

AN APPRAISAL OF THE INFLUENCE OF EVANGELICAL CHURCH WINNING ALL (ECWA) TEACHINGS ON DEATH AND BURIAL RITES AMONG THE TANGLE OF GOMBE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Generally, the Tangle are adherents of indigenous African religious practices. However, the advent of Christianity via the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) has converted some to become Christians. The conversion of some Tangle people to Christianity has increasingly influenced their death and burial rituals in the region, introducing new perspectives on death, the afterlife, and burial practices. This study, therefore, appraises the influence of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) on death and burial rites among the Tangle of Gombe State. The study adopts a qualitative research design. We obtained materials from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources involved the use of oral interviews from twenty-seven respondents drawn through purposive and quota sampling techniques. Documented sources such as textbooks, journal articles, and the internet served as secondary sources. Findings reveal that ECWA's teachings significantly shape believers' views of rites of passage surrounding death and burial among the Tangle, as funerals are not merely considered cultural events but as a time to proclaim the gospel and affirm the hope of resurrection. ECWA emphasises that the deceased's relationship with Jesus Christ influences their eternal fate. Findings also reveal that the teachings of ECWA have significantly influenced the Tangle people through modified rituals, sacrifices, and family-centred observances, as ECWA has streamlined them and given them a theologically focused approach. The practice of immediate burial, reduction in ritual sacrifices, and emphasis on Christian liturgy during funeral services reflect ECWA's influence on Tangle funeral practices. The study finds that the changes introduced have reshaped traditional practices and redefined the theological, communal, and cultural understandings of death. The study recommends, among other things, that there is a need for sustenance and modification of cultural rituals concerning

death and burial among the Tangle to cope with the influence of modernisation orchestrated by ECWA within the community.

Keywords: Appraisal, Teachings, Death, Burial, Rite

Introduction

An appraisal of death and burial rites among the Tangle people provides a comprehensive understanding of their traditional beliefs, rituals, and social customs. These rites often serve as a mechanism for social cohesion, reinforcing community bonds, and ensuring proper spiritual transition for the deceased. Additionally, these practices are intricately tied to the group's spiritual beliefs, cosmology, and societal norms. Despite the gradual influences of modernity and external religions, traditional death and burial practices continue to hold sway in the lives of the Tangle people, though with some modifications. This research aims to explore the influences Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) has exerted on the various aspects of death and burial rites among the Tangle, examining the rituals, the role of family and community, and how these customs have evolved over time. These rites serve not only as means of facilitating the passage of the deceased but also as a way of preserving and reinforcing cultural identity and community cohesion.

However, in an era marked by globalization, religious diversification, and socio-economic changes, these traditional practices have undergone significant transformations. Previous seminars have dealt with the phenomenon of death and burial rites among the Tangle of Gombe State. Therefore, this discussion seeks to appraise death and burial rites of the Tangle people in the contemporary era.

Death and Burial Practices Among the Tangle People in Contemporary Times

One of the most significant factors contributing to changes in the death and burial practices among the Tangle people is the influence of Christianity under ECWA Church in a fast growing denomination of the Tangle land. While the Tangle were traditionally practitioners of indigenous African religious practices, Christianity has increasingly shaped death rituals in the region. The introduction of these religions has brought new ways of thinking about death, the afterlife, and the burial process (Cohen 23). Christianity, for example, emphasizes resurrection-based understanding of death and burial, where the deceased is often interred in a manner that

aligns with Christian theology, such as the use of graves marked by headstones and the conduct of funeral services in churches (Saka and Adebayo 22). These new religious perspectives have led to the hybridization of burial rites among the Tangle, where elements of traditional practices coexist with traditional and Christian customs.

In addition to religious influence, westernization which came with Christianity and socio-economic changes have significantly impacted Tangle burial rites. The processes of urbanization, migration, and the increasing prominence of Western education have altered the social fabric of the Tangle community. These changes have led to the abandonment or modification of certain traditional practices, particularly those that require significant community participation or elaborate rituals.

The rising costs of funerals, particularly in urban centers, have also prompted a shift towards more simplified and cost-effective practices. According to Toris Tai, the economic burden of elaborate funerals, which often involve the slaughtering of animals, the provision of food for guests, and the construction of large graves, especially in well to do families has become unsustainable for many families (Oral Interview). In some cases, traditional burial practices are being replaced by more streamlined ceremonies that align with the financial capabilities of the family (Mbiti 190).

According to Zubairu Ahmadu, as younger generations move away from rural areas in search of better educational and employment opportunities, there is a growing gap in the knowledge and practice of traditional death rituals. Elders, who were once the primary custodians of these customs, are fewer in number, and younger people may prioritize convenience or adopt new forms of burial influenced by their experiences in the urbanized and globalized world (Oral Interview). Moreso, the role of globalization and technology in reshaping burial practices among the Tangle cannot be overstated. Access to media and the internet has exposed the community to global funeral trends, which may influence the way death rituals are performed (Abraham 69). The use of social media platforms to announce deaths, memorialize the deceased, or even broadcast funerals to a global audience has become increasingly common. For instance, Bitrus Kobongs was in England when his father Rev. Bulus Sabo was buried. He used social media to watch the event.

The Advent of Christianity In Tangle Land

The introduction of Christianity into Tangle Land marks a significant chapter in the socio-religious history of the Tangle. The arrival of Christian missionaries in the region is intertwined with broader patterns of colonialism, cultural interaction, and religious transformation that have shaped the religious landscape of much of sub-Saharan Africa. “Christianity first reached Tangle Land in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during the height of British colonial expansion in Nigeria. The Christianization of the Tangle can be traced to the activities of British missionary organizations, particularly those from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), which were active in the region as part of the broader colonial enterprise” (Ayandele 179).

The missionaries arrived in the Tangle area following the British annexation of the region and the establishment of colonial rule. As part of the colonial government’s policy, Christian missions were often seen as a means of promoting Western values, including education, health care, and European culture, alongside the spread of Christianity (Nzewi 19). While the missionaries were driven by religious zeal, their efforts were also deeply entangled with the colonial agenda of asserting control over indigenous African societies through the spread of European norms and institutions.

The Tangle, like many other ethnic groups in the region, were initially resistant to the new faith. This resistance stemmed from the deeply rooted traditional religious beliefs and practices, which were integral to their cosmology and identity (Meyer 18). However, over time, a combination of factors, including the provision of education, healthcare, and other social services, made Christianity an attractive alternative for some segments of the Tangle population. The spread of Christianity in Tangle Land occurred through several stages, marked by varying degrees of acceptance and resistance from the local population. The first successful missionary ventures in Tangle Land were largely based in the more accessible towns and villages, where CMS and SIM established mission stations and schools.

One of the earliest centers of Christian mission was in Kaltungo, later Billiri which became a significant missionary outpost in the region (Eaton 189). Missionaries played a key role in establishing schools, hospitals, and churches, which served not only as spiritual centers but also as instruments of social change. In addition to religious teachings, the missionaries

introduced Western-style education, which had a profound impact on the Tangle. Many young Tangle individuals were sent to mission schools, where they learned to read and write in English, acquiring skills that would later facilitate their participation in colonial economic and administrative systems (Ayandele 183).

By the early 20th century, Christianity had gained a foothold in Tangle Land, with an increasing number of converts. However, this process was neither smooth nor uniform. Conversion to Christianity was often a gradual process, influenced by various factors, including the growing influence of Western education, the perceived authority of missionaries, and the socio-political changes brought about by colonialism (Horton 71). Some local leaders saw Christianity as a means to enhance their political and social standing, while others converted for material advantages, such as access to Western goods and education (Eaton 200). Today, Christianity continues to be a dominant religion in Tangle Land, with a significant portion of the population identifying with it. The church remains a central institution in the social and cultural life of the community, but it has also evolved in response to modern challenges.

Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) as a Factor of Change

The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), a prominent Christian denomination in Nigeria, has played a significant role in shaping religious, cultural, and social dynamics across various ethnic groups, including among the Tangle of Gombe State. ECWA's influence in Tangle Land represents a larger narrative of Christianity's impact on indigenous religious practices and cultural norms in the northeastern part of Nigeria. As one of the key evangelical denominations, ECWA has contributed to profound shifts in the traditional religious beliefs, practices, and cultural expressions of the Tangle community, both in terms of spiritual practices and societal structures (Robinson 64).

ECWA's evangelistic emphasis has significantly challenged and transformed the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Tangle people. Traditional Tangle religion, like that of many African communities, is rooted in a strong cosmological framework that includes belief in a supreme deity, ancestral spirits, and rituals that maintain harmony between the living and the spiritual realms (Meyer 98). Ancestral veneration, divination, sacrifices, and ceremonies tied to the land are core elements of Tangle religion, which helps to reinforce community identity and cohesion (Eaton 200). However, ECWA's evangelical message of salvation through Jesus

Christ, along with the church's rejection of ancestral veneration, has posed a significant challenge to these traditional practices (Samuel Odeh, Oral Interview).

ECWA missionaries, in line with broader Protestant missionary goals, emphasized the necessity of rejecting "pagan" practices and embracing Christian salvation, leading to a shift in religious allegiance for many Tangle individuals (Horton 71). ECWA's rejection of ancestor veneration and its focus on personal salvation through faith in Christ has led to the abandonment of several traditional rituals, such as those associated with death, burial, and communal sacrifices, which were once central to Tangle spiritual life such as ped kodok, killing of goats or dog during burials, burying the deceased with his weapons and consulting diviners to unravel the cause of death.

Furthermore, ECWA theological stance on monotheism, focused on a personal relationship with the God of the Bible, has led many Tangle converts to embrace Christianity at the expense of their indigenous religious practices. "Over time, this evangelical outlook contributed to the decline of traditional religious leadership, including the power and influence of local priests, diviners, and spiritual leaders who had previously acted as intermediaries between the people and their ancestors (ArabtakaMaidula, Oral Interview).

Moreover, ECWA's emphasis on the moral teachings of Christianity, such as sexual purity, the sanctity of marriage, and the rejection of certain "pagan" practices like polygamy and ritual sacrifices has led to significant changes in social norms and family structures. While traditional Tangle culture often embrace practices like polygamy, *wantikabi* (having carnal knowledge of one's fiancée before marriage and ancestral rites during major life events (e.g., birth, death, marriage), these practices have been abandoned by ECWA teachings (Esau Damu, Oral Interview).

The Teachings of ECWA on Death and Burial Rites

The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), as one of the prominent Protestant denominations in Nigeria, holds specific doctrinal views on death and burial rites. These views have been shaped by evangelical theology, particularly the belief in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, resurrection, and the afterlife. The church's teachings on death and burial rites have significantly influenced the way its adherents understand death, mourning, and the afterlife, especially in contrast to indigenous African religious practices. According to Horton, Central to

ECWA's understanding of death is its belief in the afterlife, particularly in the doctrine of resurrection (176). Evangelical Christians, including those in ECWA, believe that death is not the end of human existence but a transition from this life to an eternal life. According to evangelical teaching, those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour are assured of eternal life in heaven, while those who do not are believed to face eternal separation from God in hell (77). This dualistic view of the afterlife—eternal life in heaven for the saved, and eternal damnation for the unsaved—provides the framework within which ECWA members view death.

ECWA's teachings on death often emphasize the victory over death provided by Christ's resurrection. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, the Apostle Paul declares, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (The Holy Bible). This passage, which is commonly cited in ECWA funerals, represents the hope of resurrection for believers. Death is thus seen as a temporary separation of the soul from the body, and not a permanent end. ECWA's doctrine stresses that Jesus' resurrection provides hope for Christians, that they too will be resurrected at the end of time (Horton 178).

ECWA's teachings significantly shape how believers view the rites of passage surrounding death. Faith in Jesus Christ is paramount in the context of burial rites, as the church holds that the soul's destination either heaven or hell is determined by one's faith during their lifetime. This theological stance informs the rituals surrounding death in ECWA communities. For instance, funerals within ECWA are not merely considered cultural events but as a time to proclaim the gospel and affirm the hope of resurrection.

ECWA emphasizes that the deceased's eternal fate is influenced by their relationship with Jesus Christ. In ECWA teaching, the deceased person is either "with the Lord" if they were a believer, or in eternal separation from God if they were not. As such, funeral services in ECWA are deeply spiritual and evangelical in nature, with an emphasis on the assurance of salvation for those who have died in Christ, and a call to repentance for the living (Robinson 66).

The funeral service typically includes hymns, Scripture readings (particularly passages on resurrection and eternal life), prayers, and a sermon that often serves to evangelize the attendees,

particularly non-believers. “The church’s teaching emphasizes that the funeral service is an opportunity to remind mourners of the hope they have in Christ and to encourage them to live a life that honours God, with death serving as a reminder of the fleeting nature of life on earth” (Adamu Toyoyo, Oral Interview). One of the most distinctive aspects of ECWA's teaching on death and burial is the emphasis on simplicity and dignity. Unlike many indigenous African traditions, where elaborate rituals and feasts are common during funerals, ECWA's approach typically favours modesty and focuses on the spiritual significance of the ceremony rather than material displays. This teaching is rooted in the biblical perspective that the body is a temporary vessel and that the soul's eternal condition is of far greater importance (Matthew 6:19-21).

The simplicity of ECWA burial practices often involves direct, unadorned burial in a cemetery or family plot, with minimal ceremonial rites beyond the spiritual components. “The body is usually prepared by close family members or professionals, often avoiding excessive ritual washing or anointing associated with indigenous practices” (AuduLabari, Oral Interview). The Tangle has interpreted ECWA's emphasis on a swift burial as aligning with Christian teachings about the temporary nature of death. “The family and community may gather at the gravesite, but there is less emphasis on the performance of elaborate rites or sacrifices for the dead” (Mathew Dangabar, Oral Interview).

The doctrine of resurrection is central to ECWA’s teachings on death and mourning. Ezekiel Lass, explains that in ECWA, death is not to be feared, as it is viewed as the doorway to eternal life for believers (Oral Interview). Thus, a sense of hope tempers the mourning process within ECWA communities. While mourning is acknowledged as a natural and necessary response to the loss of a loved one, the funeral service itself focuses on the comfort and hope of resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Thus, mourning practices in ECWA communities typically involve a period of grief, but this is followed by expressions of hope and joy in the resurrection of the dead. Funerals often include comforting Bible passages such as John 14:1-3, where Jesus promises that He is going to prepare a place for His followers. “In this way, ECWA seeks to transform the sorrow of death into a time of affirmation of faith, with the community coming together to support the bereaved

through prayer, singing, and shared memories” (Saul Musa, Oral Interview). Therefore, death and burial rites within ECWA are liturgical in nature, focused on Christian worship rather than traditional African religious rites. The liturgical components of an ECWA funeral include hymns, Scripture readings, and prayers. The service is structured to highlight the Christian understanding of death, resurrection, and eternal life. This emphasis contrasts with traditional African burial rites, where rituals are often centered around appeasing ancestral spirits and ensuring the deceased’s peaceful transition into the afterlife.

A typical ECWA funeral service will include the following components:

- Opening prayers: A time for the family and community to gather, offering thanks for the deceased’s life and asking for God’s peace and comfort.
- Scripture readings: Passages focusing on death, resurrection, and eternal life, such as John 11:25-26 (Jesus as the resurrection and the life).
- Sermon: A message of comfort, often focused on the hope of the resurrection and the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Hymns: Songs that reflect themes of death, resurrection, and the victory over death through Christ.
- Commendation and committal: A final prayer of commendation for the soul of the deceased and a committal to the earth, with the hope of resurrection.

After the burial, there may be a time of fellowship and mutual support, where members of the church community come together to offer condolences and to continue to pray for the bereaved. The burial itself is typically simple, in keeping with the evangelical emphasis on spiritual rather than material concerns.

Changes Introduced by ECWA on Tangle Death/ Burial Rites

The teachings of ECWA have significantly influenced the Tangle people, particularly in their approach to death and burial. Traditional Tangle burial rites, which often involve elaborate rituals, sacrifices, and family-centered observances, have been modified by ECWA’s more streamlined and theologically focused approach. The practice of immediate burial, a reduction in ritual sacrifices, and the emphasis on Christian liturgy during funeral services reflect the evangelical Christian influence on Tangle funeral practices. While some traditional practices,

such as ancestor veneration, still hold cultural significance for the Tangle, the increasing influence of ECWA has led many Tangle Christians to modify or abandon these practices in favor of Christian approaches to death and mourning.

ECWA's approach to death and burial rites is deeply rooted in its theological beliefs. The church emphasizes the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, which alters the perception of death from something to be feared to a transition to eternal life. This ideological shift encourages simpler and less elaborate burial rites, aiming to focus on the spiritual journey rather than the celebrations of life that characterize traditional practices (Danladi Auni, Oral Interview). ECWA has advocated for a simplification of these practices to reduce the financial burden on the bereaved families. This aligns with a broader Evangelical ethos of stewardship and the responsible use of resources (Njoku 46).

ECWA emphasizes community support during bereavement, reflecting a theological underpinning of love and compassion. Church members are encouraged to rally around the bereaved, providing emotional, spiritual, and sometimes financial support, which is the same with some traditional practices. For instance, the Tangle provide emotional support to the deceased family during and after burial (Ecstein 65). ECWA's changes to burial rites are also interpreted in the light of cultural resilience. While modifications are made, they do not completely erase traditional customs (Ibenegbu 307). Instead, ECWA encourages the integration of cultural elements that align with Christian beliefs such as providing physical and emotional support for the bereaved family, thereby creating a unique identity that respects both faith and heritage such as the involvement of the community in bereaving with the family of the deceased. This is a vestige cultural practice among the Tangle.

Another significant change has been the role of ECWA in educating its members about the theological implications of death and the appropriate responses to grief. "This educational approach fosters understanding and emphasizes a faith-based perspective on mortality, shifting focus from adherence to cultural rites towards spiritual fulfillment"(Aja 89).

Impact of the Changes Introduced by ECWA Church

ECWA's teaching on death and burial rites has significantly brought changes in the Tangle culture of death and burial among the Tangle. Herein, attempt is made to discuss the changes introduced by ECWA on death and burial among the Tangle.

1. Changes in Tangle Conception of Death

The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) has introduced significant changes in its teachings and practices regarding death and burial rites which have had profound implications for the traditional Tangle conception of death a belief system deeply rooted in the culture and practices of the Tangle people of Gombe State, Nigeria.

The most significant impact of ECWA lies in its theological reinterpretation of death. Traditional Tangle beliefs often imbue death with a sense of finality and fear, emphasizing ancestral ties and obligations (TormonMutum, Oral Interview). In contrast, ECWA's teachings center on the Christian doctrine of resurrection and eternal life. "This shift encourages believers to see death not as an end but as a passage into eternal life, altering the emotional and spiritual response to mortality" (Okafor 52).

While ECWA encourages rethinking death in a Christian context, it also recognizes the importance of cultural identity. The church does not wholly reject Tangle traditions but advocates for their integration into a Christian framework (Adetunji 78). This blending allows for a preservation of cultural heritage while adapting to new beliefs. "The church plays a crucial role in negotiating the tension between traditional practices and modern Christian values, impacting how the community collectively perceives and practices death and mourning" (DuniyaMaidawa, Oral Interview).

ECWA emphasizes the communal responsibility during bereavement, encouraging members to support mourning families emotionally and materially. This shift alleviates the isolation often felt by grieving individuals, promoting a collective approach to mourning that contrasts with the more individualistic aspects of traditional Tangle practices (Nwoye 107). In addition, the emphasis on simplicity in burial rites advocated by ECWA has notable economic implications. Traditionally, Tangle funerals could involve significant costs due to elaborate rituals and festivities such as killing of goats for those who dug graves and offering of wine (Maxwell Uba, Oral Interview). ECWA's approach encourages families to minimize expenses related to burial and focus on the spiritual aspects of death (Garba Arabia, Oral Interview). This change has the potential to lessen financial burdens on families, which is particularly relevant in a society where economic pressures are significant.

ECWA's model includes an educational component, teaching congregants about grief and the Christian view of death. By providing counseling and workshops on coping with loss, the church promotes a healthier understanding of grief and mourning processes. This counselling could be done before death occurs to all members to prepare their minds for such an occurrence. This educational outreach could play a critical role in reshaping the Tangle view of death, providing not just theological insights but practical support for dealing with loss (Eze 256). The changes introduced by ECWA have significantly impacted the Tangle conception of death. By reframing theological interpretations, promoting community support, advocating for economic mindfulness, and providing education, ECWA has fostered a new understanding of death that harmonizes Christian beliefs and Tangle culture. This multifaceted approach not only influences how death is perceived emotionally and spiritually but also alters social practices and community dynamics, ultimately reshaping the collective experience of mourning among the Tangle people. Also, ECWA introduced the use of coffin against the bare and log burial which was customarily to the Tangle.



Fig. 1: Showing coffin burial by ECWA in Amtawalam in Billiri LGA, Gombe State



2. Changes in Tangle Burial Rites

The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) has played a significant role in reshaping burial rites within the Tangle community in Gombe State, Nigeria. This transformation is not just about changing rituals but also reflects broader shifts in cultural, theological, and social understandings of death and grief. According to Aja, ECWA's theological emphasis on resurrection, eternal life, and faith-based mourning has led to a substantial reorientation of traditional burial practices (64). The Tangle community, which traditionally held complex beliefs about the afterlife and the significance of ancestral ties, has experienced a shift toward Christian interpretations of death. Elderly community members often viewed elaborate burial rites as essential for honouring ancestors; however, ECWA encourages families to focus more on the deceased's faith journey rather than merely on cultural observances.

One of the most significant changes introduced by ECWA is the advocacy for the simplification of burial rites. Traditional Tangle customs often involve elaborate ceremonies, extensive rituals, and considerable financial expenditure (Njoku 290). In contrast, ECWA promotes a more streamlined approach emphasizing dignity over extravagance (YusufuDambura 43). This shift alleviates the financial burden on families, transforming how communities perceive and engage in burial practices.

ECWA has also emphasized the importance of community involvement during the funerary process. The church facilitates communal mourning and provides emotional and spiritual support to the bereaved, significantly altering the dynamics of burials (Nwosu 74). The community's role, as emphasized by ECWA, contrasts with the more isolated and individualistic mourning processes that could be observed in traditional Tangle practices. "ECWA's efforts to educate its members about grief processing and Christian understandings of death have led to changes in burial rituals" (Tamar Ifraim, Oral Interview). Through workshops and counseling programmes, the church imparts knowledge on the spiritual significance of death, shifting focus from ancestral rites to Christian faith. This educational approach affects how the Tangle community perceives death and influences their corresponding burial practices.

While ECWA encourages changes, it also recognizes the value of cultural heritage. The church often incorporates certain Tangle customs like *bel wuddi* (putting cap on the head of deceased and dancing *tenem* during the burial of a hero, into its burial practices, promoting a hybrid approach that respects cultural identity while centering on Christian beliefs (Adetunji 348). Some examples of these practices according to Toris Tai include *bel wuddi* (putting cap on the head of the deceased or dogs skin in the hand of the deceased as a mark of respect, and dancing *tenem* during the burial of a hero (Oral Interview). This adaptation allows the Tangle community to maintain a connection with its traditions while embracing new religious insights. The changes initiated by ECWA have also influenced gender roles within burial customs. Traditional Tangle practices often linked women with certain rituals and grieving processes. However, ECWA's emphasis on egalitarianism and community involvement has led to a re-evaluation of these roles, promoting a more inclusive approach to participation in funerals.

Religious Implications of the Changes on Tangle Death and Burial Rites

The changes introduced by the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) regarding death and burial rites among the Tangle community have profound religious implications. These adaptations not only reshape traditional practices but also redefine the theological, communal, and cultural understandings of death within this context. One of the core religious implications of ECWA's influence is the reinterpretation of death and the afterlife (Ogungbemi 61). Traditional Tangle beliefs often involve a cyclical understanding of life, death, and ancestral veneration. In contrast, ECWA promotes a linear view of life, emphasizing eternal life through faith in Christ. This shift challenges the historical reverence for ancestors in Tangle culture and encourages a new focus on personal salvation.

Moreso, ECWA emphasizes individual faith and accountability to God, shifting focus from collective ancestral worship to personal relationships with the divine (Isiguzo 139). This move has implications for how members of the Tangle community view their responsibilities toward the deceased. Instead of performing elaborate rituals to appease ancestors, believers are encouraged to reflect on the deceased's faith, urging them to live in ways that honour Christian principles. Moreover, the communal aspect of mourning within the Tangle community has also undergone significant changes. "The ECWA approach often promotes a supportive community framework that contrasts with traditional practices, which might have leaned towards individual

grief”(Rakiya Julius, Oral Interview). Congregational mourning and grief counseling services help strengthen communal bonds, aligning with New Testament teachings on love and support within the body of Christ.

The influence of ECWA has created a tension between traditional Tangle ancestral beliefs and the new Christian doctrines. “The church's teachings often challenge the legitimacy of ancestral worship and the traditional roles that ancestors play in the cultural and spiritual lives of the Tangle”(Tallitha Mathew, Oral Interview). This confrontation sometimes leads to conflicts within families and communities as individuals and groups navigate their identities and loyalties. Another notable implication lies in the shift towards simplicity in burial rites. Traditional Tangle customs often involved elaborate rituals and significant expenditures. “ECWA's advocacy for simpler, more spiritually focused burial practices resonates with its theological stance on stewardship”(Martin Bitrus, Oral Interview). This shift encourages members to bury their death in rectangular graves as against the cultural shaft graves and also to allocate resources towards church activities and outreach.

ECWA's emphasis on inclusivity impacts gender roles during mourning rituals. Traditional Tangle practices often delineated specific roles for men and women in mourning and burial rites. However, the church's encouragement of collective participation allows for a reevaluation of these roles, enabling women to take active roles during funerals and in community support, aligning with biblical teachings on equality (Ojo 66). The changes introduced by ECWA have profound religious implications for the Tangle community. These transformations affect how death, mourning, and burial rites are understood and practiced, resulting in a complex interaction between new Christian beliefs and traditional customs.

Conclusion

This study appraises death and burial rites in Tangle religious culture. The changes introduced by ECWA to Tangle death and burial rites are multifaceted and significant. By promoting theological reorientation, simplifying burial practices, emphasizing community support, and incorporating educational initiatives, ECWA has transformed how the Tangle people engage with death and mourning. These changes reflect broader trends in cultural adaptation and resilience, allowing the Tangle community to navigate the complexities of their identity and faith

in a changing world. Consequently, ECWA not only shapes religious practices but also impacts social dynamics, gender roles, and community cohesion, illustrating the intricate interplay between faith and cultural traditions in contemporary Nigeria.

Recommendations

Having appraised the influence of ECWA on death and burial rites among the Tangle people of Gombe State, this study makes the following recommendations

- i. The Tangle need to modify some of their cultural burial rites like *ped kodok* and strict mourning of the widow in order to suit with modernity.
- ii. Traditional burial practices that are cost intensive like killing of a dog or goat need to be modified to save economic costs just like ECWA practices.
- iii. ECWA need to understand and respect some of the Tangle death and burial rites practices like *kwallauorop* and putting of dogs skin on the deceased hands (yadda meaning warrior) that are not harmful and do not promote evils such as human sacrifices.
- iv. Non Christian Tangle should continue with cultural death and burial rites for sustenance of their cultural heritage.
- v. There is need for the Tangle to adjust their cultural burial rites especially those concerning tradition of death by water, fire and suicide so that they could be buried in their homes and not at the place of the occurrence of death as it is the practice.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF INFORMANTS

S/N	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
1	Tallitha Mathew	F	71yrs	House wife	Baule, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	2/9/2024
2	Rispha Simeon	F	67yrs	House wife	Baule, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	5/9/2024
3	Tamar Ifraim	F	73yrs	House wife	Baule, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	7/9/2024
4	Martin Bitrus	M	66yrs	Farmer	Baule, KaltungoLGA, Gombe State	9/9/2024

5	Rakiya Julius	F	61yrs	Civil servant	Baule, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	12/9/2024
6	Samuel Odeh	M	64yrs	Civil servant	Baule, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	15/9/2024
7	Na,ason Dauda	M	83yrs	Farmer	Kaltungo West, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	17/9/2024
8	AbarchiZailani	M	75yrs	Farmer	Kaltungo West, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	20/9/2024
9	Esau Damu	M	89yrs	Farmer	Kaltungo West, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	22/9/2024
10	Garba Arabia	M	79yrs	Farmer	KaltungoWest, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	25/9/2024
11	MainingiKombani	M	91yrs	Farmer	Kaltungo West, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	27/9/2024
12	ArabtakeMaidula	M	93yrs	Farmer	Kaltungo West, Kaltungo LGA, Gombe State	30/9/2024
13	Adamu Toyoyo	M	64yrs	Clergyman	Bangaje North, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	3/10/2024
14	AuduLabari	M	63yrs	Clergyman	Bangaje North, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	5/10/2024
15	DuniyaMaidawa	M	87yrs	Farmer	Bangaje North, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	7/10/2024

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16	Baka Goni	M	71yrs	Farmer	Bangaje North, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	10/10/2024
17	Mathew Dangabar	M	82yrs	Clergyman	Bangaje North, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	13/10/2024
18	Danladi Auni	M	76yrs	Clergyman	Bangaje North, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	15/10/2024
19	Ezekiel Lass	M	62yrs	Clergyman	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	16/10/2024
20	Saul Musa	M	63yrs	Clergyman	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	18/10/2024
21	TormonMutum	M	71yrs	Clergyman	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	20/10/2024
22	Maxwell Uba	M	65yrs	Clergyman	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	20/10/2024
23	Danladi Garba	M	72yrs	Clergyman	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	22/10/2024
24	Joseph Maikame	M	65yrs	Clergyman	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	22/10/2024

25	Toris Tal	M	75yrs	Farmers	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	22/10/2024
26	KelluWali	F	55yrs	House Wife	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	22/10/2024
27	LakukkaKume	F	62yrs	House Wife	Kalmai Ward, Billiri LGA, Gombe State	22/10/2024