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Beauty in the Zongo: women negotiating religious co-existence in Accra's urban area of Madina

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BEAUTY IN THE ZONGO

Women Negotiating Religious Co-existence in Accra's Urban Area of Madina

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Kauthar Khamis

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Abdulai Adam Eliasu, and our daughters, Shefaat Nasara Abdulai and Naseebah Wunpa-a Abdulai, thank you for your love, support, motivation, and encouragement.

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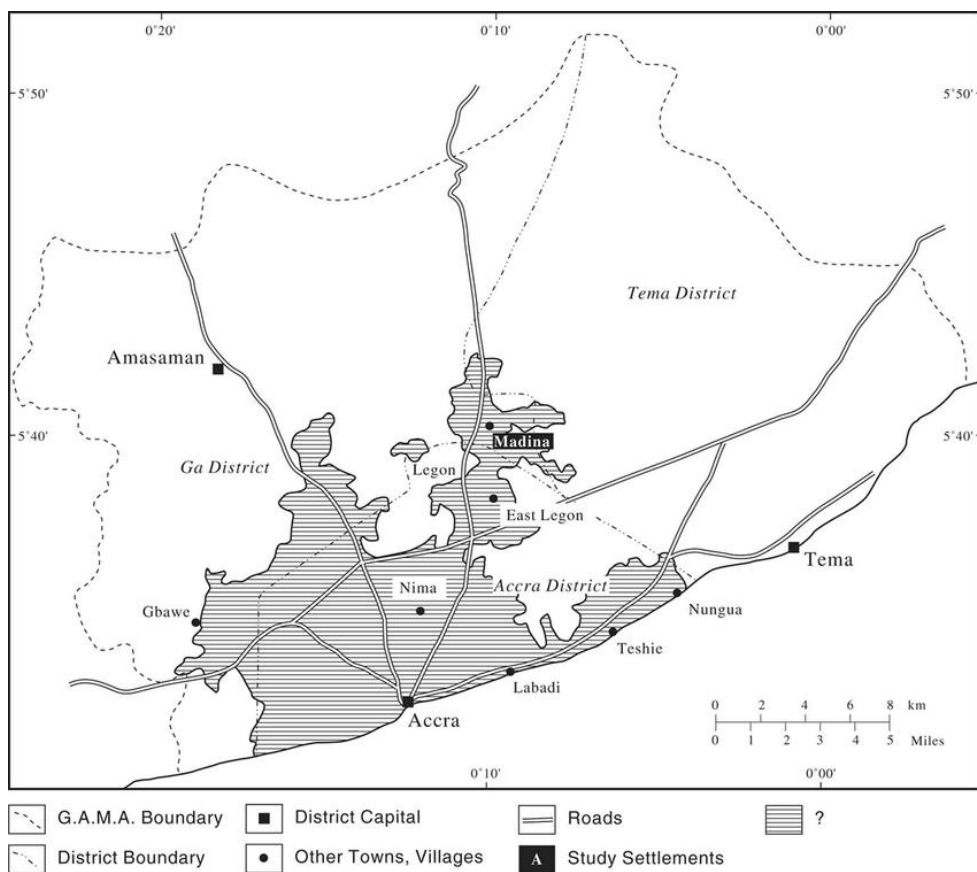
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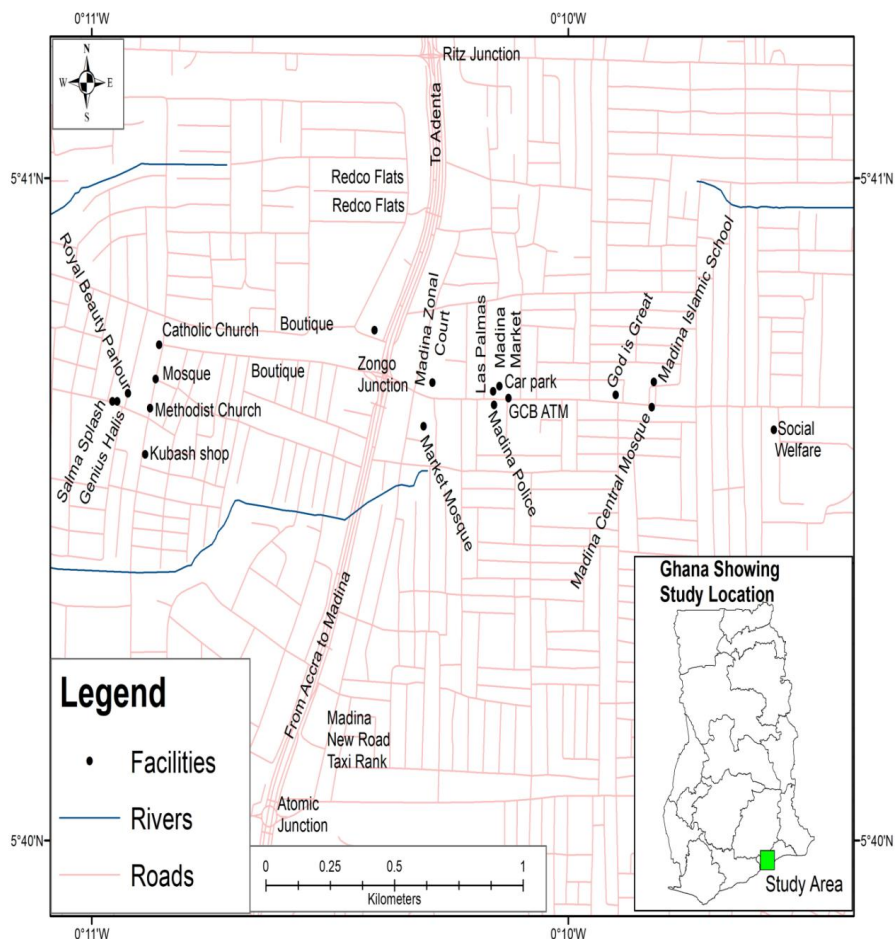
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Map 1, A map of Accra showing Madina and its surrounding communities. Photo retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Accra-showing-location-of-Madina_fig1_233266478 accessed 30 October 2025.



Map 2, A map showing some beauty sites in Madina Zongo. Map sourced from fieldwork

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASWAJ	Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease-19
ECAS	European Conference of African Studies
F. D. A.	Food and Drugs Authority
G. S. A.	Ghana Studies Association
MIASA	Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa
M. P.	Member of Parliament
N. D. C.	National Democratic Congress
NGG	Nederlands Genootschap voor Godsdienstwetenschap (Dutch Association for the Study of Religion)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
N.P. P	New Patriotic Party
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases

GLOSSARY

Akekeduro: ginger, Twi language

Akwenkyia: a misfortune, Twi language

Aljanɪ: jinns, Hausa language, also used in reference to evil spirits

Amaria: a new bride, Hausa language

Ashawo: a prostitute, Ga language

Atupa: loosely translated as ‘sex’, Twi language

Batakari: a traditional woven cloth used by the people of Northern Ghana

Bedianko: eat and get stuck (stay), Twi language

Beyi gro: another term for misfortune, Twi language

Boka: used in reference to magic, witchcraft and sorcery by the Hausa people

Buday Kay: a ceremony to mark the day a bride is presented with a beauty items and cooking utensils in her husband’s house

Buta: ablution kettle, Hausa language

Daham: Arabian Gold used among the Hausa people in the Zongo

Daraja: honour, Hausa language

Dukur: a head tie

Gumama: second hand clothing imported from the Arab world

Hajja: a Muslim woman who has embarked on pilgrimage to Makkah

Jujɪ: magic

Kaba: a locally made blouse for women in Ghana

Kakaduro: ginger, Hausa language

Kanafari: cloves, Hausa language

Kayan Mata: women’s things or women’s property, Hausa language

Kente: a woven cloth used by people from the southern part of Ghana

Lefè: beauty items given by a prospective groom to a prospective bride as part of pre-marital preparation among the Hausa people in the Zongo

Malam: a male teacher, Hausa language

Malama: a female teacher, Hausa language

Mami Water: a mermaid who lives in the sea

Masoro: Guinea pepper, Hausa language

Mayafi: a veil, Hausa language

Odasubo: a type of *duku*

Omupe Life: meaning they like to look fashionable, Twi language

Osofo Guy Guy: a religious leader who is highly fashionable, Twi language

Raba Fada: to separate a fight, Hausa language

Sakawa: used in reference to internet fraudsters in Ghana

Sala: the Hausa name for *Eid Fitr* and *Eid Adha*

Sala Bills: expenses associated with beauty needs of women to mark Eid celebration in the Zongo

Sankofa: an *adinkra* symbol, which means going back to pick aspects of the Ghanaian culture that are still relevant in contemporary times

Tarea: a Hausa term, literally means to gather or accumulate. It refers to the items a bride accumulates in order to use them after marriage.

Trotro: popular term for public transport in Ghana

Twi: an Akan language, Ghana

Whentia: Guinea pepper, in Twi language

Yaayi: meaning ‘is the same’ in Hausa: a commemorative cloth to mark a marriage ceremony

Zongo: a community largely inhabited by Muslims