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Traditional Akan Royal Chiefly Institution: Evolving Ceremonial Protocol in Chieftaincy at Duayaw-Nkwanta in Ghana

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Abstract

Chieftaincy is one of the most enduring traditional institutions in Ghana that has displayed remarkable resilience from the pre-colonial period to the contemporary era. This article discusses the introduction of new protocolary forms into the institution. Central to the qualitative method deployed is an examination of the interface between “tradition” and modernity” using the 40th anniversary celebration of the paramount chief of Duayaw-Nkwanta, Nana Boakye-Tromo III. In this article, I argue that “traditional elements” are not necessarily at variance with “modern” elements because societies that are often characterized as “modern” also recognize traditions as relevant, rather than as obstacles, to their development.

Keywords: Ghana, tradition, modernity, Duayaw-Nkwanta, ceremonial protocol

Tradition, according to Gyekye (1997), should be defined rather as that which is inherited, accepted, and preserved from previous generations than as that which is merely handed down or transmitted from generations (p. 271). He elaborates on this definition with the explanation that cultural values, beliefs, and institutions received from, or bequeathed by, the past can be discarded or disavowed by a subsequent generation (p. 271). Thus, a present generation, to the extent that it nurtures what it has inherited from the past and places it at the disposal of succeeding generations is more regarded as a maker of tradition than is the original generation that created the values and practices that eventually evolved into a tradition. In summary, tradition is anything that has passed through generations.

Modernity

Modernity, in the view of Gyekye (1997), can be defined as ideas, principles, and ideals covering a whole range of human activities that have underpinned western life and thought since the seventeenth century (p. 264). One problem that easily stands out is how
to effectively deal with the controversies between tradition and modernity as forces of modernity can hardly be disregarded in our lives today. Their impact and all-encompassing nature in the Ghanaian society have been succinctly described by Assimeng (1996) who observes that even the most illiterate and most rural Ghanaian has been influenced by the type of social changes and the corresponding tempo of modernity that have been going on in the society (p. 9). By modernity, I am referring to things relating to the present or recent times, for example, current smart phones with WhatsApp applications, Internet, digital television, tablets, Viber, Skype, Twitter, and many others.

According to Boas, an anthropologist, all people acculturate and not only the so-called “savages” and minorities. He supports his argument with the statement: “It is not too much to say that there are no people whose customs have developed uninfluenced by foreign culture that has not borrowed arts and ideas which it has developed in its own way (1940, pp. 631-632). Boas’ argument is a vivid manifestation of how individuals or groups have since the period of creation interacted with each other in one way or the other to surge to its present state. From Boas’ position therefore, it can be inferred that the borrowing or the introduction of some features from one culture into another culture is a natural phenomenon and not something bizarre. The present paper assesses the relevance of this general ideas to the forms of etiquette observed during the 40th anniversary of a chief in Ghana.

**Concept of Anniversary Celebration**

The concept of anniversary celebration in traditional societies is linked with the celebration of traditional festivals and is therefore in harmony with the Akan calendar year, which is divided into nine cycles of forty days called *Adae*. Two *Adaes* are observed in every one of the nine cycles, namely the Sunday *Adae* known as *Akwasidae* and the Wednesday *Adae* called *Awukudae*. The period between one Sunday *Adae* and the next is forty days, while the *Awukudaes* are also separated by the same period. The traditional concept of a festival, as noted by Nketia, is that of a communal celebration of life in which the members of a society participate on different levels in a number of structured and unstructured but significant ways (1976, p.33).

Emerging alongside traditional festivals in contemporary Ghana are the anniversary celebrations of the enthronement of chiefs which are often embedded in the celebrations of the annual festival of the traditional area. Though terminologies, such as silver jubilee or golden jubilee are used to describe these celebrations, it is instructive to note that the calculation of the date for such celebrations is based on the Akan nine cycles of forty days which constitute one year (Opoku, 1970). To succeed as a traditional ruler depends on so many factors which include one’s ability to serve and account for one’s stewardship to one’s people from time to time. Furthermore, the chief should be able to thank and honor the gods and ask for their support and assistance in the years ahead. It is
also important to follow on the achievements of his predecessors to forestall any destoolment charges. In so doing, it is hoped that the gods and the ancestors as well as the subjects will continue to offer chiefs the needed support and cooperation both spiritually and physically to enable them to stay longer on the throne as is the wish of every chief. As Opoku remarks aptly, “the Akan live with the spirits of their dead. They believe that the souls of their dead relatives are still near to them and they call upon them in times of trouble. They ask for their guidance and make them offers of drinks and eggs, and chicken and sheep” (1970, p. 7).

Most traditional African societies have a set of observable rules, which help to strengthen and maintain the sanctity of their institutions in diverse ways. In Ghana, one important institution associated with protocol and its observation and preservation is the institution of chieftaincy which according to Odotei and Awedoba (2006, p.15) remains an important institution of traditional governance in contemporary Ghana. Chieftaincy, from their perspective, is a complex institution with norms and traditions, including achieved and ascribed statuses and roles as well as sets of duties, privileges, rights, and expectations that the stakeholders demand of each other or the public (p. 15). It is to be recognized as an institution that links and interfaces with other institutions in the society and should therefore not be seen as an isolated institution. Addo-Fening (2000) shares in the assertion by Awedoba and Odotei when he asserts that chieftaincy is an institution that shares political and social space with other institutions in the wider society which include both endogenous and exogenous agencies. This is true for many Ghanaian societies, as well as other societies in Africa and other parts of the world.

Chieftaincy has, since the pre-colonial era, undergone many internal changes in its evolution as a traditional political institution, but the most enduring impact on the institution in Ghana, which still continues to shape it, is its encounter with various western actors; first, the traders and merchants, the colonialists and missionaries, and then post-independent African governments. A vivid example is how post-colonial governments, especially the CPP government led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah undermined the authority of traditional chiefs who were opposed to his modern government administration. On January 5, 1950, Nkrumah tried to coerce chiefs to support his nationalist movement by predicting that unless the chiefs supported the Nkrumah and the CPP, the chiefs might as well lose their sandals once Nkrumah and his party gained control of the post-colonial state (Rathbone, 2000, pp. 22-23; Arhin, 1991, p. 31). All these influences involve challenges that could be described as “modern” to distinguish them from challenges to chieftaincy from its own internal evolution (Addo-Fening, 2000). Even in the midst of external influences, an important distinguishing feature of the chieftaincy institution is that it permeates the very fabric of the Ghanaian traditional society.
The Chieftaincy Institution in Ghana

The Akan s of Ghana in West Africa have long lived in centralized states under chiefs and kings. Chieftancy has for a long time equally featured prominently in the political life of Ghanaian societies (such as Akwapim, Ga, Guan, and Tampulensi) which originally did not have chiefs and kings. By the early nineteenth century, most of these polities had achieved a high degree of centralization akin to that of their Akan neighbours (Adu 2004, Addo-Fening 2012). The paper now discusses elements that seem to challenge the established protocol of the chieftaincy institution, such as the performance of indigenous customary rites; use of language; greeting of the chief publicly by women within all age brackets; addressing traditional events using a foreign language; and use of contemporary music and musical instruments. The paper begins by examining both old and new protocol within the chieftaincy institution with special reference to the 40th anniversary celebration of the enstoolment of the illustrious chief of Duayaw-Nkwanta.

Study Area and Methodology

I conducted this research at Duayaw-Nkwanta, one of the principal towns in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. It is predominantly an Akan-speaking town. The Brong-Ahafo Region is one of the ten regions in Ghana and is located between Northern and Asante Region. It is bordered to the north by the Black Volta River, to the east by the Volta Lake and to the south by the Ashanti Region, and to the west by the Ivory Coast. Its capital is Sunyani. This site is relevant to this research given the view held by Gyekye and Wiredu (1992) that the culture and traditions of towns that are distant from the capital, Accra, are not easily influenced by modern and contemporary trends. The estimated distance of Duayaw-Nkwanta from the capital city, Accra, is one hundred and seventy-one kilometers (171km), which is about five to six hours drive time.

Methods and perspectives I employed for the research were basically qualitative with emphasis on oral history resources, interviews, focused group discussions, participant observation and audio-visual recording of the anniversary celebration, performances and ceremonies and detailed analysis of performance practices by the court musicians and other traditional and contemporary bands. I conducted interviews before, during, and after the celebration with different categories of persons at different times and locations. I later arranged a focus group discussion with the chief and his elders. This was followed by a focused group meeting with a cross-section of the subjects outside the palace for ratification of additional information on the issues. The number of people interviewed during the field work numbered two hundred and consisted of the following categories of people: traditional elders of the chief’s court (20); traders (market women and men (20); elderly men and women within the age bracket of 50 and 70 years either
with no western education (25) or with western education (30); and the youth within the age bracket of 18 and 35 years with western education up to the senior secondary school level (60), and the educated elite, civil servants and public servants (45). The interviews were later transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed for this paper.

**Brief History of Duayaw-Nkwanta**

The origin of the people of Duayaw-Nkwanta from the website of the Duayaw-Nkwanta Traditional Council appears to be shrouded in mystery. According to the legendary history of the area, Nana Dua Yaw I, his queen mother, Nana Serwaa Kesse, and other citizens of the area descended from the sky one fateful day during a heavy thunderstorm. They descended by a golden chain (*atweaban*) and landed at the Nkwanta (crossroad) where the town is now located in a very big shining brass basin in the sacred forest called “Mankwe mu” popularly known as “Kannianko,” about three miles from the location of the present town. According to oral history, Nana Dua Yaw I and his people decided to settle at the crossroad around 1600 AD, and named the place Nkwanta. Later, they moved to Asuogya just behind the Apaape River (*abankesiemonline.org/index.../history/33-the-origin-of-duayaw-nkwanta*)

**Brief Profile of Nana Boakye-Tromo III**

Nana Boakye-Tromo III was born at Nkwanta in 1926 and christened Samuel Edward Osei after his baptism in 1967. He was the son of Madam Akua Bomo and Opanin Debrah, both of Duayaw-Nkwanta. He had his elementary education at the Nkwanta Presbyterian Primary School and Bechem Presbyterian Middle School. After his elementary education, he entered Odumasi-Krobo Presbyterian Secondary School from 1947 to 1951 where he obtained his Cambridge School Certificate. He then proceeded to the Presbyterian Training College at Akropong-Akwapem in 1952 where he qualified as "a Certificated ‘A’ teacher” in 1953. In effect, he had all his formal education in Ghana, but while his elementary schooling was undertaken in his native Brong-Ahafo Region (Duayaw-Nkwanta and Bechem), his second cycle education took place in the Eastern Region (Odumasi-Krobo and Akropong-Akwapim). On 31st July 1967, Samuel Edward Osei was enstooled as the Ɔmanhene (paramount chief) of Duayaw-Nkwanta Traditional Area with the stool name Nana Tromo III.

**Coexistence of Tradition and Modernity**

**Ceremonial Protocol**

Protocol, according to *Merriam Webster learner’s dictionary*, is “a system of rules that explain the correct conduct and procedures to be followed in formal situations,” by states and institutions. One finds a high level of indigenous sophistication, manners, cultures, and beliefs, which were ignored and are still misconceived by outsiders and the
educated elite alike. Each traditional system has its goal orientations as well as behavioral and social norms around which the system revolves. The behavioral norms are closely associated with the systems of authority and roles as they are legitimized in various clusters, such as the family, the chieftaincy hierarchy, the state council, and other structures from which authority is derived and exercised. The goal orientation refers to the types of expectations that were built into the traditional system. They guide individuals to view their future and direct their activities towards achieving them. The social norms refer to the rules regarding rewards, sanctions, festivals, rituals, and sacrifices. Guides to political and other social behavior are enunciated in proverbs as proverbial laws. These proverbs often stem from the past and are associated with good and bad lessons learnt from experiences and observation; they are orally transmitted from generation to generation.

In Ghana, as in most of Africa, the root of protocol or etiquette can be traced to the chieftaincy institution purported to have come into existence around 1300, long before the arrival of the Europeans on the shores of the country. It is recognized as the custodian of the culture and traditions of a people, hence its responsibility to enact a set of rules to preserve certain values of the society. These formalities, which Agyekum (2003) refers to as semiotic honorifics, are manifested generally at the palace of traditional chiefs. Honorifics, thus, refer to specialized address and deference forms used to show politeness and competence in language and culture. They also point to various aspects of social identity and are status-indexing speech forms reflecting social asymmetries (Agha 1994; Anderson 1993; Ide 1989).

As an institution, chieftaincy seems buoyant in contemporary Ghana, but it owes much of its continued survival and social relevance to its skillful response and adaptation to the forces of social change. The institution as noted is encased in a series of traditional rules and regulations that are intended to protect the culture and traditions of its people from western forms of acculturation. In consequence of this, protocol and other related procedures are required to be observed to the letter by the institution during major traditional events such as the anniversary celebration of chiefs. This paper is an ethnographic perspective and analysis of some of the observable evolving protocol that took place on the last day of the 40th anniversary celebration of Nana Boakye-Tromo III.

As protocol demands, any major traditional event is often climaxed with a procession along some selected principal streets of the town with the carrying of the paramount chiefs and other wing chiefs in palanquins. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary celebration of Nana Boakye-Tromo III, all the important chiefs and subchiefs flanked by their elders and queen mothers and sections of their subjects and accompanied by drummers paraded the principal streets of the town before arriving at the durbar ground. On reaching the durbar ground, the chiefs and their entourage paraded round the field of the durbar amidst drumming and dancing to extend their greetings to
the teeming crowd before they finally settled down to await the arrival of the paramount chief, Nana Tromo III.

Moments later, the paramount chief Nana Tromo III was spotted coming towards the durbar ground in a Mercedes Benz car for health reasons, led by some of the young court functionaries and accompanied by the \textit{fɔntɔmfrɔm} drummers in a pickup vehicle. As soon as the paramount chief Nana Tromo III arrived at the durbar ground, all the sub-chiefs and the general crowd rose up for him while the vehicle drove him round to extend his greetings to the crowd, amidst cheers and praises. After the exchange of greetings with the people, the chief was driven to take his seat under a well-decorated modern canopy, where a special dais had been erected for him. The traditional convention is that during such traditional events, it is only the \textit{fɔntɔmfrɔm} drumming that is used to welcome the paramount chief and his entourage to the durbar ground. While the \textit{fɔntɔmfrɔm} is performing, all other bands, particularly contemporary bands present are expected to remain silent.

In this instance however, the youth band that was in attendance, out of over excitement, also started playing alongside the traditional drumming which in fact was against traditional protocol. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that no traditional chief worth his sort keeps contemporary musical instruments in his court or dances to contemporary music publicly. To this end, during the 40th anniversary celebration of Nana Boakye-Tromo III, a vast range of traditional bands was assembled and invited to play at different times. Among these traditional bands were different groups of \textit{kete} bands, \textit{adowa} groups, a \textit{fɔntɔmfrɔm} band from the chief’s court, and another from the Sunyani Cultural Center played by only females. A cultural troupe from one of the senior high schools was also present to perform on the \textit{atumpan} (talking drums) principally to eulogise the chief on his achievements and also to grace the occasion. It was these traditional bands that actually added special touch and color to the occasion as the elders of the court, children as well as women who are skilled in traditional dances moved in to the dancing arena at different times to display their dancing skills during performances by the traditional bands.

In addition to the traditional bands, a youth band and a brass band were in attendance to support the occasion, even though they did not fall into the category of court music bands. Instruments assembled by the youth band were mainly of western origin and included a table-top organ, a jazz set, and a conga (a pair of tall traditional drums). Though the repertoire of the youth band consisted mainly of gospel songs in English and a few secular rap songs in the Asante-Twi dialect of Akan, the entire audience made up of both the youth and the elders danced joyfully to their music anytime it was their turn to perform. Because of this, the bandsmen sometimes got overexcited and often jumped in unexpectedly to play even when it was not their turn to perform.

As tradition demands, the chief is normally accompanied at traditional functions by the \textit{fɔntɔmfrɔm} band. Unfortunately, this traditional norm could not be maintained
during the 40th anniversary celebration of Nana Boakye-Tromo III, because of frequent interruptions by the youth band. This can best be seen as an evolving trend since a youth band is not recognized as producers of court music, and should therefore not be used to interrupt a traditional event. These interruptions often created what one may be tempted to refer to as “cacophony” and miniature chaos as the two strands of music did not agree in terms of timbre. Apart from the discord, it also tended to mar the beauty of the event, as one could not establish whether it was a traditional function, a contemporary concert, or a church service. As a result of this, some concerned observers began to shout and remark, “Na ɛdeɛ bɛn koraa na ɛre kɔsɔɔ yi?” (i.e., “But what at all is going on?”). It was quite an embarrassing situation and intermittently were the interruptions that the youth band had to be beckoned to exercise some level of restraint to enable the aesthetics of the traditional bands to feature more prominently in the ceremony. An announcement by one of the elders got them to tone down a little and enabled people to actually behold traditional performance in its real perspective as chiefs and their followers now got the opportunity to display their skills in fontomfrom dancing.

The Œkyeame (Spokesperson) and MC

Since the inception of the chieftaincy institution in Ghana, a key person responsible for the organization of traditional events has often been the Œkyeame (spokesperson) because of his proficiency in the language of the people and also, on account of his close association with the chief and events of the court throughout the year. Among the Akan of Ghana for example, persons of royal status, particularly traditional rulers, are expected to maintain dignified silence during periods of catastrophe. Whatever the chief has to say is expected to pass through the Œkyeame (spokesperson) whom Yankah (1995) describes as the focus of all formal interaction in the royal domain, whether social or verbal. If chiefs speak at all, their speech is marked by sophisticated understatements and measured deliberation (Sutherland-Addy, 2006, p. 247; Fosu, 2005, p. 54).

Contrary to traditional protocol, this important role of the Œkyeame has been subverted, for as was observed at the 40th anniversary celebration, the role has now been assigned to what is referred to as a “Master of Ceremonies” (MC) because of modernity and rapid social change. The position, “master of ceremonies,” is a term that has evolved as a result of modernization, globalization, and rapid social change. Undoubtedly, these MCs for the most part speak a foreign language, particularly English, which most of the indigenes that are non-literate do not understand very well. Meanwhile, this is an evolving trend that has come to be accepted by contemporary society, as people often pride themselves on the ability of their chief (and MCs) to speak English, even when they do not understand much of it.
Sitting Posture

Sitting with crossed legs, particularly in front of the chief and his elders publicly is frowned upon by tradition. It is in fact considered unethical and anyone seen in this posture is immediately described as arrogant, uncouth, and disrespectful. Unfortunately, this appeared as one of the most glaring scenes during the 40th anniversary celebration of Nana Boakye-Tromo III. While the chief was going round to greet the invited guests and other chiefs and dignitaries in attendance, a lot of people were already seated some with crossed legs. Though this was glaring, no one had the courage to prompt anybody about it due to frequent observation of similar actions on television and the Internet.

Greeting of the Chief by Women

Years ago, it was a real taboo for a woman to greet a chief or go near him while in her menses. Writing generally and exclusively about women in Ghana, Assimeng notes that various myths, taboos, customs, and traditions had historically assigned women to a socio-politically inferior status (1990, p. 58). Consequently, in the days when communal wars were rampant, most families, individuals, and states, particularly chiefly institutions needed to fortify themselves spiritually against their enemies. At most of the shrines that they consulted for their fortification, chiefs and warriors were cautioned against contact with women in their menstrual period (Okyeame Kwasi Ampofo (Interview 2008). The menstrual blood according to the interviewees had the potential of neutralizing their spiritual powers.

The platform on which menstrual blood is often articulated is that of concepts of purity and pollution that Ortner (1978) sees at the heart of the belief system of most cultures. According to her, cross-culturally, purity and pollution are observed and experienced virtually as the contagion of pollution, which left to its own devices, spreads and overpowers all that it comes in contact with. In spite of these precautions, all categories of women both young and old during the Duayaw-Nkwanta function in question went round, one after the other, to greet the paramount chief publicly during the ceremony. While the traditionalists may be thinking of a possible case of some women being in their menses, majority of the people may frown upon this belief because of their Christian faith. Any attempt to enforce it will thus lead to their decline of invitation to attend such traditional functions in the future.

Chief’s Use of Foreign Language at Traditional Events

Traditionally, a chief is required to address his subjects during important traditional events in the indigenous language, which the people understand better than English. Unfortunately, the language, which Nana Boakye-Tromo III used to address the gathering during the ceremony, was English. Though it was a well-prepared speech, the applause of many of the indigenes in attendance was cosmetic as they often had to wait
for the MC to signal them to clap before they could do so. Meanwhile, in traditional societies the chief is very much appreciated and lauded by his people when he is able to speak eloquently in the indigenous language, particularly when he is able to intersperse his speech with proverbs, metaphors, and other figures of speech. But this linguistic departure from established norms is also to be seen as an evolving trend because for many people, English is an international language that everyone needs to learn and speak as it is more like the first language of the country now.

Chiefs have since the adoption of the chieftaincy institution reserved the power and the right to sanction any subject who behaved contrary to any of the procedures of the state. Before the period of colonialism in Ghana around the 16th century, sanctions of a heavy fine or death penalty depending on the gravity of the offence were imposed on culprits, particularly among the Asante. For example, there is the story of a young man of Dompoase, a town in the Asante Region who was deemed to have deliberately exhibited disrespectful behavior through his use of symbolic gestures during his dance performance at the Dompoasehene’s palace, (the palace of Dompoase chief) thereby generating conflict between himself and the chief and his elders present. By his conduct, he was deemed to have treated the office and person of the chief with contempt. For his punishment, he was made to slaughter a sheep in accordance with customary practice (Bame, 1991, p. 159). In contemporary Ghana where western democracy now permeates the entire society however, no chief reserves the right to sanction a subject for exhibiting dance gestures he considers offensive. As a result, during the 40th anniversary celebration of Nana Boakye-Tromo III, people, particularly the youth were seen displaying their own dancing skills and gestures with ease. Even to the beat of the fɔntɔmfrɔm drumming, the youth were seen using Azonto techniques and style to dance to it openly. Though it looked strange to use contemporary dancing styles to dance to the beat of the traditional fɔntɔmfrɔm music, it is worth noting that the dancing styles and gestures exhibited by the youth were so exciting and stimulating that almost everybody in attendance was compelled to voluntarily applaud at intervals in appreciation. As a result of the excitement, people were unable to focus and read any meaning into the dancing gestures on display to decipher it as something disrespectful to the chief.

1 Azonto is an African dance form which originated in Ghana during the early 2000s. It is a dance form which incorporates and coordinates complex body movement and non-verbal communication in a rhythmic fashion in very few one-two timed steps. Just like most African dances, knee bending and hip movements are required to dance it.
Other Traditional Forms of Etiquette

Within the different traditional areas in Ghana, there are a variety of rules that are observed, particularly in the courts of chiefs and also during festive and ceremonial occasions. Among such important customs are invitations of elders to meetings by the traditional ruler, which are carried out by drums with coded messages (Addo-Dankwa, 2004, p. 43). In many parts of Ghana, these coded messages are played on the drums three times at intervals of approximately thirty minutes. The first beating of the drums serves as a general notice to all who are required by custom to attend the meeting to get prepared.

The second beating is a signal for every chief and his elders to be either present at the palace or to make their way to the palace. With the exception of the paramount chief, all elders and sub-chiefs are required to be seated during the third beating of the drums. At the end of the third beating of the drums, the paramount chief enters the meeting hall, and as custom demands, everybody is required to stand up to acknowledge him and also wait for him to take his seat before they also resume their seat (Addo-Dankwa, 2004, p. 43). It is important to point out that, even though the position of the town crier (gong beater) has not been abolished from the court of the chief, because of rapid urbanization and modern technology, most traditional rulers now use mobile phones to communicate with their elders on very important and urgent issues. Drums are still used alongside, but sparingly, as the use of the contemporary medium of communication is deemed to work faster and helps to save time and energy.

When a paramount chief has taken his seat at an assembly of chiefs and elders, the ɔkyeame (spokesperson) announces this and invites the elders to come forward to exchange greetings with him. The hand shaking is done hierarchically, starting from the most junior to the most senior elder or chief. The most senior chief, as tradition demands, always returns the greetings generally through the spokesperson. In greeting the chief, one is expected to take off his/her sandals before shaking hands with him and then return to put them on when they return to their seats (Denteh, 1967, p. 10). On this occasion, however, a lot of people went to greet the chief and his elders wearing their footwear. These included both the locals and foreigners in attendance.

By protocol when a chief is moving round to exchange greetings, everybody in attendance is expected to keep standing and wait for him to finish and return to his seat before a signal is given for the general crowd to also take their seats. Once again, on this occasion, by the time the chief had finished with his rounds to take his seat, a lot of people were already seated. Though this was against protocol, no sanction could be preferred against anybody as a result of modernity and rapid social change.

On the same basis, if one has his/her hat on, he/she will have to remove it before proceeding to greet the chief (Nana Òmankrado Ansah, Interview, 2011). A probable question one is likely to ask is “Why are women not required to remove their scarves when it is their turn to greet the chief?” The argument here is that, traditionally, the
wearing of headscarves has always been a fundamental part of a traditional Akan woman’s dressing long before the arrival of the Europeans in Ghana in 1471. It is significant to note that dukuu (Akan word for headscarves), doek in Dutch and dug in Danish, according to Christaller (1933), was introduced by the Dutch during their arrival in Ghana in the year 1637. Until then, the women dressed by wearing what is referred to as shew, a kind of girdle with long fringes, made of the fibers of the adobe (raffia palm) and worn by traditional priests when performing rites. The women at this period in question did not wear any scarf or dukuu on their hair. All they did was to use black thread to weave the hair into various styles and designs of their choice. Though Christaller’s claim may be true, as a result of contemporary ignorance of what existed in Akan communities long before being conquered by their colonial enemies, the perception of most people is that the wearing of the ṭɔsɔ (raffia skirt) is for only traditional priests who are ready to perform for their gods. Worse of all, with the influence of Christianity and western education, any woman who attempts to dress in the outfit of this ṭɔsɔ to functions may immediately be tagged an idol worshipper. It is important here to stress that the wearing of headscarves over kaba and a cover cloth has traditionally been the fundamental dressing of women and though a traditional practice, it is just modernity of the past few hundred years.

The wearing of the traditional attire kaba and cover cloth without scarves fundamentally cannot adequately showcase the true beauty of an African woman, and is therefore considered a very important part of a woman’s dressing. Forcing a woman to remove her scarves in the name of protocol therefore could be interpreted as an act of sabotage to make her look “naked” in terms of her beauty. It is therefore to avoid such abhorrence that women are allowed to greet or shake hands with the chief with their scarves on.

Discussions of Results

In this study, I sought the perception of people on the acceptance of evolving protocol by chiefs and its impact, either positive or negative, on the chieftaincy institution. Some of the questions asked during the interviews include the following:

(a) Questions (Qs) to a retired public servant: What is your view about the use of an MC for a traditional ceremony like the celebration of the 40th anniversary of your paramount chief instead of the state ṭɔkyeame (spokesperson)?

Response: We think because the ceremony involved the attendance of both local and international dignitaries most of whom are literate and may know only the English language it was appropriate to employ the services of an MC. The ṭɔkyeame (spokesperson) as most of us are aware can only speak the indigenous language through no fault of his. Furthermore, looking at the changing trends in this
contemporary era; some of us do not see anything wrong with the use of the services of a Master of Ceremonies who is professionally trained for such events.

(b) Qs to retired public servant: But don’t you think in so doing you’ll be weakening the position of the ɔkyeame as the spokesperson of the chief?
Response: Well, that’s the reason why the planning committee found it necessary to meet him over it in advance before the services of the MC were engaged.

(c) Qs. Ok, but can one say majority of the subjects in attendance understood the language of the MC which for the most part was in English?
Response: Well, not everybody; but some will certainly ask for assistance from the educated folks around.

(d) Qs to an elder at the chief’s court. Good afternoon, Nana Fredua: Dwumadie a modii enne da yi fa amammore a esombo paara, nanso mehunu se nneemmafoɔ nnoɔma pii frafra mu, aden ntira? (“I see today’s program to be strictly a traditional affair, but looking round, I see that it is mixed up with so many things of this contemporary period, why?”)
Response: Well, the youth band was invited to draw more people, particularly the youth to the function, which to some of us see is a positive move. The youth now dominate the population of the town and for every program to get on well, it is imperative that we do all we can to involve them in it. Moreover, they have the strength and the energy to take on board some of the activities that we cannot do now. Additionally, we the aged love brass band music to such an extent that we always feel dignified anytime it is played. In fact, it serves as a magnetic force that has the capacity to pull us out in our numbers to events that employ it.

(e) Qs. Ɔkyeame, enne dwumadie a ekɔsɔɔ yi, na me nim se wo na wobedi biribiara anim nanso manhunu no saa, aden ntira?
“Linguist I thought you were going to preside over the entire ceremony that took place today, but that was not what I saw; why?”
Response: Ansaana dwumadie no rebedurusoɔ no, nana tuu mpaninfoɔ aa na dwumadie no hye wɔnna behuu me se wɔbepese wɔde dwumadie no nyinaa behye ɛkasafoɔ (MC) a wagye din wo Sunyani mpoɔtamu ha no nsa. Mfitiaase no m’ani annye ho, nanso esiane nkyerekyeremu a wɔdekaa ho no nti naetwa se megye to mu na biribiara atumia kɔ so senea ɛmanfo dodɔɔ no hwehwe no. (“Well, before the commencement of the celebration, members of the planning committee consulted me, on behalf of the chief, over who to preside over the ceremony for things to get
on smoothly as expected by the public. I was thus persuaded to accept their explanation”).

**Asɛmbisa:** *Enti wonnye nni se ebema wo tumi se ɔkyeame no so ahwan aba fam?*  
(“By so doing, don’t you think your status as a spokesperson is going to be devalued?”)

**ɔkyeame:** *Daabi, daabi, daabi. Ɛman no ye yen nyinaadea enti nea ɔmanfo hwehwe no na esε se yeye de ma won.*  
(“Not at all; the state belongs to all of us and so we need to respond to the needs of the people accordingly.”)

(f) Qs. Teacher Kwarteng. What can you say about Nana Boakyе-Tromo III with respect to infrastructural development since his installation as chief of Duayaw-Nkwanta?

**Response:** Teacher Kwarteng (Retired): As far as some of us are concerned, we see Nana Boakyе-Tromo III as one of the most progressive chiefs Duayaw-Nkwanta has ever had. Some of us have lived in this town for over twenty-five years and the kind of unity, peace, and oneness coupled with other developmental projects we have enjoyed under his regime is unparalleled. He is someone who devoted the greater part of his time, resources, and energy to the general infrastructural development of the town. Some of his achievements in practical terms include the construction of feeder roads to link surrounding villages, and the establishment of many basic schools and second cycle institutions. Recently, he has released a vast stretch of land for the construction of a Sunyani Polytechnic campus and has also established Tromo Educational Fund to help brilliant, but needy students from the traditional area. Another achievement worth mentioning is the reconstruction of the town roads. As you could see yourself, all the town roads are all well fixed without any disgusting potholes. Until his installation as chief of Duayaw-Nkwanta, all these roads were almost impassable. To a great number of us therefore, Nana Boakyе-Tromo III is in fact a brilliant intellectual and a visionary person worth his salt as a paramount chief.

**Analysis of Findings**

The findings show that although there was a time when chieftaincy was perceived as anachronistic, particularly in the era after independence, the chieftaincy institution, in its entirety, continues to enjoy the goodwill of many Ghanaians. The findings show that about 90% of respondents support the acceptance of evolving protocol into the chieftaincy institution, particularly in this modern era. The practice of using MC for important functions has come to be accepted as part of contemporary culture and is seen as a means
The practice of using youth bands with modern musical instruments at traditional ceremonial events, for most of the interviewees, is not to be seen as something bizarre, particularly in a country where the active population is dominated by the youth. According to the 2010 population census of the country, almost one out of every four people in Ghana was reported to be aged 20-35 years. However, persons between 15-35 years, who form the youth according to the National Youth Policy, constitute about a third of the population of Ghana. If this startling statistics on the youth population is anything to go by, then the probability of rejecting evolving protocol into the chieftaincy institution cannot be guaranteed. Any attempt to force its rejection is likely to have dire consequence on the future growth and development of the institution as participation by the youth in the programs of the institution may begin to wane. Generally, most of the interviewees greatly appreciate the traditions and culture of the institution, but hold the view that they could be practiced contemporaneously with evolving trends.

An important claim by the queen mother during my interview, for example, is that it is against traditional norm for queen mothers to be accompanied with drumming during processions which in fact makes such celebrations very boring to them. Most of them now see themselves as Christians and are able to use their resources to hire brass bands that play Christian songs in the form of choruses to accompany them during such events. Brass band music, the queen mother argues, is enjoyed by both the youth and the aged and should be used therefore to support traditional functions. The use of English to address subjects and other dignitaries in attendance at traditional functions is now hailed by society as the desire of every town or village in the country is to get a literate person as their chief, a chief, who is not just educated, but is also able to speak English eloquently. Further, the greeting of the chief by both sexes publicly is not seen as anything offensive in contemporary Duayaw-Nkwanta. Human rights advocates are ever ready to defend anyone who may be sanctioned by any traditional authority on account of perceived departure from traditional norms. The data shows that majority of the respondents in the different age categories are all in full support of the integration of evolving protocol into the chieftaincy institution.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the fact that since society is dynamic and will continue to be dynamic, there is no way tradition can detach itself completely from the influences of modernity. For example, apart from the chieftaincy institution there is even a wider space in which we can observe these changes, such as in the areas of popular culture (churches). In consequence of global influences and internal initiatives, the youth who now constitute a significant part of society have developed new tastes for so many things, including music and dance. There is therefore the need for traditional societies to
create additional space and platforms for them to practice their creative talents and skills so as to recognize themselves as part of society.

Tradition is never static. It evolves with the times, and so will continue to interact in various ways with each other as was observed at Duayaw-Nkwanta where traditional and modern bands were both employed during an important traditional function. And it is important to note that what happened at Duayaw-Nkwanta is not an exceptional case or unique to the town. The youth have become so indispensable to the success of almost every traditional event that virtually every chief of modern Ghana ensures their total involvement in the planning and execution of their traditional programs. In consequence of this, it should no more sound bizarre to find brass bands and youth choirs performing alongside traditional bands at typical traditional functions. But in each case, a mechanism will need to be put in place to streamline their performances to prevent confusion or unnecessary chaos.

Finally, I wish to recapitulate the fact that tradition and modernity are not necessarily contradictory or exclusive. They are merely two different phenomena moving in a continuum where each can borrow from the other whenever necessary.
References


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Language of Power: Pidgin in the Colonial Governance of Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Pidgin was indispensable as a working language of colonial governance in Northern Nigeria, epitome of the distinct and continuing role of pidgin as a language of the workplace in West Africa. The study is largely based on archival materials and oral interviews of some former African employees. Notably, British colonial authorities adopted pidgin as a language of government in Northern Nigeria, as they lacked a wider medium for inter-ethnic communication. African political agents were employed as intermediaries, based on their knowledge of pidgin and other local languages, enabling them bridge communication between government and chiefs. And pidgin was hard to replace.

Keywords: intermediaries, pidgin, colonial administration, Northern Nigeria, evolution

Pidgin is English modified by another language or multiple other languages. In the evolution of pidgin, the original English is termed the superstrate language, denoting the language of the influential people, and the non-English language known as the substrate language. Accordingly, English would be the superstrate language in West Africa, as the beginnings of pidgin were associated with English traders regarded as the influential group relative to Africans, in terms of technological prowess and their capacity as employers. Over time, however, the grammatical innovations introduced in pidgin from various languages of West Africa would diminish the intelligibility of pidgin to Anglophone European officials.

In West Africa, Mafeni (1971) notes that pidgin essentially constitutes a language group composed of varied dialects of pidgin and related creole forms (nativised pidgin), with a creole serving as pidgin outside its spoken area of mother tongue (pp.95-96). Thus pidgin prevails throughout West Africa, particularly the coastal cities and towns of Anglophone countries. As the language group differs in grammatical system, however, the regional varieties are less mutually intelligible.
This paper examines the role of pidgin as a working language of colonial government in Northern Nigeria. Of its organisation, the paper provides background information, including the functions of pidgin in the pre-colonial period. Then, the paper examines pidgin at the workplace of British colonial administration in Northern Nigeria, exploring the themes of English language requirement in colonial rule; tasks of governance performed by African service assistants who spoke pidgin; political influence associated with the tasks of governance; and government efforts to control the power of African service assistants. The concluding theme explores the functions of pidgin in Nigeria today.

**Early Pidgin English in West Africa**

Pidgin in Nigeria developed largely out of the Krio language of Sierra Leone, and partly from other local English-based jargons on the coast, which had emerged by the late 17th century out of a Portuguese trade jargon in existence during the previous century (Mafeni, 1971, p.97; Huber, 1999, pp.44, 128).

Among its early functions, pidgin served primarily as a language of trade, a medium of inter-ethnic communication between Africans and European traders, particularly English traders. Similarly, European officials on board ships largely communicated through pidgin with their fort slaves who could not speak any form of English (Huber, 1999, p.54). In association with pidgin as a language of trade, there emerged a distinct group of Africans serving as mediators or brokers between the European traders and Africans. These intermediaries included ‘gold takers’ who adjudicated trade disputes between Africans and European officials. According to Dantzig (1999), the intermediaries also involved linguists or ‘interpreters’ who were largely drawn from local chiefs and related political officials, synonymous with the tradition of ṣkyeame among local societies on the Gold Coast and elsewhere in West Africa (p.84).

By the second half of the 19th century, pidgin had assumed the status of a language of social communication, becoming a lingua franca and functioning as a third-party means of communication between differing indigenous language groups on the West African coast (Huber, 1999, p.116)

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1 According to Huber (1999), Krio itself derives from the New World creole languages involving either one or a combination of three scenarios: Gullah, creolised English of the slave plantations of Carolina and others of the southern states of USA, as spoken by Nova Scotians who were shipped to Sierra Leone; and the Jamaican English-based creole of the Maroons (escaped slaves) who also settled in Sierra Leone; and the language of soldiers of the 4th West India Regiment, discharged from their headquarters in April 1819 and settled in Sierra Leone (pp.62-63).
In the era of European colonisation of Africa from the last quarter of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th century, pidgin would develop on its role of transaction between Africans and Europeans, becoming institutionalised as a medium of communication in the governance of British colonial establishment in Northern Nigeria.

**English Language Requirement in Colonial Rule**

In July 1886, British colonial rule began in Northern Nigeria with the chartering of the Royal Niger Company, a British trading enterprise which had been operating in the region, and thence assumed authority to administer the region on behalf of the British government. As a trading concern, the major objective of the Royal Niger Company always involved securing the cooperation of the traditional rulers of Northern Nigeria in ensuring peaceful conditions for trade (Mockler-Ferryman, 1892, pp.254-255; Fremantle, 1925, p.5).

Now equipped with a charter, the Company chose to administer the region through the traditional rulers and their political institutions. But the Company officials could not conduct effective relations with the traditional rulers because they lacked knowledge of local conditions and languages. Company officials could therefore not collect adequate information to develop effective administration for their dominion. They needed brokers or assistants who possessed knowledge of the local conditions as well as English, and who could communicate between the Company and the indigenous people. Thus, Company officials elevated some of the local people to the position of political agents, the term denoting distinguished messenger-interpreters. As intermediaries, political agents assisted government diplomacy and helped to establish and maintain relations between the Company and the traditional rulers, reminiscent of Africans who served as brokers between European traders and African merchants during the pre-colonial period. Political agents also gathered information that was needed for policy-making in administration, while some served as District Agents and administered Company stations.

Agents were recruited on the basis of their qualifications, the most important of which was linguistic competency, essentially involving fluency in pidgin together with proficiency in some indigenous language, such as Hausa, Yoruba or Nupe. In the prevailing conditions of limited Standard English available to Africans, Company officials adopted pidgin as a language of government in their territory. For the Company officials, many of whom could not speak any local language, pidgin was a suitable medium of communication with the indigenous people. Political agents were fluent in pidgin, in addition to their native tongues. Accordingly, they were suitable as intermediaries between the people and the Company officials. On the one hand, they could communicate in indigenous languages with the people. On the other hand, they could speak with the Company officials, many of whom had acquired pidgin. For instance, John Flint (1960) notes that when the town of Kabba was conquered during the Niger Sudan Campaign of 1897, George Goldie, the governor of the
Company territories, addressed the people ‘in the most inimitable pigeon English (which was then translated by interpreters into Yoruba and Nupe)’ [p. 250]. Perham and Bull (1963) also observe that the would-be high commissioner, Lugard, could as well pick out some pidgin (p.148).

During the 1890s, Company administration was progressively superseded by a new imperialism that would require even more political agents and the entrenchment of pidgin in the governance of Northern Nigeria. After 1895, British colonial policy in West Africa changed in response to the European scramble for African colonies; the British Government revoked the charter of the Company, and declared a protectorate over Northern Nigeria, beginning 1st January 1900.

The protectorate administration aspired to colonial development, seeking to promote economic development in Northern Nigeria for the mutual benefit of the local people and their British rulers, although this objective would quickly change to economic exploitation for the colonial state. In order to realise its objective, however, the new administration had to establish authority over the local polities and organise effective government. By 1906, the entire region had been subdued; the protectorate was divided into provinces, and a system of administration established.

Protectorate administration, developing on the Company practice, was essentially indigenous, involving the adoption of local political structures. Essentially, the protectorate administration was a two-tiered system. The upper tier comprised a hierarchy of colonial rulers or Colonial Civil Service, which was responsible for the central administration of the protectorate. The civil service was organised into several departments, of which the political department was the pivot of government.

The political department was composed of expatriate governing officials, such as the high commissioner and his private secretary; the secretary to the administration; political officers or residents and their assistants; indigenous service assistants, such as clerks and political agents. The residents served as senior government officials and representatives of the high commissioner in provincial administration; they were assisted by district officers in the various divisions of the provinces. Among their major functions, residents and district officers conveyed all government orders to the provincial functionaries; they also supervised ‘Native Administration’ or the indigenous hierarchy which formed the subordinate tier in the protectorate government.

The subordinate administration was modelled on the emirate system of local government prevailing in the region, and it evolved over the years. Essentially, it was composed of the indigenous ruling elite; emir, his councilors and district heads administering the various districts. Below them were village heads placed in charge of villages in the districts. Traditional courts existed at the various levels of government. There, traditional law and customs were administered and government proclamations enforced. A provincial
court existed at the capital of each province. Headed by the resident, it handled cases outside traditional jurisdiction.

Political activity in the protectorate administration was largely informed by patron-client relations. Interaction between the two hierarchies of government involved brokerage of colonial authority, and that required political agents. They were hard to find, largely because of the financial cost involved as well as the stringent requirements for their employment, including personal resourcefulness, geographical knowledge of the territory and linguistic ability, in particular.²

Agents in the protectorate régime had to demonstrate good language skills. In fact, the protectorate government, unlike its predecessor, developed a language policy for its agents. This is not surprising considering that agents were needed for a greater variety of tasks than hitherto. The language skills involved fluency and literacy in Standard English; proficiency in Hausa, a lingua franca of the region; and knowledge of other indigenous languages, such as Kanuri in Borno, or Yoruba in Ilorin.³

The language requirement was used by the colonial officials as the basis for the recruitment and classification of agents. Accordingly, candidates were tested in language examinations and graded into three classes.⁴ The examination in English was classified into lower and higher standards. The lower standard test was an oral examination that involved conversations in Standard English between a candidate and an examining board, composed of British colonial officials. Each candidate was expected to engage in ‘six different conversations as far as possible with different Europeans each on different subjects, lasting about 10 minutes.’⁵ In order to pass the lower standard test, a candidate was expected to demonstrate clearly, an understanding of the examiners’ statements, and earn a grade of forty per cent.

A candidate needed a grade of eighty per cent to pass the higher standard examination. Such a candidate was expected to be fluent in English, with good pronunciation and knowledge of a fairly large vocabulary. In addition, the candidate was required to read English in manuscript and in print. The candidate was further obliged to ‘write accurately from dictation and compose a fairly grammatical and intelligible letter.’⁶

Agents’ proficiency in the indigenous languages was also assessed. Candidates were examined orally by one or more of the best agents in the presence of the examining board.

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² SNP 1/1 4 (238/1904) High Commissioner, Northern Nigeria, to Secretary of State, Zungeru, 26 January 1904; also (Afeadie, 2008, pp.43-50).
³ SNP 7 42/1902 Examinations in English, enclosed in Language Gratuities; SNP 1/1 vol.4 High Commissioner to Secretary of State. (N.N.40 238/1904)
⁴ CO 446/6 p.609. Colonel Lugard to Colonial Office (Received, 11 May 1899), Civil Establishments Estimates for 1900-1901.
⁵ SNP 7 42/1902 Language Gratuities.
⁶ SNP 7 42/1902 Language Gratuities.
that awarded the marks. Many candidates, particularly personal attendants of political officers, were initially engaged without the language test. However, in 1902 Lugard demanded that those candidates should present themselves for examination and if successful, be given a certificate showing the number of marks obtained. This certificate would largely determine their chances of promotion and increase of pay.

Agents who obtained high grades in the language examinations belonged to the first-class division. As the high commissioner directed in 1902, any candidate ‘who can pass the Higher Standard in English and who can also read and write Arabic letters will rank in the first grade.’ Arabic literacy for political agents was essential because the language was the means of correspondence for the predominantly Muslim rulers of the region.

A few agents were, indeed, proficient in English. Kiari and J.K. Davies were literate in English and Arabic, besides being competent in Hausa and other local languages; they therefore qualified for the position of first-class political agents. Kiari was Lugard’s best political agent. Born in Borno, Kiari was Kanuri in ethnic origin and language, and proficient in Fulfulde, a Fulani language. J.K. Davies, originally a malam and trader was also fluent in Yoruba and Nupe, his father being a West Indian freed slave, and the mother, Yoruba. Agent Yusuf, of Nupe ethnicity, was ‘a man of great presence, extremely capable, and [possessed] a good command of English. A great knowledge of History, Geography, local politics.’ He also spoke Yoruba, Nupe and Hausa.

Agents who passed the lower standard examinations belonged to the second-class division. They possessed a passable knowledge of Standard English, and some of them were literate in Arabic, as well. All of them were presumably proficient in Hausa and other native tongues. Momo Lafia, who served in Kontagora province in 1906, spoke English ‘fairly, and also Nupe and Hausa, Yoruba and Kakunda.’ Abaji Gida, a veteran agent in Borno

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7 SNP 7 42/1902 G.M. Moloney, Resident Lower Benue, to the Secretary to the Government, Lokko, 27 January 1902, Language Gratuities.
8 CO 446/30 (no.15493) p.669. Lugard to the Secretary of State (Confidential despatch), Kano, 7 March 1903, Kano Expeditionary Force; SNP 7 1355/1906 Lugard, Lokoja, May 16, 1906, Approved Political Native Staff, Sokoto Province, 1906-7.
9 NAK/O/ARLI/vol.III/204 Abadie to High Commissioner in Jebba, Wushishi, 13 May 1902; also (Staudinger, 1992, pp.32, 39).
10 Arewa House Archives, Kaduna (AHAK) Confidential Reports on Chiefs, Ilorin, Acting Resident Hermon Hodge, 21 January 1921.
11 SNP 7/7 1351/1906 (no.512/06) Resident Kontagora, W.S. Sharpe, to the High Commissioner, Northern Nigeria, enclosed in Approved Political Native Staff, Kontagora Province, 1906-1907.
province, also spoke English quite well. In addition, he was literate in Arabic and fluent in Fulfude, Hausa and Kanuri.\textsuperscript{12}

Many good agents and would-be agents ranked in the third class, because they barely knew Standard English.\textsuperscript{13} As High Commissioner, Lugard lamented in 1904, ‘sufficient interpreters do not exist to supply each of these [Political] Officers with one; such as obtainable are almost without exception exceedingly bad, and do not understand sufficient English to grasp the meaning of even a simple sentence.’\textsuperscript{14} Despite their imperfect knowledge of Standard English, third-class agents could still work effectively because they, as well as their senior colleagues, were proficient pidgin. For the colonial officials, just as their Company counterparts, pidgin was convenient as a working language of government. Temple (1968), a former resident and lieutenant-governor of Northern Nigeria, aptly observed that ‘in West Africa “pidgin English” is a language that has to be acquired. It is not “broken” English. And it is a capital asset for a British officer who wishes to be certain of not being misunderstood’ by agents (p.246).

The pidgin jargon included such elements as ‘daddy’ (father), ‘mammy’ (woman), ‘pikkin’ (son, boy), ‘yabash’ (onion), ‘savve’ (to know), ‘he no fit’ (cannot, he is not able to), ‘he pass, pass all’ (he is better than, he excels), ‘all my skin hot me’ (I am hot, I have a temperature), ‘You savve God?’ (Are you Christian?) [Staudinger, 1992, vol. I, p.84]. Other elements are ‘kuku boy’ (steward), ‘kuku meti’ (cook meat), ‘rUGE’ (rogue), ‘parashi’ (price) [Interview, Alhaji Garba Saidu, Kano, 22 June 1993].

George Hazzledine (1904), who was for some time Private Secretary to High Commissioner Lugard, relates the language of a government interpreter, Musa, who was remonstrating a domestic servant; Musa heard the boy complaining about being whipped for stealing “‘a tin of lard holding forth… on the cruelty of the White Man…,” Musa, “catching the fat youth by the ear, said: “You be one big fool, you! If de White Man no come, you be slave and carry brick for de Fulani all day. You no savvy dat? You be one big fool!”” (p.83).

**Mediatory Tasks of Governance**

Equipped with pidgin and other resources, political agents performed a variety of tasks in colonial governance, with many of the duties overlapping, the major ones being...

\textsuperscript{12} Interview, Alhaji Garba Muhammadu Saidu, 23 June 1993, Kano; SNP 15 Acc.19 Hewby, Report no.3 of 28 February 1903, enclosed in Bornu Reports, 1902-1903.

\textsuperscript{13} As of 1928 only a few people were receiving education in English in Nigeria, some 100,000 out of a population of over 20 million. Relating to that, only 10,000 out of over 10 million people were receiving education in English in Northern Nigeria. This condition did not change much until World War II (Spencer, 1971, pp.21-22).

\textsuperscript{14} SNP 1/1 4 (238/1904) High Commissioner, Northern Nigeria, to Secretary of State, Zungeru, 26 January 1904.
the conduct of government diplomacy, intelligence gathering and administrative tasks. Diplomacy was crucial to British policy in Northern Nigeria and political agents were essential to colonial diplomacy, by reason of their knowledge of local culture and languages of communication, primarily pidgin. Throughout the Company régime and the early years of the Protectorate administration, political agents were the ones largely responsible for establishing and managing government relations with traditional rulers. Agents dominated the process of negotiating and maintaining political and commercial treaties with the indigenous ruling elites, and agents interpreted and transmitted messages between colonial officers and enemy troops on the battlefield, parleying with the enemy troops for peaceful solution to their problems. Conduct of government diplomacy was a difficult task for political agents, because many of the chiefs resented colonial rule. Nevertheless, many agents performed effective service and helped to secure peace in the region.

Intelligence gathering was a major duty of political agents in colonial administration. Agents produced intelligence in both peace and war times. In civil intelligence, agents were initially preoccupied with gathering information on the structure of the local politics, because the colonial authorities needed such information to determine basic policy objectives in the region (Heussler, 1968, p.30; Lugard, 1965, p. 140, p. 195). In wartime, political agents informed the colonial authorities about the military resources of the local rulers and on public opinion. Agents were particularly effective in intelligence gathering during the planning and operation of the Kano-Sokoto campaign of 1903. Six outstanding agents served in the British conquest of Kano; Ibrahim, Mainasara, Kiari, Maimaina, Auta and Adamu Jakada all participated in the battle of Kotor kwashi, and Captain George Abadie would commend Ibrahim for his part in tracking down the fugitive Emir Aliyu during the campaign. As Abadie noted:

My best spy, and the only one I can trust, whom I had sent on the 5th [of February 1903] to ascertain where Alieu and his party were staying and also what had happened to the people who ran from Kano when we entered, returned and has given me the following and apparently reliable information. Alieu is at Magamma M’Didi and the rest of his brothers and his sons are dotted about in small towns all round. He has a screen of mounted men on the W. edge of the large tract of bush (about Kurrofi) ... The whole of the people who ran from here and the headmen of the towns above mentioned with their horsemen are collected at SAURI which is just across the Kano-Katsina boundary and

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15 NAK/SNP 6/3 95/1907 Instructions for the control of Expeditions, Patrols and Escorts. (Based upon Residents Proclamation 1900; G.S.O. 1, sections 18, 88, 89; Political Memo 7; W.A.F.F. Regulations 103 to 109).
about 4 miles N of the place marked DURU on the old Intelligence map. There are at this place some 1000 to 1500 horsemen and I am of opinion that from all I can hear, if this large force is dispersed, Alieu's party will also disperse when they hear news of it.\textsuperscript{16}

Not only did agents conduct local intelligence operations, they also spied for the colonial government in foreign territories adjoining the protectorate. Such agents provided their superiors with information, especially on political unrest, military resources and activities of the occupying colonial powers as well as on geographical features (Lugard, 1965, p.33). Predictably, there were many double agents, as some agents gathered information simultaneously for the colonial government and the indigenous ruling elite.

Political agents usually conveyed information to their employers orally and largely through pidgin, but some agents transmitted information in writing, through Arabic and Hausa.\textsuperscript{17} And there was the rare record of written pidgin, involving the letter of Agent Audu Momo, which Resident David Carnegie enclosed in a correspondence with his sister in England in August 1900 (O’Hear, 1992, pp.112-113). Information transmitted by agents, either in writing or by word of mouth, was not always accurate, however. It occasionally suffered distortion and deficiency (Afeadie, 2008, p. 90).

However, colonial authorities were not always deceived by the inaccurate information transmitted by some agents, because they possessed several means of processing data. In one method, as Temple (1968) notes, political officers who spoke some indigenous languages avoided excessive reliance on their pidgin-speaking agents by sending informal agents who were non-pidgin speakers together with the pidgin-speaking agents on each assignment (p.246). By this means, the political officers obtained adequate data to sift through, the data differing according to the investigators and in the language of transmission. On some occasions, political officers who spoke the indigenous languages worked quite independently of agents. They consulted with traditional authorities and the ordinary people, and picked up information to verify the credibility of agents’ reports.

The methods, however, had their drawbacks, as the colonial authorities often suffered a shortage of political agents. Besides, only a few political officers spoke Hausa or other indigenous languages, and they could hardly afford enough time from their onerous duties. When they did so, they could consult with only a few people because they inspired fear and resentment in the general populace. Thus, information produced by agents could not be purged of all inaccuracies.

\textsuperscript{16} SNP 17/2 (16976), pp.11-12. From the Resident, Kano Province, to the High Commissioner (Kano 1/1903), 12 February 1903, Historical Documents on the Capture of Kano.

\textsuperscript{17} Interviews, Alhaji Garba Muhammad Saidu, Kano, 22 June 1993; Alkali Alhaji Ali Waziri, Kano, 6 July 1993; also (Temple, 1968, pp.40-41).
In addition to their diplomatic and intelligence duties, political agents, proficient in pidgin, performed administrative functions in Northern Nigeria, which functions evolved over time. Initially, agents served as administrative auxiliaries to the political officers, as they managed Company’s trading stores and enforced commercial regulations.\(^{18}\) Upon the establishment of the protectorate administration, agents were deployed into the political education of the people, an aspect of colonial pacification. As administrative auxiliaries, agents also waited on political officers; they received visitors, both indigenous administrative officials (hakimai) and ordinary people (talakawa), and handled their transactions with the political officers.\(^{19}\) In another capacity, agents served as messengers and ran messages between political officers and indigenous ruling officials. Typically, pidgin featured prominently in the mediation process. For instance, East (1965) relates that agents who served among the Tiv people delivered and, in addition, interpreted messages between the political officers and the staff-chiefs, the latter of whom spoke neither Hausa nor English and therefore, needed translators and interpreters (p.392).

In the period 1906-14, many political agents were directly engaged in administration as opposed to their previous role as mere auxiliaries. This development reflected the change in colonial policy, as the period witnessed the consolidation of colonial conquest, characterised by the development of provincial administration and effective government. Many agents were appointed to positions in the indigenous administration in the interests of the colonial authorities. As Afeadie (2008) points out, the agents participated in local government and served in varying capacities; as district head; as treasurer, supervising financial administration of community native treasury (beit-el-mal); and as district judge (alkali), assisting the administration of justice (pp.105-117). All these were crucial domains of colonial governance.

**Derivative Power of Pidgin**

Political agents occupied a crucial position in Northern Nigeria, primarily by their command of language and their intermediary role in administration. Owing to their position, agents commanded political influence and occupied a high status in society. Inevitably, agents had influence with the traditional authorities and the people. A complainant or visiting official could not meet a political officer without passing through a political agent. As to the

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\(^{18}\) These involved collection of export and import duties from foreign traders, administration of trade licenses, and the adjudication of local disputes brought before the Company’s courts (Flint, 1960, pp.92-98, and 144-146; Pedler, 1974, pp.125-128).

\(^{19}\) Interview, Abdulkadir, Maja Sirdin Kano, Kano, 17 August 1993. According to the informant, hakimai (officials of the indigenous administration) or talakawa (ordinary people) who wanted to see a political officer had to go through agents like Tanko. A similar statement was made by another informant, Mallam Basiku Jibrin Zarewa but he referred to Adamu Jakada to exemplify the agents. (Kano, 18 July 1993).
traditional rulers including emirs (sarakuna), Afeadie (2008) notes that a political agent could be sent to collect an emir’s staff of office, in the event of the emir’s misconduct (p.118).

In consequence, the friendship of agents was cultivated by the traditional authorities. Many agents were known to receive gifts, such as expensive gowns and horses from the indigenous ruling officials; they also had marriages arranged and financed for them by the officials. According to Kano traditions, some agents who were Muslim often participated in private prayers with some indigenous rulers during off-hours while some of the indigenous elite were known to pay home visits to some political agents. On the other hand, agents had influence with the political officers; run-away slaves sought refuge with political agents, and political officers entrusted in some agents the guardianship of the freed slaves. Given these cases of entrustment, agents exploited their influence for several purposes. They could have people arrested for offences on their own authority (Afeadie, 2008, p.121). Some of them engaged in extortion, manipulating the people’s fear of being reported or misrepresented to the colonial authorities for real or supposed offences. Also, many agents would misinform political officers who relied on them because of their limited knowledge of the indigenous languages. Resident Temple (1968) characterised a political officer in such a situation as a “domestic slave” to his agent (p.246).

Not surprisingly, a political agent was held in awe by the general populace, because of his influence and how he exploited it. The traditional authorities held the British conquerors in high regard; accordingly, they dreaded political agents because they worked closely with the colonial authorities, and they could poison relations between the colonial officials and the chiefs. District Officer, Arthur T. Weatherhead, is noted as having observed that ‘no one in Nigeria understood the British so well as the messengers, “the eyes and ears” of a political officer (Heussler, 1968, p.118). For their part, the people (talakawa) considered their British conquerors to be as powerful as their traditional rulers. As Emir Abbas informed a British journalist, E.D. Morel, in 1912, ‘all white men are “sarikis” (chiefs) and the people cannot help so regarding them’ (Morel, 1912/1968, p.134). As officials who communicated directly with the colonial authorities and who mediated between them and the indigenous rulers, political agents were regarded by the people as powerful in their own right.

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21 Northern Nigeria Gazette, no.19, 1900, p. 131. Quarterly List of Liberated Slaves Registered 15 March to 30 March 1900: Northern Nigeria Gazette, August 1901, p.112.

22 Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-1912, p.268. Also, Resident Temple aptly observed that “the extraordinary impertinence of which a sophisticated native can be capable, the preposterous requests which he can make in his master's name must be actually experienced before they can be believed” (1968, p.126).

23 Interview, Mallam Da’u, Kano, 13 July 1993.
Controlling Communicative Power

Political agents were generally distrusted by their employers, because of the illegitimate ways they used their influence. But there were other reasons as well. Government resentment of some agents was based on a misunderstanding of their conduct, as some agents subscribed to the ideology of pretended cooperation with the colonial regime; and also, government distrust of agents arose from racial prejudice.24

Naturally, agents were subject to control in the colonial administration, especially when they used their political influence in illegitimate ways. One important means of control was the Protection of Natives Proclamation, enacted in 1901 to deal with impersonation of government officials and amended in 1903 to include the acceptance of bribes and presents.25 Such offences were punishable by imprisonment, fines and flogging. Under the proclamation, the penalty for receiving bribes or improper presents was imprisonment with hard labour for six months or a fine or both.26 As to flogging, the amended act authorised court officials to administer a minimum of 36 lashes to culprits immediately on conviction and sentencing. This was intended to provide moral effect on the convicts and on the court. Other agents could be demoted or dismissed, on conviction. In converse to punishing agents for their misconduct, colonial officials encouraged good behaviour in their trusty agents. Such persons were rewarded with increased salaries, gifts, special benefits or medals of honour.

Although reliable political agents existed in the colonial administration, they were few in number. Moreover, agents could not be adequately controlled through the existing system of reward and punishment. In the prevailing conditions of agents’ scarcity, the ineffective control system manifested in the re-employment of some agents who had been dismissed for offences against the colonial government (Afeadie, 2008, p.135). In view of the limitations in their control system, the colonial authorities sought other means to reduce the intermediary role of agents and restrict their influence. To this end, they instituted a policy of language training for political officers in a bid to promote direct communication between them and the people.

The general objective of the language policy was to deprive political agents of the power derived from pidgin and Arabic, which were working languages of government. Agents enjoyed speaking pidgin with the confident sense of African ownership, because it

24 Afeadie, 2008, p. 39. Also, during the colonial period expatriate officials held to a body of subjective opinions about the African people (Cohen, 1970, pp.427-431). According to Alan Burns (1948), a former governor of Nigeria, ‘colour prejudice is present, even when not consciously felt, in the relations of white traders, teachers, missionaries and officials, to the coloured inhabitants.’ (p.12)

25 SNP 1/1 3 (no.44) High Commissioner to the Secretary of State for Colonies, Zungeru, 30 January 1903, Protection of Natives (Amendment) Proclamation 1903.

26 Northern Nigeria Gazette, February 1904, pp.11-12.
served them very well. Political officers, for their part, were not comfortable with pidgin, as they resented agents’ control and abuse of the language. Thus, political officers sought a language of administration that would accord them direct contact with the traditional authorities and the people. They chose Hausa and consequently compelled all political officers to learn it. Resident Temple (1968) advised:

It is extremely improbable that a political officer will not find in any village of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria a man who does understand Hausa enough to interpret. Even if he cannot find a man of that village it is easier for him to find some native who understands the language spoken in that village and Hausa as well, than to find anybody who understands that language and even the most elementary ‘pidgin’ English. So that an officer if he knows Hausa is at all events likely to be independent of his own ‘English’ speaking interpreter, instead of being his ‘domestic slave’; he will at all events have a choice of interpreters, and be able to use first one and then another, so that the villagers may see that he is capable of exerting his free-will in some respects, and is not entirely at the beck and call of one ‘tarprinta’ [the pidgin term for ‘interpreter.’].

(p.246)

Thus, knowledge of Hausa in particular, and any other language (Yoruba, Nupe, Kanuri, Bassa or Okpoto) which was widely spoken in the territory of a political officer, became requirements for promotion. Accordingly, language examinations were conducted for interested candidates, the Hausa Language Examination being predominant. Revealingly, political officers were entitled to language gratuities ranging from £15 and £30, on the successful completion of the Hausa Language Examination.

To reduce the role of agents, the language policy also sought replacing Arabic with Hausa as the official language of correspondence for the people, especially the indigenous ruling elite. Prior to the advent of colonial rule, Arabic was the medium of correspondence in the region. Arabic scholarship exploded with the spread of Islamic education, in the wake of the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio, launched in 1804. The teachers who were known as malamai acquired competence in Arabic after years of training, which began in youth. Thus Arabic scribes abounded in the region, and many of them, indeed, served as agents in the

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27 SNP 7 42/1902 G.M. Moloney, Resident Lower Benue, to the Secretary to the Government, Loko, 27 January 1902, Haussa Language Examinations (188/1902), enclosed in Language Gratuities; SNP 1/1 4 (238/1904) High Commissioner, Northern Nigeria, to Secretary of State, Zungeru, 26 January 1904.

28 SNP 7 42/1902 Haussa Language Examinations (188/1902), and Examinations in English, enclosed in Language Gratuities.
colonial administration. Agents Sani and Jafaru, for instance, were Arabic scholars.\textsuperscript{29} Many of the scribes, however, lacked literacy in English and could not conduct direct correspondence between the colonial officials and the traditional authorities. Conversely, the colonial authorities were largely reluctant to promote literacy in Arabic among the colonial officials.\textsuperscript{30} Meanwhile, Christian missionaries had been promoting writing in Hausa by encouraging the development of \textit{ajami}, Hausa written in Arabic characters.\textsuperscript{31} But Lugard objected to the spread of \textit{ajami} which he described as ‘spurious Arabic’ and unintelligible to political officers. Instead, he wanted to introduce Hausa in Roman characters, the new script considered more suitable in expressing Hausa sounds, and readable by political officers (Graham, 1966, p.27). Accordingly, a school was established at Bida for the training of students in the new script.

In Lugard’s estimation, the language policy for political officers was progressive, as those who passed the examinations made use of their language skills to control agents. Thus Lugard noted in 1904:

\begin{quote}
It was owing to Dr. Cargill's knowledge of Hausa that he was able to detect a widespread scheme of extortion and slave dealing in the Muri province, carried on in the name of Government by the Interpreter [IssaKada]. Later he discovered that it had been due to malpractices and misrepresentation on the part of Captain Moloney’s interpreter [Abdu Tintin] which had led to that officer’s sad death, and lately Mr. Webster, who had acquired a fair knowledge of Hausa, was able thereby to avert a needless war and convict the real culprit.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

In fact, political officers who knew the indigenous languages were few in numbers.\textsuperscript{33} In effect, their achievements were of little avail to the control of the relatively predominant political agents and their instrument of pidgin. Besides, the indigenous people did not readily adopt the Roman script in writing Hausa. For their part, indigenous rulers continued to write official letters in Arabic, reflecting the resilience of cultural tradition. As such, the colonial

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} AHAK H. Hale Middleton, D.O.ii, 31 December 1917, Native Staff Confidential Report, Kano, 1917; AHAK Resident Gowers, Native Staff Confidential Report, Kano, 1918.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Christian missionaries and colonial officials in northern Nigeria were known to detest Islam and Arabic influence in the region, owing to the colonial experience with the \textit{jihad} movements in India, as well as Urabi Pasha’s revolt in Egypt and the Mahdist rising in the Sudan (Robinson, 1999, p.405; Ayandele, 1966, p.126)
\item \textsuperscript{31} SNP 7 42/1902 Language Gratuities.
\item \textsuperscript{32} \textit{Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-1912}, pp.215-216.
\end{itemize}
authorities continued to recruit Arabic scholars into the colonial service, and interested political agents were allowed to sit language examinations involving the study of Arabic. Obviously, the language policy was failing. Political agents, therefore, remained crucial to colonial administration.

Colonial authorities, nevertheless, continued to dislike the influence of pidgin and the position of political agent, and accordingly sought the abolition of the post in subsequent years. In the 1920s, as Heussler notes, ‘Kaduna first issued a directive against the use of informers and then abolished Political Agents; but not before a certain amount of harm had been done in preventing more direct communication between D.O.s and N.A.s [District Officers and Native Authorities].’ (1968, p.119). In practice, colonial officials could not abolish the post of political agents in its entirety; they merely changed their title to ‘messenger’, as their service remained indispensable and valuable. According to McClintock (1992), the ‘messengers’ who supposedly replaced political agents possessed the same characteristics and identity as the political agents, and they performed similar duties and wielded influence as political agents (p.16).

Of the language policy, it was well on the decline, as political officers who sat the examination were very few, and the numbers continued to dwindle over the years, in spite of incentives. By 1962 the policy had become redundant. With the spread of Standard English, and the Africanisation of the public service underway, the demand for expatriate political officers and their need to learn the local languages largely diminished (Kirk-Greene, 1988, p.10). The commanding influence of pidgin had also waned with the ending of colonial rule.

**Pidgin Today**

In the post-colonial period, pidgin would serve a complementary role to burgeoning Standard English and indigenous Nigerian languages. In that regard, pidgin would expand its function as *lingua franca*, serving Nigerians, especially southerners in many important contexts. As Mafeni (1971) notes, the condition of multilingual family settings in many urban areas of Nigerian enabled the adoption of pidgin as a major medium of communication for husbands and wives and children at home (pp.98-99). Further, at primary and secondary schools among immigrant communities in Northern Nigeria as well as cities of multilingual populations in southern Nigeria, pidgin was the primary means of communication in school compounds and outside the classroom. Similarly, pidgin served as a convenient *lingua franca* among uneducated people in multilingual working contexts.

In the Niger Delta region of Benin City, Calabar, Port Harcourt and Warri, Aziza (2006) observes,

the Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is virtually indispensable in its communicative function in the home, school, church, market place, office – in fact, for most
interpersonal communicative needs, including inter and intra-ethnic communication. It eases the language barrier that the many languages in the area would have created. In the mass media NP is extensively used in the radio and television for both entertainment and educational purposes. Adverts are common in the language and even government announcements are regularly relayed in NP for a wider reach. There are also pidgin columns in a number of periodicals. (pp.184-185)

The army and police would also adopt pidgin as a language of wide communication and instruction in the junior ranks, noted Achebe (1987, pp.191-194) This practice developed from the establishment of the West India Regiments in Sierra Leone in the first half of the 19th century, through the operation of the British colonial army, the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), where pidgin and Hausa were spoken among the soldiers. As with other West Africans today, pidgin is intelligible to educated Nigerians, including university lecturers and government officials, but they would rather speak the language in informal settings such as entertainment spots and among friends. Predictably, pidgin prevails at the workplace, particularly among urban dwellers in West Africa.

**Conclusion**

Pidgin in West Africa emerged as a language of trade, a medium of communication between Africans and European traders. Soon, pidgin developed as a *lingua franca* between the multi-ethnic groups on the West African seaboard. In the absence of a wider means of inter-ethnic communication at the workplace, the British authorities adopted pidgin as a working language of colonial government in Northern Nigeria. This enabled African employees who spoke pidgin to perform important tasks in governance, and thereby acquired political influence, which they often abused, thus challenging British colonial hegemony in Northern Nigeria. As a result, colonial authorities resented that influence, but they could not effectively control it. The status and influence of political agents would only diminish in the twilight years of colonial rule, with the spread of English language as a wider medium of inter-ethnic communication.

Today, pidgin has developed as a major *lingua franca* in multilingual settings such as homes, schools and working places in many urban areas of Anglophone West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. Pidgin is widely spoken, not just among people lacking proficiency in Standard English but also among formally educated Anglophone West Africans. As such, pidgin facilitates the vertical and horizontal communication process.

34 Novelists, playwrights and musicians also communicated to their audiences in pidgin.
Remarkably, pidgin has retained its unique characteristic and usefulness as a language of the workplace in West Africa today, albeit suffering from the colonial legacy of resentment in the ambivalent attitudes of the elite in post-colonial contemporary Africa.
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The Metonymic and Metaphoric Conceptualisations of the Heart in Akan and English

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Abstract

The paper examines the metaphorical and metonymic structure of the heart in Akan (a Kwa language in West Africa,) and English, within the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), formulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). My aim is to explore the ways in which akoma, ‘the heart’, is used in Akan to express human experiences and also to compare the conceptualisations of the heart in Akan to those in English in order to establish whether the two languages manifest any cross-conceptual, cross-linguistic or cross-cultural differences. The data reveal that there are no striking differences between English and Akan with respect to the metaphoric and metonymic conceptualisations of the heart. The differences in the language-specific conceptualisations are attributed to the cultural models embedded in the two languages.

Keywords: heart, metaphor, metonymy, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, cultural models

In recent years, a significant number of studies, focusing on conceptualisations of internal body organs, in several languages, has contributed to the understanding of the intricate relationship between culture, body and language (Niemeier, 2003 and 2008; Goddard, 2008; Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2008; Siahaan, 2008; and Yu 2008). The studies have explored how, across various cultures, internal body organs, such as the heart and the liver, have been used as the loci for the conceptualisation of feelings, emotions, reasoning etc. Related studies by Ghanaian scholars include Ameka (2002), Dzokoto & Adams (2007), Dzokoto (2010) Agyekum (2013), Ansah (2012, 2014a and 2014b).

In both English and Akan, the heart is the body part regarded as the site of emotions. Christaller (1933) has noted that in Akan, it is ‘the centre of affections’ (p. 247). The paper examines the metaphorical and metonymic structure of the heart in Akan within the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) formulated by Lakoff
and Johnson (1980). The aim is to investigate the emotion types and attitude types expressed in constructions involving the heart in Akan. Since the heart is considered the site of emotions in both English and Akan, the study is also aimed at testing the universal applicability of the types of mappings in the English language proposed by Niemeier (2003) to those in Akan. She has identified the following mappings for the heart: THE HEART STANDS FOR THE PERSON, THE HEART AS A LIVING ORGANISM, THE HEART IS AN OBJECT OF VALUE and THE HEART IS A CONTAINER (Niemeier, 2003, pp. 199-209). The paper focused on these mappings to establish whether they exist in Akan, or whether the two languages manifest any cross-conceptual, cross-linguistic or cross-cultural differences. This focus distinguishes the paper from the cited works on the metaphorical and metonymic conceptualisations of internal body organs and feelings.

**Metaphor and Metonymy in Cognitive Linguistics**

Metaphor and metonymy have been traditionally examined as stylistic devices in literary studies. Cognitive linguistics, however, is not primarily interested in the creative usage, but in the strategies that underlie both the creative usage and everyday usage. With the cognitive approach, metaphor is seen as a conceptual phenomenon which relates to what happens in the mind. This configuration of the metaphor is different from the literary view of the metaphor which simply defines it as a figure of speech that compares two subjects. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were the first to present a cognitive analysis of conceptual metaphors and propounded the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. In the CMT, metaphor is defined as ‘understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Some examples include when we talk and think about arguments in terms of war. When we do this, we map one conceptual domain to another, or there is a mapping from what the proponents have termed a “source domain” to what they have also termed a “target domain” (Lakoff, 1993).

Cognitive linguists hold the view that each mapping involves a set of correspondences between the respective entities in each domain. For example, the conceptual domain of ARGUMENT is structured in terms of WAR based on linguistic evidence such as the following:

(1)  
*Your claims are indefensible.*
*He attacked every weak point in my argument.*
*His criticisms were right on target.*
*I demolished his argument.*
*If you use that strategy, he’ll wipe you out.* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4)
Here, WAR is understood to be the source domain, which is mapped onto the target domain of ARGUMENT. In this case, mapping knowledge from the domain of WAR onto the domain of ARGUMENTS allows us to reason about one in terms of the other (Lakoff, 1993, p. 207).

Metonymy, like metaphor, is basic to language and cognition (Barcelona, 2003, p. 4). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe it as the usage of ‘one entity to refer to another that is related to it’ (p. 35). Gibbs (1994) also defines it as a process by which ‘people take one well-understood or easily perceived aspect of something to represent or stand for the thing as a whole’ (p. 321). Metonymy is often illustrated with examples, such as the use of the Supreme Court to refer to the judges or administration of the Supreme Court, or the White House to refer to the US president and the presidential aide. Others include the following examples from Lakoff and Johnson (1980):

(2)  
 a. *He is in dance.* (= the dancing profession)  
 b. Acrylic has taken over the art world. (= the use of acrylic paint)  
 c. *The Times hasn’t arrived yet.* (= the reporter from the Times)  
 d. *Mrs Grundy frowns on blue jeans.* (= the wearing of blue jeans) (p. 35)

Like metaphors, metonymies are not random or arbitrary occurrences, which is to say that metonymic concepts are also systematic (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Diegnan, 2005). Cognitive linguists postulate that metonyms are generated through links of several types. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 38) cite the following processes and examples:

(3)  
 a. **THE PART FOR THE WHOLE**  
    *Get your butt over here.*  
    *We don’t hire longhairs.*

 b. **PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT**  
    *He bought a Ford.*  
    *He’s got a Picasso in his den.*

 c. **OBJECT USED FOR USER**  
    *The sax has the flu today.*  
    *The buses are on strike.*

 d. **CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED**  
    *Nixon bombed Hanoi.*  
    *Napoleon lost at Waterloo.*
e. INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE
   You’ll never get the university to agree to that.
   The Senate thinks abortion is immoral.

f. THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION
   The White House isn’t saying anything.
   Washington is insensitive to the needs of the people.

g. THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT
   Let’s not let Thailand become another Vietnam.
   Watergate changed our politics.

These examples show the general metonymic concepts in terms of which we organise our thoughts and actions. It follows, then, that there is a system of conventional metonymic associations or mappings which are reflected not only in language, but also in the way we think and act.

Kövecses (2002, p. 145) argues that it is a basic feature of metonymically-related ‘vehicle entity’ (one that directs attention) and ‘target entity’ (one to which attention is provided) that they are ‘close’ to each other in conceptual space. For example, producers are conceptualised as close to the product because they are the ones who make it while the site of an institution is also conceptualised as close to the institution itself because most institutions are located in particular physical places. Thus, in cognitive linguistics, it is suggested that a vehicle can provide mental access to a target entity when the two belong to the same domain. Based on this, Kövecses (2002, p. 145) provides a definition of metonymy as follows: ‘Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or idealized cognitive model (ICM).’

This is one of the important distinguishing features between metaphors and metonymies. Whereas metaphors involve mapping across two domains, metonymies provide associations or linkages within a single domain.

Language, Data and Analysis

The Akan language refers to a group of very closely related and mutually intelligible dialects located in much of the southern half of Ghana (Osam, 2004). It is the most widely spoken of all the Ghanaian languages. Its dialects include Agona, Akuapem, Akwamu, Asante, Assin, Bono (Brong), Fante, Kwahu and Wassa. For the purposes of this paper, I drew all my examples from Asante Twi of which I am a native speaker. The justification is that my intuitions as a native speaker will be useful for the analysis of culture-specific metaphors (if there are any).
The Akan data were gathered from a range of sources, including song lyrics, radio and TV discussions in Akan which occur in a natural context of language use, the Asante Bible, the Akan dictionary, everyday expressions about the heart some of which were provided by some native speakers and others by myself, also as a native speaker. The radio and TV stations from which I collected the data are Hello FM and Kessben FM in Kumasi, and Peace FM and Adom FM in Accra. These stations were selected because the language of their transmission is Akan. As I listened to their morning shows, discussions and interviews in Akan, I collected for analysis a number of linguistic expressions involving the heart. The songs from which data were collected were Akan highlife songs by composers such as C. K Mann, Kojo Antwi and Amakye Dede. For English, I relied on the data provided by Niemeier (2003; 2008) which stem mainly from the Roget’s Thesaurus and other dictionaries.

Mode of Analysis

The procedure for metaphor identification proposed by the Praglejazz Group (2007) served as a guide in my attempt at identifying the metaphorically used words and expressions in Akan. They proposed the following procedure:

i. Read the entire text–discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.

ii. Determine the lexical units in the text–discourse.

iii. For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context and then also determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context, where basic meanings may be more concrete easier to imagine, to see, hear, feel, smell, and taste, bodily action, more precise and historically older.

iv. If the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with each other, then the lexical unit should be marked as metaphorical.

(The Praglejazz Group 2007, p.3)

I also consulted the lexicographic work by Christaller (1933) which is a dictionary of the Asante and Fante language to cross-check the basic meanings of the Akan words and expressions that were believed to have been used metaphorically. Some elderly native speakers in my neighbourhood were also consulted on the meanings of some of the expressions. I, then, grouped them into the major metonymic and metaphorical mappings for the analysis. The following major metaphorical and metonymic mappings were identified: THE HEART STANDS FOR THE PERSON, THE HEART AS A LIVING ORGANISM, THE HEART IS AN OBJECT OF VALUE and THE HEART IS A CONTAINER. I then described the metonymic and the metaphorical
structure of the heart in Akan and compared it with the mappings in the data for English. For the comparative analysis, I used the methodology proposed by Barcelona (2001) and Kövecses (2003; 2010) regarding identification and description. In the paper, all the conceptual metaphors are shown in capitals. Linguistic examples in Akan extracted from the various sources with their morpheme-by-morpheme glosses are also provided for illustration.

**Conceptualisations of the Heart in English**

In many cultures, the heart plays an important part as a conceived source of emotions and feelings. From a cognitive semantic perspective, the heart in English has received some attention from scholars, notable among whom is Niemeier (2003; 2008) who argues that in English, a folk model exists that places the heart as the site of emotions. Swan (2009) also discusses the role of the heart in the history of English and its function as a key term in English speaking cultures. He shows that the metaphorical meanings related to the heart are not only largely subsequent to and developed from concrete meanings, but also that new meanings develop over time, often constituting complex networks of interrelated conceptualisations. Other studies have been contrastive in nature. Siahaan (2008), for example, contrastively studies metaphorical concepts in English and Indonesian. Of all these studies, the two works by Niemeier appear to offer the most comprehensive description of the conceptualisations of the heart in English. I, therefore, present an overview of the cognitive representations of the heart in English as discussed in Niemeier (2003; 2008).

The main aim of Niemeier (2003) is to show that the heart metaphors in English rely on a metonymic perspectivisation of the heart as a source domain for the metaphorical mapping. She groups the metaphorical expressions found in her corpus into four categories: **THE HEART AS A METONYMY FOR THE PERSON**, **THE HEART AS A LIVING ORGANISM**, **THE HEART AS AN OBJECT OF VALUE** and **THE HEART AS A CONTAINER**. (Niemeier 2003, p. 199). Niemeier (2003, pp. 200-208), then, discusses the four categories and the conglomerate of different sub-folk models related to them. What follows is a summary of the main categories as well as the sub-folk models that fall under them.

1. **THE HEART AS A METONYMY FOR THE PERSON**
   a. **THE HEART IS A MOVABLE OBJECT** (‘set one’s heart on somebody’)
   b. **THE HEART IS CHANGEABLE IN SIZE** (‘heart-swelling’, ‘have a big-heart’)
   d. **THE HEART AS AN ANTHROPOMORPHISED ENTITY** (‘somebody being one’s heart’s desire’)

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2. **THE HEART AS A LIVING ORGANISM**
   THE HEART AS AN AUTONOMOUS ENTITY (‘All hearts throb for her’)

3. **THE HEART AS AN OBJECT OF VALUE**
   a. THE HEART AS A COVETED ENTITY
   b. THE HEART AS A PRIZE (‘to win someone’s heart’, ‘to offer one’s heart’)
   c. THE HEART AS A BOOTY (‘to lose one’s heart to somebody’, ‘to steal every heart’)
   d. THE HEART AS A MANIPULABLE OBJECT (‘broken heart’, ‘heart-broken’, ‘broken-hearted’)

4. **THE HEART AS A CONTAINER**
   a. THE HEART AS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS (‘to have a soft heart’, ‘to have a tender heart’)
   b. THE HEART IS A LID CONTAINER (‘to open one’s heart’, ‘to close one’s heart to something’)
   c. THE HEART AS A MANIPULABLE CONTAINER (‘to open one’s heart’, ‘to close one’s heart to something’, ‘to pour out one’s heart to something’)
   d. THE HEART IS AN OPEN CONTAINER FOR LIQUIDS (‘a heart overflowing (with gratitude)’)
   e. THE HEART AS A CONTAINER WITH GREAT DEPTH (‘from the bottom of one’s heart’)
   f. THE HEART IS A CONTAINER WITH AN INTERNAL CONTAINER (‘in one’s heart of hearts’)
   g. THE HEART IS A STOREHOUSE CONTAINER (‘I could not find it in my heart’)
   h. THE HEART AS A COMPARTMENTALISED CONTAINER (‘have a place in every heart’)

**Conceptualisations of the Heart in Akan**

All the four major metonymic and metaphorical mappings identified in English **THE HEART STANDS FOR THE PERSON, THE HEART IS A LIVING ORGANISM, THE HEART IS AN OBJECT AND THE HEART IS A CONTAINER** exist in Akan. In the sections that follow, I present a detailed discussion of them.

**THE HEART STANDS FOR THE PERSON**

This metonymy belongs to the model **THE PART FOR THE WHOLE** or **THE BODY PART FOR THE PERSON**. In Akan, the heart is considered the seat of emotions.
The prototypical emotion connected with the heart is love and the heart of the person in love is used to stand for the person. The linguistic examples in (4) capture this:

(4) a. Me de m’akoma nyinaa a-ma wo
    1SG SUBJ take POSS heart all PERF-give 2SG OBJ
    ‘I have given you all my heart.’

b. Fa w’akoma ma me na yen-tena odio mu
    Take POSS heart give 1SG OBJ FM 1PLSUBJ-stay love inside
    ‘Give me your heart so we can stay in love.’

c. ɔ-de n’akoma nyinaa dɔ no
    3SG-SUBJ- take his/her- heart all love 3SG-OBJ
    ‘He/She take his/her heart all love him/her’
    (i.e. ‘He/she loves him/her with his/her whole heart’)

In all the examples in (4), the heart is used to stand for a person.

In Akan, as it is in English, the heart is conceptualised as CHANGEABLE IN SIZE. Here, it is often described as big or small. These descriptions of the heart are used for behaviour types that belong to the antonym of courage vs cowardice. Someone who is not courageous may be said to have ‘a small heart’ (5a), whereas someone who is courageous may be said to have ‘a big heart’ (5b). It is worthy of note that in Akan, the expression in (5b) may also be used to describe someone who is kind.

(5) a. W’akoma sua
    Your heart small
    ‘Your heart is small.’ (i.e., ‘You are not bold’/ ‘You are not courageous’.)

b. W’akoma so
    Your heart big
    ‘Your heart is big’. (i.e., ‘You are kind’.)

Speakers of Akan use the heart for the articulation of negative emotions. Here, the heart is conceptualised as hard or solid as a stone or metal - THE HEART IS A SOLID. In Akan, expressions such as those in (6) are used to describe someone with an unyielding attitude or a difficult person. The hard materials can be said to be metaphorically connected with the unyielding attitude or ‘hard’ feelings of the people involved.
The metaphor **THE HEART IS A SOLID** is used metonymically in so far as it picks out one detail of a person’s disposition to stand for the whole moral frame of the person. The metaphor, then, has a metonymic basis.

The heart, for Akan speakers, is sometimes perceived as a full entity which may be present, or even totally absent; it is not visualised as half-present as it is in English. Whereas in English the notions of presence or absence of the heart are used to describe people who are considered heartless or wicked, in Akan the notions are deployed to describe people who are regarded as impatient or quick-tempered (7a). In Akan, the expression in (7a) could also mean that the person is patient or kind. That meaning contrasts with that of (7b). It is in this sense that people who get irritated or angry are sometimes advised to calm down with the expression in (7c) which literally means that ‘they should get a heart’:

(7)  

a. **Papa no wo akoma paa**  
man DEF have heart very much  
‘The man really has a heart.’  
(i.e., ‘The man is patient’ or ‘The man is impatient/quick-tempered’)

b. **Papa no n-ni akoma koraa**  
man DEF NEG-have heart at all  
‘The man does not have a heart at all’  
(i.e. ‘The man is impatient/quick-tempered’)

c. **Nya akoma**  
Get heart  
‘Get a heart’ (i.e., ‘Take heart’/ ‘Take it easy’)

In Akan, the heart is also configured as a MOVABLE ENTITY. Here, it is the direction of movement that is highlighted. In those expressions, the heart is visualised as an entity that can move in an upward direction or in a downward direction. When the
heart is viewed as having moved upwards, the people so described are considered to have been agitated (8a). Consequently, the expression in (8b) which literally means ‘let your heart move downwards’ is sometimes used to advise such people to calm down or be patient. At other times, such people are advised ‘to move their hearts into their stomachs’ (9), which also involves movement from an upward direction to a lower direction. This conceptualisation is based on a folk model in Akan which gives priority to up-down orientation, where UP denotes a positive value and DOWN denotes a negative value. This view, as held in the Akan culture, is consistent with the position of Clark (1973):

Facts of perception also suggest how we could assign positive and negative values to directions away from the ... plane ... of asymmetry ... where positive is taken in its natural sense to mean the presence of something, and negative the absence ... since everything above ground level is perceptible and nothing below it is, upward is naturally positive and downward naturally negative.

(p. 33 quoted in Tyler and Evans 2003, p. 137)

However, in this context, there is an added specific cultural value in the linguistic expressions: an attitude that is high or up is not regarded as positive but negative, whereas an attitude that is low or down is regarded as positive. In this particular case, high is understood as negative and low is understood as positive in terms of human qualities:

(8) a. W’akoma kɔ soro dodo
   POSS heart go up too much
   ‘Your heart has gone up too much.’ (i.e., ‘You are too angry’)

   b. Ma w’akoma mmra fam
   Let POSS heart come down
   ‘Let your heart come down. (i.e., ‘Take heart’/ ‘Be patient’)

(9) Ka w’akoma to wo yam
   Move POSS heart put POSS stomach
   ‘Move your heart into your stomach.’ (i.e., ‘Take heart’ /’Be patient’)

The Heart as a Living Organism

In Akan, sometimes the heart may be conceptualised as a LIVING ORGANISM or an AUTONOMOUS ENTITY. Here, the heart is understood as acting in its own right. As the example in (10) illustrates, the heart is viewed as a living organism and an
autonomous entity that is capable of ‘flying’. In (10), the heart is used to express fear. Some other expressions in Akan conceptualise the heart as what (Niemeier 2003, p. 203) describes as ‘AN ANTHROPOMORPHISED ENTITY’, where the heart itself, not the human being with which it is connected, may be regarded either as desiring someone or something in question (11a), may become proud (11b) or may grumble (11c):

(10) M’akoma tu-i
POSS-heart fly-COMPL
‘My heart flew (away).’ (i.e., ‘I panicked’.)

(11) a. M’akoma so adeɛ
My-heart top entity
‘My heart’s desire’

b. … w’akoma ama ne ho so (Deut. 8:14)
then your heart will become proud (Deut. 8:14 NIV)

c. Yi wo yam ma no, na mma no nnyɛ w’akoma ahi sɛ wo bɛma no
Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart.
(Deut 15:10 NIV)

**The Heart as an Object of Value**

It is worthy of note that Akans sometimes perceive the heart as an object or an entity. Consequently, they attribute characteristic properties of objects to the heart. In this regard, in Akan the heart as a whole is considered to be a kind of treasure or something of great value to its owner and to the other person as a COVETED ENTITY. Whereas in English the heart as an object of value can be conquered or won in a contest or in a war, in Akan it can be a COVETED ENTITY as indicated in (4b) repeated here as (12a) or an object that may be offered generously as indicated in (1a), also repeated here as (12b):

(12) a. Fa w’akoma ma me
take POSS heart give 1SG OBJ
‘Give me your heart.’

b. Me de m’akoma nyinaa a-ma wo
1SG SUBJ take POSS heart all give 2SG OBJ
‘I have given all my heart to you’
The heart is sometimes conceptualised as DELICATE or FRAGILE and can even be destroyed. Common expressions that illustrate this include those in (13a) and (13b):

(13) a. W’a-sei m’akoma
2SG-SUBJPERF-destroy my heart
‘You have destroyed my heart.’
(i.e., ‘You have made me angry’/ ‘You have disappointed me’).

b. Hwɛ na w’an-te m’akoma
Look and 2SG SUBJ NEG-pluck POSS heart
‘Be careful you do not destroy my heart.’
(i.e., ‘Do not disappoint me’/ ‘Do not break my heart’).

In all these cases, emotions are involved. Whereas the expression in (13a) may be used by someone who has been agitated or one whose love is unrequited, the one in (13b) may be used by someone who is madly in love and does not want to have his or her heart broken.

**The Heart as a Container**

In Akan, as it is in English, the heart is conceptualised in a static view as A CONTAINER WITH A LID or A CONTAINER WITH A DOOR which may be opened or closed. When it is opened, there is free access to the person’s emotions or beliefs. Here, the heart is understood as A MANIPULABLE CONTAINER. In example (14), the heart is not only described as a container with a door that can be opened, but also as a place where someone (God in this case) can reside (**THE HEART AS A PLACE OF ABODE**).

(14) Bue w’akoma mu na Onyame mmɛtena mu
Open your heart inside for God stay inside
‘Open your heart for God to come and dwell in’.

The heart is also visualised as a container that can be filled with emotions (often positive emotions). The linguistic expressions in (15) illustrate this. This metaphor may be said to be based on the generic-level metaphor **THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS**. In this connection, the heart stands metonymically for the emotions involved. If there are too many emotions involved, the container might be too small to absorb them, in which case it might overflow (15b).

(15) a. M’akoma a-hyɛ ma
My heart PERF-fill full
‘My heart is full (of joy).’
As Niemeier (2003, p. 207) has noted for English, this representation of the heart is illustrated by a dynamic view of an OPEN CONTAINER FOR LIQUIDS, where the path of the movement of the liquid from the container is visualised. Sometimes, the opposite kind of movement, namely movement towards the container is highlighted as illustrated in the Akan expressions in (16) below. This is a clear indication that the way from our feelings or emotions to the heart is not a one-way street, but works both ways, as feelings may enter or leave it.

(16) Anigyeɛ/Edɛ/ Awerɛho  a-hyɛ  m’akoma  ma 
Happiness/Joy/Sadness  PERF-fill  my heart  full 
‘Joy/Sadness has filled my heart’. 
(i.e. ‘My heart is overflowing with happiness/joy/sadness’)

Niemeier (2003) has observed that in English, the heart is sometimes seen as ‘A CONTAINER WITH GREAT DEPTH’ and as filled with positive emotions. This type of container, she notes, is conceptualised as having a bottom representing the location where one’s innermost feelings which are often thought to be very intense and sincere are stored. This is illustrated in the expression in (17) below:

(17) from (the bottom of) one’s heart

In Akan, it is the inner part of the heart that is conceptualised, and not as one with great depth (18):

(18)  E-firi  m’akoma  mu
3SG SUBJ- come-from  my heart  inside
‘It comes from my heart.’ (i.e., ‘It is from my heart’.)

In Akan, the container metaphor is also used to describe another type of attitude, that is, honesty or purity. Here, the heart is visualised as a container whose inner part is clean or white in colour. This gives us the metaphor the HEART IS A CONTAINER WITH A WHITE/CLEAN INTERIOR. Here, there is an added specific cultural value in the linguistic expressions: the colour white in Akan symbolises purity or cleanliness.
Therefore, honest people or people who are believed not to harbour any ill-feelings against others are described with expressions such as those in (19):

(19) a. M’akoma mu ye POSS heart inside good
   ‘The inner part of my heart is good.’ (i.e., ‘I am honest’ / ‘I have a pure heart’).

   b. M’akoma mu fitaa POSS heart inside white
   “The inner part of my heart is good white.” (i.e., I am honest / I have a pure heart).

Again in Akan, the heart is conceptualised as A CONTAINER OR A STOREHOUSE where items dear to one’s heart are kept or where matters or issues dear to the heart are kept or hidden. In (20a), toffee refers to the beloved.

(20) a. M’akoma mu toffee POSS heart inside toffee
   ‘My sweet heart’

   b. Me de asem no a-sie m’akoma mu 1SG SUBJ take matter DEF PERF-hid POSS heart inside
   ‘I have hidden the matter in my heart.’ (i.e., ‘I have kept the matter in my heart’.)

Differences and Similarities in the Conceptualisations of the Heart in English and Akan

The differences and similarities in the conceptualisations of body parts in cognitive linguistics have been studied by a number of scholars (Siahaan, 2008). Evidence from these studies (Gaby, 2008; Goddard, 2008; Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2008; Ikekami, 2008; Niemeier, 2003 and 2008; Occhi, 2008; Pérez, 2008; Siahaan, 2008; Yoon, 2008; Yu, 2008) suggests that the conceptualisations can be explained in terms of the thesis of embodied cognition and also in terms of constructs whose properties depend on different aspects of a given culture. Pérez (2008), for example, who studied the representations of the heart in five languages observed that there are certain similarities and differences in the conceptualisations. The similarities, she argues, derive from universal aspects of the human body, which support the idea of embodiment claimed by the cognitive theory. Siahaan (2008) who examined the cultural models of the Indonesian
concept of LIVER as the centre of both emotional and mental activities, also concluded that the conceptualisations are not arbitrary, but reflect a cultural model common among Indonesian people.

My examination of the conceptualisations of the heart in English and Akan was based on the methodology proposed by Kövecses (2010). In both languages, the heart is talked about in terms of both conceptual metonymies and conceptual metaphors. With regard to the source domains in the metonymic conceptualisation, the linguistic evidence suggests a similarity. Both languages make references to the human person, where the heart is made to represent the person. Moreover, in both languages, the metonymy, THE HEART STANDS FOR THE PERSON, forms the basis of metaphorical mappings. The metaphors THE HEART IS CHANGEABLE IN SIZE, THE HEART IS A SOLID, THE HEART IS AN ANTHROPOMORPHISED ENTITY and THE HEART IS A MOVABLE ENTITY are all based on the metonymy THE HEART STANDS FOR THE PERSON. It is interesting to note that the same conceptual sources and the targets are metaphorically associated in both languages.

However, there are differences in the elaboration in the two languages of the metaphor THE HEART IS A MOVABLE ENTITY. In English, the metaphor is derived from the expression ‘to set one’s heart on somebody’ (Niemeier, 2003, p. 200). As she explains, the heart or the person ‘only knows one goal that s/he tries to pursue with perseverance’ (Niemeier 2003, p. 200). In English, the elaboration is associated with love. Moreover, the movement is not clearly defined and may be described as traversing a path. In Akan, this metaphor is associated with the human attitudes of patience and impatience, and the movement is expressed in terms of an upward or a down movement. Interestingly, the idea of movement in both cases implies a sudden change and is based on the conceptual metaphor CHANGE IS MOTION (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p. 52), which is an entailment of the more general metaphor CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 179).

In terms of the conceptual metaphors, the two languages share the following source domains: A LIVING ORGANISM, AN OBJECT and A CONTAINER. However, the source domains A PRIZE, and A BOOTY are exclusive to English, whereas AN ABODE and A CONTAINER WITH A WHITE INTERIOR or a CONTAINER WITH a CLEAN INTERIOR are the Akan-specific source domains of the heart identified. There are also language-specific construals of some of the source domains identified. For instance, in both
languages the heart is sometimes perceived as a full entity which may be present, or even totally absent. However, in English it is also visualised as half-present. Moreover, whereas in English the notions of presence or absence of the heart is used to describe people who are considered heartless or wicked, in Akan the notions are used to describe people who are considered impatient or quick-tempered.

Cultural Models and Embodiment in the Conceptualisations of the Heart

The body and mind dichotomy, that is dualism, is often regarded as distinctive of Western culture. However, it should be acknowledged that the idea of dualism has dominated Akan culture for some time and that this has linguistic consequences and effects. In Akan, there is a view that the individual is composed of the three essences - soul, body and spirit. Sarpong (1977) explains that the soul is received at conception and is ‘a small indestructible part of God which He gives to the individual before birth’ (p. 5). At death, the soul is not transformed in any way, but returns intact to the owner, God. The body becomes the corpse which is buried and the spirit morphs into a ghost.

A similar view is shared by Gyekye (1987/1995). The human being, according to Gyekye (1987/1995), is made up body, soul and spirit (p. 85). In Akan these are referred to as honam ‘body’, okra ‘soul’ and sunsum ‘spirit’. He asserts that ‘the okra is the innermost self, the essence of the individual person’ (Gyekye, 1995, p. 85). The sunsum ‘spirit’, on the other hand, is the ‘unperceivable, mystical beings and forces in Akan ontology, and specifically refers to the activating principle in the person’ (Gyekye, 1995, p. 88). He argues that although it is difficult to differentiate between the sunsum and okra, the two are not the same. Therefore, “Akan philosophy maintains a dualistic, not a tripartite, conception of the person: a person is made up of two principal entities, one spiritual or immaterial okra ‘soul’ and the other material honam ‘body’ (Gyekye,1995, p. 94). This serves to posit a ‘theory of the unity of soul and body’ which makes the ‘Akan conception of a person both dualistic and interactionist’ (Gyekye, 1995, pp. 99-102).

Within this dualistic philosophy and categorisation prevalent in Akan, there is yet another dualism. The function of our immaterial selves, that is, soul often suggests a dichotomy between the rational and the emotional. Interestingly, though the soul is conceived as abstract, invisible and immaterial, in Akan culture, we nevertheless locate it squarely in the body, specifically in two different body
parts, the head (or brain) and the heart. In this context, the soul (i.e. feelings and rationality) in a sense is hijacked by the body, into those body parts which are highly relevant in our language. In Akan, both the head and the heart are words that denote concrete body parts. However, it has now become common to conceive of the heart as the seat of feelings, while the head is seen as the location of the intellect. Thus, the head ‘contains’ our reason and intellect and the heart on the other hand ‘contains’ various feelings and emotions.

In spite of the dichotomy between heart and head expressions in Akan, some exceptions were detected in the corpus of heart expressions. These are cases where the heart is connected to mental faculties. Most of these were found in the Asante Bible. Two examples have been provided in (21). Both expressions refer to thinking about something very deeply.

(21)  a. Na Yesu hunuu wɔn adwene no, ɔkaasɛ: Adɛn nti na mo dwene bɔne mo akoma mu. (Matt 9:4)
But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’ (Matt.9:4 NKJV)

b. Adɛn nti na mo dwenedwene yei nom mo akoma mu? (Mark 2:8)
He said to them, ‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?’ (Mark 2:8 NKJV)

Conclusion

In this article, I have compared and contrasted the general metonymic and metaphoric conceptualisations of the heart in Akan and English. The similarities and differences in the conceptualisations have been attributed to the commonality in human experience or to the thesis of embodied cognition, and also to our cultural models. The article focused on conceptualisations of one internal body organ in Akan and English. It is hoped that the article will contribute to the understanding of the intricate relationship between culture, body and language. It would be interesting to know the kind of results studies of other internal body organs in Akan would yield.
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The Pragmatics of Political Apology in Ghana’s Contemporary Politics

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Abstract

The paper discusses political apology in the 4th republic of Ghanaian contemporary politics from 2013 to 2015. It taps its data from apologetic speeches by political officials and from apologies rendered to politicians. The paper discusses the semantics and pragmatics of political apology. It examines the use of the language of apology, paying attention to expressives, commissives and persuasion, by drawing on the speech act of apology and political discourse analysis (PDA). It concludes that the obligation on the part of the offender to apologise and for the offended to accept the apology and to forgive for socio-political harmony is driven by both the social pact and the Ghanaian communalistic context.

Keywords: political apology, political discourse analysis, persuasion, reconciliation, culture

Political apology (referred to later as PA) has been studied by various scholars in the humanities who are interested in political discourse. PA is an interdisciplinary area studied in philosophy, political science, sociology, communications, pragmatics, linguistics, law, rhetoric, etc. (Kampf, 2009, p. 2258). While there is a vibrant literature on PAs (Murphy, 2014; Kampf, 2011; Kimoga, 2010; Reisigl, 2010; Hook, 2008), as far as we know, no work has been done on PA in contemporary Ghanaian politics. Even though there are some works on political discourse as found in Obeng (2002a, 2002b, 2000, and 1997), the focus was not on political apology. The current study on PAs is unique since it is based on mediatised political discourse, influenced by Ghanaians’ growing desire for openness and participation in politics. Before we deal with political apology, let us look at the general concept of apology.
Apology

Murphy (2014) asserts that ‘apologies are tacit admission that the speaker caused offence, pain, and damage or committed some other social faux-pas which had the potential to damage the relationship between hearer and speaker’ (p. 24). Apology falls under expressive speech acts that convey what the speaker feels and it functions to stabilise social harmony. For Wardhaugh (1985), ‘apologising is an open acknowledgement that the speaker did something that s/he should not have done or did not do something that s/he should have done’ (p. 189). Agyekum (2006) posits that apology is a repair mechanism; this resonates with Meier’s notion of repair work: ‘Repair work (true to its name) functions to remedy any damage incurred to an actor’s image upon the establishment of a responsibility link between an actor and behaviour which fell below the standard expected relative to a particular reference group’ (Meier, 1995, p. 338).

According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), ‘by apologising the speaker recognises the fact that a violation of a social norm has been committed and admits the fact that s/he is at least involved in its cause’ (p. 206). Offenders must acknowledge that they have violated some socio-political norms and take responsibility for the perceived negative political action(s) (Meier, 1998). In ideal situations, the offended party must accept and acknowledge the apology and be ready to forgive because an apology is incomplete until it is accepted whole-heartedly by the offended.

An apology is metaphorically considered an acknowledgement of an imbalance or disharmonious relation between speaker and addressee. Leech (1983) similarly states that ‘apology is a transaction meant to change the balance sheet relation between speaker and hearer’ (p. 125). An act of apologising is a verbal and non-verbal recognition of a breach of social ties and relationship. Apologies are motivated by offences that are contrary to the accepted norms and values of the society. Accordingly, the nature of the apology studied in this paper is correlated with the gravity of the offence and the social settings in the Ghanaian culture. More serious breaches invoke more elaborate apologies and the need for an intervener.

Political Apologies

Political apologies express regret for some offense of commission or omission by a political figure against the addressee and therefore acknowledge an obligatory

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1 The repair work shows that the speaker is a ‘good guy’ (despite having violated a social norm) and can be relied upon in future to act predictably in accordance with the social norms of a particular reference group. (Meier, 1995, p. 388-389).

2 The breach can be past, perfect, present or future, and one can apologise for a future action that can inconvenience the addressee. An apology signals that an event has already taken place or the speaker might be aware that it is about to take place.
responsibility and accountability before a general public. Most political apologies belong to the past, but a public official can apologise to citizens for future socio-economic hardships likely to result from political decisions.

Political and public apologies that show remorse and regret and the need for reconciliation have come from state leaders, presidents, individual political figures and nations. Rituals of political apology have become part and parcel of political discourse, and according to Kampf and Löwenheim (2012), some scholars have termed the past decades as the ‘age of apology’ (p. 43). Political actors have found political apology a prudent tool for easing socio-political tensions.

PAs can emanate from one state to another; Kampf and Löwenheim (2012, p. 44) cite the following national historical apologies. In 1994, Austria apologised to Israel for its part in the Holocaust, with Lithuania, Croatia, Latvia and Switzerland following suit in 1995, 1997, 1998 and 1999, respectively. Similarly, based on the Oslo accords in 1993, Israel was urged to apologise and acknowledge its responsibility for the sufferings of the Palestinians.

PAs, unlike other forms of apology, are sited in the public domain, are highly mediatised and involve politicians or prominent figures associated with politics. In this paper, we view political apologies as bi-directional in terms of the apologiser and the apologisee. If a politician is the offender (apologiser) or the offended (apologisee), we will regard it as a political apology, especially, if it is mediatised. In most cases, the demand for apology is engineered from the victim’s group that compels the politician to apologise. Most apologies are not spontaneously rendered (Harris et al, 2006, p. 719, p. 721). Sometimes, the media strongly demand the apology, and this is held on by the general public, thus compelling the politician to apologise.

In Ghana, the near absence of PAs in the colonial, pre-independence and pre-4th republic eras was largely due to the relative scarcity of print and electronic media. In the 21st century, PAs are now very common worldwide with Ghana being no exception. This is attributable to the vibrancy of the media and the fact that no atrocity can be hidden in the powerful communicative age. Hook (2008) affirms that,

The exhibition of brutality and immorality through television evokes mass empathy in a manner never before seen. To a point, wars are crafted in secrecy, but public opinion is written on television screens the world over by video, voice, and repetition. In my opinion, the upsurge in the offering of political apologies is also, to a degree, an offshoot of the information age attributable to the watchdog eye of moral journalism. The tragedies, injustices, and brutality of repressive regimes are brought to us daily in a way never before possible. (p. 10)
In relation to the above, Murphy (2014) describes a political apology as follows:

A political apology is any apology produced by a political actor in public, where it is likely to be scrutinised by the press and the electorate. So an apology made behind closed doors by a politician would not be classed as a political apology, but a politician repeating an apology publicly and perhaps drawing attention to the existence of a private apology makes it public. (p. 15)

Hook (2008) avers that ‘political apology is the public announcement of a remorseful acceptance of responsibility for wrongful or harmful actions by a government that led to the disadvantage or victimisation of a group of its own citizens, or attacks on the citizens of another country’ (p. 3). Seen in this light, PAs can go beyond state boundaries.

Since most PAs are publicised by journalists in the media as cases of performance, Kampf (2011) considers political apology a drama, a social drama of apology for which he offers this definition: “a social drama of apology” (SDA) is an act of repair, a speech act of apology, made by a transgressor at a crucial point in the trajectory of a social or political conflict. This dramatic narrative is characterized by a public struggle, which erupts following the report of a transgression’ (p. 72). SDA is thus an apology discourse, often marked by a set pattern: calls for apologies, initial refusals to apologise, rendering of apologies and declaration of forgiveness. It also involves participants who encourage offenders to apologise and others who rather instigate refusals to apologise (Kampf, 2011, p. 73).

**Theoretical Framework: Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Apology**

This paper is discussed under political discourse analysis (PDA) that looks at how discourses on politics are analysed and interpreted (Agyekum, 2013, p. 41; Chilton, 2004, p. 6; Blommaert, 1997; Van Dijk, 1997). Politicians worldwide use language effectively to win votes by dwelling so much on promises, apology, rhetoric and persuasion. During electioneering campaigns in Ghana, members of parliament (MPs), after justifying their past or current shortcomings (often attributing them to forces beyond their control), and apologising to their constituents for same, politely and persuasively promise to help them with future developmental projects.

PDA effectively pays attention to the language, culture and political ideology of a particular group; hence PDA is both universal and culture-specific (Agyekum, 2013, p. 42; Van Dijk, 1998, p. 3). In political apology, persuasive language reflects the philosophical, cultural, religious, social and political ideologies of the society. PDA basically focuses on political discourse, such as presidential addresses, political apology, parliamentary proceedings, electioneering campaigns, political advertisements and
slogans, political speeches as well as political talk shows on TV and radio. PDA relies on political texts and discourses by presidents, premiers, MPs and other political figures and stakeholders (Agyekum, 2013, p. 42; Obeng, 2002a, p. 83, 2002b; Reisigl: 2010; Van Dijk, 1997, p. 12, p. 14; Davies 1994).

Obeng (2000) posits that ‘the complete communicative context and text are important in determining whether a text or discourse qualifies as political discourse’ (p. p. 341). Any communicative event that has direct or indirect political function within the overall political process is a political discourse (Agyekum, 2013). In every political discourse, including political apologies, there is a political goal, an action to achieve that goal and a process for achieving it.

In this paper, we will notice that to be a successful political apologiser, one should manipulate political language to convince the offended party to accept and indicate forgiveness. Some of the strategies used in PDA include, politeness, indirection, speech acts and persuasive and rhetorical strategies. The political apologiser acts appropriately to repair specific conflicts caused and restore the social-political harmony between the two parties (Agyekum, 2013, p. 43; Obeng, 1997, p. 64; Jucker, 1997, p. 121).

Data Collection and Analysis

All the items in this paper were mediatised apologies on radio, TV, local media websites, Google and in local newspapers. On the whole, eight apologies were collected from newspapers and Internet sources. The sources, as well as the background information to the offence and the apologies, have all been included in the excerpts. Journal articles on political apologies in other nations were also consulted. An analysis is made based on the lexical, semantic and pragmatic features of the utterances of apology, and the comments from the media and the public. The eight excerpts were purposely selected as samples to represent political apologies. Excerpts 1-5 and 8 are from the two major parties in Ghana, namely National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP), which have dominated the political landscape since the inauguration of the Ghanaian 4th Republic in 1992. There are two other apologies (excerpts 6 and 7) that represent political apologies from non-politicians to parliamentarians. Eight were selected because of the limited space in a refereed journal, and the number of words for a single article. The period of the collection of data, 2013-2015, coincides not only with the era of heightened Ghanaian interest in participatory democracy and political discourse but also with the proliferation of social media and the ever-expanding media space.

The Lexico-Semantics of Apology

Let us now consider the lexico-semantics of the expressions for political apology. Apology may be expressed explicitly by apologetic words or implicitly by certain expressions of regret, remorse or explanation of the incidence. In the data for this paper,
most of the apologisers used the explicit expressions, ‘I apologise’, or ‘I render an unqualified apology’ for the harm caused. It is also possible to heighten the apology by adding the expression ‘please forgive me’. The offender can deny the ill-motive by attaching implicit apologetic expressions, such as ‘I did not intend it’.3 Apologisers sometimes justify the offence as resulting from external factors beyond their control; the explanation or the account of the situation fulfils the function of an apology.

Implicit Apology, Non-Apology and Remorseless Apology

In implicit political apology, the apologiser does not say exactly what the offence is. It is believed that mentioning the offence will evoke the psychological pain caused by the offence. Kampf (2009) identifies situations where there are non-apologies (p. 2261). These are situations where apologisers anticipate the danger and threat to their public image from the apology and therefore try to avoid explicit apology. Politicians do this without shouldering any ‘self-threatening responsibility’ (Kampf, 2009, p. 2263).

Some of the strategies used in mitigating the offence include describing the offence as an accident or a mistake, substituting the offence with the demonstrative ‘that’, as in ‘sorry about that’. Others are selecting a specific victim out of the offenders, blurring the identity of the victim, denying or avoiding responsibility, omitting the agent of the offence (Kampf, 2009, pp. 2265-2268). The central issue about implicit apology or non-apology is offenders’ insincerity to accept responsibility for their transgression. Non-apologies allow political figures to run away from accrued punishments from their transgression (Kampf, 2009, p. 2269). Nevertheless, the public in most cases accepts them as apologies since they contribute to political dialogue and foster harmony.

In discussing political apologies, Harris, et al (2006, p. 721) note that political apologies that are not explicit in terms of words undermine the acknowledgement, sincerity and validity of apology as a formal speech act. Kimoga (2010, p. 2181) aptly uses the term ‘remorseless apology’ to refer to apologies that flout the sincerity conditions and thus become pretentious. Some non-apologies manifest themselves in some of our excerpts, such as excerpt 2.

Structure and Strategies of Apology

The use of apologetic devices is meant to restore equilibrium or harmony and strengthen relationships. Agyekum (2006) submits that apologetic strategies and utterances emanate from the apologiser and traverse the apologetic realm to reach the offended. The strategies, coupled with the physical scenario created, appeal to the

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3 Wardhaugh (1985) lists the following apology types in English: (I am) sorry! Excuse me, Pardon me, Oops! My mistake (p. 189). Apologies could be more extensive as in I am dreadfully sorry and Please accept my apologies for X. (Harris et al, 2006, p. 722).
psychological intellect of the offended who then reacts to the apologiser. The apologiser normally expects a positive reaction, in the form of an outright forgiveness or a promise for forgiveness, from the offended person.

Bonvillain (1993) posits that apologies are made up of three-part sequences: (1) verbal or behavioural, which constitutes the ‘object of regret’, (2) an apology, and (3) the addressee’s response (p. 107). Apology is made formulaic, through recourse to appropriate strategies, in order to promote a harmonious equilibrium and elicit forgiveness from the offended party. The strategies in political apology should be able to placate the offended and at the same time deflect any dangerous threat to the apologiser’s self-face. Kampf (2009), therefore, suggests ambiguous, evasive or equivocal speech as a possible solution and a double-edged sword to resolve such conflicts (p. 2260).

Apart from asking for forgiveness, the offender can also promise an offer of repair or a promise of forbearance. Offering political repair depends on the gravity of the offence and the harm caused. A promise of forbearance is used if the offender could have avoided the offence but did not do so, e.g. I cannot act like that again (Agyekum, 2006).

Response to Apology

As a political convention, the language of the apology is deemed to repair the political harm caused the apologiser. Nonetheless, it is in the interest of politicians to be very cautious about their actions and inactions so as to avoid frequent apologies. This is consistent with Wardhaugh’s assertion that ‘a person who constantly requests your forgiveness for this or that … is likely to prove an extremely burdensome companion indeed’ (1985, p. 188). Response to political apology makes the apologiser see whether s/he has achieved the goal of re-establishing socio-political harmony. The offended party may accept, reject or evade the apology (Agyekum, 2006, p. 58; Holmes, 1998, p. 207). In some cases, it is very difficult to say either yes or no to an apology.

For political harmony to prevail, it is ideal for the apology to be accepted. Wardhaugh (1985) further contends that, ‘to be truly effective an apology must be accepted, only then is the breach that has occurred properly repaired’ (p. 189). This is couched in the English maxim ‘To forgive is to forget.’ If one accepts an apology, s/he must ignore the offence, for to err is human.

It is often deemed politically unethical for the offended to refuse to accept and forgive.4 Apologies are motivated by offences that are contrary to the accepted norms and values of the society. In the Ghanaian socio-cultural context, an apologissee who declines a reasonable political apology is always entreated to forgive (Agyekum, 2006).

4 The breach can be past, perfect, present or future, and one can apologise for a future action that can inconvenience the addressee. An apology signals that an event has already taken place or the speaker might be aware that it is about to take place.
Apology must be very sincere for it to be accepted. If someone is compelling or persuading the offender to apologise, then it is non-apology or a ‘remorseless apology’. People who use their political power and authority to refrain from apologising for their wrongs are considered arrogant.

**Excerpts of Political Apology in Ghanaian Contemporary Politics**

In this section, we will discuss some current PAs in the 4th Republic of Ghana that appeared in the media: electronic or print. As part of the discussion, we will cite the background information to indicate what caused the offence, the political apology itself and the aftermath of the apology, especially the comments from the public.

**Excerpt 1: President Mahama Apologised to Okyeman**

**Posted by: Mark Fordhumon: Ghanaweb.com 18th June, 2015**

**Background to the Offence**

The Ghanaian president spoke; ‘Excuse me to say, *Akyem Abuakwa has turned into the headquarters of galamsey in Ghana*. I came here by air and if you see how the land is being destroyed, it saddens me’.

In response, the Okyehene said, ‘The minerals are owned by government. Galamsey is illegal, and if we are being accused that Kyebi is the headquarters; then one is at a loss as to who made Kyebi galamsey headquarters. Mr. Mahama, please wake up and stop the illegal mining in the country before it gets out of hand.’

**Apology:** President Mahama therefore apologised to the Okyeman Council over the issue of galamsey, adding:

> I regret what I said; I know it has worried you the chiefs a lot. Please, forgive me; maybe because I am not an Akan, and did not know how to speak without using apologetic expressions, that is why I said that. I did not know that I had offended you. I know it has seriously worried you the chiefs. I came to Kyebi here by a helicopter, and it was because of what I saw from the aerial view, that is why I said that.

**Analysis:** The president admits that his speech was inappropriate and asks for forgiveness. He said *I regret, forgive me, I did not know that I had offended you. I am apologizing for my harsh words*. The statement ‘I didn’t know that I had offended you’, is a remorseless apology. In this case, the apology is not genuine because he president himself did not accept that what he had said was offensive.
**Excerpt 2: President Renders Apology to Mrs. Theodosia Okoh**  
By Jerry Tsatro Mordy: Myjoyonline,\(^5\) Monday, 28th July 2013

**Background:** The mayor of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), Dr Alfred Okoh Vanderpuije, announced that the AMA had renamed the national hockey pitch in honour of the late President Mills. The pitch already bore the name of Mrs Theodosia Okoh, a hockey administrator and designer of the national flag. The decision of the AMA to rename the hockey pitch attracted various reactions and criticisms from people on media platforms. President Mahama described the renaming of the national hockey pitch after the late President John Evan Atta Mills as very unfortunate, and apologised to Mrs Theodosia Okoh for the act.

**Apology:** The president apologised as follows:

> I wish as President to express our regret as a nation to our grandmother, Mrs. Theodosia Okoh, for any emotional trauma she might have suffered as a result of the confusion created by the renaming of the National Hockey Pitch. President Mills was a modest man in all respects and he himself would not have accepted the renaming of the hockey pitch after him if he was alive. The pitch still remains the Theodosia Okoh Hockey Pitch.

In response to the apparent unilateral decision of the mayor and the assembly, the then Chief of Staff, Mr. Prosper Douglas Bani, on behalf of President Mahama, directed Mr. Vanderpuije to reverse the decision to change the name of the hockey pitch. Even though the president was not the offender himself, it was politically prudent as the leader of his government to take the responsibility to apologise and give weight to the apology. This could be considered as a *vicarious* or *intervening* political apology; an apology rendered by a third party on behalf of the offended party.

Reacting to the name change, Mrs Okoh, the nonagenarian, said the decision by the AMA was very painful because it had been taken without consulting her. When the Presidency reverted the name of the hockey pitch to her name, Mrs. Okoh said on TV3 on 26th July 2013 ‘I was overwhelmed. Call a tool a tool and not a thing for digging. Good work is done by good people whom God has chosen.’

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\(^5\) Myjoyonline is owned by the Multimedia Group Company of Ghana. As the online version of Joy 99.7 FM, it focuses on news (local and international), politics, business, sports, entertainment and technology.
Excerpt 3: Murtala Mohammed Apologises


**Background:** The Deputy Minister, Mr. Murtala Mohammed threatened on a local FM station, Diamond FM that he would expose any member of parliament (MP) who wanted to unseat him by conniving with a woman to take nude pictures of a cabinet minister. He alleged that his detractors had gone to the extent of bribing chiefs and opinion leaders in the Northern Region of Ghana with ‘filthy, ill-gotten money.’ He added:

> It is pathetic, absolutely pathetic; it’s unethical, it’s so funny, it’s so stupid, it’s so silly, it’s nasty, it’s un-Islamic for people in the same party to be sitting down, and their intention is about how they can get someone out of Parliament.

**Apology:** Deputy Trade and Industry Minister, Mr. Murtala Mohammed, has rendered an ‘unqualified apology’ for his explosive outburst which has received widespread condemnation. Below is Murtala’s apology letter:

> Please accept this letter as a formal apology for my comments on Diamond FM a couple of days ago. I wish to acknowledge that I could have handled the matter better rather than an outburst, which was as a result of deep pain occasioned by events over the years.

> I wish to render my unqualified apology to His Excellency the President. I wish also to render same to the NDC party and government, the good people of Ghana, the chiefs and religious leaders of Dagbong, as well as the Chiefs and people of the Nanton Constituency whose interest I have sworn to defend.

**Analysis:** Murtala uses the expression ‘unqualified apology’ and admits that he could have handled the matter better; this shows sincerity. The apology is addressed not only to the president but also to the government, the party, chiefs and all Ghanaians. This shows how he considers the gravity of the offence. In the Ghanaian context, an offence against individuals moves beyond them to cover all those related to them. In the same vein, an apology becomes a social issue even though it is directed at an individual.
Excerpt 4: Sammy Awuku: I apologise unreservedly for my comments
Source: Citifmonline, 6 26th June 2013

Background: During the proceedings of the 2012 election petition case at the Supreme Court of Ghana in 2013, the Supreme Court issued a final warning to the media and party representatives, stressing that it would not hesitate to punish anyone found culpable of ‘twisting’ and ‘spinning’ information in relation to the court proceedings.

While contributing to a political debate, Mr. Sammy Awuku, the then Deputy Director of Communication of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), described the Supreme Court’s warning to the media and party representatives in the 2012 election petition as ‘hypocritical and selective.’ He noted that the nine-member panel led by Justice Atuguba was ‘choosy’ in citing a report by Daily Guide (a newspaper sympathetic to the NPP) that some boxes containing pink sheets in his custody had been retrieved. According to Awuku, the court could have issued a general warning without necessarily mentioning a specific newspaper or person. He added that when the orders from the court did not cover some comments made by his political opponents, then it could not avoid being seen as selective. These statements were considered offensive and disrespectful to the Supreme Court. Awuku was therefore summoned before the Supreme Court to defend his statements.

Apology: When Sammy Awuku appeared before the court, he apologised as follows:

My Lords, I offer an unconditional apology and withdraw the comments and the choice of words used which might embarrass the court or embarrass your Lordships on that said program yesterday. On that program, tempers flared up; it was a political program and my colleagues on the other side of the political divide made a comment that infuriated me. That was no justification to have followed suit and to have embarrassed the court. Upon sober reflection, I withdraw those comments and statements unreservedly, and my Lords, if I get to that platform next week Tuesday, I will make sure I use the opportunity to offer the same apology.

Analysis: Mr. Awuku admitted that what he did was prejudicial to the reputation of the Supreme Court. He offered an unconditional apology and unreservedly withdrew the injurious statements. This is in consonance with Ghanaian apology which is a social responsibility on the part of the offender. The apology fits into the sincerity conditions of

6 Citifmonline is the online version of Citi 97.3 FM in Accra.
the speech act theory and shows remorse. He realised his mistake and sincerely admitted his offence, stressing that the context of the acrimonious political debate was not a justification to have embarrassed the court.

He showed remorse by saying that he had soberly reflected on what he had done and therefore wanted to withdraw the statements unreservedly. He further committed himself to be of good behaviour, assuring the court ‘I will make sure that I take that opportunity to offer the same apology’ on that same media platform. The commitment is pragmatically very important where the spatial deixical point for the offence is considered another optimum deixical point for an unconditional apology and an unreserved withdrawal. We see that the social obligation makes him render the apology twice so that his cherished audience on radio will hear the apology. Such a performance is in accordance with the social responsibility of apologies in Ghanaian culture, and also with the Akan proverb, Baabi a yekyekere aboa no Eho ara na yegeyae no. (lit.) ‘Wherever the animal was tied to a tree, it is the same place where it is untied.’ Its earlier warning and the gravity of the offence notwithstanding, the Supreme Court felt obliged to pardon him.

Excerpt 5. K.T. Hammond Apologises for Wednesday’s Outburst, 6th December 2013 (By Winnifred P. Ndamse (Source: citifmonline))

**Background:** Hon. K.T. Hammond, Member of Parliament for Adansi Asokwa, on Wednesday December 4th 2013 verbally assaulted the Majority Leader, Dr. Ben Kumbour, while addressing the issue of corruption among politicians in the country. According to Dr. Ben Kumbour, ‘corruption is seen as the disease of the political elite of this country.’ He said this had been confirmed by the “drill ship and Woyome placards” on the floor of Parliament. The Speaker of Parliament, Edward Doe Adjaho, explained that the placards were displayed by both the Minority and the Majority, therefore could not be targeted at any particular side of the House. K.T. Hammond disagreed with the assertion and this resulted in an exchange of words on the floor of Parliament.

**Apology:** In an interview with Citi FM’s parliamentary correspondent, Richard Dela Sky, Mr. Hammond remorsefully said although the issue of the drill ship was a very sensitive issue to him because it had been linked to corruption, his outburst was still not of the ‘best behaviour’:

I want to use your platform to express my unqualified apology to the good people of Ghana. I am sorry and I apologise to all of them (Members of Parliament) and indeed to my very good friend, the Speaker. I am really sorry for the behaviour put up since that could in one way or the other, affect
the people around me, as well as those who have helped me come this far… to really sully he brand the way I have contrived in my own way to do, I think this calls for some sort of apology to those who have created the brand.

K. T. Hammond also described the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Doe Adjaho as someone who had always supported him and deserved his ‘unqualified apology.’ He further apologised to the Majority Leader, Dr Ben Kumbour.

**Analysis:** Like most of the political apologies in this paper, Mr. K. T. Hammond used the expressions, ‘unqualified apology’, ‘I am sorry’, ‘I apologize’, ‘I am really sorry for the behaviour’, and ‘some sort of apology’. He regretted his behaviour and accepted that it was not the best. His apology was widely cast to cover all Ghanaians, all MPs, his constituents, the speaker of parliament and the colleague MP, he had offended. As a Ghanaian who knows the Ghanaian culture, he sees apology as community-based and thereby extended it to all Ghanaians.

**Apologies from Non-Politicians to Politicians**

In this section, we will discuss political apologies where the apologisers are non-politicians but the offended are politicians. I cite here apologies directed to the Ghanaian parliament. One is from a university professor and the others are from a media person (a disc joker, DJ), and a youth wing of a political party.

**Excerpt 6: Prof. Dodoo Apologises to Parliament – (By Mark-Anthony Vinorkor)**

**PARLIAMENT HOUSE: Source:** *Daily Graphic* 7 No.19819, Wednesday, 15th July 2015, p.16

**Background:** Parliament in June 2015 expressed concern over a suspended Ebola vaccine trial in the Volta Region and said enough consultation had not been done to allay the fears of the people. The MP for Ho West, Mr. Emmanuel K. Bedzra, asked whether the vaccine had been tried on mice and chimpanzees, while others said the trial could be an unwitting attempt to ‘import’ the disease into the country. Prof. Dodoo, of the School of Medicine and Dentistry of the University of Ghana, in a sharp reaction to the comments made by the MPs, described them as ignorant, and if they did not know what they were saying, they better shut up. Parliament took a serious view of his statement and said it reduced the image of the House in the eyes of the public. Parliament consequently, charged him

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7 *Daily Graphic* is a state-owned newspaper published in Accra. It was established in 1950 by Cecil King of the London Daily Mirror Group. It is the oldest and most widely circulated newspaper in Ghana.
with contempt of parliament and invited him before the Privileges Committee of the House to answer the charges.

**Apology:** Professor Alex Dodoo apologised to the Privileges Committee of Parliament for describing the MPs as *being ignorant* and asking them *to shut up*. His lawyer, Mr. Yoni Kulendi, who rendered the apology on the contempt charges said: ‘I have the instructions of Prof. Dodoo to put on record his *unconditional, irrevocable apology to this House*’.

Mr. Kulendi said Prof. Dodoo held Parliament in the highest esteem, and could not disrespect and insult the House. Mr. Kulendi submitted that,

> It is not even compatible with Prof. Dodoo’s status, character, enlightenment and even the kind of work he does. It is unfortunate for him to say something which is a direct affront or demeaning to this House and, therefore, whether correctly or incorrectly, he takes the slightest view that his comments were an affront to the dignity of this House.

He described Prof. Dodoo as a ‘drug and vaccine safety vigilante’ and suggested that as it happens often when speaking, Prof. might have, in the heat of the debate and discourse on the Ebola vaccine trial, ‘overrun the runway’ without realizing he had done so. The lawyer further stated, ‘The professor *takes ashes and sackcloth* and says that he could not have meant to disrespect the House, let alone this august institution.’ He added that since speech was fluid, Prof. Dodoo could have been a *victim of the speech of the tongue*.

**Analysis:** Prof. Dodoo’s sincere apology is captured by expressions such as *unconditional, irrevocable apology to this House* and *could have been a victim of the speech of the tongue*. The expression *unconditional and irrevocable apology* implies that he is showing sincere remorse. The expressions *take ashes and sackcloth*, and *he could not have meant to disrespect the House* mean behaving in a way to depict that one is deeply sorry for the harm caused. *Being a victim of free speech* means that in oral speech one can easily make mistakes, and this can happen to anybody. This indicates that it was unintentional to offend the parliamentarians. Another expression, *overrun the runway without realising he had done so*, denotes that the issue at stake might have compelled him to do something out of the normal. The apology is heightened by saying Professor Dodoo has great respect for the House and cannot insult them. All these strategies were deployed to persuade Parliament to accept the apology.
Excerpt 7: Blakk Rasta Apologises

Background of the Case: A publication in the 17th June, 2015 edition of the Daily Searchlight newspaper states that Ahmed, known in showbiz as Blakk Rasta, has stated that 80% of MPs smoked ‘wee’ (marijuana). This sought to impugn the integrity of MPs and the republic of Ghana. He was summoned to appear before the Privileges Committee of Parliament to purge himself of his contemptuous statement. His first appearance at Parliament depicted that he was not rendering a sincere apology. Earlier, some MPs indicated that the artiste be punished because he had only sounded apologetic after the Privileges Committee had played back his comments on tape to his hearing. Kimoga (2010) refers to such an apology as ‘remorseless apology’.

Apology: 24th and 27th July 2015 edition of Daily Graphic
On his first appearance before Parliament, Blakk Rasta’s counsel appealed for his client and said ‘On behalf of my client, we unreservedly, apologise for it...’ It’s a very important house and he knows the importance of Parliament. Blakk Rasta describes it as ‘an unfortunate’ remark.’ He added:

Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry for what I said, I apologise to this House. As I was seated in the Public Gallery, I was crying in my stomach (grieving in my heart) for wasting everybody’s time, especially members of this august House. I would like to apologise…it is those unfortunate remarks which come when you are on heat…, If I were to receive a slap each from MPs for the contemptuous statement, I would willingly do so.

Comments: Blakk Rasta was invited again to Parliament because in Ghanaian culture what is considered a complete and sincere apology is where the apologiser shows unambiguous remorse. To show remorse during his second appearance, he metaphorically said he was crying in his stomach, the remarks were ‘unfortunate’, and realising his guilt, he was ready to receive slaps from each of the parliamentarians.

The two narrations in excerpts 6 and 7 show that Ghanaians respect the dignity of Parliament as an institution. It was thus a moral duty for Prof. Dodoo and Blakk Rasta to render unqualified apologies, even though both were experts in their respective fields.
A concerned youth group of the NPP writes an apology to the former president, J. A. Kufuor, as follows:

Dear Sir,

We are the ‘UNITING THE NPP’ and our sole aim as a group is to uphold and protect the sacred and solemn UNITY for victory 2016 and beyond. We wish to respectfully and humbly bring to your attention an expression of an unqualified apology. We apologise on behalf of the NPP fraternity to your noble, excellent and distinguished self after having come to realise a WICKED, BIZARRE, COOKED and SMOKED LIE against you sometime back in 2008. What happened was married with a baseless MALICIOUS MISPERCEPTION, ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION and an ARRANT HATRED that some members made it possible for ‘Newly’ NPP members and existing participants to hold it on you.

The group further explained the need for the apology as follows:

The aim for this humble but vital action is to address a calculated, deliberate, malicious, unfortunate and disdainful tape recording by a hired hungry-looking whore of a ghost full of verbal and reckless abuse on Your Noble Self. The humiliation of the ex-president became topical on almost all media programmes the week before. There were unfortunate verbal assaults from ingrates, Kennedy Agyapong, Bugri Naabu, etc.

We agree that this apology has been long overdue, but it is still relevant; it is better LATE than NEVER. We, the UNITING THE NPP are knowledgeable, wise and God-fearing enough to understand that Your Excellency has a family who are also traumatised by some of these unfounded and wicked lies. We strongly believe that Your Excellency is a Noble and an ascetic Christian and you have a Big Forgiving heart to FORGIVE us our Trespasses as we forgive those who made it possible for unbeknownst NPP members to have such baselessly hating figment against You.

Analysis: The youth stressed that the insults were unwarranted. This is done through the use of strong expressions like WICKED, BIZARRE, COOKED and SMOKED LIE,
baselessly_MALICIOUS_MISPERCEPTION, ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION and an ARRANT HATRED on you. The negative aspect of the offence is also depicted by expressions like calculated, deliberate, malicious, unfortunate and disdainful tape recording by a hired hungry-looking whore of a Ghost full of verbal and reckless abuse against you. Others are: unfounded and wicked lies; having baselessly hating figment against you.

To persuade the former president to accept the apology, as Ghanaian culture demands, the group couched its apology with honorifics such as your noble, excellent and distinguished self, Your Excellency as a Noble and an ascetic Christian have a Big Forgiving heart to FORGIVE us our Trespasses. They finally described the apology as ‘unqualified’, and this means that they sincerely accept the mess and offence created by the hired hungry-looking whore of a Ghost full of verbal and reckless abuse.

The apology ended with a biblical allusion to the virtue of forgiveness from the Lord’s Prayer. This is meant to persuade the former president to accept the response and forgive the offenders, for their party to grow. In terms of structure, this is an indirect, mediated and non-guilt apology. This is yet another example of vicarious political apology as the apologisers are not the offenders, did not post the lies, and yet are apologising for the interest, love and peace in their party. Further, this political apology conforms to Ghanaian culture that puts premium on politeness, age, rank and power.

Functions of Political Apology

Let us now turn our attention to the role of political apologies. This will reflect not only the general functions of apologies but also the specificities of Ghanaian culture and perceptions about apology. The basic function of all apologies in social interaction is to negotiate, maintain and sustain social solidarity and ties between the participants. In looking at the values of political apology, Hook (2008) argues that ‘political apology is the most important doorway in the process towards settling differences, because at least while people are talking they might not be killing each another’ (p. 10). This is a powerful statement towards reconciliation, image restoration and renewal of a politician’s moral status so as to relate to other political figures and the entire society (Kampf, 2009, p. 2259).

Taft (2000) views apology from a moral point of view and opines that ‘Apology is a common social means of reconciling the offender with the offended... Apology is regarded as a moral act because it acknowledges the existence of right and wrong and confirms that a norm of right behaviour has been broken’ (p. 1142). This is manifested in excerpt 5 when K. T. Hammond admitted that what he did was absolutely wrong.

Political apology is a non-violent way of settling scores and bringing about peace in the polity or among nations. Kimoga (2010) asserts that ‘In political discourse, apology is not necessarily a moral action but a tool used to politically appease and to settle some
situations that may threaten power” (p. 2187). In excerpt 2, for instance, President Mahama wanted to bring about peace between the government and Mrs. Okoh and the entire society, and also to calm down the tension attendant upon the infamous decision taken by AMA. In effect, to maintain political power, politicians should be humble to apologise for their actions and inactions as well as those of their groups.

In Ghanaian parlance, it is better to jaw-jaw, than to engage in war-war, to wit it is better to talk than to fight. Luke (1997) connects political apology to the power of the word whereby public demands for an apology from politicians compel them to apologise so that they will enjoy their status quo, be reconsidered as politicians and continue to wield political power (p. 366). Political apologies establish and reinstate the rapport between the individual politicians, and further extend the apology to the apologiser’s political camp and sometimes to the entire society. An example is in excerpt 3, where Mr. Murtala Mohammed extended the apology to the government, his party, chiefs and all Ghanaians. Some political apologies may be statutory; especially apologies for crimes against the state and they are employed to avoid calamities befalling a group or state (Agyekum, 2006).

One of the major tools of political apology is to assist political figures to confront the past wrongs squarely and adopt achievable strategies towards political and national reconciliation for peace and national development. (See excerpt 1 by President Mahama and 5 by Hon. K.T. Hammond). Political apologies bridge the social and political distance in relationship, resolve conflicts and bring about social harmony among the people; they also restore and renew the public trust reposed in politicians. Robinson (2004, p. 292) submits that ‘Apologising is an essential component of the maintenance of social harmony because it communicates awareness and acceptance of moral responsibility for offensive behavior’ (See also Harris et al, 2006, p. 733; Holmes 1998, 1990). Political apologies have some levels of social morality and social contract that bind the apologiser to repair the socio-political conflict caused for the common good. Politicians offer apologies to the people, who voted them into power, to continue enjoying their goodwill and support.

A political apology indicates that the speaker wants to draw closer to the addressee(s). Politicians who apologise are well respected while a refusal to apologise can cost politicians their career. Hook (2008) records that ‘In the USA, President Clinton was never slow to apologise once a wrong had been clearly identified; Bill Clinton’s empathetic readiness to adopt the perspective of the underdog is considered to be one of his outstanding strengths as a world leader’ (p. 8). All the eight excerpts in this study indicate that the apologisers were indebted to the apologisees, and they needed to settle their metaphorical debts through political apologies.

Apologies pay attention to the ‘face needs’ of the addressee. Holmes (1990, p. 195) thus refers to apology as ‘face supportive act’ (FSA). This is the reverse of ‘face
threatening acts’ (FTA). Scholars like Edmondson and House (1981) contend that an apology is a ‘hearer-supportive device’ (HSD) intended to attend to the face wants of the hearer. It serves to remedy any damage to the hearer by the face-threatening act which necessitated the apology (Murphy, 2014, 24; Holmes, 1990; Goffman, 1971). All the eight political apologies aimed at redressing the face threats caused to the offended; speakers needed to apologise to save and support their faces, bearing in mind the values and dictates of Ghanaian culture.

For his part, Meier (1998) sees apology as a speaker-supportive act (S-SA) and posits that the maintenance of the speaker’s self-image is the major motivation behind apology (p. 221). This assertion is based on Goffman’s (1971, p. 110 ff.) idea that an apology is an act by which the speaker splits herself into two: (1) the bad half which caused the offence, and (2) the good half, which recognises the offence and seeks to remedy it. The apology brings this good half to the fore and is thus speaker-supportive, since it repairs the negative feelings held by the hearer towards the speaker. A third neutral position held by Holmes (1990) is that apology attends to the face wants of both parties.

Apologising is potentially a face-threatening act for the speaker, whereas it is face-saving act for the addressee. Apologies become particularly face-threatening and face-damaging to the apologiser if the apology is rejected by apologisees who see the apologiser as somebody not worth hearing and spending their time on. Murphy (2014), however, sees contrastive face-threatening and damage on the part of the offended because the speaker places the hearer under an obligation to respond, thereby constraining the apologisees’ freedom to do as they please (p. 25).

It appears that since Ghana operates a communalistic society where socio-cultural networking is very pervasive, there is a cultural obligation for the politically offended individual or group to accept an apology. That is why in excerpt 2, for instance, Mrs. Theodosia Okoh said she was overwhelmed by the president’s apology. Our discussions have pointed out that a typical political apology reflects the Ghanaian notion of apology based on their culture. There is the phenomenon of ‘intervening apology’ where a third person can intervene and apologise on behalf of the one who had committed the offence. We saw this in excerpt 2 where President Mahama apologised on behalf of the AMA, and in excerpt 8, where the leaders of the youth group, ‘UNITING THE NPP’, rendered an apology to the former Ghanaian president, J.A Kufour, on behalf of those who had insulted him. Both cases exemplify the strong relation between culture and communicative practices.

**Conclusion**

Apology is one of the important speech acts of our daily interaction because as human beings there is always a commission or omission of an act that is unfavourable to
others and therefore offends other people (Agyekum, 2006; Holmes, 1995, p. 155). Political apologies (PAs) are pragmatic repair mechanisms meant to restore and harmonise socio-political relationship and equilibrium between interlocutors in political discourse. Political apology is a speech act that seeks to address an interactant’s face needs and intended to remedy an offence for which the political apologiser directly or indirectly takes responsibility. Most political apologies are manifestations of the politicians’ face-loss. The strategies used in PAs consist of expression of regret, admission of the offence, assumption of the responsibility, minimising the offence or responsibility, offering reparation, restitution, compensation and committing oneself not to repeat such unacceptable political acts.

We looked at the parameters of apology and identified the Apologiser (offender) and the Apologisee (the offended). What links them is the persuasive powerful language of political apology. A political apology may be simple or complex depending on the social parameters of the interlocutors and the gravity of the offence and how it has been publicised in the media, as well as the public’s outcry for an apology. Various lexical and semantic forms are used in expressing apology such as; ‘please’, ‘I beg your pardon’ and ‘forgive me’, ‘I apologise.’ In our data, the most frequent was ‘I apologise’.

It is ideal for political apologies to be accepted. A response to a political apology indicates to the apologiser whether s/he has succeeded in re-establishing the socio-political equilibrium that existed before the apology. An offended person may accept, acknowledge, reject, or fail to respond to an apology. Political apologies have become so dramatic and rampant that some scholars refer to this century as the ‘age of apology’. The language for political apology should conform to the sincerity conditions of the speech act theory and show some remorse so as to warrant acceptance. An apology devoid of sincerity can be classified as non-apology or remorseless.

In this paper, we have established that political apologies in Ghana conform to Ghanaian socio-cultural concepts and values as well as the social responsibilities of the parties involved. PA is part of the socio-cultural and socio-political norms which politicians and citizens of a particular society are supposed to know and respond to appropriately to bring about socio-political harmony.
References


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Pyramids and Prejudice: A Study of Cultural Discrimination in Lauretta Ngcobo’s *And they didn’t die*

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Abstract

A South African classic, Lauretta Ngcobo’s novel, *And they didn’t die*, explores the nexus of hegemony, culture, and transformation under apartheid rule. Edward Said’s thesis on the hierarchy of culture provides the conceptual framework for an analysis of politico-cultural agency in Ngcobo’s novel. Three characters in the narrative—Siyalo, Jezile, and Lungu—are used to comment on the cultural dynamics inherent in three different but interlocking sites: the nine-to-five working environment, rural Bantu culture, and the ambiguous location of “African Whiteness.” The paper establishes that the life of each character betrays culture’s negative discriminating power and the amplification of negativity by State policy.

Keywords: prejudice, culture, apartheid, industrialism, patriarchy

Jezile, the female protagonist of Lauretta Ngcobo’s second novel, *And they didn’t die* (1991) makes a telling statement on the prolonged and agonizing war that black South Africans wage against the apartheid government. She says: “Local uprisings could only chip at the granite power of South Africa; in the long-term they knew that they would overthrow that power, but in the short-term, people suffered and whole communities made enormous sacrifices” (Ngcobo, 1991, p. 218). Revealingly, the novel abounds with instances of suffering and sacrifice on the part of the black South African populace. Racial tension simmers throughout, beginning with Jezile’s hostile encounter with the white dipping officer, Mr. Pienaar, and ending with her stabbing of the white soldier who is trying to rape her daughter. The thirty years or so between these two events hold numerous
episodes of anger and bloodshed which underscore the extent to which racism poisons every form of contact between the black and the white South African, and while it is obvious that Bantu resistance is undying, it is equally clear that Boer authority is “granite.” Unfortunately, apartheid is not the sole obstacle to justice in the text. Standing in its huge shadow is another mountain which is more insidious and consequently, more difficult to tackle. When laws are issued from this particular edifice, according to Jezile, “it [is] as if God [had] spoken” (p. 226). She is referring to the inflexible power of Bantu culture. The customs of her own people contribute materially to her personal suffering and sacrifice, and the discriminations intrinsic to African patriarchy continually join hands with the relentlessness of the racist government to marginalize her. Incident upon incident in Jezile’s story demonstrate that culture can co-operate with politics in an unhealthy way, and elements of both Bantu and Boer culture are blamable for the exacerbation of an already chronic state of segregations. Few texts communicate this as vividly as Ngcobo’s. The chain of outsiders and exiles that runs through the pages testifies to the fact that where government policy is based on exclusion, the inherent tendency of culture to also exclude may have ugly repercussions.

The Palestinian-American critic, Said (1983), identifies culture unambiguously as an inherently discriminatory phenomenon. He describes it as “a system of values saturating downwards almost everything within its purview; yet paradoxically, culture dominates from above without at the same time being available to everything and everyone it dominates” (Said, 1883, p. 9; emphasis in the original). Said’s thesis is that cultural norms are constructed at the apex of the social pyramid and transmitted downwards in an ever-widening arc to those at the bottom, at which point culture is universally applicable but neither universally accessible nor universally beneficial. In other words, people may share a culture and yet be shut out of some of its salient aspects. They may possess a culture and at the same time be denied access to the prerequisites that will make them “cultured.” Worse still, the very culture they claim to possess might declare them out of bounds or “inferior” (p. 14).

Said expounds on his argument as follows:

Historically, one supposes that culture has always involved hierarchies; it has separated the elite from the popular, the best from the less than best, and so forth. It has also made certain styles and modes of thought prevail over others. But its tendency has always been to move downwards from the height of power and privilege in order to diffuse, disseminate, and expand itself in the widest possible range. (p. 9)

The concept of culture as a system that moves downward first and outwards only second is tenable even in the domain of popular culture, which at first glance transmits
itself horizontally across the masses rather than in a vertical descent from the elite to the plebeian. In popular culture, as in national culture, attitudes, taste, order, and other details of that culture are spread most effectively and rapidly by its icons; those who are held up as figureheads even though they have been popularly elected. Said’s sketch of the cone-like shape of cultural dissemination is astute, and his argument of its “saturating” effect is incontestable since cultural norms pervade every social institution.

Bearing this in mind, one can appreciate the possible predicament of individuals living within the purview of two cultures, as it happens with the black South Africans of *And they didn’t die*. The dominating and saturating tendency doubles, proceeding as it does from two authorities—the European in addition to the African. The predicament would have been difficult enough if the two authorities had been on par, but they are not. The black characters in the narrative depict in extreme terms a situation that pertained for most colonized Africans, whereby the European and the African cultures did not really co-exist as the former was superimposed on top of the latter.1 Viewed from the perspective of a cultural pyramid, this pressure increased the burden of conformism for, and prejudice against, those at the bottom.

Farred (1993) acknowledges the burden of prejudice on the black South African characters of *And they didn’t die*. Farred is attentive to Ngcobo’s spotlight on rural female characters, which he deems groundbreaking in the history of black South African writing:

Black South African literature since the late 1940s is marked by three distinguishing features: a commitment to the struggle of the proletariat against the forces of apartheid, a predominantly urban setting, and a majority of male writers. Lauretta Ngcobo’s *And They Didn’t Die* breaks with this tradition … focusing on the political and economic struggle of rural women in Natal at the end of the 1950s. The importance of Ngcobo’s narrative within black South African writing is that it explores the connections between black women’s sexual and political experiences. (p. 94)

Etter-Lewis (2013) agrees. She talks about the “intersection of racism and sexism” in the text (Etter-Lewis, 2013, p. 103), and appends a third component; culture. Culture has as much to do as politics with the black woman’s harrowing sexual experiences. The black woman’s body is in fact a battlefield: “Jezile finds that her body is the locus of several contending forces: 1) customary practices that define women almost exclusively by their marital status and fertility; 2) political laws that restrict physical movement of the body and determine how it can be used, especially sexually; and 3) the

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1 For a pioneer analysis of the superimposition of European culture upon the African, see E. N. Obiechina (1975), *Culture, tradition and society in the West African novel*. 
liberation/resistance movement that requires the ultimate sacrifice of one’s life/body” (p. 10). Etter-Lewis highlights resistance and the woman’s body, and it is from this angle that she approaches the connection between custom and apartheid.

In a website review, Polo (2011) investigates culture and the woman’s body as contained in the “Mother Africa” trope. Polo argues that this trope is a “nationalistic myth,” largely the work of canonical postcolonial writers zealous to construct the African mother as a figure of integrity. The figure has over time become pejorative because African women wish to widen their horizons:

> Albeit a necessary metatexstual mode to write back to Empire, such nationalist mythology represents the figure of the woman or mother as merely a vehicle or a vessel carrying African identity, easily corrupted by colonial influences. Representing ‘timelessness’, the figure of the woman comes to exist then outside of History too. As a result, she becomes an object existing at the periphery of nationalist discourse, rendered apolitical.

Ngcobo’s representation of women in *And they didn’t die* deconstructs the trope and invests women with political agency. Polo is of the opinion that Ngcobo replaces “Mother Africa” with a “Mother of the Nation” substitute that is “intimately linked to the political and historical action of nation building … Jezile is portrayed as a subject who evolves as a result of her contact with historical events and contemporary politics.” Jezile reconstructs her identity as a mother outside the stipulations of the clan, taking pride in her position as the single parent of her biracial politically vibrant son, Lungu, a symbol of the nation. Polo concludes: “The novel is correspondingly a milestone in the process of redefining the link between motherhood and nationalist discourse.”

Commenting on Jezile’s experience of single parenthood, Gagiano (2013) contends that in the event of Jezile’s rape and the subsequent birth of Lungu, the attitude of the clan matches that of the apartheid government:

> In Ngcobo’s *And they didn’t die*, cultural oppression occurs alongside apartheid political oppression while also binding the oppressed together in protective solidarity. The author suggests that, given the fact of apartheid’s intervention, the tight customary familial rules and roles of the tribe should have offered some leeway and been compassionately relaxed; the novel depicts the family-shattering results of the terrible co-incidence of Afrikaaner dominated apartheid and customary laws for women like the protagonist at this time: an accidental, destructive ‘conspiracy’ of oppressive forces. (pp. 53-54)
Gagiano notices the “conspiracy” between culture and politics, the premise of this essay. Her preoccupation, however, is squarely with how Jeziile illuminates the dealings between culture and socio-political institutions in a panoramic picture. Gagiano expatiates upon the nuances of cultural settings and the “tribal-modernity encounter” as reproduced by South African writers from the earliest times to date (p. 66). Ngcobo is one of seven authors whose works demonstrate that tribal culture may be enriching, but “also necessarily caution us against the typical dangers of a tribal culture deteriorating into an inappropriate, unadaptive, socially unstable and even individually threatening set of customs” (p. 67).

Faith Njeru in an electronic publication highlights “the symbolic deviation of rural women characters,” which occurs because “the perceived normalcy is entrappping.” “Normalcy” in Ngcobo’s text is an interweaving of “the hostile climate, patriarchy and apartheid.” Njeru’s proposition is that “the hostile climate” is a political force, a detail that other critiques seem to have bypassed. She regards nature as playing a palpable role in women’s life and in the power struggle between the sexes. Her approach to the text is feminist.

In substance, a number of critics have surveyed prejudice and culture in Ngcobo’s text, either as separate entities or conjoined constructs, but not in a manner that replicates or controverts the notion of a cultural pyramid. As earlier stated, the pyramid’s architecture and the downward movement of cultural dissemination imply an increase in the burden of conformism for, and prejudice against, those at the base. The lucidity of Said’s sketch, and the continued relevance of prejudice and marginalization in the discourse of postcolonial peoples, underscores the value of applying his ideas to a work of art. As Mukherjee (2005) notes, “Marginality may have been commodified by postcolonial theory; [but] power, exclusion and gatekeeping are material realities that

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2 The seven authors are:


need to be acknowledged” (p. 203). Inasmuch as postcolonial peoples are still embroiled in the reality of exclusion, Said’s theories are of import. Equally important are the lessons emanating from apartheid, a time-tested and educative specimen of exclusion and gatekeeping.

The Boers of And they didn’t die are at the apex of the cultural pyramid. They feel no compulsion to abide by African mores, whereas the Bantu, who are on a lower plane and the recipients of mores disseminating from the hegemonic culture above, are subject to the dual pressure of their own African value system as well as the Western one sitting on top of it. Three characters in the text—Siyalo, the husband of Jezile; Jezile, the protagonist; and Lungu, Jezile’s illegitimate son—demonstrate this. They remind the reader that culture is an agent of negative as well as positive discrimination, and that where inequality is an accepted policy the negative tendency is intensified.

**Siyalo, the “Nine-to-Five” Existence**

And they didn’t die portrays South Africa of the 1950s and 1960s, in which Blacks outnumber Whites by four to one but the latter dictate the pace of the society. Despite the negligible number of White characters, their strength is palpable in the form of their culture—their habits, skills, appetites, assumptions, and technology. Durban is the novel’s major urban setting whose concentrated white populace has turned it into a microcosm of the industrial West. Civilization in Durban duplicates that of capitalist Europe, having a bourgeoisie, a mercantile middleclass, and a swarming proletariat. The white citizens constitute the bourgeoisie and the mercantile middleclass. They have lands, factories, servants, and money. The bulk of the proletariat is black, recruited from the villages and reserves into the lowest ranks of the working class. The life of these workers—the group into which Siyalo falls—is structured on the nine-to-five routine. Siyalo migrates to Durban at the age of sixteen and works the routine for years in the belief that his relationship with the city is purely economic. But his distress when he attempts to return to the village bespeaks otherwise. He is a “townsman” (Ngcobo, 1991, p.123) not only in terms of location or employment, but by virtue of a culture that he has assimilated.

An article on Wikipedia entitled “Working Time” states, “9 to 5 [is] a phrase used to describe a conventional and possibly tedious job…a position of subordinate employment.” Due to its mundane nature, it is easy to overlook the fact that it has produced a singular culture with far-reaching social implications. Coote et al. (2012) claim that “even today…paid work remains firmly at the centre of people’s lives, providing access to benefits… and shaping how we use the rest of our time” (p. 13). The nine-to-five lifestyle is a matrix of culture in its own right, and as such it has distinctive cultural features. First, it is a European routine—a point which might seem obvious but needs to be stressed because it is so thoroughly acclimatized in contemporary Africa. “It
is a legacy of industrial capitalism” (Coote et al., p. 13) imported into Africa in the course of Westernization. Second, in its capacity as a culture it covers all within its domain, primarily the working class. In other words, it engenders customs and habits among the African workers that over-ride tribal demarcations and are practiced corporately. Third, like culture everywhere, it designates “something to which one belongs, something that one possesses” (Said, p. 8). The complications arising from “belonging” and “possessing,” and yet neither “belonging” nor “possessing,” are hard lessons that Siyalo, Jezile, and Lungu learn individually. For Siyalo, it means relocation from Durban is dislocation because he can never really re-trace his steps to the traditional Bantu life. The city has become his encampment and he fights alongside other Africans for a future within it. Hazel, a Colored South African city man in Alex La Guma’s novel, *In the fog of the season’s end* (1972), puts it like this:

[He] had not returned to the countryside after [the strike]. He felt that the brown eroded land, the little dwellings on the scrubby hillside held little for him. Besides, his blood had dripped onto the hard grey surface of a city sidewalk, and it was as if it had taken root and held him there. (La Guma, 1972, pp. 132-133)

The city community is controlled by the clock. This is self-evident to Siyalo, immersed as he is in urbanity before the novel opens. Jezile, however, is on her maiden visit to the metropolis, and the disparity between the city and the village strikes her immediately as a fundamental difference in rhythm. She alights from a bus and the tempo of city life hits her:

She virtually saw nothing all the way but people and more people, circumscribed by huge buildings. The city, that hotch-potch of human experience, that patchwork of human endeavour. Jezile and Siyalo pushed and zigzagged their way through the crowds—people’s faces varied in every way, black people, white people, Indian people, smartly dressed people, and people in rags, clean and dirty people; people with loads on their heads lumbering along and some swaggering with not a care in the world; but one thing in common—they all seemed in a hurry to get somewhere. (Ngcobo, 1991, p. 22)

Inhabitants of Durban are caught up in a massive time-regulated gadget that subtly harnesses other contesting systems. For the black worker, eight or nine hours (minimum) are spent in the offices or factories. Leisure time follows an agenda in consonance with work: evenings are spent in the beer parlors, Saturdays in the shopping malls or cinemas, Sundays in church, and annual leave in the village. Skills, habits, virtues, and vices have
been shaped by this blueprint. A case in point is the African value of hospitality, which has been re-modeled to create allowance for the industrial culture. Regularity and punctuality at work demand that Africans remain as close to their work zones as their bosses will tolerate, thus slums have arisen in and around Durban to house them. In these choked shanty towns, hospitality attains an urgency that the homespun rural dweller could scarcely have conceived. Multiple persons from different families share one roof, and sometimes one bed. In the bed-sharing custom, for instance, a man surrenders his bed to another for the night if the occasion warrants it, an arrangement that surprises Jezile immensely. She spends her first night in Durban courtesy of this slummy protocol, on a “borrowed” bed in a men’s dormitory. She refuses to permit Siyalo to touch her in such an arena, but her rustic delicacy is lost on the other men who bring in their women without qualms. The flimsy curtains separating the chain of cubicles are inadequate to conceal from Jezile’s horrified ears the orgy taking place on every side, demonstrative of the fact that traditional sexual modesty in Africa, as elsewhere, can hardly withstand the onslaught of urbanization. Her shock escalates the next day when Siyalo takes her to the quarters for married men. The quarters comprise dilapidated two-room buildings housing two families each, one per room. A room can shelter up to eighteen family members from three generations—children, parents, and grandparents. The squalor and lack of privacy dismay her until she comes to grips with reality. This is not her native Sigageni; it is a “profane” workaday world (Olsen, 1993, p. 66). Paid work is at the root of the world, and weekly salaries, week-ends off, and annual vacations are the offshoots. The fruit is a fully-rounded African industrial culture.

This information explains why Siyalo’s program in the city has the kind of lasting effect that is evident when he returns to the Bantustan in Sigageni. He has already “naturalized” in the metropolis. Again, the difference in lifestyles is symbolized through chronometry. Disparity in time-keeping regularly delimits African and non-African behaviors in modern African literature; there is city timing and there is village timing, and it is pertinent that Siyalo is unable to shake off one for the other. He is evicted from Durban by the government for his involvement in anti-apartheid politics, but he carries the city home with him in his bodily mechanisms. His disorientation on the reserve is expressed in his incapacity to synchronize with the rural timetable. Every season is the wrong one. He cannot tolerate “the curse...of the dusty winter” (Ngcobo, 1991, p.107), or the “malevolent” sun (p. 118), or the “stifling humidity of the rain” (p. 128). He is unable to wake before dawn, as the sterling farmers do, he lacks the stamina to drive a team of cattle for a protracted period, and he spans oxen at a slower speed than “the young boys of ten and eleven” (p. 122). The narrator summarizes his quandary with the observation that “somehow he seemed in conflict with the whole of his world...It had spat him out” (p. 111). This is an intriguing statement in view of a later one that Siyalo is “a creature of [African] custom” (p. 233). African custom is indeed dear to him but
another has taken up residence abreast of it and consequently, his heart is permanently divided. Significantly, in the heat of his lingering struggle to adjust to an arable life, the object of hope that he eventually stumbles upon is not an ancestral possession but a European artifact, an old leather handbag, “the proud possession of some rich white woman” (p. 109). Moreover, when he finally finds a job that suits him it is not in the fields but as a cook in a school for Colored children, which reinstates him in a semblance of the nine-to-five routine. Both the handbag and the job as a cook hint at his enduring affiliation to the metropolis.

Prior to his movement back to the reserve, Siyalo thinks of Sigageni as a “city variation” (p. 107), thereby confirming the fact that the city has become his norm. The years he spends on the fringes of Boer society provide ample opportunity for him to be drawn into its working culture, a culture which unfortunately has the same predisposition to discrimination as any other. In the nine-to-five pyramid, the upper middle class entrepreneurs could be said to represent the culture’s “best” (Said, 1983, p. 9), since they are the paradigms of taste, order, and efficiency. The “less than best” (p. 9), roughly delineated, are the administrative staff, followed by the skilled workers, and the unskilled. This separation, of course, predates And they didn’t die. The divergent benefits accruing to “the best” and “the less than best” have fueled angry debate and sparked off revolutions for centuries, but in the main the discrepancies have persisted. Charles Dickens is probably the best known English novelist to capture the best/less-than-best dichotomy of the industrial society at its genesis. He was acquainted with the manifold offspring spawned by industrialism; prostitutes, paupers, and orphans, as well as successful professionals and magnates. His portrait of Mr. Podsnap, a merchant in Our mutual friend, is a humorous attack on the automaton but it hits upon a situation that Siyalo and his type dream of—life near the crown of the industrial hierarchy:

Mr. Podsnap’s world was not a very large world…. The world got up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past five, and dined at seven. Mr. Podsnap’s notions of the Arts in their integrity might have been stated thus. Literature; large print, respectively descriptive of getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven. Painting and Sculpture; models and portraits representing Professors of getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven. Music; a respectable performance (without variations) on stringed and wind instruments, sedately expressive of getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past, breakfasting at nine,
going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven.
(as cited in Kermode and Hollander, 1975, p. 798)

The prerogatives of Mr. Podsnap belong to the white merchants, the middle class, in Ngcobo’s cosmos. There are white citizens in Durban’s proletariat too, but where they make an appearance it is in the relatively cushioned position of management staff, as “superintendants” (Ngcobo, 1991, p. 23). Notwithstanding, the presence of a white management cadre does not disrupt the basic social pattern in which white South Africans alone adopt the habits of the bourgeoisie, and the blacks unchangeingly fill the slot the culture labels “inferior” (Said, p. 14). Jezile comprehends this to some degree when she weighs the wretchedness of the African slums in KwaMashu against the luxury of the white suburbs. Surveying the early morning exodus of Africans from the ghetto, she gives the reader insight into a situation that would have been hell on earth for the fastidious Podsnap—life at the base of the hierarchy:

She watched KwaMashu empty itself from the security of those matchbox houses. The coombies screeched, passing each other at breakneck speed, loaded beyond capacity with passengers in and out of KwaMashu…. [KwaMashu] grew to serve the big city next door. [It] was not part of that city—it was the human reservoir of Durban, no different from the water reservoir on Reservoir Hill that Siyalo had pointed out to her. People were in the white man’s city to work—to work in the city they did not live in. (Ngcobo, 1991, p.30)

The authorities attempt to handle the pool of human beings in KwaMashu in a manner akin to the pool of water on Reservoir Hill. They push both to the borders of the city and relate to them as economic necessities, forgetting that, having appropriated elements of European culture, the Africans also aspire to be “cultured.” The Bantu city-dwellers are no longer strangers from far flung rural abodes but participants in a civilization where materialistic betterment is withheld from them. The endless rioting that comes in the wake of this is impervious to beating, imprisonment, torture, or murder. The racist government stubbornly strives to brace the social distance between the Boer and the Bantu but it is a doomed endeavor because, in the cultural context, “belonging” goes hand in hand with “possessing.” The African workers have moored in the city, and it is inevitable that they should reach for the loftier aspects of the culture to which they feel they belong.
Jezile, “the Barefoot Lifestyle”

The black worker is relegated to the periphery of city culture. In a parallel manner, relegation is integral to “the barefoot lifestyle” of the village (Ngcobo, 1991, p. 18). It is instructive to juxtapose cultural transactions in penurious Sigageni with those in affluent Durban. In Sigageni, as in South Africa as a whole, it is a handful of individuals who dictate the cultural norms but in this insular Bantu province, authority is determined pre-eminently by gender. The men are the unchallenged overlords. Numerous factors account for this. Some men are chiefs and elders, conventional authority figures. Others are financially strong, and their power stems from their solvency. The rest are just men, which is sufficient to catapult them into privilege. The men in the second group—the financially powerful—are noteworthy because they are mostly from the city, meaning that the same people on the bottom rung of the Euro-centric urban culture are found at the zenith of the African culture. Accordingly, in line with the concept of the pyramid, the customs of the hegemonic Western culture are dispersed downwards to the rural community through two channels—consciously through the Boer authorities at the summit of the pyramid, and perhaps not so consciously through the urbanized Bantu authorities at the middle tier. Either way, Western mores combine with those of the indigenous culture as incumbent upon those at the floor of the cultural mountain in Sigageni: the African women and children.

Bantu culture in Jezile’s province is patriarchal and rural. The land is the people’s source of sustenance, and it evolves habits and skills around it in a style commensurate to paid work in the cities. The land must be consistently cultivated, so while most of the young men are in the towns working, the women and children are assigned the responsibility of tilling the fields, tending the cattle, and ensuring the clan’s continuity. They do so admirably, preserving unique tribal traits with such exactness that tribes that are traditionally monogamous retain the practice of monogamy, whereas tribes that are traditionally polygamous retain polygamy. The traits are preserved even in cases where the two tribes occupy neighboring terrain and speak the same language. In the absence of men on the reserve, mothers-in-law keep daughters-in-law under their surveillance, and the latter have the duty of giving birth to and nurturing the children. The Bantu consider themselves proudly African, set apart from the pecuniary Boer society which seems conspicuously bereft of solidarity, compassion, or respect for fellow human beings; the very “peculiarities,” the Africans believe, that flavor their own African-ness. However, the reality of each day denies African autonomy. Life in the village is taxing, not only on account of the poverty but also by reason of the radius and resilience of the industrial culture, which spans every nook and cranny and exerts pressure on the less privileged in terms of conformism.

The industrial culture, indeed, makes existence more cumbersome for the women in Sigageni. It carves out a clique among the people—Siyalo and those like him—whose
urban habits introduce undesirable twists into the rural culture. An object lesson is the traditional onus on childbearing, which becomes nerve-wracking in the modern dispensation. It produces a custom in which the woman has only one month out of the twelve—the month her husband is on leave from the city—to get pregnant. The month of leave not only introduces an element of trauma into marital relations because of the obligation of motherhood, it also increases the burden of fidelity on the women when the month has expired. Traditionally, women were expected to be sexually restrained even when married, but the city routine maps out and chronically augments the period in which restraint is to be exercised. For the Bantu wife, the one month that her spouse comes home is for conception and sexual indulgence while the remaining eleven, when he is in the town, are for abstinence. It is not surprising that the independence of the women, another ancestral virtue, crystallizes under the pressure. An independent spirit is a legacy the women necessarily bequeath to their female successors because Bantu culture has endorsed migratory practices for the men for decades but frowns at it for the women. Jezile does not live with her husband, Siyalo, neither did Jezile’s mother live with Jezile’s father, or Jezile’s mother-in-law with Jezile’s father-in-law. The women uniformly stay back in the reserves to “preserve [their] way of life and reputation” (p. 188). As such, their organizational skills are perennially being honed as they become adept at mutually supporting one another.

“There are few men around these days,” Jezile’s friend, Nomawa, laments (p. 183). Jezile concurs, but it does not escape her notice that a man “behind…prison walls” holds greater sway in Sigageni than an independent woman (p. 216). The man Jezile has in mind is her husband, Siyalo, who is serving a ten-year prison sentence for illegally milking a white man’s cow. His imprisonment pushes her into infringing the pristine codes on migration, fidelity, and childbearing. In response to her audacity, Bantu culture in its purest and most punitive form crashes down on her like an axe.

When Siyalo is incarcerated, Jezile casts aside her concerns about reputation and migrates. She travels to the city of Bloemfontein to work for an Afrikaaner family, the Potgieters, in order to support her children. Mr. Potgieter rapes her and she gives birth to her mixed-race son, Lungu. As soon as Potgieter sets eyes on the child he disassociates himself from it and insists that Jezile depart. Apart from the risk to his marriage should Jezile remain, apartheid law looms forbiddingly in Bloemfontein, ready to indict the two of them for violating the ban on inter-racial sex. Jezile returns home. She goes first to her motherland and, after two weeks, moves on to present herself in the courts of Bantu jurisprudence in Sigageni, her husband’s clan. Siyalo’s kinsmen comprise the panel of judges sanctioned to evaluate her conduct. They are sympathetic but their verdict is harsh. They pronounce the birth of an illegitimate child, especially a white one, a misdemeanor. Siyalo’s kinsmen are without policemen, guns, or prisons, the law enforcement tools of the “granite power” of South Africa (p. 218). In spite of this, as custodians of their culture,
their ruling effectively debars Jezile from Siyalo’s community for the rest of her life. There is no court of appeal. Her punishment is convoluted because her motherland, where she seeks sanctuary, is within the same cultural purview as Sigageni. The custom in both clans is that the woman ceases to be a part of the community once she gets married. Consequently, Jezile’s attempts to rehabilitate herself and her children in her mother’s village are highly equivocal because to all intents and purposes she is “no longer one of them” (p. 222). She exists in a type of cultural limbo for twenty-five years. In essence, the culture she possesses has discriminated against her negatively and placed her conduct outside of itself. Said explains:

Culture must be seen as much for what it is not… as for what it positively is. This means that…culture is a system of discriminations and evaluations—perhaps mainly aesthetic, as Lionel Trilling has said, but no less forceful and tyrannical for that—for a particular class in the State able to identify with it; and it also means that culture is a system of exclusions legislated from above but enacted throughout its polity by which such things as anarchy, disorder, irrationality, inferiority, bad taste and immorality are identified, then deposited outside the culture and kept there by the power of the State and its institutions. (Said, 1983, p. 11, emphasis added)

**Lungu, “the Dilemma of ‘African whiteness’”**

The following excerpt conveys the tension between the Majolas, Siyalo’s people, and the Mapangas, Jezile’s people, when Jezile initially presents herself with Lungu:

When Jezile was a little stronger, she and Ma Sibiya [her mother] accompanied by a group of six women travelled to the Majolas. Jezile dreaded facing her mother-in-law. But to her surprise Ma Biyela looked a shadow of her former self. She sat them all down and in a quiet voice she sent the children to call the other Majola relations. The visitors were served tea in silence. When everyone had arrived, the two families sat facing each other. Jezile’s eldest aunt on her father’s side began to tell the whole story…When she had finished, the stunned silence was followed by a restless shuffle. In an even voice Ma Biyela asked to see the baby. When she opened the bundle and looked at its little face, she gave one deep groan. After some moments she asked a question of Jezile, a question directed more at destiny than her.

‘Why didn’t you just leave this child with the white man? The child does not belong here; it does not belong anywhere. This child will bring the white law on us. Who will face them when they come? This is not a Majola nor is it a Mapanga.’ (Ngcobo, 1983, p. 214)
Ma Biyela’s perturbed observation is a summary of the problematic running through the narrative—the unpalatable crisscrossing of State law and cultural law. MaBiyela dreads facing the tyranny of the State: Jezile dreads facing that of the clan. Together, State and clan decree Lungu *anathema* twice over, proscribed by the Boer administration along with Bantu custom. In a more profound sense, MaBiyela’s supposition that “this is not a Majola nor is it a Mapanga” (both African names) has symbolic undertones that outstep her immediate emergency and the text’s temporal setting. It pre-empts a situation that matures for the white South African *after* the apartheid government is ousted. The South African novelist, Justin Cartwright, alludes to this situation as “the white dilemma in Africa” (as cited in Simoes da Silva, 2008, p. 92). The dilemma is elaborated in the following manner: “Cartwright applies [the phrase] to the conundrum of “African Whiteness,” at once of Africa and uncannily non-African. In other words, even in the act of staking a claim to a place in Africa, White Africans are marked by the historical spectre of their Whiteness” (p. 92). The picture of the White African discomfited, staking a disputed claim to Africa, is an ironic inversion of the earlier picture of black Africans like Siyalo contending for a place in the white man’s city.

Snyman (2013), commenting on the White African’s situation during the Union Period (1910-48) as depicted in Stephen Black’s novel, *The dorp*, notes: “Political activities in the typical South African dorp [small town] [were] small-scale barometers, even determinants, of wider political trends” (p. 102). Historically, the collapse of apartheid many years after the Union Period, and the corresponding empowerment of black Africans, saw a shift in race relations that dethroned Whiteness and its wider political muscle. The shift presumes adjustments in cultural relations as well. In the cultural framework of this study, for instance, it implies a rearrangement of the elements, leading to a reduction in the dominating and saturating effect of the erstwhile hegemonic culture. That is, the Boer culture, no longer constitutionally the State culture, ceases to indubitably tip the pyramid. In consequence, white Africans are re-allocated to a stratum where they too become vulnerable to the penetrating energy of other evaluations and judgments, an eventuality they had hitherto been spared on account of their supremacy. An interesting equivalent to this jeopardy is recorded by the Asian-African writer from Kenya, M. G. Vassanji, whose protagonist in *The in-between world of Vikram Lall* is an Indian boy, Vikram, who finds out that Kenyan independence also induces cultural adjustment and an “Asian dilemma.” Vikram, looking at his black friend, Njoroge, in light of Kenyan *Uhuru*, admits: “I do recall that his being different, in features, in status, was not far from my consciousness. I was also aware that he was more from Africa than I was’ (27)” (as cited in Omuteche, 2011, p. 94). Viewed from this angle, the dilemma of “African Whiteness” is attributable to the unprecedented circumstance in which the
Whites find themselves at the receiving end of culture’s negative discriminating power—they must defend their values, their virtues, and their African-ness.

Lungu is not wholly white, but he is adequately so for the conundrum of Whiteness to act as an increment to the other trials he must surmount. There are two possibilities attached to his status as a “white African”; to belong to two worlds or to belong to neither. According to MaBiyela, the second pertains and “he belongs nowhere” (Ngcobo, 1991, p. 214). His skin color is actually only one thread in the knot. His dilemma is thickened by the injunction the elders place on his mother, which seals him tightly in the cultural vacuum where his Whiteness has already deposited him. In the Bantu scheme of things, Jezile is not officially married or single. If she had been married to Siyalo, Lungu would have been a full-fledged member of Siyalo’s family, the Majolas, regardless of his illegitimacy. Alternatively, if she had been single, or divorced, he would have been a member of the matrilineal household, the Mapangas. But Siyalo has no desire to divorce Jezile and she likewise has no desire for the stigma of divorce. She is not married, single, or divorced, and the notion of “separated couple” is non-existent in the scenario of Bantu marriage. Unless Siyalo’s family formally breaks the link, even if he abandons her, she is “a Majola to the grave” (p. 156).

Jezile is not legally divorced but she is definitively expelled and it rubs off on her son, further depriving him of a fixed cultural space. Theoretically, he is Siyalo’s child for as long as Jezile is Siyalo’s wife, but when emissaries from the Majolas come to take Lungu’s two sisters, Siyalo’s biological daughters, the emissaries leave Lungu behind. The gesture italicizes his lack of tenure in his fatherland. Culture has provision for his acceptance or his rejection—his father could have taken him, and probably would have if he had been black—but the veto aspect of the clan’s culture aligns vigorously with the apartheid temper and he is rejected.

Lungu is raised on the soil of Sabelweni from the age of two months. Living in his motherland, however, offers him no respite from the bewilderment of being “at variance…with everything he was part of” (pp. 228-229). The name “Lungu” means “white.” It is not the name Jezile gives him at birth but it becomes his nickname and a cardinal reminder of his exclusion. He is an embodiment of the incongruities of African Whiteness. He eats Bantu food, speaks only their language, has their blood in his veins, lives an arable life, and endures their hardships, yet “his skin remained remarkably white…his eyes were grey [and] his hair…was blond” (pp. 222-223). By reason of this, he is marked as immutably “Other” whether he is in Sigageni or Sabelweni. The fact that the word “Lungu” is drawn from the Fanakalo vernacular offers him little solace. It does not tangibly envelop him in the African fold any more than the name “Annie,” for instance, envelopes Jezile in the Potgieter family in Bloemfontein. On the contrary, both names breed frustration. “Annie” is the generic name that Afrikaaner women employers give their black maids. It is demonstrative of an archetypal impulse to domesticate the
alien by naming it. Mrs. Potgieter finds security behind the name and thinks it will draw Jezile close, but Jezile feels “emptied of herself” (p. 200). In some measure, the Fanakalo name “Lungu” betrays a similar impulse by the African community to simultaneously describe him in terms of Self and Other. “Lungu”, as a Fanakalo word, is a part of their culture, yet it describes something outside it. Whatever they intend by it, the name “Lungu” is for the owner “a vexing reference to his color and apartness” (p. 228).

Among white people, as among Blacks, culture has a way of producing its own “uncultured,” as proven in Lungu’s father, Potgieter, whom even Jezile can see is “ungainly” and “shabby compared to the city whites” (p. 189). Again, culture can go the extra mile and interdict absolutely, producing the outcast. It is among the quirks of cultural activity in the text that as a white-skinned African, Lungu is menaced by this stigma on two fronts. He is methodically deposited outside both circles of privilege rather than inside them. The narrator says, “He soon learned that by virtue of his birth he had been disinherited from all sources of power—the white world and his place in the African male structure” (p. 228). Wisdom demands that he leaves Sabelweni. When he is old enough, he is sent to a school for Colored children and later goes to the metropolis, returning to the environs of his home as a medical doctor. He is finally absorbed into the community as a successful city man, a figure the village culture can cope with.

**Conclusion**

Said’s sketch of the hierarchy of culture illuminates the coalition between culture and apartheid in fictional South Africa of the twentieth century. In a nation where prohibition is the order of the day, cultural leanings in the same direction seem to be encouraged and magnified. All the same because it is culture, something over which people have a sense of proprietorship, it does not trigger off the same antipathy from the populace as racism. At the close of the text, while the younger generation in Durban, Sigageni, Sabelweni, and across the land are poised to do battle with apartheid rule, there is no equivalent project aimed at the equally biased policies of culture. It stands inviolate while the mountain of apartheid totters.

Culture’s caprice is unending. It engenders Siyalo, a village townsman; Jezile, a husbandless wife; and Lungu, a blond Bantu. The uniformity of their distress emphasizes the comprehensiveness of the negative principle. Cultural discrimination transcends gender, age, or race. Lungu consolidates the problem, but fortunately he also points the way forward. He is emblematic of a reversal in situation which shows that culture, like the rest of society, is dynamic. In effect, nothing is immutable. Particulars within the cultural pyramid can be re-appraised, re-shuffled, or dropped. Re-appraisal would reduce the glaring anomalies in the cultural codes in the text, which presuppose “bests” that are out of step with the times—the “best” in the European market is the white entrepreneur, the “best” woman is the one that is married, the “best” African is black. It is disturbing to
think that as obsolete as these paradigms are, they refuse to be totally buried, testifying once more to the saturating power of culture. As the reader plainly deduces from the complexities emanating from cultural prejudice, if the new South Africa is to be an improvement on the old one, then there is need for an encyclopedic investigation of the models on which the past was established.
References


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Art Studies in Ghana: Whose Responsibility?

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Abstract

While Ghana has centuries of tradition in producing some significant art, the literature on Ghanaian art suggests a preponderance of Euro-American writing about it, and on the contrary a paucity of Ghanaian scholars’ contribution to the country’s art studies. This paper examines some of the scholarship and Ghanaian participation in art discourse. It proposes some measures to change the trend by introducing art history departments focusing on degree programmes and graduate studies, and creating a local platform for indigenous voices and perspectives to cross-fertilize the knowledge in the discipline for the enrichment of the global discourse on Ghana’s art.

Keywords: art studies, scholarship, African art, art history, faculty

This paper is about the minimal Ghanaian scholars’ participation in art studies despite centuries of local art production. On the contrary, there is abundant literature on the country’s art published largely by Euro-Americans from around the seventeenth century to date. For example, Wilhelm Müller (1983), writing about the Fetu (Fante) military accoutrements and basing his accounts on seventeenth century records, says Fetu weapons were decorated and were ‘extremely beautiful and clean’ (p. 196). William Bosman (1705/1967), also writing in the early eighteenth century, challenged European craftsmen to match the quality of works from the Coast of Guinea (pp. 128–129). Figures 1a-c taken from John Barbot’s (1732/1992) drawings of Gold Coast decorated bangles, bracelets, hair slides, stools and jewellery attest to this rich art tradition. Similarly, European interest in other African artistic creations led to their extensive collection and shipment to European homes and museums.
Fig. 1a. An assortment of jewellery, hair slides and other art forms used on the Gold Coast. Photo: John Barbot, 1732, Vol. 2: 693, Pl. 69.
Fig. 1b. Gold Coast artefacts in wood, meal and ivory. Photo: John Barbot, 1992, Vol. 2: p. 570, Fig. 47.
Subsequently, the British Colonial Officer and anthropologist Robert Rattray (1927), notes in the opening decades of the twentieth century that he took advantage of Europeans collecting gold weights at the time by commissioning seventy brass works for the annual British Empire exhibition held between 1924-5 in London (pp. 306-309). Such art collections taken to Europe, and the early European written sources led to scientific inquiry into African art.

African art, as an area of art historical studies, is a recent inception, which emerged as a discipline in European and American universities in the mid-twentieth century, and was introduced into Ghanaian tertiary institutions in 1952 (Labi, 2013, p. 18). Roy Sieber was the first to be awarded a PhD in 1957 from the State University of Iowa (Blier, 1990, p. 92). Consequently, there has been a missing link between art production and its scholarship in Ghana, raising concerns about how this gap between practice and theory can be bridged. How can Ghanaians create a forum for critical perspectives, which take into consideration indigenous thought, develop methodologies, participate in art discourses and respect local epistemologies without subjecting them to western scrutiny?
This paper therefore examines art studies in Ghana, and calls for critical local voices and perspectives to diversify knowledge on Ghana’s art. It invites the attention of faculty, art practitioners, scholars and the public as well as challenges stakeholders to develop the discipline.

While formal education in Ghana began in the 19th century, art education had to wait till the founding of Achimota School, Accra, in 1927. The formal teaching of art in Achimota School from 1927 onwards yielded interesting results as recounted by Coe (2002), Labi (2013) and Woets (2014). G. Stevens, the first art teacher, introduced art history lessons into the art curricula. He had reproductions of the works of Raphael Sanzio da Urbino, Peter Paul Rubens, Leonardo da Vinci together with sculptures and plaster casts of other European artists in the Art Department. Below these, he wrote short comments illustrating the merit in each (Achimota Review 1927–1937, 1937, p. 38). Woets (2014) informs us that Stevens also showed slides of works from the Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Nigeria demonstrating European efforts at promoting African art in workshops (p. 452). In order to deepen understanding of art history and relate it to African art, a museum was established to provide additional learning experience. The Art Department and its staff were later transferred to Kumasi in 1952 to form the nucleus of the Kumasi College of Technology. By 1958, the Specialist Training College, Winneba (which was later submerged into the University of Education, Winneba, UEW) had been established to train secondary school teachers in subjects including art and crafts. The Kumasi College of Technology became Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST, in 1961/62 and the art school became a College of Art in 1964 (Labi, 2013a, p. 19) now the Faculty of Art under the College of Art and Built Environment. Dogbe (2015), a pioneer of the African art course, narrates that art history was taught as part of the Design and General Art Studies Department courses when the college was established.

At the time the College was established, scholarships for graduate training abroad were limited to studio artists and students of art education, with little consideration for students of African Art History. Therefore, while studio art developed at the tertiary level, African Art History did not grow into an independent discipline, a fact that accounts for the rather modest critical contributions to its scholarship.

Rasheed Araeen (2005) conveys his concern about the lack of intellectual participation in art by Africans and encourages Africans to engage in a more rigorous discourse with theoretical underpinning (p. 417). Araeen cites the lack of recognition of

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the works of prominent African artists and points to Africans lacking in their own intellectual resources and scholars, and therefore unable to conduct their own research and engage in knowledge production, which would provide a framework capable of interpreting the works of artists (p. 413). Araeen was referring to the works of prominent African artists such as the South African Ernest Mancoba’s Composition (1940) (p. 417) as an example of the neglect of African artists’ contribution to global art studies. Similarly, the works of Ghanaian artists, such as Amon Kotei, Oku Ampofo and Kobina Bucknor, have received inadequate scholarly attention except scanty information in exhibition catalogues and brief mention in studies on Ghanaian contemporary art. This illustrates Araeen’s concern of lack of requisite capacity to conduct intellectual enquiries on Africa’s art and artists by African scholars.

A survey of 193 publications comprising books (excluding e-books), journal articles and exhibition catalogues devoted to Ghana’s art, written in English between 1927 and 2014 available in University of Ghana libraries and in Labi’s personal collection, revealed interesting results. Of these publications, 143 (74.9%) were by non-indigenes, while fifty entries, making 25.9%, are by Ghanaian writers. Out of these 193 publications, 72 were books and the remaining 121 comprised chapters in books, which had references to Ghana’s art, catalogues and articles. Forty-three of the writers of these 72 books were non-indigenous authors making 59.72% and 29 entries by local scholars in the form of books, book chapters and catalogues making 40.2%.

Another survey of African Arts, from 1967 to Issue 2, 2015 provided 121 articles on Ghana’s arts. Ghanaians wrote 18 (14.8%) of the articles, while 103 making 85.1% were written by non-Ghanaians. This sample of a paltry Ghanaian contribution provides evidence supportive of Araeen’s assertion of Africans not engaging enough in art knowledge production.

A comprehensive study of the literature would have considered other resources available locally and abroad, including primary sources written in different European languages, accounts on Ghanaian art from different disciplines, e-books and online journals and exhibition catalogues. This survey is therefore by no means comprehensive.

3 The survey was by an examination of publications in the available collection that had any aspect of Ghanaian art in its content, chapters in books that discuss Ghanaian art and reviewing these works to establish the authors, background, methodology, content, themes and trends in the scholarship.

4 People not having either parents as Ghanaians, no Ghanaian ancestry or cultural and historical ties to the country and its culture.
as there are works available abroad but not accessible to the author. The survey excluded archival and primary sources that have sections on art. It does not include self-publications, newspaper articles nor student theses. It also discounts Internet sources not linked to a peer review journal or book.

Additional information has been derived from a questionnaire administered in May 2015 whose answers assist in understanding the concerns of this paper, which is the paucity of Ghanaian scholarly art contribution. As a result, this work benefits from the answers to about fifty questionnaires on art studies and scholarship. These were distributed to faculty in art studies, past and current art students in the three tertiary institutions (namely Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Ghana and University of Education, Winneba), seeking their views on art studies and publications by Ghanaian scholars. There were visits and conversations at bookstores and the Artist Alliance gallery in Accra. The resources also included conversations I had with Zagba Oyortey, Director of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, GMMB (2013), when I was developing the PhD programme in Art History for the Institute of African Studies. The other discussions were with Dogbe (2015) and Ato Delaquis (2015), both retired lecturers, and Steve Kquofi, Head of Department of General Art Studies. The lecturers and Head of Department at UEW instead directed me to speak to Isaac Opoku-Mensah, the immediate past Head of Department who teaches art history. The questionnaire and conversations among several things sought to inquire about their understanding of what art history is and its future, if they know of or have read any art publication (book or journal article) by a Ghanaian scholar, and what their views are on the future of the discipline. Visits and interviews at the bookstores and galleries were helpful with regard to stocks and sales of art history books. In the bookstore at UEW, I was informed some lecturers preferred to sell their books (self-published) directly to students, and in KNUST some staff publications were sold in bookshops outside the university. However, the Artists Alliance gallery has art books, with a dominant foreign authorship, and some of the gallery’s exhibition catalogues for sale.

Similarly, there is an occasional Ghanaian presence at international African art conferences and symposia. During some of these recent conferences, such as College Art Association’s, CAA, 98th Annual Conference, Chicago (2010), there was one Ghanaian who presented a paper. The 15th Arts Council of the African Studies Association, ACASA, Symposium (2011) in Los Angeles had two Ghanaians presenting papers. The 16th ACASA Symposia (2014) had one Ghanaian presenting a paper, but none at the South African Visual Arts Historians (SAVAH) conference in South Africa (2011). The same absence applied to the 2015 European Conference on African Studies, ECAS, held in Paris. Ghanaian art scholars’ presence is also rare at art panels of the African Studies Association, ASA. It seems that this situation has not improved since John Drewal’s
observation that European and American scholars have been at the forefront of African art studies (p. 38).

**Ghana’s Art Scholarship**

Since the emergence of African art history as an academic discipline in the 1950s, studies of Ghana’s art have produced insights from adaptations of models from different disciplines, including art, anthropology, archaeology and history. A careful selection of the literature has been applied to original research and the most relevant and representative of the publications are discussed below.

A pioneer among Ghana’s art writers was Rattray (1923/1927) who made significant contribution. Similar anthropological contributions are by the Ghanaian-born Alexander Kyerematen. His works include ‘Regalia for an Ashanti durbar’ (1961). The most significant of Kyerematen’s works are the photographs he took and the script he wrote when commissioned by the government to mount an exhibition for Queen Elizabeth II’s visit in 1959 and published in 1964. He co-authored one article with Allen Bassing (1972) and published his last known work in 1977.

The eclectic methodology in the mid-twentieth century prompted scholars from diverse backgrounds to participate in this new endeavour. These initial methods were a swing between a poor account of history, weak ethnography or a combination of the two. Many early scholars saw themselves as anthropologists rather than art historians, and perceived the art being learned as a reflection in the progress of the material culture of the people they studied (Willet, 1971, p. 30). Later, scholars including sociologists, art historians and museum curators with different perspectives emerged, applying new methodologies and theories to their inquiry. There has since been a break from the ethnographic approach as there is now a palpable commitment to art history. Some scholars have explored topics such as aesthetics, iconography, performance, philosophy and style, and conducted in-depth studies, synthesized information and developed the scholarship further as a result of interdisciplinary perspectives.

Between the early works the Ghanaian writers, Kofi Antubam (1961/1963), Kyerematen and Kojo Fosu (1986), there has been remarkable progress in methodologies and themes advanced largely by Euro-American academics. In the decades that followed up to the end of the twentieth century, new Ghanaian scholars, including Alfred Quarcoo, a sociologist, Kwame Anthony Appiah, a philosopher, Nii Quarcoopome, an archaeologist, Atta Kwami, a painter, and Kwame Labi, an art historian, have contributed

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A theory and practice that selects and gathers doctrines, perspectives or styles from various sources including anthropology, history, and archaeology depending on what appears to be most useful for a particular use (Drewal, 1990, p. 32).
to the discipline. The *Research Review* has published articles on Ghana’s art studies with Quarcoo, Labi and Ohene-Konadu (1994) among the contributors.

In 1979, *African Arts* dedicated a special issue to the study of art in Ghana with no local scholar contributing. In that issue, Cole (1979) points to the number of scholars who, from diverse backgrounds are developing, refining historical analysis, identifying styles, elucidating symbolic systems and pushing the boundaries of aesthetic knowledge (p. 26). The articles provided detailed explorations of other art forms, which aimed to reflect the omissions and shortcomings of the 1977 exhibition catalogue, which he co-published with Ross. Among the new tools discussed was the use of photography to capture local values, aesthetics, moments and events. Cole and Ross (1985) and Jenkins and Geary (1985) later investigated the use of photographs as important resources to art studies but a more detailed and systematic approach is by Wendl (2001), who problematises photography as an aesthetic form or a cultural phenomenon in anthropology. Arlt and Quarcoopome (2009) later remind us that traditional leaders used photographs to negotiate their place and integration into the colony, and within the doctrines of the church (p. 62).

Antubam (1963) sets the pace in Ghanaian aesthetics by providing the main characteristics of Ghanaian art and culture, in an attempt at Ghanaian aesthetics. This paved the way for extensive attention to Akan aesthetics and world view through the works of Silver (1983), and Warren and Andrews (1977). Other studies include how the Gurensi express aesthetic judgments through wall paintings, pottery and facial decorations (Smith, 1978, p. 36-41). Gott (2007) takes advantage of the strong appetite for fashion among the Asante and demonstrates how they make a ‘show’, even at the demise of a husband or close relative, through the strategies employed and dynamics of funerary presentations (p. 79-106). Gott’s (2010) work on Ghanaian *kaba* introduces a new genre in fashion.

Cole and Ross (1977) point to a dynamic culture of influence, particularly Islam from the north and European from the south, on Akan art. Prussin (1980) supports this as important in understanding Asante architectural history. Preston (1975), Ross (1979/2007) and Labi (2006) have also discussed European influences on Fante art and architecture while Hess (2006b) introduces the modern and postcolonial political strategies in the development of architectural styles. While these scholars diversify the studies, the Ghanaian architect Wellington’s (2011/2012) studies on Accra’s heritage after contacts with the Danes have appeared in the literature.

Among the Gurensi, architectural construction and space are gendered. Gender differentiation, complementarity and decoration between the compound entrance and within it show gender relations (Smith, 1986). Later Smith (1989) investigated the relationship between the earth and women’s pots in Gurensi as an important element in social harmony.
Art historians have now found it imperative to pay attention to local artists and their study now engage scholarly attention. Pioneering in this were Antubam’s studies on Osei Bonsu, one of the greatest Ghanaian sculptors. After Antubam, Fagg (1968) was one of the first European art historians to recognise the contribution of Bonsu to the study of Ghana’s art history. Recent writers, including Andrews and Warren, and Ross (1984) have consulted him on a wide range of issues. The art of Vincent Kofi, Ablade Glover, Ato Delaquis and others have prompted the study of contemporary Ghanaian artists as an area of inquiry. Those in the Diaspora such as El Anatsui and Kwesi Owusu-Ankomah have attracted art historians to their works because of their combination of inspirations from Ghanaian imagery and foreign influences. Ross’ (2001) study of the works of George Hughes is an example of this interest.

Akan art is rich in communicative aspects. Ross (1977b/1982) has applied iconography to its study, and Cole and Ross (1977) have used the expression ‘verbal-visual nexus’ to illustrate the interconnectedness between Akan imagery and proverbial sayings. Ross (1977b/1982) and Patton (1984) later traced the origins of some of these works by exploring early European primary sources in explaining the different iconographic types and works, uses and their meanings. However, Malcolm McLeod (1976) warns us not to classify all Akan or Ghanaian art as symbolic as he distinguishes sculpture that has verbal components from the genre that does not (p. 90). Labi’s (2002b/2009) studies on the relationship between Fante flag symbols, proverbs and their interpretations by rival companies and intangible aspects of Akan art broaden the study. Metaphors are part of Asante communicative strategies but the challenges of transmission of this knowledge and collective memory raises important issues associated with the fluidity of these narratives (Owusu-Sarpong, 2003, pp. 239-240).

After Field’s (1948) study, Gilbert’s three works Ewe funerary sculpture (1981), Mystical protection among the Anlo-Ewe (1982), Akan terracotta heads: God or ancestors? (1989a) and Sources of power in Akuropon-Akuapem: ambiguities in classifications (1989b), follow the trajectory of the use of clay pointing out the need to contextualize pottery, as they have moral implications. She warns against lumping all terracotta from Ghana into one category, or seeing them as unconnected to another. Her works reveal that despite modernisation and social change, traditional representation of mystical powers in clay and cement figures is still important among the Anlo-Ewe (Gilbert, 1982). Bonakire pottery making has also been fairly recounted by Berns (2007) providing a rich context for the study of integration of pottery production, its consumption and distribution. However, for Aronson (2007) pottery also provides important components for domestic and ritual vodun (p. 80-85).

Following Rattray’s earlier account of brass casting, the subject has subsequently attracted foreign interest and the cire perdue technique used in its manufacture, has been examined by Dark (1973) as a sub-regional technique. Garrard made insightful
contributions in a collection of essays between 1972 and 1973, culminating in his 1980 book *Akan weights and the gold trade*. He sets himself the task of constructing the history of Akan brass casting, and following these series of publications was what may be considered a sequel (Ross & Garrard 1983) to similar studies in the *Arts of Ghana*. The 1983 work was firmly grounded in a scientific approach built upon archaeological evidence and a meticulous examination of sources and cast brass leading to informed speculation. In 1986, Ray Silverman, examined Bono *cire perdue* technology, and Christine Fox provided insights into the Akan technique of modelling figures and animals for casting. Garrard (1984) extended his investigation to Akan silver (pp. 48-53).

It was not until the last quarter of the twentieth century when Fosu (1986) wrote on contemporary art in Africa, citing some Ghanaian modern and contemporary artists. Other studies have been on the dynamics and aesthetic satisfaction in visual innovations in Ghana’s cities in the postcolonial era, where many unskilled people coming from the countryside are confronted with the challenges of modernity. These cities have become centres for cross-fertilization of ideas and artistic expressions appropriating American icons, and other influences through hairstyles and thought-provoking creative art on *trotro*, mini-buses, studio backdrops and a wide range of other imaginative compositions depicted in urban street art (Quarcoopome, 2009). Other works that explore these artists and their genres include Chernoff (1977), Kristen (1980), Falgayrettes-Leveau (2003) and Ross (2014a/2014b). Recent works of Hess (2006a), Kwami (2003/2012), Labi (2013a), and Woets (2014) have contributed to the studies on Ghana’s modern and contemporary art.

Early sources for the discipline included exhibitions and accompanying catalogues, starting in 1956 with the foreword by Arthur Lindsey and another by Antubam (1961). The catalogue by Cole and Ross (1977) may be referred to as the most comprehensive historical account on Ghana’s art. The *Ghana: yesterday and today* (Owusu-Sarpong & Falgayrettes-Leveau, Eds., 2003) catalogue addresses Ghana’s art traditions, its modernity and receptiveness to other cultures, contemporary and popular art, changes and persistence in its essays including three by the Ghanaian scholars, Quarcoopome, Anquandah and Kwami. Some recent catalogues (Fosu, 2004/2009) focus on Ghanaian contemporary art in a modern world, while those by Labi (1992/2000), and Labi and Boachie-Ansah (2008) are on traditional art.

For the first time in the history of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, a mobile exhibition (2010) was dedicated to the works of the Ghanaian-born El Anatsui, resident in Nigeria, an indication of the recognition of Ghana’s contemporary art and the

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6 A name derived from the two and a half pence coin called ‘tro’ charged as fare by passenger vehicles in the 1950s and early 1960s operating in the city as commuter vehicles and has been maintained to date.
global contribution of Anatsui. The four essays by Olu Oguibe, Chika Okeke-Agulu, Robert Storr and Appiah, in the catalogue (Binder Ed., 2010), discuss the early years of Anatsui’s work and demonstrate the changes in style and materials in his sculpture.

The pioneer Ghanaian contributors on performance were Awoonor-Williams (1967a/1967b), de Graft (1968a/1968b), Bame (1968) and Acquaye (1968). After these early works, studies on performance such as the Sisala masquerades by Nunley (1977, pp. 58-64), masquerading among the Grusi and Manding (Bravmann 1979), and Smith’s (1982) studies on the Frafra and Gurensi have been done. The visual and performing arts that accompany Frafra funerals, Smith (1987) explains, highlight the social roles of funerals in honouring the deceased, and revitalising ties between the living and ancestors. Scholars are continuing to study performance such as Micots (2012/2014).

The literature suggests a dynamic scholarship on the breadth of Ghanaian art within and across genres in secular and non-secular settings. The investigative methods used highlight the similarities and differences among the various ethnic groups with respect to form and sources of influence. The artists’ creativity, responses to modernity, technology and materials manifest in these publications. Also highlighted are the works of the few local scholars and the leadership of foreign scholars in these investigations.

Ghana’s Art Studies: Its State and Challenges

The discussion that follows is guided by the problem of minimal Ghanaian scholarly contribution and the concerns raised by Araeen and Drewal. One of the questions in the questionnaire was ‘There is abundant literature on Ghanaian art. Unfortunately, a survey of the authors is largely non-Ghanaian. Can you give me the reasons for this?’ The respondents gave various reasons, including lack of interest and capacity. E. K. Howard, a lecturer at KNUST, says ‘European authors seem to be more interested in issues pertaining to African art and customs. Ghanaians are not much enthused with their own culture ….’ This summarises the low patronage of the study of Ghanaian art. Lorraine Osewele (2015), a past student in art history, provides further explanation to Howard’s answer saying: ‘I think non-Ghanaians are more interested in doing research on Ghanaian art than Ghanaians themselves – perhaps non-Ghanaians are better resourced or perhaps Ghanaians underestimate their arts value’. These two responses sum up some of the reasons for the status quo. Edwin Bodjawah, a lecturer in contemporary art at the College of Art, says, ‘There is a huge gap between what is happening in the art world and what is being done here’. He admits a knowledge gap between what is being done elsewhere and what pertains in Ghana’s tertiary institutions. These differences include lack of specialists, how theoretical frameworks are taught and used and the application of established art history methodologies to research. The difference also relates to availability of local art journals, galleries and museums, a critical
mass to patronise the outcomes of research, connoisseurs, foundations to provide funding and lack of governmental support.

Some of these challenges may be explained through the account of how the College of Art’s art history course was developed. The present African Art and Culture course started in 1973 as African art when an English student, Ms. Clement Taylor, enrolled in the Master of Arts programme in African art. John Bull, a British sculptor and lecturer in African art, was tasked to write an M.A. course in African art for this student. Subsequently, Chuke Amefuna, J. J. Clement Hagan and Dogbe were admitted as the first African art students (1974 to 1976). Dogbe later received his doctorate, and by his return the M.A. course had been firmly established in the Department.

Bull’s interest was in African art and that of Osei-Agyeman, a Ghanaian colleague of Bull, was in culture, as both lecturers had no training in African art history. This biased their teachings towards African art and culture. Their advocacy in teaching this was to attract foreign students, particularly African-American students. There was later a proposal to change the course from African art to African art and culture. The document maintained that, ‘This will surely enable Ghana especially this university to earn more foreign exchange’ (2001, p. 3). With the gradual reduction in government subvention and foreign students paying fees in foreign currency, it became attractive to the university while the foreign students found a novel African art course outside Europe and America to study. When I enquired from Kquofi (2015) about the College’s plan to develop African art history, he admitted that a proposal had been submitted for an Art History Department to be established. Although the challenge was inadequacy of faculty, the Department of General Art Studies has been training local staff as well as receiving applications for new faculty. The challenge will be if the proposed Department of Art History would address the current problem under discussion.

At UEW, the situation is not much different as art history is taught for one semester only to first year students, according to Opoku-Mensah (2015). The focus of teaching art history is to train teachers to teach aspects of art history in General Knowledge in Art in Senior High Schools. At the M. Phil. Level, there is a course called the Arts of Ghana, which covers theatre, music, and pre-historic to contemporary art, which is a combination of visual and performing arts.

The responses to the questionnaire represent an unfortunate attitude towards art history as they suggest it is only Europeans and Americans who are interested in studying the art of Ghana. Howard (2015) makes an interesting remark about studio artists, saying ‘[a]rtists find it difficult to publish as writing is a skill that one has to develop. The trend is changing now as most artists are now publishing’. On the contrary, Delaquis (2015)

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7 Proposal to change the title of the ‘African art’ to ‘African art and culture’ by the Department of art history, was approved by the College of Art in 2001.
declared he was disappointed at the contents of the African art and culture course. His reason is that he does not see the impact of such art students on art. He says, ‘There are hundreds of these students but [they can] not produce simple articles in newspapers’ or journal articles. Are the faculty and students therefore unable to engage in scholarship, and meet the rigour demanded by journals and publishing houses? The concerns of some graduate students about the faculty are echoed thus ‘They are not committed to the studying of their art or the need to have new outcomes following from refreshed perspectives of their art …’ says one of the respondents. Other responses can be summarised as no motivation and encouragement to write. The students expressed other sentiments such as ‘failure of Ghanaian educational institutions (especially tertiary institutions) to provide adequate opportunities for students to study art and art history’, says another respondent, a graduate student at the Institute of African Studies. The unavailability of relevant books and resources in the University of Ghana online database and access to online art journals are some of other challenges faced by Ghanaian graduate students of art.

The other problems are restrictions placed on some African addresses by credit card companies disallowing payments from, and shipments to these addresses, or no shipments outside Europe or the US. While this is true, an answer to the question ‘How would you suggest resources can be improved’ was that universities should subscribe to art journals and purchase current literature on art history. The University of Ghana continues to acquire current literature, though this may be inadequate.

The other question that yielded interesting responses was ‘Can you give me the names of Ghanaian writers who have published on Ghanaian art in refereed journals and books?’ It appears that knowledge of such authors is limited to Antubam, Fosu, Kwami, Akwasi Sarpong and E. V. Asihene though a few also cited Quarcoopome and Labi. Respondents from each university cited the publications of their lecturers. Respondents from the College of Art cited Karikacha Seidu, Steve Kquofi and Ibrahim Mahama Seidou as scholars who have published in international journals. I decided to search electronically using Google, Jstor and eLibrary USA without any success. Even then, these local publications were difficult to find in local bookstores and libraries. In my discussion with Kquofi, he admitted that some of his publications sold in the bookstores were not peer reviewed. I spent some time at the UEW with Adolph Agbeh, the Acting Deputy Librarian, searching for publications of faculty in the library and online publications. This was difficult and confirmed what Patience Sersah, a UEW Senior Stores Superintendent at the bookstore told me, i.e. that lecturers prefer to sell their books (self-publications) directly to the students, to leaving copies in the library.

Some of the respondents admit good prospects for art studies and suggest making it compulsory at the undergraduate level to generate interest. This, hopefully should impact positively students’ understanding and appreciation of art, and ensure further
training for students. Additionally, it would broaden the range of courses available to students and create a critical mass for the establishment of art history departments. The Institute of African Studies offers art history courses as part of a general African Studies programme to second year undergraduate students, M.A. and PhD students. However, this is inadequate for specialisation in African art history.

It is evident that there is a need to train art historians and not assume artists who teach studio courses can accidentally acquire the knowledge to teach art history. There needs to be a paradigm shift and a disavowal of the assumption that art history can only be taught in art colleges and that only studio art students can offer such courses. Finally, there is the need to create avenues for dissemination of research findings, create a professional association and encourage national dialogues to discuss the promotion of the discipline. Collaborative works, funding for research and scholarships are prerequisites to advance the discipline. It is amply clear from the above discussion that African art history is not developed in the country’s tertiary institutions.

The Future of the Discipline

The historical account of Ghana’s art and the central role it plays have consistently featured in narratives and written records. What is absent is its comprehensive academic study and specialisation at higher degrees. In 1963 therefore, during the inauguration of the Institute of African Studies, the President of the Republic, Kwame Nkrumah’s speech ‘African Genius,’ gave a clear suggestion on how to conduct research into Africa’s past in order to develop models for scholars to pursue a new and aggressive Afrocentric approach to artistic inquiry. He stated that appreciation of African art should be more than a simple curiosity but pave the way towards the understanding of the African and his or her art (Botwe-Asamoah 2005, p. 65). In his opinion, the admiration of African art should be something not just for novelty, but also for enhancing understanding and respect for Africans, shedding light on African art, and positioning it within global artistic traditions and scholarly discourses (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005, p. 65). The facilities at the Institute included an ethnographic museum (Fig. 2) to promote the teaching of the African visual art.
Fig. 2. Kwame Nkrumah in 1963 being conducted round the IAS facilities by J. H. Kwabena Nketia, in the foreground of photo, On the top left is the display of some musical instruments as part of the ethnographic collection. Photo: courtesy of IAS audio visual section.

Unfortunately, art studies in Ghana deal with a limited range of art history topics taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels to the neglect of the broader subject and its theoretical and methodological underpinnings of critical enquiry. The revised 1987 second cycle curricula introduced limited teaching of a general knowledge in art, which stimulated the publication of amateur second cycle school art books. Though this is significant to the development of the discipline, these books require a body to review their contents and illustrations.

There is a re-emerging local interest in writing about Ghana’s art, which is gradually re-appearing in the form of articles, exhibition catalogues, brochures and texts on the Internet. The subject will benefit from improved scrutiny, wider circulation of published works and media support. A review of courses to consider current trends in the
discipline, set standards and orientation is critical at this point. Interactions and exchanges with institutions and colleagues who have experience in teaching African art history will be of immense benefit. Joint research projects or collaborations with local institutions and scholars, cross-border projects in the sub-region to trace origins, histories, artistic styles and influences will surely strengthen sub-regional capacity. These, I believe, will lead to increased discourse in schools and on university campuses. Equally critical for sustained interest in the discipline are the formation of strong subject associations and the organisation of symposia, conferences and travels. Research by Ghanaian scholars from diverse backgrounds, will lead to new approaches, definitions and terminologies taking into consideration language, myths, beliefs, inputs from traditional leaders, custodians as well as the voices of indigenous artists. This will gradually lead to increase in local perspectives and enrich the discourse.

In the late 1950s and the 1970s the GMMB was at the forefront of providing a platform for exhibitions and for artists such as Antubam and Bucknor to engage with the public through lectures. Several exhibitions have since been held there to promote art. To enhance its contribution to the discipline, GMMB must improve accessibility to its collections, enhance information on the objects, provide high-resolution digital images of the collection and establish an efficient retrieval system. Additionally, the GMMB must strengthen its research and have a budget and personnel to conduct original research and disseminate its findings, through publications, exhibitions and educational programmes. Collaborations with institutions in research, curriculum development, internships and educational activities will improve the museum’s contribution to the study than its current strategy of mainly providing exhibition space. The GMMB must address current challenges and interests; be at the forefront of debates; and provide the space for this as it had previously done in the late 1950s and early 1970s.

In a discussion with Oyortey (2013), he agreed to offer the museum’s expertise in the experiential learning component of the programme. This joint training component of the students training is expected to expose students to practical experience and to bring them into close contact with users and patrons of art, and how to respond to the needs of art lovers, the public and scholars in order to develop the discipline.

Conclusion

A team of researchers from IAS were reminded in the court of the Asantehene, (king of the Asante ethnic group), in 2001\(^8\) about how important Rattray’s work and the IAS stool histories have become major resources in traditional governance and in the

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\(^8\) This was during a courtesy call on Otumfu Osei Tutu II to formally seek permission from and inform him of the Institute of African Studies intended research on the death, burial and funeral rites of the late Otumfu Opoku Ware II.
settlement of disputes in the court. The IAS was thus told of how imperative it is to pursue research on Ghana’s art and traditions. Kyerematen’s works were, in effect, the beginning of the process of documenting and writing about Ghana’s art and regalia. The importance of such local studies was highlighted in 2003, when the World Bank initiated a partnership with the Asanteman Council in a development programme called Promoting Partnership with Traditional Authorities Project (PPTAP) with a grant of US$4.5 million awarded through the Ghana government. It included a component to develop local communities through identification and documentation of Asante heritage assets and how these can be used for local development (Boachie, Labi & Brempong 2009). Such initiatives have placed art as an integral part of community development. The purchase of Akan cast brass works (Figs. 3a-b) by the late Chancellor of the University of Ghana, Oyeeman Nana Wereko Ampem II, its donation to UG and subsequent research conducted on Akan brass works, a permanent exhibition of the collection and subsequent publications should serve as an example of the use of art in an integrated manner.

Fig. 3a. This photograph shows how the owner of the collection, Mr. Dieter Röttger, stored the brass works.
Fig. 3b. This photograph shows drawings and documentation of the collection by Mr. Dieter Röttger.
The current faculty, students and other scholars have to challenge themselves with innovative methodologies, revise existing course content, specialise, forge partnerships and collaborations locally and externally, provide teaching aids, lobby for scholarships and seek research grants for Ghanaian-led investigations. The approach to art studies must be multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary, and should involve private and public partnerships, local and external funding; it should also undertake new collections and exhibitions, seek to integrate technology and social media into research. All of these should be useful tools for the new direction for art studies in Ghana.
References


**Interviews**


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The Revolutionary Poems of Tayo Olafioye

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Abstract

This paper examines the revolutionary poems of Tayo Olafioye in order to demonstrate how his radical thought is depicted in his poems. To achieve this purpose, a study of one of his collections of poems, entitled *A carnival of looters*, is undertaken. In the study, we discover that proverbs are the central technique used in depicting critical ideas in the poems. The paper concludes that proverbs are used for expressing reformative messages as means of mobilisation and conscientisation of the masses in order to achieve social change.

**Keywords**: revolution, mobilisation, conscientisation, proverbs, physicalism

The social function of art resides in its capacity of inciting revolution, which has been described as ‘the instrument of rescuing society from its social doldrums’ (Akano, 2013, p.66). In the light of Akano’s affirmation (2013), we intend to push this argument a little further, by showing that proverbs are used to express revolutionary thought in the poems of Tayo Olafioye. Akporobaro (2005) has asserted that proverbs are ‘a means for deepening and generating …awareness’ (p.74) and that because of this, they are used to perform a ‘very wide educative role.’ Akporobaro (2005, p.87) further contends that ‘most Nigerian proverbs are expressions of feelings or opinions or intended to influence people’s wills and actions’. This potentiality is what Olafioye has exploited to articulate the revolutionary message in his poetry.

Additionally, Finnegan (2012) states: ‘proverbs, then, may be a particularly suitable form of communication in situations and relationships of potential or latent conflict’ (p.400). As explosive as revolutionary situations are, proverbs become imperative in conveying the poet’s ideas. In the context of this paper, we intend to establish the fact that proverbs are used to educate the masses.
The Concept of Revolution

Heywood (2007) focuses on the causes of revolution. In his opinion, people embark on a revolution for several reasons. He identifies four specific reasons:

Revolutions are popular uprisings that consist of extra-legal mass action aimed at changing the political system. Revolutions have been explained in a variety of ways. They have been portrayed as a symptom of a supposedly deeper social transformation, as a sign of disequilibrium in the political system, as a consequence of the thwarting of rising expectations, and as a result of the declining effectiveness of the state. (p.225)

From Heywood’s point of view, a revolution could take place when certain social expectations are not met by the leaders. In the same way, when the political system encourages the unequal treatment of people, revolutions will occur. In addition, revolutions can become the order of the day where the state continues to show weakness in most aspects of its national life. Consequently, it leads people to seek better alternatives.

Heywood (2007) also emphasises the violent nature of revolution. Although violence may form the nucleus of a revolution, it is regarded as a means of actualising change rather than the change itself. He declares further: ‘the concept of “revolution” can be regarded as an ideal type in this sense in that it draws attention to a process of fundamental and usually violent political change’ (p.18). The idealistic quality of revolution, as noted by Heywood, underscores the need for a process-oriented approach to change. For, no meaningful revolution can take place without a thorough plan.

For his own part, Hoover (2007) articulates Edmund Burke’s preoccupation with how a revolution could be achieved: ‘Burke was, in fact, more concerned with the method of change than with the agent. The political method he prefers is gradual, responsible, and carefully considered’(p.57). Hoover’s idea (2007) of revolution places emphasis on the method. Buttressing Heywood’s (2007) process-oriented approach, Hoover submits that effective revolutions must be gradual, responsible and properly thought out. What this means is that it must be a product of the mind (intellectualism) and not of the fist (physicalism).

Calvert (1996) believes that revolution and violence are inseparable. He explains: ‘the idea of violence, real or threatened, is inseparable from it’ (p.2). He adds: ‘The word “revolution” has more specifically come to mean a major change in the political and socio-economic structure of an individual state, brought about by the spontaneous efforts of its citizens, though these efforts may be aided from outside and may in turn act to bring about similar changes in other countries’ (p.2).
In Calvert’s view, a revolution is synonymous with a major political and socio-economic change in the structure of a particular nation-state; such a change is often brought about by internal forces, as well as by outside forces. In other words, the citizens can expedite the process of change working in concert with other nationals in order to bring about revolution.

Finally, Nielsen (1979) examines the implication of the economic factor in a revolution. For him, a revolution results when the economic structure fails to sustain and satisfy the hopes and expectations of the people: ‘For there to be a revolution, it is often claimed, there must be widespread misery, deprivation, and exploitation followed by a brief period of rising expectations which, after some minor improvements in the oppressed people’s condition, are in turn dashed by a turn of events for the worse’ (p.160). Thus conceptualised, a revolution is justified when the leaders have failed to prevent widespread misery, deprivation and exploitation. Where these prevail, the masses can embark on a revolution to usher in the much needed change. It is against this background that this paper identifies mobilisation and conscientisation as the primary functions of proverbs in Olafioye’s revolutionary poems.

**Review of Scholarship on Tayo Olafioye’s Poetry**

Okome (2000) is among the scholars who have examined Olafioye’s *A Carnival of Looters* locating the poems within the border of patriotism and recognising the deep socio-political thrust underpinning the message of the poems: ‘A poet of the younger generation, his overriding concern is for the future of nationhood and national identity; and his own relationship to the nation as a committed poet writing in exile. The poet assumes that to love one’s country is to be critical about its hateful history, disintegration and idiocies’ (p.39)

Okome’s critique outlines Olafioye’s patriotic inclinations and the possibility of achieving social change. The study pays adequate attention to the poet’s portraiture of nationhood and national identity. Okome’s study does not, however, reveal the path to national freedom.

For his part, Uzowulu (2014) carries out a comparative study of the poems of Olafioye and Niyi Osundare. According to him, ‘In Tayo Olafioye’s *A Carnival of Looters*, we learn of the evils of corruption, the helplessness and the disaster it brings. The poet presents us with the different faces of corruption political, economic and moral corruption which is prevalent in the Nigerian society’ (p.49).

According to Uzowulu, Olafioye’s poems capture the different shades of corruption practiced in Nigeria. From the poet’s range of imagination, no aspect of the society is spared. Adding to the above, Uzowulu submits: ‘What angers the poet the most is Nigerians’ attitude to corruption. He tries to incite anger in Nigerians. He says our complacent attitude and mythical beliefs will not save us from corruption’ (p. 50). From
what we can gather, Uzowulu’s paper is more concerned with identifying the causes of corruption rather than how it can be eradicated. In many respects, Uzowulu’s research, like Okome’s appraisal, fails to explain how change can be created.

In a sociological study of Olafioye’s poems, Temiloluwa (2011) states thus:

Olafioye is a satirical poet who uses his choice of words to convey his message in his satirical poems to elaborate and emphasise the situation of his nation. He employs metaphorical phrases to reveal truths. An example of his quest for truth was evident in his use of the proverbial Aiyekooto, the parrot – known for truth as the only way for Nigeria’s socio-economic resurrection. (p.47)

Although Temiloluwa recognises Olafioye’s use of proverbs, she does not show the relevance of proverbs to the overall purpose of the poems. Like other scholars who have worked on Olafioye’s poems, these statements are not given adequate textual illustrations from the poems.

Akano (2013), another Nigerian critic, seeks to show that Olafioye’s poetry censures socio-political realities in Nigeria. He contends, ‘Olafioye, a victim of socio-political malaise and strangulating economic crunches castigates using aesthetic grenade that has been the cupful lots of his native land. His poetic bi-focal lens picture with utmost consternation his rabid passion with which the country’s socio-political landscape has been awash’ (p.67). Akano’s analysis is concerned with revealing the problems confronting the Nigerian society without demonstrating from the poems how the poet intends to solve the said problems. While my paper has immensely benefitted from the insights provided by these studies on Olafioye’s poetry, it attempts to transcend current literature on his craft by highlighting mobilisation and conscientisation as the primary functions of proverbs in Olafioye’s revolutionary poems.

**Mobilisation**

Proverbs, in Olafioye’s poems, are used for mobilising the masses in order to achieve political revolution. A noteworthy attempt to project this idea is to be found in the poem entitled ‘Lunatic cuckoos.’ The poem opens with an unusual frankness that jars the leader’s complacency and awakens his/her sense of guilt:

We are all patients
in the hospital of guilt,
dancing together in sadness.
Difficult to be sorry,
society deserves government it gets. (p.36)
The speaker gains our trust by using the possessive pronoun ‘we’. In effect, he identifies with our sense of collective guilt. The poet enriches the poem with the image of sickness, sadness and suffering which have taken a national dimension. To him, this sickness is a product of the visionless government that has been entrenched in Nigeria.

To buttress the point that every society deserves the kind of government it gets and to justify his condemnation of the people, the speaker introduces a fitting proverb: ‘no one sits so idle/when their home is ablaze’ (p.36). What this means is that it is sheer lunacy for anyone to do nothing when their home is on fire. In the view of the speaker, Nigeria is burning terribly but unfortunately, Nigerians sit on the fence and do nothing. Therefore, by their inaction and indecision, they do not only condone bad governments but also permit them to thrive. This proverb is fittingly used to condemn Nigerians and also to indirectly nudge them into revolutionary action.

Olafioye’s (2000) uniqueness and much of his success lie in the baffling and completely unexpected juxtapositions he makes of indifference and disloyalty:

Dead, of course;
loyalty to nation;
principle and
conviction. (p.36)

The proverb that immediately follows the above excerpt captures the absolute loss of patriotic commitment in the Nigerian nation. His presentation of Nigeria as a nation with no patriots, no principles and no conviction conveys the impression that Nigeria is a nation enmeshed in moral attrition. As a corollary, such a nation is only tending carcass to its citizens and cannot achieve national development. This is what the proverb below appears to be saying:

Only those tending
the carcass
await their spurious harvesting. (p.36).

There is nothing that can come out of waiting for change as long as the leaders prefer to manage the carcass of the nation for their own good.

The speaker draws the attention of the reader to one fundamental error of his compatriots and that is, the predisposition of Nigerians to ‘haste[n] to change the guards’ (p.30) without first changing their ‘national attitudes’. It is not enough to replace one leader with another. The citizenry has everything to gain by discarding the old unpatriotic attitude and embracing loyalty, principle and conviction in the country. It is on this premise that Nigeria can become the dream of what Nigerians aspire to actualise.
Olafioye’s use of precise epithets creates a certain lushness as when he describes the nation’s three major ethnic groups:

- Spineless Yorubas
diplomacy degenerate:
- strong-willed Igbos
bullish myopia
- Sissy Hausas
hegemonic manipulators
- triumvirate ills
- in a national petri dish;
lunatic cuckoos, all (p.37)

The speaker identifies the different challenges that have plagued the three major ethnic nationalities in Nigeria: spinelessness, myopia and hegemonic manipulation. The masses are encouraged to lay aside these differences in order to achieve political revolution. The poem ends with an apt proverb: ‘Nothing happens for good by itself’ (p.37). This proverb suggests that for change to happen, it must be made to happen. Nigerians are urged to follow the examples of nations that have achieved freedom from misrule. The persona makes a list of some of them:

- Nothing happens for good by itself
- Albania;
- Somalia;
- Mozambique;
- Kurdistan;
- Chechnya;
- Bosnia;
- Liberia;
- What have we? (p.37)

By listing these countries, the speaker is indirectly mobilising the people to emulate their citizens who have made so much sacrifice to rid their countries of bad leaders and achieve social change.

Always remarkable for his quest for social change, Olafioye, in another poem entitled ‘My patriotic quest’, emerges as a poet endowed with great vision. Olafioye’s proverbs could be described as exemplary in general. In particular, they demonstrate the fact that they possess paradoxical quality:
Silence is graveyard of hope.
But...
How do you ask ancestors
Why the country we love
now sour and a firestorm –
sand dunes suffocating the sea? (p.20)

The opening line exemplifies the use of the paradoxical proverb. It scolds the Nigerian people for their silence in the face of extreme oppression from the government. ‘Silence’ is equated with a ‘graveyard’ where ‘hope’ is buried. Thus, this statement can be interpreted as: silence buries hope. This is an indirect attack on all those who choose to remain silent where their voice is required. The poet’s persona later reveals the various experiences of the people. Through apt diction, the speaker highlights the hardship of the people. The word ‘sour’ conveys the sense of economic hardship that has taken root in Nigeria and is commonly experienced by the poor. As for the ‘firestorm’ and ‘sand dunes’, which are said to be ‘suffocating the sea’ of Nigerian people, they symbolise the political repression that has been unleashed on the masses by the military government in Nigeria.

The second proverb: ‘Nothing happens by itself’, is an indirect mobilisation of the people against a catalogue of social reverses. The angry tone of the speaker takes a more belligerent dimension as he uses rhetorical questions to accentuate the condition of the people:

How do you ask ancestors?
why born a nation
that rows backwards in
the boat of progress?
How do you write your pains?
in words of comfort
for the hungry and dying?
Tribal phantoms of social lepers. (p.20)

This poem contains a sizzling dose of imagery and figurative language. The imagery is spontaneous; instinctive, a flash of imagination, going poetically against logic. The imagery reflects the poet’s vast experience and knowledge. In this poem, Olafioye’s sense of awareness is intimately felt:

How do you sing a people –
demoralized and broken,
breathing fiery droughts
in their nostrils?

How do you pray for hope:
a nation
ruled by demons
with hairs between teeth? (p.20)

The provocative images in this poem are meant to incite the reader against their oppressive leaders who cannot appreciate reason. Consequently, the poem condemns docility, indifference and the pathological waiting among Nigerians for something to happen or the baseless hope for change that the people are unprepared and unwilling to create.

In another poem entitled ‘The pathology of hope’, the poem mobilises the masses to embrace revolution in order to bring about change. This is expressed beautifully through proverbs. The poem berates the general public thus:

We stagger,
disaster to disaster,
blind to the batter self.
Only the parasites cheer
in the festival of loot. (p.21)

The people are portrayed as those who stagger from one disaster to another as those who gain from the looting celebrate their success endlessly. He then condemns those who exhibit misplaced hope that God will right their wrongs and change things for the better:

Unwilling to pay the price;
to save ourselves;
to save the nation.
Ours: the pathology of hope;
ours: the pathology of myths
managing the misery
of human condition,
no matter the evil;
we must ‘manage’. (p.20)

Consequently, the speaker derides the people for lacking the courage to pay the price for freedom. In consequence of their inaction, the people keep enduring misery, corruption,
hopelessness, helplessness and haplessness till, the day, everyone ends up dead. It is against this context that the two proverbs which end the poem become meaningful:

Death has no assignment  
in a deserted home.  
When ancestors lived,  
Masquerades balanced  
Masks on own heads  
Without backed assistance  
of illiterate guns. (p.22)

The first proverb speaks to the masses to abhor the sense of resignation to fate and to take action. Additionally, it expresses disgust at those who take solace in hope as nothing can be done after death has destroyed their lives. In the second proverb, the persona emphasises the need for self-help or self-reliance in the quest for freedom. Using the image of a masquerade, the persona compares the way masqueraders wear their masks unaided to explain why Nigerians must help themselves without first seeking for outside help. Therefore, they are encouraged or mobilised to fight the system on their own.

Conscientisation

One predominant feature of Olafioye’s revolutionary poems is the use of proverbs to conscientise the people about their common enemies, the political leadership. This fact speaks for itself in the poems. One such poem is entitled ‘Mandela berates Nigeria’ and it begins as follows:

The generals thought  
everyone a sergeant major  
their boot camps;  
poison of the rum,  
in the gumption;  
the hemlock of air headedness. (p.43)

The real significance of this is that Olafioye has an unusually keen eye or rather, an astonishing precocity to create very clear images for us. The poison image is used to portray the generals as destructive. In this poem, the poet succeeds in impressing us with the viciousness of the generals towards the people.

The poem censures the military junta revealing how they have brought Nigeria into disrepute. In the speaker’s opinion, Nigeria has suffered much. Six proverbs are used to conscientise Nigerians:
The MAN tamed wilder howlings
An old woman not old,
When it’s the dance she knows. (p.43)

The first proverb above is used to substantiate the fact that military dictators have sufficient experience in crushing protests and dissenters. The image of dance buttresses the fact that the military leaders are quite comfortable in putting down revolutionary reactions from the people. In the second proverb, the persona draws the attention of the leaders to the foolhardiness in thinking that the world is not watching:

That which an old man sees,
sitting down, the young cannot,
standing up. (p.43)

The contrast between the old and the young is meant to ridicule the apparent wisdom of the young military officers in power and to imbue in the masses the superior power of the advanced nations who obviously are watching and, of course, waiting for Nigerians to start the revolution. The third proverb reveals the absurdity of Nigeria’s position in Africa as a giant nation. This proverb emphasises the major factor responsible for the shameful fall of the nation: inaction. According to the persona,

Nigeria, the giant,
now, a minion pariah.
When pride, before humility,
always a head dive. (p.43)

What distinguishes this poem artistically is the ironic perspectives, which when viewed clearly, provides a sufficient cause for rejecting the military leaders in power.

Through a dose of three proverbs combined to form the concluding stanza, the speaker conscientises the masses to dare the military government so as to rid the country of their menace:

A hen cannot attend
marriage ceremony,
where the fox presides.
He who is not afraid
of the lion,
let him touch its tail.
Rude chicken will be
The first proverb shows the incompatibility and the unnatural situation that exist in a nation like Nigeria blessed with great minds and yet presided over by blood-thirsty and self-seeking rulers. Through this apt proverb, the people are encouraged to reject such leaders. The speaker also cautions the people not to confront the military blindly, reminding them of the consequences of such untoward bravado.

In another poem entitled ‘Usurpers: No basket holds water’, the irrepressible tone of the speaker amplifies the proverbs as they help educate the masses:

No matter how long the night, 
dawn will surely come. 
We know
You live at the bank of the river; 
disdain washing your hands with saliva. 
You water your gardens 
with the sweat of the people. 
It is the mouth that coughs 
that draws death to itself. (p.38)

This poem is rooted in deep Yoruba proverbs which become the channel for the transmission of the revolutionary message to the reader. For example, the opening proverb expresses the timeless aphorism that no matter how long the night may be, it must climax in dawn. By extension, the speaker is saying that no matter how long the reign of political impunity and misrule may last, it must end one day. The masses are, therefore, encouraged not to lose hope but to keep up the struggle knowing that the oppression will not last forever. Also, readers are made aware of the popular saying that one cannot live by the river and be expected to wash one’s hands with spittle:

You live at the bank of the river; 
disdain washing your hands with saliva. (p.38)

This is a direct call to rebellion. The masses are reminded that they live at the bank of immeasurable river of abundant wealth and as such, they must refuse to live as paupers. The definiteness and absoluteness of ‘disdain’ confirms, in effect, the revolutionary attitude which the speaker wants the masses to appropriate in order to end all forms of exploitative tendencies and reflexes on the part of their leaders.

In ‘Parliament of idiots’, Olafioye continues to conscientise the masses through the use of proverbs. The poem begins thus:
must know
‘tis fear…
when the elephant dances
to the rumble of thunder.
So, the heartbeats
of Nigeria,
since the slaying of Ken Saro-Wiwa.
Panic measures galore. (p.35)

The speaker recreates the prevailing mood in the country at that time when Ken Saro-
Wiwa, the famous environmental activist, was slain during the infamous Abacha regime.
The upheaval that followed Saro-Wiwa’s death is tacitly conveyed: the closure of
universities, the demonstrations across the country and other reactions that shook the
foundations of the country.

Consequently, the speaker tells the masses:
They forget, as custom:
you cannot hide nakedness
from those destined
to bury you. (p.35)

The proverb above touches the heart of the message. The speaker through this proverb is
assuring the masses that the regime will definitely crumble no matter how hard the
oppressors hang on to power. In effect, it foretells of the inevitable general change that
will sweep through the country. This proverb demonstrates the poet’s prophetic gift as
well as expresses the fact that no matter how long the leaders (military) try to hide their
exploitation, it will never be forever.
The leaders are cautioned:

Better to make kings
of new dawn,
a fresher dawn.
Each society craves the sun
why not yours? (p.35)

The images of the sun and that of dawn reveal the revitalising power of change to shed
light on the darkness that has overshadowed the progress of Nigeria. The brilliance of the
poem immediately comes to life with the effective use of a rhetorical question. This
question is moralising as well as conscientising in its conception. Insofar as change is
every sane society’s obsession, the speaker is persuaded that should be the national emblem of Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

This paper has examined the revolutionary poems of Tayo Olafioye. It has argued that his revolutionary thoughts are expressed through the use of proverbs for the twin goals of mobilisation and conscientisation.

To effect mobilisation and stir the masses to effect social change, proverbs are made the fulcrum of Olafioye’s poems. One of the methods employed in this regard is by using speakers who expose the atrocious activities of the government. In each case, proverbs which scold the people’s reticence and silence in the face of provocative leadership are effectively deployed.

In addition to mobilising the masses, proverbs are used for conscientisation. This functions by using speakers who systematically use proverbs that are analogous to the content, thus helping to contextualize, clarify and deepen the message. The proverbs are directed to encourage, to spur and to educate the masses.

From the above, it is clear that proverbs are not a mere appendage in Olafioye’s works. Rather, they are at the very heart of his poetry. Thus, proverbs are vital to Olafioye’s revolutionary message. Their relevance can also be perceived in the area of expressing revolutionary thought in his poems. For this reason, proverbs are indispensable to the poetry of Olafioye in their artistic conception, thematic orientation and structural relevance.
References


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Surrealism, Subversion, and Storytelling in Véronique Tadjo’s *As the crow flies*  

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Abstract  

This paper seeks to examine Tadjo’s art of storytelling in *As the crow flies*, focusing on her approach which is partly surrealistic and partly traditional in blending several artistic modes, such as poetry, narration, drama, myth-making, and imagistic symbols. The examination establishes Tadjo’s style in the art of storytelling as an innovator who breaks with the traditional relationships between narration and plot; and introduces a fluid and liberating style which has “no frontiers”. This approach of postmodernism radicalizes the traditional mode and subverts the craft of storytelling. The paper makes the claim that Tadjo utilizes several principles of surrealism to relate the disconnection and unreality of human stories in which the unconscious is used as a source material to deal with life’s ills and traumas.

Keywords: micro-text, surrealism, outer frame, femino-centric, imagistic symbols

Introduction

Véronique Tadjo’s novel *As the crow flies* (2001) is an enigmatic novel that innovates and radicalizes the art of storytelling. The novelist sets out to tell a tale in a non-linear progression primarily because she believes, “human lives mingle, people tame one another and part” (Tadjo, Prologue). Consequently, writing a linear and progressive story may be rather unjustified and out of touch with the tumultuous realities of life. Therefore, the artist writes a series of tales which reflect the sterility and vicissitudes of life, full of varying experiences, modes, and voices. It is only from the panoramic view of a bird in flight that the reader can swoop in to focus on the story the artist creates.

What kind of story does Tadjo create then in the novel considering her “aberrant style”? Is it possible to speculate that the artist in *As the crow flies* attempts to relate the
tale of her failed love life? One may want to find out why the artist adopts the stream of consciousness style of a surrealist narrator, imitating the ancient craft of storytelling?

A Sainte-Beuvian study of Tadjo may provide answers to these questions. This paper examines Tadjo’s art of storytelling in *As the crow flies*, focusing on her approach which is partly surrealistic and partly traditional in relating the paradoxes and complexities associated with human existence. The artist draws inspiration from the African oral tradition of storytelling (that incorporates several artistic modes like drama, poetry, song, and narration) and blends it with experimental modern forms.

The art of storytelling as a universal human construct is meant to entertain and teach the ethics, and preserve the cultural norms of a particular society. It transcends time and space with the spiritual and ceremonial function of linking the teller (narrator/addresser) and the listener (the narratee/addressed), such that during the art of telling the narrator may enact an aesthetic enterprise which should include a number of artistic elements. The elements, according to Lodge (1992), Doody (1996), Charters and Charters (1997), and Hawthorn (2001), include the essential idea of a narrative structure constructed into coherent plot lines; exposition of the theme (or idea); a development which builds up to the climax; the final denouement; the substantial focus on characters (and characterization); a blend of different narrative voices, with an identified dominant narrator-like voice; and other aesthetic figurations.

Tadjo’s artistic creation, under consideration, has been quite problematic for critics to classify its specific form as a novella, a novel, or a short story. Does the artist incorporate all the elements outlined by the afore-mentioned critics? Adjei (2013) attempts to answer the question and provides an interesting insight into Tadjo’s fictive work. He is of the view that the “text is revolutionary in its construction and shuffles between the Short Story, Novella, and Novel” (p.99). He asserts: “it is a stylistic choice driven by postmodernism in its bold attempt to subvert existing conventional novelistic forms and makes meaning only when it is consciously located within such a framework” (p.99). In his critical analysis of the text, Adjei adopts a semiotic and postmodernist approach to establish the claim that Tadjo writes in her own subversive way “to literally turn the art and craft of storytelling on its head” and also confirm that the writing and form of the novel [which hitherto had been dominated by men, Azim (1993), and Hawthorn (1991)] has experienced a dramatic change, and will continue to change in the hands of female writers (Adjei, 2013, p.113).

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1 Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869) is a French literary theorist and writer who in his essay, “Positivism and Determinism”, advocates that a literary text must be studied by paying close attention to the author’s background, education, family relationships, friends, close associates, and general philosophy of life; for a critic can uncover several hidden truths of the author in the literary work. For further details read Chadbourne’s (1977), *Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve*. 
Adjei’s views on Tadjo’s art are quite germane; however, his arbitrary selection of some of the characteristic features of postmodernism, coupled with the “dense” language employed in his analysis makes his paper a “writerly text”. Perhaps, we can appreciate Adjei’s great effort and style since Tadjo’s fictive work is written in an “aberrant” form and style, and lends itself to several interpretations.

Another critical work on Tadjo’s novel is D’Almeida’s (1994) article titled, “Véronique Tadjo: Toward a loftier ideal” in Francophone African women writers: Destroying the emptiness of silence. The work examines selected Francophone women’s writing from different backgrounds, different countries, belonging to different social classes and using different literary styles to produce a corpus of literature which is in a state of constant change, especially the form of the novel. D’Almeida provides a comprehensive reading of the subject-matter in As the crow flies, highlighting the structure and themes from a purely feminist perspective; putatively written to empower women to discuss their own lives, critically re-examine society, and offer meaningful alternatives. She believes that when “the story of women is told, the silence, and its emptiness, may be destroyed” (D’Almeida, 1994, p.177).

While D’Almeida’s advocacy reflects views expressed by many female writers and critics, misgivings on these views question the literariness of employing only a “femino-centric perspective” to judge the worth of a literary work. Tadjo’s style and mode of discourse in As the crow flies, without denying the femino-centric approach, portrays the complexities and paradoxes associated with our common humanity, through borrowings from folklore. Commenting on the inspiration behind her written and visual works, Tadjo states: “I follow the African tradition of storytelling which gives me a greater freedom of interpretation of our myths and legends” (“Biography”, 2013). For Tadjo, therefore, the art of storytelling is a fluid one emerging from the African tradition which defies a particular setting, rejects chronology in narration of plot, and neglects the development of multiplicity of characters in different situations. The artist takes advantage of this fluidity and introduces a liberating style rooted in surrealism.

**Theoretical Background**

Surrealism, as an artistic and literary movement, explores and celebrates the realm of dreams and the unconscious mind through the creation of visual art, poetry, and new artistic forms and techniques. It traces its origins to the early twentieth century, specifically during the First World War, in Paris where a group of writers and painters had a series of encounters to define their commitment to a way of life in which the state of the mind of the artist is very critical in creating and delineating meaning from a work of art. Shattuck (1967) provides an elaborate background of the movement’s activities. He lists André Breton, Jacques Vanche, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Tristan Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Hans Arp as the pioneers. Surrealism as a cult of the irrational
was popularized by André Breton in 1924 with the publication of “Manifesto on Surrealism”. It is based on the perception of a reality beyond the sensible universe. In the words of Breton, surrealism is the “psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express... the actual functioning of thought” (Shattuck, 1967, p.26). He conceives of surrealist reality as the seventh face of the dice and the “extreme degree of immediate absurdity” which gives way to everything admissible and legitimate in the world (Shattuck, 1967, p.26). It is the world of dream, chance, distorted time, and the fantastic region of the marvelous in which traditional forms of perception are superseded by a new perspective whose logic is the illogicality of paranoia, infantile perception, mysticism, hypnotism, and the general world of the irrational. Sackey (1997) is of the view that “surrealism is the power of the imagination to create fantasy out of reality by using the pure primitive virgin state of the eye to recover the innocence of the savage and primeval state,” thus provoking the reader to delineate his/her own interpretation of the work (p. 150). In this way, surrealism shares common affinities with several theories of the reader-response theories.

In most surrealist artistic creations (poetry, prose, painting, etc.), the state of the mind of the artist is very important and the primary aim is to locate the point where art and reality merge to achieve truth and realism in life; and this is where Tadjo’s art finds relevance in the discourse. The artist explores certain specific images which include birds (such as the crow and the eagle); stones (luminous such as agate); labyrinth (with light at the end and also a tunnel with an exit); water imagery (often luminous in a form of the sea, and rivers); vertigo (as in a dizzy confused state of mind or ecstasy); and blood as a symbol of simultaneous violence and desire.

Tadjo utilizes several principles of the eleven basic elements of surrealism in As the crow flies. The eleven basic elements are: love, the symbols of alchemy, chthonian character of the universe, the quest for freedom, element of surprise, the cult of sensation, dream and nightmare, the cult of the present, the divine notion of chance, the creative power of language, and the eternal return. In this paper, we focus on three, viz: love, chthonian character of the universe, dream and nightmare. For Tadjo (and most surrealists), love is seen as a fulfillment and unification with nature; it portrays the sacred character of the sensual with its atmosphere of “the one and only” where one is expected to love always for the first time with the innocence of the “femme-enfant” (“woman-child”). This explains the artist’s choice of telling a story about a failed love relation and her advocacy in loving “to the ends of the earth.” Linked to this element of love, Tadjo explores the chthonian character of the universe and human’s function in it; this involves the savage state of the eye where the eye perceives (all things in life) in its pure virgin state similar to the Senghorian sensibilities as a negritude poet. In the novel, the author-narrator explores these ideas in the several vignettes where she “dream[s] of my country, which obsesses [her] all the time. I carry it with me all day. At night, it lies next to me,
making love with me” (p.72). Dream and nightmare are part of the vision of surrealism which Tadjo explores in the text. She employs them to portray the sense of pain and darkness associated with violence and depression resulting from the failed love-relationship. The consequent option is the ecstasy and ascension of sublime dreams in humans to perceive reality beyond the irrational physical universe. In a way, Tadjo’s surrealism applies some basic tenets of Freudian psychoanalysis.

To understand Tadjo’s art, readers need to adjust and readjust their “receptive antenna” to cope with the varying voices of the surrealistic narrative posture of the author-narrator whose critical views on issues that affect African women are evidently manifest in the text. The narrator frequently alternates from the second person (You), to the first person (I) and to the third persons (he/she); sometimes the narrator complicates the relation between the addressee and the addressee with the constant shift from the recurrent use of the second person (You) to the first person (I), and when the omniscient narrator is introduced the reader is puzzled about the specific setting, the characters in question, and the chronology of the narration.

Tadjo’s surrealism and fluidity in style give her the opportunity like a bird in flight to relate the disconnection and unreality of human stories which the novelist uses as the subject of her socio-political criticism of society’s evils. The novelist, however, like many African literary artists, (Armah in Two thousand seasons, Achebe in Anthills of the savannah, Awoonor in This earth, my brother...), provides an avenue for social change rooted in personal introspection and a return to the mores and foundations of traditional African belief systems and practices.

Structure, Voice, and Point of view of the Narrator

The narrator’s function and role in As the crow flies are circumscribed by the novelist’s twin purposes of espousing the concept of genuine and unrestrained love on the one hand, and the moral imperative of overcoming one’s weaknesses through an allegorical metamorphosis of death (or decomposition) and resurrection on the other. Both are embedded in the narrative discourse of the several stories that form the corpus of the novel (each story or a combination of others in the corpus is referred to as a micro-text). The author-narrator evokes a modern moonlight scenery in the Prologue of the novel (which blends poetry and prose and is studded with series of metaphors), to captivate the attention of the reader who is invited through the recurrent use of the second person (You) to actively participate in the art of the storytelling.

In the first part of the Prologue, there is a piece of poetry which evokes love. The narrator employs the subjunctive if clause to court the reader’s support to exhibit true and sincere love. Conveyed in the second person narrative voice (You), the reader is admonished “to love… to the ends of the earth.” This advocacy denotatively conveys a resolute resolve to be genuinely committed to the act and process of loving “ad infinitum.”
The author-narrator portrays variations of this advocacy in the third person narrative voice in several vignettes in the micro-text, with the intent that: “love is a story that we never stop telling” (p.59).

The second part of the Prologue is written in prose. The author-narrator declares her intention to tell a non-linear misty story in conformity with the tumultuous reality of life. The first person (I) coupled with the second person (You) links both the narratee and the narrator in a complex relationship of manifesting real love portrayed through the connotative imagery of dying to oneself and a metaphorical resurrection of the human race from the ashes of “the ills erected as royal edifices” in life. The author-narrator alternates her role and complicates the relation between the addresser (I-Narrator) and the addressee (You-Narratee) through the constant shift of the use of the second person (You) to the first person (I) and then to the second person. D’Almeida (1994) suggests that this technique of pronominal interpenetration indicates how there can be in Tadjo’s micro text a double addressee; the narrator, though addressing the reader seems to be addressing herself at the same time (p.156).

In carrying out the novelist’s twin purposes, the narrator structures the micro-narratives in *As the crow flies* along a particular pattern of employing the third person omniscient voice anytime the love story is explored with a unique picturesque description, and of blending and complicating the voices anytime the theme of decomposition and resurrection is explored. Tadjo’s style provides a liberating environment (within the economy of the narration) in which the narrator has no special sense of providing setting, developing character(s) and plot, and even creating a central protagonist. The reader sometimes has difficulty in anaphorically and cataphorically linking the masculine and feminine gender pronouns (He, Him, She and Her) to their respective noun subjects. Sometimes the reader is even at a loss as to whether the recurrent use of the masculine pronouns (He or Him) has generic connotations or conveys a limited referent to the male gender which evidently has been the subject of the artist’s femino-centric attack, a subject which will be explored later.

Despite these complications in the narrative voices and alternation of the role of the narrator, there emerges a pattern in Tadjo’s art which is woven around the structure of the entire novel. The theme of sincere love is introduced in the first part of the Prologue and the narrator, employing the third person voice, places it at the very center of the novel (where a realistic-imaginary tale is told of a love between a sick dying woman and a man). The second theme of decomposition and resurrection is introduced at the end of the Prologue and featured in the final vignette (at the end of the novel). Here the narrator alternates the narrative voices in the short discourse between “He,” “You” and “I,” urging humanity to “rot with time” and later “flourish like a hibiscus in full bloom.” The linkage from the beginning through the middle (center) to the end provides a linear progression and an outer frame in which Tadjo’s narrator tells her story. Within the outer frame, the
narrator weaves the details of the main story (of the genuine love, and the decomposition with a resultant glorious resurrection) with different narrative threads and voices which finally produce a holistic picture of humans. Series of unconnected tales (told in the first person, second person, the third person, or a blend of either two or three persons directly addressed to the reader) form the corpus of the inner story which ultimately portrays the novelist’s twin purposes outlined in the outer frame.

The narrator in the poetic-prosaic Prologue states:

If you want to love
Do so
To the ends of the earth
With no shortcuts
Do so
As the crow flies.

As typical with some poems, the narrator disregards punctuation marks which could have rendered the effect of the message less poignant. Tadjo’s message is straight-forward in the Prologue and she illustrates this at the near center pages of the micro-text. She creates a short story which stresses the very essence of loving to the ends of the earth. The story begins realistically with a sick dying woman, writhing and battling with pain towards death and a resolute resolve of a man who shares in the woman’s pain. Though the story ends as a myth, the focalization of the narrator in the vignette is on the man (He) whose intensity to love and do all in his power—scream (possibly louder than women to pierce walls); pray; carry the woman in his arms and declare: “I will go with you to death… I want to love you till the end of your suffering”; travel thousands of miles on foot crossing streams, large rivers, swarms, lakes until they arrive at the sea, then to a white mountain; finally arriving at the end of the world, the desert. It is at this point that the man makes love to the dying woman whose wish to die has been rejected by the man in earlier encounters.

Though the love story appears mythological, the allusion to Orpheus and Eurydice gives credit to the central issue of loving to the end of the earth (even in death); and the author-narrator seems to suggest that in love, reality and imagination (or myth) can merge to establish genuine love in human affairs, which are fraught with contradictions, pain, suffering, torn and mutilated lives, partings and separations, cheatings, deceitfulness, selfishness, ungratefulness and the general malaise associated with the human condition. This possibly explains the narrator’s constant alternation and complication in the narrative voices that run through the novel.
Tadjo’s surrealism in the text manifests itself in a way that meaning is not discovered in the normal way from the inside and flow from the plot, as happens in normal stories, where narration is a function of the plot. But here, meaning is discoverable within the general framework of the author-narrator’s thematology set out in the Prologue and filled in with several tales, which have their own related contents and plots. Indeed, the novel is a clear departure from the traditional relationship between narration and plot, evidenced in the triple manifestation of the narrative point of view which underlines the verbal reality of the micro-text.

Booth (1961) asserts that there is a tripartite focalization in the narrative point of view in stories; and this manifests in Tadjo’s art. There is (i) the omniscient narrator who relates the story of the failed love relationship between “an unnamed magnificent man with hands that smiled at anyone” and an unnamed woman whose story of pain and frustration introduces (ii) the “I”-narrator who alternates and complicates her role with varying voices of either the first, second and/or the third persons to relate series of stories which critique the arts, socio-political issues, current news items and other surrealistic images which connotatively become part of the love advocacy; and (iii) the implied author whose telling portrays a female narrator with critical views on all the issues associated with women’s love, sensuality, and the sexuality in the text. In this way, the artist achieves some kind of unity, in terms of coherence of thought.

Style of Narrator

As indicated earlier, Tadjo’s surrealism which depicts meaning in the text is discoverable from the outer frame. The images portrayed on the cover of the text (illustrated by the author herself) are presented in child-like drawings to foreground meaning in the micro-text. Four images appear on the cover page, colorfully done in primary colors of red, yellow, bluish-violet, blue, orange, and brown. The first image is a portrait of a human with both arms and legs stretched out, calling the reader’s attention to it. The portrait represents our common humanity, forcefully conveyed by the color bluish-violet which does not conform to the real complexion of humans. It is a deliberate choice that engenders many connotations. Bluish-violet in the real world symbolizes chastity and loyalty recalling the primal virginity of human nature with all its innocence and purity. The image can be viewed both from the facial and back perspective with either making sense of our common humanity. However, the right (or left) hand and right (or left) leg of the portrait presents a distended picture of humans; it appears slightly bigger (or smaller) depending upon the lens through which the reader views the image – either from the back or front. The distended or slightly big (or small) part of the human portrays deception, insincerity, and lack of commitment on the part of humans towards one another. This explains why human existence is fraught with contradictions and paradoxes.
The omniscient narrator’s telling of the failed love-life in the illicit love affair between the unnamed “magnificent man” and an anonymous woman resonates through the micro-text with a deception clothed in metaphorical images. The narrator fills the story with images which portray the surrealistic patterns in the text in order to underscore the unfaithfulness in love affairs. The portrayal crosses human life diagonally with a putative force of violence that poisons human existence and finally ends on an ambivalent note of either rotting with time or flourishing like a hibiscus in full bloom. The description of the magnificent man is done in a language that portrays the deception. He has “hands that smiled at anyone”, “long fingers”, “his gestures evoked poetry, the tone of his voice has a rhythmic lilt; his looks are quite unusual and a unique way of carrying himself and his whole force lay in his neck” (p.1). Such a character is expected to have the attributes of a “rich man” but the author-narrator surrealistically portrays these traits to foreshadow deception. Tadjo suggests that appearances are deceptive, as Shakespeare opines in Macbeth that there is no art to find the mind’s construction in the face. In reality, human “lives mingle, people tame one another and part” (Prologue). It is this aspect of the 21st century humanity that the author-narrator focuses on in the micro-text as she relates tales of disappointments, pain, sufferings, and a connotative death of the human race. Humans, she posits, “must be living in a squalid century, …a century that is ill at ease, sterile, hangs its head in shame (and) time moves anti-clockwise and somersaults backwards” (pp.21-31).

In the novel, the author-narrator tells us about the magnificent man “who was rich, rich in his life. Rich in his family”, suggesting the chaste and loyal traits expected in all humans. However, we are told that “His whole force lay in his neck” (p.1). The portrait on the cover page presents this picture (of the neck) which connotatively suggests the image of a serpent refracted metaphorically to mean deception. This explains why the love relation between the unnamed woman and the faceless “magnificent man” fails. There are repeated images of “long fingers”, “neck”, “shoulders”, “streams”, “rivers”, “swamps”, “lakes”, “the sea”, and the periodic shedding of the exo-skeleton of the serpent to depict the deception in love and the failed mystic story of human relationships. Though the images of the “rivers, streams, lakes, sea” are universally seen as purifying or cleansing agents, the author-narrator surrealistically uses them to denote suffocation, an immense placenta, a liquid prison, deception, and the unreal. In chapter 14(XLIX), the author-narrator tells a story of an unfaithful married woman who plays infidelity at the beach with another man after an invigorating bath in the sea. On that particular day, the author-narrator recalls:

How the sun shines as never before: The sea delivers her as if she were being born in the middle of the day. She is happy with this love that takes her
breath away. Soon the **sky** will have swept away the glistening, mirror droplet. (p.67, Bold prints added)

The elemental forces of the **sun**, the **sea**, and the **sky** have co-joined to deceive humanity about the fleeting passions normally associated with human bonds of love, sincerity, and affection. What really is manifest in life are the meaninglessness of love and the incomprehensibility of humans in attempting to find answers to the paradoxes of human existence.

The meaninglessness of human existence is further portrayed in the second image, just beneath the first, on the cover of the book. It is a portrait of a **brown airplane** flying across space to an unknown destination and guided by six brown arrows. The color **brown** normally symbolizes our common humanity; something earthly, mundane, and bodily. The airplane always flies across space – a vast expanse of nothingness, emptiness, and maybe hopelessness; but ironically it also suggests hope and life in a dream-like mythological state, so long as the aircraft is in flight. This suggests something spiritual with the connotative force of re-awakening a dead human relationship. The duality of the images of mundane/spiritual, hopelessness/hope, earthly/spatial, real/unreal is part of the author-narrator’s surrealistic posturing, which has been foregrounded in the image of the **airport** in the micro-text. The “airport” itself is a metaphor of the beginning and (or ) end of a journey, putatively life’s journey; and it is also a place where people of varied cultures, races, colors, creeds, age groupings (of humans) and, even rather strangely, both the living and the dead converge to either bid one another a good-bye or a welcome, of partings (or separations) /unions, sadness/happiness, sorrow/joy, pain/excitement, all exhibited in the love relation between the faceless magnificent man and the nameless woman.

In the micro-text, the author-narrator tells the reader: “They met at the airport. She had travelled a long way and he came to pick her up as planned” (p.1). The joy and excitement that characterize this meeting at the airport is related in twelve short paragraphs and what follows in the micro-text are “sleepless nights” “lonely nights”, “the tension”, “this floating lie”, “torpid nights… right from the start, it was a sordid affair” (p.4/5). The brevity of joy and excitement as contrasted with the long periods of pain and separation co-join in the image of “waiting at an airport” today. However, “there, at the tip of the horizon at another airport, someone is waiting” (p.5).

While humans wait at various airports, the author-narrator connects their destinies by relating varied stories of everyday existence: of pains, sufferings, crimes, atrocities, selfishness, ungratefulness, deceit, dishonesty, abortion, politics, literature, the arts, and all manner of evils associated with our humanity in order to establish the meaninglessness of life. The “airport” and the “aeroplane” therefore become the metaphorical link between all cultures and nations in the world; hence the stories of one
continent (Africa) are not different from those of another (Europe). Let us consider some examples:

A ghetto. In a large city in the United States of America. Washington D.C… I read in the papers that a man killed his whole family. Cut each one up into small pieces: father, mother and younger sister… . The bus is filthy. The seats are torn. In the street, young men hung about waiting for what?... . In the women’s toilet at Harvard University, I figured out the graffiti: My man is a freak, my nigger is hot… . The White House is white. Dozens more drug dealers have been locked up: grass, cocaine, heroin. (pp.7-8)

The portrayal here is not so different from Armah’s portrayal of filth, squalor, stench, and putrefaction in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*. The above portrait of life in the USA is similar to some happenings in Africa:

Muddy, muddy Macory. I see snotty- nosed kids tumbling about streets covered in black mud. I see trousers rolled up, shoes held in hands, wrappers raised to the knee. I see bare feet, dirtied by the battered earth. Taxis are immobilized in the middle of pools of water…. Muddy, muddy Macory. I see the city suffering from its ills. I see the compounds, eating places, bars prostitutes, bad guys. I see a woman making aloc…Her feet are covered in dirt. Smoke stings her eyes ….I see a dog. He is covered in fleas. He rummages in the garbage…. Muddy, muddy Macory. I see the neighbourhood gangs…. I think of Abidjan’s gangsters, Boaku’s thieves, of the organised gangs of Korhogo (pp. 11-13-73)

The author-narrator confirms that as far as the socio-political evils are concerned in life, “there are no frontiers”. She creates a borderless landscape with the portrait of the airplane which flies through the space of the micro-text reeking with the odorous smell of human ills.

Another surrealistic posturing of the author-narrator in the novel is the imagistic symbols associated with the aircraft’s respective destinations – “my country” and “the big city of stone”. Obviously “my country” refers to Africa (Côte d’Ivoire, specifically where the author grew up) and “the big city of stone” refers to the West (France and America where the author schooled). Europe is repeatedly refracted through the lens of coldness, chill, unfriendliness, disease, loneliness, tastelessness, a place where “words have double meanings and that people walk on cushions of air” (p.61) despite the technological and socio-political advancements, while Africa resonates with a feeling of warmth, love, affection, communalism despite the negative issues of crime, poverty, and minimal socio-political developments. These repeated contrastive images are used by the
author-narrator to foster her dream-world, where reality and myths are absolute truths in life.

As typical of many surrealists and psychoanalysts, Tadjo believes that myths and dreams reveal the psychological fixations and desires that are latent in humans, similar to the airplane in flight. Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud maintain that dreams reveal the psychology of the dreamer and myths reveal the psychology of all humanity. The similarity between the two is the existence of what Jung calls “the collective unconscious” which is a layer of the psyche that all humanity shares (Arlow and Herma, 2009, p.6). The author-narrator draws inspiration from this psychoanalytic discourse to engage the reader about some truths in life. In the novel, constant references to everyday stories of hate, pain, suffering, and disappointment create “unfulfilled desires, the floating lie, a desire, a yearning for fairy tales, legends, myths, stories, never ending tales”, which conglomerate in “want[-ing] to escape through [the] pores, flee[-ing] through [the] mouth and return[-ing] to the earth” (p.33) as a means of coping with life’s traumas. The idea of escaping from life’s troubles and living in a dream mythical world is a common feature of our humanity. This obviously ignites hope, a state where the unreal and the impossible are made real and possible. Several stories in the novel capture this thought. The story of the young girl in Chapter 17 interacting with the Magician to solve life’s problems is a good example to cite. The story focalizes on traits of determination, strong desire, and willingness to rise above all odds in life.

Desire, dreams, and myth create hope. Perhaps, this is the essence of the third portrait on the cover of the book, the yellow bird soaring up high against the blue sky. Yellow symbolizes royalty, hope, a gay or exciting demeanor, brightness, and a “can-do” spirit. It is a cataclysmic yearning in dreams to escape from the harsh realities of life, thus elevating the dreamer onto a plateau of hope. The micro-text foregrounds this in “Desire” with this poem in Chapter 8:

Who are you?
You - who knocks (sic) at my door
On those dark moonless nights
That thrust through my sleep
In the morning –
My mind shatters into fragments
And all I want is to run, run, run
To the end of the road…..
This being the season of Desire. (p.39)

The “season of desire” takes its roots from “an ebony-warrior from Azania… like a three-way mirror reflecting [the] past, present and future”; defying solace in books, the cinema
and all other forms of pleasure. It arises from within the individual whose resolute resolve in dreams (and most certainly Tadjo’s Afrocentric beliefs in mythology) to “make faces at bad oracles, stick out the tongue at skeptics and dismiss the unbelievers” (p.40). The yellow bird, in flight against a blue sky, symbolically is an affirmation of humans’ determination to defy all odds in life and view life from the bright spectrum of hope, an optimism that is so prevalent among humans (especially Africans); and also an imagistic desire (symbolized in the bird) to escape from the harsh realities of life, into a dream world, to face them squarely there.

The author-narrator conveys this hope through a surrealistic lens to create a paradoxical image of the optimism associated with “the season of desire” making it appear as a never ending pointless hope, because “life’s hours are drawn in arabesques, hyperbole and curves” (p.40). It is like going far away from life’s realities in order to confront them on a different plane of existence where mysticism, religion, and spirituality join forces to ignite hope to a troubled world. In the novel, Tadjo provides an example of this surrealistic posturing in Chapter 11. The unnamed disappointed woman yearns for the love and affection of her lover who has been unfaithful to her. Despite the pain and suffering, the woman still yearns and dreams of uniting with the man in the hope of reviving love and affection. The reference to the woman encountering a snake (a reptile most feared and detested) and deeply being moved by the beauty of the creature, and her willingness to become a perfect habitat for it as a “wild grass” or a “handful of earth or even a running stream” (p.57) paradoxically alludes to the Biblical imagery of the serpent that created so much pain and suffering for humanity, yet it is the same image that is hoisted to provide hope and healing to humanity during a calamity (Genesis Chapter 3; Exodus Chapter 32 and Numbers Chapter 21 verses 4-10). In the vignette, the snake is glorified as an image of hope to the diseased love relationship. The imagistic snake becomes a symbol of hope, similar to Coleridge’s usage in his “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” where the sight and intense admiration of the water snakes rekindles hope and brings about restoration to the persona and his colleagues. Tadjo’s narrator tells the reader:

You will understand that there is plenty of hope where I am going. I will have a lot of things to give and a lot to account. I must leave so as to return forever, knowing that nowhere else can the soul exist and nowhere else can encounter be more wonderful or promises greater. (p.57)

Tadjo’s surrealism combines several imagistic symbols to ignite hope and create different perspectives or approaches in dealing with the meaninglessness of human existence. In Chapter 16, the narrator tells the story of a young man who was begotten from the fruits of a good love relationship, nurtured in the acceptable ways of humanity and tasked with the mission of rebuilding destroyed cities and telling them of a hope in
“the water that never dries up” (p.77). Unfortunately, the young man loses this “water” and allows the “light” to wane, causing him to derail from the path of hope; instead, he creates chaos and confusion on earth. Though the image of the “water” and “light” suggests hope and a glorious future for humanity, the narrator indicates that this ephemeral hope could not be sustained under the best of circumstances in life to produce human virtue; something beyond the yellow bird is required to establish the real hope for humanity. This is the significance of the fourth image on the cover of the book: the reddish-pink-violet-yellow eye.

The shape of the eye on the cover page is not oval as in normal shapes of human eyes; here it is portrayed in the shape and form of an amoeba, suggesting the different perspectives and varying lenses through which life’s issues could be refracted to create meaning. To achieve this, the author-narrator relates ninety-two independent yet related tales of daily existences with a vast array of themes ranging from love to religion. While some of the stories may be from the author’s personal life, observations, and reflections on life, news items and legends, some are allegorically constructed. A critique of these stories may incorporate a mix of several philosophical and critical approaches, including surrealism, deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, symbolism, existentialism, poststructuralism, and psycho-analytic literature; bringing into focus a number of theorists, such as Breton, Derrida, Lanser, Mallarmé, Heidegger, Althusser, Camus, and Freud. A reading, therefore, of Tadjo’s *As the crow flies* within the domain of post-modernist theories reveals the hidden aesthetic energies of a relatively new novelist who treads the old paths of artists but brings a fresh insight to the craft of artistic representation in storytelling. This is the justification for Tadjo to deviate from the traditional mode of storytelling and engage the reader in several experimental modes which blend a number of interpretive criticisms which is a regular feature of modern criticism.

**Deconstruction of Love**

A recurring theme in most of Tadjo’s works is an inquiry into human relationships (or bonding) reflecting on issues such as humankind’s inhumanity or insensitivity, lack of forgiveness - as presented in *The shadow of Imana* (2002) and *The song of life and other stories* (1989), and a strong advocacy for men to love “to the ends of the earth,” as presented in *Queen Pokou* (2009), and *The kingdom of the blind* (2008). These portrayals obviously betray the author’s Afro femino-centric perspective which is clearly presented in *As the crow flies*. Tadjo’s position on these issues is a blend of a Marxist temper which rejects the phallocentric subjugation of women in society, and tailored down to the recognition of the fact that hurting or mistreating a woman in love (or relationships) will always result in chaos and the destruction of society’s core values. She maintains that when society re-orient its psychology by figuratively “dying to our
old ways” then will emerge from the ashes (or soil) a new breed of humans who will blossom like hibiscus in full glory.

To some extent, Tadjo’s theme and style in As the crow flies are similar to the works of Raymond Carver (1939-1988) whose stories focus on lost dreams, failed relationships, and/or disillusionment. In his What we talk about when we talk about love (1981), Carver uses simple, brief narrative passages woven into seemingly banal dialogues to imply deeper layers of meaning on the concept of love. He argues that what characterizes humanity’s understanding of love is a myriad of issues, including bad language and communication infested with drugs and alcoholism. He adds that in marriage, love is best exhibited when it is tortured and nurtured by violent thoughts, acts, and behaviors. Carver concludes that what humanity talks about when we talk about love is a humid silver lining of darkness, stillness, and a hopelessness of inactivity.

Tadjo deconstructs love in human relationships from a different perspective picking issues from her personal life, current happenings in both the electronic and print media, and other varying issues of socio-political interest to society. The different narrative voices of the author-narrator point to the injustices suffered by the feminine gender (in love) at the hands of the patriarchal phallocentric society and a strong advocacy for love which demands forgiveness, hope, and respect for both sexes as a basis to build a new society.

The author-narrator relates several tales about the suffering of women at the hands of men, who are presented as insensitive and the causative agents of the pain and atrocities women suffer. As part of her style in the novel, almost all the women characters are nameless and faceless (except Akissi). They represent the ordinary women in society whose stories, circumstances in life, and actions are not different from Tadjo’s fictional world in As the crow flies. The significance of Akissi (as an exception) named as a character in the entire novel is the author’s interest to present her situation as the core of women’s suffering in the gendered discourse of women performing their biological functions as progenitors of life and the terminators of life: pregnancy and abortion. In the case of Akissi, whose pregnancy is “unwanted” and abortion is “illegal”, the author tells her story in an economy of dense language to portray the trauma associated with Akissi’s experiences. Her rejection by society, the psychological and emotional torture, the deception from the local male nurse, the cold impersonal “masks of stone” worn by the man who performs the abortion, and the dirty stinking environment are all images employed to indict a world in which men inflict pain and suffering on their womenfolk. In another novel, The kingdom of the blind (2008), Akissi is named as a strong woman character whose role is similar to Shakespeare’s portrayal of Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. Akissi becomes a metaphorical symbol of the African woman whose story images the plight of bastardized suffering humans at the hands of their fellow humans.
Tadjo presents several horrific examples of these issues that affect women in the novel. Below are a few examples:

i. The death of a pregnant woman in the suffocating part of the city: *the causative agent is the unfaithful architect and the negligent contractor (obviously men)* (p.23).

ii. A cancerous diseased woman dies: *the causative agent is the unfaithful husband who deserts her for another woman and her son who also deserts her* (pp. 61-64).

iii. The female body is constantly an object of desire for the men who violently disrespect it, even in public places like the theater: *the causative agent is refracted through the imagistic symbol of “darkness” and a “moist penis”* (p.69).

iv. The female body is further violated irrespective of age; even female children are defiled. *The story of the man who constantly caresses the school girl in his room* (pp.33-34).

v. Images of betrayed women living in loneliness, frustration, and boredom, who are engaged in meaningless activities; *caused by the deceptiveness and unfaithfulness of men* (pp. 91-95, 97-98).

The author-narrator’s femino-centrism which blames men for their insensitivity towards women in love affairs makes a claim that men are as selfish as marauding beasts, similar to what Achebe in *Anthills of the savannah* describes as the “odorous he-goat sensibilities” (p.95). Men are portrayed as violent sex beasts whose encounter with women always results in the latter suffering insomnia and emotional traumas while the former continue in their chauvinism and insensitivity. That is why “there is some grain of truth”, the author-narrator suggests, “that you ought not to play with the devil”; for “She dreamt of a white horse with a red underbelly. A panther placed its paw on my shoulder. “Yo”, the word that invokes the primal silence” (p.89). The imagistic reference to the *devil, the white horse with a red underbelly and the panther* evokes memories of a brute force unleashed against womanhood. Tadjo’s advocacy in the text (similar to Aidoo’s in *Changes*, Dangarembga’s in *Nervous conditions*, Emecheta’s in *Second-class citizen*) is resoundingly clear. She encourages women to be assertive, bold, and willing to take control over their lives instead of curling up, licking their wounds, and breaking down. The author-narrator intimates: “I want a sexy woman with a strong and steady voice” (p.59); a woman who will love “to melting point”, undress men and give her all with an intent of stinging the soul and cuffing the wrist of men. In one surrealistic vignette, Tadjo tells the story of such a woman: “her eyes were shaped like cowries and her skin was the
color of sand”, suggesting the unparalleled traditional African beauty, wisdom, and by extension, the common humanity of all women. However,

For her, time was not an obstacle because she considered herself to be without gender. She was a creature in between, ambiguous, who could not care less if she wore a skirt or if she had pointed breasts. For her, life flowed in regular tides and she knew how to make the most of it. She just got on with it. For her, love was a notion of second degree, like a fly in the ointment. (p.79)

The author-narrator intimates (by the end of the story) that any successful attempt by men (through betrayal, deception, or subtlety) to derail her from the chosen path of caring less about “wearing a skirt” or having “pointed breasts” (the semiotics of womanhood) will result in an apocalyptic doom, destabilizing society’s equilibrium.

Thus, Tadjo’s advocacy does not suggest an abdication or a rejection of the traditional and biological roles played by women in love--getting pregnant, dressing in the traditional stereotypical ways of women, lactating motherhood and a glorified homemaking. For in the compelling story of the “sexy woman”, the narrator in a ghostly image of a dream suspends the woman in love to a “second degree” and foregrounds the imagistic symbol of “time” which should not be used by society as a basis to cow them into submission, or force them to perform their biological functions. Women must be allowed the freedom to choose when they are ready to perform those roles, perhaps they “needed some more time. Plenty of time, years maybe” (p.79).

Tadjo’s surreal visions of love between men and women demands “tenderness” and “honey-filled caresses” from (the) men who must learn to show respect, forgiveness, understanding and sacrifices towards women. For her, this is the only panacea to deal with the tensions, pain, and sufferings associated with our common humanity. Indeed, she does not “understand those men who want to tear women up and kick them in the gut with evil words that hurt to the depths of the soul. They ought to be told to stop, held at bay and taught the alphabet from the scratch” (pp. 59-60). As part of her pedagogic role, the author-narrator teaches men in several of the picturesque stories in the novel some lessons on how to treat women and the less vulnerable in society. In one particular example (Chapter 9, XXXI), we read of a man who showed commitment, tenderness, affection, and a resolute resolve to love absolutely till death parts him from the woman. Though the story appears mythical in the text, Tadjo’s surrealistic posturing creates reality out of mythology which merges as a binary force to achieve truth and realism in life. “And so it was there, between the earth and the sky that they loved each other so intensely that the sun was eclipsed and a cool wind swept their bodies. In the morning, she lay dead” (p.47). To foreground the tenderness and sincere love, the celestial bodies conjoin with the terrestrial elements to bathe both bodies before death parts the two lovers.
In 87 (Chapter 13 XLVIII), Tadjo tells the story of a young man who after years of neglect and rejection, demonstrates real love and affection towards his dying, cancerous mother. The young man “sees himself holding her hand. He will wipe her brow. Whispers soothing words to her. Listen to her sleep. His mother is dying and he wants to be there” (p.65). The author-narrator’s use of simple, short sentences dominantly in this vignette suggests her crisp and pointed truth in the exhibition of grace, tenderness, and “honey-filled caresses” towards a woman in pain. These have a potency of connotatively giving love a new coloration of hope.

Another aspect of love the author-narrator discusses in the text is a metaphorical love for one’s country (or continent) portrayed through the surrealistic Senghorian sensibilities of Negritude. Sackey (1997) has provided an instructive essay on the surrealistic features of Leopold Sedar Senghor’s art, detailing the variant forms of love and showing how those forms affect humans and our relation to the universe. Tadjo’s deconstruction of love in As the crow flies captures a binary fusion of an incestuous love for her country, Côte d’Ivoire (especially when the image of a country is perceived as a “mother or father”) and by metaphorical extension Africa on the one hand, and a strong commitment to ensure that the arts and socio-political institutions of Africa are preserved intact on the other. The author-narrator avers: “I dream of my country, which obsesses me all the time. I carry it with me all day. At night, it lies next to me, making love with me” (p.73).

Commitment to this love-making process compels Tadjo to severely criticize the socio-politico-economic evils in her society; “the inequalities that breed like geckos under the ruins of slums” (p.73); “those cheques with lots of noughts, those big-bellied bank accounts, and black lacquered Mercedes” (p.74); “the contorted mouths, the thick oozing blood, the gruesome bodies in their final last throes” (p.75); the violence, the oppressive forces of the Monarch, and issues about censorship. The artist’s intention is to affirm that true love should naturally motivate one to point out flaws in the relation between the parties involved, with an aim of building a long lasting human bonding.

The narrator relates other stories from other parts of the world to establish that these ills are not confined to African societies. Similarly, love for one’s country, the artist suggests, should be viewed from the global perspective of our common humanity, but not a specific continent. In a cryptic surrealistic short story (Chapter 18 LXXX), the author-narrator blends several (though unrelated) news items of horrendous nature to tell stories of mutilated love, and the meaninglessness of love in human affairs. For all these happened

at the time when many Indians died during the carbide Union incident, a time when I saw burnt corpses stretched out next to each other, their eyes blinded. The crying children had been exposed to toxic gas that had escaped from the
factory. These images reminded me of the emaciated bodies of the dying in Ethiopia, of the children with distended bellies. Bellies that looked like carnival balloons. A little girl who refused to eat because her body had forgotten how to. Indira Gandhi’s corpse in flames. Reagan’s re-election. The miners’ strike, the hijack by Kuwaiti terrorists and the plane stranded on the runway. Fear inside. The killed hostages. (p.90)

The phrases and clauses employed by the artist to foreground the horrendous images of past violence confirm the fact that they can be re-invented in modern day happenings as evident in almost all the news items telecast via the electronic and print media. These are indications of the commitment of an “artist-lover” who sees her role as a teacher and a guide, possibly similar to Achebe; a sacred duty to direct humanity to retread the acceptable paths and mores of society in exhibiting love to fellow humans.

As part of her role as a teacher and a guide on love in human affairs, Tadjo takes advantage of writing to discuss some subjects considered to be taboos, imposed by the patriarchal society, among women. Issues such as sex, pleasure, and sensuality in love affairs, and the resulting orgasm among women are hardly discussed and countenanced by men. However, she believes “love is a story that we never stop telling. Let yourself be lulled by its sweet words. Adorn yourself with its multiple charms…” (p.59). Treading both cautiously and unashamedly, the author-narrator discusses issues associated with the animalistic instincts of sexual desires among women, bodily pleasures, and erotic sensibilities. She postulates that women have a capacity, just like men, to enjoy sex (in love) and proposes the pleasures of sex as a cure for loneliness and fear. The end result, she maintains, is beauty and love in marital copulations, for “[w]hen a man gives so much of his strength and soul that the woman is filled with awe by this deed, then beauty will have knelt and paid tribute to the couple lying down in the dimly-lit room” (p.88).

The author-narrator does not deny the fact that the body of a woman is a site of enjoyment and pleasurable sensations. However, she also emphasizes that its unique beauty should be enjoyed only in the context of men giving off their best, “strength and soul,” to the woman.

Allowing the Flowers of Freedom to Blossom

Tadjo’s artistic vision in As the crow flies presents a society in which humanity will allow the flowers of freedom to blossom over our scattered ills, pains, traumas, separations, and weaknesses that have become endemic in society, as illustrated in several vignettes of the micro-text. Though there is some amount of pessimism pervading the micro-text, the artist subsumes this under the surrealistic lens and refracts them to portray an optimism generated connotatively through the imagery of dying and resurrecting, which are essential elements of life. The concepts of death and resurrection (or
reincarnation) are twin powerful images the author-narrator employs in the Prologue and the Epilogue of the novel. For her, humanity should consciously allow itself to rot with the ills (of life) and be buried; only then can emerge a new breed which will radiate the glories and blessedness of life.

In the novel, the author-narrator foregrounds this imagery in the metaphor of sowing (like a farmer), watching, and waiting for the seeds to germinate and “flourish like a hibiscus in full bloom”. The narrator in Chapter 6 (XVI) further stresses:

Today I **dug** the earth by hand and **planted** some seeds. To **watch** them grow. My fingers are wet and black. I **heap** the soil gently at first and then vigorously. A warm heat spreads through my body. (p.32, Emphasis added).

The actions of “digging”, “planting”, “watching” “wetting and dirtying” the fingers and “heaping” the soil demand an amount of hard work, effort, and sacrifice before the flowers will blossom. In another vignette, the author-narrator tells the story of an old beggar who mercilessly hits a young beggar with a piece of wood till the young boy dies. The old beggar’s intent of “recover[ing] the peace he had known before, regain[ing] the feeling of satiation and the certainty that he could face tomorrows without dread” (p.28) which precipitated the action (of killing) is surrealistically portrayed against the setting (or background) of the mango season when “fruits choking with juice were rotting under the trees” (p.29). Though the story focalizes on human greed, insensitivity, and selfishness, the action of killing is executed in the night “when people slumber in oblivion and when stars twinkle with gold and mystery” (p.28). By implication, human ills and weaknesses ought to be buried under the cover of darkness, allowed to rot there and at the same time permitted to “resurrect” under the moonlight twinkling of the stars as they radiate in the end with gold and mystery. The mystery, therefore, is portrayed through the combined forces of the terrestrial and celestial bodies which become the metaphorical vehicle to usher in the dawn of a new beginning in human affairs, for “just as the cocks began to awaken the city with their crowing and cats stretched, a worker, setting out on his long morning walk,” the young beggar’s body was found. The narrator appositely observes: “A dust-cloud drifted across the sky. The city was a awakening. It must have been well past six o’clock” (p.29).

Tadjo’s vision for society draws inspiration from her African background which places much value on orature, rituals, incantations, and sacrifices as a panacea to deal with life’s pain, trauma, and afflictions. The multi-layered stories that the author-narrator tells in the micro-text are a reminder to society that, in the telling and re-enacting of tales/stories, humanity regains its confluence and balance in life; for as Achebe (2012) forcefully maintains, “storytelling is a creative component of human experience, and in order to share our experiences with the world, we as Africans need to recognize the
importance of our own stories” (p.1). Tadjo attaches so much importance to her African descent making rituals the basis to deal with the failures associated with the love relationships recounted in the novel. She clearly asserts:

I want to pour libation and summon the gods, undo what has been done, utter sacred words to quell the fires, reduce to cinders promises made. I want an assembly of diviners and sorcerers to chase away the evil spirits, to recapture the present once more. I therefore call upon each and every one of you, djinns with hideous faces, juju-makers with terrifying powers. Come from all directions. I want to make peace. (Tadjo, 2001, p.33)

The essence of incantation and invocation according to Tadjo is to make peace and deal with societal and personal ills, thus paving way for the “cleansing rites” and “the necessary sacrifices” to be performed.

In Chapter 17, the author-narrator tells the story of humanity’s debate on and search for the “secret formula for eternal happiness”, and the encounter between a young girl (from the family of magicians) and an older magician. The magician’s crisp and paradoxical logic foregrounded in rhetorical questions, translates the story into a myth validating the claim that Tadjo’s surrealism combines sorcery, mysticism, and perhaps a quest for the unknown life beyond this tangible universe, where reality is truth and truth is beauty (to borrow the phrase from Keats “Ode on a Grecian Urn”). For Tadjo’s narrator, “Happiness is to be found in its absence. Can you walk with your eyes closed? Could you sleep eternally? Can you know silence?” (2001, p.81).

In the ensuing encounter between the girl and the magician in search of the secret formula for eternal happiness, the author-narrator collapses the difference between dreams (or myth) and reality and leads the reader through a labyrinth with a glass wall. The portrayal of the labyrinth, love-making, breaking of an egg, washing of the face three times, opening of the magician’s skull, and the water image are imagistic symbols Tadjo employs in the vignette to forcefully convey her surrealist literature where the unconscious is used as a source material to deal with life’s ills and traumas.

**Conclusion**

Tadjo’s skill in the art of storytelling as portrayed in *As the crow flies* has been quite revealing. The artist fuses some principles of surrealism and other artistic modes into the traditional craft of storytelling and subverts the normal relationship between narration and plot to introduce a new style which blends several postmodernist theories. For her, like most female artists, interrogating the “norm” and providing new perspectives to interpret life’s issues are the basis of absolute truths in human endeavors as exemplified in the novel under consideration. The surrealistic posturing of the author-narrator in
designing the structure of the novel, coupled with the tripartite focalization in the
narrative point of view used in the several vignettes, and the imagistic symbols used in
the text reveal the hidden aesthetic energies of a novelist who injects a fresh insight into
the ancient craft of storytelling. Tadjo’s artistic vision combines dreams, mysticism,
psychological fixations, and “the collective unconsciousness” of humans as a way of life
to deal with life’s traumas, and by implication affirm the value of art.

Arlow and Herma (2009), citing Carl Jung, maintain that the value of art lies in
its therapeutic use; it is by this means that both the artist and public can reveal hidden
conflicts and discharge tensions associated with issues that confront us as humans (p. 4).
For, fantasies, mythology, and dreams are means of escaping from life’s realities and
coping with them (Arlow & Herma, 2009, p.4). Tadjo’s art of storytelling and her
surrealistic posturing have opened a new vista of literary endeavors and answers to some
of life’s problems, and in the process, have strangely created “headaches” for literary
critics desirous of decrypting and classifying her work. However, if literature attempts to
cure humanity of its ills and provide a lamp post to guide society on the path of
“righteousness” (to borrow a word from Christian mythology), then Tadjo’s art has
succeeded in performing the designed function, similar to other great works of literature.
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BOOK REVIEW

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Imagine this! You are reading a story told by a man who walked amidst the pyramids and sphinxes, not in an excavated site under the helmeted supervision of some learned western archaeologist. No! This story is a translation of a hieroglyphic text written by someone who lived at a time when pyramids were still being constructed; someone who himself had a stone pyramid built for him in the necropolis, complete with funerary furniture and all other appurtenances of a burial befitting a high official of Kemet, to give ancient Egypt its proper name.

This is a story which spreads before the reader’s astonished gaze a view of life in ancient Egypt as it was witnessed and lived by a citizen of the time and place who participated in that ancient way of life and was affected by the political intrigue and uncertainties of the time. The story educates the reader about the military insurrections on the borders of the kingdom, the conduct of war, the way the king related to those of his courtiers whom he trusted, the clothing of the noblemen, the practice of agriculture, the food the ancient Egyptians ate, the way children were brought up… Indeed, Sanhat’s story provides us with vivid pictures of a way of life we thought was lost or misappropriated forever, especially as we were brought up in the belief that those magnificent figures with sonorous names like Ozymandias, Tutankamun, Akhnaten, Cheops and the like were all white men, even if the noses on the statues did not always conform to the line of the Caucasian nose. Against the evidence before our very eyes we were expected to accept the sustained deceit that the people of Kemet were white.

The miraculous work of recovery which brings us Sanhat’s story is the achievement of Ayi Kwei Armah and a team of collaborators who make up Shemsw Bak. The Shemsu, we are told, were individuals in Kemet ‘who formed a long-term intellectual family for the purpose of doing some chosen work together.’ This particular group of
intellectual workers, Shemsw Bak, are people who possess skills which have enabled them to identify the story in the ancient hieroglyphic script of Kemet, to transliterate it into modern script, and then to translate it into Akan, English, French, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Wolof and Zulu – seven languages widely used in Africa today. The very presentation of the text is ingenious and aesthetically appealing. Each page of the volume presents only one line of hieroglyphic text followed in alphabetical order by its translation into the languages mentioned above, each one occupying the same linear position on every succeeding page. Thus on turning each page the reader first sees the line of hieroglyphic text and its transliteration, and below that, in succeeding lines, the translation into the various languages listed above.

In outline, the story Sanhat tells is simple enough. This courtier and high military official is returning home to Kemet from a successful campaign to put down an insurrection in the land of the Libyans when he overhears information conveyed to Senwosret, the prince commanding the campaign, that his father, the Pharaoh, has died suddenly under suspicious circumstances and also that the younger princes who had accompanied them on the campaign should without ceremony return home immediately. Suspecting a palace coup, Sanhat, the courtier, decides rather rashly to go into exile. The story he tells then is mostly the narrative of his exile and his eventual return to Kemet where, now an old man, he is welcomed back with great pomp by Senwosret, his former companion in battle who has in fact succeeded his father as Pharaoh.

The reader obtains much fascinating information about ancient Egypt, more properly Kemet, from Sanhat’s 4,000-year old story. In particular, the one thing it impresses upon the reader who did not know it before is the fact that the people of Kemet were black, and stood on higher than equal footing with their Asian neighbours and often got the better of them in war. The narrator refers to Kemet as ‘the Black Nation’ (p. 52) to which neighboring nations travelled to trade. Their culture was advanced to such an extent that the fame of King Sehoteplb Ra, the father of Senwosret, had spread as far as Palestine. We know from the Bible that Joseph and his brothers traded with the Egyptians; what is not too clear from that source is the complexion of the Egyptians. Sanhat tells us of the stone quarry from which the pharaoh obtained material to build a wall to keep out Asians and Bedouins. Further, such is the personal ability of Sanhat that the king of upper Palestine gives him his eldest daughter in marriage, puts him in charge of his children, endows him with land to farm for himself and is appointed a village chief. The fact of his being black does not seem to enter the king’s reckoning: that Sanhat is a man skilled in many arts is what matters to the ruler.

As we read his story, we notice that a skill which Sanhat emphasises above all is military prowess. Fighting skill, whether at the individual level or in military formation, seems to have been highly valued. Equipped with a fine army, Kemet has subdued many of her neighbors, Asian as well as African. When we first meet Sanhat, he is returning
from a military campaign bringing captives and booty to Kemet. In his extended panegyric to the ruling pharaoh, Senwosret, Sanhat praises his military skills, particularly the fact that he has extended the frontiers of the state, adding that this ruler of Kemet was ‘born to smash the Asians and Bedouins’ (p. 101). It is interesting that many centuries later, kings of certain kingdoms in Africa saw it as their supreme duty on ascending the stool or throne to extend the frontiers of their kingdom by annexing neighbouring states. Was this territorial expansionism a link to Kemet?

Perhaps, it is in their reverence for death and the dead that the people of Kemet most resemble present-day Africans. Admittedly, we are not in the habit of building pyramids for our dead kings these days, and Sanhat’s story does not provide us with an example of the manner in which ordinary people of Kemet were treated after death, but there is no mistaking the similarity between the ancient Egyptian attitude to death and our own today. We also bury our dead with lavish ceremony and fill the coffin with the most expensive finery.

No sooner does old age begin to crawl on Sanhat than he begins to think of returning home. ‘What is more important than the union of my body with the land of my birth,’ he says. And the Pharaoh repeats the idea when he sends Sanhat the message: ‘You shall not die abroad. Return!’ (p. 228). And so even while he is still alive, the most elaborate preparations are made, on Pharaoh’s orders, for the funeral of the returned courtier, complete with a stone pyramid, funerary furniture, a tomb garden and gold-plated statue. The people of Kemet believed death to be a passage to blessedness, a reward for a life well-lived.

Armah and his intellectual family, Shemsw Bak, have promised us ‘further pleasant surprises.’ May they be enabled to keep their promise! May they guide us to walk further with the ancient Egyptians and learn more of their story so we do not continue to believe, for example, that Ghana’s written history and literature began with the coming of the Portuguese, Diogo de Azambuja.

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