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Cultural crossroads and the domestication of oral african tradition in the african novel : a study of Asare Konadu's ordained by the oracle

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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

CULTURAL CROSSROADS AND THE DOMESTICATION OF ORAL AFRICAN TRADITION IN THE AFRICAN NOVEL : A Study of ASARE KONADU'S *ORDAINED BY THE ORACLE*

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DEDICATION

To you my late father in memory,

To you enduring mother,

To you my uncle, brothers and cousins,

I dedicate this work.

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The work would not have been a success without the devoted contribution of so many people to whom I owe much gratitude.

My special gratitude goes to Dr. Divine Che Neba, senior lecturer at the University of Burundi, who despite his numerous duties, accepted to supervise this thesis from its first stages up to its completion. His criticism and advice helped me to clarify my cloudy thinking.

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ABSTRACT

This work aims at exploiting the cultural conflict and its impacts on the Asamang people. This work also aims at showing that culture constitutes a web of security to the individual within a define premise. It also intends to show how the African culture especially the oral tradition of the Asamang village resisted Christianity and attacks from some educated elite who wanted to challenge the existing hegemony. The use of oral tradition in written text as a solution to revive the African culture also retains the researcher's attention. In view of this, this work is predicated on the hypothetical contention that oral tradition is a medium in which people especially African find their expression, moral and social development and that cultural conflict creates cultural consciousness among people. This phenomenon of oral tradition becomes a source of consciousness to Africans willing to revalorise their culture. In this sense, this work is construed around the postcolonial theory. In a nutshell, Asare Konadu in *Ordained by the Oracle* evokes the process of domestication of oral tradition as a means of asserting African culture.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The early nineteenth century (19th c) saw an important migration of Europeans to the "newly discovered" continent Africa. This movement of people was consecutive with the industrial revolution. In this respect, European entrepreneurs undertook travels to Africa to look for raw materials for their growing industries. It was also a question of seeking markets for their products. These people, armed with the Bible and the gun subjugated Africans, with the pretext of “civilizing” them. In this sense, they took inspiration from the Bible where they drew some instances justifying their ignominious acts of exploiting Africans. For example they say to the Africans that the poor here on the earth will be rich in heaven and that all these earthly things are ephemeral and they don't have to worry of them. This feigned “civilization” met resistance from some natives (Africans) and the result was cultural conflict. As a result of this cultural conflict, Africans were drawn into the Western world through Christianity and Western forms of education. The most vulnerable victims of this cultural conflict were the younger generation because their minds were still very flexible and they were fond of new ways. As a matter of fact, the Western education obtained, alienated them from their socio-cultural environment. They were nurtured to believe that their culture was inferior.

The publication of the *Origin of Species* by Darwin came as a divine decree proclaiming the inequality of races and relegating the black race (the African

especially) at a lower scale. This theory of Darwinism ruined Africa's hope as far as the restoration of identity was concerned. In this dilemma, many Africans switched to European ways of life nostalgiously leaving behind their indigenous cultures. Africa which hitherto has been (to the African) a land of glory, ancestors, rituals, a land of sacrifices and propitiation of the gods, became a land of primitivism and paganism. In compensation, Africans were taught to imitate the white man's ways of life and behaviour. This education then turned them away from their culture and tradition and placed them on a perpetual dependence upon the west as Amadou Hampaté Bâ puts in his article "Les Traditions Africaines, Gages du Progrès" :

> Nos jeunes de l'heure ont reçu une formation intellectuelle qui les a détournés des traditions du terroir, ils ont adopté les manières de dire et de faire de leur groupe d'étude. (122)
>
> Our youth of today have received an intellectual education which have turned them away from the traditions of their environment. They have adopted ways of saying and doing of their group of study. (Translation mine)

However, even though the African culture is denigrated and virtually substituted with that of the West, it still hovers and lingers in the hands of a few. Some committed Africans are attempting to reawaken this spirit of cultural integration in all nooks and cranny of Africa. Asare Konadu is one of these committed writers. His use of oral tradition in his novel gives him much authority.

The use of myths, legends, folktales and other forms of oral tradition of the Asamang village lend him much credibility. In the light of the above, many questions are raised: what is the impact created by the conflict between Western and African culture? Can domestication of African culture retrieve these lost values ?

Asare Konadu was born at Asamang in Ashanti central Ghana,in1932 and educated at the local primary /middle school and later at the Abuakwa state college in South Ghana. In1951, he joined the Ghana information service and worked as a reporter on a number of government newspapers and in broadcasting. He later went to London where he read journalism at Strasbourg University. Upon his return, he joined the Ghana News Agency. In1963,he devoted himself entirely to research into traditional customs as his own contribution to the cultural renaissance in Africa. Besides a series of short stories, he published several novels: *The Player Who Bungled His Wife (1965), Come Back ,Dora (1966), Shadow of Wealth (1966), Nigth Watchers of Korlebu (1965), A Woman in Her Prime* and the novel under treatment *Ordained by the Oracle (1969).*

He owes a great reputation to these last two novels. *A Woman in Her Prime* deals with an unhappy woman who cannot bear a child, despite her numerous marriages. Her mother, firmly believing in superstitions thinks that, it is necessary to offer sacrifices to the gods, whose magic power may help her daughter. Finally,

she rejects her mother's interference and takes recourse to charms and drugs to ensure a successful pregnancy and achieves fulfilment and new happiness on her own terms.

Ordained by the Oracle on its part, is a story of a prosperous trader in Elmina whose name is Boateng. He is from the village of Asamang. With other elite, they founded the Asamang Scholars Association whose main concern is the reformation of "the old and archaic customary" practices of the people of Asamang, especially the practice of funeral celebration. Boateng is elected President of the Association. Unfortunately, his beloved wife Dora dies suddenly and he is placed on a forty days and nights of ritual performances. When the burial of Dora is taking place, Jeremiah the catechist of the Holy Church requests that Dora should be given a Christian funeral. This request builds conflict between Jeremiah, his disciples and some ardent traditionalists. At last, Jeremiah and his disciples are intercepted by many groups of traditional singers from the neighbouring village. Dora is finally buried according to the Asamang tradition.

Before one proceeds with the analysis, it is worthwhile defining "cultural crossroads" and "oral tradition", which will centre my discussion. Klima, Vladimir et al in *Black Africa : Literature and Language* explain the word "Crossroads" in the following analogy :

> Nigerian society and in a way the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa is to be seen as people at the crossroads. The ordinary African has learned to use the white man's technical commodities, he has been forced to respect the superficial

> aspects of his moral code, at least in the cities, but the world of the past lives on his thinking, regardless of how heavily influenced by the impact of Europe and the technological world of the 20th C it may be. (108)

From this analogy of Vladimir et al., one can define "cultural crossroads" as a fact of being exposed to many cultures which are opposed to each other. In this respect, one is obliged to adhere to a culture which is not his own but his culture remains remembered. Paul Gilroy in his part in *The Black Atlantic Modernity and Double Consciousness* defines "cultural crossroads" as "a collision between fully formed and mutually exclusive cultural communities" (7). As such, cultural crossroads can be seen as a cultural contact between antagonistic cultures, one being native and the other alien.

As far as Oral tradition is concerned, Hampaté Ba in *La Tradition Vivante : Histoire Générale de l'Afrique* defines it as :

> La tradition orale est la grande école de la vie, dont elle recouvre tous les aspects (....). Elle est à la fois religion, connaissance, science de la nature, imitation du métier, histoire, divertissement et recréation, tout point de détail pouvant permettre de remonter jusqu'à l'unité primordiale. (193)

> Oral tradition is the higher school of life, which covers all aspects (....). It is at the same time religion, knowledge, science of nature, imitation of the craft, history, entertainment and recreation, all these details lead to primordial unity. (Translation mine)

In this sense, oral tradition can be understood as "a life" in which every person participates in the daily activities. It is through oral tradition that one acquires much experiences in life. Emmanuel Obiechina in *Culture, Tradition and Society in West African Novel* views oral tradition as the situation in which "cultural transmission is carried on by word of mouth through direct contact between individuals depending largely on memory and habits of thought, action and speech of cultural continuity "(32). Oral tradition is a cultural heritage, that is, the ancestors' patterns of behaviour, thoughts, beliefs, customs and values. Elders in traditional African societies are seen as custodian of tradition because it is mostly through them that authentic cultural aspects are transmitted from one generation to another. The domestication of oral tradition as it is my concern, is the act of using elements of oral tradition such as proverbs, dirges, sacrifices, festivals, legends, myths and folktales in written texts and its full impact to the overall comprehension of the author's message.

This work therefore examines cultural conflict and its impacts on the Asamang people (the Setting of "*Ordained by the Oracle*"). Also, the researcher's interest is to show that culture constitutes a web of security to the individual within a define premise. It also intends to show how African culture (especially the oral

tradition of Asamang village) resisted Christianity and attacks from some educated elite who wanted to challenge the existing hegemony. The use of African oral tradition in written text is a means of reviving the African culture and giving an identity to the African novel. The researcher's focus is primarily on Asare Konadu's *Ordained by the Oracle*. Also, some elements of the related literature will be brought in. This novel has been chosen because of its richness in oral tradition and because it offers insight into the culture of Africans as a whole.

The postcolonial theory will be central in this work because it opposes the concept of misrepresentation. Postcolonial theory is an attempt to reconstruct the former "empire"; to give the empire an opportunity to talk back to their former masters in order to correct the distortions and misrepresentations of Africa, the Caribbean, India, the Americans and other former colonies of Europe. The argument is that the story of the colonial experience and its aftermath can only be told by the colonized themselves. Proponents to this theory are against the cultural "othering of non-whites" and seek to deconstruct the identity and pride of cultures that have been colonised. This theory seeks to overturn the assumptions of cultural and racial inferiority imposed by the colonizer and accepted by the colonized. It is in this respect that Bart Moore – Gilbert defines the postcolonial theory in *Postcolonial Theory* : *Context, Practices and Politics* as

> A more or less distinct set of readings practices if it is understood as preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural

> forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination, economic, cultural and political – between [and often with] nations, races or cultures, which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism and which, equally characteristically continue to be apparent in the present era of neo-colonialism. (12)

Postcolonial theory touches all the aspects of the relation between the colonizer and colonized. In fact, the relations between the colonizer and the colonized are that of "domination – subordination". These relations are reinforced by the use of the language of the colonizer by the colonized.

As far as the applicability of the theory is concerned, it will help us to examine well the phenomenon of "cultural conflict" and the "domestication of oral tradition" in *Ordained by the Oracle* with reference to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in terms of the social, religious relationships (domination – subordination) and language.

Many critics have been interested in the theme of "cultural crossroads". Some scholars and critics have dealt with "cultural crossroads" under related title such as "cultural conflict". For instance, Sylvain Misago in "Cultural Conflict Through the Relationship Between Women and Male 'Been tos' Through Armah's *Fragments and Why Are We So Blest ?"* aims at analysing the cultural conflict in both novels. He states that most of Armah's characters are men of two worlds. As such, they are caught up between African and western values. He concludes that

European system of education for instance through its curriculum, alienates Africans from their indigenous communities.

Suzanne Ngenzebuhoro on her part in "Conflict Between Tradition and Modernity in Onuora Nzekwu's *Wand of Noble Wood*" aims at analysing the extent to which education has caused tensions between the educated and their environment. She notes that the individuals who are exposed to Western education fail to achieve balance between their inherited values and the acquired ones. She concludes that, insofar as the new ways of life have inspired polarization in the traditional society, conflicts are unavoidable between the intellectuals and their environment.

Taban Lo Liyong in *The Last Word* examines the role of oral tradition in Africa before the introduction of Western culture. He observes that oral tradition binds people together. It constitutes the cement of relationships between the people themselves. It is in this respect that he attests that

> From the testimonies of the learned, and our elders, about the lack of morals and disruption of society after the introduction of Western culture into Africa, we may conclude that the traditional methods of collusion were very successful. There was a very high degree of group consensus – and any idea of course of action. The wonder about it all is that it was by word of mouth that this culture was transmitted a testimony to the superiority of oral over written methods of teaching. For

> through spoken literature. Africans have been very successful in imparting culture from generation to generation. (68)

In the light of the above, this critic affirms the superiority of oral literature (oral tradition) over the written one. It is in this respect that he concludes that our traditional literature contains materials and techniques which are not found elsewhere. We need to salvage these and use them in our writing. We are also the people to create new African English and African French. These will give us the facility we need in transmitting our cultures and wisdom. He finally asserts that traditional African literary techniques can be very successful in creating the successive consensus and consciences that changing conditions demand.

Other illustrating critics who wrote about the domestication of oral tradition are Chinweizu et al. in *Toward the Decolonisation of African Literature : African Fiction and Poetry and their Critics.* These critics aim at analysing the deficiencies of the African narrative prose. They observe that in the African narrative prose, there has been an emphasis on novels and short stories to the neglect of such traditional forms as tales, legends, allegories, parables and fables. They go on saying that these traditional forms should not only be incorporated into novels and short stories, but should also be continued in their own right. Furthermore, in their analysis, they mention that it is possible to utilize in these narrative forms and novels and stories as well, the traditional style of oral rendition, where the audience is not only listening but also is participating in the action. In this respect, they asserts that if the stylistic features of African oral

narratives are to be rendered in the African novel in English, it is necessary that the full range of linguistic resources of African traditions be rendered in English. Proverbs, legends, fables, puns, jocks, similes, metaphors, allusions, hyperboles, declamatory speech, rhetorical devices of conversation and public oratory–these are just some of the resources that need to be marshalled and so rendered that their flavour comes out in English. They conclude that English language should not be an obstacle to the domestication of oral African tradition in African novels. Hence, African writers have the task of appropriately employing the various types of English that are spoken by Africans. They conclude that "writing in an English different from standard English should not be construed as "letting African down"

This work differs from the aforementioned in that it presents culture as a shell which embodies man, his belongings and beliefs. Culture protects people from being harmed in their existence. More so, it views the domestication of oral African tradition as a tool of resistance to Western imperialism.

This work is predicated on the hypothetical contention that oral tradition is a medium in which Africans find an expression of the self, morals and social development, and that cultural conflicts create cultural consciousness among people. This work urges people to be aware of the cultural conflict which exist today particularly in their respective communities and Africa as a whole. It also invites people to regain their roots, that is, to rebuild up their culture through their ancestral tradition. In addition to this, this work urges people particularly the younger generation to revisit their past and find where the rain began to beat them, that is, to find where they went wrong and then correct themselves.

The work is divided into five sections : A general introduction, three chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction gives an overview of the whole work. Chapter one examines cultural conflict, that is, the conflict between tradition and modernity in *Ordained by the Oracle* and its impacts. Chapter two views culture as a protective enclosure. Chapter three entitled "Domestication of Oral Tradition", examines aspects of oral tradition used by the author. Finally, the general conclusion summarizes the major arguments, brings out findings and suggests possible areas for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CULTURAL CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACTS

This Chapter examines the cultural conflict and its impacts in Asamang village. In fact, before the advent of Western influx into Africa, the African society was socially, politically and economically organized. People lived in harmony and order and respected each other. Around their political and religious authorities, they forged together the future of their society. Culture gave the people an identity. The culture and history of the people was verbally handed down from one generation to another. Any attempt to disregard cultural and religious practices was sacrilegious. The gods and ancestors were often pacified and the priests, more often than not, intervene with offering sacrifices.

Priests then are representatives of the gods among citizens. Every god has its priest. Priests are in charge of offering sacrifices to the gods. They play an intermediary role between the gods and the people. The importance of priests is

seen mostly when there is a disaster or a plague in the village. In such sorrowful moments, he intervenes to pacify the gods and the spirit of the land. Unfortunately, when the white men came to Africa, they challenged all these traditional beliefs. They considered all traditional practices of Africans and religion as primitive. Europeans base their assumption on the conviction that everything that the African does or thinks is evil. In *Nations Nègres et Cultures*, Cheick Anta Diop introduces one of these Western prejudices :

> Rien dans leur passé est de quelque valeur. Ni les coutumes ni la culture. Comme matière vivante, ces peuples sont demandés de prendre les coutumes, la langue du colonisateur auquel ils doivent emprunter même leur ancêtres.(253)
>
> Nothing in their past is of any value. Neither the customs nor the culture. Like living matter, these natives are asked to take on the customs, the language of the colonizer from whom they even have to borrow their ancestors.(Translation mine)

The missionaries guided by these false and hypocritical assumptions "endeavoured to rescue the depraved souls" from "eternal fire". After the detachment, many Africans were obliged to follow the Christian religion without questioning its raison d'être in Africa. Africans were considered as a clean slate on which anything could be scribbled. He was subjected to a constant barrage of suggestions that Western culture was all. Also, the system of education imposed on them alienated them from their community. Europeans (missionaries) established

programmes which created a permanent inferiority complex in Africans. In addition to this, the white man imposed his language on the Black man.

Having all this in mind, committed African writers have taken up the assignment to meet up these challenges, dreams and aspirations of his people, that is, by producing a literature which portrays the realities of Africa.

Cultural conflict is the main concern of this Chapter. This conflict centres around the intellectuals or young scholars who challenge some traditional rites, such as, the funeral rites because of their colonised mentality. In addition, Some of the natives are against the newly imported doctrines of the Christian Church. These people, that is, the intellectuals and the representatives of the "Holy" Church are advocating for the abandonment of some traditional rites because, according to them they are wild. Among these traditional rites is the funeral rite which is considered as barbaric. Their rebellion is concretised with the creation of an Association whose main concern is to transform the village of Asamang into a modern world, culturally and materially. These intellectuals with their colonised thinking believe that the customs and tradition of their people are not adequate enough to satisfy the modern world. This is clearly illustrated in the by-laws of the Association. The memorandum addressed to the Chief of Asamang states :

> This Association will seek all the interest of the people of Asamang and help to promote the development of the town into a modern community. We shall seek to eliminate all

> archaic customs and traditions and among these the present practices of funeral celebration. This system with its attendance of sacrifices to the dead and belief in the existence of Nsamansie is against modern teachings and should be stopped. It is a social vice which all socialists and democrats should keep their hands off. (*Ordained by the Oracle*, 36)

From this quotation, it is obvious that tradition and its related practices such as funeral celebration and sacrifices constitute a handicap to development, hence modernism. According to the new elite, a successful and fair development will be achieved if all the old practices are abandoned. However, these young intellectuals are confronted with a people of a long established tradition whose faith and belief in their customs and tradition are strengthened by some practices like sacrifices and rites. The people of Asamang are people of a long heritage as the Chief's spokesman testifies it when they are gathered to examine the memorandum presented by the new elite. He says to them that

> You are the people of a long heritage and, although there are other towns around us, we are from the palm tree and in a storm every tree will be uprooted but the palm. That is why we live today. (*Ordained by the Oracle*, 87)

According to the spokesman of the Chief, tradition is the life of the Asamang people. They are living and they stand among other fallen traditions because they safeguarded jealously their tradition. While the young intellectuals think that tradition is a handicap to development, and by extension, is a

degeneration of people's life, the vision of the Chief of Asamang village and his people is different. They see in tradition life and security. Tradition is considered sacred and custom overriding. To question tradition is a sacrilege because according to the Asamang people, tradition is seen as the earth on which they live and the air they breathe. When it happens that someone contravenes tradition, they offer sacrifices so as to cleanse the village and to pacify the gods. For example, when the Chief hears the intentions of the young intellectuals and after reading the memorandum signed by Boateng, the president of the Association, he immediately offers a sheep to the gods ; and by the time it is dark, twenty sheep are slaughtered and libation poured to cleanse the whole town of the sacrilege. To emphasize, the Asamang people's attachment to their tradition, Asare Konadu in *Ordained by the Oracle* asserts that

> The people of Asamang believed firmly in the tradition of their tribe and saw that everything was done the way their grandfathers did them as these things were mainly in the hands of women, how their grandmothers did them.(48)

Tradition then, according to Asare Konadu is handed down from generation to generation. To question tradition is to compromise the relationship between man, ancestors and gods. This belief is practically linked with the belief in life after death. In fact, the belief in life after death necessitates the performance of some rites. On this occasion (like in a funeral rite) they implore the ancestors to receive the deceased person and the ancestors' cult prescribes the appropriate rites to be performed. The ancestors' cults propagate the people's beliefs system as K.A.

Busia in *The Ashantis in African Worlds* states : "whose constant contact with the life of man on the earth brings the world of spirits so close to the land of living" (191).

Moreover, the people of Asamang believe that the spirits in the spirit world are ancestors with whom some people have had personal experiences during their earthly life and that one can reach them through ritual performances. These rites and especially the funeral rite places the Asamang community in constant communion with the spirit world.

Concerning the conflict which opposes the Christian church represented by catechist Jeremiah and the ardent traditionalists of Asamang, each group is determined to maintain its status-quo. Jeremiah and his converts consider their religion as a religion of the civilized, as a religion of God and they see traditional ritual performances as fetish. They consider the natives of Asamang village as disciples of Satan and darkness, for the simple reason that they do not belong to the Christian religion. According to them (Christians), they are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ but the Asamang people are still in the darkness because they have refused to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Here, Jeremiah Says : "we are Christians not because we were born Christians or pagans but through our individual acceptance of the blood of Christ" (49).

Contrary to this, the Asamang people see Jeremiah's religion as disruptive and his attitude of converting himself to that religion as a life – denying. Normally, a people's religion and a people's way of life must grow out of each other or if not,

they go hand in hand as Lloyd Williams rightly puts in his article entitled "Religion and Life in James Ngugi's The *River Between*" when he posits that

> religion must arise out of people's total life situation, it must speak directly to those people within the context of their whole existence, within the context of their past history, their present experience and their future destiny.
>
> (Qtd *African Literature Today* n°5 : 64)

Truly speaking, religion must identify itself with the life of people and must seek to respond to the needs of the people. It must seek to redress the moral and social development of the people where it operates. From all indications, Christianity has little or nothing to do with most aspects of the life of an African. It is the religion of the white man, with a white Christ and white ancestors. A religion which is white in dogmas and principles. A religion which focuses its teachings on the European way of life. Christianity is the religion which focuses its teachings an the European culture and tradition. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his article entitled "Church, Culture and Politics" states that

> The evidence that you were saved was not whether you were a believer in and follower of Christ, and accepted all men as equal. The measure of your Christian love and charity was in preserving the outer signs and symbols of a European way of life, whether you had acquired European good manners, like European hymns and tunes, and of course

> whether you had refused to have your daughter circumcised. (*Homecoming*, 32)

In Ngugi's words, to accept the Christian church is to accept the Western tradition and hence, the rejection of one's indigenous tradition and culture. The acceptance of the Christian church by Jeremiah and his converts is an outright rejection of the Asamang customs and tradition.

As a matter of fact, the European missionaries had attacked the primitive rites of the people, had condemned the beautiful African dances, the images of our gods arguing that they are the way of Satan, the way of darkness. The early African convert like Jeremiah did the same, often with a great zeal, for he had to prove his "Christian hood" by totally rejecting the African past.

Returning to the Christian church as a religion of the white man with the white Christ, one can also say that Christ is the answer to the questions and problems of the white man. He is the solution of problems and needs of the white man. The Christian church is an alien institution in Africa. So, what kind of religion which does not procure comfort to the people when they are harmed ? Is it not the same church which supported and backed cruel and inhuman institutions like slavery and land confiscation, by telling the natives that the poor will be rich in heaven and the richer will be poor; or by telling them not to worry about these earthly things because they are ephemeral and that this world is not their home, they are pilgrims? Is it not the same Christian church that refused to speak up when the colonial powers were exploiting and oppressing Africans? So, the people of Asamang consider the members of the "Holy Church" as Pharisees because in

the eyes of people they are like saints but inwardly they are thieves, adulterous or they are charged of many crimes. To them, Christianity is nothing but a social mask. Let us hear what one of the old man says when the catechist is discussing with them that Jesus Christ saved humanity with his blood. He says :

> You talk as if you are a saint. But last week Kwaku Mosi was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for his affair with another man's wife. This will never happen among us for our fathers spirits will knock out the culprit.(49)

African religion in general and that of the Asamang religion in particular is a religion which is closer to the people, it is present in all aspects of life and can be practiced everywhere. In a case of death for example, everybody gathers to implore or worship the ancestors and spirits, so that they can receive the deceased in the world of the living dead. This is what the Christian churches through its disciple Jeremiah try to oppose. When Dora is going to be given a traditional funeral, Jeremiah tells the people that " she was admitted into the Christian church before she died and she requested a Christian funeral and we are not going to have any way of the Satan"(49).

According to Jeremiah and his followers, the ritual practices that the people of Asamang perform are the ways of satan. But Jomo Kenyatta does not see them in the same angle. He sees them as having the quality of maintaining relationship between God and the spirits. In his work *Facing Mount Kenya*, he asserts that

"sacrificial practices are of such importance in establishing connections with both the high God and the spirits of ancestors (232).

Thus, ancestor worship is based on a variety of mingled motives : for example, a link with the past, respect for the wisdom of elders ; a desire for the blessings from the dead who are endowed with knowledge and power beyond human experience ; a desire to alleviate grief and to appease the dead by offerings and prayers. Besides the ancestors are spirits. It is believed that spirits are of different kinds. There are good ones and bad ones . If you meet good spirits, they may bless you. A bad one will not hesitate to knock you down or plague you with a disease. Because of their varied roles in the life of man, the Asamang people revere them.

While the pattern of worship varies with societies, there is a general pattern of a higher God and several deities, some of whom are private, and others public. There is also a common pattern of reverence or worship, for the deceased ancestors who are present in spirit and who pay visits to the living. Asare konadu notes that

> Once in a while when someone dies and the dead had a message, she was possessed of a spirit and people were used to her voice now. Sometimes, it came in the middle of the night or during the heat of the day. Then she would begin calling the names of people she wanted to see. To some, it was a greeting, to others a request. (104)

From the off-quoted, one can say that the beliefs that the dead are alive in spirit is a reality in Asamang village. This view of the Asamang people is shared by J.S. Mbiti in *African Religions and Philosophy* when he says that

> the living-dead return to their human families from time to time, and share meals with them, however, symbolically. They know and have interest in what is going on in the family. When they appear, which is generally to the oldest members of the family affairs, and may even warn of impeding danger or rebuke those who failed to follow their special instructions. (83)

From this quotation, one can affirm that in African societies in general and in Asamang in particular, the dead and the living are in constant communication. There is no separation between the two worlds, that is, the world of the living and the world of the living dead (Nsamansie). Also, it goes without saying that Africans in general and the Asamang people in particular believe in life hereafter. Here again J.S. Mbiti in *African Religions and Philosophy* emphasizes that "death stands between the world of human being and the world of spirits, between the visible and the invisible" (195).

In Christian thinking, things are different. There is a great separation between the world of the living and the dead or the world of spirit. When one dies, he takes a no-return travel to heaven or in hell. The communication between him and the living world especially his society is broken. Konadu illustrates this when

Jeremiah and his band come to Boateng's house to persuade all the people present that Dora Boateng should have a Christian funeral. This is illustrated in the following song :

Me nua owu a wawuye
Asamansi wouko anka
Meka mako gya wo !

My sister not that I don't
feel your death : I do, but
I cannot come with you
to heaven Just as I would
wish to do today. (88)
(Konadu's translation)

The idea of heaven as the final home is apparent in this quotation but the existence of Nsamansie, that is, the area where people rest when they die, is denied both by the intellectuals and Christians. So, in order to impose these ideas to the natives, the missionaries have an obligation of denigrating the traditional belief system of the Asamang people. Here the missionaries used two instruments : religion and school. These two instruments go hand in hand. They are necessary in deconstructing the mind of the savage. Since most of these schools are set up by missionaries, religious indoctrination remains prior in the educational curriculum. Indeed, baptism is often a prerequisite for admission. Many Africans cannot obtain

Western education without providing evidence that they have already pledged their souls to the new culture. So, in these schools, the African is modelled to reason like the Westerners.

Unconsciously or consciously, Africans greedily embraced the new culture because of what Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* calls "the cultural inferiority created by the death and burial of the national culture" (238). In the light of the above, there hang a prejudice inherited from colonization that the black race is inferior. In addition to this, the knowledge that these people (intellectuals) are acquiring in European (Western) schools and universities has a disruptive effect upon their indigenous culture ; for the culturally colonized individual is led to believe in the teachings of his masters, that his country is a "bush fit for jackals", that his people have no history and culture. This education constitutes a brutal separation from their native milieu–an uprooting. For example, Rowland Smith in *Exile and Tradition* : *Studies in African and Caribbean Literature* portrays this situation in the French Empire when he Says :

> The culturally colonized individual is required to memorize the names of the French departments and their capitals, those of the mountains, waterways, wines and cheeses, and to repeat with all the culturally colonized members of the French colonial empire the famous "Nos ancêtres les Gaulois".(89)

Indeed, the individual is learning to speak or write English, French or other Western language and as it is known. To speak a language is to carry the culture it embodies. Also, these people (the intellectuals) are nurtured in Western ideology

and most often than not you hear them repeating "great" doctrines such as Socialism, Democracy and Marxism even though they do not fully master them. Konadu once more illustrates this when he gives the view of the Asamang scholars Association about the funeral celebration and its practices. It states :

> This system with its attendance of sacrifices to the dead and belief in the existence of Nsamansie is against modern teachings and should be stopped. It is a social vice which all socialists and democrats should keep their hands off. (36)

Naturally, these people are the natives of the Asamang village but they claim themselves Socialists and Democrats. In the same vein, these people dress exclusively in Western clothing. When they dance, they imitate or simply dance the European dance because they find African dances wild as Jacob Drachler in *African Heritage : An Anthology of Black African Personality and Culture* puts it :

> Many of the people dress in European clothing and hold heated discussions on world affairs. They travel to and from all parts of the world for study, business or vacation purposes. When they dance, if they do, it is the foxtrot, the rhumba, the waltz and even the lindy hop. The native dance is often called pagan and in many cities it is completely forbidden by the officials. (174)

In fact, after going to school, most Africans tend to ignore traditional habits. Okot p' Bitek in *Africa's Cultural Revolution* sheds light on this change of behaviour of Africans in the Western milieu when he says that "the nun tells him

that the African dances are sinful, and those who take part in them will go to the place below and will burn in fire that does not die out" (11). The tendency is that these intellectuals try to negate their native beliefs, names, language and environment and see the West as a model. They see the African past as a wasteland and try to distance themselves from it. They see the rituals formerly performed by their forefathers as fetish and primitive, as such, immerge themselves into the so-called "modern" or Christian rituals, which of course, are not very different from those of Africa but for the fact that they come from a primitive African people.

Instead of undermining the situation, this conflict activates the Asamang tradition because the people of Asamang village become more and more aware of the importance of their tradition. They become more virulent to the Christians (the catechist and his band) as well as to those intellectuals who endeavour to challenge the tradition which nurtured them since childhood. For example, when the catechist says he has a duty to deliver the Asamang village, the reaction from the people is negative :

> Then carry it out somewhere. My clan is the parrot with the palm nut in its mouth. We live with fire and not water. And Serwaah (Boateng's wife) should not be part of your people who have no culture. (*Ordained by the Oracle,* 92)

In the light of the above, it is evident that the Asamang tradition is going to resist Western intervention but the question is for how long ? May be as far as konadu's vision is concerned.

Though the missionaries had a strong and zealous ambition to bring the so called "good news" to the natives of the Asamang village, they lost sight of the fact that the natives of the Asamang village were not void of religious experiences. Asamang people are religious as the West and even more. The missionaries treated them as *tabula rasa*, in terms of religious awareness ; they misunderstood the African cosmological set up and condemned their religious institutions, which were symbolic and psychological expressions of their social structure and milieu. The missionaries totally denounced the Asamang religion and considered the Asamang beliefs as magic and witchcraft. African religion in general and that of the Asamang in particular do not lack any theological sovereignty and there is a clear distinction between ideas relating to the supreme Being and other deities as Busia in "*The Ashanti in African Worlds*" asserts :

> Though Ashanti religious ceremonials concern these intermediary deities and spirits of the ancestors, the people have a feeling of awe and veneration for the supreme Being who is high above all deities and who animates them all. (193)

In a nutshell, the result of the cultural conflict raised in this novel is disastrous. The rejection of the inherited African identity is a slogan. Fascinated by the culture of Europe, some intellectuals question their tradition and culture by proclaiming its "invalidity" to current trends. The Asamang tradition is taxed as old and fetish. These intellectuals conspire with Christians in order to denigrate the Asamang tradition. The blame is at both ends–Africans and the West.

However, the Asamang people especially the illiterate people including the Chief of the village remain firm to their tradition. Their faithfulness to tradition gives them a force and vitality to resist the West.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURE AS A PROTECTIVE ENCLOSURE : RESISTANCE AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS QUO

This chapter examines the role of culture in the African society or the rapport between individual and culture. In fact, culture is a subject which has preoccupied many a writer in Africa. There are two important reasons behind the growing tendency in this domain. First, the type of colonization that Africa endured brought in its wake innovations in education, religion, philosophy and medicine. This domination affected so much the cultural life of the African people to the extent that African writers deemed it necessary to resuscitate what the colonialists have devalued.

History teaches us that in certain circumstances, it is very easy for foreign cultures to dominate indigenous cultures. It also teaches us that, whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by a permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned. Amilcal Cabral in *Return to The Source* testifies that

> To take up arms to dominate a people is above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least to neutralize, to paralyse its cultural life. For with a strong indigenous cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation. At any moment, depending on internal and external factors

> determining the evolution of the society in question, cultural resistance (indestructible) may take on new forms (political, economic armed) in order fully to contest foreign domination. (39 – 40)

From the quotation above, one can deduce that culture is the focal aspect of the life of any society. It protects a people and helps them to resist foreign domination. It equally gives a people an identity. Examining once more the writer's interest in culture, one can add as a second reason that it is a form of resistance to foreign domination. Through writing, many committed writers create a consciousness among the dominated people. This consciousness later on ignites a spirit of resistance among the dominated. This resistance may then take a political, cultural, or military form. Among these forms of resistance, cultural resistance has a probability of surviving than the others. This is because political and armed resistance of the dominated people are easily crushed by the technical superiority of the imperialist with the complicity of some indigenes. Another reason why prominence is given to cultural resistance is that, by its nature, it can evolve into new forms, political, social and economic. That is why the colonists wanted to eliminate all possibilities of cultural resistance. Confronted with this domination and the lively resistance of the subjected people, committed African writers are doing all in their capacity to respond to their immediate environment. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his article entitled "The Writer in a Changing Society" states that

> A writer responds, with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of

> sensitive needle, he registers, with varying degrees of accuracy and success, the conflicts and tensions in his changing society. Thus the same writer will produce different types of work, sometimes contradictory in mood, sentiment, degree of optimism and even world-view. For the writer himself lives in, and is shaped by, history. (Homecoming, 47)

In the light of the above, committed writer in a dominated society, most often than not, resist certain prejudices. These committed writers assert that there is no superior or inferior culture, because as earlier asserted, the dominating powers qualify the dominated people as primitive, and hence need to be civilized. They consider their own culture as a model and the culture of the subjected people as inferior and primitive culture. The committed writer tries to refute or repudiate all these false assumptions towards the dominated people. In so doing, the committed writer is asserting the identity of the dominated people. Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* is a living example of this self-assertion of the identity of the oppressed people. To read it, is to witness a world with an inner and dynamic spirit. It is also an authentic refutation of the missionary condemnation of what they thought was savage and dark.

Culture as earlier said occupies a higher sphere in the life of man. It is the link between people themselves. It is the collective consciousness of a group of people. In other words, culture consists of the ways of life and beliefs of a people transmitted from generation to generation. Culture is therefore an overriding

phenomenon in people's life. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in "Towards a National Culture" fashions culture as

> A way of life fashioned by a people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with the total environment. It is the sum of their art, their science and all their social institutions, including their system of beliefs and rituals. (*Homecoming*, 4)

In this sense, culture helps to shape a society, its beliefs and other traditional practices. In the same vein, Okot p'Bitek sees culture in *Africa's Cultural Revolution* as "the expressive and creative activities of man : song and dance, poetry and drama, painting and sculpture and so forth" (10). Edward W. Saïd on his part in *Culture and Imperialism* adds that culture is "all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aim is pleasure" (153). From these views, culture can be conceived as a protective enclosure.

In the light of the above, we are going to examine some cultural aspects which give Asamang people an identity and the necessity to preserve and protect them. Rituals are the only means through which the profane world is brought into contact with the sacred. They serve as institutional intermediaries or sanctifying agents. Rituals are the measures by which the sacred and the profane are brought together without damaging the social fabric. In this sense, Boateng (the hero of *Ordained by the Oracle)* must undergo the cleansing ceremony so as to protect him

and his community from the wrath of the gods of Nsamansie. It is in this respect that when people of Asamang learn of Dora's death, they simply say that it is the gods that have wretched vengeance on them because Boateng and the scholars (intellectuals) are doing all in their capacity to change some customs, especially the funeral celebration. The Asamang people consider this as punishment from the gods. So, only a ritual can protect him and the society of the spirit of his dead wife. Referring to this, one of the Asamang people says : "that is the only way to stop the gods from wreaking further vengeance on us" (41).

It is also believed in Asamang village that to question tradition is a sacrilege. In the eyes of the people of Asamang, Boateng becomes a taboo himself and is expected to submit to prescribed ritual purification. It is also believed that if such a ritual purification is not performed the person (Boateng) is exposed to danger and something unpleasant may happen to him (such as an illness) which may eventually spread to the whole community.

In any society, there are ritual prohibitions which Radcliffe Brown defines in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* as "a rule of behaviour which restricts the freedom of movement of a person within certain social fields vis-à-vis contact with an object or person" (133). These rules then have religious implications and people who overlook them feel a sense of guilt and seek ritual restoration. The concept of ritual prohibition then presumes a sacred entity – which should not be allowed to come into contact with certain objects or persons. In view of this tradition or culture in the Asamang village is sacred and hence no one is allowed to modify or transform it. Any attempt at changing it produces a negative effect

which deprives the individual of his ritual status and value, and the qualities which maintain his well-being are endangered. So, when this happens, the individual becomes a source of danger to himself and the society at large.

One of the major ritual prohibition among the Asamang is that tradition needs not be altered or changed. Any attempt is sanctioned by an offering of sacrifices to the gods so as to avoid vengeance. If it happens that any person breaks this ritual prohibition, he is considered as an outcast or a cursed person. In order to break-up the curse, the person in question must undergo a ritual cleansing ceremony, so as to protect himself against the wrath of the gods and spirits. Boateng is considered as an outcast or a cursed person in the eyes of the villagers. According to the villagers, he is responsible for the death of his wife Dora for transgressing the tradition of the people. Because of this, it is inevitable that the spirit of his wife will take revenge on him. He must undergo a cleansing ceremony. Asare Konadu illustrates this when the priest and other ardent traditionalists lead Boateng to the sea to perform the cleansing ceremony. One of them says :

> This is the ceremony to cleanse yourself of any association spiritually and bodily you have had with your wife. What you did last night was to say goodbye to her. That is over, you must part company and you must wash in the sea which takes everything. (63)

As a matter of fact, this cleansing ceremony aims at ensuring Boateng that he and the rest of his family (children) are protected against the anger of the spirit of Dora. Because of her sudden death, Boateng could not confess to her. This

cleansing ceremony is a golden opportunity for Boateng to seek pardon from his wife and also to ask her for blessings. Eric. Ayisi in *An introduction to the Study of African Culture* opines that

> It is believed that some of the spirits in the spirit world are ancestors with whom some people have had personal experiences during the earthly life and whom they could contact by performing appropriate rites. These spirits by virtue of their changed status in the society, having gone into higher realms, are endowed with supernatural powers and they live in the "shade" of the Almighty supreme Being, Onyankopon, interceding and supplicating on the behalf of the living, helping when they can and enlisting the assistance of the supreme Being when they are incapable of helping. (78)

As it is earlier indicated, if an individual breaks a taboo, he becomes a source of danger to himself and the society. Boateng as such is also a danger, by extension, to the whole society. In this respect Boateng in his incantation is not only requesting for personal purification, but he, together with his relations seek to placate the gods and spirits to cleanse the whole society. He incantates that.

> I speak not for myself but for all those who were born with you by our fathers. You know this is a big family in our patriclan, beginning with Okrabu who bore your father's father to the little child of your brother Kwaku Atopa. We

> ask for long life from you and prevent us from the wrath on our ancestors so that we can continue to bury your dead "fathers" for you. Take this drink and drink while you travel. (121)

In all what the people of Asamang do, be it the cleansing ceremony or the offering of sacrifices to the gods, the main thing is protection. They seek protection from the gods of Nsamansie by performing some ritual practices.
They cannot get that protection unless they perform the ritual practice appropriated to the kind of deed.

Being aware that ritual is an integral part of the peoples' culture, one can say that culture is a protective enclosure. Culture then is like a shell in which man hides himself. Like a tortoise which takes refuge in its shell, man takes refuge in culture. It gives him a sense of belonging. A man without a culture is exposed to all kinds of humiliation, subjugation, servitude, domination and slavery. Once within his culture, the individual is secured from most threats. He is illuminated, guided by his culture in whatever he does. It is in culture that the individual finds consolation. For example, when Boateng lost his wife Dora, all the people of Asamang came to mourn with him. Asare Konadu illustrates this cultural solidarity in the following words :

> When madam Dora died everybody at Asamang and the outlying district came to the funeral, not only for the love and respect they had for her family but to mourn with her husband Kwabena Boateng in that hour of tribulation. It

> was customary that when anybody died all the people of Asamang joined the bereaved family to bury the dead and share the funeral expenses, which sometimes stood very high because many kinds of drinks were served and many people were invited from all parts of the country and they came with traditional drums and played them until the dead was buried and all the ceremonies were carried out. These lasted forty days and nights. (20)

During the forty days and nights of mourning, the widower is protected against chagrin because he is in company with other people and hence he forgets the awful moment he is going through. Also, this period of mourning is accompanied by different ritual practices designed to protect the widower from the anger of the spirits of Nsamansie (the spirit world) as Konadu states :

> Her husband was one of the important figures in Asamang and all the customs and traditions of the people were invoked to give him all the protection necessary on the occasion from the gods of Nsamansie.(21)

From all indications, culture is designed to protect the individual who belongs to it. But the fact of belonging to it is not sufficient. The individual must respect it, protect it and do what it prescribes. Contrary to this, the non observance of cultural practices or the culture itself by an individual brings wrath on the latter. This is because the spirits in the spirit world are the guardians of culture. Some of these spirits are ancestors who have much experience about earthly life and then

they cannot let such things (the non-observance of culture) to pass unattended. This is what happened to Dora Boateng. She dies because of her rejection of the great Tano (the oracle). When the messengers of the great Chief of Asamang go to consult the oracle in order to know the cause of her death, the oracle tells them that "my child was my child, created by me in her mother's womb. How many times did she come here ? Never !" (117). It is therefore understandable that she has been crushed down by the oracle due to her non-observance of the custom.

Culture as it has been evoked involves the whole community. To be human then is to belong to a particular community and to do so involves participating in their beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals. In this sense, cultural beliefs are the roots of human beings. Therefore, a person cannot detach himself from the tradition or culture of his people. Also, an individual has to respect the ideology of his society. By ideology of a society, one is referring to the way they view things. Any person who denies the ideology of his society is considered as an outcast. For example, in Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy*, Toundi is seen as an outcast. Toundi runs away to the mission to learn the ways of the white man. He leaves the day before his circumcision ritual, a ritual which would have initiated him into adulthood. Thus, he becomes a symbol of the young native seduced by the material wealth of the white man. He is completely isolated from his family and tribe. They regard him as a traitor who has caused them evil by joining the white man's religion, and they blame him for his father's death. He says this :

> They say in the village that I caused my father's death by running away to the white priest on the day before my initiation when I was to meet the famous serpent who watches over everyone of our race. (18)

Thus, separated from his own culture by his irrevocable act of rejection, he finds himself in limbo. At the end, he pays the price of abandoning his people. He is mercilessly mistreated by the white man and he finally dies in exile.

From the time man first inhabited this planet till date, there has been a long struggle between man and nature. Man tries to live and also to find his place in the universe. In this process, man leaves behind traces of his achievements at various levels of development. In fact, life has always been a struggle : the first quest is to obtain a better living ; and the second in my own view is the struggle against outside intrusions which come to spoil his life style. In his struggle, he confronts obstacles and try to overcome them so as to ensure his identity. This is what the Asamang people are doing. As tactics, they use ritual practices to resist against the attacks of the Christian church and the intellectuals who endeavour to suppress the "old" customs of the Asamang village. When the chief of the Asamang village reads the memorandum that Boateng and his learned colleagues have addressed to him with the intention of eliminating the practice of funeral celebration, the Chief immediately summons the assembly to examine the case. After examining the case they decide to resist this new hegemony by offering sacrifices to the gods, against such a calamity. Konadu says :

> The registrar of the local court was called and when he told the Chiefs of the contents, a sheep which was passing by was caught and slaughtered. This is sacrilege and the town should be cleansed. Ahenkwaa, beat the drums and gather the people together, the Chief said. (36)

As the French proverb states "le feu attire le feu" (fire attracts fire), the people of Asamang defend themselves through their cleansing ritual. They intensify their effort by performing traditional songs and dances as a means of inhibiting the Christian choir which comes to sing on the occasion. Talking about cultural resistance, Basil Davidson in *Africa in Modern History* distinguishes two kinds of resistance : Primary resistance and the secondary resistance. He says that

> After the period of "primary resistance" literary fighting outside intrusion, there comes the period of secondary, that is ideological resistance, where efforts are made to reconstitute the shattered community to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system. (155)

As seen above, we are concerned with both forms of resistance. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment. The Asamang people use rituals, song and dances as a means of asserting themselves in the midst of foreign invasion. The people of Asamang find themselves celebrating their culture and refuting the

values of the invading culture (imperialist culture). In other words, they try to make sense out of what has been trampled upon. For instance, when the catechist comes in with his choir and drummers, the Asamang people immediately oppose them by seizing the occasion. Konadu illustrates this when he says that

> The drumming groups to oppose the singers from the church come from apowa. There was a lorryful of them beating all sizes of drums and gongs that filled the area. After the driver had driven twice up and down the main street, he stopped at the market place. The drummers got down and started again. They marched in the same fashion as the church singing band, dancing and shifting their waists from side to side as they walked away. (89)

The struggle in which these drumming groups are engaged in, is a quest to liberate themselves from Western influence and assert their identity. This liberation struggle of the drumming group is above all, a struggle for the preservation of the cultural values (the funeral celebration) of the Asamang people and for the harmonization and development of these values within the whole village. The spokesman of the Chief questions that

> Have you seen a citizen of Asamang who has died and had not his funeral observed ? Which of you want his dead relative held on the banks of the broad river away from the arms of his dead ancestors and would refrain from carrying out the necessary sacrifices for the dead ? (37)

It is evident that the Chief's spokesman wants the preservation and the continuation of their cultural value ; particularly the funeral celebration.

Furthermore, cultural resistance of the Asamang people is based not only on the observance of the cultural values, but also in keeping them alive. In fact, oral tradition is an integral part of the African culture in general and that of the Asamang village in particular. This drives us to say that cultural resistance of the Asamang people is nothing but the fight to maintain their oral tradition. This is not a new phenomenon because history has shown that, of all forms of resistance that Africa has had, cultural resistance remains the only one that has managed to survive a bit. Hence, political and armed resistance of the African people were openly crushed by the technical superiority of the imperialist conqueror (as earlier indicated), with the complicity of some of the ruling classes. The elite who were faithful and who attempted to resist were massacred. The colonial kingdom was installed with all its crime and exploitation. Even though colonization is taxed of many crimes it is a necessary evil. It gave us language to communicate with other worlds and it introduced school which is the base of development. It is important to note that although African culture was partly repressed by the colonial powers, it partly survived the storms by taking refuge in the villages and in the mind of some ardent traditionalists. Frantz Fanon in *Toward the African Revolution* adds that

> the setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of native culture. Historic observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a

> continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. (34)

From the above mentioned, the invasion of Africa was not total. The patches of resistance gave the image of Africa we have today ; Africa which is free from a colonial alienation and which is assenting its identity by participating in the cultural exchange with other continents by behaving not only as a consumer of culture but also as a producer of it. In other words Africa today is participating in the cultural dialogue with the modern world by giving its contribution to the cultural enrichment of the latter.

In a nutshell, the culture of the Asamang people as demonstrated in this chapter serves as a shell, or a protective enclosure to the people. It makes life meaningful to people and give them an identity. It gathers and binds all the people of Asamang. It is through this togetherness and unity that the Asamang culture tries to resist and refute the idea of totally transforming and suppressing some elements of their culture. Using oral tradition as a weapon to fight Western invasion, the Asamang people regain their authority and their tradition remain unchanged. Unfortunately, the vision of Konadu seems partly illusory, if we see what is happening in Africa today. However, the moral behind his message remains that, Africa would have been better off today, if they had joined their efforts like the Asamang ardent traditionalists to totally resist Western invasion.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DOMESTICATION OF ORAL TRADITION

This Chapter examines the place and role of the oral tradition in *Ordained by the Oracle* and in African literature in general. In fact, colonization brought a profound change in the social structures, values and mode of thinking of the African people. In this respect, some ritual practices and other aspects of oral tradition were forbidden or denigrated by the colonial administration. They considered them as mere primitivism and hence saw no reason for their existence. People then adopted the new values from West and belittled the indigenous traditional values. The role of the modern African writer is to re-evaluate this situation and domesticate the tradition of his people in writing.

Indeed, colonization imposed a language to the colonized people. Consequently, the education they received from Western schools was alien to the people. This made the educated to lose contact with their people. Likewise, the African writer was separated from his local audience. His writings were directed towards the West which, with her paternalistic theories viewed little or nothing in them. With the advent of modernism in Africa, many African writers have taken up the assignment to serve as spokesmen to their people ; so that they can easily communicate with them. Now, the African writer can establish for himself a language and a form to give genuine and effective expression of the realities of his African experience. Dennis Brutus is in favour for this change of style.

This is apparent in an interview accorded to Cosmo Pieterse about the simplification of his poetry and the role of the African writer. In his interview, he maintains that

> ... and then, of course, if one is writing as I would be principally for the people of my own continent, and particularly those who are just becoming familiar with the English language – but who one hopes will develop a great love for the language, because it is a fine vehicle for poetry – I think then one must avoid embroidery or anything that would be interference in, and a barrier against communication between writer and listener.(*African writers Talking*, 58)

In Brutus' words then, there is no need of Western ornament in poetry. Poetry must be simple to allow communication between the writer and the audience. In addition, Taban Lo Liyong joins him by proposing the taming of the language of the colonial power (English or French) to an African reality. In *The Last Word* he states that

> If it is, say, English we have adopted, we will not have to stick to Queen's English; that is English for people in England. We have to tame the shrew, and naturalize her so that she echoes local sentiments and figures of speech

> as understood by those who sit patiently before the school mistress with her cane, and those who search for the mirror that reflects the man we are. (80)

Before examining in detail the aspects of oral tradition in *Ordained by the Oracle*, let's first of all shed light on the difference between oral tradition and other forms of literary discourse because all along the discussion, one will need this difference in order to understand the process of domestication of oral tradition. Emmanuel Obiechina in *Culture, Tradition and Society in West African Novel* argues that

> Oral tradition therefore implies a situation in which cultural transmission is carried on by word of mouth through direct contact between individuals depending largely on memory and habits of thoughts, action and speech for cultural continuity; within a literary tradition on the other hand, cultural transmission is carried on through writings and the existence of written records. (32)

From the above, it is evident that in oral tradition, transmission is made possible by a face – to face contact between two interlocutors, where the listener can see and touch the speaker and even ask questions to him. For the success of communication these peoples must have common customs, beliefs, techniques, sentiments and general outlook.

In addition to this, the modes of apprehending reality within the two traditions therefore differ in varied respects. In fact, in all societies, knowledge is apprehended through the senses. Some of men's daily actions are derive from direct learning from events and situations as they occur, and a certain degree of experiment, building on previous experience is necessary if the community is to go on living. In other words, some simple empiricism is important for survival. But, because writing provides a basic facility for the experiment and the documentation of results, the literary tradition tends to foster a scientific outlook.

Within oral tradition on the other hand, the absence of this facility tends to inhibit the scientific outlook and to leave the people more at the mercy of environmental factors. They therefore attempt to explain their problems as well as all mysterious phenomena through recourse to a theory of supernatural or mystical causality. Thus, where the basic science of oral culture fails to provide an answer, one is found through magical or supernatural theory. One may say that the reality is apprehended scientifically within the literate tradition and mystically or metaphysically within the oral tradition.

When people talk of oral tradition in African literature, they tend to talk in terms of content, proverbs, stories, histories – and forget the art of oratory itself. In traditional ceremonies, political gatherings for example, speeches are appraised on style as well as on matter. Certain speech forms are marked by the ability of being recalled easily since these forms are fairly stable. The rigidity of these forms makes them to be delivered as if one were reciting them. These speech forms with the quasi – permanent features have the characteristics of written forms.

Literary artists exploits these quasi-rigid speech forms and use them with virtuosity in their works. It is in this way that Asare Konadu uses summons, greetings, prayers, rituals, speech genres like proverbs, songs, myths and folktales in order to articulate the values of his cultural stock.

SUMMONS

When the Chief of Asamang village summons the people of Asamang to examine the case of the Asamang Scholars Association which wants to suppress the funeral celebration, the spokesman of the Chief declares :

> Have you ever seen a citizen of Asamang who has died and not has his funeral observed ? which of you want his dead relatives held on the banks of the broad river away from the arms of his dead ancestors and would refrain from carrying out the necessary sacrifices for the dead ? after all that is our last honour to the dead. And if we refuse to do so then what are men ? These are the things that trouble our minds and made us call you here today. (37)

This extract is orally performed because there is immediacy between the speaker (the spokesman of the chief) and the audience (the public). This immediacy is marked by some adverbs like "here" and also the question marks which indicate that the speaker is addressing a public which is in front of him. There is also a face-to-face contact between interlocutors, which is peculiar to oral tradition. In addition to this, in Asamang tradition, there is a traditional call that

every Asamang people must recall before addressing people which is "Agoo, Agoo" and the people assembled must respond him by another formulae which is "Amee, Amee". It is then obvious that this formulae of speech is in the memory of people which must be recalled at the due moment. It is recited or performed orally. This oral performance confers this formulae existence and continuity, else it will be ephemeral. Like other oral pieces, it (the formulae) presupposes the existence of a performer, an audience and an occasion.

PRAYERS

Because Boateng knows of the ritual reserved to the widower, and that he wants to ovoid it, whenever he prays, he calls for the help of the gods to give him and his wife long life. Several times he himself pours libation of gin and rum to his ancestors. He makes recourse to these ancestors for protections. In one of his ritual performances, he prays that

> Kuhkuma Bonsafo, come and drink from my hand. All ancestors of Asona clan, for you also a drink. It is not anything that I have called you here today. Today is Akwasidae, fortieth sunday of the season and as in my duty I bring you drink. So that you will drink and bless us all. Do not let any mishap come my way of my wife and children or any members of the clan. (23)

This prayer is an invocation of Boateng to the gods and ancestors (spirits) in order to protect him and his family. This prayer contains local words and names

such as names of ancestors (Kuhkuma Bansafo) and the names of the clan (Asona clan). The Asamang tradition and beliefs, are expressed in this prayer. Also, this prayer is delivered as if Boateng is with the ancestors and the gods of Asamang.

PROVERBS AND WITTY EXPRESSION

According to Leonard Barret in *The Sun and the Drum*, proverbs are "short sayings in common use that strikingly express some obvious truths or familiar experiences characterized by terseness, rhythm, and striking imagery" (35). As a matter of fact, the speech of elders is always reinforced with proverbs. For instance in *Ordained by the Oracle*, the Chief of Asamang village warns the members of the Asamang Scholars Association who want to transform the tradition of the Asamang tradition village by sitting on a stool carved from a piece of wood into a shape of an elephant with a duiker sitting on its back (when people are assembled to hear what the chief is going to tell them). It means that "although the elephant was bigger, the duiker rules the forest". This means that, although the scholars might be seemingly learned and rich, it is the illiterate Chief, with his wisdom, that governs them. Again, it means that the tradition that they are looking down on one day will override modern values. In terms of aesthetic, this proverb is made of images and symbols drowned from the Asamang tradition in particular and the African general. These images are "the elephant" and "the duiker" which both symbolise size and wisdom.

In African tales, the elephant is recognized as a big animal and the duiker as a small one. But the tendency is that in African tales powerful and big animals like the elephant are ascribed qualities of stupidity and greediness while weak and small animals like the duiker and the hare are often wise tricksters. The tendency is that, it is the weak and small animals that rule the forest amid the existence of the powerful and big ones. This is the apprehension of reality by Africans in general and by Asamang people in particular. According to Africans, wisdom is better than physical might.

Furthermore, when the chief calls the people, he wears the "kente" woven cloth of "one head does not counsel", which shows why he has brought the people together. This proverb pertains to the situation in traditional Africa (before the coming of the white men) where solidarity reigned. The chief of Asamang puts this proverb in order to ask the people of Asamang to stand as a rock in order to defend their tradition which is being trampled upon by the new elite of Asamang and the West.

Again, it is known that when Madam Dora joins the Christian church, Boateng forbids her from going there. She ends up neither going to the Christian church no worshipping the Asamang gods. Now she belongs in nowhere. In this respect, Kai, the custodian of culture refers to this situation and says that "indeed it was said that if a knife has no owner it gets lost'. This means that, Dora belongs neither to Africa nor to the West. She never participates in the worshipping or in the festivals offered to the gods. She confines herself and dies in isolation.

FOLKTALES

Folktales are stories narrated with the intention of entertaining and educating. Because of the ritual prohibition, Boateng is obliged to sleep on the floor on a grass mat. He feels the floor very hard and finds it difficult to sleep. He then keeps turning. Kofi Amapa, his guide feels his uneasiness and begins to tell him a tale to divert his attention from the pain. It goes like this

> There was a man who also complained about his bed because it was too soft. "He must be mad" Boateng said. "No he wasn't. He was just not used to it". Boateng laughed. This man was a farmer. He had lived through most of his life on his farm, sleeping as we are doing now. Sometimes he even slept on tree trunks when hunting. Now, he had some money and wanted to see Accra. He booked into an hotel and at night when shown into his bedroom refused to sleep in the bed "was it a pincushion ?" No, he said any time he fell asleep he found himself in a deep, deep hole and he kept dropping through a bed of feathers with fluttered round him. So he rose and slept on the carpet on the floor. It was then that he had a fine sleep. (98 – 99)

This story is not narrated purely to entertain the reader or Boateng but also to shed more light on the themes of the novel. This man is not accustomed to the modern bed and as such, it causes him pain, but he finds comfort on the carpet which is similar to the traditional bed. This story teaches the reader and Boateng

that the African people and especially the Asamang people are not happy with the introduction of Western culture. The Western culture seems attractive not for the Asamangs.

The folktale is intended to teach Boateng that the Western culture that he has embraced will stress than serve him. In addition, it is orally performed with the involvement of an audience (listener), wanting to know more (by posing questions) or making criticism. For instance, before the performer finishes his story, the audience (Boateng) breaks in and says "he must be mad" (a criticism) or "was it a pincushion ?" (question). This is one of the characteristics of oral tradition. Charles Bodunde remarks it in *Oral Tradition and Aesthetic Transfer : Creativity and Social Vision in Contemporary Black Poetry* **posits that**

> One of the characteristics of oral tradition which relates to the nature of performance is the involvement of the community in the creative process as well as in the criticism. (1)

Ruth Finnegan on her part adds :

> In a creative performance, members of the audience neither listen silently nor wait for the chief performer's invitation before they join in. Instead, the audience breaks into the performance with their additions, questions and criticism. (Qtd Bodunde ; 10-11)

It is evident from these above-mentioned views that participation of the audience in the oral performance is overriding. It enriches the story both qualitatively and quantitatively and hence produces vitality and dynamism of the oral tradition. Also, it is captured (from the quotation above) that the audience or listeners of the story are not passive observers. They are involved both in the production and consumption of the story. There is a feedback between the performer and the audience.

RITUALS

Rituals are pervasive in all human societies, and in some, they are observed in every day life of the individual and the group from cradle to grave. For example, grown ups or household heads of the Asamang village are exhorted to throw the first morsel of food on the ground for ancestors before eating or to pour a drop of water or a drink known as a libation. By this ritual, the social link between the person and the dead relative is acknowledged. Speaking of rituals, this novel embodies two main rituals segmented in different phases : there is first of all the ritual for the dead (the ritual of the disposal of the body) and the ritual for the widower, (ritual of saying goodbye to the dead, the cleansing ceremonies and funeral ritual).

Rituals of the disposal of the body

Before the burial, the corpse of Dora is laid in state according to the Asamang tradition and custom. This ritual is performed as follows :

> The bed was covered on all sides with lengths of kente cloth and twelve blankets each showing on the side. Then the body was carefully placed on it; a gold necklace adorned the chest and three gold nuggets shaped into rings on the fingers. Dora's favourite dish of mashed yam mixed with palm oil was set before her on a small table. A hen with the head twisted rested in the brass pan and beside it six eggs in sand. (49 – 50)

This ritual is intended to send off the departed (Dora) peacefully, to physically sever her links with the living, and to ensure that normal life continues among the living (the survivors). In fact, Dora's favourite meal is served to her so that she cannot be hungry on her journey to the world beyond (Nsamansie). According to African philosophy, life continues in the world hereafter. Gifts are also given to her : ones for herself and others for the ancestors. Those gifts are intended to help Dora on her journey to the ancestral world. The money given to her will be used to pay the boatman who will ferry her across the great river which separate the world of living and that of the living dead. These gifts are intended to show a renewal of relations between ancestors (spirits) and the living and to show that the relation that formerly united them is still safeguarded.

The ritual of saying goodbye to the dead

Boateng (the widower) is left alone with his dead wife in the room. He is given a white handkerchief in which he ties three pieces of silver coin, three cowries and three cola nuts. He is also given a bottle of lavender and a bottle of schnapps for pouring a libation to invoke the spirit of Dora in order to tell her all what he wants and this is to be done before the cock crows for the first time. This ritual is intended to release Boateng's soul from Dora's. Also, it is the only moment for Boateng to have close communion with Dora as she goes into the world of the spirit. It is also an occasion for Boateng to tell his wife all that he feels and ask her protection and good life as Konadu illustrates it in an invocation of Boateng to Dora's spirit (After pouring libation of course) :

> Dora Serwaah (for that was Dora's maiden name and he thought she would listen to him in that name better than in her name) 'daughter of the great farmer of Ashanti. Come and drink from my hand today. I call you not out of happiness but out of sorrow....As you know it is the stones nearest each other that rub. Bless the children and me and give us long life and do not let any mishap come our way. Now I say goodbye with this handkerchief. The money here is your fare to Nsamansie and the cowries for Amokyi .(55)

What one can derive from this quotation is that this prayer or invocation reaffirms the belief in the world of spirits (ancestors) as an integral part of the cosmological belief of the Asamang people and that these spirits take care of the living and protect them from all kinds of mishaps. This is because in African thinking (philosophy) the world of living and that of the dead are intricately linked. Dead people continue to influence the lives of the living. Eric O. Ayisi once more testifies that

> The dead members of the lineage membership influence the lives of the living and the most senior of these – that is, those who had occupied special ranks before death – constitute the ancestral spirits, and provide an important mechanism for social control. (89)

Funeral Rituals

When the corpse of Dora is ready to be buried, Boateng (the widower) undergoes a series of ritual ceremonies. In this case, the following rites are performed : a cooking earthenware pot is held round Boateng's head seven times, a woman custodian repeating "Kuku breaks on to your feet and should rid you of these scourges and revenge". Boateng is asked to carry the pot and is quickly taken to the compound to lead the funeral procession to the cemetery. Boateng is supposed to break the earthen ware pot at Daafoo junction before the return to the cemetery. In fact, this ritual is intended to rid off the death on the widower

(Boateng) and particularly on his family; since it is believed in African philosophy (thinking) that when the death plagues itself on a family it stays there waiting to exterminate the whole family. It is in this quest of chasing it away that people perform all the necessary rites.

Cleansing Rituals

These cleansing rituals are prepared in two phases .For the first part, pots of herbs containing water are brought in and the water is poured into an earthenware pot for the widower to have a bath. Thereafter, the chief priest and other custodians of culture string and put around his waist a brass padlock, a red feather of a parrot and claws of a chameleon. The waist-band of padlock, the parrot feather and the herbs are supposed to remain on him for the whole mourning period (forty days).

The second part takes place at the sea. During this performance, the widower (Boateng) is given ghost grains of departure and he is asked before he dips himself in the water to bite each and throw them against the seven wings of the winds, repeating after each a wish or a desire.

These rituals are intended to chase away the spirit of Dora so that it should not haunt the living. Also, it is an opportunity for the living to ask the dead person or the spirit to act in their favour in the spiritual world.

Myths

According to Isidore Okpewho in *Myth in Africa*, the old theory about myth holds that "myths are oral narratives which explain the essences and sequences of ritual performances, thereby preserving the memory of these elements for posterity" (45). As such, myths are second to rituals in terms of evolution. This means that, myth is the raison d'être of ritual. Without myth, the ritual has no meaning. So, taking into account that myth explains the raison d'être of rituals, one is going to use myths to explain why particular rituals are performed among the Asamang people.

Myth of the River's Gate

One of the myths is the myth of death. In fact, it is believed in the Asamang village that when a person dies, his spirit goes in Nsamansie where people retire after death. Death in this sense is viewed as a journey from the world of the living to the world of the living dead. On this way, there is a great river which separates these two worlds. To cross the great river, the dead person must have money with him to pay the boat which will ferry him cross the river. That is why a dead person is buried with some clothes which will protect him or her from the cold on his way, some drinks that will quench his thirst and also some money which will be given to the boatman to ferry him across the great river, which separates life and death.

In the Asamang tradition, there is a belief that in the way to the world of spirit, (Nsamansie) there is a river's gate and on that river's gate the dead must pay money in order to be allowed to enter in the spirit world. There is also an Asamang saying which goes "if-you have anything to do, do it now when the river's gates have not closed on you". That is why people are buried with money.

Myth of "Tuesday" as day of rest for the gods.

This myth is narrated by Kofi Amapa, the guide of Boateng. It is about the consequence of violating the holy days among the Asamangs. That day nobody could go to the shrine, not even to the farm. The story follows like this :

> It was said one man who went there on Tuesday found a man with three heads. The man or the men asked him to carry them home. "How can I carry you ?" he questioned.
> "If you will not carry us, we shall carry you". He saw himself in the air. He shouted for help and the people in the village down the hill, atwea, said they heard the shouts but it was a Tuesday and nobody dared go to his rescue : what happened to him ? Well, he became mad. He talked to himself all the time and sometimes shouted. Even in daylight he would cry "please hide me ! they are coming ! Can't you see them ? They have three heads. Then people would run away from him. (119)

This myth has a moralistic or a didactic message to Boateng or to anyone who hears it. As such the Asamang tradition must respect the day of the rest of the god. The tradition also must be honoured and respected. Tradition is something which is valuable and anyone who attempts to adulterate it, particularly in the Asamang society, is punished. Again, this story comes to shed light on the cause of the death of Dora (Boateng's wife). By this story, Boateng is able to know the cause of his wife's death. The cause is not witchcraft as they envisage but that Dora has been a victim of the god's vengeance; vengeance because Dora rejects the tradition of her ancestors and joins the Christian religion; and also, Boateng attempts to alter the tradition inherited from his ancestors. All these facts provoke the wrath of the gods. It is in this context that the title of this novel under treatment (*Ordained by the Oracle*) is derived.

Legend

Legends are pure historical narratives. The legend that we are dealing with here is about Boateng's first encounter with a ghost when he was a lad of about eighteen. Boateng's adventures happen in the Ashanti region twenty- five years ago where he is going to visit his father who was the Chief priest of the Ateko goddess. His mother warns him that that area in Ghana is fearful and people never walk alone on the footpaths. She reminds him that highwaymen always keep watch to attack the lone traveller, so do not walk alone. His sister adds that even if he managers to escape the highwaymen, he will be attacked by fearful ghosts.

In spite of those instructions, Boateng goes to visit his father, walking alone for about two hours. The story runs as follows :

> Boateng joined a band of traders who were travelling eastward to the village of Oyoko. If we get there I am likely to find another band travelling south to Sekyere' he said. When they get to Oyoko he was told the next convoy had just left. You can find them just on the outskirts of the "village" an old man sitting under the silk cotton tree said. For nearly two hours no man came in sight. It was now pitch dark. Bush babies had started descending for their night's hunting, their sharp cries enveloping the whole area. In between, the monkeys sent a deep murmuring sound echoing through the forest. The noise they made falling from bush to bush made him keep looking around. He felt a breeze round his ears and in the distance the noise of a falling tree, then a tremendous rush of wind, a squeak and the cry of what seemed to be a human being in agony. They went on for a few minutes, then stopped. There were repetitions of intervals of some five minutes and the movement seemed to approach. He started shouting Allah, Allah, Allah. His feet gave way under him and he fell head over heels to the other side of a big tree which lay across the path. Ahii, I am dying. Ahii, ahii, Allah, allah, allah, he

souted. He heard the clattering of feet and voices closing in on him. He could hear them approaching; then a dog barked. I am finished; he shouted and closed his eyes tightly to face whatever was coming in the dark. Just then he felt a hand on him. He gathered all the breath in him and shouted, nearly bursting his sides, "Help, help". Why young man ? He heard a man's voice say. He opened his eyes and beside him were four men. Highwaymen. Please don't kill me. Boateng Said – We are not highwaymen. We come from Sekyere. But why are you here. What are you doing in this bush ? You are in fact on the outskirts of Sekyere. (59 – 60)

This story is constructed around the experience of Boateng. Events are recorded chronologically beginning from where Boateng starts his journey, until he finds himself surrounded by the four men from sekyere. This legend then is chronologically recorded. Also, this story is history because one may locate it in space and time, that is, all events are set in a particular place (Sekyere in this case) and for a certain duration of time (twenty five years ago). In addition to this, the story is not hazardously narrated. This story has a moral lesson to convey.. The moral lesson is that people especially children must obey their elders. This is because Boateng disrespected his sister's and mother's advice.

This story also reveals that the history of the phenomenon of spirits in the African belief system is a permanent phenomenon, that is, spirits really exist in the

African cosmos and that they are always patrolling the atmosphere searching to punish evil doers and bless others.

Apart from the moral lesson that this legend may convey, entertainment is also its objective; that is, after having heard the story of Boateng and his dead wife, the cause of her death, the chagrin that Boateng endures because of his wife's death, such a story is important in order to purge out the emotions and bad thoughts that the reader endures in reading this novel. This story then provides a rest to the reader's mind which is charged of bad memories or feeling about Boateng's situation.

As already said, the process of domestication of oral tradition involves the use of elements of oral tradition in written texts. This process then is also known as oral aesthetic transfer. This use of oral tradition do not suffice so as to speak of the domestication of oral tradition. The handling of language is also of paramount importance. This is because the writer's description of characters for example, their appearance, clothes, actions, habits and inner feelings and thoughts, his exposition of a particular moral or vision, the ordering of incidents and events to convey that moral or vision are conveyed entirely by his manipulation of language. In other words, it is to take some elements of one culture and transfer them in another through a foreign code. In doing so, the author tries to tame the language so as to convey his message clearly.

From the aesthetic point of view therefore, the novel *Ordained by the Oracle* is written in a language which is abound with proverbs, symbols, stock expressions and characteristic turns of phrase. All these are drawn from the African tradition

and particularly from the Asamang tradition. For instance the word "Kuntukuni" symbolises mourning. It is the transliteration of the clothe of mourning which is turned to the more traditional usage (Asamang usage). In the Asamang tradition, the person who is mourning is given a black clothe that he will put on all along the mourning period. This clothe is called Kuntukuni. Also, the "drums" and "gongs" are symbols of communication. Drums in Asamang tradition is used in communication. This is illustrated in *Ordained by the Oracle*, when the Chief of Asamang village hears the intention of the intellectuals (to change the old tradition of the village), he says "Ahenkwaa, beat the drums and gather the people together" (36). In the same vein, J.H. Kwabena Nketia in his article "Akan Poetry" sustains this view when he says that "drums are used in Akan society for making announcements; and they are also "vehicle of literature". (Qtd Ulli Beier, 29).

Moreover, the language of elders in this novel especially the Chief of the village is punctuated with proverbs (which have been focussed) and modes of expression which reflect traditional wisdom and familiarity with the traditional lore. For instance, the conversation between Jeremiah, the catechist and the elders :"I have a duty and in the name of God I should carry it out", Jeremiah said : "Then carry it out somewhere. My clan is the parrot with the palm nut in its mouth"(92). The use of proverbs and traditional lore in this novel gives the speech of elders of Asamang village (setting of the novel) a dignified ponderousness which specifies their position about the evangelisation of the people of Asamang village. The elders of Asamang village are against this evangelisation and this position of theirs is obviously marked by this proverb : "my clan is the parrot with the palm

nut in its mouth". This saying means that the chief of the village wants to tell the catechist that his village is culturally nurtured and mature, culturally independent and that it does not need any cultural element from outside.

Another use of language in this novel (*Ordained by the Oracle*) consists of the traditional conventions in the art of conversation. This art of conversation consists of the repetition of stock greetings followed by stock responses, the exchange of local gossip, accounts of happenings. To illustrate this, the greeting of the spokesman of the Chief of Asamang village must be taken into consideration. When he is addressing people, he says "Agoo, Agoo" and the people respond "Amee, amee". So, the adherence to this conventional conversation is a prudent way of oiling the wheels of intimate or social relationship in the village of Asamang. When people hear someone saying "Agoo, agoo" they keep quiet even if they were talking and listen to him.

In a nutshell, the domestication of oral tradition is a great step towards refining African literature and giving it an identity. By incorporating the oral tradition, (that is, the use of proverbs, short stories, tales, legends, and myths) in their writings, African writers have largely succeeded in giving an air of authenticity to their writings.

Asare Konadu is among the writers who try to revive the literature of their people by incorporating elements of tradition in it. Stories, tales, proverbs, legends and myths recounting the Asamang village mode of life, its perception of life, and wisdom are significantly used so as to give a real picture of the Asamang village and its inhabitants. All these elements beautify the Asamang village in all

dimensions. To read *Ordained by the Oracle* is to witness a sense of tradition, it is to participate spiritually in the festivals, rituals, folktales, myths that are recounted in this novel. The language the people speak is embellished with the use of some local idioms.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis sets out to prove that oral tradition is a medium in which Africans find an expression of self, morals and social development, and that cultural conflict creates cultural consciousness among people. In fact, culture is the uniting force binding social groups or classes together. In other words, having a culture means belonging to a group whose members give the same or similar answers to the problems arising out of their own nature, orientation in time, relationship to nature, purpose in life, and relationship to each other. Culture then is a vital tool to any human in society. In this sense, a people without culture is like tree without its roots.

In the course of the work, we realized that culture in Africa constitutes an obstacle to the Western occupation of the continent. In this sense, cultural alienation was considered as a great success for the West to completely occupy Africa. In consequence thereof, after having conquered Africa militarily, Western powers endeavoured to subject Africans by sacrificing their culture at the altar of "Western civilization". In this respect, Africa was considered as a dark continent, a wasteland, a continent whose culture is quasi-inexistent

In the face of this debate, many scholars have fostered their viewpoint by arguing that Africans are inferior and needs to be civilized. It is through this assumption that the "Western civiliser", especially the missionaries undertook to

uproot Africans from their religion and customs. This was facilitated by the varied colonial enterprises like the school and church.

It has been realized that the rest of the world (particularly the West) and Africans themselves are co-participants in this denigration process. In this sense, we realized that Africans are more to blame than the West because they themselves are at the centre of this cultural caricature and denigration. The very fact that they embraced European culture had an adverse effect on the indigenous African culture and civilization. In their canonization of the Western records, they unwittingly relegated African culture in world annals. This is because many African elite had to read foreign materials which contained Western ways of life in their most part of their education. Nurtured in this Western way of life or culture, many tend to shy away from their native culture.

Apart from these traitors who compromised African culture, there are other people who are firmly rooted in their beliefs, who are strongly attached to the African culture. These people then constitute a barrier to the complete alienation of the African culture. In this respect, it was realized that the creation of these two groups of people (i-e the non educated and the educated) gave rise to cultural conflict. This is because their viewpoints about culture are totally opposed. In view of this we realized that this cultural conflict is based on the fact that one group wants to transform the culture of a people while another preaches its preservation. Hence, a majority of the non-educated see culture as part and parcel of their lives. They see it as something which unites them and assure their protection and identity. Most of the educated elite on the other hand consider African culture as

something outdated and primitive. This idea stems from the colonial education they have had. The non educated view their culture as something of unprecedented richness and they are ready to sacrifice all what they have (including themselves) so as to safeguard it.

From the foregoing, it is clear that a resistance to the attacks of the educated intellectuals is unavoidable. This resistance as it has been realized is different from those we often observe around us and those that history has witnessed so many years ago. Many a resistance that Africa had witnessed, be it political or cultural ended in favour of the invader/conqueror, except some few cases where the white conquerors have been obliged to retreat. This is the case of the empire of Ethiopia which resisted against Italian Army until sovereignty was restored. In this respect, many Africans sacrificed their culture at the altar of Western civilization.
They abandoned their gods and rituals. Their mind is fascinated by the gleamness of Europe and they are incessantly converted to the alien culture.

In our discussion, we also realized that oral tradition constitute the base of culture .It is not limited to the national areas only. It goes beyond national boundaries. With the advent of modern communication, science and technology, cultural continuity cannot be fully achieved if the native culture is only expressed orally. It is in this perspective that many erudite scholars like Chinua Achebe, Okot p' Bitek, Amos Tutuola, Taban Lo Liyong and Asare Konadu are venturing in the domestication of these elements of oral African tradition. The domestication of oral tradition is indispensable. In fact, the discussion has revealed that the domestication of oral tradition is an effective means of promoting continuity of

African culture to a wider public. This is due to the fact that this process of domestication of oral tradition also helps to build in the younger generation a sense of cultural consciousness.

By way of contribution to scholarship, this thesis has continued the debate on the prior relevance of culture to any society and the central role of oral tradition in the African culture, using the Asamang oral tradition as a springboard for such a discussion.

Contrary to previous studies which considered the domestication of oral African tradition in the African novel as linguistic shortcomings on the part of the black writers, this study opposes such assumptions. It calls for future generations of scholars to consider the domestication of oral African tradition as one of the means promoting the African culture. It is partly through this domestication of oral African tradition that Africa will achieve a fair and profitable dialogue with the rest of the world. As far as the world is evolving, Africa should not be the consumer of culture only, but also, it should be a producer.

In order to solve the long-standing problem of viewing Africa as *tabula rasa,* of considering Africans as people who invented nothing, every African state especially Burundi should elaborate a well defined scheme for cultural nationalism and introduce oral tradition in its general curriculum. In this respect, students will master the oral tradition of their countries and the opportunity to open oneself to the rest of the world will come after the student have been deeply rooted in his own tradition. This will limit the chances of being totally drowned into foreign civilizations. This is of great advantage in the sense that students will be trained in

the oral traditions of their countries at an early age. Also, each country must organize a systematic and careful study of its indigenous languages. This is because a study of our own languages is important for a meaningful self image. Understanding study of our indigenous languages is a prerequisite to a better knowledge of ourselves, our way of life, our ideals of the beautiful, the true, the good and the holy, the savage and the primitive. More so, increased study of African languages will inevitably ignite Africans to write in their indigenous language, thus opening better avenues for creative imagination.

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