

African knowledges and sciences

Understanding and supporting the ways of knowing
in Sub-Saharan Africa

*David Millar, Stephen Bugu Kendie, Agnes Atia Apusigah and
Bertus Haverkort (Editors)*

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AFRICAN KNOWLEDGES AND SCIENCES
Understanding and supporting the ways of knowing in Sub-Saharan Africa

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on African Knowledges and Sciences
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PART I

Conference papers

Introduction

African Traditional Knowledge (ATK), variously called rural peoples' knowledge, indigenous knowledge, or cultural knowledge, among others, is as old as the existence of the African peoples themselves. This knowledge base has provided sustenance for Africans in a diverse, complex, and risk-prone environment. Spirituality is the bedrock of this knowledge system that makes it remarkably different from other knowledges/sciences. Bio-cultural diversity is another feature that characterises African traditional knowledges.

Non-Africans and so-called "educated Africans" have often denied recognition for this knowledge base since colonial times. Except in the field of health sciences and particularly for herbal medicine, music, culture and arts, very little has been done by science-based scholars on African knowledges.

In recent time, there has been an increased and renewed interest in African Knowledge Systems. A few scholars of so-called 'hard sciences' and development work have made token gestures at this knowledge base. Yet, a lot remains unknown, unexplained, and, in some cases, misunderstood. For those scholars who embrace and project African knowledges as an alternative form and source of knowledge, the challenge of legitimacy is often an issue. This challenge is often directed to forms of proof and legitimacy. Much as we cannot discredit Western science, we resist any attempts to use Western standards to measure ATK, for, African sciences, ancient as they are, have their own unique forms of proof and legitimacy.

As African scholars who project and claim an Afrocentric science, we find ourselves being increasingly challenged to provide evidences of our own traditional knowledge system in the same way as being done by our colleagues from Asia and Latin America. African science based scholars find a lot of empirical evidences to consider their knowledge as African Science. But for this we should be prepared to listen, see, learn, and feel. A conference on African Sciences was held in October 2005 in Bolgatanga, Ghana, to bring together various experiences and positions (from traditional people, scholars, and practitioners) as a way to understand, develop, and consolidate African Sciences. This Conference provided a platform for the the 'scientification of the African knowledges' and in so doing motivate interest and challenge actions.

It is our hope that the papers in this collection will illuminate, the unique ways that Africans generate and share knowledge. The authors come from varied backgrounds and include University Professors, development workers, social critics, religious practitioners and African traditionalists. They have worked with varied African peoples in rural and urban, community and University, and formal and informal places to produce these knowledges, which we are privileged, in this volume, to pass on to diverse audiences.

Conference approach

Various approaches were adopted in the organization of the conference, the delivery of the papers and the discussions thereof. Some participants presented research papers on topical issues. The presentations were immediately followed with plenary questions, comments and suggestions. Later in the day, syndicate group discussions were organized with thematic areas and guided questions to review the papers presented. The groups then made plenary presentations and these were subsequently discussed by all the participants.

Given the complexity of the issues under discussion and the fact that many participants were venturing into the field of African Sciences for the first time, some papers were still incomplete and ‘in progress’. These were discussed during the group sessions. A number of already published materials on the issues that contribute to the debate were given out as reading materials. Because these papers were pertinent to the deliberations, they were read up-front and these informed subsequent discussions of some of the papers.

Layout of this book

This book is a compilation of papers and proceeding of the conference. The first couple of chapters are overview papers that are dedicated to debates about the globalisation of knowledge, focusing on science in general and African Science in particular. Critical issues and unanswered questions are raised in these articles to challenge, further, action by scholars. Thereafter, the subsequent articles discuss the gnoseologies, epistemologies, and ontologies of African wisdoms/knowledges/sciences and the notion of *‘Essence’* as reflected in concepts like *Ubuntu*, *Saakumnu*, *Nyaba-Itgo*, and *Vodoun*. The book concludes with case studies of African knowledges with respect to current developmental concerns in gender, sustainable livelihoods, natural resources management, conflict management and peace building.

Acknowledgements

The Editors wish to pay tribute to all eminent Chiefs, women and men leaders, dignitaries from South Africa, Benin, Togo, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Ghana and the Netherlands for attending, participating and contributing in diverse ways to the Conference, which has resulted in this publication.

A special acknowledgement is extended to the Vice Chancellor of UDS, Professor J. B. Kaburise, for not only agreeing to host the International Conference but accepting to chair the opening session and the then Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Saa Dittoh for sitting in one of the sessions and making very useful contribution to the debates. Thanks are also due to Deans, other Senior Members and graduate students of the University for Development Studies as well as our colleagues

from University of Cape Coast and University of Ghana, for participating actively throughout the Conference.

The joint sponsorship of CTA and COMPAS International, both of the Netherlands, made the Conference possible. We owe them a depth of gratitude. We show an additional gratitude to CTA for the Books and Publications given to support the Conference. They were duly utilised and shared among all participants and their contents have influenced the re-writing of many of the papers published in this volume.

To all others who have contributed in diverse ways to this publication we say – “*Ya fara la ya touma touma*”. May the Ancestors give you wisdom and protect you.

David Millar, Stephen B. Kendie, Agnes A. Apusigah and Bertus Haverkort

African knowledges and sciences: Exploring the ways of knowing of Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

*Despite obvious differences between the regions and ethnic groups on the vast African continent, one can identify common elements in the way African people see themselves (cultural universalis), the way they know and organize themselves: their religions, worldviews, relationships to nature, notion of time, artistic expressions, leadership, and ethnic organizations. In contemporary Africa, traditional knowledge and values still are an important driving force in the decision-making and development activities of the people. Understanding this knowledge and the way it is organized, as well as assessing its strengths and weaknesses may be an important step toward building African science. This chapter is a preliminary effort to come to grips with the way ‘**knowing**’ is conducted in Africa.*

Key words: Knowing System, Indigenous Technologies, Worldviews, Cosmovisions.

Peculiarities of African ways of knowing

In the preparation of this chapter we had to deal with the basic question of whether there is one body of knowledge that can be referred to as ‘African Science’ as is done for Western Science. We also had to contend with the question of whether there is a useful distinction between the so-called ‘sciences’ and ‘arts’ as we encountered during our ‘western styled schooling systems’.

To provide useful answers to these questions, we resorted to empirical research. We also read what our colleagues have said on these subjects. Our travels and encounters all over Africa have shown that it is more apt to refer to **African Sciences in plural**, because of the prevalence of different expressions of knowledge. The basic building blocks of these **knowledges** are similar but differently expressed because of cultural and geographical specificities, among others. Hence, pluralism (heterogeneity) is what Africa has to share with the rest of the world. Yet, there are many common elements in the African way of knowing; the worldviews, ecological spirituality and the existing cultural/religious practices do have similarities.

In talking to rural people, it became apparent that there is no such distinction between ‘science’ and ‘arts’ in the traditional African context. What rural people have is an integrated body of knowledges and practices, not split up in disciplines. It is perpetually being re/constructed from generation to generation and over time and space. It is strongly believed that ‘...*What we know is not of our own doing. They were told to us by our ancestors*’ (Elder Kausong – *A local leader*).

Earlier sociologists and anthropologists from the Western world have studied Africa and its people as objects of interest relating to their fields of work, which is rooted in the academic, political, economic and cultural context of colonialism and post colonialism. The recent upsurge of interest in knowledge of indigenous peoples has challenged the assumed superiority of mainstream western science over sciences that have their roots and dynamics in Africa (and Asia, America and other regions). The challenge here (also as part of the goal of this conference) is for African scholars to (re-)value, give recognition, and articulate their niches in the world of science today. How does the African way of knowing relate to the claims of rationality, objectivity and universality of western sciences?

We invite African scholars to put their knowledge on the pedestal of scholarship in the interest of sustainable development. We need to move away from the feeling of mediocrity to a collegial realm with our western counterparts (as the Asian scholars are doing). These are part of the expressions and discourses of an African renaissance (Mbeki, 1996; Jana, 2001) and present challenges that we shall elaborate later in the chapter.

A number of Africans and African writers have made their observations on African knowledges and their relations to conventional or mainstream knowledge. One perspective suggests that the African way of knowing should be integrated into the mainstream whilst another posits that the African way of knowing is science – separate from the mainstream but equally relevant and unique.

Oniangó (2000) concludes that in the theory of African knowledge, the world centres on a 'self' that lives in a personal world of culture. African culture does not assume that reality can be perceived through reason alone. There are other modes of knowing, such as, imagination, intuition, and personal feelings. This is why the deepest expression of the African cultural reality has been through art, myths, and music rather than through the Western mode: logical analysis.

An important yet basic view about nature held by the traditional African is that **life forces** permeate the whole universe and that matter and spirits are inseparable realities. The African hardly proffers definitions of the life forces but often demonstrates understanding and offers descriptions of the forces in terms of their functions. The soul is the individual will, thought, conscience and judgment. Unlike the European, the African does not even say that the soul is the kind of entity that goes to heaven or hell after death. When an individual soul is compatible with other individuals, it is pure and there is peace and harmony. When it is not compatible with others, it is impure and there is no peace and no harmony.

Emegiawali (2003) suggests that the African way of knowing seems to be relatively less transferable than conventional science, given its holistic socio-cultural and even spiritual dimensions. The African way of knowing appears to be largely communitarian in terms of discovery and experimentation. The mode of transmission and sharing is often collective rather than individualistic. Embedded in the products and services associated with the African way of knowing are proprietary systems, which are often more flexible and negotiable than the Western way. The engine of growth and sustenance is neither the market nor the profit motive nor is it prone to large-scale mass production and economies of scale. The community is a source of strength for the African way of knowing in terms of the discovery process and knowledge production.

Goduka (2000) characterises African knowledge as spiritually-centred wisdoms. In traditional African view, the universe is a spiritual and a material whole in which all beings are organically interrelated and interdependent. In the process of reclaiming/affirming our indigenous stories, cultural identity and voice, we need to decolonize our minds. She suggests that educators must move beyond a focus of specialization to holistic knowledge, from materialism to spirituality; from a focus on structures to understanding processes and from objectivity to subjective methods of enquiry.

Many of the contemporary African writers on African knowledge and science argue in favour of a process of decolonialization. Wiredu (2005) indicates that this decolonialization aims at divesting African philosophical thinking of all undue influences emanating from our colonial past. He is quite critical of Western domination of Africa, but also indicates that it would be unwise to reject all potentially positive things from the West.

Also, Goduka (2000) warns of the possibility to over-romanticize cultural and spiritual values of the pre-colonial past, but maintains that the spiritually-centred wisdoms should be seen as the springboard from which the current system of education can begin. "Anything short of this shall continue to plague us and continue to make our education contextually irrelevant and culturally and spiritually insensitive because it is disconnected from the cultural, social, spiritual political and economic realities".

Africa's past and present

There are many different cultures, and many differences within cultures in Sub-Saharan Africa. Historic developments, demographic and ecological differences, as well as economic opportunities, colonial impact and religious missionary activities, to mention but a few factors, have resulted in a diversity of lifestyles, professional practices, values, religions and knowledge systems. Africa has a diversity of ecosystems, ranging from extensive mountain areas, savannah and dry land areas, to lowlands, coastal plains and tropical forests. Nomadic peoples often compete for land and water resources with sedentary peoples. The urban population is increasing and a considerable number of large cities exist. Traditional religions have common elements, but there is also a great variation in rituals, traditional institutions and leadership structures. They are often combined with, or have been replaced by Christianity or Islam. As a result, a great number of different religious denominations exist. Yet, Sub-Saharan Africa has a lot in common, as its peoples have known a great number of migrations across the continent. Although there are more than a thousand ethnic groups, many of them have similar origins or historic relationships. The population has a predominantly rural background, and even today, agriculture remains to be the main occupation. Many African soils are degraded and tend to be quite poor. That, combined with a harsh climate, makes African agriculture complex, diverse, and risk-prone.

The first anatomically modern human emerged in the southern part of Africa. The first African people hunted a wide range of animals, and learned the use of fire to control vegetation. During the last glacial period, Africa was not covered with ice, but,

as much of the earth's water reserve was frozen, endured drought. Evidence exists that around 9000 years ago, sorghum, millet, rice, yam, oil palm, as well as cattle were domesticated, while barley was introduced from western Asia. The first domestication took place in the territory between the Sahara and the Equator. The spread of farming and herding south of the Equator was a long and gradual process, impeded by the dense forests and parasites, especially the tsetse fly.

The introduction of iron tools made way for the development of sophisticated settlements in West Africa and the construction of monumental centres and phenomenal civilizations such as Great Zimbabwe. Bantu speaking people moved from West Africa to Eastern and Southern Africa, claiming regions that are more fertile and integrating or displacing earlier occupants. From the eighth century onwards, Arab trading penetrated sub-Sahara Africa, bringing oil, lamps, pottery and cowry shells in exchange for ivory, ebony, gold, as well as slaves. Islam spread and impressive mosques and other constructions were built in Djenné and Timbuktu (Mali). Several kingdoms with important cultures emerged. Among these were Ghana, Benin and Ashanti. The Portuguese were the first Europeans who got involved in (slave) trade, bringing Christianity with them. In the 19th century, the Portuguese lost their monopoly and the British, French, Belgians and Germans colonized and Christianized the continent, except Ethiopia. These colonies lasted until around the second part of the twentieth century, when the independent nation states were formed.

The colonial past has had a strong impact on indigenous cultures and peoples. It intended to replace traditional knowledge and beliefs with Western knowledge and that way it has limited the African capacity to solve their own problems and to develop technologies and skills that build their own ways of knowing. This aspect of colonization was not very successful however.

The continent has a low level of literacy and few people are educated in the western sense. Traditional knowledge is still widely practiced and, co-exists with the western knowledge system. The systems of governance of most of the present nation states, established less than 50 years ago, often reflect more aspects of the colonial systems than of the pre-colonial or indigenous systems. The same holds for the legal system and the education system. Yet, the efforts of the colonizers and missionaries over the past centuries, to introduce alien concepts and rituals, have not been able to suppress the values attached to ancestors, funerals, and many other traditional practices. Largely, ancestral knowledge determines the way of farming and social organization. Most health practices in rural Africa today are based on traditional healers and knowledge, using a wide range of herbs and rituals. Africans, also the educated, make wide use of these traditional health services in combination with western health care.

Africa is changing fast and there exists a mix of dominantly traditional, dominantly modern and more hybrid subcultures. Some aspects of indigenous knowledge are expressed openly, whilst other aspects are secretive and hidden from outsiders. Elements of the past, which still play an important role in the values and decision-making processes of African rural peoples, and somehow also in the modernized African world. Obviously, the degree and relevance vary per location, ethnic group and person. Many studies about African worldviews and indigenous knowledge either stress the positive aspects, or show the limitations and negative

aspects. The first written anthropological studies on Africa often included biases and Eurocentric prejudices, which, in part, have been corrected later. But even today in Africa, institutional science is taught in the context of a Eurocentric paradigm, which carries along with it arrogance, disdain, disrespect for African knowledge.

Romanticising indigenous knowledge, however, is not a good basis for endogenous development either. As any knowledge system in the world, African ways of knowing will have progressive and retrogressive aspects. Phenomena such as overexploitation of natural resources, land use practices that have detrimental ecological effects, gross inequalities between men and women, misuse of their position and knowledge by political and local leaders, traditional forms of conflict resolution and warfare are aspects, which need to be observed and together with the positive aspects, be brought into the dialogue.

African technical knowledges and practices

This section provides a brief summary of some literature on African indigenous technical knowledge divided into sub themes: soil and water management, crops and trees, and animal production, medicine, mathematics, food processing, metallurgy and building techniques.

Soil and water management

One of the common characteristics of the African cultures is the perception that the earth is associated with the concept of the mother, or womb. It is often considered a deity, the property of the gods, and the founders of a clan or tribe who were the first settlers in the area. Traditional functionaries, such as the earth priest, exercise spiritual control over the land. A wealth of information exists about agricultural traditional knowledge, especially on soil classification and practices of soil and water management. Mulching, use of water pockets in plant holes, soil conservation, traditional erosion control, water harvesting and irrigation are all examples of effective practices, which are still widespread and explain, largely, the food productivity in areas considered marginal by conventional standards.

Experiences on how traditional African soil and water conservation concepts can be matched with modern insights, using participatory approaches are accumulating. They are resulting in increased understanding of farmer livelihoods, and more and more programmes today put farmers in the centre of their activities (Reij and Waters-Bayer, 2001). In her Africa wide study on “Realising the promise and potential of African Agriculture”, the Inter-academic Council (2004) expresses the need for experimentation in creating effective solutions to the problems of African agriculture, especially those that empower farmers in Africa to make decisions about their own crops and their own livelihoods. However, many of the present day programmes hardly address African worldviews, beliefs systems and the traditional systems of land tenure on which these practices are based. In the development literature reviewed for this chapter, there was a general lack of information about the spiritual dimension of soil and water. Traditional functionaries, such as earth priests, spirit media and rainmakers, who are traditionally consulted on issues relating to land and water management by rural people, are hardly involved in rural development

projects. In practice, the divide between anthropologists and development workers with a technical focus is quite deep.

Crops and trees

An overview of literature on traditional management of crops and trees reveals that the subjects most frequently dealt with are sacred groves, agro-forestry, plant breeding, and crop cultivation. Again, the literature gives more information about the bio-physical aspects of traditional use of trees and crops, than about the cultural and spiritual dimensions, with the exception of the studies on sacred groves. Several studies stress the importance of sacred groves in relation to the efforts of rural people to appease the spirits related to rainmaking, good crops or health. Traditional spiritual leaders play an important role in the management of these important patches of biodiversity. Several authors also indicate (Fairhead, 1993; Millar, 1999; Reij and Waters-Bayer, 2001; Emiagwali, 2003) that sacred groves can be an important starting point for development and rehabilitation of savannah areas, forests and wetlands.

Indigenous agro-forestry is widespread and several systems are described in the literature. Farmers know the qualities of trees, what they can be used for, and the possibilities and limitations of combining trees with crops. Some tree species have a spiritual significance, which is reflected in taboos and rituals associated with them. Many studies on the traditional cultivation practices of crops, including traditional food crops and wild plants, can be found.

Livestock keeping

Livestock systems in Africa are extremely complex. In a broad sense, we can distinguish between two major livestock systems, which are the extremes of a continuum: livestock systems associated with settled farmers and pastoral husbandry systems. The role of animals in the spiritual life of African rural people is unique and has been the subject of several studies. The literature describes beliefs and practices related to livestock on aspects like feeding, breeding, animal health, small stock and wild animals (Reij and Waters-Bayer, 2001).

The literature also shows the immense changes that African livestock productions systems are undergoing currently, especially the pastoral systems, due to modernization, population growth and government policies. It is necessary to look at indigenous knowledge related to livestock in the context of the culture of the people involved. In many ethno-veterinary and animal husbandry studies, this aspect has been overlooked, focusing mainly on the use of medicinal plants for curing diseases. There is much potential in activities that combine ethno-veterinary aspects with village-based animal health care. There is an imbalance in the extent, to which the different animal species are studied, and the use and importance of the species in rural peoples' lives. For example, most literature on fowl deals with chicken, though many families use a combination of species including guinea fowls, ducks, turkeys and pigeons. There is potential for working with rural people, especially women, by focusing on these 'non-traditional' species.

The role of women related to livestock is subject to many changes. In some cases, they become more involved in livestock, in others less; the effect on their social position and status also shows a wide variation. In the last decades, there has been a decline in 'conventional' livestock projects, due to disappointing results, especially the

range development projects, and the projects based on the import of exogenous breeds. Meanwhile, the number of 'innovative' projects, for example on ethno-veterinary medicine and village-based animal health care, has increased. There is a sharp decline in the number of traditional breeds in Africa, which are adapted to the local culture, ecological circumstances and social structures. It is necessary to look at these breeds, taking into account not only the conventional productive role of livestock (like meat, milk and traction) but also the importance of manure, the role of livestock as a factor in risk-management, transport and in social and cultural life.

Medicine

According to Emiagwali (2003), African Traditional Medicine (ATM) is holistic and attempts to go beyond the boundaries of the physical body into the spiritual. This is in contrast to western bio-medicine, which views the body mechanistically in terms of individual parts, and is derived from the germ theory of disease. ATM can be categorized as mind-body medicine. Some common medical principles have emerged over time in various African regions. These include several scientifically proven techniques and strategies, some of which are culturally specific and of psychological importance. Among the common principles and procedures utilized in African Traditional Medicine (ATM) are hydrotherapy, heat therapy, spinal manipulation, quarantine, bone-setting and surgery. Incantations and other devices of psycho – therapeutic dimension are often applied. Western-based pharmaceutical companies often send agents to tap the knowledge of traditional African pharmacologists. Treatment for cancer, obesity, drug addiction, diabetes and other ailments have benefited directly and indirectly from traditional African pharmacologists through plants such as the African willow (South Africa), the hoodia plant (Namibia), iboga (Gabon and Cameroon) and other botanicals. Carlson (2002) acknowledged that Shaman Pharmaceuticals collaborated with 58 traditional doctors from 7 provinces and 42 communities in Guinea, West Africa, between 1994 and 1998. Because of this collaborative venture, 145 plant species were identified as useful for the treatment of Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

The naming of major vessels and detailed knowledge of neuro-anatomy and neurological symptoms emerged in some areas, including ancient Northeast Africa. There is evidence of the use of pills, enemas, suppositories, infusions and elixirs for dispensing prescriptions.

We have evidence of experimental medicine in surgery, orthopaedics, gynaecology, and pharmacology. Surgery has included male and female circumcision, brain surgery and the excision of tumours. The alignment of dislocated bones and the treatment of collarbone fractures have been documented. Pregnancy diagnosis using urine samples and the use of spermicides as well as the removal of the ovaries have also been noted in some areas. Anaesthetics were derived from plants identified to have pain killing capabilities. Some areas have become well known for certain types of medical expertise, as is the case of Funtua in Northern Nigeria for orthopaedics. Many of the traditional techniques are still utilized in some areas. Some have undergone change over time. Others have been revived in more recent periods or have fallen into oblivion. The World Health Organization has recognized the contributions of traditional medicine to psychiatry.

Mathematics

The African Mathematical Union based in Mozambique has listed innumerable sources of information on the history of Mathematics in Africa. Gerdes (1999) Doumbia (1997), Zaslavsky (1990) and Eglash (1999) have identified some important developments in the field. There are historically very practical explanations for the development of Mathematics in the continent. A complex system of trade developed in the context of the trans-Saharan trade and also trade with Asia in terms of commodities such as gold and gold dust, kola nuts, leather items such as bags and various types of textile. The extensive trade that developed between Great Zimbabwe and the Swahili city-states necessitated systematic calculation and systems of measurement. In Muslim regions, the calculation of heritance and the distribution of zakat necessitated mathematical accuracy. Some indigenous systems of calculation had 10 as a base whilst others were vigesimal (have the base of 20) such as the Yoruba system. Distinctions were made between prime numbers and multiples, which contained other numbers. Various symbols evolved to represent various quantities. African systems of logic have also been manifested in games and activities of strategy such as mancala and ayo as well as games of alignment and puzzles.

Food processing

Indigenous fermented foods in Africa have derived, usually, from cassava tubers, cereal legumes, oil seeds, palm tree sap, milk and various other local products. Okagbue (1997) has pointed out that ‘the scientific basis of indigenous food fermentation lies in the nature of the micro-organisms involved in fermentation, and microbial induced change of the base product; the nature of the enzymatic reactions which take place; and the specific nature of the end-product in terms of nutritional and preservative qualities’.

Common to various parts of the continent have been de-hydrated granular food products, which involved fermentation, frying and de-juicing; or products such as sorghum, maize, or other cereal fermented and made into alcoholic beverages. Food processors became aware of the significance of the various agencies by virtue of trial and error experimentation. Metallic objects were sometimes used to hasten fermentation and in this case serve as trace elements, thus promoting the growth of the relevant micro-organisms.

African civilization may be associated with specific methods of preparing and even consuming food items in ways, which reflect some measure of relative uniformity throughout the continent. Fast food items ranging from couscous to “gari” or cassava granules; various types of cereal-based flour, pulverized tubers of various kinds and a wide variety of vegetable-based soups have given African culinary traditions a distinct character, which may also be the subject of discussions on microbiology and food processing. It has to be stressed that food preparation involves hypothesis formulation; the assumption of regularity in nature and a measure of logical consistency in thought in such a way as to facilitate repeatable and predictive capability on the part of the food processor or agent associated with food preparation.

Metallurgy

Schmidt (1997) has made extensive research on steel production in ancient East Africa. Africans have used various types of metal products over time. These range from gold, tin, silver, bronze, brass to iron/steel. The Sudanese Empires of West Africa emerged in the context of various commercial routes and activities involving the gold trade. In the North/East Ethiopia and Nubia were the major suppliers of gold, with Egypt being a major importer. In Southern Africa the Kingdom of Monomotapa reigned supreme as a major gold producer. In the various spheres of metal production specific techniques and scientific principles were applied. These included the separation of ore from the non-ore bearing rocks, smelting by the use of bellows and heated furnaces, smithing and further refinement.

The use of multi-shaft and open-shaft systems facilitated the circulation of air in intense heating processes whilst the bellows principle produced strong currents of air in the context of an air chamber expanded to draw in air through a valve or to expel it. The various metal products were used for a wide range of purposes including armour as in the case of some Northern Nigerian city states; gold, silver, iron, copper and brass jewellery; currency including circular and non-circular coins; pots and cooking utensils; cloth dyeing, sculpture and agricultural implements. The technical know how and expertise which blacksmiths were associated with helped to enhance their status although they were also often associated with supernatural and psychic powers as well.

Building Technology

Emeagwali (2003) describes how in various parts of ancient, medieval and contemporary Africa building constructions of various dimensions, shapes and types emerged reflecting various concepts, techniques and decorative principles and specific raw material preferences as well. Builders integrated the concept of the arch, the dome, and the use of columns and aisles in their construction. The underground vaults and passages and rock-hewn churches of Ancient Ethiopia are matched in Nubia and Egypt with pyramids of various dimensions. In the Sahelian Region, adobe or dried clay was preferred in the context of moulded contours at times integrated with overall moulded sculpture. Permanent scaffolding made of protruding planks characterized the Malian region. The principle of evaporative cooling was integrated into the building activity. Mats were utilized as part of the décor and also to be saturated repeatedly, to cool the room.

Derelict ruins from walled cities such as Kano and Zazzau and other city states of Hausaland in the central Sudanic region of West Africa complement the rock hewn churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia, the Zimbabwe ruins, and the pyramids and temples of ancient Nubia, and Egypt.. Museum displays also include vandalized structures and should invite discussions on the centuries of misappropriation of Africa's historical treasures. Some of Africa's misappropriated artefacts include Egyptian and Ethiopian obelisks and stelae in Rome, London, Washington and New York.

Indigenous knowledge and development

During the colonial period and after, the formal models of agricultural development and health care efforts were developed based on western technologies. These new technologies were not to complement, but to substitute traditional practices. Emeagwali (1997) states that one of the major effects of colonialism was the subordination of African science and education to the logic of the colonial production systems and class structures. According to her, science and development emanated from the womb of African civilisation, indigenous problem-solving and experimentation. The colonial system was exploitative, geared towards export of a surplus from the continent. It redeployed resources in the form of agricultural and mineral wealth from the periphery to the centre, destabilising the existing process of knowledge and technique development. Also, after independence, the focus of research, education, extension and services to agriculture and health professionals continued based on knowledge transfer from the West to Africa. In recent decades, the efforts to introduce the green revolution, cash crops and to train farmers to become entrepreneurs have not resulted in the expected outcome. This is mainly because they were not rooted in African knowledge systems and did not take into account the specific ecological and socio-economic conditions.

In Africa, various blends between completely western and completely traditional practices exist. This is truer for health than for agriculture. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that up to 80% of the people in Africa use traditional medicine as a major source of health care. People go for modern health services or high-input agricultural technologies when they can afford it. Most people opt for combining both systems, however, or limit themselves to the traditional practices.

African worldviews and belief systems

Traditional African ways of thinking and reasoning differ in many respects from the dominant international approach. Despite generations of western influence, the decisions about agriculture, health and nature management are still heavily based on the concepts of African traditions. At the village level the spiritual leaders, although often not clearly observed by outsiders, are quite influential. Nowadays, thinking amongst Africans ranges from traditional to modern, but in many cases both systems of thinking can be observed parallel to each other. Traditional worldviews and traditional institutions play an important role.

Religions

According to Mbiti (1969), the existence for Africans is a religious phenomenon; “man” is a deeply religious being living in a religious universe. Mbiti identifies five categories that are mentioned consistently the various African religious practices. These are: *God as the ultimate explanation of the genesis and sustenance of man and all things; spirits, made up of superhuman beings and spirits of ancestors; man, including human beings alive and those not yet born; animals and plants or the remainders of biological life; and phenomena and objects without biological life.*

In addition to these five categories, a vital force, power or energy permeates the whole universe. For the Africans, every plant, animal and natural phenomenon is a carrier of the divine. God is the source and the ultimate controller of these vital forces, and the spirits have access to some of them. Selected human beings, such as medicine men, witches, priests and rainmakers, have the knowledge and ability to tap, manipulate and use these forces; some use it for the good and others for the ill of their communities. In order to appease the gods, people have to perform rituals and make sacrifices. There are numerous rituals such as those for the fertility of humans, crops and animals; for birth, initiation, marriage and death; for rainmaking, planting and harvesting.

Cosmovision

Religious and philosophical concepts have their place within traditional worldviews. Often a hierarchy between divine beings, spiritual beings, especially the ancestors, men and women, and natural forces, such as climate, disease, floods, soil, vegetation, animals, is indicated. These cosmovision gives rise to several rituals in which the elders, the priests, soothsayers and spiritual leaders play a prominent role. Cosmovision, to a large extent, dictates the way land, water, plants and animals are to be used, how decisions are taken, problems are solved and experimentation takes place and how rural people organize themselves (Haverkort and Hiemstra, 1999). Millar (1999) presents the cosmovision of the people in Northern Ghana as follows (Figure 1 and Box 1).

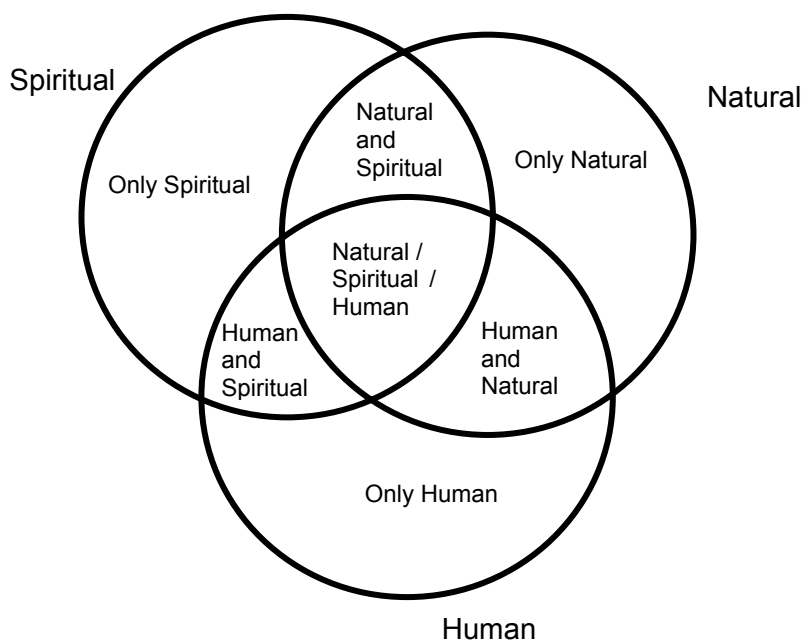


Figure 1 Constellations of cosmovision related knowledges

Box 1 The Three-Circles depicting the possible constellations of African knowledges

The interaction of the human, natural and spiritual worlds implies the following possible constellations of knowledges:

- Knowledge resulting from Social interactions only.
- Combination of knowledge of the Social and Natural worlds.
- Combination of knowledge between the Social and Spiritual worlds.
- Knowledge resulting from Natural interactions only.
- Combination of knowledge of the Natural and Spiritual worlds.
- Knowledge resulting from Spiritual only.
- Combination of Social, Spiritual, and Natural.

This last constellation is the perfect state, which strives to be in balance or harmony with itself.

These constellations highlight the heterogeneity and complexities of African Sciences that should underscore the development of Africa.

Conventional research concentrates on the ‘horizontal level’ – the Social and the Material. The investigations/researches of the African should also be targeted at the ‘horizontal level’ but especially the ‘vertical’, which deals with higher order discourses – the spiritual aspect of the African culture.

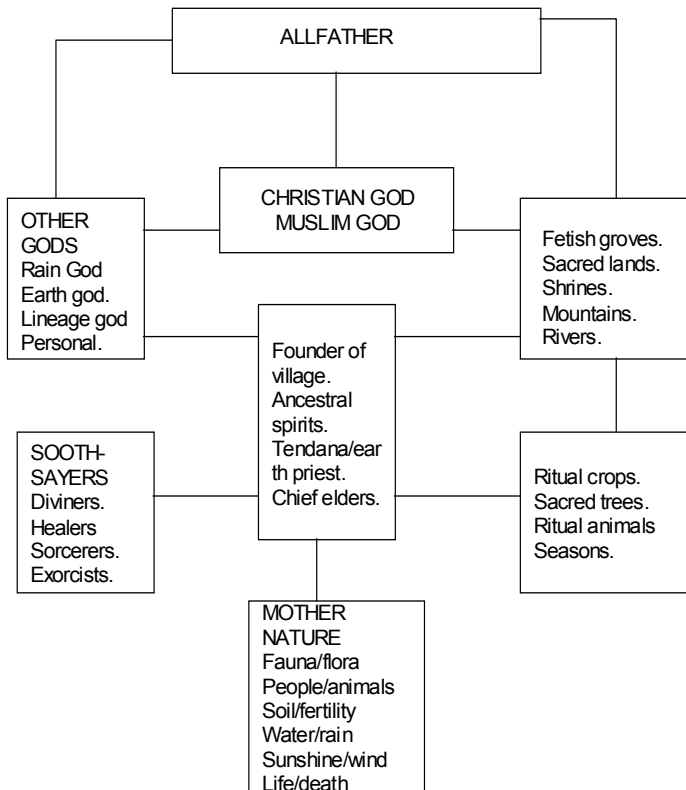


Figure 2 The Pantheon in Northern Ghanaian Cosmology (Millar, 1999)

For the traditional people in Northern Ghana gods, spirits, ancestors, spiritual and political leaders, sacred groves, lands and shrines, ritual crops and animals, food items and cash crops are all interrelated (Figure 2). Obviously Christianity, Islam and Western Education have influenced the cosmivision of Africans, especially those with formal education.

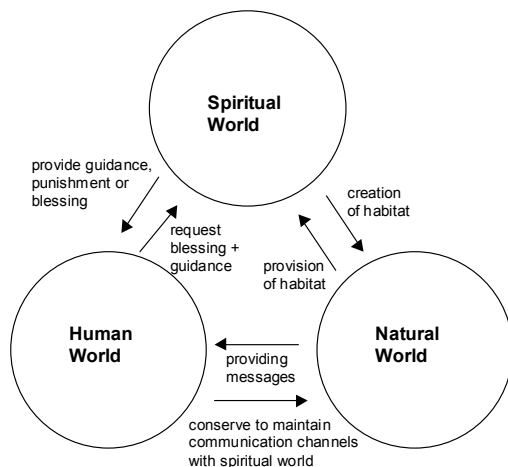


Figure 3 Shona Cosmivision (Gonese, 1999)

For the Shona, the human world, the natural world and the spiritual world are linked. The natural world provides habitat for the spirits and sends messages from the spiritual world to the human world. The spiritual world provides guidance, punishment and blessing to the human world. People therefore have to relate to both the natural and the spiritual worlds.

From these examples of traditional cosmivisions in two countries as far apart as Ghana and Zimbabwe, it becomes clear that in the general traditional African worldview, land, water, animals and plants are not just a production factor with economic significance. They have their place within the sanctity of nature. Moreover, certain places have a special spiritual significance and are used as locations for rituals and sacrifices, for example sacred groves, shrines, mountains and rivers (Millar, 1999; Gonese, 1999). Fig trees and baobabs are often treated as sacred trees. The sun, moon and stars feature in myths and beliefs of many people. Certain animal species have a spiritual significance too. Cattle, sheep, goats and chicken are often used for sacrifices and other religious purposes. Creeping wild animals frequently feature in religious concepts. Snakes, lizards, chameleons and certain birds are considered messengers of the spiritual world.

Rain is regarded by African peoples as one of the greatest blessings of God, who is often referred to as the rain-giver. Many of them make sacrifices, offerings and prayers to God in connection to rain. Rainmakers are reported in all parts of the continent. Their duties are to solicit God's help in providing rain or in halting it if too much falls.

African reasoning

The way Africans think and reason has been the subject of several studies and debates. Anthropologists carried out the first studies on this subject in the colonial period. They reflect the Eurocentric bias characteristic of that era. These reflections often made distinctions in terms such as savage and civilised, prelogic and logic, oral and written, magic and scientific, and perception and conception.

Eurocentric prejudices have not stopped to exist in the minds of many non-Africans and have been reproduced in those of many Africans. Biakolo (1998) notes that the low state of African scientific and technological knowledge is often ascribed to the African mentality, which is supposed to be mystical, illogical and incapable of scientific pursuit. It is pointed out that the state of technology in Africa is proof of this, contrary to the situation in several Asian countries, which have been able to overcome the colonial experience and underdevelopment. Accordingly, for Africa to develop, it must abandon the oral, magical, prelogical past and gradually assimilate the written, logical, scientific culture of the West.

Biakolo argues, however, that it is fiction to think of the history of the west as one continuous upward movement of progress. Even here, history shows periods of rapid material progression, moments of stagnation and times of decline. The fashionable pessimism about material and societal development in Africa seems to be related to the sustained western doctrine of superiority, rather than to a serious reflection of history. It provides no understanding of the past or of the present. It has been used in great measure to colonize and exploit Africa, but provides no key to the knowledge about this continent. On the contrary, it merely repeats the outdated myth of Africa as the 'white man's burden'. This frustration is widely felt in Africa, but a widely shared answer that takes a constructive and critical look at African ways of knowing is still pending.

Religious diversity and innovations

In many cases, a duality in cosmovisions can be observed: the same people or persons observe both western and African visions. According to van Beek and Blakeley (1994), there is great variability and flexibility in the different African religions. Divination techniques move widely across the borders, cults spread from region to region, magical techniques be borrowed. Even at the local village level, this results in multiple options for the individual, which co-exist without conflict. The oral transmission and the non-dogmatic character of indigenous religions enhance this plurality and the absence of conflicts. This is also in line with the idea that religion is not an abstract theoretical reflection on beliefs, but one that implies action. Religion means performing or doing something: consulting a diviner, offering a sacrifice, praying, talking about a problem, enthroning a chief, falling into a trance, making magic and dancing at a funeral. Indigenous African religions often also are a means to an end. They aim at health, fertility, rain, protection, and harmony in relations. Religion is thus part of a survival strategy and serves practical ends, immediate or remote, social or individual.

The notion of time: past, present and future

According to Mbiti (1969), the linear concept of time in western thought, with an indefinite past, a present and an infinite future, is practically unknown in African traditional thinking. For Africans, time has two dimensions: a long past and a present. In the African languages, terms and verbs that refer to the future are practically absent because events that lie in it, have not taken place and cannot therefore constitute time. At best, they are in potential time, not actual time. Time moves from the present to the past. Events move from the present into the past, the ocean of time in which everything becomes absorbed into a reality, that is neither after nor before.

Mbiti's analysis has encountered considerable criticism. Opatá (1998) explores the idea of future in the Igbo worldview. He concludes that at each critical point of existential action, the person must ensure that everything is well in the spiritual world related to the intended action. This is why at the beginning of the planting season, before a marriage, burials, initiations, child naming ceremonies, or title taking ceremonies, there is always much concern to learn whether the action may imply potential dangers, and if so, how these can be averted. According to Opatá, prayers are petitional in nature, and are said in order to avert the fulfilment of the negative aspects of events in future time. Millar (2002) presents the African concept of time as a circular way of the living, the dead and the yet unborn. These worlds are partly visible (present) and partly invisible (past and future).

Destiny

In this context, the African notion of a human being is important. Swanson (1980) studied the belief system of the Gourma in Burkina Faso, and found that in their cosmovision each person enters life with certain basic possessions, that qualify and define him or her as human. They are: the ancestral soul, the personal soul, the guiding spirit, the physical body, a God consciousness, and a destiny. The notion of destiny has great implications for development. This notion of destiny is in contrast to the western concept, in which the future can be influenced by special human efforts and nature can be controlled by human intervention.

In the Gourma cosmovision everything a person receives, good or bad, is part of destiny; success and failure in agriculture or health are interpreted as the result of one's personal destiny. Especially, when a failure is encountered for the second or third time, it is interpreted as the result of metaphysical reasoning, and not from direct material causes. Swanson describes experiences of failure in rabbit keeping and tree planting programmes. The interpretation of the farmers was '*rabbits are not for me, they are not part of my destiny*'. A similar destiny is ascribed to land, when the failure in fruit tree planting was explained by '*my land did not like this particular tree*'. Van der Breemer (1984) found that the Auan in Senegal have a taboo on rice cultivation with the explanation: '*Our soil does not like rice*'.

Artistic expressions

Proverbs

Gyekye (1996) has compiled more than 150 proverbs and explained their meaning. These proverbs represent different values related to religion, immortality, survival, goodwill, communal and individual values, morality, responsibility, marriage and family life, work ethic, chieftaincy, aesthetic values, knowledge and wisdom, human rights and ancestors. Gyekye argues that by listening to the proverbs and trying to understand their deeper meaning much can be learned about the values and motivation of the people that use them.

Colours and numbers

Colours and numbers have religious meanings in many traditional cosmovisions. A number of African peoples have black and white as their sacred colour, and black and white animals are used for ritual sacrifice. Bartle (1983) describes the Akan cosmovision and mentions three colours: red the sign of danger, black the sign of power and white the sign of purity. Black clothes are worn at funerals, but contrary to its meaning in western societies, this colour does not indicate sadness. It is the recognition of the changes in life: death, reincarnation and ancestral power, stool power, history, tradition and memories. The colours red, white and black are frequently used in African sculptures, paintings and architecture. Tribes like the Abaluyia, Baganda, Watumbatu and Gofa only use white animals for their religious rites (Mbiti, 1969). In Northern Ghana the colours of the fowl determine their use in sacrifices (Millar, 1999).

Numbers can have a religious meaning too. As documented by Mbiti (1969) counting people and livestock is forbidden in many African societies, partly for fear that misfortune would befall those who are numbered, partly because people are not individuals but corporate members of a society that cannot be defined numerically. For the Nandi, the number 'four' seems to be sacred. The number 'six' is sacred to the Shona and Jie, who sacrifice six animals. The Akamba and Vugusu have taboos attached to number 'seven'. The number 'nine' is sacred for the Baganda and all their gifts, sacrifices and sacred vessels must number nine or its multiples.

African art

African art and artefacts such as masks, clothes, body painting, architecture and sculptures, like African music, have often emerged in the function of religion, rites and rituals, and are undoubtedly expressions of African emotions and identity. These expressions of art have reached high levels of aesthetics and can be divided into different styles and techniques. During colonial times many masks and sculptures were taken to the capitals of the colonizers, and many of these pieces are now exhibited in prestigious museums. Internationally reputed artists like Picasso, Moore and Giacometti have found great inspiration in African sculptures and paintings. Music such as jazz, blues and reggae also find their roots in Africa.

Wilkinson (1998) states: *At the risk of generalisation and oversimplification of the complexities of the continent, African society – being communitarian and collective instead of embracing individualism – builds itself around the community and extended family. Hence, acts of*

individual creation, which can be found in western cultures, in Africa are replaced by cooperative ventures between the maker and the client. Since the client often dictates the look and even the shape of the work, the maker assumes the status of what to western eyes is considered to be that of an artisan rather than of an artist.

What is often not observed by contemporary art critics is the spiritual function and symbolic messages expressed in these pieces of art. Music has the function of strengthening rituals and helping people to get in a trance, thus enabling them to communicate with ancestral spirits. Mural paintings may contain messages about the social identity or the spiritual status of the inhabitants of a building, while sculptures and masks are frequently used to represent a spirit, or to strengthen the effect of a ritual. Among the Mijikenda of East Africa, the mediation role of sculpture is most noticeable in the natural process of sickness and death. Sickness is often associated with spirit possession and its cure may require elaborate exorcism, in which a sculpture plays a crucial role (Orchardson-Mazrui, 1993). In Ghana, idols are often considered the real spirit – and not just a representation – and supernatural powers are ascribed to them, with whom humorous relationships can be established.

Cultural erosion and revival

Many of the traditional artistic expressions are subject to erosion. Traditional architecture, wall painting and sculpture are being replaced by modern practices, in which the cultural and spiritual values are marginalized. The number of museums in Africa is quite limited, and their exhibitions cannot be compared with those in Europe. At the same time, one can observe some significant artistic innovations. Zimbabwean villagers have started to make stone sculptures for the western buyers, the unique architecture in Djenné, Mali, is being restored, and a number of African musicians have developed their own styles and international reputation. But many African artists live outside the continent, adjusting their expression to suit potential buyers, and, largely, the cultural erosion in Africa continues.

Traditional leadership

In most cases, traditional communities have a variety of traditional leaders, specialists and spirit mediums, who play an important role in village life. Below, we describe the different spiritual specialists, according to Mbiti (1969).

Medicine man (woman) – healers, herbalists (or sometimes called witch doctors)

These specialists are present in almost all villages and towns in Africa. They can be men or women, have undergone formal or informal training and are influential. Their professional quality may vary, but they are expected to be trustworthy, morally upright, friendly, willing to serve, able to discern peoples' needs and be reasonable in their charges. They are concerned with sickness, disease, misfortune, which in African societies, are often attributed to negative action such as witchcraft or magic, of one person against another. The medicine person, therefore, has to find the cause of the disease, find out who the criminal is, diagnose the nature of the disease, apply the right

treatment and supply means to prevent the misfortune from occurring again. Thus, the healers apply both physical and spiritual, or psychological, treatments.

Rainmakers

Rainmakers are engaged in the art of rainmaking or rain stopping. The entire livelihood of people, either farmers or pastoralists, depends on good rains. The seasons control the rhythm of community life, and in many societies the change of the seasons is marked by ritual activities. There are rites to mark occasions like the onset of the rains, the first planting, the first fruits, and the harvest, as well as the beginning of the hunting season. Rainmaking is one such a rite, and rainmakers are amongst the most important spiritual leaders. Their work is not only to 'make' rain, but also to 'stop' rain when too much comes at a certain time, or when it is not welcome at a given moment. Rainmakers are well versed in weather matters, and may spend long periods acquiring their knowledge: learn from other rainmakers, observing the sky, study the habits of trees, insects, animals, study astronomy and use common sense. Rain is a deeply religious theme, and those who 'deal' in it should be of high religious calibre. Rainmakers not only solicit physical rain, but also symbolise human contact with the blessing of time and eternity.

Kings, queens and rulers

Royalty does not necessarily exist in every African society. These rulers are not simply political heads; they are also the mystical and religious guides, the divine symbol of their people's health and welfare. The weakening of the office of traditional rulers leads to tensions between their supporters and political leaders, who think in terms of nationhood rather than local kingdoms.

Priests, soothsayers and religious founders

The priest is the chief intermediary between the divine and the human. Just as the king is the political symbol of God's presence, the priest is the religious symbol of God amongst his people. His or her duties are mainly religious, but as Africans do not disassociate religion from other spheres of life, he or she may also have other functions.

Earth priests *play an important role in land tenure. They are considered the sons of the earth God, and regulate the ownership, tenure and use of land. They perform important roles in rituals related to soil fertility (Millar, 1999).*

Soothsayers and diviners are persons with special skills to interpret the messages of the divine world. They can read the signs given through animals, or objects, and are often consulted by earth priests.

Persons with mystical or magic power: Mbiti states that, to his knowledge, there is no African society that does not hold beliefs in some type of mystical power. There is mystical power in words, especially those of a senior person. Words of parents can cause good fortune, curse, success, peace, sorrows or blessing, especially when spoken in situations of crisis. The words of a medicine man work through the medicine he gives to his patients. Curses and blessings are considered extremely potent, and many African peoples consult experts to counteract evil effects or to obtain powerfully charged objects, like charms and medicine. Magic can be either good or evil. Good magic is used by medicine men, diviners and rainmakers, and combined with their

knowledge and skills for the welfare of the community. Evil magic is used to harm human beings or their property. Sorcerers, or evil magicians, are believed to send flies, bats, birds, animals, spirits and magical objects to achieve their goals. Experiences of misfortune are often blamed on the misuse of mystical power. The subject of mystical power has religious as well as social, psychological and economic dimensions.

The role of traditional leaders

The role of traditional leaders in Africa is often debated within the context of endogenous development. Good and bad examples exist of their influence on the wellbeing of the people. An example of the latter is put forward by Sheila Oparoacha in the *Compas Magazine* No. 4 (March 2001), as a reaction from readers:

"...More criticism could be included on the role of traditional leaders in Africa. For example, throughout the African continent, some leaders are being criticised for their role in spreading HIV/AIDS and victimising young girls and women. Some traditional leaders in various countries advocate sex with virgins as a cure for AIDS, or are proponents of cleansing rituals of widows through sexual intercourse with a male relative of the deceased. These kind of traditional practices need to be critically looked at...."

Traditional and national organization and leadership

Although Africa at present consists of nation states, the traditional organization of its peoples is mainly based on ethnic lines. African social relations are often tribal, involving communal resource management patterns and group decision making (Izugbara, 1999), though a system of indirect rule was introduced in many places during the colonial period. Tengan (1991) gives a description of the people's perception of this process for the Sisala in Northern Ghana. 'Indirect rule' meant the institution of chiefs in stateless societies, in combination with district and provincial councils directly responsible to the central administration. This whole implied a major transformation of the political scene. Villages, which had been relatively autonomous, suddenly found themselves part of an extensive nation with a structured government. In most cases this process was not comprehensible to the villagers. The government imposed taxes, initiated forced labour for the construction of roads, and drafted young men to the army. Hence the government was identified with forced levies, forced labour and forced conscription. The chiefs who had to enforce these laws were considered part of the government, and regarded as harsh people in contrast to the more humane traditional rulers.

The independence of Ghana did not bring about any drastic changes in this system, as far as the Sisala were concerned. The Ghanaian government took over and granted constitutional backing to much of the political machinery set up by the British (Tengan, 1991). For Zimbabwe, Aztec has reported that the war of liberalisation was not fought just to replace colonial regimes but to revive, restore and resuscitate an African system of governance. Yet, in many cases African politicians took over the governments, and actually consolidated what the colonialists had imported into the African continent.

Government is identified with the execution of law through the police force and the levy of taxes, and is disliked for both. Tengan (1991) reported that the Sissala subsistence farmers in Ghana have the idea that the literate and the government workers serve an impersonal entity, with an inexhaustible source of money. In their

view, the government can never run out of money; it only needs to print more. Hence, government employees who have access to this wealth should not suffer any want, and, since government cash belongs to no person, it is not really immoral to ‘chop’ or steal some of it. The nation state has thus become an anonymous body, which attracts corruption, and it is common in Africa to talk about the ‘national cake’ from which everyone can take a slice. Those who try to be honest are seen as abnormal or foolish.

Traditional authorities, and the traditionally ascribed social obligations, do not suffer the same fate, however. When an offence takes place, it is considered criminal, and there is no such thing as a ‘tribal cake’. This tribal loyalty transcends even national boundaries, as national borders have been established irrespective of ethnic lines of division. This makes national leadership more problematic than traditional leadership, as the latter is easily identifiable and seen as part of people’s cultural identity.

Present day Africa

We can look at the period after the colonialism from two positions: The period immediately after independence with the first generation Pan-African leadership (1960-1975), and the second and subsequent generation of leaders of Africa until date. Subsequently, we present some aspects of Africanism that could be considered for their possible retrogressive effects. A self-critical and constructive attitude in our view is a precondition for Endogenous Development. We should be prepared to criticize others as well as ourselves. It involves investigation of ways to address possible negative aspects of our cultural heritage.

Africa after Independence (1960-1975)

Immediately after independence the legacies left behind by the colonialist and the reasons for which Africa argued for self-government were still rife. Various ideological reorientations were ‘on sale’ or “available to buy”. Socialism made in-roads and other ideologies existed that could help the neo-nationalist to leverage their ambitions and justify the demise of the colonialist. These, among a combination of factors, propelled the Pan-Africanist that appeared to be meeting the dream of Africans.

Back to capitalism and neo-colonialism (after the mid 1970s)

After enjoying this spell of glorification, capitalism bounced back. Especially after the collapse of the socialist system in Eastern Europe, neo liberal approaches became commonplace. The globalisation effort brought in its wave a generation of leadership that professed the identity of ‘the true capitalists’ and ‘were disciples of democratic principles for Africa’. With a baggage of uncertainties, the apprenticeship and tutelage processes of the ‘new African leadership’ is gradually becoming crystallized – a system characterised by anticipated rewards and punishments that could be meted out by the West.

Unfulfilled Hopes and Aspirations

Our interactions with a critical group of village elders, being the group that have lived in both eras, reveal that not only little has been done to help realize the ‘African dream’ but a lot has been done to even undo the very little left behind by the

colonialists. The evidence suggesting the failure of African leaders in the postcolonial era can be discerned from the manner in which present day leaders give little or no room for self-criticism and challenge.

The current leadership (in the domains of political-governance as well as in the academic world and development fields) have done a lot of disservice to the culture and value systems of the Africans. Although lip service has been paid to revitalising African culture and traditions, we are yet to see concrete deliverables in this respect. Different leaders undervalue the African knowledge systems and worldviews. In so doing Africans have assumed mediocrity or even gave up to other worldviews and values. African leadership has done very little to enhance the indigenous knowledge of the African peoples and this limitation has found translations in various developmental deficiencies of Africa.

Many of the he current leaders have plundered Africa's natural resources with impunity and total development has retrogressed. Our overdependence on external technologies has limited our capacity to solve our own problems and develop technologies and skills of our own that had better serve Africa's own needs. It is commonplace to find African leaders today globe-trotting, calabash in hand, looking for expatriate private investors to come to Africa; offering them terms and conditions that are not offered to their own local investors. For African leaders the term private investor seems to have become synonymous with a non-African investor. The opening up of markets to unregulated free market economies, emphasis on privatisation, with total belief and emphasis on western technology and large-scale productivity, is even more worrying than has been the colonial era. The swallowing of western-styled democratic principles, legal systems and neo-liberalism and the distance given to traditional values, rulers and systems of governance, the traditional systems of peace keeping and justice is a far cry from the colonialist who administered jointly with the traditional authority despite their exploitative agendas.

Problems that plague the African continent are:

- Escalation of conflicts, wars and social or ethnic controversies.
- The destruction of traditional community-based economies by unregulated privatisation and unfair free trade.
- The breakdown of community based moral leadership, solidarity and reciprocity.
- The large scale leakages/accumulation of resources that allow some of the African leaders to be far richer than the nations they govern.
- The deepening of poverty.
- Persistent gender inequality and in some cases repression of women.
- The wanton exploitation and destruction of our natural resources for the love of money and/or for satisfying the West.
- The poorly developed agriculture and insufficient food systems.
- The deficient health systems and proliferation of diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS.
- Poor roads and infrastructure.
- Lacking access to water.
- Poor education system that does not get to all and is skewed away from the culture of the people.

- Unregulated urbanization with poor housing, roads and employment.
- The denial of various social amenities.
- Growing criminality: robbery, violence and rape.
- Ambiguous patterns of land use and land ownership.

We do not buy the argument that the colonial past, the globalisation, population growth, poor soil and poor climatic conditions are solely responsible for this dismal performance of African's development. It is our view that with a more responsible political, intellectual and moral leadership, devoid of petty jealousy, devoid of the desire to perpetuate in authority and accumulate wealth, a leadership that respects the norms and values that Africans thrive in, would have left us in a better state than we were when the colonial administrations left. But this requires a real commitment to pan-Africanism, a genuine desire and struggle to deal with Africa's poverty (also cultural and spiritual poverty), showing a large degree of tolerance, building peace and mending wounds. The chance is still there for Africans to redeem Africa if only introspection and commitments for concerted action is our collective hallmark.

Conclusions

The authors, cited in this chapter, give a picture of the diverse and complex African belief system and world vision. The presentation indicated that many differences exist between African and western concepts of matter, nature, religion, time, art, agriculture, nature conservation, local governance, community leadership, and decision-making. Contacts with non-African cultures have certainly brought about intercultural exchanges and substitutions. But, in many respects, the traditional belief systems still form the roots and branches of the knowledge systems of rural people in Africa.

During the last decades, there has been a renewed interest in African indigenous knowledge. This is partly due to the influences of African culture on some European scholars and cultures, and partly due to a new positioning of Africans themselves. This renewed interest, however, is more concentrated on technologies than on values, systems, structures, and processes. It often has the intention of validating traditional technologies from a western scientific perspective. As local knowledge and values still form the main driving force for rural people's decisions on land use, food production, community management, health practices, religious practices, teaching, learning and experimenting, these should be seen as the main point of articulation for development activities and development workers. Programmes for health, agriculture, and the management of natural resources, should and can be built on African religious concepts, institutions and practices.

It is becoming increasingly clear that for most traditional Africans, adoption of a new technology does not imply abandoning what they have been already doing or believing. Adoption means doing both things side by side. For the African it is a question of survival in a diverse and risk-prone environment. Strategies for modernization, by way of the introduction of innovations from outside, could be replaced by strategies of endogenous development, 'development from within'.

Outsiders can build up relationships with traditional leaders and discuss the possibilities of experimenting with forms of agriculture, health, or management of natural resources, of interest to the population in a given community. Rural appraisal exercises can include cooperation of spiritual leaders, and take notice of the worldview and religious concepts of the people involved. On-farm experiments and tree planting activities can be successfully planned together with the traditional leaders, and rituals can be held to initiate these activities and to discuss the traditional criteria to be used in evaluating the outcomes of the experiments or project.

For this, the interventionists need to establish a relationship with the community based on respect. In this process, awareness is required to resist two temptations: the temptation to condemn and reject local knowledge and practices, and the temptation to justify and idealise them. Hountondji (2001), a philosopher from Benin, rightly emphasises the need for an internal debate within traditional cultures in order to develop new alternatives for negative traditional, as well as modernization practices. He states: *“It is not enough to develop a new reading of the past, a new comprehension of tradition. Once it has been recognized that tradition is plural, the practical question is how to promote the internal debate inside our cultures in such a way, that it may itself develop the best possible new alternatives. We need to rebuild the traditional cultures with elements provided by debate.”*

Since 1998, the African Compas partners, are systematically building up experiences with endogenous development. They have consciously chosen to predispose themselves to learning from the traditional systems, and to question and redefine their professionalism, which until now had been western-biased. They also seek cooperation with other organizations and persons in Africa in order to exchange experiences.

In this process we have come across a number of issues that need to be discussed as part of our intra-cultural dialogue. We have also formulated a number of key questions that need to be addressed. We conclude this paper by presenting these challenges and key questions. We invite readers to reflect on it and share with us their ideas and results so that we can maximise the potential contribution of African Traditional Knowledge to our own African (endogenous) development path.

Some challenges for Africa’s intra-cultural dialogue

Goduka (2000) challenges our epistemological perspective. She says: “Educators must move beyond a focus on specialization to holistic knowledge; from materialism to spirituality; from a focus on structures to understanding processes and from objective to subjective methods of enquiry. In short, educators must look beyond the so-called rational Newtonian-Cartesian epistemologies”. This, for us, means a (re) orientation of a mind-set starting with the ‘self’; a behavioural challenge for scholars in Africa that demands de-schooling and re-schooling.

Are we prepared for this? Do we realise what the price and the possible benefits would be? And in which way can we do this?

Emeagwali (2003) states that European philosophers of science have spent an inordinate amount of time discussing the nature of rationality, objectivity and problem

solving in mainstream science. According to her we need to do the same for African science: rejecting, accepting, modifying or adapting relevant conceptual baggage in the field and creating entirely new constructs of analysis for understanding the phenomenon where necessary.

In doing this, what should be the standards for being scientific in the African context: what is the role of rationality, objectivity, repeatability, and what role do intuition, quality, spirituality, justice/morality and consensus play?

Emagalit (2004) looks at similar challenges from a cultural perspective. Discussing various philosophical frameworks, he talks about how African people base themselves on in interpreting, organizing, and rendering their lives possible in the physical and spiritual universe. He talks about a set of principles by which their experiences are ordered, rationally justified, and rendered meaningful, ethical and valuable.

As scientist, do we know these principles? What are the implications of such principles for an African policy position?

Wiredu (2005) is looking at Africa from the lenses of a philosopher. He talks about the role of colonization that characterised the interruptions into the African societies in earlier times (our religion, language and education) by the western world. He uses the concept '*de-Africanized*' as one of the attributes of colonization. He argues for decolonizing (sifting the out undue influences).

The question is how do we (re) organize our education to be 're-Africanized' as far as the sciences are concerned in Africa?

Stoop (2005) recommends a capitalisation on local farmer's know-how (we add '*know-what*') and experience and secondly on external solutions. He posits that such an understanding cannot be achieved from quantitative data of questionable accuracy that are the output of formal surveys; instead a dialogue based on semi-structured and informal interviews is the appropriate tool. He states further that the dissemination of most innovations will be much more effective when left to local communities through a rather informal farmer-to-farmer mechanism than when done by Government or NGOs extension services. We see this as a motivation for development alternative forms of technologies and dissemination processes that are based on the culture of the people; taking care of issues of equity, marginalisation and gender.

Are we ready for development 'an African Alternative'?

A documented proceedings on a "National Workshop on Indigenous Knowledge in Tanzania" (Orchardson-Mazrui, 2001) captures vividly the policy, research, and theoretic challenges for African scholars, practitioners, and policy makers.

How do we mobilise the stakeholders in African sciences as a constituency for building an African perspective in globalisation? Or do we allow globalisation to once more colonize us?

The presentation above indicates that there is some work in progress, but that there are still tremendous challenges. Although African ways of knowing have been eroded and weakened, there are clearly common elements of the African way of knowing. Yet, there seems to be no clear consensus and hardly coordinated efforts on the way to revitalise the African way of knowing. The participants are therefore challenged to make their contribution to this revitalisation process, which is not just a professional or academic challenge. It is a combination of personal commitment, political statement, spiritual connection and professional ethics.

Key questions for the African sciences

To what extent and on which points can we improve the understanding of the way of knowing as presented in this chapter?

- The worldviews and self perceptions of Africans
- The holistic nature: mind and matter, past and present
- The values and objectives of knowing
- The concepts and epistemologies: laws of cause and effect, rules of logic, the criteria for relevance, truth, justice
- The practical application and practices
- The roles of political, spiritual and intellectual leaders
- The scientific methods: multiples ways to observe, interpret, learn, experiment and to teach
- The contradictions and or complementarities to western science

What are the opportunities it provides for building an African society?

What are its weaknesses and or limitations of the way of knowing in Africa?

What are the things to do to strengthen the African way of knowing?

- In education
- In research and theory development
- In policy for development and for scientific development
- In practical activities of e.g. agriculture and health.
- In intercultural dialogues

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Discourses within and between different sciences

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Abstract

This chapter results from the experiences of COMPAS, an international programme on endogenous development. Studies on local knowledge in different cultures have led to the conclusion that there is a global diversity in the ways of knowing. A further understanding of the way people in different cultures build up, exchange and accumulate knowledge and have dialogues is an important challenge. This experience has given rise to the notion of intra- and inter-scientific dialogues proposed by this paper. In furtherance of this agenda, this chapter addresses the following questions by starting from the globalization debate. From an intercultural perspective:

- *What is knowledge and what is science?*
- *What are the main characteristics of local and of global worldviews and of their ways of knowing?*
- *What types of relationships can exist between dominant science and the different local knowledges?*
- *How do we look upon endogenous development and how can it contribute to co-evolution of knowledges?*
- *What activities could be undertaken to enhance co-evolution of different ways of knowing?*

Key words: Inter-scientific Dialogue, Intra-scientific Dialogue, Cosmivision, Co-evolution.

Globalisation and localisation of knowledge

There are currently on-going events as expressions of a rethinking of the role and nature of knowledges and sciences in the globalizing world. On the one hand, one can observe a further proliferation of “western” sciences and technologies (better referred to as “international” or “global” sciences and technologies as this science has incorporated a lot of insights from different origins and is increasingly being developed on several locations in the globe). On the other hand, one can observe a renewed interest in local culture, endogenous development, and the diversity of sciences and knowledges. This renewed interest is a response to the globalization process that, although contributing to global economic growth, does not do enough to solve problems of poverty, social conflicts, and sense giving and is reducing cultural diversity and can have a negative impact on local economies.

The ongoing process of globalization involves the entrenchment of modern knowledge and technologies throughout the world. The dominant education and research systems are based predominantly on global knowledge and commercial value systems. Profit driven values and corporate interests, to a large extent, determine the

global direction of research and development. Commercial enterprises, universities and international and national research organizations apply this global science in their research and development programmes and apply them in technologies for production of food, medicine and communication systems, in commercialization and promotion of these products and in the lifestyles going with them. In agriculture, the use of external inputs has increased due to extension advice and subsidy policies. In health, commodities and knowledge of western allopathic medicine has reached out to all corners of the globe.

Although these efforts have led to definite increase in productivity and increased health, awareness related to the problems associated to this approach is increasing. Environmental pollution and degradation, loss of biodiversity, international and local conflicts, poor health and persistent poverty in certain regions on the globe are serious problems. Privatisation and liberalization have held health services and access to agricultural inputs beyond the reach of large groups. Many young people are no longer educated in the traditional way of life and are leaving the rural areas. Under the influence of mass media a general westernization of taste and consumption is taking place. These processes strain local economies and influence the social and cultural inheritance of the local communities. The confidence in traditional cosmivision, leadership and practices is declining and as a result the local dynamics, social cohesion and local conflict resolution mechanisms are being undermined.

Globalization has triggered local responses, called “localization” that emphasizes cultural identity, local ownership and local culture. Despite the apparent acceptance of dominant concepts and technologies, a number of indigenous and traditional institutions have survived and a wealth of indigenous knowledge still exists. It has been consistently observed by the organizations working in different cultures, that although their existence is under threat, there is still much indigenous knowledge, cosmivision and traditional leadership. Indigenous knowledge and leadership have their strength and weaknesses and although often not perceived by outsiders, these still form the basis for the decisions made by the majority of rural people. Parts of this ‘counter-development’ are the numerous new social movements emerging around the world expressing their disagreement with the current mainstream understanding of globalization. The search for new ways of living and interacting gives rise to alternatives, e.g. movements developing alternative fair trade based economies, organic agriculture, complementary medicine, production of renewable energies, or other forms of education. The uneasiness with the globalization and the homogenization also leads to a re-valuation of cultural identity. Ethnicity, religion, language, local values and knowledge are receiving attention and play important roles in the national and international debates. Endogenous development builds on such responses to the globalization process.

Different ways of knowing and different sciences

Plurality of sources of knowing and sciences

There is a dominant tendency to look at ‘science’ as the only possibility as if ‘true’ knowledge and ‘objectivity’ can only be acquired by rational reasoning and quantitative methods using the senses. In an intercultural perspective this is not an acceptable

position. The way knowledges and sciences are shaped results from the worldview of the people involved and of the sources of knowing that are being derived from this worldview. In this respect two different sources of knowing can be observed: rational reasoning and measuring, on the one hand, and intuitive learning, on the other.

Conventional science is the product of a worldview, where a separation has been made between people and nature, between mind and matter, between quality and quantity. These notions lead to a scientific approach where natural laws can be discovered by putting nature at test and where a distinction is made between object and subject. Knowledge then is the result of rational, logical or scientific reasoning and observation and measuring.

In cultures or situations, where the worldview is based on a unity of the natural, the social and spiritual worlds, it is not the separation, but the unification, the connectedness between these three domains that play a role in the way knowledge is gained. In these situations, knowledge often has a source from within: It is rooted in intuition and contact made with the unity. These sources for knowledge include meditation, seeing from a connection with supra natural world, visions, dreams, and trance. Persons with special qualities and positions in the society often can only access this type of knowledge. The information contributes to sense giving and may be expressed in rules, myths, metaphors or stories to express awe, and morality. It links mysteries with the real life situation. Their messages can be understood in multiple ways. Ascribing meaning to it requires a process of meditative reflection.

Every form of knowledge – including the one produced by natural and quantitative science – is socially constructed. This means that knowledge cannot exist separate from the worldview and the process of its construction. What makes a certain form of knowledge more disseminated than others is its degree of meaningfulness for people, combined with the degree of instrumentalisation by powerful elites within different societies or historical periods.

Science is defined as one body of knowledge. It includes the complex of producing knowledge with its worldview, assumptions, general principles, theories and methodologies about which a specific community has reached consensus. The knowledge acquired and the resulting science is always limited and subject to modification in the light of new data and information.

From this definition it can be concluded that there are many ‘sciences’ and ‘numerous ways of knowing’ that are co-existing. Besides the academically established sciences there are sciences rooted in different cultures. Against this background it becomes clear that a dialogue between different forms of knowing would be impossible if the sciences involved are oriented exclusively to rationality or to intuitive ways of knowing and if the partners involved do not accept the relevance of the other ways of knowing.

But then, how can we form rules of the game for understanding and exchange between individual knowledge systems? To what extent can we expect contradiction, synergy or complementarity between different forms of knowledge? How can we enhance exchange between e.g. Maya knowledge, Shona knowledge, Hindu and Buddhist knowledge, European and global knowledge?

In an inter-scientific dialogue, we want to avoid a situation where a dominant system determines the rules of the game. Local knowledge should not be assessed by global science, or the other way around. What is relevant first is a self-assessment of

the relative strengths and weaknesses of each of the knowledges (in terms of the sources of the knowledge) as well as an assessment of the power relation between the systems involved. In the terms of the Peruvian traditional scientist (Jose Illescas), intra-scientific dialogue and revitalization of indigenous knowledge are preconditions for inter-scientific dialogues.

Relations between different sciences and forms of knowledge

Interaction between different cultures may result from trade, migration, missionary activity, tourism, war or mass communication as well as from friendships and networks of solidarity and cooperation. The degree of reciprocal influence may vary greatly. In many cases, the more powerful culture dominates and deliberately or by implication has an influence on the less powerful culture. When analyzing the different ways in which sciences and forms of knowledges interrelate it would be impossible to discuss them all. There are many differences in the way different positions in power and differences in effectiveness of available technologies, are being used and many differences in the way people react to domination.

Without claiming completeness, I present some of the possible relations between different forms of knowledge in the table below:

| Type | Characteristics | Examples |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Clash or hostilities | Violent occupation, wars, resistance, fights between civilizations. | Fights between religions or political lines; Independence or resistance movements; Terrorism and anti terrorism. |
| 2. Going underground | The suppressed knowledge continues to exist but not openly. In order to avoid repression, hostilities or rejection local knowledge continues in a clandestine way. | Many local knowledge systems: Sjamanism in Sri Lanka; Spirit mediums in Africa; Traditional leaders in the Andes. |
| 3. Parallel knowledges | Different ways of knowing co-exist openly without interaction; Cultural or scientific apartheid. | Conventional medicine and Ayurvedic medicine co-existing in India. Islam, Christianity and other religions co-existing in Europe Conventional and biodynamic or organic farming. Voluntary isolation of certain aspects of international exchange of a country like Bhutan. |
| 4. Utilitarianism and selective inclusion | Elements of local knowledge, which can be scientifically understood or validated, are accepted for enhancing the stock of scientific knowledge; may imply assessment of local knowledge by outside scientists and lead to ex-situ conservation of local knowledge. | Aspirin is made based on a local practice, which already the Egyptians and the Greeks were using, without knowing its active ingredient. Local medicinal practices for Malaria treatment. Adoption of Arab mathematics and Chinese gunpowder by western scientists. |

| Type | Characteristics | Examples |
|---|---|--|
| 5. Substitution | The dominant system forces the introduction of exogenous concepts to substitute local traditions. | Missionary activities to substitute traditional religions, privation of land, introduction of European languages as national language, exogenous rule of law to replace traditional juridical systems, republican and democratic systems of governance, hygiene measures as conditions for export. |
| 6. Paternalism | The traditional knowledge is a starting point but must be 'up-dated' by scientific contributions | Transfer of technology in education, health and agricultural extension programmes. |
| 7. Syncretism | The dominant and dominated systems merge and incorporate each other's rituals, beliefs and knowledge in such a way that both systems believe that their knowledge is in fact the dominant. | European knowledge with Cartesian knowledge and Catholicism merged with Andean or Maya beliefs, health practices and rituals. |
| 8. Complementarity | Two different ways of knowing use mechanisms of exchange and mutual learning aimed at complementing each other | FRLHT in India with activities to exchange and compare different health care traditions. |
| 9. Romanticism | Local knowledge is romanticized and considered basically 'good' and should have the right to remain as it is | 'Going native', rejecting possible contributions of global science; enhancing capacity of resistance of local actors. |
| 10. Co-evolution | Different forms of knowledge evolve simultaneously, in the first place on basis of their dynamics (revitalisation) and partly as a response to their interaction/dialogue with other forms of knowing | Experiences of Compass partners in Europe (co-existing farming styles), Africa (Ghana and Zimbabwe), Latin America (Picads). |
| 11. Transcultural and transdisciplinary synergy | Sciences are aware that they represent one type of knowledge among and that knowledge is always culturally embedded and forming part of historic development. Both can be benefiting from comprehensive interaction | Development of holistic medicine and health care in industrialized and developing countries or the clarifications of interactions, which are not (yet) scientifically explainable. Work of Nicolescu, Sheldrake, Wilber and others. |

Table 1 Typology of relations between different forms of knowledge

Issues for discussion

The typology makes clear five major issues considered in looking for an interrelation between different forms of knowledge:

- First, due to global interdependence and communication, almost any type of knowledge available today is in some way or another influenced by others. This makes it almost impossible to address the pure differences between different ‘knowledge systems’.
- Second, every position departs from different worldviews and has a clear political and power dimension. This means that the degree, in which a certain way of knowing is spread and accepted, may depend more on its power base than on the quality of its science.
- Third, in the inter-scientific dialogue emphasis needs to be placed on a reflection on what the specific starting position of each form of knowledge is:
 - What are its sources (the role of rationality and intuition, the values involved and the way meaning is ascribed to things)?
 - How does the knowledge system relate to the natural, social and spiritual worlds?
 - How is it placed in terms of power and conflicts.On that basis a process of intra-scientific dialogue can be designed that aims at the revitalisation of the form of knowledge.
- Fourth, a mutual learning process and dialogue between different types of knowledge involves the revision of power, values and worldviews. This revision will aim at overcoming the suppression, arbitrariness and paternalism as represented in the typology. Only then, a synergetic relationship and co-evolution can take place. The global domination of the rationalist way of knowing and the emphasis of the use of knowledge for accumulating material wealth is an important point of attention (Molenaar, 2005).
- Fifth, the idea of integration of (scientific and local) knowledge, by taking the best of both, is not realistic. Sometimes different knowledges have contradictory or mutually exclusive positions. E.g. the hegemony between mind and matter may be seen differently, the notion of connectivity and unity may be different from the positivist notion. Rather than having the idea that the end of inter-scientific dialogues would be one integrated scientific construction, we may have to accept or embrace the fact that a diversity of ways of knowing exists, each unravelling part of the complex reality.

On the basis of the reflections above, it becomes possible to take a closer look at the approach and experiences of endogenous development and its implications for intercultural dialogues.

Endogenous development: the approach followed by Compas

Endogenous development refers to development that is mainly, though not exclusively based on locally available resources, such as land, water, vegetation, knowledge, skills and competencies, culture, leadership and the way people have organized themselves. External knowledge and resources are often used as complements to local resources. It has mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, building local economies and retention of benefits in the local area.

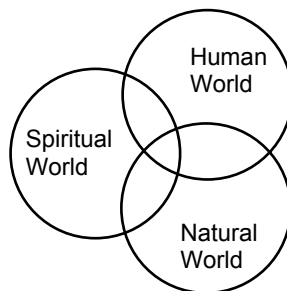
Endogenous development does not imply isolation, nor does it limit its attention to local processes. It may use some opportunities provided by globalization.

Compas experiences

Compas is an international cooperative programme with some ten years of action research and learning from local knowledge in different cultural and ecological environments. Revitalising local knowledge and in building on this knowledge in development programmes is the final goal. Compas is involved in an intercultural dialogue aimed at a co-evolution of knowledges and sciences. The field activities of the 25 partner organizations include support to local people in their identified endogenous development processes. This is development based mainly, though not exclusively on the locally available resources, local knowledge, culture and leadership. Endogenous development has the openness to integrate traditional as well as outside knowledges and practices. It has mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, building local economies and retention of benefits in the local area.

A consortium of nine universities is providing scientific support that includes contributions in the formulation of the specific paradigms, epistemologies and the launching of related research and teaching activities. Through its action research, Compas has learned that local knowledges include a wide diversity of assumptions, concepts, technologies and ways of experimenting, teaching and learning that are specific to the culture and ecosystem. The work done so far also brought to light, that even with the immense diversity in the ways local knowledge is phrased and expressed, a common feature is represented by conceiving life in terms of three interrelated and inseparable domains as follows:

- *the natural world,*
- *the social world and*
- *the spiritual world*



In most traditional ways of knowing, a notion of unity exists and therefore the natural, social and spiritual worlds are considered integrated. Local knowledge in the natural domain includes thematic fields related specifically to agriculture, health and other practices. The social domain includes knowledge about local organization, local leadership and management of natural resources, mutual help, conflict resolution, gender relations, art, and language. The spiritual domain includes knowledge and beliefs about the invisible world, divine beings, spiritual forces, ancestors, and translates into values and sense giving and the related practices such as rituals, and festivals. But an important feature is that none of these domains exists in isolation.

The conventional way of knowing is based on the separation of observer and the observed world. Knowledge is organized in specialized disciplines and is compiled by the observation and application of quantitative methods. It is focusing on the material world, has an anthropocentric perspective and has difficulty in relating to the spiritual world. Local and outside knowledge are always interacting, sometimes competing, replacing or confronting each other, sometimes as an intercultural dialogue. The Compas partners try to understand these interactions and influence them in such a way that social learning and co-evolution can take place.

The Compas partners have ongoing programmes in the domains of poverty reduction in marginal areas, participatory development, local management of natural resources and ecological processes, low external input and sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, and local health systems. Based on their experiences the partners have concluded that the conventional approach to support development, consisting of transfer of technologies, knowledge and values from the modern world to the underdeveloped world, needs to be revised. Rather, traditional knowledge and values with its technical social and spiritual dimensions need to be accepted as the starting point for development from within the own culture.

Compas functions as an international network that links practical support to people in rural areas with theoretical reflections about development options. The approach of the Compas programme can be described as action-research on endogenous development. It hopes to be complementary to the many organizations that have similar focus but that restrict themselves to fieldwork or research or to the technical aspects of indigenous knowledge only.

Supporting endogenous development does not imply a narrowly defined development approach and is neither romanticizing nor rejecting traditions. Endogenous development is seen as an approach that takes place complementary to the ongoing technological and economic global processes. It wants to address local needs and contradictions; local potentials enhance local economies and link them to international systems with optimal terms of trade. It supports co-existence and co-evolution of a diversity of cultures. Intercultural research, exchange and dialogues will be helpful to find the most desired development path in specific contexts building on the accumulated experiences.

Indigenous knowledge and practices may not have all the answers to present day challenges. They may have certain limitations or setbacks. But farmers and rural and urban people in the south take decisions and define their relationship with outside knowledge and agencies based on their own culture and values. Therefore, for development organizations to be effective in supporting endogenous development, they need to understand the basic characteristics and acknowledge the existence of local forms of knowledge, and the worldviews that they are based on.

The Compas partners started their work on supporting endogenous development by systematic activities for learning with and from rural people about their knowledges, practices and worldviews. Subsequently, initiatives have been taken to test, adapt and improve the traditional practices and to enhance endogenous development. Networking and training have taken place and a number of workshops and publications have led to a further systematization of the experiences so far.

In the course of these processes, the Compas partners have identified the following components for supporting endogenous development:

1. Development that builds on locally available resources
2. Objectives based on locally felt needs and values, acknowledging the interests of different social categories
3. In-situ reconstruction and development of local knowledge systems: understanding, testing and improving local practices and enhancing the dynamics of the local knowledge processes
4. Maximising local control of development
5. Identifying development niches based on the characteristics of each local situation
6. Selective used of external resources
7. Retention of the benefits in the local area
8. Exchange experiences between different localities and cultures
9. Training and capacity building for rural people, development staff and researchers
10. Networking and strategic partnerships and policy influencing
11. Further understanding of systems of knowing, learning and experimenting

Diversity of contemporary sciences and intra and inter scientific dialogues

In the Compas programme, we have started to formulate the most striking characteristics of the paradigms and epistemologies of sciences in Africa, the Andes, India, and Europe. We are only at the beginning of this process. Of course, there are also many differences within each of the regions but in a preliminary way, we have found similarities in characteristics, which serve as the basis for on-going intra- and inter-scientific dialogues within and across regions.

The objectives of the intra- and inter-scientific dialogues are to:

- understand, describe and exchange the epistemologies and paradigms of the sciences involved
- strengthen and revitalize the marginalized sciences
- determine the strengths, weaknesses and comparative advantage of each science
- look for synergy and opportunities for mutual learning as well as for contradictions and exclusions
- question, challenge and criticize each other in order to determine those aspects of the science and value systems that need modification and improvement and
- balance the power and financial resource base of the different sciences.

The epistemological interpretation of the different Asian, African and Latin American and European knowledge systems, their ways of learning experimenting and their mutual relationships need attention. Hence, it is important to systematize and make more explicit the concepts and theories behind indigenous forms of knowledges with the view to sharing them as part of a possible co-evolution of the diversity of sciences.

Key issues of the dialogues:

Africa: A worldview with a hierarchy between divine beings, spiritual beings, ancestors and natural forces. Sacred character of natural resources. Cyclic notion of time. Powers of ancestral spirits. Use of magical powers both in negative and positive terms. In the African reality one can observe a dual system of beliefs and knowledge: traditional and modern. They co-exist and each of them goes with specific values and this often leads to different decision-making.

India and Sri Lanka: The real world and the fundamental principles of organizing live systems are different from those in the west. Scientific methods are not limited to the five senses. The mind, free of prejudices such as lust, anger, greed, intoxication, delusion and jealousy can complement the senses and understand reality from within. The Vedic knowledge has a notion of nine existential principles and qualities. The health system is based on these principles. In tribal knowledge, powers of symbols and of sounds are important. In Buddhist systems: Meditative techniques can lead to mental states that disclose a range of different powers (time, location, sounds, symbols, plants, persons).

The Andes and the Mayas: The natural, social and spiritual worlds are expressions of a unity. Sacred time-space that goes beyond the physical or socio-economic domains (Pacha Mama). The cyclic notion of time; Mutual and reciprocal relationship between humans, animals, plants; The living astrology; The role of rituals and fiestas. The religious worldview, the Maya calendar, own system of mathematics (based on number 20) allowing architectures in pyramids, own health and agricultural systems that build on the calendar, rituals and ecological principles.

Europe: (Conventional/Enlightening): Measuring and the use of the five senses is knowing; Rational logic; Materialism; Mechanistic, Self-interest of individual or group as organizing principle. (Post modernity): Uncertainty, diversity, chaos and self-regulation, holism, synergy rather than generic principles and universal science or values (such as human rights, democracy, good governance). (Trans-disciplinarity and Co-evolution of sciences): Compas wants to provide a platform for inter-scientific dialogue that can contribute to a co-evolution of sciences. In this process, each science involved is stimulated to evolve (to develop and improve their methods and theories) based on their own dynamics as well as on the basis of interaction with other systems of knowing.

Risks and code of conduct

Based on the experiences, the partners of Compas realise that it is not without risks for an outsider to work with indigenous knowledge and practices. The risks involved include the following:

- The extraction of local knowledge for purposes not in the interest of rural people,
- Disturbing the existing status quo and dynamics at community level,
- Domination of local processes by outsiders who do not understand the local values and mechanisms of decision making, and
- Introduction of values and lifestyle that is not consistent with or complementary to the local values,
- Prying into people's private matters (e.g. beliefs and spirituality, power relations).

The partners have agreed to work with rural people according to a code of conduct that respects the diversity of ways of knowing, accepts and supports the local

ownership of local knowledge and local development processes, defines a complementary role outsiders may play and accepts the need to learn from and with local people. Publications mainly aiming at strengthening local ways of knowing are as much as possible done in local languages.

Co-evolution of different ways of knowing: towards a strategy

Actors involved

Given the wide range of options in belief systems, values, practices, knowledge concepts, and power positions, there are many modalities for intra and intercultural relations. The present dominant position of materialist values and global technologies tends to marginalize minority cultures and diminish cultural and biological diversity. Therefore, for achieving more egalitarian, just and sustainable relationships between different forms of knowledge, new paths have to be explored.

Building on the analyses and arguments discussed so far, we suggest an intra and intercultural social learning process carried out by multiple actors. The process will include at least the following actors: Local people, their intellectual, political and spiritual leaders. Local NGOs and governmental development agencies can support the process of revitalization and improvement of the local knowledge and way of knowing. Schools can include local forms of knowledge into their curriculum. Universities and research centres can do supportive research on the epistemologies while supporting action research programmes. National governments can place policy priority on endogenous development and revise current mechanisms for development in this light. International agencies for research and development and donor agencies can make available funds for these activities. International media of communication can be used to give credibility and prestige to this process and to support the mutual exchange process.

In fact, the choice for endogenous development and for co-evolution of forms of knowing is a major shift in paradigm that will not be done easily. The present systems for research and development have their own interest in the continuation of the status quo. Therefore, a careful strategy of activities at different levels will be important.

Possible activities

Below we present a number of activities that together could constitute an approach to be taken by actors in the Compas programme, i.e. local communities, NGOs, universities and regional and international coordinators.

Re-building relationships

A prime condition for a successful cooperation of these actors will be a relationship between actors that is horizontal as much as possible while being characterized by mutual interest and confidence. Hence, the first step to take is to critically analyze and reconstruct the different relationships, as they currently exist. NGOs working with rural people have to make clear that their role is not that of an external agent who

comes with a certain message or technology to be transferred. Learning with and from local people and working on the basis of their cosmovision implies that the outsiders accept the rules of the game as expressed by the communities.

The traditional codes for hospitality, confidence building, respect and communication have to be respected. It may imply procedures of selection and processes of initiation, and the participation in rituals, that have a different cultural background and meaning for local people than for outsiders. Universities have to accept the fact that their conventional knowledge has its limitations as it represents just one type of learning. The funding agencies have to get used to a downward accountability. The international coordinators should learn from and with the regional coordinators and these with the local partners and these in their turn with the local communities.

The communication and interaction will not only be about conventional professional subjects, but may involve spiritual and cultural aspects and a lot will depend on good social relations and skills. This means that the role of supporting people and organizations change radically. Instead of teaching local people on how to resolve their manifold problems they concentrate on learning from local people as the basis for exploring possible synergies between different forms of knowledge. External actors become companions and animators of communications within and between different groups related to endogenous development. Instead of aiming directly at participatory development of technologies they become agents for participatory skill and competence development involving local as well as external people, aiming at enhancing and broadening local control on development. This requires a process of personal preparation where the conventional professional standards, attitudes and skills are scrutinized and modified where necessary.

Intra-community dialogue

An intercultural dialogue and a process of co-evolution require that the different parties involved are prepared and interested in exchange. Yet, it is not evident that local communities, traditional experts and spiritual or political leaders are positive about it. Keeping local knowledge separate or hidden from the eyes of outsiders can be used as a defence mechanism, as a way to protect the traditions and to be free from external influence.

Also, within a community there may be different positions: not everybody will have the same interest and position. Differences in gender, age, social position, class, caste, professional background, can lead to a different knowledge, value and position towards exchange with others. Therefore, before we can assume that an intercultural dialogue is desirable and possible we need to get the view of the community as differentiated by social classes, gender, and age groups. Some questions that arise include:

- How do they see their situation?
- What would be the strategies of negotiation and joint learning?
- Which internal and external factors promote or hinder endogenous development and in which cultures are they rooted?

- Which points are considered to be important for the traditional culture to be maintained, and what points from the dominant or formal system can be included in the traditional system and who decides on this?

Answers to these questions should lead to a vision on the desired closeness or distance of collaboration, and on the desirability of the ways, contents and partners of a co-evolution.

Learning about cosmovision

This activity consists in trying to understand the way of knowing within the cultures involved in this process. The cosmovision, values, the way people learn, teach and experiment and their logic and knowledge concepts and theories must be made clear and understood in order to have the internal reflection on the strong and weak points of the own knowledge. We could try to understand the cosmovisions: how the different sources of knowledge, like rationality, intuition, inspiration etc. are being used and combined and how they lead to the understanding by the holders of local knowledge. Sharing these aspects could then lead to a joint reflection. Specific needs can be identified for strengthening, revitalizing or enhancing the way of knowing. On this basis, possible change required in relation to traditional education, training, research or macro conditions and policy environment can be identified.

Learn from community experiences

It is important to find out to what extent the local communities are already dealing with dominant the systems:

- Is it possible to describe the relationship of the local culture and the way of knowing with the formal/dominant system in the area?
- Can the typology as presented in this chapter be used to make such a description?
- Can we learn from the community how they have managed to survive/change and co-evolve with the dominant/formal system?
- How do they do it and how shall we as NGOs, Universities or other supporting organization relate to that, and how do we deal about this when certain value differences between them and we become clear?
- What are the possibilities and limitations for intercultural dialogue?

Strong and weak points of the local forms of knowledge

On the basis of a self-assessment of the sources (e.g. rationality and intuition), proposals can be formulated to revitalize local knowledge. Suggestions can include transformation of existing mechanism of learning and teaching, recovery of lost knowledge, mobilization of people or resources to come to grips with local knowledge, or healing of practices that are considered ineffective or detrimental. For each of these possible options, appropriate approaches can be chosen. These approaches could first and foremost be chosen from the available scale of indigenous options. This may be an important focus of the action-research activities for endogenous development of the partners involved.

Strong and weak points of the dominant forms of knowledge

The basic hypothesis of this chapter is that western knowledge is one of the possible forms of knowledge. It is not universally applicable. It has its own strengths and weaknesses. An intercultural dialogue based on mutual confidence and horizontal relationships can only be done if all partners involved are prepared to have a self-critical attitude. In the battlefield of knowledge, debates are being held on issues such as objectivity and subjectivity; universalism and relativism; specialization and holism, disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity; quantitative methods and qualitative methods and; neo-positivism and actor perspectives.

Hence, it is clear that also within the dominant scientific tower, there are different perspectives and positions. Western knowledge applied in agriculture or health practices have great impact on the globe. It has led to impressive results, but it has not been able to solve all problems related to food security, health poverty, environmental sustainability and peace. Therefore, there is a perspective for intercultural and inter-scientific dialogue on condition that also western science is accepting its limitations and is interested in finding ways to deal with them. The balance between sources of knowing: rationality, quantification and the material world, on the one hand and empathy, intuition, sense and meaning, need to be explored and where necessary corrected. Non-western scientific traditions can offer a lot to western science.

Exchange of experiences and co-evolution

An important step would be to look for opportunities for mutual learning and exchange and for co-evolution. It could be understood as a dialogue between partners allowing themselves to maintain a certain degree of divergence between the different forms of knowledge involved. Respectful dialogues imply the willingness to listen, openness to learning, responsiveness to information, questions and suggestions as well as the courage to criticize when necessary. It needs to avoid the pitfalls of rejecting positive elements of deficient forms of knowledge, as well as avoiding the risk to romanticize or idealise any of the forms of knowledge involved. The question whether it is feasible to reach inter-epistemological cooperation in the sense that it leads towards trans-cultural synergy and selective adoption remains to be answered. Possible this can only be done in a satisfactory way, once the local systems as well as global systems have gone through its own processes of transformation, recovery, mobilization and healing.

Concluding challenges

This chapter is an effort to come to grips with the co-evolution and inter-scientific dialogue in a situation where the starting positions of the different actors are not equitable and where the differences in status, power, resource availability are tremendous. Compas wants to play a stimulating role in creating a platform for the dialogue and therefore we need to be open for other positions and approaches. We have to learn a lot, and we are ready to receive criticisms and suggestions for improvement.

The Compas experiences in intercultural and inter-scientific dialogues are still rather limited. In this chapter, we purposefully presented more questions than answers. We are convinced that answers can result from a continued joint learning process and dialogue between different forms of knowledges.

This is a difficult process that we have to learn ourselves. What seems to be clear for us might be questionable for others and the other way around. Our challenge is to accept the uncertainty and through the mutual social learning process try to come closer to answering the open questions.

We invite professionals and scientists in local organizations, NGOs, Universities, Governmental bodies, national and international development agencies to join us in this effort. It is ambitious, interesting and worthwhile.

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Ancestorcentrism: A basis for African sciences and learning epistemologies

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Abstract

This chapter investigates the epistemologies and ontologies of African sciences from the philosophy of ancestorcentrism. It discusses the relevance of ancestral spirits in defining action and inaction and in so doing generate knowledge, which is the basis for an alternative science. This is done by briefly examining culture and indigenous knowledge, and the concept of ancestorcentrism. Also, the methodology that was used for the investigation, the WHAT, WHY (WHERE), and HOW of African sciences is presented. The chapter evolves a mental construct to give meaning to the paradigm shift required for African sciences. Essence, phenomenon, cosmivision, and epistemology were intricately linked in this construct. The chapter concludes by making a passionate appeal to African scientists (and others in the Diaspora) to assist in unearthing and putting in public domain the richness of African sciences

Key words: Ancestorcentrism (“Saakumnu”), Knowledges, Sciences, Essence, Epistemology, Ontology, Culture, Endogenous Development, Cosmovision.

Opening the windows

Science has once more assumed centre-stage for development in general and for salvaging the human race. The world is often referred to as a global village with the underlining assumption that science (for that matter technology) has reduced time and spaces for interactions. Hence, a ‘universal science’ is subsumed under this discourse. In establishing the bases for a ‘scientific world’ sight is lost by professionals and practitioners of the historical colonizing role that the ‘universal science’ has played in subjugating Africa to the rest of the world. With this short and myopic memory, we run the risk of walking on the same road twice – prescribing a ‘universal science’ again which will be a recipe for (re)colonization of Africa. According to Wiredu (2005), colonization of Africa was not only a political imposition but a cultural one as well.

Instead of bemoaning this situation and waiting for doom’s day, African scholars have assumed a proactive posture – questioning the status quo and querying whether Africa has a science to bring to the discussion table and in so doing carve its own niche in this ‘global scientific village’. Some pertinent questions that come up immediately are as follows:

Can we provide an alternative logic that will query and challenge the ‘universal science model’? What are the challenges that Africa has to offer? Do these challenge present themselves in a competitive form that will enable them create a credible constituency for constructive dialogue?

This chapter intends to contribute to an anticipated inter- (Africa) and intra- (Africa and the rest of the world) scientific dialogue by attempting to, in addition to

contributing to the answers to the pertinent questions, generate information for a logic/rationale and vocabulary; in fact a paradigm (foundational theory) for an alternative science based on African worldviews.

In writing this chapter, I posit that there is no one body of knowledge referred to as ‘African Science’ as you would for European or Western Science. It is more apt to refer to **African Sciences** because of the proliferation of expression of bodies of *knowledges*. The basic building blocks are similar but differently expressed because of the cultural, spiritual, philosophical and other specificities resulting from empirical encounters. Hence, pluralism is a better expression of what Africa has to share with the rest of the world. There is also no such distinction between ‘science’ and ‘arts’ in the African context. What rural people had was a body of knowledge constructed (and perpetually being reconstructed) from generation to generation and over time and space covering various livelihoods and life-encountered experiences. Hence, African Sciences is all inclusive of the so-called science and arts.

In this chapter, I see Ancestorcentrism as a philosophy with Cosmvision as one perspective of a worldview expressing this philosophy. Endogenous Development is therefore a strategy that comes along with it a body of knowledges and sciences within the context of African peoples’ cultures. This sets the stage for the ensuing.

Sharing with the ‘inside’- culture and indigenous knowledge

Culture is defined as the way of life of a people. It is the totality of the human-created world. It comprises the intangible aspects of life – language, beliefs, myths, folktales, proverbs, histories and legend, philosophy, world-view, laws, values, attitudes, social systems, knowledge, religion, rituals, music and dance, technology, games, modes of production etc; and the tangible – buildings, tools, clothing, medicine, food etc and the environment – the flora and fauna etc. of the human habitat. This has been variously paraphrased by Busia (1965), Danquah (1968), and recently by Amadiume (1997).

Culture is also the accumulated knowledge and experience of a people. It is taught and transmitted from generation to generation; but is however not fixed – it is dynamic and changes through human creative thought and activity.

According to Borland (1969), while western science and education tend to emphasize compartmentalized knowledge, which is often de-contextualized and taught in the detached setting of a classroom or laboratory, indigenous people have traditionally acquired their knowledge through direct experience in the natural environment. For them, the particulars come to be understood in relation to the whole, and the “laws” are continually tested in the context of everyday survival. Western thought also differs from indigenous thought in its notion of competency. In western terms, competency is often assessed based on predetermined ideas of what a person should know, which is then measured indirectly through various forms of “objective” tests. In the traditional sense, competency has an unequivocal relationship to survival (Gyekye, 1987; Higgs, 1997).

Higgs (1997) further argues that traditional knowledge is the information that people in a given community, based on experience and adaptation to a local culture

and environment, have developed over time, and continues to develop. This knowledge is used to sustain the community and its culture and to maintain the genetic resources necessary for the continued survival of the community. Indigenous peoples do have form of “science” when they are involved in the annual cycle of subsistence activities. They have studied and know a great deal about the flora and fauna, and they have their own classification systems and versions of meteorology, physics, chemistry, earth science, astronomy, psychology (knowing one’s inner world), and the sacred.

In two separate articles, Wiredu (1990; 2005) posits that to bring significance to learning in indigenous settings, the explanations of natural phenomena are best understood by students if they are cast first in indigenous terms to which they can relate, and then explained in western terms. Once the students understand the significance of the knowledge being presented, it can then be explained in western terms, such as flow, velocity, resistance, turgidity, sonar readings, tide tables, etc., to illustrate how the modern explanation adds to the traditional understanding (and vice versa). All learning can start with what the student and community already know and have experienced in everyday life.

Since western scientific perspectives influence decisions that affect every aspect of indigenous people’s lives, indigenous people themselves should begin to take an active role in re-asserting their own traditions of science. There is a growing awareness of the depth and breadth of knowledge that is extant in many indigenous societies and its potential value in addressing issues of contemporary significance (Goduka, 2001; Borland, 1969).

The ‘roots’ – ancestorcentrism

I start this section by examining the concept I refer to as *Ancestorcentrism* (for lack of a better terminology) – a concept I have found very prolific in many cultures in Ghana. This notion is not static, an unchanging artefact of a former way of life. It has been adapting to the contemporary world since contact and will continue to change. Western science in the North is also beginning to change in response to contact with indigenous knowledge.

The ancestors, as a matter of survival, have long sought to understand the (ir) regularities in the world around them, recognizing that nature is underlain with many unseen patterns of order. They have learned to decipher and adapt to the constantly changing worlds. For the ancestors there is a recognition that many unseen forces are in action in the elements of the universe resulting in new sets of relationships, which point to the essential balances and diversity that help nature to thrive. (This view is also shared by Goduka, 1999.)

There are various expressions and vocabulary on the linkage between the living, the dead, and the yet unborn as part of the philosophy behind the linkage of the African to his/her Ancestors (male and female). In Ghana the various expressions of ancestorcentrism is in indigenous vocabulary such “Saakumnu” in Dagaari, Nyaaba Itigo in Gurunne, and Amaamere in Akan, all of Ghana. A similar thought exists in Eastern and Southern Africa as exhibited in the generality of the “Ubuntu” concept. Limiting my studies to the Dagaaba (my native place allowed me to conduct my

investigations directly and also through experiential learning and participant observations). I have done an in-depth investigation on the concept “Saakumnu.” I use “Saakumnu” as my starting point for deeper understanding of the epistemologies and ontologies of African sciences. I start this with an encounter that led to this study:

Explanatory notes on terminology

- “*Saakumnu*” literally means ancestorship – what the ancestors used to do that has persisted over generations. It also connotes sacredness, identity, and personality.
- *Worldview* here means a coherent body of knowledge that covers all aspects of the world of a people. It is a mindset/map that peoples use to orient, position, and explain their world, and from which the asses and act or refuse to act, and establish for them selves an expectation/motivation and a vision for the future.
- *Beliefs* are assumptions that have not been verified and tested but are held for true by an individual or a community of believers. The source of belief can be revelations or teaching by spiritual leaders, ancient texts, or supernatural experiences.
- *Information* refers to data that have been processed and analysed and to which a certain interpretation or meaning has been ascribed. Hence *Data* refers to outcomes of observations that can be processed, quantified or qualified. Information can therefore be carried in reports, books, or computer systems but also in indigenous forms such as songs, prayers, poems, sayings and other narratives.
- *Knowledge* is in people. It refers to the assumptions, concepts and interpretations of information acquired by individuals or groups. Knowledge is understood here as the way in which people give meaning to phenomena and translate them into action. Knowledge production then is a process that links information with meaning, values and action that cannot be reduced to a set of ‘objectively’ validated information. Knowledge is inextricably linked to the social, environmental and institutional contexts. Knowledge can be the result of a certain tradition, can be confined to a certain locality, be linked to indigenous people, to a certain continent or have a global character (hence the possible labels as: traditional, local, indigenous, African, global knowledge).
- *Science* is the body of knowledge and their classification under a theoretical framework, which itself is tested in observation or supported by its logic. It includes the complex of producing knowledge and information with its assumptions, general principles, theories and methodologies about a range of phenomena on which a specific community has reached consensus. The knowledge acquired is always limited and subject to modification in the light of new data and information. In the society where a particular science is accepted and used, there is a professional community of practitioners of knowledge governed by some social and methodological norms.
- *Adopting* these definitions allows stating that besides the academically established science there are many other ‘sciences’ referring to numerous ‘knowledges’ that are co-existing. Every form of knowledge – including the one produced by natural and quantitative science – is socially constructed. This means that knowledge can not exist separate from the process of its construction. What makes a certain form of knowledge more disseminated than others is related to its degree of meaningfulness either for people or due to the degree of instrumentalisation by powerful elites within different societies or historical periods. ‘Truth’ is not so much determined by objectivity, but by ‘inter-subjective validation’.

Pathways – Engagement with elders

When I started getting interested in “Saakumnu” long before this study, I decided to conduct a small investigation asking a handful of elders (aged above 60 years) in my

community where they would want to go when they die. Their answers were straightforward, “I want to meet and be with my Ancestors.” After a while, I shifted my investigation of the same question to a couple of elders in my community (also above 60 years) of the Christian and Islam religions. They were asked the same question: Whether they will want to go to heaven/promise-land or to meet with their ancestors (they had to choose one option only) when they die? To my surprise eight out of ten of them said if the choice was that restrictive they would want to be with their Ancestors. All eight were quick to add that they believed their Ancestors were in heaven/promised land. I then reminded them that in the tradition we had ‘Good and Bad Ancestors’ so I doubt whether all the Ancestors will be allowed a place in heaven/promised land since some of them would be ‘Bad Ancestors’ and the teachings of Islam and Christianity had no place for Bad People in heaven/promised-land. This made them apprehensive and a few issues were traded between us. They then went quiet for a couple of minutes and with a lot of confidence, still wanted to be with their Ancestors no matter what for a while.

This encounter left me with the thought that “Saakumnu” is a concept only operational at the level of spirituality. Very recently, I had another revelation when I went talking with Elder Zule (the Tendana – Earth Priest of my village who is over 80 years old). I asked him to explain to me why our people were obsessive and fanatic about the Ancestors. This was the wisdom he shared with me:

“Saakumnu” is our essence – our total wellbeing. It is that which binds us together as one collective and beyond that sustaining the bondage of the Dagaara people even across boundaries to Burkina and Ivory Coast, giving us one identity. It provides us with an inextricable link between the living, the dead, and the yet unborn. In “Saakumnu” life and death are like day and night – one and the same day. It is about our spirituality, culture, our **science, our arts**, our way of life and our view of the world. Some of this phenomenon is expressed in the (extended) family system, the clan system, the lineages, our totems, our beliefs, our values and our personality even across borders”.

“..... our spirituality, our science, and our arts.....” This phrase from Oldman Zule provided me with the motivation to conduct further investigations to deepen further my understanding of the concept “Saakumnu” among the Dagaaba. This has given cause to this study.

‘Sense-making’ – African sciences

The study was spread over a period of three months in three Communities (Gengenkepe, Mag-Tange, and Sonne). My personal experience as a native of the Nandom Area of the Upper West Region of Ghana was also brought to bear on the study. Since this is my native area, I conducted the interviews in my dialect – Dagaari. The tools used for the investigation were largely qualitative.

In my investigation, I opted to pick out a few concepts that repeatedly occurred and which I thought were of significance for building up vocabulary for this discourse. The in-depth investigation of these concepts, which I present here, has brought me closer to understanding “Saakumnu.”

I discuss the paradigm for an African science from the worldview of the Dagaaba as influenced by “Saakumnu.” I was made to understand that this worldview is formed and reformed by the constant co-evolution of a quest for answering to the WHAT, the WHY, and the HOW. While Western science privileges the WHAT and HOW over the WHY, African sciences, stress all three in ways that reach beyond the physical, natural and observable. In African sciences, all three might be addressed as separate entities or as conjoint. For example, WHY a person has a misfortune befalling him is just as important as WHAT has caused the misfortune, and HOW it is caused. The desire to answer the why is often inspired also by the spiritual dimension of sciences – their cosmovision – *where the African expressions of their cosmic world underscore the assumed interrelationships between spirituality, nature and humankind. It also describes the role of supernatural powers, the natural processes that take place and the relationship between humans and nature, and it makes explicit the philosophical and scientific basis on which interventions in nature take place.*

A paradigm of African sciences

In order to build up an understanding of the theories behind African sciences, an entry is made here through analysing the wisdoms surrounding THE WHAT, THE HOW, and THE WHY. The ensuing is the reconstruction of these wisdoms as independent emerging properties and their various properties when they intersect.

THE WHAT: Modifying the position of Mifflin (2000), a phenomenon is defined here as any state or process known through the *senses an/or by intuition* or reasoning, any fact, circumstance, or experience that is apparent to the senses (*and by intuition*) that can be appraised or defined. This appears to be the central emerging property of the WHAT of African science.

It is characterised by sense and meaning given also by intuition through experiencing and feeling. Because it combines sense and intuition, it has elements of realism – a type of realism based on the doctrine that the external world exists independently of perception and relativity that puts perception in centre-stage in ascribing meaning to phenomenon.

The ultimate desired outcome of phenomenon in the African construction of the WHAT is expressed in ***Essence***. Miller (1997) defines essence as, “... that which makes a thing what it is – the inner nature or most important quality of a thing or person; the nature of a thing throughout its change from potentiality to actuality”. For the African, essence signifies ‘both an inner self and an inner peace’ attained also through maintenance of our ethics of the community, reflections, meditations, predisposition, and ‘calls’. It is the holistic total of the meaningful elements of an entity; our existence and essence, our life-world. The real essence of the WHAT is in the ‘whatness’ – its ***Quiddity*** – something, which makes it what it is and hence makes it different from others. For the African it captures the element of identity or ‘whatness’ – ‘things are what they are’.

For the African, essence and therefore quiddity are essential properties of also the HOW and the WHY. This depicts the complexities of African sciences. We come along with a new set of challenges to the scientific world querying the very basis of our professionalism.

THE WHY

As part of African logic, if phenomenon is established, there is the need to establish the WHY. The dimension of the WHY spans spirituality, humanity and nature. The central emerging property of the WHY things happen as they may is their cosmovision (their view of the world or worldview and also experiences they have encountered through experiential learning). Through the lenses of our cosmovision, sense or meaning is attributed or given to a WHY of an action or inaction. This becomes a basis for establishing 'knowing structures' – ontology, that help attain Essence and Quiddity.

For the African, the concept of cosmovision includes the assumed interrelationships between spirituality, nature and humankind. It describes the role of supernatural powers, the natural processes that take place and the relationship between humans and nature, and it makes explicit the philosophical and scientific basis on which interventions in nature take place (Haverkort and Millar, 1992). (*It must be established here that there is not one cosmovision for Africa but as many as perceptions and beliefs of the cosmic world differ*). It often indicates a hierarchy of divine beings, spiritual beings (especially the ancestors) and natural forces (such as climate, diseases, floods). These hierarchies give rise to several rituals in which the elders, traditional priests and soothsayers play prominent roles and prescribe the way problem-solving and general experimentation can take place. Cosmovision predisposes the way the African peoples go about knowledge and technology development, which is their indigenous knowledges. Hence, indigenous knowledges, and the cosmovisions inherent in them, determine how society organizes itself and how effectively it achieves its goals (Millar, 1996).

THE HOW

The way 'Knowing' is conducted deals largely with the African Epistemologies. Here again, 'knowing' is constructed by a combination of reality, relativity and ontologies, which lend themselves to the establishment of Essence/Quiddity.

In order to deepen my understanding of the ways of the different forms of knowing – *epistemologies* and (re)construct the structures of knowledge and knowing – *ontologies*, it was important to look at this at various levels of addressing the WHY and the HOW. The relevant vocabulary underpinning knowing was analysed as follows:

SPRITUAL LEVEL

Ancestor/Saakumine: He is the first grandfather of a lineage, the founder of the village, and similar elders of the lineage who have distinguished themselves in leadership roles. However, a grandmother in the same category is not called an ancestor because she came from another lineage. There can be many ancestors referring to a group of grandfathers in the same lineage. *Saakumine* are therefore dead male parents at the remote end of the lineage where the living beings or people can still remember very well. In that case, they are a point of reference for those alive when it comes to family, household or lineage matters. The Ancestors are at the apex of the ontological ladder. All knowledges and wisdoms emanate from here and is created and recreated by them. The development of knowledges is guided by the spiritual influences of the Ancestors (by showing ample signs of concordance and discordances). There is an array of spiritual institutions that safeguard the interest of the Ancestors and that are in

constant dialogue with the ancestral world – forming a vital link/inter- and intra-connectedness with the *Mwin* (God).

The concept of spirits is key in the expression of *Saakumnu*. The positions of the Dagaaba with respect to spirituality are captured by Uka (1991) as cited in Goduka (2001) thus, “...Indigenous *spirituality has no historical founder. It came into existence as a result of human experience of the mystery of the cosmos. In an attempt to solve the mystery of the universe, indigenes have asked questions, searched for answers, and come to the conclusion that the mystery must be supernatural power, to whom belongs both the visible and invisible.*

It is a spiritual value and practice that is grounded and originated from the indigenous people’s environment. It is neither preached nor imported. It permeates the private and public lives, as well as in their daily activities. Indigenes are not converted to their spirituality. Each is born into it, lives by it, practices it either in public or private life.

It has no written literature, sacred scriptures or creedal forms. It is an essentially oral tradition passed on also through mythology and legends, stories and folktales, songs and dances, liturgies and rituals, proverbs and pithy-sayings, adages and riddles. Some of these oral forms are preserved in indigenous arts and crafts, symbols and emblems, names of people and places. Thus, African works of art are not merely for entertainment or for pleasing the eye. Rather they usually are a means of transmitting cultural and spiritual values, sentiments, ideas and indigenous cultural ‘truths’”.

Within the context above, the Dagaaba believe that all living things have *Sie/Vuru* – this is *Mwin’s* (God) gift to all His creation on earth. If that is out, there is no life or the living thing is dead. In the tree kingdom, for example, The *Dagaaba* believe that the *sie* of one tree can do harm to a person who kills it. That is there is a popular saying that, “*a tie nyogu na*” (meaning the *sie*/soul of the tree has harmed the person who killed it).

One important encounter of this investigation was the linkage between the WHY and the WHERE. The Elders were quick to explain at length the abode of the ancestral spirits – which doubles as the repository of knowledge for the Dagaaba. The following vocabulary captured the WHERE:

Saakumine/kipimeteng: *Kpimeteng* is a place or abode where *Siir-vele* (i.e. good spirits/souls) goes to stay after death. *Siir-faa* (bad spirits or souls) do not go to *kipimeteng*. In other words, *kipimeteng* can be referred to as heaven in Christianity where there is joy or happiness after good death (deaths that are by custom more natural and without sin or evil).

Nyere/Seer: Is a person (man or woman) who is believed to have ‘four eyes’ which literally means additional powers of sight than the ordinary two eyes that every human being has. In that case, he/she is capable of knowing the good or bad deeds that has befallen another person in a locality or beyond. *Nye-nyere as protector*: Is that type of *nyeru* that saves the lives of others from the attack by the *sien* or evil-eye/spirits. *Nye-nyere as evil (Sien)*: The *Sien* is the opposite of *nye-nyere* as protector – the category that brings or causes harm or evil on persons. They manifest themselves in various types of soothsayers and sorcerers.

These spiritual level structures act as ‘knowledge safeguards’. All the knowledges and wisdoms that emanate from the ancestors are protected (patented) by a reward and punishment system that is administered by these intermediary structures.

SOCIAL LEVEL

At the social level some ontological structures include the following:

- *Deb-nyang* & *Pog-nyang*: This structure refers to a man and/or a woman who are 60 years or older. At this age they are seen to be repository of wisdom for their siblings, the family, and the community as a whole. They are an asset to the family, household and the community in which they live because they are contacted for either indigenous knowledge in order to improve upon an innovation or solutions to posed problems. They serve as ‘the institutional memory’, an archive for the community, and a museum of the culture of the people. There is a saying among the Dagaaba that, “*pog-nyang yel-ke faarigyo*”, (meaning the old lady says stop at that point- indicates a critical moment and pronouncement that is intended to safeguard the secretes of the lineage). This shows the authoritative role of the *pog-nyang* in knowing.
- *Poltaar/Posibiir*: These are men or women who are born either on the same day, in the same week or month in a particular year. In other words, they take themselves as peers irrespective of the family, household or community they belong to. The structural role of *poltaalu/posibiilu* lies in the Dagaara wise saying that, “*nyirgegene yelke song-ɛel ni kpeng*” (literally meaning joint effort is better than individual). That is why the Dagaaba use this type of social grouping in agricultural production (*Kotaar*: Is a type of organized labour for agricultural production among either the same age group, clanship or household. Mostly, such groupings are either only males or only females. However, a mix grouping (men and women) is possible). This structure endorses and enhances the communal spirit of the African – **‘the collective I**. Also, *poltaalu/posibiilu* offers some learning opportunities within the formed social group. This is because those who want to learn are freer with their *poltaabe/posibiir* in the search for improved way of working than those outside the social group who are either older or younger.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

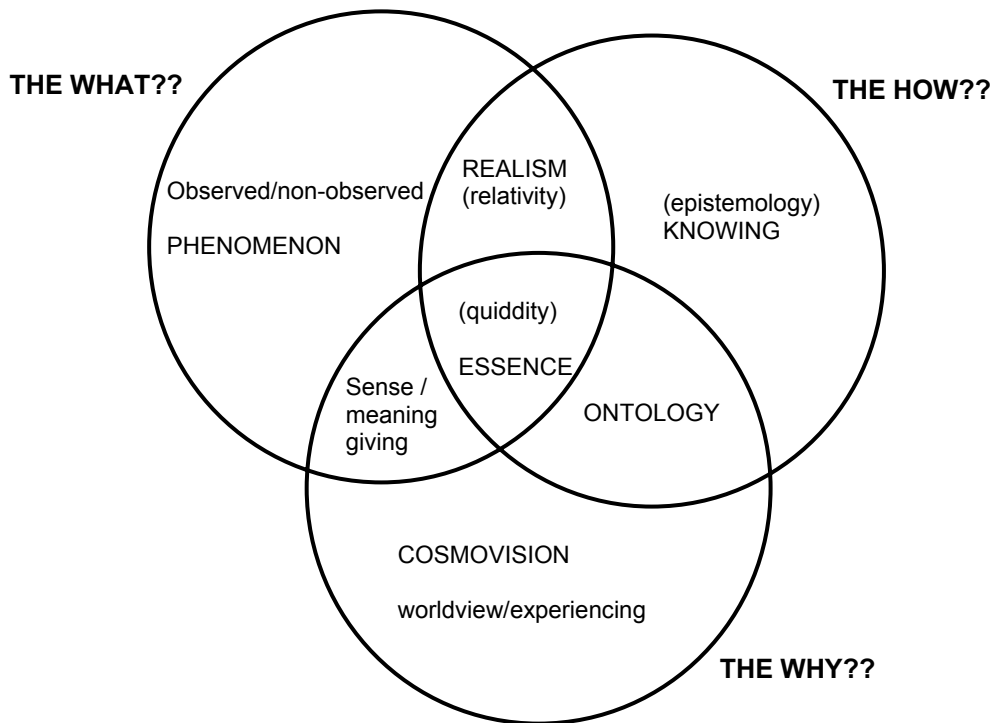
Some structural arrangements exist at the human activity systems level. We narrate our encounter from the level of masculinity and femininity. This depicts the fact that some forms of gender expression in African cultures are of a spiritual nature – going beyond just social differentiations of man and woman.

Deb-nu-gbaata/Pog-nu-gbaanaar: The notion of male dominance is rife among the Dagaaba. *Deb-nu-gbaata* (means man and his number – three) and *Pog-nu-gbaanaar* (means woman and her number – four). The number three connotes superiority over the number four. This superiority is expressed in stability, courage, and resilience. The Dagaaba also say that as the man is the landlord or the family head, he must act after three offences such as an insult or disobedience by someone whereas the woman has to be more patient for the fourth time.

The given structural degree of 3x for the man and 4x for the woman is made manifest in burial performances, the dressing of the dead, the pouring of libation and the performance of sacrifices. The general codification of knowledge and learning assumes 3x and 4x structural arrangements. A literature search on the significance of numbering brought me to the works of Bullinger (1837-1913); Roerich (1925). Some of the findings here border on the observations made by this study about the Dagaara.

This complex knowledge of the science of numbers and mathematics of the Dagaara surely requires deeper investigation and proper documentation.

A PARADIGM FOR AFRICAN SCIENCES



Conclusions

I conclude this discussion on a *paradigm of African Sciences* by drawing attention to the overlaps and interactions after having discussed the basic emerging properties of the WHAT, the HOW, and the WHY.

Essence is central and a common denominator for African sciences. This is the desired state of our body of knowledges that may capture synergy or entropy (where entropy is also a desired state in attaining the perfection of our knowledges). Hence, Essence is the middle of the interaction of all three sets and forms a basis of sense-making with respect to the philosophy of the sciences of the African.

The points of intersection between the WHAT and the WHY give 'Sense and Meaning' to Essence.

The intersection of the WHAT and the HOW adds on dimensions of 'Realism and Relativity' to Essence. The WHY and HOW intersect to introduce 'Structures of Knowing' – Ontology to Essence.

In my attempt to develop a 'scientific framework' I have ended up realising, from the tuition I received from the traditional knowledge experts I encountered, that African sciences are a type of science that is very complex and better understood by the people themselves than by 'outsiders'. Some of this knowledge can be and in fact is, expressed outwardly for expanded learning and sharing but most of it is 'internally' locked up and require 'different sets of tools for scientification'. These tools include empathy, immersing/embedding, initiation and just being born into it, tutelage/apprenticeship, experiencing/experiential learning and a calling.

As I grow in this 'new form of learning' it is my hope that I will find peers to help complement my deficiencies. This remains for me a lifelong challenge and, for that matter, a challenge for African sciences and scientists – the schooled and the 'natives' who we often refer to as unschooled are all key players in establishing a niche in the world of science for African sciences.

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Obuntu concept in Uganda: The case of the Basoga of Eastern Uganda

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Abstract

This chapter explores the obuntu/ubuntu concept as a Bantu philosophy. It first deals with etymology of the concept with reference to ethnic groupings, genealogical resemblance rooted in origin, essence, ethics and how the three affects African culture. It attempts to give a comparative analysis of root words, their usage and meaning. The structural basis of ubuntu philosophy based on the spiritual, natural and human world is presented in a Venn diagram showing the interconnectedness of all the worlds in relation to God. The significance of the interrelationships and how they affect African peoples is also explained. African jurisprudence is outlined and compared to Western jurisprudence. It concludes on the assertion that Africans use taboos to forbid and sanction certain behaviour, which behaviour is controlled by myth to guide action or inaction of a particular group of free human beings.

Key words: Obuntu/Ubuntu, Ethics, Jurisprudence, Taboo, Behaviour.

Socio-cultural origins of the Bantu

The Bantu belong to one of four major language groups in Uganda and are part of a larger Bantu grouping in east, central and southern Africa. Their origin, creation, myths and migration vary from region to region but there are similarities despite distance from one tribal group to the other in Africa.

In the case of Uganda, it is believed that the Bantu represent a group of people who migrated from the Eastern Congo and settled in Southern Uganda and formed many related ethnic groupings namely the Bakiga, Banyankole, Batoro, Banyoro Baganda, Basoga, Banyole, Bagisu, Bagwere, Bakonjo, Bamba and Baruli. The Bantu form the biggest language group in Uganda making up over 70% of the population. Except the Banyankole, the Bantu are basically an agricultural people and produce both cash crops such as coffee, cotton, tea and food crops such as bananas, sweet potatoes, rice, maize, sorghum and vegetables. In addition, they rear animals including cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, and poultry.

The Bantu have a close linguistic and cultural affinity, which is more often than not evidenced by cultural ties, body of knowledge, expressions and vocabulary and the relationship between the living, the dead, the ancestral spirits and nature as the ultimate form of beauty and source of livelihood. The commonality in words and concepts, further explained by migration roots, tell a lot about the Bantu peoples of Africa. The Bantu peoples are bound together by the Obuntu philosophy.

The ethical conception of Obuntu

Etymologically, Obuntu in Bantu conception means an inner feeling of a person, which involves the feeling of oneness, love, tenderness in one's 'heart' and care for other humans. Among the Bantu, a human being is regarded as one with conscience and tender heart and as such must behave rationally as a free moral being. The person who possesses Obuntu is that generous person who cares for others with a rational sense of belonging to a society.

In Bantu psychology, all humans have an ego. The ego can be of two types – one of selfishness and the other of people-centredness. The selfish ego gives rise to individualism where a person does not care about other people around him/herself. Individualism entails self-seeking at the expense of the common good, where one behaves as if one is alone in society to the extent that one looks at other people in society as less important and/or burdens. In so doing, one ignores them, despises them and does everything possible to avoid their company. A selfish person always pursues his/her own good. Such a person does not believe in the common good and therefore looks at people who believe in the common good as foolish in the sense that they spend a lot of their valuable time and resources on others. To him/or her a common good, as the obuntu concept entails, is a way of enslavement that subordinates one to societal dictates thus curtailing personal freedoms and liberties.

In a moral society, individualism is not encouraged because no person is an island. For that matter, every individual person can live a free life as she/he wishes but the common good overrides selfish behaviour. The common good (within Obuntu), therefore, calls for persons that possess such virtues as generosity and care for other individuals in society.

Ethically, human beings are said to possess both bad and good behaviour depending on circumstances but it is expected that rational beings would choose goodness over evil or bad under any circumstances. Where a person falls short of that moral virtue, he/she is reprimanded by society. Society applies sanctions consistent with the natural law. What this implies is that while some unethical behaviour such as theft, murder, and causing bodily harm to another person are punishable by society using set rules laid down in a code of ethics, law or conduct, Obuntu ethics does not fall in those categories that cause great harm.

Extreme forms of unethical behaviour that cause physical pain, as outlined above, are regarded as first-degree harm and evil. However, there is also second-degree harm, which is equally bad, although no actual or physical pain is caused to an individual. This second-degree harm is categorized as bad because one is only behaving in such a manner that offends others without necessarily hurting an individual physically. Even if the individual is hurt in the process, the laws applied are not coded.

For example among the Basoga in Uganda when one dies the community around does not go to work. Community members are expected to gather in the deceased's family house and console them for their loss. The moral implications are that every one is bound to die and in the event that a family loses, one of its own it needs everyone's company. If one does not come to console the family of the deceased, he/she is regarded as bad or short of Obuntu. The punishment for that kind of lack of Obuntu can be administered in paying that person back in the same way. That is to say, no one will come to console such a defaulting family in their turn

of grieve or misfortune. Aristotle states that what is proper for one individual may not be proper for another, since people differ in so many fundamental ways, but on the other hand, he says that the correct way of living for any given person cannot be determined by reason alone (Stroll and Popkin, 1978). This means that while a person can make free decisions to do what he wants using reason the same rational means of doing things can be misinterpreted to mean that one can live without the company of others. To be able to live a happy life, reason cannot be a fundamental guide to human behaviour since society does respect intuition as a major guiding principle.

A linguistic analysis and the ethical ingredients of Ubuntu

Bantu comes from a root-word '*ntu*', which may imply people, things and space plus time. Comparatively, Omuntu means an individual person who, Aristotle would refer to as the golden being by which he meant that a good person should be between the two extremes of too good and bad. In physical terms, this is a person who is not too small, not ugly, neither too fat nor too tall. These are also described differently although their description is rather offensive because they are perceived negatively. For example, a small person or thing is referred to as akantu, an ugly person is referred to as oguntu or ekintu.

In Kagame's writings expounding on the Bantu philosophy with reference to Rwanda in Central Africa, he demonstrate that there are several categories of being. These have semblance with conception of being among the Basoga, Baganda, Banyole, Bagwere and other Bantu speaking peoples in Uganda. Below are some of the meanings of Bantu related concepts according to Kagame.

| Meaning of related concepts | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Omuntu | Human being with intelligence/person with good moral traits |
| Ikintu/Ekintu | Being without intelligence/a single thing |
| Ahantu/Awantu | Localizing and temporizing being or a physical place |
| Oguntu | A big and unknown thing or a fat ugly or bad person |
| Obuntu | The attribute of being a moral and harmonious human being Modifying being both in moral and non-moral terms |
| Akantu | A tiny or small thing whose name cannot be easily known. Sometimes the concept is used to demean a small person (that small person) |
| Ebintu | Things that are mixed together occupying a common place. These may include household utensils |
| Oluntu | A long and thin thing or a thin person |
| Obuntu bulamu | Being morally good, ethical, understanding, considerate and or people centered |

Obuntu, in the Bantu speaking ethnic groups in Uganda and probably elsewhere in Africa, means an ethical and intelligent person with the will to make independent decisions. In psychological terms, obuntu implies a person with conscience and good will in which case Obuntu can be described in terms of social behaviour. It is about how people relate to each other: their behavioural and moral traits.

In Bantu philosophy, a morally upright person is said to possess the ethical attributes of ubuntu. For a person to qualify to have Ubuntu one must be considerate or kind, empathise with others, show respect to others and have a feeling of belonging to communities of intelligible beings. Ubuntu also refers to a set of principles, or rules that guide conduct and regulate behaviour, including sanctions or taboos that forbid certain kinds of conduct. The concept in its ordinary sense connotes morality or norms implying that certain actions are commendable, praised and/or acceptable as constituting a moral uprightness.

The concept Ubuntu is taken as a measure of goodness; a measure accorded to individuals by society. Society prescribes actions as good or bad in accordance with people's attitudes, opinions, desires, wishes or beliefs. Society judges actions as bad or good, right or wrong and as well, people as morally upright or evil in character.

A bad person is said to lack Ubuntu. He/she is said to behave like animals and birds, which do not have the human intellectual aptitude and moral behaviour. In sociological terms, Ubuntu means a social being – one who likes and cherishes living with other persons in a given environment or community. What we are emphasizing here is that while Omuntu refers to a living human being not all human beings have the intellectual and moral capability to possess Ubuntu. Some people do not possess Ubuntu because being ethically upright requires a sense of responsibility for one's actions. If a person's state of mind is not all right, his moral responsibility is limited by involuntary behaviour. For example, the insane person is not considered to be possessing ubuntu/ethical behaviour because he/she has no control over the will.

Ubuntu entails acting rationally as a rational being hence any one who acts irrationally is devoid of ubuntu. In precise terms the way a person relates to another, his/her society or communities in the neighbourhood in an ethical manner are what make him a person Omuntu and this differentiates him/her from brutes and gods.

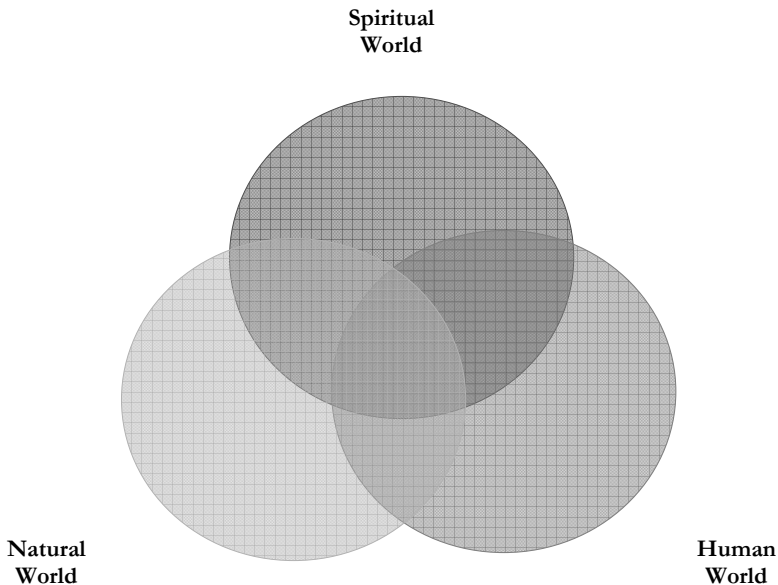


Figure 1 Structural Basis of Ubuntu Philosophy

A: People with special powers

Traditional healers
Spirit mediums
Sooth Sayers
Spiritual Healers
Church Priests
Imams and Sheiks
Magicians
Ancestors
Witches

B: Sacred beings

Sacred plants
Sacred Animals
Sacred groves
Totemic creatures
Sacred hills
Rocks
Sacred birds

C: Human inventions

Infrastructures
Structures: Computers, cars, aeroplanes
People with the intelligence to invent/transform

Significance of the interrelationships in the Venn diagram

The three circles act in perfect balance between the Natural World, the Spiritual World and the Human World. This is where humans strive to be ideal so that they become part of the community of people with special attributes. In modern times, category C is very significant in the sense that it comprises people who have the intelligence to transform nature into appliances that make people live in a better environment. These can be the kings, presidents and scientists/innovators. In the Venn diagram, the circles are wide and show a small portion of the interactions. In essence, it means that we know very little about all the three worlds. This also shows that there is a lot in existence that is still unknown. Endogenous Development here has a window of discovering more knowledge.

Above all else is the Supreme Being, God. God stands not as part of the circle but in the centre and above all the three worlds since He is the Creator and One who balances all that which exists in perfect harmony.

Ubuntu as a sense of belonging

The Basoga and probably all the Bantu-speaking people belong to a clan system by virtue of birth. A family is the smallest unit and this unit gives rise to a lineage. The lineage is a group of family members claiming descent to a known ancestor. The members in the lineage are immediate brothers and sisters or sons of the great grand father. The small network of relationships grow and become further distant and yet maintain common names, totems and common rituals to give rise to clans. The clan members claim a common origin and in such matters involving family decisions, the head of clan has a big role to play especially in settling land and inheritance disputes. Through internal migration, clan members move to different places and only congregate in the ancestral place in times of need or celebration such as deaths, disputes, festivals and marriage, among others.

The village/community is a combination of several clans. In such a multi-clan setting, certain codes of behaviour are agreed upon to govern and regulate the behaviour of the people of the community. Such behaviour that replaces the role of the clan is the *baisekantu*. Baisekantu is a community organization that assists the deceased family with funeral arrangements. This involves the digging of the grave, contributions of food, water, firewood and money to assist in the funeral arrangements. Every community member is expected to be a member of the burial association. If for any reason one does not contribute to the survival of the

association, one is not given a punishment except that when he/she is in need the community can pay back by abandoning him/or her in their time of need. The essence is that if one does not empathise with others then the other community members should exhibit the same feeling against them.

Basoga jurisprudence: certainty of proof versus arguing a case

The Basoga form of justice is based on certainty of proof and not on merely arguing a case as is in the conventional justice system. What we need to explain here is that Basoga administrative justice is based on Ubuntu philosophy. There are unwritten but systematic methodologies of handling issues of conflict with the law and breach of conduct. Judgement is based on the gravity of the matter and the circumstances under which a crime is committed. The Council of Judges, who are people of credibility and imbued with immense old experimental knowledge of traditional wisdom, act as counsellors who give judgement on the basis that both the aggrieved and the offender are reconciled and life continued normally.

Under colonialism, Basoga administrative justice changed. They were replaced with written laws with prescriptive judgement. The colonizers also introduced prisons for custodial purposes and offenders were made to appear before special people such as trained magistrates, lawyers, prosecutors, police and prison warders. With this sort of intimidating arrangements, offenders could lose a case even if they were innocent. The lawyers argued a case using their convincing styles or intimidation rather the morality of the people and community. This served to widen conflict between the aggrieved and the sentenced “offender.” Even after serving a prison term the offender and the aggrieved never reconcile because the prison sentence or restitution, in civil cases, was not based on reality and circumstances under which the offence was committed.

The Basoga justice system was based on trying to widen the circle of tolerance and in so doing the same case would be judged differently depending on the nature and circumstances under which a crime was committed. For instance, a hungry man who steals a tuber of cassava can not be forced to pay a whole garden or sent to jail for a couple of months in which case the family he was feeding for would be left in total disarray. That sort of justice did not mean that a crime or an offence was condoned (Batuuka, 1993). Rather, it ensured the sanctions did not destroy the offender or their dependants. Hence, when conflicts occurred in Basoga they were peacefully resolved through agreed procedures that promoted reconciliation (Mudoola, 1974).

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Basoga would apply such proverbs like “*Bwotemera mwinho eigumba hyo omutwe, sooka onhige kugugwo*” literally meaning that ‘before you make judgement against your friend first consider your self in those circumstances.’

Courtesy as a virtue

Courtesy is a measure of Ubuntu and can take several forms including greeting, calling on neighbours, relatives or friends whether in good or bad times. In normal conditions in the lives of the Basoga, greeting is a very powerful tool in interpersonal relations and it is regarded as morally wrong not to greet other members of the community either individually or collectively. The Basoga respect others and one way

to show respect is by greeting fellow humans. Greeting is a sign that one belongs to a community of humans and not of brutes. That warm feeling displayed through greeting also shows that one is not potentially harmful.

Greeting has valuable ingredients in conflict management, as it is also another sign that calms down high tempers, thus resolving some petty conflicts that would escalate into a big quarrel. If a quarrel ensues between individual persons after a misunderstanding of an issue and thereafter one of the respondents greets his/her colleague and the colleague responds then the conflict is assumed to have been settled.

Ubuntu and taboo morality

In traditional Busoga, *Ubuntu* was operationalised by taboo morality to ensure that everyone had to observe certain rules and rituals at all times. Taboos were and still are vital in shaping the morals of the society, despite the fact that many of them have faced criticism because of their sacred nature. Some of the taboos, however, were good in themselves as they played a positive role in ensuring harmony between the living and the dead. Those against incest cannot be disputed; since today's scientific discovery confirms that children born of people with the same blood are likely to develop poorly. From the customary point of view, incest was an evil and punishable by spirits through incurable diseases, insanity or infertility. As such, families had to guard against such evil because society would judge the victims with contempt and scorn. Musicians compose embarrassing songs as a way of deterring other people from such bad practice. The Basoga assert that it is only animals and birds that can practice such sex without shame or embarrassment.

It is also true that taboos can prohibit completely harmless acts such as not eating meat on Friday, not squatting at the grave, whistling at night, calling one's name at night etc. Taboos also prohibit genuinely harmful acts such as murder, incest, theft or acts of rebellion. Taboos are instrumental in promoting social stability and greater cooperation among the members of society. Morality in general aims at shaping the behaviour of individuals. A human being is a social animal, who seeks to live in harmony with other members of his/her kind. As Russell puts it: "*The main purpose of morals is to promote behaviour, serving the interests of a group and not merely of individuals.*" This is so, because individuals are only capable of fulfilling themselves as corporate members of society. Against this background, whatever was to bring harmony between individuals was taken as good among the Basoga.

One fundamental feature about a taboo is that it operated on human conscience and its strong social sanction is reinforced by public opinion. A rule as applied in court may not necessarily be applied in matters involving custom. The latter only concerns itself with beliefs and observance of "dos" and "don'ts". However irrelevant they may be, taboos are still respected.

Justification of taboo morality

We have dealt at length with the description of taboos as observed by the Basoga. In the justification, taboos shall be given a philosophical interpretation. To begin with, many ordinary people observe customary rules because society had upheld and inherited them, since the unknown past, with successive generations copying without

question certain justifications were not properly handled. With a reflective mind, one puts to oneself very often in trivial circumstances such questions as:

- Is my conduct defensible in moral terms, decent, honourable, and respect worthy? Is it useful considering all things? Is it fair or the reverse?
- An unreflective mind would respond that he or she behaves in a certain way because it is the custom of the people, and they feel an intense loyalty to them.

One can accept the above explanation of behaviour but not the justification, because the person here is only exposing his sentiments and loyalty to custom. A disposition of loyalty is not a virtue but a weakness and hence pre-rational. A statement should prescribe what ought to be the right action.

A justification of an action in one's society calls for one to stand in and above society so that one can give an objective judgement. Society may regard it, a deviation, if one discovered that the beliefs actually have little significance and can be phased out without short changing social harmony. This is the birth of critical thought. Critical thought calls for the validity of statements and aims at achieving the grasp of ideas in an attempt to arrive at valid conclusions. Science has achieved this method, but unfortunately, religion, old as it is, has remained under philosophical speculations, and humans continue to search for the metaphysical truth in this matter.

However, customary sentiments have their justifications despite their inability to satisfy basic rules of conventional logical analysis. Notwithstanding the fact that they provide raw materials for critical discussion, they also emphasize the identity of a people, their common goals and principles as well as social harmony.

Even though the taboos of the Basoga did not meet conventional logical rules, they had one fundamental role to play. This was to bring harmony among the people. The idea of social harmony sprang from the fact that one gave in to responsibility in matters concerning social order. Personal convictions for whatever reasons could never be accepted as right if society rejected them. For purposes of corporate existence, society was right in moral issues and every one was expected to subordinate his or her will to the general body of rules, of custom.

As per purposes of peace between the living and the dead, taboos had profound importance. They helped society to achieve a minimum level of peace and order, as harmful acts were forbidden. Even in contemporary societies, such myths still exist. To date we observe certain taboos to keep society harmonious and prepare some one for a better life after death.

The discussions here show that customary beliefs were part of a traditional Musoga, but in other times, a Musoga was a moral teacher who taught lessons concerning right behaviour through proverbs in everyday life. The following section deals at length with sayings and their interpretations.

Obuntu concept from the perspective of behaviour

The Basoga use imagery and proverbs to articulate what they want in a short, precise way but with deep meanings. For instance, a proverb like "don't chase a mad man when you are naked" has deep meanings for the Basoga. Below are detailed examples of some of the proverbs or ground rules signifying obuntu?

Rules of conduct for children

The peace and order of the community depended on the way children were brought up. Viewed as the future of the community, it was the responsibility of the adults to train them (children) to become good adults and people.

Among the Basoga, it was and still is a moral offence for a boy to beat up his parents because the latter made up what can be referred to as teachers and sub-creators. Family, friends and society would isolate anyone who beats their parent or elder. The act is unfortunate, and since parents are sub-creators, their words were more or less curses. To drop tears is, enough curse which in the actual sense was unforgivable, as it is “impossible to pick one’s tears once dropped”, as the saying goes. Even if the parents are wrong, an act of abusing or beating them is not condoned. Always public opinion is in favour of the parent, even if there were good reasons to justify the act. In this sense, therefore, society expects children to exercise maximum tolerance towards old people.

As young children, society had the duty to impart certain rules of discipline that would enable them grow up as responsible members of society, capable of fostering harmonious existence of the Soga society.

In case of girls, as they began to develop breasts they were supposed to be acquainted with the morals and taboos of society. The aunts and mothers had to play important roles as educators. They were duty bound to impart the necessary “dos” and “don’ts” of society. For example, grown up girls were not supposed to keep very close to grown up boys, lest they fell easy prey to boys. Their beer drinking habits were restricted, but not totally forbidden, as the Bakiga in western Uganda did.

The reason was that when drunk, the girl might develop excitement for males forcing her into sexual immorality: an act that was regarded as evil before marriage. The right conduct for a girl was that she was supposed to be humble and obedient to cultural values.

For this matter, the teaching of children was in itself a greater value since society needed people who would be able to foster corporate existence. Children made up a vulnerable stage in human development. To deny them education and training in this early stage was bound to cause problems in future; as undisciplined children would result into a chaotic society.

Obuntu and the rules of convenience

Among the Basoga, there were certain rules of behaviour that were just for the sake of convenience. Even if a member deviated from them, it was not considered a breach of basic rules as would be the case if one committed murder, suicide, incest or theft. Such behaviour concerning matters of convenience was tolerated because it was a matter of courtesy. In such cases, minor rules were prescribed and enforced by isolation. The order of conduct included greeting and empathise with those in sorrow. In the latter case, one was expected to say sorry to those in sorrow through visits. What drove people to observe such rules, which did not breach the basic ones, was that anyone could encounter similar circumstances and would require help, sympathy and care from other members of society?

However, it is important to note that, corporate existence was vital where human life was threatened. This basic idea forced people to observe even those rules that were minor in significance. Visiting the sick, calling at a funeral, greeting other

people as one met fellow human beings, were ethical values that the Basoga cherished since they were good *per se*. These minor rules became dependent on major ones like corporate existence and social harmony. Whereas in the technical sense of the meaning of the term, there was no breach of morality when one did not greet others, society became very serious on disciplinary issues. It was the duty of society to teach its members the *Obuntu* or 'right' things to be done regardless of the significance of certain rules of conduct. A Musoga thought that if one could not observe minor principles, they were vulnerable to violating basic rules. Hence, those who deviated from the teaching of society were treated as rebels, and for purposes of corporate existence and social harmony, such people were dealt with according to the dictates of society.

In Soga philosophy, one could not be right and the rest of the society wrong. Most societies do believe in this idea also. As such, one had to succumb to the wishes of the rest of society, if necessary. Society demanded that one must be friendly and show a feeling of belonging and in this respect, one owed society due respect by recognizing the importance of other members. This made the concept of morality achieve a wider meaning than the usual one in philosophy today. Below are two examples of rules of convenience.

Digging when the Corpse is not yet buried

Among the Basoga, it was a moral offence for one to dig when one of the village members has died and had not yet buried. If one was found digging, society put severe punishments against him or her, including a fine and public flogging, if deemed necessary. To dig as such, could only be justified as a sign that both the deceased and the one digging were great enemies. The act of digging here meant a sort of celebration. However, it was true that quarrels did exist among members of the same village, but death of one member was a public affair. In this sense, therefore, public morality was exercised. Sharing in sorrow with the deceased's family was regarded as a vital moral value, and a sign that the deceased has been living in harmony with the dictates of society.

Sometimes, there were cases where a family could be isolated by the rest of the members of the village. The reason is that, some fellows thought that society had no right to impose sanctions in their private matters. There was nothing private as far as death was concerned and anyone who thought so was violating the basic principles of harmony/*Obuntu*. Below is a story of a rich man who had violated these minor rules.

"One family suffered an embarrassment when the members of the village boycotted a funeral, because the rich man had no concern with the dictates of society. He lived in an enclosure with the necessary security. Every visitor had to fill a form before being granted a talk with him. The rich man treated his neighbours as security risks and nursed all intentions to buy off their pieces of land to reduce the risks.

One day the rich man lost his wife and news spread all over the village, but none of the village members paid a courtesy call at his home. Friends of the rich man came but not even a single member of the village was seen near the man's home. Even if it was a breach of the rules, all the people continued with their routine work.

Efforts to get gravediggers proved futile as everybody had been warned against giving any form of assistance, as the rich man insisted before, that he could do everything he fancied regardless of the fellow village members' assistance. The voice

of the village insisted that the rich man should do everything alone as his pronouncements held.

From this story, several ideas can be inferred. First, it shows that society had the necessary tools to put sanctions against anybody who proved uncooperative. Secondly, there were certain things that need collective responsibility regardless of social status, for purposes of social harmony. Thirdly, certain taboos were flexible and were only accepted as a matter of convenience. For instance, a taboo sanctioning work after the death of a member has no sacred bearing. Such a rule helped to remind the people of their collective responsibility in assisting a corporate member of society or to punish the non-cooperative member.

It is not a contradiction to react to the same event of death in two different ways i.e. the refusal by the village community to assist a rich man at his funeral as the custom was. A rule or custom is an outcome of a social contract one makes with society. In this sense *obuntu bulamu* or moral behaviour is a social contract between the person and the community in which one lives. Since the rich man did not enter into the contract with his fellow citizens, the latter had no moral obligation to render any help. In this light therefore this incident acted as a lesson to the world – to bad people, because they feared the judgement of society with its strong tools.

Conclusion

Obuntu is a moral trait, a sense of humanity and, in ethical terms it is the right or the good thing to do so that one lives a happy life in community. The purpose of living as human being is embedded in the very philosophy of the Basoga people. Obuntu expresses an ability to excel and to be perfect as a human being. We need to crave for power and prowess, excel in behaviour such as being honest and going beyond the ordinary that we can claim to be exercising the concept in its African sense.

Negative impact of Obuntu

On the other hand Obuntu has a negative impact on many important and development issues as the community or individuals having a sense of *obuntu bulamu* have to suspend their valuable time and other resources on others for purposes of harmony. Some examples of lost time include; wedding meetings, funeral arrangements until the corpses are buried, the sick who are hospitalised at home, those who have been admitted to hospitals and even those who have been discharged from hospitals, to those who have had miscarriages, to those who have lost their close and distant relatives, to those who have been bailed from police cells and prisons, to those who have been convicted sentenced and have completed their prison sentence in jail, they even go to the extent of attending and consoling those who have lost their domestic animals and poultry, and other types of sicknesses or problems that might have happened to their fellow Omuntu.

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Vodoun as a socio-economic development factor in Benin

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Abstract

In Benin and in several other parts of the world, the Vodouns are usually seen from a negative perspective. This situation has been aggravated these days by the promoters of foreign religions, who act in such a way that many Vodoun believers avoid to worship the Vodouns openly and so develop a kind of underground practice. Such people often are more economically and politically powerful and have more influence on the modern communication means. Among the Vodoun worshippers there are the pure adepts and those who practice syncretism (that is they worship the Vodouns together with an other mainstream religion). This paper deals with the reasons for people to worship the Vodoun and the roles the latter plays in the socio-economic development of Benin. To this end, qualitative data have been collected through literature review, observation and interviews with people involved in these activities in urban and rural areas. These findings show that the Vodoun is present in rural areas as well as in urban areas. It is socio-economically significant for Benin society through its contribution to people's healthcare, natural resources conservation, agricultural activities and for that matter in facilitating and improving the general well-being of the people.

Key words: Vodoun, Belief Systems, Social Learning, Natural Resource Management, Socio-economic Development.

Vodouns as a worldview of a people

This paper deals with the Vodoun in Benin society and specifically with the syncretistic behaviour of people and some of the roles played by the Vodoun in those societies. The interest in this topic arose from the observation that traditional belief and worshiping practices are widespread in Benin. The conventional strategies for development are not successful and we need to search for alternative strategies. There is a tendency to go back to our roots. It is not possible to do this and ignore the role played by the Vodoun.

Many people in Benin practice foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam and at the same time demonstrate interest in Vodoun. They sometimes practice both religions at the same time. Vodoun, defines their spiritual, social and material worldviews. Despite the hostility of modern religions with their modern means of communication as well as economic and political powers, Vodoun still exists and develops. Where there is a blend, Vodoun is often the dominant factor. To emphasise the negative aspects of Vodoun or to simply equate Vodoun to the devil is to demonstrate very little understanding of a peoples' culture and hence does injustice to a peoples' worldview. Whatever negative picture is painted of the Vodoun, it still

persists in Benin Society either in its pure state or in combination with other forms of spirituality or spiritual expressions.

Why is the situation like it is? Why do people behave the way they do? What roles do Vodoun play in the life of individuals? Such are the questions we try to answer in this paper. But before we attempt to answer these questions, we will examine some positions by reviewing some pertinent literature.

Conceptual framework

Faith

According to the Bible, “Faith is the certainty of the things we hope for; a proof of things one does not see” (Hebrew 11:1). Faith concerns everybody and is one of the essential energies which makes humans function. A faithless or hopeless being is lifeless as expressed by the following popular statements: “He who lives, hopes” or “He who hopes never dies from hunger or anger”. When we trust in ourselves or in other persons, in nature and/or in any divinity or spirit, when we desire something fervently, it is an act of faith. This act determines every religion or philosophy and defines the behaviour of an adherent.

Syncretism

Syncretism is briefly the act of believing or trusting in and practicing more than one religion at the same time. This practice is frequent in Africa, and especially in Benin where people worship Christianity or Islam at the same time with the worship of Vodoun or Magic.

Divinity

Divinity is a word used here to define everything functioning like God; using universal principles known about God’s creatures, mystery and spirit. God is the omniscient and the omnipotent body or spirit who created the earth and the heavens. He is what Beninese call “Sègbo, Dada-Sègbo or Sègbo-lissa” (the upper principle and power at the origin of the creation of heaven and earth), or “Yèhwé” (the luminous invisible and spiritual principle). Any entity using the principle of one of his creation such as water, earth, sun or fire and air, is considered a divinity (Monsia, 2003). The Vodoun is linked originally, to the mystery of the cosmos (Monsia, Ibid). It relates to God in his expression. According to Monsia (2003), there are four main Vodoun: “Hèevioso” (linked to the principle of sun or fire), “Ayidohwédo” (linked to air), “Dan” (linked to the principle water) and “Sakpata” (linked to the earth’s principles). He adds to this list “Lisa” and “Mawu” (God). Nowadays several Vodouns have been and are still created. These created Vodouns are more and more guided by the strength of their magical powers. All these entities influence the daily life of the faithful and their communities.

The Vodoun

It is difficult to define what Vodoun is, since its definition depends on a people’s cosmovisions or perceptions. The definitions differ according to the people’s religion,

faith, belief and or experiences. Vodoun is commonly compared to divinity or an intermediary of God. It is also expressed in terms of soul, power, mystery, devil Satan, witchcraft and talisman. The negative demonstrations of Vodoun are emphasized by Christians and Moslems and to lesser extend by syncretists, while the positive ones are highlighted by Vodounsi (those who believe in Vodoun). For many outsiders, Vodoun is created and worshiped especially to harm anybody (both followers and non-followers). It is supposed to be witchcraft and a power of misfortune.

According to Vodounsi, Vodoun is a divinity worshiped to get salvation, protection and power. It acts in spiritual/invisible domain, but its effects are physically demonstrated. According to Monsia (2003), a Vodoun is made up of “ashè or yè” (spiritual power owned and worn by the Vodounnon), natural elements or principles (air, earth, water, rainbow, leaves, animals or human parts, palm oil, etc.), a representation or a statue (made of wood, clay, iron...), a messenger (“Lègba”), and a preacher (“Fâ”). Once the Vodoun is created, adherents worship it and ask it everything they want. Figure 1 below recapitulates the components and the functioning of a Vodoun:

| Invisible/spiritual expression | Spirits posses Vodounnon or other initiated persons e.g. in worshipping |
|---|--|
| Visible demonstrations or representations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations of spiritual powers through Vodounsi in dancing, prayers, trance • Wood, clay or metal statuette, metal, animal skeleton • Plants or plant parts • Stones, rivers, forests • Animals and animals’ parts, plant leaves • Palm oil, drinks, etc. |

Figure 1 Vodoun’s expressions and functioning

Indigenous or local knowledge

It is knowledge generated, used and developed by people in a certain area based on their belief systems and worldviews. It is not limited to indigenous peoples and may include knowledge originating from elsewhere that has been internalized by local people through local processes of learning, testing and adaptation. It forms the basis of the art of identifying, combining, unfolding and protecting local resources. It is rooted in and stems from local practices. Hence, it is specific to the local context and often gender specific (Haverkort et al., 2003).

Endogenous development

Endogenous development refers to development that is mainly, though not exclusively; based on locally available resources and the way people have organized

themselves. External knowledge and resources are often used to complement these local resources. Endogenous development, therefore, does not imply isolation; nor does it limit its attention to local processes. It actively uses the opportunities provided by globalization. (Haverkort et.al., 2003).

This way of development needs also to be considered by Africans and especially by people of Benin.

Indigenous worldview or cosmovision

It is the way a certain population perceives the cosmos (or world). It includes assumed relationships between the human world, the natural world and the spiritual world. It describes the perceived role of supernatural powers, the relationship between humans and nature, and the way natural processes take place. It embodies the premises on which people organize themselves, and determines the moral and scientific basis for intervention in nature (Haverkort et.al., 2003).

Decision making and behaviour regarding belief

A person's decision-making situation depends on his/her acquaintance and perception about things or situations, aims and means, and on his/her choices (Bos cited in Van Den Ban et al., 1994). From Popkin (1979) and GTZ (1987) points of view, decision-making depends on the economic profit expected and the probability, of success, amount of risk taken, and probability of failure on social and cultural factors. It also depends on the macroeconomic context.

From these points of view, which role does spirituality play in the behaviour of believers' of religion? According to Haverkort et al. (2003), spirituality largely determines the worldview, values and knowledge concepts of the people. It includes the concept of time, the ideas about destiny, soul and life after death, as well as the relationship between humans, the spiritual world and nature. These concepts largely determine their technologies, ways of doing research, and the way people look at the present, past and future. Hence, religions play various roles in life of believers and influences their behaviours and welfare. The belief in a divinity or a powerful creature through a religion or a Vodoun are considered profitable not only by individual adherents but also by their communities. The do's and don'ts and knowledge taught thought religious and other belief-system are often known and respected by believers.

Social learning, decision making and behaviour

Social learning is about the interactive way of getting things done with actors who are interdependent with respect to some contested natural or social resources. The interactive way of getting things done is based on conflict resolution, negotiated agreement, shared learning, convergence of goals, theories, systems of monitoring and concerted action. It stands in sharp contrast to instrumental use of technologies to control nature for assumed human purposes. It also stands in sharp contrast to economics, which ascribes people to utilitarian reasoning. Social learning is likely to override reliance on both technology and the market. Given that our predicaments are increasingly anthropogenic, technology and market increasingly fail to solve our problems. Social learning is a hope-giving approach for designing the future (Röling, 1998; Hounkonnou, 2001).

According to Dangbegnon (1998), the ways of learning about resource management are:

- Divinatory processes and spiritism;
- Experimentation and observation;
- Metaphors, dialogue and interactive processes;
- Analysis and appreciation of resource use situations.

Divinatory processes consist of consulting oracles and speaking with ‘earth-spirits’ to know the cause of problems and the remedies required (Peek, 1991). It is effective for resource management where the stakeholders believe in the relationship between spiritism and sustainability of resource management.

Experimentation and observation, individual stakeholders, interest coalitions, and intervening parties in resource management are learning entities. Experimentation leads to (self-)discovery. Observation triggers change of existing norms and practices about the use of natural resources through a mechanism of self-reflection on one’s curiosity or others behaviour and activities of interest. It stimulates autonomous and horizontal diffusion of e.g. soil erosion control techniques. Mutual control in competitive resource use is based on observation of other behaviours.

A shared metaphor or proverb is a key element for learning because it synthesises meaning that can be shared. A proverb provides a model for a shared agreement. Dialogue helps to share ideas, and to enrich one’s frame of reference. Field visits, network activities, and exchange journeys can also be very effective. Interactive processes occur among facilitators and stakeholders through mapping and revision exercises to agree on territorial boundaries, to make decisions for planning, and agree on concrete actions.

Regarding analysis and appreciation of resource use situation, resource management activities themselves are potential source of learning. The role of history is important. Biophysical analysis that is based on the evolution of natural resource appropriation is one way of learning to appreciate the resource use situation. Analysing practical experiences from ongoing resource management activities itself leads to reflexive learning and consistent decision-making. The theories inspired our study approach and the analysis of our findings.

Methodology

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with farmers, Vodounnon, fa-priests, traditional faith-healers, Vodounsi, fishermen and other water users, and local authorities, and through existing documentations. Observations also permitted us to learn about the studied phenomena. The data were collected on Benin’s agricultural and natural resource areas, healthcare, natural resource conservation and the motivation for syncretism. The data were analysed using sustainable development criteria as well as people’s cosmovisions and aspirations.

Findings

Vodoun pantheon in Benin: Components and structures

There are hundreds of Vodouns in Benin. According to Falcon (1970) these are:

- Vodouns made of living or dead animals such as crocodiles (1o), vultures (aklasu), pythons (dangbe), boas (dogblossou or ayidowhedo) and ducks (kpakpa).
- Vodouns made of twins (hoho), abnormal persons (tohosou), kings (dada); dead humans or ancestors [dead king, prince and princess (nesuhue), dead exemplary persons (assen), any dead persons (kutito, egun or egungun), secret society of dead persons (oro), night-watchmen (zangbeto).
- Plant Vodouns (atinvodoun) such as iroko (loko).
- Stone Vodouns (wan, kpe).
- Water Vodouns (tovodoun, tohossou and dan).
- Earth Vodouns (ayivodoun or Sakpata).
- Rainbow Vodouns (Hebioso).
- Air Vodouns (Dan ayidowhedo).
- Metal or iron Vodouns (gu).
- Ethnic, clan or family Vodoun (guinvodoun, Xwlvodoun or dogbolossou, hinnou Vodoun).
- Individual Vodouns (lègba honoukwe or agbanohosu).

Monsia (2003) classified all the Vodouns into three groups:

- Talisman Vodouns: human creations which are various and numerous: They may take the form of talismans; individuals, family, ethnic or clan and regional Vodouns.
- Divinity Vodouns: deal with natural elements such as water, air, fire, sun or thunder and earth; and are publicly worshiped by faithfuls.
- Ancestor Vodouns: the soul of the ancestors especially those who had an exemplary stay on earth, are considered as Vodouns and are worshiped.

Vodouns and their socio-economic implications

Vodouns intervene in several domains with respect to the well-being and the misfortune of people, public security, influence of natural phenomena, and natural resource conservation. This section deals with healthcare, rainmaking and harvest improvement in agriculture, and with forest and continental water resources conservation.

Health issues and Vodoun

When Vodounsi and syncretists are ill, they usually consult the Vodounnon, or fâ priest, even if they are dealing with modern medicine. This route is especially taken when sick persons do not get satisfaction from modern medicine earlier. The fâ gives information about the past, the present and the future. It permits believers to learn

about what happened in the past, what is happening now, and could happen in the future. When the diagnosis of the harm and the problem or the situation according to which the consultation is done is known, the *fâ* and the *fâ* –priest are also able to recommend remedies such as: ceremonies to the Vodoun; collection of plants' leaves, barks or roots for teas, sometimes under certain auspicious conditions; powders or talismans making use of animal parts. It would also entail the mixture of plants and animals parts for teas, powders or talismans. The ceremonies can consist of animal sacrifices to the Vodoun or sacrifices made of fruits and other foods, prayers to Vodoun, and of fasting.

The concoction can be used as a drink or for bathing. The powders (*atin*) are used either for “scarification” (sacrifices), body powdering, inhalation, bathing, drinking or eating. The talismans are hidden anywhere as prescribed by the priest. When pledges and rules are not respected, the illness can come back another time.

Vodoun and issues of rain

Before a growing season, the adherents or practitioners of Vodouns ask the *fâ* through the *fâ* priest what the next season will be and what precautions can be taken to succeed in the cultivation of crops to improve yields. Then they perform a number of rituals to ask for a good season. If the recommendations of the *fâ* are not met, drought can occur.

During the 1980s, drought occurred in a district in the south-west of Benin. The consultation of the *fâ* revealed that a sacrifice must be performed by the District Extension Officer of the area (DEC). The DEO who is a Christian didn't want to participate in this sacrifice. He refused for a moment. But the pressure of the population obliged him to perform the ceremonies. Fortunately, as predicted, three days after the ceremony, the rain started falling permitting farmers to cultivate and to have bumper harvest for that season. What would have happened if the DEO didn't follow the *fâ*'s prescriptions?

Vodoun and harvest

In some parts of Benin, and for certain crops, when the harvest time comes, the Vodoun should be the first to “eat” the product before anybody else, in order to create good spiritual conditions for eating and for the next growing season.

A typical example concerns the ceremonies around yam [yam festival], performed on every 15th day of August in the Mahi region” in Central/Mid-Benin and in the Northern-Benin. In the “Mahi area”, the festival takes place in Savalou. It consists of the offering of prayers early in the morning on the 15th of August and the yam sacrifice to the Vodouns. Curiously, on this day a big church service is performed in the Catholic Church and many people participate. This is one example of syncretism and “complementarity” of religions in Benin. After the prayers the people eat cooked yams, fried-yams or mostly pounded-yams accompanied with sauce and meat.

Forest conservation and Vodoun

The presence of certain Vodouns in forests makes the people avoid destroying those forests in Benin (Agbo et al., 1995). There are forests of “oro” (orozoun), forests of “*fâ*” (fazoun), forests of iroko or “loko” (lokozoun) and forests of “abikou” (abikouzoun) that have survived as a result of this. This way of protecting natural

resources was observed till the 1970s when the revolutionary regime started to destroy the forests arguing that they are the homes of witchcraft. The government adopted that strategy to fight sorcerers. The change brought by Government Policy led to the destruction of several forests during the period. Fortunately, there have been resistances of some Vodounnon so that some sacred forests have not been completely degraded and so still exist.

Vodoun and water resources conservation

Whole or parts of rivers, lagoons or lakes are sometimes protected with some Vodouns against their excessive use. There are snake water “danto” e.g. the one from which the international market of Dantokpa of Cotonou originated. We don’t know if this Vodoun is still useful for lagoon protection, but it seems that it contributes more to the business, conservation and improvement of the market. Examples are Lake “Sodji” in Allada (Southern Benin), where women fetch water of exemplary persons who have died to represent “assen”; Lake “Azri” of Zagnanado in central-Benin where rites were performed for abnormal babies “tohosu” and the Rivers “Dido” and “Gudu” of Abomey, where women took water from to resolve their personal problems” (Falcon, 1970). All these practices helped to protect these water resources in the past.

One example of ongoing protective practices in present time is the Lagoon of Grand-Popo, where the Vodoun, “Agbigbi”, protects a part of the lagoon against excessive fishing and where some ceremonies are performed annually for the regeneration of fishes. An area of the lagoon is reserved for the Vodoun “Agbigbi.” It is forbidden to fish in and around this area. Each year, the priest and adherents, assisted by angles and local authorities, enter the lake and kill a bullock in the area for the Vodoun. The bullock is attached to a heavy stone drowned in the lagoon. This practice, which has perhaps other benefits for faithfuls, is a conservative and regenerative practice for environmentalists, ecologists and other scientists. The disintegration of the dead bullock’s body serves as feed for the fishes. The ban on fishing in the area of the Vodoun protects a part of the fish resources from fishnets and facilitates biodiversity conservation and reproduction of fishes.

Summary and conclusions

Why the syncretism?

There is syncretism because people gain from both the Vodoun and foreign religions. People recognize the existence and the power of the witchcraft “azé” and the “bô.” They also believe in God’s power but they are not sure of being fully protected against sorcerers’ attacks. With foreign religions, they get information and counseling useful for their daily behaviour in life. But since they are not totally sure of getting protected from the evil spells of witchcraft and “bô”, they go to ask for help from the priests, the Vodounnon/hounnon/bokonon and the bo-men. In the local language ‘fongbé’, it is said that, “*minonyi kpa glagla nou aklounon*” (i.e., *we ask for help from Christ near the local powers*). This reflects a complementarity between the local powers and Christian power.

God is the upper power from whom everything depends. They trust in God's power but their faith is incomplete without the protection of the Vodouns.

According to some Christians interviewed, it is common to see fervent Christians get ill and/or die from witchcraft or bô attacks. It is also frequently noticed that Vodounsi or magic and power users are less attacked by witchcraft and bô. There are also some fervent Christians who, apparently, have never been attacked by evil spirits. So by striking the balance, people choose according to their experiences and convictions. Most people tend to have been in contact with Vodoun before their conversion to a foreign religion. Most of them, from their childhood, have been in the environment of the Vodoun and do continue to believe in some of its powers to solve problems that they encounter. They either refer to the Vodoun at an early or at the later stage of a sickness. They go to Vodouns in an early stage if they think that the sickness should not be treated using modern medicine. Also, when they fail to get satisfaction from a modern medicine they resort to the Vodouns.

There are some hundreds of Vodouns in Benin. They are a part of every natural, minerals and human domain. The Vodoun is believed to be capable of many positive things. It is considered useful by people whose happiness or well-being is often threatened by evil spells. It also helps to check non-recommendable behaviours (such as disrespect of bans, taboos/lanes neighbours, persons, and hygiene). It checks behaviours, which are inimical to traditional worldviews or cosmovisions.

The reconsideration of Vodoun can contribute to meeting sustainable development goals, especially the ones of natural resource conservation. The syncretism is a current practice which permits its actors to satisfy their needs. Their belief systems, culture, and worldview is formed and transformed by the Vodoun. No matter what the criticisms are, Vodoun persists in Benin in particular and in other parts of Africa and the World as a whole. It is an important part of the heritage, cosmovision, and the worldview of Benin society.

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Africans return to the village: Reconstructing identities and engendering praxis

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Abstract

*This chapter draws on Ali Mazrui's conception of African attitude to development as "returning to the village" to investigate efforts at reclaiming identities in ways that necessitate the engendering of praxis. It entails a meta-analysis of reclamation efforts traced to African nationalists such as Kwame Nkrumah through *Consciencism* and Julius Nyerere through *Ujaama* as they sought to decolonize Africa. Borrowing from Mazrui's conception to frame these efforts as returning to the village, the authors examine the benefits of making a return while contesting and inviting the rethinking of the process of return. We define the return as reclamation of identities in ways that can facilitate the decolonization of Africa while fostering the appreciation of our multiple ways of knowing and making meanings. Arguing from a gender perspective, they advocate reclamation of the maternal spirit. We trace this in Bosumefield's mother's unrelenting and unyielding efforts to rescue her son from the shackles of colonialism, Apoka Kariyane's prevention of the enslavement of her sons and daughters, Yaa Asantewa's leadership in the war against the British colonialists and Hajia Salamatu Taimako's promotion of eco-medicine, among others. In the process, the authors propose an engenderment of the return through the cultivation of diversity, constant critique of the evolving system, re/socialization of the young and old, and reclamation of the maternal force. The authors conclude that as Africans return to the village we need to learn from and embrace the goodness of the past but we should as well contest and reject its dehumanizing and denigrating elements.*

Key words: Identities, Heritage, Maternal Force, Diversity, Socializing, Developmentalism.

Introduction

A peoples' survival depends, among others, on their ability to maintain their ways and means of interacting and interpreting their world(s). As Africans, we have had our ways of knowing and understanding our worlds. Our worlds of the physical, social and mystical have meanings and together shape our experiences and life's meanings. The meanings and understanding of these worlds are secured through a constant search for better/alternate ways of social improvement. Our search for improvement in our livelihoods; economically, socially, spiritually, physically and politically have resulted in the constant search for new meanings.

Traditionally, as Africans, we have maintained a connection between the physical, social and mystical worlds. We have rationalized our beings in relation to all of our three worlds. With the so-called dawn of civilization and its concomitants, we

have been inundated with worlds that have not always been consistent with our traditional ways. As a result, our great philosophers and sociologists as well as spiritualists have and continue to contest the unfortunate ramifications of such interruptions. Kwame Nkrumah, K. A. Busia, Haile Selassie, Nelson Mandela and Okomfo Kwabena Damua, a few modern ones among others, have taken turns in contesting alienations and colonialisms returned through such interruptions.

As we move with the tide of post-colonialism and reclaim ourselves, it is also important that we reclaim our ways. It is important that we uncover or re/discover the ways that our forebears used to know and build knowledge(s) about their worlds and the worlds that we can claim truly and rightfully as our own. As the current generation of Africans, we cannot afford to ignore the persistent bombardments in the forms of religion, economics, and politics and, in recent times, globalisation and developmentalism. As Ali Mazrui asserts, these form part of our heritage. Yet, these remain the intrusive elements of our heritage.

Mazrui has written that while the West was going to the moon, Africans were going to the village. Perhaps we needed to go to the village. For, it is in the village that we can find our true selves as Africans. Our Africaness started in the village and our roots will remain in the village. Laid buried there is the umbilical cord, our maternal connection sustaining the dyad! While we understand that our worlds connect with other worlds, we also need to realize that we cannot trade off our worlds for alien ones, in which we remain disoriented, alienated and colonized. Thus, returning to the village becomes an existential imperative.

As we return to the village, we need to understand that our village is, was and has not been a perfect place. As we look back with nostalgia to our past and reclaim our ways, we need to understand that our forebears had produced some knowledge but had not completed the process. We need to understand that our forebears were constantly searching for meanings and even welcomed intruders as part of that search. We need also to understand that our past has been interrupted in many ways. We need to understand that our villages remain tainted, adulterated or even polluted due to such intrusions.

Therefore, as we plan our return, we need to work on re/creating or even approximating the perfect village to which we look with nostalgia. We need to take up many questions as we make our return. We need to take issue with colonialism and imperialism for their distortions and alienations. We need to take issue with developmentalism and globalization for the destructions of our livelihoods. We need to take issue with politics in light of civil, ethnic and partisan wars in order to return peace to our village and re/instil the good old virtues of tolerance and peaceful co-existence to our peoples. We need to take issue with faith/spirituality as we search for deeper meanings and the unexplained. We need to take issue with our social systems and structures for their gendered meanings.

In this chapter, we want also to take up the gender challenge. We want to privilege gender questions, for their value and legitimacy in the process of rebuilding our village and reclaiming ourselves. We want to reconnect to the umbilical cord that lays buried in the village in ways that empower both our males and females to the greater benefit of our return. We want to embrace the systems and structures we inherited from our forebears and their appreciation of sex/gender differences. More importantly, we want to examine the ways that they account for the gender meanings

in our social worlds. We take up gender issues as a way of reconstructing our new village. In the process, we want to reclaim the empowering elements of our cultural heritage but also our not-so-empowering ones. We foresee and propose a reconstruction because of the imperfections that we observe. We will conclude by proposing ways for rebuilding our village in more gender sensitive ways as we learn from the past and present constructions and experiences.

Africa going to the village?

In his famed 1986 documentary on Africa's development, Ali Mazrui raises several questions that point to Africa's inability to optimize its progress. This documentary, which has been used in many African Studies classrooms and featured on television, at least in Ghana, was meant to teach African youth to choose the path of progress. In the statement: "as the world goes to the moon, Africa goes to the village", Mazrui discounts Africa's inability to utilize the benefits of science and technology in the era of the Sputnik. The moon represents modernity while the village represents traditionalism. When the world goes to the moon, the world chooses the path of progress. The world is said to progress as it develops and builds on scientific knowledge and technological advancement. The path of modernization was deemed, at the time, the desired means to development and the only alternative to underdevelopment.

By conceiving Africa's path as one of "going to the village," Mazrui suggested that Africa, at best, was failing to take advantage of scientific and technological advancement. He suggested that Africans were slow to progress even as they remained stuck in the past. He also suggested that Africa's chosen path was crippling its progress. To some extent, these suggestions may be true as some of us sometimes use our unique culture as an excuse against progress. We make our culture an excuse for choosing the path of paralysis and inertia. We speak and use our culture as if it were static. Yet, we all know too well that our rich cultural heritage, the one that only our forebears defined and shaped for us with the hope that we, the present generation, might continue to define and shape, is very dynamic. That is why going back to the village should not always conjure negativity. However, it does sometimes!

Going back to the village, conjures negativity when it suggests that Africa remains stuck in a "primitive" past. To say that our cultures are backward and retrogressive is one thing deserving contestation. It is another to say we have failed to respond to our changing worlds! The colonialists, the slavers and even the spiritualists, sought to remove or save us from our so-called primitive and backward selves in their civilizing mission. They exploited our generosity to dominate us in the name of civilization. As true sons and daughters of our rich and beautiful continent, we ought to know better. We ought to know that civilization that returns serfdom debilitates from the start.

Kwame Nkrumah, Kofi Abrefa Busia and Julius Nyerere have shown that serfdom resulting from so-called civilization robs Africa of its true identity even as it perpetuates states of alienation and domination. Nkrumah in his book *Conciencism* speaks of the divisionism that Western civilization in the form of education and politics creates in Africa. Consequently, he calls for a revolution that will re/unite but

also re/liberate Africa from the shackles of Westernism and its colonialisms. Busia raises similar issues in his book, *Purposeful Education for Africa*, in his analysis of the alienations that Western education returns to Africa. For these great scholars and politicians, the African village had been misunderstood and misrepresented. Their works are thus efforts at reclaiming the village.

Perhaps Nyerere, from among the three, was better able to articulate and actually work to realize his dream of returning Africa to the village. Fortunate to rule for many years as the president of Tanzania, Nyerere, the Mwalimu, did not just reclaim the concept of *Ujaama* as a true African ideology that explained our politics and economics but all of our worlds. Hence, he tried to implement it in the Villagization Project, at the community level. Drawing from *Ujaama*, the Villagization Project, often criticized for its implementation deficiencies, offered Africans and the world an opportunity of re/living with peace with one another and with nature.

In another film, *Heritage Africa*, the renowned Ghanaian filmmaker, Kwaw Ansah, shows how colonialism really alienates the African. Atta Bosumefi, the main character played by Kofi Bucknor, through Western civilization in the form of education, politics and economics is transmogrified into Sir Arthur Bosumfield. Bosumefi had tried to lose all of his African identity. Sir Bosumfield tried to lose his roots in the village; his Fanti tongue, his dressing, his taste, his relatives and friends and even his thought. Yet, his skin and colour, he could not lose. His choice to speak, act and dress like a colonial civil servant was meant to transform him into securing membership in the British colonial class of whom he sought alliance. Yet, was he so wrong! The transformations that he anticipated did not occur. Rather, he was transmogrified. Bosumefi was transmogrified because his Western civilization did not make him a better African but a bad and evil one. Neither did it make him a Westerner as his village roots did not leave him. He tried to sever his village roots but in the end, it was those roots, through a persistent and unyielding mother, played by Alexandra Dua of blessed memory, which saved Bosumefi from the rejected Bosumfield.

The mother figure remains a major factor in Africa's reclamation endeavours. In Asmara, Eriteria, African scholars and politicians proclaimed a return to the motherland by reviving and rejuvenating African languages as media for educating African children (Ngugi, 2001). The Black civil rights leaders of America advocated a return to the motherland. Cinke and his colleagues chose to return to the motherland rather than stay in America as freed African slaves. The motherland remains at the heart of the African Renaissance. Africans on the continent and the Diaspora have always known and counted on and held on to the maternal dyadic connection to the continent. The forgiving and unrelenting maternal connection continues to receive its sons and daughters even when it has been hurt through denial and destruction in many ways and in many places.

Through religion, politics, economics, education and technology the motherland has been denied and destroyed. In our embrace of Westernism and even Easternism, Africans have condemned and even scorned our own ways of knowing and living in the world. Our exposure to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Hindism ought to teach us about the diverse ways of God's manifestations. Our exposure to liberalism and communism ought to show us the multiplicity of governance systems. Our exposure to capitalism and socialism ought to teach us similarly. Our exposure to *sukuu* and

makaranta ought to teach us similarly. Our exposure to hi-tech ought to teach us similarly. We have to believe that our forebears admitted and even invited foreigners into the motherland out of trust but also out of the knowledge and appreciation of the strength of knowledge sharing.

The failure to pride in our ways while linking arms with other ways to improve our own and other cultures has cost us the many losses that we suffer as a people. We ought to bemoan our lost identities and continual domination by other cultures. As we throw away our ways in our embrace of other people's cultures we do not only deny and destroy our African-ness, we also set ourselves up to condemnation and domination. Our history of slavery and colonialism ought to teach us to appreciate ourselves. However, even after our forebears have worked to break those shackles we work hard to return them in many disguises.

We return colonialism in the form of development and its attendant globalization. We return it in the form of economic and political alliances. We also return them in patriarchy and paternalism. While Africa cannot isolate itself from the rest of the world and indeed, should be collaborating with the rest of the world to further its development, it is also the case that Africa should not play the perpetual underdog in all these endeavours. We easily throw out our African-ness and perpetuate disunity and divisiveness in our competition even for external domination in the form of aid and trade. Instead of capitalizing on such alliances to transform ourselves to our greater benefit, we tend to transmogrify ourselves to our own doom. Africa fails to build on its traditional ideals of interdependence and maternal dyadic relations. Rather, it wallows in creating dependences and disconnections.

It is also the case that Africa has a rich heritage. Probably, the only continent so blessed. Yet this heritage, which ought to be counted as a blessing has rather spelt its doom. In his thesis on *Africa's Triple Heritage*, Mazrui shows how African economics, politics and socialization have been shaped by external forces. In reclaiming ourselves, we reclaim our right to return to the village to learn from our old and true African ways. We need to learn those ways that are transforming; enabling us to move forward not backwards as implied above.

As Africa goes to the village

As Africa goes to the village, it embarks on a programme of reclamation. Africa is reclaiming itself by returning to its roots, to its traditions and cultures. It seeks its past in order to understand the present with the view to shaping its future. This reclamation cannot be wholesale due to the dangers posed by an uncritical embrace of the past. We can learn to rediscover our true selves by appreciating what good the past and the present offer and as well what bad the past and the present offer as important sites for learning. In the process, we would work to make both the good and the bad better.

As Africa goes to the village, we need to appreciate the fact of our maternal African roots. Our rootedness in a maternal culture for a people whose social systems have been described as patrilineal, matrilineal and anything in-between should serve as an important pedagogical site. We need to learn that our forebears built families that were headed by mothers and fathers. That is why among the Frafra, there is the *Dei-*

dana (female head of the home) and the *yir-daana* (male head of house). Both the *dei-dana* and the *yi-rdaana* play important and mutually respecting roles to complete the household. For instance, a visitor to the household is received and sent off by the *dei-daana*. The *dei-daana* welcomes and makes the visitor comfortable before the *yir-daana* joins in. Even in matters about the *yir-daana*, the *dei-daana* must be greeted and her permission sought before the said visitor is received and takes leave. Although, the general tendency is to describe African women as condemned to the domestic sphere where their power is restricted to an invisible position, the mutuality between Frafra household heads is demonstrative of a functional relationship where differentiated roles remain intersecting rather than parallel in ways that promote power sharing. The failure to appreciate this mutuality has resulted in the hierarchies that have divided our households.

As Africa goes to the village, we also need to return to useful learning in our wisdom. In his analysis, Agyarkwa (1979) traces African wisdom to tangible elements such as proverbs, riddles, stories, maxims and wise sayings but also to intangibles such as intuition, telepathy and premonitions. African wisdom can be rightly located, in part, in the tangibles. In the tangibles, we find wisdom about our creative history, values and morality, beliefs and ideologies, customs and traditions as well as knowledge forms and productive skills. The tangibles are replete with wisdom of our forefathers and foremothers, who Agyarkwa so blatantly ignores. Together, our foremothers and forefathers created and produced our ways in which we were to be taught. Our wisdom is replete with narratives about male, female and even animal figures. Even the inanimate found their presence in our wisdom.

The intangible aspect of our wisdom has been subjected to the most condemnation. Our attribution of life to what Western science considers inanimate has often served as fertile ground for condemnation of all sorts. Writing on *Social Science and its Methods*, Hunt and Colander (2002) assert that primitive people “accept their world as they found it, and if any explanations seemed called for, they **invented** supernatural ones” (p. 2, our emphasis). That Hunt and Colander choose to call the appeal to the supernatural as an invention points to not only disbelief but also an arrogant condemnation of a system they obviously know very little about. With the availability of information on multiple ways of knowing, one cannot forgive such ignorance in any writing of this millennium. That is why Africa must go to the village.

We need to reclaim the physical ways that explain our worlds but also the non-physical ones. What is natural about our physical worlds remains unclear in the face of much superficiality and artificiality. What is clear, for us, is the supernatural because it rises above the so-called natural world. It looks and presents meanings that defy the imagination of so-called hard or natural sciences. Our forebears connected and found meanings in the two worlds. The living connected with the passed (i.e., dead) in ways that enabled them to reach meanings that the West in particular has no means of comprehension. Women’s premonitions, telepathy and clairvoyance will not be termed witchcraft and branded evil but will be legitimated and nurtured as genuine ways of knowing as we embark on our return.

In addition, as we return to the village, we need to return to our maternal instincts and forge ahead in strength and courage believing in our own ways and lives. We need to move ourselves from welfare and work (physical and spiritually) to restore our true African image, the African personality that Nkrumah promoted. The

resilience and unrelenting spirit of Bosumfield's mother resulted in the reclamation of Bosumefi. It was her intuition and prayer but also her strength to stand up for her son that facilitated the transformation. It was this instinct and spirit that drove Yaa Asantewa to mobilize and lead her people against the British colonialists. Apoka Kariyane was lead by this same spirit to ward off slave raiders. The same spirit drove Queen Nzinga and Queen Amina to lead their people in peace and progress. It is the same spirit that motivates great African women such as Melanie Kasise, Stella Awumbila, Salamatu Taimako and Wangari Mathai to return to their roots and promote ecologically safe ways. Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth were lead by this spirit to resist racist segregation in the United States of America. It is the same spirit that enables African women in the Diaspora to keep their families together even when their male counterparts give up to racist insinuations and intimidations. It is this spirit that keeps the African continent together even in the face of massive destruction from civil/ethnic wars, slave trade, colonialism and industrialization.

As Africa goes to the village, we also return to our traditional economic values. We were forced into capitalism through trade, slavery and colonialism. Now we crave it through development and globalization. At independence, many African countries turned to the East for alternatives. Dissatisfied with the tenets of capitalism, our leaders sought and returned to African-centred ways. Nkrumah's Consciencism, Nyerere's Ujamaa, Kenyatha's Uhuru and Mbeki's Renaissance have sought to re-Africanize Africa. These models are based on an African moral sense that is sufficiently holistic to embrace our traditional ethics and moralities. Together, these philosophers drew from African communal morality to advocate economic structures that foster interdependence and fellow feeling rather than mere profit making. The advocacy for inter-African trade and business collaborations is a demonstration of the traditional age-old links among Africans. Our peoples travelled near, far and wide, to trade using our traditional principles of exchange of one good for the other. Salt from the Sahara was exchanged for spices and cotton from the north. We have built the capitalist structures and infrastructure but as true Africans we can rise above them. We all know that attempts to formalize the African economy remain illusions. The informal structures persist. Attempts to build male-centred economic systems remain unsuccessful as even in the margins, at the informal sector, women sustain the livelihoods of their families. What these speak to is that profit-centred economies might have their merits but they cannot survive without our traditional people-centred ones in which women play central roles.

As Africa returns to the village, we also need to rethink our social systems and socialization processes. We have inherited Western-style education. We use it to develop our human resource and generate the thoughts for maintaining the colonial structures that we have inherited. Yet, if we listen to Busia and to Nyerere. If we listen to Nkrumah and to Lumumba, to Asantewa and Nzinga and Amina, and to Taimako and Mathai we will hear different and alternate voices. We will hear voices of return that seek to construct and not destroy. Above all, if we listen to our forefathers and our foremothers we will seek alternate ways. They teach us to teach our children better ways of progress, ways different from the destructive ones into which we have been co-opted. These alternate ways offer hope and opportunity for re/socializing our young. Above all, they allow us to reclaim our maternal care and protective elements.

Our forebears valued training all their young. The girls and the boys were brought forth and raised to realize themselves as deemed fit at the time. Our young women as well as the men were socialized in their teens through various rites of passage. We are aware of the Poro society of the Mande, the Dipo of the Krobo, the Bragoro of the Akans and Yab-ne of the Gurunsi. We can return to and reclaim the principles that shaped those trainings to enrich our educational systems. We can reclaim the values of social responsibility, hard work, respect for elders, sex education, sex/gender roles and occupational ethics as enshrined in the curriculum of these traditional systems even as we reject aspects such as female genital mutilation, scarification, and other forms of blood letting. We enrich our education systems as we are offered opportunities for socializing our young to grow up as Bosumefi not Bosumfield. Our young women as much as our young men will develop their potentials for becoming functional, responsible and valued contributors in the families, households, communities and the nation-state.

As Africans return to the village, we will have to challenge those ways that have denied sections of our populations the freedoms and liberties that are truly African. Those aspects of our culture that have divided us and set us against one another on the basis of sex, class, education, occupations, wealth and ethnicity we will have to contest. We will reject those aspects of our culture that privilege men's and boys' ways and experiences while under-privileging those of women and girls. We will reject those aspects of our culture that denigrate and dehumanize the feminine. If we can reclaim our traditional principles, we will have better appreciation of such differences. We can return to the same traditions and learn alternate ways of engendering our village and hence, optimizing the benefits of our return. We will, like mothers, offer care and hope to all of our children.

Engendering the African village

As we enter the village in our attempts to reconstruct our African-ness, we need to embark on conscious efforts of self and collective reclamation of our identities. The loss that occurred due to the inundations of other worlds requires efforts at reclamation. Our African worlds of complex interactions and relationships connect and intersect as well as change. However, as we individually and collectively seek progress that can sustain and support our existence, we ought to require more than mere change. We ought to seek those social transformations that can truly engender praxis. We propose that, as Africans, we could do so through the following:

Embracing and cultivating our diversities

Our forebears had a strong appreciation of our uniqueness as a people or individuals within our societies or communities. They understood the strength of bringing those unique identities together to the greater good. Hence, they found areas of connecting that left our continent with a beautiful tapestry of which we pride ourselves. Our nationalists and post independence reconstructivists appreciated this in the phrase "unity in diversity." Our economic, political, religious, ethnic, racial and geographical diversities were not denied but embraced as offering opportunities for learning and influencing. As they led the process of re/construction, they persisted on re/weaving

our own brand of progress; our own tapestries. They even created room for learning and sharing from even the colonizers.

Now that we embark on our own journey, one of return, we need to embrace our diversities even more and cultivate them for mutually benefiting ends. We will need to embrace our economic, political, religious, ethnic, racial and geographical diversities as we return to the village. Yet, we should not forget that at the core of all these diversities is the sex/gender one. We need to recognize that our women and girls deserve to and must be as much a part of the reconstruction as our men and boys. Hence, we will need to learn from and utilize all of our diversities including sex/gender diversity. We need to cultivate attitudes that are respecting of the diverse experiences of our males and females.

We could do so through our socialization processes. We could return to our traditional socializing processes that enhance learning through proverbs, riddles, story telling, music and dance, direct teaching, drums and even games and rites of passage to re/socialize ourselves about the strength and beauty of diversity. These multi-media learning tools have proven effective for moral teaching. We can use them to re/engineer our social psychic to re/embrace all of our diversities.

Constant critique of our evolving systems

Our social reconstruction efforts suggest that we are not merely reclaiming but rebuilding our worlds. As work in progress, we need to work constantly and persistently on improvement. Like the bread maker, we need to knead constantly our dough so that we can optimize the benefits of change that is transforming.

We need to critique constantly our evolving systems to ensure that they are meeting the needs of our time. We need to critique constantly, our evolving systems to ensure that they cater to everyone one's needs. We need to critique constantly our evolving systems to ensure that we leave no stone unturned. Our forebears said those who chart the path could not tell when it was crooked. By this, they forewarned us that the path could be crooked. We do not want to wait until it is crooked. We may want to look back constantly as we move on.

Through festivals and rituals, we could ensure accountability of progress from our leaders and from all of us. Festivals present opportunities for reflecting on the past and preparing for the future. Our forebears used cultural festivals to recount the past and thank the ancestors, spirits and the Almighty God for their goodness and kindness. They asked for pardon for past mistakes. They pleaded for similar goodness and kindness for the future. Our funerals, rituals, child out-dooring/naming and enstoolments/enskinments ceremonies offer opportunities for self and collective searching and re/strategizing for the future. Both men and women play unique and/or identical roles in the process. Each group fulfils important responsibilities toward the individual and collective good. We ought to be turning to and reclaiming such opportunities in our reconstruction efforts.

Re/socializing in our reconstructed way

As we return to the village, we need to make conscious efforts to relearn our lost ways as we rebuild our identities. We may need to de/socialize ourselves from some of our ways that have proven to be negative. Those that degrade women and cripple progress we need to reject and abandon. More importantly, we will have to de/socialize

ourselves of those ways that allow us to accept such dehumanization. As we de-socialize, we also will have to re/socialize ourselves in those ways that are positive. We will have to re-socialize in those ways that empower both men and women and foster social progress.

As we return to the village, we may re/socialize ourselves by educating and training both the old and new generations of our ways. This might entail educating and training our generation to lead and facilitate the process. It might entail the re/education and re/training of the present generation to follow the path of goodness. This will be important for our individual and collective preparation toward re/construction even as we assume our new and true identities. Above all, we need to prepare our selves for transmitting, translating and transferring our education and training to our young.

Formally, semi-formally and informally, our forebears socialized their young in these noble ways. We can learn from this wisdom, but more importantly, we need to secure those ways through socialization. Our schools need not continue to alienate us as Busia and Nyerere so rightly appreciate. Our schools can be avenues for the formal teaching of our reclaimed and reconceived ways. At independence, the Institutes of African Studies were identified for such teaching. We can use all of our school systems now rather than specialized institutes. All of our schools can become sites for such teaching. In Ghana, the National Youth Council, the Centre for National Culture and the National Council for Civic Education offer avenues for semi-formal mass teaching as well. We can also use our traditional ways of education and training. Our socialization processes, including proverbs, riddles, stories, and wise-sayings as well as moonlight dances and praise songs are proven, time-tested educational and training tools. Rituals are also important traditional media.

Reconnecting to the maternal force

We often forget that both males and females have traditionally built our societies. We forget that our ontology is replete with evidence that teach us never to depart from our mothers. The Akan account of being reflects a triple identity of the *okra*, *susum* and *bogya*, often translated as the conscious, soul and blood. The *Okra* is the spiritual element that connects the being to the super-force or supreme consciousness. The *susum* is the paternal force that signifies strength and the *bogya* is the maternal force, the blood that forms and binds the family. Among the Frafra, the maternal force defines *soo-go*, (i.e., matri-force), a familial connection that derives only from a mother and connects some members of the family but not others through the *so-nifo* (matri-spiritual eye). It is through the *so-nifo* that witchcraft is shared. Wizards and witches are often described by the Gurunsi Frafra as: *a yeti me* (i.e., he/she sees) or *atare la nini* (he/she has eyes). The *so-nifo* is the spiritual eye and those with very strong or powerful spiritual eyes become witches and wizards. Since it is through *soo-ro* (matri-kin) that the spiritual eye is received, witchcraft can be passed down only through matri-kin. A son cannot pass it on, as his children will possess the blood of their mother.

The strength of the maternal force is its effective integration of spiritual and material powers. It is the force on which our very beings are formed and under whose spirit we care, protect and nurture our young. This suggests that we cannot reconstruct our villages without reconnecting with our mothers; the feminine, the

female members of our societies. We need to disabuse our minds that our female members are secondary beings, for the maternal force, according to our traditions, has never been second rate. She gives life and as such can never be dormant. She is an embodiment of goodness as life-giver. She is the power that keeps the village together, alive and moving. Our ancestors knew and acted on this. The Akan appreciation of the matri-force is exhibited in the “queen mother” who elects the kings. The matri-force is also signified in the *abrenw-tia* (i.e., sage and arbitrator), the wisdom house to whom difficult issues are deferred. Yet, our present societies seem to have lost sight of such wisdom. Our return to the village will be incomplete if we do not reclaim this wisdom.

We can do so by creating opportunities for women’s effective social participation. Our females need to return to the limelight and contribute as knowing and functional members of our societies whose experiences are invaluable. Our female members cannot remain at the margins but become central to the reconstruction efforts. Formal, semi-formal and informal socialization will be necessary for disabusing our (male and female) individual and collective consciousness of the inferiority of the feminine. We need to disabuse this wrong notion and restore ourselves in ways that allow that maternal force to manifest itself, truly and faithfully.

We may also reconnect to the maternal force by appreciating and valuing women and girls in the same ways that we appreciate and value our men and boys. We need to appreciate and value women’s and girls’ roles, responsibilities and contributions in our households and communities. Their experiences ought to be validated and legitimated. We need such re-appreciation and re-valuing as we re-build our village.

As we return to the village, we also need to create avenues for border crossings. We need to realize that our societies are complex and require sophisticated tools for rebuilding. As we rebuild we are also transforming our societies. The status quo, the normal ways of doing things might not be relevant. We cannot afford to remain in the past. We have to create room for choice and for border crossings. We cannot afford to have our women stay in the kitchen. They have always combined the kitchen and the farm. Now that we step beyond the farm, indeed expand the farm; we need our females there too. Yet, we cannot overburden them with additional responsibilities. Since the kitchen and reproduction roles are central to our survival we (males and females) need to work together to reconstruct those spaces in ways that allow flexible functioning and border crossings. The traditional restrictions on roles and spaces become counter productive in our changing worlds.

We may need re/education and re/training but also legislations such as national laws, local bye-laws as well as customs and traditions that will promote this cause. State governments, local government agencies and traditional institutions will have to lead this process of reclaiming the maternal force as we make our return to the village. Above all, men and women will need to work together as agents of change.

We need to develop advocacy based on affirmative action, skills training, and focused activities that will foster the reclamation of the lost feminine. We can design and use activities that will enable us to reflect and appreciate femininity and masculinity in ways that enable us to value them equally. More importantly, we can forge complementarities that are mutually re/enforcing rather than denigrating.

We need role models from among men and women who will lead the path of flexible functioning. We need to teach ourselves through focused activities that allow both males and females to experience and enjoy each other's worlds. Mothers cannot become fathers. Neither can fathers become mothers. Yet, mothers and fathers can learn together and support each other to their mutual benefit and the greater benefit of their young.

Conclusion

The foregone has sought to demonstrate a strong need for Africans to return to the village. We, as authors, demonstrate that there are compelling forces for returning to the village. We demonstrate that we need to return to the village in order to recollect our losses and reclaim our true identities as Africans.

We also show that our village is not a perfect place. It is a place that has been bombarded by worlds other than our own. We have been bombarded politically, religiously, and economically. While we return to the village, we need to understand the ways that these have defined and shaped our worlds. We need to understand the colonialisms and pollutions that have engulfed our village. We need to embrace but also contest the paths and spaces to constructive ends. A return to the maternal spirit and instinct is proposed.

Arguing from a gender perspective, we propose, that among all other efforts, we need to re-engender our village. We need to remain guided by our diversities, contestations, re/socializations and the matri-force.

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Traditional knowledge in Bulamogi County – Uganda: Importance to sustainable livelihoods

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Abstract

This study was carried out in Bulamogi County with the specific objective of documenting existing traditional knowledge (TK) related to plant exploitation. Formal and semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. Interviews were supplemented with direct observations and transect walks in the plant collection areas. Results of the study confirmed the widely held view that rural communities hold extensive TK important to their survival. In this study, community members held knowledge relevant for the exploitation of 315 plant species, to satisfy subsistence needs. In addition, the community was knowledgeable about the biology and ecology of the useful species. It was also found out that traditional spiritual beliefs were contributing to the conservation of plant species diversity. The TK is disappearing because the principal custodians of this knowledge, the aged are dying with their knowledge. Secondly, the domination of the traditional knowledge systems by Western cultural values is another factor for this loss. Two other factors are also seen to contribute to the loss of TK; i.e. scarcity of traditional plant species and changes in consumption patterns away from for instance traditional food plants to introduced crops. These two factors either singly or jointly result in a loss of experience and consequent loss of associated TK necessary for exploring relevant plant species.

Key words: Traditional knowledge, Sustainable livelihoods, Ecology, Conservation.

Introduction

Traditional knowledge (TK) is the collective knowledge, practices and beliefs that have been developed over millennia through observation and experimentation. This knowledge has been important for the survival of society in their environments by entitling communities to identify resources and products vital for their sustenance. Secondly such knowledge has been used and is still used to conserve and enhance biodiversity (Gadgill et al., 1993). For example, the traditional practice of fallowing farmed landscapes allows wild plants to regenerate from the seed bank on resting land or to emigrate from surrounding areas. Similarly, rotation of gathering practices in wild plant collection areas helps to regulate harvesting intensity. Many traditional conservation practices are guided by spiritual norms such as taboos.

The pivotal role of TK to sustainable livelihoods and national development is universally recognized. In Uganda, the need to promote, develop and conserve TK is well articulated in the Kampala Declaration on Indigenous Knowledge (IK) for sustainable development of 1999, which asserts that TK should be promoted for the empowerment of local communities. The draft National Culture Policy in its final draft has identified strategies for the conservation of TK. Among the many strategies plausible for promoting TK, is the documentation of all forms of TK. Such

documentation can achieve a number of outputs including the archiving of important cultural capital and generation of hypotheses that lead to the validation of TK and theory development.

Methodology

Study area

This study was carried out from June 2000 – June 2001 in Bulamogi County of Uganda. Bulamogi County was formerly part of Kamuli District but has now been upgraded to a district – Kaliro District. The county is made up of five sub-counties namely Nawaikoke, Gadumire, Namwiwa, Bumanya and Namugongo. These sub-counties are subdivided into parishes and the parishes into villages. The County has an approximate land area of 870 km² (Uganda Government 1963) and is found 200 km north-east of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda between 33°20' – 33°38' E and 0°58' – 1°18' N at an altitude of 1052 – 1098 m a.s.l. The region is generally flat with rocky outcrops. The soils of Bulamogi are of low productivity. The most extensive soil type is the Mazimasa complex of catenas derived from ancient lake deposits. This soil type is usually a shallow grey or brown sandy loam on laterite base rock (Ollier & Harrop, 1959; Department of Lands & Survey, 1962). The natural vegetation of Bulamogi is savanna; the greater part of which is at present dominated by non-uniform small-scale farmland (67.4%) (Langdale-Brown, 1959; Forest Department, 1997). The climate is generally warm and dry. Rainfall is bimodal and ranges between 1195 and 1357 mm (UBoS, 2000).

The population is estimated at about 155,000 people (UBoS, 2005) and a population density of 180 people per sq. km. The people of Bulamogi are known as the Balamogi and are an agricultural community. They practise subsistence crop agriculture as their main sources of livelihood; growing mostly sweet potatoes, maize, finger millet, cassava, sorghum, groundnuts, cotton, and fruit plants, especially oranges and mangoes. Some also practice livestock keeping.

Methods

Data was collected using interviews consisting of key informant interviews, a general community household survey and key resource user interviews. Twenty-three key informants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule following a checklist of questions. The household survey and key resource users were interviewed using a mixed open- and close-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire administered to the healers was different from that administered to households.

The key informants (14 men and nine women) were identified with the help of the local area leaders. Similarly, key resources users (47 Traditional Medicine Practitioners), selected on the basis of their reputation to effectively treat human ailments. They were identified with the help of local leaders and the community. Household respondents were chosen through stratified sampling. In each sub-county, a respondent was randomly chosen from at least one village from each parish in the sub-county. In this way, 126 household respondents (83 men and 43 women) were interviewed.

Interviews were conducted in Lulamogi; the local language of the study area. The interview questions included items covering demographic and social characteristics e.g. name, age, etc. Informal assessments of wealth of the respondents were made by directly observing the homestead and by inquiring from the local area politician. A three point scale: 1 = rich, 2 = poor, and 3 = very poor, was used for such assessment. The context specific questions included inquiries to determine, which plant species were useful, how these plants were used, which beliefs and taboos surrounded the species, and patterns of their exploitation e.g. how far people had to go to harvest the plants.

Interviews were supplemented by direct observations and transect walks in plant collection areas. Observations were made on aspects such as plant growth habit, patterns of plant exploitation etc. Furthermore, during these walks, in-depth discussions on plant uses were held with respondents. In addition, plants discussed in interviews were identified in the transect walks. All plants discussed were collected for archiving and identification at the Makerere University Herbarium.

Data from the field study was edited, and all incomplete responses treated as invalid and excluded from the analysis. Data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively; responses from open-ended questions were grouped into classes that expressed similar ideas and summarised while percentages, based on valid responses only, were calculated from close-ended questions. Detailed descriptions about how the plants are used are described elsewhere (Tabuti et al., 2003a, b, c; 2004).

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics

According to the survey results the community is ethnically made up of the Balamogi ethnic group; the dominant religion in the area is Christianity (84%); and households are male-headed (Table 1). On the whole, the surveyed homesteads were poorly endowed in human capital. For instance, respondents had acquired low levels of formal education and only a few had salaried employment. By their own admission, community members are very poor (Table 1).

| Characteristics | % | Characteristics | % |
|--------------------------------|----|--------------------|----|
| Ethnicity | | Employment | |
| Ba-lamogi | 87 | Peasant farmer | 85 |
| Ba-tenga | 9 | Teacher | 2 |
| Others ¹ | 4 | Restaurant owner | 2 |
| | | Other ² | 9 |
| Religion | | | |
| Protestants | 68 | Size of land (ha.) | |
| Catholics | 16 | 1 – 3 | 57 |
| Muslim | 12 | 3.1 – 5 | 21 |
| Traditional (<i>Kiswezi</i>) | 4 | 5.11 – 8 | 5 |
| Nature of households | | > 8 | 17 |

| Characteristics | % | Characteristics | % |
|---------------------|----|-----------------|----|
| Male headed | 92 | | |
| Female headed | 8 | Wealth ranking | |
| | | Poor | 72 |
| Education level | | Rich | 25 |
| No formal education | 19 | Very poor | 3 |
| Primary | 54 | | |
| Secondary | 23 | | |
| Tertiary | 5 | | |

Table 1 Background information about the household respondents (n = 126)

Other ethnic groups include the *Ba-kenye*, *Ba-ganda*, *Ba-gwere*, *Ba-siki*, *Ba-teso*.

Other sources of employment include beer-seller, Bricklayer, Carpenter, Odd jobber, Traditional medicine practitioner, lay church reader, politician, security officer, tailor, craft weaver.

TK and useful plant species' identification

The community was found to possess extensive knowledge regarding plant use. A total of 315 different plant species used in different ways were inventoried in this study (Table 2), the majority of which were harvested for the treatment of human ailments. A substantial number was found edible.

| | Species (No.) | % |
|---------------------------------|---------------|------|
| Human herbal medicine | 229 | 72.7 |
| Human edible plants | 105 | 33.3 |
| Firewood | 48 | 15.2 |
| Cattle fodder | 42 | 13.3 |
| Cattle herbal medicine | 38 | 12.1 |
| All useful species ¹ | 315 | |

¹This is not an arithmetic total as some species have multiple overlapping uses.

Table 2 Diversity of plants used in bulamogi county.

(Shown are absolute numbers and the percentage of used species.)

TK pertaining to plant ecology and biology

The community held perceptions on the ecology and biology of the used plants. For instance, the community knew the preferred plant species habitats, trends in plant population availability and their distributions. The biological information identified in the study covered seasonality of plant life history such as the time of fruiting.

TK and plant conservation

Plant species diversity was found to be conserved by a system of taboos embodied in traditional beliefs. A number of plants were held sacred and were protected from indiscriminate exploitation. Such plants were reputed to have bad luck or to be home to spirits. For example, *Gardenia ternifolia* (Schumach. & Thonn). is not harvested for

firewood because it is believed to have bad luck; also people commit suicide by hanging from it. Other species were designated sacred on account of their sizes. It was common to find large trees of the *Ficus* spp., *Milicia excelsa* (Welw.) C.C. Berg or *Tamarindus indica* L. in which a shrine (Kazimbye kunjila) had been constructed. Other trees were considered sacred because after falling down during thunderstorms, for instance, they grew upright again. These include species of the *Ficus* genera.

Traditional belief systems also protect plant communities. Specific habitats have been set aside as groves and prescriptions regulating exploitation in these areas laid down. These habitats are reputed to be home to spirits and it is taboo to harvest plants from there. One such site is a bushland at Meelu village in Gadumire Sub-county. Another one is the coronation site for the Paramount chief of Busoga, the Kyabazinga at Gadumire.

Traditional knowledge loss

TK is transmitted orally between generations and within the community. For example, knowledge related to TM is orally passed on from senior TM practitioners to their apprentices. However, this knowledge is threatened and is disappearing. Four reasons responsible for this were identified in the study. Firstly, the old people who are the principal custodians of TK are dying with their knowledge before it has been adequately transferred or documented. Similarly, because the young generation spends much of their time at school they are missing knowledge associated with wild edible plants.

Secondly, in the last two decades there has been an upsurge of Christian fundamental religious beliefs and values. These Christian religious values have also dominated the traditional belief system in many ways. Followers of these religious groups are intolerant of most traditional practices. For instance, they condemn traditional medicines. The other reasons leading to loss of TK are related to scarcity of plant species. When a hitherto exploited species becomes scarce, the users are deprived of the necessary experience to exploit the species and over time the associated TK erodes. Lastly, there is a change in consumption patterns. Many homesteads have replaced the nutritious millet porridge drink with black tea. This factor leads to loss of TK in much the same way as low availability of plant species described above.

Discussion

Results of the socio-economic survey indicate that the Balamogi are a poor community. This deduction is based on their having low human assets e.g. formal education. A low level of formal education compromises a person's ability to acquire appropriately paid jobs. Indeed, the greater majority of the respondents were engaged in peasant farming. Again, for most respondents, land was insufficient to cater for household needs beyond subsistence needs; 55% of the respondents had between 1 and 3 ha of land. The inadequacy of these various forms of capital apparently forces the community to exploit natural resources using TK. Results of the study show that the community has extensive knowledge for identifying useful species.

TK and plant management

Apart from identifying useful species in their environment, the community has knowledge relevant for managing plants and conserving them. This knowledge includes knowledge on phenology i.e. the community is adept at telling when species flower, fruit or shed their leaves. The community members also know how to propagate species (Tabuti, in press). All this information is important when planning for the management of plants. For example, knowing which months of the year seeds are available helps clarify planning for replanting to restore degraded ecosystems. Similarly, knowledge of propagation techniques for indigenous or traditional plants can support domestication or ex situ conservation of plants.

By knowing which plants are less available and clumped in distribution helps make management decisions. This information will be useful in identifying areas for collecting planting material to restore degraded areas or for domestication. This knowledge further informs domestication breeding activities by identifying the best growth conditions for species.

TK and species composition

Traditional belief systems are important to the conservation of species in Bulamogi and spirituality is the basis of community conservation of plants. Groves contribute to plant community conservation, while shrines protect individual species. By selecting certain plant communities and believing them to be homes to spirits, these plant communities and species are conserved. They then serve as refugia necessary for restoring degraded landscapes (Gadgil et al., 1993).

African traditional knowledge systems (TKS) including beliefs and practices suffered much during colonialism. Domination by the western culture led people to undervalue their TKS (Haverkort et al., 2003). During the period of colonialism, many forms of TK were considered inferior and repressed by the colonialists. The colonized were forced to abandon their TK and to believe that their knowledge was inferior and primitive to western knowledge. This led to a lack of confidence in TK by its holders. This process has been enhanced further by globalisation. Globalisation, by promoting universal values and beliefs, has encouraged people to abandon their TK while adopting western knowledge (Haverkort et al., 2003).

Conclusion

Results from this study are clear manifestation that traditional knowledge is of significant value to the Balamogi. The community employs TK to identify useful species and conserve them. Other aspects of TK are useful for the managing of plant species in the community. This important heritage is threatened and is disappearing in the community. There is therefore an urgent need to conserve it for posterity before it is too late.

This requires revitalising and strengthening the local traditional cultures. The local cultural institutions and their structures in Uganda are quite weak. The monarchies were abolished in the early 1960s. The Uganda Constitution of 1995 restored them, but they are still weak. They need to be strengthened and the

traditional leaders empowered. There are a number of efforts in Uganda aimed at conserving, promoting and developing our cultures. It is not well known, however, how the existing institutions and structures for managing TK are performing.

There is need to demonstrate that TK can contribute to national development using local resources and skills. More documentation and dissemination of TK should be undertaken. This should be done for the whole of Uganda. Some TK has been documented, especially inventories of useful plant species. But many aspects of TK have not been documented, for instance the spiritual aspects. Alongside advocacy for documentation, the already documented TK needs to be evaluated on efficacy and use. Thereafter, the validated knowledge and practices should be disseminated widely and their adoption encouraged for the development of Uganda.

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Indigenous institutions as partners for agriculture and natural resource management

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Abstract

In recent times the need to work with Traditional Authorities (TAs) and Indigenous organizations as alternative partners to formal NGOs and externally facilitated groups has gained a lot of grounds. Corporate bodies like the World Bank and development NGOs, in implementing Poverty Reduction Programmes, are looking for opportunities to work directly with Traditional Authorities. This is with the hope of more effectively reaching out to the usually unreachable section of civil society – the rural sector – who are usually the targets for such poverty reduction programmes. The problem, however, is that there is currently very scanty documented information in this area that will guide development agents to take informed decisions on Traditional Authorities and indigenous organizations as partners in development. This study was to identify civil society organizations in Ghana that aim to empower communities to know and claim their rights to natural resources in order to improve their livelihoods. Part of the study was to investigate the existence and roles of indigenous institutions engaged in land and natural resources use and management issues. The study was also meant to give the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) an opportunity to build its knowledge base on the potential of Traditional Authorities and indigenous Institutions as partners for development.

Key words: Traditional Institutions, Natural Resources, Custodianship, Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Systems.

Background

The Wassa Fiasse Paramountcy in the Western Region of Ghana comprises five Divisions, namely, Adum, Sekyere, Apinto Pepesa and Bosomtwe. The Akutuase subdivision falls under the Sekyere Division. The people of Wassa Fiasse are believed to have migrated from present day Aguafu and Esikado. The seat of the Wassa Fiasse Traditional Council is Benso. Politically, the Wassa Fiasse Traditional Area is part of the Mpochor Wassa East District with Daboase as the District Capital; oall of the Western Region of Ghana.

Akutuase has an estimated population of 2,500 inhabitants. The people have access to limited social amenities. The only available services include a Primary and Junior Secondary School and a health centre. The health centre is closed most of the time because of lack of personnel. Personnel normally come from Daboase, also in the Western Region.

The area falls within the dense rainforest zone. Most parts are currently semi-deciduous forests because of excessive timber extraction and extensive food and cash crop farming over the years. Farmlands are becoming infertile because of burning, shifting cultivation and consequent soil erosion. The enormity of the problem is seen in the agitation by farmers to have access to portions of the forest reserve in the area for farming purposes. The bamboo plant is an important natural resource and still abounds in the area. All citizens have free access to this resource. Outsiders, however, have to pay before harvesting the bamboo.

Methodology

For the study, we used a combination of methods to collect the data. These included durbars of chiefs and elders for general brainstorming, semi-structured focus group and individual interviews on more specific issues and field observations.

Analyses of the data took the form of discourse analysis where meanings were ascribed to issues arising from the durbars and interviews and relating these to the potential of the different indigenous institutions discussed as partners for development. Discourse analysis was also used to examine the perceptions of the local people about the relevance of the various indigenous institutions in the area. Through interface analysis, the points of intersection and discontinuities between the indigenous institutions and formal institutions such as the Forestry Commission and the District Assembly were identified.

In this chapter, we defined indigenous institutions to include (see also Kendie et al., 2004a,b):

- The societal norms, values, beliefs and cosmovisions that guide human interaction in any particular community or locality.
- The leadership structures within the community (chiefs, queen mothers, elders, clan heads, etc.) and their functional roles, which ensure that the norms and values of the community are respected.
- The structures that form the units of organization in the community. These include the family, households, clans, indigenous associations and social networks, etc.
- Practices such as the rituals and rites of the people, the funerals, the dowry system, festivals, and the shrines or places of worship of the people.

Natural resources management

The development-environment nexus has been contentious and debates still rage as to the objectives, scope and strategies to link environmental (natural resource use) and development. From the early arguments of the protectionists through the conservation movement and the community based natural resource management approach to the current resurgence of protectionism, one can see dialectical differences. While the protectionist ideas advocate a top-down approach to nature conservation, the conservation literature focuses on bottom-up perspectives. In recent years, there has been resurgence in protectionist philosophy as it is argued that in most developing countries, it is the government, not the people around protected areas that ultimately decides the fate of forests and wildlife.

Several writers in recent times have begun to advocate a for a strictly enforced nature protection (see reviews in Turner, 2004 and Fabricius et al., 2004). The conclusion from these authors is that people centred approaches that seek to promote local participation and community development as central issues, dilute objectives and complicate implementation. The fortress mentality permeates so much of the literature that it is becoming a paradigm.

At the same time, the failure of many natural resource management programmes has been seen in the top-down approach that pays no attention to local needs. In many areas, nature reserves are seen as yet another form of external/government control and the protection itself as excessive in the use of authority¹. Thus, communities see management restrictions as restrictive and illegitimate. It is the contention of this chapter that, any natural resources management programme should be centred on the basic tenets of sustainable development in which the livelihood needs of the forest fringe communities take centre stage. Basic needs provision should be central to development programming; after all the forest is a rich source of food security to the local populations. But this is under threat from excessive logging and land clearance for food and cash crop cultivation – geared towards the export market. African people evolved intricate relationships with nature that also had a conservation dimension. ‘Modernization’ trends and change in religious beliefs are eroding these practices, which combined with the need to generate foreign exchange, are placing severe pressures on ecosystems. We shall focus on how to approach local level participation in natural resource management programmes. The approach is important given the concerns of the protectionists that local level participation delays implementation.

Forest resources management in the Wassa Akutuase Traditional Area (WATA)

Communities have always had a close relationship with the land and the discussions by Kirby in the later chapters of this book attest to the important role of land and its resources in African societies. To the Akan, for instance, the land belongs to the living, the dead and the yet those yet to be born. The sacrifices that precede planning and harvesting reveal the closeness of people to their land. Consequently, indigenous management systems evolved that at least ensured access to the land and its resources and various taboos and sanctions existed to protect natural resources from reckless exploitation.

Current forest management practices in WATA

The original forest vegetation in the area is said to be giving way to scrap land with shrubs taking the place of trees. About 30-50 years ago, it is said that the people did not have to go far to trap wild animals. Water bodies never dried up with a lot of fresh water animals like shrimps, crabs, tilapia, and mudfish. Today, all the land available for farming has been cleared and farming activities have reached the margins of the mandatory forest reserve. Logging and land clearing for cultivation of cocoa and food

¹ The case studies in Fabricius et al. (2004) contain an excellent overview of these trends and a comprehensive presentation of the elements of the community based natural resources management.

crops (mainly cassava, coco-yam, maize, plantain, yam) are the causes for the deforestation.

Forest resource management in the ATA like all forested areas of Ghana is the responsibility of the Forestry Commission. Logging for timber is done in concessions given to timber operators. These concessions are demarcated for the loggers, in most cases, without the knowledge of the local population. The Forestry Commission has an office at Daboose, the District Capital, and several guards to assist to prevent illegal logging. In the present scheme, royalties are expected to be paid to the traditional authorities for timber cut from the area. According to the people the formula for the sharing of the royalties is not being followed. The formula requires that 60% of all royalties be paid to the District Assembly, 25% to the Paramount stool and 15% to the community. However, the District Assembly does not pay up to the latter with the excuse that it needs funds to provide social services to all communities. This leaves no incentive for the people to put in efforts to protect the forests.

Chainsaw operators in logging are a major cause of deforestation. These are individuals who acquire chainsaws and cut timber without permission from the Forestry Commission. As a strategy to stop their activities, the Forestry Commission set up a task force comprising the technical officer of the commission and the labourers. This proved to be ineffective because the taskforce did not have the support of the community. As an alternative, the commission in collaboration with the chief and elders set up a 9-member Community Forestry Committee (CFC) at Akutuase with the chief as the chairman. The committee was expected to track down and arrest all illegally logged timber and to pass them on to the Commission in Daboose. To make their work effective they were provided with identification cards, Wellington boots, cutlasses, and T-shirts.

Indigenous forest resource management systems at WATA

In Daboose, the Chief explained that originally, it was the chief and his elders who gave permits for timber extraction. In so doing, the chief led the contractor to the forest, poured libation and showed which trees should be felled and which should not. The community itself was guided by a system of taboos to regulate the felling of timber. These included taboo days, taboo species, and taboo areas. All readily observe these taboos because they are social norms known and accepted by all through the socialisation process. Today the powers of the chiefs have been taken over by government. An elder cynically remarked that, "The timber people come from Accra with permits from the government and nobody can tell them what to do, and now that they have finished clearing the forest, government is now coming back to tell us to protect the forest!"

Box 1 Perceptions of the community about the community forest committee (CFC)

The people perceive that it is only the chief, the members of the CFC and staff of the Commission who are benefiting from the natural resources management arrangement. The committee members were said to be bribe-takers while letting the illegal timber operators off the hook. Both the Unit Committee and the Asafo Group in the community are not represented on the CFC. There are however individuals in the unit committee and the Asafo who have also volunteered to serve on the CFC.

Generally, the people think that the CFC concept is a good idea. However they suggest that a

forum be organized where the District Chief Executive, the District Forestry Officer, the Chief and Elders and the members of the community would dialogue for the community also to benefit from the proceeds of the forestry products. Secondly, community members feel that the CFC has to be reconstituted to involve people who are altruistic – willing to work for the community without expecting too many incentives.

Today, the indigenous forest protection system has broken down because of the following:

- Due to poverty, local people and even chiefs are collaborating with illegal loggers to fell trees that should not be felled.
- The forest guards who are sent to the forest areas to check illegal timber operators are generally not committed to the work because of lack of awareness of the several other values of natural resources and tend to be corrupt.
- The churches that have emerged in the rural areas are preaching that the taboos that were instituted by the elders are “*bossom*” or fetish and are irrelevant and to no effect and should be ignored by Christians.

The state of agriculture at WATA

Logging and land clearing for commercial agriculture as outlined above are affecting soil fertility. About 30-50 years ago, the land was said to be fertile and a plantain crop could yield for up to five years. Today, a plantain crop will yield for 1-2 years only. In general, land for farming is not difficult to acquire in the Wassa Akutuase Area.

It was found that usually during the annual festival, the chief announces that any body that needed land for farming could make their intentions known. Such persons were given land either on lease or share cropping basis (abunu and abusa system). It was only in special cases that the land was sold outright. Members of the family may also request land from the family head for farming. Persons who acquire land for farming under whatever arrangement were usually allowed usufruct rights for as long as the person was alive. In some cases the use of the land may even be transferred to the next of kin. This situation still occurs. However, the problem of land degradation does not result from the land use arrangements. Rather, it has to do with vegetation loss as a result of logging and commercial farming.

Added to the above, the people have virtually no access to extension services. The only services are occasional visits by the extension staff of the Cocoa Marketing Board whose concern is cocoa and not food crops.

Agricultural marketing is left to middle women who buy, basically, cassava from the village for sale in the urban centres. At the urban markets, market queens for the various crops exist who control the entry of any agricultural produce from the rural areas. The middle women usually give loans to the farmers for their production activities on the condition that they would sell all their harvests to them at prices negotiated between them and the farmers. As the loans are given at the beginning of the farming season when the farmers are in critical need for cash, the middle women always have the opportunity to negotiate for the lowest prices. The middle women also provide a vital service of supplying basic needs such as kerosene, soap, and bread to the farmers. All these services are factored into the price negotiation. The rural people are unable to take their produce directly to the markets because they are tied down by the loans they take from the middle women. Also, it is uneconomical to carry

small quantities of food crops all the way to the urban centres where they may not be able to sell directly in the market because of control by the market queens.

Clearly, though a food growing area, the Wassa Akutuase traditional areas has problems with food security and rural poverty is a reality. The Dutch Development Organization, SNV, operating from Daboase, facilitated the formation of a women's group at Akutuase and taught them soap making as an income generating activity.

Institutions and natural resources management

As mentioned earlier, African societies evolved various institutions to guide natural resources management. Silverman (2000) defined institutions to “comprise a wide variety of formal and informal relationships that enhance societal productivity by making people's interactions and cooperation more predictable and effective. Some institutions have organizational form, while others have more diffuse patterns of norms and behaviour about which there are social consensus. Thus institutions can be understood as complexes of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving some socially valued purposes. Institutions provide shared understanding of the cultural meaning of activities”.

It is this 'shared understanding' and the cultural embeddedness of activities that have been drastically eroded by external interventions, which seek 'to accelerate the pace of national development'. The extent to which these interventions fit within the norms and behaviour patterns of the society is inconsequential so long as the intervention contributes to growth in national income. For long, traditional or local level institutions have been ignored in the development process. African sciences have no place in development planning, so the cultural meaning of work and development are lost.

The next section looks at the traditional institutions in place to manage natural resources. It also examines the consequences of the erosion of the powers of these institutions due to the imposition of external institutions/organizations to manage the forest resources.

Typology and characteristics of indigenous institutions and organizations at Akutuase²

We present in tabular form the types and characteristics of the indigenous institutions and organizations that were found in the traditional area under study. Also presented are the formal institutions of state that currently operate in the area. The perceptions of community members regarding the relevance of these institutions and organizations are also presented.

| Type | Categories | Function | Perceptions |
|------|------------|----------|-------------|
|------|------------|----------|-------------|

² For a detailed description of indigenous organizations and their potentials for development, see Kendie et al. (2004a,b).

| Type | Categories | Function | Perceptions |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Chief | a. Apakanhene (Chiefs who are carried in palanquins) b. Odikro c. Heads of ethnic groups | Political leadership | Still very relevant and effective although powers reduced by government and churches. |
| Elders | Tufuhene Sanaahene Gyaschene Okyeame Ohemaa | Councillor and acts in absence of the chief Responsible for finances of the chief Head of the royal family responsible for protocol and welfare of the chief. Chief's linguist King maker, representing interest of women | Effective and relevant for community decision making. |
| Mmranthene (youth leader) | Usually a young dynamic male or female selected by consensus by the youth based on demonstrated leadership qualities and installed by the chief. | Conflict resolution among the youth and mobilising the youth for development initiatives. Can instigate youth for removal of a bad chief. | Very effective in conflict resolution among the youth and ensuring transparency of the chief and elders. |
| Besuanfo (committee of 7 Elders) | The 7 clan heads acting as a standing committee in the chief's palace | Decision making on development issues Arbitrators for social justice | Effective but unit committee assuming its role. |
| Opinion Leaders | Individuals of high social standing (men and women) | Advisors to the council of chief and elders | Complimentary role to the elders. |
| Okomfo | Fetish Priests Fetish Priestesses | Spiritual leadership, caretakers of the various shrines | Powers watered down by effect of churches. Important during festivals. |
| Nunsin Adunsifo | Both males and females | Traditional herbalist | Important for health care of the people. |

Table 1 Indigenous institutions

| Organization | Categories | Functions | Perceptions |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Festivals (Afahye) | (Apaho, Nkokongua Hohor, Odwiura) Addae | Seven days of activities including thanksgiving, reconciliation and planning for development. Half-day event occurring every 40 th day in the year. Occasions for chief and elders to reflect on matters of concern to the community. | Occasion for home coming of all citizens outside the community. Observed by all as sacred days. |
| Asafo | <i>Asafo group</i> at village level (eg, Akyem and Ankobia groups in Wassa Akutuase) <i>Asafo Company</i> at Divisional and Oman levels | Provides protection to the community and its natural resources. (The standing army). Mobilises the community for development. | Perceived as more relevant for mobilisation of human and material resources for development and protection of the community and its resources. But powers taken by unit committees and CFC. |
| Susu groups | Mutual rotating savings and credit system for material goods (especially seed) Mutual rotating cash savings and credit system | Mobilisation of material and financial resources for economic activities based on reciprocity and trust. | Almost died out because of access to group credit facilities from the District assembly Common Fund. |
| Nnoboaa | For farming activities For any other jobs requiring manual labour. | Rotating labour support system based on trust and reciprocity usually among peer groups. | Still the dominant organizational system for small- scale cocoa farmers (especially for harvesting and processing). |
| Nkosuo kuo (Village Association) | Association of all citizens above 18 years living outside the community (usually in the regional capitals). Association of citizens above 18 years living in the village. | Mobilise external resources to support village development. Usually spear head political discussions concerning the village. Mobilise resources locally and undertake self-help development initiatives. | Effective for initiating self-help initiatives and ensuring transparency. |
| Singing groups | Kokomba, Sida Ndwumkro | Formed by younger women and perform during funerals, festivals and other occasions. Formed by elderly women who use empty bottles as the main musical instruments. Formal singing group with dues paying registered membership. | Very active during funerals and festivals. Create songs of praise as reward for illustrious sons and daughters and songs of ridicule of social misfits in the community. |

| Organization | Categories | Functions | Perceptions |
|--------------|---|---|---|
| | Apatampa, Bosoe | | |
| Shrines | Awusu Apraso, Enikoko, Awura, Sushen | Mother of all shrines in Akutuase. Drive away evil gods entering the community. Lesser shrines. Provide spiritual and psychological protection to the community. | Not recognized by many because of influence of the churches in the area. Important as deterrents against social vices. |

Table 2 Indigenous organizations

| Organization | Category | Services | Perceptions |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Cocoa Buying Company | Private Company | Providing credit to cocoa farmers for farm maintenance and buying the cocoa beans. | A vital service because cocoa is the main income earning activity. |
| Unit Committee | Government | Mobilising community for development and protecting natural resources. | Usurping role of the Traditional Authorities. Could be effective if there is collaboration between the two. |
| Community Forestry Committee | Local committee set up by Forestry Commission in collaboration with Chief and elders | Protecting the forest and promoting afforestation. | Committee members and community not sufficiently motivated by Forestry Commission and the CFC. Would be more effective if working in collaboration with Asafo groups. |
| SNV | NGO | Established a women's group and providing inputs for palm oil extraction and soap making. | SNV perceived as providing services to its group and not the community. |

Table 3 Formal service organizations

Relative Relevance of Institutions

Presented in Table 4 is an analysis of the relative relevance of the existing indigenous institutions and organizations in agriculture and natural resources management. Table 4 was constructed after a participatory assessment exercise, which involved the chiefs, elders and individuals in both Akutuase and Daboase. The ranking was based on a scale of 0 – 3 where: 0 = not relevant, 1 = quite relevant, 2 = relevant, and 3 = very relevant.

| Institution | Forestry | Land | Agric. Production | Agric. Processing | Agric. Marketing | Total Score |
|---------------------|----------|------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Chief | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| Mpanyinfo (Elders) | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Clan Heads | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Besuan | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Queen mother | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 12 |
| Mmranthene | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 10 |
| Asafo groups | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 15 |
| Susu groups | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| Village association | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Festivals | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 14 |
| Shrines | 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| Opinion leaders | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Clan Groups | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 15 |
| Singing groups | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Nnoboa groups | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 8 |

Table 4 Relative relevance of indigenous institutions to sectors of the local economy

From Table 4, it can be seen that all the indigenous institutions and organizations listed in the rows were said to be quite relevant in agricultural and natural resources management as no institution/organization had a cumulative score below 5. The most important institutions identified are shown in Table 5 in descending order of relevance for ANR.

| |
|---|
| 1. Asafo Groups, Clan Groups |
| 2. Festivals |
| 3. Queen Mothers |
| 4. Chiefs, Youth Leader (Mmranthene) |
| 5. Mpanyifo, Clan Heads, Besuan, Susu groups, Singing Group |

Table 5 Relevant institutions for AANR

Description of the indigenous institutions

To present a clearer picture of the structure, roles and functions of the relevant indigenous institutions for natural resources management, we examined the leadership structure of the Wassa Fiase state of which WATA is part. Wassa Akutuase is a sub-divisional traditional area in the Wassa Fiase state. The purpose of the descriptions is to establish how the various institutions fit in the traditional set-up to manage natural resources and to ensure orderly development.

Leadership and decision making structure of the Wassa Fiase State (WFS)

The WFS (*oman*) consists of five semi-autonomous divisions, namely Adum, Sekyere, Apinto, Pepesa and Bosomtwe. Each division (*omansin*) comprise a number of sub-divisional areas, which are themselves groups of towns and villages, (*nkrrow* and *nkeur*)a,

with a capital town where the *Ohene* or divisional chief resides. The Divisional and sub-divisional chiefs have the right to deal with internal matters without reference to the *Omanbene* (*the paramount chief of the oman*). The villages or *nkura* also consist of wards inhabited by one or two family groups. Akutuase is a sub-divisional area under the Sekyere division.

The Head of the Oman is the *Omanbene* or Paramount Chief, the supreme overlord. Next after the *Omanbene* are the Divisional chiefs, *Ohenes*. The villages, *nkura*, are headed by either an *ohene* (chief) or *Odikro*, literally meaning, the owner of the *kura*. The smallest units are the *nnanso* or hunting hamlets. Headmen head these. Each *kura* is inhabited by a number of family groups or clans/lineages. Each family group or clan in the village is headed by an *abusuapanyin*, the elder of the family group. He is to be distinguished from the *ofiepanyin*, the head of a household. The *abusuapanyin* is politically important as the link between his family group (clan) and the rest of the village; he is an elder, *panyin*, of the *odikro*, and member of the village council. The clans are scattered segments or sections of the seven or eight *Akan nton* clans.

Box 2

The broader akan tribe is composed of seven or eight original family groups or clans. Members of these have migrated from different parts of the akan territory. In every akan settlement one will always identify different combinations of these clans or variants of these clans.

The Leadership hierarchy of the Wassa Fiase Traditional Area may be depicted as in Figure 1. The Divisional chief or Ohene is a position that is conferred on an Odikro by the Omanhene. The division is however semi-autonomous and can take decisions on internal matters without reference to the Omanhene. The Omanhene has the power to withdraw the status of divisional chief. The divisional chief has authority over a number of Sub-divisional chiefs. These Sub-divisional chiefs may be the Odikros or village chiefs but have authority over a limited number of villages. They may also be categorised under *apakanbene*, which means those that come from royal families and can ride the palanquin and the ordinary Odikros who are usually the heads of migrant communities and do not belong to royal families. Although the Divisional chief can confer the power of sub-divisional chief on an Odikro, he cannot de-stool him as an Odikro, which literally means the owner of the town. That power rests on the citizens of the area. In terms of power relations, the structure will take the form of concentric circles with the Omanhene at the centre and the Ofiepanyin in the outer most circle. The Omanhene draws his authority from the various layers of the structure but does not necessarily control them.

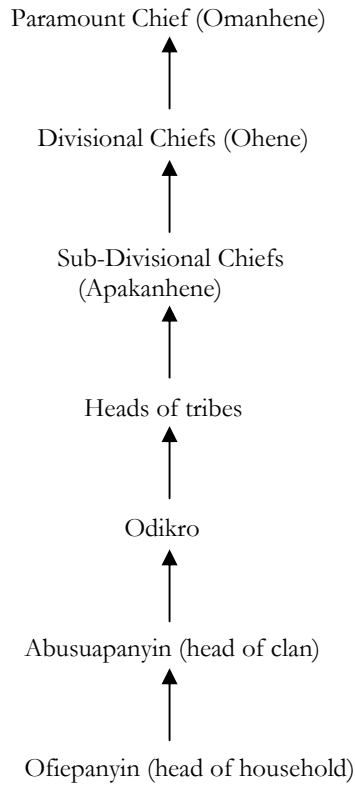


Figure 1 Leadership structure of Wassa Fiase

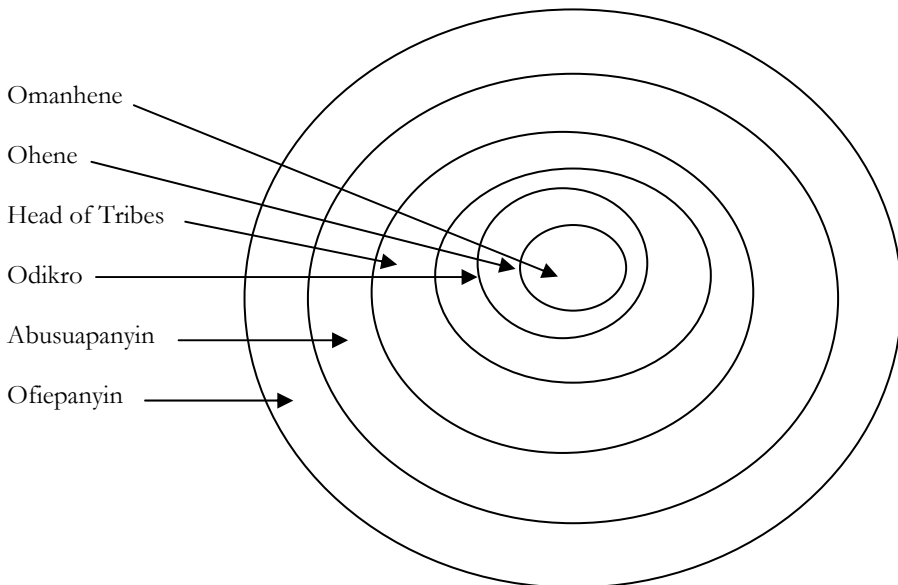


Figure 2 Spheres of influence (based on numbers)

In the Akan tradition, the chief at all levels (Oman, Divisional, sub-divisional, village) has a council of elders. At the *Oman* level, the traditional council comprises the *Omanbene* and *Obemma* or queen mother and all the five divisional chiefs as well as the head of the Royal family and all the apakahene. At the Divisional level it is the *Obene* and his queen mother and all his *abusuapanyin* (heads of the clans). At the Village level it is the *Ohene* or *Odikero* and his *obaapanyin* and *abusuapanyin* together with the opinion leaders in the village. The *abusuapanyin* (usually seven) form the *besuan* (committee of seven), *which* advises the chief on development issues.

The Structure of the Traditional Council

By Akan tradition, the council is structured on a military pattern solely because the role of the council is first to ensure the security of the resources of the state and its citizens.³ Each member of the council is assigned a specific title, which confers a specific role on him. These titles and roles are as follows:

| Position | Role |
|-----------------------|--|
| Gyasehene | Administrator of the chief's Palace |
| Ohemaa (Queen mother) | Nominates candidates for the positions of Omanhene, Ohene or odikro and legal advisor to the chief especially on issues concerning the wellbeing of women. |
| Kyeame (Linguist) | The chief's spokesman |
| Abusuapanyin | Head of clan, assists queen-mother in selection of the chief and provides counsel to the chief. |
| Tufuhene | Chief counsellor and deputises in the absence of the chief. |
| Adontenhene | Front battalion commander |
| Nifahene | Right wing commander |
| Benkumhene | Left wing commander |
| Kyidomhene | Rear battalion commander |
| Ankobiahene | Reserve or reinforcement battalion commander |

Table 6 Roles of various traditional rulers

The above classification is not unique to all traditional areas in the Akan territory. For example in the Mankesim-Nkwanta area in the Central region, there are additions like the *Dwantua*, (responsible for reconciliation), the *Mankrado*, and the *Ankobia Twafo*. These positions are conferred by the Omanhene to his divisional chiefs according to his ratings of their capabilities for the various functions. Similarly, the divisional chiefs and Odikros also confer these positions to the members of their traditional councils.

The Ohemaa and Obaapanyin

The female counterpart of the *Obene* and *Omanbene* is the *Ohemaa*. (Queen mother). The female counterpart of the *Odikero* is the *Obaapanyin*. The *Obaapanyin* was a female relative of the male office holder, and could be any of the following to him: a mother, or mother's sister, a sister, or a mother's sister's daughter, or a sister's daughter. The

³ A wing is a military division, which the Wassas called *pasua*, and every Akan male was supposed to belong to one of this *mpasua*, divisions

Obemaa or *Obaapanyin* is responsible for women's affairs, and is a member of the council of her political unit.

The indigenous organizations

The Asafo groups

The Asafo groups are indigenous organizations that exist in all traditional areas in the Akan speaking regions of Ghana. They typically comprise selected young men and women who originally performed a purely military function but are now the main institutions for dealing with emergencies in the community as well as mobilising the people for self-help initiatives. These are age-old institutions that have co-existed with the chieftaincy institution.

The Asafo groups exist at all levels of the traditional structure – village, sub-divisional, divisional and Oman levels. Primarily, each Odikro at the village level has one or more Asafo groups, with membership of Asafo groups being hereditary. One joins one's father's Asafo group.

The chances that an Odikro will be up-lifted to the position of ohene by the Omanhene depend much on the number and strength of his Asafo groups. These also determine whether he or she would be a Kyidomhene, Adontenhene, Benkumhene, etc. During war, each Asafo group is expected to contribute a number of men to form the Paramount Level Asafo company for the defence of the Oman.

A typical Asafo group has an *Asafobene* as the commander of the group. The *Asafobenfo* are appointed by the Odikro in consultation with his elders based on demonstrated bravery and social standing. A woman who shows same qualities may be selected as *Asafokyeremaa*. The *Asafobenfo* are assisted by *Asafo kyerewa* (the drummer), the *Asafo kyeame* or (linguist) and the *Asafo bomber* (the disciplinarian). The Asafo bomber has wide ranging powers to taunt members who do not show bravery and to punish members who break the rules of the Asafo or who do not respond promptly to the call of the *Asafo kyerewa*. All males in the village above the age of 18 years are obliged to be members of the Asafo group.

Functions of the Asafo group

In the beginning, the primary role of the Asafo group was to protect the resources and citizens in the community from foreign invasion. Today, the Asafo group serves as the core contact point as regards information dissemination in the community. It is common for the Asafo groups to formulate and sing songs during public occasions that seek to advise the community against social vices. Such songs are also used to praise illustrious sons and daughters of the community and reprimand those who commit social vices. It is the most vital institution in the community in times of emergencies. For example in case a citizen is lost in the forest, or a fire outbreak or armed robbery occurs, it is the duty of the Asafo group to organize and go to the rescue of the victim. It is the institution that the chief uses to mobilise the community for communal work such as clean ups, constructing schools and clinics. The Asafo companies are more noted for their display function, which serves as source of amusement during festivals, durbars, enstoolments and other special occasions.

The Asafo continue to play vital roles in the communities. In Akutuase, the Asafo group built all the schools in the area through the mobilisation of labour and cash contributions from the community. The creation of Unit Committees has, in some areas, created conflicts as to responsibilities, and this was a source of worry in the study area. There is continuing debate in the area as to whether mobilisation for development purposes would not have been better served with the recognition of the asafo as de facto representatives of the people.

Festivals

In all the Akan traditional areas, the general name for festival is Afahye although according to the particular area they may have different forms and names. The purpose of Afahye is to bring together all citizens of the community from within and outside the traditional area to:

- Thank God for the good harvest and appease the ancestors and pray for their goodwill in the coming years.
- Take stock and plan for the development of the entire community. It is an opportunity to invite foreigners who may wish to contribute to the development of the area.
- Reconcile differences between the chief and the citizens as well as among the citizens.
- Strengthen social bonds among the people and create opportunity for new marriages.
- Take firm commitment to continue with the good initiatives taken by their predecessors.

There are various variants of the Afahye. In the WATA, the Awusu Afahye is celebrated. Box 3 gives a narration of the daily activities.

Box 3 Daily activities of the Awusu festival

Friday

In the evening at about 6 pm, the Asafo group, in the company of the chief and queen mother meet around the Asafo-buo (house where the drums and other gadgets of the Asafo group are kept and start to beat their drums. By 9 pm the chief and the queen mother are escorted to the palace amidst songs and drumming where they are confined. During the confinement, the chief and the queen mother are well fed to ensure good health. They are not allowed to be disturbed by any person and will hardly receive any visitors unless the situation is very urgent. The drumming and merry making continues around the Asafo-buo until midnight or, sometimes, daybreak.

Saturday to Tuesday

From Saturday up to Tuesday morning, nobody goes to farm to work except to harvest foodstuff or firewood for home consumption. Any person found working on these days is dealt with severely and is believed to have the curse of the Gods. These days are meant for general cleaning in the town and working on development projects, which must be completed before the climax of the festivities in the afternoon of Tuesday. At dusk of each day, the Asafo groups and other choral groups provide traditional songs for merry making. These days the youth also engage concert parties and modern sound systems for public entertainment.

Tuesday Afternoon

The inhabitants of the town converge at the extreme end of the town opposite the Awosu River in their beautiful costumes. The Chief and the Queen mother are then carried in their individual palanquins through the principal streets of the town amidst drumming and singing of traditional songs and are finally carried to the Awosu River. At the river, libation is poured by the fetish priest of the river god after which the chief and queen mother also take their turn in performing rites and pray for success of the town. Individuals also say their prayers and strengthen their covenant with the river god and honour promises made the previous year. After the prayer, they all march to the durbar grounds. It is believed that requests made by individuals are fully honoured by the god. For example the barren and impotent become fertile and the children they bear are named Awosu, which literally means 'River of births', or 'river that provides children'. All ventures taken by the people become successful.

The chief and queen mother are then carried amidst drumming and dancing to the durbar grounds. At the durbar grounds, the chief and the queen mother address the people by reviewing previous activities and also present their projections to the people for the following year. Government dignitaries and state officials are usually invited and given the opportunity to address the public on government development policies.

Wednesday to Saturday

Individuals pay homage to the chief and queen mother in their palaces. The evenings of these days are just for merry making.

Sunday

On Sunday both the chief and the queen mother in the company of their elders and Asafo drummers attend church service. This day ends the festival and everyone resumes work the following Monday.

It was reported that the Awosu festival has not been held for the past two years in Wassa Akutuase and this has brought many calamities to the communities. A conflict between the chief and the village association was not properly resolved, which made it impossible to organize this festival. In Daboasi, the Chief stated that for her 32 years of reign, she has always celebrated the Afayhe. This is believed to have brought a lot of prosperity to the community and has fostered unity among the people.

The Addae festival

The Addae festival is a day's activity that comes off at forty (40) day's intervals in the year. Thus the Addae celebrations occur nine (9) times in a year. They are named according to the days on which they fall. These are:

- Sunday - Akwasidae
- Monday - Fordwuor
- Wednesday - Awukudae
- Friday - Fofie
- Saturday - Dapaa

They are occasions for the chief and elders to discuss matters of importance for the community. The day's activities are observed as sacred as it is believed that the ancestors in their spirit form visit every inhabitant especially the chief. The ceremonies are brief and last up to 12.00 noon.

Box 4 Activities of the Addae festival in the Wassa Akutuase Traditional Area

In the early days of the forefathers, all the Addae festivals were celebrated but for the past 50 years only the Fofie (Friday festival) is celebrated. The reason for choosing the Fofie is that according to oral history, their ancestors who migrated from elsewhere and arrived and settled around the river Awosu, put the black stool at a safe place on a Friday in November. For this reason, even the annual Afayhe is celebrated in the month of November. The Fofie is celebrated every Forty (40) days and the ninth Fofie which falls in November is for the annual Afahye.

The day before the fofie at about 6.30pm the talking drum is beaten to remind citizens of the morning's activities. The Chief, queen mother, elders of the town, elders of the clan and fetish priest meet at the palace to perform some rites to their ancestors and to renew their allegiance to the black stool. They then use this period to take stock of the past (40) days and consider the way forward. The whole activity starts from about 1pm on Friday and ends at about 6pm. There is no work that day and no guns are shot.

The clan system

The clan is made up of a group of families that trace their ancestry to a common matrilineal foundation. In Akan tradition, there are seven or eight basic clans to which that all Akans belong. Each clan has a distinctive symbol by which it may be identified. These are as follows:

| Clan | Symbol |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Oyoko | The Hawk |
| Aduana/Abrade/Amoakade | Burning fire or a dog |
| Agona/Anana | The parrot |
| Asona/Asomakoma | The crow |
| Ekuono | The buffalo |
| Bretuo | The tiger |
| Asanie | The vampire bat |
| Asakyere | The eagle |

Depending on which part of the Akan traditional area one is in, one would find different variants of these clan names in each village although the symbols and taboos remain the same everywhere. One can find from one to seven of these clans in all the Akan villages.

In the Wassa Akutuase traditional area, the seven clans were named as; *Asamankona*, *Abratuo*, *Abradzɛ*, *Ayoko*, *Asona*, *Abene* and *Agona*. Each of the seven clans is headed by an *abusuapanyin* who is usually the eldest in the family group. He is the link between the family group and the rest of the village. He is an elder or *panyin* of the Odikro and member of the village council.

The clan is probably the most important unit of identity for every Akan. It is an important binding force for its members and is the hub for socialisation. The clan remains the most important support in the event of social calamities such as death. It is a norm among the Wassa that if any of the clan members were bereaved, it would be the responsibility of all clan members to make sure that the dead is appropriately buried. For this, each clan has agreed on a certain amount that is levied on all its

members in the event of death of a member. An agreed percentage of the total contribution is paid to the community for community development activities, while the rest is given to the bereaved family. For this purpose, each clan appoints a *fotosanfo* or treasurer who keeps funds for the clan. Similarly a secretary is appointed who keeps the records of the family. The secretary and treasurer are selected by consensus by the family heads and stay in their position till death or until he or she breaks the norms of the clan or community. In each clan, the various individual families are obliged to maintain an *Nsaab buuk* or family register in which all adult family members are registered. This way the clan is able to keep track of adult members of good standing. In case of default in payment, the defaulting person will receive no support from the rest of the clan when he or she has any problem.

The main medium by which the *Abusuapanyin* of the clan communicates with members of his clan is through the *kyeame* of the clan or the *kyerema* or town crier. In case an *Abusuapanyin* needs to call his clan members together, he would first have to seek permission from the *odikro* who may ask his *kyerema* to beat the gong gong to announce to the community at dawn. Alternatively, the *Odikro* will give permission to the *Abusuapanyin* to use his clan *kyeame* to call the attention of all the clan members for the meeting

The Nkosuo kuo or Youth and Development Associations

Youth and Development Associations are a development phenomenon that is widespread in Ghana and can be found in almost every community although the degree of activity differs from place to place. They are normally built on modern democratic principles. In Wassa Akutuase, membership to the Nkosuo kuo comprised all adult males and females above the age of 18 who are resident inside and outside the community. The members who reside outside the community are usually more educated and connected. It should be made clear here that the Mmranthene is literally the chief for youth affairs and plays an important role in the activities of the Nkosuo kuo. It is not an elected position. Any courageous youth (male or female) who demonstrates leadership qualities may be selected as the Mmranthene or Mmabahemaa in the case of a female. Selection is done by popular acclamation by the youth and approval and installation by the chief and elders. The main activity of the Nkosuo kuo is to mobilise the youth for self-help development initiatives.

Worldviews or cosmovisions of the Wassa people

The Wassas regard the *Obemaa*, female king, or queen mother, as the *owner* of the state. The male king (called *Omanbene*) is appointed by the queenmother as the *ruler* of the state. By the cosmovision of the people of Wassa, the queenmother is regarded as the daughter of the Moon, who symbolises the female characteristics of *Nyame*, the Supreme Being who created the universe and gave birth to the sun. The sun, as the son of the Moon, is personified in the person of the Sun god. Thus, in the worldviews of Wassas, the *Obemaa* is regarded as the great *Mother-Moon-goddess*, the *Ohene* the *Sun-god*, and the state the *Universe*. At the court of the Wassa kings and queenmothers, the minstrels still sing "*Obemaa ye bosom, na Ohene ye ania*" meaning, the Queenmother is the Moon, and the King is the Sun. It is worth noting that in the Wassa Fiase traditional area, women can be enstooled as chief on their own right. Examples are the current chief of Daboase, and the late chiefs of Ayiem and Manso.

The Universe, the Sun and the Moon are personified and integral to the daily activities of the Wassas. An important part of this cosmivision is the evolution of structures and organizations that ensured the binding of the human, spiritual and natural worlds. The human institution exist in so far as it is in harmony with the spiritual and natural worlds. The inability to organize the Awusu festival because of an unresolved conflict between the chief and the village development association is said to be the cause of various calamities in the community. This shows a break in the required synergy between the human and spiritual worlds – a break that is also affecting the physical world because of the non-renewal of the behaviour patterns that follow the festival.

Potentials of indigenous institutions and organizations as partners for agricultural and natural resources (ANR) management programmes

The traditional authorities

From the above descriptions of the roles and activities of traditional institutions and organizations, it is clear that the chief, queen mother, elders and clan heads are important for leadership and decision-making in the Wassa Traditional Area. The perception, however, is that their powers have been greatly reduced by the influence of the state. There appears to be two parallel local governance structures operating at the local level:

- The traditional system drawing its power from the indigenous people and ruling by taboos and traditional norms known and accepted by the citizens, and
- A local government represented by the district assembly system drawing its power from the central government and basing interventions on external views that are not internalised by the local people.

The analysis shows that the most important strength of the indigenous leadership structures and accompanying institutions is the capacity to build consensus, and give opportunities for participation, dialogue and community evaluation. In terms of ANR and poverty reduction programmes, working through or with indigenous leadership structures will ensure inclusion of the poor in decision-making processes, and strengthen reciprocity, fairness and trust in the community. This would ensure that projects have a widespread effect. It will ensure ownership by the community and therefore enhance sustainability.

In dealing with indigenous leadership institutions, an external agent must however put in place mechanisms to deal with autocratic and selfish traditional leaders. Secondly, the capacity of the decision making roles of the leadership institutions could be enhanced by providing opportunities for exposure of the elders and advisers of the chief to positive events and activities outside their community to widen their horizon to be able to give informed advice to the chief. Economic empowerment of the traditional leaders will enhance their social standing and thereby engender respect from the people.

Festivals

The Afahye offers a natural opportunity for entry into the community by external development agents to participate in needs assessment and development planning

processes. The procedure the study team used to enter the Wassa Akutuase community (through the chief and elders) worked out very well and offers a framework for developing an appropriate entry procedure into the festival to introduce ANR programmes.

The Addae festivals (nine of them in the year) can be described as the indigenous monitoring and evaluation system. This is an opportunity for external partners to join the people in their own monitoring process. Again, the appropriate procedure for an external agent to participate in this one-day activity must be identified.

The Community Forest Committee and Asafo groups

The Community Forestry Committee (CFC) is probably the best opportunity for promoting a synergy between the 'indigenous' and 'formal' institutions to protect and promote the forests and other natural resources in the Wassa Akutuase traditional area. The Forestry Commission has realised the value of involving the traditional authorities in forest protection and this realisation is essential in facilitating a strong collaboration between government and traditional authorities and their institutions to initiate and support ANR activities.

The problem however is that, whereas the committee has been empowered to arrest illegal loggers, it has no power to control the sharing of the benefits that accrue from the sale of the illegal logs. Evidence on the ground shows that the benefits go to the forestry commission. This does not give incentive to the members of the CFC to be effective in their work. Secondly, benefits that come to the community go to only members of the committee.

There is the opportunity for a reconstruction of the CFC concept as a partnership arrangement involving the Asafo groups and other indigenous institutions, the District Assembly (unit committees) and the Forestry commission where responsibilities and benefits are equally shared among the different stakeholders. The Asafo groups in particular are an excellent opportunity for mobilizing human, material and financial resources for the implementation of ANR projects.

The clan system

The seven clans in Wassa Akutuase present a well-established and accepted system of organization, which is well understood by all the people. They could be the basis for establishing sustainable community groups for ANR activities, where the criterion for membership is the clan. The fact that members of each group belong to a common clan is the reason for sustainability. They already have a common value system and operate according to the norms of the clan. This means that trust and reciprocity is already in-built in such groups.

Nkosuo Kuo

There is the opportunity that the *mmrantehene* and the *Nkosuo kuo* can be effective checks on the chief and his elders. The two institutions have the potential to serve as partners for project implementation and at the same time serve as a political force to keep the chief and elders as well as government officials in the area in check.

Nnobia groups

Although the Nnobia system is reported to be dying out because of the commercialisation of labour, it is still very much in use by small-scale cocoa farmers

during the harvesting and processing of cocoa. The tendency however is for external development agents to favour the organization of so called cooperative groups or income generating groups (based on external criteria) for the purpose of using resources that are provided by the external agent. An example is the *Danfo Pa Ye* Group established by SNV in Akutuase. The sustainability of the cooperatives or income generating groups as alternatives have not proved to be sustainable because it is doubtful if the group would continue to exist after the support from the external agent has been stopped. It would be useful to look at the *mnoboa* system more closely together with indigenous people to see how it could be modified to deal with its shortcomings and build on the criteria of the local people so as to create a more sustainable organizational system for implementing ANR projects.

Conclusion

In general, the study reveals that in the Wassa Akutuase Traditional Area, there exists a vibrant indigenous system around which the local people organize their lives and livelihoods. Specifically, the study has identified a number of indigenous systems in the Wassa Akutuase Traditional Area. These include:

- a system for local governance based on well established leadership and consultative structures (chiefs, queen mothers, elders, opinion leaders)
- a system for an annual assessment of the needs of the community, planning self initiatives, mobilizing own resources and reconciling with the present and the past. (Afahye festival)
- an inbuilt system for monitoring and evaluating developments in the village (social, economic, political) and finding corrective action (Addae festival)
- a system for quick mobilization of the community for emergency and security actions and communal work as well as ensuring effective communication within the community and with other communities (Asafo)
- a system for mobilizing the youth and community at large to check abuses of power by the chief and elders as well as mobilizing resources for development. Also important for advocacy and making political demands on government officials (mmrantehene and Nkosuo kuo)
- a well established social support system that is based on trust and reciprocity (the clan)
- a system for protecting and projecting women's interests (Queen mother).

Over the years, both government and non-governmental organizations in their bid to support the poor in poverty reduction and natural resources conservation programmes have largely ignored these institutions and systems. The effect is that, at the local level, there exist two distinct parallel and symmetrical systems operating at the level of local governance and promotion of socio-economic development. These are the formal bureaucratic systems of government and NGOs (especially the INGOs) and the indigenous or informal system. The existence of the two systems has implications for ANR programmes in particular and poverty reduction programmes in general at the different levels:

Decisions on the protection of natural resources that are taken through the formal channels (District Assembly, Ministries, Departments, NGOs), most of the time, do not take into consideration the interests of the local people. In fact, such decisions normally reflect the interests of the decision makers rather than those of the implementers. Such decisions therefore do not enjoy the support of the people. A case in point is the decision of the Forestry Commission to establish a taskforce for the protection of the forest in Wassa Akutuase, which did not involve the traditional leaders and local people. Since the interest of the community was not catered for, they did not cooperate with the task force and in some cases were even reported to be conniving with the illegal loggers. The CFC that was established after the dissolution of the taskforce did involve consultations with the chief. The weakness of the CFC lies in the fact that the decisions on the sharing of the benefits are still taken by the Forestry Commission to the exclusion of the chief and local people.

ANR and poverty reduction programmes that are planned by technocrats would always suffer at the stage of implementation because the commitment of the local people who should implement the project would be lacking. In recent times development practitioners have resorted to using various PRA tools to solicit the ideas of local people as input in their planning process. But this still leaves the ownership of the planning process to the technocrats with consequent lack of commitment during implementation. The indigenous system of needs assessment and planning by consensus during Afahye is a process owned by the local people. Full commitment and ownership is possible where technocrats join in the planning process of the people rather than soliciting the ideas of local people through PRA tools to be used in their own planning process. On the same note, government and NGO sponsored projects normally go with strict monitoring and evaluation schedules prescribed by the sponsor. Full commitment on the part of the locals will be achieved if the project sponsors would join the people in their monitoring schedule (Addae festivals) rather than forcing the people to follow a schedule that does not suit their traditional work pattern.

A parallel system of resource mobilization is apparent in the Wassa Akutuase area. Whereas programmes promoted by the District Assembly and NGOs rely on external funding (case of the Danfo Pa Ye Soap making group and other groups for the Poverty Alleviation fund of the district Assembly), those promoted by the local groups themselves rely on mobilization of internal resources (local contributions by Asafo groups, clans and Nkosuo Kuo in form of material, human and financial resources) although appeal for external support is not excluded especially in the case of social amenities such as schools, clinics, etc. In terms of ANR activities, this has great implications for ownership of the initiatives. Whereas the local people may perceive externally funded projects as those of the funders, they would see those for which they have made local contributions as theirs. Thus for the sustainability of ANR programmes, external development agents must seek to participate in the indigenous needs assessment process and only supplement whatever local contributions the people themselves are able to contribute.

On a higher scale, a positive development is emerging where chiefs are using their goodwill and authority to mobilise resources both locally and at the cooperate level for development. The success of the Asantehene's educational and investment funds, which is now being emulated all over the country, has opened up new

possibilities for external agents to collaborate with traditional leaders in promoting poverty reduction and ANR programmes.

The case of the CFC in Akutuase clearly demonstrate that for any development strategy, no matter how well executed, will collapse if the people for which the project has been designed do not have control over the sharing of the benefits. In the traditional systems like *susu*, *nnoboa* or *nsaab*, there is an equal benefit for all as long as all go by the rules. This is because the people themselves set the criteria. In the case of the CFC, although the chief and community selected the members of the committee, the Forestry Commission, to the disadvantage of the people, decided the criteria for the sharing of the benefits. Thus, an otherwise good intervention for the conservation of the forests in Akutuase stands the risk of being ineffective.

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The earth cult and the ecology of peacebuilding in Northern Ghana

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Abstract

Ethnic conflicts have increased dramatically these days and the ability to manage them is dwindling. Recent political dispensations have exacerbated tensions that have been bottled up for generations. Despite the rhetoric of globalization, tribalism and sectarianism of all sorts seem to be on the upswing and Western-styled confrontative and negotiative diplomacy do not get to the heart of the matter. This chapter makes a contribution to peacebuilding by making an entry through 'the earth cult.' In so doing, it introduces a way of resolving conflicts culturally. It further highlights the way Culture-drama enables communities to 'heal' themselves first by recognizing, then by accepting and coordinating, and finally by integrating various implicit, 'hidden' pathways for peacebuilding.

Key words: Peacebuilding, Conflict, Rituals, Cult, Spoilt Earth, Intervention, Accommodation.

Introduction

It has often been observed that the people who are meant to benefit most from development projects play only marginal roles in their own development process. The lack of involvement reduces the overall effectiveness of any intervention and prevents its continuity. More recent trends in development, therefore, have tried to encourage the involvement of the beneficiaries in every aspect of the process from planning down to implementation. Beginning with Paolo Freire's (1970) idea of liberation through "conscientization," new approaches to development planning have focused on the role of the beneficiaries of development in their own process of transformation. Here, the first step is to help the people to recognize the thinking processes and behavioural chains that perpetuate their poverty, ignorance, ill health, and which hold back their own "development". As the theory goes, once the factors are understood and accepted the energies of the entire community can be harnessed to the work of transformation.

But if we take this seriously, that is if we recognize the necessity of people to be involved in their own process of transformation – and I think we must – this involves an implicit critique to our own values and perspectives on "development" and indeed, to the whole Western way of life. If understanding and acceptance are indeed key to development, these must rely on a dialogical process rather than just a unilineal narration or a one-way conversation. And this means a two-way flow – not merely of information – but of entire stories. By "stories," I mean culturally contextualized information. In other words, it involves not just a dialogue of "information" per se, but information contextualized in different systems of meaning. This presumes that

systems themselves be open to dialogue, and for there to be any true dialogue there must exist the actual possibility, through mutual critique and support, of eventually generating a two-way transformation of the two systems – as the Akan people of Ghana say, “the right hand washes the left and the left washes the right!” It is also presumed, in view of the absolute need for dialogical give and take that it is now the “turn” of those at the “grass roots” to tell their story.

At the very least, culturally contextualized input needs to be encouraged and accommodated from the “bottom-up” instead of just the “top-down” (Melkote and Vallath 1994). Is the Western world really ready for this sort of dialogue? Clearly, not yet! But as the cost of bailing out failed systems begins to dramatically outweigh the costs of prevention, the West is beginning to pay closer attention. Over the last decade, here in Africa, we have witnessed such a change accompanied by a dramatic increase in small-scale wars and regional conflicts. The high human, material and financial cost of repair and maintenance, the cost of relief aid, of care and rehabilitation services in the wake of natural and man-made disasters has indeed led to greater levels of awareness.

The escalation of armed conflicts in Africa – Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone – has, at the very least, led to an increased awareness of the need for more cooperation and planning in the area of conflict-management. The “development providers” in responding to the loss of life and property, the mass displacement of peoples caused by armed conflicts, are now casting their preventative sights further afield and, at least at the theoretical level, are trying to involve the disaster-prone communities in the preventative processes.

Intervention/accommodation of religious beliefs and practices

From the perspective of the local communities such claims to include their input and involvement are both extremely rare and empty. There are a number of hindrances and bottlenecks. The first is that the idealized “involvement” expectations on the part of the West are quite different from the forms of involvement idealized by Africa. Second, the enormous wealth and power of the development provider over that of the beneficiary militate against any equal dialogue. They tend to confirm the presumed superior knowledge and culture of the development provider and the inferior status and knowledge of the beneficiary.

The very fact that we presume the need for agencies of “development” in the first place speaks against an equal dialogue. Then the presumed new role of development agencies, which are perceived as wealthy and powerful, to elicit this kind of cooperation seems oddly incongruent to villagers. Nicolas van de Walle (1999: 339) claims: “In most countries of the region, the aid business is typically the second biggest employer in the local economy, surpassed only by the government, to which it is often preferred by young graduates because of its greater prestige and much more generous conditions of employment.” This is more than substantiated on the dusty streets of Tamale, Northern Ghana. Judging from the number of NGO vehicles and the people employed by development or “disaster relief”, it is the number one industry. On the principle that “people help those in need” the stark contrast between the rich development agents and poor African farmers makes it difficult for the “beneficiaries” of development to come forward, and the appearance of making a

business out of peoples' suffering makes any claim to mutual transformation a wry joke.

Added to the ranks of professional developers riding around in their USD 40,000 "Toyota Land Cruisers", there are also professional negotiators and "peace contractors" in their USD 35,000 "Pajeros." Conflict-management groups, operating with the Western efficiency of SWAT-teams-for-peace, have been organized throughout Africa at national and international levels to anticipate and defuse potentially volatile situations. Typically they tend to operate with a maximum of Western expertise but with a minimum of African cultural contextualization. Although they tend to function smoothly at the negotiating table, their record is less convincing as peacebuilders or as agents of reconciliation.

Here too, the mismatch between claim and reality is apparent and its roots go deep. It resides in an even more fundamental cultural gap that exists between the Western culture of "conflict-management" and the African culture of reconciliation. These deep cultural differences extend to the local beliefs, values and attitudes about conflict as well as to the contexts, the timing, procedures and actors that are involved in conflict resolution. Yet a good understanding of these issues is not normally required of a development team and, indeed, such an understanding goes well beyond the scope of most Western-initiated projects of relief or disaster-prevention. So, although the intention to involve the local community dialogically is admirable, the cultural framework in which development and relief are currently done does not easily adapt itself to this essentially cross-cultural task.

This chapter suggests that development and aid planners, and especially those that wish to help local people "manage" their own conflicts, need to enlarge their purview to include an understanding of local cultures of reconciliation, especially the beliefs, attitudes and practices arising from African Traditional Religion. Although Islamic and Christian beliefs and practice may sometimes play a role, especially at the end of a peace process through a symbolic ritual, those of African Traditional Religion do not normally play any part at all. Our central point, here, is that in order to help people to truly resolve their conflicts in Africa, especially those involving the land, one must take into consideration the widespread beliefs and practices concerning the cult of the Earth and search for ways to apply these to the mechanisms currently employed in peace building. Land issues are shrouded in religion, politics, economics and culture.

The situation in Northern Ghana

Although on the larger African scene, our Ghanaian "Northern Conflict" was quite eclipsed by the Rwanda affair, which reached its peak at about the same time, it was nevertheless considered destabilizing enough, that large investments were and are still being made to address the situation and to ensure that it doesn't happen again. Indeed, since the end of open hostilities, in the rainy season of 1994, there have been numerous attempts by sundry agencies to arbitrate a tenable peace agreement. But up to the present date the Konkomba peoples are not permitted to reside in any of the major cities of Dagbon or Gonja land, especially not the Regional and District capitals. Besides the official governmental bodies and the bilateral and multi-lateral organizations of development assigned to the task, various NGOs acting independently, and a consortium of NGOs acting in unison, have tried their hand.

Refugees and other victims of the conflict have been given humanitarian assistance including food relief, medicine and basic amenities. Hundreds of meetings have been organized at the local, regional and national levels, and various strategies have been tried over the years to negotiate a lasting settlement. In addition to numerous colloquia aimed at clarifying the issues, softening hard lines and keeping the parties at the negotiating table instead of the battlefield, there have also been numerous training seminars and workshops aimed at equipping local arbiters and spokespersons in the tactics of negotiation and the dynamics of conflict-management.

Yet, in spite of all the cost and concern expended, to date there still exists a very tentative and uneasy detente, which is more the absence of open hostilities than a genuine peace. In this context it is noteworthy that in the search for durable peace, the various agencies – even those that prioritize local participation – do not usually discuss or even recognize the importance of, let alone call into play, the traditional beliefs and practices of the people, especially those which are held in common, concerning their ritual relations with the land. Their reluctance to do so may actually foster the continuance of a kind of “cold war” which is in danger of getting “hot” each dry season.

The reason for this is that for the peoples of Northern Ghana and elsewhere in Africa, the spilling of human blood on the land involves not a two-dimensional “negotiation” between the combatants. Rather it is a three-dimensional “reconciliation” between the combatants and, even more importantly, especially for all those who are not directly involved in the conflict but are suffering the effects of it, reconciliation with the “Earth”.

Dispelling basic fallacies: A note on the religious demographics of Northern Ghana

Before proceeding too far into the discussion, it will be necessary to dispel some common fallacies: The first concerns the religious identity of the people in the North. It may be surprising to many that most of the people in Northern Ghana are neither Muslim nor Christian but adherents of their traditional religions (Barker, 1986: 59). In fact, astounding as this might seem to Southern Ghanaians whose main acquaintance with Northerners usually stems from their knowledge of the strangers’ quarters or “zongo’s” in Southern cities, there are more Muslims in the South (especially in the cities) than in the North (Dretke, 1979). Current population estimates in the combined three northern Regions of Ghana are: Islam: 18 %; Christianity 10%; ATR: 70% (Boi-Nai & Kirby, 1998).

The second is that the use of the word “minorities” to describe “acephalous” peoples (those without chiefs) is not a reference to their actual numbers but to the political and cultural status accorded them by the British in the colonial era – an anomaly that has passed down into current usage. Combined, they are actually more numerous (cf. Ghana Census 1960) than the so-called “majority” tribes (those with chiefs) and their cultures undergird the “majority” tribes linguistically as well as in their common religious understanding of the “Earth”.

Opposing cultures of peace-making

The major problem that would-be peace negotiators might face might arise from the fact that the culture of the development agencies, including their philosophy of

conflict- management together with its notions of law, justice, and peace etc. (see Gluckman, 1969), is so different from that of the beneficiaries, or the people experiencing the conflicts. Without a sophisticated understanding of the cultural element, the stage may be set for ongoing institutionalized miscommunication.

The striking differences that exist between the African political and judicial systems as compared with the systems of the West have been referred to in numerous classical studies of the colonial period (Gluckman, 1956, 1969; Fortes, 1949; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940). The most fundamental is with regard to the aim. African systems, often termed “dispute-settlement” (D-S) rather than “conflict-management” (C-M), aim at re-establishing harmonious relations in the community. Assigning blame and punishment or compensation is less important compared to healing the breach and re-establishing cordial social relations. Pressure is put on the disputing parties to settle the dispute for the good of the whole society. In Africa, justice is more contextual following the sliding scale of human relations as compared with Western-styled notions of immutable truth. Similarly, status is more important than contract. Laws and entitlements seems relative, fuzzy, soft-edged, and open to interpretation and re-interpretation. Everything seems to swim in the negative space of negotiation. But these negotiations are subordinated to human relations. They are meant to preserve these relations rather than destroy them.

In stark contrast to Africa’s time-honoured modes of settling disputes, repairing the breach, reconciling and reuniting communities, Western cultures of conflict-management aim at securing the rights of individuals. They do not aim at harmonious relations but at minimizing conflicts or keeping them manageable, which is to say not too violent. Negotiations are linear and progressive, moving sequentially from one point to another. Gains and losses are concretely defined, calculated and quantified. Clearly identifiable protagonists are placed in direct confrontation to one another. One prosecutes, another defends; one is innocent, one guilty. Indeed, at the cultural core, we find, implicit in the very language and strategies of Western-styled “peace contractors”, an oppositional code which conflicts dramatically with the culture-based expectations of African communities for reconciliation and harmonious relations.

The means follow from the ends. We can therefore expect to find different strategies and tactics in each system. On the one hand, dispute-settlement emphasizes the resumption of normal social interchange and friendly relations beginning very concretely with greetings. The tactics favor everything that can foster, insure or better these relations. On the other hand, Western conflict-management, which emphasizes “concrete” things like individual rights and material possessions, attempts to pile these up as chips for negotiation at the conference table.

The systems organize time very differently too. Dispute-settlement is cyclic and recursive, whereas C-M is linear and progressive. D-S goes round and round and seems to be getting nowhere but suddenly breaks through to a new level, whereas C-M makes quantifiable but often illusory gains. Because D-S focuses on relationship, measurement of specific units of time is counter-productive. Because C-M attempts to maximize quantifiable gain, strict measured time is of the essence.

D-S also requires much longer time than Western C-M processes because of the importance it puts on “healing.” The healing process must go through the three normative stages of separation, liminality and reaggregation (cf. Junod, Turner, Douglas), which do not easily lend themselves to measurement in discrete units of

time (days, weeks, months) but in terms of stages in the mourning process. The greater the trauma, the longer the time it takes for the emotional, physical and psychic healing to take place. Before re-integration or reconciliation is possible, denial, anger and acceptance must take place. Grieving is a socially-imposed responsibility, not a luxury. Yet, typically in the West, “mourning is treated as if it were a weakness, a self-indulgence, a reprehensible bad habit instead of a psychological necessity” (Geoffrey Gorer, 1965: 85). Because of this and because mourning time is not easily quantifiable, the process tends to be neglected or ignored by development providers. Only the third stage is stressed in conflict-management, thus preventing a true re-engagement. Whatever was lost remains socially unburied and thus unstable.

The key juncture points indicating “progress” in the process are not tied to this or that concession, or to the ratification of documents but to rites of separation, purification and re-integration. The final objective is not to bring about a negotiated settlement that each party can “live with” but to bring about a new life – a new equilibrium based on renewed relationships.

Trans-tribal foundations for peacebuilding

The case for the D-S model rather than the C-M model for Africa is a strong one. However, there is one big drawback with regard to the D-S model. D-S models in Africa operate well within the group but are not effective with regard to tribal conflicts, which, by and large, are what pertain throughout Africa today.

Here the C-M model may appear to have an advantage because the dynamics are not group-based. But it cannot handle inter-cultural dialogue. This is just not a priority for the C-M mode of peace brokering. Even if the cultural analysis were to be done, the C-M mode would not know what to do with the results. What would it do with cultural themes involving non-material agents such as God, the ancestors and the deities of the “Earth”? Where the C-M method is not equipped to handle these, they are commonly recognized by the beneficiaries of development (using D-S models) as the most basic agents for unity and harmonious existence.

The problem, then, is essentially one of stretching the D-S model to do its work trans-tribally. Here the same differences at the level of culture-based perception and interpretation occur between the African actors as plague the dialogical relations between the West and African development as a whole. At the heart of local conflicts in Africa we can usually find two different cultural systems in conflict. I’ve argued elsewhere (Kirby, 2002) that this stretching might be done through a new enactment format called “culture-drama.” Where its cousin psychodrama integrates the human personality, culture drama works to integrate two or more cultural pathways. But good culture-drama must be built on good cultural analysis – which has yet to be done. Very little is known about the underlying cultural themes of ethnic conflicts in Africa.

Thus, the two processes are radically different in their worldviews and with special reference to the unseen world. Yet, I believe that it is here, especially in their common belief in and dependency on territorial deities that we may find the most workable basis for a new mode of trans-tribal D-S. The problem is that the groundwork of cultural analysis needs to be done before the ethnic pathways can be

integrated through the new mode of culture-drama. This requires specialists in cultural analysis, for our own themes are quite inaccessible to us analytically.

The religious dimension

“The African is incurably religious” as Mbiti (1960) says. Another way of putting it is that in the African mentality the unseen or the spirit world is so closely united to the physical and material one we see about us that it is all part of the same reality. All of creation participates in relationships extending in two dimensions (pardon the crude geographics) – horizontally among the living in the visible world and vertically between them and the agents in the invisible world including the ancestors, the Earth and God. A breach in our relationships with one another in the visible world affects relationships with agents in the invisible one. As they are linked by a common ecology, disruptions in the visible world, brought about by bloody conflicts, not only destabilize elements of the visible world horizontally, they also disrupt the vertical connection rendering a given territory infertile, unproductive and unable to sustain life. Thus the aim of dispute-settlement is only secondarily the restoration of balanced relations in the visible world. Its primary concern is with the holistic restoration of a visible and invisible ecology where the vertical relationships are the conduit for life itself.

The cult of the Earth

One of the most common features of African Traditional Religious belief is the cult of the Earth. It is consistently found in the pre-Islamic Middle East (e.g. the Kabala, El Shaddai, Horeb, Tabor etc.), and among peoples throughout Africa, including the Gur-speaking peoples of Northern Ghana, Cote-d’Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Niger. Among all of these peoples the common linguistic roots of this cult derive from the word *ten* meaning “earth” which is often used together with the word for “animal hide” or “skin” to mean “land-skin” (Tait, 1963: 35). This cult is particularly important for their relationship to the land. Tait speaks of Konkomba political and geographical districts as “having their own shrines (*luwaa*, pl. *uguma*) . . . of which the most important in this context is the Earth shrine, *Ntengbe*” (1963: 35).

Throughout Africa, land is not just a political or economic entity. It is primarily a ritual or sacralized entity governing the fertility and vigor of life. The most elementary feature of this wider ecology is peoples’ (vertical) relationship to the land as a spiritual and physical source of life (see Tait, 1963: 14). This relationship is centered on the “Earth” as a personified deity. It is not just the horizontal elements, the organic and inorganic elements of the earth’s material ecology, including the soil, the stones, or the trees and vegetation that grow on it, or the animals that abound in its ‘bush’. It is not just the DNA or biological fertility of this or that animal or human, but, within a given territorial range, the essence of fertility itself, including all of the natural elements that comprise, insure or demonstrate instances of fertility, like rainfall, sunlight, and the nutrients and biological life in the soil. In this deity is combined a holistic ecology of life.

In this broad-based ecology are also embedded the rules governing society’s relationship with the deity as provider, the source of life, fertility, abundance and prosperity. This relationship is hierarchically ordered through ancestors to the Earth and through the Earth to God. In the Anufo ritual presented below (see Appendix)

the Earth priest calls upon the ancestors to give the offering to the Earth and then to God. The Nankanse say “When a *Ten'dana* performs sacrifices, the land ascends to *Yini*, the Sky-God, and begs things (*suse bono*) from him and every one prospers” (Rattray, 1932: 258).

Our relationship with the Earth must be maintained to insure the life and sustenance for all those living on it. The relationship is cultivated and maintained through intermediaries or “Earth priests” (*tendana*) by means of two main rituals every year – one at the onset of the rains to petition for fertility and good crops, and the other after the harvest to offer thanksgiving for the fecundity of man, beast and soil, and for the sustenance to maintain life for another year. The relationship can also be jeopardized or broken by certain individual or group acts which symbolically or actually destroy the relationship between those living on the land and their relationship with the Earth itself.

Ritual “landowners”

The ritual office of “landowner” (*tindana*) or Earth priest was the highest office held by the original “acephalous” inhabitants of northern Ghana. In spite of the obvious differences among these peoples, Cardinall points to a source of unity in the ubiquitous spread of this religious “landowner”:

Apart from the divergence of dialects there is one great similarity among all these tribes. This is the institution of the *tindana* (Moshi, Mamprussi, Dagomba etc.), *tigatu* (Kassena), *tengyonya* (Builsa), *tensoba* (Moshi)” (Cardinall, 1920: 15-16).

The *tendana* were and still are the intermediaries passing between the veil that separates the seen from the unseen world – between the people living on the earth and the Earth itself. Cardinall therefore sees a “primacy” in the office of *tendana* as relating to farming matters and day-to-day living on the land and he asserts that this primacy was recognized by the YaNaa himself.

At Yendi, for example, the Naa of the Dagomba preserves to this day the cap, gown, and necklace, which were the insignia of the principal *tindana*, whom his forefathers slew. But the Ya Naa has never dared to arrogate to himself the duties of the *tindana*. In fact, he humbles himself before him and appears disguised as a poor man when occasion arises for him to visit the *tindana*. For the latter not only owns the land, but by reason of his ownership is the only one who knows or is known to the spirit of the land. And it is worship of the earth-gods that is common throughout the country. It is said that there is no place without a *tindana*, and to this day when people move into uninhabited country, owing, perhaps, to the poverty of soil in their own, they obtain the land from the *tindana* who is nearest to the site of the new settlement (Cardinall, 1920).

Political “landowners”

Rattray (1932: 259) says that before the advent of the “territorial ruler” (the Na), “the *Ten'dana* was head of the clan, which was the largest political unit.” The “landowner” exercised mainly a religious function in that he made sacrifices to the Earth and he purified the Earth when it was violated, but he also acted politically by preventing wars, by intervening in conflicts and by sitting with the elders to decide on important matters concerning relations with other tribes, and he acted economically by allocating land to strangers. Because his authority rested on the ancestors and it was to assure

harmonious relations between all the people and the land, there was clearly a “religious” primacy to the office. However the Earth is a political, economic and geographic entity as well as a ritual one, and because the “landowner”, although essentially a ritual office holder, also at times exercised adjacent authority in other aspects of life, especially those that may threaten or be threatened by a disharmonious relationship with the Earth – and the possibility for this increased dramatically as “markets” formed on his territory – he was also implicitly and incipiently a political leader.

In Cardinall’s view, the *tindana* is a precursor to the *naba* or chief. “The distinction, therefore, is an important one between a *tindana* and a *naba*. The former cares for the religious observance of the people, the latter was in process of developing into a political head, when the advent of the white man interfered with and accelerated the slow process of evolution” (Cardinall, 1920: 21). He also maintains that in Asante, and in southern Ghana as a whole, the office of political leader or chief arose out of the office of land priest and that his political authority is a direct extension of his religious authority. They are “landowners” primarily because of their relationship to the sacral Earth, not because of their political authority and the conquests of their forefathers. According to Cardinall’s reckoning therefore, the Asantehene is first and foremost an Earth priest whose political authority is prefaced on his role as ritual intermediary to the ancestor king/priests of the nation and through them to the Earth and to God as expressed during the *odai* and *odwira* (thanksgiving) festivals.

Around the 16th century in western Dagbon there was an attempt to combine these offices. Cardinall says: “These traditions (drum histories) agree in that the first arrivals of these chief-families seized and slew the *tindana* of the land and thus came to them their over lordship” (Cardinall, 1920: 16). However, all over Gonja, and in eastern Dagbon, Nanumba and in Anufo land these ritual heads along with their people were assimilated into the state system at the level of “Commoner” status. Here, even today, the two roles remain distinct, though there was, until very recently, a priority given to the ritual landowner when it came to allotting land to farmers.

Elders and Earth priests

The Konkomba and the Anufo distinguish between “those who hold the people” or “elder” (*miekpie*) and “those who hold the land” or “Earth priests” (*miefi*). The “elder” has one function and the “Earth priest” has two. Similarly among the Konkomba, “the term *onekpel* is applied to the senior man of the kin group which occupies a district or to the senior men of its subdivisions. Of the elder it is said, ‘he holds the people’, *odzo benib*. Where there is no Earth priest, the ‘elder’ may serve in his place” (Tait, 1963: 35). But the Konkomba recognize two functions in the title and role of Earth priest: “as the form of the word shows, he is the ‘owner of the Earth’; of him, it is said, ‘he holds the people, he holds the Earth too’, *o dzo beniib, o dzo keteng mu*” (Tait, 1963: 36). This is quite logical given the holistic ecology within which they think and act, in which the one most responsible for the overall good of all is de-facto also responsible for the good of the particular.

This division between secular and religious authority also finds its counterpart in the community as a whole. Among the Konkomba and Anufo, the newcomers to an area are distinguished from the descendants of the original settlers. Tait says: “In

contrapuntally organized clan and district the two kin groups are known as *onekpelanib* and *otindanib*, the Elder's people and the Owner of the Earth's people; the latter are said to be the earlier settlers in the district" (1963: 36).

Among the Konkomba and Anufo we see a connection similar to that of "divine right" between the Earth priest and his shrine. Tait says: "In another sense, *otindaa* means 'one who was sent by the Earth.'" "He or she is therefore one who stands in a special relation to the Earth, and may be called on to cut the throat of a fowl or animal sacrificed to the Earth shrine" (Tait, 1963: 36). The "landowner" is also a messenger or delegate who represents the Earth in all matters concerning society's relationship with the Earth. The office and authority of "landowner" is therefore from the Earth itself through the ancestors and is demonstrated, validated and confirmed in sacrifice. To the Anufo, the shrine itself ultimately substantiates the claim to the office of Earth priest. As they say, "the shrine knows the voice of its owner". To snub his authority, to take land without his permission or perform the sacrifices in his stead incurs the wrath of the Earth.

In the past no one in eastern Dagbon would attempt to arrogate to himself the right and duty to offer sacrifice or to claim the office of "landowner" if he or antecedents were not the founders of the place (see also Rattray, 1932: 285). The establishment of an original settlement or an autonomous community is dependent on establishing a relationship with the Earth Spirit of the new place. In an account of this drawn from the Konkomba, Tait says:

When a man or group of men wish to go and settle in a stretch of unoccupied bush, they consult a diviner who discovers for them whether or not it is advisable to move and, if the answer be positive, the location of the shrines, commonly groves of trees, in the new area they propose to occupy. Thus a new relationship is established from the beginning between a group of kinsmen and the territory they occupy. Migration does not necessitate the cutting of all links with the shrines of the parental district, although the links die out in time; but it does imply the immediate carrying out of separate sowing rites and Earth rites. The first and major step to district autonomy has been taken, and a new clan and a new district have come into being (Tait, 1963: 39).

The need to consult diviners and establish a relationship with the Earth did not apply when someone else was there first. Thus, in places where some group, for example the Dagomba, have already settled, the Konkomba say, "the land is for the Dagomba" (Tait, 1963: 39). In this case the newcomers simply depend on the intercession of the existing Dagomba "landowner".

The spoilt Earth

Tait, who studied the Konkomba as a prelude to what he considered as his main work which was to study their overlords, the Dagomba, was ever sensitive to the elementary political and religious strata shared by the two groups. He pointed out that among the Konkomba and Dagomba there are certain acts of desecration which unleash chaos or a state of "ritual pollution" on the eco-system. Among these are certain lesser, more localized offences such as sexual acts in the bush, the occurrence of a "bad death" (someone dying alone in the bush or by drowning) or the dragging of a branch of a certain thorn tree (*nabuli*) across the surface of the land which can render it infertile.

But by far the most abhorrent act is the spilling of human blood through war, tribal conflict or murder (see Rattray, 1932: 258; Froelich, 1963: 151).

Following such an event the relationship is shattered, a state of ritual pollution ensues, and fertility and vitality can only be restored by a ritual of purification called the “burying the blood” or “smoothing of the land” (cf. Rattray, 1932: 258). If the land is not purified there are dire consequences for all. On this Rattray quotes his informant saying: “the land is a bitter thing, it will cast out, finish, your house (if you refuse to purify it)” (1932: 258). Cardinal (1917, GNA, Adm. 67/5/1, 147) gives an account of such a “burying of the blood” ceremony which was to reconcile the two Konkomba villages of Kanjok in Togo and Sambul in Ghana. As he explains it, the infraction is not just between the two fighting parties but also between the Earth and everyone who depends on it for sustenance. Later in the essay we will examine a text of such a ritual in Anufoland.

The very threat of war is a also threat to the stability of these relationships and one of the duties of a Earth priest is to prevent war by casting down his animal skin (the insignia of his office) between the combatants (Rattray, 1932: 257). Rattray says that even the threat of this destabilizing event is so perverse that “To raise the war cry necessitates purification, even when fighting has not followed, and not one has been killed . . .” (1932: 125).

Thus, the ritual has a dual purpose. Because of the peoples’ beliefs in an ecology which brings together both the seen and the unseen worlds, the ritual focuses the warring parties on a common, more basic problem which unites them – the need to live in harmony or not to live at all. The state of war is unnatural and leads to some form of death for everyone. The presence of war constitutes a break with life and brings about a state of deadly contagion and it will ultimately lead to death for all. The very fruitfulness of the earth is affected by this contagion, and its re-establishment depends on ceasing the hostilities and reconciling the differences. Thus the ritual of the “burying of the blood” both offers the possibility of reconciliation and makes reconciliation a necessary step for the resumption of life. Existentially speaking, without the ritual of reconciliation there still exists a state of war.

Old “landlords” and land tenure

Although the chiefly peoples of Northern Ghana, in particular the Dagombas and Gonjas, now exercise control over the land, even those of western Dagbon who combined both offices under the chief, have not been “landlords” in the Western or even feudal meaning of the word. Jack Goody stresses that in the past the “ownership” of chiefs was over people, not land as such. “Politically, chiefship tended to be over people rather than over land; these a leader had to try to attract as well as restrain” (Goody, 1971: 30). People supplied the labour, which produced the food. But land was of little consequence. Goody goes on to say, “In Africa labour requirements led to slavery but not serfdom; trading towns like Kano and Bida in northern Nigeria, or Salaga and Bole in northern Ghana, were surrounded by villages of slaves which supplied the ruling and commercial groups” (Goody, 1971: 30 fn. 20). Until very recently land was not viewed as an economic entity. Skalnik (1983) maintains that in the past “wealth served non-economic goals almost exclusively. It was a source of prestige and a means for paying and feeding any army. Nor was land considered an economic interest; the jurisdiction of any ruler over his territory did not

imply ownership of the land. His authority was viewed only in terms of political (i.e. organizational, moral and ideological) authority”.

The historical record also testifies that chiefs traditionally did not allocate land in the North. Staniland quotes H.A. Blair, “the most knowledgeable of British D.C.s in Dagomba” on this question saying: “Right of control is vested in the Ya-Na, for the decision of boundary dispute between Chiefs, but not for the apportionment of land outside Yendi sub-division. Similarly sub-divisional Chiefs have no right to apportion land to persons except within their own towns . . . The Chief does not grant farming land to individuals. He is considered not to have any right over farms . . . *Tindamba* still have power over Chiefs and are feared” (Staniland quoting from Assistant D.C., Dagomba, to D.C. Dagomba, 13 Aug. 1936 [N.A.G.T., ADM 2/15] Staniland, 1975: 16).

Rattray describes the position of the Chiefs in pre-colonial times, which I summarize here:

- People assemble at his house to dance (social functions).
- The chief wears a red cap and people salute him (prestige and sumptuary display).
- When it was “red” [times of trouble] the chief ran to the *Tendana* who had the power.
- The land never belonged to the chief.
- Chiefs could not fine a man or impel him to do forced labour.
- Chieftaincy was “like a wife” because one had to bid for it with cows.
- A chief’s profit was in his right to seize and sell strangers (slaves).
- It was forbidden for a chief to sacrifice.

A changing North

These concepts have gone through many changes. The primacy of the *tindana* in distribution of land to farmers now only applies to lands far in the bush, away from district and regional centres where the Chief claims this right. In the towns and cities where land is sought for building, commerce or industry, it is the regional governmental bureaucracies, the Lands Department and the signature of the Chief, especially the Ya-Na, that counts. The key to understanding these changes is a conceptual shift that has occurred, from land as the sacralized patrimony of the ancestors, to land as a “people” who could be coerced, and finally to land as a scarce economic – and therefore political – resource (see also Rattray 1932: 259ff).

Rattray, drawing from his observations in the 1920’s, makes an insightful commentary on this transition process:

The territorial Ruler, the only Chief recognized by our Government, in this instance, ignores the *Ten’dana*. I found this old man living alone in a hovel and bitterly lamenting the fate, which had befallen him. The functions also of the old section leaders were gradually but surely being usurped by men who, like the Chief, had bought their positions as head-men in the various sections. Any man who can raise the money can become a *Kambonaba* (Chief of the gunmen) as they are called. This system is a pernicious one. A man, having bought the post, proceeds to make what he can out of it to recoup himself for his initial outlay.

Captain Rattray quotes one informant as saying, “They, the Chiefs and their sons, prefer rascals for their minor posts and keep on changing them to get the presents, which each new candidate must bring before he is installed.” And he goes on to say, “Positions of authority are tending to fall into the hands of ambitious and unscrupulous individuals who have taken full advantage of our lamentable ignorance of the conditions under which the Native administration functioned prior to our advent” (1932: 260). One wonders if today he might also lament the ignorance of the development teams.

Ritual authority under contention

Over the last century, the institution of “elder” or Chief has increased in importance and has absorbed the political and economic roles formerly belonging to the Earth priest. Although the institution of *tindana* still brings together all peoples who depend on the land for life and fertility and most people still look to him, rather than the Chief or his appointees, to carry out the rites, this too is now changing. Nowadays Chiefs are beginning to claim ritual as well as political possession of the land in order to strengthen their overall authority as chiefs.

An example of this occurred in the 1998 government-orchestrated attempt at reconciliation in Salaga when Muslim clerics were appointed by the Gonja Chiefs to perform a “sacrifice” for peace while the opposing group insisted that only their *tindanas* had the right to officiate at the ceremony. The incident almost thrust the two parties back into full-scale war. In the Anufo case of the “burying of the blood” below we see a similar tactic being used by the Chereponi *feme* who had appointed an elder of his own family as his “Earth priest” and, in order to satisfy the Muslim majority in Chereponi, he directed the Chereponi Imam to “sacrifice” a sheep in the market a short time after the Sangbana “landowner” performed the “burying of the blood”. Such “sacrifices” are considered unorthodox by Muslims and the appointment of an Earth priest by a Chief is considered invalid by adherents of ATR.

The northern “ethnic” conflicts are essentially land wars. It is no longer the “people” of the land but the land itself as an economic commodity that is of interest to modern day combatants, the 21st Century territorial rulers and their former subjects. Yet, ironically, it is the land in the ritual sense that, sooner or later, all are forced to come back to in order to insure a lasting peace; so they are, at a very basic level, also religious wars. Today the territorial rulers show renewed interest in the authority of the *tindana*. This office and the incumbent responsibility to offer sacrifice affords the autochthones (*utindanib*) holding the office a residual claim to land ownership and popular support. Since this is one of the central issues in the recent conflicts, the needed rites of reconciliation are not being performed. Where the farmers would usually prefer to make the reconciliation sooner it is in the interests of politicians and those holding power to postpone this until they can build some religious legitimacy around themselves or their appointees.

Nature may decide but divine right will win

Thus, at present the two parties are at a ritual stalemate. The danger in such a stalemate is, of course, that it unnecessarily continues the state of war. We are still in what can be considered a “liminal period”, a time of “mourning” but it cannot last

forever. If it does not lead to reconciliation “the land will be bitter” they say, and it will degenerate once again to a “hot” war.

Rattray (1932: 258) makes the comment that action is not always taken until “misfortune overtakes” those responsible. The rainy season of 1999 was the heaviest the North has experienced in living memory (since 1935). Few farms were spared flooding. Development and relief organizations began to anticipate the need for relief aid and preparing for famine conditions by March. Since the North feeds the South, all of Ghana was affected through the general price hikes and corresponding raises in salaries.

Hardest hit, as usual, were the farmers. To them in the eastern part of the Northern Region, regardless of their tribal identity, the misfortune was not put down to the vagaries of African weather. Now, as in times past, the very first answer to the “why” question, in the minds of all the peoples on the land, is the disruption of their relationship to the Earth through the hostilities and the blood that has remained “unburied” these past years. They will continue to be reminded of this by diviners whenever any misfortune arises.

Even though the concepts are changing in the face of new economic and political pressures, when faced with a common life-threatening foe, it is more than likely that all parties will finally forget their differences and address the problem at the ritual level. The more excessive and critical these dangers become the greater the possibility that it will be done quickly and in a way that meets the ritual imperatives of everyone involved.

The “burying of the blood” at Chereponi

In order to illustrate the issues involved and how these were dealt with in a specific case, I would like to present an account of a ritual of “burying of the blood” which I witnessed at Chereponi in 1984. The ritual was necessitated by the fatal stabbing of a youth, who was a member of the Chief’s family, by another youth from Sangbana during an argument in the market. The argument was about whether or not the Chereponi Chief had any ritual authority over the Earth and thus over the welfare of the people of Sangbana.

The ritual was enacted because of a crisis or series of misfortunes which were consistently interpreted by the Sangbana elders and local diviners as the direct result of the Earth having been “spoiled” by the stabbing. The particular misfortune that was the “last straw” for some elders was the moribund condition of the mother of one of the youths who had been involved in fight, and the fact that their granaries were almost empty. My own interest in the case was occasioned by the fact that the youth was the son of, and the woman the wife of, my dear friend and informant, Kobina.

There are two features of this Anufo case that help us to see more clearly the ecological features of the so-called “Northern Conflict”. The crucial feature of the case is that if the pollution is not removed, it is believed that the people will continue to be at risk from a range of dangers and chaotic influences. The second feature concerns the contested ritual office of Earth priest. It is crucial because it offers an ecology-based authority to the role of “landowner” for the Chiefs.

History of the Anufo and Chereponi

Like the Gonja and Dagomba, the Anufo are territorial rulers who derive from a group of raiders. They entered the area of Northern Ghana in the mid-18th C. and conquered the local peoples, gradually incorporating them into their centralized state system at a lower status as Commoners (*njem*). It clear from the accounts of Froelich (1949), Kirby (1986) and others that the people of Sangbana, were formerly “Kpalibas”, one of the Konkomba peoples. The mis-pronounced name of Chereponi itself, “*n cha n kpend?*” in this Konkomba dialect means “I am going for water”, which, as tradition tells us, is what Sangbana women told the geographer who mapped out the names of the towns and villages of that area in the 1920s. Their relationship with the Earth and the rituals they follow in this regard are therefore identical to those described above.

The area of Northern Ghana inhabited by the Anufo is about 100 km north of Yendi. After the First World War it was annexed to the Gold Coast as part of British Mandated Togoland. Its capital, Chereponi, which was never a traditional village but grew up at a junction along the road from Yendi to Sansanne Mango during the colonial era, is situated on the traditional land of nearby Sangbana village, which claims the custodianship of the Earth. The first Chereponi chief, Malba, was not from the traditional Anufo line of chiefs but from an Anufo commoner lineage. He bid for the title and was appointed chief of the area in the 1930's, as the local administration began to implement the policies of “Indirect Rule”, because he could speak English and had culled favor with the British and the Ya-Naa in Yendi – also probably because both the British and the Ya-Na feared that a “real” Anufo chief would have divided loyalties to Sansanne Mango, the Anufo capital in French Togoland.

At the time of the ritual, the chief of Chereponi, Abdulai, was the son of Malba. Although up to this time neither he nor his father before him had ever laid claim to ritual authority, he nevertheless refused permission for the sacrifice to be performed because it impinged on the authority he was trying to establish as full “landlord” (including the ritual office) of Chereponi. At this point the reader is asked to follow the account and commentary of the “Burying of the Blood” ritual at Chereponi (see the Appendix).

Background to the Anufo ritual

Like the Gonja and the Dagomba of eastern Dagbon, the distinctions the autochthones made between political and ritual leadership were incorporated. The assimilated Konkomba political leader or “elder” became “*miekpie*” and the ritual leader or custodian of the Earth shrine became “*miefɔ*”. Like the other chiefly peoples, the Anufo only bothered to assert their position as elder (*miekpie*) and not Earth priest (*miefɔ*). If they thought that a sacrifice was needed because of drought, famine or to remove some ritual pollution, which had “spoiled the earth”, the Anufo chiefs would simply round up the local Earth priests and force them to make whatever sacrifices or rituals were deemed necessary.

I witnessed such a sacrifice at the Anufo village of Nyangbandi in 1984. The Anufo elders called upon the Earth priest from Nanchem, a Komba village some 10 miles to the west, to come and make a sacrifice at their Earth shrine in order to insure good rainfall and fertility in the next farming season. Both the Anufo rulers and their

“Commoners” from Nanchem subscribed to the view that “you can’t fool the ancestors or the Earth shrine” for the shrine “knows the voice of its owner” (Kirby, 1986).

By the late 1970’s the “ethnic” consciousness that we find generally arising in Northern Ghana because of the establishment of schools and “development” in general was also prevalent in Ghana’s Anufo land, locally called “Nalori”. Along with this there was strong popular movement afoot to claim their own paramount chieftaincy and governmental district. Up to this point both the Chief’s supporters and the opposition were in agreement.

The Chief, however, felt he had a better claim if didn’t antagonize Yendi. For the very process for gaining more independence would involve going through that political and chiefly bottleneck. He also realized that being a “Commoner”, and without the support of the Yaa-Naa, he would have little chance of winning the Nalori Paramountcy against such Anufo “Nobles” as Baye (see Kirby, 1986).

After the change in constitutions in 1979 regarding the ownership of land in the Northern Region being with the Chiefs (see Skalnik, 1985), those who were appointed by the Ya-Na, like chief Abdulai, following the example of the Dagombas, also began to claim ritual jurisdiction over the land though they had not done so previously. In some ways, this case puts their claim to the test.

Over the course of February and March, 1984, the elders of Sangbana discuss the necessity of renewing the Earth shrine in view of the desacralization of the land which had occurred because of the knifing. Strictly speaking, Chereponi is no longer under Sangbana’s political jurisdiction so the elders informed the Chief of Chereponi, the Imam and the new Earth priest who had been appointed by the Chief’s family, that something should be done. But nothing is done. To make matters worse, there are many “strange disruptions” including elders being beaten up by “spirits of the wild” as they walk home at night, and many cases of illness, which, like Atifala’s case, are attributed to chaotic forces. Diviners are consistently reporting that the cause of all this trouble is the Earth shrine and they are advising their clients “to remove the obstruction” (the ritual pollution caused by the incident).

Therefore all of the elders of the 13 compounds of Sangbana contribute an amount each to buy a goat and on the morning of 1 April, they sacrifice it to the Earth. At first there is some confusion as to whether the sacrifice of the goat should be made at the Earth shrine itself (*mie amue*) called “Chanchange” or at the spot in town where the blood had been spilled. The Chereponi chief does not want them to make the sacrifice in the town, as that would indicate that they control the land. But exercising their “divine right” and risking his wrath and that of his appointed Earth priest named Langa, they decide to follow tradition and “bury the blood” (*kata mboja*) at the place in the town where the blood was actually spilled.

The ritual itself

The animals of sacrifice include a chicken and a goat. It was explained to me that in the past, each of the quarrelling parties had to supply a part of the sacrifice. One was obliged to give the guinea corn beer, the other the sacrificial animals, but in this case Sangbana supplies everything. A hole is dug about a foot deep and six inches in diameter. Then the sacrifice begins with invocations and libation pouring. Finally, the chicken’s throat is cut and its blood is dripped into the hole. Following this, the goat’s

throat is also cut and its blood poured into the hole. The very knife used in the fight is used to sacrifice the animals. After the goat is sacrificed, the elders and representatives of the offending parties eat its meat on the spot. Only part of the cooked liver, the head, the feet and the offal of the goat are left and these are buried in the hole along with the blood, the chicken and the knife.

The interpretation

The actual case of the ritual and its background at Chereponi was presented in order to tie the issues to a concrete situation in which people enact rituals in response to complex situations involving conflict. An interpretative reading might proceed as follows:

The people of Sangbana believe they have a prior claim to the land stretching back through their ancestry, which, though they wouldn't like to admit it, happens to be through their Konkomba ancestors. Now this claim is being challenged by the Chief by virtue of his authority as a Dagomba sub-chief, appointed by the Yaa-Naa, who is by virtue of the constitution of 1978 the titled "owner" of Anufo land. Most of the people of the area want to live in peace. They all believe that the rites are necessary to keep misfortune and disaster at bay. But the Chief, realizing that such rites jeopardize his claim to the complete office of "landowner" refuses to let them be performed. The people wait for more than three years before finally performing the rite on their own. Initially they wish to avoid problems with the Chief and the interim is good for the mourning process. As time goes on, however, misfortunes seem to increase in intensity and gradually a consensus begins to form, which is backed up by diviners and is constantly reinforced by quiet discussions among the elders. The consensus is that the reason for these misfortunes is the sacrilegious "spilling of blood," and the subsequent "spoiling" of the Earth. Gradually, the whole populace of the affected territory, under the leadership of their elders and Earth priest, come to decide that the sacrifice simply must be performed. Finally, the Sangbana elders and their Earth priest perform the rites. The Chief's group are annoyed to discover that the sacrifice is made without their permission and attempt to fine them without success. Throughout the area popular support favours the Sangbana Earth priest and elders rather than the Chereponi chief or the Yaa-Naa

Conclusion

Participatory development at an intercultural level challenges the cultural presuppositions of both development providers and benefactors. In fact, if it is done well all become "providers" and "benefactors" in a mutual sense, for it works toward mutual transformation and not just an overlay of Western cultural practices. This is equally true of conflict resolution and peace building.

Western institutions of conflict-management are particularly ill-suited for peace building in the African context because they operate out of a set of Western cultural and philosophical presuppositions which attach negative reactions to religious beliefs, especially to those of ATRs. Yet if they are to elicit the full cooperation of African beneficiaries in establishing a lasting peace, those who are guiding conflict-management interventions need to be more aware of the culture-based issues – most

especially those arising from ATRs – as these are perceived by those directly involved in the conflicts.

Many development agencies have claimed that they fulfill their consultative obligation by hiring African operatives at the local levels. But this is a sham when the projects themselves are culturally Western to the core. Africans are responsible to their bosses for their interventions, and ultimately everyone is responsible to the Western institutions of development according to what is deemed “logical” and “valuable”. Furthermore, our inbuilt tendency toward ethnocentrism, and the fact that our own cultural presuppositions are usually most hidden from us, applies equally to African agents of development. While the intensions to involve local participations are in the right direction, they do not go far enough or deep enough to effect local transformation.

In this essay, I have tried to explore the intricacies of the stake-holder’s world view in one specific context of peace building. It is a world that is both visible and invisible but in which the latter has priority. The consultative approach makes claims to the recognition and understanding of the stakeholder’s position. It invariably stops short of accommodating their holistic ecology involving both seen and unseen entities. The fact that these run contrary to expectations of the West becomes apparent in the felt needs of the stakeholders. Some very concrete needs arising from this case would be the need of the people:

1. on the ground for holistic reconciliation rather than a “managed” conflict, for if reconciliation does not take place the chaotic situation remains, rendering all things unbalanced and infertile, endangering life itself at all levels and perpetuating the state of war;
2. to go through a period of social mourning in which denial, anger and acceptance must feature before arriving at a re-integration stage and;
3. to go through a rite of reconciliation which is commonly accepted and performed by the legitimate ritual office-holders, i.e., those who are “known to the Earth”.

Applications to the “Northern conflict”

This last point is particularly critical in Northern Ghana bearing in mind that the ritual authority that is needed to reconcile the conflict is itself being contested. Conflict management teams need to be critically aware of the historical transitions that have occurred in the concepts and roles of “landowner” and “chief.” This is so that they can understand the various criteria for legitimacy and illegitimacy based on ATRs and understand the biases, vested interests or political and philosophical leanings of the various parties, the Ghanaian government, other governments, and, indeed, those of their own development organizations.

What is the role of conflict-management experts and development agents here? The key to good management is an understanding of the length and breadth of the problem. It will certainly mean entering more deeply into all the cultural issues (even the religious ones) at all levels and helping those involved to clarify these issues to themselves. This, of necessity, involves astute cultural analysis. When the situation becomes clear, people do get involved.

There are also ritual considerations. Formerly, the non-chiefly tribes of Northern Ghana did not organize themselves beyond the tribal level. But in the last conflict they united against all the chiefly groups. The fighting ranged widely over a

large territory including hundreds of traditional districts each with their own Earth shrines – some with Dagomba Earth priests, some with Konkomba priests and some with others. The new conditions call for adapting the traditional procedures of reconciliation. Earth shrines are limited territorially. But a trans-territorial war requires reconciliation at a higher level. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to suggest particular ritual innovations or to speculate about the particular sacrifices, their rubrics, or when, where and how they might take place. But the following initiatives might be pursued with positive effect: besides the local rituals performed in each affected district, the broader context would suggest organizing a mass ritual of “burying of the blood” by involving a number of Earth shrine custodians to represent the areas where the major battles and carnage took place. One could also envision a ritual, which would accommodate both Christian and Muslim clerics since both of these religions are trans-tribal and trans-territorial.

If development organizations truly wish to assist in the process of peace building and insure reconciliation and future stability, they should be in addition to the economic and political also be interested in the ritual aspects. In the Chereponi example the state of chaos, or what the inhabitants believed was the case, had reached a crescendo. The inhabitants could no longer tolerate the insecurity of an imbalanced ecology. So they took matters into their own hands for the common good and performed the ritual of reconciliation even though it meant going against the political authority of the Yaa-Naa. In this case, affliction brought the picture into sharper focus. Perhaps development agencies can stimulate this kind of clarity through discussion and, as I have suggested in another place (2002), through culture-drama workshops. But they will only be successful if they do not diverge too far from the real culture-based issues.

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Culture-drama: A new enactment genre for peacebuilding

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Abstract

In our post cold war, global era, ethnic conflicts have increased dramatically. Tensions that bottled up for generations are now bursting forth. Despite the rhetoric of globalization, tribalism and sectarianism of all sorts seem to be on the upswing and Western-styled confrontative and negotiative diplomacy do not get to the heart of the matter. This chapter introduces a way of resolving the conflicting cultural pathways that undergird most ethnic conflicts by means of a new enactment genre called “culture-drama..” Where psychodrama works with intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal relations, culture-drama deals with intra-cultural and inter-cultural relations. Culture-drama enables the communities to ‘heal’ themselves first by recognizing, then by accepting and coordinating, and finally by integrating various implicit, ‘hidden’ pathways within a workshop format which makes use of this enactment method.

Key words: Peace Culture, Cultural Conversion, Cultural Drama, Tenureship, Enemyship.

Background

A very promising new form of enactment genre has found its way into the plethora of approaches to conflict management and peace building. It is endogenous. It starts from where the people are. It uses their terms for the problem. It engages their diagnosis and precipitates their forms of action.

From February to June 1994, roughly the same time as the infamous Rwanda bloodbath, the West African country, Ghana, famous for its gold, colourful customs and joyful people, experienced its own devastating conflict. The conflict occurred in the northern part of the country between rival ethnic groups: the Dagomba and Konkomba. Although this conflict went largely unnoticed by the outside world, estimates of up to 20,000 died and many more were displaced. The 1994 northern Ghana conflict has been described as the most brutal and destabilizing conflict in Ghana’s 48-year history (see Katanga, 1994a, 1994b). A grudging peace was quickly enforced but few of the political issues, and none of the deeper underlying historical and cultural issues were addressed. Even now, ten years later, beneath a calm exterior, the real issues continue to simmer and are sure to erupt at some future point with likely greater menace if not addressed.

It is against this backdrop of festering discontent between the “chiefly” (Dagomba) and “non-chiefly” (Konkomba) tribes that this new enactment format was initially launched in a peace building workshop held at the Catholic Conference Centre in Nsawam, near Accra the capital of Ghana, from the 10th to 16th February 2002. The

workshop, which was sponsored by Catholic Relief Services of Ghana, brought together some ten Dagomba and ten Konkomba from their contiguous homelands some 500 miles to the north of the country. For one week, in complete seclusion, they discussed, interacted, paced through their roles, and worked toward building a lasting peace for themselves and the whole of Northern Ghana.

Their dramatic involvement in their reverse roles focused on their feelings about one another, the war, peace, reconciliation and integration. Some of the major enactments centred on the different points of view concerning “masters” and “subjects”, the role of chiefs versus Earth shrine custodians in land tenureship and ownership, and other areas of conflicting expectations. The objective was to create the possibility of a new and shared way of life based on a culture of peace.

The participants had to go through a selection process. We, the organizers (Kirby and Gong Shu) were interested in what J. P. Lederach (1996) a peace building guru, calls the “mid-level” participants – those who are neither the agenda-bearing, heavily politicized elites, nor the commoners. This group is normally the least biased and it has the greatest influence on others above and below their group. Most of the participants were truly seeking the road to a genuine peace and they had already had a great deal of experience with peace workshops of all types. They yearned to deal with the deeper issues and wished to bring about a lasting transformation. But they talked about justice and human rights instead of the systemic issues buried deep within their cultures and histories. They saw the effects but not the causes. None had ever experienced their culture reflected back to them.

The workshop was, therefore, a unique experience for all. Being unique brought its own brand of difficulties. One participant explained he had “attended many peace workshops sponsored by the government over the years and the method of this workshop is something completely new.” This was a subtle way of saying it lacked legitimacy. But gradually the group came to appreciate this new method. One participant confessed: “It took us some time to get used to the new approach, through acting, but it turned out to be much better than just thinking and talking about the issues.” After getting into the act, another reported: “I feel much closer to my Dagomba brothers and sisters now because I can see and feel things that I didn’t see and feel before.” Another one felt that dramatizing reverse roles helped her to see the issues more clearly. She said, “We could actually feel the sentiments of the other party. The drama helped us to say things we couldn’t have said in ordinary discussions. This has brought us closer together.”

All the participants came to appreciate the role culture plays in disposing us toward conflicts and in resolving them. One of them commented, “We could use our own languages and ways of doing things. This made it real. The real issues came up without us thinking about them and the way we interacted let us see a new way through the problem.” In their evaluation, the participants showed their appreciation for this new approach to resolving conflicts and they went back to their homes with great enthusiasm for the method, new insights into their cultures and renewed hope for a “peace culture”.

The lesson is that peace building is not just a matter of discussion and negotiations. It is also necessary for each side to experience the cultural pathways of the other side. This calls for a kind of “cultural conversion”. Instead of struggling with each other to score points, participants ended up acting and speaking for each other.

Participants traded places with each other and were able to see and feel the sentiments of their brothers and sisters from inside their culture. By confirming each other in a natural give and take, they were able to envision a new pathway and, in some very limited but authentic ways, begin to put those transformations into practice.

Six themes in culture-drama

The transformation process in culture-drama is especially evident in six ways. It:

- is a method for discovery;
- builds trust;
- offers hope for the future;
- is about self-discovery;
- is about discovering the other and
- is about building a “peace culture” together.

It is a method for discovery

From the beginning to the end, culture-drama accents discovery. It is essentially a learning process and, as such, the first role of the participant is that of the learner – namely one who admits that he or she does not know and is open to learning from others. From the outset, therefore, an attitude of humility and dependence is fostered. Participants need to learn from one another and become dependent on each other. These elements are discernable in the following comments:

- “The acting made things more open and clear.” (Konkomba)
- “The moment we started to enact the roles, all our fears vanished.” (Dagomba)
- “This method is very different but I encourage this way of doing workshops in the future. It is far better than what we did before with only discussion.” (Dagomba)
- “We have all been able to express ourselves so freely . . .” (Konkomba)
- “We should have more of these workshops . . . closer to home.” (Dagomba)

It builds trust

As we shall see below, by far the most important ingredient for building a common “peace culture”, especially in the African context, is trust. Participants must learn to trust each other and to overcome their negatively-valence expectation of “enemyship”. The first great obstacle is the inveterate lack of trust. Below, we discuss how this is linked to the African social construction of reality.

Here beyond all our expectations, the method shows its mettle. From the outset, silently, almost imperceptibly, it begins to build up the group’s trust. It does so principally by the dynamics of the role reversals in which the participants have to come to terms with the fact that they really don’t know the other as well as they thought, and then they are immediately made to rely on the other – those who really know – who willingly guide them through the enactment. Thus “enemy” becomes friend; “enemyship” is vanquished by friendship. Experience of what is true and trustworthy or untrue and false is immediate and almost instinctual. Their “help” can’t

be faked. Here are some of their comments regarding the building up of this new trust:

- “I felt for the first time that the chiefly customs of the Dagombas are good [I have seen their usefulness]. I now see that they are not a block to our coming together . . .” (Konkomba)
- “I was greatly relieved. This let me see that the Dagomba system can work for us. It is not against us.” (Konkomba)
- “I saw clearly that the Dagombas really do want us to live peacefully among them as we did before . . . they really did give us their full support.” (Konkomba)
- “At first I feared that it would only open up old wounds . . . but when we got into it all the fear vanished.” (Dagomba)
- “In the enactments we were all able to express ourselves without it being threatening like it is in other workshops that focus on negotiation.” (Konkomba)

It offers hope for future

The workshop gave participants the hope that peace is within their grasp and the enactments gave them a glimpse of what living together peacefully in a “peace culture” might be like. It showed them that peace building is a process of discovery, that the process of negotiation is not so much with the other as with oneself and one’s own culture, and that the other is not the enemy as much as it is ignorance, prejudice and fear. The other becomes an ally, a potential guide and mentor assisting the process.

Even though the “Northern Conflict” occurred over 10 years ago, up until now the two major groups (Konkomba and Dagomba) do not mix freely and there has been no re-integration of the Konkomba into the two largest cities of the Region, Yendi and Tamale. This effectively excludes the Konkomba (who are a political minority though a numerical majority) from ‘civil’ society and it holds back the entire area from a normal process of development. Both sides realize this but they, as well as the government, are powerless to deal with it. The fact that they decided to take on this issue during the culture-drama workshop witnesses to the level of trust that had been established in the workshop. It was a sign of hope – that something could be accomplished here that had never been done before. Here is what the participants had to say in the discussion following the ‘integration’ scene:

We Konkomba were very worried about the outcome of the [integration] scene, but [by the end of the enactment] when the Ya Na [the Dagomba Paramount chief whose role was enacted by a Konkomba] spoke and gave permission for us to come back [to Yendi] we were very happy. We knew that this was not play-acting and that now it could really happen because all the ‘real Dagomba’ in the workshop scene also wanted it, and gave it their full support and assurances that we could do it together. (Konkomba)

The Konkomba [who acted the Ya Na] . . . was very good. It was actually what the real Ya Na would have done trying to find the best way out of the problem [of reinstating the Konkombas in Yendi and Tamale]. This is a real start. The ‘House

of Chiefs' [up until now a major block to integration] wouldn't dare to go against the Ya Na..." (Dagomba)

It is about discovering ourselves

At the heart of it, culture-drama is concerned with self discovery and social transformation. It acts as a "mirror" allowing us a glimpse of our hidden cultural pathways and of those aspects of our group identity that are normally hidden from our own view, thus making accurate assessment and change possible. Here are some of the statements to this effect made by the actors:

- "They [culture-drama enactments] really did help us to see our cultural differences." (Dagomba)
- "Things came out that we would never have discussed . . . automatically and naturally, without fear." (Konkomba)
- "We could use our own languages [rather than formal English] and express ourselves freely." (Konkomba)
- "We have been on many other peace workshops but we have never gotten very far with the problem of integration. But here we have actually worked it out. We have really accomplished something new." (Konkomba)

It is about discovering the other

The first things we notice in multi-cultural contexts are the differences between others and ourselves. This is a preservation instinct; it is for our own safety and supports our cultural conserve. But differences only lead to stereotypes if we do not use them to ask deeper questions about ourselves. Once we have looked at our own pathways more clearly, the ways of the other are suddenly loosed from their stereotyping bonds and begin to have meanings of their own. Thus, understanding us, and the ways of others, work in tandem. The process is holistic, dynamic and it involves alternating reflections on the self and the other. This process of mutual assistance in discovery resounds in the comments of the participants:

"When the Konkomba were acting the role of the Dagomba chiefs, it was as if it were a plea for help. It urged the Dagomba to support them and teach them [how to be chiefly] . . . and the Dagomba responded by actually teaching them. In this way ... we started to see that the solutions are already there in the enactments." (Dagomba)

It is about building a "peace culture" together

One of the major differences between culture-drama and other instruments of peace is that in its final stages as a workshop it leads participants to follow up and act upon the discoveries that have been made in earlier enactments. The final stages actually begin to traverse a new pathway following the beacon-like vision of a "peace culture". The format helps participants to put into practice what has been discovered. It is therefore much more than an enactment of roles. Already within the secure environment of the workshop both sides actually begin to live life in new ways, in mutual discovery and in mutual help. Here are some of the statements made by the participants, which attest to this experience:

- “Culture-drama has helped us to share the process [of building peace] and take ownership of it together.” (Dagomba)
- “It is something that we never thought would happen. We actually acted out how we would bring about the re-integration of Konkomba into Yendi. The Dagomba group showed us how it could be possible. Now I know that we can do it. I have actually seen how it can be done. We only need to carry it forward.” (Konkomba)
- “I have been in many kinds of workshops but I have never seen anything like this. We are really learning about each other and about ourselves in the process. This method gives me real hope that through it we can rebuild our lives together.” (Dagomba)
- “Now we see that it is really possible and that we can actually do it . . . Now we have a vision. We can see what works for peace and what does not. We are beginning to do things that we have seen need to be done, like the re-integration scene. We can also see that we have already been doing some things, and we are confirmed in doing them, knowing that we are on the right track. For example, we already have a start with St. Charles [a boarding secondary school in Tamale attended by some Konkombas]. . . We must continue with this.” (Konkomba)

These are some of the sentiments that were voiced by the participants in the first culture-drama peace building workshop that took place at Nsawam, Ghana in 2002 (see Kirby, 2002: 100-106). Their remarks reflect a transformational process, which is at the heart of community diagnosis and action planning. At long last peace builders are also on the “right track” for dealing with the systemic, ongoing, culturally dependent aspects of social conflict. After this rather lengthy introduction, we can now turn our attention to some of the more theoretical aspects of culture-drama.

Culture-drama

‘Culture-drama’ is a new, culturally therapeutic enactment genre where the primary focus is on resolving two or more conflicting cultural pathways. Within a drama format, protagonists enact various cultural scenes in which each group follows out their own prescribed and encoded pathways, which very soon come into conflict.

What makes culture-drama and psychodrama so special is the process of role-reversal. The process acts on both the intellect and the emotions. Only in the process of role reversal can a person experience the emotions of anguish and joy of the other. Only by assuming reverse roles can the actors become aware of their own cultural blind spots and those of the opposing culture. It is in the clash itself that the differences in expectations become apparent, and can be acknowledged and challenged in terms of more appropriate pathways. In the process of enactment the conflicting parties learn new ways to relate to one another, creating a synthesis or a “peace culture” right in the workshop.

Application to social issues and development

The genre can be applied to any problematic issue involving cultural pathways. It can focus on conflicting ecological, healthcare, gender, racial and religious issues, and

expectations arising from different values, beliefs and practices in different cultures or sub-cultures. It has been used to help resolve conflicting cultural expectations in Catholic Religious communities made up of Ghanaians and expatriates, and it has been demonstrated as an effective tool to help resolve such thorny African problems as bush-burning and women's emancipation. Most recently, it has been applied to the "Northern Conflict" in Ghana.

When it is applied to developmental issues like bush-burning and gender relations, the underlying cultural codes and pathways in conflict are usually Western versus Traditional. The main African traditional actors such as the "bush spirits", the "Earth spirit", the "ancestors", the elders, the chiefs, hunters, farmers and women's groups etc., are pitted against the non-traditional forces for change, such as the churches, schools, the development agencies, NGOs, the World Bank, the police and the government ministries. Beneath these cultural roles and institutions and linking them together, the two (or more) cultures themselves are the main *dramatis personae*.

Rationale for culture-drama

The rationale for culture-drama ultimately rests on our differing conceptions of the self, the social world and the relationship between the two. In the Western world, constructions of self are based on the individual. People have an atomistic experience themselves, as inherently separate from each other and the community. But throughout much of Asia and all of Africa, people experience themselves as inherently connected to the community. "We are, therefore I am" has been proposed as the basis for an African epistemology. In this dynamic, non-Western view, the philosopher-theologian Mbiti asserts, "Whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual" (1969: 106). In the Western, atomistic orientation, individual persons perceive community and social arrangements as based on individual contract. In the African orientation, the experience of self as social being is part of the epistemological grounding of self – it is simply part of the world as it is.

The cultural expectations, the social arrangements and institutions that flow from these worldviews tend to confirm beliefs about their respective worlds. So, their vastly different social theories do have predictive powers and do function as explanatory models – but only in their respective spheres of engagement. They are closed systems. Thus, the Western models are not able to function adequately as predictive or explanatory models in African or other non-Western cultural contexts any more than African models can so function in Western contexts. In fact, it goes without saying that typical African explanations for illness and misfortune, such as ancestor-sanction or spirit-possession, would be quite unconvincing to the raised eyebrows of most Westerners.

The implications of these differences, in terms of practices, institutions and social arrangements, are obviously profound and far-reaching. Take just one example – an extremely important one for peacebuilding – that of mistrust and fear of others' bad intentions. Although the anthropological literature on the phenomenon of African witchcraft is voluminous, and some of it has been from a psychological perspective (Field, 1960), it has only more recently attracted the attention of cross-cultural psychology. Psychologist, Glenn Adams theorizes about it in terms of suspicion of human mischief as a feature of the African socially constructed universe (2004: 58-68).

Adams maintains that in spite of the emphasis Africans place on harmony and the cultural value of community, friction is a feature of all human societies and, of course, conflicts do arise. In Western societies such frictions are understood as competition between individual claims. But in Africa they are interpreted as divisive forces built into the system, or what he calls “enemyship”. He says, “When human existence is understood in terms of interpersonal relationships, the cultural model of interpersonal friction may be something more like enmity, with a corresponding atmosphere of suspicion” (Adams, 2004: 60). Such suspicions were borne out in his studies of Ghanaians’ explanations of election defeat and in their explanations of a friend’s illness. Both of these are in extreme contrast to the explanations of similar events offered in Western contexts.

If the expectation of human mischief is to be taken as a given in African contexts, as we follow Adams in arguing that it must, the implications for any cross-cultural ventures are enormous. At the very least, they suggest that in the African (and in other non-atomistic universes) the issues to be addressed in any given situation of conflict involve much more than simply the Western concerns about individual contractual negotiations in a neutral ground. A prior and over-riding concern would be dealing with a presumed ground of bad intentions.

This, then, is the primary rationale for culture-drama: that it works in the space between worldviews and epistemologies, and it negotiates them rather than individual contracts. In fact, from the outset, it presumes very different cultural pathways, cultural codifications and worldviews, each with their own implicit biases, and it sets itself to addressing their unspoken presuppositions just as implicitly and unobtrusively. Furthermore, a rationale for favouring culture-drama as the most appropriate vehicle for peace building and advocacy in the African context would rest on the strong tendency of African peoples to take the explanation of human mischief as an implicit presupposition, given their socially constructed universe.

In short, the philosophical rationale for culture-drama lies in the fact that, in group-centred as opposed to individual-centred societies, people act as a group – and hence any process for social change must deal primarily with social and cultural pathways, and not simply with individuals – and in the fact that in group-centred societies group frictions and conflict tend to be interpreted as chaotic elements from within which are played out in social representations of enmity, such as “witchcraft” beliefs, accusations and resultant behaviour, or at the very least the claim that “everyone has enemies”. This claim, and the genuine fears, suspicions and behaviour that it evokes, must be prioritized in any bid for building a genuine peace in the African context.

A vehicle for peace building

Besides its claim to bridge cultures and whole socially constructed worlds, culture-drama also acts as an institutional surrogate. It offers a temporary structure, a vehicle, for building new structure. Culture-drama is the vehicle needed to carry peace building through to the end of what John Paul Lederach (1996) calls the “structural level” of peace building.

Lederach divides peace building efforts into four levels or stages. Each stage is a pre-requisite for the next. Yet each stage needs to anticipate the final objective, or have a unified vision of peace, in order to attain its own limited goals. The vision of

peace is at the end of the process – the fourth stage – but it is also present, in some way, in all the foregoing stages.

The first stage is dealing with the crisis. It involves management of the immediate conflict, disarmament and political negotiation. It is where we see most of the attention, money and peace building efforts. It is also the stage that is most easily understood and efficiently managed by a Western individual-centred construction of social reality. The second is the “relationship” stage: getting the parties to live together, to rebuild their physical structures, their trusting relations and their lives. It aims at reconciling group relationships. This stage takes longer to achieve and, if reached at all, usually spells the end of outside Western intervention and of all organized efforts to build peace.

Here the cultural gap between Western and African social realities widens to a chasm. Due to its biases, the Western contractual approach is too limited to deal with the second stage appropriately. The second stage issues typically are important for societies that structure their social reality in group-centred ways. In individually-oriented societies people are expected to repair their relationships on their own. If the Western model attempts to stay in control at this stage it is soon mired in its own tracks. So as soon as the first stage is completed, Western peace builders usually consider it time to redirect the money and efforts to quelling a new crisis at some new trouble spot. But this is only the beginning; the job is incomplete. There is still a long way to go if further outbreaks and regression are to be avoided.

The third or “systemic” stage is the longest and most difficult to achieve. It addresses the history, the social structures and the institutions of injustice that sustain conflict; and it aims at social and cultural transformation. For this, it needs a set of holistic objectives and a goal – a clear vision of a “peace system”. But most of all, a cross-culturally adaptive vehicle is needed to get things moving and to carry the process through to this vision. Part of the difficulty in moving forward is the need for such a vehicle. As we have seen from the rationale above, culture-drama is exceptionally well suited to serve as this vehicle for transformation toward a “peace culture”.

The procedures of culture-drama

The procedure of culture-drama involves three stages: warm-up, action and synthesis. These stages parallel psychodramatic procedure with its three stages of warm-up, action and sharing.

Warm-up

The warm-up begins with the group members doing a brief self-presentation in reversed roles. This is followed by an art therapy exercise, developed by Dr. Gong Shu, in which the opposing groups imagine that they are shipwrecked and thrown together on a desert island. Implicitly, the exercise teaches them that they are sharing the same space and time. In order to survive, they have to learn how to get along. They are instructed to use colour markers to illustrate their feelings and concerns for survival, on a large sheet of cloth, which serves as the island. The use of colours and forms is usually more expressive and eloquent than words. The purpose of the

drawing is to help the facilitators and the participants to see the psychological reality of the group at the beginning of the workshop. It also provides the facilitator with the socio-metric gestalt, which is needed to begin the group process, and it helps the participants see what is happening.

Action

It is the cultural pathways that are in conflict. Therefore, it is important for facilitators to know some of the areas of potential friction in the values and expectations of these pathways as a preparation before going into the drama. A good cultural analysis by a trained anthropologist can uncover a number of such opposing cultural themes. Aspects of the themes, or sub-themes, are elicited from the group and they may then choose various scenes to enact. The scenes are enacted in reversed role, namely each group takes on the other's role. As each takes up their unaccustomed new role, members of the opposing groups are encouraged to "double" whenever they spot inaccuracies or unlikely behaviour. The "doubles" enact the scene "the way they would actually do it" thereby demonstrating broad differences in interpretation of the roles, behaviour and the underlying values.

The exercise is helpful in three ways: (1) It reveals the existence of opposing pathways since one usually follows one's own cultural pathway in such reversed roles. (2) The demonstration of the "doubles" makes the implicit pathways suddenly explicit, and (3) this helps both groups to see themselves through the eyes of the other, and thus with ever-greater clarity.

Synthesis

The final stage in culture-drama is the synthesis. Here, the participants return to the large group to do another drawing, which is a clear demonstration of the changed sociometry of the group, and it symbolizes the co-creation of a synergetic peace-culture harmonizing, in a unique way, aspects of both pathways. Harmony is created by diversity and breadth of vision. It is achieved by crossing over; not by clinging exclusively to one's identity or by a narrow exclusivity.

The psychological process of transformation

The psychological process of synthesis in culture-drama parallels the personal psychosynthesis described by James G. Vargiu (1977), and it involves a cultural transformation process having five stages: (1) Recognition, (2) Acceptance, (3) Coordination, (4) Integration, and (5) Synthesis.

After the enactment, participants discuss what they experienced. Enactment helps them to recognize and accept various parts of themselves that were previously hidden to their awareness. It is important to *recognize* (stage 1) what our cultural pathways actually are, and that they are part of our cultural heritage which ought to be valued and accepted. Recognition leads to *acceptance* (stage 2). Once they are accepted, each group must learn how to *coordinate* (stage 3) their cultural pathways so that their interaction will not engender conflict. *Integrating* (stage 4) these various coordinated pathways and fusing them into their own culture through enactment comes next.

Finally the two groups are ready for *synthesis* (stage 5). Whereas the coordination and integration processes are intra-cultural, the synthesis is an inter-cultural process. Only when one cultural group is integrated with itself can it reach synthesis and harmony with another cultural group.

Techniques of culture-drama

Throughout this process, culture-drama adopts three important techniques of psychodrama:

1. *Mirroring*: is when part of the group sits ‘outside’ the scene and watches the scene being played.
2. *Doubling*: When members of one group see that the other group misunderstands and misrepresents their culture during the enactment, they are encouraged to go up to the stage to make corrections by “doubling” or standing behind the person and acting as their identical “double”.
3. *Soliloquy and aside*: Actors can use “soliloquy” and “aside” to deepen the investigation of the other culture. Here the actor temporarily steps out of his or her enactment role to ask a question or to make a comment on the process. Sometimes the actor can use these techniques to subtly critique the other culture.

“Action-insight”

Action brings about a deeper understanding of the other culture (as well as one’s own) that is not accessible to intellectualisation by itself. Our culture is manifested in our verbal and non-verbal language, and in all our behavioural patterns. The less reflected on and more automatic our responses, the more credible they are as pure reflections of our cultural values and perspectives, and the more direct the communication. When a person takes on the body postures of another, he or she sees and actually experiences much more than could ever be experienced by just talking about it. Anthropologists call this “high-context” (as opposed to “low context”) communication. The psychodramatist calls this: “action-insight”.

Special contribution of culture-drama peace-building

Culture-drama is especially useful in dealing with what J.P. Lederach calls the second, the third and fourth stages of peace building: the relationship building, the systemic and the envisioning levels. These have been the most neglected in peace building. The reasons are many – it takes a long-range commitment, it is difficult to direct and coordinate and, most importantly, in Western individual-centred constructions of the social world, the second, third and fourth stages are not fully understood or accommodated, and thus responses are inadequate or inappropriate. But perhaps the most general reason is that human beings need structures. Building and sustaining an inter-cultural group vision for a “peace culture” requires people of both cultures to live at the margins of their group identity for extended periods of time. This is impossible without a viable framework. Thus, among the many blocks to peace

building, perhaps the biggest of all is that, up until now, there has been no reliable method, no viable framework, no plan of action or serviceable vehicle to “envision” the peace pathway and to carry the process along.

Culture-drama provides this framework. It acts as a creative vehicle for envisioning a “peace culture”, and for learning and activating the transformations that are needed to achieve the vision. Our research and work in culture-drama as a vehicle for peace building have demonstrated that we can begin to envision a “peace culture” and begin building it using this new method.

Summary of the dynamics of culture-drama

Culture-drama is extremely effective in what is, perhaps, the most common form of ethnic conflict found in Africa – between closely related ethnic groups, especially where they are bound by a socio-cultural symbiosis (such as we find among “chiefly” and “non-chiefly” peoples in West Africa). It engages the actors in ways that, in real life or in workshops constrained by formal discussion, would be impossible because of their sensitivity. It empowers the actors to solve their own problems. Usually one group’s problems and difficulties prove to be the other’s strengths and assets. They are literally the antidote to each other’s problems. This fact only remains to be discovered. In the enactment format they are able to ‘teach’ each other to put in place the new structures and activities that are most needed for harmonious interaction.

Training culture-drama facilitators

We would like to end this discussion with the next step in the process of introducing culture-drama – the training of facilitators. Culture-drama is only as good as its facilitators and practitioners. The facilitators must be trained and the participants must really want peace. A longer discussion of this can be found in the final chapter of the *Culture-Drama Workbook* (Kirby, 2002), which also introduces a preliminary plan for training facilitators.

What we would like to stress here is that the training of such facilitators is a major task. There is no “quick-fix” solution. It necessarily involves theory and practice, lectures and fieldwork, demonstrations and supervisions. Besides training in culture-drama itself, special training is also required in cultural analysis, psychodrama and in workshop facilitation. But most of all, it must be remembered that culture-drama is group therapy and facilitators need to learn the therapeutic processes before conducting a group. Oftentimes participants encounter their personal issues and a good facilitator must know how to deal with them without being hampered by his or her own unfinished business. Facilitators, therefore, need to be trained in psychodrama and must have worked through their personal issues.

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PART II

Proceedings

Proceedings

Objectives

The purpose for this Conference was to gather experiences and positions from traditional people, scholars, and practitioners on African traditional practices and knowledges, in order to understand, develop, and consolidate African Sciences. The Conference was to provide a platform for enhancement of the 'scientification of the African knowledges' and in so doing raise interest and challenge actions for its revitalisation.

The conference was aimed at:

- Creating awareness of the relevance of African Sciences.
- Revitalising African knowledges and challenging them for revitalisation.
- Sharing perspectives of African sciences.
- Identifying action areas with respect to education and development.
- Formulating appropriate recommendations for policy influencing

Conference approach

The workshop combined various approaches in arriving at the necessary outputs. After the opening session, the participants presented research papers on topical issues. They were followed with plenary questions, comments and suggestions. Syndicate group discussions were organized with thematic areas and guided questions to review the papers presented. Groups then made plenary presentations and their reports discussed by all.

For papers that were 'work in progress type' (Constitution and Programme Proposal), the participants worked in small group discussions, made plenary reporting, and a task team was put together to revise them.

Quite a number of papers that contribute to the debate were published elsewhere or given as reading materials.

Elaborate open discussions were allowed for any other issues that were not foreseen or that did not belong to any of the areas described about. This was to ensure that other interests were also factored in. The following are the summaries of presentations and discussions.

Opening session

The Conference brought together some 60 participants from Ghana, Burkina-Faso, Benin, Togo, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and The Netherlands. The deliberations centred on AFRICAN SCIENCES' as a stepping stone for Africa's development. By way of introduction, the participants mentioned their names, organization/institution, country, and added to that *the clans from which they*

belong and their totems. By this introduction, participants from different countries in Africa discovered that they belong to the same totems, hence can be traced to the same lineages.

Dr. David Millar, in his opening remarks, mentioned that the Research and Postgraduate Centre of the University for Development Studies was set up through the efforts of the Vice Chancellor. The MPhil in Development Studies teaches subjects oriented towards in endogenous development by lecturers who have experiences in African sciences. He described historical interest of Compas in this field of study and the supportive role of CTA to the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries. The interest of the three key players has culminated in the organization of this conference. For the Chiefs and peoples of Africa, this was a vindication of their relentless effort as custodians of their culture and traditions. He concluded by welcoming them all and wishing them a pleasant stay; informing them that they were pioneers in an anticipated big movement towards the revitalisation of African knowledges. He expressed the hope that the energies put in the Conference will contribute to the African-wide efforts for endogenous development and revitalisation of its sciences.

The chairman for the occasion, Prof. J. B K Kaburise, Vice Chancellor of the University for Development Studies in his acceptance speech, articulated at length his special interests in his native sciences (African sciences). He did this in addressing his totem and lineage and making reflections about his birth and name. He then dilated on various encounters with African knowledges. He highlighted a growing interest (wider than we anticipated) of scholars in Africa to rediscover their knowledges. He further remarked that his colleagues in Southern Africa are advance in championing issues of indigenous knowledge systems as far as incorporating it into the University curriculum. He also acknowledged the presence of the Chiefs and indicated that they are repository of knowledge as far as African sciences are concerned and that Africans need to explore their own worldviews. In his conclusion, he indicated the role of National Commission on Culture in advocating indigenous knowledge systems as crucial.

The Chief of Bolgatanga, Naaba Martin Abilba II, welcome participants from far and wide to the capital of the Upper East Region of Ghana. He was proud that an International conference on African sciences was being held in his paramourty. This being the first of its kind in Africa, he was a particularly proud host in pioneering a course that his position stood for. He indicated the need to use the forum as an opportunity to revisit African knowledge in different fields in and around Bolgatanga. This can assist us to marry African knowledge with western knowledge. He stressed that African sciences are based on philosophies that have stood the test of time and are still relevant in our modern day. African cultures, values, and beliefs are stores of knowledge which can assist us in demystifying so many things that are bedevilling the world now and assist sustainable development and the poverty reduction of our peoples. On this note Naaba Abilba welcomed all a sundry, wished them a fruitful and incident free stay, and wished the Conference success pledging his continuous participation in the Conference during the entire period.

Bertus Haverkort, of the Compas international coordination unit mentioned that this conference was one out of a sequence of four regional conferences, taking place in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. In each continent the worldviews

and ways of knowing have been studied by the Compas partners and a start is being made of intra-cultural and intercultural dialogues in worldviews and sciences. This marks a growing recognition of the importance and relevance of cultural diversity and of diversity of ways of knowing. The pioneering role of UDS and other institutions on Ghana were commented. Understanding and strengthening the African way of knowing is particularly important as it is widely misunderstood and disrespected whereas it has a big influence on the way Africans value their livelihood and take their decisions. The time is ripe to have a critical and constructive dialogue between Africans on the strong and weak points of their knowledge and to design pathways for its further development and revitalisation. Partnering with the colleagues from Latin America and Asia, and also from Europe can be very helpful. An international conference for inter science dialogue will be held in Geneva in 2006.

Outcomes of thematic discussions

The different papers of the conference covered three main themes: Reconstructing and revitalising traditional systems of knowing in Africa; Reorienting ways of research, teaching and learning and Reformulation of policies. Besides discussions and reflections about the individual papers, the participants discussed the three themes at aggregate level and formulated conclusions and visions for the future as presented below.

Theme 1: Reconstructing and revitalising systems of knowing in Africa

The Conference recognized the weakness in African sciences: It is hardly documented or expressed openly. There is no Africa wide sharing of experiences and insights. There is no systematic way of assessing existing practices for its use in the present day conditions, of testing new ideas and improving the theoretical basis. The formal educational and scientific institutions in Africa and abroad hardly address African knowledge and practices. And yet, although traditional knowledge and their institutions is subject to erosion, daily decision of Africans are strongly based on African beliefs, knowledge and values.

These weaknesses were traced to history:

Colonialism undervalued and rejected the knowledge of the African. It succeeded in dividing its peoples and paralysing the dynamics of African knowledge. In the period of missionary activities dominant religions (Islam and Christianity) declared traditional faith and beliefs as inferior superstitions and till today find it difficult to reconcile traditional beliefs with their own religious concepts and practices. The western education has strongly influenced our ways of knowing and has alienated it from our African roots. Globalisation involves traditional societies in modern, consumer-oriented economies. Mass media and communication technologies are spreading to all corners of the continent and influence the mindset especially of the youth. As a result the dynamics of African knowledge and the involvement of the Africans in the process of development of their own knowledge is limited.

A mind-set has evolved that make us not to believe in ourselves. External knowledge and values are substituting traditional knowledge, and complementarity between these ways of knowing is generally not aimed at.

We are all for an African Renaissance that manifests itself in revitalisation of our ways of knowing and our own logic in complementarity with external knowledge. NEPAD offers an opportunity and a challenge to assert our Africaness. This provides us a platform and an arena for concerted action.

Participants agreed that it was important to reconstruct the logic and sense making behind African philosophies, todiscuss and internalize the implications of African sciences as a learning and knowing process and to evolve tools, materials, and methods that assist in investigating our African systems.

They also agreed that change should and could come from ourselves. The following personal challenges were mentioned.

- Go back to our roots – ‘A return to the Village’.
- De-school and re-school ourselves.
- Be proud of our Africaness.
- Document our knowledge and demonstate that it is not static.
- Develop a system of knowledge generation and dissemination (also developing our oral tradition).
- Evolve our own philosophy based on concepts like Ubuntu, Vodou, Saakumnu, Amaamere, Nyaba-Itgo.
- Enrol traditional institutions and help to reconstruct knowing systems, tutelage, and apprenticeship.
- Develop systems of investigation that will enable us better understand, deepen our understanding of the ‘secrecy of our knowledges’.
- Enhance various forms of recording, particularly indigenous ways.
- Involve local experts as researches in the knowledge development processes.
- Develop our own indigenous tools and protocols (also by adapting and incorporating that which already exists).

Activities

It is important to conduct studies into cosmovisions, worldviews, and spirituality and reconstruct our own onthologies and epistemologies. This can lead to further deepen our understanding of the WHAT, the HOW, and the WHY of African knowledges. For this we have to establish inter- and intra-cultural dialogues that will harmonize the various African philosophies, establish their similarities and differences and lead to an agenda for revitalisation and development of African knowledges and sciences.

At the community level, efforts should be made to re-vitalise indigenous logic and in so doing recognize the positions of local experts and integrate them in the formal systems of knowledge, science and technology. In this process we need to do advocacy and lobbying to mainstream our traditional knowing systems.

Theme 2: Reorienting research, teaching and learning

The Conference recognized the need to develop a ‘new type of scholar’ – scholarship that combines indigenous knowledge with external knowledge at a collegial level. This position is articulated by most of the papers of the conference. However the need for doing more and perfecting research and learning within the concept of endogenous development was recognized. It was agreed that:

Learning, and sharing of traditional knowledge should take place at various levels: primary schools, secondary schools, vocational schools, colleges and universities and should lead to an Africa re-oriented education that builds on its own roots and resources and selectively includes elements of outside knowledge. Culturally embedded professionals and practitioners should be identified, recognized and given positions in systems of learning and education.

Endogenous Development based teaching and learning curriculum need to be developed encompassing all stakeholders evolved. These should include, stories, drama, music, art and also further develop the oral tradition, strengthen the social cohesion and spiritual values.

Methodologies for endogenous learning should be developed and documented.

Research should take African concepts and parameters as subject of study and also the research methods can be derived from its own logic and epistemology and should recognize the traditional African scientific authorities.

External knowledge can be very important as well, but should be selected and used complementary to traditional knowledge. Hence the importance of intra and interscience dialogues.

Activities to be undertaken include:

- At the community level, re-vitalise indigenous forms and systems of learning, giving due recognition and position to local experts and integrating them into formal systems.
- Initiate and advocate a review of didactics at primary and secondary level and include traditional knowledge and African sciences in current curriculum.
- Re-organize curriculum within the Universities leading to the evolution of professionals and practitioners that respond to the challenges of the African cultures as well as to those of the globalised world.
- Develop less formal and less classroom type interactions to create collegial learning among professionals, practitioners, and traditional experts.
- Develop, in addition to action and other forms of formal research, indigenous forms of experimentation that recognize rural people as experts.
- Communities to re-define the roles of Universities in a more meaningful and reciprocal engagement.
- Promote African University wide linkages or similar efforts with the view to development a ‘Virtual University’ in endogenous development.
- Integrate professionals in communities activities of learning, teaching and experimenting and vice versa in a process of endogenous development.

Motivating comments and questions that still need to be addressed are:

- Are we/is the formal system ready to integrate and reward the traditional specialists?
- How can African sciences be taught in schools given the environment of mistrust that has led to the underground position of African sciences?
- Who are the teachers? What support can be given to them?

The challenge on teaching African science is: How do we help and strengthen traditional forms of learning x and how do we balance it with relevant teaching concepts and methods brought from outside?

- Conceptualize what African sciences are about:
 - Identify and share the strengths of oral tradition and its knowledge, skills discipline involved.
 - What was African knowledge prior to the advent of western styled documentation?

What does documentation actually mean? How can it include paintings, artefacts, designs, and drawing as well as spiritually inspired forms of recordings.

- Difficulty with African research is in its secretiveness and the absence of a common terminology and language.

Theme 3: Policy reformulation

The Conference of African Sciences recognized the central role of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative of the African Heads of States and Governments. Compas Africa is desirous to be a part of this initiative and help it strive towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within our socio-cultural contexts as prescribed by the various worldviews (cosmovisions) of the African.

In pursuance of this goal, we realized at this Conference that a culturally-based endogenous development engenders policy reorientations at all levels and facets of the development arena: Community level and local policy reviews; institutional/organization level changes, various governance levels. These reorientations can culminate in national and international policy change and for Africa, operationalising NEPAD and Millenium Development Goals to reflect our concerns for culturally-based poverty reduction and development in general. Hence the conference is advocating a major change of existing policies.

Hence the challenges of Compas Africa include playing an advocacy role at the Community level revitalising traditional authority and institutions, structures, systems, at the Organization/Institution in development work, relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Universities and other Institutions of Higher learning, and various levels of Government. For this it should be proactive in its engagement with policy strategy development to ensure that such strategies captured endogenous development interests. It should build strategic networks (within and between communities, organizational level, and the level of governance) within our Countries, in our Sub-regions, on the Continent, and relevant linkages internationally.

Activities to influence policy changes

- There are already various policy and policy-type documents (National Culture Policies in Africa) that recognized the role of culture (NEPAD is major player here). However there is very little evidence to give meaning to a concerted action. Hence it was recommended to put our energies into developing materials, generating information and field level experiences as inputs for policy and advocacy dialogues.
- We also wish to contribute to policy reform by investigating existing policies and challenging them (in a positive and constructive manner) through the organization of policy dialogues in the form of workshops at communities, national, sub-region, and regional levels, and international as in NEPAD, AU, EU, World Bank/IMF.
- Compas Africa will require that African Universities transform to respond to the current challenges of a culturally embedded African scholarship.
- As part of our policy influencing activities, the Conference recognized the central role played by education (especially schooling). We therefore will target a major contribution towards educational policy reform that will be indigenous to Africa. This will encompass the Villages/Communities, Schools, Higher Education and other less formal education opportunities. We shall do this through curricula, pedagogy, didactic reforms that take into cognizance and places in centre-stage the African's way of knowing.
- Various policy reform networks will be developed to facilitate inter- and intra-stakeholder advocacies in endogenous development rights from the community level to national, continental, and international level.

Motivational statements

Participants of the Conference on African Sciences are motivated by the following positions:

- There is one large and diverse body of knowledges and sciences of which orthodox/conventional science is a small part and so are the knowledge's from Africa and other parts of the globe.
- We should try to involve community members in the development of African Sciences. After all they are the custodian of such knowledge's, they have the experts, and what we need to do is revitalisation of traditional knowledge and give recognition and new roles to traditional scientists.
- The issue at hand with western science is that a minority from outside is interpreting the reality and forcing their own subjective interpretation on others in a continent with its own ontology and rich tradition.
- We can not deny the existence of African sciences. Africans must make efforts to materialise their sciences also through their ways of recording and dissemination (including the local languages).
- What are the African definitions of poverty? Does it coincide or depart from the current notion and definition of poverty? We are convinced that not all dimensions and expressions the poverty are captured in the definition of "income in dollars per day". A challenge is to define what the parameters for poverty are:

Poverty can be expressed in material, social and spiritual ways. The diagnosis of poverty in Africa and in other continents will be different if the definition of poverty is widened. And so the strategies to reduce poverty would differ. The conference was of the opinion that Africans are relatively poor in material sense but relatively wealthy in the social and spiritual domains. The relevance of local knowledge and values would be reassessed in these revised poverty reduction strategies.

- Research, learning, and sharing at various levels and forms in Africa needs re-orientation. We need to create culturally embedded professionals and practitioners and develop Endogenous Development based teaching and learning curriculum and systems encompassing all stakeholders.
- The teaching, learning, and research processes at all levels in the context of Africa has been skewed towards the western models. Compas-Africa will engage all levels of actors (from community through to policy) in the search for an 'African alternative – a renaissance' through a collegial, dialogical process and scholarship embedded in the worldviews of Africa.

Annexes

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Acronyms

CTA – Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation

COMPAS – Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development

ED – Endogenous Development

IKS –Indigenous Knowledge Systems

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

NEPAD – New Partnership for Africa’s Development

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization