding. Because of this special role, which is believed to be supernaturally induced, they are given reverence and respect. Their words are taken seriously, and their counsel is followed through diligently. The understanding of prophecy among the Nawuri people has an impact on various aspects of their Christian practice. This shall be the focus of the next section.

5.0 IMPACT OF THE NAWURI CONCEPT ON CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

The concept of prophecy among the Nawuris, as discussed above, has a significant impact on the practice and theology of Nawuri Christians. Just as every social phenomenon, prophecy has evolved. Quayesi-Amakye (2015, 162) states that ripples of prophetism have characterized Christianity in Ghana since the turn of the twentieth century. This paper discusses aspects of Christian practice that are influenced by the Nawuri understanding. There are implications on the reverence accorded to prophets, the theology of evil as understood by Nawuri Christians, the relationship between the people and the prophet, and issues of Bible translation among the Nawuri people. The sections that follow discuss how these aspects of Christian practice among the Nawuris are directly or indirectly impacted.

5.1 The Reverence of Prophets

The respect and reverence accorded to the ‘man of God’, especially those who exhibit prophetic prowess, is very high among Nawuri Christians. This is so because of their understanding of the prophetic role in the traditional setup and the kind of respect accorded to the *Oseepu* and the *Lagipu*. These are understood as highly revered persons who had direct communication with the divine. They are therefore given the needed respect, reverence and honour. The *Oseepu*, for example, used to be accorded the honour of being both the political and religious leader of the community. Just as Larbi (2001, p. 55) has intimated, prophets are characterised by the charisma they receive from God in their encounter with the Holy Spirit. This implies that the prophets are still recognized as individuals who carry the calling of God and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfil their roles. Hence, they are God’s spokespersons and are empowered with the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, the ‘men of God’ among the Christians are regarded with high esteem and revered. If the ‘man of God’ shows that they can foretell the future and reveal supernatural things, they are accorded more respect and reverence. People who accord this level of reverence to the prophet will send first fruits of their crops, offer to have their children serve the prophet, or present special gifts to them. This reverence can be traced back to an understanding of the concept of prophecy. The next aspect of Christian practice that is impacted is the theology of evil.

5.2 The Theology of Evil

Like most traditional religions, the Nawuris also have an idea that there is an enemy who seeks to harm good people. The role of the *Oseepu* was to warn individuals and the community about potential sources of evil, whether internal or external. By holding this role, they could also predict all forms of calamity that may be coming, such as wars, pestilences, diseases, and low yields. To avert some of these evils, one had to consult with either an *Oseepu* or a *Lagipu* to find a way of getting rid of the results of evil.

This notion affects the theology of evil among Nawuri Christians. To a typical Nawuri person, evil is the result of an enemy’s work. The reason for the problems in marriage, low yield on the farm, illness of a child, or any other evil is that an enemy is working against the believer. This notion informs

the issues that they will present to the ‘man of God’ for prayers. These prayers will avert the evil that the enemy has planned against the believer. To the Nawuri believer, evil is always the result of an enemy’s handiwork, and the ‘man of God’ has power from above to avert it. Apart from this, there is also an impact on how the Nawuri Christian consults with the prophet.

5.3 Consultations of the Prophet

The belief in the divine mandate of the ‘prophet’ defines the kind of relationship that should exist between the man of God and the believer. Believing that the *Oseepu* and the *Lagipu* are not ordinary beings, but spiritual persons who receive messages and instructions from God, the Nawuri will often consult to find a way (*Okpa*, plural *ikpa*) to solve the problem. Some of the *ikpa* could involve presenting certain animals and items to the deity as a sacrifice to appease the gods and pave the way for blessings to be bestowed upon the individual. These ‘prophets’ also prescribe ‘*ikpa*’ for the entire community to avert any calamities that may be coming their way. Quayesi-Amakye (2015, 162) rightly explains that in both Ghanaian prophetism and Old Testament prophetism, there is ample evidence to show that the prophets sought to provide solutions to the problems of their people in particular situations and periods of their history. Clearly, that is the case of the Nawuri traditional setup, where people consult the priest-prophet when they have problems. It has therefore become a practice in contemporary Christianity. Believers seek solutions from prophets in the same way that people in traditional societies sought answers and solutions from priests-prophets (*Oseepu* or *Lagipu*).

This aspect of Nawuri cultural understanding influences Nawuri Christian practice, as it informs the way they consult with the ‘man of God’ and seek counsel on what to do. The counsel offered is regarded with high esteem and considered as a direct instruction from God. Hence, the Nawuri Christian believes everything the prophet says and practices the prescriptions dutifully. The final aspect of Christian practice that is impacted is Bible translation.

5.4 Implications for Bible Translation

Translation, which can be defined as the “process of transferring information from a source language to a target language” (Boaheng 2021, 4), is generally necessary when dealing with documents that are for wider circulation. The Bible has been translated into so many languages, including several Ghanaian languages. Currently, the New Testament has been translated into the Nawuri language. The understanding of the terms *Oseepu* and *Lagipu* has influenced translators, prompting them to consciously refrain from using these known terms in their translations. Since there is no Nawuri translation of the Old Testament, this section focuses on the translations done in the New Testament. In the Nawuri New Testament, the term “prophet” is not rendered as “*Oseepu*” or “*Lagipu*” as one would expect. Instead, they translate it with a description, either as ‘*lbwaare tɔwɛpɔ*’ (‘God’s spokesperson’) or with similar descriptions instead of a particular title. For example, in 1 Cor. 14:32, one reads ‘*Ɔsa kvmaa mv nu lbwaare bɔla mv sv ɛɛ tɔwɛ mv*,’ (literally, ‘anyone that God speaks through...’). However, in passages such as Matthew 10:41; 11:9, Mark 6:15; Luke 7:26; and Acts 2:16, among others that require the use of the term ‘prophet’, *lbwaare tɔwɛpɔ* is employed.

The translation limits the role of *Oseepu* to priestly roles. *Oseepu*, therefore, stands as the standard translation for the priest only. This limits the meaning of the term to only the priestly roles involved, excluding the prophetic role associated with it. Obviously, the cultural understanding of the term has had an impact on the translation of the Bible and its interpretation.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study explored the concept of prophecy as understood in Nawuri oral culture and its impact on Christian practice. Through an in-depth examination of the Nawuri people’s cultural context, the research revealed that their understanding of prophecy is deeply rooted in their traditional beliefs and practices. The study focused on two key terms, *Oseepu* and *Lagipu*, which are central to the Nawuri understanding of prophecy. The study’s findings indicate that the Nawuri cultural understanding of

prophecy has a significant influence on Christian practice among Nawuri Christians. Many of their practices can be traced back to their cultural knowledge of the role of the prophet in traditional religious settings. This suggests that the conventional concept of prophecy has a profound impact on Christian practice, shaping various aspects of their faith. The study highlights the importance of contextualizing Christian theology and practice within the Nawuri cultural context. The study concludes that the Nawuri cultural understanding of prophecy significantly influences Christian practice. Many aspects of Nawuri Christian life reflect traditional conceptions of prophetic roles, underscoring the need for theological contextualization within this cultural framework. To wit, the conventional concept of prophecy has a significant impact on Christian practice.

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