

Trokosi' - Slave of a Fetish: An Empirical Study

D.Y. Dzansi and P. Biga

*Department of Business Support studies, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Central University of Technology Free State, South Africa, 9301*

KEYWORDS Trokosi. Trokosism. Slave of a Fetish. Human Rights Abuse. Sexual and Physically Abuse

ABSTRACT *Trokosi* meaning 'slave of a fetish' is an ancient cultural practice still in vogue among some tribes in parts of West Africa. It requires parents to offer their virgin daughters to serve as sex-slaves to fetish shrines in atonement for earlier sins committed by family members. Considered by opponents as outdated, apocalyptic, and outright human rights abuse, it is revered by adherents of the fetish system. In Ghana, the Trokosi law has officially abolished the practice but this has not deterred adherents. Combining literature study, participant observation and in-depth interviews with three key stakeholders in a southern part of Ghana, the study investigated the abusive nature of *Trokosism*, its effects on the 'liberated', and how to effectively combat it. The results suggest that the 'liberated' *Trokosi* were subjected to both physical and emotional abuse and denial of basic needs and rights. It however seems that the practice is abating. Since *Trokosism* (the *Trokosi* system) is based upon deep-seated beliefs, the most realistic strategy to combat it would be to educate practitioners and communities on human rights as well as through negotiation.